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Culture and feminist theory : an Armenian-American woman's perspective.

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CULTURE AND FEMINIST THEORY:
AN ARMENIAN-AMERICAN WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

A Dissertation Presented

By

ARLENE VOSKI AVAKIAN

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

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1985

Education

Arlene Voski Avakian
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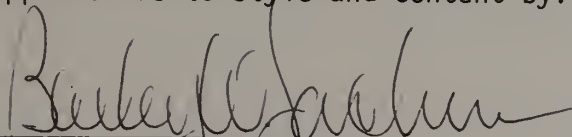
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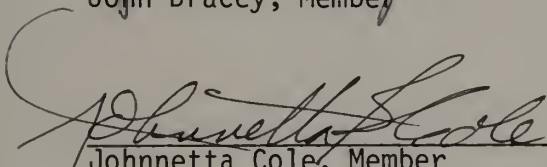
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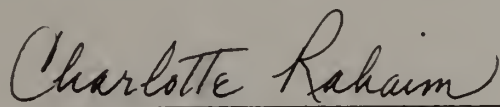
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Reclaiming my ethnic identity would not have taken the form it did without the intimate and intense interaction with Martha Ayres, a WASP who was willing to fight with me. My gratitude to her for the fights as well as her empathy cannot be adequately articulated.

Finally, I thank my grandmother who survived and passed the story of her life on to me.

ABSTRACT

Culture and Feminist Theory:

An Armenian-American Woman's Perspective

May 1985

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Directed by: Professor Bailey Jackson III

Women's Studies uncovers women's experience as well as critiques the content and methodologies of the disciplines in an attempt to correct the neglect and/or distortion of women's experience historically as well as in the present. This feminist critique asks fundamental questions about the ways that knowledge has been collected, analyzed and synthesized. Arguing that women's experience is omitted and/or distorted the resulting analysis is not an accurate representation of the human experience, feminist scholars in all areas of inquiry have begun to develop new methodologies. Feminist theoreticians have developed theoretical frameworks within which women's experience can be accurately analyzed.

While much of this work is of great value to all scholarship, it is also limited by its failure to incorporate the lives of all groups of women within its theoretical constructs. The three major strands of feminist theory: radical, reformist and socialist, neglect issues of race and culture while basing their theories within the assumptions of their own race and culture. The resulting frameworks, then, are

necessarily inadequate to analyze the lives of women who fall outside the hegemony.

Afro-American and Third World women have criticized accurately feminist theory for excluding their lives. This study broadens that critique to include white ethnic women. Using the vehicle of autobiography, it presents a challenge to feminist theory. While that theory does address some issues in my life and the lives of other Armenian-American women, other issues of crucial importance are totally neglected. Thus, the analysis of our lives can only be distorted if the frameworks of feminist theory are used. The study also questions the accuracy of the analysis of the lives of women of the dominant group if the theory does not address issues of race and culture. The failure of feminist theory to recognize the relative power of women in the dominant group and to bring that reality into their analyses results in a partial theory which distorts all women's lives.

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PREFACE

The bulk of this dissertation is a political/cultural autobiography. I have attempted to recreate my consciousness as an Armenian-American woman at each level of development rather than bringing a full scale analysis to each stage. My response to events and people in my life, then, is presented as much as possible with the understanding I had of them at a particular point in my life. The people who appear in this work are characterized therefore only from my perspective as I understood them at the time I knew them and as they are filtered through my memory.

Lillian Hellman, in the preface to her autobiographical work, Pentimento, eloquently described her attempt to portray the impact of people on her life.

Old paint on canvas, as it ages, sometimes becomes transparent. When that happens it is possible, in some pictures, to see the original lines: a tree will show through a woman's dress, a child makes way for a dog, a large boat is no longer on an open sea. This is called pentimento because the painter 'repented,' changed his mind. Perhaps it would be as well to say that the old conception, replaced by a later choice, is a way of seeing and then seeing again.

That is all I mean about the people in this book. The paint has aged now and I wanted to see what was there for me once, what is there for me now. (Hellman, 1973, i)

My canvas, too, is many layered and what appears is colored by time and point of view.

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

A life can be seen as a tapestry which is at once in process and unravelling. Few strands are pulled through time and place intact. Some are worn through and break or appear as mere threads only discernible upon close examination. Others collect strength and form major motifs. The tapestry that they form is many layered and must be viewed from all possible angles while remembering that all the layers are connected. What infuses all the layers and all the patterns is culture.¹ Culture determines the color and the shape of the strands as well as the form and texture of the patterns. This study will look at the way that culture has determined one life through an autobiographical narrative.

The study will focus not on the whole tapestry in all its minute detail and all of its patterns, but will look at those parts which are determined by culture. It is an attempt to explore what culture is and what its dynamics are to emphasize the importance of cultural factors to any theoretical construct that tries to explain human behavior. By looking at my life, a first generation Armenian-American woman through the perspective of the cultural dynamics that have shaped and continue to shape it, I will address the neglect of cultural dynamics in the curriculum and methodology of Women's Studies, a new discipline that has its foundations in feminist theoretical frameworks. While there

¹Let culture here mean both the world view and the behavior patterns of a people. A full definition of the term begins on page 20.

are at least three major schools of feminist theory--radical, reformist and socialist--none addresses the issue of the role of culture in women's lives. Black and Third World women have rightly criticized feminist theory and Women's Studies as well as the feminist movement out of which they arose for focusing exclusively on white, Western and middle class women. It is my contention that a major reason for the inability of feminist theoreticians, scholars, teachers and activists to include women who are not like themselves in their work is a cultural myopia which is challenged neither in the theoretical works within Women's Studies, nor in the theory or political action which predate the Women's Movement of the late 1960s. I present the study of my life before this theory to ask if my life, not as an exceptional person but as an Armenian-American woman, is congruent with the analyses of women's lives which they present.

Problem Statement

Anyone who has been involved in Women's Studies for even a few years would agree that the issue of the inclusion of Black and Third World women in the curriculum and scholarship of the discipline has been and continues to be raised by women of color. At the 1979 National Women's Studies Association's annual conference, women of color brought their concerns before the participants in the final plenary session. Barbara Smith's statement spoke not only to what had happened at that particular conference, but to a history of exclusion of issues of concern to Black and Third World women:

Although my proposed topic is Black Women's Studies, I have decided to focus my remarks in a different way. Given that this is a gathering of predominantly white women and given what has occurred during this conference, it makes much more sense to discuss the issue of racism; racism in Women's Studies and racism in the women's movement generally. "Oh no," I can hear some of you groaning inwardly. "Not that again. That's all we've talked about since we got here." This of course is not true. If it had been all we had talked about since we got here, we might be at a point of radical transformation on the last day of this conference that we clearly are not. For those of you who are tired of hearing about racism, imagine how much more tired we are of constantly experiencing it, second by literal second, how much more exhausted we are to see it constantly in your eyes. The degree to which it is hard or uncomfortable for you to have the issue raised is the degree to which you know inside of yourselves that you aren't dealing with the issue, the degree to which you are hiding from the oppression that undermines Third World women's lives. I want to say right here that this is not a "guilt trip." It is a fact trip. The assessment of what's actually going on. (Smith, 1980, 48).

Despite the fact that the entire meeting of the next year was devoted to racism, the issue that Smith addressed in 1979 has only been seriously dealt with by a few isolated individuals, and even fewer Women's Studies programs. The majority of Women's Studies scholarship continues to focus on white women and only in a very few instances is that focus made explicit. The theories which are being developed similarly apply only to the lives of white, Western women--mostly middle class, yet they are propounded as theories of all women's lives. Issues of variability in power and powerlessness among women are generally not addressed just as cultural variations among women are ignored.

This exclusion of women of color and others who do not fit the Western pattern has a long history in feminist theoretical writing. Nineteenth century work on women's status may be best exemplified by the work of John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill (Rossi, 1970). Writing

in the mid nineteenth century, the Mills invoked the natural rights argument for women's equality.¹ They advocated for the emancipation of woman from her subordinate position which J.S. Mill stated

. . . stands out an isolated fact in modern social institutions; a solitary breach of what has become their fundamental law; a single relic of an old world of thought and practice exploded in everything else, but retained in the one thing of most universal interest. (Rossi, 1970, 146)

He further argued that women were socialized to live for others.

All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others. All the moralities tell them that it is the duty of women, and all the current sentimentalities that it is their nature, to live for others; to make complete abnegation of themselves, and to have no life but in their affections. (Rossi, 1970, 141)

According to Mill, this socialization produced an unnatural condition.

What is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing--the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others. It may be asserted without scruple, that no other class of dependents have had their character so entirely distorted from its natural proportions by their relation with their masters . . . (Rossi, 1970, 148)

Mill was not sure what the true nature of the sexes was and stated that it could not be known without full equality. In his essay "On Marriage and Divorce," Mill called for the education of woman, not to make her a better mother, as others in his period had, but because women are human beings and ". . . knowledge is desirable for its own sake" (Rossi, 1970, 76). And further, that until women were economically independent,

¹Although I do not quote Harriet Taylor Mill directly, I have used her name because John Stuart Mill credits her with much of what he wrote. For a discussion of the relationship between the Mills and Harriet's influence on John's works see Alice Rossi's introduction to Essays on Sex Equality, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill.

marriage could not be a matter of choice. In the jointly written essay on "The Enfranchisement of Women," the Mills stated the basis of their argument.

We deny the right of any portion of the species to decide for another portion, or any individual for another individual, what is and what is not their "proper sphere." The proper sphere for all human beings is the largest and highest which they are able to attain to. What this is, cannot be ascertained, without complete liberty of choice. (Rossi, 1970, 100)

While one can hardly disagree with these assertions advocating that women be included in the human race, the analysis of how women experience their subjection is from a universalist perspective. The Mills, influenced by the natural law argument that all human beings are equal, see no differences in social arrangements or solutions to women's subordinate position due to social class or cultural variations.

Simone deBeauvoir, writing nearly one hundred years later, includes class as a determining factor in women's lives, yet she does so only on an economic level and, like the Mills, does not consider the effects of culture on women's lives. In her epic work, The Second Sex, deBeauvoir describes women's status as "the other."

She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute--she is the Other. (deBeauvoir, 1974, xix)

Her work examines biology, psychology, history, myth, literature and the contemporary socialization of women in an attempt to prove her point. Aspects of culture, values, norms and mores are only discussed in terms of Western patriarchy.

deBeauvoir herself has accepted some of these values, most strikingly in her view that only in overcoming nature and our animal selves can humans achieve consciousness.

The discovery of bronze enabled man, in the experience of hard and productive labor to discover himself as a creator; dominating nature, he was no longer afraid of it, and in the fact of obstacles overcome he found courage to see himself as an autonomous active force, to achieve self-fulfillment as an individual. But this accomplishment would never have been attained had not man originally willed it so; the lesson of work is not inscribed upon a passive subject; the subject shapes and masters himself in shaping and mastering the land (*italics mine*). (deBeauvoir, 1974, 62-3)

Throughout her work deBeauvoir identifies women with the preservation of the species and with nature.

. . . in the female it is the continuity of life that seeks accomplishment in spite of separation; while separation into new and individualized forces is incited by male initiative. The male is thus permitted to express himself freely; the energy of the species is well integrated into his own living activity. On the contrary, the individuality of the female is opposed by the interest of the species; it is as if she were possessed by foreign forces--alienated. (deBeauvoir, 1947, 27-8)

While she rejects basing the definition of the sexes on biology, the identification of women with nature, coupled with her premise that nature must be dominated, is a fundamental point of contradiction in her work as well as an unconscious acceptance of an essentially male, Western and modern assumption.

Socialist feminism, another major ideological position within contemporary feminist theory, looks at women's condition within the basic structural analysis of Marxism with some alterations. Arguing that Marx oversimplified woman's place in society as well as her potential for revolutionary change, Zillah Eisenstein states, "Marx never questioned the hierarchical ordering of society" (Eisenstein, 1979, 83). And

further that,

The sexual division of labor as the sexual definition of roles, purposes, activities, etc., had no unique existence for Marx. He had little or no sense of woman's biological reproduction or maternal functions as critical in creating a division of labor within the family. (Eisenstein, 1979, 11)

Marx and Engles recognized that women were oppressed within the family, but they believed once a socialist society enabled woman to engage in productive labor, she would be emancipated (Eisenstein, 1979, 15).

Eisenstein explores the connections between capitalism and patriarchy in an attempt to include women into a basically Marxist construct.

A feminist class analysis must begin with distinctions drawn among women in terms of the work they do within the economy as a whole--distinctions among working women outside the home (professional versus nonprofessional); among houseworkers (houseworkers who do not work outside the home and women who are houseworkers and also work outside), welfare women, unemployed women, and wealthy women who do not work at all. These class distinctions need to be further defined in terms of race and marital status. We then need to study how women in each of these categories share experiences with other categories of women in the activities of reproduction, child-rearing, sexuality, consumption, maintenance of home. What we will discover in this exploratory feminist class analysis is a complicated and varied pattern whose multigrid conceptualization mirrors the complexity of sex and class differentials in the reality of women's life experience. (Eisenstein, 1979, 33)

While she states that race and marital status must be addressed, she does not, in fact, do so, because the premise of her "multigrid" is class and sex. Race and culture are not germane to her conceptual framework, but are merely added to a list of factors.

A more recent analysis by Heidi Hartman calls for a "more progressive union" between a feminist analysis and a class analysis which "requires not only improved intellectual understanding of relations of class and sex, but also that alliance replace dominance and

subordination in left politics" (Hartman, 1981, 3). Like Eisenstein she argues that

. . . a materialist analysis demonstrates that patriarchy is not simply a psychic, but also a social and economic structure. We suggest that our society can best be understood once it is recognized that it is organized both in capitalistic and in patriarchal ways. While pointing out tensions between patriarchal and capitalist interests, we argue that the accumulation of capital both accommodates itself to patriarchal social structure and helps to perpetuate it. We suggest in this context that sexist ideology has assumed a peculiarly capitalist form in the present, illustrating one way that patriarchal relations tend to bolster capitalism. We argue, in short, that a partnership of patriarchy and capitalism has evolved. (Hartman, 1981, 3)

Once again, race and culture are left out of the analysis. Hartman's call for politics of alliance rather than dominance and subordination refers only to sex, not to the dominance and subordination created by race. Throughout her article, Hartman's analysis assumes that despite class differences, all men bond along gender lines, yet women's oppression is determined by class as well as gender. Gloria Joseph, in her response to the Hartman article, rightly points out that all men do not benefit from male privilege to the same degree. She states, ". . . Black men in actuality never had and still have no power over white women; it is more accurate to say that all white women have ultimate power over Black men--penis power included" (Joseph, 1981, 100). Joseph calls for an analysis in which

The role of white males in the partnership of patriarchy and capital has to be discussed in relationship to the laborers, consumers, the exploited who are the providers for the beneficiaries of patriarchy and capital. These providers are predominantly women, both Black and white, and Black males. It is incumbent upon white feminists to: (1) recognize their implication in the partnership, as benefactors and tools; (2) address the unique problems of Black women in the labor force; (3) distinguish between the role of

white men and Black men in the partnership of capital and patriarchy. (Joseph, 1981, 92)

As Joseph points out, Hartman's essay neglects "the incestuous child of patriarchy and capitalism . . . racism" (Joseph, 1981, 92). Arguing that while some Black men are sexist in their individual relationships with women, Black men do not have institutional power over women. To make her point Joseph provides the following statistics:

Black men have no economic power. Blacks own 1.2% of business equity; 1.2% of farm equity; and 0.1% of stock equity in the U.S.A.; U.S. business receipts in 1977 amounted to \$2 trillion. Minority business accounted for 1.5% of this total. Political power is tied to economic power so Black male political clout suffers the same anemia as Black economic power. . . . In the final analysis, however, the white woman has the ultimate power because the judicial system is racist, the executive system is racist, and the legislative system is racist. . . . Capitalism and patriarchy simply do not offer to share with Black males the seat of power in the regal solidarity. (Joseph, 1981, 100)

Hartman and Eisenstein, considered to be at the forefront of socialist feminist theory, rightly criticize Marxism for its blindness about sexual politics, yet they are, like their "brothers," equally blind to race and racism as a major force in the lives of Black people. Hartman's call for a more "progressive union" is clearly a union of whites.

While socialist feminists have been unwilling or unable to incorporate Black feminist critiques into their theoretical work, they do credit radical feminist writers for emphasizing the power of patriarchy. For Marxists, class relations are the determining factor in human history and for radical feminists it is gender relations. Mary Daly, a major radical feminist theoretician, states this position in her book, Gyn/Econoly: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism.

The fact is that we live in a profoundly anti-female society, a misogynistic "civilization" in which men collectively victimize women, attacking us as personifications of their own paranoid fears, as The Enemy. Within this society it is men who rape, who sap women's energy, who deny women economic and political power. (Daly, 1978, 29)

For Daly, all women are oppressed by all men, and therefore all women of all historical eras are sisters; "All women who define our own living, defying the deception of patriarchal history, are journeying. We belong to the same time and we are foresisters to each other" (Daly, 1978, 33). Differences due to class, race and even historical circumstances are subordinated to the experience of domination of all women by all men.

Speaking directly to issues of culture, Daly states that cultures are "merely multimanifestations of the overall culture of androcracy" (Daly, 1978, 223-4). To support this thesis, Daly examines six instances of tortures of women which she calls, "The Sado-Ritual Syndrome: The Re-enactment of Goddess Murder" (Daly, 1978, Table of Contents). According to Daly, these practices: Indian suttee, Chinese footbinding, African genital mutilation, European witch burnings, gynecology, and a comparison of Nazi medicine and American gynecology, all follow the same pattern which she identifies as follows: "1. an obsession with purity, 2. erasure of responsibility for the atrocities performed through such rituals, 3. gynocidal ritual practices have an inherent tendency to 'catch on' and spread, 4. women are used as scapegoats and token torturers, 5. compulsive orderliness, obsessive repetitiveness, and fixation upon minute details, which divert attention from the horror, 6. behavior which at other times and places is unacceptable become acceptable and even normative as a consequence of conditioning through

the ritual atrocity, and 7. legitimation of the ritual by the rituals of 'objective scholarship'--despite appearances of disapproval" (Daly, 1978, 131-3). By using examples from various cultures and historical periods, and by arguing that all of these practices follow the same pattern, Daly has eliminated the significance of any possible variations in women's conditions cross-culturally or historically.

Women are, however, human beings who not only live within particular cultures, but are, like men, dependent on culture for survival (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Hallowell, 1967). Each particular culture develops various strategies to cope with its particular situation (Harris, 1974, 1978). Culture determines how we act in the world as well as the way we see the world (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). One example of the limitations of the applicability of theoretical frameworks which do not include cultural differences can be taken from Simone deBeauvoir who argues that because women are identified with nature they are feared by men. deBeauvoir assumes that all human beings in every culture feel that they must overcome nature. Rather than being a universal condition of humankind, this antagonistic relationship to nature is particularly Western. In contrast, according to Melville J. Herskovits, a central feature of West African religion is a sense of harmony with nature.

Everywhere some conception of the universe as ruled by Great Gods, customarily associated with the forces of nature, is found. The pervasiveness of divination would indicate a world view that implies beings whose decisions can be ascertained, thus making it possible to carry on activities in harmony with their desires by proper manipulation of the accepted tribal techniques of foretelling the future. (Herskovits, 1941, 83)

The Gods, then, are not only associated with nature, but are very close to humans and can help them with their lives on earth. If cultural norms are based on a harmony with nature, would women be singled out as particularly identified with natural forces, and if they were, how would that identification affect their status?

Feminist theoreticians, like other Western thinkers, could learn much from studying the debate among scholars of Afro-American and African life and culture. The role of African culture in the lives of Afro-Americans has been a point of serious debate since the 19th century. As early as 1859 Martin R. Delany advocated that free Blacks emigrate to Africa. Unlike the white "Back to Africa" movement of the same period, Delany called for an "Africa for Africans" (Cruse, 1967, 6). Early in the 20th century W.E.B. DuBois, arguing that Afro-Americans carried within them two consciousnesses, the African and the American eloquently articulated the difficulties of bi-culturalism, particularly in the American context where one of the cultures was not recognized.

. . . the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil and gifted with second-sight in this American world--a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only let him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of other, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,--an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,--this longing to attain self-consciousness manhood, to merge his double self into a better self. In this merging he wished neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would

not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. (DuBois, 1969, 45)

Thirty years later, in 1933, in an address at Fisk University entitled, "The Field and Functions of the Negro College," DuBois outlined the direction an Afro-American institution of higher learning should take:

. . . starting with present conditions and using the facts and the knowledge of the present situation of American Negroes, the Negro university expands toward the possession and the conquest of all knowledge. It seeks from a beginning of the history of the Negro in America and in Africa to interpret all history from a beginning of social development among Negro slaves and freedmen in America and Negro tribes and kingdoms in Africa, to interpret and understand the social development of all mankind in all ages. It seeks to reach modern science of matter and life from the surroundings and habits and aptitudes of American Negroes and thus lead up to understanding of life and matter in the universe. (DuBois, 1973, 95)

In 1946, DuBois specifically addressed the issue of Afro-American culture and its relationship to Africa.

What is a culture? It is a careful knowledge of the past out of which the group as such has emerged: in our case a knowledge of African history and social development--one of the richest and most intriguing which the world has known. Our history in American, north, south and Caribbean, has been an extraordinary one which we must know to understand ourselves and our world. . . . Shall we seek to ignore our background and graft ourselves on a culture which does not wholly admit us, or build anew on that marvellous African art heritage. . . . Whence shall our drama come, from ourselves today or from Shakespeare in the English seventeenth century? (DuBois, 1973, 144)

This view, that Afro-Americans are Africans who have developed a distinct culture as a result of the interaction of their African heritage with the life experiences in the "new world," falls within what Harold Cruse calls the nationalist trend in Black social, political and cultural thought. In his book, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual, Cruse identifies the "crisis" as the inability of Black leaders to see

the importance of Black cultural identity. In an attack on integrationists he outlines the difficulties encountered when the focus is on integration to the detriment of assertion of the validity of the Afro-American experience.

As long as the Negro's cultural identity is in question, or open to self-doubts, then there can be no positive identification with the real demands of his political and economic existence. Further than that, without a cultural identity that adequately defines himself, the Negro cannot even identify with the American nation as a whole. He is left in the limbo of social marginality, alienated and directionless on the landscape of America, in a variegated nation of whites who have not yet decided on their own identity. (Author's emphasis) (Cruse, 1967, 12-3)

Like DuBois, Cruse's solution to this conflict is to focus on Afro-American culture.

. . . the truth is that the more practical sides of the Negro problem in America are bogged down organizationally and methodologically precisely because of cultural confusion and disorientation on the part of most Negroes. Thus it is only through a cultural analysis of the Negro approach to group "politics" that the errors, weaknesses and goal-failures can cogently be analyzed and positively worked out. (Author's emphasis) (Cruse, 1967, 14)

Through a discussion of Harlem and the political and cultural activities that took place there, Cruse indicts Black intellectuals for their focus on the

. . . folklore of integrationism, transposed from the civil rights front. Their simple, uncultivated outlooks, which have been nurtured by the American myth makers, are socially conditioned against original thought, even in their own behalf. . . . Lacking even the fundamentals of a cultural critique of their own, they adopt every shibboleth of the white cultural standard as practiced. (Author's emphasis) (Cruse, 1967, 70)

Cruse sees American society as dominated by WASP cultural values and the trap of integration is that "one must accept all the values (positive or

negative) of the dominant society into which one struggles to integrate" (Cruse, 1967, 99).

The debate between the integrationist and nationalist orientation in Afro-American social, cultural and political thought that Cruse presents, was also played out in a scholarly arena through the ideas presented by Melville J. Herskovits and the response to them. Herskovits sets out to dispel the widespread notion that African tradition and culture were totally wiped out in Black Americans by the slave experience. He initially establishes that most slaves came from West Africa, and further that the cultural traditions as well as languages in that region did, indeed, have enough similarities to allow people from one area to understand and relate to the traditions of another area. Additionally, he places these cultural forms within the context of Africa as a whole showing that in religion, attitudes toward ancestors and aesthetic traditions, the cultural values of West Africa are consistent with Africa as a whole (Herskovits, 1970, 83-5). Through a study of Black cultural traditions in the new world, Herskovits maintains that slaves were able to retain some aspects of their culture and that Blacks in the new world do have a distinct culture that is formed by an interplay of what they were able to maintain from their African heritage and the imperatives of the slave experience. The emerging culture was so strong, in fact, that Herskovits argues that it influenced the culture of whites who had close contact with it.

While Herskovits goes out on a limb in certain cases because of the scanty research in these areas, the bulk of his work is

incontrovertible. Yet it has still not been incorporated into white academic thought, nor has it found its way into the thinking on which public pronouncements are based. Despite the fact that this book was published in 1941, a study like the Morynihan report which identified the Black matrifocal family as pathological, could be issued by the government and accepted by most white scholars. Herskovits' work showed that matrifocal family patterns were a clear example of an African retention, and not a deviant form of family organization (Herskovits, 1970, 181). Johnnetta Cole, in an unpublished manuscript on African retentions, notes that not until the late 1950s and early 1960s and the emergence of the Black Power and Black Studies movement, did the concept of Africanisms begin to be studied (Cole, 9). Yet, as Cole points out, it is only in the 1980s that scholars outside of Black Studies may be prepared to accept and integrate the notions of Africanisms into their work (Cole, 20).

Herskovits himself was well aware of the political implications of an acceptance of an African past and a distinctly Afro-American cultural tradition. He stated, "A people that denies its past cannot escape being a prey to doubt of its value today and of potentialities for the future" (Herskovits, 1970, 32). He also documents the refusal of scholars to use the materials that were available to make connections between African cultural traditions and Black culture in the new world. It is much more important to a racist culture to bolster assumptions that Black people are deviant when the patterns of their culture differ from whites.

While feminist theory does not define Black cultural patterns as deviant, it just ignores them totally. Two issues that have been identified by white feminists as crucial to woman's oppression are her role in the family and in the workplace. In both of these areas the experience of Black women clearly does not fit into the structure established by feminist theory. Simone deBeauvoir, as well as younger socialist feminists, identifies the family as the locus of oppression for women. According to Eisenstein it is the relations in the patriarchal family which devalue women in the workforce. Motherhood is defined as "a patriarchal institution not reducible to any class reality" (Eisenstein, 1979, 48). Black women's role in the Black family, however, has quite a different meaning as Angela Davis notes:

. . . in the infinite anguish of ministering to the needs of the men and children around her (who were not necessarily members of her immediate family), she was performing the only labor of the slave community which could not be directly and immediately claimed by the oppressor. . . . Even as she was suffering from her unique oppression as female, she was thrust by the force of circumstances into the center of the slave community. (Author's emphasis) (Davis, 1971, 7)

But the reality of the Black family in slavery is not considered, nor is the role of the contemporary Black woman. Additionally, feminist theory assumes that family means a nuclear unit, and is clearly not applicable to those cultures in which the kinship network plays a vital role (Stack, 1974).

Similarly, the issue of women in the workplace is seen by feminist theory from a Western perspective. As early as 1941, Herskovits documented that West African women were in the marketplace and played important economic roles in the family. Beyond that, their money was their

own and they had the power to will it to the person of their choice (Herskovits, 1970, 58). During slavery Black women worked as hard as Black men, and after the Civil War, they continued to work in large numbers. Clearly, Black and white women's relationship to the family and to the workplace are not the same, yet feminist theory does not see the distinctions.

Feminist theoretical frameworks cannot begin to address Afro-American women's history and lives without an awareness of racism, a social force at least as equal in its power to sexism. The study of racism would not only inform theoreticians about the lives of women of color but of white women's history and experiences as well. In her 1978 article, "Disloyal to Civilization: Feminism, Racism and Gynophobia," Adrienne Rich attempts to address the racism of white women. She argues that while white women have been racists, they differ from their male counterparts because:

Women did not create the power relationship between master and slave, nor the mythologies used to justify the domination of men over women: such as, that the master is 'called by nature' or 'destiny' to rule because of his inherent superiority; that he alone is 'rational' while the Other is emotion-swayed, closer to the animal, an embodiment of the 'dark' unconscious, dangerous and therefore needing to be controlled; . . . Women did not create this relationship, but in the history of American slavery and racism white women have been impressed into its service, not only as the marriage-property and creature objects of white men, but as their active and passive instruments. (Rich, 1979, 281-2)

Throughout her essay, Rich obscures the actual power white women have had and continue to have over Black people. Arguing that "an analysis that places the guilt for active domination . . . on white women not only compounds false consciousness; it allows us to deny or neglect the

charged connections among black and white women" (Rich, 1978, 301).

Thus, she shifts the focus from white women as whites to white women as women. Presumably if these "charged connections," which Rich identifies as an erotic, do exist Black women would necessarily be primarily identified as women rather than as Blacks. She calls for Black and white women to:

To take our condition seriously. . . . To assert woman-hating as a constant fact of life both within the black community and as a fact of white women's lives has meant, for both black and white feminists, taking an immense and courageous step beyond past political positions, old analyses of power and powerlessness. (Rich, 1979, 308)

The "old" analyses are not so very old. Feminist theory has yet to seriously reckon with an analysis of race and culture.

Socialist feminism reduces all women to producers or reproducers, and radical feminism sees all women as victims of patriarchy. Women are, however, human beings whose place in society and sense of self is determined by more than the relations of production or a monolithic patriarchy. When feminist theory and Women's Studies curricula do not include culture as an important part of women's lives, they omit a fundamental aspect of the human experience. As Spelman and Lugones state in their paper, "Have We Got a Theory for You!--Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism and the Demand for 'The Woman's Voice.'":

But you theorize about women and we are women, so you understand yourselves to be theorizing about us and we understand you to be theorizing about us. Yet none of the feminist theories developed so far seem to me to help the Hispana in the articulation of our experience. We have a sense that in using them we are distorting our experiences. Most Hispana cannot even understand the language used in these theories--and only in some cases the reason is that the Hispana cannot understand English. We do not recognize ourselves in these theories. They create in us a schizophrenic split

between our concern for ourselves as women and ourselves as His-panas, one that we do not feel otherwise. Thus they seem to us to force us to assimilate to some version of Anglo culture, however revised that version may be. (Spelman & Lugones, 6)

Women's Studies must listen to all the voices of women. My study will add the voice of an Armenian-American woman to the chorus of Hispanas, Afro-American women, Asian women and all the other women who do not fit into the theory and have no place in the curricula, and who are sometimes whispering and sometimes shouting, "We are women too and we must be seen within the context of our particular cultures."

Definition of Terms

Culture

The early history of the study of culture began more than one hundred years before the anthropological concept of culture was developed. Until the 18th century the use of the word "culture" related to the cultivation and tending of plants and animals (Williams, 1977, 11). By the late 18th century "culture" was synonymous with "civilization" and the terms were used interchangeably by anthropologists. What was meant by culture/civilization was "an achieved state, which could be contrasted with 'barbarism,' but . . . also an achieved state of development which implied historical process and progress" (author's emphasis) (Williams, 1977, 13). According to Raymond Williams the meanings of civilization and culture in its non-anthropological sense began to be distinguished from each other when the concept of civilization was attacked during the Romantic period as being "superficial; an 'artificial' as distinct from a 'natural' state; a cultivation of 'external'

properties--politeness and luxury--as against more 'human' needs and impulses." The result of this attack was that culture became associated with "religion, art, the family and personal life, as distinct from or actually opposed to 'civilization' or 'society' in its new abstract and general sense" (Williams, 1977, 14). In George Stocking's view, culture, before 1900 was

. . . associated with the progressive accumulation of the characteristic manifestations of human creativity: art, science, knowledge, refinement--those things that freed man from control by nature, by environment, by reflex, by instinct, by habit or custom. (Stocking, 1968, 201)

In its pre-anthropological meaning culture was singular, denoting that people had it or didn't, or if they had it, the level to which they had developed it could be determined. E.B. Tylor's famous definition of culture, "That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" is a concept of culture which allows that it might come in more than one form (Stocking, 1968, 73). This sense of culture, the behaviors of a people and the patterns for those behaviors is, in very general terms, the anthropological meaning of culture.

Basic to contemporary definition of culture is the idea that culture is integrated and that it encompasses the entire lives of the people who live within it. E.B. Taylor's 1871 definition of culture, while marred by an evolutionist framework did include the idea that culture was both behavior and patterns for behavior and that they were presented to the individual as a whole piece.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, while they are sociologists of knowledge, offer important insights into the relationship of society to the conceptions of reality that are created within it. Defining the sociology of knowledge as the analysis of the social construction of reality, their work explores the origins and institutions of society and individual consciousness within a dialectical framework. Their basic thesis is that reality has no meaning outside of a social context. It is, in fact, constructed and defined by society. All human groups, according to Berger and Luckmann, create a social order and this order is in a dialectical relationship to the individuals within it. Because they see humanness as being defined in various ways by various cultures, in their view, humans reproduce themselves in terms of the culture in which they live, and this culture is created by human activity. Berger and Luckmann see the essential dialectic of society in that "society exists only as individuals are conscious of it" and "individual consciousness is socially determined" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 78). Because this relationship is central to their definition of society, Berger and Luckmann conceive of change in society as basic to its definition. The change, however, is within the framework of the possibilities defined by that society. In all societies there is more than one definition of reality and it is therefore possible that change may be the result of the interaction of competing realities.

The definition of culture that Berger and Luckmann offer is one which reflects the relativity of reality. What is real is a subjective perception rather than an objective fact. They define it as "a quality

pertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 7). While there may be many forms of reality within a culture, "everyday life presents itself as a reality . . . subjectively meaningful . . . as a coherent whole" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 19). This reality, according to Berger and Luckmann, "is taken by me to be normal and self-evident . . . it constitutes my natural attitude." Within this conception of reality, they define culture from the perspective of an individual within it.

I know that my natural attitude to this world corresponds to the natural attitude of others, that they also comprehend the objectifications by which this world is ordered, that they also organize this world around the 'here' and 'now' of their being in it and have projects for working in it. I also know, of course, that the others have a perspective on this common world that is not identical with mine. My 'here' is their 'there.' My 'now' does not fully overlap with theirs. My projects differ from and may even conflict with theirs. All the same, I know that there is an on-going correspondence between my meanings and their meanings in this world, that we share a common sense about its reality. The natural attitude is the attitude of common sense consciousness precisely because it refers to a world that is common to many men. Common sense knowledge is the knowledge I share with others in the normal, self-evident routines of everyday life. (Author's emphasis) (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 23)

The "common world" shared by people within a culture is created by human activity and interaction and maintained by institutions and systems of knowledge that arise from a particular society. Language, of course, is fundamental to the development and maintenance of culture. The origin of language is in everyday life and

. . . refers alone to the reality I experience in wide-awake consciousness which is dominated by the pragmatic motive . . . and which I share with others in a taken-for-granted manner. (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 38)

But language also has the capacity to "bridge the different zones within the reality of everyday life and integrates them into a meaningful whole" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 39). Language, then, becomes a vital factor in creating a sense of a world of common understandings.

Also contributing to this sense is what Berger and Luckmann call a "social stock of knowledge." The selective accumulation of "the total experience of both the individual and society," this knowledge helps people to function within their world. It includes what Berger and Luckmann call "recipe knowledge . . . knowledge limited to programmatic competence in routine performances" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 42). Providing typifications, it also helps to differentiate what is appropriate for various settings, e.g., public/private. Additionally, it provides the "natural backdrop"--the routines which always apply and the elements of a particular logic system; that is, "'what everybody knows' has its own logic, and the same logic can be applied to various things I know" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 43).

The process by which humans create their world is the result of necessary interaction between humans and their environment, which Berger and Luckmann define as both natural and human. Arguing that because of humans' underdeveloped instincts, they are neither limited to a specific environment nor a specific form of society. Some kind of social organization is necessary to order the chaos of our situation. The urge to create society is neither innate nor can it be derived from "laws of nature," but is a result of "the inherent instability of the human organism [that] makes it imperative that man himself provide a

stable environment for his conduct" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 52). This instability, inherent in humans because of the lack of well developed instincts, is compensated for by the ability to habituation, the patterning of repeated actions and the recognition of those patterns. Through this process, humans' undirected drives, which present them with many choices for every situation, are channelled into a limited number of directions. Habituated actions fall into types and thereby constitute institutions. In this schema, institutions are clearly the result of human activity, which in turn limits and controls that activity.

The ability of institutions to control those who produced them is the result of the reality they acquire over time, the sense that institutions "have always been there." They become objectified and "are experienced as existing over and beyond the individuals who 'happen to' embody them at the moment. . . . They are now experienced as possessing a reality of their own, a reality that confronts the individual as an external and coercive fact" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 58). They are seen "in a manner analogous to the reality of the natural world" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 59). Thus, what emerged out of human activity results in producing human beings. Social reality becomes reified only because "the dialectic between man, the producer and his product is lost to consciousness" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 89).

In order to maintain these institutions, societies, particularly pluralistic societies, must legitimate them. According to Berger and Luckmann, the legitimation process takes three forms. The first is incipient; things are the way they are because that is the way they are.

The second form, explanatory schemes, includes tales and myths. The third form, explicit theories, may become autonomous from the institutions they originally sought to legitimate and include "symbolic universes." Defined by Berger and Luckmann as "bodies of theoretical tradition that integrate different provinces of meaning and encompass the institutional order in a symbolic totality . . ." symbolic universes include what cannot be experienced in everyday life, while integrating all sectors of the society, "all human experience can . . . be conceived of as taking place within it" (author's emphasis) (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 96). The symbolic universe establishes a "hierarchy of realities" and "provides the ultimate legitimation of the institutional order by bestowing upon it the primacy in the hierarchy of human experience" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 98). The symbolic universe then, originating to legitimate institutions, results in providing the framework within which the history and life experience of the society and the individual within it exist.

Despite the power of this legitimatizing force, it does not usually produce a completely homogeneous and harmonious society. For one thing, the socialization process is not always complete, and there are always threats through confrontations with another society and its symbolic universe. Additionally, in a pluralistic society it is also possible for numbers of realities and their symbolic universes to exist at the same time. The creation of more than one symbolic reality is the result of "deviant" versions of reality "congealing" into realities in their own right (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 106).

Berger and Luckmann offer a method of looking at the parts of the "encompassing whole" of culture as well as the relationships among the various aspects of the culture. By focusing on the dialectical relationship between human beings and society, their framework provides a way to look at the development of the individual and culture with an emphasis on material conditions. Although less well developed, their conceptualization of reality allows for an analysis of changes within a culture.

A fundamental aspect of the notion of culture as an encompassing whole is the effects of culture on the individuals within it. Berger and Luckmann approach this question from the perspective of sociologists analyzing the socialization process. A. Irving Hallowell, while agreeing that socialization of individuals is basic to the relationship of the society to the individual, argues that anthropology must also focus on the interaction between culture and the development of the self. According to Hallowell, self-awareness is basic to humanness and while there are variations in cultures, he is interested in discovering both the "generic psychic structure" of human beings as well as the role of culture in self-awareness. Hallowell's interest in the development of the self is posed within a framework that is at once evolutionary and holistic. Raising the question of the relationship of biological and psychological factors in the development of human beings, he calls for anthropologists to focus on behavioral and mental evolution.

For Hallowell the development of the self is intimately related to the transmission of culture which is seen as a sociological, a

psychological and a cultural phenomenon. Using the term "self" because it "seems to connote a concept that remains closer to the phenomenological facts that reflect man's self-awareness as a generic psychological attribute," that

. . . a human individual becomes an object to himself, that he identifies himself as an object among other objects in his world, that he can conceive of himself as a whole, but in different parts, that he can converse with himself and so on. (Hallowell, 1967, 80)

Hallowell identifies the sense of self or self-awareness as the distinguishing trait between humans and primates. The development of the self is a social product because it is dependent on contact with others, but he also sees it as being the result of culture:

The acquisition and use of a particular language, the specific content that is given to an articulated world of objects that is built up pari passu with self-awareness, and the integration of personal experience with a concept of the self as traditionally viewed, are among the necessary conditions that make possible the emergence and functioning of human awareness as a generic aspect of human personality structure. (Hallowell, 1967, 81-2)

Like Berger and Luckmann, he believes that the subjective/objective dichotomy is not given a priori, but is a result of the inner/outer dichotomy which is determined by what the culture has defined as "outside the self." He argues that

. . . the world of human awareness is mediated by various symbolic devices which, through the learning and experience of individuals establish the concepts, discriminations, classificatory patterns, and attitudes by means of which perceptual experience is personally integrated. (Hallowell, 1967, 84)

What the culture has determined to be outside the self, is the mechanism through which the self is defined. Environment and the self, then, can only be defined with reference to the culture.

Hallowell calls for anthropologists to focus on behavior only within the concept of the "behavioral environment of man" which he defines as being

. . . distinguished from a concept of environment construed as being "external" to the individual, with properties that are definable independently of the selectively determined responses that the socialization process in man always imposes [and] takes account of the properties and adaptive needs of the organism in interaction with the external world as constituting the actual behavioral field in terms of which the activities of the animal are more thoroughly intelligible. (Hallowell, 1967, 86)

Without a sense of the relationship of the perceptions of the individual within a culture to her/his external world and a sense of how she/he perceives it, anthropologists describe merely the manifestations of a culture from the perspective of the outsider. According to Hallowell the outsider is severely limited in her/his understanding of the individual's perception of her/his society, and will therefore never be able to discern "the most significant and meaningful aspects of the world as experienced by him in terms of which he thinks, is motivated to act and satisfies his needs" (Hallowell, 1967, 88). Hallowell, then, is interested in the inner life which is created by the culture. The culture must be viewed in its totality by bringing the "psychological field of the individual" into focus (Hallowell, 1967, 92).

This "field" is determined by self-awareness which, as indicated above, is initially defined by the subjective/objective dichotomy. The culture also provides basic orientations which play a "constitutive role in the psychological adjustment of the individual to his world" (Hallowell, p. 88). He identifies these as: self-orientation, object orientation, spatiotemporal orientation, and normative orientation. In

addition to providing the means by which the individual relates to the world, taken together these orientations constitute a world view.

Melford E. Spiro is also interested in understanding the inner state of individuals. His view of the relationship of the culture to the development of a psychological orientation focuses on the cultural prescriptions for behavior. Unlike Hallowell, Spiro is interested in changing the conceptual status of personality studies "from a concept to be explained to an explanatory concept" (Spiro, 1961, 470). Arguing that the personality has social and psychological functions in the maintenance of society, Spiro holds that culture and personality studies can make important contributions to anthropological theory.

The unique task of culture and personality, as a theory of social systems, is to explain their social (not merely psychological) functions by referring to their capacity for the gratification and frustration of personality needs. (Spiro, 1961, 472)

Spiro's view of the relationship between culture and the humans within it is that since there are a great number of possibilities for human behavior, society develops rules to channel the activity of individuals in particular directions. These rules, of course, vary from society to society, but it is the distinctive feature of human culture that it prescribes behavior. His specific definition of culture, relegated to a footnote, is the rules that are developed for behavior.

Culture consists, among other things, of the norms which govern social relationships; that these norms are to be distinguished analytically from that system of social relationships which may be termed the social system of a society; and that both are to be distinguished from personality, by which I understand the motivational system (including internalized norms) that characterizes individuals. (Spiro, 1961, 474, fn 8)

Culture, then, is the norms for behavior which is distinct from social systems and the result of those norms, the personality.

Because culture limits human possibilities, Spiro sees the individual in a potentially antagonistic relationship to the culture. It is possible to construct a system, however, in which the conflict can be resolved to "satisfy the functional requirements of the individual and the society simultaneously." If this is achieved, then "personality drives serve to instigate the performance of social roles . . ." (Spiro, 1961, 476). But the system could be disrupted or even changed if the personality needs of individuals are not satisfied. While Spiro presents a very neat system, his theory does give a prominent place to the importance of personality to a culture.

The political economy approach to culture also develops paradigms to study society. Fundamental to this perspective is the Marxist conception of the relationship of material conditions to the development of society and the individual. For Marx, what distinguishes human beings from animals is their consciousness and the ability to produce their means of subsistence. The form consciousness takes is, in the final analysis, the result of what is produced and the method of production.

Developing in stages as the result of an increase in needs and productivity as well as an increase in population, "consciousness . . . is a social product" (Marx, 1972, 122). The first stage is

. . . merely consciousness concerning the immediate sensuous environment and consciousness of the limited connection with other persons and things outside the individual who is growing self-conscious. (Marx, 1972, 122)

At this initial development human interaction is minimal, according to Marx, due to "man's restricted relations to nature" which "first appears to men as a completely alien, all-powerful and unassailable force, with which men's relations are purely animal and by which they are overawed like beasts; it is thus the purely animal consciousness of nature" (Marx, 1972, 122).

The second stage, like the first, is the result of increased productivity needs and population, but at this point a rudimentary division of labor develops; eventually becoming a "true" division of labor based on the separation of mental and physical labor.

From this moment onwards consciousness can really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it really represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of "pure" theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. (author's emphasis) (Marx, 1972, 123)

It would be at this point then, that culture would develop since in the earlier stage both the relations among human beings and their consciousness is very limited. It is also at this stage that contradictions are necessarily produced, as they are the result of the division of labor.

. . . intellectual and material activity--enjoyment and labour, production and consumption--devolve on different individuals, and . . . the only possibility of their not coming into contradiction lies in the negation in its turn of the division of labour. (Marx, 1972, 123)

Marx developed a concept of property which is essentially the same thing as the division of labor. Defining property as a power relation rather than a thing, Marx held that it was "the power of disposing of the labour-power of others." Locating the "natural division of labor in

the family," Marx also identifies the first form of property in the family, since the husband had the power to determine what work his wife and children would perform. Marx's view of the family was that "wife and children are the slaves of the husband" (Marx, 1972, 123). The contradictions that are associated with a true division of labor are "between the interest of the separate individuals or the individual family and the communal interest of all individuals who have intercourse with one another" (Marx, 1972, 124). As long as this contradiction exists, "activity is not voluntary but naturally, divided, man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him" (Marx, 1972, 124). Society, then, arising out of human needs and activity, determines the form that life will take.

The specific activity which defines the kind of individual which will emerge is the mode of production:

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production . . . is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production. (author's emphasis) (Marx, 1972, 114)

While there are many interpretations of what Marx meant by "mode of production" and "material conditions" what is important for this discussion is that culture and consciousness are the result of activity, not thoughts. Individuals and society are created by everyday activities of people and what they create comes to have power over them.

The idea that "life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life," is the basis of cultural materialism as defined by Marvin Harris (Marx, 1972, 119). Harris called Marx "the Darwin of the social sciences" because he "showed that phenomena previously regarded as inscrutable or as a direct emanation of deity could be brought down to earth and understood in terms of lawful scientific principles" (Harris, 1979, x). The influence of Marx is clearly evident in Harris' definition of cultural materialism which is "based on the simple premise that human social life is a response to the practical problems of earthly existence" (Harris, 1979, ix). Attempting to develop "better scientific theories about the causes of sociocultural phenomena," Harris purports that in order to make Marxism useful to 20th century anthropology, the notion of Hegelian dialectical contradictions must be dropped without ignoring "the systemic interactions between thought and behavior, with conflicts as well as harmonies, continuities as well as discontinuities, gradual and revolutionary change, adaption and maladaptation, function and dysfunction, positive and negative feedback" (Harris, 1979, xii). Thus, while he does not see society as static, Harris does not see the changes to be the result of contradictions.

Harris' theory is based on the assumption that all cultural phenomena are the result of the basic needs of the society. In this view, for example, the practice of female infanticide, while it does denote the existence of male supremacy within a culture, is not the result of an ideology or a particular set of power relations. In Harris' view, female infanticide is due to the practices that arise as a result of the

conditions of lack of adequate food. Because of population pressures on the food supply, some cultures resort to cyclical wars. The killing of female infants, then, is the result of the need for more males who will fight the wars which will reduce the population and at the same time gain food for the winning side. According to Harris, women kill their female infants because it is in their best interest to have more male children (Harris, 1974). Not surprisingly, Harris has been roundly criticized by female anthropologists. Karen Sacks questions Harris' basic assumption that female infanticide existed and that prehistoric societies were, indeed, warlike (Sacks, 1979, 43).

Non-feminist anthropologists have also critiqued Harris' theory for ignoring the significance of the existence of a particular world view. Arguing that the ideas of a culture also have a determining role in the creation of culture, Marshal Sahlins proposes that

The distinctive quality of man is not that he must live in a material world . . . but that he does so according to a meaningful scheme of his own devising, in which capacity man is unique. . . . The decisive quality of culture--is giving each mode of life the properties that characterize it--not that this culture must conform to material constraints but that it does so according to a definite symbolic scheme which is never the only one possible. Hence it is culture which constitutes utility. (Sahlins, 1976, viii)

A particular material condition, then, creates certain problems which have more than one response. Harris' theory does not deal with the question of why one particular solution is chosen over the other. In Sahlins' view the anthropologist must look to both the material conditions and the "symbolic and the meaningful" in order to determine the origins of the culture.

Sahlins' work on hunter gatherer society highlights the importance of values in determining the response of a people to a particular set of circumstances. Arguing that anthropologists have looked at these cultures from a perspective that is determined by a conception of human nature which sees "the human condition . . . as an ordained tragedy, with man the prisoner at hard labor with a perpetual disparity between his unlimited wants and his insufficient needs" (Sahlins, 1972, 1). The idea of scarcity, according to Sahlins, has its basis in capitalist theory rather than in an objective assessment of human beings' relationship to their material conditions. Looking at hunter-gatherer societies from this perspective, for example, we assume that they have few possessions because they can't get more. Sahlins proposes that the lack of possessions is the result, not of scarcity, but of a value system in which freedom of movement has the ultimate value. Therefore, few possessions are "better" than many and small things are "better" than big things.

Attempting to view hunter gatherer societies from the perspective of their value system while taking into account the material conditions of their lives, Sahlins suggests that they may have been the "original affluent society" because people's desires are actually within reach, and are, in fact, usually met.

Hunting and gathering has all the strengths of its weaknesses. Periodic movement and restraint in wealth and population are at once imperatives of the economic practice and creative adaptations. . . . Precisely in such a framework, affluence became possible. Mobility and moderation put hunters' ends within the range of their technical means. An individual mode of production is thus rendered highly effective. (Sahlins, 1972, 34)

Although male and female infanticide are practiced when the group becomes too large for the available food, and those too old or too sick are left to die, hunter gatherers do not perceive their reality in such a way as to necessitate cyclical wars and the killing of female infants.

Contemporary definitions of culture are still working out what Tylor's 1971 definition of "whole ways of life" means. Culture has been dissected into its various parts, thereby identifying aspects of culture and making possible the exploration of the relationships among the many parts. The two scholars who offer the most important insights to me are Raymond Williams and Clifford Geertz.

The cultural theories of Clifford Geertz and Raymond Williams speak to my "sense" of culture which developed out of my attempts to understand the differences between Black and white women as well as the impact of my ethnicity on my own consciousness as an Armenian-American woman. Without having an explicit definition of culture, there are some things that I "know" about it. The articulation of culture and cultural processes by Geertz and Williams coincides, in many respects, with what I "know" about culture.

Although Clifford Geertz is an anthropologist and Raymond Williams is a literary critic and Williams' framework is explicitly Marxist and Geertz's is not, the theories of culture that they have developed have much in common. They both conceive of culture as including all aspects of life and, in fact, as originating out of everyday life. While they see culture as an exceedingly complex whole, they isolate the elements within it, analyze it through looking at the interrelationships among

its various aspects. Geertz and Williams differ in the elements they choose to isolate and in the analytic frameworks which inform their analyses. Williams defines culture as existing within framework of power relationships and Geertz's framework is a more general "web" of symbolic meanings. Yet, for both Geertz and Williams, the interaction of human beings with the conditions of life which are presented to them is basic to cultural development, and they both argue that this relationship is a dialectic. Because a dialectical process is inherently dynamic, we can assume that Geertz does not view culture as static, but he does not focus on the processes of cultural change. Williams' theory, on the other hand, analyzes how change occurs, and develops explicit classifications to identify cultural forms which are operative in the change process. Both Geertz and Williams are interested in the meaning behind behavior, conceptualizing of culture in such a way that there is no distinction between behavior and rules for behavior. In trying to determine the meaning of behavior, both Geertz and Williams are aware that scholars bring their own cultural orientation to their analyses, and Geertz argues that the anthropologist must be as aware of her/his own assumptions as possible.

For Clifford Geertz, culture is webs of significance that have been created by the human beings who live within them. Cultural forms are articulated through behavior, therefore to understand a culture the anthropologist must look at behavior very carefully as the first step in the process of determining the meaning the behavior holds within the culture. Defining human behavior as symbolic action, Geertz argues that

to look only at behavior would necessarily give a distorted view; to understand what it means the anthropologist must seek to determine what it means to the actor and how it is perceived in the culture. Because Geertz's conception of culture is that it consists of many complex conceptual structures, sometimes superimposed upon each other, determining the meaning that behavior holds is exceedingly difficult. To adequately describe a culture, the anthropologist must find the conceptual structures that inform behavior and construct a system of analysis to determine what is generic to those structures.

Geertz's definition of culture is intimately connected to his conception of the evolution of homo sapiens. He argues that "culture . . . rather than being added on . . . to a finished or virtually finished animal, was ingredient, and centrally ingredient, in the production of that animal itself" (Geertz, 1973, 47). Unlike other animals whose instincts are essential to their ability to function in the world, human beings can only function "under the guidance of instructions encoded in flow charts and blueprints, hunting lore, moral systems and aesthetic judgments: conceptual structures molding formless talents" (Geertz, 1973, 50). Geertz does not argue that humans are a "blank slate" at birth, rather that "the boundary between what is innately controlled and what is culturally controlled in human behavior is an ill defined and wavering one" (Geertz, 1973, 50). He offers the example of speech and language to clarify his point: the ability to speak is innate, but the ability to speak a particular language is cultural. While human beings' great capacity for learning is one factor which distinguishes us from

other animals, Geertz maintains that precisely because human behavior is not coded in our genes and we have the possibility for a great variety of behavior, human beings are dependent on learning.

Undirected by cultural patterns--organized systems of significant symbols--man's behavior would be virtually ungovernable, a mere chaos of pointless acts and exploding emotions, his experience virtually shapeless. Culture, the accumulated totality of such patterns, is not just an ornament of human existence but--the principal basis of specificity--an essential condition for it. (Geertz, 1973, 46)

In Geertz's view, there is no such thing as human nature.

Men without culture would be . . . unworkable monstrosities with very few useful instincts, fewer recognizable sentiments, and no intellect: mental basket cases.

Viewing human beings as "incomplete or unfinished animals," Geertz argues that "we complete or finish ourselves through culture--and not through culture in general but through highly particular forms of it . . ." (Geertz, 1973, 49).

A basic element of culture, then, is that it is "a set of mechanisms . . . for the governing of human behavior" (Geertz, 1973, 44). But because behavior is "symbolic action," the rules for the behavior are not separated from the behavior itself, and they both comprise culture. For Geertz, culture is an "acted document . . . though ideational it does not exist in someone's head; though unphysical, it is not an occult entity." The ethnographer, in observing behaviors must ask, "what their import is: what it is . . . that, in their occurrence and through their agency, is getting said" (Geertz, 1973, 10). Any particular behavior may be interpreted in many ways, but we only understand what it means when we can see it from the perspective of the actor--by knowing what

place it has within the "webs" of meaning constructed by the particular culture within which it occurs.

Geertz is not, however, saying that after studying a culture we could know the rules well enough so that we could, if we followed them, be able to "pass for a native." What we must be aware of in order to understand the people in a culture is more than a set of rules, rather we must be able to penetrate their "imaginative universe within which their acts are signs." To discover how a people see their culture the anthropologist should be

. . . seeking, in the widened sense of the term in which it encompasses much more than talk, to converse with them, a matter a great deal more difficult, and not only with strangers, than is commonly recognized. (Geertz, 1973, 13)

The difficulty in "conversing" with another person, particularly with someone from another culture, is that we don't know their "webs" of meanings and therefore are apt to misunderstand the symbols which come out of their universe. "The aim of anthropology" for Geertz, then

. . . is the enlargement of the universe of human discourse. That is not, of course, its only aim . . . nor is anthropology the only discipline which pursues it. But it is an aim to which a semiotic concept of culture is particularly well adapted. As interworked symbols of construable signs . . . culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly--that is--thickly--described. (Geertz, 1973, 14)

Raymond Williams' work focuses on art and literature, however, his analysis is pertinent to theories of culture since he sees artistic production as part of the material social forces of society. Like Marvin Harris, Williams' theory has a Marxist base and is called "cultural materialism," however, they are as different as is possible given these

two commonalities. Williams' definition of cultural materialism includes the notion of dialectical process which Harris reject. Williams' conceptualization of the relationship between art and literature and the mode of production does not place economic activity in the fundamental position, the base in Marxist terms, of society, while relegating artistic activity to merely what comes out of the base, the superstructure. For Williams art and literature are part of the dialectic of society, acting to create it while being acted upon by it. His analysis of art and literature as constitutive of society and created by it is, thus, an analysis of culture and its processes.

While Clifford Geertz sees culture as "webs" of meanings, Williams' conception of culture is defined within the concept of hegemony, which can be briefly defined as "a complex interlocking of political, social and cultural forms," which has at its base the relationships of dominance and subordination and the ways in which values of the dominant group "saturate the whole process of living" (Williams, 1977, 110). In Williams' view, hegemony is neither static nor all powerful since it defines the political, social and cultural aspects of life as forces, and society changes as a result of the interactions among all of these forces. Williams maintains that society, economy and culture must not be reified, rather theories about how they are constituted as well as the ways in which they interact must always be related to everyday life. Additionally, they must always be analyzed within a framework which accounts for change. The relationship of the individual to the hegemony is also seen by Williams as dynamic and interactive. Eschewing any

theory which does not account for all of these factors, Williams explores the complexity of human beings and their creations and the relationship between them.

Since Williams sees hegemony as impacting powerfully and pervasively on all aspects of life, this concept must be understood to know what he means by culture. Hegemony in its traditional meaning, according to Williams, is "political rule or domination, especially in relations between states." Antonio Gramsci developed the modern concept of hegemony by extending it beyond the mere political sense of rule. In this sense, hegemony, according to Williams

. . . goes beyond culture . . . in its insistence in relating the 'whole social process' to specific distributions of power and influence. To say that 'men' define and shape their whole lives is true only in abstraction. In any actual society there are specific inequalities in means and therefore in capacity to realize this process. In a class society these are primarily inequalities between classes. Gramsci therefore introduced the necessary recognition of dominance and subordination in what was still, however, to be recognized as a whole process. (Williams, 1977, 108)

Conceptions of ideology are, within the framework of hegemony, very much affected by the hegemonic process since ideology is in an interactive process with hegemony.

It is in just this recognition of the wholeness of the process that the concept of 'hegemony' goes beyond 'ideology.' What is decisive is not only the conscious system of ideas and beliefs, but the whole lived social process as practically organized by specific and dominant meanings and values. (Williams, 1977, 108-9)

Including culture and ideology within it and changing their meanings because of its basis in the concept of dominance and subordination, hegemony, according to Williams, "is distinct in its refusal to equate consciousness with the articulate formal system which can be and

ordinarily is abstracted as 'ideology'" (Williams, 1977, 110). Williams defines hegemony as follows:

It of course does not exclude the articulate and formal meanings, values and beliefs which a dominant class develops and propagates. But it does not equate them with consciousness, or rather it does not reduce consciousness to them. Instead it sees the relations of domination and subordination, in their forms as practical consciousness, as in effect a saturation of the whole process of living--not only of political and economic activity, nor only of the manifest social activity, but of the whole substance of lived identities and relationships, to such depth that the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific economic, political and cultural system seem to most of the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense. (Williams, 1977, 110)

This sense of hegemony as a "saturation of the whole process of living" could be a definition of culture in E.B. Tylor's sense of "most complex whole," but it is only one aspect of a complex process of dialectical relations, with each part of the hegemony playing a constitutive role within an overall framework of dominance and subordination. Williams' discussion of hegemony goes on, in fact, to say that hegemony is culture.

It is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values--constitutive and constituting--which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives. It is, that is to say, in the strongest sense a 'culture,' but a culture which also has to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes. (Williams, 1977, 110)

The concept of hegemony may not be applicable to all cultures since relations of dominance and subordination define the framework within which the culture is analyzed, it assumes some kind of stratification,

most particularly class society. It is, however, a very useful concept as so few societies are or have been egalitarian. While the system can be seen as being such a totality as to make any thought of change impossible, Williams' interpretation of hegemony emphasizes it as a process lived by people not abstractions. Because Williams does not see people in a culture as passive sponges absorbing anything the dominant group presents, hegemony does not operate through a simple manipulation but "a realized complex of experiences, relationships and activities, with specific and changing pressures and limits" (Williams, p. 112). Never static, hegemony changes as conditions change and the conditions, in Williams' view, are a "material social process" which includes much more than "mode of production" as it has usually been interpreted. Williams' emphasis on hegemony as a lived experience is crucial.

Defining social as "individual meaningful activity," Williams conceives of "material social process" by going back to Marx's original conception of human beings reproducing themselves through the production of their means of life, and for Williams, "means of life" includes culture and society as well as economy and the relationships among them.

This sense of human life as a dynamic process in which human beings play a decisive role, though they are acted upon by the structures they create, is at the basis of Williams' thought and informs all of his analysis. In his discussion of ideology and consciousness, Williams defines consciousness "as part of the human material social process, and its products in 'ideas' are then as much part of this process as the material products themselves" (Williams, pp. 159-60). Placing

consciousness and ideology squarely within the process of the production of the means of life, he conceptualizes them as constitutive activities contributing to the configuration of, and affected by society, culture and economy. Similarly, Williams' conception of language is that it is a dynamic and constitutive activity.

The real communicative 'product' which are usable signs are . . . living evidence of a continuing social process into which individuals are born and within which they are shaped, but to which they then actively contribute in a continuing social process.

For in Williams' view, neither language nor society is reified. Language is not a simple reflection or expression of material reality, but "a grasping of . . . reality through language, which as practical consciousness is saturated by and saturates all social activity . . . and since this grasping is social and continuous . . . it occurs within an active and changing society" (Williams, 1977, 37).

Williams' emphasis on the dynamic quality of the relationships among society, culture and economy, together with his insistence that they are comprised of living human beings, impacts on his conception of hegemony. With these emphases hegemony, though powerful, could never be viewed as a static totality. In order to better describe the processes that take place within it, he offers the concept of "counter hegemony and alternative hegemony," which he defines as "alternative or directly oppositional politics and culture." This concept of society possibly consisting of a hegemonic order with forces within it that provide alternatives and, even, oppositions allows for change outside of a dialectic based only on the notion of contradictions. Thus, we are presented with an exceedingly complex conception of hegemony. Applying

this conception of hegemony to culture, Williams states:

. . . cultural process must not be assumed to be merely adaptive, extensive and incorporative. Authentic breaks within and beyond it, in specific social conditions which can vary from extreme isolation to pre-revolutionary breakdown and actual revolutionary activity, have often in fact occurred. And we are better able to see this, alongside more general recognition of the insistent pressures and limits of the hegemonic, if we develop modes of analysis which instead of reducing works to finished products, and activities to fixed positions, are capable of discerning, in good faith, the finite but significant openness of many actual initiatives and contributions. (Williams, 1977, 114)

While Williams emphasizes the possibility for change within hegemony, he is, by no means, denying that it is a social order with great power. In order to analyze the maintenance of the order, he looks at the role of traditions, disparate "meanings, values and practices into a social order" (Williams, 1977, 115). Tradition, in Williams' view, is "the most evident expression of the dominant and hegemonic pressures and limits . . . more than an inert historicized segment . . . it is the most powerful practical means of incorporation" (Williams, 1977, 115). Tradition, in practice, is always selective, using only those aspects of a past which are congruent with the present needs of the hegemony. It is, however, always vulnerable, since records of the past do exist and can be recovered and reinterpreted. The relevance of this idea to Black and Women's history hardly needs explication.

Also powerful in the incorporation process are formal institutions through which socialization occurs. Defining socialization as

. . . a specific kind of incorporation [which] includes things that all human beings have to learn, but any specific process ties this necessary learning to a selected range of meanings, values, and practices which, in the very closeness of their association with necessary learning constitute the real foundation of the hegemonic. (Williams, 1977, 117)

This process, including the family, education, churches, specific communities and places of work and the major communication systems cannot, according to Williams, be reduced to "the activities of an 'ideological state apparatus' . . . the whole process is much wider and is in some important respects self-generating" (Williams, 118). Just as hegemony cannot be seen as a totality, institutions and the socialization they perform must be put in the context of the complexity of the interrelationships between individuals and society and the constitutive quality of both must be recognized. Additionally, the socialization process must not be abstracted, but seen as a living dynamic. Because hegemony consists of many complex interrelations, aspects of some institutions may be in conflict with each other. Additionally, they may exist within a context of alternative or counter hegemonies.

Williams identifies formations, "those effective movements and tendencies, in intellectual and artistic life, which have significant and sometimes decisive influence on the active development of a culture" as another force in hegemony which must be considered in any analysis (Williams, 1977, 117). Not having a direct relationship to formal institutions, yet playing an important role, particularly in complex societies formations may put pressures and limits on hegemony.

There are not only alternative and oppositional formations (some of them, at certain historical stages, having become or in the process of becoming alternative and oppositional institutions) but, within what can be recognized as the dominant, effectively varying formations which resist any simple reduction to some generalized hegemonic function. (Williams, 1977, 119)

To relegate such activity to the superstructure, according to Williams, fails to recognize them as constitutive elements of the cultural process.

Always focusing on the complexity of cultural process, Williams states that analysis of hegemony cannot stop at examining tradition, institution and formation, but must also look at their interrelationships within a historical context. Rather than examining only how these elements relate to hegemony, they must be analyzed with respect to the whole cultural process. Williams offers the concepts of residual and emergent processes as a way to describe the dynamic relationships among the elements of culture. For Williams these processes are "significant both in themselves and in what they reveal about the characteristics of the dominant" (Williams, 1977, 122). Residual and emergent relate to the past and the future respectively, but are active in the present. Both can present alternative or oppositional pressures to hegemony. They always exist within hegemony because modes of domination "select from and consequently exclude the full range of human practice." Thus, some elements of the past as well as some visions of the future which are not necessarily congruent with the hegemonic order will necessarily exist.

Williams' perspective on society, culture and economy is complex because he consistently rejects any attempts which abstract or reify human beings, the social forms they create and the dynamics between them. His critique of Marxist theory and his own interpretation of it is based on the premise that human existence cannot be dichotomized or

reified. Theory must always relate to the material social process as it is lived and experienced by real people in their everyday lives. His articulation of the importance of the residual and the emergent is a concise statement of his perspective.

What has really to be said . . . is that no mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy and human intention (author's emphasis). (Williams, 1977, 125)

For those of us who are interested in studying those groups which are not in the dominant, Raymond Williams provides a comprehensive and useful framework for analysis.

A major focus of both Clifford Geertz and Raymond Williams is the exceedingly complex nature of culture and the processes through which it operates to encompass "whole ways of life." The task of defining it is overwhelming, however, there are some things I can say about culture and the elements which comprise it. Rather than calling my comments a theory or a definition of culture, however, I think they would be more appropriately called ideas toward a working definition of culture.

It is clear to me that culture is not a static entity. Whether it is described as patterns for behavior, the behavior itself or a world view, culture is created by real people, living their lives and confronting a particular set of circumstances, one of which is the culture they created, which in turn creates them. Culture is an interactive, dynamic process of people with other people and with itself. In this perspective patterns for behavior and the behavior itself cannot be viewed as separate entities. One emerges from the other, human activity

and interaction creating patterns and the patterns creating human consciousness. Human beings do not merely adopt behavior, learning it by rote, rather the culture they create forms ways of thinking and feeling which are both conscious and unconscious. Since humans are dependent on each other for mere physical survival they must create some form of social intercourse which will sustain and reproduce life. Society and economy, like culture, are created by human beings and they interact with each other to form human consciousness.

Human beings, not limited by genetic coding for their activity, are complex creatures. Human potential, coupled with the great variety of the particular material conditions in which humans exist, has resulted in many different cultural forms. Additionally, because of human complexity and the dynamic nature of the cultural process, culture, though a powerful force, is never a totality. Conflicts and confusions within particular cultural forms and the interactions among them, always exist, though to varying degrees. While consciousness is a creation of culture, all people within a culture do not have exactly the same conception of the world, although there exists a general framework. In addition, since in all societies there is some division of labor, though it is not always stratified, all people do not experience the society in exactly the same way, thus they may not have the same consciousness. For example, women, who in foraging societies are responsible for the gathering of food, will share with men the basic assumptions of the culture, but may differ from them in aspects of consciousness which emerge from the particular labor they perform and the relationships which

develop out of it. If this is true, then we may say that the women in this society, by virtue of the particularities of their experience within it, have their own conception of the world. Yet this conception is necessarily related to the general assumptions of the culture. It is only within the framework provided by the culture as a whole that the meaning of the activity the women perform is defined. The framework, however, is complex and we can only determine the meaning of behavior by placing it, to use Geertz's term, within the webs of significance created by the culture, in which the women play a part. Consciousness, like culture, cannot be viewed as a static entity. The activity of a group of people within a particular culture is not all the same and their lived experience of the culture, then, is not identical.

In egalitarian societies the differences in experience, though significant, may be comparatively slight, but in stratified societies they are major and it is in these culture that the concept of hegemony is crucial. In the context of dominance and subordination the way in which individuals and groups relate to the culture is partially determined by their place in the hegemonic order. The hegemony creates a particular consciousness, but this conception of the world may be in conflict with aspects of the experience of particular groups within it. Thus, the hegemonic order must actively socialize people into the culture, but this process is never complete because it might be contradicted by lived experience. It is, itself, changed through the interaction with the pressures and limits brought to it through its interaction with these

"other" consciousnesses which might operate within the framework of what Williams has termed alternative or counter hegemonies.

People in complex stratified societies may have multifaceted and sometimes contradictory experiences and consciousnesses. For example, the world of work for a white, working class, male may be characterized partially by the experiences of the subordinate group in the culture and he might share a particular consciousness with his peers, as defined by his situation as a worker. In his home, on the other hand, his life experiences may be partially that of the dominant group and his consciousness, as a male, would be defined by the particular situation of having power over his wife and children. Similarly, as a white person, his life experience would be that of the dominant group and he might share the consciousness of whites, males and females, working class and ruling class. But he is one person and all of these experiences and the consciousnesses that might emerge from them are part of one life. What must be added to the complexity is that consciousness is not necessarily a result of experience, but the interaction of the lived experience and the reality it has, as defined by the culture. He may not, however, adopt the reality ascribed to his experience by the hegemony. His consciousness may be formed as a result of an alternative or counter hegemony. In addition, since he is a real person living a real life, the particularities of his specific combination of ethnicity, region, religion, as well as the particular psychological dynamics in his particular family, must be considered in the development of his particular version of consciousness. None of these particularities, however, exists

completely outside hegemony, and they therefore must be analyzed within it.

Since people within a complex stratified society do not necessarily experience their lives as one piece within a total and static system, their consciousness cannot be directly attributed to one source, nor will it always be the same. They are, to be sure, acted upon by the culture as represented by the dominant, but their consciousness is a creation of an interaction of what they have internalized from the hegemony and from any alternative or counter hegemonies they might be a part of and their perception of their daily lives.

To summarize, my definition of culture is that it is an encompassing whole. Each part of a culture is related to the whole and must be analyzed not as an isolated element, but as deriving its meaning from its relationship to the totality. Elements of culture are acted out by people and it is crucial to look not only at the behavior, but also at the meaning the behavior has for the actor. While cultures do have a coherence and must be seen as totalities, this is not to say that the culture is experienced in exactly the same way by all the people within it at all times. Within some general parameters, culture is always changing in response to changing conditions. Thus, different generations, indeed even the same generation, may have various responses to the same cultural form. Its meaning will be changed for the group of people who are experiencing it from a new perspective. Additionally, within stratified societies people experience the hegemony from different positions within it and may even develop alternative or counter

hegemonies. Because cultural processes are not merely followed in order to conform, but are internalized at a very young age, they are not entirely rational. Culture is part of our environment from the moment of our birth, one could even argue from the moment of conception; it creates not only our consciousness but our unconscious. Yet, culture does not totally define an individual. Because it is exceedingly complex and dynamic and because in stratified societies different experiences and perspectives often challenge the hegemony, individuals are not presented with a static totality. Within American society today, then, to define a person's culture we must look at ethnicity, region, class, gender and race.

In this work, I will consider all of these factors: my ethnic background as an Armenian-American, the child of a survivor of the 1915 Armenian genocide whose mother came here as a refugee and whose father emigrated from Iran to attend Columbia University, as a woman who grew up in the 1950s in a white working class neighborhood in New York City.

Gender

Another term I will be using throughout the work which is highly controversial is gender. Debate over the differences between female and male and their significance for the proper place of women and men in society has a long history. Early 19th century scientists used comparative measurements of skulls and muscles to "prove" that women had less brain capacity and were weaker than men (Hubbard & Lowe, 1979; Gould, 1981). While scholars did not propose that females were a different species than males as they did about Blacks and whites, they did find

that there were fundamental differences between the sexes. The basis for these differences was the female reproductive system which produced in women an especially sensitive nervous system. The post-Darwinian era added the argument of different evolutionary adaptations of women and men to the basic idea that all of women's lives were determined by their capacity to bear children. According to Hubbard and Lowe, although this idea had no scientific basis, its acceptance as fact allowed for prescription of and prescription for female behavior.

The assertion that the female nervous system was particularly irritable was translated into a picture of woman as emotional, fragile and dependent. The theory that a woman has an intricate and centrally important reproductive system meant all her energy and effort had to go into it if its enormous energy needs were to be met. (authors' emphasis) (Hubbard & Lowe, 1979, 13)

This doctrine was used to argue against women's education, physical activity and work outside the home until the turn of the century. If women did not attend to the energy needs of their reproductive systems, they would atrophy. Indeed, if too many women thus endangered their ability to reproduce, the entire species would be threatened (Smith-Rosenberg, 1972; Wood, 1973).

While 20th century scientific theories of sex differences might seem more sophisticated, they are no more based on verifiable data than their predecessors (Hubbard & Lowe, 1979). Some ethologists attempt to determine what is innate in female and male behavior by studying sex roles in "lower" animals. Assuming that non-human animal behavior is totally determined by biology, these scholars attempt to find what is genetic in human behavior by looking at our evolutionary cousins (Ardrey, 1961, 1966; Morris, 1967, 1969; Lorenz, 1966; Tiger, 1970).

Not surprisingly, they found traditional sex role divisions in their populations, and concluded therefore that the present arrangements between women and men have a biological base. Sociobiologists or biosociologists also use an evolutionary framework to assert that the natural selection process of females and males is not the same and that each sex has made adaptations which are most important to its survival (Wilson, 1975; Rossi, 1977).

Anthropologists also use a biological determinist approach to gender. According to Karen Sacks, the following syllogism is at the basis of most anthropological theory about the essential or innate nature of the sexes:

1. making babies and shaping culture are incompatible
 2. women make babies
 3. therefore only men can make culture
- (Sacks, 1979, 24)

One effective way to support the idea that patriarchy reflects the essential nature of the sexes is to show that male dominance exists cross-culturally and historically--perhaps even more effective is to assume that it has and does. The universality of male dominance is demonstrated (Goldberg, 1973), explained in practical terms (Harris, 1974), or assumed (Levi-Strauss, 1969).

The debate over the essential nature of females and males rages within feminist scholarship as well. While many feminist scientists argue against biological determinism (Hubbard & Lowe, 1979), at least one biosociologist, Alice Rossi, who considers herself a feminist, postulates that female and male sex hormones produce different propensities for behavior in women and men (Rossi, 1977). Radical feminists, too,

argue that women and men have always been and always are different; women being nurturant and caring and men aggressive and unfeeling (Daly, 1978; Griffin, 1979).

One powerful argument against the idea that female and male behavioral variations have their basis in the essential nature, the genetic coding or necessary evolutionary adaptations comes from anthropology. As early as 1935 Margaret Mead in her book, Sex and Temperament, presented evidence of nurturant males and aggressive females. Other anthropologists have pointed to African women's economic independence (Herskovits, 1941; Steady, 1981). Studying non-stratified societies, Eleanor Leacock finds:

The authority structure of egalitarian societies where all individuals were equally dependent on a collective larger than the nuclear family, was one of wide dispersal of decision-making among mature and elder women and men, who essentially made decisions--either singly, in small groups, or collectively--about those activities which it was their socially defined responsibility to carry out. Taken together, these constituted the "public" life of the group. These were the decisions about the production and distribution of goods; about the maintenance, building and moving of the camp or village; about learning and practicing various specialties and crafts, and becoming curers, artists, priests, dancers, story tellers, etc.; about the settlement of internal disputes and enforcement of group norms; about feasts connected with birth, adolescence, death, and other rites of passage; about manipulation of supernatural power; about the declaration of war and the making of peace. Even a casual consideration of any nonstratified society one knows reveals that in the precolonial context, insofar as the culture can be reconstructed, to speak simply of men as "dominant" over women distorts the varied processes by which decisions in all the above areas were made. (Leacock, 1981, 24)

Reviving the argument that Engles made in The Family, Private Property and the State, Leacock proposes that the dominance of males is not the result of their essential nature, but comes with colonization by Western capitalism and women's subsequent loss of control over production.

While feminist scholars have critically analyzed the validity of research which concludes that female and male behavior has a biological base, they have yet to "prove" that there is no behavior that is sex linked. Hubbard and Lowe state:

For almost any human behavior one can successfully argue an adaptive, evolutionary, biosocial base or a socio-cultural one. Up to now it has proved impossible to devise or implement experiments that rigorously test either explanation . . . probably the most important point concerning the nature-nurture controversy is that to try to separate genetic and environmental components and discuss them separately is meaningless. (authors' emphasis) (Hubbard & Lowe, 1979, 95)

Given these difficulties, we each must decide, on the basis of the latest and most significant research, what gender means. My interpretation of the data is that gender is socially constructed. It is a biological fact that women have the capacity to bear and nurse children, and this fact determines the category female. The biological female, however, exists only within a cultural context and it is the context which creates what is appropriate to female and male, not the existence of a particular anatomical structure.

Genocide

The last term which needs definition is genocide because I will be using it with reference to the Armenians in Turkey in 1915. While the definition of genocide is clear, "the systematic, planned annihilation of a racial, political or cultural group" (American Heritage Dictionary, 1982), there is enormous controversy over whether the death of Armenians in Turkey occurred in the numbers claimed by Armenians and others who were eyewitness to the events, whether they were planned by the

government or merely the result of the necessary exile of disloyal elements of the population during wartime (Kuper, 1981). At present the United Nations Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities does not include the killing of 1.5 million Armenians in Turkey as a genocide, but there is considerable debate on the question (Kuper, 1981).

The evidence is clear that at least hundreds of thousands of Armenian men, women and children lost their lives in 1915 through shootings, beatings, mass deportations to remote deserts, and by other means, and that these murders were perpetrated under the aegis of the Turkish government. Thus, I will refer to the cataclysm of 1915 as a genocide.

Significance of Study

Women's Studies is based on feminist theoretical conceptions of women's place in society and throughout history. These theories provide frameworks for scholarship, teaching and curriculum development in all areas of the discipline. Without an understanding of cultural dynamics they can only be based within the cultural framework of the scholar or teacher. While this cultural orientation may be altered to a degree by gender, it operates on an unconscious level within the general parameters of the scholar's culture of origin. One example of this phenomenon is what might happen when white feminists with an understanding neither of African-American culture nor their own cultural orientation use blues lyrics as evidence of the victimization of African-American women. While there are lyrics which do, in fact, refer to deceit and even

beatings by men, Mary Ruth Warner, a folklorist whose area of expertise is the blues, suggests that there is also much in the lyrics to suggest that "the woman in the blues" when viewed through the perspective of African-American culture, is a woman in possession of significant personal power and a woman who is a standard bearer of an important cultural form in the Black community. Another example of the distortions which result from an ignorance of cultural forms is feminist work on the family (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1976; Rich 1976). Feminist theories of the family are unable to adequately analyze the Black family because African-American forms of family organization and the history of the Black family have been totally ignored in the formulation of the theory. Yet these theories are presented as pertaining to all families.

Feminist theory and Women's Studies have been created primarily by white women, and what they have created is unconscious of its own cultural perspectives. Part of white women's cultural orientation is a belief in white supremacy, and unless we examine and make conscious our own cultural orientation, any attempt to "include" women of color in the theory and curriculum will remain within a basically white framework. This study will explore the significance of culture to the life of one woman, and thereby hopes to address the rampant cultural myopia within the discipline.

Methodology

The main emphasis of this study is that cultural dynamics are central to the development of world view or consciousness, and that the

curriculum in Women's Studies does not address the lives of all women partially because an awareness of culture is absent from the theory which provides the intellectual foundation for the discipline. In order to illuminate the importance of culture to the development of consciousness, I will use the material of my own life focusing on the impact my particular ethnic background and its intersection with post World War II American culture had on my consciousness of gender.

Working in the field of Women's Studies for the past thirteen years I have experienced increasing tension between my commitment to the study of and the teaching about women, and the major problem of a seriously limited theoretical foundation. My initial critique of the practice and theory of Women's Studies was based on its failure to include the history and life experiences of Afro-American women. Most of us in Women's Studies had absorbed the racism of our culture and the curricula and the theories we developed necessarily reflected our often unconscious and unexamined notions of white supremacy. Through my work on Afro-American women and their culture, I came to recognize that an essential element of white supremacy is the inability of most white people, female and male, to recognize the existence of any cultural orientation which is not our own. Because attempts to share this awareness with colleagues in Women's Studies were severely circumscribed by their failure to understand the concept of culture, I realized that my own ethnicity had made me receptive to the idea that a woman's cultural orientation has a decisive influence in how she sees the world. Clearly, my work with Afro-American culture has illuminated the limitations of feminist theory

and Women's Studies curricula to reflect my own life. This is true despite the fact that Armenian culture is highly patriarchal. In traditional Armenian village life, for example, a woman lost her right to speak to adults upon marriage. She was permitted to speak only to children when the family was gathered together and to her husband in private. The opportunities for privacy were severely limited in the typical extended family household. This period of silence could last up to ten years (Matossian & Villa, 1982). While it is obviously true that Armenian culture is patriarchal, it is reductive to assume that all patriarchy is the same and that the experience of all women within them is identical. The cultural values that emerge out of and form responses to political, economic and social history also shape women's attitudes towards themselves, the state, power, family and men.

Through the realization that my own understanding of the limitations of Women's Studies curricula and feminist theory emerged out of my own ethnicity, I have recognized the importance of the use of autobiographical material in theoretical formulations as well as the collection of data. There is a long tradition of autobiography among oppressed groups, it seems to me, because no one else accurately represents their experience. Thus, the oppressed must tell their own story. Ida B. Wells, a Black American who lived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, is explicit on this point in the preface to her autobiography. A young woman asked Wells to tell her about her life. She had heard Wells' name, but did not know what she had done. Wells explained why the young woman knew nothing of her accomplishments, and in so doing

also tells us why she decided to write an autobiography:

When she told me she was twenty-five years old, I realized that one reason she did not know who I was was because the happenings about which she inquired took place before she was born. Another was that there was no record from which she could inform herself. I then promised to set it down in writing so those of her generation could know how the agitation against the lynching evil began. . . . It is therefore for the young people who have so little of our race's history recorded that I am for the first time in my life writing about myself. I am all the more constrained to do this because there is such a lack of authentic race history of Reconstruction times written by the Negro himself. (Wells, 1970, 3-4)

Clearly, Wells did not think of this work as merely the narrative of one person's achievements and accomplishments, but an attempt to set the record straight about the life experiences of a people. Stephen Butterfield in his book, Black Autobiography in America, contrasts black autobiography with the individualist tradition of white autobiographers. He maintains that the "self" in black autobiography, "is conceived as a member of an oppressed social group, with ties and responsibilities to the other members . . . the self belongs to the people, and the people find a voice in the self" (Butterfield, 1974, 3). The rich tradition of Black autobiography from the narratives of slaves and former slaves (Douglass, 1845, 1855, 1892; Bibb, 1850; Brent, 1861) to the contemporary life stories of Afro-Americans (Malcolm X, 1964; Angelou, 1970; Lester, 1969; Moody, 1968) give us much valuable information about Black history, politics and culture in the telling of the life of an individual person. W.E.B. DuBois also made use of autobiographical material in some of his theoretical work, e.g., Souls of Black Folk. In his last autobiography, Dusk of Dawn, he is explicit on this point: "[it is] meant to be not so much my autobiography as the autobiography of a

concept of race, elucidated, magnified and doubtless distorted in the thoughts and deeds which were mine" (DuBois, 1940, viii). While DuBois might have been concerned with the problems of subjectivity in this kind of work, he was also fully aware of the value to theory of his personal experience with race.

Speaking to the crucial importance of the subjective experience to social theorists and historians, the French philosopher Lucien Goldmann in his book, The Human Sciences and Philosophy, states: "What we look for in historical facts is less their material being than their human meaning which obviously, cannot be known apart from their material being" (author's emphasis) (Goldmann, 1969, 31). Goldmann is referring in this passage to biography, but his comments could apply to autobiography as well. Like the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, he maintains that scholars must look at the meaning the events had for the actors as well as what made them inevitable.

Women's Studies scholars have made use of autobiographical material in just this sense. Diaries (Chesnutt, 1904; Nin, 1966-71), autobiographies (Goldman, 1931; Angelou, 1970), and fiction that has an autobiographical base (Perkins-Gilman, 1973; Smedley, 1943) are regularly included in Women's Studies curricula. Taking the idea "the personal is political" from the early women's movement, Women's Studies scholars have validated personal experience and focused on the particularities of individual lives not to highlight individual women, but to get some sense of the subjective experience of women. Autobiographical material can also offer a corrective to traditional notions of women's lives.

The use of autobiographical material in Women's Studies has not been limited to what women wrote about their lives. Scholars and teachers in the discipline have shown great interest in oral history. Many Women's Studies programs offer courses on oral history and entire issues of journals in the field have been devoted to collecting techniques particular to women (Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies, 1977 & 1983). Because of the existence of a large body of slave narratives collected in the 1930s, Black Studies scholars have had the opportunity to make extensive use of autobiographical material. The narratives form the basis of a history of slavery from the perspective of the slave; a vital part of the historical record (Blassingame, 1979; Rawick, 1972). Social scientists have also used narrative or oral testimony to present an important perspective on ways of life. John Gwaltney's Drylongso (1981), a collection of oral testimony, is in the view of many one of the most accurate depictions of contemporary Black life and thought.

It is not surprising that Black Studies and Women's Studies have made extensive use of autobiography, narrative and oral history/testimony since they give voice to those who have been studied from the outside. Studies of women and Black people generally incorporated within them all the prejudices of the dominant group towards the oppressed. Hearing from the people themselves about their experiences and how they felt and feel about their lives is an important resource in getting at the "human meaning."

The particular relationship of the individual to her/his culture, which is the focus of this study, has a theoretical foundation in

anthropology (Benedict, 1934; Mead, 1949). Cultures, being integrated wholes which develop into particular patterns, create people who act out the patterns. Culture, then, is embodied in an individual, and to find the patterns the anthropologist looks at the behavior of the people within a culture.

While the use of autobiographical material is important to the methodology of both Black Studies and Women's Studies, the danger of mistaking the idiosyncratic for the general is a very real one. In order to put the material of my life within the context of first generation Armenian-Americans I have used four resources: 1. a study I conducted on Armenian-American women; 2. biographies and autobiographies of Armenian-Americans; 3. oral histories and other historical and psychological work on the Armenian genocide and the Armenians who emigrated to the United States; 4. literature of Armenian-Americans.

The study of Armenian-American women is part of an ongoing project on Afro-American and Armenian-American women: "The Search for Wholeness: Perceptions of African-American and Armenian-American Women's Roles." It is being conducted under the auspices of the Rites and Reason Program, the performing arts component of the Afro-American Studies Program at Brown University. Using the "research-to-performance" method developed at Brown, my colleagues and I conducted a series of interviews with five groups of Armenian-American women in Massachusetts. This research, compiled in a working paper (see Appendix I), provides the material for a play which is presently being written by another member of the project team. In the Fall of 1984, the play was

performed at Brown and participants in the study as well as other members of the Armenian community were invited to attend. After the performance the project team invited comments from the audience. The ensuing discussion helped the team determine whether the research was an accurate representation of how the community perceives the issues. We have also applied for funds to videotape the play in order to take it to communities outside of the Providence area. The working paper will be revised in light of these discussions. I am no longer part of the project team but the initial interviews helped me enormously in my attempt to identify that part of my experience which is common to first generation Armenian-American women.

The second resource I used to determine that part of my experience which is due to my ethnicity rather than to the particularities of my life is biographies and autobiographies of other Armenian-Americans. Comparing and contrasting my life to others is another tool to ferret out what is idiosyncratic.

Thirdly, since I am the child of survivors of the Armenian genocide, I used oral histories of survivors to compare their experiences and perceptions with those of my family. I supplemented the oral histories of my grandmother, mother and aunt with historical works on the genocide and the resulting emigration of Armenians to the United States. I also participated in a study undertaken by psychiatrists Boyagian and Grigorian on the long term psychological effects of the genocide on children of survivors. Since the study involved group meetings with

other participants, it gave me the opportunity of hearing their perceptions.

The fourth resource, literature of Armenian-Americans, though perhaps the most difficult, might prove to be the richest. If we consider artistic productions to reveal the essence of experience, then the work of Armenian-American artists is, at the very least, an aid to determine what is general to the experience of the group.

While the use of autobiographical material is fraught with difficulty, it can yield insights available only through an indepth study of an individual life from the perspective of the one who has experienced it. Because I am well aware of the difficulties inherent in the use of this material, I have built in the use of resources discussed and hope to find the right balance between what makes me who I am as an individual and my identity as a first generation Armenian-American woman. My work will present the richness of the specificity of the impact of culture on the life of one woman with the hope that it will enlarge the formulation of generalizations about the lives of all women.

Limitations

This study will not be a theory of women's lives. It will present a corrective to feminist theory through the material of the life of one woman. It will not analyze the theories in terms of this life, but present a challenge to theorists to develop a theory which can incorporate it.

While I use my own life to explicate the importance of cultural dynamics, I am not writing a full scale autobiography incorporating all of the psychological and sociological dynamics that have shaped my life.

C H A P T E R I

It was Easter Sunday, 1954, and my family and I were coming out of church. I had on the new clothes I had made for the occasion and high heels. I wore lipstick, but no other makeup. My legs were shaved, but my eyebrows remained untweezed. Going to Church on Easter Sunday in a new outfit might seem to be an ordinary event for a fifteen year old Christian girl, but for me it was a victory of sorts, that included some defeats.

The church, the Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Church, on 187th Street between Audobon and St. Nicholas Avenues in Manhattan, was just around the corner from the Presbyterian church where my cousin Susan was probably standing at that very moment waiting to shake hands with the minister as was the custom in "regular" churches. In our church the congregation had no such opportunity as the priest who officiated at the three hour, highly ritualistic ceremony conducted in ancient Armenian merely disappeared behind the ornate altar after the service.

My time in church had neither inspired me, nor did I feel any particular relationship to the God whose resurrection it celebrated. The point of going to church on Easter Sunday was to try to become an American. Regular church attendance is as common among Armenians as it is with other groups, but my parents rarely went to church. The only regularity was Palm Sunday because, as my mother reminded us every year, she liked to have the palms that were given out to the congregation on the Sunday before Easter in the house for the year. Palm Sunday and the

dry fronds that for me had no relationship to any living plant were fine, but going to church on Palm Sunday was not enough. As I understood it real Americans went to church every Sunday at best or, at the very least, on Christmas and Easter.

Years earlier, in an attempt to be the best kind of American, I had tried regular church attendance. Since I was about nine or ten years old at the time, this meant Sunday school. For a few Sundays I walked to church with my grandmother who did attend regularly, though the practice did not seem to make her any less "old country." The class consisted of coloring pictures of Bible scenes for what seemed an eternity. Then, we were marched into the old, dark, incense laden church for the last half hour of the long service.

Sunday school classes always came at the point in the service when the choir would be singing the "Lord's Prayer." I was glad that this hymn, which I considered a universal Christian song, was sung in our church, but it would never have been recognized by an American. The words remained the same, but they were, of course, sung in Armenian to a melody that had no relationship to what Americans knew as the "Lord's Prayer."

Not only was this hymn wrong, but everything about the church was. The language of the church was a form of Armenian which, though it sounded as if it could be understood, was unintelligible to me. In my confusion, I asked my grandmother why I couldn't understand what was going on and she informed me that ancient Armenian was used for church services. The fact that our priest used an even stranger form of a

language that was peculiar enough as it was, was not the only thing about church that bothered me. The altar was adorned not with pictures of a sweet Jesus surrounded by little children or his apostles, but two paintings which horrified me, though my eyes were drawn back to them repeatedly during the service. In the middle of the altar was a depiction of the crucifixion with blood dripping from Christ's hands and side. The other painting was a bust of Christ with more blood from the thorns cutting in to his forehead. The emphasis was clearly on his suffering rather than his glory.

The priest, too, looked like nothing I had seen in magazines or books. The black suit or the simple black cloak of the American minister was replaced by an ornate brocade cape worn over a black gown. A huge gold cross, also ornate, hung on his chest. At various points during the service a brocade curtain would be drawn across part of the altar and the priest would disappear behind it, emerging after some time carrying a scepter and wearing a large hat. The one good thing about our priest was that he was clean shaven and had short hair. Sometimes on special occasions--and these were usually the times when the whole family did go to church--the archbishop presided. His flowing white hair and long white beard that reached down to his chest made him look like some depictions of God, but nothing at all like what priests were supposed to look like. Even the Pope didn't look like our archbishop.

I could have endured Sunday school despite the fact that it was boring and my classmates and the teacher were disturbingly Armenian looking, if it did not culminate by being marched into that church with

that priest to the strains of that "Lord's Prayer." It soon became clear to me that the road to becoming an American, at least as I had defined it in 1949, did not lay in attending this church. It seemed hopeless. The whole experience made me feel more Armenian and less American.

Why couldn't we go to the "regular" church around the corner? My cousin went there and she was as Armenian as we were. My mother told me it was not our church, but where "they" went. I recognized her use of "they." It meant "wrong." But that church looked like heaven to me. Although I had never been inside, I knew it had to be different from our church. For one thing, it wasn't called the Holy Cross American Apostolic Church. It was an American church that had Presbyterian in its name. I didn't know what that meant, but I had heard of it. What was really important was that Americans went there and it was some kind of Christian. I knew it was important to be Christian--certainly, to be American meant to be Christian.

Before my short Sunday school experiment, I had longed to be Catholic. Catholics, it seemed to me in the late 1940s in New York City, had a lot going for them. Two of my favorite movies, "The Bells of St. Mary's" and "Father Flannagan's Boy's Town" had big stars in them and they were about Catholics. And Catholics were not only recognized as Americans, but they had power. Every Thursday afternoon our school lost half of its students. Catholic kids were actually allowed to leave school for catechism. Not only did they get to leave school, but it was clear that the teachers did not do anything important while they were

gone. Becoming a Catholic was, however, out of the question. Most of the Catholics in my neighborhood were Irish, and my mother was very clear that they, like Presbyterians, were "wrong." They had too many children, were lazy, dirty and stupid--nothing like the characters played by Big Crosby, Ingrid Bergman and Pat O'Brien. There was also, according to my mother, something "wrong" with their religion itself, but she was not clear on that point. I knew I could not pursue my dream though, even if I could overcome the obstacles presented by the Irish, because being Catholic was something you and your family were not something you became.

By 1954 this dream, like my firmly held belief in Santa Claus, faded into my childhood, but my attempts to become American had become more intense. If attending church regularly was not going to work, there was one last thing about church to try. I could convince my parents to go to church on holidays--American holidays. Christmas presented a major problem since Armenians, different as always, celebrate Christmas on January 6th. Going to church on December 25th would be fruitless, and besides, we were pretty American around Christmas. We always had a big tree and presents. Christmas dinner was always at the home of my father's brother and his wife, Uncle Alex and Aunty Goharik. The large fieldstone and frame house in Westchester County was filled with many relatives who all brought presents to put under the tree. Best of all, Aunty Goharik always made a turkey for dinner. Of course we also had stuffed grape leaves, rice pilaf, and Armenian pastries for

dessert, but the highlight of the dinner, at least for me, was Uncle Alex carving the turkey--very American.

Easter, on the other hand, presented a perfect opportunity to use church. Armenian Easter and American Easter amazingly fell on the same day. My Greek friends were not so lucky since the orthodox church followed a different calendar and their Easter rarely fell on the same day as "regular" Easter. Surprisingly, they did not seem to be bothered by this difference. Maybe it was because they had other advantages, but I will get to that later. I began to plan early because there was a lot to get done. The first thing, to get my parents to agree to go to church, went fairly easily. Although they were surprised at my request, since my only interest in church had been a few weeks of Sunday school and my request for a Bible that Christmas--every real American had a Bible--they agreed.

The second part, our clothes, proved to be very difficult. Americans did not go to church on Easter wearing any old clothes. They went to church in Easter outfits. Yes, my mother explained, we would go to church if I wanted to even though it would make the preparations for the Easter dinner more difficult, but new clothes were out of the question. My argument that Easter outfits were an American institution--wasn't that clear from the Easter Parade that happened every year right here in New York City on Fifth Avenue in front of not just a church but a cathedral (more evidence of Catholic power--it was St. Patrick's, a Catholic cathedral)--was to no avail. I tried again with the fact that big stars, Judy Garland and Fred Astaire, had marched in front of this very

cathedral in the movie "Easter Parade," but as I spoke I knew this was a lame argument; my mother hardly ever went to the movies and had no interest in big stars. What was an institution for me, and obviously for the rest of America, was to my mother only ostentatious display. It was something "they" did. Not us.

What we did for Easter was to get palms from church and make them into little crosses that we wore on our coats and we ate special foods. While we did not observe Lent with meatless dishes as other Armenians did, we never ate meat on the Friday before Easter. The meal began with the traditional egg fights. The colored hard boiled eggs, half dyed with egg coloring which we bought at the grocery store like everyone else, and the other half dyed to a reddish brown color with onion skins my mother got from the green grocer who saved them for the Armenians and Greeks in the neighborhood. Each person would choose an egg and test it for its strength by tapping in on their front teeth. We would then go around the table tapping each other's eggs. The egg that broke all the others was the champion and kept until the next round. The eggs were eaten wrapped in soft lavash, a very thin bread, with fresh dill, scallions and parsley. When everyone had finished their eggs, those who wanted a second helping could also have another try at beating the champion egg. Once again, the winning egg would be saved for the Easter meal which also began with an egg fight.

The most important thing about Easter, though, seemed to be Easter dinner. Weeks before my grandmother would begin to bake her specialty khata, a buttery, flaky pastry. No one in the extended family made

khata like my grandmother, so she made them not only for our dinner, but to give to family members who would not be at our house for Easter. Days before the feast, she would prepare the second course. After the eggs, we had either artichokes or stuffed mussels. Both dishes took enormous amounts of time to prepare. The mussels had to be cleaned and opened. They were then stuffed with a mixture of many pounds of finely chopped onions that had been cooked slowly with rice, pine nuts and currants. When the mussels were stuffed they were cooked in a mixture of lemon and olive oil. She made enough so that each of us could have four or five mussels. They were never eaten with a fork or a spoon, but by using one half of the shell to scoop out the delectable stuffing. While the artichokes were not quite as time consuming, it seemed to me that my grandmother sat at the kitchen table for hours, trimming dozens of artichokes, reaching into the cactus like vegetable to scoop out the choke and then cook them with potatoes and small white onions in olive oil and lemon.

The day before Easter, my mother would begin to prepare her specialty, Persian pilaf. This dish was never made with rice that we bought at the store, but rice from Persia. It was kept in big jars and used only on special occasions. My uncles, who had an oriental rug importing business, made arrangements with their suppliers to send us rice with each shipment of rugs. We didn't even get our rice in an ordinary way, but wrapped in bales of rugs. My mother also made leg of lamb--we always had lamb on Easter and spinach and eggs. Enormous

energy went into the preparation of food for Easter, but none into what we would wear.

If I would have to accept the fact that my mother and father were going to church on Easter in their old clothes, that didn't mean I couldn't have a new outfit even if my mother refused to waste her good money on such foolishness. The kind of clothes I wore had been a battleground for the last few years. I wanted lots of the kind of clothes my friends wore--what my mother called "cheap." She bought me a few "good" clothes from Best & Company, Lord and Taylor or B. Altman. These shopping trips downtown had been fun when I was younger, but they became increasingly frustrating as I approached my teens. I didn't want "timeless classics," but what was in style right now even if it would be out of fashion the next year. In desperation, I took up sewing and made skirts out of yards and yards of cheap cotton and saved my allowance and babysitting money for see-through blouses with puffy sleeves and a little black tie at the throat. So, I was prepared to make my Easter outfit. Luckily, I had won the stockings and high heels battle the previous year and was making headway on makeup. Unlike some of my cousins, I was allowed to shave my legs and wear lipstick, but other makeup and tweezing my eyebrows would have to wait "until I was older."

I was reasonably satisfied with how I looked on that Easter Sunday in 1954, but standing on the steps of the church surrounded by people who were praising the resurrection of Christ in Armenian, few of whom looked as if they had given much thought to their Easter outfits, I realized that I could neither remake my parents, nor the Armenian

community in the image of the Americans in my mind. These people would never look or act like people in Life magazine, The Saturday Evening Post, or the silver screen. America was around the corner in the Presbyterian church and going to the Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Church was not the way to get there.

As if reading my thoughts, a young man in his twenties approached me. He asked my name and when I replied with a name that had the characteristic "ian" at the end, he responded that I certainly didn't look Armenian. He went on to explain that I was too tall, too narrow in the hips, too light and didn't have a big enough nose or enough hair to look like a real Armenian. His comments were meant as a compliment, and I not only took them as such, they made my day. It was possible to come from these people and "pass." And it was clear, too, that I was not the only Armenian who put a premium on looking American.

C H A P T E R I I

I consciously began my campaign to become an American--to assimilate--towards the end of my elementary school years, but the process of accommodating American culture had actually been begun by my parents when I was born and they named me Arlene Voski. Armenian tradition requires that the first female child be named after the father's mother. My parents decided that since I was born in America and would most probably live in this country all my life, they would give me an American first name and use my grandmother's name for my middle name. My parents were following the lead of older family members who had emigrated to the United States. My father's Uncle Mesrop and his wife, Aunty Manoush, renamed their children when they emigrated from Persia. There was precedent too for American names in my mother's family. Uncle George's name had been Americanized when he came here as a young child, and he and my mother's sister named their three sons George, Howard, and Edmond.

While my first name was Arlene, the emphasis, it seemed to me, was on my middle name, Voski. Arlene was the name they had given me to face the world, but Voski was who I really was. The language of our house and the extended family was Armenian, and in our neighborhood, the language of the street was also often Armenian. We lived in the center of the Armenian community in New York City--Washington Heights. As a very young child my journey into the world centered around shopping with my mother. In the 1940s in New York City there were no supermarkets, even

for Americans. Shopping for food was done in small, specialized stores. We made frequent trips to the Greek bakery for round, fluffy loaves of Greek peta or a half dozen kaiser rolls. If we wanted rye or pumpernickel bread, we went to the Jewish bakery. Fish was bought from the fish market with live fishing swimming in the big tank in the window, vegetables and fruits from the green grocer, the same one who saved the onion skins for my mother at Easter time. Rarely, for a special treat, we went to the Jewish delicatessen for cold cuts, hot dogs and sauerkraut or pickles. Once a week we went to Zarifian Brothers, the grocery store where my mother bought meat, canned goods and staples.

My weekly trips to Zarifian Brothers with my mother were pure joy. It was our store. The people in it were like the people at home, buying the kind of food we ate and speaking our language. It even smelled right, wonderfully fragrant with olives and cheeses. The small store was generally crowded with women whom my mother knew. It was like going to the market in a small village.

The wait was usually long as the women would slowly read their lists to one of the brothers who would pick items off the shelves. I waited anxiously for one of the women to request something on the top shelf because then I could watch while one of the Zarifians got out the long stick with a claw on the end and expertly grasped the can or box with the claw and dropped it into his hand. They would also dish out spoonfuls of olives or pickled vegetables and sometimes give me a taste, or they would cut hunks of cheese from the big wheels in the glass case.

Meat was kept in the walk in refrigerator, and sides of lamb were brought out and the roast or chops cut off while we waited.

Meanwhile, the women talked with each other, always in Armenian. I wonder now about what kinds of information were exchanged at the grocery store, how topics under discussion in our community might have been formed or shaped by the women waiting their turn at Zarifian Brothers. I wonder, too, if anyone ever spoke English. Did non-Americans, odars, ever wander into the little store? It seemed as unlikely to me as an odar sitting in our living room.

Until I began to bring my friends home after school in the fifth or sixth grade, not many odars came into our home for social visits. The two exceptions were my aunts Vera and Sonia, who were English and Russian respectively. Amazingly, my father's two brothers had married odars, but as far as I could tell, they were as much a part of our family as anyone else. Aunt Vera and Uncle Vaghoush lived with us for a short period of time when they moved to the United States from England. Aunt Sonia, too, moved in with us when she emigrated from Persia after her husband died. She and her daughter Mary lived with us, while her two sons, Leopold and Peter, lived with Uncle Alex and Aunty Goharik. While Aunt Vera's English accent and non-Armenian ways--using Windex to clean windows instead of vinegar and water, for example--clearly identified her as an odar, Aunt Sonia, who spoke English with a very heavy Russian accent and was also fluent in Armenian did not seem at all like an odar to me. I had identified odars as Americans.

There were, however, two things about Aunt Sonia which distinguished her from the other women in the family, though they did not make her American. One was that she had long and often heated debates with my father and uncles using words I had never heard before. None of the women participated in these discussions, and perhaps for that reason I was naturally curious about them. When I asked my mother what Aunt Sonia and the men were talking about, she told me with a wave of her hand that it was just talk. While this talk was clearly not something "they" did and therefore not automatically wrong, because my uncles were part of it, I sensed that something about it was not right. My mother disapproved not so much of the conversation, but Aunt Sonia's part in it. It was "men's talk"--probably politics--and women did not discuss such things. The other thing about Aunt Sonia that was different from the other women in the family was that she called herself an artist. She painted, not just to fill the time after her children were grown, but because she was an artist. Aunt Sonia had ideas of her own and was willing to argue about them with men, and she had an interest that was totally unrelated to her children. These were unusual qualities in a woman, to be sure, but they were certainly not attributes that other women--American women--of the 1940s and 50s possessed either. They did not make Aunt Sonia any more like an odar than her Russian accent. Aunt Sonia was just strange. There was one thing, however, that made her more like what I imagined odars to be like, and that was the way she used the city. Although she was a newcomer to this country and spoke English very badly, Aunt Sonia regularly went to the museums. No one

else in the family ever went downtown for anything but shopping, with the one exception of my grandmother who took me to Radio City Music Hall for the Christmas and Easter shows. While it was unusual for my grandmother to love Radio City as she did, she was at least taking her granddaughter out for a holiday excursion. Aunt Sonia, on the other hand, went alone and often.

While Aunt Sonia did not seem like an odar to me, she was decidedly not Armenian and, I found out many years later, she was Jewish--the daughter of a rabbi. It is a measure of the tolerance of my family that Sonia and Vera were accepted into the family circle, though when Uncle Vaghoush and Aunt Vera were divorced in the late 1950s, her name was never spoken and Uncle Alex cut her out of all of his home movies of the family. But, while they were married, Aunt Vera was part of the family, as was Aunt Sonia. Other Armenian families I knew of made life miserable for members who married non-Armenians, in some cases disowning them entirely. But for us, family was paramount. If a family member transgressed in some way, by marrying an odar or moving out of their parents' home before marriage, the family adjusted to the new situation. The extended family was the center of our lives. My parents' few close friends were brought into the life of the family as if they were blood kin. Social life with friends who were not brought into the circle took place only during the week. Weekends were time for family.

My memory of our apartment when I was a child is that it was always full of people, and that memory is based on a good deal of truth. When I was an infant twelve people lived in those five rooms. It was 1939

and Uncle George, my mother's sister's husband, was out of work, so their family--Uncle George and Aunty Ars (her real name is Arsenic), Uncle George's mother who we all called Grandma, their three sons, George, Howard, and Edmond moved in with my parents, my mother's mother and me. Later that year, Uncle Vaghoush and Aunt Vera emigrated from England and they moved in too. By 1940, they had all moved to New Jersey, except my grandmother who lived with us until her death in 1983. But there were others who lived with us for periods of time, emigrating to this country from Iran or Turkey or relocating from one part of the country to another. Contact with the family, however, was just as intense whether or not we actually lived under the same roof. We saw Aunty Ars. and Uncle George every weekend and other uncles, aunts and cousins lived in the neighborhood and visits back and forth were almost constant.

Someone it seemed was always at the house. During the week, it might be one of two of my mother's or grandmother's friends. My most vivid memory of these visits is the ritualistic drinking of Turkish coffee. It was always offered when people dropped in, and rarely refused. Everything about Turkish coffee was special, the kind of pot it was made in, as well as the cups it was served in. It was made in a gleaming brass jezveh, a wide bottomed, long handled coverless pot. The pulverized coffee and sugar were boiled together until thick and foamy. My mother always made the coffee, carrying the steaming jezveh out of the kitchen on a round brass tray. The thick, bittersweet coffee was carefully poured into small cups that had absolutely straight sides.

The shape of the cups was vitally important to the telling of the fortunes which was as important as the drinking of the coffee. Turkish coffee, because the coffee and the water are boiled in the same pot, has a thick sediment that collects at the bottom of the cup. When the coffee was finished, the cup was turned over on its saucer, turned three times to the right and not touched until completely cool. When the time was right, my grandmother would choose one of the cups, turn it over and peer into it studying the patterns that the sediment had made. Some cups had a pattern that was spread all over the sides in delicate and intricate shapes, in others, the coffee grounds had collected on one side in a thick mass which always looked foreboding to me. As my grandmother held the cup, everyone was silent, waiting to hear what she "saw." My mother didn't believe in the fortunes, but my grandmother had a reputation for always "telling the truth." There were, however, some days when she would not agree to tell fortunes, and some people whose cups she never read for reasons known only to her.

She was clear on one thing though. It was forbidden to tell children's fortunes. I wasn't allowed to drink the coffee either, but I pleaded with her to pour me a cup and let me dump out the coffee and turn my cup over too. But tradition prevailed and I never had my fortune told. By the time I had reached the age when I was old enough to both drink the coffee and have my cup read, like my mother, I too didn't want any part of that foolishness. Also, when I was older the drinking of Turkish coffee and the ritual surrounding it had become very confusing to me. By that time I had heard about the Armenian genocide and

what my grandmother had suffered "at the hands of the Turkish devils." I had also heard comments about Turks from other family members that indicated that they were evil incarnate. Uncle Ashot, for example, was adamant that a Turk would never cross his threshold. Yet the focus of many afternoons was the drinking of a coffee that was Turkish, and some of our favorite foods were Turkish.

During my pre-school years, I was neither confused nor ambivalent about the coffee or anything else about the family. Like my parents, my life was spent within the womb of the extended family. My only other contact was with the Armenian community in our neighborhood. I made the rounds of visits with my mother and/or grandmother during the week, and spent weekends with relatives. My only playmates were my cousins.

One of my favorite places to visit was Aunty Lucy's house. Her husband, my father's uncle, had come to New York City from Persia to join his brothers in the family oriental rug importing business, Avakian Brothers. According to my mother, Aunty Lucy had not wanted to leave her home in Persia, and it was clear from her behavior that she was unwilling to accommodate herself to this country. Aunty Lucy lived and died in the eight room apartment on 193rd Street and Wadsworth Avenue that Uncle Hagop had rented when they first arrived. Though she lived in America for more than fifty years, she never spoke one word of English. She resisted this country through her refusal to learn its language even when it meant being unable to communicate with some of her grandchildren. Two of them, Rita and Susan, lived with Aunty Lucy when her son Hemeyak and his wife Lucy (known in the family as "little Lucy")

moved in with her. During the ten years that they lived together the usual tendency of the children of immigrants to teach their elders the ways of the new land was reversed. Rita and Susan learned enough Armenian for minimal communication with their grandmother, but Aunty Lucy did not learn any English--at least she never let anyone know that she had any understanding of it at all.

There was little about this country that Aunty Lucy liked or trusted. After Uncle Hagop died, shortly after their arrival, she rarely went out of the house. Zarifian Brothers delivered most of the food she needed and other family members did her other shopping. Aunty Lucy was very particular about the food she ate, and she refused to believe that American meat was edible. Before she and Uncle Hagop left Persia, their nephew Alex had come to the States for a visit. He returned to Persia with stories of the wonders of America, including the fact that meat was kept fresh for weeks at a time. When Aunty Lucy moved here, she insisted that meat kept that long without salting would surely be rotten and she became a vegetarian. Explanations of the process of refrigeration were to no avail. During her time in this country Aunty Lucy ate meat only twice when Alex, feeling responsible for her refusal to eat red meat, bought live lambs and had them slaughtered for her.

But meat was not the only food that Aunty Lucy thought was potentially dangerous. When dairies began to package milk in cartons instead of bottles, my cousin Susan and I, who had begun to shop for Aunt Lucy, went from store to store looking for milk in bottles. Not only food,

but household products too, had to be pure by Aunty Lucy's standards. She used only Palmolive soap, but sometime in the 1950s chlorophyll was added to the familiar green bar, and Aunty Lucy noticed the difference. Susan and I made the rounds of the stores in the neighborhood looking for the last bars of Palmolive in its unadulterated form. I don't remember what Aunty Lucy did when they were gone. Maybe she switched to Ivory.

For me as a young child, however, the only thing strange about Aunty Lucy was that the Armenian she spoke was a different dialect from that of my parents, though we had little trouble understanding her. I would sit on her ample lap in the summer and drink hot tea out of tall thin glasses in ornate silver holders while the rest of the family had iced tea or other cool drinks. There was something so comfortable about Aunty Lucy and the atmosphere she had created in her apartment. The care that she took with her food was also in evidence in her home. The dark mahogany furniture was highly polished as was her silver coffee service and candy dishes which were filled with salted pumpkin seeds, roasted chick peas and pistachio nuts. The floor of every room except the kitchen was covered, from wall to wall, with a Persian rug, even the long hall which ran from one end of the large apartment to the other and the two bathrooms. Her house was her country. She hadn't wanted to emigrate and she would keep as close to her ways in Persia as possible. There was no ambivalence about Aunty Lucy.

As I grew older I would never experience such absolute security as I did as a young child on Aunty Lucy's lap. My relationship with her

was to become severely limited as I grew older, primarily through my loss of fluency in Armenian. My desire to assimilate was as forceful as Aunty Lucy's refusal, and by the time I was in my late teens we could barely understand each other. Despite my growing embarrassment with my ethnicity, however, I always had great respect for Aunty Lucy. While she could have been seen by my friends as a weird old lady, I described her to them as a strong, though perhaps eccentric, woman. It is a measure of the powerful effect she had on me that I could even talk about this ultra-Armenian woman to my friends in the first place, but to characterize her as a strong woman in the 1950s when such a term was not generally positive was surprising even to me. Aunty Lucy died a few years ago at the age of ninety-three. Though frail, she was cogent and to the day she died she wore the black clothes of mourning for the husband who had brought her to this country and had died shortly after.

I am not sure that all of the members of the family were altogether comfortable with Aunty Lucy's insistence on maintaining Persian-Armenian traditions, but her position in the family demanded that they cater to her wishes nonetheless. My father's extended family was organized around a strict hierarchy that was obvious even to a young child. The father held the position of family head with major decision making power, including business as well as private matters since all males in the family were on the board of directors of the family business, and many of them worked at Avakian Brothers. Aunty Lucy, being female, of course had none of this kind of power, but she was paid a good deal of deference by all family members, but particularly by females. Women in

the family who smoked cigarettes, for example, did not smoke in Aunty Lucy's presence. Women in their thirties sneaked off to the bathroom for a smoke at her house or anyone else's house if Aunty Lucy was there. She noticed, after some time, that particularly after dinner female family members would disappear for a few minutes. One day she asked where they were going and was told by one of the men that they had gone to have a cigarette. She laughed and invited them back into the dining room to smoke with the men.

While Aunty Lucy and Uncle Hagop, and after his death Uncle Mesrop, were at the top of the hierarchy and everyone in the family was deferential to them, older brothers also held positions of authority. My father, being a younger brother, was subservient to Uncle Alex. During the Depression, Uncle Alex, in consultation with his Uncle Mesrop of course, decided that my father should move to Cleveland and sell Avakian Brothers' rugs through a concession in a department store. My father, who was in his thirties, married and owned a small restaurant, complied with his brother's decision. While my parents have always described their years in Cleveland as a golden time, they never divulged the circumstances of their move. I found out about it from my mother's sister a few years ago when she was angry at "The Avakians." My parents confirmed the chain of events that led to their move, describing it as a good decision. Yet, when they came back to New York, my father did not stay with the family firm, but established a wholesale butter and egg business. Even in his seventies, my father was deferential to his older brother, rarely disagreeing and never arguing with him. Only when Uncle

Alex became incapacitated by a stroke did my father exercise some authority with him.

My father had two younger brothers. One of them, Boghous, never emigrated and died in Persia. Vaghoush, the youngest brother, was rebellious. He refused to go to college like his other brothers, nor did he join the family business. He was an auto mechanic--the only blue collar worker on my father's side of the family. Even more shocking was his marriage to an English woman. While Vaghoush was somewhat deferential to Alex, he obviously did not follow his wishes in how he lived his life, and he treated my father, his older brother, as an equal. Deference to elders broke down with Vaghoush, but was scrupulously observed by everyone else. Even as a child I was aware that being at Aunt Lucy's or Uncle Mesrop's house was different than being with other family members. There was something about the way my parents behaved when we were there that made them seem young--even to me.

There was none of that feeling in my mother's family. My mother, the youngest, freely contradicted her brother, sister and even her mother, though my uncle, being male, was catered to by all the women. While she might listen to their advice, I cannot imagine that even my grandmother would tell my mother what to do and expect her to accept her decision unquestioningly. Yet, she seemingly accepted Uncle Alex's decision that she and my father leave the rest of the family and move to Cleveland. Perhaps the difference was that in my mother's family there was no older male to maintain the hierarchy, since my grandfather and his brothers were all dead.

When my mother was a child, however, my grandmother's sister did exercise significant authority over the family. Turvanda Donigian was eighteen years older than her sister Elmas, my grandmother. Elmas lived with Turvanda and her husband Arakel from the time of her mother's death when Elmas was two years old until her marriage to a man chosen by Arakel. Even before the 1915 massacre, Arakel decided that he and his family were not safe in Turkey, and he found a way to bring them to this country. My grandfather, too, had decided that Turkey was not where he wanted to raise his family, and he and my grandmother and their three children had made plans to move until his mother had a dream that was full of foreboding. They decided to stay, and a few years later my grandfather was inducted into the Turkish army and never heard from again. It was many years before my grandmother was able to get out of the country and only after she had suffered exile and near starvation. Her oldest daughter had fallen in love with a young Armenian man and wanted to stay in Turkey. Elmas felt she could not make the decision to leave Arsenic behind without consultation despite the fact that she had been responsible for the survival of the family for the eleven years since her husband's departure. Since her father and all of his brothers as well as Arakel were dead, she wrote to her older sister Turvanda for permission to leave Arsenic behind. Turvanda replied that Arsenic must come to America because she had decided that her niece was to marry her son George regardless of the fact that they were first cousins. It was of no consequence that they didn't know each other. My grandmother complied and when she and her three children arrived in New York City,

Arsenic went directly to Turvanda's house while the rest of the family went to live with my grandmother's other sister until they could find the means to get a place of their own. Over the years as Turvanda grew older, no other woman emerged to become head of the family. There were some men of my mother's generation in the family, and the women were deferential to them, but the strict hierarchy of my father's family did not exist.

While I was aware of this hierarchy as a young child, I was bothered neither by it nor the deference to males. When I was six and a half, however, my brother was born and my life changed. When I was told that my mother was going to have a baby, I was excited and gave no particular thought to its sex. I don't remember where I was when she went to the hospital, but the scene when I heard that she had had the baby and that it was a boy is crystal clear. I was in the living room sitting on the couch with my cousin Daisy. I was very close to Daisy although she was ten years older than me. The phone rang and my grandmother ran for it, no doubt anxious to hear news about my mother who was having a long labor. She came into the living room ecstatic. It was a boy! I can't remember that either Daisy or I responded, but the news that had made my grandmother scream in delight had stunned us. Obviously, we had not counted on a boy, though we had never discussed it. After my grandmother left the room we looked at each other with a strong sense that a disaster had occurred. After a long period of silence, I turned to Daisy and asked her what I was going to do and she just shook

her head. Even Daisy, with all the wisdom of her sixteen years could not help me.

A new baby is always hard on the first child, especially one who had been attended to as I had. I was not the first Avakian child born on these shores, but the first one on the East Coast. My cousin Rita had been born two years earlier, but she and her sister Susan, also older than me, were in California. All the other Avakians were in the New York City area. I was the baby of the Avakian clan. A new baby of either sex would, of course, threaten my status, but a boy was a real challenge and it came primarily from the women in the family: my mother and grandmother.

In the two weeks between the birth of Paul Khrosoff and the day we went to bring him and my mother home from the hospital, I had decided that I would hold him on the way home from the hospital. The great day finally came and my grandmother, father and Aunty Ars got into my father's 1936 Chevy and drove downtown to the hospital. Waiting in the car, I told myself that he was my baby brother and I was going to love him, but when my mother appeared and handed the bundle to me, I couldn't take him. My grandmother's arms shot out and she, not me, held the baby. I was sitting next to them and felt, for the first time, a circle of intimacy from which I was excluded. Later that day while the family celebrated the homecoming, I went into my parents' room where my brother was in his crib. I looked at him for a long time and wondered if I could love him.

My next clear memory of my brother's infancy was a few months later. I was in the dining room and my mother and grandmother were on the other side of the room where my brother was lying on the couch. The two women were bending over him, totally absorbed. The circle of intimacy I had felt on the day we brought my brother home now included my mother. The hurt I felt at exclusion from my mother's and grandmother's warmth turned into hatred for them as well as the object of their love. I stood apart watching them and saw the circle as double edged. I couldn't get in, but it was also clear to me that he couldn't get out. I felt compassion for my brother who was, after all, only a baby. But the circle, closing me out and him in, was too powerful for me. The compassion faded and I was motivated mostly by hatred and jealousy.

My father was not in this very special orbit either. While I loved my father, he was not home enough to offset my displacement. He went to work before I got up and came home after I was in bed. We did spend time together on weekends when it wasn't taken up by the extended family. Even when he was home, though, he seemed to have no impact on the bond between my mother, grandmother and brother. It seemed to me that we were outsiders together.

The circle that had enclosed my brother had never enveloped me. Even before his birth I spent many afternoons and sometimes weekends with relatives. My cousin Daisy, who had been with me when the news about my brother's birth came, lived only a few blocks away and I often went to her house after school. Her mother, Aunty Vart, made the best simits (a crisp, buttery cookie with sesame seeds) in the family. When

I came in we went directly to the kitchen and she would go to the cupboard where she kept a tin which always was miraculously full of simits. She put two on a plate--always two and I knew not to ask for more--and I ate them as slowly as I possibly could, picking the sesame seeds off the plate with a wet finger when they were gone. When Daisy came home from high school we either listened to her Billie Holiday records or went to her room to talk. Later in the afternoon Aunty Vart would ask if I wanted to stay for dinner. I can't ever remember saying no, though sometimes my mother would and then I would have to go home. Aunty Vart usually prepared something I particularly liked and Daisy and I set the table. We were all very comfortable it seemed until Uncle Charlie came home. While I could chatter endlessly to Aunty Vart and Daisy, when Uncle Charlie was there, I spoke only when he asked me a question. He was a stranger it seemed who had the power to change a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere to one which was formal and difficult, at least for me. I would look from Daisy to Aunty Vart wondering how they felt about the change, but they seemed happy to have him home. As much as Uncle Charlie made me uncomfortable, I still loved being at Daisy's house for dinner and was usually there once a week.

After my brother's birth, my trips to relatives' homes increased. I particularly loved going to my mother's sister's house in New Jersey for the weekend. Aunty Ars had three boys and told me that she had always wanted a girl. I became her daughter. My brother, because he was a boy, could never touch our relationship. Aunty Ars, though she worked full time in a clothing factory and cooked, cleaned and ironed for her

family, always had time for me. She cooked all my favorite foods, read to me in her broken English which I loved better than anyone else's reading and, as I remember it, agreed to anything I suggested including sleeping with her.

As my brother grew older, he stayed within the circle, never making the visits I did. Partially this was because the family had changed. People were moving out of the neighborhood to the suburbs. When I was fifteen and he was nine we, too, moved to New Jersey and he couldn't walk over to a relative's house and make it his own as I had done. But he had not begun to do this even before we left the neighborhood. He stayed at home with my mother and grandmother where he was their adored king or pasha as my grandmother called him.

C H A P T E R I I I

While my entry into school certainly began the process of assimilation, it was not until the middle of my elementary school years that I was fully aware of my non-Armenian surroundings. The very few memories of my early years in school are, no doubt, due in part to my lack of familiarity with English. Though I didn't have major problems with the language, my social contact with the world of non-Armenians was strictly limited to the hours I spent in school. My mother did not allow me to "play in the streets" as other children did, but I had not made any friends in school, so I was content to stay at home or visit my relatives. By the time I was eight, I had a playmate at home. My cousin Mary and her mother Aunt Sonia moved in with us and while Mary was a few years older than me we were good friends. I taught her about life in the United States from my vantage point in the center of the Armenian community in Washington Heights. They stayed with us for about a year and it was shortly after they left that I noticed that I was one of the few children who walked home from school alone.

I had a little practice in making friends during the two summers that my mother and brother spent at the beach in Rhode Island. In the late 1940s summer brought with it great fear of polio. We stayed away from beaches and other crowded places hoping to avoid the dread disease. Because my cousin Emik was totally handicapped with cerebral palsy, I was particularly afraid of losing the use of my legs and I would wake up on hot summer mornings afraid that I had contracted polio during the

night. The summer of 1949 we left the city. My grandmother didn't come with us since she always went to one of the two Armenian hotels in the Catskill Mountains. My father stayed in the city during the week and joined us on weekends and for his vacation. But we were not alone in Watch Hill, Rhode Island. Family members from both my mother's and father's side spent the summer, their vacations and weekends in Watch Hill. The tight restrictions that my mother imposed on me in the city were miraculously gone when we were at Watch Hill. For the whole summer, I came and went as I pleased, leaving my mother and brother in the small apartment in the morning, and walking down to the beach or the little town by myself. While I spent some time with my cousins Donna and Adrina who were also there for the summer, I generally was either alone during the week or with the one friend I made. She lived in the lighthouse with her father who was the lighthouse keeper. I don't remember anything about her except that we went to her house one afternoon and I had my first and last taste of Spam. Despite my few memories of this friend our relationship was very important in teaching me that I could make friends. By the time we got back to the city in September, I was ready to relate to peers who were not relatives.

One day on my solitary walk home from school, I decided it was time for me to make some friends. I was excited by the prospect and told my mother about my decision when I got home. She looked at me for a long time and then told me to be careful. I didn't know exactly what she meant, but it was clear that there was danger in associating with people who were not blood kin. I was, however, undaunted and began to talk to

the other children in school with the goal of making a friend. My first conquest was Carol Capps, who with her long, blond banana curls seemed just right to me. Amazingly, she asked me to come to her house after school. I ran home for lunch and excitedly told my mother. I was afraid that she would not let me go, but she did, though I had to be home well before dinner.

I felt a kind of triumph as I not only walked out of the school yard with a friend, but was on my way to her house to play. When we got to her apartment I found it very different from what I was used to. Carol had her own key and opened the door to an empty apartment. I had never had a key. I had never even used one. Someone was always home at my house. If my mother was out shopping, my grandmother was home. But Carol's mother wasn't out shopping or visiting relatives--she worked. Aunty Ars. was the only woman in our family who worked and that was only because her sons were in high school.

The apartment itself, too, was like another world. There were no oriental rugs on the floors. No candy dishes filled with goodies. And it smelled different from the homes I was used to. When I came home from school or went to one of my relatives' houses at three o'clock, something was usually simmering on the stove or meat was marinating on the counter filling the apartment with the smells of onions, olive oil, tomato sauce or lamb. We didn't stop in the kitchen for something to eat, but went directly to Carol's room where she began to show me her clothes. Carol Capps had nylon stockings. I could hardly believe it and asked her if she ever wore them. She looked at me as if I were

crazy and told me that of course she did--every Friday when she went to Temple. I came home with the news of Carol's nylons, not to ask for them which I did not do for many years, but to tell an amazing fact. I was informed by my mother than Carol was Jewish and Jews did such things.

For one reason or another, my friendship with Carol was shortlived. Maybe she was too different for me and maybe I was too unsophisticated for her. My next friend was more familiar. Thalia Marmarinos was Greek. Her mother was home when we got to her house after school and there was the smell of food in the apartment. Thalia's mother didn't have Persian rugs on the floors, but the decor was familiar to me nonetheless. There was a big table in the dining room to accommodate family feasts and many couches and overstuffed chairs both in the living room and dining room.

When we got to Thalia's house we went directly to the kitchen to get something to eat, usually some kind of Greek cookie. Very often Mrs. Marmarinos would be at the sewing machine making something new for Thalia. Thalia didn't have nylons, but she did have lots of clothes. Not only did Mrs. Marmarinos make clothes for her daughter, they decided on what she would make together.

Mrs. Marmarinos, like many of my relatives, spoke English only when she absolutely had to, and after a while she decided that she didn't have to make the effort with me. She spoke Greek and I began to think I understood her. We got along famously.

Through my friendship with Thalia, I met Athena whose family had changed their name to Andrews, though there was little about them that wasn't Greek. Athena's mother also was home when we got there, also spoke English with difficulty and was usually cooking. The Andrews apartment looked and smelled like Greece itself. Athena, I was told, was the Goddess of Wisdom in Greek mythology. I began to believe in the power of Greek gods, who had the novelty of goddesses, as my friend was, indeed, very smart.

The only non-Greek friend I had in elementary school was Rachel Herzberg. She lived in Thalia's building and, like Carol Capps had a mother who worked--Rachel had a key to her apartment. Her parents, Jewish immigrants from Germany, lived in an eight room apartment with another family. The rooms were easily divided between them, but they shared the kitchen, eating at different times. The food of each family was distinguished by colored rubber bands. I never felt free in that kitchen, always afraid that I would take something that belonged to the other family whom I never saw. But, Rachel had her own room, a tiny maid's room off the kitchen with its own bathroom, and we enjoyed the empty apartment where we could be as loud as the neighbors would allow.

While I knew that my Greek friends were, like me, different from Americans, it seemed easier to be Greek than it was to be an Armenian. For one thing, everyone knew where Greece was. In my neighborhood when you met someone you were almost immediately asked about your nationality if your name did not clearly indicate your origins. I dreaded the question, "What are you?" because when I answered, "Armenian," the response

was either a blank stare, or more often another question, "What's that?" I was hard put to answer what an Armenian was. It was who I was and what I had known all my life, but how could it be defined? I knew that my mother came from Turkey and my father from Persia, but they were definitely not Turks or Persians. Where was Armenia on the map? I asked my mother and she told me that it was in the northeast corner of Turkey, part of what was called Russia--I don't remember hearing the name Soviet Union until I was in college. Though I knew that my father had lived in Russia and that Uncle Alex had fought in the Russian army, I knew that we were not Russians. Nothing about being an Armenian was clear. When I couldn't answer "what I was" clearly, the next question was usually, "Well, what religion are you?" The answer to this question meant more confusion. The Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Church was as mysterious as my country of origin. Was I Catholic? Protestant? I could only answer that, as my mother had told me, our church was like the high church of England. Though I had no idea what that meant, it usually stopped the questions.

Being Greek, on the other hand, seemed wonderfully clear and simple. There was no confusion about where Greece was, and my friends' religion, Greek Orthodox, was also well known. Not only was the location of Greece and its religion obvious to everyone in the neighborhood, but we also learned about Greece in school. It was the cradle of our civilization--of democracy. And I remembered that Greeks were also represented in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Whole rooms were full of Greek sculpture. Even the drug store had pictures of Greeks on the

walls, and though they looked strange in their togas and sandals, they were Greeks and somehow related to Thalia and Athena.

My other friend, Rachel, was not Greek, but German and Jewish--neither of which was unknown. I had already learned that the Jewish part was problematic, but people generally didn't ask Rachel what she was, as they invariably asked me. Of course, Mrs. Marmarinos and Mrs. Andrews knew what Armenians were, but none of my peers seemed to. I was clearly a minority among minorities, and an unknown one at that.

I am sure that there were other Armenian children in my school, but I knew only one--Eloise Nazarian. I met Eloise because our mothers were friends, but our friendship never developed. Eloise was very tiny, very dark and meek. One day she waited so long before asking for the pass to go to the bathroom that by the time she got it, she stood at the front of the room, holding the wooden pass in her hand while she peed on herself. My own social situation was too precarious to befriend Eloise. She was not the kind of friend I had decided I wanted.

Of course I knew other Armenian children around my age--my cousins. My mother's brother's daughter, Adrina, was only a year younger than me. While we spent time together we never became friends as children, partially because I tried to avoid her family as much as possible. Her father, Ashot, was a tyrant and whether he was home or not, there was an atmosphere in their house that was frightening. Other males in the family had power, but when Ashot came into a room, he commanded it. His wife and children seemed to cower in his presence as did other female family members. Only my mother was an exception. While she maintained

a certain deference towards him that all males deserved, she did not allow her brother to completely dominate her. When Adrina and I were together she was very submissive to me. She had learned that relationships consisted of one dominant and one submissive partner, and I was not only older than she, but the daughter of the only woman who dared to stand up to her father. I called all the shots. Although I must admit that I did enjoy exercising power over Adrina, I was somewhat uncomfortable with it. Mostly, it was boring as Adrina agreed to anything I suggested.

My cousin Susan, on the other hand, became a good friend. Her parents were more like mine in their relationship to each other. Lucy deferred to Hemeyak, but he didn't order anyone around. The atmosphere in Susan's house was not set by Hemeyak, but his mother Aunty Lucy. While Aunty Lucy was the personification of everything about the "old country," Susan's mother was very modern--almost American. She didn't speak with an accent, was interested in clothes that were in style and didn't even wear her hair in a bun like most of the other women in the family. Lucy even cooked like an American, using vegetable oil, which I never saw in anyone else's house, instead of olive oil on the salad. Susan and her sister Rita didn't speak Armenian and were sent to private school outside of the neighborhood, and best of all they went to the Presbyterian church. Lucy was so American that she organized a Girl Scout chapter for us. Though it was sponsored by the Armenian church, we were real Brownies, with uniforms and little gold colored pins that were worn upside down until we did a good deed and then we could proudly

and self-righteously turn them over. I felt as if I was on the edge of something very important when I became a Brownie, but the group only lasted a few months. I expect that the other mothers were like mine in thinking that a Brownie troop was just another one of Lucy's strange ideas. Maybe Armenian girls were not supposed to be Brownies, but I had tried my best.

My friendship with Susan lasted long after the abortive Brownie chapter. I can't remember that we ever talked about it directly, but we had a tacit agreement that we were not going to be "feminine" like her older sister Rita. We convinced our mothers to buy us dungarees--they had to be Levis, not exactly a household name in the early 1950s--and we saved our money for garrison belts--thick black leather belts with brass buckles. The dungarees were rolled up and worn with one of our father's white shirts. As soon as we came home from school, we changed into our "real clothes."

Susan and I were great baseball fans. We chose the New York Giants as our team because the Polo Grounds were more easily accessible by bus than Yankee Stadium. Ebbetts Field, the home of the Brooklyn Dodgers, might as well have been in Kalamazoo. Our mothers would never allow a trip to Brooklyn. We were content with the Giants, and went to the games every Ladies Day, paying our quarter for the bleachers and then sneaking into the better seats. Though my school friends also wore dungarees and garrison belts, I was a real "tomboy" only with Susan.

There was one other setting where I met other Armenian children--dancing school. My mother had decided that I would have ballet and

piano lessons so that, as she frequently told me, "I would group up like a flower, not a weed." I was excited at the prospect of both. I asked my mother if I could go to the school that Thalia attended. She took tap dancing lessons and had shown me her black patent leather shoes with the huge metal taps on the soles. "No," my mother said. "Tap was common. I would take ballet from Madame Seta whose son was a lead dancer in the Ballet Russe." Despite my disappointment over not being allowed to take tap with Thalia, I happily went to my first lesson at Madame Seta's. She was a stern woman in her forties who barked commands to us in her Russian Armenian accent. My cousins Adrina and Donna were in the class, and most of the other students were Armenian as well. After about six months at Madame Seta's I wanted to quit. I would rather have no dancing lessons than be in this class with this teacher. I reminded me too much of my Sunday school class. After months of begging and screaming, my mother let me leave dancing school. If I was destined to be an unknown minority, I found no solace with people like myself. I would work to become like the majority, but in the meantime, I certainly did not want to be surrounded by Armenians.

My experience with piano lessons was, on the surface, very different, but the underlying message was the same. I was an Avakian and that meant I would do nothing that was "common." On the contrary, I would have only "the best." I would not have a piano teacher like my friends, but would go to music school. One day after school, my mother and I took the subway down to 125th Street and walked over to the Julliard School of Music where I was to have my "audition." My mother waited in

the hall while I was called into a large room with the most enormous grand piano I had ever seen. There were three people sitting at a long black table and one of them asked me to play. I had never had a lesson, but my cousin Daisy had taught me to play the melody to "Beautiful Dreamer," and so I sat down at the piano and picked out the notes with one finger. They thanked me and I was ushered out of the room and we went home. Juilliard must have needed students that year, because, to my surprise, they called the next week to say that I had been accepted and my teacher would be Miss Hull. We went to meet her on a Tuesday which was my regular lesson time. In addition to private lessons, I found out from Miss Hull that I would also be required to go to a theory class on Saturday mornings. It all seemed ominously different from what my friends were doing, but I really did want to play the piano, so I didn't object.

My private lesson with Miss Hull was fine, but I wondered if my friends' teachers cared as much about the shape of their hands while they were playing. The class, on the other hand, was a disaster. I had no idea what was going on, and, it seemed to me that all the other students in the class were much more advanced than I was. I found out from talking with some of them that I was the only beginner. They had all had lessons for years. I confronted my mother with these facts with the hope that she could get me out of the class, or failing that I wanted to leave Juilliard. But I was told that I was an Avakian and we didn't just take piano lessons. I was going to the finest music school in the country and I had better appreciate it.

The theory class at Julliard underscored the message that was becoming very clear. We didn't do anything the way ordinary people did--not even the way my Greek friends did. If our nationality and religion were different it didn't seem to me that we had to accentuate our differences in all aspects of our lives. I was going to do my best to be like everyone else--average, as I articulated it. I began my campaign to leave Julliard in earnest. Because I still enjoyed learning to play the piano, in spite of Julliard, I wanted to get a piano teacher--some ordinary neighborhood woman who would come to the house once a week, not teach me any theory just how to play "Beautiful Dreamer" with two hands. My mother, however, was adamant. If I was going to learn to play the piano, it would be the finest instruction available, but the recital Miss Hull held for her private students turned the tide in my favor. For one thing, it was held at Miss Hull's apartment in Greenwich Village and my mother wondered aloud on the long subway ride there why such a nice woman like Miss Hull would live in such a nasty place. When we got to her small apartment it was already crowded with her other students all of whom were older than me and some looking dangerously "arty" with long hair and beards. One thing was clear though. They were all playing very difficult music. Their books were black with notes. When it was my turn I played my little piece and thought I had done quite well. I hadn't missed a note and had used the pedals correctly. I had even thought about how I was holding my hands while I was playing, but instead of the applause the other students received after their performances, I heard laughter. Miss Hull stood up and admonished her other

students saying that they had all begun by playing that piece and gave me a round of applause. The point that I had been trying to make with my mother was well made that afternoon. I was in the wrong place. Soon after the recital, I left Julliard and got a piano teacher.

My next great battle not be different came in my last year of elementary school. By this time the group of friends I had begun to develop in the fourth grade were my constant companions; that is as much as my mother and the extended family would allow. My mother's disdain for "playing in the streets" had lessened, but was not gone. I was allowed to be with my friends only three out of five weekday afternoons and weekends were reserved for family events. My mother's response to my pleas to be allowed to stay home on weekends to be with my friends was generally in two stages. In the first place, how could I think of disappointing my aunts and uncles by not going to their house. They wanted to see me. And in the second place, who would stay home with me? Generally, if my grandmother was not accompanying us, she would be visiting other relatives. Although I was old enough to regularly babysit for an infant in our building, I was not allowed to stay home alone. I didn't have my own key to our house until I was a freshman in college and even then it was superfluous since someone was generally home, and if I was out on a date, my mother always waited up for me, sitting in the living room in full view of the front door. While I liked members of the extended family and even loved some deeply, and I enjoyed some of our visits, "the family" as it was represented to me by my mother became severely restrictive. The family that had been so important to me,

particularly after the birth of my brother, had become a burden. My mother's message was clear: friends might be a nice diversion, but family is all important. But for me, friends were vital and if I had to choose between friends and family, I would choose friends.

The battleground was set. My friends were all going to George Washington High School, the large public high school three blocks away from my apartment, except for Rachel who had chosen another city high school, Industrial Arts. My mother informed me that I was going to Hunter or Barnard High School. While we were having ongoing battles about visiting relatives on the weekends and I generally gave in, the question of where I was going to high school was major and I intended to stand my ground.

By 1951 I was twelve years old and had become adapt at arguing with my mother. I was fully prepared for her now familiar argument that she wanted only the best for me. George Washington was for ordinary--even common people's children. This time I pressed her to tell me what she meant by common. It was then that she told me that the student population of the school was half Negro. I was shaken by this news.

As unammiliated as my parents were, they had understood very well America's racial code and had transmitted it to me, mostly non-verbally. I don't remember anything said about Negroes by any member of my family when I was growing up. Nevertheless, as early as my pre-school years I had learned to be a white American as far as attitudes towards Black people were concerned. My trips downtown with my mother on the number three bus took us through Harlem. I always anticipated this part of the

ride with mixed emotions. Because everyone on the street was Negro and even the billboards advertising familiar products looked so different with Negro people drinking Coke or smoking Lucky Strikes, it felt as if we were in another country, and that made our trip like a very special adventure. I was also afraid, but my mother was sitting right next to me and I was viewing the scene from the protection of the bus. The strongest emotion I can remember, however, was sympathy for the dogs on the street. I loved dogs and even as young as I was, I knew that something as good and lovable as a dog could not be Negro. The dogs, then, had to be white and I felt sorry for them because they belonged to Negro people and had to live surrounded by Negroes. By the time I went to kindergarten, the fear that I had felt on the bus with my mother was firmly entrenched in my psyche and focused on Black men. On my way to school I passed a Negro man who was often sitting on the stoop of the building in the morning. I imagine that he was a janitor. I can see his shape, but not his face. I was friendly with the janitor in our building. I was afraid of the cellar, but not the man. He was white. For all my grammar school years, I cannot remember walking down the side of the street where the Black man sat, whether he was there or not.

I wondered how I would feel going to school with Negro students. There were very few Negro students in my elementary school, and I wasn't friendly with any of them. My only contact was with Walter, a quiet boy--at least he was quiet in school--who was in my class. I had forced myself to dance with him one day when we had ballroom dancing lessons in school. I felt very strange, but nothing had happened to me. On the

other hand, my friends and I spent many hours learning the mambo, cha cha and other Latin dances from our two friends who had recently emigrated from Puerto Rico. We invited them to the dances held at the Greek Church every Friday night and tried to teach them the lindy. While we were aware that there was prejudice against Puerto Ricans, our friends seemed to be very much like us. They and their parents had come from another country, they spoke another language at home and ate different food. In fact, to me, they seemed to have some advantages over Armenians. Although I wasn't sure where Puerto Rico was, I did know that it was a country that stood on its own--not a corner of Turkey or a part of Russia like Armenia. And the language they spoke was Spanish. There was nothing mysterious about that. It was even taught in high school. Negroes, on the other hand, weren't immigrants from anywhere that I knew about, and were, it seemed to me, nothing like me or any of my friends.

I decided that, though I may have some misgivings about going to school with Negro students, George Washington was still where I wanted to go to high school. I told my mother, and myself, that I wasn't going to associate with Negro students. I had my own friends, and they were all Greek. The argument went on for weeks and I was as resolute as my mother.

I was, however, surprised at her insistence on a private school. My parents seemed to have little interest in my school. Their response to my report cards with all As, except for math, and excellents for conduct was minimal. It was as if that was what they expected from me.

My father helped me with math, but there were no conferences with teachers. They came to open school night like most of the parents of my classmates, but they hardly seemed to know how to talk to the teachers. My mother never volunteered to help with school trips to Chinatown, museums or other city excursions as some of the other mothers did. School was controlled by the outside world, which my parents only ventured into when it was absolutely necessary.

We seemed to be at an impasse, and one day I pulled out all stops and told my mother that there was no way she could make me go to Hunter and Barnard. I was not going to go to school if I couldn't go to George Washington. She asked me what I meant, and I told her that I would just not go; that she had no control over me once I left the house and I would get off the subway and go to the movies with my lunch money. If she let me go to George Washington, I promised that I would come home for lunch every day. I won.

My victory, however, was not complete. I went to George Washington with my friends, but we were in different classes. My desire to be ordinary had been foiled. To my chagrin, I found that I was in the honor class--a class set apart for good students. As soon as I entered high school, I would try to take care of that, but most importantly, I was going to a regular school with my regular friends.

C H A P T E R I V

Though I would never admit it to my mother, there was much about George Washington High School that was intimidating and I wondered during the first few weeks of school if I had made a mistake. I had known that the school was huge, but the experience of going to school with six thousand students was overwhelming. I kept my promise to my mother and came home for lunch, but I could not just walk out of school. Since students were not permitted to leave the building during school hours, I had to get special permission to go home for lunch. I was sorry to leave my friends, but glad that I did not have to endure the lunchroom that was not only unbelievably crowded though it was a very large room, but so noisy that my friends and I had to scream at each other in order to be heard. After a few days my pass came through and I was able to eat at home just as I had in elementary school.

Even in 1952, George Washington was something of a fortress. Student monitors guarded the doors at all times to insure that only students, teachers and other school personnel entered. Visitors had to go to the office, state their business and get an authorized pass to come into our school. The movement of students within the school was also tightly controlled. If caught roaming the halls during classes without a pass, students would be punished. The order was maintained by teachers with the help of students who were required to earn a number of service points in addition to fulfilling the required academic credits in order to graduate. Monitoring the doors, the halls and the lunchroom

were only a few of the many service jobs that filled. After school, however, there were no monitors to control what happened and, as I remember it, there was at least one fight every day outside the gates of the building. Although I never got near these fights, I heard that some were the result of feuds between rival gangs. I quickly learned about these gangs and that some of them carried knives, and even zip guns. When switchblades were outlawed early in my freshman year, school officials came to every class to inform us of the new law, thereby convincing me that at least some students did carry knives.

Despite my initial fears, after the first few weeks of school I was quite comfortable at George Washington. The fights, the gangs and rumors of switchblades and zip guns were part of my environment, but they were decidedly in the background. It became clear that my assurances to my mother that I would not associate with "those people" came true. I had my own circle of friends and the school insured that my contact was limited to other honors and college prep students. My classmates were the same kind of people I knew in elementary school--mostly the children of immigrants. My fears about having to associate with Negro students were ungrounded. Although it was true that half of the students were Negro, my classes were all white except for the few electives we were allowed to take and gym class. The only other contact I had with Negro students was in my service job.

Since those of us in the honors class were expected to go to college, we were encouraged to take typing. My recollection of this class was that unlike my other classes, it was very large and included a cross

section of the school. What I remember most clearly is that the back row was occupied by boys wearing leather jackets--a sure sign in my neighborhood in the early 1950s that they were "hoods." As far as I knew their hands never touched their typewriters, but I always knew they were there because they beat out rhythms on their desks. I have no memory of the teacher trying to make them type, though she did occasionally scream at them to stop their tapping. They would shrug their shoulders, stop for a while and then slowly and quietly begin again. Sometimes the teacher sent them out of the room and I wondered how they negotiated the halls without a pass, but they were so foreign and mysterious to them that I had no real concern for their welfare.

While the typing class was big by the standard of the honors classes, the gym class was so large that there were at least two or three teachers. When we played volleyball, there were so many students on each side of the net that we had to fight with our own teammates to get to touch the ball. Volleyball became an opportunity to talk with friends. Getting our hands on the ball was rare in our basketball games too, though the teachers had devised a new way to play the game. Rather than having ten girls play, each team of five had a long line of girls on one side of the court that was part of their team. The players passed to the line rather than each other and the lucky girl who caught the ball got the opportunity to pass the ball back to a player on her team. But for most of us, basketball, like volleyball, meant nothing more than standing around talking. The gym teachers, like the typing teacher, ignored those of us who decided not to participate. About once

a month we would have dancing and I looked forward to those days not because I loved to dance, which I did, but because what happened was that the Negro girls in the class danced while most of the white students watched. I welcomed the opportunity to see these girls dance and to copy their steps. Although my friends and I considered ourselves good dancers and spent most afternoons practicing our steps, we knew we were outclassed by our Negro classmates. As much as we wanted to improve our dancing, however, we never asked them for help. One reason surely was that we were in awe of their ability, but much more importantly, we just didn't speak to Negro students.

I made one exception to this unspoken rule and that was at my service job at the pool. I loved to swim and chose to work at the pool with the hope that I might be able to find a way to get into the pool during a free period. I didn't get any special privileges at the pool, but I did experience something I hadn't counted on--a kind of friendship with a Negro girl. Of the four students who worked at the pool, taking attendance and giving out suits and towels I was the only white one. While I was uncomfortable with my situation at first, I soon grew to look forward to spending time with Madeline, one of my co-workers. As the term progressed and we got to know each other better, I also found out that Madeline was a loyal friend. One day as I was on my way from the office to the pool to take attendance, I was stopped by four Negro girls who accused me of marking them absent the previous week. All the stories I had heard about Negro and Puerto Rican girls carrying razors flooded my mind and I stood paralyzed with fear. They told me that if I

ever marked them absent again they would beat me up and one said that maybe they should give me a taste now of what I would get if I didn't do what they said. Just at that moment Madeline walked over and simply said, "she's okay." Miraculously, they left. Needless to say, that class had perfect attendance for the rest of the term and my friendship with Madeline deepened.

Shortly after this incident Madeline asked me to come to her house after school. I was surprised by this otherwise normal gesture of friendship. Madeline was a friend of mine at the pool, and though I really did like her I never considered a relationship outside of this setting. I nervously asked her where she lived and realized from the address she gave me that Madeline lived in Harlem. The fears I had about that "other country" as a young child on the number three bus with my mother were still with me. I told Madeline that I would have to ask my mother and would let her know. I counted on the probability that my mother would not let me go and she did not disappoint me. When she did refuse to let me go, however, I felt obliged to argue with her. With no real possibility of going to my friend's house I could easily be indignant that my mother was so strict and narrow minded. And there was a part of me that was genuinely upset that my friendship with Madeline was limited. Mostly, I wished that Madeline were white or at the least, that she didn't live in Harlem. When I told her that my mother would not let me go to her house, I tried to let Madeline know that I really had wanted to visit her, but I was not very convincing. Our friendship cooled. It never occurred to me to ask her to come to my house.

Madeline and I were friends for one period a week in the pool, but we lived in different countries.

While I was clearly set apart from Negro students at George Washington, I also went to a different kind of school than most of my friends. Of all my friends from elementary school and the new friends I made at George Washington, only Athena Andrews was in the honor class with me. She had fallen out of favor with the group partially because she was "a brain" and although I felt somewhat secure with my friends I did not feel confident enough to carry this stigma. It was fine for a boy to be smart, even to study hard, but for girls being smart was synonymous with being undesirable. Additionally, my mother's insistence that I was special because I was an Avakian coupled with my discomfort with being Armenian made me want to be ordinary--just like everyone else. Being in the honor class was a serious impediment to the self-image I was trying to create. There was no question in my parents' minds that I would go to college, and though I had no idea what college was about it seemed attractive to me. I couldn't let my schoolwork go altogether, but I decided that I just wouldn't be exceptional. I remember clearly the day I started my new way of learning. I was in French class, sitting next to Athena. We were working on vocabulary and we came upon a word neither of us knew though I had an idea of what it might mean from its association to other words. This time instead of following the thought through, I stopped it. Athena, who seemed to have no qualms about being smart, guessed at the meaning of the word. While I knew I could have done the same, I asked her how she knew what it

meant and didn't listen for the answer I already knew. During my years at George Washington I remained in the honor class, but my decision to slow down my learning process made me feel more comfortable.

My urge to be like everyone else--to try to change anything that made me different, particularly my ethnicity--was intensified by something that happened when I was fourteen years old. As far back as I can remember my grandmother periodically told me that she would tell me her story, but when I asked her to tell it she merely said she would when it was time. As I grew older I became more insistent each time she said she was going to tell me, but despite my pleas she only shook her head and retreated into what seemed to me a deep and mysterious sorrow. I don't know what criteria she used to determine the right time, but when I was fourteen I had come of age and I heard her story.

She began by telling me about her life with my grandfather in Kastemoni, Turkey. I patiently waited while she told me about her husband. I was used to her familiar description of my grandfather as the most wonderful, intelligent and kind man in the world. This time her praises were embellished with how well he provided for her and their three children. As she described her house, the servants she had and how wonderful their life was, it seemed that the story I had waited so long to hear was going to be just another tale of how much better life was in the old country, or as my family called it, "the other side." Aunty Ars and Uncle George occasionally told my cousins and me about how good life had been in that other land. "On the other side," for example, vegetables grew to be much bigger than they did in this country.

Lemons were as large as grapefruits and cabbages were so huge that only one would fit in the cart. I now listened to my grandmother with some of the same skepticism my cousins and I had for the wonders of Turkey.

Her story began to lose its idyllic quality, however, when she told me that one day my grandfather was taken away to be in the Turkish army. She never heard from or saw him again. Sometime later she came home from church on a Sunday to find that the doors of her house had been sealed. She went to the town square where all the other Armenians, whose homes had been similarly barred, assembled. Town officials were there to tell them that they would soon be sent into the interior of the country and that until that time they would have access only to one room of their homes. The police commissioner, who had been a friend of my grandfather's, wanted to help my grandmother. He advised her to become a Turk--to renounce Christianity and become a Moslem. Although he warned her of the great danger she and her three children faced, she said she could not give up her religion and would face the consequences with the rest of her people.

The day for their departure soon came. My grandmother and her children were exiled with other relatives, all women and children as the other Armenian men in the town had had the same fate as my grandfather. Because they were lucky to have been assigned to a kind soldier, she said, the journey was not too difficult, but they were taken to a place so barbaric that the people who lived there had never heard of Christians. Despite their lack of "civilization," however, they treated my grandmother and her family fairly well. They were given one room and

provided with some food, but the women were very fearful nonetheless. Some nights they would hear noises in the room and they would all crouch behind the door until they no longer heard anything. One night the noises were so persistent that they stayed there until morning only to find that a bird had gotten caught in the chimney.

After some time two soldiers came and took my grandmother's eight-year old son away to make him, she said, into a Turk. She left her two daughters in the care of her relatives and bartered the few pieces of jewelry she had managed to bring with her for Turkish clothes and set out to where she thought her son had been taken. She found him in a detention camp for Armenian boys. She walked to Kastemoni to ask the police commissioner who had warned her of the impending danger for help. He told her that he could help her only if she would become a Turk and this time she agreed. He arranged for the release of her son from the camp, as well as the return of her daughters and other relatives from exile.

Although they were all reunited in Kastemoni, life was very difficult. My grandmother was outraged that her neighbors spied on her to make sure the family was performing Moslem prayers at the appropriate times of day. And, she said, they were very poor. She earned money by going out into the countryside to sell pins, needles and other sewing necessities. Years later Uncle Charlie, my grandfather's nephew, heard about their fate and sent money for my grandmother and her children to come to America.

She sat back when she finished relieved, it seemed, to have finally told her story. "That is my story, yavroos*" she said "and I want you to tell it to the world."

I didn't want to tell it to anyone. I was sorry that I had heard it. My grandfather had been taken away and had disappeared. My grandmother, aunt, uncle and even my mother had been sent into a barbaric land alone to survive as best they could and then forced to become Turks, practicing a strange uncivilized religion. Why? Why had all of those horrible things happened to them? My grandmother explained that the Turks were devils who hated Armenians, but the whole thing was totally incomprehensible to me. A people who were unknown to most of the world, at least as I saw it, were hated so much when they were recognized that they were forced to leave their homes, to give up their religion and even killed. I was sorry that my grandmother had told me her story. I was sorry that I had asked her to tell me. I didn't want to know it. It was bad enough to be unknown, strange and different from everyone else, but unbearable to be despised. I would forget it.

Superficially, it was easy not to think about it. No one else in the family ever talked about it. My mother had been in the apartment when my grandmother was telling her story, but she had stayed out of the dining room where we were sitting. She never asked me about it, and I had the sense that she did not approve of my grandmother telling me. My uncle talked about hating Turks and there were occasional comments from other family members about the "Turkish devils," but my family had

*Yavroos--Armenian word meaning darling.

negative opinions about many groups of people. Their hatred of Turks, however, was confusing. We seemed to be so connected to Turkey ourselves. The "other side" was, after all, Turkey. Some of our favorite foods were Turkish. It was a very special occasion when my grandmother made atleakmak, a Turkish meat turnover. She would make them, one at a time, and my mother would bring them into the dining room. We would eat them, moaning all the while about how wonderful they were, and even from her rather bad vantage point in the kitchen, my grandmother always knew exactly how many atleakmaks each of us had eaten. We danced Turkish and Armenian dances to Turkish music, and the men of the family played tavloo (backgammon) for hours on end, shouting the numbers after each roll of the dice in Arabic. Older family members were fluent in Turkish and spoke it whenever they didn't want children to understand what they were saying. And the coffee that provided the focus for our afternoon rituals was Turkish coffee.

How could it be that my family could hate what was so intimately woven into the fabric of their lives? The atleakmaks, the tavloo, the music and the coffee were very real, but the story my grandmother had told me was remote and unbelievable. Could it be that she had made it up? Why didn't anyone else talk about it? Although I had serious questions about what she had told me, I didn't discuss them with anyone. Maybe I didn't want her story corroborated. As it was, it was something she told me one afternoon and mentioned only rarely when she reminded me that she wanted me to tell the world. What her story did do for me at

fourteen years of age was to make me even more determined to deny my ethnicity.

I would change my ways and try to get my family to change too. The fights that had begun in elementary school intensified. Although I had loved most Armenian food, I began to refuse to eat certain dishes and berated my mother for not serving American food--Wonder Bread, potato chips, Lipton Chicken Noodle Soup, steak and potatoes. She had nothing but disdain for these American delicacies. Americans were stupid about many things and food was no exception. I had learned, too, that Americans were generally not as clean as Armenians. In cooking class, for example, we washed the dish towels after drying the dishes. I came home with the news that Americans were so meticulous that they washed their towels after every use. My mother's reply was quick and sure. "They" have to do that, she informed me, because "they" don't really get their dishes clean. As for their food, it could even be dangerous. The potato chips were sure to be fried in some unmentionable grease rather than in butter or olive oil which were the only acceptable shortenings. My father, who was in the wholesale butter and egg business, added his knowledge about the cheese that Americans ate. My beloved Velveeta, which I had convinced my mother to buy, was not really cheese at all, according to my father, but a cheese food which could be harmful if eaten in large quantities. I was sorry at that point that I had brought up the subject of food, since Velveeta's quality now came under discussion. My father brought home real cheese--five pound bricks of Muenster

which my mother and grandmother peeled and cut into pieces and stored in a brine of salt water.

Only the hamburger deserved respect, but making it like Americans did was beyond the skills of every woman in the family. Everyone had her own formula for making this simple, but elusive dish. Some put chopped parsley in the meat and breaded the patties; another mixed the meat with ice water. Some said that the meat wasn't supposed to be touched too much; others that it had to be handled roughly. Despite all of their attempts, however, everyone knew that only Americans could make good hamburgers. But except for this fluke, Americans had nothing to teach Armenians about food. An Armenian idiom, "they don't know the taste of their own mouths," summarized how the family felt about the American palate.

While I considered the attempt to change my family's eating habits to be important, the real battle was over how much control my parents and the extended family would exercise over me. The arguments with my mother, which had begun in the last year of elementary school over spending time with my friends instead of going to visit relatives on the weekends, now took on monumental proportions. I not only wanted to be with my friends, I wanted to get away from my family. There were some exceptions, of course. I still was very close to my cousin Susan and I loved Aunty Ars dearly, but I began to refuse to attend many family events. On a conscious level I did not think about what my grandmother had told me, but unconsciously the knowledge that I belonged to a people who were despised for what they were contributed to my drive to get as

far away from being Armenian as possible. The family, with its adherence to old world traditions, was Armenia.

My rage at my mother for her strict controls over me, at the family for demanding so much of my time, the Turks for having done what they did to my family, and at my grandmother for having lived through such horror and for telling it to me began to erupt. I would be like my friends. I would tweeze my eyebrows. I would wear lipstick. I would go out with boys. And, most of all, I would get away from my family as soon as I could.

My friends became my support network. The closely knit circle of friends I was a part of in elementary school expanded to include new friends, but remained basically intact. Rachel, though she went to another high school, was still very much a part of our group and had become my best friend. She was the only Jew in our group which was still mostly Greek. It never occurred to me, on a conscious level at least, that Rachel and I had a common history. I knew that her parents had to leave Germany because they were Jews, but I was only dimly aware of the holocaust. Rachel never talked about being Jewish and seemed to have no particular anger towards Germans. Her feelings about our new German friend, Marjorie Bismark, were like the rest of us, at least as far as I knew. We felt sorry for Marjorie who had no father and lived with her mother and aunt who spoke no English. They were very poor and we could never have thought of Marjorie's mother or aunt as being in any way responsible for what happened to Rachel's parents. Marjorie was German and I knew that our enemy in the war was Germany, but there was no

connection between that abstract enemy and Marjorie. Rachel, like me, acted as if she had no troublesome past. But we were both unlike our Greek friends who spoke Greek at home and seemed eager to participate in their culture. Rachel and I, on the other hand, were rejecting our ethnicity and trying as hard as we could to be Americans.

Our main interests were clothes, dancing and boys. Thalia had no problems with clothes since her mother continued to turn out whatever she wanted on the old Singer treadle, but Rachel and I had to find ways to supplement the less than adequate wardrobes our mothers agreed to buy us. We both knew how to sew, but neither of us was very good at it, so we spent many of our afternoons on Dykeman Street in second hand clothing stores. Other afternoons were spent with Thalia, perfecting our dance steps. Dancing was the focus of our social life. Friday nights were generally spent at the Greek church dancing to a juke box, and sometimes one of us would give a party and we danced to records.

For most of my friends the primary function of boys was as dancing partners. While I was exceptional in having boyfriends, the main difference between my friends and me was that after the dance or the party, my current flame and I walked home together. When we reached my building we spent a few minutes kissing, with closed mouths of course. My only formal date was at the end of my freshman year in high school. I had been seeing Dickie who was a senior and he asked me to go out with him on senior night. There were no dances at George Washington High School, not even a senior prom, but seniors chose one night when they went to one of the nightclubs downtown.

I was very excited. The nightclub chosen that year was the Copacabana. My friends and I never went downtown at night. My parents occasionally took me to Broadway and 42nd Street to see the lights and we usually took at least one trip down Fifth Avenue at night during the Christmas season, but none of my friends or I had ever been on a date downtown. Our world consisted of the few square blocks around 190th Street which comprised our neighborhood with occasional excursions to 181st Street for clothes hunting or to go to the movies.

My main problem was how to convince my mother to let me go. Not only was this my first date, but we were going to a nightclub. And Dickie himself presented an obstacle. I knew my mother's first response would either be "no," or "what is he?" She asked the question instead of immediately telling me that I couldn't go and I was ready with my answer, "He's Spanish, but from a very good family." Then she said no. We argued for weeks, generally over the television which was usually not on in the afternoon. I was surprised to come home from school and find my mother watching the screen with a worried and serious look on her face. During our first battle over my date with Dickie I too looked at the screen and saw not a game or variety show, but men sitting at tables talking and sometimes screaming at each other. I took time out from arguing to ask what that show was all about and my mother told me that it was from Washington--some kind of hearings with a man named Joe McCarthy. I don't know whether she finally let me go out with Dickie because she was so distracted by the McCarthy hearings or because my constant badgering just wore her down, but I did get to go to the Copa.

I did not have another date for more than a year, but that would be in another place. I was quite content going to dances and parties with groups of friends whether or not I had a boyfriend to walk me home. By the time I was fifteen, I was approaching a sense of self-assurance and ease with my peers, but it was not to last.

C H A P T E R V

Early in 1954 my parents told me that they were thinking about moving to New Jersey. I was horrified. Why would they want to do such a thing? We lived in a nice neighborhood. I loved my school and my friends. My parents, however, informed me that our neighborhood was not so nice anymore since so many Puerto Ricans were moving in and they had decided that they did not want my brother to grow up in the city. It had been fine for me, I argued. Couldn't they wait just two more years until I graduated from high school? But they were determined to save my brother from the neighborhood and they now spent their weekends with realtors.

I didn't argue with my parents when they assumed that I would join them on their search for the new house. I was curious about what the house might look like and we were usually home by late afternoon and I could still be with my friends in the evening. We always began at a real estate office where the broker talked with my parents about the kind of house they wanted. Among the questions about size, price and location there was always one about what church they attended. My mother was usually the one to answer, "We are Episcopal." I was very confused by this lie. My mother had told me our church was like the Episcopal church but when my parents went to church it was to the Armenian church. My mother told me that the realtors wanted to make sure that we were Christians before they showed us a house. She seemed glad that we would live in an area that didn't allow Jews. I quietly

thought of Rachel. After a few weeks of looking at small houses on streets that all looked the same, I convinced my parents to leave me home when they went to look for their new house. I didn't really believe that they were going to move anyway, and I hated all the houses and the realtors with their questions.

Despite my denial, however, it did happen. My parents bought a three bedroom ranch style house in Glen Rock, New Jersey. We moved that June. Because of my refusal to accompany them, I hadn't seen the house before moving day. I walked around the small rooms of perfectly measured space. There were no long hallways, no deep closets, and the low ceilings made everything seem closed in. There was nowhere to go in that house--no cozy nook to escape to. Our phone in the city, for example, was at the end of a long hallway away from the center of the living space, but here it was right in the middle of the galley kitchen with no possibility of privacy. I wanted to die. How did they expect us to live in this box? But they seemed very content with the house with the one exception that it did not have a separate dining room, but they had decided to build one on.

For me, there was only one positive thing about this house. I would no longer share a room with my grandmother, but would have a room all to myself for the first time in my life. My brother would share the small bedroom at the back of the house with my grandmother. Given their intensely close relationship it seemed right that they should share a room, although I did have some pangs of guilt that I would have my own

room while my nine-year old brother would share his with an ancient woman.

I was as disturbed by the environment around our new house as I was with the house itself. The surrounding streets were divided into measured plots. A ranch house exactly like ours or a split level variation on the same theme sat in the middle of each plot. As far as I walked in either direction the scene was the same except for the small shopping center eight blocks away. The supermarket, drug store, dairy and bakery were surrounded by a parking lot. No one, it seemed, walked anywhere in New Jersey. Early in the morning men walked by our house on their way to the bus which would take them to their jobs in New York City and in the evening they would return. During the day, only the mailman walked on the sidewalks. Even children were rarely on the street as they each had their own little plot of land behind their house. Although there was a kind of main street in Glen Rock, the two blocks of stores, the town hall, the library and the train station where most men went to their jobs in the city, had nothing to offer me. After days of roaming the streets looking for a neighborhood, I gave up. I knew there must be people my age in the town, but I ran out of places to look for them. I understood, too, why the sidewalks were empty. There was nothing to walk to. No streets lined with shops. In New Jersey people drove to shopping centers, I supposed, to buy their clothes and food. Here, no one walked to the soda fountain to sit for an hour or more sipping a freshly squeezed orangeade and watching for friends to drop in and come over to your table.

My mother didn't drive, and the only public transportation was to the city of Paterson. I spent the rest of the summer hanging around the house with my mother and grandmother. My brother had quickly found friends as our area, I would never call it a neighborhood, was populated mostly by young married couples and their pre-adolescent children. They had moved to the right place for him, it seemed, but the wrong place for me. I spent most days that I could not find a way to get to the city to visit my friends lying on our little plot of land in the blazing New Jersey sun trying to get a tan and wondering what kids my age would be like in this strange place when I finally did get to see them.

One weekend, towards the end of the summer, my parents drove me past the school I would attend. It was in Ridgewood, the next town. Although there were not nearly as many students attending Ridgewood High School as George Washington, the building looked almost as large. With its ivy covered brick walls, clock tower, terraced lawns and huge trees it looked more like what I imagined a college campus to look like than a high school. It sat on a small hill facing a football field which was being watered although school would not be open for weeks. Looking at this idyllic scene, I began to think that my parents might have been right to move us out of the city. This school fit the image of the American high school. They obviously had a football team. There was a football field, but no team at my old school. My cousin Howard told me that the year he went to George Washington it had been discovered that some of the "students" on the team were in their twenties and were part of a gambling ring. Football at George Washington was banned for twenty

years. Looking at this field with its neat bleachers on either side I imagined that such a school probably also had dances, proms, yearbooks as well as a football team that probably played its big game on Thanksgiving Day. It might be that here I could really become an American.

The months of anticipation that were tinged with dread were finally over. I rose early on the first day of school and dressed in the best clothes I had. After days of thought about what I would wear on the first day of school I had decided on my fullest skirt and a new blouse that picked up the aqua in the print of the skirt, a wide cinch belt that I had found on Dyckman Street with Rachel and my red flats. They weren't Capezios, which I could not afford, but a damn good copy. When I reached the bus stop I was delighted to see a group of girls waiting for the bus. They all lived in the area and seemed friendly enough. We boarded the bus which, I was surprised to find, only went to the center of town. As we came into Ridgewood, my fear of this new school that looked so different from what I had known ebbed as I got off the bus with the other girls from Glen Rock. I knew that I was on my way to a homeroom that was just like all the others in the school, since there was no tracking at Ridgewood High. Almost all of the students went to college. When I reached my room everyone seemed to be talking to people they knew and I quietly sat and waited for the teacher to enter. We began the day with a reading from the Bible. Although I was somewhat uncomfortable because I didn't know whether to bow my head during the reading or cross myself at the end, I knew that I had come to America and I was glad.

When I returned to homeroom for the last period of the day, I had thought it had begun well enough. My classmates seemed very different to me in ways that I could not articulate, but they had seemed friendly enough, for the first day at least. When the bell rang my teacher called me aside and told me to report to the office. While my days of getting excellent marks on my conduct report had been over since I had taken to being the class clown at the end of elementary school, I had never been called to the office before. I had been very quiet all day, dutifully listening to my teachers and even taking notes. Had I broken some rule I didn't know about? But as I walked to the office my optimism returned and I thought that maybe the school counselor wanted to know how my first day had been.

As I approached the door to the office a man gruffly asked me if I was Arlene Avakian, stumbling over my last name. When I responded that I was, he told me that I had a detention. I looked at him totally puzzled. A detention sounded bad. I neither knew what it was nor why I had it. He informed me in the same gruff voice that it was a punishment and I would have to stay after school for the length of a class period. Before I could ask what I had done he told me that he was going to make sure I behaved myself and that he had to teach city kids like me a lesson right away. He turned and left before I could ask again what I had done. I held back my tears of rage and hurt and silently cursed my parents for bringing me to such a place. When the period was over I walked the long distance to the bus alone. When I got home my mother was angry because I was home so late, but when I told her what had

happened she was silent. We never talked about it again. If P.S. 189 and George Washington High School had been remote for my parents, Ridgewood High School was clearly in another world. I imagined she thought that if the people at school thought I deserved a punishment, I had better accept it and hope that it wouldn't happen again.

When I got to the bus stop the next morning the girls I had met the day before asked me where I had been after school. I told them what had happened and they were, like my mother, silent. I expressed my outrage at being treated so badly. Didn't the people in the school know I had come from the honor class? They merely said that Mr. Poffinberger, that was the first time I'd heard his name, was awful and that everyone hated him. I sensed that though they thought the assistant principal was too strict, nevertheless they might have shared his fear of "city kids." What did they think about people who lived in the city? I wondered if they thought that George Washington was like the school depicted in The Blackboard Jungle? But no one, neither the girls at the bus stop nor Mr. Poffinberger, had accused me of anything other than being from the city.

As the weeks wore on I became less and less comfortable at school. I had many encounters with people who asked me fantastic questions about the city. Had I used dope? Did I sell it? I didn't even know what dope was, except that it was something bad kids used. Had I ever seen a tree before? I thought they were really stupid. Had they never heard of Central Park or the Bronx Zoo? How could they live only eleven miles away from one of the greatest cities in the world and be so ignorant? I

patiently answered their questions and tried my best to educate them. But they were not interested.

The initial friendliness of my classmates never went beyond that. I was not asked to anyone's house after school or to any other social events. The school did have dances as I had hoped, but girls did not go unless they had dates. Nothing could be done, it seemed, in New Jersey without a date. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, a boy in one of my classes asked me to one of the dances. While it felt strange to go out with someone I hardly knew, I hoped that we would meet some of his friends at the dance. The dance was a real disappointment. My date merely said hello to his friends. He neither sat with them nor introduced me. I didn't really have any friends to meet at the dance, so the time was spent dancing slow dances since my date didn't know how to lindy. I didn't ask if he knew how to mambo or cha cha since I had already found out that I was the only student in the school who knew these dances. The gym teacher had asked me to teach the class and I had gladly agreed. I had hoped that I would make some friends by showing off my dancing skill, but the girls in New Jersey were not interested in dancing.

My date didn't seem very interested in talking to me or anyone else and the long evening finally came to an end. Like so many of the other students, my date had his own car and we went to a drive in for something to eat. While we waited for our hot dogs and root beer in silence, I thought it would be nice to hear some music and reached for the knob of the car radio when he grabbed my hand and told me it was his car

and he would decide whether we would have music. I quickly ate my hot dog and anxiously waited for him to take me home, but he had other plans. He drove down a deserted road, parked the car and moved over to kiss me. When I resisted his advances he became furious, muttered something about me being from the city and started the car. That was my last date with a boy from Ridgewood High School. I guessed that he passed the word that I was not the easy mark he had thought I was.

Most of my female classmates also seemed totally uninterested in me after I told them that I did not know what dope was, but there was one group of girls who were very friendly. Although they seemed kind of tough and were definitely not the kind of people I would prefer to be with, I was pretty desperate for friends and spent some time with them. After a few weeks they asked me to join their club. I had heard nothing about it, but that was not real concern since I knew so little about what went on at the school. It was, however, not one of the many school clubs. In addition to the academically oriented clubs like Spanish, French, math and science, there were clubs for tennis, golf, bridge, photography and even aviation. The club my new friends were in, however, did not seem to have any particular focus, but it did have an elaborate initiation ritual which they described to me in great detail and with relish. What it amounted to was that the initiate stripped in front of the club members and though it wasn't stated explicitly, there was an insinuation that the club included boys. If that was the initiation, I didn't want to know what the activities were. My city friends

and I were quite prudish and here I was in the "wholesome" suburbs being asked to join some kind of sex club.

While I declined the offer of this club, I thought the idea of joining a club was a good way to get to know people outside of school. I perused the list of clubs. The radio, science and math clubs were not interesting to me and besides there were no girls in them. The girls' clubs were the commercial club, Future Teachers of America, and Nightingales and since I didn't want to be a secretary, teacher or a nurse, these were out of the question. I didn't have a tennis racquet, golf clubs, a camera, or a plane, so these clubs too were not real possibilities. Bridge was something ladies played in the afternoon and I was not ready for that yet. There was no dance club, so I chose bowling because I had bowled once when I went to North Carolina with my cousin Susan. The Bowling Club was more of the same. The bowlers all knew each other and I remained an outsider to what seemed to me a closed group.

I was clearly different from everyone else and my difference was decidedly not an asset. I began to study the other students in the school to determine what made me so different. They didn't look like me or any of my friends from the city. I knew they weren't all blonds, but most of the students, particularly the school leaders had light skin even if they had brown hair. Their names, too, were familiar enough, but not like the names of anyone I knew: Doris Lane, Muffy Tipton, Yvonne LaGuerre, Chuck Anderson, Carol Smith, Roger Wolf. They had names like characters in the movies, not like the people in my neighborhood. There were a few Italians, and some of them were in the club I

had been asked to join, fewer Jews, and two or three Blacks. As far as I knew I was the only Armenian, and there were no Greeks.

As I walked the halls or sat in the lunchroom or study hall I listened to the conversations around me. It seemed as if most of their mothers belonged to the Ridgewood Women's Club and their parents seemed to know each other. Many had free use of their mother's charge cards at the expensive store in the middle of town and they spent their afternoons shopping for Dalton cashmere sweaters and English wool skirts. They wore the "classic" clothes of B. Altman and Lord & Taylor that my mother had bought for me when I was younger.

As I listened, watched and asked questions of the few people who did talk to me I found that those of us who came from the towns surrounding Ridgewood were considered "lower" than those who lived in the town. But even within Ridgewood there were divisions. Most of the school leaders lived in Upper Ridgewood, the most expensive part of what I had come to realize was a town of very rich people. While many of the students who came from the towns surrounding Ridgewood were not rich, students from Upper Ridgewood set the standard that most other students strove to attain. It seemed to me that a majority of the students came from families that could afford to give them more than mine could. So many of the students had cars, for example, that there was a large parking lot set aside for students and it was filled with everything from late model sports cars to jalopies. I learned that it was unusual for parents to give their children, particularly their sons, a car for their sixteenth birthday. For the first time in my life I felt poor, and

though I had felt like an outsider before, at Ridgewood High I felt like an outcast.

By the end of the first term I had found a few other "outcasts" and we shared our hatred of the school. Mimi Kopecky was blonde and had very fair skin, but beyond these physical attributes had as little in common with the Ridgewood type as I did. She, too, had moved to Ridgewood from a city, but unlike me she carried an extra burden of living in a rented house in the center of town. Mimi's mother was dead and she lived with her father and her older brother Freddy. Freddy was a senior at Ridgewood High and though he was also blond, very tall and good looking he had not made it into the "in" crowd. Unlike us, however, Freddy was a part of a small group who were known as "the hoods." I don't know what they did to deserve their reputation as bad kids, but they wore their hair long and slicked back, drove motorcycles and usually had cigarettes dangling between their lips.

Through Mimi I met Octavius Pitzalis Jr., known to his friends as Pitzie. He had grown up in Ridgewood, but though his parents were very rich he also had had problems when he had been a student at Ridgewood High. Pitzie's family were immigrants from Italy and ran a beauty salon in the center of town. Pitzie and I became great friends. I loved being in his house, hearing his family talk to each other in Italian. It was like an island of ethnicity in a WASP world, though Pitzie and I never talked about his Italian background. We shared our disdain for Ridgewood and its narrow-minded provincialism as well as our love for the City. With Mimi and a few other friends in school and Pitzie after

school, I was able to bear the long lonely days. As often as my parents would let me, I went to the City and relaxed in the company of my old friends.

My feelings of being an outcast at Ridgewood High came not only from the students, but the teachers as well. While I didn't have any more problems with Mr. Poffenberger, I felt as if my teachers expected very little from me academically. At George Washington I felt different because I was an honor student, and at Ridgewood my teachers assumed that I was part of the very small minority of students who would not go to college. After trying not to be a "brain," I was now at the opposite pole. Both situations made me uninterested in academics and when I was counselled to take sewing in my senior year I did not object although I knew there were other courses I should be taking.

The days of being an honor student were decidedly behind me. I had striven to be average and it seemed clear that I was. The discovery of my brother's I.Q. certainly contributed to this feeling. One day my mother excitedly told me that she had found out that my brother had a very high I.Q. In the 1950s the numbers that were the result of tests administered to school children were considered to be absolute fact of the genetic entity of intelligence. These numbers were so powerful, in fact, that they were closely guarded secrets known only to school personnel. I had always wondered what my number was, but I thought there was no way to find it out. I asked my mother how she learned Paul's number. She told me that an Armenian woman who worked at the testing agency had noticed my brother's score. She had, of course, known he was

Armenian by the "ian" at the end of his last name. It was her habit to inform Armenian parents of their children's scores if they were particularly high. She didn't know us, but asked all of her friends if they knew any Avakians and finally found one who knew my family. This woman called my mother to tell her that my brother had a very high number, though her friend did not tell her the exact figure. My mother was ecstatic and said that if only one of her children was very smart she was glad that it was Paul because he was a boy. Although I had striven all these years to be ordinary, my heart sank when I heard the news that there was incontrovertible truth that, indeed, I was ordinary. This woman had worked for the agency for years and my number had obviously not impressed her. But, I agreed with my mother. It was better that Paul had gotten those genes. Boys did need to be smarter than girls.

Except for my grandmother who maintained that she had always known that her Paul was brilliant, my family's focus of attention on my brother intensified after they received proof of his intelligence. Even my father, who was generally not easily excited, was drawn into the plans for Paul's future. His best friend in Paris had been a doctor. Maybe Paul would like to go to medical school. My mother, on the other hand, had visions of West Point. She thought it would be wonderful if Paul became a general like President Eisenhower whom she liked because he was "such a gentleman."

Paul was ten years old and my parents were already planning his career. I was sixteen and beginning to apply to colleges, but my parents seemed unconcerned about where I would go and what I would do. My

father's comments were that he thought I should go to a girl's school and be a teacher. I thought he was ridiculous. I liked boys and I was not going to isolate myself from half of the human population. Besides, college was a place to find a husband as well as get a degree. As for teaching, I hated school and the thought of spending my life teaching was repulsive. He merely shook his head and said that teaching was a good profession for a woman.

I didn't have any idea what I wanted to do, but I did know one thing about college. It was a way to get away from home, and I desperately wanted to do that. After my time in Ridgewood High I was determined to go to a place that would be comfortable. I would have loved to have gone to college with some of my friends from the City, but none of them who had decided to go to college considered going away. They would stay in the City and go to Hunter or City College.

Finding a college that would fill my need to be accepted by my classmates was my main criterion for choosing the school, but how to find it was a real problem. My counselor at school was not much help. I sensed that like my teachers she didn't really think I was "college material," but she did suggest that I go to hear the various representatives from colleges that visited our school regularly. When the representative from Alfred University came to Ridgewood to talk about the small college in western New York State he emphasized the friendliness of the campus and I was sold. I went through the ritual of the required meeting with my counselor to discuss my choice. As she told me that Alfred had a good academic standing I wondered if she meant "good

enough for you," but I didn't really care. I told my parents of my choice and my father raised his objection to a co-ed school, but I was determined and he agreed to let me go, "if you can get in." I expected to get into college and I was merely waiting for graduation day when I could get out of Ridgewood High School and away from home.

C H A P T E R V I

I was accepted to Alfred University and despite the fact that no one I knew had heard of the small liberal arts school in western New York State that also included the New York State schools of ceramic engineering and ceramic design, I knew I had made the right decision. The response of my friends and family to my choice was generally, "Alfred? Where's that?" Explaining where Alfred was located was almost as hard as trying to tell people where Armenia was, but had none of the emotional impact. I didn't care that the town of Alfred was so small that it was hard to find on a map and that it was more than two hours away from any place that people could recognize. I had made the choice to go to this unknown school. My confidence in my decision was based on the assurances of Alfred's representative to Ridgewood High School that the campus was friendly and because this aspect of campus life was emphasized in the literature I received when I wrote for an application. Alfred had also met the other criterion that was important to me and to all the women I knew at Ridgewood High--the ratio of male to female students. Although I knew other schools had a higher proportion of males to females, Alfred's ratio of two males for every female was clearly within the acceptable range. In 1956 these numbers were important not because they would help to determine whether schools discriminated against women, but because they indicated the availability of dates.

I had made the choice to go to Alfred virtually alone. The school counselor didn't seem to have much interest in where I went to school. My parents, relatives and friends from the city knew as little about colleges as I did. My father and his cousins had immigrated to this country to go to Columbia, but they seemed to know nothing about other schools. As far as I knew, attending college had not even been a dream for my mother and her sister and brother. I had heard from my mother's mother that my grandfather had valued education, but after the genocide even elementary school was a luxury my grandmother could not afford. She tried to enroll her children in a school for Armenian orphans that had been established by relief agencies, but since she was alive and her children were not orphans, they were not admitted. By the time they came to the United States, my aunt was eighteen--too old for school. She did, however, enroll in an English class for immigrants, but was so overwhelmed by the large class with its great variety of people speaking many different languages that she did not return after the first night. Her "school" she often told me, had been the radio which she listened to whenever she could to learn English. Her younger brother Ashot was more ambitious. Although he worked full time to supplement my grandmother's meager income, he attended night school with the hope of earning his high school diploma. After a year of working long hours as an apprentice photo engraver and trying to keep up with schoolwork in a language he was just beginning to learn, he dropped out. My mother, the youngest, was the only one in her family who went to day school. When she was old enough to work, my grandmother wanted her to leave school, but

Ashot insisted that she stay in school. At least one of them, he argued, would have a high school diploma.

Both my mother's and my father's sides of the family seemed pleased that I was going to college, though I had the sense that if I had chosen not to my mother's relatives would not have cared. For my father's side of the family, however, it was unthinkable that an Avakian child would not have higher education. The main point of daughters attending college, however, was so they could find appropriate mates. My parents, like most of my aunts and uncles, had accepted the probability that their children would not marry Armenians, though they would of course prefer that they did. My mother's family was mainly interested that the men the women in the family married were good providers, but for my father's family a college education and the middle class status it implied was crucial. They made little distinction among colleges except that they knew that Harvard, Yale and Princeton were the best education this country had to offer. Since they were all male schools and I never heard about the best the country had to offer to women who wanted higher education, the choice of a college for the women in the family was not a real concern. For women, college was college.

None of my friends from the City considered going away to school. Their options were limited to going to work or attending one of the City Colleges. For a short time I considered applying to City College where Rachel had decided to go, but I was never really serious about attending school in the City. What I wanted from college was to get away from home and to experience the social life a "real" college offered. I

discussed Alfred with my City friends, but they could not fathom going to live in a small town away from New York.

What I was able to share with them, however, was preparation for going away--the building of my wardrobe. The arguments with my mother over clothes had virtually ended when I decided to get a job after school and during the summers, as I bought most of my own clothes. My mother disapproved of most of my choices because they were "cheap," but I didn't care. I augmented my carefully chosen purchases with clothes I made. The sewing class I had taken my senior year in high school had improved my skills and I was able to turn out acceptable skirts, slacks, bermuda shorts, and even a jacket. My aunt, who worked in a coat factory, helped by bringing home usable remnants.

While I was frantically sewing and looking for bargains, my mother and grandmother made me a comforter. I had told them that I didn't want it--that an ordinary blanket would be just fine--but they were convinced that I was going to the end of the earth and that it would be very cold there. They sent to Turkey for the necessary materials despite my assurances that Alfred was not Alaska and that I was sure the dorm I was going to live in would be heated. My cousins in Turkey sent the raw wool that would become the filling and the large piece of patterned silk for the front of the comforter. For days the house smelled like wet wool as my mother and grandmother washed the wool by hand and set it on brown paper to dry. It dried into hard matted clumps which they then spent days pulling apart until they had a huge mass of soft and fluffy wool. I would have nothing to do with this process. When my mother

asked me to help I refused saying that I had never wanted it in the first place and I was too busy sewing. When it was finally finished, I reluctantly put the large, bulky comforter in the pile of things I was taking to college. I was sure I would be the only person at school with such a thing, but I guessed it would be warm. By September the set of plaid luggage I had bought myself was full of what I considered to be the right clothes. Although I wished I had been able to buy or make more, I was fairly confident that my collection was adequate.

The day to leave for school had finally arrived and when my father had finished packing the car with my things there was barely room for my parents and me to sit. My spirits were high as we set off on the eight hour drive to Alfred. After stopping for lunch in the Catskills, we headed westward into the most desolate and isolated countryside I had ever seen. As I looked out at the scene of mountains and trees with only a few houses scattered here and there, I quietly wondered what kind of place I was going to. My anxiety increased as the scene became more and more sparsely populated as we approached Alfred. What kind of people would choose to go to a school so far away from civilization? I hadn't known that the school was in such an isolated area. Would there be any students at Alfred from the City or would they all be from Upstate?

I thought about my visit with my "big sister," a senior at Alfred who had called during the summer to invite me to meet with her. I looked forward to asking her the many questions I had wondered about since I had been admitted. I immediately made it clear that I was not

from New Jersey, but had only moved there recently. I also intimated that my experience at Ridgewood High was not very pleasant. Picking up on my fear that I would have a difficult time at Alfred socially, she assured me that students at the school were not snobs. The campus was, as the man who had come to my high school had said, friendly. Although my "big sister" was from New Jersey, she didn't seem at all like the students I had encountered at Ridgewood High. She told me that she loved her years at Alfred and was looking forward to returning in the fall. Only reviewing that conversation over and over again in my mind kept me from giving in to the tears that had begun to form behind my eyes. I hoped my parents hadn't noticed that I had become very quiet since we left the familiar resort area of the Catskills. The lump in my throat was so large I knew I wouldn't be able to speak if they had asked me a question. The last thing in the world I wanted to do was to give them any indication that I might have made a mistake. I had decided on this college by myself and did as much as I could without their help. I couldn't afford to let them know I had any doubts.

When we drove into the town of Alfred, the desolation gave way to the bustling atmosphere of a small college town on the day the freshmen arrive. The sight of the dorm for freshmen women, an old brick building that reminded me of our apartment house in the city, dissolved the lump in my throat. As my father pulled up to the curb two young men approached the car. They were football players and were there to help us carry my things up to my room on the third floor. When we got to my room my roommate was saying goodby to her father. My parents exchanged

glances when Mr. Cerrito, dressed in a pinstripe suit, introduced himself and said he lived in Buffalo. I was glad that my roommate was Italian and from a big city, but I knew my parents were thinking that her father was probably a gangster.

The young man who had been helping us brought up the last load and told us that the stores in town, including the banks, had opened that Sunday to accommodate the freshmen. Because my father wanted to open a checking account for me, we walked the short distance to the main street. While my mother and I waited, my father opened my account. I wondered why I had to have a checking account, but it seemed to be the thing to do as the small bank was crowded with freshmen and their parents. When he returned, my father handed me a checkbook and began explaining that I could use checks like money, but I would have to keep track of the amount I spent to be sure not to overdraw the account. Never having used checks before, I was confused by what he was telling me. I knew that my checking account would probably prove to be a disaster, but I was not interested in my father's instructions. What I really wanted at that moment was not to understand the fine points of balancing a checkbook; but for my parents to leave. He was finally convinced by my nods that I understood the process and we walked back to the car.

As much as I had wanted them to leave, when my parents drove away I was terrified. To my surprise my tears and the lump in my throat returned. I was really alone for the first time in my life and I was miles away from home and anything that was in the least bit familiar. I

turned before the car was out of sight and ran into the dorm and up the stairs to the only person I knew, though I had just met her. Jean was calmly putting away the first of her clothes and after a few minutes reminded me that it was almost time for our first orientation meeting. I had no idea that we were to go to a meeting and asked her how she knew about it. She picked up a schedule of events for the first few days of school from a packet of materials that looked vaguely familiar. I remembered that I too had recently received such a packet, but my anxiety level was so high the last few days before I left home for Alfred that I had been unable to read anything. I marvelled at Jean's composure and frantically searched through my suitcases for my schedule. I began to seriously doubt whether I would be able to manage college at all, but since it was time to go I put on a fresh coat of lipstick, checked the seams in my stockings and Jean and I walked to the meeting together.

Within the next few hours I had met most of the other freshman women and some of the men. To my great relief I found that many were from the City or had only recently moved to the suburbs. Like my roommate they had last names that proclaimed their ethnicity, and although I was the only Armenian and I hadn't met any Greeks, I began to feel less frantic. I also met people whose names connoted not their English or German ancestry but were, to my mind, like most of the students at Ridgewood High--Americans. Unlike my former classmates, however, these "Americans" seemed to be as friendly as everyone else. My confidence about my ability to survive returned as I walked out of the meeting with my green and yellow freshman beanie which I was to wear Monday through

Friday until the end of that school year, my freshman handbook which I was required to memorize and my new friend, Barbara Lake.

Barbara was born and raised in New Jersey, but not in the suburbs that I hated so much. She was from Newark and her description of that city made it clear that it was very different from Glen Rock and Ridgewood. She lived in what she described as the Jewish section. Almost everyone in her high school was Jewish, even the teachers. Assuming from her last name that Barbara was "American," I asked her why her parents had chosen to live in that section. He assured me that she was Jewish. Lake was not her real name. Her grandfather had decided, when he emigrated to this country, that it would be wise to change the family name to something that sounded neutral and chose Lake. Once I knew what Barbara's background really was, I felt safe and we quickly became "best friends." Over the next few weeks we made more women friends and we both always had dates on the weekends. I began to feel almost as comfortable with my social life as I had during my last year of high school in the City.

The academic side of college was, however, another matter. I had no idea how to choose courses and was relieved to find that some were required. All freshmen at Alfred had to take the six credit course, "Our Cultural Heritage," three credits of which was English composition. Whole fields, like philosophy, were totally unknown to me and others, like political science were, I thought, for men. My advisor suggested that I begin to fulfill my distribution requirements and I chose biology for the math/science group. I didn't know what geology was and despite

the fact that I had gotten grades in the nineties in both my geometry and algebra regents exams, I had decided what I was terrible in math. I was also required to take a language and though I had taken two years of both French and Spanish in high school, I chose to begin German. I was sick of Spanish and I had taken French so long ago that I didn't remember anything. What really made me decide on German, however, was that I had heard from an upperclassman that Mr. Buchanan, the German professor, was very nice and if you sat in the back row and didn't look at him he never called on you. For my elective I decided on "Introduction to Music." I loved jazz and Latin music, but I thought it was time for me to learn about "serious" music.

It had been overwhelming to choose courses, but I had gotten through it. I began classes and realized with a shock at the end of the first day that the books the professors had assigned were not given out at the end of class as they had been in high school. We had to buy them! After I had gone to all my classes it became clear that the books I needed would cost more than I thought I had in my checking account. Since I had written only one or two checks I was quite sure, at that point, of my balance. I asked my friends how they were going to buy their books and found that they all had enough money. Their parents, it seemed, knew they would have to buy books and had given them enough money to cover this expense. I called home to ask my father to send money, and he responded that he would send it soon and I could use the books in the library until the money came. My fury at my parents for not knowing that I would need money for books and my shame at my own

ignorance erupted. With tears in my eyes I screamed that everyone had their own books and I needed them immediately. He agreed to send a money order the next day.

Once I had the books, however, it almost seemed as if I didn't know what to do with them. I read my assignments mechanically with little understandings of how they related to the lectures I had heard in class. The years of trying not to be a "brain" at George Washington and the alienation I felt at Ridgewood High had taken their toll. I had no idea what studying was all about. I envied Barbara and the students I knew who had gone to the Bronx High School of Science because they seemed to know how to prepare for class. But most of my friends were more like me. The bulk of our energy was focused on our social life and getting through school was a game.

While some of my midterm grades may have been dangerously close to failing, as far as I was concerned I had an "A" in my social life. Not only did I have lots of girlfriends, I had a date every weekend. And after a somewhat shaky start, I had managed to go out with men who belonged to the "right" fraternities. During the first few weeks of school I realized that I had gone out only with Jewish men. I didn't mind dating Jews, but I was not satisfied with my dates' fraternities. Social life at Alfred revolved exclusively around fraternities because of school restrictions and town ordinances. Having a good time in the 1950s was unthinkable without drinking alcohol--usually beer--and Alfred was a dry town. Getting to bar required a car since the closest one was fifteen miles away and there was no public transportation. People

could, of course, have alcohol in their homes, but most students lived on campus. Single women students were not only forbidden to have their own apartments, but were not allowed to be in a man's apartment without a proper chaperone. Disobeying this rule more than once could mean expulsion from school. As far as I knew, no one broke this rule. The weekly fraternity parties, duly chaperoned by a faculty couple, provided the social life for most of the campus. Belonging to a fraternity was so important for men, in fact, that the school allowed freshmen males to pledge fraternities in the second semester while women had to wait until the sophomore year to join sororities.

The choice of fraternities was, however, not unlimited. Of the six fraternities on campus, three allowed membership only to white, Christian males. Of the three others only one, a local, was non-sectarian in its membership. The other two houses had non-sectarian policies, but their membership was exclusively Jewish except that one of them included two Black members. The popular fraternities, at least as my circle of friends understood it, did not include the two Jewish houses.

I discussed my problem with Barbara and she suggested that what had probably happened was that the men thought I was Jewish. We decided that I should wear my cross, and because most people thought she was Christian she would wear her star although she had no particular interest in changing her dating pattern as she had already begun to steadily date a man from one of the preferred houses. The next day, with our religions around our necks, heads turned as we walked down the streets,

to our classes and into the student union. We giggled, but our ploy worked. That very weekend I had a date with a Christian man.

As far as I knew, the discrimination against Jews was taken by most people on campus as a fact of life, but late in my first semester the editor of the school paper wrote a stinging editorial charging the school with anti-semitism for allowing the restricted fraternities to operate on university property. As I read Nate Lyons' editorial my main response was shock that he had dared to use the term anti-semitism. I thought briefly about all of those realtoes in New Jersey and my revulsion at their questions, but mostly I thought it was wrong to talk about it. I was relieved to find that Barbara was also disturbed by what Nate had written. She argued that he had only made matters worse. Now, she said, everyone would be talking about the policy of the fraternities and Christians who didn't mind Jews would turn against all of them because Nate Lyons had stirred up trouble. Her fears were realized when the Christian man she had been dating since the beginning of school told her that it was all right that she was Jewish because she wasn't like the others. But it was all right with either of them. Shortly after Nate's editorial, they ended their relationship.

Nate Lyons' charge of anti-semitism also affected our discussions about sororities. Although we would not be able to pledge a house for another semester, my friends and I had begun to weigh the merits of the two sororities we were considering. There were four on campus, but two were out of the question since the girls in them were unpopular--even on that small campus we hardly knew who they were. The sisters in Theta

and Sigma, on the other hand, included the few women who were in leadership positions at the school and , more importantly for us, the queens of the Military Ball, the Interfraternity Ball, Winter Carnival and the St. Pat's Festival. We had decided one thing. We would all pledge the same sorority. For weeks we had discussed the women in the two sororities and the location and size of the houses without facing the fact that, at least for one of us, there was really no choice. Sigma did not accept Jews. Now that Nate's editorial was out, we didn't talk much about sororities anymore. One day when we were at dinner someone brought the question up, and the discussion which had been highly animated only a few weeks earlier was strained. Teddi Mihm suddenly looked at Barbara and asked her what it was like to be Jewish. As Barbara tried to collect herself to respond, Teddi said, "You must wish you were Christian." Barbara rose and said something to Teddi which I didn't hear because I was so overwhelmed with what Teddi had said. My reaction was that I wanted to put my body between Teddi's and Barbara's to protect one friend from the violence of the other friend's comment.

I followed Barbara out of the dining room and assured her that I, too, thought that what Teddi had said was awful and that I would never really consider pledging Sigma whether she was my friend or not. I lied about the last part. I didn't really know what I would have done if Barbara had not been my best friend, but the fact was that she was and I didn't want to join a sorority without her. Barbara said that Teddi was no different from the man she had been dating who had never accepted the

fact that she was Jewish. There were damn few goyim who could be trusted. I hoped that I was one.

While I was forced by Nate Lyons' editorial and my friendship with Barbara to think a little about anti-semitism, I was oblivious to the other forms of oppression on our quiet and "friendly" campus. Out of my freshman class of about three hundred students there were two Black students: a man and a woman. I never considered why there were not more Black students at Alfred. What I did think about was that it must have been very hard for the few Black students who were at the school, particularly Norma as she was the only Black female. While I never saw the few Black men with dates, all of the upperclassmen were in fraternities and Charles Axt was president of one of the Jewish houses. The men could at least go to parties. I had no idea what Norma did on the weekends.

Despite the fact that most of the rules governing student behavior applied only to women, I generally agreed with them as did my friends. We thought our curfews were too early, but no one thought we shouldn't have them. We never considered that it was our right to have men in our rooms or to visit a man in his apartment. My parents would never have agreed to let me live in my own apartment at school or anywhere else, so that prohibition seemed normal to me. I was annoyed that I couldn't smoke on the street or wear slacks to dinner, but I agreed with the idea that men and women should act differently.

Two incidents concerning women's rights came up during my freshman year that I did consider being unfair to women. In the second semester

an "older" woman came to Alfred and was required, like the rest of us, to live in the dorm. I thought it was unfair, since she was in her late twenties, to make her live in the dorm with us. The school would never have required an older male to live with eighteen and nineteen year olds, but since she was a woman the rules that applied to young women were not relaxed for her. The second incident concerned a friend of mine who was pregnant. When Lorna found out that she was pregnant she and her boyfriend, who went to another school, got married. It was late in the second semester and she wanted to complete the last six weeks of school. She had already broken one rule which applied to both male and female students. Students who intended to marry were to notify the personnel deans of their plans. Since Lorna was already married, the administration agreed to overlook this infraction. The second problem was more serious. Married women were not permitted to live in the dorm, but Lorna could not live off campus unless she was living with her husband. Lorna's husband, who also wanted to finish the school year, did not live in Alfred. My friends and I were furious. It was awful that Lorna had gotten pregnant, but we thought it was unfair to make her leave school because the administration could not decide where she could live. After many meetings with the dean of women and letters from her professors who said that even as a freshman Lorna was one of their best students, the administration finally agreed to let her live in the dorm. Since she was pregnant, however, she would have to move from her room on the second floor to one on the first floor.

My only other problem with the way women were treated at Alfred was that only men got second helpings at meals. I had an enormous appetite and knew that I ate more than many men, but despite my hunger after what I considered very skimpy meals, there were no seconds. After the first few weeks of school I tried to organize a boycott of the dining room to protest the quality and quantity of the food, but no one else seemed to care about what we ate. As it worked out, all my friends were perpetually on diets, so I ate their potatoes and bread. My parents sent me packages of cheeses and salami, and for the first first semester I regularly dreamt of food--mostly stacks of lahmajoon (Armenian meat pies).

Except for food, however, I didn't think much about being Armenian that year. The six credit course freshmen were required to take both the first and second semesters, "Our Cultural Heritage," had no mention of Armenians, but I never expected to hear about us in school. We did learn about ancient Persia and the Ottoman Empire, which by second semester disintegrated into "the sick man of Europe," but nothing about the massacre of Armenians that my grandmother had told me about. For reasons I did not understand, I did a paper on the massacre. Reading the accounts of the tortures inflicted on the Armenians by the Turks, I realized that my grandmother had left a lot out of the story she told me. It was only then that I realized that my grandfather was not a soldier in the Turkish army as my grandmother had implied, but had probably either been murdered outright or had been used as a pack animal until he died of exhaustion. I was moved by what I read about the

massacre, but once I finished the paper I didn't think much about it. I put my grandmother's story away again.

The paper I did on the Armenian massacre was, however, the only school work that had really engaged me. Academics were something I had to do in order to be at Alfred, and I got by with as little work as possible. By the end of the first semester my grades of three "Cs" and one "D" had put me on probation. I had striven to be average in high school and in college I had overshot the mark. I knew that there were students at Alfred who were serious about school, studied hard, and were popular as well, but for most of my friends in my first year, getting through school was a game. I promised myself I would learn to play the game better the next semester and get off probation.

My parents were angry and disappointed with the results of my first semester at college. My father shook his head sadly as my mother reminded me that sending me to college was costing a lot of money and that I had better work harder. While I felt guilty and promised them I would apply myself when school started again, I was pleased with my first semester at college. I had accomplished the goals that had been my highest priority--I had a circle of girlfriends, a best friend, and a date every weekend.

I did learn more about playing the game the next semester. I took an introductory psychology course and heard that the professor never read the term papers. He gave "heavy" papers high marks. The topic I had chosen was war neuroses and when I told the professor that I was having trouble finding materials in the library, he gave me an unpublished

manuscript on the topic. It was my only reference and after I read through it I began to type the paper. After a few pages of my own words, I typed directly from the manuscript until I had twenty or more pages--a "heavy" enough weight I assumed. I handed the paper in hoping that my friends had been right. On the last day of class when the professor returned our papers I reached for mine with thought of the sanctions against plagiarism, but was relieved to see an "A" on the first page with the words "good work" written under the grade. With the help of the "B" in this course I was off probation, but I still had no idea how to learn. I took notes in class, but rarely read them over before an exam. I did read all of my assignments, but if I didn't understand what I was reading I just went on turning the pages until I was through. I stopped cutting classes, but had trouble concentrating on the lectures.

The only glimpse I had that first year about what education might be about came not from my classes, but from a relationship with a man whom I had begun to date steadily towards the end of my second semester. Although Bill Witherell was in one of the preferred fraternities and was majoring in ceramic engineering, he was on the fringes of one of the small groups of students who did not participate in the general social life of the campus. The men lived in apartments and attended neither fraternity parties nor school dances. The few women who were part of the group had to live in the dorm, but they were like the men in having no interest in what I considered the wonderful and "normal" social life of the campus. Instead of dancing and playing drinking games on

Saturday nights, these students gathered in someone's apartment, sometimes with a chaperone, but just as often without, and talked about literature. Sometimes one of them would read his own writing and the group would then discuss it at length. Bill was my guide to a world where people talked about ideas. Although I felt very inadequate when I was at one of these gatherings and often wished I was at a fraternity party instead, I was also intrigued by these people who were so unlike anyone I had ever known. I was also very interested in the fact that the women who were considered to be at the core of the group were clearly "brains," but they seemed to be proud of their intellectual abilities. None of these people seemed to care about being different. It almost seemed to me that they enjoyed it. While this group of people interested me, they were clearly in another world and I still enjoyed what they despised. I decided, however, that I would be more careful in my selection of courses the next semester and I would try not to just get better grades, but to learn something.

I had told my parents a little about Bill and mentioned that he was working his way through college since his parents were very poor. While they did not respond directly to his economic status, they told me I was too young to be "serious" about anybody. I should study hard and have lots of "friends"--by which they meant dates. During the summer, however, my mother began to be more explicit about what it meant to be an Avakian. She explained that while the family was not rich in this country, they had been aristocrats in Persia. Avakians had a seal, she told me, and had maintained a full staff of servants. In this country,

Avakian Brothers was one of the major Oriental rug importing firms and all the Avakians, she meant the men but did not say that, were highly respected in the rug trade. At the annual New Year's Eve Rug Dealers Association dance at the Essex House, the Avakians always sat at one of the tables reserved for the leaders in the business. As far as I knew, all the rug merchants were Armenian and while it was nice that they honored my family, I had little interest in the family business and its rank.

I was more impressed with the achievements of members of the family who had chosen not to work at Avakian Brothers, but had forged into the outside world. While I had no interest in science, I listened with pleasure as my mother told me that my cousin Souren, a chemist, had identified a previously unknown enzyme that now bore the family name. I hadn't known that, but I did know that my cousin Peter had gone to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on full scholarship. Although Peter, who had emigrated to this country from Persia when he was a teenager, spoke with an accent and was totally unable to learn American dancing despite his lessons at Arthur Murray, I was impressed that he was a physicist. Being a scientist seemed very American to me. The accomplishments of Peter's brother Leopold, on the other hand, left me cold. Leo had also gotten a scholarship, but his was at the Julliard School of Music. After eight years of studying the violin he was now preparing for his debut. It seemed such an old country thing to do, and Leo looked the part of the immigrant musician. His long black hair fell in a shock over his eyes no matter how much Vitalis he used. Like my

father, he wore dark suits and white starched shirts despite the fact that he was in his twenties. What really got me about Leo, though, was that instead of just putting his violin away in its case, he first lovingly wrapped it in a large piece of patterned silk like the one on the front of my comforter. It embarrassed me that so many of the people in my family insisted on showing how old country they really were.

My cousin George, on the other hand, seemed to be as close as anyone in my family came to being a real American. He had gone to Yale University and had a prominent position in a very American industry. George was a Vice President of Columbia Records and his special responsibility was jazz--a most American music. I knew that many jazz musicians were Black, but I identified the music as American. In my mind anything truly American was white. While my mother thought that jazz like tap dancing was "coarse" she was, nonetheless, proud that George had achieved his position with Columbia and included him in her litany. Her emphasis was on the Avakian family. Of her own relations she merely said that they had been prominent in Turkey "before," by which I vaguely knew she meant before the massacre. My grandmother, she told me, had a large house and servants.

Although my mother didn't talk about it, I knew that there were some real differences between the two sides of my family. Even as a child I had noticed that the Avakians' relationship to each other was much more formal than those of the Tutuians and Donigians. There were other differences that I had noticed when I was younger. While all my older relatives spoke English with an accent, my father and his family

sounded different from my mother and her family. More importantly, there were some important variations in the food each side of the family ate, although there were many similarities as well. Lamb in the form of chops or stew meat cooked in tomato sauce with string beans or potatoes, vegetables and grape leaves stuffed with a mixture of ground lamb, tomatoes and rice and, of course, shish kebab were common fare for both the Avakians and the Tutuians and Donigians. While both families ate pilaf regularly, each had a different method for cooking the rice. My father's family made their pilaf the Persian way, soaking it in salt water overnight, draining, washing and parboiling it the next morning and then drenching it with melted butter and baking it. Turkish pilaf was much less complicated to make and, I thought, much tastier. Thin egg noodles were browned in butter and the rice added and sauteed until the grains were coated in butter. Boiling chicken broth was added to the mixture and the rice was cooked until done. My mother made both varieties, but was renowned among the Avakians for her Persian pilaf, a concrete example to me of how much of an Avakian she really was.

I preferred not only Turkish pilaf but the other foods my mother's family made: lahmajoon and atleakmak (Turkish meat pies), enginar (artichokes braised in lemon juice and olive oil), and chee kufta (raw ground lamb mixed with very fine bughlur and eaten with chopped onions and parsley) which we ate only on the rare occasions when my father was not home because he considered it barbaric to eat raw meat.

I vaguely sensed that the differences between Turkish and Persian Armenians went beyond those of language and cuisine. Nothing was ever

said directly, but when the two sides of the family were together, which was fairly frequent, it seemed to me that members of my mother's family were somewhat deferential to the Avakians. A few times I heard Aunty Ars. refer to the avakians as Barska Hyes (Persian Armenians) in a tone that connoted more than a description of national origin. One time, when I knew that she was angry at someone in my father's family, I asked her why she called them Persian Armenians. After I badgered her to tell me what she really meant, she said that Persian Armenians thought they were better than everyone else. She didn't explain why, but I wondered if their superior attitude had anything to do with the massacre that they had escaped because they hadn't lived in Turkey.

The other differences between the two families, however, made it difficult to get any clarity on the significance of this factor. What was clear was that the Avakians had more money than the Tutuians and Donigians, and Avakian Brothers' position within the Oriental rug trade made the Avakians prominent members of the Armenian community. But there was more than economics involved in the status difference of the two families. My mother's brother, for example, made enough money so that his wife never had to work and the year before my father bought our house, Uncle Ashot bought a large older two story house in Westchester County. I knew his house was worth more than our new five room tract house in New Jersey, but despite his ability to buy a more expensive house than my father, Uncle Ashot was in a different category of people than any of the Avakians. Like many Armenians of his generation, Uncle Ashot was a photo engraver and I knew from conversations between my

parents that he belonged to a union. I didn't really know what unions were, but I gathered from the way my mother's voice curled around the word to form an audible sneer, that it was something bad. I knew that my uncle's union had provided triple time for him when he worked on Sunday, and that seemed to be a good thing to me. I also heard that Aunt Ars' union had paid for her medical expenses when she developed an ulcer, and that also seemed to be a good thing. I was confused by my mother's non-verbal message that there was something wrong with belonging to a union. It was clear that unions were for working people. Maybe my mother was upset because her sister and brother were workers.

My father didn't seem to have any particular problem with my aunt and uncle belonging to a union, but I knew from other comments that he made about work that working for someone was not really acceptable unless it was in a professional position. None of the men in my mother's family had their own business and most worked at blue collar jobs. All but one of the Avakian men, on the other hand, were either part of the prestigious family business or were professionals. I sensed that my father felt that it was too bad that Uncle Ashot had to work for someone else and the fact that he also belonged to a union was only more evidence that it was best to be one's own boss.

It was made perfectly clear by both of my parents in the spring of my freshman year, that I would not be allowed to do any kind of work. I was frustrated by the low salary and boredom of sales work and began to think about other kinds of summer jobs. I knew some men my age who worked on construction jobs and made much more money than I did, but

construction was clearly out of the question for women in 1957. The only job for women with minimal skills I could think of that paid more than sales was waitressing. Some of the women I had known in Ridgewood went to the New Jersey shore for the summer and not only made more money than I did, but had the added advantages of living away from home and being at the beach. I didn't even consider asking my parents about that. The only women in my family who lived away from their parents' home were at college or married. If I couldn't go away to the shore, however, I thought it would be interesting to try waitressing in one of the many restaurants around Glen Rock. My father was adamant--his daughter was not going to be a waitress. It was all right to wait on people in a department store, but serving food to strangers for money was clearly too much of a subservient position for his daughter. I argued that I could probably earn more in tips alone than my whole salary as a salesgirl, but my father was disturbed by the idea of tipping. To him it was like charity. If you pleased your customers they would tip well, but tipping was not like a salary--your due for work completed. Rich WASPs from Ridgewood could waitress, but I couldn't. I was frustrated again by my parents' old country ideas.

That same year there was another occasion, however, when my father's sense of propriety had worked in my favor. In the middle of my second semester at Alfred my mother called to say she had some bad news. Avakian Brothers had been paying the tuition of all the children in the family who went to college, but a change in the tax laws had now made it impossible for them to continue doing so. I was terrified that this new

law would mean that I would have to leave school. I offered to work, but my mother only said that they would see. A few weeks earlier Barbara's father had informed her that he could not afford to send her to school the next year. She was devastated and we thought of ways she could raise some money. There were a few scholarships, but Barbara's grades were not high enough to consider them. Only a handful of the men we knew worked, but none of the women did. There was a cooperative household for women on campus which reduced living costs as the residents did their own cooking and cleaning, but the stigma for living at the house, ironically called "The Castle," was so great that Barbara said she would rather not come back to school if she had to live there. I wondered if I too would have to make that choice. When I came home for spring break I discussed the problem with my parents and suggested that I try to get a job. My father shook his head and said they would manage. My mother thought it would be a good idea for me to work, but my father wouldn't hear of it. I was relieved that he thought it was wrong for me to work while I was in school. Working would surely have cut into my social life. Once again that summer I used the money from my job for clothes and the subject of my parents' ability to pay for school never came up again.

That summer I went back to my job at Bambergers, but this time I was chosen to be a member of the "College Board." There were ten women on the "Board," and for the first part of the summer we worked all over the store, but as the fall buying season approached we were assigned to the women's clothing departments. We were special advisors to young

women who were buying clothes for college. We received no extra pay for our positions, but were given a uniform of a reversible pleated skirt and two blouses which we wore to work for the remainder of the summer. We also had occasional lectures on merchandising. Although they were mostly very boring, they broke the monotony of the job and I began to think that it might be fun to buy clothes for a living. I was also among the few women who were chosen to model some of the latest styles at local fashion shows sponsored by the store. Again, we received no compensation for these days, but I was thrilled to have been chosen and was very satisfied with myself.

I still saw some of my friends in the City, but I felt as if we were growing apart. Though I could not articulate what was different in our relationships, I felt as if I was changing and my friends seemed to have stayed the same. The change in me had something to do with college life. I wanted to escape what I considered to be their provincialism. They were content to be living at home with their parents, working at their jobs or commuting to college. I didn't have any idea what I wanted, but I was not content with what I had. Only one thing was clear in my behavior if not in my consciousness. I did not need my friends from the City as I once had. My new life was with my friends from college and I eagerly awaited the opening of school in the fall.

C H A P T E R V I I

Driving to Alfred in September of 1957 with my parents I looked out lovingly at the hills that had looked so desolate to me the year before. There were no football players to help the sophomores unload their cars, but some of my friends had already arrived and helped us with my things. This time when my parents left I was as calm as Jean Cerrito had looked on that day that now seemed so long ago. As I unpacked and got my room in order, I smiled as I made my bed with the new blanket and bedspread that I had convinced my mother to buy. I had won another battle that summer. After weeks of arguing, my mother agreed not to wait up for me in the living room when I went out on a date. I still had a curfew and she still waited up, but she stayed in her bedroom, out of view of the front door. I had made a few concessions too. I went to some Armenian social events with my parents and at one of them I met the young man who had complimented me on my non-Armenian appearance that Easter Sunday in 1954. Though he looked very Armenian with his dark hair and large nose, I nevertheless thought that Deran was very attractive and happily agreed when he asked me out. My parents were concerned because he was much older than me, but agreed to let me go. I didn't doubt that they would since he was the first Armenian date I had had. After going to the movies and out for a few drinks the evening ended abruptly when Deran wanted more than my customary goodnight kiss. I told him it was only our first date and he angrily responded that he hadn't realized that I was such a baby and reached for me. I was frightened and got out of the

car slamming the door behind me. Because Deran was Armenian I told my mother, with some pleasure, that he had wanted to take liberties with me. All Armenian men were not as wonderful as she thought.

I was back at college, thank God, and I didn't have to deal with my mother or any more Armenian boys. I was glad I was the only Armenian at school. My friends didn't seem to care what I was and I was as unconcerned with their ethnicity. My roommate for the year was Bunny Johnson who was to my mind as American as anyone could be. She was blonde, had a small turned up nose and was from a small town in western New York State. She had never been to the City and I had the feeling that she looked up to me because I was raised in New York. Unlike most of my other friends, Bunny was a serious student. She took courses that I considered difficult, like math, studied hard, and got excellent grades. I hoped that her habits would influence me as I had decided that I would give learning a try.

My selection of courses was still based mostly on information I had gotten from my friends about which professors had a reputation for being easy graders, but I chose "Introduction to Art History" because I had heard that Dr. Klitzke was a good teacher. What was really on my mind that semester was sororities--which of the two my friends and I would pledge. Since Barbara had not returned to school the discriminatory policy of Sigma did not seem to be a real issue, and it also seemed to me that the choice would be up to us as we were being rushed by both houses. Bunny was not so sure of herself and I was impatient with her fears that she wouldn't be tapped. I was too close to my own history of

feeling like an outsider to have empathy with her feelings. My other friends and I were so confident, in fact, that towards the end of the rush season we became critical of the sorority system itself. We liked the women in both houses. Why did we have to choose? Did our choice eliminate the possibility of remaining friendly with women in the house we did not choose? What would happen if one of us was not tapped? I thought we might all be much happier if we stayed in the dorm, but we finally decided that living in a house would be much more comfortable than our dorm. The rooms in our modern building were all the same with no possibility of making them our own as both the dressers and desks were built in. What really changed my mind, however, was that I heard that the food in the sororities was better and more plentiful than what we were served in the dorm and that it was also possible to eat between meals. The latter was a serious concern for me as I was usually hungry after curfew when it was impossible to get out of the dorm to get something to eat.

While I didn't consciously think much about Sigma's refusal to admit Jews, every time I thought of choosing that sorority, I saw Barbara's face. I began to campaign for Theta by arguing that there was a greater variety of women in Theta and that they were more interesting than the women in Sigma. The decision was finally made. We all pledged and were tapped by Theta. The next day we found out that Sigma had admitted a number of Jewish women. Because so many of us had decided to pledge Theta, the women in Sigma had to decide between a very small pledge class of WASPs, on the one hand, and a large "mixed" class on the

other. They were a local sorority and could choose to change their rules, and they had opted for the large "mixed" class. Without knowing what we were doing, our decision opened Sigma for Jewish women. I was delighted.

My other focus that semester was my relationship with Bill. We had written to each other frequently over the summer. I had missed him, but thought that a few months separation was a good test of the relationship. My feelings about Bill were intertwined with what he and his friends represented for me--a world that was elusive as it was compelling. I was attracted to the idea that there was more to life than dates, clothes and parties, but I was mystified as to what this other world was really about. I knew it had to do with reading and thinking, but not necessarily studying for courses. As I got to know Bill and his friends better I found that they considered most of the faculty at Alfred, with very few exceptions, to have nothing to offer them. Not only did they think that these men, they were almost all men, badly trained, but also that they were very conservative.

I was awed by this group's lack of regard for convention, but I was also frightened. I had worked very hard to achieve my status with my peers and I was trying to do better in my school work. Bill and his friends were beyond both the frivolity of campus social life and what they saw as the narrowness of the faculty. If I gave up my friends and didn't look to my teachers for guidance, where could I turn? Certainly not to this group of people who, I was sure, thought I was a silly coed.

Bill was willing to be my mentor and I was grateful for that. As I remember it, however, I knew more about what I shouldn't be like than about what I should do to change. I was walking a tightrope between what I was--everything one shouldn't be--and what I saw as the very frightening bohemian life of Bill's friends. Part of me was content and comfortable with my women friends and the social life of the campus. Another part, however, was toying with the idea of striving to be something more, and I could only define this something as a vague state of being that was in some way connected to intellectualism.

I did get some help from my course in art history. Dr. Klitzke's view of creative production was that it was intimately connected to the social and intellectual currents of its time. To really understand art--to see its true meaning--one had to study everything about the social context in which it was created. For the first time in my life I was excited by an idea. I read my assignments as thoroughly as my limited skills allowed and looked forward to Dr. Klitzke's lectures. To find meaning, I thought, one could study art. For the present, however, I would have to limit my search for meaning to the past since I could make no sense of modern art and Dr. Klitzke would not get to our period until the spring.

The only help I got with my search for meaning in contemporary society were two books that were assigned in sociology classes: The Organization Man and The Lonely Crowd. My understanding of these books was that most people's lives were directed by what others wanted, and only the exceptional few lived their lives according to their own needs.

It was clear to me that Bill and his friends were just those "inner directed" people the books talked about. I wanted to be like them, but had no clue as to how to find my "inner needs." Despite my confusion, or perhaps because of it, I became a missionary for this new vision. I wanted my friends to come along on this new way of life with me, and urged them to be more serious.

Although I was confused I did not feel totally alone. I had Bill as a guide. I thought our relationship was perfect. We loved each other and were on the same road, although I had yet to reach his level. We began to discuss the possibility of marriage at some future date. I would, of course, finish school first, but there was another reason I wanted to put the marriage as far away from the present as possible. I knew very early in our relationship that Bill's parents could not afford to pay for his education. He had decided to go to Alfred and major in Ceramic Engineering because the School of Ceramics was part of the New York State system and tuition was cheap. As our relationship developed Bill told me more about how poor his parents were and we discussed how we would overcome the problems our difference in backgrounds would create. Bill decided I should meet his parents and I reluctantly agreed. I arranged with a friend who was also going away for the weekend to sign out for her house and Bill and I drove to Buffalo in a borrowed car. I tried to prepare myself on the trip for what Bill's parents would be like. The image I created was one of a small and perhaps slightly ramshackle house that was, in essence, a pretty little cottage.

I was totally unprepared for what I saw by anything in my experience. The house that Bill's parents lived in consisted of a kitchen with a toilet behind a curtain, a tiny living room and a bedroom closed off only by another curtain which was only large enough for a double bed. Clothes were piled on the floor in boxes and hung on nails in the wall. Bill and his brother slept upstairs in an unheated attic on mattresses on the floor. I was overwhelmed and was barely able to relate to his parents who did not fit my image of a poor, but proud and lovely couple.

I hardly spoke on the way back to school. The discussions that Bill and I had had about our families and how we would deal with our differences seemed very academic. I was repulsed by his "background" and there was nothing to say.

After weeks of turmoil I broke off our relationship. I was disappointed in myself, but I could not accept Bill's poverty. I knew that he did not have enough money to go to school the next semester and was relieved when he said that he was, indeed, taking a semester off to go to Buffalo to work.

With Bill gone I no longer had anyone to measure myself against, and I relaxed. I did not, however, completely give up the vision of the way of life that had so attracted me. I took the second semester of Dr. Klitzke's Art History class and was even more involved with the material than I had been in the first semester. But I also started to date fraternity men again. My new "steady" was an athlete whose main interest beside basketball and his fraternity was me. I was surprised by how

easy it was to be with Bob. Though I thought many of his friends were idiots--typical jocks--I liked some of his other friends who were veterans. Some of these older men also seemed to be looking for meaning, but they were not as serious about it as Bill's friends were. They didn't cut themselves off from the social life of the campus. The polarity between being a serious, inner directed person on the one hand, and being a silly college kid on the other was beginning to break down. I was off the tightrope.

As I approached the end of my sophomore year I had to make a decision about my major. I had been taking psychology and sociology courses and was particularly interested in psychoanalysis. I wanted some help with the problems I was having knowing who I really was and what I really wanted, but as far as I knew analysis was for crazy people. I also thought that the prospect of being analyzed was one of the most terrifying things I could think about. I was, however, drawn to anything that I thought would help me to understand myself. It seemed to me that psychology might be of some use to me. My favorite course was without a doubt Dr. Klitzke's but since there was no Art History major at Alfred, I became a psychology major.

I ended the semester with acceptable grades and, unlike the previous year, looked forward to the summer. I had my job at Bambergers back. Bob lived only a half an hour away from my house and I expected to see him frequently. As he had graduated that spring he was waiting for his commission in the Army, but did not expect it before Fall. The summer passed uneventfully. I was chosen to be on the "College Board"

again and being with Bob was fun and easy, though sometimes I was a little bored. Bob was not like Bill at all. He had nothing to teach me. The only other problem was that I felt that Bob's father didn't like me. I hardly knew him, yet he was cold to the point of rudeness. I wondered if his attitude towards me had anything to do with my "strange" last name, but Bob assured me that his father was just like that with some people. I wondered though. They were a very American family. They had been in this country for so long that they had lost track of the original immigrant. Bob's father had been a career man in the Navy and after his retirement became the basketball coach at the local high school. Since Bob and I did not talk much about our future together, his father's feelings about me were not a major issue. When September came I was anxious to get back to school even though I had to leave Bob.

My parents were not pleased when we drove up to the sorority house where I would be living that year. When my father saw the old frame house on the top of a steep hill, he commented that it looked like a fire trap to him. When we got to my room they were even more concerned when they saw there were no beds in it. Instead of sharing a room with one other woman as I had for the last two years, my bed was now on the sleeping porch along with about ten others. I shared my room which had one closet and an odd assortment of desks and dressers with three women. My parents could not understand why I had chosen to move out of the nice modern dorm for this old and run down house. But they helped me unpack and left taking their doubts with them.

I was very happy. All of my old friends were back and for the first time since my last year at George Washington I felt like an integral part of a group of peers. Since I had decided on my major the choice of courses was relatively easy. While I was disappointed that Dr. Klitzke was not offering anything I could take. I began the semester with a determination to study and try to learn something.

My initial optimism began to fade shortly after the semester began. My courses, instead of helping me to understand myself and others, seemed to have very little to do with real life. The disappointment with the academic side of school that semester was disturbing, but what was beginning to happen socially was really alarming. My feelings of ease with my "sisters" in the sorority house were changing. During the first few weeks of school I felt that I not only liked everyone in the house, but that they returned my friendship. Slowly my good feelings towards everyone began to fade. I found myself being critical of many of my "sisters." While I was still unclear about what Bill and his friends had represented to me, I was disturbed that so many of the women I lived with were so frivolous. I wanted them to be more like the men I knew, to talk about life and its meaning. Most of the women in the house seemed not to care about anything but their boyfriends.

There was, however, one group of women in the house whom I admired greatly because they seemed to have a real sense of dedication to something I considered important. They were ceramic design majors who had found an old wood kiln on the hill behind our house and decided to try to restore it. They interested other designers and worked so hard that

the Ceramic School eventually gave them a grant to pay for materials. For weeks I woke up on Saturday and Sunday mornings to see them on the hill working on the kiln. I was almost as excited as they were when the day came when the kiln was ready to fire. I learned that the process would last long into the night and happily offered to stay up and make coffee and sandwiches for them. In order to bake the clay and melt the glazes properly the kiln had to reach a temperature that was so high it could only be measured by cones of clay that melted at different temperatures. I joined the cheers as each cone melted, but in the end the last cones did not melt. Despite the fact that the project had been a failure, I envied those students for their sense of purpose and the community that emerged out of their shared work. Watching them work together for the months when they were restoring the kiln made me even more discontented with my situation.

I, too, wanted to be serious about something, but I had no idea what it might be. I turned my attention to analyzing the various personalities in the house, and this activity did not enhance my social status. I was particularly focused on two women whose relationship disturbed me. I had known Joan and Pat since we were freshmen together. Their friendship, which had been close since the first few weeks of school, had never seemed more than that of "best friends." Being with them in the close quarters of the sorority house, however, I was uncomfortable with the way they related to each other. Joan seemed to hang on Pat's every word and I sometimes found her sitting next to Pat's bed which was one of the few that was not on a sleeping porch. Joan watched

Pat as she slept. I had no idea what was going on between them, but whatever it was it seemed wrong to me. I wanted to do something about it. I began to talk to some of my friends about their relationship. No one wanted to talk about it and most people let me know that I was wrong to bring it up. I couldn't understand why they did not see that it was our obligation to try to correct a situation that was, to my mind, just not right. When I suggested that we talk to the Dean of Women, I was told directly that I was ridiculous. I thought they were all being foolish and didn't have the insight I did. Luckily, I did not take any action on my own.

I began to think that sorority life was really stupid and some of my friends who had pledged when I did agreed that we might have been better off if we had stayed in the dorm. Because we were so sure that we would be accepted by either of the two houses and we liked the women in both, we had not made the kind of total commitment to our sorority that some of the upperclasswomen had made. By the time rush season came, some of us could think of no particular reason why sophomore women should choose Theta over Sigma. After the pledge cards came in and my friends and I realized that we had attracted none of the women we liked, we became even more apathetic. When we initiated our pledges the ceremony, that had seemed silly to us the previous semester when we were being initiated, looked even more ridiculous. A few of us had to work hard to suppress our laughter, and by the end of the long and supposedly solemn ritual our laughter erupted. After the initiation some people stopped talking to me altogether as I was seen as the instigator of the

incident. I began to fear that I was on my way to becoming an outcast again, but this time it would not be the result of prejudice against me. Although I still had some friends, it was clear that I had alienated many women in the house. While I was the one who was critical of people and rejecting sorority life, I was nagged by the feeling that something was wrong with the way I interacted with people.

My tenuous situation in the sorority did not, however, affect my social life with men. I had many offers for dates every weekend, and during the week I spent a good deal of my time with Jake Ryan, one of Bob's friends. Jake was a vet and I thought he was very smart and wise. Though I was not interested in him romantically, I considered him one of my closest friends. I tentatively discussed my situation at the sorority house with him and despite the fact that he was president of his fraternity, he supported my feeling that sororities were silly and I was probably too insightful for most of those women.

Towards the middle of the semester I ran into Dr. Klitzke and he invited me to his home for dinner the next night. I was overwhelmed. I thought Dr. Klitzke was the smartest person I had ever met and he had befriended me. As I walked the short distance to his house I thought about his courses and how excited I had been with the ideas he presented in his lectures. Nothing that semester had interested me like his class had. I felt very special and realized that none of the other women in the house had been asked to dinner by a faculty member except Carrie Fisher and she was a real brain. I was anxious to meet Mrs. Klitzke who was filling in as Acting Dean of Women since the former Dean had been

suddenly fired when it was suspected that she was having an affair with the Dean of Men.

The evening was like a dream. The Klitzkes seemed to me a perfect couple. She was intelligent and, I thought, very outspoken. She shocked me by saying that she thought many of the rules for women were ridiculous. Not only was she disturbed by the way women students were treated, but she was also dissatisfied with other aspects of Alfred. The school was generally too conservative for her tastes. I was amazed and flattered that she was so frank with me--a mere student.

After dinner Dr. Klitzke showed me some of the prints he had been collecting. Most of them were by Kathe Kollwitz, a German artist he had covered in his course. Hearing him talk about these powerful lithographs that cried out against war and poverty, I thought again about how boring and irrelevant my courses that semester were. When I looked at the clock I realized that I only had ten minutes before curfew and got ready to leave. Dean Klitzke said I should stay if I felt like it and if there was any trouble about my getting in after curfew I should tell my housemother to get in touch with her, but I said I was tired and accepted Dr. Klitzke's offer of a ride back to the house.

Over the next few days I thought about my excitement when Dr. Klitzke was talking about Kollwitz and Dean Klitzke's attitude towards Alfred. Maybe I had grown out of the place. I had certainly needed what I had gotten from the school for the first two years, but maybe it was time to move on. I made an appointment to talk with Dr. Klitzke about majoring in Art History. He was very encouraging. He thought I

would make a fine art historian and agreed that it might be time for me to leave Alfred. Like his wife he thought the school was very provincial and they had decided to leave at the end of that school year. I told him that I was considering living at home, as I was tired of campus social life and he suggested that I think about going to Columbia since Meyer Shapiro was on the faculty there. I left his office elated. I had found what I wanted to do with my life. I would leave Alfred, go into art history and devote myself to learning all there was to know.

I almost ran up the steep hill to the house to share my discovery with Bunny, my roommate of the previous year and still a good friend. She had decided to major in music and we had often talked about the congruence of styles of music and the visual arts in various historical periods. Bunny did not disappoint my trust that she would share my excitement. We talked about my vision for my new life--immersion in intellectual work. As we talked I thought about Jake, and I suggested to Bunny that we go to the Student Union to look for him. We found him at his usual table and when he heard my news he decided that we should celebrate with a few beers. As we drove to our regular bar in the next town, I thought about my quick decision to leave Alfred and felt relieved that I would only have to live in the sorority house a little while longer. I didn't even consider what it would be like to live with my parents again.

The next day I wrote to Columbia for an application and to my parents to tell them of my plans. My parents responded that they were worried. I had told them that I would probably not be able to start

school until the fall since it was too late to expect to begin in the spring semester. My father said that if I stayed out of school for nine months that I would most probably not return. He obviously had no idea that I had a new sense of purpose--that I was finally going to school to study. I had tried to explain how I felt about art history, but to him it was just another impractical major. Why didn't I take up something I could teach? Of course, I couldn't think of a thing I could do with my new major, beyond working the in Metropolitan Museum shop, but a job was not my concern. I was going to be able to be a serious student because I would be studying a subject that had real meaning for me. But despite my father's doubts, my parents said that if I felt as strongly as I did about leaving Alfred, they would accept my decision.

Although I still had some friends in the sorority, I left college with a sense that I had messed up. I had no idea what I had done, but I had not been able to maintain my position with my women friends. My main feeling, however, was that Alfred was a wonderfully supportive place for me to be after Ridgewood High School when I was so needy, but I no longer needed it. I looked forward to real scholarship at Columbia and to taking full advantage of the museums and galleries in the City. I had had my fun and now I was going to be a real student.

C H A P T E R V I I I

Coming home to Glen Rock did not seem difficult at first. I still had my own room. Even though my brother was approaching adolescence he continued to share his room with my grandmother. Bob had not heard about his commission yet and I was glad to see him again. I also saw Barbara frequently. She had gotten married to a man she knew before coming to Alfred and had had her first child.

Within a few weeks of my move back home I began to look for a job. I had decided that I would like to try something other than sales, but did not consider waitressing. My relationship with my parents was going rather smoothly and I did not want to make any trouble. I went to a few employment agencies in Glen Rock and Ridgewood hoping that there might be some jobs that I had not thought of, but as soon as I came through the door I was told that they had nothing for someone like me. When I asked what they meant they explained that they specialized in domestic help. I wondered why they had assumed I would not be interested in such work, but was glad since I had no intention of being a maid. There seemed to be nothing to do but go back to being a salesgirl.

My excitement at the beginning of what I saw as my new life wore down to the drudgery of standing behind a counter for eight hours a day. I had intended to use my time out of school to try to learn what I had missed in my two and a half years at Alfred, but I had neither the discipline nor the emotional space to read on my own. Living with my family again proved to be more difficult than I had imagined. My mother

assumed that I would attend every family event, and she always seemed to be telling me what to do. My relationship with my brother, which had begun to move in a positive direction while I was away at college, deteriorated when I was back in the family context. My mother and grandmother seemed to hover over him just as they had when he was a baby, and I resented their expectations that I would help with the housework while he had no responsibilities.

Being with Bob, outside the environment of Alfred, was worse than it had been in the summer. He increasingly seemed unsuited to my new dedication to the life of the mind. When his commission finally came through in April I wondered what it would be like not to have him around, but I also felt that his departure might be a good way to end our relationship. Shortly after he left, however, I felt terribly lonely.

I decided that I wanted to go back to Alfred for a visit and tried to convince my father to let me take the car. He refused. Although I had been driving for three years, he felt that I did not have enough experience to take a long trip alone. He was sure that if the car, which seemed in mint condition to me, broke down I would be incapable of handling the situation. I realized it was no use arguing with him. It was true that I did not know how to diagnose and fix a broken fan belt or change a flat tire, but I wondered if it was really necessary to have the skills of a mechanic to take a trip. I was frustrated with my father's "what ifs?" but stopped arguing and took the train. On the long trip I began to think about Jake. I had written to say that I was

coming and asked him to pick me up at the station. As we approached the western part of the state the conductor asked me if I was going to see someone special. I thought of Jake and said I guessed I was.

When the train pulled into the station and I caught sight of Jake's old brown car, it became clear then that he was the reason I had wanted to visit Alfred. When I saw him, however, he was not alone. Bobbi Broudy, one of my sisters at Theta, was with him. I was totally surprised both by her presence and my jealousy. After a rather quiet ride into Alfred they dropped me off at the sorority house and Jake said they would see me later. Since I had no desire to see them, I was equally vague about my plans.

Strangely enough it felt good to be back in the house. In some ways it felt more like home than my parents' house in Glen Rock. People seemed surprised to see me, but most were very nice and I wondered for a moment when Bunny came into the room why I had left. We went off to her room and after a while I casually asked her about Jake and Bobbi, and she told me that they had been dating fairly steadily for a few months. I didn't hear from Jake that afternoon and after dinner Bunny and I went to the bar with some friends.

When we got there I was delighted to see that Jake was there without Bobbi. We talked and danced for most of the evening and I became more and more tense as the time to leave approached. I accepted his offer of a ride back to Alfred and as we walked to the car I heard myself tell Jake that I loved him. I was as shocked by what I had said as he was and we decided that it was impossible for me to go back to the

house. Curfew was only a half an hour off and we would need more time than that to deal with what I had said.

We drove to a secluded spot and spent the rest of the night in the car. Jake told me that he had fallen in love with me the previous year, but since I was Bob's girlfriend he had tried to put me out of his mind. He thought he was over his feelings for me when he began to date Bobbi, but I had brought them back that night. I was ecstatic. Jake was the kind of man I wanted. He was someone I could look up to. He was six years older than me and his plans for the future were much more advanced than mine. I was merely planning to be a serious undergraduate student, but Jake had decided to be a college professor. We spent the next two days together and when he took me to the train it was with promises that he would write often.

On the train ride back to Glen Rock I felt like a new person. I had so much to learn from Jake. I worried a little that I was not smart enough to keep him, but I also knew that I had some power over Jake because he was a man. I felt much more vulnerable with women who, I thought, could see right through me. Men, on the other hand, could be easily fooled by flirtatious and sexually suggestive behavior. One had to be careful, of course, not to endanger one's reputation by crossing the thin line between acceptable flirtation and acting like a "bad" woman, but I thought I was rather skilled at walking that particular tightrope.

Shortly after I got home from my trip to Alfred I heard from Columbia. I had been accepted but because of my less than exceptional

record at Alfred and my low grade on the writing section of the entrance exam I would be on probation for a year and I was required to take an advanced composition class. I had been so anxious the day of that exam that my mother had offered me one of her pills. I hadn't known before then that she had been taking tranquilizers, though I had noticed that she had been more nervous and volatile over the past year. I gladly accepted both her pill and her concern.

On my way into the City I did relax and I wondered about the tranquilizer. I guessed that my mother was going through the change of life, but I never considered asking her about it. We did not talk about "women's problems" in my family. My mother had not told me about menstruation. I had learned about that from my friends and in my home economics class in elementary school, the only class where there were no boys. I learned more directly, when I started to get cramps with my period, that I could expect no sympathy from my mother who believed they were all in my head. What was made absolutely clear when I was in my early teens was that female functions were never to be mentioned where men were present. One Saturday morning my father and I were sitting at the kitchen table while my mother prepared breakfast. I had cramps and began to complain about the pain. My father did not respond and looked very uncomfortable. My mother whispered to be quiet because my father was in the room. I stopped complaining, but was angry. I had cramps and I had to bear them in silence to protect my father.

I wondered if my mother talked to anyone about going through menopause besides her doctor. I had certainly not heard any discussion

about it. I guessed she would get through it somehow, just as I had learned to endure my cramps in silence. I thought I would try to be nicer to her and when I got home from the exam I remembered to tell her that the pill had helped.

As the summer approached I decided to apply for my old job at Bambergers, and I looked forward to Jake coming home. He had written frequently, just as he had promised and had invited me to this graduation. He lived with his parents in the Bronx and I felt sure that our relationship would develop over the summer.

My old bosses at Bambergers were glad to have me back and I felt sure that I would be chosen for the College Board again. For the first time that summer I had very little interest in building my wardrobe. I was going to Columbia to learn, not to show off my new outfits. Instead of shopping for bargains during my lunch hour as I had other summers, I spent most of my time at Sam Goody's, a large record store in the Plaza. Because of my frequent visits I became friendly with some of the salespeople and one young man in particular.

Keith Lockhart was a college student who was, like me, a real jazz fan. We spent as much time as we could talking about our favorite artists. One day, when we were particularly frustrated because our conversation was constantly being interrupted by customers, he suggested that we go out for lunch sometime. While I was delighted that he had asked me, I was also somewhat taken aback because Keith was a Negro. I said sure, let's do that sometime hoping that he would not suggest a date right away. But Keith did not give me the time I had hoped for to

consider whether or not to accept his proposal. I heard him ask, how about tomorrow and I answered, fine.

When I did have time to think about having lunch with Keith, I decided that there was nothing wrong with it. He was a college man, very well mannered and very good looking. During the rest of the day I kept thinking about Madeline, my friend from the swimming office at George Washington and how my feelings about Negroes had changed because of knowing her. Before our friendship all Negroes were totally alien and to be avoided as much as possible, but Madeline was not one of "them." She was my friend. After leaving George Washington I had no contact with Negroes until I got to know Warren Sutton, a phenomenally good basketball player at Alfred. I met Warren through Bob and immediately liked him. One night when Bob and I were at a fraternity party I saw Warren standing alone. I was concerned that he might be feeling strange being the only Negro at the party and went over to talk to him. Although I was worried about Warren because of his race, what I wanted to show him was that for me, he was just like anyone else. I was just like that with Keith, I thought. Why should it matter that his skin is dark.

By the time my lunch hour came the next day I had convinced myself that there was nothing extraordinary about spending the hour with my friend from Sam Goody's. The restaurant we chose because of its good hamburgers and deli style pickles was crowded with shoppers, mostly women. By the time we got a table and had ordered, it was clear that by having lunch with Keith I had violated a code. Many of the women as well as the few men at the other tables were staring at us. As we

struggled to make conversation, which had always been so easy in the record store, I heard one woman say, "She looks like such a nice girl. Isn't it a shame." We ate as quickly as we could and left. As we walked back towards Bambergers I was aware that more heads turned to stare at us. I was shocked, furious and a little frightened. Perfect strangers felt they had the right to comment on my choice of friends and this wasn't the South.

Keith patiently explained that attitudes in the North were not as liberal as most people thought. My hatred for New Jersey, which was generally just below the surface, erupted. I was sure, I told Keith, that people in the City would not have reacted the way these suburban idiots had. He said he wasn't so sure. We decided that we would have lunch together the next day, but that we would bring sandwiches and eat outside.

I didn't mention Keith to my mother until he asked me for a date. I had stopped asking her whether I could go out, but I knew I had to tell her about Keith being a Negro. Unlike the time in high school when I had asked her if I could go to Madeline's house, this time I really hoped she would not have any objections. My parents were conservative in most areas and gave no indication that their views on race relations were liberal, but we had virtually no contact with Negroes and I was able to delude myself that my mother would welcome Keith into our home. I began by talking about how intelligent Keith was, that he went to Fairleigh Dickinson and that he wanted to take me out. Finally, I said that he was a Negro. My mother looked at me as if I had lost my mind.

It was out of the question. I could not go out with a Negro. Even if she didn't mind, which she decidedly did, she had to think of her neighbors. She owed it to them not to allow any Negro into the neighborhood. I said he wasn't moving in, only coming to the door to pick me up. She turned her back and walked out of my room saying that I had gone too far. I quickly realized that this was one argument that I could not win and decided to quit before my mother got hysterical. But I did tell her that she had disappointed me greatly because I had thought she was above such foolish prejudice.

I was, however, going to go out with Keith. I really enjoyed my time with him and we shared many interests. Keith also met one of my main criteria in a man--he had something to teach me. He wrote poetry and I looked forward to learning about a form of writing that had always been mysterious to me. When I told Keith what had happened and that I still wanted to go out with him we arranged for one of his white friends to pick me up. That night was only the first of many of my "dates" with Keith's friend. One week when we both had the same day off we decided to go to the beach. This time, since we wanted to be alone I told my mother I was going to the beach with friends from work and drove to Keith's house in Teaneck. I had been anxious to see where he lived and when I came to his street the split levels didn't look any different from any other street, but all the people I saw on the block were Negro. It seemed wonderful to me. More evidence that we were really all the same except for skin color. The weather was clear and hot and I looked forward to a whole day with Keith.

When we got to the beach I was flooded with memories of going there with my family when I was a child and I ran down to the water. When we had unpacked our towels and lunch and settled down on our blanket I began to notice that people were staring at us. This wasn't New Jersey and I knew that many people from the City went to Jones Beach, but the looks on people's faces were the same as they had been at the Garden State Plaza. Keith had been right after all. I forced myself to ignore the looks, but the day was tainted.

I felt lucky that summer to be dating two men who had so much to offer me, but I knew I could not keep them both indefinitely. I was also afraid of how much I liked being with Keith and wondered what would happen if our relationship became really serious. Would my family disown me? Did I have the strength to face a disapproving world? I had already paid for my relationship with Keith. After being chosen to be on the College Board for two consecutive years, I had been passed over that summer. My boss intimated that the company I had been keeping during my lunch hour had conflicted with the image the store wanted to project. I knew that not being chosen for the Board was only a minor taste of what would be in store for me if Keith and I stayed together.

I thought about Bill some during that summer. I had not had the courage to deal with our differences, but in many ways Keith and I did not have those kinds of problems. His parents obviously had enough money to buy a new house in Teaneck and from what Keith said about them, they seemed to hold values which were close to those of my parents. They placed a high value on education. In both their economic status

and their attitudes towards education, Keith's parents were more like mine than Jake's. Jake's father worked for the gas company as a meter reader and his mother also worked at a low skilled job to supplement the family income. They lived in a small apartment in the Bronx that did not contain one book. While they had sent Jake to a private high school, Cardinal Hayes, they could not understand why he wanted to go on to graduate school. But Keith was Negro and I was white and even total strangers let us know that they disapproved of our relationship.

Towards the end of the summer, despite the fact that Jake had decided to go to Syracuse University for his masters, I told Keith that I was involved in another relationship and that it had become very serious. While it was true that my relationship with Jake had deepened, it was also true that I wanted to stop seeing Keith because I was afraid of how much I might grow to love him.

Although I had ended my relationship with Keith and Jake was away at Syracuse, I was happy that September. I was eager to start school. When registration day came, however, I felt like a freshman again. The lines at Columbia were endless and I was so confused that I spent more than an hour waiting on the wrong line. The advisors hardly seemed to have time to fill in the students' schedules and as I waited I realized that the long talk with my new advisor that I had dreamt about was not part of what Columbia had to offer. I knew that I had to take advanced composition and that Columbia required three years of a language. I had barely passed the two required years of German at Alfred by sitting in the back and not looking at Mr. Buchannan and learning only enough to

pass tests. I convinced my advisor to allow me to repeat the second year of German. Since I had gotten a "D" in one of my semesters of science and they would transfer the credit but would not count the course towards the science requirement, I had to take a semester of science. I also needed a year of math. After signing up for the required courses I had room for only two Art History courses, but I was eager to begin the first semester of my new life as a serious student. I was, however, also worried since with the exception of my two semesters of Art History at Alfred, I had never really tried to learn in my courses. I had minimal study skills and as my entrance exam showed, my writing skills were below the acceptable standard. I was afraid, too, of German even though I was repeating the second year. I had never mastered the structure of the language which seemed like a diabolical code to me. I had confidence only in my ability in Art History.

When I told my parents what I was taking their main concern was that two of my courses were at night. My father asked me why I was going to night school. I explained that Columbia didn't have a night school any longer--that I was in the School of General Studies and some of the classes were offered at night. He insisted, however, that I was going to night school and he hoped that I would transfer into day school soon. He didn't like me being in the neighborhood around Columbia at all, but he worried particularly about my being there at night.

I loved being in the City--day or night. I intended to get to know the City as I never had when we were living there. I also intended to take full advantage of what Columbia had to offer academically, and had

no interest at all in the organizations that the students at General Studies were trying to build. While I was often alone, I rarely felt lonely. I was testing myself intellectually, and that was my main concern.

By the middle of the semester it was clear that I had enough discipline to study and I realized with a shock that math was my best subject. After a little help from one of my classmates at the beginning of the term I usually answered all the problems on our weekly quizzes perfectly. General Biology, on the other hand, was a problem for me since it was designed for pre-med students. I was at a distinct disadvantage because I had not had chemistry, but I was enjoying the course immensely and doing well enough. I also had learned more German than I had thought and was able to keep up with the work in that class.

My real disappointment that semester, however, was with my Art History courses. The classes, held once a week for three hours, were very large and more than half of the students were middle aged women whom one of my classmates and I called "culture vultures." They took one course at night to broaden themselves, but had no real interest, as far as we could tell, in the deeper meaning of the works we studied. For the first time in my life I began to wonder if financial considerations had affected academic standards. Did Columbia hold these courses at night and allow anyone to take them because they raked in \$68 a credit? I felt cheated. Instead of small classes of art history students, we had large classes filled with people who were not serious.

More disturbing than the composition of the class, however, was the professors' approach to the material. Instead of placing the art within its historical and culture context, they explored only its structural aspects. Dr. Klitzke had recommended Columbia because Meyer Shapiro was on the faculty, but I was told that he taught only graduate students and that his classes were in such high demand that only students who reserved their place a year in advance were admitted to them. I hoped that the next semester I would have professors whose perspective was like Dr. Klitzke's even if I had no hopes of getting into Professor Shapiro's classes. In the meantime I was able to do well in my courses, but found no particular relevance in the "beauty of the line" or the elements which defined Italian Renaissance painting.

For the first time in my college career I ended the semester with better than average grades and also, for the first time, I was proud not embarrassed by my achievement. I did even better the next semester, but was even more disappointed by my art history classes. As the memory of Dr. Klitzke's lectures faded I began to wonder if there was something wrong with me. Why wasn't I satisfied with appreciating the aesthetic qualities of the works? None of the other students seemed to think that the professors' approach to the work was limited. A few of the readings for my courses did make the connections that interested me, particularly Erwin Panofsky's Early Netherlandish Painting, which I treasured. At the end of my Northern Renaissance Painting course the professor said that it was, of course, impossible to understand the work we had been studying all semester without a knowledge of the philosophy current at

the time when the paintings had been created. I felt cheated again. If he really did believe what he said, why hadn't he incorporated that material into the course? Would he have if the course had been comprised of students who were serious about studying art rather than the mix we had?

Despite all my difficulties with art history, I was on the whole glad to be at Columbia, but I missed Jake terribly. He came home a few weekends each semester and I convinced my parents to let me visit him once. They only agreed if I promised to stay with my father's brother who lived in Syracuse. Although my confidence in myself was buoyed by my ability to do well in school and get along with the few friends I made at Columbia, I felt like a whole person only when I was with Jake. I needed his presence to know I was a worthy person.

One night, a few days after Jake had left, I was feeling particularly lonely for him when my grandmother came into my room. She asked me why I was so sad. I was surprised both by her visit to my room which was, as far as I could remember, the first and her interest in my feelings--unique not only for her but for the whole family. I told her that I missed Jake. She responded with an empathy that was totally uncharacteristic of our rather strained relationship. It didn't seem to matter to her that Jake was not Armenian. He was going to be a college professor and he was my man. She didn't say much, but I understood that she knew more than I would ever know about what it was to long for your man. It was a moment when I felt that we were two women relating across time

and space. I had a man and was, in my grandmother's eyes, no longer a child. My grandmother marked another rite of passage for me.

As the end of the Spring semester approached I began to think about what I would do for the summer. I was determined not to go back to Bambergers after they had penalized me for being seen with Keith. I was also no longer interested in selling clothes. I wanted to be in the City. After a year at Columbia New York felt like home again and as far as I was concerned the less I saw of New Jersey the better. Jake would be home for good in June since he had finished the course work for his degree and most of the research for his thesis. He hadn't made his plans for summer work, but he would most probably also be in the City. I decided to talk to my father about working at Avakian Brothers. Many of my cousins had worked there for a summer or two and I thought it was probably my turn. My father seemed pleased at my decision and agreed to talk to Uncle Alex about it. The next time we saw my uncle he told me he would be delighted to have me in the office for the summer.

I had loved going to Avakian Brothers as a child. My cousins and I played on the huge stacks of rugs, jumping from one to another. The first morning I walked through the double doors I was overwhelmed with nostalgia for Aunty Lucy's lap and hot tea in a glass. Somehow the bell that rang when I walked through the doors had evoked that simpler time in my life. Uncle Alex greeted me, introduced me to the secretary and the bookkeeper and showed me my desk.

The hierarchy that was so obvious in family gatherings was even more pronounced at Avakian Brothers. Uncle Mesrop, the oldest member of

the firm, was clearly at the top of the structure. He had a large private office away from the secretary and bookkeeper and everyone was deferential to him. Uncle Alex was next in line, also with a private office but one that opened out onto where the secretary and bookkeeper sat. Hemeyak and Amis, the youngest members of the business, didn't have an office. There was one salesman who was not a relative, but was Armenian. He had the lowest status of the men who worked in the front of the large room. The men who worked in the back, the shipping clerk and the men who moved the rugs around and opened them for customers were non-Armenian. The only Armenian who worked in the back was the rug weaver, but they were all "boys" regardless of age and nationality. I was introduced to them by the secretaries only when they came to the front of the room. I never did meet the old man who repaired rugs.

The phone began to ring and a customer came through the double doors signaling the beginning of the work day. The secretary set me to typing consignment orders and bills and as I heard the bell ring all morning as customers came and went, I felt I had made the right decision. It felt good to be at Avakian Brothers.

After the first few weeks however, my nostalgia was gone, and I realized why I had thought of Aunty Lucy when I came through the doors that first morning. Being at Avakian Brothers was like being at her house--it was a little piece of Armenia. The area where the secretary and bookkeeper sat and the back of the store seemed like islands of America to me, although the women in the front were both Jewish and most of the "boys" were Puerto Rican. All the customers were short, dark men

who, like my uncles and cousins, spoke English only when necessary. And everything seemed so old fashioned. As the weather got warmer, for example, and the smell of wool and mothballs became oppressive it seemed ridiculous to me that the showroom was not air conditioned. I asked the bookkeeper if anyone had thought of air conditioning. She gave me a look that said that I should know better and asked me if I really thought the Avakians would consider spending money on such frivolity. I said I guessed not and asked myself my old question again. Why did my family have to be so old country? Any American business of the size and prominence of Avakian Brothers could surely have made their offices and showrooms more comfortable for their customers if not for themselves and their workers.

My relatives were, on the other hand, all too American in their attitudes about race relations. One morning Uncle Mesrop came in and walked directly to Uncle Alex who was standing in front of the bookkeeper's desk. I knew something important must have happened because he usually went to his office and waited for Uncle Alex, Amis and Hemeyak to go to see him. He was holding a New York Times in his hand and was obviously disturbed. He pointed to a picture of a leader of one of the newly independent African states and said, in Armenian, "animals in suits." Uncle Alex, Amis and Hemeyak all shook their heads in dismay, not at the brutality of their uncle's comment, but at the specter of Negro men in positions of power and leadership. I knew nothing about the man whose picture was on the front page of the Times or the politics of Africa, but I was outraged at the blatant prejudice of my family. I

had no idea what to say to them, but at that moment I hated them. I looked at my dark and hairy relatives and thought they looked more like gorillas than Keith Lockhart did.

The secretary and bookkeeper gathered around the picture and though I knew they had not understood the words Uncle Mesrop had spoken, they shared his feelings. A short while before this incident I had seen Black Orpheus, a Brazilian film with an all Negro cast. When I came into the office I asked the secretary if she had seen it. She said she had and thought it was okay but she was disgusted at the love scene between the two main characters. Because I couldn't imagine what would be disgusting about what I had thought was a beautiful movie, I asked her what she meant. She replied that watching Orpheus and Eurydice kiss each other was like watching animals. I was so overwhelmed that I could do no more than look at her in disbelief.

That night I told my parents what Uncle Mesrop had said and how angry I was. My father said that there were differences between the races and that science had proven that Negroes were not as well developed as whites. It was a fact that he had learned when he was a student at Columbia. There was scientific evidence that Negroes' brains were smaller than whites' and that while Negro babies might develop faster than white babies, their development stopped at a lower stage. Negroes were, in that way, more like animals whose rate of development was certainly more rapid, though less advanced than humans. Since the idea that Negroes were closer to animals than whites was becoming familiar, I was not as shocked as I had been when I first heard it and was,

therefore, able to respond. My arguments that Negroes were as capable as whites were, however, to no avail. My father had science on his side.

While my time at Avakian Brothers did not live up to its early promise, the summer with Jake was all that I had hoped for. Sometimes he met me at the office and we would walk from Thirty-third Street down to Greenwich Village which was one of my favorite places in the City. In the Village, it seemed, people could be what they wanted to be. Sometimes we went to hear some jazz, but most of the time we had something to eat and walked and talked for the rest of the evening.

I felt as if I could talk about anything with Jake. He was interested in my frustration with my Art History courses and supported my ideas. I was also able to share the problems I was having with my mother. My resolve to try to be nicer to her had not lasted long. We always seemed to be fighting about something--the clothes I wore, the music I listened to, the friends I had. According to my mother I never did enough with the family. My perception was that the family was like an octopus. If one set of relatives was not making demands one weekend, another set was. My mother and I were polarized just as we had been when I was in high school and living with her seemed to be a constant struggle.

I stayed out of the house as much as I could, but it was never enough for me. What I really would have liked was to move into a place of my own. I knew, however, that my parents would never allow it. Earlier that year my godmother's daughter, a woman in her early thirties,

had moved into her own apartment. My mother, who had always liked Diane very much, thought she had done a terrible thing to leave her mother especially since she had moved to the City. Ana worried about her constantly. I was furious with my mother. Diane was a grown woman, even if she wasn't married, and Ana was not left alone. Shahab, her husband, was with her as well as Adrina, her younger daughter. I was sorry that Ana worried, but I could really understand why Diane wanted to live in New York, and she did call her mother every night. But my mother insisted that it just wasn't right for Diane to move away from her parents. I argued that she wouldn't feel that way if Diane were a man, but she maintained that she would and reminded me that none of my male cousins had moved out of their parents' home before they married. I stomped out of the kitchen with tears of rage and frustration in my eyes and screamed that ordinary people--Americans--let their children have their own apartments when they were in their twenties and Diane was over thirty years old.

When I had calmed down I thought about what my mother had said about my male cousins. She was right. All but one of my relatives moved out of their parents' homes only when they got married--males and females. Diane was very brave and I admired her courage, but was furious that she had to be a hero just to move out of her parents' home.

I was sure that I could never convince my parents to let me get my own place. Even if I had the courage to move out without their consent, which I didn't think I had, I was still in school and financially dependent on them. There was an added problem. I didn't want to live alone

and all my women friends in the area were either engaged or already married. Columbia provided no dorms for General Studies students. As far as I could see, there was no way for me to get out of the house--at least until I graduated and got a job. I had no plans past graduation, and though it was only a year away, it seemed very far off.

Towards the end of the summer Jake asked me to marry him and I happily accepted. My vision of our lives together was idyllic. We would live in an apartment in the City, furnished sparsely with white bookcases, a good FM radio and hifi set and no television or oriental rugs. We would both be involved in some kind of scholarship. Of course I wanted children eventually, but I wanted to wait for a few years. In 1960 for a woman to even consider whether she wanted children seemed the height of perversion, but one could put them off. I knew I wasn't ready to be a mother. I had just begun to find myself and marriage to Jake, I thought, would only enhance that process. I was eager to begin my new life with Jake and when we discussed dates for our marriage I was delighted to agree to December of that year.

Once we had set the date we told my parents. They were decidedly not happy with my decision. I was too young. I hadn't graduated from college yet. But they saw that we were determined and did not argue. Only my grandmother was happy. I had my man. She immediately began to treat Jake like a king--cooking special foods for him and praising his intelligence. It made me uncomfortable to see her cater to him, but at least she seemed glad for me.

Telling my father and mother, however, was not the final step in getting approval for my marriage. My father had to tell his older brother. We arranged to go to Uncle Alex's house. Jake was not invited. After dinner my father, approaching his brother just as Jake had approached him, told Uncle Alex of my decision to marry Jake. Uncle Alex asked my father about Jake's background and future plans. My father began by saying that Jake was an ordinary person and when I spoke up to offer some more positive information, I quickly sensed that I had broken one of their rules and I stopped speaking. My father explained that Jake had a master's degree and was intending to enter a Ph.D. program in the near future because he wanted to teach at the college level. My cousin Emik, who had met Jake, got excited and broke in telling his father how smart he thought Jake was, but he too retreated into silence when neither his father nor mine responded to him.

Uncle Alex, who was much more exacting than my father, thought it would be wiser if we waited until Jake got his degree and would be better able to provide for me. I hated what was going on and decided to speak for myself--rules or no rules. I said I didn't want to wait. We were in love and had decided to marry now. Probably realizing that I was not going to be quiet anymore, Uncle Alex broke the rules and responded to me. He asked me how I would like being poor--the wife of a student. I said it didn't make any difference to me as long as we could be together and that I didn't need much money. I wasn't interested in having a lot of things, but in sharing a good relationship.

Since the rules were already broken, Aunty Goharik told me that she, too, had wanted to marry Uncle Alex before he went into the Army but her parents had decided that she should wait. She had waited and everything had turned out fine. I quietly responded that it was nice that things had turned out well for her, but this was not the old country and I was going to get married when I wanted to. I thought about both of my grandmothers who had been married to men they didn't even know and was outraged that they were trying to make me follow rules that applied to another time and place. I was an American and American couples did not allow their parents or relatives to tell them when to get married.

My uncle finally gave his approval and then Aunty Goharik congratulated me. Although I had felt that getting Uncle Alex's approval was merely going through a ritual, once I had it the marriage seemed very real.

Telling Jake's mother our decision was comparatively easy. She was, however, shocked by the news and in some ways less willing to accept it than my family had been. He was an only child and she had lost her husband the previous year. We hoped that in time she would accept our decision.

I began to think about what kind of wife I wanted to be. The one thing that I knew for sure was that I didn't want to be like the women in my family. Whether their husbands were authoritarian like Uncle Ashot and Uncle George or more willing to share with their wives like my father, the women all devoted themselves to their husbands and families.

I wanted a life of my own, not one that would be lived through other people. Though we hadn't discussed in any detail what it meant, Jake and I had agreed that marriage should be a fifty-fifty partnership. I discussed my ideas with my mother and she was uncharacteristically quiet. I wondered what she thought, but she merely said she didn't understand what I was talking about.

She was, on the other hand, very concerned about the arrangements for the marriage. She began by asking what kind of engagement ring Jake intended to give me. When I said that we had decided that engagement rings were too expensive and that I really didn't need one, she responded that she had thought as much. She went into her room and came back with an old gold ring with five small diamonds set in a circle on top. She offered me the ring that she said had been in the family. I was touched by this first sign that she accepted my decision to marry Jake. The ring was old fashioned and she suggested that I take it to my cousin Kay, who was a jeweler, and have the diamonds reset.

My feeling of real joy at my mother's generosity was shattered when she told me that she wanted me to have the ring, but that I was not tell anyone that she had given it to me. I was deeply hurt and retaliated with anger. I screamed that I would not accept the ring under such conditions. I thought she was giving me the ring because she cared about me, but it was clear that she cared more about what other people thought about Jake's inability to buy me a diamond. I was not going to lie to save face for her. I returned the ring, but she gave it back to me saying "do whatever you want." I decided to have it reset and wore

it with mixed feelings. As it turned out no one asked where I got it. I guessed everyone assumed that it had come from Jake.

I returned to school that fall amid plans for the wedding but I was, surprisingly, able to concentrate on my work. I had completed my distribution requirements and was able to take most of my courses in my major. To my surprise, however, I found that I missed taking math and science. The Art History courses were as disturbing as they had been in past semesters and I began to wonder what had attracted me to the field in the first place. I could find no evidence of Meyer Shapiro's influence on the faculty who taught the courses I took. I wondered if his presence at Columbia had been a fantasy of Dr. Klitzke's, as I had yet to meet one person who had ever seen the great man. By the middle of the semester, however, my concerns over the various approaches to the study of art took a back seat to wedding arrangements.

My struggles with my mother continued over various aspects of the wedding. We argued over who would be invited to the reception, but the major conflict came over where it would be held. Jake's family was very small, but even if we invited only those relatives of ours who were considered to be essential we would have well over a hundred people. I wanted to invite some of my friends and had to argue for the inclusion of each one. When we had the number finalized my parents and I priced the restaurants in the area. Some were very expensive and after discussing one or two of them I realized that my mother was willing to spend thousands of dollars on a reception. My father seemed disturbed by her attitude but was his usual non-communicative self. It seemed to

me that my wedding reception had become a vehicle for the kind of ostentatious display of money that I was beginning to hate. When we came out of one place that would have cost my father more than four thousand dollars, my mother shocked me by saying that she had really liked it. I couldn't believe she was seriously considering it but she talked about the menu and the changes she would like to make and my father said nothing. I said that I refused to let my father spend that kind of money for one night. She looked at me and asked what I had to say about it. I responded that if she went over what I considered a reasonable price that she could count out two of the guests--Jake and me. We finally settled on a place that we all could live with.

Our other conflicts revolved around what kind of home I was going to have. I had no real interest in the silver flatware, china dishes and crystal stemware that my mother considered essential. Jake and I had chosen a pattern for flatware in stainless steel and preferred stoneware dishes to china. When I informed my mother that the cutlery and dishes we had chosen were not our "everyday" set, but all we thought we needed, she was mystified. Would we really use stainless for company? I assured her that we would. What would she tell relatives when they asked what to get me? She could tell them about the stainless, the dishes and some other things I had seen that I liked--a Dansk teak salad bowl, enamel on cast iron pots. Her response to my preferences was that she couldn't understand why I didn't want good things. The things I liked were "good" to my mind, but I realized that they were in the same category as the "cheap" clothes I bought. A few weeks before the

wedding, however, I was compelled to choose a china pattern. My mother informed me that Aunty Manoush had decided to get me an eight place setting of china and was waiting for me to choose the pattern.

All the difficulties at home made me realize I had made the right decision in choosing an early date for the wedding. Jake and I decided to live in the City and found an efficiency apartment in Riverdale near DeWitt Clinton High School where he was teaching and an easy commute to Columbia for me. We bought an unfinished table and chairs, a modern sofa bed, a teak coffee table and walnut shelves which we planned to put on the wall.

We also made plans for birth control since we didn't want a baby until after Jake had completed his Ph.D. My plans for future schooling were vague since my interest in art history had waned, but I agreed that we should not have a baby for a while. I guessed that I would work when Jake went back to school. I had heard from a friend at Columbia who was a nurse that the safest method of birth control was a diaphragm, and I made an appointment with the gynecologist that she recommended. Since I was totally ignorant about the procedure for being fitted for a diaphragm I was very nervous on my way to the doctor's office. By the time he came into the examining room my anxiety had made my blood pressure rise to an alarmingly high rate. Dr. Kerman, a tall man in his thirties, patted my hand and asked me what was wrong. As I floundered for an answer his nurse said, "you would be nervous too if you were waiting for your first internal." I looked at her gratefully and hoped she felt my gratitude as I was unable to speak. She took my hand and I relaxed.

I left the office with my diaphragm and my first experience of a conscious connection with another woman because of our shared experience. The nurse had been right. Dr. Kerman would never know what it felt like to have an internal.

When I got home I tried to talk to my mother about the diaphragm but the subject of birth control, because it was related to sex, was impossible for her. She said she was busy and left the room. I had hoped to share some of my feelings about being at the doctor's but I was as inept in my attempt to be "modern" about sexuality as she was closed to the subject.

My relationship with Jake's mother was very different from the one with my mother, but it was equally difficult. The fact that Elsie did not accept my existence was made very clear one night when Jake and I had planned to have dinner with her. It was raining very hard and as we ran into the courtyard of her apartment building I slipped on the wet pavement and fell on my back. I wasn't hurt but I was soaked to the skin. When we got to her apartment she was very upset because Jake was wet. I tried to tell her that I had fallen and that the back of my dress was soaked, but she didn't hear me. She ran into the bathroom to get a towel so he could dry his hair. I waited for Jake to finish with the towel and used it to dry myself as best I could. I had hoped that Elsie would offer me a robe, but she didn't seem to realize that I had a problem. Throughout the evening I mentioned my fall but Elsie never acknowledged that she heard me. I was astounded that my invisibility was so complete and I was furious with her. I was also a little annoyed

with Jake. It hadn't seemed to me that he tried to get his mother to acknowledge me. I hoped that things would work out once we were married.

My parents assumed that Jake and I would be married in the Armenian church in our old neighborhood. Jake had been raised as a Catholic, but had fallen away from the church after high school. He had no objection to complying with my parents' wish. I was ambivalent about getting married in the Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Church, though I never seriously considered doing anything else. On the one hand, I liked the continuity of being married in the same church as my parents and where my brother and I and most of my cousins had been christened. On the other hand, my old feelings about the church that had so incontrovertibly defined my difference were still with me. I had long ceased to look to religion to fulfill any of my needs--spiritual or social. When I was a freshman at Alfred I learned the word agnostic and adopted that label for my own attitude towards God. The next year I crossed the line and became an atheist. Since I had not attended any church other than the one in the City I had no desire to pick a church out of a phone book and be married by a stranger. I did decide, however, to talk to the priest about shortening the wedding ceremony which I knew could last for more than an hour.

I had not spoken to a priest since I was a little girl when Der Hayr used to occasionally come to our house for dinner after church, and I was not looking forward to the meeting that Jake and I were required to have with him before the wedding. I listened as he told me that I

would have to take communion the day before the wedding to insure my purity before taking the holy sacrament of marriage. Since Jake was not a member of our church he had no such requirement, though Der Hayr said he hoped that Jake would see his priest. I was outraged at the assumption that I was impure, but I seemed to have no choice other than going through the ritual. He reminded me that I must not eat before communion and I nodded my head. When he was finished I asked him if it was possible to keep the ceremony down to a half an hour and he assured me he would do what he could.

I awoke the day before the wedding excited, nervous and hungry. My mother and grandmother were busy cooking for the dinner after the rehearsal. The smells in the kitchen stimulated my appetite and I decided to eat. My mother reminded me that I was supposed to fast, but I said I was hungry and didn't believe in any of that stuff anyway. Surprisingly, neither she nor my grandmother seemed to mind as I ate a hearty breakfast. Later that day when I met the priest for communion he asked me if I had eaten and I heard myself saying "yes." I had meant to lie, but when the time came I realized that I had taken some pleasure in defying Der Hayr. I could not have communion. I guessed Jake would have to accept me in an impure state.

That night when all the guests had left the house, Jake and I were sitting around the dining room table with my parents and my grandmother having a last cup of coffee. My mother left the room for a moment and came back with a packet of small papers tied with a pink ribbon. She handed them to Jake. When he looked at the packet in confusion, she

informed him that they were all my doctor bills, from my infancy to the present. She wanted him to know that they had taken very good care of me and that she expected him to do the same. I was mortified.

The morning of the wedding was like a dream. My godmother, an artist with a needle, had made my gown. It was silk satin with a silk brocade overskirt. The sleeves were long, tight and buttoned at the wrist with eight tiny satin covered buttons. The straight skirt reached to my ankles in the front and lengthened into a train in the back. The whole process around this gown had been pure joy. We had gone "shopping" for the gown at the best stores in New York and when we found the one I liked, Ana carefully studied how it was constructed while the saleswoman was out of the dressing room. The next Sunday we went to the Lower East Side to buy the material. As I stood in the gown that hugged my body perfectly, I felt a flood of warmth for my godmother whose skill had produced an exact copy of the original we had seen at Bonwit Tellers. For the first time in my life I was really satisfied with how I looked.

When we reached the church it was crowded and I took my father's arm for the walk down the aisle. As we approached the altar and Jake stepped forward to receive me, the image of being handed from one man to another flashed across my consciousness. For a split second I wanted to kick off my shoes, four inch spiked heels, and run out of the church. But as I stepped towards Jake the feeling was gone. The ceremony, which was as unintelligible to me as the services had been when I was a child, dragged on endlessly. My feet hurt and I was so thirsty that when the glass of wine that the wedding party was to share was handed to me I

almost finished it off. Finally it was over and Jake and I walked back down the aisle as man and wife.

CHAPTER IX

It felt wonderful to return from our honeymoon to our little apartment. It was decorated just the way I had wanted it with the exception that I had accepted an oriental rug from the family business. Although Jake and I had talked about having an equal relationship before our marriage, it had never occurred to me that such an arrangement would mean that he would share housework. Before my marriage I had interest neither in cooking nor cleaning. In my mind both activities were identified with the kind of devotion to husband and children that I rejected. Now that I had my own apartment, however, cleaning did not seem so bad and I was surprised by how much I enjoyed cooking. My mother and Aunty Ars were delighted in my new interest and taught me the basics of Armenian cooking. As I made each new dish I was, of course, anxious for Jake's reaction, but not crushed when he complained, as he often did, that the food was too spicy. I loved to eat and I liked my own creations.

When the second semester began at Columbia I changed my last name on my records. It sounded so strange to me--Arlene Voski Ryan, but I guessed I'd get used to it. What seemed impossible to accept, however, was the name Mrs. Ryan. I was glad no one had occasion to call me that. It always made me think of Jake's mother. That's who Mrs. Ryan was, not me. Since I did have an Irish last name, however, I wanted to learn something about Irish culture beyond the stereotypes I had learned as a child. I needed something more substantial than "Father Flannigan's

Boy's Town" and "The Bells of St. Mary's" to counteract the image of the dirty, drinking Irish who had too many children. I decided to do my senior seminar paper on the tracery in Irish illuminated manuscripts of the seventh and eighth centuries. My work on this paper was the extent of my interest in Irish culture for that period of my life. It had been enough, it seemed, to study the art and learn that Irish monks of that period had been highly respected throughout Europe.

Although Jake was half German, I had no need to delve into German culture. Despite the fact that Germany had been the enemy of our country in two world wars, I didn't feel the need to reclaim German culture. It was generally accepted that while Germany had produced Hitler, it had also given the world Bach, Brahms and Beethoven as well as many fine universities.

While my new life as a married woman did not exactly fit the idyllic image I had had, after the first month of marriage I was reasonably satisfied. I would have preferred it if Jake's mother had not called every night at seven. I tried to remember not to answer the phone when it rang at that hour because she always asked for Jake without making even the slightest pretense of saying a few words to me. I was also somewhat bothered that he talked to her for what seemed like forever and never mentioned anything about me. What I would have liked was for him to tell her not to be so rude to me, but I didn't feel that I had the right to complain to either of them. I was, however, pleased with my life with Jake and absolutely delighted to have my own home.

At the beginning of February I thought I was getting the flu. I was tired all the time and woke up nauseated. I called the doctor and told him my symptoms to which he replied that I could be pregnant. I thought that was the most ridiculous thing I had ever heard. I had used my diaphragm faithfully. I was sure I had a stomach flu but when I didn't get better and I missed a period, I began to worry. I made an appointment with Dr. Kerman despite the fact that Jake belonged to a health maintenance group where I could see a gynecologist free of charge. I hated going to that group. It felt like a clinic--a place for poor people. I preferred Dr. Kerman.

After he examined me and took a urine sample he said it was too early to be sure, but he thought I could very well be carrying a child. I made an appointment for the next week--St. Patrick's Day. This time I wanted Jake to come with me. The news was devastating. I was pregnant. As I held back my tears, Dr. Kerman patted me on the shoulder and said it would work out fine. Even though we had not planned a baby so soon, he was sure that once we got used to the idea we would be very happy. Jake was shocked, but said he also felt proud and like Dr. Kerman was also sure that everything would be fine.

For the next few weeks I battled nausea and exhaustion and tried to finish my courses. Once school was over, however, I felt worse. It seemed to me that this pregnancy was the worst thing that could have happened to me. I felt as if my life was over and in a way I knew that the life I had envisioned for myself was, indeed, gone. Now I would not be a scholar, but a mother. I had heard of abortions but had no idea

how to go about getting one. Abortion was for poor women and Negro women. They probably knew how to get one but it was not something anyone like me did. I wished I would fall down a flight of stairs. Women in the movies always lost their babies after such a fall. Not having the courage to throw myself down the stairs, I tried another method. For some reason I thought hot baths might bring on early labor and for the rest of my pregnancy I scalded myself in the hottest water I could stand.

I knew that I should get a job. We needed the money, particularly with the baby coming, but I had neither the energy nor any motivation to look for work. Jake had a summer job at a detention center for delinquents and worked twelve hour shifts. While he was gone I was barely able to function. I spent most of the time sitting in the apartment and staring at the walls. I didn't even turn on the radio or play a record. I didn't want to see anyone and I couldn't read anything. I just sat and waited for the baby that had already changed my life so dramatically.

Jake's life, on the other hand, seemed not to have changed very much at all. Before my pregnancy we had decided that he would go to graduate school as soon as possible. Now that I was going to have a baby in late October or early November, he would have to wait to start in the spring instead of the fall if we decided to leave the City. His plans were delayed, but not changed. I wanted to move to get away from his mother. Elsie's continued refusal to accept my existence and her nightly phone calls were driving me crazy. I was also having my usual

trouble with my family's demands. With regard to my responsibilities to the extended family, it seemed as if I hadn't left home at all. Getting married and moving to my own home was not enough distance. I wanted more miles between us.

Jake was offered a scholarship at the University of Massachusetts and when we went to visit the quaint New England town where it was located, I fell in love. Amherst was the kind of American town I had pictured as being the real thing. Jake liked it too and was pleased with the faculty in the Political Science Department. He accepted their offer and we were put on the waiting list for married student housing.

By September, with our plans for moving settled and Jake working regular hours and home more, I began to come out of my depression. I thought about the baby a little and realized that I knew nothing about taking care of an infant and even less about the birth process. My doctor, whom I was seeing very often because I had put on too much weight, did not offer any information and I was too ignorant to formulate any decent questions. I guessed I would learn about it all when the time came.

My parents had been shocked when I had gotten pregnant so soon, but my mother seemed happy to be having a grandchild. My father treated me like an invalid, not allowing me to carry anything heavier than my pocketbook. While great attention was paid to my physical being, no one seemed to notice my depression. Whether the lack of comment on my emotional state was because I had managed to hide it so well that they didn't notice or the usual family denial of feelings, I was relieved

that no one said anything to me. To admit that this pregnancy had sent me into a deep depression would be to admit to decidedly unnatural feelings. I was, indeed, plagued by the suspicion that there was something wrong with me because I was not elated by the baby. I worked very hard to convince myself that I really wanted the baby after all, and by the time I had reached the end of my pregnancy I was looking forward to its birth.

Jake and I began to discuss names. The thought of giving my baby an Armenian name had never crossed my mind, but I thought it would be nice to honor tradition in some way. We decided that the baby's middle name would be Christopher, a translation of Khrosrov, my father's father's name. His first name would be Neal. While I was getting used to the idea of the baby, I was still ignorant about the delivery and terrified.

On the morning of October 31, 1961 I was awakened by a flood of water gushing out from between my legs. I ran to the bathtub and wondered if my hot baths had worked. Jake was talking to the doctor who said that there was nothing to worry about. My "water" had broken and I would probably go into labor soon. He would meet us at the hospital. Labor didn't seem very bad at first. The contractions were mild and I could read the Russian novel by Turgenev that I had brought with me-- Fathers and Sons. The nurses were surprised by what I was reading. They said I was the only woman in maternity who had come without Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care. Well, I thought, I guess I'm a different kind of mother.

Eight hours later I was in what the nurses called "hard labor." I had been given something for the pain, but my feeling was that the drug affected not the agony in my abdomen but my ability to speak. I was wheeled into the labor room which looked like a dungeon from my vantage point in the adult sized crib they had put me into. As the pain wracked through my body I felt the hand of the nurse on my abdomen. Though the pain was excruciating, I heard her tell the other nurse that she didn't know why I was making such a fuss. I wasn't having a contraction. I wanted to scream that it wasn't her body but I had lost all power of speech and managed to utter only an incomprehensible murmur.

An eternity later my son was born. The nurses handed me a swaddled bundle with large dark eyes, but I wanted only to go to sleep. I waited for them to talk him away.

I stayed in the hospital for the usual six days and learned how to feed and burp Neal. I had not considered nursing. I thought it was old fashioned and my doctor agreed. With a bottle, he said, you always knew exactly what and how much the baby was getting--a decided improvement over the breast.

We had decided to go to my parents' house so my mother could help with Neal until I felt strong enough to care for him myself. The first few days we were there many of my relatives came to see the baby. He was a beautiful baby, I thought, and I was proud to show him off. One night Aunty Ars and Uncle George came for dinner and after we ate and Neal was sleeping all the women were in the kitchen cleaning up. My aunt looked at me and said, "So, now you know what we all went through

for you. Now you are a woman." I didn't really know what she meant. But I did know that no matter how I, as an individual, felt about my experience I was now part of a group and assumptions would be made about how I felt. I didn't ask her whether she meant the pregnancy, the birth, all the caretaking that babies required or all of those things. My ambivalence about being part of the group was so great that I had no desire to talk about it. If she knew that pregnancy had touched off a deep depression would she still include me in the group, or could it be that experiencing that depression might be part of what it meant to be a woman? I felt sure, however, that my feelings at the moment were not normal. Having babies and caring for them was natural for a woman. I had not only not wanted this baby, but now that he was born I hadn't the faintest idea of how to care for him.

Maybe I should have read Dr. Spock. I resolved to get one as soon as I got home. My mother, on the other hand, handled Neal with authority. She seemed totally calm giving him his first bath and cutting his tiny nails. I wondered if I would ever feel such confidence. After two weeks I decided that it was time to go home. I could no longer bear the humiliation of being terrified of caring for my own child.

The first morning we were home I felt Jake's reluctance to go to work. I asked him if he was scared to leave Neal with me. He admitted he was. So was I. How would I manage? Twenty-four hours later, however, I felt like an old hand. It was exciting to be learning so much so fast. Within a few days, however, I was exhausted again and frustrated. No matter what we did Neal cried all night, his surprisingly

loud voice resounding through the small apartment. Despite my serious doubts that we would survive Neal's colic, we all did and I began to pack for our move.

C H A P T E R X

We arrived in Amherst in January and moved into the University's married student housing complex. Our two room apartment was larger than our efficiency in the City and had the added advantage of having a yard where I could set out Neal's carriage in nice weather and, in the spring, be able to barbeque. I had gotten a part-time job at the library shelving books and working at the circulation desk. While it was not easy to leave the familiarity of the City, my main feeling about the move to Massachusetts was relief to be four hours driving time from my family and Jake's mother.

I looked forward to getting to know my neighbors, particularly the women. I had felt very isolated in the City after I finished school. My depression made even a phone call to the few friends I had in the City difficult. I also felt that my pregnancy had put me into another world. My women friends all had jobs and though some were engaged or already married, none of them was expecting a baby. I felt comfortable only with Barbara, who by that time had two daughters. Because she lived in Newark and Jake used the car during the week, I didn't get to see her often and I rarely saw her alone. When I did visit her it was usually on the weekends. Jake came along and Barbara's husband Barry was home. Barbara and I were able to talk, however, when the two men watched sports on television or got into their own conversations. While I never told Barbara my real feelings about being pregnant, I was comforted by the fact that she seemed, in many ways, to be her old self.

She had survived motherhood without losing everything. I hoped that I would find a woman among my neighbors in the apartment complex with whom I could share some of my feelings about being a mother.

Within a few weeks I had met most of the women in our section of the apartments and while I had not been particularly drawn to anyone, I gladly accepted an invitation to one of their regular get-togethers which they called a "coffee klatch." The conversations I had had with most of these women when we met in our adjoining yards were largely about their children and how quickly they were developing. The discussion at the beginning of the coffee klatch also focused on children and as I listened to the women comparing the achievements of their infants and toddlers I realized why my encounters with them had always felt strained. They were competing with each other through their children. Although I was not exactly sure what I wanted in relationships with other mothers, I knew that I did not want to participate in the game these women were playing.

I was glad when the discussion of children seemed to be running out of steam but was even more disturbed by the topic that replaced it. To my great surprise the bulk of the evening was spent discussing the soap operas they all watched regularly. As I listened to the arguments about their favorite characters I thought about my grandmother. When our family finally got a television in the early 1950s (because my mother said she didn't want me going to someone else's house to watch it), I always knew where my grandmother would be when I came home for lunch--watching "The Guiding Light" and "Search for Tomorrow." I didn't have any

problems with my grandmother's devotion to her programs. She was old and, as far as I could see, didn't have any kind of life of her own. These women, on the other hand, were my age or younger, had families and a future ahead of them. It was clear to me that I would find no friends among this group of women and I vowed that I would never become like them.

I was disappointed not to have found any friends with young children, but I was not totally isolated. There were a few people in the apartments whom Jake and I both enjoyed and I expected that Jake would soon be bringing home some of the graduate students he was getting to know.

It was important to me, too, that I had a job. Not only did my salary help to support us, but I had a place to go on a regular basis where I did some work that I thought was useful. While shelving and checking out books was not what I would have considered to be a "real" job, it did help me to keep at least a small part of my identity from being subsumed in motherhood.

Jake and I had arranged our schedules so that he could be home with Neal when I was at work. I felt slightly guilty because I looked forward to those days when I worked, but I reasoned with myself that I hadn't left Neal with strangers. Jake was, after all, Neal's father. What could be wrong with him spending a few hours a week with his son? Besides, we really did need the money.

After a few months, however, my job in the library was beginning to drive me crazy with boredom. It didn't feel very different from

cleaning house and taking care of Neal. The books, like Neal's toys and Jake's papers and books, were taken off the shelves and had to be put away and there was always someone at the desk wanting attention. Just as I was beginning to consider looking for something else, I got a call from the Art Department. I had applied for a job in that department before we moved to Amherst, hoping to put to some use all that I had learned at Columbia. They had not had any openings at the time, but they were now looking for a departmental assistant. I went to the interview excited that I might have the opportunity to work in my field and was elated when I got the job. I started work after the semester was over and mounted and filed slides. In the fall I would also help to grade papers from the large introductory courses. The job also meant a small raise and half an office.

While I felt that I was able to perform my duties adequately, working in the department brought back many of the feelings I had had at Columbia. Something was definitely lacking in my response to art. People in this department, like the faculty at Columbia, seemed to have no interest in the cultural context of the works, but focused extensively on their aesthetic and structural aspects. The excitement I had experienced over Dr. Klitzke's lectures seemed like a fantasy. I guessed that I had made another mistake. Art History was not really my field, but I didn't know what else I would have chosen. It didn't seem to matter much now anyway. Jake would be the scholar and I would do what I could to help him. If Jake, at least, was doing what I thought we would do together, I could salvage part of the vision I had for our lives.

Jake, however, never talked to me about his courses and I still had no idea what political science was all about. It remained identified in my mind as something for males and the composition of the department at the University corroborated that idea. As far as I knew there were neither women on the faculty nor any female graduate students in the Ph.D. program. The way I thought I could help Jake with his work was to insure that he had as much time as possible to focus on his studies. I had never expected him to do any housework, shopping or cooking, but he did stay home with Neal while I was at work. I arranged with the Art Department to bring home as much work as possible so that Jake only had to stay with Neal for a few hours a week.

I also thought it was important to make as comfortable a home for us as possible. Because our apartment was so small it was hard for Jake to work at home when he had to be there. I suggested that we look for a bigger place to live. I was also anxious to get away from my neighbors. Once the weather got warm the yards behind the apartments were crowded with women and children. I could only go outside between eleven and one while everyone was inside watching their programs. During the rest of the day to go outside was to invite questions about what stage of development Neal had reached. He seemed to be very slow to reach the appropriate levels, and I was slightly concerned. Although my pediatrician had assured me that Neal was fine, the constant comparison with other children his age was not encouraging. One thing I did not want to do was to discuss his progress with my neighbors.

Jake agreed that it would be a good idea to move and we began to look for an apartment outside of Amherst where the rents were more affordable. We finally found a four room apartment in an old house in Leverett. It was only fifteen minutes from Amherst but it seemed to me that we had moved to the depths of the country. The first night in our new home I looked out of the window and was startled by an impenetrable darkness. The lights in the two houses across the street were out and there was no street light. Country living would take some getting used to, but I loved our new apartment. Neal had his own room, Jake had room for a study in the large entrance hallway and I had a huge kitchen. I hoped that now that we had some room, Jake would bring home some of the friends he had made in the department.

While both Jake and I liked a few of the couples we had met in the apartments and I knew some people I liked from my job at the library and the Art Department, our real friends, I thought, should be Jake's colleagues. I had met some of them and their wives at a few department functions, but now that we had a decent home I wanted to have them over for dinner. The social life that emerged over the next year was not very satisfying. The men Jake befriended were, for the most part, uninteresting to me. Their conversation generally focused on the courses they were taking or the books they had been reading. Sometimes the women listened to the men and other times we talked among ourselves. Both situations were awful. If we listened to the men I usually had no idea what they were talking about. They had a common interest. The women, on the other hand, had only one thing in common--we were all

married to men in the Political Science Department and working to help put them through school. Some of the women seemed to resent having to work. All of them had college degrees but were doing some kind of secretarial work. I wondered what they would have done if they didn't have to be in Amherst. I never asked about that, however, because our conversations always seemed so strained. One night one of the women articulated what I had begun to sense. She resented being thrown into a social situation with us. We had nothing in common beyond our husbands' graduate work. I was outraged by her rudeness and assumed that her marriage was probably on the rocks. I felt sorry for her husband because he had such a bitch for a wife.

Although I was not happy with our social life, I continued to want to have our "friends" over for dinner. Nothing seemed to satisfy me like cooking a beautiful meal. I used all my skills, and many of the recipes I had collected when I was pregnant and couldn't eat any of my favorite foods, to produce meals that were delicious and cheap. I tried to talk to some of the women about cooking, but they were not interested. For them cooking was only another of the household duties they had to perform.

I wondered if their attitude towards food had something to do with their backgrounds. All of the people we knew in Amherst were either Irish or "American." I not only missed our friends from the City but I longed for people who were more like me--mostly Jews. They would certainly appreciate my cooking more than the people we had over for dinner. I thought there must be some people in the department who were

Jewish. Why hadn't Jake befriended them? Since we had always liked the same people when we were in college, however, I guessed that Jake had made the right choices. It was difficult though to be dependent on him to make them.

I felt strange, too, not to know anyone from New York. All the people Jake met and liked were from the Boston area, and I had only disdain for that city. One weekend, when my hunger for a city had been unbearable, Jake and I had gone to Boston with the hope of doing some "city" things. I wanted mainly to walk the streets, but in Boston there was nothing like Greenwich Village with its great variety of people or the beautiful window displays on Fifth Avenue. We couldn't even see a play. Boston only had one theater and we had no interest in seeing the play that were there at the time. I had heard that the Boston Museum of Fine Arts had an outstanding collection, but I had lost all interest in museums. We did find one club that featured jazz and I loved the North End with its wonderful Italian grocery stores and restaurants. I stocked up on cooking supplies and came back to Amherst missing New York more than ever. Boston was obviously not a real city.

Toward the end of our first year we had an invitation to dinner from a couple I had only met briefly. Roger and Elaine were from Boston and I had heard that Elaine had a professional position in the Biology Department at Smith College. She was the only wife who was working in her field and enjoyed her job, and I was intimidated by that fact alone. When we got to their apartment, however, I felt strangely at ease. Elaine had prepared beautiful appetizers and I could tell by the smell

wafting into the living room from the kitchen that the dinner would probably be equally good. At least Elaine liked to cook and as the evening progressed it became clear that we had other things in common. Elaine was Italian and I was delighted to meet someone who was not Irish or "American." With our friendship with Roger and Elaine and weekend visits from our friends from the City, I finally felt less alienated.

During Jake's second year in the Program we began to discuss the parts of the country we would consider moving to. While I didn't discuss Jake's work with him and I thought I was very flexible about moving, there was one part of the country that I would not consider. I would not live in the South. I had gone to North Carolina with my cousin Susan and her family when I was thirteen years old. We had stayed with Susan's aunt and uncle for a few weeks. I had seen for myself how Negroes were treated in the South and the freedom rides and sit-ins indicated that nothing had changed since I had been there. Even I, who paid very little attention to what was going on in the world knew about the freedom rides and the sit-ins at Woolworth's. Luckily, Jake had no desire to go to the South either. We also agreed that the move away from the City had been, on the whole, a good thing. Despite our occasional "city hunger" we liked the distance between us and our families.

My relationship with my parents, and even Jake's mother, had improved immeasurably since our move to Massachusetts. We went to visit them on most holidays and for long weekends during the summer. They also made occasional trips to see us. Since we had moved Jake's mother

rarely called and I was spared the nightly reminder of my mother-in-law's refusal to accept my existence. Because of our physical distance from the family I also escaped the almost constant conflict with my mother over her sense of my obligations to the extended family. When I did see my parents and relatives the visits were not so much out of a sense of duty as from a genuine desire to see people.

They had all taken the news of our move fairly well except my grandmother, who lamented the fact that I would be all alone in Massachusetts. I tried to assure her that I had Jake and was sure to make friends quickly, but as I spoke about friends I knew that my grandmother would not be reassured by any association with people who were not blood relations. I had thought that the fact that I was going away not alone but with my husband would reassure her, but it seemed that being with one's man was not always enough.

Because of Jake's school work we were unable to go home that first Easter and as the holiday approached I was surprised by how uncomfortable I felt. I felt lonely for my family and our Easter rituals. I decided to color eggs, but it seemed a futile effort. I could get neither the proper bread nor fresh dill--absolute necessities for the beginning of an Easter dinner. An egg fight between Jake and me would also be a poor substitute for a table full of people battling with the eggs they had carefully chosen from the large bowl of colored eggs on the table. It would feel strange, too, to do it with Jake, who thought it was kind of silly. On the morning of Good Friday I was sitting at the kitchen table wondering whether my grandmother had made stuffed

mussels or artichokes when the doorbell rang. I went to the door to find the mailman who was holding a large box at arm's length. I took the box, which had a strong odor and was surrounded by little flying insects and went into the yard to open it. It was from my grandmother-- a box of very rancid stuffed mussels. As I threw the box into the garbage I thought that maybe my grandmother had been right. We were, in a very real sense, alone. I was glad that she had sent the media even if they had gone bad. Her attempt to make me feel a part of the family's Easter celebration had touched me deeply.

Within the next year, however, I had learned to live with that aloneness. The price for being around family was too great, I thought, to consider moving back to New York. As I typed Jake's letters of application to colleges in New England, the Midwest and the West I wondered what the next year would bring.

That spring we made another major decision. We would try to have another baby. It was unthinkable in the early 1960s to have only one child. It seemed clear to me, and Jake agreed, that parents got too attached to an only child and that when the child became an adult he would be burdened by having to bear the responsibility of his parents alone. It was important, too, for a child to learn to share with a sibling. There was no question that we would have two children and I was anxious to have the second one soon so that I could be finished with taking care of little children as soon as possible. Jake had the promise of a part-time teaching job the next year and we thought we could get along on just his salary after the baby was born.

It seemed like the right time in other ways as well. I felt that another baby might help Neal. His development still seemed slow to me, though the pediatrician continued to assure me that he was fine. A brother or sister might spur Neal's growth in some ways. For one thing, a baby in the house might help him with his fear of children which had begun when he was six months old and had intensified over the next year. I also felt that I would prefer to have a baby in familiar surroundings and move with an infant rather than move and deliver a baby in a new place. Everything seemed to say that it was the right time and by June of that year I was pregnant.

The difference between the two pregnancies was startling. I had none of the nausea and exhaustion that had plagued me when I was pregnant with Neal and instead of being depressed I was elated. I felt sure that we had made the right decision and I didn't even mind too much when my usually slim body grew to accommodate the new baby.

While my life at this time was almost entirely focused on Jake, Neal, and the life we were building, some events in the outside world caught my attention. I was enchanted by John Kennedy who, it seemed to me, brought a vitality to the White House that made even someone like me more interested in politics. The youth of the President and his wife was brought home to me as Jackie had had her son John just around the time Neal had been born. Jake's initial enthusiasm about Kennedy, on the other hand, had cooled. He said he was much more conservative than he had seemed when he was first elected, but I didn't know what he was talking about. I was still fond of the President. He had shown his

maturity and effectiveness during the Cuban missile crisis which had been a time of pure terror for me. I also believed that this president was really committed to ending segregation in the South, and race relations was my main interest in politics.

I followed the reports of preparation for the March on Washington and was glad that our public radio station was going to have live coverage. When I woke up on the morning of August 28, 1963 I turned on the radio and began to prepare Neal's breakfast. Jake was going to be in the library all day and I had planned to catch up on some housework. For most of the morning the radio was a backdrop to my dusting and vacuuming, but as lunchtime approached I found that I could not leave it. As I listened to the speeches calling for freedom, I was completely taken aback by the intensity of my response. I spent most of the afternoon on the edge of tears and when Martin Luther King made his speech I broke down in sobs. That night as Jake and I watched the television coverage of the March I held back my tears. I was confused and embarrassed by my response. While I didn't know what to make of my reaction, I did know that something was very wrong with segregation and that I was moved by the people who were crying for justice.

All day long I had wondered about the thousands of people who had joined the March. The reports repeatedly pointed out that many of the marchers were white. Who were they, I wondered. How did they get there? Would I have been able to join if I hadn't been married and a mother? I had no answers for any of my questions.

I did decide, however, that I had to do something to further the cause, but I had no idea what it could be. I discussed my feelings with Jake. He also thought that segregation was wrong and that the March on Washington had been a call for justice, but he neither felt compelled to get involved nor did he have any suggestions for me. I thought about it all night and finally came up with the idea of trying to find a local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The next morning I called information and got the number of the NAACP chapter in Springfield. As I sat at the phone with the number in my hand I hesitated to dial it. What would I say? What did I have to offer? The only organization I had ever been in was my sorority and that had been a disaster. Who would answer the phone and how would he react to me? I decided I was being foolish--surely they would be able to find something for me. I dialed the phone. The voice on the other end sounded somewhat surprised by my request to get involved in the fight against segregation, but politely told me that there was nothing I could do at the moment. If I called back in a few weeks there might be some way I could help.

I was proud of myself for having made that call and both disappointed and relieved that there was nothing for me to do. Springfield, though only a half an hour from Amherst, might as well have been in another state for as much as I knew about it. I had been there only once--to pick up my cousin Emik from the train station--and was not attracted to, what seemed to me, an old and very run down city. I also

assumed that most of the members of the NAACP would be Negroes and I was not anxious to be in a group where I would be one of only a few whites.

While I did not call the NAACP back in a few weeks as the man had suggested, my interest in the struggle of Negroes for their rights intensified. For the first time in my life I began to read Jake's Times and I watched the news for reports of sit-ins and other demonstrations. No one around me seemed to share my interest. The March on Washington had not made such a dramatic impression on anyone else I knew. I was confused as to its meaning, but I knew one thing--listening to the March that day had changed something in me.

Except for bringing up the issue of the Civil Rights Movement whenever possible, my day to day life did not change much after August 28. My pregnancy was like a dream. I had planned this baby and was happy. I was bored with mounting and filing slides, but since I was going to quit work when the baby was born it was not too hard to get through the next few months.

There were some things about my life, however, that could have been better. As far as I could tell, Jake's work was going well, but we were not as close as I had hoped we would be. Sometimes Jake seemed to be in another world and my response to his withdrawal was silence. There were weeks when we hardly spoke to each other unless we were in a group of people. One of the things we could not talk about was Neal, who at two years old had just begun to walk and was showing no signs of speaking. I guessed that the disappointments in my relationship with Jake and

Neal's progress were just part of growing up. Life wasn't perfect but, I thought, things would get better when Jake had a real job.

In November of 1963 the world broke in on my life again as it did for so many Americans. We were expecting friends from New York for the weekend and I was taking a shower while Neal was napping. I was startled by someone screaming at me through the bathroom door. Thinking that something had happened to Neal I jumped out of the tub, scrambled with my robe and opened the bathroom door to find my neighbor pacing the living room floor. She told me that the President had been shot in Dallas. Like everyone else, we sat in front of the television for the next four days watching the incredible events. Even Jake seemed visibly moved. As I listened to Lyndon Johnson's drawl I wondered what would happen to Negroes' struggle with a Southerner in the White House. By the spring, however, it seemed to me that the country was going to be all right.

On the night of March 13, 1964 I heard something even more disturbing than the assassination. A man named Mark Lane, a critic of the Warren Commission, was speaking at Amherst College. Jake, who had serious questions about the Commission's verdict that Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone, wanted to go to hear Lane speak. Since I was already three days past my due date I decided to go along just in case I went into labor. As I listened to the facts that Lane had uncovered and heard his allegation that the Warren Commission had not investigated as thoroughly as it might have, I got very interested in the lecture. I was really alarmed, however, when Lane said that the book he had written

on the subject had been published in thirteen countries but he could not find a publisher in the United States. I had always believed in freedom of the press and if what Lane was saying was true, and I had no reason to doubt him, a serious kind of censorship existed in this country.

After the lecture I anxiously asked Jake what he thought as he always seemed to understand so much more about what was going on in the world than I did. He seemed as upset as I was. For the next day I alternatively thought of Mark Lane and when the baby was going to come.

By the next day I focused more on the baby that was eight days late and Jake and I decided to go out to dinner as a distraction to the anticipation. When we had finished eating I felt a slight twinge in my abdomen and told Jake that I might be beginning labor. By the time we got home the contractions, though slight, had become quite regular and I knew it was time to go to the hospital. We changed the bed for our neighbors who had agreed to stay with Neal and drove to the hospital in Greenfield. When we got there Jake seemed so relieved that I asked him what was going on. He told me that he had been afraid our car (my father had given us his 1950 Oldsmobile when he bought a new one) would break down on the way. Now that we were at the hospital he could relax. During the ride to Greenfield I began to think about labor and when we walked through the doors I had been overcome with fear about the delivery. Jake's only concern had been getting me there. We really were in different worlds.

I hadn't thought much about the delivery during my pregnancy, but when we got to the hospital I remembered Dr. Kerman's warning that

deliveries would always be hard for me because my pelvis was narrow. The nurse took me to the labor room where two other women were moaning through their contractions. I knew I would be sharing their agony in a very short while and when the doctor came I was ready for any pain killer he had to offer, though my contractions were merely a slight discomfort. He said he thought the baby would be born in less than an hour and I thought to myself that he must be a quack despite his Harvard degree. Forty-three minutes later I heard him say, "It's a girl" and I looked up to see my daughter.

We hadn't chosen a name for this baby and the next day I poured over books of names. Jake suggested "Jenny" but I thought it sounded too Irish. My interest in Irish culture and Irish people had been more than fulfilled after living in Amherst, Massachusetts for two years. Everyone, it seemed, was Irish. It was enough that my daughter's last name would be Ryan. I wanted something unusual for her first name. When I came across the name "Leah" it seemed to fit my baby whose hair and eyes were very dark. Leah was an old testament name and, I thought, a good balance for Ryan. Jake liked it well enough, so we named her Leah.

I felt wonderful. I had wanted a girl. The delivery had been a snap. I wondered what had happened to my narrow pelvis. While I was preoccupied with Leah, I still thought about what Mark Lane had said and talked to my roommates about the lecture. They looked at me in disbelief and changed the subject. The next day I heard that the nurses were talking about the woman in 305 who talked more about a man named Mark

Lane than about her baby. I smiled when I heard what was being said about me. Once again, though I did have the book at home, I had come to the maternity ward without the requisite Dr. Spock mentality.

The standard stay in this hospital after delivery was three days, and while it was half the time I had when I gave birth to Neal I was anxious to get home. My mother had come to help. It was the first time she had left my father since the polio scare had sent us to Rhode Island for the summer when I was ten and eleven years old. It was nice to have her on my turf especially since I was feeling so good physically and had no fears about taking care of Leah. She stayed until the next weekend when my father came to see us and take her home. I was glad she had come, but also happy when she left. I wanted the four of us to have some time alone. Leah was a very easy baby and Neal seemed to be taking some interest in her. At least, I thought, he wasn't afraid of her.

A week after my mother left I developed lower back pain. Recognizing the symptoms of a bladder infection I called the doctor for an appointment. He listened to my symptoms and said I should try to rest and call him back in a few days. I couldn't understand why he didn't want to see me as soon as possible since my symptoms seemed to clear to me. He patiently explained that I was probably experiencing some postpartum depression. I was shocked and angry at his assumption about my emotional state. I knew what depression was and I didn't have it. I had a bladder infection. But he said to call him in a few days. Two days later my symptoms were worse. I called the office and demanded an appointment the next day. The nurse reluctantly agreed. After

examining me he said that I had a bladder infection, but made no reference to his earlier diagnosis. I could only mutter "I told you so two days ago." He didn't seem to hear me.

While I was there I thought it would be a good idea to be refitted for a diaphragm. He said we would talk about it in his office. As I dressed I wondered if he was against birth control, but when I sat down in the chair opposite his huge mahogany desk, he asked if I didn't think that the diaphragm was an awkward method. I agreed that it wasn't the best but one thing I did not want was another baby. Despite its earlier failure I still believed the diaphragm was the safest method of birth control and I was mainly interested in safety. I was wrong, he said, there was a method that was ninety-nine percent effective--the new birth control pill. When I questioned him about the possible side effects of the pill he assured me that it was fully tested. Women in Puerto Rico had taken it for six years with no complications. Without a thought about how these women were used as laboratory subjects to test the safety of the pill for women in the United States, I gladly took the prescription he handed me.

While it was a good year for us to have a baby the job prospects were not very promising. Very few of Jake's classmates had gotten offers, and none were in New England. I hoped that we would not have to reconsider our decision not to move to the South. Finally, a few weeks after Leah was born, Jake was offered a job by the University of Wisconsin. He would be teaching at two of the University's Centers--Manitowoc and Sheboygan. I knew nothing about Wisconsin, but Jake said it had a

very progressive past. I looked for the two towns on the map and was glad to see that they were both on Lake Michigan. At least we would be near a large body of water. I heard from some friends that the area around the Lake was very beautiful. Since Jake had not received any other offers, we decided to try the Midwest. The two things I felt good about were that we were a healthy distance from New York and that Roger and Elaine had also decided to take the offer Roger had gotten from the Center in Green Bay only a short drive up the Lake from Manitowoc. I was mainly relieved that Jake had gotten a job and that the pay was decent. We would, at last, have a little money.

C H A P T E R X I

Jake and I were both anxious to see what Wisconsin was like and as soon as Leah was old enough to be left with my parents we planned a trip west to look it over and find a place to live. Roger and Elaine decided to go with us. After we dropped the children off at my parents' we made our way west. On the long drive through seemingly endless miles of cornfields Roger and Jake argued about a war in a place called Vietnam while Elaine and I listened. I knew very little about the war, although Jake had talked before about his anger at our government's involvement. I had little interest in the small country that was somewhere in Indochina. I was preoccupied with what our new home would be like. I hoped that Wisconsin was not as flat and as empty as Indiana--at least the part of that state that I was able to see from the car window. Elaine was also disturbed by the view from the car, but we reminded each other that people had said that Wisconsin was beautiful, particularly the part of the state near the Lake.

Since we wanted to be as close to Roger and Elaine as possible, Jake and I had decided we would look for housing in Manitowoc rather than Sheboygan which was another thirty minutes south of Green Bay. I had tried in vain to picture Manitowoc and was disappointed when I realized that by the time we got there it would be the middle of the night. By the time we arrived, however, I only wanted to sleep. Roger and Elaine dropped us off at the hotel and went on to Green Bay.

The next morning as Jake and I ate breakfast and looked through the paper for apartments I began to worry a little about what life was going to be like in this little city. There was only one hotel and the downtown didn't seem to offer much at all but as we found almost nothing for rent in the paper my focus was directed to how to find a place to live. We rented a car and drove to the two apartments listed in the paper. Neither was very appealing and we decided to try realtors, but none of them carried rentals. They informed us that most people in Manitowoc owned their own homes. It sounded like there was something wrong with being a renter. We had no choice but to rent one of the two apartments we had seen that morning. We settled on the one with more room, though it was rather dark and dreary. It did, however, have a nice yard and I thought it would be fine for a while.

When we had made all the arrangements with our new landlord we drove around Manitowoc to get a better sense of the town. Our first stop was the Center where Jake would be teaching. When we got to the one building that comprised the entire Center the reality of the kind of place we were moving to began to be clear. I knew that the Center was small--that it was only for the first two years--but I had expected a few buildings at least. We went in and our walk through the modern and very sterile building only made me feel worse. It was very small and, like the town, very neat. Manitowoc was, in fact, the neatest town I had ever seen. The lawns were manicured beyond even the most meticulous efforts of an Eastern suburbanite.

We decided to go back to the center of the city to look it over more carefully, hoping that our negative impressions of that morning were wrong. They weren't. There were two movie theaters, a few clothing stores, a drug store and two very large hardware stores. The most distinctive thing about the downtown, however, was the painting of two huge bottles of Old Milwaukee beer on the grain elevators at the end of the main street. I could hardly believe that I was moving to a town that ended in a brewery.

Though Green Bay was larger than Manitowoc, Roger and Elaine did not have good news either. The Center at Green Bay was also one very modern building and they, too, had only found a few places for rent. As we drove out of town we decided to drive by the Lake which seemed to be the only positive thing we had found about Wisconsin. It was a beautiful lake, but the countryside was disappointingly flat and, to my Eastern tastes, boring.

When we got back home Leverett looked like Eden compared to Manitowoc, but I didn't have much time to be depressed about the move. Jake was finishing up the research for his dissertation and I had a household to pack. We decided that since Leah was only six months old and Neal two and a half it would be very hard for us to all move together. Jake would go ahead and meet the moving van and the children and I would join him after he had a chance to unpack the essentials. My parents and my brother came to help with the last of the packing. Jake left for Wisconsin, my parents left for New Jersey taking the children with them and my brother and I waited for the movers.

Those two days were the first time I had ever had alone with Paul. Seeing him outside of the family context I realized that my nineteen year old brother was a virtual stranger. I did, of course, know some things about him. He was, like I had been at his age, very concerned about his appearance. Unlike me, however, he didn't work after school and during the summer but had managed to convince my parents to buy him what he wanted. And he wanted the best--cashmere sweaters and slacks from the exclusive stores in Ridgewood that I had never been able to afford. His greatest interest, cars, was an extension of how he looked. He talked endlessly about whether my father would fulfill his dream by trading in his Oldsmobile for a Cadillac. Paul, I thought, is really a child of the suburbs.

He loved New Jersey. Since he had been nine years old when we moved from the City, he had had a much easier time than I did. As I looked at him that day I knew that his appearance must have been an asset to him in New Jersey. He had light brown hair, the lightest in the family, and his skin was lighter than mine. His nose, by the standards of my family, was very small. He was well over six feet, tall, slim and, I realized for the first time, very good looking. While Armenians said that I didn't look Armenian, my friends generally asked me what I was, knowing by my looks that I was something "different." My brother, on the other hand, could very easily be taken for an American.

Paul and I were different in other ways as well. His goal was to make lots of money to buy cars and all the other things he wanted, while I wanted a life that was "meaningful" and had disdain for mere material

possessions. We went out for dinner and since neither of us knew what to say to each other, we spent the evening at the movies. The next morning, after the movers had packed the van, we drove to my parents' house in silence.

On the day before my flight to Wisconsin I decided to say a private farewell to New York. I went into the City alone, visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art to see those paintings I could still enjoy, went to a matinee and had dinner at a delicatessen for what I knew would be my last real pastrami sandwich and dill pickle. I took the subway down to the Village and walked until it was time to catch the last bus back to New Jersey.

The next day my parents drove me to Idlewild Airport that had just been renamed for John Kennedy and as I boarded the plane I felt that this time I was really going off alone into an unknown world. After a few weeks in Manitowoc, I realized that I had been right. Even my first trip to the grocery store made it clear that I was in an alien land. I had learned to adjust to the lack of what I considered essential in Amherst but Manitowoc was a real wasteland where food was concerned. In Amherst, for example, I usually couldn't get Italian parsley. The stores carried only the curly kind that was, to my mind, only good for a garnish as it lacked a strong parsley taste. I also never saw fresh dill in Amherst. When we first arrived I asked for it thinking they might have some in the back and hadn't yet put it in the bin. I was sent to the pickle department and almost cried as I looked at the jars of dill pickles. It also wasn't always possible to get olive oil in

every store but the A&P did carry it regularly. In Manitowoc even curly parsley wasn't always in the vegetable bins and none of the stores carried olive oil. They said there was no "call for it." They occasionally had eggplants but when I bought one the cashier asked me what it was. I told her that it was an eggplant and when there was no look of recognition on her face, I realized that she had never heard of it.

I told myself that one should not judge a town by its grocery stores. While I was not so sure about the reasoning behind my argument, I decided to wait until I met some people before I made a final judgment. Within the first month of our arrival I had that chance. The wife of the head of the Center held a tea for the wives of the faculty. I chose my most conservative clothes and drove to the afternoon wondering if she would serve petit fours and little sandwiches without crusts. The food fit my image of what a tea was supposed to be, but I was very disappointed by the other wives. Jake was the only new faculty at the Manitowoc Center that year. All the other women were not only much older than me, but many had lived in Manitowoc or the surrounding area for years. The talk was mostly of the changes that had taken place in the town over the years since the Center had opened. They seemed to be disturbed that it might bring in too many new people. New people like Jake and me, I thought. I remembered the tone of voice of the realtors when they said "most people own their own homes." Renters, like us, were probably the kind of people they most feared. I left the tea without having talked more than two sentences to anyone.

Soon, I thought, Jake will meet people at work and bring them home. It had taken him a while to do that in Amherst too. I would just have to be patient. But things were different than they were in Amherst. Jake was teaching a full load--three new courses a semester and working on his dissertation. He was not even home much since there was no room in our apartment for a study and he had an office to himself at school. There was also no possibility of me working now that we had two children. Even if I was able to find a sitter, I had no idea what I would do in that town, and there was nothing for me at the Center--not even courses to take since they were all at the introductory level.

I spent most of my time alone with the children, deeply bored and more isolated than I had ever been in my life. Even at Ridgewood High I saw other people and after the first few months did find some people who were at least acquaintances. In Manitowoc I spent most of my waking hours with my children. My weekly trip to the grocery store, even as inadequate as it was, was an event. The first few weeks we had been in our apartment I tried to talk to my neighbor, a woman about my age with two small children but our relationship was very limited. Jake and I had met her and her husband during my first few days in Manitowoc. He was a liquor salesman who was on the road a great deal of the time and he told us that he expected his wife to stay home while he was gone and that she wasn't to have any company either. I never saw the inside of their apartment after that night and she refused all invitations for coffee. We talked occasionally when we met in the yard but once winter came I didn't see her until the weather got warm again. My other

neighbors were much older than me and seemed to want to have nothing to do with the renters in their neighborhood. My only contact those first few months was with Elaine, but she had gotten a job and was busy during the week.

Some days I walked through the apartment not knowing what to do with myself. My greatest fear was the television. After Neal was finished watching Captain Kangaroo I always made sure to turn the set off. I was really afraid that if I turned it on during the day I would get hooked and thought that would be the end of me. I would be worse than my neighbors in Amherst who only watched their programs between eleven and one. My main activity was cooking. I spent most afternoons preparing elaborate dishes, as least as elaborate as the poor selection in the grocery store would allow. We had finally found olive oil. It was sold in the drug store for medicinal purposes, but the small bottle smelled rancid and so I learned to use what had been an anathema in my house--vegetable oil.

While my isolation certainly was a big part of my misery during that time, I was also very worried about Neal. His motor development had progressed to the point that he was walking quite normally and was even able to ride a tricycle, however, as his third birthday approached he had yet to say an intelligible word. He was also so unresponsive that I sometimes wondered if his hearing was impaired. I knew something was wrong, but Jake didn't want to talk about it. The day before Neal was three I looked through the phone book for some kind of help. I

found a listing for the Manitowoc Mental Health Center and made an appointment to take Neal in for an evaluation.

After I had an interview with the psychiatric social worker, Neal was given a series of tests. Weeks later the Center called to say that the test results were ready and that the clinical psychologist would like to see me. I asked if it was all right for my husband to come and the secretary said that would be fine. I was determined that Jake would accompany me this time. It had been horrible to go through the earlier interview alone. I made an appointment for a time when I knew he was free. Jake agreed to go with me and I anxiously awaited the time when I would find out what was wrong with my son. The meeting was, however, inconclusive. The results of the tests were not clear. We were referred to the director of the Center--a psychiatrist.

After more weeks of waiting the day of our appointment finally came. I sat in the waiting room terrified on so many levels. What would he say about Neal? Would he be able to see what a terrible mother I really was--that I had never wanted Neal--that I was unnatural? When the receptionist said we could go into the doctor's office I was in such a state that her voice sounded far away. I rose slowly and walked unsteadily down the narrow hall to the office. Dr. Kordecki was a large, energetic man who rose to greet us when we came through the door. He heartily shook our hands, sat behind his large desk and came right to the point. After reviewing Neal's tests and the interview with me he felt quite sure that there was nothing physically wrong with Neal. His problem was, in his opinion, psychological and was rooted in his

relationship with his mother. He recommended that I begin therapy with him. As I worked out my problems, Neal's development would proceed normally. His only suggestion for Neal was that we consider enrolling him in the local day care center for a few hours a week. He would call them to insure Neal's acceptance. I agreed to see Dr. Kordecki and made an appointment for the next week. I didn't seem to have a choice.

As we walked out of the Center I was bombarded with feelings. I was relieved to learn that whatever was wrong with Neal could be helped. The doctor had been quite clear about that. There was no irreparable brain damage. He had not uttered the word which had plagued me for years. Neal was not "retarded." I was certainly more than willing to do what I could to help my child.

My other feelings, however, were not so sanguine. I felt like a monster. The suspicion I had had that my reaction to my pregnancy with Neal had not been natural had been confirmed. My perversion had prevented my innocent baby from being normal. It was my fault. I had not deigned to befriend my neighbors in the married students' apartments, yet they were far superior to me. Whatever their problems they did not destroy their children as I had.

While I was committed to working on my problems, which were obviously massive, I was also terrified of therapy. It was, in my mind, still only for crazy people. I wondered if I was really one of them. Whatever I was, however, I was convinced that therapy would uncover the most horrible aspects of who I really was. I anticipated my first session with Dr. Kordecki with the hope that my therapy would, in some

mysterious way, help Neal and dread that my worst fears about myself would be confirmed, but I had overwhelming guilt over what I had already done to my child.

The next day I enrolled Neal in the day care center. I anxiously told the woman in charge that he was afraid of other children and that he had a lot of other problems. She told me not to worry. He would do just fine. I guessed he would if he were in the care of normal women like her. As I drove away I wondered if Dr. Kordecki had suggested the day care center to give Neal an experience with other children or to get him away from me. I decided that his reason must have been the latter.

By the time my first therapy session came I was both ready to accept the details of my monstrosity and armed to defend against the attacks on me which I was sure the doctor would make. I was angry because he had made me feel terrible, yet he also represented the hope that Neal could be like other children. Sitting in his office alone it seemed much larger than it had when I had been there with Jake, and the doctor's voice seemed to be coming from a great distance. It also seemed very cold and I huddled in my chair and tried to stop shaking. The only things that I remembered from that first session were that Dr. Kordecki reiterated his opinion that Neal would develop into a normal child and that I should see him weekly; though the Center only allowed for monthly visits. He could arrange for me to see him monthly at the Center and weekly in his private practice. Once again, I seemed to have no choice. If Neal was going to get better I had to get on with working on my problems.

I was shocked that within a few weeks part of me actually looked forward to my weekly sessions. Although I was so guilt ridden that I was depressed most of the time, at least Dr. Kordecki was someone to talk to. I was actually growing to like him but there was much that he said that I didn't understand. What was most confusing to me was his insistence that I lacked affect. I had no idea what he was talking about until one week some months later when I felt like I wanted to die. I had begun to cry during the session and when I went home I cried some more. I was miserable for the whole week and I realized that for the first time I was counting the days until my next session. When I told Dr. Kordecki that I had not been able to stop crying for most of the week, he rose out of his chair, spread out his arms and said, "That's wonderful." I hated him intensely at that moment. When he went on to say that I had good reason to feel miserable and what had finally happened was that I had let myself feel my feelings, however, I felt a deep sense of relief. I did feel better after that awful week and it seemed to me that Neal was showing some small signs of improvement.

There was some change, too, in my social situation. After months of seeing no one but Roger and Elaine on occasional weekends, we finally had our first invitation from one of Jake's colleagues. Dick Berke taught English at Sheboygan Center and while his wife Rosemary also worked there as a counselor, neither Jake nor I ever considered her to be his colleague. Rosemary was very nice, but Dick was a real treat for me. He had grown up in Chicago and was Jewish. I loved being at their house. We often listened to Mort Sahl and Mel Brooks records and

sometimes we would have kosher salami on "real" rye bread that Dick brought back from visits to Chicago. We grew to be good friends and I was pleased that they were fond of the children, both Leah and Neal. They suggested that we think about moving to Sheboygan which, they said, was a much better place to live than Manitowoc. I was willing to try anything. Manitowoc offered nothing that I wanted except Dr. Kordecki and I would be able to continue seeing him since Sheboygan was only a twenty minute drive from Manitowoc. We decided to move when school was over and I started, with Rosemary's help, to look for an apartment.

Rosemary called one day to say that I absolutely must come to Sheboygan immediately. She had found a beautiful apartment. As soon as I could get the car I drove to see Rosemary's find. She was right. The apartment, half of an old house in the center of town, was more than I had expected even from her extravagant description. There was a large kitchen with a butler's pantry, a real dining room, a living room and a half a bath on the first floor and four rooms on the second floor. The children could have their own rooms and Jake could have a study as well. The next day Jake came to see it and we rented it on the spot.

I packed with optimistic thoughts. While Sheboygan would certainly not have been my preference for a place to live, I thought that Dick and Rosemary were right in thinking that it was worlds better than Manitowoc. I was bigger, had at least one decent department store and was closer to Milwaukee where the movie theaters sometimes showed foreign films and there was one Middle Eastern grocery store where I could stock up on olive oil, pine nuts, bughlur and other necessities. Through Dick

and Rosemary we had met some people who lived in Sheboygan and I was pleased to find that I was able to enjoy their company. My attitude towards Sheboygan was, no doubt, also influenced by the fact that I was feeling better than I had in years. I was still uncertain about how Neal would develop, but at least I was talking about my fears and frustrations with someone. I also credited my therapy with Dr. Kordecki with bringing about a major change in me. My work with him had, in some mysterious way, opened up my feelings. While I was often unhappy, I was also able to experience some joy. Before therapy I sometimes spent weeks, even months, feeling nothing more than a vague kind of depression. After that awful week when I felt like dying I had more of a sense of what I was feeling. I felt sure that being more aware of my feelings would help me to take advantage of whatever Sheboygan had to offer.

Within the first months of our move I had met more people than I did in the nine months in Manitowoc. Shortly after our arrival I met Dawn Belleau who asked me if I would like to join the chapter of the League of Women Voters that she and some of her friends had just begun to organize. I went to my first meeting wondering what the League was all about. I knew that they were involved in politics because when I was in Amherst I had seen the flyers they distributed before elections outlining the issues and listing the candidates. My only interest in politics was the Civil Rights Movement and a growing sense that our government's involvement in Vietnam was wrong. Jake's arguments with Roger about the war had continued and they seemed to make sense to me.

I also heard him talk about the war with Dick who agreed that the United States had no business being in Vietnam. As far as I knew the League of Women Voters focused on local politics, but I was glad to join this group of women. At that point in my life I would have been happy to join almost any group where I could meet people, but a group of women who had some interest in issues seemed perfect.

When Dawn introduced me as "Arlene Ryan, the New Yorker," I was shocked but relieved when none of the women reacted negatively. Being a New Yorker had caused me some problems in Manitowoc. Among the very few people we met during our first few months in Wisconsin were a man who was born and raised in the City and his wife, a Wisconsin native. He made it clear that he hated the Midwest and was anxious to get back to the City. Because I was from New York and shared some of her husband's disdain for Wisconsin the woman never spoke to me without saying something awful about the City. I was not a person with any individual characteristics in her eyes, but a New Yorker. Other people we met also reacted to where we were born and raised as if it were a place full of sin. Being from New York had become an issue in my life again but the women I met at this meeting were anxious to know what the City was really like. Before I had an opportunity to sing New York's praises, however, the meeting began.

This League chapter had been organized only a few months earlier and was preparing for its provisional status, a requirement stipulated by the national organization before it could become a full fledged chapter. In order to attain this status the group had to research the

city of Sheboygan as well as obtain funds and endorsements from local businessmen. Most of that seemed very boring to me and I was glad to hear that the group had also decided to study some local and national issues. Each member of the group was to be responsible for a topic of her choice. Most people had chosen their topics and when I heard the list I offered to do something on race relations. The room got very silent and I heard myself arguing that it was an issue of national importance and I hoped that this group was interested in being as well informed on the issue as possible. Because it was a topic that had not come up before, it was decided that I should come prepared the next time to discuss why this group should undertake such an issue.

I was completely taken aback that anyone would question the importance of race relations at a time when reports of demonstrations appeared almost nightly on the evening news. I told myself that I shouldn't have been surprised. A few months earlier when, under orders from local law enforcement officials, Negro college students in the South were sprayed with fire hoses and attacked by huge and vicious German Shepherds, I had thought of little else. When I brought the brutality up in my session with Dr. Kordecki he wanted to know why I was so upset. I asked him why he wasn't. Had he watched the evening news? Young Americans who were only trying to obtain the rights that should be theirs by virtue of the constitution were being abused and even beaten by people who were supposed to uphold the law and protect the citizens of their city. I refused to discuss why I was upset until he had watched what was happening for himself. The next week he admitted that

he had been ignorant as to the severity of the situation and we went on to other topics.

That year I had also learned from Roger and Elaine that Green Bay, a city of one hundred and twenty thousand people, had only four Negroes among its residents: one student at St. Norbert's College, an elevator operator who lived in the city and two players on Green Bay's claim to fame--the National Football League team the Green Bay Packers. I knew that the Packers were like living gods in Wisconsin and particularly in Green Bay. These two players, however, were the only ones on the team whose families did not live with them. They had been unable to rent or buy a house in Green Bay. The coach of the team, the famous Vince Lombardi, had had to buy a house in his own name and rent it to these two Negro men. It wasn't clear whether the players had decided not to subject their wives and children to Green Bay or whether they had been prohibited from bringing them to the city.

A group of whites from the Center at Green Bay had formed an NAACP chapter. They wanted to test discrimination in public accommodations in the city. The two football players were not involved but the St. Norbert's student and the elevator operator agreed to "integrate" restaurants, barbershops, and department stores. After a few months of testing, they were the best fed, dressed and groomed men in town. Since there had been few problems, the chapter was at a loss as to what to do next and disbanded.

As far as I knew there were Negroes in Manitowoc and it looked like Sheboygan was also white. After studying race relations on a national

level the League could, I thought, find out what was happening locally. I presented my arguments and most of the group did agree that it was an important issue. I began to try to do research but beyond watching the news and reading the Times I didn't know where to go for information. The library at the Center contained no books on prejudice. The only other help I got was from occasional articles in the Village Voice. I had decided to subscribe to that paper to keep in touch with what was happening in the City. It was like a lifeline. My concern about my limited research on my topic was allayed as the other women made their presentations. They were not very well researched either and I waited anxiously for my turn.

I had become very friendly with Dawn, the woman who had invited me to join the League. We saw and talked to each other on the phone frequently. One day she sat me down to find out why I cared about race relations. The other women had also wondered, she told me. Although they had agreed to take on a study of race relations, it became clear from what Dawn said that the injustice of segregation was not recognized as an important topic. They had agreed only because it seemed so vital to me. I was stunned. Segregation and race prejudice was my issue. No one else cared about it at all. When the night finally came for my presentation someone brought up an issue that had to be dealt with immediately. It concerned the response to the League among the business leaders of Sheboygan. We postponed my discussion until we had more time.

That other time never came for my topic as well as a few others. I had to admit that the League was really in trouble. We could get neither the required financial support from local businesses nor more than one endorsement and that came from the husband of one of our most active members. The women who had spoken to businessmen in Sheboygan reported that most responded that the League was "pink." They wanted to keep it out of their city. The League of Women Voters was a commie front--I could hardly believe it. We decided to show city leaders that the league was concerned with Sheboygan's welfare. We approached the mayor about speaking at a public meeting, which we would organize, about issues of importance to the city. To our great surprise he agreed, and as a result our meeting was fairly well attended.

After a glowing report of Sheboygan's good economic condition, the mayor ended his speech with a discussion of the one problem that had been plaguing the city over the last year. There was a serious shortage of skilled construction workers. Contractors had travelled as far north as Green Bay as well as to the western part of the state to try to lure workers to Sheboygan but their efforts had only minimal success. I wondered why they had only gone to the north and west. I asked if the contractors looking for workers had gone to Milwaukee. It was a fairly large city only an hour south of Sheboygan and I assumed there were some men there who needed work. As soon as I saw how flustered my question had made the mayor, I knew the real reason. His response, however, came in the form of questions--"Where would they sleep? Where could they eat?" They, I knew, were Negroes.

That summer I learned that some restaurants in Sheboygan refused to serve dark skinned people. A Pakistani graduate student was in Sheboygan for the summer and had moved into a small apartment in the house where we lived. After he caught the smells coming from my kitchen at dinner time, we had long conversations about food and exchanged recipes. When we had gotten friendly he told me that one night he was too tired to bother with cooking dinner and had decided to go out for a hamburger. His order was taken but was brought to his table in a paper bag. He had tried a few other places in the city with similar results. It would, indeed, be difficult for them to find a place to eat. The mayor ended his response to my question with only one statement, "They would not come here."

The next day I asked my friend, whose husband was a contractor, about what the mayor had said. She corroborated that there was a shortage of skilled artisans. Phyllis said that her husband had even hired three Negro bricklayers once in absolute desperation. They drove up from Milwaukee in the morning and returned after work. Probably knowing about the "hospitality" of the local restaurants, they had brought their lunch with them. My friend's husband was told directly by most of the prominent men in town that if he ever did such a thing again, they would make sure that he would not get any more work himself.

Sheboygan, it seemed, was no different from the South except that there were no Negroes. Jake had learned, in fact, that there were official connections between Sheboygan and some Southern cities. The high school offered an exchange program for seniors. Groups of students from

Sheboygan went to a high school in another state while Sheboygan received a group of students from the same city. In order to prevent the possibility of having Sheboygan students go to school with Negroes and allowing Negro students in their high school, these exchanges were made only with Southern states where one could be assured that school and community would be all white.

While I was grateful that we had moved out of Manitowoc, Sheboygan was still a small Wisconsin city and I felt more and more that it was an alien territory. I had made some good friends, it was true, but there were things about me that no one could understand. My interest in race relations was clearly something that made me different from everyone else, but it was not the only thing. My atheism marked me for some people as a dangerous woman. Dawn had asked me if Jake and I belonged to a church and I told her that neither of us believed in God. She seemed to be tolerant of my non-belief, although she said she had never met an atheist before. I didn't talk about it much with her after that day, but I realized within a short period of time that she had told some of our common friends. Some people asked me about being an atheist with genuine interest but others seemed to treat me differently than they had before knowing what I thought about God. One day I went to see a friend who had a baby about six months old. As we sat in the kitchen I noticed that she was unusually tense. When I saw Dawn a few days later I asked her if something was wrong with Susan. As I described the scene Dawn began to smile. Susan, it seemed, had just heard about my atheism and

she was terrified that I would harm her baby. After I left she prayed and took the baby to church. I was, I guessed, the devil incarnate.

Most people, on the other hand, more than tolerated my strange beliefs. I was totally shocked by how much people seemed to like me. I had even been elected to the presidency of the League chapter. We had made great headway after our meeting with the mayor despite my embarrassing question. After many weeks of work we had been endorsed by a few of the more daring members of the business community. We had finally fulfilled the requirements to become a provisional chapter of the League of Women Voters. While I was pleased to have been elected I thought that many of the other women were much more qualified than I was. They had had a long standing interest in state and local government, a subject which still bored me and they had talked the businessmen into supporting us.

As I thought about my election I wondered if it was only more evidence of the assumptions people in Wisconsin made about New Yorkers. The details of this favorable prejudice towards us was made very clear to me when Elsie came to visit for a week. One of my friends was, to my puzzlement, very anxious to meet my mother-in-law. Since my relationship with Elsie had only improved to the point that she tolerated my existence and Jake was at work for most of the day, I was glad to have someone else around for a few hours. I invited Marilyn for lunch. She came carefully dressed and talked to Elsie about politics, the theater, art and the latest fashions. I listened amused at the questions my friend was asking my mother-in-law. I knew that Elsie's political

insight came from the pages of the Daily News, that she had only been to a few Broadway plays and they were all musicals, that she had never been to any of the art museums and that her clothes came from the sale racks at Alexanders in the Bronx. My friend was, however, undaunted by Elsie's monosyllabic responses to her questions. I wondered what she thought of Elsie and was amazed when she called to say that I was so lucky to have such a well-informed and intelligent mother-in-law. I tried to tell her that all the intelligence and information in the conversation at lunch came from her, but she was obviously blinded by the aura of a New Yorker. I knew that some of my friends' opinion of me was influenced by the same attitude, and it made me feel strange.

Jake was also beginning to feel uncomfortable. His political views were far to the left of most of the faculty at the Centers and the conservatism of his colleagues was matched by the views of the students. When he came to the McCarthy period in his American Politics course, for example, one of his students asked if he could bring a visitor the day when Jake had planned to discuss the Senator. He agreed, anxious to support any special interest in his students. Shortly after Jake began his lecture which focused on the destructiveness of the period, the visitor raised his hand. Jake stopped and acknowledged him. The visitor, an older man, stood and gave a lecture for the rest of the class on the greatness of Joseph McCarthy and ended with an invitation to the students to join the annual motorcade from Milwaukee to Appleton on the anniversary of the Senator's death. After that day, Jake received anonymous letters warning him not to disparage McCarthy again.

He learned from the few other liberal faculty that there was a large chapter of the ultraconservative John Birch Society in Sheboygan. They decided that a group would attend the next public meeting. As my experience in Sheboygan had made me more interested in politics and since this group was probably responsible for the threats against my husband, I decided to go along. I was also intrigued by the topic for the evening, "Communists in the Civil Rights Movement." The hall was so crowded that we were lucky to get seats. The League might not think that race relations was an important topic, but it seemed to be a hot one for the Birchers. To my great surprise the speaker was an old Negro man, and I wondered to myself where he would be sleeping that night.

He reiterated the Birch line that all the leaders of the movement whom I admired so much were proven Communists and that the organizations they headed were merely commie fronts. After the speech various people in our group tried to ask a question but the moderator did not call on one of us. We had the distinct impression that some of the men, at least, were well known not only to the moderator but to members of the audience who frequently turned to stare at us. I left that meeting more than uncomfortable. I was frightened.

I had had enough. I liked my friends. I would hate to leave Dr. Kordecki but I thought I could not stand living in Wisconsin for too much longer. I talked to Jake about trying to get a job in the East. Although he had wanted to finish his dissertation before looking for another job, he agreed. Since he had made good progress over the last year and was very near completion he thought his chances for a decent

job in the East might be good. I was elated and gladly typed each letter of application.

The week I was installed as President of the provisional League of Women Voters in Sheboygan, Wisconsin Jake got a call from Ithaca College. They were very interested in his application and wanted him to come for an interview. I had hoped that I would live up to the expectations of my friends, but I never got the chance to find out how I would do in my position. The next month Jake was offered and accepted the job at the small liberal arts college in New York State, in the same town as Cornell University and only four hours from the City. I felt released from what had seemed like a kind of sentence. We were going home.

CHAPTER XII

Ithaca was as different from Manitowoc and Sheboygan as it could have been. When Jake returned from his interview he said that the city was built up the sides of steep hills. Ithaca College was at the top of one of the hills at the south end of the city and Cornell University sprawled across the hills to the north. Jake's colleagues told him that housing in Ithaca was difficult to find not because people owned their own homes but so many people, students as well as faculty, rented apartments and even houses. They said, too, that it was a lively city since Cornell as well as Ithaca College sponsored many concerts, plays, lectures and exhibits of all kinds.

Jake was reluctant to take the time for a trip to Ithaca as he was anxious to use as much of the summer as possible to work on his dissertation. Although he had only been to Ithaca and I had never been there it didn't seem crucial to see it before we moved. Going to Ithaca felt nothing like the move to Wisconsin. We decided that we would try to rent something through the mail. Jake's colleagues had sent him the names of several realtors and we wrote to them describing our needs. They responded with brochures of a new housing complex set on the western hill of the city. While the three bedroom apartment with a galley kitchen was disturbingly like my parents' house in New Jersey, I was so happy to be moving out of Wisconsin that almost anything would have been fine with me. We rented a top floor apartment and I began to prepare to leave Sheboygan.

While I looked forward to the move I realized as the time to leave approached that there would be much in Sheboygan that would be harder to leave than I had imagined. Many of the women I knew had become good friends--possibly the best I had ever had. They had, I thought, been very tolerant of my dissatisfaction with Wisconsin and my desire to leave and now that I was moving they were genuinely happy for me and incredibly helpful. Our apartment had been a wonderful place to live, nicer by far than anything else we had had. The most difficult thing to leave was, however, my therapy with Dr. Kordecki.

Therapy had been so vital to me that I saw my life in 1967 as divided into two major sections--before and after therapy. It scared me to consider what might have happened to me if I had not been seeing Dr. Kordecki. I saw myself, before therapy, as having had only minimal awareness of my feelings. As a child I had been "the screamer" in my family, railing against my parents' restrictions, the demands of the family and my mother's and grandmother's seemingly obvious preference for my brother. When I got into one of my rages everyone generally left the room and my grandmother said, in Armenian of course, "the temper has a hold of her." Her statement only made me angrier. She denied the real factors which had made me so angry and attributed my feelings to a mystical force that had overtaken me.

Since there was only the most minimal expression of feeling of any kind in my family I learned that growing up meant enduring whatever one felt silently. I restrained my outbursts of anger and by the time I was eighteen years old my feelings were repressed so well that I hardly felt

them at all. But they were not gone. My anger, frustration and hurt turned inward and I developed a nervous stomach which became fairly acute when I was about seventeen and lasted until my early twenties. Many of my relatives also had stomach problems which after my work with Dr. Kordecki seemed to me to be the obvious result of denial and repression.

Ironically, the most lavish expression of love that I ever experienced from the women in the family came through the preparation and serving of food. My grandmother's attempt to make me a part of the family's Easter celebration when I moved to Amherst was through a box of stuffed mussels. I knew I was her favorite female grandchild because she always had given me an extra helping of artichokes. My mother always brought a cooler full of meat, cheeses, breads, dill and the right kind of parsley when she and my father came to visit us in Massachusetts. When we moved to Wisconsin she could not bring the food with her and so we always went to the grocery store shortly after their arrival where she could buy us at least a week's worth of supplies.

It was not easy to interpret this focus on the giving of food as an expression of love when I saw few signs of physical affection nor heard any verbal expressions of love. I wondered if speaking of love was strictly an American thing to do. While I hadn't seen for myself what happened in American families, verbal expressions of love and terms of affection seemed to be a part of the culture. I wondered, too, about the significance of the fact that there was no word in the Armenian language for love--sehr meant both love and like.

Other emotions too, it seemed clear to me after therapy, were also repressed. While my mother often yelled at me in anger and sometimes hit me as well, she generally restrained her emotions with other people. When I was in my teens she did, however, acquire a reputation within the family as being nervous and high strung because of her occasional outbursts of anger at my father, her sister and her brother. These episodes were never really confronted. People tried to calm her down rather than dealing with what was bothering her. They left the room emotionally just as they had left me physically when I got into a fit of temper when I was a child.

My father, on the other hand, was known as a man who "takes everything in stride." The closest he ever came to expression of anger with me or my brother was by shaking his head in frustration or raising his voice ever so slightly. I never saw him express even that much emotion with anyone else. It was unthinkable, for example, for my father to be angry with any of the older members of his family. He never even disagreed with Uncle Alex. What I experienced was an almost total lack of expression of any emotion at all among my father's relatives. The hierarchy determined behavior and everyone seemed very polite.

It was only through my work with Dr. Kordecki that I began to understand how destructive it was to deny and repress emotions. I tried not only to be more open to my feelings about both children, but to express them as well. When I felt that Jake was withdrawn I worked to force myself to confront him with how his behavior made me feel rather than retreating into an angry silence myself as I had done for so long.

While I did think that therapy with Dr. Kordecki might very well have been the most important thing that had ever happened to me, he did sometimes make me furious. After I had been seeing him for about a year, for example, he suggested that having another baby might make me feel more secure in my femininity. When I responded that the last thing I wanted was another baby, that I had just about as much as I could handle at the moment, he suggested that some of my creative needs might be fulfilled by a baby. I shouted back that I was not a cow. I was a human being who had more options for creative outlets than a uterus. Creating a baby was something my body, not my mind did and it would not fulfill anything for me. I had already had that experience twice. He finally agreed that he might be wrong. For me, at least, pregnancy might not be a creative experience.

The other area in which he seemed to focus on my gender was my relationship with Jake. He believed that husbands should be stronger than wives but to achieve what he considered to be the proper balance, he did not try to make me submissive. His hope was that Jake would get stronger and be able to confront me. I wasn't sure that I agreed with his idea about power relations between husbands and wives but as long as he didn't want me to be submissive I could accept his ideal as an interesting possibility.

When I told Dr. Kordecki that we were leaving I expressed my fears about what would happen to me without our sessions. He assured me that I would be fine. I had made progress during the eighteen months he had been seeing me. Neal's development has been enormous and would, he was

quite sure, continue. Neal was, it was true, quite a different child than he was when we moved to Wisconsin. He was so much more responsive from what he had been that it was hard to remember that only a year earlier we had thought he might have been deaf. His fear of other children had diminished, though he still did not play with his peers. The most encouraging thing of all was that he had begun to say some words and had recently even begun to create simple sentences. Although we could not always decipher what he was trying to say, he was attempting to communicate.

Dr. Kordecki thought that Neal might be reaching the point where he could benefit from some therapy himself. He had originally diagnosed him as having a form of childhood schizophrenia but had recently changed his mind. Neal's behavior seemed to him to fit more clearly into the category of autism. He suggested that we try to find him a therapist as well as some kind of setting where Neal could be with other children. He promised to provide the therapist and any other professionals with a detailed report on Neal and his family history. As he spoke I realized again that he had, indeed, saved my life and most probably was also responsible for the possibility that Neal would grow up to be a normal child. He was my therapist but I also thought of him as my best friend.

Ithaca, I was sure, would not only have more services for Neal than those that were available in Manitowoc or Sheboygan and it would also be a place where Jake and I would feel more at home. My first impressions of Ithaca did not disappoint me. As we drove into town I was overwhelmed with the beauty of the small city. While Jake's description of

Ithaca had been detailed and very positive I was not prepared for what I saw. The hills were very steep and they rose from the sides of the beautiful lake I had seen on the map. Our apartment was as uninteresting as I had expected but the view from the large plate glass windows more than made up for the sterility of our new home.

Within a few days Jake and I met the couple who lived in the apartment on the floor below us. Betty and Arnold Singer had moved in just the week before us and to my great delight I found out that they were both Jewish and had been born and raised in New York City. Their move to Ithaca was, in fact, their first move out of the City. I smiled as Betty complained that nothing ever happened in Ithaca. Although I thought I knew what she meant I asked her anyway. She said she had spent a whole day looking out of the window and hardly even saw any people. I knew just how she felt. I, too, had looked out the window when we moved to New Jersey expecting to watch the passing scene and to my great disappointment, saw only grass, trees and the rare individual out for a walk. I was somewhat intimidated by the fact that both Betty and Arnold were painters. I worried that they would be able to detect the defect in my aesthetic sensibility but since we didn't talk about art much I was able to hide my deficiency. Since they were as anxious to get out of their apartment as we were, we spent our first few weekends exploring Ithaca's many parks. Betty and I quickly became close friends. She seemed to accept Neal's sometimes inappropriate behavior and the children and I spent time with Betty and her six year old daughter Poppy almost every day.

As soon as we were settled I began to try to find a placement for Neal as well as a child psychologist. Manitowoc had had only Dr. Kordecki. As wonderful as he was he did not specialize in children and we could therefore not get Jake's health insurance to pay for any treatment connected with Neal. We tried to find a child psychologist but the closest one was in Madison, a two hour drive from Manitowoc. It had been frustrating not to be able to get any help with Dr. Kordecki's fee, but I would not have thought of leaving him in any case and he felt it was not the appropriate time for Neal to be seeing anyone. Ithaca's phone book, on the other hand, listed two child psychologists and I chose the first one and called for an appointment.

When I met with Dr. Lambert she agreed to see Neal and also suggested that she and I meet regularly. I agreed, relieved to have found someone so quickly. She recommended that I take Neal to the Special Children's Center for an evaluation and possible placement in the Center. I went home elated. It had been the right time to leave Wisconsin. We would certainly find more services for Neal in Ithaca. I called the Center the next morning and made an appointment for an interview for a time when I knew Jake was free. I was determined not to go to this interview alone.

When we met Dr. Berko I immediately recognized by her spastic movements and the slight difficulty she had forming her words that she had cerebral palsy. Because I was close to my cousin Emik who was totally handicapped by the same affliction, I felt at ease. She would, I was sure, know how to overcome difficulties. From our description of Neal

she thought he could be helped by the Center but she wanted him to have an evaluation by her husband, the co-director of the Center, before she made any decisions. I looked forward to the evaluation. Neal had not had one since I called the Manitowoc Mental Health Center on his third birthday and he was now almost five years old.

I was shocked when I met Dr. Berko to see that he was even more severely affected by cerebral palsy than his wife. As he asked Neal questions I became very disturbed. Even I, who was used to Emik's speech, could hardly understand what he was saying. While I believed that handicapped people should be allowed to develop to the full extent of their potentials, I was angry that my son who had trouble understanding normal speech was being tested by someone whom I had trouble understanding. I began to wonder how good the Center would be.

Dr. Berko's test was inconclusive since Neal could not understand him but both he and his wife agreed that he could benefit from their program nonetheless. I discounted their judgment that Neal was incapable of being tested. Dr. Berko, I thought, would be a challenge to any child. But I was anxious to see the Center and made arrangements to go there the next day. The teacher of the class that Neal had been assigned to greeted us at the door of her classroom. While the Berkos did explain that the Center was for multiply handicapped children I had no idea what that would mean. I looked around the room at the children on crutches and in wheelchairs and realized that Neal would be the only child in the class who did not have some kind of major physical problem. I tried to listen to what the teacher was saying about the class but

what I really wanted to do was take Neal and run out of the room. But there seemed to be no choice. As inappropriate as it was, this Center was the only place for Neal in Ithaca. We went home in silence.

Neal began to attend the Center for a few hours three days a week. It was conveniently located at the bottom of our hill and when the weather was bad I dropped Leah off at Betty's and walked Neal down to the Center. Usually, however, the three of us went together. When we left Neal I usually took Leah's little hand and squeezed it to help me hold back the tears as we walked home. Not only did the Center seem wrong for Neal, the building in which it was housed was totally inappropriate for the children it served. It was a small two story building and the children whose legs were encased in braces struggled to negotiate the steep and narrow stairs. The major funding for the Center came from the United Way and I wondered about their commitment to handicapped children. Why did they have to endure the difficulties presented by this building? I saw no signs of even the slightest attempt to modify it for wheelchairs. It was dark, old and run down--a cast off building for children, I was beginning to conclude, whom nobody really cared about.

During this period I thought about Uncle Alex's efforts on behalf of his son Emik. I had heard the story many times. When Emik was born the family lived in Persia and when he began to show signs that something was wrong Uncle Alex took him to many doctors but none knew what was wrong with him. When the family decided to emigrate to the United States, Emik was nine years old and still undiagnosed. By this time it

was clear that he had no use of his arms and legs and even speech was very difficult for him. On their way to the United States they stopped in a hospital in Germany that they had heard might be of some help to Emik. The doctor they met immediately recognized Emik's problem as cerebral palsy and advised my aunt and uncle to leave him in his care. He thought he might be able to train those muscles that were not affected and, he said, he was sure that Emik would not be admitted into America. United States immigration codes considered persons with cerebral palsy to be mentally defective and therefore unfit to enter the country on a permanent visa. They reluctantly decided to leave their son for what they thought would be a few months. When they got to this country they found that the German doctor had been right. Cerebral palsy made one categorically defective.

Uncle Alex worked for years to get clearance for Emik and when all else failed he wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt. The President's wife responded that she had arranged for a special dispensation for Emik. Her letter also included a desire for an Oriental rug. She would visit Avakian Brothers on her next trip to New York. A few months later Emik was reunited with his family, and it had not been any too soon. As Hitler took power in Germany Emik's future became uncertain. By the time Uncle Alex went to get him he had been moved to a back ward and had almost no attention. The new Germany had no room for people with cerebral palsy either. Shortly after Emik's return my uncle wrote a letter of thanks to Mrs. Roosevelt and invited her to Avakian Brothers. One day several months later the elevator operator burst into Avakian

Brothers saying that the President's wife was on her way. She left with a very large rug. A small price, the family agreed, for Emik's return.

Once Emik was in the country Uncle Alex's energies were focused on finding schooling for his son. Despite the opinion of United States immigration he refused to accept the fact that his son was mentally defective. While Emik was still totally handicapped physically, Uncle Alex was determined to allow his son the opportunity to develop his mind. He did find a school for children with cerebral palsy and Emik excelled in his academic work, particularly in math and science. When he graduated from high school Uncle Alex wanted him to continue his schooling. He thought that Emik had shown that he was, indeed, very bright and could certainly handle college level work. He also thought it would be important for him to experience college life away from home. Emik applied and was admitted to a small liberal arts school in Illinois and Uncle Alex paid the tuition of another student in exchange for taking care of Emik. The arrangement worked beautifully. Emik not only graduated with honors but was in a fraternity and participated as fully as he could in campus life. He went on to earn a master's degree in physics from Columbia.

I knew that Emik's success was due not only to his intellectual ability but to my uncle's persistent efforts to find ways for him to develop his potential. I also knew that no matter how hard Uncle Alex worked to find opportunities for his son, his ability to pay for services was crucial to being able to give Emik those opportunities. I thought about all the other people like Emik and wondered what happened

to them if their fathers didn't have my uncle's determination and money. It seemed so unfair to me that everyone who had a handicap did not have my cousin's advantages. I wondered, too, how much I would have to fight for Neal, if I would be up to the task and if Jake would make enough money.

It was already clear that finding services for Neal would be mostly my responsibility. While Jake was more willing to talk about Neal's problems than he had been in the past, he focused more on the future than the present. What would happen to Neal when he was older? What kind of work could he ever find? How would he live? Since Neal continued to develop I had no idea what the future would bring. None of the professionals who worked with him could even give us a diagnosis that seemed to fit his behavior. Dr. Kordecki's judgment that Neal was autistic seemed to tell us very little about his prognosis and the diagnosis of Dr. Berko that he was schizophrenic was equally inconclusive about the future. I was impatient with Jake's seeming inability to deal with the present and his assumption that Neal's future would be grim. He occasionally talked about institutionalization, but I would not hear of it. Most of Jake's energy, however, was directed to his classes and finishing his dissertation.

Once again, he was slow to bring people home but I was less dependent on him than I had been either in Amherst or Manitowoc. I had my friendship with Betty Singer and was able to wait to meet Jake's colleagues. After my experience of making good friends on my own in Sheboygan I no longer thought that our real friends had to be Jake's

colleagues. I saw Betty every day and we often went to lectures or concerts together at night while Jake and Arnold stayed home with the children. When Jake finally did bring some people home towards the end of the first semester, I was glad to meet them but not desperate for company.

I did look forward to the time when Jake's dissertation would be finished and he would, I hoped, have more time for me and the children. As he got closer to completing it though, he seemed more preoccupied than ever. After his defense he was so depressed that he decided to see a therapist. While he was often withdrawn when we were alone, after he finished the dissertation he was somewhat more open to socializing with his colleagues.

Towards the end of the first semester he invited a colleague from the economics department and his wife to our house. When I first met Pat and Charles Sackrey I was immediately put off by their thick Southern accents. They were, they informed me, not from the South but from Texas. I had thought that Texas was the South but the Sackreys were quite definite that Texas was a very different place from what they considered the South. I wondered if it was different where Negroes were concerned and they assured me that although most people from their state thought that Negroes were inferior, they were both against segregation. After finding out where they stood on race, I found that they were very nice people. We saw them fairly often and while I generally enjoyed the time we spent together, I felt very inadequate around Pat. She was a WASP who seemed to be able to get along with everyone and do everything

right. She and Charles seemed to have a wonderful relationship and their three children were equally perfect.

Although I felt inadequate around Pat, I did want her to like me and was delighted when she asked me what I thought about going to march in the Fifth Avenue Peace Parade. She had thought about going but would like to go with a friend. She said that a peace group at Cornell had hired buses. We would leave early in the morning, march from the Sheep's Meadow in Central Park to the United Nations and come home the same day. I thought it was great that Pat had asked me and I also wanted to do something about the war in Vietnam. I had, by that time, learned more about our involvement in that war and had come to agree with Jake that the United States had no business being involved in a civil war. Pat said that she thought that Mary Lee Taylor, the Dean of Women at Ithaca College, and her friend Gloria Joseph were also going. I had spent some time with Mary Lee and liked her. I had met Gloria and was anxious to get to know her too. My main attraction to Gloria was that she was from New York and she was a Negro. I told Pat that I would love to join her and we strategized about how to get Charles and Jake to agree to let us go.

We decided to tell them when we were all together. Pat and I had thought about things they could do with the children and had also considered what meals we would prepare in advance that they could just heat up. They were both surprised that we wanted to go and as we explained that we wanted to stand up for what we believed in, that we would only be gone for a day, and that we would make their meals the day before I

heard Charles say to Jake that the real reason we wanted to go was to get next to those "big Negro Bucks." I was shocked and furious when Jake agreed that he was probably right. I asked Charles to repeat what he had said, but he just smiled and said he guessed it would be all right for us to go. Pat and I looked at each other but said nothing. We both understood that if we wanted to go to the march it would be unwise to argue that particular point with our husbands at that moment. Later, when Pat and I were alone, we shared our anger at Jake and Charles. We both wondered if it might be true that white men share the same fears of "their women" being attracted to Negro men regardless of the part of the country in which they had been raised.

We were surprised, too, that neither Jake nor Charles seemed to have any interest in going to the march. Jake had opposed the war when I had no idea what it was about or where Vietnam was and Charles also had had a long standing opposition to the involvement of our government in Vietnam. Although Pat and I had only recently taken an interest in the war, we welcomed the opportunity to take a public stand against it. We met Gloria and Mary Lee at the bus and sat together for the trip to New York. As we approached the City Gloria said she thought she might just go on to her sister's house for the day and meet us at Shea Stadium, where the buses would be parked, for the trip back to Ithaca. I was disappointed that I would not get to spend the day with Gloria and listened as Mary Lee and Pat tried to convince her to come with us. When the bus reached Central Park Gloria seemed determined to go her sister's and I was embarrassed as Mary Lee and Pat pleaded with her to

stay with us. I stood apart and as I waited for Gloria to make her final decision I wondered if Mary Lee and Pat would have been so insistent if Gloria had been white. I was also impatient to get to the Sheep's Meadow and was glad when Gloria finally left.

Mary Lee, Pat and I walked into the Park and saw that the crowd was already enormous. I had had no idea that so many people would be at the march. As we waited for the march to begin more and more people flooded into the park and we realized that the march was going to be a huge success. I was so glad that we had been able to come. Surely, I thought, this many people could not be dismissed as a radical, un-American fringe as the press had characterized other demonstrators. I looked around to see all ages and types of people. Someone in our group had a transistor radio and shouted that the news was about to come on. We crowded around the small radio and heard that a few demonstrators, mostly college students, had gathered in the park. I was shocked and expected that the report was from one of the smaller, more conservative stations but at the end of the news broadcast was dismayed to hear the familiar signature of WCBS. All day long the reports of the march on the radio were as if they were describing another scene. We marched sixteen abreast towards the United Nations and there were so many people that we moved at a snail's pace. The people on the sidewalks held banners in support of the march and some applauded as we passed, yet the radio continued to underplay the size of the march as well as the variety of people participating. Before we reached the United Nations Plaza we realized that it was time to get the subway to Shea Stadium where our bus was parked.

I boarded the bus physically exhausted and in an emotional turmoil. I had gone to the march to take a stand against our government's role which I considered was not only unwise but morally wrong. I did believe that our leaders would respond to a peaceful protest by serious citizens. I considered my participation in the march to be an act of patriotism just as the civil rights movement had been a cry for America to live up to her ideals. The reports of the march on the radio not only underestimated its size but characterized its participants as idealistic young people at best and unpatriotic fanatics at worst. Pat and Mary Lee were also shaken by our experience. Gloria, who joined us for the ride back to Ithaca, did not seem surprised when we told her about the discrepancy between our experience and the news reports. Although she did not say much, I had the distinct impression that she knew something about our country that we didn't.

C H A P T E R X I I I

I hoped that I would be able to get involved in other efforts to end United States' involvement in Vietnam but after the march my energies were focused in other directions. Living in our modern apartment had been fine for a year but I was getting anxious to find a place that was less like New Jersey. Betty and Arnold were moving and I hated the idea of being in the apartments without Betty. They had bought a beautiful old house near Cornell. I wondered if Jake and I could consider such a move and began to look at the listings for houses in the paper. I had no idea what it would take to buy a house but when I saw an advertisement for a seven room house for \$12,000, I thought we should at least look at it. The house seemed perfect for our needs--enough room and a reasonable price. We decided to try to buy it. Jake was able to get a G.I. mortgage so we only needed \$1,200 for the down payment. We borrowed it from one bank and got our mortgage from another bank across the street.

The owner was an old woman who had lived in the house for most of her adult life. Since her husband died she had been unable to maintain the old house and had had difficulty in making her tax payments as well. When she told me that it was very hard to leave the house where she had lived with her husband for more than forty years and raised her four children, I tried to assure her that we would take good care of it although it was clear that leaving her house was very difficult for her no matter what I said. We had decided to take down the wall in the

entrance hallway to open up the living and dining rooms. After the closing Pat and Charles came over to help us with the work. In the middle of the afternoon the old woman came by to get something she had forgotten and was visibly shaken by what she saw. The wall was down and there was plaster everywhere. In a faltering voice she told me that what we were doing was tearing her apart. I was glad to have the house but miserable that this old woman had to leave because her social security payments were not enough to keep the house. As I watched her walk down the hill to her apartment I thought to myself that something was very wrong with our country if this old woman was forced out of her home.

My life took another major change that summer--I was going to start working in the fall. Towards the middle of the summer I got a call from the chairman of the English department at Ithaca College whom Jake and I knew socially. He asked me if I would like to be a tutor for the freshman English class. When I said that I had no experience or training for such a position he assured me that I would have no problem. The job consisted of attending the large lecture, grading papers and meeting with a small group of students periodically to discuss their writing. I told him that I would have to think about it and discuss it with Jake.

When I put down the phone I was mostly frightened by the prospect of the job. I had had trouble with my own writing in college and I doubted that I had the skills to help students. On the other hand the idea of working at the college was really exciting. I could hardly wait for Jake to come home to discuss it with him. He encouraged me to

consider it. We could, he said, certainly use the money and since it was a part-time job he felt sure we could either get a sister for Leah, who was not in school yet, or he would arrange to come home to stay with her while I was at work. He also felt that I was more than capable of grading the papers. I called Dr. Baizer that night and told him that I was willing to take the job as long as he understood that I had no training in writing other than an advanced composition course at Columbia. He said he understood and that Bob Cosgrove, the new director of the freshman English program, would be in touch with me.

I began the semester encouraged by my discussions about the course with Bob Cosgrove. He seemed to be a very understanding man. The lecture on how to write as well as his discussions of the stories used as material for student essays were interesting and, I thought, would be helpful to me when I graded the papers. As I sat in the large lecture hall surrounded by freshmen I wondered how many of them heard what was being said. I tried to remember what I had learned in my freshman year at Alfred and could recall only that I had been driven by my need to be accepted socially. Learning had been irrelevant.

When my students handed in their first essays I brought them home feeling excited by my new challenge. After I had read through a few of them, however, I realized that my fears about my lack of skills in writing were well grounded. I read through them again and felt even more inadequate. While I could recognize a sentence that was grammatically wrong or a paragraph that was not well developed, I could not identify exactly what the problems were and felt even more at a loss as

to how to communicate them to the students on the narrow space of the margin. I had been right, I thought. I never should have taken the job but I had no choice now. I decided to call Bob Cosgrove. Holding back my tears I told him that I needed some help with the papers. He came right over and after we went through a few of the essays together I felt that I could manage.

I was almost as nervous about my first meetings with students but I finally realized that as little as I felt I knew, I did have more skills than freshmen. I found, too, that I enjoyed my meetings with them. I identified with those who had difficulty translating their thoughts into writing and was as gratified as they were when a jumbled paper was transformed into an understandable piece of writing. By the end of the first semester I felt confident about the comments I made in the margins of the students' essays and looked forward to my meetings with them. I was glad I had agreed to take the job.

Jake, on the other hand, was not pleased. While he had been perfectly comfortable with the idea of my working, the reality of my being on the campus twice a week proved to be difficult for him. He felt that I was invading his territory. It was hard for me to understand that my little job would threaten him. I knew from what he told me, as well as from what I heard from other faculty, that he was a popular teacher and had earned a reputation as an innovator. He and Mary Lee Taylor had spearheaded the development of the Economic Opportunity Program (EOP). Combining a package of financial aid and academic support services the goal of the program was to bring a small number of inner city students

to the college. While final approval of EOP was still pending, his work on the project had made him a well known figure on the small campus.

I knew it was my responsibility to try to understand his feelings. He was, after all, my husband and he was the one who had the real job. I tried to be empathetic but I was really annoyed that something that gave me so much pleasure and that I wanted to do for myself made him so upset. I thought about our time in Amherst and realized that he had been even more territorial then. I had wanted to go to the campus with him sometimes but he usually found some excuse. One day I was feeling particularly lonely and I wouldn't take no for an answer. We were going to go to the Student Union to get something to eat. I was feeling so isolated that I had the idea that being on the campus would help me to feel more connected to the University. When we got to the Union Jake seemed so uncomfortable during our short stay in the cafeteria that I wondered if he might have been having an affair. He assured me, however, that he just didn't like having Neal and me in his territory. Things hadn't changed much over the past six years except that I had no intention of giving up my job.

Other aspects of our relationship also seemed to have stagnated. Since our marriage I had waited for our relationship to get better. When he was in graduate school I thought we would be less distant when he had a job and was making a decent salary. Then I thought he would be more approachable when his dissertation was finished but in each instance Jake's distance was either unchanged or greater. While I felt frustrated with Jake, I also felt responsible for the problems in our

relationship. As Jake's wife the relationship was primarily my responsibility and I had obviously messed up. I had had excuses for Jake's preoccupation in the past but now that he had his degree, a good job and we had a nice place to live I wondered what else to wait for. Neal, it was true, was still a problem but he had been progressing very well and Leah was a delight.

While Neal's second evaluation with Dr. Berko did show some small improvements, he seemed far better to me than the report indicated. His attempts to communicate were more frequent and successful and he had begun to develop a relationship with Leah. She often understood what he was trying to say before I did and sort of translated for me. He had been seeing Dr. Lambert who also agreed that he was progressing. I had no idea what happened in their session but I was increasingly dissatisfied with my weekly meetings with her. She seemed patronizing and basically unhelpful. I decided to try the other therapist whose name I had seen in the phone book.

I knew from my first meeting with Dr. Olum that most of my time with the other therapist had been wasted. Her empathy for me made it possible to discuss my deepest feelings about Neal as well as the problems in my relationship with Jake. She also seemed to understand Neal and was able to deal with her own frustration when his behavior did not fit into a neat diagnosis. She felt that he was neither autistic nor schizophrenic and was able to face not knowing what caused his inability to develop normally. Her refusal to put Neal into a category was very helpful to me as she was able to help me deal with where he actually

was. She also encouraged me to be more direct with Jake about my feelings. After seeing Dr. Olum for a short time I realized that my tendency to repress my own feelings had not been "cured" by my work with Dr. Kordecki but was something that would be a continual struggle.

As I thought about my tendency to run away from my feelings I realized, too, how important my relationship with Betty Singer had been. She seemed to know so much about her emotions and our conversations were generally focused on feelings--hers and mine. Arnold had, however, become increasingly disturbed by our relationship. He felt that women should be content to stay home and tend to their husbands and children and I was always encouraging Betty to go to lectures at Cornell with me. It was true that hearing scholars speak on various issues was affecting both of us. We thought more about the world and less about dinner and housework. From Arnold's perspective I was definitely a bad influence on his wife and shortly after we both moved out of the apartments he forbid Betty to see me. We continued to talk on the phone and I sometimes ventured a visit during the time when we knew that Arnold was in class but our relationship was limited. I wondered how Betty could stand to be ordered around by her husband but never ventured to express my opinion that he had no right to choose her friends.

As my relationship with Betty deteriorated I began to spend more time with Pat Sackrey. While I enjoyed my time with Pat, our relationship was very different from the one I had with Betty. Pat seemed to be even more removed from her feelings than I was and although I was more comfortable with her than I was when we first met, she continued to

represent everything that I had tried and failed to be--a perfect American woman. I had been far easier to be with Betty than Pat. Betty was Jewish, from New York, had problems, had even been in therapy and she and Arnold did not have a perfect relationship. Pat had begun school, she had never gone to college and did not have much time but I was also busy with my job. Charles and Jake had become very close friends and the four of us generally spent a part of each weekend together.

I met Ann Lipke through the Sackreys. She was my age, married to a man who taught art history at Cornell and, to my great surprise, she was on the faculty at Ithaca College. The few other female faculty I had known at Alfred and Columbia (there were none as far as I knew at Manitowoc or Sheboygan) were old, unmarried and the butt of jokes from the student body. Ann was not only my age and married but very attractive and, I later heard, very well liked by her students. Although I felt inadequate around Ann because I assumed she was much smarter and more well informed than I was, we also grew to be rather friendly.

Despite my feelings of inadequacy around Ann because of her greater knowledge and Pat because of her all around perfection, by the fall of 1968 at the age of twenty-nine I was beginning to take myself seriously as a person. I did not try to convince Jake that it would be all right for me to be working at the college. I simply never considered the possibility of quitting. By the beginning of the second year I felt confident not only that I was doing an acceptable job but that I would get

better and Jake had somehow managed to accept my "invasion" of his territory.

During that summer he occasionally mentioned that he thought we should have another baby. I was appalled at the idea. Leah was about to begin kindergarten and I would finally have some freedom during the day. Neal had progressed so well at the Special Children's Center that the Berkos recommended that he enter the class for emotionally disturbed children at the public school. We had also enrolled him the speech clinic at Ithaca College and I hoped that the sessions there would accelerate his development. My life seemed to be finally a little less frantic. Another baby would change all that. I wondered if Jake wanted me to have another baby to keep me at home. Maybe he was more like Arnold Singer than I had imagined. I usually changed the subject when he brought it up, but one night I told him directly that I didn't want another child. He said that he had hoped to have another son. I had such a good relationship with Leah and he wanted to experience that kind of sharing with a son. I was furious. I did not change the subject that night but said that Neal might have problems but he was his son. What was he going to do about Neal if he did have another son? And what if the baby were a girl? Would he want me to have another one? I said that I would consider having another baby only if he was prepared to work half time and stay home to share taking care of it equally. The subject never came up again.

My relationship to the professionals who saw Neal had also changed markedly since I first saw Dr. Kordecki and accepted his judgment

without question. Each of the specialists who saw Neal, it seemed to me, tried to fit him into the category of the disorder they knew best and wanted to administer tests to confirm their diagnosis. I was concerned about putting Neal through the ordeal of extensive testing and refused to consider it unless they would help us to develop a treatment that would help Neal. In every case the answer was that the treatment would remain the same.

I found that when I asked the experts questions about their diagnosis and the value of testing they reacted negatively. I was not accepting their word as gospel and I could sometimes almost hear them label me as a mother who could not accept her child's limitations. But what I was trying to do was take some control of a very confusing and frustrating situation. Neal had had so many diagnoses--childhood schizophrenia, autism, aphasia, mental retardation--that the label seemed much less important to me than what could be done. Because I was trying to find the best for my child and didn't accept what the experts said without question, I felt like a rebel.

But there was much I could not control and I was upset and angry about that. The Special Children's Center had not been appropriate for Neal but there was no alternative. When he went to the class for emotionally disturbed children it was immediately clear that once again Neal was in the wrong place but this class was the only one in the school system provided for children who could not be in the regular classroom. All the other children were either hyperactive or had acted out in ways that were very disruptive. Neal, on the other hand, was

quiet and passive and needed to be coaxed out of his withdrawal. He was also still not comfortable with other children and being in a class with children who were very aggressive and hard for even normal children to cope with seemed cruel. While I liked the teacher and found that she took a great interest in Neal, there was no doubt in my mind that Neal was placed in this class because it was the only one. I realized that I thought the schools had an obligation to provide adequate services for my child. The system was, however, geared to the mainstream--the normal--and those who didn't fit that description were placed in a back room together regardless of whether they all had the same needs.

Questioning the authority of the "experts" and seeing major flaws in the way the educational system's treatment of children who had special needs affected my attitude towards authority in very serious ways. During the early 1960s I believed that the protest of the Black students in the South would make the government aware of a problem it had neglected and once our leaders recognized the seriousness of segregation they would take swift and decisive action to alleviate the situation. There had been major gains in civil rights since that time but it was beginning to be clear to me that the system was designed for whites and would move only as long as Blacks pushed at it, just as the schools were designed for normal children and would change only when masses of people forced some accommodation of those who had special needs. My experience with Neal and the school system, the services provided by the United Way and the Speech Clinic made less sanguine about people in authority and the systems they created. I was on the outside again but this time it

wasn't because I didn't know how to fit in or was directly excluded as I had been in high school; rather I was beginning to see that something was wrong with the way the system operated.

My experience with Neal had opened me up to radical critiques of America and, to my surprise they shed light on my past in ways that I had not expected. When I first heard Stokely Carmichael, for example, I was shocked and dismayed by his call for Black Power. Didn't Black people want to live in unity with whites? Didn't they want to be like us? Why did they want power over whites? But as I heard the concept articulated again by students at Ithaca College and Cornell I realized that the kind of control they were talking about was just what I wanted for Neal. I wanted a system which would be responsive to his needs. It also became clear to me when Black students articulated the very real need of Black children to see themselves in the curriculum that my life might have been very different if I had had that opportunity. Perhaps being an Armenian might not have been so difficult if I had heard about my history and culture in the schools. But as it was, even the massacre that had caused my grandfather's death and so much suffering for my family seemed to be unknown to everyone in the world who wasn't Armenian. I saw that Black Power was a very different concept than the struggle to end segregation. While I supported both, Black Power spoke to me in ways that the civil rights movement hadn't. It seemed to me that it was an attempt to change a system to make it serve of the needs of the people it had abused.

For the first time I was trying to work through political ideas and coming to some conclusions on my own out of my own experience rather than listening to Jake and his friends' ideas as I had done for so long. And I found that I had very strong political convictions. I was suspicious of all kinds of authority and believed that all people in a society should have equal rights. I also felt that it was my responsibility as a politically committed person to speak up for my beliefs. I generally found myself in some kind of debate at most social gatherings we attended and visits to my family were frequently disrupted by political arguments over "colored people," the war or student takeovers. My father was outraged that I supported the student strike at Columbia. I had felt avenged for the bad advising, overcrowded classes and elitism that had barred me from ever seeing the professor who was the main reason I had chosen the school. The students, it seemed to me, had a perfect right to participate in decisions affecting school policy. They paid tuition and were the major reason for the existence of the institution.

The most heated arguments with my parents, however, focused on Black people. I tried to explain to my parents that the situation of Black people in this country was not unlike that of Armenians in Turkey but my argument got nowhere since they were convinced of both the superiority of Armenians and the inferiority of Blacks.

While my mother was always present at these discussions she was generally quiet. When she did speak it was usually to try to change the subject. I was determined to continue arguing because I really did want

to convince them that their judgments were based on prejudice and because it felt good to argue with my father. The arguments were the only emotional interchange we had ever had and I was able to stand up to him. I was also breaking rules. Not only was I contradicting my father but by talking about politics at all I had crossed over into the male world.

That summer Ann Lipke and I decided to go to the Poor People's March in Washington. This time I didn't plead with Jake to let me go but told me that I was going. I had felt so discouraged by what was happening that I wanted to do something. Medgar Evers had been killed. Three Black girls had died in the bombing of a church in Birmingham, James Meredith had been shot and finally Martin Luther King had been assassinated. I no longer expected the media to give an accurate report of the march and I experienced none of the exhilaration of being with thousands of people who shared my views nor the sense that the government would listen. The struggle for social and economic rights seemed very long and difficult and had to be waged against those in power. I knew that I was marching only to try to make myself feel better. At the end of the day as Ann and I waited for everyone to get back to the bus for the long trip back to Ithaca we sat on the curb in the silence of exhaustion. I looked up at the Washington Monument and was almost surprised when I turned to her and said "we are sitting in the shadow of the federal prick." She shook her head in agreement and we boarded the bus.

I was changing so quickly that I hardly knew what was happening myself. I looked forward to the Democratic convention in August. Surely,

I thought, the party could not ignore what had happened over the last few years and nominate Humphrey. As I watched the party go through its business as usual as people like myself were being beaten on the streets of Chicago I began to shake. Despite the oppressive August heat I watched the television wrapped in a blanket and shook for the rest of the night. I knew that I was leaving the America of my youth and innocence. The land of the free and the home of the brave that I so fervently believed in and had tried too hard to assimilate into was a broken dream. I was firmly on the outside and in opposition.

C H A P T E R X I V

Shortly after the convention both Ann Lipke and the Sackreys left Ithaca. Ann's marriage had broken up and she had decided to go back to the University of Wisconsin to finish her dissertation. Charles had accepted a job offer from Smith College. He had become increasingly unhappy with the conservatism of the economics department at Ithaca College and had finally decided to apply for jobs despite the fact that Pat had not finished her degree. I wondered how Pat felt about leaving school but she seemed to feel that she could easily continue her studies at Smith. While I loved Ithaca I was surprised to find that I felt a little envious that they were moving to the Amherst area but my main feeling was a real sorrow that our best friends were moving away.

The English department at Ithaca College replaced Ann with another woman who quickly became friendly with Jake and invited us over for dinner. Bea Goldman and her husband Jack were both Jewish, Bea from Los Angeles and Jack from New York. Bea's dinner was beautifully prepared and even included a delicious loaf of homemade French bread. The conversation at dinner focused on food and when I raved about the bread Bea offered to teach me how to make it. After dinner the talk turned to politics and we learned that Jack was a full time activist. He was the editor of the local radical newspaper, Dateline: Ithaca. At the end of the evening he asked us if we would like to help put the paper out on Sunday mornings. Jake didn't seem interested but I agreed to go to the office of the Glad Day Press the next day to fold and bundle the paper.

When we left the Goldmans that night I hoped that they would help to fill the void left by Pat and Charles.

I did go to the office the next morning and while I felt awkward because I didn't know anyone but Jack, I was glad to be part of Dateline which seemed to be a very good paper.

I also decided to take Bea up on her offer to teach me to make bread and while we waited for the dough to rise we got to know each other a little better. As she talked about the courses she wanted to teach and her dissertation which was on James Agee I was intrigued by her perspective on literature. As I listened to Bea's highly animated and knowledgeable discussion of the social and political import of works of art I was at once intimidated by her intelligence and excited by her analysis. She made me want to read the books she talked about and I was reminded of Dr. Klitzke's lectures. I wondered what she thought about the visual arts and asked her if the kind of analysis she had used for literature could be applied to painting. To my surprise she said she knew of scholars who had done such an interpretation of the visual arts. I was astounded. After years of not thinking about art because I was ashamed of my inability to see it properly, I wondered again about my experience at Columbia. I told Bea about what I had encountered and she told me that in literature, at least, there were two schools of criticism--those who looked only at the structure of the works, the "art for art's sake" school, and those who were interested in the relationship between between the work and its social context. It seemed clear to her that the faculty at Columbia had been adherents of the school

that considered the art in isolation. I left Bea's house with a loaf of freshly baked French bread and some clarity of what had happened to me almost ten years before that afternoon. I did not need to be ashamed of my perspective on art--I belonged to a "school."

Within the next few months Jake and I saw the Goldmans frequently. We enjoyed their company and my association with Dateline had expanded when Jack heard me talking about photography. Since Neal was born I had been taking pictures with a camera that Jake had bought when he was in the Air Force and stationed in Germany. My interest in taking pictures had grown over the years and I had taken a course in darkroom techniques when I found that it was offered at the College and, as a faculty wife, I could take courses for free. Jack asked me if I would like to take pictures for the paper and I agreed. Although I was afraid that I wasn't good enough, I decided that I would give it a try since I loved working in the darkroom.

While I enjoyed the time we spent together as couples it was always disappointingly unlike the time that Bea and I spent without our husbands. The conversation among the four of us seemed to be mainly between the two men. While Bea and I did participate, there was something about the interaction that was very different. After some time I realized that Bea deferred to Jack just as I thought that Jake knew more about politics than I did. She often told me that she considered Jack to be brilliant and while I didn't feel that I was a very good judge of intelligence, I wondered if he was really any smarter than Bea. I always learned so much more from our conversations when we were alone.

Because we both loved to cook we often spent Saturdays cooking elaborate meals together. While we chopped vegetables for egg rolls, spread pounds of melted butter on filo pastry for spanikopita or peeled peppers for chiles rellenos we talked about literature, teaching and politics. My conversations with other women friends had focused mainly on our relationships with our husbands and problems with our children. Since Bea thought that Jack was a kind of saint and didn't have or want any children she talked about her interests. I was delighted since her ideas always stimulated me. Listening to Bea's highly animated discussion of her courses and how she planned to incorporate her political views into a literature class made me think about the freshman English course. Bea was convinced that all scholarship and teaching had a political perspective and that the only difference with her attempts to bring her politics into her courses was that it was conscious and explicit. I knew from my own experience at Columbia how destructive it could be to students to teach courses as if they were value free when they were actually presenting only one point of view.

One Saturday when we were preparing a Mexican dinner I mentioned to Bea that I had been thinking about ways to change the freshman English course. She got really excited by the idea since the course was required of all students and we had the opportunity to reach every student at the school. I had become dissatisfied with the content as well as the structure of the course. The large lectures on writing that had been interesting for me the first year I heard them seemed to be totally useless to the students. They only came to class because we took

attendance and most of them did not listen. It didn't seem to me that the way to teach writing was to give lectures on form, but to have students discuss the material and write and rewrite short essays about ideas they had talked about with their peers. The material for the essays should be chosen with some sense of the concerns of students. Like Bea, I agreed with student activists that the material of the classroom should not be divorced from the world but relevant to the lives of the students. Bea made many interesting suggestions for the course and agreed with me that the structure was totally inappropriate for a writing class. She was, however, very doubtful about what changes could be made within that department. Her experience had been that they were very conservative and afraid of any change.

Despite Bea's pessimism about the possibility of altering the course in any way, I was bolstered by her agreement that the structure and content of the course were destined to fail. I not only admired her intelligence but knew that within the first semester of her job at the College she had already become one of the most popular teachers. I talked to one of the other tutors about my problems with the course and some of my ideas. Ellen Peters, who had become a good friend, heartily agreed that there were serious problems with the course and was also anxious to make some changes. She also was interested in bringing her political and social concerns into the material we used. We decided on approaching Dr Cosgrove about incorporating some of our concerns into what was left of the semester and while he was generally cool to our

suggestion he did make up one essay topic that touched on the contemporary issues.

Our small success only spurred us on to want more change. Ellen and I talked with all the other tutors and found that they all agreed that the course was a failure. Students were learning neither how to write nor think. Since the tutors read the students' papers and met with them regularly we were the ones who really knew what was happening in the course. We decided that we would like to change it and offered to work with Dr. Cosgrove over the summer. His initial response was that he would think about it. As the end of the semester approached we pushed him to make a decision. He finally said that we could do what we wanted over the summer but that he had made plans to go away. We could send him our deliberations and he would respond by mail.

We were amazed that he would give us so much power but were too excited by the prospect of redesigning the course to consider the consequences of doing our work in his absence. We did realize, once he accepted our proposal, that it was going to take serious work to do what we had suggested. We approached the English department for small stipends for each of us--enough to pay for baby sitters--and to our great amazement they agreed to subsidize our work for the month of June. They also arranged for us to have one of the seminar rooms for our meetings.

I had another interesting possibility for the summer. Jake and other members of the EOP Steering Committee were trying to get funding for a Summer program for EOP students who would be entering the College that fall. The students would take some of their freshman requirements

in the summer with tutorial help and have the added advantage of getting acclimated to the campus before all the other students came back in the fall. Bea had agreed to serve as the English tutor. She had decided to run her tutorial as a class and, to my great delight, asked me to co-teach it with her. I looked forward to the opportunity of watching her teach and hoped that the College administration would agree to fund the program. Shortly after the English department accepted our proposal to redesign the freshman writing course the administration funded the EOP summer program.

I was generally pleased with my life that Spring. I was working for social change not only by going to demonstrations but by my work on Dateline. Now with my two summer jobs I would be able to bring some of my concerns into the classroom and I would have the opportunity to help the mostly Black and Hispanic EOP students make an easier adjustment to Ithaca College. Neal was still not a "normal" child but he continued to develop and I was helped in many ways by my weekly sessions with Dr. Olum. Jake had also begun to see her and I had hopes that our relationship would grow closer. Leah was in kindergarten and seemed to be a very bright and happy child. That monstrous part of me that had hurt Neal so much--whatever it was--had obviously not harmed my daughter. I felt very close to Leah and usually enjoyed our time together.

Although I felt that I had matured enormously since seeing Dr. Kordecki, in some ways I felt younger than ever. I credited the student movement with helping me to overcome some of the rigid ideas I had had about the role I was supposed to play as a married woman who was also a

mother. I stopped wearing skirts and stockings every day and bought myself some jeans. It was wonderful to be able to wear the kind of clothes I had loved when I was a teenager and I thought fondly of my cousin Susan when I pulled on my first pair of Landlubber bells. I let my hair grow long and didn't worry about setting it anymore and didn't always wear makeup.

I also joined the food coop and smiled in delight as I ordered what the natural foods movement thought it had discovered and I had known all my life. Bughlur and yogurt, it seemed, were vital to a long life. Well, my family did live to be very old but I ate these foods again because I loved their taste and because they were no longer strange--at least to a small group of people.

Although my growing conviction that those in power were all evil and corrupt had put me outside of the mainstream, I felt more comfortable than I had in years. I felt part of another group which was small and embattled but, I was convinced, was striving for justice and was clearly morally superior to the majority who supported the government. Change was sure to come soon and I would have the pleasure of having been on the "right" side.

Encounters with my family were, however, becoming more and more difficult. Earlier visits to New Jersey were punctuated by arguments with my father but by 1969 debates predominated and they were initiated not only by the comments of my father but by those of other relatives as well. That Easter I was sitting with my cousins when one of them, Aunty Ars' son Howard began to complain about all the problems Negroes were

causing. They wanted to be like white people, he said. When I asked him why he thought they didn't have the right to the same jobs and schools as white people his wife and my cousin Adrina excitedly joined the argument. Dot said that her parents had worked hard for what they had and that Negroes wanted everything handed to them a silver platter. When I argued that they had every right to expect everything that her parents had acquired and that they worked just as hard as anyone she got very angry and said that they were not like white people in any way. I was getting as angry as she was and I shouted that a friend of ours had just moved into Larchmont but that he and his wife had to fight the stupidity of people like her just to buy their house. The level of rage at our table had gotten so intense that I was almost frightened by it. When Adrina said that her husband Garo kept one of his shotguns near the door just in case a nigger ever dared to set foot on their property, I left the table terrified by the viciousness I had seen.

My relatives, usually placid, had turned into monsters. On the way home I talked with Jake about what had happened. He said that it was important to understand their perspectives but I was afraid of their violence. Stokely Carmichael, I thought, had been right when he said that white people didn't want to go into their own neighborhoods to talk about racism because they knew how dangerous that could be.

The polarization that was already evident in my family would overtake Ithaca that Spring. The Black students at Cornell had been working with the administration for months to establish a Black Studies Program. It seemed to me that the demand for a concentration of courses that

explored the history and lives of Black people was not only reasonable but necessary. Black students had every right to see themselves represented in the curriculum of the university they attended. The administration did not refuse the demands outright but seemed to be substituting meetings with the Afro-American Society about the Program for any action to establish Black Studies. Because of all the delays, in December of 1968 the Afro-American Society staged a demonstration to protest and publicize the administration's failure to act. Six students who participated in the rather large demonstration were summoned before the Student-Faculty Board on Student Conduct.

Since they felt that they had been arbitrarily singled out for judiciary board action, the six refused to appear before the Board. They were informed that they would face automatic suspension unless they appeared before the Board. The six students came to the meeting of the Board with all of the one hundred and fifty members of the Afro-American Society not to face the charges but to present the Board with a statement of why they refused to accept its right to sit in judgment of the students who had been charged. The statement outlined three major points: the Board was supposed to be a jury of peers, yet it did not include even one Black student; the action for which the students were being tried was political and since Cornell was a party to the dispute it could not sit in judgment; finally if those six students were guilty so were all the others who participated in the demonstration. The Board decided to drop the suspensions and tension on campus was diminished.

Because the dispute of the Afro-American Society with the judiciary board challenged the University's authority it was watched closely by people from all parts of the political spectrum. Most of my close friends were convinced of the justice of the position taken by the Afro-American Society and we were appalled when the judiciary board reversed their earlier decision that spring. They tried the six students in absentia and reprimanded them. We waited anxiously for the response from the Afro-American Society. It was not clear what it would be but there was no doubt that they would respond to the reassertion of the legitimacy of the Board. Tensions were increased when a six foot cross was burned in front of Wari, the Black women's housing cooperative, and campus police left the building unguarded for more than an hour after the incident. President Perkins further aggravated the growing atmosphere of fear when he characterized the cross burning as a "prank."

The response of the Afro-American Society to the decision of the judiciary board and the cavalier attitude of the campus police and the University's president to the cross burning was dramatic. A week after the cross burning, the Afro-American Society entered Willard Straight Hall, the student union and campus hotel. It was parents' weekend and they peacefully evicted the parents who were staying in the hotel and the people who worked in the building. They occupied the student radio station which was located in the Straight for a few minutes to inform the campus community of the takeover.

There was no question in my mind that the occupation of the Straight was justified and I hoped that the action would alert Cornell

to the seriousness of the Black students' situation on that campus. That afternoon something happened that exacerbated an already volatile atmosphere. A few white students gained entry into the building and attacked the Black students with clubs. They were finally ejected and reports that the campus police had once again failed to protect the Black students by allowing the white students to enter the building mobilized the SDS. They ringed the building to prevent any other white students from entering the Straight. Meanwhile rumors that groups of white students had procured guns and were planning to storm the building were circulating. I heard from Ellen Peters, who was a member of the small radical Catholic community, that the Catholic chaplain at Cornell was meeting with two hundred white students to try to prevent them from taking such an action. They were, she said, well armed.

The next morning the campus and community were seriously alarmed by the news that the Black students had also armed themselves. Large groups of whites, students and the few faculty who supported the takeover, had gathered in front of the Straight to show their support and offer whatever protection they could to the students inside. Jake and I decided to join the supporters. It was a balmy Sunday that eerily had the atmosphere of a community festival. Most of our friends were there as well as other people we knew to be radical activists. I was holding Leah's hand when suddenly I was overcome with fear. I was standing in front of a building with my children and inside were Black men with guns. I quickly found Jake who was talking to Bea and Jack and whispered that we would have to leave immediately. I must have looked

frantic. He didn't ask any questions. We walked--I had to force myself not to run--to the car.

When we got home he went into his study to do some work and I turned on the Cornell radio station which had moved out of the Straight and was covering the events from another campus building. In the calm of my living room the fear that had had such a powerful grip on me faded and I was able to think about what had happened. I realized that the people inside the Straight had ceased to be the students whose activities I had followed and supported. What had scared me was the specter of Black men with guns. For all of my progressive attitudes it seemed to me that afternoon that I had not been immune to the racist myth of the Black man as beasts--the "animals in suits" that Uncle Mesrop had pointed to on the front page of the Times so many years ago. I had been shocked and angered by his blatant racism but I learned that afternoon that I, too, carried that image in my psyche. It was my first understanding of the power of racism to invade my unconscious, a lesson I hoped to communicate to other whites.

During the next few weeks I had ample opportunity to talk to other whites about racism in all its forms including my new revelation. Even though the Black students had emptied their guns and left the Straight without one shot being fired or any other kind of violence, everyone I knew, friends and mere acquaintances, talked only about the fact that the students in the building had guns. Dateline had published the reports of the white students who had armed themselves and planned to attack the Straight and that the students inside the building had

decided to arm themselves only in response to that very real threat, but many of the whites I knew never got past the specter that had so frightened me on that balmy Sunday. Although the white students occupied another building in support of the demands of the Black students, the rage of most whites was directed at the Afro-American Society. As a result of President Perkins' courageous refusal to bring in the National Guard to oust the Black students, he was forced by pressure brought by the majority of the faculty to resign.

Happily, all of my close friends supported the Black students but many people I knew stopped talking to me and my friends because of our stand on the Straight takeover. The town was divided and I held the same position in that polarization as I did in my family--the radical, fanatic side. While I certainly did not feel isolated because most of my friends held the same opinions, I was truly distressed that most whites seemed to be totally incapable of seeing the situation from the perspective of the Black students. The Straight takeover and the reaction to it in Ithaca confirmed my growing feeling that my views put me squarely into the counter culture.

Although most of my energy was focused on the racism that I had come to learn pervaded not only Cornell, Ithaca College and the whole culture but my own psyche, I was also involved in the anti-war movement and a staunch supporter of the student movement. I heartily agreed with the most radical of the students and faculty who wanted to equalize the student-teacher relationship as much as possible. I looked forward to the summer when I was going to be teaching with Bea and I could put my

beliefs into practice. I also hoped to work some of my ideas into the design for the freshman English course but worried about how much real change Bob Cosgrove and the English department would allow.

I had great respect for some of the students I knew. There were so much more aware of the world and their own needs and rights than I had been at their age. I was surprised and inspired by twenty year olds who believed that they could change the world. I was most impressed with some of the young women who were involved in radical politics. I became friendly with Nadine Cohen, one of Jake's students. After we had known each other for a short time she began to tell me about the difficulty she and some of the other women were having in getting the men they worked with to take them seriously. Their ideas were not heard and they were never allowed to speak at public meetings. I sympathized with Nadine and urged her to confront the men directly, although I realized how hard that would be.

I had felt bitter that the Women's Movement had emerged after it was too late for me but my conversations with Nadine and some of the other young women made me begin to think about the movement again. While I primarily thought about them and ways that they could deal with their situation, I couldn't help but think about my life in terms of women's roles. Jake never ordered me around the way that Arnold told Betty what to do. He had had problems with my teaching at the College but had not asked me to quit.

Other men, though, seemed to think there was something wrong, even dangerous with my behavior. Arnold forbid Betty to see me and what was

more amazing to me was that she saw me secretly rather than confronting her husband. My influence on Betty, as far as I could see, was merely that I encouraged her to use her mind. Arnold, I knew, thought that women's fulfillment came from homemaking. Shortly after we had moved into our house he came over to help paint. I was scrubbing the kitchen floor with steel wool to remove the wax that had built up over the years. It was well over ninety degrees, I had been working for hours and was only half done. When I started to complain about the job I was doing he responded that I should be feeling very good since I was fulfilling my role as a woman. I thought that even Arnold Singer could not be serious and when I responded sarcastically I realized that he had, indeed, meant what he said. I was furious and told him he was crazy. My banishment from his house came a few weeks later.

I was also an anathema to Ann Lipke's husband Bill. Although he hardly knew me he thought I had contributed to their separation. One Saturday night when Ann was at a party at our house he called to tell me that I was a dangerous woman--a homebreaker. I could not imagine what I had done and asked him what he meant. He could only answer that I was a witch. I understood Arnold's problem with me but was completely mystified by what Bill Lipke was talking about. When I told Ann about the phone call she thought my influence had been to befriend her and support any signs of independence that she showed. Another friend, John Miller, said that Ann was wrong. Bill Lipke thought I was a dyke. I had never heard that word and asked John what he meant. Thinking I hadn't heard him he repeated, "Bill Lipke thinks you are a dyke." When he finally

understood that I really didn't know what the word meant he told me that it meant that he thought I was in love with Ann--that I was a lesbian. I was so astounded that I was speechless. As I looked back on that night after talking to Nadine, I began to wonder if any close relationship between women that was supportive was so threatening to men that they had to sexualize them.

I thought, too, about some of my experiences at the office where Dateline was published and where I worked in the darkroom. I was often intimidated by the male SDS students who spent a good deal of time at the office. It seemed impossible to have any kind of decent conversation with them. They were so sure that they had all the right answers to questions I had just begun to formulate. I had not thought then that their behavior had anything to do with the fact that they were male but I now wondered about that as I had never encountered such dogmatism from the women radicals I knew. I had also been very disturbed when I came across a set of contact sheets that belonged to one of the other photographers. Among the prints of various demonstrations and meetings were four or five sheets of nude women. I was not able to articulate what had upset me about those pictures which looked like they might have been taken for a men's magazine but I was less willing to believe in his complete dedication to the cause of freedom for everyone. I didn't talk to anyone about what I had found, it seemed to me as I thought about those sheets again, because I knew that most people in the movement wouldn't think there was anything wrong with using women's bodies as

sexual objects. I would have been considered a prude, something anyone over twenty-five had to be very careful about.

My conversations with Nadine had made me want to learn more about women's issues. She suggested that I read The Second Sex. I found it very difficult to understand and decided to ask Bea if she had read it. I hadn't discussed women's issues with her. I had sensed that she would think that my concerns were silly. She had, she said, read the book years ago and found it to be highly derivative. I didn't really know what she meant so I tentatively asked her what she thought about the oppression of women. Her answer was quick and thorough. The oppression of women was not the real problem with our society, she said. We needed to focus our energies with men on overthrowing the class system and the military industrial complex. I wasn't sure exactly what she meant but was too embarrassed by my obvious ignorance to ask her to explain her position further. In that instance, it seemed to me, Bea had not been her usual open self but was more like the SDS men I had encountered at the office.

None of my other women friends seemed interested in the problems of women either, so I discussed the subject only with the women students I knew. They had decided to form a new organization--the Ithaca College Women's Liberation Front and when they asked me to join I was surprised myself when I agreed without a second thought. Since the group had been formed at the end of the semester we talked about what we planned to do in the fall when school opened again. Our main concern was to publicize

women's issues to make them a campus issue on the same level with the war, racism and student rights.

I did get some support for my growing interest in the Women's Movement from Pat Sackrey. She called late that spring to say that she and Charles were going to California that summer and planned to stop in Ithaca. Charles was doing some research on a new book and Pat was going to visit something I had not even heard of--Women's Centers. I looked forward to seeing her and talking more about women's issues.

In the meantime, my participation in the Women's Liberation Front had made some waves. Jake was not surprised as I had discussed some of my concerns with him. I didn't know exactly how he felt about it but he didn't discourage my involvement. Bea, on the other hand, seemed upset. As I explained that I thought that the role women were expected to play in society had affected my life in very serious ways she said she could understand that. She could see that having children at a very young age had stopped me from developing my potential. She, on the other hand, had not married until she was in graduate school and had decided not to have children. The Women's Movement really had nothing to say to her. While she could see that I might need it, she hoped that I wouldn't get carried away.

I was confused by what Bea said. While I instinctively felt that she was wrong it certainly did look as if she had not been affected much by being a woman. She seemed to do what she wanted. Jack never complained about her working but I also knew that she supported them so that he could be a full time activist. She did do all the housework,

laundry, shopping and cooking, often of gourmet meals, as well but that seemed to be no problem for her. What she was not able to do was work on her dissertation which permanently sat on a table in the living room and gathered dust. Bea seemed perfectly happy with her life with Jack. Maybe I would feel as she did if I had had a career too but I didn't and I knew that I couldn't devote myself to any full time pursuit until the children were older. I didn't know why Bea had been different from all the women I had known in college. Few of them had any serious plans past graduation but all the men had something in mind. For most of the women I knew, marriage and children were their major goals in life. If they worked after college it was only until they found "Mr. Right."

Jack was also having some reaction to my interest in the Women's Liberation Movement. One night after we had finished eating a beautiful dinner that Bea and I had made, Jack followed me into the kitchen. I thought he was going to help clear the table and was pleased by his uncharacteristic helpfulness. He did have a plate in his hand but when he said that he wanted to talk to me for a minute I realized that he had no intention of carrying in any more dishes. He wanted to know, he said, why I was involved in the women's movement. When I told him I felt that women's roles seemed to be restrictive, he said he hoped that I would not become one of those women who had a chip on her shoulder. I wasn't quite sure what he meant but there was something about his attitude that seemed patronizing. While I assured Jack that I didn't expect my involvement in the women's movement to change my personality, I wondered to myself if my annoyance at the tone of his questions might

not be the first sign of an attitude that he would find distasteful. He seemed to be reassured by what I said and he went back to sit at the table and wait for coffee and dessert while Bea and I cleaned up.

When Pat came I experienced the relief of talking to someone who, though she might have been as inarticulate as I was about what was drawing us to a focus on women's issues, shared my interest. Many women our age, she told me, in Northampton and Amherst were meeting weekly to talk together about their lives as women. They were also working together to try to establish a Center where other women could come to talk, get information on women's resources in the Valley and elsewhere and generally find some support. She had a reading list that a group of women had compiled which I copied and promised myself I would work my way through when I had some time.

There was, however, very little time that summer. Shortly after school was over the meetings to redesign the freshman English course began. We all agreed that the course should be restructured to allow for at least two small discussion groups a week and that the large lecture should be limited as much as possible. Ellen and I had talked about building each semester around a theme. She suggested using the conflict between responsibility to one's own beliefs and duty to those in authority as the theme for the first semester. The other tutors agreed and we began to work on the syllabus.

As people began to suggest various readings I started to feel inadequate. Compared with my colleagues I realized that I was practically illiterate. I did, however, find that I functioned well as a meeting

facilitator. Bob Cosgrove had designated me chairman of the group and I discovered that I was well suited to keeping the meeting on track and settling the disagreements that arose over particular readings or guest speakers.

The design of the first semester went fairly well and we were anxious to begin our work on the second term but were unable to think of a theme that would allow for as many possibilities as our choice for the first semester had. I was very anxious to expand on the struggle against racism that we had introduced in the beginning of the first semester. I also thought it would also be interesting to do something on women. In the middle of the meeting the theme of stereotyping came to me. I immediately suggested it to the group and they all liked it. The stereotyping of students and Black people were obvious choices and we had ample material on both subjects. Ellen was anxious to include something about the clergy and how hard it was for the few men who wanted to break out the rigidity of the role of priest to relate to their parishioners as people. She suggested bringing in Father David Conner, the priest who had worked so hard to keep the white students from storming the Straight, for a guest lecture. Her idea was enthusiastically supported.

It seemed obvious to me that women had at least as many stereotypes to face as priests and I suggested at that point that the course include a week on women's roles. My colleagues, all of whom were women, balked. Stereotyping was not an issue for women, they informed me. The roles for the sexes were based on nature. Women gave birth to children and

therefore should stay home and take care of them. These arguments were presented by women whose children were, at that very moment, being cared for not by their mothers but by sitters. Only Ellen Peters agreed with me. We fought over the issue for days. I knew that I should give in. The majority should decide the content of the course but something in me refused to capitulate. What had begun as an interesting idea had been transformed into a crusade for the recognition that women had very specific problems in our society.

Finally I said that I could not allow a course that focused on stereotyping to omit women's issues. If the rest of the group did not want a discussion of women in the course they would have to find another theme. Since our time was coming to an end and people were exhausted by days of debate, my colleagues agreed that we would do a week on women's issues.

Although I had argued for the inclusion of women, I had no suggestions for readings for that section. The list that Pat had shared with me included only books and I had not read any of them. What we needed were a few short and concise articles and perhaps a lecture on the issue by a local woman. I took the responsibility for finding two articles and hoped that Pat would come back with more references. We sent the final version of the course to Bob Cosgrove and ended our work exhausted, a bit embattled but mostly anxious to teach what we had spent so much energy designing.

Working on the course had been a wonderful experience for me even though I learned that I was not well read. I had met daily with peers

and shared real work with them. I also found that I was good at running a meeting and that while I could mediate disputes, I could also stand firm for my own beliefs. And I emerged from the argument over the inclusion of women in the course as a firmly committed "women's liberationist."

Although Bea and I disagreed on the importance of Women's Liberation, teaching the course with her was just as gratifying as designing the freshman English course had been. I was surprised at how easy it was to equalize the student/teacher relationship. I followed Bea's lead and listened hard to what the students had to say and found that they had much to teach me.

Since the course was a tutorial to help the students with their work in the regular class, we had no control over the readings. The first assignment was Thoreau's Walden which I had never read. As I read it I was amazed that a book written so long ago could so easily speak to this generation of students. Jake and I knew students who had formed communes and were building their own homes in the country without electricity and running water. Although they lived communally, their attempt to "get back to nature" seemed so like Thoreau's retreat to Walden Pond. I was amazed, then, when all but one of the students in our class thought that Thoreau had been a fool to give up a good house in town to go and live in a shack.

Bea's response was not to tell them that they had missed the point of the book, as I might have done, but to encourage them to expand on their ideas. It became clear that for these students who did not have

Thoreau's financial security, the retreat to Walden made no sense.

Thoreau rejected what they were trying to obtain.

I was astounded at how much I had assumed about our students. I knew, of course, that they were poor but it had not occurred to me that their economic status might have an effect on their response to Walden. Our students' view of Thoreau's retreat had exposed my assumptions and made me begin to question how much my responses to the subsequent readings were a function of being middle class and white.

Because Bea and I had taken our students' perception of Thoreau seriously, they were able to listen to our understanding of the radical aspects of his philosophy and see him within his historical context. Although the students continued to be critical of the readings for the rest of the course, the class was well attended and the discussions highly animated.

The experience of the teacher of the regular class with our students was just the opposite. She told us that they cut class often and when they did come were usually quiet and sullen except for one young woman whose voice was so loud and whose bracelets made so much noise that she could hardly conduct the class when this student was present. While this student was, we agreed, loud she was the only one who had liked Walden and was willing to take on the whole class and defend her perception of Thoreau's work. All the students, we found, were much more willing to express their ideas than the other students at the College. I told her that I hoped that my class in the fall would be half as stimulating as this one was. She was, however, not convinced of

the potential of our students to make her class interesting and lively. As we left the meeting it seemed clear to me that she had no interest in finding out who our students were and was "freaked out" by a class that was filled with Blacks and Hispanics from New York City.

While I had no doubt that the woman was a racist, I thought about her response to our students from another standpoint. It was true that she was from the South and the daughter of a high ranking military officer and the color of our students was certainly a factor in her response. It seemed to me, however, that there was something besides color that elicited such a strong reaction in her, at least with respect to the young women who seemed to drive her crazy. Bea and I had often discussed the fact that our students were different from the white students at the College. They were loud and sometimes outspoken. We liked them for that but the other teacher wanted them to be like her-- prim and "proper." Race was definitely a factor in her response but I wondered if attitudes towards different kinds of behavior had not aggravated the situation. She might have been able to accept a class that was half Black and Hispanic if they had behaved just like her other students. Racism, I was beginning to realize, was very complex.

Just as our course was about to end I finally heard from Bob Cosgrove. He had basically accepted our syllabus but wanted to discuss it further when he got back to Ithaca. He had arranged for a meeting with those of us who had designed the course and the other tutors, all of whom had been hired during the summer. I wondered why he did not want to meet with us first but was excited that he had accepted the

restructuring of the course. I would now have my own discussion group and would meet with them twice a week. I was anxious, too, to hear what the new tutors would think of our work.

Ellen Peters and I went to the meeting together and listened as Bob Cosgrove began the meeting with a rather critical overview of the syllabus. He wasn't sure that the theme made sense and most of the readings did not seem appropriate to the English department. As if on cue one of the other tutors said he didn't know how he could teach the essays by James Baldwin that we had selected for the section on racism. I had read them just that week and was honestly unclear as to why anyone could not teach what seemed to me to be beautifully constructed and very clear prose. He responded that he knew nothing about the subjects the essays addressed and therefore felt inadequate teaching about them. Ellen said that Baldwin, like any good writer, had provided the necessary information within the piece. One of the other tutors agreed that it was also impossible for her to teach those essays. She had never lived in Harlem and was not a sociologist. I asked her if she felt comfortable teaching the George Orwell story we had assigned for the same week and she immediately replied that she would have no problems with Marrackech. That surprised me, I said, since I assumed she had never been to Morocco, the setting of the story. Harlem, it seemed to me, was a lot closer to our experience than Morocco. The tension in the room was mounting and I seemed to be the one on the spot. The other tutors who had designed the course had become very quiet.

I was becoming so angry that I had begun to shake although I didn't really understand what was happening. I told myself that we had to be open to criticism on the syllabus. We not only liked it but it had been our baby. We couldn't expect the people who had not been involved in the design to accept it without question. But there was something about the criticisms of Baldwin that made me furious and when one woman shouted that Orwell was a real writer and that Baldwin was a sociologist, I knew why I was shaking with rage. Baldwin was Black and wrote about Blacks. He was, therefore, not a real writer. Just as our students had not acted the way the teacher had wanted them to be, and were hopeless, this woman thought that Baldwin was not a writer because he wrote out of his own concerns and experiences. Before I knew what I was saying, I shouted back, "that's a racist comment."

A deathly silence descended on the room broken only by a few gasps. My colleague had denied James Baldwin's skill as a writer because he was Black and chose to write out of his own experience. That was acceptable but to name what she had done went far beyond the limits of convention. Bob Cosgrove broke the silence by asking me to apologize. I refused saying that James Baldwin was a writer not a sociologist. If my colleague would only read the essays we had chosen she could see that they not only fit the theme of the course beautifully but were very well crafted. We had presented them as literature not sociology.

What I really wanted to do was scream that the attitudes we had encountered in that room were exactly what we had wanted to confront with the course but I knew I had already gone too far. I was silent

while I listened to more complaints about the section on women. I had hoped to use the meetings for the tutors that we had built into the design of the course to help me with my teaching. While my confidence had been bolstered by my experience that summer, I was scared of teaching the class by myself. It was clear to me that I would get no help from any meetings with this group. I wondered, too, why the other women who had designed the syllabus had been so quiet. Did they agree that Baldwin was not a real writer?

When the meeting was finally over I was gratified that no changes had been made, although a group of the new tutors said they were willing to work with Dr. Cosgrove to see about altering the latter part of the first semester and working on changing the second semester. As I gathered my things I was astounded to see that Ellen had gone to the front of the room to speak to Bob Cosgrove. It seemed clear to me that he had sabotaged our whole effort. He had not met with us before the large meeting with the new tutors to go over his concerns about the syllabus and had invited criticism by his very negative overview. I felt betrayed by him and now by Ellen as I watched them engage in what looked like a very pleasant conversation. Maybe I was unfit for any conventional interchange.

Since Ellen had driven me to the meeting and no one else came near me, I had to wait for her to give me a ride home. We walked to her car in silence. I was fuming, but decided not to say anything until she did. When we got to my house she apologized for not speaking up in the meeting. Confrontation was very hard for her, she said. I was glad

that she had acknowledged the fact that she had left me out on a limb by myself and assured her that what I had had to do at that meeting had not been easy for me. I asked her what she thought of Cosgrove's handling of the syllabus. She agreed that he had wanted all the criticism he could get from the other tutors and had wondered if he had met with them before the large meeting. She had gone to speak to him for the same reason she had not been able to speak up in the meeting. She couldn't stand conflict. I wondered if her problems stemmed from being a Catholic or a woman but was too exhausted to deal with either. I got out of the car and said I would call her and we could talk about it some more the next day.

We never did have that conversation. I was not willing to open myself up to any criticism from her about my behavior at the meeting. I was beginning to feel like I had when I was the screamer in my family. I promised myself that I would try to control myself at any future meetings and devoted my energy to preparing for my first class.

The first assignment was "The White Race and Its Heroes," from Eldridge Cleaver's Soul on Ice. I talked with Bea about the essay and we agreed that it was very important to present Cleaver within the context of the various strands of Black political thought. The white students at the College seemed to see all Black thinkers as the same. I assumed the class would be all white since except for two or three students, all the Black and Hispanic students at the College came there under the auspices of EOP and they had, I thought, all participated in the summer program.

I walked into the room and was amazed to see a Black woman dressed in African clothes sitting in the front row. I took attendance and found that her name was Brenda Verner. I proceeded to describe the political perspectives of contemporary Black leaders. When I was through, Brenda raised her hand and when I acknowledged her said, "Let me tell you about Brother Malcolm, Brother King and Brother Carmichael." She turned towards the class and gave a lecture on racism and the Civil Rights Movement. Despite the differences among Black leaders, she said, all of them were fighting the same evil. The attention of the entire class, including me, was riveted on her. When she was finished I asked her some questions and then the students joined in. The discussion lasted past the hour and as the next class came into the room a small crowd of students were still clustered around Brenda.

Over the next few weeks Brenda's participation in class was less dramatic but the other students were no less attentive to her comments. I had believed that teachers could learn from their students but as I listened to Brenda's highly sophisticated comments which seemed to be based on extensive political experience, I wondered what she could learn from me. After she handed in her first paper, I decided that it was foolish to demand that she attend this freshman English class. The paper was beautifully written. My limited writing skills could not be helpful to someone at her level. When I returned her paper I told her that I thought the class would be a waste of time for her since she already had more than adequate writing skills. I would expect her to do all the readings and to do all the assignments but that I could not, in

good conscience, require her to come to class. I did say that if she wanted to attend I would appreciate her participation since her comments had sparked so much meaningful discussion. She seemed surprised but said she would think about attending class. At the next meeting of the class, I was delighted to see Brenda sitting in her familiar seat in the first row.

We sometimes talked after class and towards the middle of the semester I asked her if she'd like to come to my house for coffee. She said that would be all right and we made a date for the next day. After a very stiff initial conversation, Brenda and I slowly became friends. She had, she told me, not spoken to white people unless it was absolutely necessary for a very long time. After dropping out of college she had worked at various jobs and for the last few years had also been part of a Black Nationalist organization in Chicago where she was born and raised. Being at a predominantly white college was very hard on her and living in the dorm and encountering the blatant racism of the students there was almost intolerable.

I wondered how she had chosen Ithaca College. Her response amazed me. She had been having problems with the attitude of the men in the Afro Arts Center towards the role of women. They believed that women's primary duty was to support men and bolstered their position with the argument that women's subordination was going back to an African tradition. Her decision to leave Chicago came on the evening of the opening performance of a pageant produced by the Center. Brenda had been responsible for the design and production of the many and elaborate

costumes for the pageant. The afternoon before the performance, she said, some of the "brothers" had told her to remain backstage before and after the pageant. They said they were concerned that she would detract attention from the "brothers" who had worked on the production. Not being the quiet, retiring type, Brenda not only refused to do what they asked but decided to leave the Center and Chicago.

She had heard about the new Black Studies Program that had been instituted at Cornell after the occupation of the Straight and called James Turner, the director, to ask if it was possible to enter that fall. She had known Turner from political work in Chicago. He told her that there were no openings for that fall but there was a program at Ithaca College that he knew of that could help her financially and if she were a student at Ithaca College she could take courses at Cornell. Ithaca College did have one opening in the EOP. She decided to apply and was accepted. It was, however, too late for the summer orientation program which was why she had not been in the class that Bea and I taught.

While Brenda's belief in women's equality was stronger than mine, there was much about the fledgling women's movement that she did not understand. The women she had known when she was a child had always worked whether or not they were married. Most of her friends, too, worked. Why was the women's movement so anxious to get women into the workplace. The women she knew hoped to have the opportunity to stay home and take care of their children. Her own mother had never had that luxury. She had worked in a factory when Brenda was a child and now

worked at the post office. My experience had been very different, I told her. The only woman in the family who worked was my aunt and it seemed to me that there was some shame associated with the fact that the family was dependent on her income to make ends meet. We discussed the possibility that there might be some substantial differences between the experience of Black and white women.

As we became closer, Brenda talked more about the racism she had experienced growing up in Chicago. She also talked about her family. I was struck by the differences between her extended family and mine. In Brenda's family most of the women worked and many had raised children without the help of their husbands. I was also intrigued by the practice of relatives taking over the care of a child if they deemed the mother was not providing a proper home. Brenda's own "sister" Elaine was actually a cousin but had been raised by Brenda's mother from the time she was nine years old. I was also amazed by the intensity of the emotional exchanges among the members of the extended family. I had never seen in my family what seemed commonplace in Brenda's--arguments, fights of all kinds as well as expressions of love. I began to wonder if we didn't live in different countries.

But there was also much in her description of growing up in Chicago that made me nostalgic for my old neighborhood. I was able to share some things with Brenda that had not seemed appropriate to my conversations with Bea. Although Bea and I had talked about our childhoods and teenage years, her fondest memory was the day when she got her library card. Her mother had prepared her for the great day for as long as she

could remember and when Bea learned to read she took her to the library. There was a library in my neighborhood but my mother never took me there and my friends and I only visited once to see what it was like. Brenda and I, on the other hand, reminisced over dates, clothes and learning to dance. We listened to records that Brenda had brought with her from Chicago--Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder and someone I had never heard of, James Cleveland. I knew Aretha and Stevie Wonder but had not listened to them much. I had given up that kind of music for the more politically correct Beatles, Judy Collins and Bob Dylan. As we listened to Brenda's records, particularly James Cleveland who was a gospel singer, I felt that I had come back to the kind of music I had loved when I was younger. Although I had not heard much gospel before, the feelings and rhythm of the music reminded me of the Latin music and jazz that I had not heard for years and only then realized how much I had missed. When Brenda went home for Christmas she promised that she would bring me some gospel records.

She also talked about the racism she had encountered in the school she attended where the teachers were all white and the students all Black. I thought about my school years in the City. Although my teachers and I were the same race, I felt strangely out of place. Perhaps it was because I had not spoken English until I went to school. When I thought about my high school years in Ridgewood, however, Brenda's descriptions of the assumptions the teachers had made about the Black students' lack of aspirations for a higher education and generally low intellectual ability struck a familiar chord. It felt good to share the

pain I had experienced in Ridgewood with Brenda. She seemed to understand it in ways that no one else had.

We also frequently discussed politics and the Civil Rights Movement. I was often struck that Brenda's analysis, based on extensive political experience as well as reading, was so clear. Similar discussions with Jake or Bea and Jack spun out elaborate conspiracies of the ruling class, while Brenda focused mainly on racism.

I hoped that when the spring semester began there would be more opportunity for Brenda and Bea to get to know each other. They were both so important to me that I wanted them to like each other. The few times they had met, however, had not been very promising. When I first became friendly with Brenda, I told Bea that I would like them to meet each other. She suggested that we come to her house for coffee some afternoon. Brenda seemed reluctant to go but when I told her I was sure that she and Bea would like each other, she finally agreed. When we got to Bea's apartment Brenda was unusually quiet and Bea's normally effusive manner, which put most of the people I knew at ease, seemed to make Brenda even more withdrawn. The afternoon had been very tense and I had hoped that Brenda's reaction had only been her usual reluctance to be open with white people. After they had been together a few more times and the tension eased only slightly, I began to have doubts that they would ever get to know one another. I was also dismayed when Bea began to tell me that Brenda was not a very serious person. She complained that she did not seem interested in talking about racism or any kind of politics. It seemed to me that since Brenda had to live with racism on

a daily basis, I could understand it if she didn't feel the need to discuss it constantly. Bea was, however, not convinced. She seemed to have a particular idea of what Brenda should be like and the real woman clearly fell short.

I knew that Bea had heard about Brenda. Her frequent mini lectures in the classes she took had caused quite a stir at the small college. Brenda was almost like a celebrity. Whenever I saw her on campus she was surrounded by a cluster of white students who seemed to follow her from class to class. Bea, I thought, saw only the Brenda Verner whom people talked about. In time, I was sure, she would be able to see the person behind the image. I would make sure that they saw more of each other when Brenda came back from the Christmas break.

C H A P T E R X V

While I needed to prepare for the second semester of the class over January, I had also promised myself that I would continue the reading I had begun that Fall. When Pat came through Ithaca on her way back from California she had much to share about the Women's Movement on the West Coast. She had gathered more lists of readings including a few articles that I thought might be useful for the course. She had begun to read the Children of Violence series, a five volume work by Doris Lessing, a white African woman. Pat had been very moved by what she had read and highly recommended it to me.

I had begun Martha Quest, the first book in the series, and had been overwhelmed by how much of what Lessing wrote seemed to describe my life, although the setting was Africa and the heroine came to adulthood between the wars. I had found it hard to put Martha Quest down and had often read long into the night. The second in the series, A Proper Marriage, was even more gripping. Lessing's books seemed to clearly articulate what had been inchoate in my own thinking. The roles for women not only prevented us from participating in certain activities but, more importantly, became so much a part of our psyches that once we were socialized we did not think beyond the parameters they defined. In my case, no one had told me directly that I could not have a career but by the time I was a sophomore in high school, I had accepted the idea that women should not be as capable as men. I consciously decided not to be a "brain" and directed most of my energies to what would attract

boys. From that point on I assumed that I would be taken care of by someone more capable than myself--a man of course. Doris Lessing made all of this painfully clear through her description of the life of her young heroine, Martha Quest.

As I began to read A Proper Marriage I was glad that the series had five volumes, for Martha Quest had become a very important friend of mine. She shared my deepest concerns. Like me, she had married young and shortly after the wedding suspected that she was pregnant. Her reaction to the possibility that she was carrying a child was as "a web that was tight around her" (Lessing, 1952, 99). Before going to the doctor to confirm her suspicion she, too, had tried to induce an abortion by scalding herself in a hot bath. I wondered where we had both gotten the idea that hot water would force out the fetus.

As I read on the continuing similarities in our feelings and experiences astounded me. She received the news that she was, indeed, pregnant with dismay. Her doctor had also assured her that she would soon feel differently. Many young women, he told her, were initially upset by an unplanned baby but had come to be delighted with the prospect of being a mother within a very short period of time. Though Martha Quest did eventually look forward to the birth of her baby, like me, she was more anxious to be finished with being pregnant than she was joyfully anticipating motherhood.

It seemed as if Doris Lessing, through Martha Quest, was speaking directly to me across a generation and a continent. I was not the only

woman who had not wanted a baby. There were others who had tried to self-abort with methods as foolish as mine.

I eagerly read on. This time neither crying children nor a dinner waiting to be made stopped the reading that had become almost a compulsion. Martha Quest's delivery of her baby had also been hard. She had also felt that she and her husband were in different worlds, although her feelings came after the birth of the baby and mine when we reached the hospital when Leah was about to be born. The details didn't matter. What was important was that another woman had had feelings that were identical to mine.

The congruence of experience and feelings with one other woman, a fictional one at that, was very powerful. I began to rethink the years since I learned that I was pregnant with Neal. I was not a monster for not wanting a baby. It was not unnatural for feeling, once he was born, that my life had become an unending drudgery that was driving me crazy. It was understandable to feel that caring for an infant could be maddening. It was hard. I was not alone in resenting the child who had changed my life so dramatically. It was all right not to want a baby even after it was born. It occurred to me that what I was experiencing with this book was what Pat and the women in Massachusetts got from their support groups. But I did not envy Pat and her group. I had Doris Lessing and Martha Quest. I needed nothing more.

For the next few weeks my life centered on Martha Quest. After I finished A Proper Marriage, I went on to The Golden Notebook. Although it was not the next volume of the Children of Violence series, Pat had

told me that it was the book Lessing had written after A Proper Marriage. I opened the pages of The Golden Notebook anticipating another long conversation with Martha and myself. In this book the main character was Anna Wulf but it didn't seem to matter. Whether I was actually reading the book or not, Anna/Martha had become a constant companion. I was so engrossed with her that for the first time in many years Jake got angry with me. I was halfway through The Golden Notebook when I heard him shouting that I lived with him, not Martha Quest. I looked up, startled as he grabbed the book out of my hands. I realized then that he had been trying to talk to me but I had not responded. I also realized that I didn't care how he felt. I only wanted the book back. He stormed out of the room and as I picked up The Golden Notebook from the corner of the floor where he had flung it, I heard the front door slam. He had left the house. I was glad. Now I could read without being disturbed. For a change, I was the one who was preoccupied.

Anna Wulf had done the unthinkable. She had left not only her husband but her child as well and had moved to England alone. Lessing's description of Anna's feelings and the events that led to her departure made the act seem totally understandable. Anna was not a monstrous, unnatural creature but a woman who was unable to cope with the extreme difficulties of being a wife and a mother. While I had never seriously considered leaving Jake and the children, reading about Anna Wulf's decision to leave her family made me feel less guilty about the times when I did feel like running away from them.

My guilt was also assuaged by Lessing's description of Anna's marriage and the relationships she formed with men in England. Perhaps, I thought, as I read about Anna's continual attempts and failures to develop emotional intimacy with the men in her life, the limitations of my marriage were not entirely my fault. Like Jake, Anna's husband and lovers had seemed preoccupied with more important things than relating to her. The emotional intimacy that had been so elusive with men seemed, on the other hand, to come as a matter of course with Anna's friend Molly. Although they often argued, or I thought perhaps because they were able to honestly share their feelings, the two women developed a deep relationship that was loving and supportive. Though their intimacy did not include sexuality, it seemed at times that it was the relationship between Molly and Anna was at the core of their lives rather than the difficult and emotionally limited relationships they both had with men. I realized that the emotional quality of my friendships with my women friends was often like what Molly and Anna shared.

When I finished the book Martha stayed with me, although the semester had begun and I could not begin the next novel in the series. Even if I had had time I wondered if I would be able to read any more. The three novels I had already read had had such a powerful emotional impact that I felt I would probably be unable to take any more in. I seemed to be functioning well enough. My class was going well and Jake and I resumed giving and going to dinner parties when the semester began again. I slowly realized that something had changed in me over the last month. I was deeply sad--not depressed but sad. I felt as if I was in

a kind of mourning--a grief for the self I had given up so long ago. Reading Doris Lessing had opened me up to the pain that I had put away when I was pregnant with Neal. I was grieving for the part of me that had died when I accepted the role that society had determined was proper for females. Becoming a mother had only culminated a long process of giving up my self.

Jake and the children became symbolic of the self I had lost. I knew that it wasn't their fault that I had accepted my role. I knew that it had begun long before I knew Jake. He had been more supportive of my interests than most men I knew of their wives' development. He had certainly been as understanding as a man could be of my growing interest in the Women's Movement. It was ridiculous to blame the children. They had not asked to be born. Although my rational self knew all of this I could not stop myself from physically recoiling when Jake or the children came near me. I felt sorry for them but for months, physical contact with my husband and children was agony for me.

Doris Lessing, through Martha/Anna, had pushed me over the edge. When I came out of my mourning some months after finishing The Golden Notebook, I was fully committed to working to change my life and the world. Women, I realized, were not free to develop ourselves. To keep one's "proper place" as a woman was to destroy ourselves as human beings. I was convinced, too, that any real change in my life and the world could come only through the cooperative efforts of women with each other. Doris Lessing had already changed my life and it was perfectly clear to me that those books could not have been written by a man. Just

as white people could never really know what it was like to be Black, men could only have an outsider's perception of the experience of being a woman. Doris Lessing had opened the door and I was going to find myself and try to change the world so that other women would not have to choose between committing a kind of suicide and being an outcast. I would dedicate myself to making the world a better place for myself and other women.

C H A P T E R X V I

My new commitment to women's issues felt like a call to the barricades but the action I was able to take seemed very modest. I worked with the Ithaca College Women's Liberation Front to organize a rally. The other members of the group encouraged me to speak and although I was unsure about my ability to address a large crowd, I agreed. The rally was a great success and once I got over the initial shock of feeling my voice detach from my throat as it went through the microphone, I found that I was exhilarated by speaking to so many people about women's issues. The much disputed women's section of the freshman English course came after the rally and I not only arranged for an outside speaker but organized a panel of a few of us from the Women's Liberation Front. The outside speaker was Shelia Tobias, a woman who worked at Cornell in the administration. I had heard that she was a women's liberationist and a good speaker as well. I was not disappointed. Her lecture, the first I had ever heard on women's issues, excited me more than I had expected. She was articulate, intelligent and addressed the issues that had become so powerful in my life. I hoped to take more substantive action but it was unclear as to what to do next. The semester was coming to an end and we agreed to wait until the new term to discuss the direction the Women's Liberation Front would take.

The changes in my life with Jake also seemed mild in comparison to what I considered to be a major breakthrough in my consciousness as a woman. We discussed housework. I didn't want any help with the cooking

as I enjoyed creating meals, and despite my new consciousness I thought it would be too much to ask Jake to clean up after dinner. Cleaning the house, however, was another matter altogether. I hated being responsible for everyone else's mess and as long as I could remember, a day of housework had left me depressed. As soon as the despised tasks were over, it seemed, it would only be a matter of hours before most of the rooms needed straightening again. I wanted help from Jake and as I talked about the frustration of a job that had no end, I began to cry. I was embarrassed by my tears. Housework seemed too insignificant, but I guessed that I resented cleaning more than I even knew. Jake was very understanding. If it meant that much to me, he said, he would certainly help.

Despite his compassion, Jake never took it upon himself to see what needed to be done and do it. I also did not notice that he was any more likely to pick up his books and papers or even his laundry than he had been before our conversation. I knew that my feelings about housework were intense, but I also thought it was petty to make an issue over cleaning. It didn't seem worth the trouble to continually remind Jake to dust or vacuum. I either did it myself or let the dust and dirt collect.

While the distribution of work around the house had not changed much, I was much more vocal about my ideas with Jake as well as with our friends. Conversations which included negative comments about "women's lib" or jokes about women ceased to be light social interaction. No one could make a derogatory comment about women or our movement in my

presence without a fight from me. I also tried to raise women's issues in all the contacts I had with people and was, therefore, usually arguing with most of the people I knew. I guessed that I had become what Jack Goldman had feared, "a woman with a chip on her shoulder." I felt that I was at war and if Jack and my other friends didn't like it, that was too bad.

I sensed that Bea thought I had gone too far and in a sense she was right. The reality of the oppression of women was firmly in my consciousness and I saw evidence of it everywhere. There was no turning back. I was becoming very angry, mostly at men. It seemed to me that they benefited from a system which oppressed women and they refused to even acknowledge that the oppression existed. Bea never brought up women's issues and when I did she usually changed the subject.

Our relationship was also affected by Brenda. My attempts to provide an opportunity for them to get to know each other had been a disaster. Bea continued to complain about Brenda's lack of commitment to politics while Brenda and I became closer. Unwilling to accept the possibility that two people I liked might not like each other, I kept trying to get them together. I decided that perhaps if we all ate together everyone might feel more relaxed. I planned a dinner party and asked Brenda if she would come and bring Ray, the young man she had begun to see regularly. She agreed and asked if she could invite Tex, a friend of hers and Ray's. I thought it would be fine for Tex to join us and was also delighted when Bea, Jack and Gary Esolen, a friend who worked at Dateline also accepted my invitation.

Bea, Jack and Gary came at the appointed hour and the men quickly got into one of their political conversations which always bored me no matter how hard I tried to concentrate on the intricacies of what they were saying. I had known that Brenda would be late. I had learned early in our relationship never to expect her to arrive on time. I had actually told her to come earlier than I had planned dinner, hoping that she would arrive close to the dinner hour. When Brenda, Ray and Tex arrived, Brenda announced that she was starved. I laughed and told her that the appetizers would be ready in a few minutes and were not burned only because I had learned to deal with her time.

When I brought out the Chinese style barbequed spareribs and shrimp toast, the previously stilted conversation turned to food. Everyone seemed to be talking at once about how good everything was. I was beginning to have hopes that the evening would prove to be a success. When we moved into the dining room, however, I watched as people slowly began to talk to the people they knew best. Jack, Gary and Jake were discussing a new United States tariff on textiles and its ramifications on Japan's relationship with China. Brenda, Tex and Ray were talking about their days in junior high school. Bea was quiet and I was watching the scene. Everyone seemed fairly comfortable but the table was clearly divided. I finally focused in on Brenda's conversation which was far more fun than tariffs. After coffee and dessert Brenda asked if anyone wanted to play cards. Ray and Tex said that a game of bid whist sounded good. When no one else expressed interest in playing, Brenda asked me for cards and they went into the kitchen.

The living room was silent and tense while whoops of laughter came from the kitchen. It was unusual, at the least, to have a dinner party split into two groups but it didn't really upset me. I was often bored by the conversations at dinner parties and thought it might make sense to play cards instead of endlessly talking about the progress of the war and the movement against it. As I listened to Brenda and Ray yell at each other over a play one of them I had made, I wished that I had gone into the kitchen. Bea, Jack and Gary left shortly after the card game began. Brenda, Ray and Tex finished their game and stayed until I was finished cleaning up then they thanked me for the wonderful food and left.

The next morning Bea called to say that she was very upset. Brenda, she said, was running my life. She had been able to see that very clearly when Brenda came into the house and ordered me to get the food. I was surprised by Bea's reaction to what I had taken as the ease with which good friends relate to each other. Bea was bothered by more than Brenda's domination of my life. She and Jack had, she told me, repeatedly tried to engage Brenda, Ray and Tex in serious conversation but they had seemed to only want to be frivolous. I wondered what was wrong with having some fun on an evening out but didn't have a chance to ask Bea as she went on to say that the final straw had come when they decided to play cards. It had been, she thought, so rude that it had taken her breath away.

I was becoming very angry listening to Bea criticize my friend so severely. It seemed to me that if Brenda had been white Bea would never

have been so harsh. She knew that Brenda and I were close friends but that didn't seem to matter to her. What upset me even more was her assumption that people who did not act the way she and her friends did at dinner parties dominated and were rude. Bea seemed to think that seriousness was defined by talking about politics. I told her that Brenda had been and was very active politically. I asked Bea if she knew that Brenda had been seriously hurt when she marched in Cicero, Illinois for open housing. I also reminded Bea that Brenda was responsible for the formation of the Afro-American Society at Ithaca College and that both Ray and Tex were members of the Black Liberation Front at Cornell. I said that I was glad that Brenda felt comfortable enough in my house to do what she wanted rather than having to follow our social conventions. It didn't seem to me that it was intrinsically better to have a political discussion than it was to play cards. It was merely what we did. In fact, it seemed to me that the people in the kitchen were having much more fun than we were. I didn't bring that point up because I knew that what was fun was irrelevant, might even be considered to be frivolous.

When the conversation was finally over, I hung up the phone and sat at the table stunned. Did Bea really think there was only one proper way to relate to people? Did we always have to be so serious? Did Brenda dominate me? I knew she was a powerful personality but I enjoyed myself with her. When Jake came into the kitchen I told him what had happened. He, too, had thought the evening had gone fairly well. No one had stopped him from doing what he usually did at dinner parties.

I decided to call Brenda to ask her what she thought. When she heard my voice she said she was glad I had called because she was about to call me to find out if there were any leftovers from the dinner. It was getting to be lunchtime and she could not bear dorm food after eating at my house the previous evening. I told her to come over. There was lots to eat and I had something I needed to talk to her about. When we had finished lunch I asked her what she had thought about the dinner party. She said it was nice. The food had been great. Ray and Tex had told her they had felt welcomed and she felt very much at home in my house.

When she wanted to know why I had asked, I told her some of what Bea had said. Brenda was unusually silent. After a few minutes she said she would tell me how she really felt about Bea Goldman if I wanted to know. I assured her that I was anxious to hear her impressions and she told me that she considered Bea to be one of the most patronizing white people she had encountered. She had reacted to Bea that first day we had gone to her house for coffee. As I heard Brenda say that she had not said anything to me earlier because she knew that Bea was a good friend of mine, I wondered who was rude--Brenda or Bea. Since I had seen for myself some of Bea's problems, Brenda felt that she could share her feelings with me. Bea, she said, would only relate to her if she discussed racial issues and because of that Brenda had never responded to her attempts at "serious" conversation.

I had learned a very important lesson from my infamous dinner party and its aftermath. Bea's refusal to accept any behavior but what she

deemed appropriate showed me how subtle racism could be. While she berated the teacher of the freshman English class the previous summer for not being able to recognize that the EOP students' behavior was part of a different cultural orientation, she expected Brenda and her friends to behave like white academics. Any behavior outside those parameters was seen as an attempt to take over. Non-conformism to her acceptable standards was inappropriate and insulting. The dinner party did not end my friendship with Bea but it did put it under a severe strain. I was upset with Bea's attitudes and she was, I am sure, disturbed that I continued to be "dominated" by my good friend Brenda.

Despite all of my problems with Bea I tried very hard to be a good friend to her when the English department informed her that she would not be rehired. The news was devastating. She had worked very hard at her job and loved teaching. It seemed clear to Jake and me, as well as to most of the liberal faculty at the College, that Bea's dismissal was for political reasons. She and Jack were well known in Ithaca as radicals and it was also well known that Bea brought her politics into the classroom. As soon as the decision became public a large committee of faculty and students formed to fight it. Bea had agreed to wage the battle not only because she loved teaching but because she felt obligated to fight a department that had, by this action and others, so clearly aligned itself with the status quo. When the department heard that she was going to challenge their decision all of the men literally stopped talking to her. The one other woman was pleasant to her but

told Bea that she could not jeopardize her own position as she did not yet have tenure.

The strain of working under such conditions and the enormous emotional energy that the fight required was taking its toll on Bea and I wanted to give her all the support I could. Jack, it seemed to me, wasn't being the saint that Bea thought he was. While she never complained about him, I felt that he was somehow removed from Bea's struggle. He was usually out at night and seemed strangely preoccupied when we discussed her case. Within a few weeks I learned that my feelings about Jack were well grounded. While Bea was fighting for her job, he had begun an affair with one of her former students.

I felt that as Bea's friend, I needed to do something. I wondered if she knew about Leslie. Did she really believe he was at the Dateline office every night? Jake and I discussed the situation at length and decided that we shouldn't say anything to Bea unless she gave us an opening. We did feel that someone should speak to Jack. Since it seemed that Jack was closer to Gary than anyone else we knew, Jake decided to talk to him about what was happening. Gary, Jake said, had already spoken to Jack who merely said he was in love.

It seemed at once heartless to talk to Bea about Jack's affair and cruel not to. One day we were driving from the College to the Oriental Shop to get some wonton skins when we saw Jack walking with Leslie. I looked at Bea and knew immediately that she either had suspected that Jack was having an affair and seeing them together had confirmed her suspicions or that she had known and was upset by seeing them together.

There seemed to be nothing to say. When we got back to my house I asked her if she wanted to talk about it. She didn't. We sat in silence for awhile. Bea was obviously miserable but was unable to share her feelings. I felt absolutely helpless. What I really wanted to do was to go and beat up Jack. The least he could do, I thought, was to be more discrete.

As the end of the semester approached I worried about the tutorial for EOP students that Bea and I had agreed to teach. We were getting along rather well. It had been important for me to be there for Bea when she needed me and I had learned to keep my relationship with her separate from my friendship with Brenda. That summer, however, we were all going to be teaching the tutorial together. While the Afro-American Society had not stated that they had any problems with us teaching the class, they felt that the students would feel more comfortable if a Black person were a member of the teaching team. They recommended Brenda. The recommendation had come before the dinner party but even then I knew that Bea would be reluctant to teach with Brenda. I also knew that she was unwilling to raise objections to the suggestion from the Afro-American Society. We informed the Society that we would be happy to have Brenda teaching with us.

While I was nervous about the summer tutorial, I looked forward to the fall when I would be teaching the freshman English course again. I was generally pleased with how it had gone but was anxious to make some changes. In the spring of 1980 there was still not very much material available on women's issues but I had read whatever I could find and

wanted to expand the section on women. I hoped that we could use Martha Quest, or at least a section from the novel that had had such a profound effect on my life. I wondered what it would be like to teach Doris Lessing.

I soon found, however, that I was not going to have the opportunity to teach anything that fall. Bob Cosgrove called me late that spring to say that the department had decided that my services would no longer be needed. I was truly stunned by the news. I knew that he was angry with me for suggesting that the course should be redesigned and for my refusal to agree that the material we had selected was inappropriate to a course in the English department. But I thought I had done my job well. My students' writing had improved and the discussions in class were generally lively. When I asked him why I was being fired, Cosgrove explained that I was not being fired. The position I had was being terminated. The course had been reorganized and I was not qualified for the new positions created. I said that I had not known that the course had been redesigned and as far as I knew none of the other tutors knew anything about such a plan either. He replied that it had been done by the department who felt that input from the tutors was not necessary. I was furious. I shouted that the whole thing sounded like a way to fire me without actually doing it. He hung up in the middle of my tirade.

I called Ellen Peters immediately to tell her what had happened. She was as shocked as I was and also had no knowledge of any plans to redesign the course. She said that she was going to call a meeting of all the tutors to inform them that I had been fired. All of the women

anxious to come to the meeting. The one male tutor said that he didn't want the job the next fall and had no interest in what the department had done.

My relationship with the other tutors, which had had such a stormy beginning, had developed quite well. While we rarely met as a group, and when we did it was to listen to directives from Bob Cosgrove, we did see each other from time to time. We had demanded office space so that we could meet with our students and the department had allocated a tiny office for our use that was carved out of a hallway. We got to know each other by literally bumping into each other regularly. I was even on rather cordial terms with the woman I had called a racist at that first meeting in the fall.

By the time we met the next week, they had all been informed by the department that the course had been redesigned and were assured that they would be hired for the new positions which carried the title of instructor but kept the same pay rate that we had as tutors. They were all outraged not only that the department had changed the course without our input but that I had been fired. They decided to draft a letter of protest and urged me to write to Bob Cosgrove asking him for a formal letter of termination and reasons why I was not qualified to apply for the new position. They seemed unwilling to accept the department's decision about me and I was delighted.

Toward the end of the meeting Ellen said that she would be unable to apply for the job. She said she could never live with herself if she took a job that had been denied to me when I was equally well qualified.

I was very touched. Ellen had five young children and I knew that her salary was absolutely crucial to the family's income. Other women responded that they would also have problems applying for the job for similar reasons. As they discussed their feelings someone said that she thought we were overlooking the power that we had. The semester was not over and if we all resigned, the department would have to deal with final grades for the entire freshman class. We could demand that I be assured a position in the program for the next year. They decided to meet again to discuss the mass resignation in detail.

I left the meeting moved by the support of my colleagues. While a few of the women worked to fulfill themselves, many, like Ellen, needed the money. For some the income from this job provided the major support for themselves and their graduate student husbands. Before the next meeting I decided I would make a little speech telling them that I appreciated their support but that I would understand if they felt that they needed to keep their jobs.

I was late for the next meeting and when I arrived everyone was excitedly discussing the resignation letter that Ellen had drafted. I told them how I felt and suggested that I leave to allow them to have a free discussion. Ellen told me to sit down and get to work on the letter. One of the other women said that she had thought very hard about her decision to resign. She knew that if she did she would probably not be able to get this job in the fall and that she did enjoy teaching. But she had decided that if Cosgrove felt he could arbitrarily fire me, he could do it to her and she wanted to protest.

Ellen had written a beautiful draft. It praised my work as a teacher and a colleague and stated that the undersigned refused any further connection with the freshman English course unless I was promised a position in the new program. When we had put the finishing touches on the letter Eloise Blanpied said she was having second thoughts about our strategy and that she agreed with me that the group could have a more open discussion if I were not present.

While I had suggested that I leave the meeting, now that everyone had agreed to take action against the department I was not so willing to give it up, especially since I knew that Eloise's reservations were not based on financial need. She was a middleclass housewife whom I had met the previous year through my work with Dateline. She and her husband, a Cornell professor, had three children and when they were all in school she volunteered with various organizations. She had told me that she was considering looking for a job since she had never had one and thought it might be good for her to try working. I knew that Cosgrove was looking for one more tutor and told her about the opening. She applied, used me for a reference and got the job. Now she was threatening the unity of the group. We had decided that it was acceptable if one of the tutors, the male who had not come to the meeting and was even less interested when we informed him of our plans, did not join the protest but our success depended on everyone else's resignation. I rose to leave, over the protests of most of the other women. I was angry. I did not feel that I could stay. I was afraid that I would lash out at Eloise who I felt had betrayed me.

About an hour after I got home Ellen called to say that Eloise had refused to resign. Everyone was really upset with her but no one could convince her to change her mind. Since we didn't have a solid front other people began to question whether resigning would have any impact. It was finally decided that the original letter of protest would be sent to Cosgrove with a copy to the department chair. It would not include any resignations. Those who wanted to resign could do it individually. Eloise had declined to sign the letter, for personal reasons she said.

The letter was sent. No reply came. I received my official letter of termination and included in the reasons why I could not be considered for the position of instructor was a reference to my calling a colleague a racist. There was nothing more to do. Ellen Peters did finish out the semester but refused to apply for the new position even when Cosgrove called her to assure her that she would be hired. We bitterly wondered how the department changed the course we had worked so hard to create and had had only one try at teaching.

I realized that for the first time in four years I would not have a job and I did not look forward to the prospect of staying home full time. Once the tutorial for EOP students began, however, I did not think much about the fall. I was almost completely preoccupied with trying to keep the tension between Brenda and Bea to a minimum. The situation was further exacerbated by something that Bea told me just before the class began. She was pregnant. I asked her what she was going to do. I assumed that she would have an abortion which, though still illegal in the U.S., was possible to get in England and Canada. Bea

surprised me by saying that she was delighted. I was shocked. As long as I had known Bea she had been absolutely adamant that she did not want children. She didn't like them, she said, and made that perfectly clear when she complained endlessly if there were children present at any social gatherings that she and Jack attended. While she said that Neal and Leah were exceptions, I know that she only said that to make me feel better. Watching her with the children made it perfectly clear that she was uncomfortable with them and was relieved when they went to bed.

I asked her what made her change her mind. She said she didn't know but that she was really happy about the baby. Wondering how fatherhood was going to affect Jack's love life, I asked how he felt about it. She assured me that he was as happy as she. Jack had shown even less interest in children than Bea and I was incredulous that he was anticipating fatherhood with great pleasure.

It became harder and harder for me to mediate between Brenda and Bea as I became more and more convinced that Bea's happiness came not from her pregnancy but from Jack's return to the marriage. He was no longer seen with Leslie. Bea was, it seemed to me, prepared to use an innocent child to keep her husband. We all tried to keep our problems with each other from coming into the course but the tension could not be totally suppressed. By the end of the session I was only relieved that it was over.

On the last day of class Bea told me that I could no longer be her friend if I could not accept her decision to have her baby. I knew she was right and our relationship ended with the class. I was very sorry

about what had happened. I had tried my best to bridge our differences over Brenda and my reactions to Bea's pregnancy had broken a relationship that had already been strained to its limits.

C H A P T E R X V I I

Once the course was over I began to think seriously about finding a job. I realized that I had no idea how to go about it and was even less sure about the kind of job I wanted or for which I was qualified. I hadn't looked for a job since I left college in my junior year and the English department job had come to me. I didn't know where to start.

One day, towards the end of the summer, I met Shelia Tobias on the street. I asked her how the Female Studies Program that she had been working to institute at Cornell was progressing. She had good news. The group of faculty and staff she had been working with had convinced the administration to fund a position for a half time Executive Director. When I told her that I had been fired and was looking for work she urged me to apply. She was not interested in the position herself, she said, as she had just accepted an offer for an associate provostship from Wesleyan. I didn't exactly know what a provost was, but I was impressed. Since she was leaving town soon, she was not directly involved in the hiring process for the position in Female Studies but she did think the application deadline was very soon.

I was beside myself with excitement. While I was not very clear about what a Female Studies Program might do and equally ignorant about what the duties of an executive director might be, I did know that I would welcome the opportunity to devote my full energies to women's issues. I went home to work on my letter of application and my resume.

My letter stated that I had become a feminist when I was six and a half and the important Avakian child, my brother, had been born. My nascent sense of oppression of women had gone underground until the emergence of feminism. To my great delight the steering committee called me for an interview. I was to meet with the whole committee but one member could not make the meeting time they had chosen and she asked if I would meet with her before I met the group. I was, of course, happy to accommodate the committee and agreed to the separate interview.

The woman was on the faculty of the School of Home Economics which, I had read in the paper, had recently undergone a major reorganization. Over the years the school's curriculum had expanded beyond the parameters of a traditional home economics focus. The name had been changed to the School of Human Ecology and to upgrade its image and attract male students a male had been appointed as dean. A low blow, I thought, as I walked toward the building that had once housed a domain of women's power.

I was delighted to see that my interviewer was an older woman. I was also pleased when she seemed as anxious as I was to include women in the curriculum, but towards the end of the interview she made me very angry. She asked if I had any children and when I responded that I did, she wanted to know what provisions I would make for their care if I was working. I was applying for a job that I hoped would not see women within their traditional roles and my first interviewer was concerned about my children. I tried to answer as politely as my fury would allow that I had been working for years and had managed to fulfill my

responsibilities as a mother as well. I felt like asking her if she had had children or had married her career but restrained myself.

Happily the interview with the group did not include any inquiries into my private life. I learned that the Steering Committee made the decisions for the program and it would be the responsibility of the executive director to implement them. It was not clear from the interview what the committee proposed to do beyond a general desire to alter the curriculum to include women but I was not concerned with their lack of direction. I left the meeting fairly confident about my performance. At the end of the week, Jane Camhi, a member of the committee, called to offer me the position. They were still working on getting office space but hoped to have something within the next few days. I accepted the offer.

I put down the phone and was at once elated and terrified. I had what sounded like a dream job. I could work on women's issues and get paid for it. I would also probably meet many other women who believed as strongly in Women's Liberation as I did. On the other hand, I wondered if I could really do the job. The only office I had ever worked in was Avakian Brothers where I basically did what I was told. What did an executive director really do? As I wanted for Jake to get home to tell him the news I wavered between feeling confident that I would learn quickly and do the job well on the one hand, and on the other that I had been very good at convincing the committee that I was the person to hire and within a short time they would undoubtedly realize that they had

made a grave error. There was one thing, however, I was sure about. I would work very hard because I cared so deeply about women.

My feelings of inadequacy were increased during my first few weeks of work. I knew from the interview that the goal of the new program was to include women in the curriculum but I had no idea where to start. There were no courses on women as yet and when students began to come into the office to find out about the program I could only tell them what we hoped to do and refer them to the few faculty on the steering committee. Luckily, Jame Camhi's office was on the floor above mine and I could go to her for advice. While she was helpful on details I could hardly ask her what I should do to fill up my time. Sensing that I was at loose ends she told me that my job would become clearer when the steering committee had their first meeting. I had been looking forward to the meeting but I also worried about having to chair it. My only experience with meetings had been our very informal League meetings and the meetings to redesign the freshman English course. I hoped that I would not need Robert's Rules.

I managed to chair the meeting well enough, I thought, but did not get much help with what my daily tasks should be. The committee seemed unfocused as to what the program's direction would be. They talked about longitudinal studies on women that the sociologists in the group were interested in undertaking but it was unclear what my function would be in designing the studies or obtaining funding for them. One member of the committee talked about the possibility of developing a course for

the next year but, once again, my role in its planning and implementation was unspecified.

Except for Jane Camhi the people on the committee almost seemed unaware of my existence. I decided to talk to Jane about my problem of not knowing what to do with my time. She said that the group was unclear about specific, short term goals. Shelia had been a very forceful leader and the task of getting a funded position had been well defined. Now that we had the position the group did not seem able to provide the direction needed. She suggested that I press the committee to be more specific about what they wanted me to do.

After talking with Jane I realized my problem was the result of more than my inadequacies as a leader. I was working in a vacuum. I could try to be more forceful with the committee but I would also have to create my own job. Since my vision of Female Studies was that it would develop courses on women, I set out to find faculty who might be receptive to such an innovation. Just after the office opened a woman had come in to say that she was interested in developing a course on women in education. I had not known what to tell her at the time but I was now determined to find a way for her to teach the course. I was at a serious disadvantage since I did not know one faculty member at Cornell but after many inquiries I learned the name of a faculty member in Education who might be sympathetic to a course on women. I called Susan Bereaud, the woman who was interested in developing the course, and urged her to work on a syllabus. She agreed and I contacted the faculty member and set up a meeting to talk about the course.

I went to the next meeting of the steering committee armed with news about the possibility of a course and hopeful that I could, with Jane's help, move the discussion to focus on specific goals. Before I could begin with my new agenda, however, a member of the faculty presented us with a proposal for the creation of the position of academic coordinator and another member of the committee, Jennie Farley, presented her application for the position. As I listened to various members of the committee say they would love to have Jenny work for the program and other people say they would be willing to approach their deans for funds, I wanted to leave not only the room, but the job.

It seemed strange that I had not been consulted about the position and equally odd that a member of the committee was ready with her application for a position not yet approved by the group. I didn't know much about the details of how departments and programs worked but I did know that if there was a position created it should be the result of the desires of the majority of the group. We had not even voted on this one and people were strategizing how to fund it and it seemed a foregone conclusion that Jenny Farley would hold it. I was still unsure about what I was supposed to do and the committee was creating another position. I was not at all averse to having another member of the staff. I was the only one and would have welcomed the opportunity to talk things over with a co-worker. I was not only disturbed that I had not been informed about the proposal for the creation of the position but it seemed clear that I would also not be invited to attend the meetings with the deans. It seemed to me that certain members of the committee

had already realized their mistake in hiring me and were now trying to rectify it by bringing in Jenny Farley.

While I thought the committee was probably right about me, I didn't have what it took to do this job, I was not going to allow Jenny Farley to waltz into the position. I ended the meeting saying I hoped that if the position was funded that we would open up the hiring process by advertising the position. Some of the committee members seemed annoyed at my suggestion and said that Jenny was the best qualified candidate. I argued that while I was not opposed to Jenny having the position, I could not support a process that did not allow other women to apply for the job. Other members of the committee came to the defense of my position arguing that we should be as open as possible and not hire the way men did. I was also concerned that there was no student representation on the committee and tried to raise that issue as well but most people had to leave the meeting. I promised myself I would bring it up again the next time.

Within a month the funding for the new position was assured and we did open up the search over the objections of a sizeable group who felt that Jenny was the best candidate. I had also won my point that students be invited to be on the committee. The program was, I had argued, for them and they should have a major role in deciding its direction. Jane and I had also made some headway on focusing the group. We proposed that we write a proposal for the funding of a permanent program.

Even in our preliminary discussions about the proposal I had begun to sense that there was a difference in my perspective about what Female

Studies should be and that of most of the vocal members of the committee. My conception was that any program that dealt with women's issues emerged out of and was stimulated by the growing women's movement. Female Studies was only the academic arm of a struggle to change the world. Many of my colleagues, to my great surprise, seemed anxious to deny any such connection. They were uncomfortable even articulating among ourselves the potential for a Female Studies program to make any major changes in attitudes towards and treatment of women. For many members of the committee, Jenny Farley especially, Cornell was just fine as it was except for the omission of women.

I wasn't exactly sure what Female Studies should be but I knew intuitively that any real change in the curriculum would mean more than sticking women into what already existed. I was anxious to talk to other women about the possibilities for Female Studies but I was strangely isolated at Cornell. Aside from Jane Camhi none of the members of the steering committee seemed open to any discussions with me. I was delighted when Jane told me that women at the University of Pennsylvania had organized a conference on Female Studies. She had heard about it from Shelia who was going to join a group from the steering committee for the drive down to UPenn. She was going and urged me to think about making the trip. I thought it would be important for me to go to the conference to hear what other women were thinking about Female Studies as well as to try to get to know some of the members of the steering committee outside of our meetings. Jake agreed to take care of the children for the weekend.

I was quiet on the long drive. I had decided that it was becoming increasingly important for me to listen to what people on the committee thought about women's issues. I was particularly alert to what Shelia said as it seemed that everyone seemed to think she was exceptionally astute. I was heartened when I heard her say that she thought it was important to include students in the initial planning of Female Studies, but as she went on to outline her reasons for including students I was appalled. It was her opinion that if they were not included we could not count on their support, and she considered it strategically vital for the program to have student support. The ensuing discussion of student power, because of the relationship of student activism at Cornell to the struggle of Black students, inevitably raised the issue of how the Program would relate to Afro-American studies. Black support, Shelia thought, was not important. Their political strength on campus was diminishing and their support might even be a liability at Cornell. Since the Straight takeover, Blacks and whites had minimal contact.

I sat in the back of the car fuming. Everyone else seemed to agree with Shelia's analysis. Only Jane had not responded and I hoped that she, like me, was quiet only because she thought it would be inpolitic to challenge Shelia. I looked out of the car window and tried to contain my rage. These women didn't really want to change the world. My earlier intuition had been correct. They wanted a piece of the pie and had no qualms about the methods they used to get it.

I was relieved when the talk turned, as it usually did when women were together for any length of time, to relationships with men. I was

glad to hear that Shelia refused to do housework and seemed to have no guilt feelings about the man she lived with taking over that job. She still did the cooking and was joined by the other women in complaining about the drudgery of preparing meals. They shared ways they used to reduce the cooking they did. One woman served her family peanut butter and jelly sandwiches or TV dinners and another made a large casserole on the weekend and the family ate it for most of the week. Clearly these women ate only because they had to. Their discussion of food included neither the pleasures of cooking nor eating. I wondered if they would understand the joy of saving a succulent morsel of lamb that had been marinated for a day or more in onions, lemon, oil, wine and herbs and broiled over a charcoal fire. They seemed like another species to me and I wondered if I could ever bridge the gap between us.

Happily, as we approached Philadelphia, the conversation about food stopped as they followed the directions to JoAnn Gardner's house. Shelia had met her at another conference and she had graciously offered to put all of us up. When we drove up to her large home I was physically and emotionally exhausted. The trip that I had hoped would be an opportunity for me to get to know my colleagues better had already made me feel even more alienated.

Despite my feelings I looked forward to meeting JoAnn. She was the founder, owner and manager of KNOW, Inc., an organization that provided, I thought, an invaluable service to the women's movement and Female Studies by reprinting articles on women. From what I had seen of the reprints, KNOW, Inc. was dedicated to attacking male power in all

aspects of our society. Although it was late JoAnn asked if we wanted something to eat or drink, a good sign I thought. When everyone else declined, I decided it would be better to follow their lead rather than accepting her offer which was what I really wanted to do. She said she would have to leave the house very early since she was setting up a display at the conference but wanted to show us what she had for breakfast. When I walked into the spacious and well appointed kitchen I exclaimed that it must be a wonderful place to cook. JoAnn agreed and we began to talk about food while my colleagues looked on in amazement. Shelia broke in to say that as far as she was concerned, black coffee would be fine. She was going to bed. I was grateful to JoAnn. She would never know how important it was to me to learn that another women who was devoted to women's issues also thought feeding oneself was important.

The next day I would also hear support for my idea that including women in the curriculum as it existed was not sufficient. Florence Howe, a woman who described herself as coming to a political consciousness during the Civil Rights Movement, gave a stirring lecture on the importance of keeping a strong political perspective in Female Studies. Her view of the goal of Female Studies was not only to add women to what existed but to change the way the academy operated so that it could incorporate women and our concerns at every level. When she was finished I wanted to stand on my seat and cheer and I expected the audience would at least rise to give her a standing ovation. I was dismayed by the polite but not wholly enthusiastic applause. I turned to Jane, hoping

to find some support for my response to Florence's speech. I was relieved when she said the talk had raised very vital issues.

That evening there was a karate demonstration by two women who first gave a short talk on the reasons they thought the method they used was particularly well suited to women. At the end of the demonstration JoAnn, who was all of five feet tall and could not have weighed more than one hundred pounds, asked if it was too late for a woman like herself, in her mid forties, to learn the method. She looked very disappointed when one of the women replied that it might be if she had not done much strenuous physical exercise. I was drawn to this woman who had turned her luxurious home into a print shop. The elegant entrance hallway was filled with piles of reprints and her formal dining room with its long mahogany table was the mailing center for the press. Now she wanted to learn karate.

The conference was over. My feelings on the ride back to Ithaca were very mixed. On the one hand I had gotten support from Florence Howe and JoAnn Gardner but on the other what I had learned about the women I had to work with was very disturbing. I was silent as they discussed JoAnn. The press was, they all agreed, a great service to Female Studies but her desire to learn karate misguided. When Shelia said she thought Florence's speech was idealistic I calmly told her I disagreed. As we drove out of Philadelphia, however, I did insist that we stop at a roadside stand. They had beautiful eggplants which would not be in season in Ithaca for weeks.

I returned from the conference determined that the majority of the committee was not going to have its way without a fight. I was going to do what I could to bring my politics into the program. I discussed my sense of the political division between me and the women who had gone to the conference with Jane. She had also come to see that many of the members of the committee were, indeed, quite conservative despite their support of Female Studies. There were, she felt, members of the committee who were not very vocal who might share our view of what the program should be.

I thought about what Jane had said and realized that I had overlooked the support that I did have within the committee. After our conversation I decided to make connections with these women. They were mostly on the staff and felt that their ability to influence steering committee decisions was severely limited by their lack of faculty status. I realized from talking with them that my isolation from the more vocal members of the committee had probably been influenced by the fact that I only had a B.A. and that my associations were with Ithaca College. Cornell was, they told me, a very elitist institution and the women on the Female Studies steering committee were not exceptions to that rule.

The first major battle in the program came over the selection of the academic coordinator. I had initially insisted that we do a search in the interest of fairness but as I came to know Jenny Farley better my efforts to open the process were also based on working against her appointment. Jenny, a sociologist with a Ph.D. but no job, loved Cornell.

While she did feel that the curriculum should include more women she was basically uncritical of the University. My dedication to bring some sense of the need for larger change to our efforts to include women in the curriculum would be seriously hampered if Jenny Farley became the academic coordinator. I decided that I had to get a candidate to apply for the job who was more highly qualified than Jenny who had never had a teaching position.

I immediately thought of Joyce Elbrecht who was the chair of the Philosophy department at Ithaca College. She was well respected by her students and one of the few tenured women faculty at the College. I was sure that Joyce would share some of my views as she had been instrumental in bringing students into the departmental decision making process. Students not only sat on every department committee as voting members but comprised half of its membership. When I called to ask her if she would be interested in the position at Cornell she seemed very interested but said she'd have to think about it.

Within a few days she called to say that she had talked to her department about the possibility of a part-time leave and they had agreed to support her request if she wanted the job at Cornell. She had decided to apply. I told her that it was my impression that most of the committee supported Jenny because they shared her conservatism but that Joyce had a chance to win over some people since her qualifications far outstripped Jenny's.

I was very excited that Joyce had agreed to apply for the job, and when she met with the committee even I, who had heard so much about

Joyce's intellect from faculty and students, was impressed with the breadth and depth of her answers. She believed the disciplines were male centered and they needed to be critically reevaluated from a feminist perspective. She outlined the male bias in her own discipline attacking the myth that it was a value free inquiry. I could see that the committee was also impressed, though some of the most conservative members were obviously taken aback by her willingness to apply feminism to an academic discipline in such a basic manner.

Joyce's analysis of philosophy seemed to articulate what I had been unable to express. A basic critique of the disciplines was the real work of Female Studies. Women's Liberation was not content to merely see women enter male arenas but attacked the male system just as Joyce had attacked philosophy for being male defined. With Joyce as the academic coordinator of Female Studies I believed we could move the new discipline to a truly revolutionary position.

Jenny's interview, on the other hand, provided no new insights. Her response to what she would do in the position was that she would carry out the wishes of the committee. When pressed to articulate what her perspective on Female Studies was she merely said that she would work to convince faculty to include women in their courses. She hoped that the committee would agree that Female Studies could benefit from a newsletter which she hoped to edit. After Jenny's interview I was convinced that there was no contest but it seemed that I had a good deal to learn about my colleagues.

The debate about the two candidates was not very long. Within a few minutes it became clear that the vote would be overwhelmingly in favor of Jenny Farley. I was crushed. I went home and told Jake what had happened. He listened and said he thought the committee had made a mistake. I tried to explain that they had gotten just what they wanted. They were not interested in a strong leader who was committed to changing the status quo other than inserting women into what already existed. As I complained about the lack of vision and conservatism of the committee, Jake seemed bored. I stopped talking and waited until I could discuss the committee with Joyce.

She agreed that the committee was threatened by her criticism of the disciplines. She thanked me for my support and told me she thought I had been very politically astute at the interview. My face had been, she said, impassive--a look she had rarely seen on white people. Her comment made me feel very strange. I had thought that my support of Joyce was only too obvious, yet I was glad to hear I was able to disguise my feelings. Since the ride to the conference I had decided to watch my colleagues and express myself only when I had some idea what impact my opinions would have. I was clearly an outsider in the group on many levels and if I was going to bring any of my concerns to the program I had to be very careful about what I did.

I came home from my meeting with Joyce feeling support from her and wondering why I had felt so differently when I talked with Jake. Although he had been in similar political struggles at the College, he didn't seem to grasp either the significance of the choice of Jenny over

Joyce or the difficulty of my position. I had always supported him when he worked against those who opposed change at the College and I had only heard his side of the story. I did have to admit that he hadn't been there while Joyce had but I decided that I would be more direct when I felt he was not as supportive as I thought he could be.

At the end of the Fall semester of 1970, Jenny Farley was installed in a large office next to mine. We had very little contact with each other. It seemed almost as if we worked for two different programs. She was responsible for writing the drafts for the proposal of funding for the program. She never conferred with me and we argued over her drafts in the steering committee meetings. Her conception of the program, which was supported by many of the committee members--most of those who had status--was that Female Studies would augment what existed at Cornell and in no way bring anything new. She stated explicitly in the proposal that Female Studies was in no way connected to the Women's Movement. While I had been reluctant to openly express my opinions I was so appalled by what I saw as a betrayal of the movement that I could not help but attack her position. I also stated that as far as I was concerned, there was much at Cornell that I hoped Female Studies would work to change. The proposal was also criticized by other members of the committee on some minor points. Jenny was asked to write another draft.

My work focused on getting new courses on women introduced into the curriculum. Susan Bereaud and I had made great headway with the course she had designed on women and education. With the help of the faculty

member in the Education department she was going to be teaching in that spring. Brenda and I had also begun to talk about a course on Black and white women. Jane, whose field was American history, was working on a syllabus with us and we hoped to teach it through the Female Studies program. We intended that it would be team taught by a Black and a white woman. I was, of course, very anxious to teach it with Brenda but it seemed strategically stupid to present it to the curriculum committee with us as the instructors. We decided to try to get the course approved first and then see about the instructors.

I continued to chair the steering committee meetings and see students who came into the office looking for courses on women. One day a student came in to tell me that she had just learned from a friend about a woman in her eighties who had been a suffragist and was willing to talk about her experiences. As she told me more about Florence Luscomb I thought that while a lecture would be interesting, a celebration of women's achievements dedicated to one of the women who had struggled for women's rights before most of us had been born would really be exciting. I prepared a proposal for the steering committee for a Women's Festival in honor of Florence Luscomb and got preliminary approval.

After I spoke to Florence and she agreed to come the students on the committee immediately contacted campus groups for funding. I called a meeting of the students I knew at Cornell as well as the Ithaca College Women's Liberation Front to form a committee to work on the festival. I was anxious to find ways for women from Cornell and Ithaca College to work together to bridge the gap between Cornell, the

prestigious school, and Ithaca College, the "other" school in town. The meeting was well attended by women from both institutions and many small task groups were formed. I was responsible for coordinating all the groups and the budget.

It was soon clear that my idea of a small celebration was going far beyond my expectations. It seemed as if the students had been waiting for the opportunity to pour their energies into a women's event. I was also caught up in the growing excitement about the festival. I contacted Pat Sackrey about doing a workshop on women's centers and she not only agreed but suggested three women poets from Northampton who would be glad to come and read their work. Brenda agreed to do a workshop on Black Women and the Women's Liberation Movement. Joanna Russ, a writer and a member of the steering committee, said she would read from her latest stories. I contacted the women who had done the karate demonstration in Philadelphia and a women's theater group in Cambridge to do a reading of Myrna Lamb's play about abortion, "What Have You Done For Me Lately?"

The students felt strongly that if the event was to be a real celebration we needed music. They arranged for a women's country western band from New York City to play on Friday night and the New Haven and Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Bands to play at a women's dance Saturday night. The festival was growing into all that I thought Female Studies ought to be--discussion of women's status in all aspects of the society, serious discussion of women's politics including practical workshops on setting up women's centers, day care, abortion referral

services, health clinics, performance of art by women and a celebration of our lives.

As the festival grew into a three day event I worried about how we were going to raise money to cover a budget which had become very large. The students told me not to worry. They would find the money. I should concentrate on coordinating the festival. Although I continued to give the Female Studies steering committee periodic reports on the progress of the event, I worried about their reaction to the festival which, I was sure, would attract the more radical segments of the movement. It was my opinion that the festival would bring a discussion of women's issues to both the Cornell and Ithaca College campuses and to the community as well. Female Studies could, I thought, only benefit from the publicity of the event. Students who had never heard of our small program would not only be introduced to women's issues but would learn of the program's existence. Organizing the festival had already provided the opportunity for students from different parts of the community to work together. I sensed that it might be laying the groundwork for other collaborative efforts. Aside from Female Studies and the small Ithaca College Women's Liberation Front there was no active women's movement in Ithaca and I hoped that something would emerge from the festival.

As February 19, the first day of the festival, approached I was amazed at how well the large group of students and I worked together. I only hoped that everything would go as smoothly during the festival as it had over the months of planning. The first night of the event I sat

in the large room where Florence Luscomb was scheduled to speak and as I waited for her I wondered if the months of work had been worth it. When the eighty-one year old woman walked into the room with a sure stride and began to speak in an unflattering voice about her experiences as a worker for women's suffrage, any doubts I had were gone. The speech was well received and was a wonderful introduction to our celebration of women.

The next day more than two thousand women and some men filled the many workshops. Everything was going beautifully until that evening at the women's dance. We had not talked much about what we would do in the event that men wanted to join the dance and I worried a bit when three men came through the doors. Naomi Weisstein, the piano player for the Chicago Women's Liberation Band, announced that men were not welcome. Shouts of approval came from the large crowd of women as the three men left the room. I was also glad they were leaving but I worried a little if that would be the end of it.

When the band started to play again and the floor was filled with women dancing with each other in couples or large circles or even alone, I forgot about the ramifications of asking the men to leave. It was wonderful to be at a dance and not have to concern myself about the men in the room, either to put off their advances or to worry about men I knew who might be feeling left out. It was also a wonderfully freeing experience to look around the room and see hundreds of women enjoying themselves without the company of men. Ellen Peters was smiling and dancing her heart out, by herself. I realized that I had never seen her

dance before and I joined her for the rest of the song. I noticed Joyce who was dancing with Carol Kates, the woman she shared her house with. I walked in their direction and before I could tell them I had never seen them look better, Joyce said that the festival was a wonderful event. Ithaca, she said, would never be the same. Once women realized their strength and power there would be no holding them back.

Just as I was beginning to feel really wonderful I was called out into the hall. The security guard was trying to stop a group of fraternity men from storming the dance. He needed some help and had sent for me. I spent most of the rest of the evening talking to men who could not accept the fact that they were not wanted. The security guard was very calm and helpful until one of the men said he must be a fag if he supported women being alone--without men, that is. At that point I thought they were going to come to blows and the guard ordered them out of the building. Men seemed so vulnerable to me. The guard had been fine until someone questioned his sexuality. I thanked him for his help and turned to go back to the dance.

I looked at the women in the dimly lit room, many with their blouses off, dancing in large groups. It felt like a kind of communal rite. Women affirming each other. I joined the circle that Ellen was in and as I danced I felt a connection with all the women in the room. We were, at least at that point in time, sisters. The spirit in that room gave me strength and I hoped it would help me carry on with the struggles that I knew I had to face in Female Studies.

The festival ended the next day with a performance of baroque music by women musicians, the play reading and a concert by Meg Christian. I was exhausted but more exhilarated than I had ever been in my life. The festival had proved to me that the struggle of women to change ourselves and the world was possible and the most important thing in my life.

I had also been moved by the support I had gotten from Jake. He had been more than helpful with the children, had not complained when seven members of the New Haven Women's Liberation Rock Band had to sleep at our house, and had even thought to buy food and make sandwiches for everyone. He also prepared a radio show with an Ithaca College student on what men could learn about themselves from the women's movement.

For the next week my phone at the office as well as at home rang constantly. Women I didn't even know called to thank me for the festival. I was grateful to the Cornell Daily Sun as well as the Ithaca College student newspaper for not sensationalizing the ejection of the men from the dance and reporting the festival fairly. When I went to the first steering committee meeting after the event I truly expected thanks from my colleagues but, once again, I had underestimated their conservatism. While a few people did praise the festival, the bulk of the discussion was focused on the dance. At the end of the meeting one of the student members told the committee that the festival, including the women's dance, had profoundly changed her life. As she spoke about what it had meant to her to hear Florence Luscomb and the other women who spoke as well as to be with women to celebrate ourselves, she began to cry. She ended by saying that if the Female Studies steering

committee did not recognize the importance of the event they clearly did not understand what Female Studies was all about. Although I could not have agreed more with what she said, I forced myself to be silent. They did not have the same conception of Female Studies that we did and there were other battles to be waged. By my standards the festival had been a huge success. I didn't need their praise.

Shortly after the festival Jenny presented another draft of the proposal. The statement of goals did not include any indication that a feminist analysis of the disciplines was necessary. Also omitted was any reference to changing women's status. Instead it stated that the aim of the program was to:

- to broaden teaching about women . . .
- the study of and the places of women in the social order
- the role women have played in history, in literature, and in the creative arts
- the status of, and contributions of women who are members of disadvantaged minorities
- the biology of women
- the education of women
- the status of women in developing societies and industrial society

Other goals included cooperating with ongoing research projects in the areas designated and working with the efforts of the cooperative extension service's special programs for women.

In the description of the program's structure, Farley had omitted mention of the steering committee. The new structure consisted of an advisory board comprised of representatives of the board of trustees, the deans, the faculty, and the graduate and undergraduate student body. The paid staff, a director and an administrator, would be responsible to

this board. The staff women who had worked so hard to institute the program would have no place in the new structure.

The proposal indicated that the program would be reviewed in 1974 and at that time, Farley stated:

. . . it may be that

(1) teaching and research about women will have become so integrated into the activities of the University that the Program will have accomplished what it set out to do and will have outlived its usefulness

or

(2) that a mechanism other than a Female Studies Program will prove to be more likely to reach the goals currently set by the Program, if adequate progress had not been made by then.

Not only was she willing to destroy the program before it had had an opportunity to make any significant changes, she was all too anxious to explicitly state that the program did not intend to make change. In a final section entitled "Some Cautions," the proposal stated that the program "should not be seen as a panacea for all the problems of women in an academic community . . ." and "should not be seen as a political effort. It is not. Indeed, persons in the Women's Liberation Movement may suspect that the Program is a mechanism for defusing the movement since the Program is so clearly and unequivocally dedicated to academic endeavors."

Not only was she assuring the University that the program did not intend to be political but she also indicated that people within the program were not part of the Women's Liberation Movement. I had expected the worst from Jenny's draft but she had surprised even me with her absolutely blatant refusal to incorporate suggestions from me as well as other members of the committee. We had been very concerned that

the proposal indicate that it would not be enough to include women in what already existed and I had said that any reference to the Women's Liberation Movement as a totally separate entity from Female Studies was unacceptable.

Happily I was not the only member of the committee who was disturbed by Jenny's draft. Even those members of the committee who were generally silent spoke out against the proposal. As I listened to the faculty defend it I guessed that the draft was not the work of one person. Jenny must have had the support of the more conservative members of the committee to present this particular proposal. The battle lines were drawn. Most of the staff and students found the draft totally unacceptable while the faculty supported it. We argued about it in and out of committee for months.

Because I was beginning to sense that my tenure in the program might not last past my one year appointment, I was anxious to move on the course that Jane, Brenda and I had developed. I also began to think about proposing a course that I could teach the next year. Joanna Russ, the only faculty member on the committee who did not support the proposal, suggested that I teach one for the freshman Humanities seminars. She promised to help me get it through the College of Arts and Sciences curriculum committee. I began to work on a syllabus while Jane, Brenda and I strategized about the course on Black and white women.

We decided to try to get preliminary approval for the course but the program curriculum committee would not consider it until we named the instructors. Jane and I thought that Brenda's participation was

crucial and we all agreed that naming me as the other instructor would assure that the course would not be approved. Jane contacted a graduate student in the History department whose field was American History and who was reputed to have some interest in women's issues. Sarah Diamant had, it turned out, a great interest in the course as well as some teaching experience. She was in the process of writing her dissertation and had extensive knowledge of slavery and a real interest in women's history. We all agreed that the course should go before the committee as soon as possible. As the debate over the future direction of the program continued, tensions among committee members and between myself and the more conservative members were increasing.

We called a meeting of the curriculum committee and presented the course, this time with Brenda and Sarah in attendance. After the course was presented Sarah passed out copies of her vita and the committee focused its attention on her. After her interview seemed to be over, the group turned to a discussion of Brenda's credentials. Because she was still an undergraduate we thought we could bolster her qualifications by support from faculty. Brenda had told us that a number of faculty from the Africana Studies Center were willing to come and speak in her behalf and we agreed that it might be helpful if they did come. Just as Brenda's interview began, they arrived. Brenda introduced them to the committee and James Cunningham said he hoped the committee would seriously consider Miss Verner for the position of co-instructor of the course on Black and white women. While he recognized that she did not have the qualifications generally required of instructors he could

attest to her ability. The committee was strangely silent. Brenda's interview was very short.

After Sarah, Brenda and the Africana Studies Center faculty left the room, Jane and I were amazed to hear the committee quickly pass both the course and the instructors. It seemed that it had been too easy, but the course had been approved in a duly constituted meeting. The next step was what we thought would be a pro forma approval by the college curriculum committee.

Within the next few weeks we found that the struggle for the course had just begun. Sarah learned from a friend who was on the college curriculum committee that the course had been removed from the agenda after a small group of the Female Studies steering committee had met with the dean. They had, they told him, passed the course only because they had been coerced and intimidated by a contingent of Blacks who had come to the meeting. How easy it was for whites to use the charge of coercion to overturn decisions they did not like. Some members of our committee had acted just like their male counterparts after the takeover of the Straight. I called a meeting of the full steering committee to inform them of what a small group had done. The meeting was very heated. No one would admit she had met with the dean. Finally, the majority of the committee agreed to approve the course and ask the dean to put it on the agenda for approval by the curriculum committee.

I had been convinced for months that secret meetings were being held by the conservative bloc on the steering committee and the incident with the course only confirmed my suspicions. Jane had also heard from

Shelia that she had been asked to attend one of the meetings and though she had been very uncomfortable she had agreed. She refused to disclose the substance of the meeting but implied that it focused on the debate over the proposal for the program.

We were deadlocked. Our meetings had become hopelessly polarized with me at one end of the spectrum and Jenny at the other. In a desperate attempt to save the program from self-destruction I approached Jenny with a proposal. I would offer my resignation if she would agree to do the same. She refused. I consider resigning but Jane urged me to talk with Alice Cook, the University Ombudsman. Alice was not surprised at my description of the struggles within the program. She thought it would be disastrous for either Jenny or me to resign at that point in time. We should, she said, try to come to some compromise. If I thought it would help, she said, she would come to a meeting to try to mediate some sort of agreement.

At the next steering committee meeting I told the group I had been to see Alice Cook because I was convinced that the divisions within the program were threatening its existence. I suggested that we invite her to a meeting. Jenny said she didn't know why we needed an outsider. I decided it was time to tell the group how I really felt. Things could hardly have been worse than they were. I said that I knew that a group within the program was having secret meetings to make decisions about the program. We needed to face what was happening and get some help. The University administration would like nothing better than to use the dissension and disorganization within the group as an excuse to

terminate our program. We decided to invite Alice to a meeting over the objections of Jenny and a small group of faculty.

As I prepared for the meeting with Jane I realized how upset I was. I had come to this job unskilled, it was true, but I had also had a real commitment to building a program that would reflect the critique of society that the women's movement was making. I had found that many of the women on the committee wanted nothing more than getting their own feet in the door. While I did recognize that there were serious political differences within the group, I blamed myself for the split that now seemed to be unbridgable. Jane was very supportive as was Brenda, who was convinced that those white women were crazy. Despite their assurances that it had not been my fault, I felt very guilty for what had happened and wondered if I was the kind of person who was unable to work in a group.

While Jake seemed supportive, I often felt strange when I talked to him about my problems with various members of the steering committee. It wasn't anything I could put my finger on, but he seemed to want to be able to see the situation from both sides. After conversations with him about what was happening in the program, I found myself thinking back to the times when I had listened to his struggles for hours and hours. I never was interested in the whole picture. I only wanted to support him.

I was not only upset about my own role in bringing the program to such a terrible state, but I was also genuinely concerned that we would not survive this crisis. For all the problems I had had with these

particular women, I was still strongly committed to the idea of Female Studies. I knew that the "other side" saw me as anti-intellectual but I was also sure that they were wrong in that. I might be dogmatic and impossible to work with but my vision of the study of women was not anti-academic. It did, however, call for a radical change in the academy.

I went to the meeting with Alice hoping that she would find a way to mediate but within the first half hour it was clear to me that it was too late. I decided to offer my resignation as soon as the course I had proposed to the Freshman Humanities committee was approved. I was tired of fighting particularly since there seemed to be no hope of a positive resolution.

On June 4, 1971 I resigned from my position but not from the steering committee. I was assured that I would retain the two courses I was to teach the next year.

C H A P T E R X V I I I

I was plagued with doubts about myself that summer. I was obsessed with the question of what part of the disaster in Female Studies was my responsibility and what part was the inevitable result of directly conflicting political perspectives. I wondered what would have happened if someone like Pat Sackrey had had my position. Would she have been able to bring the two sides together? She seemed to be having none of the problems I encountered in her work at the women's center. She was able to get along with all kinds of people while I seemed only to antagonize individuals and polarize groups. I didn't know why I couldn't be more like Pat but it seemed impossible for me to keep my mouth shut. Maybe I was still the screamer I had been as a child.

Although Brenda told me I was foolish to blame myself for what happened, it was hard to accept her analysis that white women were crazy. Also, she was having similar problems with the Afro-American Society. She, like me, had gained a reputation as being a difficult person. Support from Jane was more reassuring. She was still able to work with some of the people who disagreed with and she had also escaped being labeled as an anti-intellectual radical. It helped, I supposed, that she had finished all the course work for a Ph.D. and had a husband on the faculty at Cornell. I also realized that she had had the advantage of having worked with the group from its inception. I, on the other hand, only had a B.A. and was married to a man who taught at the "other" school.

During my year at Female Studies, Jake and I had become friendly with Jane and her husband Jeff. We planned to spend part of the summer with them at a house we jointly rented at Woods Hole on Cape Cod. I looked forward to our time at the Cape. It had been ages since I had been at the ocean and I hoped that sitting on the beach and watching the waves would help me to recover from the trauma of Female Studies. Since Jeff was doing research at the Oceanographic Institute at Woods Hole, the Camhis planned to be there for the whole summer. Jake and I decided to go for a month, two weeks at the beginning of the summer and two weeks at the end. The Camhis' son Jeremy was around Leah's age and while they were not good friends, they got along well enough. I worried a little about how Neal would respond to being with another family for an extended period but I also thought the experience of being around Leah and Jeremy might be good for him.

I was also thinking about moving again that summer. The house that had felt so spacious when we had first moved in seemed to have shrunk. Jake agreed that a bigger house would be nice. We did some cosmetic repairs on the house, put it on the market and I started to spend a lot of time with realtors. Just before we left for the Cape we made a bid on a beautiful, nine room, three story house with a large yard. It would give us all more space and allow for the possibility of having someone live with us. A number of students had stayed with us for short periods of time and I found that I enjoyed having another adult in the house. I had considered trying to find a student who would help with

the children and the housework in exchange for room and board and the new house would be perfect for such an arrangement.

We gave the realtor our number in Woods Hole and left Ithaca for our first two weeks. The house the Camhis had rented was fine. The rooms were large and it also had a nice yard. I was anxious to see the beach but by the time we arrived it was too dark. The next morning after a long breakfast we finally packed our lunch and went to the beach. Jane said there were a number of beaches in Woods Hole. She had decided to take us to her favorite one. When we got there I found it impossible to hide my disappointment. Instead of the long, white sandy beach and rolling waves I had expected, Jane's beach was a pebbly cove with virtually no waves. Jane also seemed disappointed that I was less than enthralled with the beach. She told me I would have to go further out on the Cape for surf.

As it turned out we didn't get to go to the beach much that week as it was cold and rainy. We took some day trips to Provincetown and did find some surf but it was too cold to relax on the beach.

Although we had not talked much about the mechanics of living together before we actually did it, Jake and I thought the first two weeks had gone rather smoothly. I did not get to cook as often as I would have liked, but I hoped to change that when we returned. Leah and Jeremy were not the best of friends but they did get along and Neal spent most of his time listening to records just as he did at home. We left hoping that the weather would be better when we came back.

A few days after we had been home we received a letter from the Camhis. Their feelings about the two weeks we had spent together had been very different from ours. Jeff had written the letter and Jane added a note at the end saying that she agreed with Jeff's sense of the situation. Their expectations had been that we would spend more time together. They had been upset that we had taken day trips and hoped that we could plan outings together when we returned. Jake and I wrote back saying that we would enjoy spending time with them but we also felt that we needed some time alone.

While I was concerned about our last two weeks at Woods Hole, I was preoccupied with selling our house and getting ready to move. Our offer on the house had been accepted, but we had had no offers on our house. One day a pleasant couple came to look at it. Joan and Edward Ormandroyd had decided to move to Ithaca from California because it seemed like a nice area. They were both librarians but Edward was not going to look for a job for the first year. He had written a few children's books and was going to try to work on another. Joan had just gotten a job at the reference library at Cornell. They liked the house and within the week they gave us an offer and we accepted it.

Once the house was sold I could relax a bit and begin to do some serious work on the freshman humanities course I would teach in the fall. It was basically a writing course which I had organized around the themes of feminine and masculine images in literature. I also began to pack. Before I knew it it was time to go back to Woods Hole. After Jane and Jeff received our letter they called to say they were still

disturbed but hoped we could talk when we got there. I was not really looking forward to our last two weeks, but I hoped the weather would be on our side. At least, I thought, Jake and I were in agreement. We would spend most of our time with the Camhis but would also feel free to be alone from time to time.

There was some initial tension when we arrived but within a few days it seemed to us that everything was going rather well. The night before we were to leave Jeff told us that he had been very upset with what had happened and most of this criticism was directed at me. He had found me very distant, he said, even cold. He had expressed his desires but I had insisted on doing what I wanted anyway. He thought I was a domineering person. I was amazed that he had expected us not to do what we wanted but I thought I would wait to see what Jake had to say. I was also curious to know what Jane thought about our time together but she and Jake both remained silent. As Jeff went on attacking us with a particular focus on me I realized I could not wait for Jake to respond. I told Jeff that we had not been there merely at his invitation. We had paid for our time. It was our vacation and we did expect to do what we wanted for part of the time. Jane said she could no longer stand what was happening and left to go to bed.

Jeff continued his tirade and Jake finally began to respond but his words were not in my defense. He had agreed with me when we discussed how we wanted to spend our final two weeks but not his response itself indicated it had been my decision. As I listened to the two men talk about me, I became so angry at Jeff's arrogance and what I saw as Jake's

betrayal that I knew I had to leave or my rage would erupt. I told them I could not longer stand listening to either of them. I rose to leave and noticed that Jake looked surprised. Well, I thought, if he wants to know what upset me, he can ask. I went into the bedroom.

I started to pack our things and wished I could take the children and leave right then. I was really miserable. I had managed, somehow, to mess up another group. Jeff's complaints about me indicated that I was an unapproachable person. It seemed to me that many people were afraid to confront me directly. If the women in Female Studies had told me that I was creating serious problems, I might have been able to change but no one had ever said anything to me. Jeff, too, had not told me how he felt until we were ready to leave. What was it about me, I wondered, that made me so unapproachable. People were frightened by me, it seemed, but what I felt myself was fear. I was afraid of the job in Female Studies and I had been perceived, among other things, as a person who could not be dealt with directly. Was Jenny Farley afraid of me too? Were the faculty on the steering committee afraid of me?

I was also very disturbed by what Jake had done that evening. While he never agreed with Jeff, he also never said he, too, had wanted the time in Woods Hole to be a vacation with our family as well as with them. He had written the letters with me, had talked with Jeff on the phone as well but that night he defended my needing time alone. What had happened that night reminded me of times when I argued with my parents. Jake was usually silent but when he did enter the discussion it was to argue against me. I was always shocked because I knew he

didn't believe what he was saying. In fact, many of my points came from things Jake had said. I always felt strange when that happened. Although I was annoyed with Jake for betraying me, I also felt guilty. I was too outspoken. It seemed that I was unable to stay within the bounds of propriety. I went over a line that "normal" people did not cross.

I had finished packing and Jake had not yet come to bed. As I lay down and tried to sleep, I could hear the murmur of the two men's voices. I began to feel that I might go crazy if they did not stop talking. I jumped out of bed and told them to go outside if they wanted to continue their conversation. I was very tired and was trying to get some sleep.

Shortly after my outburst, Jake came into the room. My confusion had become intense. I asked Jake why he hadn't said that he had also felt that we had the right to do what we wanted. His answer was vague. It had been a hard situation, he said. I pushed him to explain what he meant when he told Jeff that I had a very strong personality. He said that he felt that was true. Although I feared how he would answer, I asked him if he thought all the problems in our time with Jane and Jeff were my responsibility. He said that I was a difficult person. I was, he said, often a stranger to him. He just didn't understand me. As he elaborated on the problems I had getting along with people, I felt more and more desperate. I tried to defend myself, saying that there were people who did like me. Jake asked who they were. I responded that Brenda was a good friend and he smiled and said she had the same

problems. I frantically searched for another name of someone who liked me and blurted out that Ellen Peters was a friend--she liked me. Jake said that she was just a good Catholic who was nice to me out of a desire to do good works. When he reminded me that she didn't call much, I began to feel that he was right. I didn't have any friends because I was such a domineering bitch. I was a monster.

But there was also something in me that said I was all right. By that point my turmoil had become so intense that it seemed as if the room had begun to spin. I could see only a blur with an occasional glimpse of faces of women in Female Studies, Bea Goldman, Arnold Singer, Ellen Peters. I was terribly frightened that I was going crazy and said that I would have to talk about all of this with Dr. Olum. When I said her name I had a vision of her office. She was a very gentle woman but she had never seemed to be afraid of me. She seemed to respect me. The spinning stopped and I began to feel very calm. I might be difficult, but I was not a monster.

I realized at that moment that Jake had been undermining me. He had seemed to be supportive of me and my position in Female Studies but had subtly let me know that he did not approve of my behavior. The discussion over the hiring of the academic coordinator had only been one example of Jake's ambiguous support. I looked Jake in the eyes and told him that I now knew that he had undermined me all year. Without a moment's hesitation, he told me I was right. He began to explain that he had been very threatened by my job at Cornell but I didn't care to hear his explanations just then. I realized that I had to accept who I

was even if some people thought I was a bitch. I was exhausted. I told Jake I needed to go to sleep.

The next morning we left as soon as we had some breakfast. When we had all of our things in the car, Jane asked if she could speak to me alone. We went into the living room. She said she hadn't been able to sleep all night. She had been very confused by our exchange, but she wanted me to know that she did not blame me for what happened. She was worried about me. I told her that I was all right, perhaps better than I had ever been. I really felt that I had to get home but that we would talk in September when she got back.

I was very quiet on the ride back to Ithaca, preoccupied with what had happened to me. I had been terrified by my utter confusion and the sense of the world spinning around me. I knew that the vision of Dr. Olum had calmed me because of her acceptance of who I was. I had to have that kind of acceptance of myself. It had begun to grow the previous night. I was convinced that my insight about Jake had been correct but I was unsure as to what it would mean for our relationship.

He was quiet too and although I wondered what he was thinking, I decided to let him tell me. I sensed that my days of trying to bring him out of his withdrawal were coming to an end. If he had something to say to me, he could say it.

The next few weeks were completely devoted to moving and I didn't think much about the night at Woods Hole. The Ormandroyds had to get out of the place they had rented for the summer before we could get into our new house so we asked them to stay with us. We both enjoyed the

fact that the realtors as well as our lawyers were appalled that we were living together before the closing.

After the move I began to get anxious about teaching. It was the first time I would be teaching a course I had developed myself and I worried about being able to relate to Cornell students. I knew that they were much better prepared academically than students at Ithaca College and I also knew that many of them were very rich. Despite my worries, however, I was eager to teach the class. I was, on the other hand, not looking forward to participating on the Female Studies steering committee but I did not feel that I could abandon my side of the conflict.

That September both children were going to new schools. For Neal, it was no different than any other year. Every fall, the special education classes were moved from school to school. It seemed that none of the principals wanted those classes in their schools. It was as if the schools had no responsibility to these children. They had to take rooms where they could get them and if one principal told them to get out they had to find a room in another school. Neal would just get used to being in one school and it would be time to leave. That year the class was about one and a half miles away from our new house. Too far to walk and too close for a bus. Jake agreed to drop him off before he went to work and I would pick him up.

Leah was going into the first grade that fall and Jake and I had decided to enroll her in East Hill, a "free" school that was part of the public school system. Based on the Summerhill model of experimental

education, teachers at East Hill created learning experiences based on student interest rather than imposing their own sense of priorities on them. One class, for example, had read Kon-Tiki and was fascinated by Heyerdahl's narrative of his journey on a raft. The teacher picked up on their interest and suggested making a model of the raft to the scale of the lake that stretched sixty miles from Ithaca to Seneca Falls. The students responded enthusiastically and worked closely with the teacher as well as in small groups with each other to design the raft, solicit funds and materials from local businesses, learned arithmetic by doing the calculations to build the raft to scale and finally launched their "sea" worthy craft on Lake Cayuga. They had attached a note to the mast asking that the school be notified if the raft was found. Within a few weeks the school received a call from someone who saw it beached at the top of the lake in Seneca Falls.

I was convinced that Leah, a very bright and creative child, could benefit from East Hill. I had been very disturbed by the lack of interest she showed in her kindergarten experience. She never complained about going to school but she never offered information about what she did and had only minimal response to my questions. I was concerned, too, that she would be damaged by the traditional attitudes about female children. While I was not sure about the attitudes of the teachers at East Hill towards sex roles, I hoped they would treat boys and girls equally.

Just before school opened Tod Rossi, one of my first students at Ithaca College, came to visit. We had become friendly that first year

and our relationship had developed into a deep friendship. Tod was not like any other male I knew. He seemed to easily share whatever I was doing. If I was folding laundry when he came over, he would join me in picking the clothes out of the basket and adding them to my piles. If I was about to go grocery shopping he was happy to go along. Tod actually seemed to enjoy "women's work," especially cooking which we often did together. Both children adored him. He and Leah had very long and involved conversations and he was able to relate to Neal as no one else was. If Neal was withdrawn, Tod was usually able to break through his defense and bring him out.

Tod said he had come back to Ithaca early to look for a place to live because the arrangement he had made in the spring had fallen through. I got very excited. We had an extra room on the second floor. Tod could live with us. I would not even have to designate his responsibilities. I knew that he would help me in whatever housework I was doing. I asked him if he would like to live with us and he seemed as excited as I was. I ran upstairs to talk to Jake who also agreed that Tod would fit into our family very well.

Although my life seemed not to have changed very much since that night in Woods Hole, I was anxious for Dr. Olum to return from her August vacation. I wanted to talk with her about what had happened and thank her for her acceptance of me. As the day of my appointment approached, I began to consider stopping therapy. She had been wonderfully helpful and I wanted to continue to see her periodically to discuss Neal's progress, but I had had enough of talking about my

feelings. I wanted to see what it would be like to work things out for myself. When I told her about the spinning and the calm that followed when I thought of her and our therapy, she said she was glad she had been helpful. I had, she thought, really begun to accept myself. I felt very warm towards her, but did not reconsider my decision to stop seeing her weekly.

I was feeling more and more comfortable with myself. It was as if a great weight had been lifted from my shoulders. Maybe I was hard to get along with for most people, but that was who I was. There were people I respected, after all, who seemed to like who I was. If Jake was having problems with me he would have to tell me.

One afternoon, he did just that. He told me that it had been very hard on him to have me work at Cornell and to be so involved in the women's movement. He said he really didn't understand me. His words began to sound familiar. When he said that I was really a stranger to him, I knew that he was going to begin to complain about how difficult I was and this time I was not going to listen. Without thinking about what I was going to say, I launched into a tirade. I told Jake that I was who I was and he was going to have to deal with that person not someone he wanted me to be. If he didn't know who I was he could find out. As far as I was concerned it was becoming clearer to me each day that we had no relationship left. If he was interested in building one, I would be open to that but he would have to show me by his behavior that he was really committed to relating to me. I was through, I said, with being responsible for his feelings. If he wanted to relate to me

it would have to be to the person who sat before him, not some wife he had in his psyche. I was, for the first time in my life, directly and openly angry with him.

When I was finished saying what I had to say, I got up to leave the room. Jake walked towards me, put his hands on my shoulders and said he was in awe of my ability to get angry. He hoped, he said, that I would help him with his fear of my anger. I was furious but only said that I could not do that. He would have to use his own resources. I turned and left the room.

I was astounded by my reaction to Jake. I had had no idea what I was going to say to him when I started to speak. It seemed as if it had all rushed out of me. As I articulated how I felt I realized that I was being quite honest when I said that we no longer had a relationship. I also knew then that it had ended that night in August when I ceased to trust him. I had no intention of leaving him. I honestly would be open to developing a relationship with him if he was able to show me that he was really committed to it. Until he made some serious moves in my direction, however, I had no intention of continuing my role as sympathetic wife.

There were other things I realized I would no longer do. The housework became an issue again but this time I did not think it was petty to expect Jake to do his share. Tod would, of course help, but I didn't think it was fair for us to clean the whole house while Jake did nothing. It was also important, I thought, for the children who were nine and seven years old to begin to do their part. They would be

responsible for keeping their rooms straightened and one of us would help them dust and vacuum. They could also help to set and clear the dinner table. I presented Jake with my plan. He didn't have much to say about it except to agree to participate.

I was also going to give up giving dinner parties for people who were not my friends. Jake had been chair of his department for two years and that September Tod and I had prepared a beautiful feast for his colleagues and their wives. We had had a wonderful time cooking that day but as the guests arrived I wanted to stay in the kitchen. I didn't really know his colleagues very well but I did know, from years of seeing them at college functions, that I had little in common with most of them and their wives. I did emerge from the kitchen to greet the guests but when the party was over, I told Jake that it had been the last one I would host for his colleagues. If he felt that as department chair he had to entertain them, he could either hire a caterer or take them out. They were not my friends or colleagues and I had no desire to play the part of a dutiful faculty wife.

I seemed to be very clear on what I would not do but I was less sure about what I wanted. I was enjoying teaching but I was beginning to feel that I needed more education. I felt as if I was only one step ahead of my students. The thought of going back to school for a masters had occurred to me but I had no idea what I wanted to study. Because I had started teaching in the English department, I had used literature in my courses. I had always enjoyed reading novels but I had no interest in a serious study of literature.

I also knew that the courses I was teaching through Female Studies would be my last connection with the Program. Although I hadn't thought it was possible, the situation in the Program had gotten worse. I heard from Susan Bereaud's husband, Jacques, that a proposal for a Female Studies Program had been placed on the agenda of the academic matters committee of the Arts College. The proposal we were drafting in the steering committee was nearly complete and we had hoped to present it to the dean and the academic matters committee within the month. This proposal was obviously another one. I asked Jacques if he had seen it and he responded that as a member of the committee he had received a copy and had become alarmed when he saw that the names of many of the steering committee did not appear on the document. Jacques, whom I did not consider to be a liberal, was also concerned by the proposal's conservatism. He wanted to argue against it and we agreed to meet to discuss strategy.

Even I was amazed at how duplicitious the group had been. They had worked with the steering committee on our proposal and were, at the same time, drafting an alternate which they presented before ours. We had seemed to be making some headway in the committee. Now I knew why. Jenny and her supporters never intended our proposal to reach the administration. As I read through the proposal presented by the newly constituted Female Studies committee, I was sure it would be approved. It was just what the Cornell administration would want. Jenny's statement about the non-political nature of Female Studies was included as well as the recommendation that the program would be in existence for only three

years. All appointments in the program would be in conjunction with departments thereby insuring that Female Studies would have no autonomy. The steering committee was replaced by the advisory board that Jenny had proposed in her original draft but this time student representation was eliminated. The words "innovative, experimental, and interdisciplinary" did not appear in the document.

While I was not sure that Jacques' opposition to the program was based solely on its lack of innovation and I wondered if he would support any program that focused on a study of women, I urged him to fight its passage. I also suggested that he inform the other members of the academic matters committee that the proposal before them was not the work of the duly constituted Female Studies steering committee but a "junta." He assured me he would do what he could to see that the program was not approved.

I called Jane to tell her what I had learned and she and I called the other members of the steering committee whose names did not appear on the proposal. They all urged me to try to contact the dean before the meeting of the academic matters committee. My suspicion that the dean had full knowledge of the "coup" in Female Studies was confirmed when he did not return any of my many phone calls. The "junta" presented the proposal and, just as I had thought, it was approved. There would clearly be no place for me or any of my concerns in the new Female Studies Program. The fight was over and we had lost.

C H A P T E R X I X

I worried about what I would do the next year. It seemed as if I had no possibility of finding a teaching job in Ithaca with the credentials I had and after my experience with Female Studies, the thought of an administrative position was anathema to me. Since I was only teaching one course a semester that year, I had time not only to think about what my next step would be but to do some reading I had had to put off. One day I picked up a book I had bought shortly after Pat had given me her list of books on women. A Century of Struggle had sat on my shelf for almost a year. It was, I thought, important to know about women's campaign to win the right to vote but I had never liked history and after the 1968 Democratic convention was less interested than ever in electoral politics. I started to read early one morning after the children went to school and was shocked when Tod came in and asked if I was going to have lunch. I had not noticed that hours had passed since I had opened to the first page of Flexner's book.

This history was clearly not like any history I had ever read. It was about me and my struggles as a woman, despite the fact that neither of my parents was even in this country when the 19th amendment was passed. Nonetheless, Flexner recounted my history, the struggles and achievements of women who went before me. It excited me to find that those of us involved in the women's liberation movement had foremothers. We were not the first to complain about women's roles and also not the first to try to do something about it.

By the time I finished the book I realized that I was hungry to learn more about the women who had gone before me. I also thought more about the kind of history Flexner wrote. Although the subject was different, reading Flexner had reminded me of Dr. Klitzke's lectures. He, too, had talked about what people had thought in earlier times and had also focused some on what their daily lives were like. My history courses, on the other hand, had been a boring recitation of facts, dates, battles and presidents. Maybe, I thought, what I really liked about Dr. Klitzke's lectures was the history not the art.

The more I thought about women's history, the more excited I got. I could work on the questions that Brenda and I had talked about so often: what were the historical bases for the similarities and differences between Black and white women? What was the relationship between the mistress of the plantation and the female slaves she owned? Did Black and white women see any commonality of cause as women? Flexner's book had included some of the material on Black women as well as a discussion of the relationship between Black and white female abolitionists. I was hungry to learn more.

Just before the coup in Female Studies we had arranged to have Jill Conway come to Cornell for a lecture. She was a historian whose work focused on women. I looked forward to her talk. I was anxious to see if I would react in the same way I had to reading Flexner. I also began to look for more books on the history of women. I remembered that in a conversation with Pat she had mentioned a book about two white women who were raised in the South before the Civil War and had left because of

their inability to live with slavery. I hoped that I had written its name on one of my lists. I looked through them and found it--The Grimke Sisters of South Carolina by Gerda Lerner. The night of the Conway lecture came just as I had finished it. Lerner's work was another book that had riveted my attention. The lecture, about women evangelists, was just as fascinating as the two women's history books. As I listened I realized that it was very reassuring to know that women had gone before me. We of the Women's Liberation Movement were not the first women to agitate for our rights. It was equally important to know that the image of 19th century women as docile and frail creatures who were totally dependent on men was far from the whole truth. Those of us who were not content with the present power relationship between the sexes were not fighting a brand new battle.

After the lecture I asked Conway where she thought I could go to study women's history with a particular focus on Black and white women. She said that a few scholars were working both in women's history and Black history. The most important work being done, in her opinion, was that of Herbert Gutman at the University of Rochester. Rochester was only two hours away from Ithaca. If I could manage to take classes two or three days a week it might be possible, I thought, to commute. I wrote to Gutman the next day. I also wrote to the admissions offices of the other schools that were within a two hour commute from Ithaca.

Going back to school would only be possible, I thought, if Jake were willing to do more than he was to help with the children and the running of the house. I also needed to discuss what it would mean to us

financially. As usual, he seemed supportive. He thought we could manage with just his salary and he was willing to take out a loan if we needed it for my tuition. I felt very warm towards him and thought that it might be possible for us to save our relationship. As he told me how to go about applying to graduate school, I realized once again that few men would be so willing to be so helpful in their wives' attempts to grow.

I registered for the Graduate Record Exams, which Jake told me were like the SATs. I would take them in October and I realized that I would have to study for them if I expected to do well. I also realized that I knew virtually nothing about history. Jane Camhi was very helpful in suggesting books for me to read and I decided to take courses in history at Ithaca College. As the semester came to an end, I was anxious to begin my work. Jake had agreed that it would be all right if I did not look for another job. I would spend the year learning history and studying for the GREs.

I needed a place to work. Tod was in the spare room on the second floor and the only other room was in the attic, much too hot during the summer for serious work. There was no other place except to fit a small desk into the end of Jake's study. He thought that would be fine. He could work in his office at school if he needed to be alone. I went out and bought a desk, a chair and some wood for shelves. Once my little nook was ready, I went to work. I was amazed at my discipline. As soon as breakfast was over I was at my desk reading history, studying lists of words, and struggling with algebra and geometry.

I worried about what would happen to my routine when the children were out of school for the summer, but as things worked out, both of the children were occupied. The director of the speech clinic that Neal had been attending for a few years recommended that he attend the clinic's camp. He felt that Neal had made great progress and an unstructured summer would set him back. We had also been pleased with Neal's progress. He was learning to read and to do simple arithmetic. Because he was still not comfortable with other children we thought it would be hard on him to stay at the camp overnight, but since it was close to Ithaca we decided to enroll him in their day program. Leah would be with Tod for the bulk of the day. He had decided to stay in Ithaca for the summer and had come up with the idea of running a day camp out of our house for a group of children Leah's age. On nice days he would take them to one of the many parks in the area so they would be in the house only when it rained.

After Neal was at the camp for a few days, the director suggested that we reconsider our decision to have him attend only on a daily basis. Neal seemed to be quite comfortable at camp and he assured us the counselors would monitor him closely. If Neal seemed to be very disturbed, we could certainly return to our original arrangement. I was nervous about leaving Neal at camp but I thought he would probably be all right. While he was still not able to play with his peers, he had developed an ability to relate to adults. The teachers and the students who worked at the clinic repeatedly told us that they loved working with

Neal and we could see for ourselves how he endeared himself to the students who regularly came to our house.

The night before we took him to camp we explained that he would be staying and that we would come to visit on parents' day. I had felt he understood what we told him. When we left him the next morning he looked very sad. A normal reaction to being left at camp, I thought. As Jake drove the car away I looked back and saw Neal walking up to one of the counselors and smiling. I told Jake to look back. Neal, I said, would do just fine at camp. Jake, however, was very upset. He was worried about Neal and I thought I saw tears in his eyes.

I became impatient with what I saw as Jake's inability to see Neal's strengths. He had continued to focus on Neal's future despite the fact that none of the professionals who worked with him would venture to make a prognosis. His continual progress defied any of the previous diagnoses. He was even beginning to show signs of independence. He wanted to walk the mile and a half to school and was able to save money from his allowance to buy records and books. As I looked at Jake again, I saw that I had been right. He was crying. I repeated that it seemed to me that Neal was fine but he did not answer me. Jake, not Neal, was the one who was having the problem with overnight camp.

I told Jake that I was sick of his negativism about Neal. He did have some strengths and Jake ought to recognize them. Neither of us said any more but I thought to myself that Jake and I really were very different and I was not pleased with who he was.

My feeling that Jake was unable to support Neal's strengths was corroborated one day a few weeks later. It was a very hot weekend and we had gone to the pool at the College. Leah came out of the water and sat on the blanket. She looked at Jake and told him she was afraid to put her face in the water. He told her that he knew how she felt. It was okay, he said, to be afraid of the water. I waited for him to say more but he didn't. I thought to myself that Jake would be content if Leah never conquered her fear. I was disgusted with him. He didn't seem to want either of the children to develop into strong adults.

When I calmed down I told Leah that her father was right. There was nothing wrong with being afraid, but it was also possible to learn to do things that were scary. We all had fears about certain things but they didn't have to stop us. If she wanted to go in the water with me I would help her put her face in. She said she'd try. Within a few weeks she was swimming.

I had a sense that I might need to protect both children from Jake's influence. It seemed clear to me that he didn't expect, or perhaps didn't even want them to be strong and independent. I realized that summer that I had been trying to counteract Jake's negativism about Neal for years without being fully conscious of what I was doing. It also became clear to me that I had been struggling to impress Leah with the knowledge that she was a capable little person despite the negative messages from her father. For Jake, feeling that one was not adequate to a task was good enough reason not to try it. His weakness, I realized, had formed me into the position of being the parent who pushed the

children to do what was difficult for them. Just as he had undermined me, I felt that Jake was subtly manipulating Neal and Leah.

Just about the same time I realized that Jake might be a negative influence on the children and that his attitudes had forced me into the position of being the demanding parent, I had also become very angry at men. I was conscious of sexism everywhere and felt compelled to at least name it. It seemed to me that the world men had created was in their image and for their benefit. I excluded Black and working class men from my analysis but I knew that in individual cases they were often as oppressive to the women in their lives as white men of the middle and upper classes. Jake was working class and while he was not openly authoritarian and often seemed very supportive, he had put me down in ways that were less obvious, though just as damaging.

I began to see the world as divided into male and female, each sex having its own set of values. While the values of men and women were clearly created by socialization and were not biological, they were nonetheless powerful and pervasive. All the reading I was doing as well as what I saw around me every day corroborated my analysis. Women were generally interested in relationships--my own years of endless attempts to "help" Jake relate better were a powerful testament to that. Men depended on women for this but on the other hand, they derived their sense of worth only from the admiration of other men. Male homosexuality was, I thought, only the ultimate expression of sexism. Most men were totally unable to see women as human beings.

I thought about the pictures of nude women I had found among Bill Seibert's contact prints. He had devoted his life to the struggle for justice and at the same time he saw women's bodies as objects. Jack Goldman was another devoted worker in the cause of freedom for everyone but women. The young people we knew who lived in communes, I now remembered, thought they were trying to change everything about the way they had been raised. Most of them had grown up in the suburbs and they were turning their backs on the conformity of that life required. They built their own houses, grew their own food, lived without electricity and running water but they brought their attitudes toward the role of women with them. None of the men helped with the preparation of food nor did they lift a finger to assist in the awesome task of cleaning up without running water. I remembered how tired the women in the purported idyllic communities had looked.

Some men, of course, were different but they were so rare that I assumed men to be pigs until they showed me by their behavior that they did not hold traditional views about women. I usually thought Jake was among the best one could expect, but even he was often disappointing in subtle ways. I now understood very well how Brenda felt about whites. She had told me that until white people proved to her by the way they acted that they were struggling against the racism in themselves as well as in with other whites, they could not trust them. What had seemed to me to be an understandable but somewhat paranoid response now seemed totally appropriate.

My acid test for men was how they responded to the behavior of other men and how they felt about men in general. Tod shared my views completely. He was as disgusted with most male behavior as I was. Although Brenda's friend Ray did not share the hatred that Tod and I felt towards men, I was able to talk to him about women's issues and feel that he was taking what I said very seriously. The racism that he experienced as a Black man had made it possible, I thought, to understand the sexism that women faced.

Most of the other men I knew either ridiculed my arguments about the existence of sexism or quickly changed the subject. Others seemed to delight in harassing me. Julian Smith, a faculty member at the College whom I knew because his daughter Una was a good friend of Leah's, only referred to me as "Leah's mommy" despite my direct requests that he call me by my name. One day he asked me if I thought there should be men's studies programs at colleges and universities. Before I could respond he told me that it only seemed reasonable that if there were female studies programs that there should be something for men. My answer was that we already had men's studies--it was called education. He roared with laughter. I stopped talking to him from then on unless it was absolutely necessary.

To my great disappointment, most of the women I knew in Ithaca shared neither my concern about sexism nor my anger at men for their participation in keeping women in our socially prescribed roles. Friends who were my age seemed to think I had gone off the deep end and acquaintances whom I saw at social gatherings were reluctant to talk to

me. Some of their husbands, on the other hand, were only too anxious to argue with me. Going to parties had become a chore. Because I was identified as a "women's libber" I felt like a marked woman.

Most of my time was spent with Brenda, Ray and Tod. Less frequently I saw some of the young women from the Women's Liberation Front. While I enjoyed my relationships with my friends, I felt the lack of a friendship with a woman my age who was married and a mother. I looked forward to the occasional trips Jake and I took to Northampton to visit the Sackreys. It was a relief to talk with Pat and be able to share my feelings with someone whose circumstance was similar to mine. I was also corresponding with Ann Lipke who, not feeling any more comfortable with her maiden name than she did with the surname of her former husband, had taken Jones as her last name. She had finished her degree and was teaching at a Black college in Texas. I loved her visits. After Jake went to bed we talked long into the night. Living in Texas had given Ann a sense of the pervasiveness of racism in our country and she had turned into as avid a women's liberationist as Pat and I. Our new consciousness had changed the quality of our relationship dramatically. I felt a very deep bond with both Ann and Pat and I was grateful for my relationship with them. They helped me from feeling totally isolated in my almost constant preoccupation with women's issues.

The summer ended and while it felt strange not to be going back to work, I looked forward to continuing my preparation for the GREs and taking more courses in history at the College. I had learned as much math as I thought I needed to make a reasonable score on the test and

now knew lots of words I had never heard of before. The survey course in American history I had taken at the College had not been inspiring but I did learn some basics.

The children had both had a good summer. Leah had enjoyed Tod's "camp" and was anxious to begin her second year at East Hill. At six years of age she had become quite a women's liberationist. One day I overheard her telling her best friend Edward Gooding that girls were just as good as boys. I listened for his response and when none came I heard Leah's voice again. This time she demanded an answer by repeating what she had said and adding a fairly threatening "right Edward?" He did agree and they went on with their game. I hoped she really believed what she was saying. I knew that even with my help she was going to have a difficult time resisting the sexist barrage of the society.

Neal's camp experience seemed to have been positive. He had performed very well in the speech exercises and while he had not related much to the other children, he seemed to have enjoyed the experience. As I had hoped, he was well liked by the counselors and adored by the few who worked with him most intensely. I was, however, not entirely happy with the camp. Our visit on parents' day had been very disturbing. After the parents met with their children's counselors and watched them go through some of their exercises we were gathered on the main field for what I thought would be a general meeting. The director addressed us and I began to feel very strange about the way he talked about "these" children. I tried to tell myself that I was too sensitive. They were, after all, children who had serious speech problems.

I waited for him to finish so we could spend more time with Neal but I didn't know that this part of the day was to include a performance. A number of children were led onto the stage and after their particular problems were described by the director they were urged to go through their exercises so that everyone could see what good work the camp was doing. I was grateful that Neal was not among those chosen for the display.

As I sat through what seemed an interminable variety of speech pathologies I thought of the cerebral palsy telethons I had watched. For a number of years Emik had regularly appeared and the family always sat through hours of the telethons waiting to see him. I had hated watching the children struggle to show how well they walked so that more people would send in money. Recently I had turned on the television and saw the familiar set of a telethon. I sat down to watch it for a while. A great deal of money had been pledged during the segment and Edie Gorme, the host, was overcome with gratitude. She looked into the camera and with tears in her eyes thanked the viewers. She then said she was so proud to be part of the telethon because only in America could such a wonderful thing happen. I shouted back at the television that only in America do children have to be paraded like specimens before millions of people to raise money for research. I turned off the set and vowed I would never watch a telethon again even if Emik was going to be on it. Now I sat before the same kind of display and tried to contain my tears of rage.

I did have to admit, however, that the camp seemed to have done Neal some good. He was easier to understand and was proud of his achievement. Even the telethons, I remembered, had done some good. In addition to raising money they did educate the public about cerebral palsy. I had noticed a change in people's attitudes towards Emik. When I was a child and out with Emik, people on the street stared at him and sometimes even made harsh comments. The telethons had made people realize that cerebral palsy was a birth defect that damaged the ability of the brain to coordinate muscles and that people who were afflicted with it were not freaks. The camp, like the telethons, had its good points. I would consider sending Neal back the next summer but I didn't have to like the director or his performance.

As September approached I was fairly satisfied with my life. Although Jake had not been any more direct about trying to relate to me, he was generally supportive of what I wanted to do. I was pleased with myself. I had proved to myself that I had enough discipline to follow a rather strict regimen of studying on my own and that I could set my own goals and priorities. The one thing that was upsetting me that fall was that Tod was moving. He had decided to work in special education and had applied and was admitted to a graduate school in New Haven. There was no doubt that we would keep in touch but he had become so much a part of the fabric of my daily life that I knew I would miss him terribly. We not only shopped, cooked, cleaned and did the laundry together but we read some of the same books and shared similar perspectives on

almost everything. He was a good and loving friend who had been more like family to me than any of my blood kin.

With Tod leaving I was anxious to find someone who would at least help me with the children. The plan for dividing the cleaning tasks had gone fairly well though there were still some problems. Jake did his part but only when I told him it needed to be done. What had seemed a petty argument on my part only a year ago was now a serious battle. By only ceaning when I said it was necessary, it seemed to me that Jake was reaffirming that housework was primarily my responsibility. There were also other ways he underscored this attitude. When he did wash the floor he always left the dirty mop in the bathtub. I either had to ask him to wash it and put it away and then wait a few days and ask him again or I do it myself. Taking care of the children was still almost totally my job. Jake found it difficult to get home during the day and I did not feel I could ask him to leave work.

Just after Tod left Sonny Gooding, my neighbor and Edward's mother, told me that one of her husband's best students was looking for a place to live for that year. Sonny said she was wonderful with the children whom the student had frequently cared for when she and her husband went out. She and her mother would be in town the next day and if I was interested, she would bring them over. I told her I was very interested and the next day I met Nancy Lanni, who preferred to be called Lanni, and after a short interview sensed that she was a very responsible young woman. I offered her my proposition of room and board in exchange for

help with cleaning and child care. She accepted, choosing the small room in the attic for her own.

Lanni moved in a few days before the college opened and after she had unpacked I saw her sitting on the porch looking very sad. I went out and asked her if everything was all right. Her room was fine, she said, she was just feeling lonesome for the people she had worked with that summer. When I asked her where she had worked and she responded that it was at a camp near her home in Poughkeepsie--the Metropolitan Baptist Camp, I was very disturbed. Had I invited a Jesus freak into my home? I was greatly relieved when Lanni explained that the camp, while funded and administered by the Baptist church, did not have a religious orientation. The campers and counselors were mostly from New York City and all but one or two were Black. It was a hard transition for her to come back to Ithaca College. She didn't always feel comfortable among the other students who were from wealthy families and almost all white. I asked her to come inside and I put a Motown record on the stereo. She perked up and began to show me how some of the kids at the camp danced. Neal and Leah came in and Lanni invited them to dance with her. As I looked at the three of them dancing and laughing, I knew we would get along just fine.

Despite my initial feelings that Lanni would be a good addition to our household, I was amazed at how quickly she became part of the family. Like Tod, she was Italian and loved to cook and eat. We often made dinner together and even if we didn't share the actual preparation of the meal, we shared the enjoyment of good food. Jake usually ate

without saying much about the food but Lanni responded to each dish. I found that I often thought of her when planning dinners. Her relationship with Neal and Leah was excellent. While she enjoyed being with them and they loved her, she also expected them to respect her space when she was busy. I considered it a great stroke of luck to have found Lanni.

Early in October Tod called to say he had a three day weekend and had found a ride to Ithaca. I could hardly wait for the weekend. I had missed him as much as I thought I would. Lanni and I planned the meals. I was sure that they would like each other and I thought if we all cooked together it would give them a great opportunity to get to know each other. Tod arrived just as Lanni and I had begun the sauce for the lasagna. We greeted each other with great hugs and when Neal and Leah heard Tod they ran into the kitchen and there were more hugs and screams. Jake came down from his study, shook hands with Tod, stayed in the kitchen for a short time and then went back upstairs. Tod, Lanni and I settled down to stuffing artichokes, tasting and seasoning the sauce and talking. I felt great waves of warmth and love in my kitchen which by that time smelled wonderfully of garlic, oregano and tomatoes.

When we had finished assembling the lasagna Tod said that Margaret, the woman he had been seeing the summer before he left, was coming over. Did I mind if she stayed for dinner? It was, of course, fine with me. Jake had also invited two of his students, Michael Mombria and Alfred Ehrenclou. We weren't too fond of Michael and Alfred was practically a

stranger but we all felt so good being together that we felt even two political science students could not change the atmosphere.

When Tod went upstairs to be with Neal and Leah, Lanni and I cleaned up the kitchen and got the salad and the garlic bread ready. Tod and the children came down just as Margaret came in the kitchen door. Neal and Leah set the table and the front doorbell rang. I thought it was probably Jake's students and waited for him to answer the door. I felt absolutely happy. Tod was home, he and Lanni seemed like old friends and the table was laden with wonderful food I had prepared with people I loved.

Towards the end of the meal I sat back to observe the scene that was giving me so much pleasure. I looked at Jake's end of the table and saw that he was holding forth on some topic while Michael and Alfred listened. The people at my end of the table were laughing and talking together and I suddenly realized how far apart Jake and I had grown. The result of my refusal to perform the wifely duties of entertaining Jake's friends and colleagues had resulted in each of us developing a separate set of friends and it was clear to me that our preferences were very different. Strangely, I didn't care. Being at my end of the table was pure joy. If Jake could not or would not join me where I was, then we would have to be separate.

I was brought back to the conversation when I heard Margaret suggest that we all go to the gay dance she had heard was being held that night at SUNY Binghamton. Her friends had told her that a woman's band would be playing. Tod, Lanni and I thought that going to a dance would

be a perfect way to end a wonderful evening. I had gone to a few gay dances with Ellen Peters and had enjoyed myself enormously. While the atmosphere had not been as wonderful as it had been at the dance during the women's festival, there had been the same feeling of ease. The men did not have any interest in picking us up and the women were friendly but not aggressive in any way.

I never thought that Jake and his students would consider doing something as wild as going to a gay dance. They hesitated for a few minutes before saying that they would prefer to stay home. I was just as glad. We wouldn't have to try to find a sitter on short notice. It was a nice dance but not wonderful. We left before it was over and came home to eat the rest of the lasagna.

The week after Tod left I took the GREs. While taking the tests had been a grueling experience, I felt good because it was the first time in my life I had been so well prepared. I put away my vocabulary flashcards and continued to read history. I also began to think seriously about graduate schools. I heard from a friend that there was a graduate student in history at Syracuse University who had some interest in women's issues. I went to meet with her and heard very discouraging reports about the school. Syracuse was, she said, a very difficult place for a woman to be and very few of the faculty would even allow that the study of women was a legitimate field of inquiry. She had hoped to focus her dissertation on women but had changed her mind when she realized that she would probably be penalized for her choice of topic. Although I hated the thought of being at Cornell, I got an

application and thought I would consider it if nothing else looked better.

Early in November, I heard from Herbert Gutman. He had left Rochester and my letter had been forwarded to City College where he was teaching at that time. In his judgment, he told me, it would be very hard to do any work on women at Rochester. He did have a suggestion for me, however. He knew of some women at SUNY Binghamton who were doing interesting work in women's history. I wrote to the department immediately telling them of my interest in Black and white women's history and received a reply from Mary Ryan. She was preparing to teach a course on the history of women the next year and would like to meet me.

I drove down to Binghamton in a state of excitement at the possibility of working with someone who was interested enough in women's history to be preparing to teach a course. I was very encouraged by our conversation. While there was no formal Female Studies program on the campus, Mary told me that there were a few women interested in women's history. She also thought I could find someone to work with in the fairly large Black Studies department. As I rose to leave she shook my hand and said she would be delighted to have me as her TA next year.

After meeting with the director of graduate studies in history and getting an application from the graduate school, I almost flew back to Ithaca. As I drove over the narrow and winding road, I really felt that my life was coming together.

My new sense of confidence and euphoria made me think about applying for a fellowship. I had seen flyers for the Danforth fellowship for

women when I was at Female Studies. It was specifically designed for women who were returning to school after an extended absence. As I filled out my application I thought of how much the women's movement had done for me. I had been a mediocre student who had no real aspirations and here I was filling out an application for a fellowship from a nationally known foundation.

With my application to SUNY Binghamton and the Danforth Foundation in the mail I could devote more time to the two courses I was taking and I decided to start swimming regularly. Lanni, who was working towards her senior lifesaving certificate, promised to help me with my stroke. The first day in the pool was very discouraging. I didn't know if I would be able to swim one length but by the end of the week I was up to eight laps and had set my goal for a mile. Swimming was the one sport that had been emphasized at George Washington since students in city high schools had to pass a swimming test in order to graduate. It felt wonderful to be in the pool and to be able to swim for what seemed to me a very long time without stopping. On Friday nights Lanni and I took the children with us. Leah was learning the crawl and Neal, who had never been afraid of the water, was also learning to swim.

Because of my friendship with Lanni and Tod I no longer doubted my ability to make friends but I was feeling somewhat isolated. Ellen Peters and her family had gone to California for a year and since I had stopped going to parties I didn't meet many new people. I was also disturbed because my relationship with Brenda was beginning to be difficult. I knew for some time that she had been upset but I didn't know

exactly why. Certainly being at Ithaca College was not easy. Many of the faculty had long since tired of the novelty of having a highly articulate and outspoken Black woman in their classes and I knew from things that Jake had said that they now resented Brenda. She did not easily accept their authority. It was also clear that the racism at Ithaca College and Cornell, where she took many of her classes, had not lessened. I tried to be patient and understanding of her position but our contact at the end of the fall semester had been painful for me. She seemed very harsh and I often had the distinct impression that she was responding to me not as an individual but as a white person. I had always known that race was like a third party in our relationship, that no matter how close we were there were important things we could not know about each other because she was Black and I was white.

I decided that I cared too much for Brenda to allow our friendship to slowly deteriorate. I called her and told her that it had been very hard to be with her for some time and while I cared deeply for her, I could not be her "white lady." She was quiet for a minute and then softly said I was right. She had been nasty and she was sorry. She hadn't realized, she said, that her hostility had been so obvious. What had been troubling her was that there were serious divisions among the Black students at Ithaca College and Cornell. The difficulties of living in Ithaca and attending the basically white and racist institutions were taking their toll. The Black students had begun to turn on each other. It was difficult, she said, for her to be around whites--even me. I had become a "white lady." Brenda said she was glad that I

had told her how I felt. She hadn't realized, she said, how much I cared for her. I felt sure that I had saved our friendship and I was enormously relieved.

Although Brenda was very important to me and I loved being with Lanni, I still missed knowing a woman my own age. I was delighted when one evening Ann called to ask if she could come to visit. She had left Texas for a job at City College and I had hoped that we would see each other more now that she was in New York. She arrived on a Thursday night and we stayed up very late, as usual, after Jake went to bed. She seemed more content than I had ever known her to be and when we could stay awake no longer I went to bed very happy to have such a good friend.

The next morning we continued our conversation but I noticed that Ann seemed a little nervous. I asked her if anything was wrong and she told me that she had something very important to tell me and that it was a little hard to say. I waited for her to continue and wondered if I had said something wrong, but what Ann had to tell me had nothing to do with me. She was in love, she said, with a woman. I was shocked that one of my oldest friends had become a lesbian but quickly responded that I was very happy for her. She relaxed and began to tell me about her lover. She had met Anne Bowen, a good friend of Pat's, when she had been in Northampton the previous summer. They had immediately liked each other and Ann soon realized that she felt more than friendship for Anne Bowen. As she told me about her relationship and how supportive it was, I realized that I really was happy for my friend.

When Ann rose to go upstairs to shower and dress she said she was very relieved that I had taken the news that she had "turned queer" so well. She had been worried that I would react badly. I could well understand her fears but I responded that I could see she was happier than I had ever known her to be and it seemed clear that her sense of well being was the result of her new relationship. Any fool could see that and I could only be glad that she was so happy.

After she left I sat at the table amazed at myself that I had responded so well. I had known lesbians when I worked in Female Studies. Two women in particular had worked very hard on the women's festival and had subsequently joined the steering committee. Janis and Stephanie were lovers and my initial response to them had been very positive but I didn't think much about their sexuality. As I got to know them better, however, it was impossible to ignore negative attitudes towards them because of their lesbianism. I had had many arguments with Brenda about Janice and Stephanie's right to love each other. They also talked about the difficulties they encountered and I realized that gay people were another group that was discriminated against in our society and that injustice also needed to be confronted. I decided to include something about them in my course. Janice and Stephanie, both active in the Gay Liberation Front, agreed to arrange for speakers to come into the class and suggested that I read Sappho was a Right On Woman. It was one thing to be open to the rights of gay people and another to have one of your best friends come out. I guessed I would have to think about it some more, but I really did feel happy for Ann.

When Ann came back into the kitchen she said she had had a brilliant thought while she was in the shower. One of the residential colleges at the University of Massachusetts was having a January session devoted to an exploration of racism and sexism. Pat had told her about it and she had applied and was hired to teach a course in women's literature. The course I had taught at Cornell was just the kind of thing they were interested in. I would have to change the name to include the term "sex roles," since they were very big on that phrase. It was a three week intensive session and if I got the job I could not only meet Anne but really get to know her.

I got very excited at the prospect of being away by myself for almost a month. Jake was generally off for most of the month of January but was also due for a sabbatical that semester. He had not decided what he was going to do but I thought he might be open to agreeing to let me go to Amherst. That night, when Ann went to see another friend in town, I talked with Jake about her suggestion. He said he'd have to think about it some, but it would probably be fine.

Jake really did seem to be supportive. I had talked earlier that year about changing my last name to Voski. It had been my grandmother's first name and I liked the idea of following the female line. Jake had agreed that I was not and had never been a "Ryan" and had said that if I wanted to change my name he would support me. I sometimes wondered what it was I wanted from Jake. One thing was very clear to me. He was understanding about the kinds of changes I was trying to make in my life.

He was also trying to make some changes in his life. He had been reading Carlos Castenada and had considered using his sabbatical to go to Mexico and "sit on a mountain." I was frightened by the prospect of Jake going off somewhere alone. As long as I had known him he had a tendency towards serious depressions and often drank more than I thought was wise. I worried that if he were alone in a strange country with no structure and no people he knew he might get into one of his depressions, start drinking and maybe never come back. Years earlier I had worried about his drinking. After nearly passing out at parties a few times I wondered if he might be an alcoholic, but after I had told him I would leave if he ever got that drunk again, he had moderated his drinking. While he did still drink daily he was clearly not an alcoholic since he obviously had his consumption under control. I told him my fears about his plans and he seemed to understand what I was saying.

I suggested that if he really wanted to figure things out that he should consider going to the Esolen Institute. I had read some Fritz Perls and had been amazed to discover that he wrote about what I had experienced in Woods Hole. It was a phenomenon he called "impasse." I was impressed with his insistence that each person needed to stand on his own before he could really relate to another person without needing him in a way that was mutually destructive. Esolen, a therapeutic center based on Perl's philosophy, seemed perfect for Jake. They used techniques much more dramatic than traditional therapy. Jake, who could talk about his problems endlessly, might be helped by Perl's method.

Although Jake had yet to decide what he was doing in January, I wrote to the people Ann had told me about at the University of Massachusetts to tell them I was interested in their position. Pat, who was also excited by the prospect of my being in Amherst in January, agreed to do what she could to help me get the job. She was, by that time, working at the University. The women's center she had helped form in Northampton was very successful and a group of women at the University had convinced the administration to fund a center on campus. Pat had been appointed director of the center which had been named the Everywoman's Center.

Just after Thanksgiving I got a call from one of the members of the search committee. They were, she said, very interested in my application but felt that an interview with the committee was necessary before any final decisions were made. I agreed to drive to Amherst if they could meet on a Saturday. Jake, who had since decided to go to Esolen in the spring, said it would be fine with him if I took the job. He suggested that we all go to Massachusetts together. We could use my interview as an opportunity to visit the Sackreys.

I was amazed by the interview. The search committee was composed of the Head of Residence of one of the dorms, which had recently been renamed the MacKimmie Humanity House, and a group of students who lived in the complex. I learned that the Southwest Residential College had both its own women's center which would be funding Ann's course and the one I was applying to teach and a center for racial understanding.

UMass, it seemed to me was a haven for activists and I looked forward to being part of such a community.

I went back to the Sackreys confident that the interview had gone well. My experience in Female Studies as well as my involvement in the women's movement had been invaluable assets. Pat corroborated my feeling about the campus. It was a very active place. She felt that I would get the job. I hoped she was right.

Pat and I talked some about Ann. I was anxious to know more about Anne Bowen. She was, Pat said, a very close friend who worked at the Everywoman's Center and had just begun to sing with a women's rock group, "The Deadly Nightshade." She lived in the country with the two other members of the band and another woman. They grew most of their own food, heated with wood and were making major renovations to the old farm house one of them owned. She, too, felt that Ann was happier than she had ever seen her to be. We didn't talk much about Ann's new relationship with Jake and Charles, although Pat did say that Charles also knew and liked Anne Bowen. A few days after we got back from the Sackreys, Julie Adams, the Head of Residence, called to offer me the job and I happily accepted.

Amherst truly was a feminist paradise, or so it seemed to me in January of 1973. Southwest was sponsoring four courses, all focused on sexism or racism. There were also many cultural events scheduled for the three week session.

I had a room in the dorm with a small refrigerator. It felt very strange to be living in one room and one without a kitchen at that, but

Julie and her husband Peter were very hospitable and often invited me to dinner. I was also without transportation as Jake and I had one car and he had it. Despite the inconvenience of no car or kitchen, I felt free. For the first time in my adult life I was not responsible for other people. My only responsibility was to my class and that was thoroughly enjoyable.

Shortly after my arrival, I met Anne Bowen. "The Deadly Nightshade" was scheduled to play after the performance of an original play by Judith Katz, another friend of Pat's and one of the student members of the search committee that had hired me. The play, "Variations on a Dream," a kind of feminist fairy tale, was wonderfully funny and well received by the audience of mostly women. Just before the band was to begin Ann Jones came towards me with a small woman I assumed was Anne Bowen. We stiffly shook hands and said we were glad to meet each other. I knew it was important to Ann that we like each other and in my attempt to be ingratiating, I could not think of a thing to say. Anne, also, seemed to be at a loss for words. We were both, I thought, relieved when one of the other members of the "Nightshade" came to say it was time for them to go on.

I was also relieved to find that I liked the music. Judith Katz came over to welcome me to UMass and told her it felt very good to be there and I loved her play. Pat, Judy and I began to dance and before the song was over Ann joined us. I felt somehow that I had come home, not to Amherst, but to a group of women who were my community.

The three weeks passed very quickly. I got to know Anne Bowen a little better and Julie and Peter Adams and Judy Katz became friends. I met many other women I liked. I realized, too, that my feelings for Ann Jones had become more than friendship. I was attracted to her. I wondered if I, too, had "turned queer" and I was amazed at how calmly I considered that possibility. I guessed that my reaction was due to the fact that she was so obviously in love with Anne and that any real sexual involvement with her was out of the question. It was a safe attraction and I supposed that if I had been attracted to a woman who was not involved with someone else I might have been more upset by my feelings.

At the end of the session Jake came with the children to pick me up. It was nice to see them, particularly Neal and Leah, but I didn't feel ready to go home. My time in Amherst had been a relief. I had met so many women and some men who were feminists that going back to Ithaca felt like returning to an unnecessary isolation. The "Nightshade" was playing that night in a bar/restaurant in Amherst and I was very anxious to go and hear them. Dancing to the "Nightshade" would, I thought, be a fitting finale to my three weeks. Pat also wanted to go and we were both glad when Charles and Jake decided to join us. The Rusty Scupper was crowded with women and, I was relieved to see, some men as well. As I looked at the crowd I saw many of the women I had met during my stay and was amazed at the range of ages.

The band started to play and when Jake and Charles said they didn't feel like dancing, Pat and I danced together. We decided to try to

Lindy and we laughed as we realized that neither of us knew how to lead and that we were both unwilling to try to follow. We danced through the whole set; sometimes Ann or other women we knew joined us. Jake and Charles were still sitting at the table drinking. When the band returned for their second set we asked them again to join us but they refused. We said that other men were dancing and seemed to be having a good time, but Charles said they were fine. Pat and I had no intention of sitting out the set and got up to dance.

After the first song I saw Jake and Charles get up. I thought they were going to join us but Jake came to say they were leaving. I told him I wanted to stay and could probably find a ride back to the Sackreys. Pat was talking to Charles. I hoped she wasn't going to leave. We were having such a good time. She came back to the dance floor and started to dance wildly. She leaned over and said that Charles said he was leaving. I said I knew that. Pat explained that he didn't say he was leaving the bar but that he was leaving. I asked Pat what she thought he meant as she said she wasn't sure. She had decided that whatever he meant, she was staying. I didn't know what to think. I told Pat that if she wanted to go, it would be fine with me to leave but she insisted that she wanted to stay.

Within a few minutes I had forgotten about Charles and it seemed that Pat had too. Despite the fact that there were a few men on the floor the atmosphere at the Scupper was like the other women's dances I had attended but this time it was even better. There were women my age

there and I was dancing with two of my oldest friends. It was like a revival--a celebration of women together.

When the band finished for the night, Ann suggested that we all go out to get something to eat. Since neither of us seemed ready for the evening to end, we happily accepted her invitation. On the way to the restaurant Pat whispered to me that she wondered if Charles would be there when we got home. I said we could go straight home if she wanted to but she replied that she had decided when Charles left the Scupper that she was going to do what she wanted to do not what she thought she ought to do.

While we waited for our food Pat and I talked about the difficulties of living with our husbands. We agreed that they were very weak and they needed to maintain a facade of strength to hide their weakness from others and themselves. As we continued to complain about them I felt that both Ann Jones and Anne Bowen thought we were too harsh. I thought it was easy for them to be sympathetic to Jake and Charles, and perhaps to men in general, since they did not live with them. I wondered if lesbians, because they were not involved with men sexually, were better able to see their side. It would be ironic, I thought, if the women who were branded as male haters were, in reality, the very women who might not be filled with hatred for men. I was, however, too tired to begin that conversation that night.

It was very late when we got back to Pat's house. All the lights were off and we fully expected that Jake and Charles would be asleep but we found them wrapped in blankets and sitting in front of a dying fire.

They didn't look up when we came in. We said hello anyway. They continued to stare at the embers in the fireplace. We went upstairs and I whispered to Pat that we had come from life into a room full of death. She agreed. We said goodnight and I fell asleep before Jake came to bed.

The atmosphere at breakfast was strained but no one mentioned what had happened the previous evening. Pat and I tried to make conversation with Jake and Charles but ended up talking to each other when they answered only with grunts. I was anxious to leave. I had had a wonderful sendoff and now all I wanted to do was to get out of that kitchen. The ride back to Ithaca was more silent than usual but I refused to ask Jake how he was feeling. I was going to maintain my vow not to help him to express his feelings. If he had a problem, it was up to him to tell me about it.

Although I missed being in Amherst it was nice to be with the children again and, of course, to see Lanni. Shortly after I returned, Jake decided he wanted his own room and started to paint the playroom on the third floor. It was beginning to feel more and more as if he was a tenant in my house. On one of my monthly visits to Dr. Olum I asked her how she thought Neal would react if Jake and I separated. She seemed upset and asked me if I was considering a divorce. I responded that I wasn't, at the moment at least, but was convinced that Jake was not going to change. I would stay as long as he didn't make my life difficult. I knew I wasn't quite ready to be on my own yet, but that the possibility that we could rebuild our relationship looked very dim. She

said that a decision to leave could often turn into a rededication to the relationship. I didn't feel that way about my marriage. I had told Jake the previous September that our relationship was over in its present form. If he was interested in revitalizing it, he would have to show me that he was willing to take some responsibility for expressing his feelings. While he was outwardly supportive of what I wanted to do, I saw no indication that he was attempting to relate to me honestly. Dr. Olum said that Neal, like any child, would be upset by the separation of his parents but she did not think it would trigger a serious regression.

I didn't know what was going to happen to my life. I knew that what I wanted in a relationship was a kind of sharing that Jake was either incapable of or unwilling to give me. I also was unsure of my ability to manage the children, especially Neal, without him. For all of my feelings that his influence on the children was not very positive, I could talk about my fears and hopes about Neal with Jake. I was very frightened by the prospect of having full responsibility for Neal. Because he continued to learn it seemed to me that Neal's growth was very much dependent on decisions that we made about schooling and treatment as well as on the quality of our daily interaction with him. I would just have to wait to see what happened.

During this period swimming became very important to me. It seemed to me that what I needed most at this point was endurance and as I swam up and down the length of the pool for forty or fifty lengths I felt

that I was building my strength. Swimming also gave me some relief from the changes in my life that seemed to be happening so quickly.

I had heard from SUNY Binghamton. I was not only accepted into the graduate program but had been offered a small stipend. It really would be possible for me to work with Mary Ryan on the course she had planned to teach. I was also on the final list for the Danforth Fellowship. I had had an interview and thought it had gone fairly well but didn't think my response to the question about whether women constituted a class or a caste was very well developed.

After the interview I went straight to the pool. I had still not reached my goal of swimming a mile without stopping. As I swam my first few laps, the interview faded from my consciousness. After fifty laps I knew that the day that I would swim a mile had come. When I stumbled out of the pool after the seventy second length, I felt wonderful. I hoped that I had gotten the fellowship but if I didn't I knew that I had tried my best. I was proud that I had at least made it to the finals.

At the end of February I was in my study when Jake came upstairs with a letter in his hand. It was from Danforth. I opened it and read a very nice rejection letter. I gave it to Jake and after he read it he said he was sorry and turned to leave. I knew he didn't have any classes that day and I asked him where he was going. He said he had some things to do in the office. I was amazed at his lack of sensitivity. I had just learned that I had been rejected and all he could do was say he was sorry and leave. I felt that I would have gotten more empathy from a stranger. I was glad that I didn't depend on him for

emotional support. I was also very glad that he had moved into his own room. We were worse than strangers.

He had made arrangements to go to Esolen for at least a month and would be leaving soon. As I helped him prepare to leave I realized I was glad that he was going. I wondered how I would feel when he was gone and guessed that I would probably miss him somewhat. Despite the distance between us, I had been married to the man for twelve years. When I dropped him off at the airport, I felt nothing. For the next few days I expected that there would be times when something would make me think of him but my life went on as usual.

Within a few weeks, however, something did happen that was out of the ordinary but it was not that I missed Jake. Alfred Ehrenclou, Jake's student who had been at the house for dinner the night Tod came for a visit, began to visit me. Since that night in October he had come to see Jake but often ended up talking to me if Jake wasn't home. One day in February he dropped by and I said Jake was upstairs watching some sport on TV and I was chopping onions for a tomato sauce. He could have his pick of what to do. He sat down, asked for a cutting board and knife and chopped onions. When the game was over and Jake came down, Alfred and I had finished the sauce and I had asked him to stay for dinner. I found that I enjoyed being with Alfred. He seemed to be interested in who I was and also seemed to be open to feelings.

By the middle of March I realized that I was attracted to him. Since he was only nineteen years old and I was not only fifteen years older than he was but the wife of one of his professors, I thought I

would have to make the first move. I told him how I felt and he responded that he was also attracted to me. We kissed and then decided we should both think about what we wanted to do with our feelings. He was going to leave for Spring break in a couple of days. We would see each other when he got back.

I went upstairs and tried to think about why I didn't feel guilty. My husband was away trying to "get himself together" and I was contemplating an affair with one of his students. As far as I was concerned, it had been clear for some time that Jake and I didn't have a relationship. I didn't care if he had affairs. I had, in fact, urged him to sleep with one of his former students. She had obviously been in love with him for years. He did finally have a short affair with her. As much as I knew I was emotionally separated from Jake, I thought I would have some reaction but when he told me about Susan, I found that I just didn't care. Why then, I thought, shouldn't I sleep with Alfred if I felt like it?

Lanni was also going home for Spring break and when she left I realized that it was Lanni, and before her Tod that I shared my life with, not Jake. I hated being home without her and decided to go on a trip with the children. I had some friends in Boston and could also stop in Amherst for a few days and maybe work in a stop in New Haven to see Tod. The children seemed to be glad to be going on a trip and we packed up and started on the long drive to Boston.

It was the first time I had driven more than an hour by myself and I was a little nervous. I thought about my father and all the things he

said could go wrong with the car when he refused to let me drive to Alfred alone some fifteen years earlier. I also remembered a night when Jake and I were living in Wisconsin. We had gone to Madison for the day and on the way back he pulled over to the side of the road and turned off the motor. When I asked him what was wrong he said he was tired and couldn't drive any further. He had decided to sleep for a while. When he didn't make any move to get out of the driver's seat I realized that it had not occurred to him that I could drive. I was furious and did drive the rest of the way home. As I drove to Boston worried that something might happen to us with only me in charge I realized why I had no confidence as a driver. The trip had been a little too hectic, but I was glad I had done it. I had proved to myself that I was quite capable of taking a trip without another adult.

We got home the day before Jake was due back. I thought I would be glad to see him and when I met him at the airport I was. He was very excited by what he had experienced in California and when the children went to bed he told me about it. He had, he said, "gotten in touch with" parts of himself that had been repressed for years. He explained the types of techniques they used at Esolen and at one point in our conversation I had the impression that he was trying to use one of them on me. I told him to stop playing shrink and while I was angry with him, I was glad that he had gotten so much out of his time at the institute. Later that night he told me that he had had some wonderful sex while he was gone. The women he had met at Esolen, he said, were very open about sexuality and he had had the best orgasms of his life. As I

listened to his descriptions of his various sexual encounters, I thought it would probably be a good time to say something to him about my feelings for Alfred. When he seemed to be finished I quietly said that while he was gone I had realized that I was attracted to Alfred and would probably sleep with him. Jake was silent for a minute and then said he was glad to see that I was going to work on my sexual problems. An affair with Alfred would probably be good for me. I felt patronized but wondered if he might have felt the same way when I urged him to sleep with Susan.

The next day both Lanni and Alfred were due back from Spring break. When Lanni came through the door the children ran past me to greet her. I, too, was very happy to have her home. She was hungry, of course, and we went into the kitchen to get something to eat and Jake went upstairs. She told me all about her time in Poughkeepsie and I told her about my trip but did not mention Alfred. Just as she asked me about Jake's time in California, he came into the kitchen. He said he was leaving for the rest of the day. He's probably be back for dinner but he wasn't sure. I had planned a nice dinner to welcome Lanni home and realized that I didn't care if Jake were there or not.

Lanni went upstairs to unpack, the children followed her and I wondered if Alfred had returned yet. Things would, I realized, be a little more complex with Jake back in town. I would have to be very careful since I wouldn't want the whole town to know that I was having an affair with one of his students. Just before dinner Alfred called to say he was very anxious to see me. He had thought about me all during

the break. We made arrangements to meet and as I hung up I smiled to myself. I was actually going to have an affair with a man who was not even twenty years old. It was pretty crazy but I didn't care. Alfred was a very sweet boy and I thought it would, at least, be fun.

Jake did come home for dinner but was exceptionally quiet. He went to his room after he had finished eating and didn't come downstairs until Neal and Leah were in bed and Lanni had gone out to the library. He had his hat and coat on. He walked to where I was sitting and said he had decided he could no longer live with me. I was surprised but said if that was how he felt, that was how it would be. He was going out for a while and said we could talk when he got back.

As the door closed behind him I felt a profound sadness that our relationship had been such a dismal failure. It was finally over. It had actually been over for me since that day almost a year ago when I told Jake that he would have to change if we were going to have a relationship. I also felt afraid. Could I really manage alone? Could we afford to separate financially? Would I have to give up the house that I had grown to love so much? Could I parent Neal alone? I knew nothing about paying bills. Jake had always done that and taken care of the car as well. I had so much to learn. Despite my fears, however, I also felt an enormous sense of relief.

I wondered if Jake would tell me he had changed his mind when he came home. Would he suggest that we try to work something out? Although my emotions wavered between fear and relief, I was not open to reconsidering our separation. I could have lived with Jake longer,

perhaps even for a few more years, but now that I was faced with the probability that we would separate, I realized I was glad. I did not want to live with Jake any longer.

When Lanni came home I decided to tell her what had happened. I knew it was a lot for her to hear but I also knew that since she lived with us she should know about our decision. As I told her the chain of events, I realized that Jake's reason for being unable to live with me was that I was considering sleeping with Alfred. He hadn't said that. He hadn't given me a reason and I hadn't asked for one, but clearly what had become intolerable to him was that another man might touch my body. He had not even complained when I withdrew emotionally. He had even adjusted to being a virtual tenant in his own house. But the possibility that I might have an affair was too much. It seemed so ridiculous to me that possession of my body meant so much to him while other things that had so much more significance, at least in my scale of priorities, might have been difficult but did not seem to warrant serious attention.

Over the next few weeks I did sleep with Alfred. It was nice to be with him but I made it quite clear that any relationship that developed between us would have to be on my terms. I had had enough of feeling responsible for someone else's feelings. If he had any problems with anything I did or said, it was up to him to tell me. He had to understand that at that point in my life I was very selfish. Except for the children, I was going to think about what I wanted and needed before I thought about anyone else. Any new relationship I formed would have to be on that basis.

Jake and I were cordial. Sometimes it seemed as if nothing had changed. When we told the children that we were separating, however, our decision became very real. Neal cried and Leah was very quiet. We tried to explain to them that we had grown apart but I knew that what we were saying made no sense to them. We seemed to get along well enough. We never fought. How could children of nine and eleven years of age understand the subtleties of two people growing in different directions? I felt very sorry for them and wished we had fought more so they would have been more prepared for the separation. Our lack of direct confrontation was, however, part of the problem. Jake was so detached that it was impossible to get him into a heated debate and a fight was clearly out of the realm of possibility. I also knew that some of my behavior had been provocative. I had wanted Jake to fight with me.

The separation also took on more reality as I thought about how to tell my parents. I knew it would be hard on them. There had only been one divorce in the family. Uncle Vaghoush had divorced his wife, Vera, when I was about fifteen. I was never clear on the reasons for their separation but I knew that I was not supposed to mention her name. She was erased from the family memory. Uncle Alex went so far as to go through all of his home movies to splice Vera out of them. She remained only in one sequence and that was because she was pushing me on a swing. I had loved her and was devastated when I learned I would never see her again. I asked my mother if I would visit her but she was adamant that I could not. Marriage, in my family, was eternal.

I decided it would be better to write them a letter than to tell them on the phone. I tried to reassure them in my letter that I would be fine, although I knew it was inconceivable for them to understand that a woman could survive without a man. I also told them that Jake and I had been estranged for some time and that it would be much better for all of us if we separated. They called after receiving my letter and my mother's first words were, "How will you manage?"

After we had told the children, my parents and Jake his mother, we agreed that we didn't need to keep our separation a secret any longer. I told my friends and he told his. People we knew in common were as astounded as the children had been. His colleagues, I was sure, blamed the women's movement and in a sense, they were right. Had it not been for women's liberation, I was sure that I would not have had the sense of self that generated so many of the changes that had taken place in my life. It was also clear to me that without the movement, I would not imagine that I could make it on my own. My friends were not surprised. They could see how little Jake and I shared.

The day after I told Brenda both about our separation and my affair with Alfred, she called me. Since it was early in the morning, an unusual time for Brenda to call, I asked her what was wrong. She said she had been up all night thinking about me and she had something to say. She asked if I was sitting down and when I responded that I wasn't, she said I had better. When she told me that I should think about moving away from Ithaca, I said that I couldn't do that. Was she crazy? I began to tell her all the reasons why I couldn't leave. She

interrupted me by saying I should shut up and listen to her. First of all, she said, never say "can't." She then went on to say that she had felt for a long time that Jake was a very bad influence on the children, especially Neal. He didn't really want them to grow up. I had never discussed my feelings about Jake's influence on them with anyone and I was astounded that Brenda had come to the same conclusion. As she went on to say that the time to move them away from Jake was now, I sat on the chair that was beside the phone and listened hard to what my friend was saying. The older the children got, the harder it would be for them to move. It was very important, she thought, to get them away from Jake. Also, she said, I didn't really have a solid support network in Ithaca. Most of my friends were students and where would I be when they graduated and left town? I needed to be in a place like Amherst where I knew women my own age who could be there when I needed them. Also, she said, she would be in Boston which was only a two hour drive from Amherst. She also thought it was important that I go some place where I wouldn't be Jake Ryan's wife. I needed to start a new life in a new place. Lastly, she did not approve of my relationship with Alfred. He was too young for me and sure to leave me soon. She wanted me to get away from him before I was too involved. She ended the conversation, or monologue, by saying she was tired. I had kept her up all night and now she needed to go to sleep. She and Ray were planning to go to Boston in a few days to look for a place to live and I should go with them. She and Ray were both going to graduate school--Brenda to Harvard and Ray to MIT. After they were done in Boston we could go to Amherst to see about

housing for the children and me and to find out what the schools had to offer for Neal.

She hung up and I sat on my chair astounded. Brenda's analysis of my situation had struck a chord in me. No one was home but I felt I had to get out of the house to think about what she had said. I walked to one of the many little waterfalls near our house and tried to get some clarity on my life. Everything Brenda said made perfect sense to me except the part about Alfred. I knew that if anyone was going to leave that relationship it would be me. What she said about my network was, however, very true. All of my close friends at the time were students. Becoming a feminist and the debacle at Female Studies had not been conducive to making or keeping friends. The one friend I had who was my age, Ellen Peters, had written that she loved California and might not return. In Amherst, on the other hand, I would have Pat and the friends I had made during January. There was also a strong possibility that Ann would be there in the Fall. Pat was trying to create a position for her and the last I heard from Ann was that everything was looking very positive. The Women's Movement in Amherst was as strong as it was anywhere in the country outside of a big city and there was still no real feminist activity in Ithaca. I could even go to school in Amherst. After establishing residency the tuition would not be a problem. I imagined that with all the feminist activity on campus that the history department would certainly be open to work on women's history. I would hate to give up the opportunity to work on the course with Mary Ryan, but I couldn't have everything.

The more I thought about moving, the more attractive it became. It was certainly worth a trip to Amherst to see what the possibilities were. When Brenda called back later that afternoon, I told her I had decided to go to Boston with her and Ray. I decided not to call Pat since I didn't want Jake to know what I was contemplating until I had decided and worked everything out. I didn't worry about Pat keeping a secret but knew that Charles' first loyalty was to Jake. I called Kathy Salisbury, a former student of Jake's who was in graduate school at UMass. She had given me a ride to Amherst in January and I saw her fairly often when I was there. I told her why I was coming and that she would have to promise not to tell anyone. I needed a place to stay and whatever she could find out about schools, housing and therapists for Neal. She agreed to keep my secret and promised to do what she could. I told Jake that I needed to get away for a few days and had decided to go to Boston with Brenda and Ray. He looked surprised but didn't say anything.

Brenda had made arrangements to stay with Nadine Cohen, the young woman who had initiated the formation of the Ithaca College Women's Liberation Front. Nadine was going to law school in Boston. She called her to say I was coming too and, she told me, Nadine had said she had enough room for all of us. When we got there Nadine was very cool towards me. I couldn't understand what had happened. I had seen her just a few months earlier and she had been as warm as ever. Brenda told me that Nadine had been very upset that Jake and I had decided to separate. I realized then that Jake and I had been a kind of model couple

for students, especially young women who were involved in the women's movement and heterosexual. Jake was far more understanding of the movement than most men and seemed so supportive of me that it was difficult for Nadine to accept the fact that we couldn't make it. I felt that she blamed me for the failure of the marriage. I supposed she thought I expected too much from Jake. I was glad when she said she would have to be at the library for most of the weekend.

After spending a morning at Nadine's listening to Brenda make phone calls to realtors in her "respectable lady voice," I decided it was time for me to get to Amherst to see about my own move. Brenda drove me to the bus station. I sat in the front seat and made a long list of things to do when I got to Amherst. My first priority was to see what services were available for Neal. He would need a special program in school and a therapist. If adequate services were not available, I would not consider moving.

The next morning Kathy set me up with a phone and some names. She shared a house with Jean and Jim Matlack who had also moved to Amherst from Ithaca. Jean, Kathy told me, was working on her doctorate in counseling and would surely know therapists I could call for Neal. She also had three children and could give me information about schools. Jean was helpful on both counts. She gave me the names of several therapists and told me whom to call for special education in the Amherst schools. I made phone calls all day and by late afternoon had an appointment with a therapist, had talked to the director of special education and one of the teachers. They both explained that they worked

towards mainstreaming special education as much as possible. They provided each child with a coordinator who, after consultation with parents and any professionals who worked with the child, devised an individual plan for six months or a year. She was sure, she said, that they would be able to work with Neal.

The next morning I got a ride to UMass with Kathy and went directly to the Southwest Women's Center. I walked in on a meeting and excused myself and went back outside. Judy Katz followed me into the courtyard and when I told her why I was in Amherst she screamed with delight. She said that I would not believe it but that very meeting was about hiring a Teaching Assistant for the Fall. They were writing up a job description and it was specifically for a person to work on developing Women's Studies. I seemed perfect for the position. I, too, was excited but told her to calm down. I hadn't even applied to graduate school yet.

I dropped in on Julie Adams who seemed genuinely sad about my separation from Jake but also anxious to do anything she could to help me. She would love it, she said, if I did decide to move to Amherst. My next stop was the history department. I hoped it wasn't too late for an application for the fall. The man I talked with seemed uninterested in women's history but did tell me that the application deadline was not for another two weeks.

I decided to go and see Pat at the Everywoman's Center. I told her what I was planning and asked her not to tell Charles. She seemed very excited at the prospect that both Ann and I might be in the area. She was very confident about Ann's job and thought she might be able to work

something out for me too. She also introduced me to a woman who knew about housing in Amherst. Britt Gutmann said that Amherst was very expensive. There were not very many apartments and landlords felt they could charge outrageous rents as a result. If I could manage it, she suggested thinking about buying a house. Real estate in town was an excellent investment.

By the end of the day I was sure that the move to Amherst would be the best thing for me and the children. I had found more support in one day than I had ever felt in Ithaca. It could work here. I would make it work. Now that I had decided to move I began to think about finances. I felt that since I would have both children I should get half of Jake's salary. I didn't want alimony. I was quite clear on that but I did want decent child support. The children and I, I thought, deserved it. I had helped Jake get to where he was by taking care of everything while he was in graduate school and working on his dissertation. Until the last year I had also entertained his colleagues royally, with the best food in town, and had dutifully played the role of faculty wife. I had also worked, taken care of the children and had major responsibility for housework and cooking. Now I needed money to support the children and me while I got an education. Half of Jake's salary and the money from a TA would be enough, I thought, for us to live comfortably. I saw no reason why my standard of living should drop dramatically after all the years I had put in to help Jake.

Brenda called me the next morning to say that she and Ray had not found a place to live yet. I said I had to get back to Ithaca since

that Sunday was Easter. It would be very hard on the children if I were not there. She decided that Ray would stay in Boston and continue to look for a place and she would get to Amherst as soon as possible.

By the time Brenda came to pick me up I was fully organized. I had Neal's school situation worked out and had met with the therapist Jean recommended. I liked Sarah Alleman enormously. She seemed to have so much empathy for the struggle I had been through to try to get services for Neal and thought she could work with him. She was not sure that she had time to see him, but said she would be in touch with me very soon. I had the application for graduate school and two job possibilities. I planned to come back to look for a house to buy another time. If I were to move we would have to sell our house. It was a large and beautiful house in a good location and I had no doubts that I could, at the very least, get a down payment for a house in Amherst with my share of the profit.

It was later than I had hoped when we set out for Ithaca. I was determined to be home for Easter. We wouldn't have artichokes or even colored eggs but I wanted to be there. We made it as far as Blanford, Connecticut when the car started to act very strangely. I pulled into the service area and was told by the mechanic that the clutch was almost gone. I was furious. The car was only a year and a half old but my rage got me nowhere. I arranged for a Volkswagen dealer in Springfield to pick it up on Monday and called friends in Amherst to come and get us.

Brenda and I went into Howard Johnson's to wait for our ride. I called Jake to tell him what had happened and when I came back to the table, I noticed that Brenda seemed very nervous. I asked her what was wrong and she whispered that she hated being in "honkey country" alone at night. I realized that what had been merely an inconvenience for me had been worse for Brenda. I would have been afraid if I were on the street but Howard Johnsons was a comfortable place for me. It evoked memories of trips with my parents and enjoying the special pleasure of eating at a real American restaurant. I wondered if I would ever stop learning from Brenda about the differences in our lives as Black and white women.

When we got back to Kathy's she not only was glad to put us both for another night but offered me her car to drive back to Ithaca the next morning. She would get mine when it was ready and I could come back to exchange cars at my convenience. I was grateful for her generosity and wondered whom I knew in Ithaca who would be so willing to help me out.

We set out again the next morning as early as I could get Brenda moving, and made it to Ithaca by early afternoon. I dropped Brenda off at her house and when I got home Lanni came rushing into the kitchen. She was very glad to have me back. Jake had been, she said, very strange while I was gone and Neal and Leah were very upset. I went to see them. They were in their rooms, looking very sad. They brightened up somewhat when they saw me. Lanni had planned a nice dinner. Jake

came down from his room and we salvaged what we could of that Easter celebration.

As soon as the children were in bed and Lanni had gone to her room, I told Jake that I planned to move to Amherst. I explained everything I had learned about schools, housing and jobs. He was silent for a while and then walked to the kitchen to refill his drink. When he came back into the living room he said that he had known I was planning something. I told him that it had all happened rather suddenly and I didn't want to tell him until I had made a decision. After what seemed to me an eternity of silence, Jake said he thought a move to Amherst might be a good thing for me. He would keep the children with him until I got my life together. I was astounded. I could hardly believe that Jake wanted to keep Neal and Leah. I shuddered to think of what they would go through with him as their only parent. I told him that it was out of the question for him to keep the children. Neal and Leah would stay with me. If that meant I had to stay in Ithaca, then I would not move. I told him directly that I did not consider him capable of caring for them properly. By the end of the evening he agreed. He also thought that my suggestion of half of his salary was quite fair. As I walked up to my room I thought that Jake certainly was a decent enough man.

We put the house up for sale, I made my application to graduate school, made up new resumes and sent them to Judy and Pat. Kathy called to tell me the car was ready. She was enjoying it and I could come to get it any time. I talked with Jake about going to Amherst again to look for a house. He said he's like to go with me. We agreed

to tell the children that evening that they would be moving to Amherst with me sometime during the summer and we would all be going there to look for a house.

I did find a house. It was a small house within walking distance of the University, downtown and the school that Neal and Leah would attend. It had been completely modernized so I wouldn't have to worry about maintenance. I liked it well enough but it was nothing like the wonderful house I would be leaving. When my offer was accepted I found that I needed a fairly large sum for a deposit. Jake told me not to worry. I could write a check and he would cover it.

I also found out that the director of graduate studies in the History department had recommended to the graduate school that I be accepted into the master's program. There was, however, still nothing definite on my job possibilities. The Southwest Women's Center was waiting for funding and Pat said the staff at the Everywoman's Center had not yet voted on new positions. She had thought I would be best suited to a position as liaison between the center and Third World women on campus and in the community. The Center was, like most women's groups, totally white.

After weeks of waiting I finally heard from both Judy and Pat. Pat had a tentative approval from the staff for my position and Judy said the funding had come through and she was authorized to offer me the job. I felt that I was more qualified for the Southwest position since it was to develop women's studies. I would not know how to be a liaison with Third World women. I was just coming into the community and had no

contacts. I called Pat and said I was sorry that I would have to take the other job. I needed a TA badly not only for the money but because it carried a full tuition waiver. I would not have to pay the substantial out of state tuition while I waited to establish residency.

The sale of our house did not go so smoothly. We accepted an offer from a woman lawyer who was moving into town to set up a practice. Despite the fact that she had a large down payment, the bank refused to finance the house unless she had a cosigner. She was indignant and refused. We didn't have any other offers as it soon became clear that we would have to think about renting it for a year. I was frantic about where I would get the down payment for my new house in Amherst, but once again, Jake said not to worry. We could take out a home improvement loan using our house as collateral. He would make the payments on the loan and I could pay him back when our house was finally sold. I was very grateful to him for being so helpful.

We seemed to be getting along better than we ever had. I wondered if part of the reason for our amicable relations was that despite my fears about living alone with the children, I was feeling wonderful. I felt as if an enormous weight had been lifted from my shoulders. When acquaintances offered condolences for the demise of my marriage I was quite honest when I told them not to be sorry. I knew it was not appropriate to tell them how I really felt and I didn't, but I was ecstatic. I was about to live my own life for the first time and I was looking forward to it.

Neal and Leah seemed to be adjusting fairly well to the dramatic changes that had occurred in their lives over the last few months. Neal was going to return to the speech camp and Leah was going to the Metropolitan Baptist camp with Lanni for a two week session. I had not thought of sending Leah to camp but one night at dinner Lanni suggested that Leah might enjoy going to her camp. Leah's immediate reaction was positive. I explained to her that she would have to sleep there and while she would see Lanni often that Lanni would be very busy. Leah responded that it was fine with her. I also wanted her to know that she and Lanni might be the only white people at the camp and Leah said that as long as Lanni was there should would feel fine. Besides, she said, maybe she could find some other kids at the camp who liked the Jackson Five as much as she did. The girls at East Hill thought she was "weird" because she liked a Black group so much. Jake and I told her that we would all think about it and would talk about it again the next day.

After Leah and Neal went to bed we talked with Lanni about the camp in more detail. I was concerned about its affiliation with a church. Lanni assured us that the children were not required in any way to attend church services. She had thought about it for a while and felt that the camp would be a wonderful experience for Leah. We agreed that if she still wanted to go after she had thought about it, that we would send her. The next morning Leah's first words were about camp. She really wanted to go, she said and when I replied that Jake and I had decided it would be find she beamed at Lanni.

I began to make serious plans for my move. Alfred offered to help me by borrowing his stepfather's truck. Jake and I divided our possessions without any major problems. The only things I was willing to fight for were the freezer and the stereo. He had no use for the freezer and agreed to let me have the stereo. I was beginning to think our separation was going to be very easy but Jake's actual move was traumatic.

I was awakened early one Saturday morning by loud voices which seemed to be coming from the living room. As I got out of bed to see what was happening, Jake came into my room and said I should strip the bed. His friends had arrived to move his things. I was shocked. That moment was the first time I had heard he was moving that day. I screamed that he could have at least told me so I could arrange to take the children out of the house.

I dressed as quickly as I could and ran to see where Neal and Leah were. It was obvious to me that he had also not told them that he was moving that day. They looked very distraught. Tod had come for the weekend and we had planned a day's outing on a lake near Ithaca with him, Margaret, Lanni and a friend of hers from Poughkeepsie. When the children and I got down to the living room Tod was staring at the scene. Jake was carrying furniture out the front door. Leah began to cry and Neal ran after Jake telling him to put down the chair he was carrying. Tod went and got Neal and we took the children into the kitchen. I could not understand how Jake could be so understanding and helpful on the one hand, and so cruel on the other.

Tod and I quickly collected ourselves, fed the children breakfast and started to pack lunch for the picnic. It seemed imperative that we get out of the house as quickly as possible. Watching Jake move the furniture that had been a part of our lives for so long without any preparation was obviously very painful for Neal and Leah. We had most of the things ready when Lanni came into the kitchen. An exchange of glances was enough to tell her that we were going on our outing earlier than planned. She ran upstairs to get towels and bathing suits and Tod and I packed the car.

When we got back home that evening we were all exhausted. Neal and Leah went to bed very soon after we got home and I looked around the half empty house. I could not erase from my mind the image of Neal running after Jake telling him to put down the chair. I walked into the study we had shared and saw my little desk in the corner of the now empty room. As I turned to leave I saw a book on the floor. It was a small paperback, lying face down. I turned it over and saw that it was a book on how to tell children about divorce. Tears of rage came to my eyes. I wanted to go to Jake's apartment and beat him with that book.

My contact with Jake over the next two weeks was very formal. My anger at him was so intense I could hardly speak to him. I only wanted to get away from him and Ithaca as quickly as possible. Neal was due at camp the day after my move and Jake and I agreed that Neal would stay with him that day. Leah's session also started that day and I decided that I would go to Amherst via Poughkeepsie and drop her off at Lanni's. Leah would spend the night there and go to camp with her in the morning.

Alfred, Margaret and I loaded the truck together and he left for Amherst while Margaret, Leah and I drove to Poughkeepsie.

We had a very nice dinner at Lanni's house. I had gotten to know Josephine Lanni over the year her daughter lived with me and had grown to like her enormously. She was also a wonderful cook and had prepared a nice feast for us. It felt appropriate to be sitting down to a nice meal while my furniture was en route to my new home and the beginning of my new life. Before we left Poughkeepsie I made a stop at the Italian grocery store and bakery for bread, cheese, salami and olives. We would certainly be hungry when we finished unpacking and I thought it would be wonderful to have some good Italian food.

By the time Margaret and I got to Amherst it was dark but the house was lit and I could see people moving back and forth carrying things. As I got out of the car I was greeted by Ann, Judy and Kathy. I walked into the kitchen. My table and chairs were in place and Ann took a bottle of champagne out of the refrigerator. I was overwhelmed by the warmth of my friends, old and new. I ran out to the car to get the bag of food. When I put the food on the table Ann started to laugh and said only I would come to a new house with a supply of good food.

Alfred came in to say that the truck was empty. His brother, who had driven it to Amherst, was going back home. I realized then that I had forgotten all about Alfred. I apologized profusely and went to the truck to invite his brother to have something eat. He said he had to get started and left.

We carried the remaining things into the house and when we finished the food, Ann said that the "Nightshade" was playing at the Pub, a bar only a few blocks from the house. She had promised Anne she would get there for the last set. I suggested that we all go. I felt so wonderful that I only wished the night could last forever.

Within the next few days, all the unpacking was done. Alfred had stayed over for a few days and Pat had come to help as well. After everyone left I walked through my house and reveled in its emptiness. I had loved being greeted by my friends and having Alfred and Margaret stay to help but it was also wonderful, I found, to be alone. I wondered briefly how Neal and Leah were doing but I was so delighted with being in my own house in Amherst that I didn't think much about anybody.

The next morning I woke up early and was surprised that I was anxious to start the day. I usually waited until the last possible minute before getting out of bed but as I showered I realized that I didn't want to waste any of my precious time alone. For the first time in my life I had ten days all to myself. After a breakfast of fried eggs and the last of the Italian bread, I walked out into the yard. It was not very big but I was able to find a spot in the sun for a small garden. I turned the soil and drove to a farm stand I used to go to when Jake and I lived in Leverett. I was delighted that it was still in business and bought some tomato plants, herbs and seeds. By evening I had planted my garden and was exhausted but delighted with myself.

Before I knew it Leah's session at camp was over and so was my time alone. Jake and I had decided it would be important for Neal to see me

again and for Leah to see both him and Neal. I was to pick Leah up and then drive to Ithaca. Jake had arranged for Neal to leave camp for the weekend. Although I still knew nothing about fan belts or even changing tires, I was no longer afraid of driving alone. If something happened to the car, I had confidence that I would manage.

Leah had had a wonderful time at camp. She seemed anxious to get to Amherst but was pleased when I told her we would be spending a day in Ithaca. I didn't know how I felt about going back to Ithaca but as we drove into the town where my life had changed so dramatically, I realized that the only thing I would miss was my house. Brenda had been so right. There was nothing for me in Ithaca any longer.

C H A P T E R X X

The summer in Amherst passed quickly. Leah loved her room and while she sometimes complained about being lonely, she seemed to be adjusting to the separation and the move quite well. One of my neighbors ran a potting studio at his house and for a nominal fee he allowed Leah to work with the clay and fired the hand built pots she created. She had learned to make pots at East Hill and enjoyed it enormously. I was amazed at how skilled she had become. She also spent a good deal of time writing. My nine year old daughter came to me one evening and announced that she needed a new notebook. She had, she said, four stories to write and had already picked out the titles. I patiently explained that people usually choose their titles when they had finished writing the stories, but she said she already knew what they were about. I was astounded as I listened to the well developed plots. She clearly did have four complete stories in her head and spent the next month writing them down. I was encouraged as I read her stories. They focused on female characters who had problems with family or friends, but had found ways to work them through.

While Leah and I seemed to be coping well that summer, I knew the real test of how well we were going to manage in Amherst and without Jake was still before us. When the asparagus fronds began to turn to their beautiful autumn gold and the pumpkins stood large and orange in the fields, I began to feel occasional pangs of fear. Would the Amherst school system with its emphasis on mainstreaming special children really

be able to meet Neal's needs? He still tended to withdraw, particularly when he was in a stressful situation, and could easily be ignored. I worried too about Leah. She was making a major transition from East Hill to a traditional school. Would she be able to adjust to doing math even if she didn't feel like it? How would she react to the expectation that she be quiet and listen to the teacher or any of the other requirements of a "regular" school?

My greatest fear, however, was how I would do in graduate school. I felt ill prepared for advanced work in history. I tried to tell myself that my performance in the classes I had taken at Ithaca College and the high grade I had achieved on the graduate record exam indicated that I would be able to do the work, but I had also convinced myself that anyone who could read would have done well in those courses and that the graduate record exam must have been particularly easy the year I took it. I had no confidence that I would be up to the task of serious academic work. When school started I would probably find out that I had been fooling myself and that I wasn't really smart after all.

The one thing I felt fairly confident about was my job. Ann Jones, whose responsibility at Southwest was to teach a course at the Women's Center, asked me if I would like to teach with her and I happily agreed. We developed a course that focused on women's struggles called, "Climbing the Walls." Using the wall as a metaphor for the sexism in our society we posed three alternatives for women: getting stuck in the wall, jumping off and climbing over it. I was very pleased with our syllabus except that we had been unable to think of easily available

books by Black women. We hoped to find money to rent "A Raisin in the Sun" which we planned to use in the "getting over the wall" section.

Although working on the syllabus with Ann had been stimulating and I had felt that we shared it equally, I was less confident about what would happen in the classroom. I looked forward to teaching with Ann more for what I could learn from her than for what I would contribute. She was very interested in creating an environment that equalized the power relationship between students and teacher. She did not plan to lecture or prepare questions for discussion. She wanted the students to take the responsibility for discussion. In this way, she argued, the students would create the class themselves. I had serious misgivings about such an unstructured situation and I tentatively expressed them to Ann. She confidently responded that if the students did not have anything to say about the readings, we might have to learn to deal with silence. I was not encouraged by her response, but I assumed my fears came from my lack of experience in teaching and my own need for structure. Ann, after all, had had real teaching jobs and knew what she was doing.

Despite my fears and apprehensions, I was excited to be starting a life on my own and Amherst was clearly the best place for me to do it. I had even embarked on a major project with Ann and Pat. One night when the Nightshade was playing at the Pub, Ann came to spend some time with me. I asked her if she had any thoughts about writing another book. The previous year she had written and published Uncle Tom's Campus, a book about her experiences teaching at a Black college in Texas. She

said she wanted to write about the lives of women like us--women who had gone through major changes as a result of the women's movement. She thought I might be interested in collaborating on it with her. I was flattered but thought that writing a book was far beyond my abilities at that point in my life. I did, however, have a suggestion. It seemed to me that Pat, Ann and myself would be good subjects for such a work. We had met each other when we were faculty wives, although Ann was on the faculty at the time she was identified as a faculty wife since it was her husband who had the "real" job. The women's movement had not come into our lives when we first met but we had each come to it in our own ways and it had had profound effects on our lives. Ann was intrigued with the idea but said it would only be feasible if Pat and I worked on it with her. The more we talked about the possibilities of such a book, the more excited we became. It could be, we thought, a new kind of book--a triple autobiography/biography. We would write about ourselves and each other. We excitedly called Pat to say we had something very important to discuss with her and made arrangements to meet early the next week.

Ann left to go to the Pub for the Nightshade's last set and I went to bed. Although I had felt tired, sleep seemed impossible. I could only think of the book and how exciting it would be to work with Ann and Pat. We were all from different backgrounds: Ann was Norwegian and from a small town in Wisconsin, Pat so "American" that her ethnicity was not an issue, was raised in a medium sized city in Texas, and me, an Armenian from New York City. I was fascinated too with the prospect of

sharing details of our past and learning how I was perceived. I finally fell asleep but woke the next morning with the idea of the book still with me.

Although the thought of writing anything that Ann would read was very frightening to me, I believed anything was possible in my new life. I had done things over the last two years that I never would have imagined I could do. It seemed that once I understood that my training as a female in my family and the negative images of women that I faced daily were partially responsible for my feelings of inadequacy I needed to challenge myself to find out what I could do. My being in Amherst was certainly the result of my new found courage. If I had given in to my doubts and fears, I would still be living with Jake and that had become a horrible thought to me. The women I knew seemed to share my feelings. We would try anything we wanted to do and support each other for the trying.

Pat and Charles were building a house and I was amazed when I heard Pat talk knowledgeably about footings, whatever they were. And when I stood in the living room and looked at the beautiful fireplace I was thrilled for Pat and myself because I knew that she had helped the mason build it. Ann was also doing things we had all thought women could not do. She and Anne were living in Putney for the summer rent free in exchange for doing maintenance work on the house and its outbuildings. Leah and I went to visit for a few days and I was very happy that my daughter witnessed Ann repairing the roof. She climbed to the top of a

tall ladder and hammered shingles with what looked to me like great skill and confidence.

We not only thought we could do anything men could but were also convinced that we could create better ways to do things because of the very socialization that had convinced us we should stay in our sphere. We did, of course, have to overcome those parts of our sexist training that had hindered our development into strong and capable women, but I was convinced that we were better than men. Women were more able to cooperate, we cared about other people's feelings and were certainly more in touch with our own emotions than men. The book would reflect all of these differences. It would not be the work of one person but a collaborative effort that would speak to the experience of women like us. It was also clear that the process of doing the book would be as important as the product.

Whatever happened in the Fall, I felt that my friendship with Ann and Pat would provide me with more real support than I had ever gotten from Jake. Like Brenda, they supported my strengths. They believed in me and wanted to see me succeed.

Neal came home from camp very open both about his feelings of anger towards me for moving him to Amherst and missing his father, but he also seemed to like some things about his new home. Judy Katz, whom he had met when she came to Ithaca for a visit, took him on a tour of the record stores in town and on campus. Within a few days, he began to explore the area on his own.

Late in August we had an appointment with the teacher who would coordinate his program. I walked to school with both children to show them the way and to see how long it would take. After twenty minutes of a leisurely walk we arrived at the school and Neal seemed anxious to explore the large, one story building. I felt some sense of relief as I looked at the school and realized that Neal would stay at Wildwood until he finished elementary school rather than moving from school to school as he had done in Ithaca. We met the teacher in a small room. She had received all of Neal's records, she told me, and would like some time alone with him. Leah and I could wait for them in the library. Leah was very quiet as we entered the large, comfortable room and only shrugged when I said it looked like a nice place to read. We sat on the carpeted steps and I could feel Leah's tension. The summer had come to an end.

I agreed to a plan for Neal that seemed overly cautious. He would begin school by attending for one and a half hours a day and she would increase his time as she thought it appropriate to his adjustment. I did not feel I could do anything but accept her plan. The classrooms at Wildwood were organized into large quads of one hundred students and four teachers in each room. The quads could, she said, be intimidating to a child like Neal. My fears about Neal being neglected were increased as I thought about the reality of a room with one hundred children, but I also wondered how Neal would feel about not going to school all day as he had done for so long. I worried too about what it would

mean for me to have Neal home for most of the day. He might, I decided, have to learn to stay home alone from time to time.

Leah would, of course, be in school all day. She had made friends with a few of the neighborhood children by the end of the summer and I was pleased when she said that one of them was in her quad.

The first week of September I also met with my advisor and enrolled in three courses, one of which to my great delight was "Comparative Feminism: Britain and the United States." Joyce Berkman, the instructor of the course, had only recently become interested in women's history and was teaching the course for the first time on an experimental basis. My advisor, whose own field was American social and intellectual history, seemed open to my interest in women and as I walked home from our meeting I felt I might do just as well at the University of Massachusetts as I would have at SUNY/Binghamton.

That week I also met the other staff members at the Southwest Women's Center. Aside from teaching the course with Ann, it was unclear to me what my duties would be and after my experience at Female Studies at Cornell I was determined to clarify my job description. I said that I knew I had been hired because of my expertise in Women's Studies, but I was not sure how the Center wanted to use my skills. I was alarmed when one of my colleagues responded that she did Women's Studies. One of the student staff members suggested I spend time in the Center to see where I would fit in. I replied that I did not have time to hang around the Center. I was a single parent and was starting graduate work full time after being out of school for fourteen years. Moreover, I had

specific skills to offer. When the meeting was over I had no more clarity on what my job was than I had when I first asked my question.

I taught the course with Ann and attended weekly staff meetings. It seemed to me that they were not very productive meetings. I had the distinct impression that they served a social function. I discussed the situation with Pat and she suggested that I attend the staff meeting at the Everywoman's Center. They had had some of the same problems with their meetings and had hired a facilitator to help them with their process. I could take what I learned back to the Southwest Women's Center. I made my proposal to the staff and they agreed that our meetings would be better. The result of three weeks of meetings at the Everywoman's Center was not very illuminating, but I was supported in my judgment that meetings should designate a chair which would rotate, an agenda should be set at the end of the meeting for the next time and the agenda should be followed. The response to these suggestions at the Southwest Women's Center was favorable, but after a few weeks of having fairly well run meetings, we reverted to getting together to catch up on what had happened in our lives over the week. I realized that once again I would have to create my job. What I thought I had been hired to do was being done by someone else, although I was unclear as to what it was she was doing about Women's Studies.

Luckily, I had been appointed as the graduate student representative to the Women's Studies subcommittee of the Faculty Senate Committee on the Status of Women. The work of this group was to write a proposal for a two year pilot program which would award a B.A. in Women's

Studies. Pat was chairwoman of the larger group and Ann was a member of the subcommittee as well as other faculty who had been teaching Women's Studies courses in their departments. I was also pleased to see that there was also an undergraduate student member of the group. Working on this committee was precisely the kind of work I had expected to have at the Southwest Women's Center and I decided to make it my job.

I requested a staff meeting to discuss my duties. I had had a month of frustration trying to find work at the Center, I told my colleagues. Since their only suggestion was that I hang out at the Center for ten hours a week and I had refused to waste my time in that manner, I had not been doing anything other than teaching the course with Ann and attending the staff meetings. I proposed that my work on the Women's Studies subcommittee be made part of my job description. Since they really had nothing else for me to do, they agreed.

My disappointment with the Southwest Women's Center was matched by my feelings about the progress of the course Ann and I were teaching. Learning to live with the silence in the classroom was as difficult as I had expected it would be and I was not sure that it was very productive. When we did have discussions I was unclear about how much Ann and I should participate. I tried to follow her lead but I often felt that I wasn't doing what was required for this kind of a class. I wondered if the class would have been better if Ann had been teaching it alone or with someone who was more sensitive to the students. I also wondered if Ann might be giving too much responsibility to the students. I was not so confident in my perceptions, however, to discuss them openly with

Ann. To raise serious questions about the course might be a challenge to Ann's philosophy, indeed to question the structure might reveal that I did not fully support the concept of student power. I was reluctant to reveal my latent authoritarianism, particularly when Ann did not seem to be disturbed by the class.

My experience in my own courses was mixed. Women's history was a joy. Joyce Berkman was incredibly thorough and seemed to have a real commitment to women. The other two courses, on the other hand, were very painful. The professors were not only sexist and racist but constantly talked down to the students. I was also overwhelmed by the amount of work I had to do. My background in history was very thin in spite of all the reading I had done, and there just didn't seem to be enough time to carefully read all the assignments. By midsemester I had to begin working on my term papers and that meant getting up very early in the morning after staying up as long as I could keep my eyes open the night before.

At least Neal was finally in school all day. I was uncertain as to how much attention he was getting but was encouraged by the interest his coordinator had taken in him. He was also seeing his therapist once a week. Her office was not within walking distance from home and I was initially quite upset that I would have to take the time to drive him there, wait for his session to be over to take him home again. Time was so precious that it was hard to give up an hour and a half of afternoon time once a week. I soon found, however, that I looked forward to Thursday afternoons. Sarah's office was in her house and on nice days I

sat in her yard and enjoyed the afternoon sun. I had also met Martha Ayres, a therapist who worked with Sarah. One rainy Thursday when she had an hour between clients we shared coffee and conversation in Sarah's kitchen. She was frequently off during Neal's hour and I was growing to like her very much.

The semester came to an end and I was so exhausted that I wondered how I would deal with Christmas. All I wanted to do was be alone and sleep, but the holiday would come and I would have to do something. The children would, I knew, want to spend the day with both Jake and me and although I dreaded the thought of another Christmas with Jake, I felt I should do all I could to give Neal and Leah a decent day. We decided that the children and I would drive to Ithaca on the day before Christmas, I would spend the night with a friend and Neal and Leah would stay with Jake. We would spend Christmas at his apartment. My parents wanted to see the children too and Jake wanted to see his mother. After opening our presents in Ithaca we would all drive, though in separate cars, to New Jersey. It was a grey Christmas. I had tried my best, but it had not worked.

After taking the children to see his mother, Jake left for Ithaca and we stayed with my parents for a few more days. I racked my brains to find a better solution for New Year's Eve. The children seemed as depressed as I was. I remembered Lanni's description of her family's New Year's celebration. It had sounded wonderful. They gathered at her mother's house, played blackjack until midnight and then welcomed in the New Year with sausage and peppers. It would be good to see Lanni and

her mother and I knew Neal and Leah would be happy to see her again. Lanni was overjoyed when I called to ask if we could come to her house for New Year's.

While we welcomed in the New Year in a joyous atmosphere, January of 1974 seemed to be filled with less promise than the previous year. Amherst was a good community for feminists but far from the paradise it had seemed to be. My friends were supportive but I seemed to need more than they could give. I had done reasonably well in my courses but had dazzled neither the history department nor myself with my performance. I never seemed to know enough history and I had also learned that my writing skills were in need of serious improvement. I felt a deep shame when my papers were returned with grammatical corrections. There were problems too with my organization. I was deeply disappointed in myself. Graduate school had been a kind of cause for me. I was going to learn and write women's history not only for myself but for all my sisters. Clearly, I had not, or worse yet, could not live up to the task I had set for myself--writing a history of women.

The first semester of my job at the Southwest Women's Center had been difficult but because I had taught the course with Ann and had worked on the Women's Studies committee, I felt I had fulfilled my responsibilities. I could continue my work with the committee but Ann and I would no longer be teaching a course and I was left once again with the dilemma of what to do for work. Brenda, who was in Cambridge working on her Masters at Harvard, came to visit in January and suggested that we teach the course on Black and White Women that we had

designed and she had taught at Cornell. If the Center could pay her, she would be willing to come to Amherst once a week to teach the course. I proposed the course to the Women's Center staff and to my surprise they not only supported it but were able to find some money to pay Brenda. I was greatly relieved. Brenda and I had wanted to teach this course at Cornell; it was certainly as needed on this campus as it had been in Ithaca and I looked forward to seeing Brenda on a regular basis. There was, however, one problem. Courses sponsored by the Women's Center often didn't get a sufficient enrollment and I worried about this one. The topic was difficult and Brenda was not able to use the network she had had at Cornell to get the students into the course and I had not developed much of a reputation among the students. My fears were well grounded. Two students signed up for the course and it was cancelled. I decided I had done what I could to find work at the Women's Center. Since the staff had no suggestions, I continued to work on the Women's Studies committee and attended the weekly staff meetings. I tried not to feel guilty when I picked up my weekly paycheck. I had tried my best to be flexible and I hoped I would find another TA the next semester.

One place I did not want to work was the History department. I felt alienated from the faculty and the other students as well. Women and Black people were absent from the courses and the consciousness of my fellow graduate students. Only Joyce Berkman had an interest in what seemed so vital to me. The other professors I had, including my advisor who had seemed so supportive in our initial meetings, could neither teach me what I felt I needed to know nor did they consider the study of

women to be a valid intellectual enterprise. It also seemed to me that they put demands on me that were out of proportion to my level of knowledge and experience. I tried to do my papers on women and the comments on them by my professors indicated that they expected me to not only study women but present a methodology for women's history. I began to seriously question whether I would continue in graduate school beyond the Masters level. I knew that there were few jobs for historians and my education was giving me more pain than pleasure and very little knowledge that I considered important.

Meetings with the Women's Studies committee were a vital antidote both to my experience in the history department and the gross inefficiency at the Southwest Women's Center. While there were some problems in writing the final draft of the proposal, it was clearly the product of all of us and the consensus we had reached. It called for a major and a minor in Women's Studies as well as a number of courses taught under the auspices of the Program. A policy board of faculty, students and staff as well as a community representative would be the Program's decision making body.

I had heard that a group of socialist feminist faculty and students were disturbed because the proposal was not radical enough, but compared to my experience at Cornell this was an amazingly progressive proposal. I was unclear as to who these women were as well as what their specific objections were. I was even more ignorant about a rift that was occasionally mentioned between the women on the committee and a group of Third World women. No one I asked seemed to be able to articulate what

had happened. I wished I knew some of the women who were referred to by my colleagues, but no one had any regular contact with them.

As spring approached, I began to feel more and more depressed. School was becoming more difficult than ever. I was infuriated as I was continually the only person in my class who seemed to have any interest in women, Black people or even in the daily lives of ordinary working people. In one class, I brought the actual lives of factory workers at the turn of the century into a discussion of the industrial system. The professor and the other students in the seminar merely stared at me and then went on with the discussion. The conditions under which people worked was obviously not germane to the high academic level of the discourse. Writing papers within this context had become excruciating. Not only did I have to work on my writing skills but I felt that each word I wrote had to be documented because what I was interested in was not the concern of "real" history. Despite my awareness of the political dimension of my professor's criticisms of my work, I often felt very stupid and wondered why I ever thought I was capable of graduate work.

School was also not going well for Leah. The creative child who had written four wonderful stories and built beautiful pots during the summer was totally disinterested even in reading and art classes. My general feelings about the school were also negative, but I had tried my best not to convey them to Leah. Despite its "open classroom" structure, the school reminded of P.S. 189 in 1945. I had noticed on my visits to the school that the teachers' main concern seemed to be control. Children were hurried into long lines only to wait for the order

to march to wherever they were going. Leah seemed so unhappy that I had asked the teachers in her quad for a meeting. While waiting for them I picked up the reader the class was using. It had eight stories. Four centered on male characters with females either non-existent or peripheral, three had male animals as their main characters and one last story was about a little girl who was a deaf mute. Of course all the characters were white and very middle class. I put down the book and looked at the children's work on the walls. I could easily see why Leah was not stimulated. Tacked to the bulletin board were mimeographed copies of snowmen, each with a little paragraph the children had written in response to the picture that was just like the one I remembered from my days in elementary school. Had nothing changed?

By the time the teachers were ready for our conference I was furious. There had been much about East Hill that had disturbed me and I had been genuinely relieved that Leah was going to attend a "regular" school but I had not expected it would be as rigid and unimaginative as Wildwood seemed to be. The teachers complained that Leah was very negative and I finally responded that I could well see why. The meeting was a disaster.

It was also clear that my relationship with Neal's program coordinator was deteriorating. I was beginning to feel that she pitied Neal because he was from a "broken home" and what was more disturbing, she seemed to underestimate his potential. Dr. Alleman, like Dr. Olum, believed that since Neal continued to progress it was dangerous to his development to make any assumptions about his capabilities. She also

agreed with Dr. Olum's assessment that Neal was able to do more than it seemed on the surface and it was crucial that his teachers have high expectations of him. Although this material was in Neal's file and Dr. Alleman had had a meeting with the coordinator, I had the distinct impression that she thought I was too demanding and was unable to face the reality of Neal's limitations.

I was very tired that March. It seemed as if there was always more to do than there was time or energy. I sometimes felt as if I was going to be crushed by the weight of my responsibilities--to the children, to myself, to my friends, to all the women in the world. One day I met a woman on campus whom I had not seen, I suddenly realized, for some time. I asked where she had been and she said she had collapsed from exhaustion. She had had to stay in bed for a few weeks. While I was sorry to hear what had happened to her, part of me was relieved to hear that another feminist was having some difficulty being and doing everything. The "superwoman syndrome" was beginning to seem almost as dangerous as the sex roles we were trying to overcome.

My relationship with Ann and Pat also seemed to be suffering partially because of the demands of appropriate behavior for feminists. The movement had said we had to be strong and perhaps because we were so needy and frightened, we were unable to share our real feelings with each other. I knew that Ann's job was very difficult. Her position was divided among three divisions of the University: The English department, the Everywoman's Center and the Southwest Women's Center. Her occasional acerbic and sometimes bitter comments made it clear that she

was unhappy, but she was unwilling or unable to talk openly about her difficulties. I did not encourage an honest discussion about it either, because I, too, needed to see Ann as a strong woman. Pat's marriage was finally breaking up and her oldest son was in California and in serious psychological trouble. Ann and I tried to do what we could for Pat, but she too was defended against us and, I thought, her own feelings. It was also clear to me that what I had to give was limited. My energies were focused on trying to make it myself. The three of us still met occasionally to talk, using the pretext of the book. While we continued to tape our sessions and had them transcribed, our discussions no longer included ideas on how to organize the material into a book. We were meeting, it seemed to me, to try to hold each other up without acknowledging that we were faltering.

My Thursday afternoons at Sarah Alleman's house were like an oasis in a desert. Martha had arranged her schedule so that she was free at Neal's hour and we had become close friends. Early in April she drove up in a very snappy MGB and walked out of the car, smiling and waving hello. As she got closer to me she sat down and immediately asked me what was wrong. Martha was the one person I knew who saw through my facade. Perhaps that was because I didn't keep her out. For some reason, I felt that I could be honest with her. She didn't seem to need to uphold the image of the superwoman. She complained, accepted her own vulnerabilities as a normal part of life and was able to admit to her fears. I told her I felt awful. I was tired, lonely and it was my thirty-fourth birthday. No one in Amherst knew it was my birthday

because I hadn't told anyone, I said, but it was my birthday. I looked down to hide the tears that had sprung to my eyes.

I heard Martha tell me to get up. She wanted to take me for a ride in her sports car. As we sped off I began to feel a little better. If I could have anything I wanted for my birthday, she asked, what would it be? Without thinking for a moment, I said I wanted a garden. The one beside my house was near three large pine trees. It had neither good soil nor enough sun. The seedlings I had so optimistically planted the previous June had produced a very small harvest. Martha was quiet for a few minutes and then said she thought she could give me my wish. She was part owner of a house that had a beautiful spot for a garden and, if I would like, we could plant it together. I was really excited. A garden was just what I needed and planting and tending it with Martha would only make it better. Digging in the dirt had always helped me relax. I thought only about the soil and the plants and didn't obsess about all that I had to do. Martha said she would let me know the next Thursday if it would be all right for us to use the land, but she felt there would be no problem. I told her that even if it didn't work out, she had given me one of the best birthday presents I had ever had.

I waited anxiously for the next Thursday and was not disappointed when Martha came into the kitchen and said, happy birthday--the garden is yours. Although it was only April I was anxious to start planning. I invited Martha to come to dinner that Saturday to talk about the garden. I wanted to start tomato, eggplant and pepper seeds. We would have dolma, vegetables stuffed with ground lamb and rice. I had made

and frozen it in the fall. It would be a celebration of the garden we would share. She agreed to come.

I woke earlier than usual that morning. Martha was not due until six o'clock but I could think of little else than her arrival. I decided to clean the house. Cleaning was the lowest of my priorities that year and the place was filthy. I got Neal and Leah to do their rooms too. When the house was done I went out to get graph paper so that Martha and I could make a serious garden plan. I was glad we would have a focus. I was a little nervous about having Martha over since we had seen each other only at Sarah's.

Martha arrived on time and within a few minutes I realized my fears had been groundless. We fell into the easy conversation that had marked our relationship for the past seven months. I was also relieved to see that she was comfortable with Neal and Leah and they seemed to like her. The dinner of dolma, yogurt and salad was a huge success and after the children went to watch television, we worked out the garden plan. We agreed that it would be fun to scatter the plants throughout the plot--like a crazy quilt--rather than growing the plants in rows. We laughed as we broke all the traditional rules for gardens while scrupulously following companion planting procedures.

Although it was fairly late when Martha left, I was not ready to see her go. I saw her often over the next few weeks. I realized that since my birthday, when Martha had given me the garden, I had felt wonderful. School was as difficult as ever, my relationship with Neal's program coordinator had become so bad I wondered if we could work

together at all and my relationship with Ann had deteriorated to the point that we hardly spoke to each other. But I felt better than I had since I had moved to Amherst. Once again, everything seemed possible.

Clearly, my feelings for Martha were more than friendship. When I was not with her, I thought about her and when we were together, I longed to be physically close to her. I knew she cared for me too but I had no idea if her feelings were sexual. I had assumed from a number of things she had said that Martha was a lesbian and I tried to convey my feelings in non-verbal ways. After weeks of hinting how I felt with touches on the arm or shoulder and a few very passionate handshakes, I realized she was either not interested in a sexual relationship with me or had seen me as a "straight lady" and was missing all my cues. By the middle of May I had to face the fact that I would have to tell her how I felt--in so many words. I would, however, have to wait until I finished the semester. I could not possibly finish my papers and tell Martha my feelings at the same time.

After what seemed like an eternity, though it was only a few weeks, I finished my school work. When I thought about what I would say and how Martha might respond I worried most about losing a friendship that had become very important to me. While I was attracted to Martha I thought I could accept it if she wasn't interested in a sexual relationship with me, but I would be devastated if I lost her friendship.

We had arranged to meet to buy seeds for the garden and I decided that I would tell Martha how I felt that day. After our trip to the garden center, she asked if I would like to go to her place for coffee.

When we got there she noticed that I was unusually quiet and asked me if anything was wrong. I took a deep breath, looked at the floor and said I had something to tell her. I was very nervous, I said, because I cared very much about our friendship. I went on to say that if I didn't tell her how I felt, I worried that my feelings would threaten that friendship--they had, in fact, already changed it. I was, I said, very attracted to her but I had never been in a relationship with a woman and didn't really know how I would react if that became a reality. I was so intent on what I was saying I had no idea how Martha was responding. I looked up for the first time since I began speaking and saw that Martha had been completely taken aback by what I had said. She said nothing for what seemed like hours and then asked if I wanted a drink. I shook my head in the affirmative and she disappeared into the kitchen. She returned looking as if she had collected herself somewhat. She was holding a bottle of cooking sherry and two wine glasses. She smiled and apologized for the vintage. It was all she had in the house but she thought we could both use something.

After a few sips of the awful wine she said she, too, cared for me but was just coming out of a long term relationship and was not ready for anything else at that point in her life. As she continued to talk about the complexities of relationships at our particular point in history, I wondered what was really going on. I had just told the woman that I was attracted to her and she was giving me a sociology lecture on relationships in the 1970s. I waited for her to stop talking, which she eventually did. I looked at her and she leaned over and kissed me.

I was overjoyed and frightened. I cared for Martha more than I had ever cared for anyone and her kiss made it very clear that the relationship that might develop between us would be very intense. There would be no clear and distinct boundaries as there had been with Alfred. I looked at my watch. Luckily, it was almost time for the children to get home from school. I rose and told Martha I had to leave but I hoped she would come over later. She said she would give me a call later.

I got home just before the children and walked around the house feeling very happy and wondering when Martha would call. I opened the refrigerator to ponder dinner when I heard a car in my driveway. I walked out to the yard and saw Lanni, her cousin Tina and Tina's daughter Lisa. I was puzzled for a minute and then remembered we had made plans for them to visit that weekend. My thoughts had so focused on Martha that I had completely forgotten about Lanni. I quickly collected myself and greeted them, frantically wondering what I would feed six or seven people for dinner.

It turned out to be a wonderful weekend. Martha did come over that night and I was glad that she and Lanni got to meet each other. Both Neal and Leah were overjoyed to see Lanni and Leah and Tina had great fun with each other. When Lanni and I were alone I told her about my feelings for Martha. She looked surprised, but said she could see that I was very happy and that Martha seemed like a very warm person. I was delighted that Lanni had so quickly recognized the warmth that had drawn me to Martha so many months ago.

Over the next few weeks it became obvious that I was deeply in love. I was astounded at how quickly our relationship deepened. I trusted Martha so much I wanted her to know everything about me and I wanted to know about her life as well. She had been a lesbian since she was an adolescent and as she told me about the double life she lived in the small town in West Virginia where she was raised and later in college, I was overcome with guilt for what I had wanted to do about Joan Cutter and Pat Gregory when I was at Alfred. I had wanted to tell the dean about them because they made me uncomfortable. Some of the fears that Martha and her lover had to endure when they were in college were certainly the result of people like me. I resolved to tell Martha about this incident so that she would know the worst about me. When I told her I could see that she was shocked, but also moved that I had told her. I felt great relief that my secret was out.

My relationship with Martha seemed different from any other I had had not only for its level of trust but because of the kind of caring we showed each other. While she did support my strength, I also felt free to express weakness. She was there for me when I felt tired and young as well as those times when I felt I could conquer the world. Although male and female roles assumed that men would care for women, I had never experienced anything like what I got from Martha. Men might protect women from the world in some ways, but my experience had been that women took care of men emotionally. I had finally refused to take care of Jake and was clear with Alfred from the beginning of our relationship that I had no intention of providing him with emotional support. I

realized that I felt I had to protect myself from being used by the men I knew and I had never expected they would give me what I needed. I looked to my women friends for that.

While I did feel that some of my most significant emotional relationships had been with women, I did not assume, as many of the lesbians I knew did, that I had always been a lesbian and had only recently acted on how I had felt all my life. Women had always been important to me, but so had men. It would be dishonest to recast my life into thwarted lesbianism. I was also clear on the fact that I did not become a lesbian because I hated men or that I had chosen to sleep with women because of political reasons. That idea, which was common among many lesbians I knew, did violence to my feelings for Martha. I fell in love with her because of who she was not because I didn't want to sleep with the enemy. I also realized, however, that if I had not been in Amherst in 1975 where there was acceptance of relationships between women, I might have denied and repressed my feelings for Martha. Despite my disagreements with some of the other lesbians I knew, I did feel connected to them in a way I had not before my relationship with Martha. I also had a new feeling of admiration for the courage of women like Martha who had loved women when homosexuality was universally condemned as a perversion.

Clearly, even in Amherst, there were many people who considered lesbians to be sick man haters, but with the exception of the faculty in the history department, most of the people I associated with seemed to be very open minded. Except for Brenda, I had told all my friends about

Martha and they all seemed to be very happy for me. I knew that Brenda would not approve and I decided to wait until we saw each other to tell her. It never crossed my mind that the healthiest relationship I had ever had in my life might be sick. I worried only about the possibility that Jake might try to take the children away from me if he knew about Martha. I had no intention of telling my parents. I had not told them about Alfred and they had not asked about the young man who had lived in my house for a few months. They had known so little about my life for so long that my lesbianism was just something else they would not be able to fathom. The children seemed to like Martha and telling them about my sex life seemed inappropriate. They could only benefit, I thought, from something that gave me so much.

They would not be around much that summer in any case. After school was over they were going to Ithaca to visit their father and then would both be in camp until August.

I was very excited about a camp I had found for Neal. The speech camp had provided structure and contact with other children but it did not really suit his needs. Sarah Alleman had heard about a camp for emotionally disturbed boys that she thought was exceptionally good, and I was impressed with the material I received from Camp Wediko. I filled out the application and waited anxiously to hear whether Neal would be accepted. Late that spring I heard from Harry Parade, one of the directors, that they were interested in Neal but required an interview before they made a final decision.

On the drive to the interview both Neal and I were nervous. While Neal had not seemed to like the Speech Camp it was at least a known entity. Now he faced the prospect of a totally new situation. My feelings were familiar. I would be scrutinized by another professional. As we sat in the small waiting room I tried to think of the therapists who had supported me. When Harry emerged from the inner office, walked right to Neal and started to talk to him I was relieved. This interview would clearly be with Neal rather than a discussion of his relationship with me. He made it very clear that while camp was lots of fun, the counselors would expect him to work hard at relating to his peers. He also took what Neal said very seriously and I was amazed as I listened to Neal articulate his fears. Harry had engaged Neal in a conversation that was closer to normal than any I had ever heard.

Towards the end of their talk Harry turned to me and said he thought Neal would fit in well at the camp and they would be happy to have him. I was ecstatic. If the camp was anything like what had just occurred in the last hour, it would be the best thing Neal had had. As we rose to leave Harry told me he was very impressed with the application I had filled out. It was clear, he said, that I knew Neal very well.

I was grateful for that support from Harry. My contacts with Neal's coordinator at Wildwood had gone from bad to worse. She had written a report in May that stated that I had not set appropriate goals for Neal because I was unwilling to accept his limitations. She also

compared my relationship with Neal to the one he had with Jake, characterizing me as cold and even hostile and Jake as warm and affectionate.

It wasn't clear to me what her problem with me was, but I wondered if it might be related to the fact that I left Jake. Other single mothers I knew had complained that teachers seemed to be very critical of them. Even in Amherst it seemed, single mothers were by definition bad parents. Clearly, we would have to have it out. I made an appointment to see her without Neal. While the report played into the great reservoir of guilt that I had about my responsibility for Neal's problems, I was also angry. When we met I told her that she had to understand that I had not set goals for Neal because I was far from sure what they might be. Based on my own knowledge of him as well as what I had learned from most of the professionals who worked with Neal, it was my judgment that it was impossible to know his potential. When he was three years old and did not utter a word it might have been "realistic" to consider institutionalization. But at twelve years old he was reading, writing, doing arithmetic, showed an amazing memory for facts, and was able to relate positively to adults. His progress was the result, in some measure, of my struggle to help him develop to his potential--whatever that was. His father, on the other hand, had urged me to consider institutionalizing Neal at various points during his early childhood. She might not like the way I was parenting Neal, I said, but she would have to accept who I was with him.

Leah had also expressed a desire to go to camp and I found one about an hour from Amherst that was advertised as a "free" camp. The

children and counselors met each morning to plan their activities and, like East Hill, the arts were emphasized. The director also assured me that the camp was dedicated to providing a non-sexist atmosphere. I thought Leah needed a break from what I saw as the rigid routine of Wildwood and after visiting Shire Village, Leah decided to give it a try. We were both glad that it was close to home and that I could visit at any time. Leah's best friend at the time, Lydia Gillespie, was also going to Shire Village and I hoped that Leah would be comfortable enough to make other friends as well.

I wished I could have taken the summer off but I needed the money. Jake and I had split the expenses for camp for the children and my share had wiped out my savings. I hoped to work for the Women's Studies Program but funding was uncertain. The proposal for the program had been passed by the faculty senate that spring but since the senate did not make budgetary decisions, the new program was dependent on the provost for funds. Our requests for money were responded to with the suggestion that we administer the program by using faculty members who could get released time from their departments. The committee met to discuss the situation and I was relieved that many of the faculty were as outraged as I was that we were expected to begin the program with no funding. With very little discussion, we decided to send a memo to the Provost stating that the committee was expecting funding and if we did not receive it we would close the program before it began. The demise of the new program, the memo stated, would be a very public event. Within

the week our budget, small but a beginning, was approved including money for summer staff. I was hired as one of two summer staff.

It was an enormous relief to me that the committee was willing to take strong action to get what we considered necessary to the functioning of the program. There was clearly no distinction in the minds of these women between Women's Studies and the Women's Movement. The message we sent to the administration was unequivocal. If Women's Studies was threatened the committee felt absolutely justified in using the movement, very powerful in the Amherst area, to protect it. As I began to work in the program I was confident that I had something to give and that the committee would stand behind me.

My co-worker, Marily Bogue, was an undergraduate who had also been on the committee. Since the provost's office had not found us space, the Everywoman's Center allocated their hallway for our use as well as giving us access to their phones and typewriters. We set up our little office in the hall and by early July had more work than we could handle. We made arrangements for search committees to hire the coordinator and three other staff members, made a preliminary list of the Women's Studies courses to be offered in the Fall and worked with the Five College Women's Studies committee on a faculty appointment to be shared among the University, Smith, Mount Holyoke, Amherst and Hampshire colleges. While I had not wanted to work, I was glad to be working for the program and pleased when I learned that I would have a TA with Women's Studies for the next academic year.

Martha and I had a lovely summer and before the children were due back from camp she suggested that we take a weekend trip together. It had been two years since I had gone anywhere for a vacation and that had been at Woods Hole--hardly a fun time. She had been wanting to go to Nantucket for years and since I still loved the ocean, I happily agreed. I was, however, a little worried about money. She suggested that we could save a little by packing some food for the ferry trip. I thought that was a great idea and made some vichyssoise and roasted a chicken. The night before we left we went to the grocery store to pick up a few more things for our lunch the next day. Martha didn't say anything as I loaded the shopping cart with my favorite crackers, pickled tomatoes and other goodies but stared at me strangely when I said we would get some French bread and cheese before we left the next morning. We went back to my house to pack and when Martha got her suitcase out of the car, I was disturbed. How, I asked her, could we carry the cooler of food if we had suitcases as well? She looked puzzled but said she didn't know. I suggested we carry our clothes in backpacks. That way, I said, our hands would be free to carry the food. She agreed and took her clothes out of the suitcase that she had begun to pack, and crammed them into a pack. The meal was complete when we stopped to get bread and cheese before we set off to catch the ferry to the island.

We got to Falmouth in plenty of time, parked the car and carried the cooler to the dock. It was quite heavy since the vichyssoise was in my yellow pot, a favorite of mine, made of cast iron and enamel. By the time we got to the ferry the handle of the cooler had broken and it was

quite awkward to carry. A small price, I thought, to pay for a good lunch. It was a beautiful day and we sat on the top deck and had a wonderful feast. The vichyssoise, a serving for eight, was of course not finished but I had made sure to put enough ice packs in the cooler to keep it and the leftover chicken and cheese from spoiling.

We hadn't made reservations in Nantucket, something I had never done, but Martha assured me we would find a place to stay. When we got off the ferry we realized we couldn't walk very far with the cooler. It also became clear that we would have to find a place with a refrigerator. The ice packs would not last for the whole weekend. We hailed a taxi and asked the driver to take us to a guest house he thought might have a vacancy. After a few tries we found one that had a nice room. The proprietors agreed to let us put our food in their refrigerator.

When we finally got settled in our room and put the food away we went out for a walk. It was a pleasure to be free of the cooler and I began to think about what I had done. By the time we got back to the guest house I realized that I had packed lunch and dinner for a family. I was mortified and furious at Martha for not stopping me. I asked her how she could let me be so ridiculous. She was used to traveling without children, how could she have let me pack so much food? She reminded me that by the time she had gotten to my house the evening before we left the vichyssoise and chicken were already made and I had been so excited in the grocery store, she didn't have the heart to stop me. She had, I remembered, suggested that we had enough bread and didn't really need two boxes of crackers and three kinds of cheese. I would have to

learn, I guessed, about packing a light lunch for two. We went out for dinner that night and when we looked at the prices on the menus displayed in front of the restaurants, we laughed and decided we would have leftover vichyssoise and chicken the next night.

C H A P T E R X X I

The fall of 1974 held neither the promise nor the fear of the previous year. I had survived on my own. Although at times I had felt desperately alone, I had not looked back on my relationship with Jake as one in which I was any less alone. What I missed was another adult taking some of the responsibilities, particularly in the area of paying bills and dealing with the car. But I did feel some pride in having saved some money that year--something Jake and I had never done. I still didn't know much about cars but I had found a mechanic a few blocks from the house and had learned to tell him what was wrong with the car and hear his response as well. I had previously thought I had had a rare disease which impaired my brain when I was in the presence of mechanics. Graduate school and my performance had been excruciatingly painful at times, but I had survived that too and had confidence that I would at least struggle through another year. I was in a relationship that was giving me real joy but the year had also been marked with pain. I had expected too much of my friends, Amherst and myself. All three had fallen very short of the mark.

My relationship with Ann Jones had died. It wasn't at all clear to me why we didn't talk to each other, but we didn't. I knew she felt that I didn't support her enough in some of the struggles over the Women's Studies proposal. I had done what I could at the time, and I didn't think it was a bad proposal. There were, I knew, difficulties between Anne Bowen and myself. I felt that she didn't like me and was

disturbed by what I saw as Ann Jones' dependence on the relationship. I needed Ann to be independent and was threatened by the exclusivity of her relationship with Anne Bowen. I knew that Ann's position had not been renewed and Pat had told me that she was returning to the City. Her year had, I guessed, been harder than mine. I was very sad that I hadn't been the kind of friend Ann needed and I mourned the loss of her presence in my life.

That fall my relationship with Pat also seemed to be threatened. I had decided that summer my life would be easier if I had another adult in the house and I had hired Pat's new lover to finish the room Alfred and I had started. It had been a storage shed behind the kitchen and could easily be heated by a wood stove. Alfred and I had laid the floor with beautiful wood from an old silo on his stepfather's farm. What needed to be done was only the walls, setting in of three windows and the building of a simple platform for a loft bed. I didn't know much about construction but it seemed like a job that could easily be done in a month, or even less. Pat's friend came to work sporadically and by the middle of August it was clear that the room would not be finished by September unless he worked more consistently. I had found a graduate student who was interested in living with me and she was understandably anxious to get settled before school began.

I called Rich to say he had better get the room finished and when he responded that he would see if he could manage it, I became very angry. Because he had been in need of money I had agreed to advance him what I had agreed to pay for his labor and therefore I could not afford

to get another carpenter. I told him he was highly irresponsible: he had had more than enough time to get the job done; I had told him when the room was needed; I knew he didn't have any other commitments; I had paid him and I wanted the work done. He hung up on me. I was upset not only because it looked like the room might never get finished, but because I feared that my difficulties with Rich would endanger my friendship with Pat. I vowed to try to keep the situation with Rich as separate from my relationship with Pat as possible.

The next night he called to say he wanted to talk to me and asked if he could come over. I agreed and was shocked when he arrived, not alone, but with Pat. She had come, she said, because she couldn't stand to see two people she loved upset with each other. As Rich began to tell me that I had no right to talk to him as I had the previous night, I began to wonder if Pat had come to protect him from me. I responded that I had every right to be furious and to express my feelings. Nancy was ready to move in and the room was not ready. He had not come to work for days on end and when he did come, it was late and he left early. He acted as if the job was a favor he would try to do for me and I had already paid him for it.

Pat broke in to say that they had worked it all out. She would come over to help him finish the job. They would have it done before school began. I was angrier than ever and my sense that she had come to protect Rich was confirmed. I said that she could do what she felt she had to but I had paid Rich to do the work, not her. If he would only work for a few days I was sure he could get the job done. I also told

her that I felt betrayed by her. Her presence there that night was, I said, totally inappropriate. My problem was with Rich and I had been trying my best to keep that situation separate from my relationship with her which was, I said, very important to me. She had made that separation impossible. If she was going to help Rich, I asked that she let me know so that I could leave the house when she was going to be there. Pat was surprised and upset by my reaction. I wanted both of them to leave. Rich sat sullen and quiet and Pat chatted, trying to appease my anger. Finally, I stood up, said that I expected the room to be done by August 31st at the latest and asked them to leave.

Over the next few weeks Rich managed to fit in a few days of work on the room and by mid-September I moved in although there was still some finishing work to be done. I knew it was as finished as it would ever be. Pat had not come to help Rich and I did not hear from her for the next few months.

I was very saddened by the loss of my friendship with Ann and now my relationship with Pat was in trouble, but as school began I had little time or energy to think about what had happened. What I did not do, however, was to blame myself for what had happened and that seemed to be enough for the present.

I focused my energy on trying to be more realistic about my school work. I would have to get through the year without expecting to write women's history for all my sisters. Because of the meager offerings in the history department and the rules prohibiting graduate students from taking courses in other departments, I was forced to take courses that

neither interested me nor had any focus on women. Joyce Berkman was not teaching anything I could take since her field was British intellectual history and I was interested in American history. I also realized that I would have to be more careful with my advisor. While he had seemed to be supportive about my interest in women, I had begun to feel that he was not being totally honest with me. His evaluation of my major paper for his course the previous semester had been ambivalent. After praising my effort for its insight and thoroughness, he ended the evaluation with a question about whether I could "professionalize" my work. I was confused by the praise which ended in such an enigmatic question. Was not professional historical scholarship insightful and thorough? When I asked him what he meant, he replied that he didn't know if I had serious scholarly potential or if I had only a "B-" mind. I decided it would be wise to stay away from him as much as possible.

One bright thing about my school work was that I was finally going to get some help with my writing. I had improved since the beginning of my graduate work, but I was still struggling very hard. When Julia Demmin, a friend of Nancy's, heard about my problems she offered me a proposition. She was an accomplished editor and would be happy to help me with my papers in exchange for a few feasts at my table. After a few sessions with Julia I began to have some confidence that I could learn the skill of writing.

By the middle of the semester I had to decide whether to apply for the doctoral program. After weeks of thinking about it, I opted to get my Masters and get out. There were, I knew, few jobs for Ph.D.s in

history and while I had enjoyed some of my research and even some of the writing, I also thought too many more years in this History department might destroy me. I felt at once defeated and relieved when I decided not to apply for the doctoral program.

Martha forced another decision that year. Our relationship had been developing beautifully, the only major problem being finding enough time to spend together. Although I tried my best to put some limits on the time I spent on my courses, I was obsessed with trying to learn as much as I possibly could--to fill in the blanks of all the history I did not know. I also tried to spend as much time with the children as I could but it never seemed to be enough to assuage my guilt about not being a "supermom." Martha's time was also limited since she had a full practice, was finishing a Masters degree, and was in training with a Jungian analyst in Connecticut.

Early that school year we had decided that Martha would eat with us a few times a week and she spent most of her free time at my house, but I knew that arrangement would not last too much longer. She did not feel that the small apartment she had rented on a temporary basis was really a home, and she would, I knew, soon want to find another place. When she did I was sure that she would not be as willing to spend most of her time at my house. But I tried not to think about all of that because I knew then I would have to face a decision I did not want to make.

One of the things that frightened me the most was living with Martha. After losing what little sense I had of myself in my marriage,

I was afraid of what might happen to my relationship with Martha if we shared the same space. Living together, I thought, was more than I could handle. I would probably become very dependent on Martha and make all kinds of assumptions about her role with the children. I would, I was sure, grow to resent her for not being everything I wanted, although the rational side of me would know that no one could be all that I wanted. In our present arrangement, I didn't expect her to do anything with the children and if she did I was pleasantly surprised. Living together, I was sure, would change all that. As soon as it became clear to me that our relationship would be more than a brief affair, I made Martha promise she would never ask me to live with her. She smiled and agreed.

One day towards the middle of the semester we decided to take some time for ourselves. Martha cancelled her clients and I cut my classes. After a lovely day of being together alone, Martha broke her promise. She looked at me and very innocently said, let's live together. I screamed at her that she had promised she would never utter those words but as I yelled at her I knew that it was inevitable that I would agree. It was clear to both of us that we were making a life together and for us, that would at some time mean sharing a home. While I knew that the question had to come, I was a wreck nonetheless.

When I recovered, we began the long process of talking about our fears, mostly mine, and the various possibilities. We thought about buying a two family house. Martha would have one side and the children and I the other, but that seemed kind of silly. We would be living

together but not really living together. Because of my conviction that our relationship would be destroyed if we lived like a nuclear family, I suggested that we live with a few other people. I had wanted to try to live communally for some time, and had approximated that kind of arrangement in Ithaca when Tod and Lanni lived with me. Martha, who was a person who valued her privacy, was not thrilled with the prospect of living in a large household. She was also quite intent on our owning the house ourselves. For a few weeks it seemed as if we would not live together at all, and I was both relieved and disappointed. Finally, one evening after dinner Martha said she really did want us to live together. She had thought about it and if she had to live with other people to live with me she was willing to do that. She was insistent, however, that she and I buy the house.

I was surprised at how delighted I was by her decision. Despite all my fears about living with Martha, I had realized while we were discussing the various options that it might be quite wonderful to live with her. We would really share a home in a way that Jake and I never had. Martha seemed happy too. We stayed up half the night talking about the kind of houses we liked.

The next week Martha got a call that threatened our plans. She had been asked to take the position of staff psychologist at the Country Place, a residential treatment center for schizophrenics. It was a wonderful opportunity to work closely with Dr. Renee Nell, the Jungian analyst she had been studying with for more than two years. Dr. Nell was the founder and director of the center. We were both overwhelmed.

The position required that she live at the center--a two hour drive from Amherst.

Martha's initial reaction was to say no, but as we talked about it she was less certain. I was very ambivalent. I could hardly stand in the way of what was clearly an important experience for Martha, but I wanted us to start our life together. And the thought of her living two hours away was awful. She had told the executive director of the center that she would have to think about their offer for a few days and we did little else during that time. To my great relief, Martha was not considering taking the position on a permanent basis, but she thought she would suggest they hire her for a limited period. When she told the executive director that she was not interested in the position on a permanent basis but had another suggestion they arranged for a meeting the next week. As Martha drove off to the Country Place I worried that they would convince her to take the job for more than a few months, but she came back having gotten just what she wanted. They had agreed not only to take her for only four months but had also promised her most weekends off so that she could come back to Amherst regularly.

I was relieved but still unnerved by the sudden turn of events. I thought it might be better if we put off our plans to buy the house for another year. By then she would be back in Amherst and would have re-established her practice and I would have some clarity on what my financial situation would be. Martha was adamant that we go ahead as planned. She had lived in a makeshift way for one year and didn't plan to do it for another. She was not interested in waiting. I could look at houses

that came up for sale during the week and she would be back in Amherst almost every weekend.

I called a realtor to see what was available and to get some indication of what the market was like. I thought I'd try to sell my house on my own but did want an estimate. The news was not encouraging. Amherst's economy was closely tied to the vicissitudes of the University's budget and since there were rumors of an impending spending freeze, nothing was moving. There were no large houses for sale at that time near the center of town. If we were interested in moving to the country, we could probably find something very nice and at a much better price. I was, however, not interested. It was important to me to live where the children could walk to school and downtown. She was sure, she said, that the market would get better in the spring. She would be in touch if something came up. There seemed to be little more that I could do and I was able to concentrate more fully on my school work again.

I was in my last semester and I had had to enroll in courses, once again, that did nothing to expand my knowledge of women's lives. It was also very frustrating to get so little help in the process of doing history. I had been to a number of women's history conferences in which the main concern had been methodology. The question of how we should set about the task of learning about women's lives was a burning issue for the scholars, both young and established, who gathered to discuss the difficulties and successes of researching and writing about women. There was no such talk about any kind of history in my courses at the

University. Except for the course Joyce Berkman offered during my first semester, the material consisted of lectures about the various periods and we graduate students dutifully went to the library, collected information and assembled it into thirty or forty pages of prose. The question of methodology arose only once in the form of a comment on one of my papers questioning what mine was. I would have loved to have been able to seriously study questions of method but found it difficult to do that within a course which did not address them at all.

It also seemed to me that I was being asked to do other unreasonable things in my papers. In one of my courses, nineteenth century American intellectual history, I chose to work on Emma Goldman. When I went to the faculty member for help with resources, he merely reached for Notable American Women and read me the citations. I then specifically asked him for help regarding material on anarchism but he said he really didn't know of much. I proceeded to gather as much information on Goldman, her mentors and comrades as well as her milieu as I could and wrote what Julia and I thought was solid analysis of Emma Goldman's political philosophy. I was unable to relate her thought directly to the American scene however and got no help from the class. Not only were all the thinkers we studied men, but they were all conservative or liberal. Socialism, feminism or any of the other radical movements of the early part of the century were not mentioned, yet this man expected me to make those connections although there was nothing in the primary or secondary sources to help me. That topic would have been a major undertaking in itself.

There was only one faculty member besides Joyce who did not seem hostile to my interest in women. He was a conservative who taught colonial history. When I told him I was interested in women's issues, his response was merely, "I don't care if you write elephant history as long as it's good history." I did a study on divorce in 18th century Massachusetts and he was extremely helpful with resources and even suggested me for a panel at a professional conference on the colonial period. It was a pleasant surprise to get this kind of help and I thought about what some of my Black friends had said and what I had read by Black writers about how much harder it was to be in the North. I had expected only trouble from this man and he was helping me. The liberals, on the other hand, led me to expect they were supportive of my interest but gave me a very hard time when I pursued my desire to work on women. Although I knew their expectations were not appropriate to my stage in my graduate work, my confidence in my ability to become a scholar was undermined nonetheless. I declined the offer to present a paper at the conference and thought only of the day when I would be out of graduate school. I hoped I could contain my rage for the few months I still had in the department.

While graduate school was becoming more torturous, my prospects at Women's Studies were improving. The program was growing very rapidly and the administration had agreed to fund more positions for the coming academic year. I was assured by the policy board that if there was a staff position, I would have it. Nothing could be certain, of course, because of the impending freeze. By May the freeze was imposed but it

exempted non-professional positions. If I wanted it, I could have a half-time job with the program doing more of what I had been doing that year. Although the salary was very low, I did not hesitate to accept the offer. There would be, I thought, no better place to recover from my two years in the History department than Women's Studies. I would manage financially. I finished my courses and prepared for my comprehensive examination. I passed with distinction but felt little sense of accomplishment. I was only relieved that it was over.

The week after my exam Martha left for the Country Place. She had given up her apartment and would stay with me when she came back to Amherst for the weekend. She would work until it was time for us to move. We had not found a house yet, nor had I found a buyer for mine. I expected that there would be some activity in the market once the semester was over. Just then I was too tired to worry.

I realized as Martha backed out of my driveway that I had not faced what it would mean to me not to have her in my life on a daily basis. I had thought of her time at the Country Place as only being four months long, but as the car disappeared down the street I felt that it might be a very long four months. My acute sense of loneliness scared me. I sensed that I had already become very dependent on Martha and was very disappointed in myself. If there was one thing I had learned from the women's movement it was to be independent and it seemed as if I had failed in that area as well as in all the others.

My belief that my life would dramatically change because of my new-found consciousness had not been correct. Overall my life was better.

I was no longer someone's wife. I had forged a new life for myself and I was surviving. There were of course problems with the children, but I felt less conflicted about how I was raising them. Despite my feeling that I had failed because I had become dependent on Martha, I did love her very much and the relationship was very important to me. But there had also been some very real pain. I questioned my intellectual abilities and I had lost my two closest friends. As I sat in my kitchen that morning, I felt a profound weariness. My life had not been turned into a series of successes, but there was no turning back. I was on the right road. It was, unfortunately, much rockier than I had allowed myself to believe it would be.

C H A P T E R X X I I

There were not many large houses for sale within walking distance to the center of town that summer, so my task of choosing houses for Martha and I to look at on the weekends was simplified. We settled on an old house which met our requirements for space and location. It needed work but would, we thought, be quite lovely when the old and soiled wallpaper was removed and the walls painted. Two young women had agreed to move in with us and although I had hoped we would live with women closer to our age, I thought Karen and Lisa might work out well. They seemed anxious to participate in running the household and Neal and Leah liked them. The rent they paid would certainly be important since money would be very tight that year. As per my agreement with Jake, my support payments were reduced because I had finished school. My job at Women's Studies was half time and the salary did not make up the difference in my income. Martha was also anxious about money since she was starting a new practice.

Despite the low salary, I was glad that I had not refused the job at Women's Studies. I continued to feel that I was an integral part of a program which, for the most part, expressed my politics. I also knew that it would be possible to develop my own programs. When the rush of the beginning of the semester was over, I began to think about doing something for women in graduate school. The experience had been so painful and lonely for me that I wanted to find ways to alleviate the alienation and loss of confidence that seemed to be a part of the

process of doing graduate work. After approval from the policy board I worked with Mary Lou O'Neill, a staff member at the Everywoman's Center who was herself a graduate student, to create support groups for graduate women. The first meeting was well attended, but the number of women dwindled at subsequent meetings. Despite the positive feelings among the women who did come to the groups, it became clear that they were too overloaded with work and often with family responsibilities as well to make a regular commitment of time. I knew the feeling all too well.

We discontinued the meetings and planned a day long conference instead. We had a morning panel of three women: a graduate student, a local woman therapist who had returned to school after years of a successful career as an editor in New York, and a faculty member who was committed to helping women graduate students get through the barriers placed before them. We had optimistically reserved a large room for the conference and as we watched the seats fill we were confirmed in our feeling that graduate women did need support. When the first speaker talked about the faculty in her department devaluing her work and the difficulties she experienced by being closed out of the professional and social networks among the male graduate students and faculty, I looked around the room and saw many heads nodding in recognition and agreement. The therapist was the next speaker. She described her utter disappointment when she returned to school expecting to be treated like the adult that she was. She found the atmosphere to be more like elementary school than like college and was appalled. She went on to say that the process was infantilizing and designed to make students, particularly

women, feel stupid. I saw many women in the audience wiping their eyes. The faculty woman was inspiring. While acknowledging the difficulties of graduate school for women, she discussed strategies for protection against the worst of the abuses as well as ways to manipulate the system to one's own advantage. The afternoon workshops were also well attended and by the end of the day women crowded around us to express their thanks for the conference. I was filled with emotion. The day had made it clear to me that my problems in graduate school were not unique. It was also obvious that graduate women did need services. The policy board agreed that I should continue to work with Mary Lou to provide what we could. I felt sure that working with the Women's Studies Program was where I should be.

There was, however, one thing about the program that was disturbing. Women's Studies was almost exclusively white. While two faculty members from the Afro-American Studies department did regularly list their offerings on Black women as Women's Studies courses, all the faculty, students and staff who worked on our committees and made decisions about the direction the Program would take were white. Occasionally, members of the policy board would lament the fact that our courses did not attract Black and Third World student, but there was no discussion about incorporating material on racism or Black and Third World women into the courses.

It seemed to me that Women's Studies had little to offer students who were not white. I wanted to change that situation, not merely to attract Black and Third World women to our courses, but for reasons that

were central to our mission, at least as I had defined it. The simple fact that most of the women in the world were not white seemed ample enough justification for Black and Third World women's lives being a major focus of our courses as well as the research interests of the faculty associated with the program. If our goal was to study women, and white women were a distinct minority in the world, it was clearly incumbent on all of us not to limit our work to white women. I also felt that racism, being a fact of life for the majority of the women in the world, was crucial to any analysis of women. While I also sensed that white women were affected by racism, the dynamics of that process were not clear to me. What was clear to me was that a Women's Studies Program that did not address the issues of dominance and subordination however and wherever they existed would have only a limited vision of women's lives.

Although my feelings on the issues of the inclusion of Black and Third World women's lives in our Program were very strong, I was unable to clearly articulate my reasons. Since it seemed that no one else in the Program shared my perspectives--beyond hoping that Black and Third World students would enroll in our classes--there was no opportunity for serious discussion of the issues I considered so crucial to the foundations of the Program. I also recognized that beyond the limited reading I had done and what I had learned from Brenda, I was fairly ignorant about Black and Third World women's lives and the role that racism played in the development of our society or its role on an international level. My education in the History department had been of no use in

this area. It had, in fact, delayed taking up the issue of the commonalities and differences in the history of Black and white women which was what I had intended to study when I entered the department. For faculty in the History department, Black people simply did not exist, nor was racism a component of American history and culture. Even the historical fact of slavery was not discussed except from the point of view of the abolitionists.

Racism, it seemed to me, was and continued to be a powerful force not only in the lives of Black and Third World women, but in all of our lives. I thought it would be useful to the Program if I began to educate myself on these issues and I suggested to the policy board that I sit in on courses in the Afro-American Studies Department. I could not only enrich the Program with what I learned, I argued, but make important liaisons with some of the Black women on campus. I was gratified when the board agreed with my plan. I was confident that the faculty would be as anxious to include the new material in their courses as I was to gather all the knowledge I could.

Luckily that Spring Johnnetta Cole and Esther Terry were offering "The Black Woman" and although I had read most of the books they were using, I looked forward to hearing what Professors Cole and Terry had to say about them. I also wanted very much to hear the discussion among the students. I made the decision before going to the class that I would listen, take in as much as I could rather than participate. What I wanted was to hear what Black people had to say--to get a sense of how they would approach the works--to hear what issues were salient for

them. I arrived early the first night of the class in order to introduce myself and to ask if I could sit in on the class. I told Professors Cole and Terry I was from Women's Studies and that I had been authorized by the policy board to educate myself by taking their class. Their response was affirmative but reserved. I went to the back of the room, took a seat and as I watched the students come in I was glad to see a few other white faces. My experience with Brenda and her friends had made me sensitive to the reality that discussions in an interracial group were different from what occurred when whites were not present. The self-imposed limitations were not unlike what happened when women's issues were discussed in front of men.

The class was more than I had hoped it would be. Professors Cole and Terry were not only very knowledgeable but excited by their subject. They also seemed perfectly balanced to team teach. Professor Cole's flamboyant style contrasted with Professor Terry's quiet intensity and the combination drew in the shyest as well as the most vocal students. As the class progressed I kept my seat in the back row apart from the class in some very real ways, yet feeling that I had come back to something very vital in myself. Although there was much in the discussions that related to my life as a woman, it was also clear that the experience of living as a Black woman in a racist society, a basic fact for the authors of the books as well as the Black women in the room, was not part of my life. I was also aware, too, that the Black students, the faculty and the authors shared a culture that I knew only from the perspective of an outsider. Yet, I felt inexplicably closer to both the

authors and the Black people in that room than I did to the white women I knew. I was confused but absolutely certain about one thing: it had been very important to me to take that class and I would definitely sit in on another class the next semester.

I could not articulate the deep meaning that the class had had for me and I was even less sure of what I could say to my colleagues in Women's Studies. Beyond reading lists and the possibility of developing a working relationship with Professors Cole and Terry, there did not seem to be a way to convey what I had learned. Partially, I was sure, the difficulty lay in my inability to understand clearly its importance to me. I hoped the benefits to Women's Studies would be more concrete the next semester.

There were no other courses on Black women offered by Afro-American Studies but I was beginning to understand that it was crucial to learn more about the culture which informed the lives of Black women. I was delighted when I saw a course on Black music in the listings for the next semester. It was taught by Archie Shepp, the jazz saxophonist. I was not familiar with his music but I remembered that he had been very outspoken during the Black Power movement. I vaguely remembered reading an article in the Village Voice about a heated debate at the Village Vanguard at which Shepp had been reported to have expressed an anti-white attitude. I wondered if I would feel as comfortable in his class as I had in the one I had taken from Professors Cole and Terry, but I was anxious to learn more about the music I had loved for so long and

was also intrigued by the title of the course, "Revolutionary Concepts in Afro-American Music."

It was with some trepidation that I approached Professor Shepp on the first day of class to introduce myself and ask if I could sit in on his course. His response was a relief. He actually seemed pleased and thought I would be particularly interested in the section on Bessie Smith. He had thought, he said, of devoting an entire course to the great blues singer and asked if I thought Women's Studies might be interested in listing it. I assured him we would and as I sat in the back of the room I wondered about the report I had read about Professor Shepp. Had his attitude towards whites changed or had the report in the Voice merely been another case of white overreaction to Black people asserting themselves? My thoughts were interrupted by Professor Shepp's voice saying that the course would begin with a discussion of African music which was the foundation of all of Afro-American music--gospel, the blues, rhythm and blues and Black classical music, his term for jazz.

This subject for this class as well as the style of the instructor was very different from "The Black Women." A course on music is by its very nature less personal than the material evoked by literature and biographies of women's lives and Professor Shepp's style of teaching, with its heavy reliance on the lecture, did not invite much discussion from the students, yet I felt the same sense of excitement hearing about Afro-American music as I did hearing a discussion of Black women's lives. It also was wonderfully familiar to be in New Africa House, the

building where the Afro-American Studies Department was housed. "The Black Woman" had been held at night when the building was empty except for the few other night classes. This course was in the morning and the atmosphere of the building was like nothing I had experienced at any college. It was very noisy. People yelled down the hall and when I heard people screaming up to the classrooms from the street I knew why New Africa House felt so much like home. It was like my old neighborhood in the City. My friends and I always called to each other from the street--even to Thalia who lived on the sixth floor. The people at New Africa House did not impose the conventionalities of "proper" or "professional" behavior on themselves and it felt wonderful. I knew, however, that there had to be more than a nostalgia for my old neighborhood to explain my feeling of ease in that building. Despite the incontrovertible fact of my whiteness, part of me felt I belonged in New Africa House taking courses in the Afro-American Studies Department.

My emotional response to the material was also confusing. Early in the course Professor Shepp outlined the basic elements of African music and showed how they had formed the basis of not only the field holler and work songs of the slaves, but the contemporary music Black musicians were creating in 1975. The strength of African culture, its ability to survive the middle passage and the trauma of slavery was not only astounding on an intellectual level, but evoked in me a profound feeling of respect and even joy. Concurrent with these positive responses towards African and Afro-American culture and people was a revived fury and rage at Western culture and whites. I had, of course, read about

slavery before and Brenda had taught me about racism but I had never before thought of Africa as a place from which Black Americans had come--never considered it to be the homeland of anyone but the "natives" I had seen in the National Geographics I had leafed through when I was a child looking for pictures of naked breasts and bare bottoms. This course affirmed the African heritage of Black Americans through the close connection between traditional African music and contemporary Afro-American music. I was stunned at how thoroughly I had been socialized. I had never before thought of Black Americans as having a heritage other than slavery, yet I had known that slaves were brought from Africa.

Most of my colleagues and friends seemed only mildly interested in what seemed so cataclysmic to me. Worse than the disinterest of my associates was what had begun to happen to my relationship with Martha. She listened to what I told her about what I was learning but when I began seeing racism everywhere and venting my rage at whites, it was clear that she did not share my feelings. We started to have terrible fights and I found myself censoring myself and feeling very alone. I knew that my new knowledge was a kind of an obsession, but I also knew that my feelings were very important. I was compelled to go on with my quest.

The next semester, on the advice of Johnnetta Cole whom I occasionally saw at various University committee meetings, I took "Introduction to African Studies." It was a new course team taught by four faculty including Johnnetta. Because the faculty were well aware of the

ignorance of most students about Africa they began the course with a geography lesson. Africa, we learned, was a huge continent containing many countries, cultures, ethnic groups as well as many different kinds of climates. It was not, as I had thought, wall to wall jungle. As I looked at the map it seemed clear to me that my sense that Africa was all the same was more than ignorance. The huge continent dwarfed the United States and it seemed only logical that it would contain as much or more variation than this country, but I was not alone in assuming that it was all the same. Every class revealed something else about Africa that challenged my basic assumptions about the continent and made me question where they had come from. Somehow I had learned to think about Africa as monolithic and backward, yet there was incontrovertible evidence that great African civilizations existed well before nation-states were established in Europe.

I had, of course, learned at Columbia about the great artistic achievements of ancient Egypt but I had never considered Egypt to be part of Africa. I had certainly never thought of Greek civilization as having been influenced by Egypt but I learned in the course that Socrates had been educated in Africa--"our" Socrates, the philosopher whose ideas, everyone knew, were at the very foundation of Western civilization. The Greek pantheon of gods, in fact, had African roots. What did it mean, I wondered, for a culture to deny its origins? Could we in the West know who we are if we don't know the origin of basic assumptions? As the course progressed I learned that Western nations did not always consider Africa to be the "dark continent." African kings had been

honored in European courts but that had been before the slave trade and before colonization. In order to justify the buying and selling of African people, Western scholars had revised their assessment of the continent. If the reality of the great pyramids of Egypt could not be denied, then Egypt could be taken out of Africa.

Every week when I came home from the class I told Martha what I had learned and vented some of my rage at whites--those who had perpetrated the brutal hoax that Africa was a backward place, who had bought and sold Africans, who had imperialized and colonized the continent as well as whites who refused to see what had been done. Our fights intensified and were very painful for both of us. I began to understand that when I attacked whites, Martha felt I was attacking her and I was confused. I didn't feel attacked when I was in the class, nor had I taken Brenda's rage at whites personally. Though I did feel that I was a racist and that knowledge was difficult and painful to accept, I somehow did not feel that I was personally responsible for what had hurt Brenda and other Black people. Brenda had often told me that I wasn't really white and I had argued that I had been raised as a white girl with all the privilege that accrued to someone with my skin color. My parents certainly thought of themselves as white and taught me that Black people were inferior. Now I heard Brenda's words coming from Martha, but this time they were screamed at me in rage. I screamed back that I was as white as she but I had realized what it meant to be white and was trying to overcome my own racism. Even as I yelled this to Martha I wondered what she and Brenda meant. It was true that I did feel very different

from all the whites I knew but I also knew that I wasn't Black. I was beginning to wonder who I was, after all. One thing was very clear--I felt alone.

By the end of the semester Martha and I were fighting most of the time and most of our arguments began with a disagreement that focused around race. When she made blanket statements about men I felt myself stiffen even though I could easily have said the same thing myself when the women's movement first touched me. But when Martha said them I would sometimes quietly and sometimes loudly respond that all men were not the same. Some men--Black men--did not have the same power as white men. The discussion quickly became an argument which was never resolved. One day, when we had been yelling at each other for some time, I heard myself saying that my grandfather's power had been very limited. There was no doubt in my mind, I said, that he had oppressed my grandmother but he had been killed by the Turks nonetheless. My uncle, I screamed, had been put into a camp because he was an Armenian and had my grandfather been alive he would have had no more power to save his son than my grandmother had had. I continued, now through my tears, to say that I understood the oppression of a people and that oppression had an impact on patriarchy. I was well aware that Armenian men were pigs and it was impossible for me to live near my family because of the way women were treated but there was something about our common pain that would always connect me in some profound way to Armenians, women and men.

Slowly over the next few months, Martha and I began to understand where our respective backgrounds had put us, how they had informed our

different reactions to oppression. The genocide, that story my grandmother had told me when I was fourteen, the tale I did not want to hear, the events of her life that no one else in the family acknowledged, that story which I had not thought about for years had come back into my life. This time, however, I wanted to know more. What had happened in Turkey? Was my grandmother's experience unique or typical?

During this period my mother sent me a book written by an Armenian, as she occasionally did. I usually did no more than leaf through whatever it was she had sent and then put them away. This time I was intrigued. The book was Passage to Ararat by Michael Arlen, an autobiographical account of Arlen's attempt to come to terms with being an Armenian. I opened it and began to read and until I finished it, every free moment I had was spent reading that book.

Arlen's father, born Dikran Kouyoumjian, had been raised in London. When he reached adulthood he changed his name to Michael Arlen, emigrated to the United States and became an acclaimed writer of romantic novels. The son described his father's writing as being devoid of any reference to his Armenian ancestry. This omission was, according to the son, no surprise since except for an occasional derogatory remark about Armenians by his father, he had grown up with no indication that his parents were Armenian. The son questioned neither the omission of ethnic references in his father's life and work nor his own ethnic background until he was in his forties and both his parents were dead. Arlen was asked by an Armenian organization to give a lecture on

contemporary writers. That invitation was to have a profound effect on his life.

My own identity as an American seemed to me fairly definite--at least on the surface. I had an American wife and American children--a satisfactory American career and life. Then, one day, out of the blue, I was asked by an Armenian group in New York to come down and give a talk about writing. I was surprised and flattered by the invitation--for my lecture services were not in great demand--and I said yes.

I can remember the evening vividly. The talk was given in an auditorium of the Armenian Cathedral, on Second Avenue--a place I had never before visited. The audience sat before me on little chairs--middle-aged Armenian men and women, for the most part, the men generally stocky, the women wearing old fashioned flowered dresses. What I said was undistinguished, but all of a sudden I myself felt greatly moved. I remember standing at the lectern gazing into the rows of clearly Armenian faces--more Armenians than I had ever before seen together--and experiencing an extraordinary pull. My eyes told me that these people were different from me, but I knew that they were not so different. I didn't know what else I knew.

Afterward, an old gentleman with thick white hair came up to me. "An interesting talk," he said. "Although you didn't mention any Armenian writers. It's too bad we never saw your father here."

"I don't think he thought of himself as Armenian," I said. And as soon as I had said it I realized that it was untrue.

"Of course he was Armenian," said the old man. "You are Armenian. It is not such a strange thing to be Armenian. Come have some coffee."

I think I thought something like, You can go forward here, or stay where you are. And so I went with him and had some coffee.

Such small beginnings. That evening, for the first time, I met Armenians on my own. Armenian women who laughed and asked too many questions. Thick-chested men who seemed always to have their arms around each other. Too many cups of coffee and small, sweet cakes. I was there--wherever there was. It was an uncertain beachhead, for I kept fighting off the desire to bolt. Never let them get too close! But I also knew that a corner of some missing piece had briefly become visible.

As I finally made my way toward the door, a voice called out, "You will come back!" I couldn't tell whether it was a statement or a question.

"I will," I said.

The journey had begun. (Arlen, 1975, 13-14)

Even though our experiences growing up as Armenians were opposite there was so much, even in Arlen's first encounter at the church, that spoke to me, particularly his feeling of connectedness and his desire to "bolt." I read on eagerly as Arlen described his difficult journey. I understood his ambivalence. He was both eager and reluctant to explore his identity as an Armenian and as I continued to read, I also began to understand his compulsion to continue his journey. I had grown up knowing all too well that I was an Armenian, yet it seemed clear as I read this book that my own ethnic identity was a "missing piece" for me as well.

I had not felt such excitement about a book since reading Doris Lessing. Martha Quest and Anna Wulf had become part of my life because their lives, as Lessing had shaped them, mirrored mine in a fundamental way despite the obvious differences. Lessing had articulated essential truths about my life as a woman which I had vaguely felt but been unable to bring to consciousness. Now Arlen's book had evoked the same kind of response. I was not the only Armenian who had ambivalent feelings about my ancestry. He, too, resisted learning about the 1915 genocide despite the repeated urging of Sarkis, a character who becomes a guide on Arlen's journey back to Armenia--to Ararat.

While I was reading I tried to tell Martha about it--to convey what it meant to me but my attempts were not satisfying. I needed to find a way for her to know as much as she could, not only what Arlen wrote but what it meant to me. When I finished I urged her to read it and she agreed but I was still not satisfied. Then it occurred to me that if we read it aloud to each other she could see and feel the impact of the words on me and I would also have some sense of what they meant to her.

We began to read and it was clear from the first few chapters of the book that it would help us bridge our differences. Martha laughed with me when Arlen's description of Armenian behavior so clearly described that of my relatives or even, I was embarrassed to admit, my own. We both fell silent when we read about the 19th century obliteration of Armenian villages, atrocities committed against Armenians by the Turks or, finally, Arlen's account of the 1915 genocide.

There was no question that Martha had been deeply moved by Passage to Ararat and I also knew that reading it together had been an important experience for both of us. I wondered, however, how she had reacted to Arlen's exclusive focus on Armenian men. His journey was to Ararat and to his father, an attempt to discover who he was as an Armenian and to understand his father. While I had occasionally been annoyed by Arlen's inability to see Armenian women, the book had meant so much to me as an Armenian that I was able, for the most part, to ignore his omission. Martha had said nothing about this aspect of the book and when I raised it she merely said it didn't matter. I was relieved, feeling that through sharing the book Martha had finally heard what I had been

screaming about for months, though I had not been so clear myself about what had been happening to me.

C H A P T E R X X I I I

Shortly after Martha and I had finished reading Passage to Ararat, Women's Studies sponsored a lecture by Andrea Dworkin on "Women and the New Right." Since I was interested in the topic I decided to go to hear her talk and Martha joined me. When we got to the large auditorium where the lecture was being held it was almost full but we found two seats near the stage. Shortly after we sat down Dworkin was introduced and when she rose to the podium the audience responded with thunderous applause. She began her talk with general comments on the oppression of women and finally focused on Anita Bryant who had just begun her campaign against gays and lesbians. To my great surprise Dworkin asked the audience to empathize with Bryant--to see her as a woman, like ourselves--a woman oppressed by patriarchy. As Dworkin continued her litany of the wrongs perpetrated against women by men, I grew more and more uncomfortable. I looked around the room and saw some of my colleagues and many of our students in the audience. None of them seemed to be disturbed by Dworkin's endless recital of the powerlessness of women. I wondered if I was unable to accept the reality of my oppression as a woman.

I began to literally squirm in my seat and I turned to Martha and knew from the look on her face that she was also disturbed by what Dworkin was saying. I leaned closer to her and heard myself whisper, "not my grandmother." Even as the words passed over my lips I wondered what I meant, but Martha calmly nodded in agreement. I wanted

desperately to leave but that was impossible. The audience was, it seemed, spellbound and we were seated in the middle of the row. I sat and waited for Dworkin to finish no longer hearing her but thinking about my grandmother and trying to contain the rage I was beginning to feel.

The lecture was over, at last, and Martha leaned over and said, let's get out of here. While the audience rose to applaud Dworkin we made our way out and almost ran to the door. The cool night air felt wonderful. I took a deep breath and vented my fury at what Dworkin had said. She wasn't talking about me. I am not a total victim. I can act. I can change my life. I do have responsibility for what I do and I most certainly held Anita Bryant responsible for what she did. And finally, the phrase that I had uttered in the auditorium came out again--not my grandmother. She had survived. The Turks had taken her husband from her, forced her into exile with her three young children, taken her son away, but she had gotten him back, found a way to get the family out of exile and finally managed to get to the United States. She had saved herself, my aunt, uncle and mother. I had to hear her story again and I had to write it down. Arlen's book had given me the courage to explore my own history and Andrea Dworkin unwittingly had compelled me to look again at my grandmother's survival.

I decided to tape my mother and aunt as well as my grandmother and I was both excited and terrified. The distance I had maintained for so long both from my family and my ethnicity had seemed to be necessary for my own survival. I desperately needed to be as American as possible and

to also be as independent as possible of the considerable demands of my family. After I became a feminist I understood, too, that to stay within the family would have meant either adhering to the rigidly proscribed roles for women or to constantly fight against them. Now, at the age of thirty-five, I wondered if I was threatening a relationship that had become fairly comfortable. It was clear, however, that I had no choice. I had to hear my grandmother's story again.

I asked Martha to come with me when I went to New Jersey to do the taping. I honestly felt that I could not attempt the project without her support and was grateful when she agreed to join me. We arrived at my mother's house armed with sheets of questions I had prepared. While I had come to tape the story of her survival, I thought it was important also to get a sense of her role as a woman as well as some idea of what her economic status was before the genocide. As I asked her what her wedding had been like, the kind of house she had and who did the cooking and cleaning, my grandmother seemed uninterested and even irritated. Her memory of her early life was dim and she seemed confused. The situation was not helped by my Armenian which was worst than rusty. I could barely understand her and she tried to speak in English which had gotten worse than I had remembered it to have been. I called Aunty Ars into the room to help translate but the situation did not improve. I looked closely at the small woman who sat before me. Perhaps, I thought sadly, I waited too long. My grandmother looked very old. Her eighty-nine years seemed to have finally taken their toll.

With my aunt's help, I got some sense of Elmas Tutuian's early life. She had been two years old when her mother died and her father sent her to live with her older sister Turvanda who was married and whose daughter was just Elmas' age. Turvanda and her husband Arakel were, she said, wonderful to her, just like parents. When she was seventeen years old Hampartzum Tutuian, a friend of Arakel's, asked for her hand. Elmas did not know him and she thought he was too old for her but Arakel convinced her to marry him, saying he was a good man and would take care of her just as he had. Before I could ask her another question she said in English, "I was seventeen years old. He was twenty-eight. At twenty-seven they took my husband. Berj was two years old, Ars seven and Ashot four. I have three children. They took us out of the house--the Turks. My husband was a soldier. I have three children." She then turned to my aunt and told her to "tell about us. Tell about the Turk." Aunty Ars began the story.

Christmastime they exiled all the men and boys fifteen and over. And then Eastertime we went to church and came back from the church our doors were all--what do you call--they locked it and had their stamp on it--only the dining room was open. No kitchen--nothing. And what we had on, we were left with that. And my mother went to the police commissioner who was very friendly with my father.

My grandmother seemed relaxed for the first time since I began asking her questions. The story was being told and she was content to add her comments from time to time. Aunty Ars continued.

My mother went to him to say that's what they did to our house. What are we going to do? And he said, 'It's going to be very bad. They are going to exile everybody. Why don't you become a Turk?' And my mother says, 'My husband is in the army, how could they exile me?'

My grandmother broke in and corrected my aunt, "I told them, if my husband heard I became a Turk he would go to his grave. And then he said it's going to be very bad. You'll be sorry. I told them what my nationality is--I'll be the same." She sat back and told Aunty Ars to continue. When Aunty Ars diverted to tell us something about her husband's family, my grandmother said, "Ashot's story, Ashot's story." Aunty Ars turned to her and told her not to skip ahead. She sat back and listened as her daughter told us that the police commissioner had arranged to allow them to use a few more of the rooms in the house.

One day an Armenian man who had somehow escaped being exiled with the other men in the town came to the door. He begged Elmas to hide him. Refusing at first, she relented. Knowing she could not keep him for long in the three rooms of the house that had been opened for their use, she went to tell his wife and mother that they had to find another place for him. While she was gone Ars, Ashot, Berj and their one hundred and ten year old greatgrandmother were alone in the house. The man was hiding in a closet.

They came, gendarmes . . . with the muchdar--was like a sheriff . . . and he says, 'These people, I know all this time, they are not that kind of people.' Oh no, she's hiding somebody over there, we know it. I said, we don't hide anybody--and the man is in there . . . where the wood is. I was trembling. And my greatgrandmother had a cane. They took her cane--going like this [waving her hand around]. My heart was throbbing. And the sheriff says, 'Have you got a match?' We haven't. Berj says--how old was she--two or three years old--says 'yes.' I took the match from her and said, 'no, we don't have a match.' . . . so they went.

When Elmas came home and was told what had happened she realized he had to leave immediately. She had just returned from the house where his wife and mother were living. They had been taken in by a Greek family.

The house was surrounded by Turkish police. Her solution was to dress him like a Turkish woman and send my aunt, who would appear to be his child, with him. Aunty Ars described their walk across the town.

Turkish women wear a veil. Their face is closed. My mother brought it. He wore that and what belongings he had in a handkerchief. My mother sent me with him. You know it was quite a far way. I'm going from the front and he is following me. . . . When I reached his house all the gendarmes, police, you know, all around. So he says, let's go from the back. They have searched the house. So he got in. I came back. I said never again. I was trembling. . . . But my mother was so--there was no fear with her. She didn't know what fear was. So Easter came after Easter. They sent us. We were the last ones to be exiled . . . Visim's family, they were four, no they were three. Verzin, three, five with my mother and my greatgrandmother . . . and we had a distant cousin, she had two daughters--eleven people. They put us on those cars that ox pulled it. Whatever we had they took us . . . far, far away.

My grandmother interjected, "No Armenians or nothing." And as my aunt tried to remember how many days they travelled, my grandmother impatiently said in English, "Wait a minute. We go over there. The man came over and said in Armenian, 'They don't want you in our town.'" Aunty Ars disagreed and they began to argue about the sequence of events. My grandmother sat forward in her chair and said, "Let me say it in Armenian." She looked very different than she had a short while ago when I had been asking her about her early life. Her eyes were bright and she seemed to be fully engaged in what was happening. But Aunty Ars continued the story.

That man, that gendarme--everybody was crying . . . he starts crying with us. He was such a nice person. Anyway, third or fourth day, it was raining, it was dark. In the evening somebody came . . . like a sheriff or something. He said, 'I have to leave them over here.' He said, 'Government told me to bring them here, and I'm going to leave them here.' He said, 'I don't have anyplace.' And there was one room. And there was one room. . . . He says, 'What's that' He says, 'That's the school.' He says, 'Where's the

key?' He says, 'the khoja' the teacher they call the khoja, 'he's gone home in another town.' You know what he did, the gendarme, he gave one kick, broke the door. He took us all up there, eleven of us, you know, small room. We don't have a door up there. And the people start coming. To Armenian they used to call gavors.* And they are coming and looking from the door. Young men about eighteen, seventeen years old. They're saying, 'Let's see what the gavors look like.' Anyhow maybe an hour later, big tray of food came. See there were two Agas, two brothers, one had gone to Istanbul, you know, had come back, he fed us.

She turned to my grandmother, who had been listening to her intently, and asked her how long the brothers fed them. She replied, "He said, 'For a week you are going to give them their meals. . . . And later they came to Ashot.'" My aunt told her she was mixing up the story. She said they had come for Ashot later and for a few minutes they argued and my grandmother finally sat back and waited for my aunt to continue. She told us about the food the brothers provided for them and finally she said, "One day they came. They sent somebody and we have to go someplace. We all went. They are taking the boys." My grandmother sat up and said, in Armenian, "I will tell that." Although my aunt tried to interject from time to time, my grandmother would not be stopped. She spoke rapidly in Armenian, but this time I understood everything she said.

The police came and saw us, and the two brothers were sitting there. They wanted to know how many boys there were there. They said two, there are two boys. Visim and Didi. [Didi was what the children in our family called our Uncle Ashot.] And then he said, he looked and said, 'that one is too small. I am going to take this one. I am taking this boy.'
 'Where are you going to take him?'
 'They are collecting the boys.'

*gavor, Turkish perjorative epithet for Armenian.

I said, 'This boy's father is a soldier. You are not taking this boy. He is my boy. I won't give him to you. He is mine. He is mine.'

He said, 'he is not yours.'

I said, 'he is mine.'

And we were screaming in Turkish, 'I won't give him.' The brothers were listening. 'This boy is mine,' I said, 'and his father is a soldier,' I said. 'Soldier, do you understand?'

'I am going to take him.'

'You can't,' I said. 'I won't give him,' I screamed. 'I won't give him,' I screamed. 'I won't give him. You can't,' I said.

'Who are you to take my boy,' I said.

He screamed at me. Then he said, 'you are doing too much.'

I said, 'you are doing too much. Do you understand?' And how he screamed. 'You cannot take my boy. He is my boy.'

He said, 'he is the king's boy.'

'No,' I said, 'he is mine. I won't give him to you. Understand this,' I said, 'you know if there is a God in heaven, this boy will not stay with you. If there is no God . . . Day and night,' I said, 'I will pray that when the English come' (already when you say English the Turk trembles) and take your child from your wife's arms and you will know what I am feeling. Do you understand? Night and day I will pray. If there is a God, he will come and do that, if there is no God, do what you want. But I will not give my son, understand that.' And I was crying. I looked at the brothers and said, 'I will pray that the English come and take your wife's child away from her. If there is a God, know this.'

He said, 'All right. Let me take you son.'

I said, 'I won't give him to you. Take me with him. I'll go. Take me with him.'

'No,' he said. 'I am telling the brothers to bring you tomorrow. I will take this child now.'

I said, 'Very well, if you are going to take us tomorrow, I will bring my son with me. I will bring my son.'

'No,' he said, 'I am going to take your son.'

'I won't give him,' I said. 'I will bring him.'

He turned to the brothers and told them to bring the rest of the family the next day, that he was going to take the boy then.

'Very good,' I said, 'I will bring my son with me.'

He said, 'You are making this too long.'

My sister-in-law said, 'Please let them take him and we will go tomorrow.'

He told the men again that they were to bring the rest of the family to Dadai.

He took Ashot away. Arsenic was crying, 'First I lost my father and now I am losing Ashot.' She was crying. 'Quiet,' I said. 'We are going tomorrow too. Quiet.' She kept crying saying that she had lost her father and now she lost Ashot. My sister-in-law said, 'It's all right, tomorrow we will go.' The next day we went to the

brothers and said, 'We are ready. When are you going to take us?' The man laughed. I said, 'Why are you laughing?' 'He fooled you,' he said. 'He took your son. He told us later that you are going to stay in this village.'

'Oh. Is that how it is,' I said. 'You wait and see.' After the children went to bed, I told my sister-in-law. I called her sister. We loved each other like sisters. 'You know what I am going to do? I am going with the villagers.' I wrapped my head up and I am going to Dadai with the villagers to get Ashot. Early in the morning the two of us wrapped ourselves up, my sister-in-law and I. I said, 'If I come, I will come. If not take care of my children.' I wrapped myself up and started my journey. I started and came to a mountain. No people. No road. Nothing. By now it is around five o'clock in the afternoon and dark. I am alone on the mountain. I looked in front of me and saw someone coming. I said, 'If you love your God, stop.' I screamed, 'if you love your God, stop.' I want to go with him. I ran after him and held the horse. I begged him to take me to his house. He said, 'I can't. I am not going there, my girl. I am going somewhere else.'

At that point I broke in to ask if the man was a Turk and Aunty Ars quickly answered, "Turk. Turk." My grandmother continued.

He said, 'where are you going?' I said, 'I am going to Dadai. What is the way to Dadai?'

'Go down this way,' he said. 'There will be a mountain in front of you. There is a road on that mountain. If you stay on that road, you will reach Dadai.'

I was still holding on to him, and I said, 'if you love your God, take me with you.'

'I can't,' he said. 'I am invited somewhere else and I can't take a young woman with me.' The man said, in Turkish, 'let God be with you. I am showing you the right road.'

I got on the road and climbed the mountain. I am in the mountain. Mountain. Big trees. I sat under a tree. It was dark. I sat under the tree and said, 'Jesus Christ, if you are there, help me, help me. I am doing this for my child.' I sat there until it was light, awake all the time. I haven't eaten anything yet. When the birds started to cheep, I got up. The man had told me the road to Dadai. I went a little further and there were people there. I ran to them. Three women were sitting (it is before my eyes as I am saying this) three women were sitting and two men. They were taking food to the soldiers. The man said, 'what do you want? Where are you going?'

I said, 'I am going to Dadai.'

The man felt sorry for me. He said, 'I will take you to Dadai. We are going there too. We are taking food to the soldiers.'

I said, 'no. Show me the right way and I will go to Dadai myself.'

Because the Derderians had become Turks and were living there, I said no. 'I have relatives there. I will walk.' The women started to laugh and were speaking in Turkish. Aman* the man let them have it. 'Look at this woman's face,' he said. 'Aren't you ashamed of yourselves? Why are you laughing? Shame on you!' He got angry at the women. I said, 'don't get mad at them. I am going to Dadai.' I went to Dadai, understand? I went to Dadai to Vahram's house and they welcomed me. I am crying. 'They took my Ashot.' He said, 'yes they have collected all the boys and they are here. They are in the school. That is why our friend came and made us Turks. They had a ceremony so they won't take our son.' Then Vahram's mother said, 'now they are having breakfast. After they eat they are all out in the garden. It is a large school with a large garden.'

I said, 'very well. Please get me some coffee. After coffee I will go. I will not stay.' To see my son! I was trembling all this time. I drank my coffee and went to the school. They said it was two blocks away. I went the two blocks. There were mothers outside. They took all the boys and many of these mothers were there.

Aunty Ars broke in to explain that the Turks intended to raise the Armenian boys as Turks. "They were going to do a circumcision so they did become a Turk then, see. That's how they think." My grandmother waited for her to finish and continued her story.

Ashot saw me and come running. 'Mother, save me. You save me.' I said, 'that's why I came--to save you. I am going to save you. I won't leave you in the hands of these Turks. Don't worry.' He went upstairs crying. I thought about the police commissioner who told me, if you are in trouble, come to me.

I was confused and asked who this police commissioner was and my aunt explained it was the one in Kastemoni, where they lived before the exile. She said he had told her mother that he would help her if he could. She explained that he had been very friendly with her father. "His great grandmother was an Armenian, see. He said, 'I have Armenian blood in me too.' He was a very nice man." She went on to say that my

*Armenian exclamation meaning, oh my goodness.

grandmother had walked from Dadai to Kastemoni, a walk of three days. "When she went, her feet were swollen. They said my mother's feet were swollen." She told us that there were some Armenians in Kastemoni who had become Turks to avoid being exiled and that my grandmother had gone to their house. As soon as there was a pause in the conversation, my grandmother continued.

I went to their door and knocked on it. I was dressed like a Turk. They said, 'please come in.' When I got there I was numb. When I knocked on their door, I was numb. I was as if I was going to go crazy. I couldn't go in. They said, in Turkish, 'come in. Come in, madam.' I opened my face and they started to scream. 'Oh, Elmas.' They all came and we hugged each other. 'What is it,' they asked. 'They have taken Ashot,' I said. 'They took Ashot. I am going to the police commissioner.' But I couldn't walk for three days.

My grandmother paused for a moment and my aunt said, "Yeah, for three days she couldn't walk. You can imagine what's happening to us, back there. Because they came and they want to know where is my mother." My grandmother said, "They put my feet in hot water and rubbed salted butter on them." She then described her meeting with the police commissioner.

It was early Friday morning. He had just come downstairs to wash up. It is in front of my eyes now. He said, 'please come in,' in Turkish. The rest of the family was upstairs. I closed the police commissioner's door and opened my face. 'Oh my, Elmas. Where did you come from? What has happened?' I said, 'They took my Ashot. They took my Ashot.' He said, 'I told you to become a Turk and you didn't do it.' 'You know best,' I said. 'I beg you, save my Ashot.' People upstairs noticed that there were two people talking. His wife looked down from upstairs. 'Oh my, Madam Elmas,' she said. 'Come upstairs.' I cried, 'they took my Ashot.' I am crying. The police commissioner came and said, 'don't cry. I'll see what's what. Don't cry.' 'If I don't cry, tell me what it is I have to do to save him. I have to save him. I have to save him.'

He said, 'today I am going to see my superior. I will speak to him and see what can be done. . . . But don't tell anyone you are here. There are some Turk dogs, who if you say Armenian, they will cut your throat.'

Within a short period of time the police commissioner arranged for my grandmother to formally renounce her Armenian ancestry and become a Turk. She was also able to do the same for her children, including Ashot, and all the other relatives who were still in exile. He had also arranged to bring them to Kastemoni, but Ashot's release took a longer time. After four months time, the whole family was reunited.

Aunty Ars began to talk about what it was like.

We came to Kastemoni. And we used to live, all of us in--I don't know how many room. We had houses, but we didn't have it anymore. And we were Turks. . . . We had like a small apartment. My aunt and cousins--all together. We used to sew burlap bags. That's how we survived. And then one night, I never forget that night, two men, they're going to break our door.

My grandmother broke in, saying in English, "wait a minute--I am talk," and she continued in Armenian.

My sister-in-law and I are like sisters. We were sewing bags for the soldiers. The children went to bed. I said, 'get up and go to bed. I will finish this one and tomorrow I will take them.' She got up and went to bed. Then she got up and ran to me saying, 'sister, sister, sister, they are breaking the door down.' I said, 'don't worry. It's nothing.' She said, 'no, no. It's not what you said, get up.' I got up. I got up and saw that they were going to break the door. They were going to break the door down and come in. What were we going to do? Ars said, 'mother throw me out the window.' I said, 'how can I throw you out the window.' 'Whatever you do, throw me out the window,' she said. 'Throw me out the window.' Suddenly I had an idea. I said, 'let's open the windows, and all at once let's all scream fire. Save us. There is a fire.' All of us were yelling out the windows. After that we noticed that there were soldiers in the street. The superior of the soldiers said, 'this is not a fire, it is a rape.' Soon after that we noticed that they went away. Then the police came. They knocked on the door. We said we won't open the door. They said, 'we are the police.' They came in. They asked what happened. And how did I get that idea to yell out the window? In the morning

they took us to the police commissioner. He said, 'what happened.' We told him, 'we were sleeping, and my sister-in-law woke me up saying that they are going to break our door. They were going to break it and come in.' The police commissioner said, 'what neighbors do you have there.' 'The Aga's son, the shoemaker's son, and another person's son. That's all. No one else.' I was sitting there and they brought both of them. When they saw me, they turned pale. The police commissioner asked where they were last night. They said they were home. I said, 'no, you were the ones who were throwing rocks at the door and were going to break it.' The police commissioner got up and hit them both.

Commenting on her courage my grandmother said, "Do you know what? When I am in trouble, I am never afraid. When I went to Turkey they made terrible trouble for me." I remembered then that she had gone to Turkey when she was in her late seventies. She told us what happened.

I signed a paper saying that I was going to leave, and the official said it was forged. . . . The mayor came and said, 'they want you.' I want. He said, 'go over to that man.' I went here. He said, 'what do you want?' I said, 'I don't want anything. You said you wanted to see me and so I came so you could see me.' And the place was full of people . . .

He asked, 'who signed this paper.'

I said, 'I did.'

He said, 'no you didn't.'

I said, 'give me the pen.' I took the pen and signed my name.

'That is my signature.' He saw it was the same. I opened my mouth in the government office and said, 'aren't you ashamed of yourselves? Shame on you doing these things. No one can sign my name. Only I can make my signature. Look at me and look at my hair. Such a woman doesn't do such things. Shame on you.' In the government office--everyone was sitting there. No one made a sound. I am never afraid. When I have something to say, I say it. The man came and took me to my relative's house. 'Oh,' he said, 'you are like an aslan.'

I asked her what aslan meant and she told me it was a lion woman.

We had been taping for close to an hour and thinking that my grandmother must be very tired, I suggested that we stop for a while. She assured me that she was not tired at all and my aunt seemed anxious to finish their story. When I agreed that we would continue, my

grandmother sat back and listened as my aunt told us what happened after the night their neighbors had tried to break down their door.

We moved to where the Greeks lived . . . where there was an Armenian church and school. We moved there after that affair. . . . My mother and Araskin, der hayr's* wife, she had a son and daughter, we lived in one room, and they in one room. And my mother was going with a few other women--they were going from town to town selling needles and thread, this and that, packs on their backs, you know . . . Mother took me. We went to one town. It was night. Some young boys came, you know, and they're saying, 'if we kill the gavors no one will know.' And nobody could know it. And then from far away, I suppose it was their parents, they came and said, 'shame on you people, these are people.' And they told us, 'you people better go to the next town and stay there.' So we went. . . . Coming back, some town, some farm, they chased the dogs after us. All the dogs are around us. I was going crazy, crying, yelling. Finally, all the people came and chased the dogs away. After that I got sick. . . . My mother came. She got sick. She had the typhoid fever. And the doctor saw me and said who is going to take care of her. [Arsenic was about ten years old at the time.] I said, 'I am.' He said, 'you know you have to wet the sheet in cold water, wrap her in it.' All night long I had to do that . . . and wash the sheet, boil it. I used to do all those--and I was a little girl. All night long, she is burning, you know. I got cold water, put the sheets, wrap her in. I must have dozed off. All of a sudden, she says, 'Arsenic?' You know, my name. She says, 'I'm all right. I saw your father in my dream.'

After telling us about her own bout with typhoid, my aunt told us how my grandmother managed to get her family to Istanbul.

All the English had come . . . they were taking captives. English soldiers, they came to Kastemoni--all generals and things, you know. They had their guides and things. One night, our door was ringing and ringing. They wanted to come in. Do you remember [to my grandmother] the English? The next morning my mother went and talked to their superior. She told them what happened and said that they were not that kind of people over here. They wanted to get in . . . English came with an Armenian interpreter. They were going to take all the orphans to Istanbul. So my mother went and saw the interpreter and said, 'I have children. I want to go to Istanbul and maybe from there--I have relatives. My sister is in America. I have to go there.' He said, 'I will take you to the

*der hayr, an Armenian priest.

captain.' He took her to the captain. He said, 'we can't do it. We can only take so much and no more.' And my mother said, 'I'll be their mother. They need a mother, these orphans.' And that's how we came to Istanbul.

It would be years, however, before they were able to leave Turkey. Turvanda and Arakel had gone to New York just before the genocide began, but they were unable to raise the money for Elmas' passage. Aunty Ars described how they lived.

In Istanbul when Armenian people came from America they used to bring old clothes. Mother used to work there. We used to sew the burlap bags . . . the man, that I saved his life, Armenian man, he was doing that business. He used to give us that work.

My grandmother broke in to say, "I all the time worked." I asked if they had been very poor, and my aunt responded.

Very poor. And we had one room. That was our bedroom, in an apartment, you know. We had the ground floor. One room. That was our bedroom, living room. . . . It was bad. . . . We all worked, otherwise we can't--we used to go to the fields and pick perper [a wild green] and something else . . . no meat, you know. We didn't have sugar. You know, during the war [World War II] nobody had it. I mean when they rationed everything over here. . . . One day I went to the A&P and here was a big line. I said to the manager, 'why is there such a big line?' He said, 'today they're giving away coffee without a coupon.' I said, 'well, I do without it. I'm not going to wait for that line.' He said, 'why.' I said, 'you know, I've seen it--that I could do without it. There is no panic about it.' We have everything over here.

I asked if she had been hungry a lot and she answered, "Oh yea. Sometimes we have an onion, and sometimes apples for dinner. Whatever we find."

Finally, my grandmother located a nephew of hers who was working for a rug exporter in Iran. She wrote to him, told him what they had endured and how difficult their lives were. He sent the money for their passage and they left Turkey for New York City.

My aunt and grandmother began to reminisce about their lives before the genocide, and while I did want to hear what they remembered I was also too exhausted to engage with their stories. I was relieved when my mother knocked on the door to say that dinner was ready. We we rose to leave my grandmother's room, I wanted to say something to her--to convey some of what I was feeling. I had been deeply moved and had a sense that her story had had a profound influence on my life. But, I was not yet able to articulate either its significance or what I was feeling. Telling any of the members of my family what I really felt was something I had not done for years and my relationship with my grandmother had been marked by hostility since the birth of my brother. My aunt and Martha left the room and I waited for my grandmother to get out of her chair, held her arm and thanked her for telling me her story again.

C H A P T E R X X I V

My grandmother's story had had more than one message. When she first told it to me I had heard that she had lost her husband, the grandfather I had never known, to the Turks, that he had been taken into the army and was never heard from again, that she had been forced out of her home, lost all of her property and then had almost lost her son. I had heard only that Armenians were despised, tortured and killed because they were Armenians. Twenty years later I also heard that my grandmother had survived. She had saved her son, my mother and aunt as well as the other relatives who were in exile. Her story, as I remembered it from the first telling, reached its climax when she refused to give up Ashot to the Turks. She told us what had happened almost seventy years ago with a lucidity that was astounding and her message was clear--don't ever give up. Even in the face of the horror of the genocide, don't allow yourself to be a victim.

That message had not been clear to me when I was fourteen for a number of reasons. When she sat me down that day in 1953 and began to tell me about how she had suffered in Turkey, I didn't want to hear it. I was trying my best to become an American. It was hard enough to accept the fact that my family was as far as they were from the image of what Americans should be and my grandmother was the farthest from that ideal. I longed for a grandmother who lived in a big old house with an attic filled with old clothes, furniture and photographs who could tell me about the old days in America. My grandmother didn't even have a

room of her own, spoke very little English and had few possessions. I had adjusted to that reality but I didn't want to hear about her past in Turkey. It was too painful to know how different we were--to know that we were in the United States only because to stay in Turkey would have meant deprivation and even danger to my family's lives. Her story served to make me want to become more American--to deny in any way possible that the history she told me had anything to do with my life.

I was also unprepared to hear that my grandmother possessed the degree of strength and courage required to endure and survive what had happened in Turkey. She herself had taught me that women needed men. She deferred to all of our adult male relatives, had clearly preferred my brother and even spoke about some of the men in the family as if they were gods. My mother and the other women in the family as well as Life magazine and everything else in American culture had corroborated the view that women could not function without men. They were weak and should be dependent on men. It was, therefore, inconceivable to me and even disturbing that my grandmother was a strong woman. If I couldn't have a grandmother who fit the image of what grandmothers were supposed to be, I preferred to forget what she had told me about her past.

Her story would not be forgotten, even if temporarily repressed. By telling it to me, my grandmother had passed it on and I realized twenty years after hearing it for the first time that her story was my story as well. Although I had not been aware of it on a conscious level, knowing what had happened to my grandmother in Turkey and knowing that one and a half million of the two million Armenians who lived in

Turkey had been killed because they were Armenians had had a profound effect on my life. While I was trying to forget her story, my closest friends at George Washington High School and Alfred University were Jewish. Despite my family's clear anti-semitism, I felt drawn to Jews. Unspeakable things had also happened to their kinspeople and although I was not aware of it at the time, it seemed obvious to me now that I had listened to my grandmother again that it was not merely Rachel Herzberg's personality that made us such close friends. Her family had had to leave Germany because they were Jewish.

It also seemed clear that my deep emotional connection to the Civil Rights Movement had had its base in what my grandmother had told me when I was fourteen. I had cried all day listening to the 1963 March on Washington not only because the struggle for Black freedom was a just and noble cause, which certainly it was and is, but I had felt somehow that it was my struggle as well. When I became a feminist I thought I had an explanation for my response to that movement. I had thought then that as a woman I had known about the yearning for freedom and had respect and admiration for the movement which struggled to achieve it. Women's history had supported my analysis. White women in the 19th century as well as in the 20th had come to realize their own oppression and found their own voices through the abolitionist and civil rights movements.

There were, of course, problems with that analysis. If other feminists, both 19th and 20th century women, had felt as I had either about the movement to free the slaves or the contemporary movement for

Black equality, how could they have so easily erased it from their consciousness when they formed movements for the liberation of women? How could women who defied prevailing convention and laws to emancipate slaves later exclude Black women from their organizations or even argue that the votes of white women would outweigh Black and/or "foreign" votes? I also knew that white women of my own generation, some of whom had risked their lives in the South, "forgot" about racism and Black women when they struggled for women's liberation. The women's centers, health clinics and Women's Studies programs that grew up during the women's liberation movement were almost exclusively white and for good reason. The concerns of Black women had never been central to these organizations. Indeed, it was as if racism no longer existed.

I had wondered, since I had become a feminist, why this had happened. I had thought that white women, discovering their own oppression, had been so overwhelmed by their new consciousness that it was impossible for them to see anything else. My own experience had followed such a pattern. When the women's movement touched me, I was primarily moved by the sexism I saw in the society and in my own life. My feelings and energies were directed towards that oppression and my "sisters" who were also trying to liberate themselves and "all women." Shortly after I became a feminist, however, I met Brenda. She reminded me that racism was alive and well and that Black women's lives did not exactly mirror my own. Black women, like Black men, also had to contend with racism.

With Brenda's help I strove to develop a feminism that would be inclusive of that reality but I had not always been successful in that attempt. When I worked on the Women's Studies proposal and during my initial involvement with the new Program I questioned neither our failure to make racism a central concern nor our omission of Black and Third World women's lives from our courses. Getting the proposal approved and helping the new Program function had been my main concerns. In my work in the history department I continued to be aware of racism and Black women's lives but I did not immediately make the appropriate connections to Women's Studies. When I did make that connection and realized how exclusively white our Program was in its orientation, I seemed to be virtually alone in my concern with the exclusion of Black and Third World women.

Hearing my grandmother's story again made it clear to me that my identification with Black people had been profound. I had responded not only as a woman but as an Armenian as well. While I did not suffer discrimination as an Armenian my people, members of my own family, had been killed because they were Armenian. Knowing that the genocide the Turks had perpetrated on Armenians was the result of an oppression that was not based in gender made it impossible for me to see sexism as the root of all the evil in the world. Armenian culture, it was true, was highly patriarchal but Armenian women's lives had also been marked by an extreme suffering that was the result of their being Armenians. I understood the double oppression of Black women. The women in my family had been suppressed by their fathers and husbands because they were

women; they were killed, marched into the desert until they died from thirst and exposure because they were Armenians.

I also realized that the Black power had spoken to me as an Armenian. I had tried to melt--to become as much of a WASP as possible. Long before my grandmother had told me her story I had been embarrassed by my family's behavior. The food we ate, the language we spoke at home, the way my mother wore her hair--all of these proclaimed our difference and I didn't like that difference. Even though none of my friends' mothers served Wonder Bread or hamburgers, spoke unaccented English or had stylish hairdos we were all propelled, to one degree or another, to live up to the image of what an American should be. Black power proclaimed pride in difference, insisted that Black Americans had as much right as WASPs to see themselves in the culture. When I had responded to that message then I had known it was because I was an Armenian.

My insight was, however, short-lived. I would not make that connection when I took the courses in Afro-American studies, but hearing my grandmother's story again made me realize that I had responded to the uncovering of information about African and Afro-American history because my own history and culture were invisible. There were, of course, differences between the systematic denial of great African civilizations, the realities of the slave trade and subsequent Afro-American history on American history, but there were also similarities. I had been confused by my emotional response to the material in those classes because I had not yet faced my own history as an Armenian. We were also

denied a place in American culture. While we were not discriminated against, we were made invisible. What was even more horrifying was the fact that the genocide which had happened in the 20th century was unacknowledged by the world community.

I had not been able to hear my grandmother's message because I could not afford to identify as an Armenian. Having been born in the United States and growing up in the 1950s, I had chosen to model myself on what I had understood to be an American. Americans, in my mind, were secure, prosperous and powerful. American women were, like the women in my family, deferential to men but unlike my grandmother had men to protect them. I wanted to be on the winning side and I did everything I could to be like them.

My efforts to feel like an American were, however, only partially successful. Although I was quite good at approximating the ideal through my appearance and behavior, I always felt as if I had missed the mark. Just as I was beginning to sense that I could feel somewhat comfortable with a group of peers, who though they were Greeks, Italians, Rumanians and Jews, looked and acted like Americans, my parents moved to New Jersey. The students at Ridgewood High School made it very clear that I had, indeed, missed the mark and by a very wide margin. They were the "real" Americans. Overwhelmingly blonde and of fair complexions, wearing cashmere sweaters and tweed skirts from the best Fifth Avenue stores, my classmates had fathers who went to work in offices in New York while their mothers played bridge, golf and even tennis. Other women cleaned their houses which I imagined were

furnished with the latest in blond furniture, though I didn't really know what their houses looked like on the inside. My New York friends and I could only appropriate the appearance and behavior of these upper class WASPs in small ways. We could, it was clear, never become what they were.

After the experience of being in Ridgewood I wanted, more than anything, to be liked--to belong to a group. While I had had friends in college, had found "my man" and had gotten married, it wasn't until the women's movement that I really felt that I was like other people. Despite my problems in Female Studies at Cornell, the women's movement had given me "sisters" in other women. Although my friends were different from me we were all oppressed by sexism and were committed to supporting each other in our collective and individual liberation.

For a few years I luxuriated in my new sense of belonging--then my old feelings of being different began to emerge again. I was not content to focus only on sexism when I knew that the majority of women in the world also had to content with other oppressions. There were those in Women's Studies nationally and in our Program who were concerned with class issues, but very few who seemed to have any sense of racism and its impact on women's lives. I was sensitive to the reality that our concerns as white women did not always coincide with those of Black women and tried to communicate this to friends and colleagues. They listened to what I said, but they did not share the intensity of my feelings about our exclusion of Black and Third World women. I was also disturbed and often enraged when they did little to include the

experiences of Black women in their courses and research or to reconsider their theoretical frameworks in the light of their white orientation.

I felt, however, compelled to pursue the issue and eventually learned to include my own ethnicity as well as the lives of Black and Third World women into my own politics. It was possible to do this only when I could look at my own history as an Armenian and I knew I could not have done that without the women's movement. Becoming a feminist had been absolutely vital to my ability to face my own ethnicity. The early Women's Liberation Movement had placed great value on personal feelings, validating women's traditional concerns with the private side of life while at the same time asserting that women's minds were every bit as capable of great intellectual pursuits as those of men. I might have been confused by my feelings after becoming a feminist but I tended not to discount them as unimportant and I began to believe that I could think. The movement also gave me a kind of acceptance and sense of belonging that I had never known in my life. Without that new sense of myself as a capable and intelligent person who shared an awareness of my own oppression and the struggle to overcome it with other women I would not have had the courage to face my own history. The women's movement had, indeed, given me new life even as I railed against its limitations.

Looking again at my grandmother's story I realized that it was she who had told me never to be a victim. The same woman who taught me to defer to men had also told me I could survive because she had. Ironically, it was quite possible her story had sown the first seeds of

feminism in me. I was sure after I had heard it again that it was her strength that had made it impossible for me to accept a feminist politics or theory which focused only on women's victimization. It was my grandmother who taught me that even within a patriarchy, women were not universally and eternally oppressed. Her lessons that women could be strong and that one must never accept victimization allowed me to believe in the great capacity of women to survive. She made possible my openness to the Women's Movement as well as my dissatisfaction with it. My grandmother's story had lain dormant in my psyche for so many years but its influence had been profound. It had provided a fertile soil for the flowering of the feelings behind my politics. It would not, could not, be denied.

CONCLUSION

The Women's Movement, feminist theory and Women's Studies have focused on women's lives in an attempt to change the domination of men over women in the world and in the academy. Activism has informed the theory and the work of feminist scholars has influenced the direction of political action. The second wave of feminism has been particularly conscious of the need to ground theory in the actual history and life experiences of real women. The reality of feminist practice and theory has, however, often fallen short of this ideal. Feminist theoreticians have, indeed, based their analyses on real women's lives but the lives that informed their theories have almost universally been those of women like themselves. The resulting theories have, therefore, a basis in the reality of only some women's lives. If cultural and racial variations are acknowledged, they are merely additives to a theory which does not incorporate them.

While there is much in my experience as an Armenian-American woman which corresponds to some feminist theory, it is also true that the theory omits, denies or distorts crucial aspects of my life and the lives of other Armenian and Armenian-American women. The lives of other groups of women whose race and/or culture puts them outside the frame of reference of feminist theoreticians are similarly invalidated.

Feminist theory and practice must incorporate the lives of women from all racial and cultural groups if it is to adequately analyze the lives of any group of women--even those who are members of the hegemony.

The cultural and racial dynamics that inform the lives of women outside the hegemony necessarily also impact the lives of all women because none of us lives in complete isolation. Just as the inclusion of the history and experiences of women allows for a more accurate analysis of the history and experiences of men and of our times, my experience as an Armenian-American woman informs the lives of all American women. WASP women, for example, must understand that their relationship to the hegemony is different from mine and that difference has serious ramifications in their lives as well as mine. Thus, my experience and those of women from other racial and cultural groups is as crucial as theirs to the development of a feminist theory which truly analyzes the lives of women.

A major tenet of the radical wing of the early Women's Liberation Movement was the idea expressed by the phrase, "the personal is political." Asserting the importance of the personal, women's liberationists validated the value of feelings in a political analysis. Kathie Sarachild stated this position clearly in 1968:

Our feelings (emotions) revolve around our perception of our self-interest.

We assume that our feelings are telling us something from which we can learn . . . that our feelings mean something worth analyzing . . . that our feelings are saying something political, something reflecting fear that something bad will happen to us or hope, desire, knowledge that something good will happen to us. (author's emphasis) (Sarachild, 1978, 202)

Speaking directly to the devaluation of feelings by men, Sarachild stated:

Now male culture assumes that feelings are something that people should stay on top of and puts women down for being led by their feelings (being underneath them).

We're saying that women have all along been generally in touch with their feelings (rather than underneath them) and that their being in touch with their feelings has been their greatest strength, historically and for the future. We have also been so in touch with our feelings, as a matter of fact, that we have used our feelings as our best available weapon--hysterics, whining, bitching, etc.
. . . .

We're saying that when we had hysterical fits, when we took things 'too' personally, that we weren't underneath our feelings, but responding with our feelings correctly to a given situation of injustice. . . .

Our feelings will lead us to our theory, our theory to our action, our feelings about that action to new theory and then to new action. (Sarachild, 1978, 202)

In order to assist women to express and value their feelings, early movement women developed the consciousness-raising group. According to Sarachild, the groups, through the expression and exploration of feelings, enabled women to "perceive their situation correctly" (Sarachild, 1978, 202). The sessions, as outlined by Sarachild began with the personal testimony out of the daily lives of the participants, not with an analysis of women's condition. Writing about her own experiences in consciousness-raising groups, Carol Hanish articulated in 1969 what the women in her group learned. "One of the first things we discover in these groups is that personal problems are political" (Hanish, 1978, 204).

By the early 1970s women from the entire spectrum of the women's movement endorsed consciousness-raising as an important political method (Pogrebin, 1978; Payne, 1971). The effectiveness of these groups was

based on the principle, articulated by Hanish, "we regard our feelings as our most important source of political understanding" (Hanish, 1978, 204).

The other principles for consciousness-raising groups outlined by Hanish, like the early Women's Movement, focused on the commonality of women's experiences. While such a focus seems necessary when an oppressed group does not recognize its subordinate position in the social structure, it also eliminates the possibility of a serious analysis of women's relative power or powerlessness.

The focus of this dissertation has been on the personal--my life--because I do believe the personal is political. The presentation of my personal experience is intended as a corrective to the overaccentuation of the commonalities among women. Its intention is to emphasize and validate the differences among us in order to insert the political and theoretical ramifications of my "personal" into the feminist "political."

My own political development emerged from my personal experiences and from the feelings that resulted from them, but it is absolutely clear to me that neither those experiences nor the resulting feelings came solely from my gender. My ethnicity, my race, the social class of my parent' families, my region and the times in which I grew up not only determined my feelings and my politics, but also impacted my sense of myself as a woman and my emerging political consciousness.

My early childhood years were spent within the womb of my extended family and the Armenian community in Washington Heights in New York

City. Although we were only one of the two Armenian families in our apartment building, my only contacts as a child were with Armenians, and most of those were blood kin. My mother and grandmother did spend some time with non-relatives on some weekday afternoons, but it was clear to me that important social contacts were those that took place on the weekends and holidays. The latter were always with family. The very few friends my family had were brought into the circle and it wasn't until I was older that I discovered they were not relatives. My own playmates, then, were necessarily also kin.

My pre-school years were spent as much within an Armenian context as was possible in New York City in the 1940s. Although most family members were able to speak English, the preferred language was Armenian, my father's family using a Persian-Armenian dialect and my mother's Western Turkish-Armenian. My parents had given me an American first name but my first language was Armenian. My mother's adult relatives also spoke Turkish when they didn't want children to understand what they were saying. Even on the street, my mother often spoke Armenian when she met acquaintances or shopped at Zarifian Brothers, the Armenian grocery where we went at least once a week.

The furnishings of my relatives' apartments were also influenced by their nationality. Everyone had as many Oriental rugs as they could afford--Aunt Lucy even had a runner that ran from one end of her bathroom to the other. A silk rug depicting "Mother Armenian" also adorned one of her walls. My father's relatives displayed ornate engraved silver pieces from Iran. They sat on crocheted doilies on the surfaces of

dark, highly polished furniture. And the homes of both sides of the family always smelled of Armenian, Turkish or Persian food. Food, family and nationality were paramount.

I took it for granted that men worked outside the home and women did all the work in the house. Aunty Ars was the one exception to this rule but she, like all the other women in the family, served her husband and two sons. It was also obvious that food was a central concern and that women did have eminent domain over the kitchen. (I cannot remember any of my male relatives, adults or children, ever helping to prepare, serve or clean up after meals.) It was also clear that what men did was more important than what women did. They were, after all, the ones who were served.

Being one of the first children of my father's family to be born in the United States, and the first in New York City where most of the family lived, I was the object of much attention. I also felt special to my mother's sister who had always wanted a daughter but who had had three sons and didn't "expect" any more children. I would be, she told me, her daughter. I was special among my father's relatives because I was the only Avakian baby in the City and special to my aunt because I was a girl.

When I was six years old my brother was born and I lost my special status with the Avakians and the significance of my gender took on new meaning. I was still Aunty Ars' "daughter" but for everyone else, it seemed to me, even my mother, the child of the clan had been born--the son. He, because of that strange looking flesh between his legs, had

achieved a status on the day of his birth that not only displaced me but seemed to be something I could never reach.

Concurrent with my brother's birth was my encounter with the world outside the family and the Armenian community. My entry into school was very confusing. Everyone spoke English, that other language my family used only on rare occasions, and I noticed too that the other students were friendly with each other. They even walked home from school together although it was clear that they were not related to each other.

School attendance had broken into the closed circle of Armenian life and the birth of my brother had shaken the security I felt within the family. I began to feel like an outsider in both situations. Within the family I experienced the circle around my mother, grandmother and brother as exclusive of me and at school I felt different from my classmates through language and social interactions.

Well before I reached adolescence I was sure about two things: one was that I was not as important as my brother because I was a girl and the second was that I was not like the other children at school because I was Armenian. One of these "facts" of my life was not more painful or difficult than the other and one was as determining to my life and the political consciousness I would develop as the other. While it is true that a major problem for me was gender, that feminist theory which would attribute all the difficulties in my life to woman hating, discrimination against women or sex-role socialization omits a crucial aspect of my identity. In Raymond Williams' terms, the hegemony as represented by

the school completely overshadowed the alternative hegemony of Armenian culture.

By the time I was in the sixth grade I had decided to act to try to change my situation. I would become as much like "them" as I could. I wanted to be an American and I had defined that entity through various means. Most important were the messages I was getting from school books, magazines, the radio and the movies. I also took cues from what my peers were like and although most of the children at P.S. 189 were also the children of immigrants, they seemed more American to me than my cousins or myself. Lastly, it was clear, that anything truly American was not in any way like what was Armenian.

The information from the media sources was clear on some points: real Americans were white, Christian, did not have ancestors who came from anywhere but the United States and therefore spoke nothing but English, they had friends who were not related to them, they ate simple foods like steak, potatoes, hamburgers and white, sliced bread, they lived in the country and had pets--usually male dogs. While the messages from my classmates did not always correspond to those of the media it seemed to me, nonetheless, that they were closer to the ideal than I was. For one thing, they had friends who were not cousins--a basic requirement. If their parents did come from other countries, at least they were places one recognized. We had even studied some of those countries in school. Those who were Christian went to church regularly and the Jews went to Temple. While it was clear that Jews were also outside the parameters of real Americans, at least their place of

worship was known. No one knew what the Armenian Apostolic Church was, and my family didn't attend regularly in any case.

My campaign to change myself created conflict with my mother. She wanted me to remain within the family circle and I wanted to get out, but it was also true that she didn't understand why I valued the things I wanted. My desire to make friends and spend time with them was incomprehensible to her. She had, to my knowledge, only one friend and she had been brought into the family circle. My father's "friends" were his cousins. No one else in the family of my mother's generation seemed to need or want friends. When I first made friends, each attempt to be with them sparked heated arguments between my mother and me. I began by convincing her to let me go out on weekday afternoons, and she limited me to three out of five. As I got older I also wanted to go out at night on the weekends and after a bitter struggle, I won the right to either Friday or Saturday but never both. Of course, if family events came up on the night I had made plans with friends the battle began again.

The degree of restriction on my behavior was surely due to my gender, but the desire to keep children and young adults within the family circle was also imposed by parents on males. The independence of children, male and female, was not valued in my family. Most of male cousins moved out of their parents' homes only when they married. The few who did not marry were well into their thirties before they set up their own homes. My research on Armenian-American women indicates that my family's attitudes towards the independence of children were typical.

My informants were absolutely clear that unmarried women faced the most severe restrictions on any attempts to move outside of the family circle, but they also indicated that males experienced difficulty in this arena as well. The assumption that all males are encouraged to strike out on their own does not coincide with my own experience as an Armenian-American or those of my informants (see Appendix).

By the time I was an adolescent I was well on my way to rejecting all of my ethnicity and I had also tried to address the problems created by my gender. I became a "tomboy," and my mother was appalled by my behavior. In refusing to walk "like a lady," wearing my dungarees as often as possible and playing stickball in the street with boys I was rejecting my proper role and I was also being a kind of American girl. Armenian women never wore pants or played sports but it was quite acceptable for American girls and young women in the early 1950s to wear their father's shirts and dungarees and have an interest in sports. When I did want to wear makeup, shave my legs, tweeze my eyebrows, wear nylons and high heels, my mother and I argued about that too. My mother identified what she considered to be a premature sexualization of girls as American--what "they" did. I wanted to be like my friends and the young women I saw in the magazines and at the movies. Of course, much of the struggle with my mother during my teenage years can be seen as typical--for Americans at least--adolescent rebellion. Our struggle was, however, also impacted by culture--the one she upheld and the one I was rejecting in my attempt to assimilate.

I was not only persistent in my struggle to be like "them" but angry at my family for being so different and making my task so difficult. When I was fourteen and in the midst of my struggle, my grandmother told me her story. Initially, my grandmother's decision to pass her history on to me served only to accelerate my flight. I wanted to get as far away from that past as possible. Knowing what my grandmother had suffered only made Americans seem all the more powerful and secure and I wanted, more than ever, to be like them. While the form my behavior had to take was gender defined--I became not an American but an American female--the reasons for the flight from being Armenian were the same as the male members of my family who chose to assimilate.

Even being an American female, it seemed to me, was preferable to being an Armenian female. While there was some correspondence between Armenian and American roles for women, American girls seemed to have much more freedom than my female cousins and I did. They could go out with friends, were even encouraged to have dates, could choose their own clothes and decide when and how much makeup to use. Their mothers were not supposed to have careers, it was true, but they did seem to have lives of their own. They, like their daughters, had friends, joined clubs, drove cars, generally seemed to have something that was their own. Armenian women, on the other hand, seemed to exist only within the family and their main function was service to men. I, of course, wanted to get married and have children like any other "normal" female, but I would be sure to marry an American and have American children.

Since I was intent on assimilating into American society, I could hardly be critical of its role for women and there was nothing in the culture at the time to encourage or support such a critique. There was only my grandmother's story of her survival as an antidote to the Armenian and American conception of women as weak and dependent on men and that story was very remote, threatening and isolated from anything in my experience. My general acceptance of both the Armenian and the American injunction that women should be confined to particular roles, coupled with my desire to assimilate made it impossible for me to recognize my grandmother's strength. In addition, she substantially undercut that message herself by her constant deference to males.

I would be critical of American culture but my initial dissatisfaction came from my experience at Ridgewood High School. My experience in that very white, upper middle class and Christian suburb made it absolutely clear that I would never be on the "inside" with a group of "real" Americans and I was not so sure I liked who they were. Their rejection of me was so swift and felt so total that as insecure as I was about my ability to be accepted, I knew even then that my New Jersey classmates' assessment of me was not based on who I was as a person. I was from New York City and "foreign looking"; those two factors were enough to condemn me. It didn't seem to me that the students at Ridgewood High School had much to recommend them. The girls were, it seemed to me, boy crazy and provincial; they didn't know anything about New York City which I considered to be the greatest place in the world; they didn't know about Latin music or jazz; they didn't know how to dance and

worst of all they thought that everyone in the world ought to be like them.

I longed for my ethnic friends in the City and when I got to college I was relieved and delighted that many of the students at Alfred University were from the City and ethnic. Although many of my friends were WASPs, my best friend was Jewish. It was more comfortable for me to be with Barbara than with any of my other friends and I immediately responded to protect her when one of our other friends made an anti-semitic remark. Barbara and I were connected through our histories. At college, too, I began to be sensitive to what the few Black people on that very white campus might be feeling. My identity as an outsider was beginning to emerge.

At that point in my life I did not have a sense of myself as the "other" because of my gender. While I did slowly respond to the world of ideas and wished I could think like some of the men I knew, I generally accepted women's subservient and dependent role as natural and appropriate. I was, however, becoming more critical of Armenian culture for what I saw as the absolute subservience of the women to the men. A few of the women I knew at college seemed to think of themselves as being intellectually equal to men. I admired these women who were "brains" but didn't seem to mind. I identified extreme male dominance with Armenian culture and thought that American women were more modern than the women in my family--almost, it seemed to me at the time, free.

While it would be overstating the case to say I had developed a critique of patriarchy because of my desire to escape my ethnicity, I

did identify submissive women with the old world and modern and free women with America. This conception of American women was held among members of my family as well, although their use of the term "free" was pejorative. It was true that the women in my family seemed to serve their men more faithfully than the image of their American counterparts and in my desire to become as American as possible and to see all things American as "good" and "modern" I saw American women as free and Armenian women as tied to their men and their families. Ironically, my identification of the freedom of women as a positive thing was also the result of my grandmother's story emerging from my psyche.

My relationships with men in college reflected my ambivalent views about women's role. I wanted a man I could look up to and learn from, but at the same time I wanted a relationship in which I would have some decision making power. None of the men I dated were overtly authoritarian and I couldn't understand my friends who stayed with men who told them what to do. Despite my nascent feminism I was, however, like all the other women I knew in being utterly dependent on male approval for my sense of self. I was also unable to contemplate life outside of marriage and family. While I did not want to be totally subsumed in the role I also could not imagine who I would be if I were not somebody's wife and eventually, some children's mother.

After I left Alfred University and enrolled in Columbia University I was desperate to get out of my parents' house and away from their restrictions and demands. The only way I could conceive of doing that was to get married. Living on my own was totally outside of my

capabilities and world view. Other women my age did have their own apartments, though in the early 1960s young women living alone were certainly not the norm, but for me it was impossible. My parents would never approve and the very thought of living alone or even with friends was terrifying. I was rarely in my parents' house by myself and had only recently gotten my own key.

I did get married and had the sense, at the altar, that I was being passed from one man to another--from my father to my husband--but that flash of insight went underground because I felt I had no real alternatives. With marriage and shortly after that motherhood, I accepted my dependence on Jake. The discussion of an equal relationship, which had never been very well formulated in my mind, became a thing of the past. My life played itself out like so many other women my age. We got married, had children, became moms and repressed our boredom and misery.

When I did think about my life during the early years of my marriage, and I didn't do that very often, I told myself that my life was different from my mother's. I had my own friends. I drove our car and went out at night while Jake stayed with Neal. I even had a job. I also knew that Jake's work on his degree, his friends, his future was what was really important and I considered it to be my responsibility to do everything I could to help him in his efforts. I also listened and accepted his judgments on what was happening in the world. He, after all, was becoming a political scientist and was therefore able to tell me what was really happening. There was one exception to this rule and that was my response to the Civil Rights Movement. I felt that it was

the most noble and important thing that had happened in my lifetime, while Jake thought it was merely a just cause. I didn't argue with him. There seemed to be nothing to argue about other than my feelings about the movement, but I didn't accept his judgment.

My emotional involvement with that struggle, although I was unaware of it at the time, was directly related to my knowledge of what happened to my family and the other Armenians in Turkey. Just as my grandfather had "disappeared" into the Turkish army and just as Armenians were killed by Turkish officials, Black activists in the South "disappeared," were firehosed, attacked by dogs and even killed by whites with the knowledge and sometimes participation of local law enforcement officials. The Civil Rights Movement symbolized the struggle of an oppressed group for their rights and it is possible that I responded to it emotionally because of my gender, but the main emotional impact on me was the result of being Armenian--the child and grandchild of survivors of the genocide.

The struggle of Black people in the South was my first serious political interest, but even though I was deeply moved I was unable to take any action. While the movement seemed so close to me emotionally, participation in it was very distant from my capabilities. I greatly admired those who joined the struggle but political action was totally out of the context of my experience. Also, I was a wife and mother and my first responsibilities were to Jake and Neal.

We moved to Wisconsin and although my interest in the Civil Rights Movement continued, I also had another focus. Neal's slow development

was becoming alarming and I finally was able to muster the courage to call the local mental health center for an evaluation. Because the clinic's staff psychologist thought Neal's development was the result of my problems, I felt I had no choice but to follow his advice and go into therapy. Dr. Kordecki's judgment that Neal's problems stemmed from my inability to relate to him appropriately augmented the guilt I felt for not wanting him in the first place and caused me great pain. Yet, my work with him also released years of repressed feelings. Therapy did help me to know what I was feeling and I began to learn to express myself. Miraculously, Neal also became more responsive.

There is no doubt in my mind that aspects of my therapy were sexist. It is also clear now that Neal's problems are at least partially the result of an organic dysfunction. Despite the unnecessary pain Dr. Kordecki's misdiagnosis caused me, feminist critiques of psychoanalytic theory and practice never range wholly true to me (Chesler, 1972; Mitchell, 1974). When I went into therapy I was in a deep depression, some of which it is true had to do with my life situation as a woman, but it is also true that some of my problems stemmed from my incapacity to face my own feelings. Therapy helped me feel them and validate them as well. Dr. Kordecki, for all of his sexism, helped me to begin to become my own person.

Although I was able to develop some of my own interests in Wisconsin far more than I had in the past and also had a group of friends, I continue to feel I was in a different country. I was known as the "New Yorker" and my friends admired me for a level of sophistication they

assumed I had and which I was sure I didn't possess. What had worked to my disadvantage at Ridgewood High School was, in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, an asset. I enjoyed the status my New York origins gave me, but I was anxious to get back to the East where I felt I could be more myself.

By the time we moved to Ithaca Dr. Kordecki felt that Neal was old enough to benefit from some kind of special school. I had high hopes that in Ithaca there would be a good program or school for him. What I found instead was one agency that tried to serve all children with any disability. Children who were not "normal" had to make do with the minimal amounts government designated for them and what could be collected from charitable organizations. My anger at the government for not strenuously enforcing civil rights in the South and my new understanding of the neglect of children with special needs was very disturbing. I began to develop a critique of American society that was devastating to me. Our country, it seemed, was geared only to meet the needs of those who fit into the mainstream--Black people and handicapped children clearly did not have the same rights as whites and "normal" children.

My anger at America was fueled as the war in Vietnam continued and protests against it intensified. I began to understand the rage that Black Power leaders expressed towards the government and white Americans. By 1968 I had completely identified with those on the outside of the American mainstream yet I had just begun to hear about the Women's Movement. All but the most conservative of feminists maintain that women are essentially outsiders because of our gender. Thus, my gradual

but persistent move away from the mainstream of American society could be interpreted as being the result of being a woman. While that may be true to some degree, it is clear to me that I was predisposed to being on the outside because I am Armenian.

The history of Armenians in Turkey as well as in the other countries they have settled in has been and still is to be on the outside. In Turkey they were kept out by official policy but in countries where such restrictions did not exist, Armenians kept to their own communities maintaining their own language, religion and schools. My father's family never considered themselves to be Iranians although they were born there. In fact, my father was quite clear that Iranians were rather uncivilized. While the family was more positive about the United States, they were far from accepting of American society and culture. My grandmother often proclaimed that the United States was the greatest country in the world, yet she made no effort to speak English and for all of her years in this country never associated with any Americans. My mother had gone to an American high school but her attitude towards the citizens of her adopted country was not any more sanguine than my grandmother's. Americans were the "they" who usually did things improperly; their daughters were loose and boy crazy, they were concerned only with appearances and, perhaps worst of all, they had underdeveloped palates--they didn't know the tastes of their own mouths. Certainly "they" were not people one would bring into one's life. My mother and grandmother were in this country and grateful for the sanctuary it had offered them, but like other Armenians in the diaspora, they were not of it. After so

many years of struggling to be part of American society, being on the outside of the mainstream was not exactly comfortable for me, but it was familiar and this time I had lots of company.

Slowly the Women's Movement came into my life and my general anger at a racist, imperialist America now included a critique of sexism and an anger that would grow into a rage of men. While I had been unclear as to why I had had such a strong emotional response to the Civil Rights Movement, I knew why I responded to the Women's Movement. I knew that it would give me new life and it did. My feelings of inadequacy, my inability to develop an independent life, my dependence on male approval, my guilt over not wanting Neal all seemed to make sense given the roles society had designated for women. In each instance I had responded to the training I received from a sexist society. My inadequacies were not the result of my individual limitations but created by a system that was determined to keep women in their place. I mourned for the loss of a life I could have had and was ecstatic about the possibilities in the future.

My involvement with the Women's Movement began to put me outside of the left groups I had worked with as well as strained some of my friendships. Just as I had felt like an outsider among other ethnic groups in New York City, I was now once again an outsider among outsiders. But this time I was exhilarated. I was able to throw myself into activism around women's issues with an abandon that I was never before able to muster. This movement was mine and I had a total commitment to change the world for myself, my sisters and our daughters.

Although my experience with the women at Female Studies at Cornell shook my sense of myself, it also served to help me to realize that all feminists did not want to change the world or even the institutions of which they were a part. Feminists, I learned through bitter experience, could also be mainstream. I also realized at Cornell that I was beginning to be able to form my own political opinions and trust them. My support came from other women, most importantly Brenda.

The Women's Movement also gave me the courage to face the reality of my relationship with Jake. After years of feeling uncomfortable with his very subtle undermining, it suddenly became clear that he had been threatened by my growing strength. Because of the support I felt from the Women's Movement in the form of friends and books, particularly Doris Lessing, I was able to demand that Jake deal with his feelings towards me and also face the consequences if he could not.

When Jake said he could no longer live with me I was frightened but thought I could probably manage without him. It was, however, Brenda's unconditional belief that I would be just fine, perhaps even better off without Jake, that made it possible for me to leave Ithaca and move to where I would have a supportive community. Brenda's assumption was based I believe on her experiences as the child of a single parent and growing up in a community in which women raising children on their own was neither shameful nor unusual.

I looked to the feminist community in Amherst for more than it could possibly offer. Because I felt so frightened to be on my own with two children, I needed to believe that my friends in Amherst, indeed the

whole women's community in the Valley, would be like my extended family had been when I was growing up in New York City. This idea was, of course, a fantasy but it was one that I desperately needed. It was not appropriate to expect so much from my friends but it did not seem so during the early days of the Women's Movement. We all expected to give as much as possible to our sisters but our expectations of each other coupled with our enormous needs strained my friendships to the point of collapse. Sisterhood was powerful, but our demands of it often outweighed its strength.

My problems in graduate school, with Neal's coordinator and Leah's teachers often left me exhausted and frightened but my fear of being inadequate to the task of living on my own was so real that I was unable to admit, even to myself, how difficult my life was. I was also influenced, indeed often oppressed, by the unspoken expectation that feminists were strong and able to survive. I often felt that I was not an individual woman trying to deal with my new life but a symbol of all women. If I did not excel in graduate school, as a parent, as a feminist my failure would reflect on all my sisters. It seemed necessary to repress any inkling of doubt I had about my capabilities.

I did, however, allow Martha to see through the facade I kept up for myself and my other friends and it was she who gave me real support. I let her see my weaknesses and she responded with warmth and assurance and I fell in love. Being with Martha seemed so natural to me, yet I knew that it was the Women's Movement that had made it so easy for me to be in a relationship with a woman. I was very grateful for that.

I had come to Amherst with a bravado without which I would never have attempted the move. The Movement had convinced me that anything was possible and I was willing to try to dramatically change my life. I needed the bravado to cover my fear but Martha's support of my real strengths and her acceptance of my weaknesses coupled with my concrete successes--survival of one year in graduate school and a year alone with the children--I was able to be more realistic of my life. I would do as well as I could within the hostility of the History department and I would do my best to be a good parent, but I no longer expected to be everything for everywoman.

The year I finished school, Martha and I moved into our new home together and I began my job at Women's Studies was the first time since I had moved to Amherst that I had had the time and space to think directly and seriously about the politics of our Women's Studies Program. Almost immediately after the beginning of the semester I began to think about what the Program was and set about to try to make some changes. While my colleagues were supportive of my suggestion of taking courses in the Afro-American Studies Department, their responses to my growing understanding of the power of racism and the significant differences in the life experiences of Black and white women ranged from mild interest to ignoring me. What was clear to me was that none of the faculty were making any substantive changes in the way they approached women's lives--changes which would incorporate Black women.

I was also very shaken by the fact that my renewed interest in the lives of Black people and the power of racism to shape all our lives was

causing enormous friction with Martha. Despite my growing alienation at Women's Studies and the threat that my involvement with these issues posed to my relationship with Martha, I never considered giving up my interest. Studying the lives of Black people was, it was becoming quite clear to me, more than an interest. I was compelled not only to learn what I could but to talk about my insights into American and the West with Martha and to continue to try to make changes in Women's Studies.

Through the many heated arguments with Martha I finally began to understand that I identified with Black people because I was an Armenian. I had understood that all men did not have the same degree of power because Armenian men, my own grandfather, had been as powerless as Armenian women in the face of the brutality of the Turks against the Armenians. It was clear to me too, that there was more than one oppression in the world. Sexism was surely powerful and had affected my life profoundly but it had not been the singularly determining factor. My grandmother's suffering was based on ethnicity, gender was certainly only a secondary factor in her oppression. After hearing my grandmother's story again it was also clear that my ethnicity and my history as an Armenian had informed my world view all my life. I had tried to deny it, to flee from it, but I was an Armenian and that fact was as significant to my life as being a woman. The Women's Movement had, it was true, given me new life but the theory which grew out of it and which in turn informed the Movement had made part of me--and many other women as well--invisible. It had not helped me to uncover or explore my feelings about my ethnicity.

None of the three major schools of feminism address my life as an Armenian-American woman. They are all based on the assumption that women's lives can be analyzed by examining women as women. By isolating women from any particular context the specificity that gives shape and texture to the lives of real women is totally lost. The women in these theories do, in fact, exist within a cultural context but that context is not made explicit and the theories purport to speak to the universal condition of women. Because of the cultural context is assumed, it is not subject to any analysis. The resulting theories, framed within the parameters of the white, Western hegemony not only neglect the experience of the majority of the women in the world but the analysis of women who are part of the hegemony or have adopted it is only partially undertaken. Thus, feminist theory focuses on women's powerlessness in the face of patriarchy but ignores the very real power that some women have over other women and even some men.

By ignoring the power that some women have, or denying that any women have any power by making an ideological separation between themselves and the men in the social, racial, cultural group or class to which they belong, feminist theoreticians obfuscate the responsibility they have for the oppression of the group over which they do have power. They also fail to recognize a crucial aspect of their own life experience. The theories that develop from these partial analyses of women's lives are inadequate to describe the social structure as it exists. If racism, class relations or the hegemony of Western, WASP culture is

ignored the basis of the theory has only a tenuous relationship to the reality it purports to analyze.

The focus on the powerlessness of women in the face of a universal patriarchy also obscures the reality of particular cultures in which women do have some social power. The economic power of West African women is only one case in point. This analysis also denies us our history of the resistance of strong women--women like my grandmother who refused to be victims.

Race, class and culture cannot be added on to a feminist theoretical framework but must be incorporated into the body of the theory. To say that Turkish-Armenian women suffered as women because of patriarchy and as Armenians because of their ethnicity bifurcates a life in ways that are incomprehensible. My initial feelings of being oppressed came both within my family as a girl and from the society as an Armenian. It is possible to say that at one point I was more aware of one oppression than the other, but while I was experiencing being a non-WASP, I experienced it as a female. When I became aware of sexism and involved in the Women's Movement it was as an Armenian. Being female determined in some very significant ways how I would approach the non-Armenian world just as being Armenian similarly determined my responses to the Women's Movement. Knowing what happened to Armenians in Turkey and feeling outside the hegemony of American culture bonds me in very real ways to other Armenians, even the most sexist of my "brothers." Being female, despite the very real connection I feel to other Armenians, it is impossible for me to live within an Armenian-American community because of their

patriarchal assumptions about women's roles. Being the child of a survivor of the 1915 Armenian genocide it not only seems ludicrous to me to identify gender relations as the basis of all oppression in the world and throughout history but subsumes the very real history of Armenians under the umbrella of the evils of patriarchy and thereby denies the specificity of that particular historical event.

Bettina Aptheker argues that the 19th century women's movement lost its radical impetus when it separated from the Black movement during the debates over the fifteenth amendment to the constitution (Aptheker, 1982, 13). Maintaining "that women's emancipation and Afro-American liberation are intimately and inexorably connected and that neither can be envisioned or achieved without the other" Aptheker argues for a politics and process, "in which themes of hierarchy, power, and dominance are no longer tolerated, either personally or politically" (Aptheker, 1982, 52). If the contemporary Women's Movement, feminist theory and Women's Studies are to develop into forces that can change the world in substantial ways, they must dedicate their efforts to examining hierarchy, power and dominance wherever they occur and whatever form they take. Only then will my life as an Armenian-American woman be fully and adequately addressed.

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APPENDIX

Working Paper for the Women and Ethnicity Project

Rites and Reason Project

Afro-American Studies Department

Brown University

ARMENIAN-AMERICAN WOMEN: THE FIRST WORD . . .

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The project on Armenian-American women is the first step on the long road to understanding what roles and expectations Armenian culture has for women, how the women view these roles, and whether or not they live them out. In thinking about what culture imposes on people within it, we must not view culture as a static entity imposed from an immutable source. Culture is a set of expectations and behaviors that are created by groups within a particular set of circumstances, and culture changes when circumstances change. This is particularly true when a people undergo a severe dislocation. In the case of the Armenians, the 1915 genocide and the resulting emigration to the United States certainly had an enormous impact on cultural norms and behaviors. The sense of a culture in the process of change was obvious in each of our sessions. There were major differences in experiences in the life histories of the women as well as substantive disagreements among them over basic values.

The issues that emerged in the discussions were, of course, influenced to a degree by the interview process itself. The very fact that the groups were all women and had been told that we wanted to focus on women's issues had some influence on what women brought up as concerns. Our process, however, was to be as non-directive as possible in the interviews so that we could get a better sense of what the women thought were important issues for discussion, as well as to see what conflicts would emerge among the group.

We chose the groups in an attempt to represent as wide a spectrum of Armenian-American women as possible. Because we had no contacts in the Armenian community in Providence we were unable to assemble a group

there. In fact, not one person we called was willing to discuss the issue of Armenian women with us. We therefore moved the project to the Boston area where two members of the project team do have contacts. Initially, we knew that we would have to get both sides of the Armenian political spectrum represented by two separate groups. For many generations the Armenian community has been politically divided between the Ramgavars and the Tashnags. The Ramgavars, or the assimilationists, believe that wherever they are Armenians must make do as best they can. This does not mean, however, that they assimilate into the culture of the country they are in, for Ramgavars all over the Middle East and in the United States as well have built strong Armenian communities. The Tashnags are nationalists in the sense that they want the traditional Armenian homeland repatriated. Each group has its own community, usually centered around a church which has traditionally taken an important role in the debate. We were also advised by the Armenian teacher (Armenian is taught as a foreign language in three Boston area high schools) to interview her students, recent immigrants as well as second generation. We held two sessions in Watertown High School and one session with professional women.

After all the sessions were held, I felt somewhat disturbed that my own experience as an Armenian-American woman was not adequately represented. Not willing to believe that I am completely out of tune with my countrywomen, I decided that there must be something in particular about the women we interviewed that made me feel very different from them. I realized that all of the women we talked with were very much connected

to the Armenian community, through the church and/or Armenian community groups. Most of the women with children were very much concerned that they learn Armenian, and, indeed, many of the children are fluent and literate in Armenian. For many of these women social life is exclusively with kin and other Armenians. As one woman in one of our groups put it, "We are not fully Americanized, especially the Armenians in Boston. Do you realize that there are not more than one hundred Armenian churches in the country and seven of them are right here in the Boston area?" Although Armenian was my first language, both of my parents are first generation and they socialize only with kin, I did not grow up in a tightly knit Armenian community. I considered it vital to the project to have at least one session outside of the Boston area to get the views of women who are not part of an Armenian community. I chose Amherst, Massachusetts because there is no Armenian community there and I know of a few Armenian women.

The difference between this group and the other four was striking. The Amherst group was the only one that agreed in their general criticisms of the roles of Armenian women within Armenian culture. It was also the only group in which a majority of the women were single, either never married or divorced. Of the sixteen adult women in the Boston area that we interviewed only one had never been married and three were divorced. This group was also the only one, outside of the high school immigrants, who talked about the difficulties of being Armenian in American society.

While there were women in most of the groups who wondered why we would focus on women's experiences and opinions, and there was some initial resistance, each group lasted longer than we had anticipated and many women expressed an appreciation for having the opportunity to get together as women and talk about their concerns as women. The most striking instance of an initial reluctance and then an intense involvement was in our first meeting. The group had been assembled by the mother of one of the project's team and consisted of nine of her friends and acquaintances. When I asked why they had come, most answered that they had come as a personal favor for the team member. We began at seven in the evening and after four hours of a highly animated and sometimes heated discussion, I tried to end the evening. I was unable to stop the discussion which finally ended at twelve thirty. Most of the women there came to me individually to thank me for bringing them together. The most initially resistant and even hostile group we met with was one of the Watertown High School groups, and yet even they stayed well beyond the allotted time for our discussion, and that was on a Friday afternoon after school. (The discussion began in the last school period.) Clearly, Armenian-American women are concerned with issues around their lives as women, although very few of the women we interviewed would call themselves feminists.

All of the groups focused heavily on marriage and family issues; general discussions of marriage, power issues between husbands and wives, women's proper role as wives, work and marriage and child rearing. Other issues that emerged in all the sessions were: education,

general discussions of women's role in society, the church, Armenian culture, the genocide, social life, relationship to American culture and women's work and careers. One of the issues that did not come up was politics; one group responded to a question asked by one of the project team about terrorism and had a discussion about Armenian political issues for a few minutes. Another issue that was not discussed was women's sexuality. There was only some response to questions about the double standard for female and male sexuality.

I will discuss each of the major issues that emerged from our discussions. I will make some general comments and then quote extensively from the women we interviewed.

General Discussion of Women's Roles in Society

If my mother wasn't strong she wouldn't have survived.

My mother told me when I came here* to just be quiet and everyone would know that I'm a good girl.

*to Boston after her marriage

In most of the groups the discussion of women's roles took place within the context of marriage, but the professional women brought up some of the difficulties they had encountered in their fields as well as some of the ways they had found to cope with them. In discussing problems relating to male colleagues two of them had the following discussion:

A man who demands respect for himself as an individual and as a person isn't even considered a demand. It's considered a right simply because he is standing there. Just the very fact of his manhood demands a certain respect in our culture. A woman just by being there doesn't receive it and if she makes any motion physically or verbally to call your attention to the fact that a person

expecting and demanding respect is standing there can be perceived as arrogance. So you have to get to be very accomplished in the manner in which you handle that. It's difficult.

It's nice that you have such a pleasing appearance and such a nice manner that you were probably able to get a heck of a lot done without raising people's cockles. Just because you didn't look like the kind of lawyer or something that people have a preconception of--a very mannish person wearing a suit and being gruff and totally unfeminine. You always have to be conscious of this. And sometimes it isn't a deliberate attitude on the part of the person opposite you. It's just a matter of conditioning and tradition. You have to be very understanding of that to not compound the problem. I mean that's even work. I mean if you try to do something to indicate just who you are or why you are there, if you don't do it the right way you not only don't get the message through, but you create hostility towards yourself. So it's a double burden. I was in California to be the featured speaker on an afternoon program. And two hours before the program the other speaker, who was a male and a graduate student, had an appointment with an older Armenian to get some information on castles in Celicia and he asked me to sit in. When the older man and his son came to the hotel, I was sort of hostess. And as we sat around the table the graduate student asked his questions. I participated--made some comments--so that any person with any intelligence--that's a sentence born of irritation--would have known that I knew something about this. . . . When we finally got finished . . . the older man said, 'And what are you doing in San Francisco? Are you here for a visit?' And I hadn't realized that because you're a woman they naturally think you're just there.

Behind all of this there is one other theme that carries all along. That is, aside from your own, the organizations that you are in, never mind the society, don't support your own perception of yourself. In other words, there's nothing in the environment that says, 'Yes, you are a worthy person. You are a knowledgeable, competent person.' You have to carry that around in your own head all the time while people around you are saying that you are not there. It's a very difficult thing to do to maintain self-esteem given the circumstances . . . the general environment doesn't support your view of yourself . . .

One of the three women in the group who had gone to one of the top women's colleges in the country felt that there was much in her education at this institution that worked against her sense of self as a woman.

There were some factors at Radcliffe that worked against being independent and against being self-realized and so on. I didn't recognize it at the time. At Radcliffe and Harvard you were told you were the best. You were hand picked and all that. And I swallowed it whole and for years afterwards you were kind of puzzled when you met very bright people who went to other kinds of schools. Terribly snobbish attitudes you didn't realize you held. . . . Looking back you were a second class citizen. The freshman classes were separate. . . . They built Lamont Library and they didn't let women in there. I used to make a joke by saying that was the most glorified men's room on the campus. And when you look back--speaking of ladies' rooms--there was only one place where you could sort of flop--in Harvard Yard. . . . And when you had large lecture courses . . . you would be the only girl . . . and you didn't like to open your mouth and the men could talk circles over and around you. And there was the common perception, that I must have bought at that time, that the women might get good grades because they're conscientious, but the men were really bright. All of this verbal ability . . . we complained about it. It really has a perceptive effect on you . . .

It was really the mold of the greater society.

Our Radcliffe president at the beginning of the year making these comments about our future . . . getting this education and then getting married and having children and being the cultural force in the community.

Speaking of women students deferring to males, a college professor said

So many of the young women I see in my classes today with young men are less progressive than I am. What is happening here? There is something wrong. Their behavior in the class is directed by their hormones. . . . They are really concerned with how they are going to be perceived by the young men in their classes and whether or not they are going to be considered desirable mates or not. . . . Young women will not speak up in class even when they know the answer until a young man speaks.

She was answered by another academic who brought up the issue of women's desire to be loved. The following discussion ensued:

It is a very unusual young girl, I think, who has enough intellectual drive to put that in its place--that drive to love and be loved and also pursue. . . . That's the whole point though. Here we're getting back to this business of love and be loved. Sure, why should a woman have to put being loved and loving in its proper place? Where is its proper place? At any point in life you want

to be loved and to love. And you want to be valued for who you are, but . . .

A woman from another group, an unmarried high school teacher, spoke to the difficulty in resolving the conflict of coming from a culture in which women defer to males, being a professional person and trying to maintain an intimate relationship.

I will not ever in my life defer to a man on my job. There is not one of them--I have no problems thinking I am brighter than they are. I am more capable than they are--that never enters my mind. But in my personal, intimate relationships, I am emotionally retarded.

While she had friendships with men,

It doesn't get to the commitment stage, emotionally, I can't do it. Why, because it scares me. I either make a total commitment which is devastating and destructive, therefore what I do is make no commitment.

Because you become totally submissive?

Yes.

Speaking to the issue of women's intellectual growth within a marriage, one of the academic women spoke to the difficulties imposed on women by cultural attitudes towards married women and women's work.

As I look back I realize that I had the special feeling as I was growing up. I was treated intelligently. My education was equal to my brothers', but there's an erosion. Societal expectation at that time, component number one. The pathway you took, the fact that you got married was another thing, and then living--raising children in a suburb--you very rarely had discussions with anyone, and so, in a sense, . . . I learned a heck of a lot. I can recite what I learned, but you were not testing your intelligence against other people's intelligence. You were not getting a feedback . . . a positive demonstration of your competence, either by a salary or a promotion or even verbally. And you don't have that much contact with other people's lives in such a way that you can compare yourself. I mean there were always certain levels at which I knew I was very competent in my profession which was wife, mother, house-maker, cook, whatever--to the point of French food--Julia Child and all that . . .

Towards the end of the session with professional women, one of the women asked that the following quote be inserted somewhere in the paper. I will comply with her request, but I will end this section with a conversation with her son which she related to us.

Men in our society apologize for their weakness, women for their strength.

My son says, 'Mama, you act as though you don't see the lions and the tigers.' I said, 'My son, it isn't that I don't see them,' I said, 'I see them there, but you can't spend your whole life hanging back wondering that there are tigers and lions in the bushes.' I said, 'You look at where it is you are going and you set on your path. If one of the them jumps out of the bushes, then you'll deal with it when they jump out of the bushes. The fact that they're in the bushes isn't doing anything to you.'

The Genocide

My mother, who had no one, she spent all of my youth with me and she couldn't read so she wasn't reading me fairy tales--instead she was talking about the massacres.

Because of what the Turks did to the Armenians, my mother told me what they did and I thought it was awful to be so stamped out, I thought I had a special responsibility. Everything I do seems to try to prove my identity--that I am Armenian--that I want to show other people.

A major factor in the life of most Armenians is the 1915 genocide in which one and one half million Armenians were killed and thousands more were dispersed throughout the Middle East and the United States. The group of women who were the most reluctant to discuss the genocide and its result were the assimilationist women. While it necessarily came up in conversation, since many of them were children of survivors, when asked directly about it they responded that they didn't want to go into all that. The nationalist group, on the other hand, brought up the issue frequently and discussed its effects. Stories about the genocide

generally came up when women over thirty-five discussed their childhood years as it was a part of their environment whether or not their parents were survivors. The extent of the effect of the genocide on people's lives can be captured in the following discussion:

I heard about it a lot when I was a child, but it's only in the last few years that I've listened. It hasn't affected me. I can understand it. Yet, it's like something that never happened.

Don't you resent it? Don't you think about the outcome of it? The outcome of the genocide? The fact that your whole cultural history was destroyed--annihilated and there's very little information. You don't have the same rights as an American born or ethnic woman--that you don't have the right to go into the library and look up your ethnic history. I didn't have the right to find any Armenian costume design history until these plates came from Armenia in the late 60s. When you stop and think--you have to have these things because you have children. You have a responsibility to educate them as to their cultural heritage. . . . They have the right to know about their heritage. A lot of things that were brought to this country before the genocide were found and the people themselves were delighted to show the things. They automatically became real to themselves. Their ancestors became real. Their heritage became real. They had seen the objects they possessed, but it was almost as if they looked through them like they were invisible because they didn't have the consciousness to even have the luxury to think of their background because the shock of coming here was such a trauma that the luxury of looking at their history was new to them. But when I asked them when they brought it out, and I admired the things they said, 'Yes, it is beautiful. They do have beauty. We do have art.' Nicer than anything I have seen. I would say, 'Have you seen anything like this silver filigree? How does it look to you?' And they realized--and so many people were so grateful just to learn and become conscious of what they had and to show their children. And that the whole thing--the education behind it.

My mother is the sole survivor of her family and I heard stories when I was young. I am very close to my mother emotionally and physically. I went to see "Annie" and everyone else is laughing and I am crying and it is shortly after my mother died and I just related to the orphans and my mother and the other Armenian orphans. I always felt cheated growing up that I had no family.

And some of the children felt a special responsibility to their parents.

When you are the offspring of a survivor you try to become strong. You sort of become like the parent of the survivor. You feel so sorry for them you want to do everything for them. I gave English lessons to my mother's girlfriends. I felt like a parent to those people. Armenians in M_____ were like one family. They visited each other and I went with my mother and heard all the survivor stories. It is a burden for a child. I felt I had to be strong in order to survive.

Other women wondered about the effect of the genocide on their parents' lives. One woman thought that her mother's inability to trust anyone was directly related to what she had experienced in Turkey as a young woman.

They were in a horse drawn carriage. They're going from one city to another as they had to do and there were highwaymen--robbers--on the road. They stopped the carriage and wanted the money. My mother was very pretty. This robber grabbed and wanted all of her money. And then he also referred to her as being attractive. She was crying and saying she had no money. He grabbed her by the hair, spun her around. As long as I have known my mother she's had headaches. If the Turkish driver did not come to her aid--the family couldn't of course--who knows what would have happened. He said that if the robbers had not taken her, he would have. My mother doesn't trust anybody.

The telling and the retelling of the stories of the genocide is explored by another woman.

My mother always told me about her life and it's very important that she did, and I know other Armenians did that. For years, and I know this is another legacy of the genocide, the only people they had to talk to--the only audience they had was us. The world did not care--it never cared. They knew that. They would not have died if the world had cared. . . . So that it would not die. It is the idea of the telling and the retelling and expiating the pain by telling it and telling it and telling it. And in the telling it becomes easier to live with. It's a recognition that we were people and they did this to us. I was somebody. . . . My mother believes that she and her people survived the genocide because God put out his hand and chose them. . . . That's the only justification they have. It's the guilt of the survival.

Relationship to American Culture

My mother prayed every day--every time she sat down--'Thank God, thank God that we are in America.'

I was dark. I was exotic looking. I had all of the features that the Anglos said were trampy . . . and when they looked at me they assumed what they had absolutely no right to assume.

The most striking difference between the group in Amherst and the groups in the Boston area is their perceptions of American culture and how they relate to it. The women in the Boston area, who it will be remembered are for the most part deeply entrenched in the Armenian community, seem to have no major problems being Armenian in America, with the exception of the high school students who suffered from being foreigners. A number of women in the Amherst group, on the other hand, had major problems either with being discriminated against in one way or another, or with the conflicts created by being raised in a traditional Armenian home and living in American culture. One would think that those women who grew up in a strong Armenian community would feel the conflict less, but this is not, in fact, the case. What can be said is that the women who left an Armenian community articulate such problems, while the ones who remained in such a community or moved into it do not share the conflicts. When I asked the group of assimilationist women what conflicts they felt by being Armenians in America, there was no response. I reasked the question and one woman answered that American girls were promiscuous and that was a problem for them because of their daughters. There was no other response. The issue just was not a real one for them.

The nationalist women responded by saying that they had been given such a strong and positive sense of being Armenian that they never had any problems.

We grew up in a multi-ethnic neighborhood. None of the children spoke English. When my brother went out he sang Armenian songs and all the kids in the neighborhood learned these songs in Armenian. We were so strong.

She related a story of a friend of hers who decided not to give her child an Armenian name.

She said, 'I didn't want my child to be exposed to the treatment I had growing up.' She related the story that no one could pronounce her name and she was shy and she was held back. She was ashamed of her name. I never knew anything about that. My name is A____, my brother was A____. Not one of us had any problems. The teachers would stutter when they came to my name and I would stand up and say, 'my name is A____ and I would spell my name and sit down so they wouldn't say is this a boy or a girl. I did this in every grade. It never dawned on me that I was proud. I knew that it was my name. It came from my parents. They were both very strong. Even now, my daughter is the same way.

Among the professional women the issue of relating to American culture came up early in the discussion in the following way:

Armenian women in the United States of our generation have fallen into the Middle America trap. They have tried to emulate the middle class and the upper class of American society where the woman goes to the finest colleges . . . and then she goes on to marry and bring up children and then her brain atrophies from that point on . . . the presumption is that her brain atrophies.

Later, in response to my question of whether they felt a disjuncture between home and the larger society, the following discussion ensued:

I don't remember feeling other. I can remember feeling other, but never less than. My daddy always told us how wonderful we were.

I wonder if young women can be strong enough to stand up for themselves. They are living in two distinct worlds and it is too hard to integrate them.

I always felt a source of strength. I felt lucky to be Armenian. I thought we were special. We had a more colorful life. I was embarrassed because people could not pronounce my name.

I was proud of our history.

The dissenter in the group was a woman who teaches Armenian in the high school as well as English as a Second Language to the immigrants.

The students themselves were fairly clear that they do live in two worlds--the Armenian and the American. Some are trying to bridge them and others remain within Armenian culture as much as possible. Those who had been here for six years or more related the problems they encountered in school when they first arrived.

It was definitely hard. It used to be hard, being made fun of. It wasn't hard when we were just a few, but the fifth, sixth and seventh grades were very hard.

We were the only ones, remember?

The sixth grade is when everybody came.

They used to call us Armors. The way they dressed. With the clothes they had they didn't speak the language.

When you come at a younger age it's real hard. Elementary students are a real pain . . . they call you names. Once you are in Jr. High it's okay. I don't have that trouble now. But up into sixth grade I had a lot of problems. The group had a lot of problems and we got closer. We were able to share the problems. Over the years they accepted us. They got beat up. I was the only student who didn't get beat up. . . . I always tried to be friendly, ignore their remarks.

Of the groups that we interviewed, those who had been here for more than six years generally wanted to assimilate.

I've adjusted. I came at an early age. I don't think as they do [referring to the recent immigrants in the room]. More friendlier with my Armenian friends because most places I go are Armenian oriented. When I came here there were not a lot of Armenians. Everywhere I went there were ten families of Armenians and we became a group. . . . Now I have American friends.

Among some of the more recent immigrant high school women, the two worlds are so incompatible that they prefer to remain within their own community.

I can never get along with American kids. They think a whole different thing. Can talk for a while, but comes time when there is nothing to talk.

Thinking mentality is much totally different. We feel much comfortable with Armenians.

But their choice is not without some feeling that they are not being seen by the dominant culture.

You become shy when you are in different country. . . . But when you come to this country they don't know you and what good things you can do for them. They don't know you.

These young women identify the main issue that separates the two worlds as relating to males. Speaking of American women their age:

Dating boys is very common to them. We don't think that way. We are more conservative.

That's all they think about. There is more to think about than that.

I go out with my friends. I have much more fun in groups.

Count me out.

Armenian kids think differently than the way Americans think. I like the way Americans think.

You don't go out on dates. That's the difference in our thinking. Over there you don't go out with guys and stuff. Here I can go out with a guy and have a good time and no one thinks it's forever. The way they think, you know, if you go out with guy, you're married to him.

The issue of dating was a problem for some of the women in the other groups when they were adolescents and young adults.

I was sixteen years old and I made a date with a guy and my father didn't talk to me for two weeks.

When I was about twenty-five I went to a psychiatrist for about a year. I really had problems with the two worlds. There were so many double messages. I mean there was no dating or none of this stuff. I would be on committees in high school for the dance and I couldn't go to the dance . . .

My father would not let me join the Armenian Youth Federation. Because that's dating. You meet boys there.

As indicated by the second comment, the conflicts with American culture were broader than whether or not American dating practices were adopted. Some women experienced discrimination.

N_____ is primarily an Anglo town and unfortunately, I learn very quickly--I'm a quick study--so I learned to read and all that very quickly. So what they did with me was to jump me two grades because I was bored. Same thing happened to my sister, but time passes and it was easier. Also she was lighter than I was. But I went into the ninth grade when I was twelve years old and I had been at the top of my class all the way into the eighth grade. There had never been any doubt that I would go to college. That's what I heard all my life. Well, the first day of high school, I'm in all of these artsy-craftsy classes. I really didn't understand it, but what I did understand was I knew you had to have a language to go to college and I wasn't in any of the language classes. So I go marching down to the counselor and I explained to her that I am going to college and don't I need so many years of language. She looked at me and said, 'My dear, your parents can't afford to send you to school. You are not going to college. You don't need that. You need to learn how to make a living.' You have to understand how mortified I was by this and I went home to tell my mother. And, of course, she said that's outrageous. My mother has always had an incredible sense of self because of the way she was raised. My mother's very unaware of this kind of discrimination because she condescends to people . . . she never felt any kind of inferiority--it just kind of rolled off her back. And so she just called them and told them, yes, I was going to college and would they please make the adjustments. They did, in fact, put me in those classes, but they made my life miserable. I had a terrible hatred of them for a long time.

This woman also described the importance of the Armenian Youth Federation to her sense of self.

If it hadn't been for that--somebody that was a male who made me feel that I wasn't a tramp, if it hadn't been for that--I stop and I think about that. You know sometimes you end up being what

people say you are. . . . I will always be grateful for that little group of people because, in many ways that was the only social life I had that was of any significance. Now I tried with the others and I spent more effort than was certainly necessary--at the expense of my grades--trying to prove that I was like them.

The pain of her early experiences stayed with her for many years.

When I went back to my twenty-fifth reunion . . . I went back with a vengeance that I am even embarrassed to articulate. . . . Probably the best thing that ever happened to me. I came away feeling sorry for them. Those that had gone had not developed, had not grown, had not gone beyond 1956 and when I left I felt sad. And I felt ashamed. When I had gone, I put on every piece of jewelry I had. I mean, I was ready . . . I was going to show them--you wanted a tramp? Now let me show you what happened.

Marriage and Family

I've observed one thing about Armenian women. Armenian women are very affected by their parents. I've seen Armenian women go both ways. Either they are hard working, conscientious about their heritage--I don't want to say aggressive--strong women, or they become wives, take the back seat, they become the worst of what femininity is. Too bad there is not a happy medium. I think I'm really driven, to do, I don't know what, to be something.

In all of the groups, marriage and family were central to the discussions. As noted earlier the overwhelming majority of the adult women are presently married. Most of the women were old enough to be from the generation that did not allow or strongly discouraged dating. One wonders how they met their mates. A woman in her seventies related how she got married.

My brother got my boyfriend and we didn't go out date--no. He said I want to take Mary to show. He said, you can't take Mary to show now, when you marry take any place, but not right now.

I never see him alone. I never say hello to him. He never say you like me or I like you--no. Just we marry. He say you have to marry to this man. He looks like good man. He has this. He going to support you. Any trouble you come back to me. If you marry the person you like I don't look after you. . . . I didn't like in the

beginning. I don't want to marry that. He says you don't know nothing. . . . You marry and you make a home. That's all. We marry. We have a good life. We have good children.

Another woman in her fifties said that when she was young she said, "I'll never marry an Armenian because I want to be dated for six months before I'll ever take an engagement ring." But her uncles, because her father was dead had authority, forbid her mother to allow her to date Americans. They said, "Don't let R_____ go out with any non-Armenians and spoil our name." She met her husband at her sister's wedding in Boston. He came to visit her for two days in Iowa, where she lived with her mother, and came a few months later for three days, this time with his father. Attesting to the importance of family ties in the selection of a mate, she says that among the reasons she married him "was because his first cousin was married to my first cousin and he liked my mother and she liked him." The young women immigrants in W_____ High School whose parents say "nice girls do not go out" are not too far removed from this match through relatives.

One of the women remembers that her mother recognized the difficulty of finding mates in the American setting if daughters were not permitted to date. In trying to convince her husband to allow their eighteen year old daughter to go out on a date, she recollects her mother saying to her father:

You give her an education, you give her a car, you let her have clothes, you give her money. What is she supposed to do? Put on her clothes, sit in the car, put the money in her pocket and sit in the car in the garage? You can't do that. You have to let her go out. She has to meet people. This isn't the old country. They're not going to come to the house and ask for her hand.

Whether they went out on dates, or met their husbands through family or an Armenian group, all but one of the married women in our groups were married to Armenian men. They expressed the desire that their children marry Armenians, although most were willing to accept the mate regardless of nationality. All of the high school women, except one whose father was Armenian and mother was not, said their parents expected them to marry Armenians.

Many of the women, except for the Amherst group, also expressed the feeling that they preferred Armenian friends.

We have very good friends in Lexington. They are like family and they are Armenian. I have to stop and think that they are Armenian. Yet when I think about it, we don't have American friends that we are as close with.

Without realizing it you are much more friendly and relaxed with Armenian friends than American friends. You find that they are more interesting.

My longest lasting friends are Armenian.

Somehow the closeness that you have with an Armenian group--you're much more relaxed.

Among the issues that raised the most controversy was the relationship between wives and husbands. Some of the discussion centered on whether Armenian women are submissive or strong. The most extreme view was taken by a seventy-two year old woman whose arranged marriage was described above.

Life was under the commander--under the husband commander. But today--no husband and no commander and that's why life is so easy. . . . When you under the husband you have to obey and he brings the living. Today's living is my pocket is mine and your pocket is yours. . . . The man have to be the man and the woman have to be woman in the house. Because no rule for the children, no rule in the house--nothing. If we have no government we have no country

either. Husband same thing as government in the house. Whether he is a good husband or a bad husband, he still has to be the boss.

While not agreeing with this point of view, another woman did feel that "Very few Armenian women dare contradict or override their husbands." She is a very outspoken woman, yet in her own marriage it is her husband who makes the decisions.

We can't do anything without his approval. If we went for a ride we have to ask him to stop for ice cream. He says no. If I say the kids want to stop for ice cream--no--we are going home. . . . Everything had to be what he wanted. Whether it is selfishness or manliness I don't know.

She did, however, make the decision to go to real estate school despite the fact that he disapproved. While he wasn't able to stop her, he did make life difficult for her.

My husband was furious. He wouldn't help me. I had to catch the 6:30 bus. He came home at 5:45. He wouldn't help me. I had the kids all ready for bed. If I was home he would help me.

While she perceived her husband as having all the power to make decisions in the family, she did, in fact, pursue a career in real estate regardless of his opinion. He was clearly not "the commander" across the board.

Another woman spoke to the dominance of males within Armenian culture, in this case, the role her brother assumed after the death of their father.

The hierarchy is so strong--so obvious. Males are very domineering. The mother is outstanding, but all decisions made by father, whatever is left is made by the brother. It was okay with me until I went to the American school [she grew up in Lebanon] and was exposed to Western ideas. That brought conflict in my family. I was the rebel. The first to follow the new ideas. I wanted to come to the States. . . . I had to deal with my brother. I resented his authority. As a teenager, you want independence. He decided where I would go. He was very educated, yet it didn't make

any difference. I did all my papers secretly. My mother knew. I was still scared. What if he stopped me at this point.

In all of the sessions some women talked about the strength of their mothers, but this was most evident in the nationalist group.

My mother was always a very independent, strong person. She was strong mentally, physically and emotionally--in every way. And she had my sister and me and she brought both of us up to be independent and complete people. My father worked long hours. He had a store, a grocery store, so we did all the yard work, took care of the porches, the car. I mean we really were taught--without being told--just by osmosis. Mama taught us how to do everything. Mama was a fantastic example. She was such a strong woman. She never talked about loneliness or she never--she bemoaned the fact that she had no family. So I also raised my children very independently.

Another woman described her parents' relationship as being one of two equally strong people.

My mother took off and went to Boston, found a job and came home and said, 'I've got a job.' They had only been in this country two years. My father was upset in the beginning but then realized that they needed the money. . . . After the first trouble my father experienced, my mother going to work--she let him know right from the beginning. They had their arguments on different things. I remember when my father would have to write something. He would say, 'Let me read to you what I have written.' After the first couple of sentences she would butt in and he would say, 'Wait until I am finished.' But this is what they did all the time. He wrote. She would have to listen until he finished and then start taking them all down again.

Would he listen?

Oh yes, very much. Because my mother is very brief, concise, to the point. . . . They did it all the time. He would always listen, but if he felt strongly he would argue the point and she would bring him down. They were both strong, opinionated. They matched wits.

She implied that her mother might have been exceptional because she had an education.

Women are strong, but they are not able to express it as much. My mother could only go so far in school because she was a girl, but

she insisted on going through anyway. She read everything she could get her hands on. So in her case, she can talk about it. Most Armenian women are strong, but don't show it in so many ways.

The restrictions put on strong women by Armenian culture were explored by another woman.

My mother was also strong, but she was part of the Armenian tradition where the woman couldn't be as strong. My father was very strong. They never had fights that I knew about, but I could definitely sense that there were conflicts. My mother would do things, my mother would go out, for instance--my mother was very strong. She could turn the outdoors upside down. And my father didn't approve. I don't think it was because he minded her improvements, but what he minded was, I don't think she cleared it with him or what. . . . Not only did she garden . . . we were quite masculine, because, just the economics of the situation. We had to wallpaper, we had to paint, we had to do our home improvements. My father was not of the temperament to do those things. He was more of a professional man. Not a white collar worker, but cut out to be a white collar worker. . . . My mother just could do anything. . . . She was frowned on for it. My father was never able to enjoy her accomplishments.

Later on in the discussion, she made this statement:

Men rule the roost. It took me years to realize that marriage didn't have to be like that.

Speaking of her own attitudes towards marriage, she said:

I was an oddball in my generation because I was very much aware of what I would have to give up when I got married. My mother had a strong identity and she gave that to me and probably the male images I saw did not appeal to me. I don't know what the psychological things are. I realized, in a way, I insured myself by marrying late. I had twenty years in a career. . . . Our generation--in the 50s--you either became a teacher, nurse or it was assumed that you would get married. It was the typical thing. They became Mrs. somebody. They stay home, raise their children. They don't know who they are when they marry that young. And then later, they realize what's happened. I used to think my girlfriends were crazy. Have to come to terms with yourself, I did, as far as the marriage. I felt satisfied getting married at that point, but I had to go through my identity. I am not one to say, I'm married, I've lost my identity. I have my identity.

The loss of identity in marriage as a result of wives deferring to husbands was seen as a major problem in Armenian women's lives by a majority of the women in all of the groups. One group of women explored the concept of women's strength within the context of the Armenian patriarchy.

What a contradiction the women continue to live. I see it in the Armenian families I know. This great strength in the women and the great power in the men and those don't come together. The men don't have the same strength and the women don't have the power. My grandmother is an incredibly strong woman. She's one of the most powerful, articulate, charismatic women I will ever know, but she's very deferential to men--just pampering of men and they are what's right and women are not visible unless they are attached to a male. It's a very painful thing to experience and she could not be a more strong, more clear, more independent woman. . . . My grandmother is eighty-eight, my mom's mom, as powerful, as beautiful, as clear as I have known in my whole life and she has been a part of my whole life. She really is a regal, charming, lovely woman and very, very powerful. But I see it--just this pattern--in my own folks. . . . My mother has enormous strength and my father has this power, and my father has very little strength and my mother has very little power.

Focusing on the social position of Armenians, one of the women responded as follows:

I think that what we don't understand--when we talk about power--we have to understand something. It is power only where their families are concerned. Those women understood something. Those men have no power outside of the family. They have none--none. . . . A man is born into this world and everything around him says--you can become something, however if you can't get it in the world you can get it at home. My father was not a powerful man outside the home. . . . He was scared every day of his life to go out and work in a world that didn't accept him--in which he really did not belong and which he didn't totally understand--which is one of the reasons Armenians of that generation stayed so close together.

While the women generally saw their mothers as either totally submissive, strong within the limits of their situation or as both strong

and powerful, some of them felt that their marriages were equal partnerships.

My mother and I are very different. My mother waited on her family hand and foot. I see Armenia² women that way, but it didn't rub off on me. My family is very independent. Somewhere along the line the tradition broke. Maybe it would be different if my husband believed that way. I worked when my children were in school. My husband and I share.

Although some of the women have careers, and there is a range of sharing of housework and childrearing with husbands, the issues of whose career should take precedence came up in the discussion with the professional women.

I have always felt that his career came first. There was always that tacit understanding and if I was invited to a conference and he was busy, I would just stay home. His was more important. . . . I still do.

It's practical. Let's not lose sight of practicalities.

Why do you still feel his career is more important than yours?

It's attitudinal. Just the way I've been brought up. Even though, logically, I may say that's not right and it shouldn't be that way, subconsciously I accept that's the way things should be.

I object to saying that's the way it is and it's okay, not that we might think one way and feel another.

The whole subject is so loaded . . . first of all practically speaking, my husband's career, for many reasons, came first, traditionally and practically.

The ambivalence is okay, not that the phenomenon of accepting it is okay.

At any point . . . times when it makes good sense for one person's career to take precedence over the other. I'm just asking us also to look at the fact that there are times in such a relationship-- that there are times when it's appropriate that the woman's career should take precedence over the man's, and for our minds to be open enough to accept that--that it's okay for that to happen and that there are times when we should press that be acknowledged and that be the case.

I was making a conscious decision. . . . In my case I just felt, instinctively--first of all, I'm not an assertive person, but second, I thought that it would be too much of a strain on the marriage--just instinctively, not that my husband ever said anything or did anything. . . . I probably would do the same thing again. . . . I think that the ideas that you can be a wonder woman and pursue career, marriage and home and family is a ridiculous myth and I think that women are realizing that.

The notion that some aspects of your life don't suffer is a ridiculous thing to consider.

While the decision to try to combine career and marriage and family might bring up some difficulties, deciding not to pursue a career at all was not easy either. One of the women in the discussion above recalled her life as a housewife and mother and the difficulties she experienced.

I went to college and got married soon after. I got a job . . . raised a family. I remember, at that time I used to say, the sudden change from being in the world without children and with children, I used to say--not in a heavy way--was like having, suddenly, a ball and chain. You were no longer free to go across the street and buy a quart of milk, you had to be with that child. And we all complained about it, to varying degrees. I never had the kinds of misery that some women have when they suddenly have a child . . . because of my mother's model of devotion to children. And the other thing was we were the newer generation, we felt, yes, we were going to keep on learning and doing and this sort of thing. Society around you saying you should have lots of children--it was the move back to the home. And at that age, if anybody told you that you were reflecting society's values, you'd say 'who me? I know what I am doing. I'm independent. It's a matter of certain things you are ready to understand. I think this generation has a better start on things because they discuss so much more. Yet, in some ways the same issues are there. What I did was raise the children in a traditional way. . . . Always doing something, always learning, but looking back you see that most people around you were living that traditional life as well. You didn't have women as role models. I don't think I knew one woman--yes there was one woman . . . who was working with children. I disapproved of her. I thought it was cruel. I moved in and she dumped her child with me for three hours because it was sick and the babysitter didn't come and I thought, what a cruel thing. How did she know that I'm not going to mistreat this child, and I disapproved of that very strongly. If you had children you wanted to bring them up well with love and attention.

Another woman agreed with that there were difficulties imposed by the society on women with children.

There was no support for women with children. It was a fantastic loss of freedom. I was totally unprepared for it. And there is nothing in society to support you or help you.

The first woman to speak to this issue recalled that when her children were in high school she began to take courses and became interested in pursuing a research interest. When she spoke to one of her professors about it, he suggested that she go to graduate school. She responded

No. Some people can do that, but I feel that I wouldn't be doing my husband my children the justice--I wouldn't be able to give them the attention that I feel they deserve.

Most of the high school women had definite career goals despite the fact that they all wanted to marry and raise a family, and some were disturbed that their mothers had total responsibility for the housework.

All I know is, Armenian women, they go to work, be good housewives and have children. They have the same tradition. They don't change. But when you come here at a small age your views--ideas become more Americanized. . . . I don't think they should cook all the time. I think they should share housework equally. They should help each other, share the burden. In this country you have to go to work--some people do. My mother goes to work, does the housework, cleaning, cooking. It's very hard on her. My brothers and father don't help. They still have that overseas way--taking it easy.

Seeing traditional values in another light, a young woman responded

The major thing is Armenian women--positive thing on them--they never change. They don't change. American women work, but are not housewives. They are used to eating outside--they work outside. Armenians not like that. I like to work. I like to be home too.

Another young woman, also a recent immigrant, agreed with the first speaker.

They are good wives but, sometimes they're too much. Always home. They always tell you what to do. They have good ideas. I want--go out--find out what life is--travel.

A young woman who has been in this country for six years said:

Nothing should happen to your career. Life doesn't stop after marriage--right?

Most of these young women do not expect it to. Although they might disagree on whether or not traditional values should change, these women want it all--families and careers.

Mother/Daughter Relationships

Being a good mother means . . . freedom of thought within rules and regulations of my household. I have certain rules for my sons. I try to discipline them, but I let them feel freedom.

I had my hair cut at thirty-three years old. I said, 'I can't go home. My mother is going to kill me. It looks awful.' I was thirty-three years old.

Interestingly enough most of the women we interviewed who have daughters want it all for them too. In discussing her feelings about one of her daughters who left college, one woman expressed the view that a woman needs more than marriage in her life.

She has great potential and is not living up to it. She is not the type to take courses. I said, 'what if you don't marry M____, or what if it doesn't work out? What is going to make you happy? What are you going to do for the rest of your life? You can't say that marriage is it.' She should not think of marriage as a career. Not in this day and age.

The mother of M____, the man whom the daughter is engaged to, related how both she and her son felt about the daughter leaving college and the following discussion ensued:

My son was upset when she quit school. I said to her, 'marriage is not the end of life.' My cousin had a Ph.D. thirty-five years ago, had children and is now dean of N_____ Community College. What you do is go to school. You can have it all.

There doesn't seem to be anything to motivate her.

You people seem to be knocking down marriage.

No we're not.

I think being married . . .

You went out to work after your kids were in high school. Why did you work?

I would never have gone to work if I had a home of my own. I was living with my mother. Two women home all day doesn't work. It was either her or me. She wanted me to go and so I went out. But I had someone at home to stay with the kids. A home is very important.

We agree.

There is more to life than that.

Speaking from her own experience another woman told us the advice she gave her daughter.

I taught music. Then I got married and quit my job to raise a family. There was no question that I would do that. Now that I need to support myself I am behind the eightball. I have an entry level position in a jewelry store. I resent very much being in a position where if I had remained in my profession I would have a comfortable life style and now I can't support myself. . . . I told my daughter, 'You go into a profession where you can comfortably support yourself. Don't let it dry up like I did. You never know today what happens. I never dreamt in my life that after twenty-five years I would get up and get a divorce.

Another woman who had a career for twenty years, but is now home with her two young daughters expressed concern that she would not be providing a proper role model for them by being a housewife. Another hoped her two daughters would have careers and she encouraged them to think about setting up their own businesses.

Education is highly valued by all the women we spoke with. Again and again we heard how important it had been to the older women's parents that their children could get an education in this country, perhaps reflecting the difficulty Armenians had in getting an education in Turkey.

The fact that we can go to school and have independence. We live in the best country in the world--even my mother--every day she said she was glad she was in America. To me, I follow along with my mother. I thank God I'm here and my children can go to school . . . my mother couldn't go to school--my daughter graduated with the granddaughter of the man my father [a butler] worked for. . . . My mother was illiterate and even though my father died she made sure we all went to high school. My godfather said, 'send the children to work.' But she was adamant that her children would go to high school.

My daddy wanted me to be a teacher because teachers were very valued in his country and honored. And he valued that education. I don't think my daddy went past the fourth grade in school.

My father was a fourteen year old teacher in the old country, self-educated in this country--read extensively--left the factory and got into insurance and then real estate and then, thereafter we lived a life that was very modest, but in terms of education there was no end to that. I was brought up that way. . . . I remember my father saying--emphasizing the education, 'You're so lucky you have a library, you have books. You would have been shot in Turkey if you had been found with a book.' He said, 'There's no telling what you can be because you have been born in this country. You know the language.' So now, you realize what an obstacle it had been--to pronounce words. But he said, 'Who knows what you may become--you may be a writer.'

In some families, however, the education of sons was encouraged more than the education of daughters.

In those days, we believed in progress . . . of the next generation doing something better than the past generation. Looking back on it I don't think we appreciated our parents and grandparents. I know I didn't . . . I felt I was better. That I was going to do more. So, I think that one of the reasons I wanted to go to graduate school was that I wanted a different life and a better education. I must say that my family did not particularly think the education of women was important. They never put any obstacles in

my way, but on the other hand, they never pushed me. . . . I think they always felt I didn't know what I was doing and they were probably correct in that. I think they've always given me a lot of freedom, but, on the other hand, I've always felt that since they weren't really in favor of this, that I shouldn't expect any money to support me. So, I always earned my way through all the way.

In other cases, the education of sons was given preference over the daughters.

I'm sure this is typical of many Armenian families. They will send the boys to college and not the girls because they couldn't afford it. . . . So I knew all along, I had one brother and two sisters, that my brothers would go to college no matter what it took and the girls were older and we would help to put them through. Fortunately, he went on scholarships, because I decided I'd go to college two years after I was in high school.

My mother, though she was a very good student, and to hear her, she was, she had to leave school because her father died and they didn't have enough money to send the girls and so, that was that.

Sometimes it was the mothers who encouraged their daughters' education.

Mama was a very progressive woman, very contemporary in her thoughts. She was really way ahead of her time. My father couldn't care less, never encouraged his daughters to go to college, but ever since we were in elementary school my mother brainwashed us that there was no question that we would go to college. So, of course my sister and I did.

Most of the high school women's parents expect them to go to college, but not one of them plans to go away to school.

My parents won't let me go away either. I don't know why but . . .

That's really weird. Because, like, I've mentioned that to my mother. I go, hey ma, how about if I want to go away to college? She goes, 'no, there's too many schools right here.'

There is general head nodding and agreement to this comment. She goes on

I think--I don't know why--but see--that was like--An American kid, well, I wouldn't say an American kid--someone who was probably, you know, whose parents had been brought up here, they wouldn't talk

the same way. They would say to their parents, 'you don't have anything to say about it.'

It's not even that. The parents wouldn't say anything about it. They'd say, 'where do you want to go to college?' The kid would say, 'I want to go to California'--I'll give you the money.

They're scared of American influences--drugs and stuff . . .

Another young woman complained that her parents would not allow her to follow her own interests and talents. The other young woman tried to find a way for her to do what she wanted to do.

I want to be fashion designer, but to be fashion designer you have to go to New York. My parents won't let me. I am going into computers.

If you told your parents you were going to New York to be a fashion designer, what would your parents say?

They won't let me.

But, you'll be eighteen.

Still. . . . But it's hard to do something if you don't have interest in it.

A woman from the older generation remembers what happened in her extended family when she decided to go away to college and her parents allowed it.

I was the first one to attend a four year college--days. All the others had gone to two year colleges or at night and the big thing was his sisters and brothers. They said, 'You're not going to let her go away and she's sixteen years old?' My father wanted that and my mother said, 'It's her choice.' But his sisters and brothers said, 'You're going to let her go away. She going to get pregnant.' Every ugly thing that they could possibly say and my father finally said, 'It's my money and it's my child.' And the other thing was, 'Why are you going to spend your money and waste your money?' Now, I don't know why he was the only one in his family that had that type of progressive attitude--unless it was from my mother. But my father's position is schizophrenic. His position was and always has been, you educate women and you educate a family. If your husband should die, you can raise your children.

But he got very upset when I kept on going to school and he asked me one time, did I plan to be a professional student?

Most of the women we interviewed who went to college lived at home.

The sense of the dangers presented to daughters by the world was part of the reason the high school women thought their parents would not let them attend colleges away from home, but they also saw the strong sense of family, their parents desire to have them home as a major factor in their decisions about college.

My mother trusts me a lot now. I don't think it's the fact of drugs or anything like that. I think she just is too scared to let go. You know it will be the first time that the kids will have left home like that for her. My brother left and she didn't like it. He graduated from college, and he was going to work and she didn't like it. He moved away from the state. . . . He has been living away for about three or four years and she has never gotten this idea. . . . It used to make her sick at nights. And he's twenty-six--twenty-seven. It's not the fact that I'm a girl and I'm seventeen. I realize that. I always thought it was because I was a girl and that she never trusted me. It wasn't that. It makes her sick, because of the way they were brought up in the old country. Families lived together and they see each other constantly. I have a huge family. Like, my father has ten brothers and sisters. They, constantly, every weekend, they're always together. They have the best times together.

The control that parents try to exercise over their children's lives is obvious in the following discussion among the high school students.

My mother still tells me nice girls don't go out.

Does that mean go out on dates? [me]

Yes--no, to tell you the truth, that means everything--even if you go out with friends.

To me it meant you don't go out of the house [me].

Exactly. (general agreement)

In some cases, mothers would intervene on behalf of their daughters.

Speaking of her mother's role, another woman recalled her adolescence.

She was responsible for me and my sister having a life. . . . My father had one answer for everything--no--that was it, we didn't discuss it--no. . . . I was quite old before I would realize the process. The process would be, I would go to my mother and ask her--can I go to the dance and she would always say, ask your father. She would defer to him always. I would say to her, you know he's going to say no. She would say, ask him. So, I would ask him and he'd say no because I would come back and I'd cry and carry on and she'd say, well maybe he'll change his mind. Always, the next day he'd have a change of mind. It took me years before I realized that my mother would sit up with him all night quietly. It was my mother. It was always that way. She never, never took credit for it.

Another woman remembered the process in her home rather differently.

My mother could influence him, but she could never stand up to him and say--you go. The same with my mother. She would say, ask your father. Occasionally she would say, 'Why don't you let them go.' She deferred to him. He said--no--you can't go. I don't think she really wanted us to go either. I must have been in college. I would sometimes go out without asking them. I came home one night from a date. He hadn't slept well. He asked me, 'Oor manatzer?' I translate it, where did you get left? I didn't go and get left any place.

This sense of the world as a fearful place seems to have kept many Armenian women from leaving their parents' home until they married. If they didn't marry, leaving home was a difficult process.

I was in my late twenties when I finally left home. After high school I went into the secretarial field. I started to work for M_____ in S_____. I was with them about nine years when they centralized in S_____ and offered . . . the opportunity to move. I didn't go with the first batch, but I had worked for several men and their families had moved out there. One October I took a vacation with a friend and went to C_____ and C_____ to visit people and we stopped in S_____. When I arrived two of the men I had worked for had secretaries that were pregnant and would be leaving in a year. And I just took to S_____. They were sort of teasing me and asking if I'd like my old job back. And I said yes. What amazed me was that I realized that I could make decisions for myself being twelve hundred miles away from home. And all the way home I just has to psych myself up that I was going to inform my

parents. I was all they had. I was my mother's fourth child and the only one to survive. . . . So I was their whole life, so for me to come home and announce. . . . I was now twenty-eight and I was going to move to S_____.

With some daughters there is an ambivalence in their parents' view of their ability to take care of themselves. A woman in her early forties related a conversation with her father.

My father, in his old age, is standing there and his eyes are filled . . . and he says, 'What are you going to do when we die? Who is going to take care of you?' And he was so sincere, so overwhelmed by the possibility, that I reached out to touch him. I almost had tears in my eyes myself. It's going to be all right Pa, I've taken care of myself all these years. Before I can get the words out of my mouth he says to me, 'But you're the strong one. You have to take care of the others.' I said, 'Now you wait a minute. You make up your mind whether I'm going to be pitiful or I'm going to be strong. I can't be both.'

As indicated in some of the comments about going away to college, some of the fears that parents have about their daughters have to do with sexuality. In response to my question about different ground rules for boys and girls the following discussion took place:

Yes. For one simple reason. Girls get pregnant and boys don't.

That's only sex.

They push you, but they want that discipline. They'll go just to defy you . . .

Do you really think ground rules are different for girls and boys?

It goes right back to sex. The male has power, physical strength to take care of himself . . .

I don't go along with it now. I would thirty or forty years ago, but not today.

Absolutely not. For neither.

You can tell them up to a certain point, then . . . it's up to her. If they have been taught the consequences and can handle the consequences . . .

I'm not talking promiscuity.

They have to know and respect their bodies and know it's theirs.

They don't know right from wrong.

When are they going to learn right from wrong? I wouldn't say, okay, go sleep with M_____.

I wouldn't allow my son to take an apartment and take her daughter. . . . I wouldn't allow that.

I wouldn't say to my daughter, come home home at eight and say to my son, come home at ten. They can go to bed at eight as well as ten.

There was also some disagreement about this issue in another group. One woman described her reaction when her son asked her how she would feel if he moved in with his lover.

My oldest boy, he's twenty-four, he met this Jewish girl at the bank where he works. He called me to ask how I would feel about his living with E_____. I have no qualms on moral grounds, but told him about losing his freedom, etc. . . . They live together now. It makes no difference to me. . . . I would feel the same way about my daughter.

I would be very upset if my daughter lived with a man. I would be upset for my son too.

I think my daughters are very precious and it's a very precious gift to give a man--to give yourself. I wouldn't want them to jump into anything. I wouldn't hurt a marriage choice not to live together.

All of the groups spent some time discussing the preference of male over female children.

Uncle Joe always talked about his sons. He ridiculed his brothers for having daughters. When he was an old man he told me it was not lucky to have sons, because he was alone. . . . But he crowed like a rooster every time he had a son. He said it to me because I have three sons.

My mother always loved boys. She never had any, and she has four grandsons and two granddaughters. She never gave two hoots for the poor girls, but boys, oh she doted on the boys.

There was very little discussion about whether they wanted their children to marry. It was hoped that they would and that they would have children. Most women in the Boston area groups were positive towards the institution of marriage, even though they might have expressed some problems in their lives. Only the women in the Amherst group were critical of the institution.

There was also little discussion about the importance of religion. It was assumed that good parents should take their children to the Armenian church, and the overwhelming majority of women were active church members. But a few were disturbed that the Armenian church is so male dominated.

I had the gall when a group from St. Stevens were here . . . to talk about Armenian women in the church. They didn't have a woman trustee then . . .

Our church is very male dominated.

I love going to church, but it's hard.

The church is all male oriented and it bothers me terribly.

The men make all the decisions about the programs without consulting the women.

The church holds the community together, but it is very male dominated.

Most of the women could care less.

The professional women agreed with this characterization of the Armenian church.

I have not sent my children to the Armenian church because I feel very strongly that the Armenian church is anti-feminist.

My experiences as the single female member of the parish council of the Armenian church would fill two and a half tapes. We don't even want to talk about it. There is no disagreement here. But I love

the church. I sing in the choir. I love the music. I separate those things.

I separate it too, but I don't know if my daughters can.

Work and Career

When I graduated from college I wanted to be a lawyer . . . and then I thought it was a very unfeminine thing to do. I didn't want to be a woman lawyer, and so--going for a masters degree was less of commitment.

I'm a senior in high school and I don't know what I want to do. I'm going to college next year. . . . Once I make up my mind nothing's going to stop me . . . no man is going to stop me.

Except for the professional women and the high school women, the issue of work and career was not a major focus of the discussions. However, although most of the women in the Boston area groups consider themselves primarily homemakers and mothers, some of them have worked for many years and never thought of giving up their professions. The professional women and the high school women focused most heavily on their career goals. All but one of the high school women intend to have professional careers.

I want to be a legal secretary. I don't want to be just a housewife. I can work part-time and be a housewife. I want to be a lawyer--but the money--we can't afford it. We just came here four years. I want to be a legal secretary so I can go to school.

I like to major in computer science . . . but again, before going to college this summer my mother will teach me everything. . . . In the future I might not have time.

I want to go into management. After I finish school, find a job and get married, hopefully.

Our parents became just housewives. I want to be more than high school education. I want to make money to help my husband. My mother works in the hospital. . . . I want to be professional. My mother tells me she doesn't want me to be like her. She thinks

she's unlucky. She got married when she was seventeen. She had me when she was eighteen.

My father wants me to have a career.

Our parents are like that. Armenians encourage us. They did not have much education because there were private schools and they did not have the money.

The discussion of career goals with the group of immigrant high school women who had been in this country for six years or more began by most of the young women saying that they wanted a career. When I asked if they thought they might encounter any problems as women, I received the following responses:

By the time we graduate from college. . . . There should be no difference between you and a guy. You can do anything you want. It's going to be easier by the time we get to the point when we're going to look for a job.

People make too much of a big deal out of it. Because, I mean, if you're good enough they're going to take you. It's not that bad. Everybody makes the biggest deal out of it and then, women, they turn around and they want it easy, just because they're women. They use it as an excuse. And there is no excuse. The excuse is themselves. If you want a job, go out and earn it. If you're good enough, you're going to get it. . . . There are exceptions . . . but there are bosses that will give jobs to women. It's ridiculous. It all equals out in the end.

I know it's not exactly the same, but if you want something bad enough, you're going to get it.

The older women complained that they did not have the kind of advice which would have helped them to make intelligent career choices when they were young women, or even when they were in their mid twenties.

What I didn't realize was that even in law, all the experience that I've had is not a waste. I really could have done it and I regret that I didn't talk to somebody about it at the time. . . . I would have made a great trial lawyer.

She attributed her initial choice of career to financial necessity. She had been a legal secretary. She married, got pregnant and quit her job when her child was born. But the marriage dissolved before her son was a year old.

I was on my own--had to come back to my family--and I was also penniless. And I think that part made a tremendous impact in terms of my motivation for what I wanted to do with my life from that point on. I mean, I wanted financial security for myself and emotional security and a home for my child. So those are pretty strong motivating forces. Someone says what do you want to do. I did not know what I wanted to do. I just wanted to earn a really good living and provide really well for my child and the question of whether or not you liked what you did or how hard you worked--these were really secondary questions.

Despite her need for work and her lack of a college education, she had a strong sense of herself as a professional woman.

When I went to interview at the S_____ Company, they had this position open and I went to interview, I thought, with the president of the company. And immediately they asked me to take a typing test. I smiled and said I already knew how to type. And she said, 'everyone takes the typing test.' I said, 'Yes, I know, I have an appointment with Mr. _____.' But she said, 'You have to take this typing test.' She said there was also a personality and an achievement test of some kind that you were supposed to take. She came to me with all of these. I said, 'Look,' I said, 'I don't even know if I want this job yet and,' I said, 'until I have the opportunity to speak to Mr. W_____ and determine whether I want the job or not, then I'll be happy to look at the tests . . .'. The president of the company came out and asked me to take the personality test. I took that test and I learned three years later when I went into management that I came out on that profile as the most aggressive person that they had ever interviewed. My profile went right off the page. Now, you can tell from the study of those things what kind of mood I was in when I took the test. That was my start at the S_____ Company. They hired me without my ever having met Mr. _____ at the S_____ Company. They hired me without my ever having met Mr. N_____. They wanted to hire me and I said I wouldn't do that. But the Vice President said, 'I already talked to Mr. N_____ and he said you would do fine.' I said, 'Yes,' I said, 'but I haven't met him and I don't know if he'll do fine.' You have to understand when I talk about this now it seems strange, but none of that seemed strange to me at all. I thought that was entirely

appropriate and I still do. And that was a long time ago. And I thought it was entirely appropriate then.

She attributed this strong sense of self to her upbringing.

That's the way I was raised. In my family a person is supposed to have dignity as an individual and you have rights as an individual. And I think you are expected to respect others and they are expected to respect you. And the fact that you are an employee doesn't mean that they are buying you. It's a service that you are providing. . . . You're not a servant because you're working for somebody.

Another woman attributed her decision to pursue an academic career to be the result of her experience at the Radcliffe Institute.

It was the first time in my life that I was with a group of professionally oriented women. Now, you can imagine, I didn't have a Ph.D., I hadn't been in school for X number of years and it was a very benovolent and very nice atmosphere. But, of course, I felt a little uncomfortable. . . . I was craving for intellectual conversation when I was raising the kids and I was very angry that in Belmont, knowing that the women I was in touch with were intelligent women, college graduates. I couldn't get an intellectual conversation started. I finally analyzed why. Number one, they weren't used to discussing what they did on a volunteer basis in a way that, you know, for conversation. They were just used to doing it. . . . They weren't used to being articulate about themselves and what they were doing. It's at the time of the Radcliffe Institute that I realized I wanted professional training. Also I had to earn a living . . . and I decided that this was what I wanted to do . . . to be able to combine two things; to do something intellectually challenging and forever rewarding and something that had to do with your heritage. . . . That was the motivation. I realized that whatever I did had to be intellectually challenging.

Summary

For the Boston area women, the Armenian church and community was a backdrop to our discussions. Women did not raise issues in these areas, it seemed to me, because they are so much a part of the fabric of their lives. While there were a few complaints about male dominance in the church, there was no controversy over the value of the Armenian church

to one's life and the lives of one's children. Only one woman did not take her children to church because she felt it was anti-feminist. Similarly, the importance of the Armenian community was not raised as an issue. It was a part of their lives--they are the Armenian community. The issue of whether or not to be a part of the Armenian community was raised only by the high school women who disagreed with each other about whether or not one should associate exclusively with kin and/or other Armenians or have "American" friends. The importance of maintaining the language and encouraging children to learn it were also givens. Some of these women were probably responsible for the fact that Armenian is taught as a foreign language in three Boston area high schools. The value of visiting and taking one's children to Armenia was also accepted without question and many of the women in our sessions as well as their children had, indeed, been there and some were planning second trips.

There were, however, other issues over which there was substantive disagreement. While the institution of marriage was not seriously questioned, there was a wide range of opinion about the proper role of women as wives. Although only a woman in her seventies expressed the opinion that women should be totally subservient to their husbands, other women indicated in other ways that they subscribed to traditional male/female relationships. Most of the married women automatically quit their jobs when they married or had children, although some did return to work after their children were in school. Some of these women were content to be at home with their families and strongly criticized women who worked; others complained about their loss of freedom and the lack of

support for women with children in our society. This discussion, among women in their forties, was very much like that of non-Armenian women who became mothers in the 1950s. Yet, few of these women expected husbands to share in childrearing or housework. Among the professional women, there was strong disagreement over husbands' careers taking precedence over wives' careers. Two of the women felt that there was no question that their careers should take a back seat, but one woman felt strongly that there ought to be, at the very least, some discussion of whose career should have primary importance at various points. All agreed that this was a very difficult issue. The women in the Amherst group were the only ones who had substantial criticisms of marriage as an institution, and two of the women had made the choice not to marry and another, in her late forties, only married two years ago and is not sure she made the right choice.

There was agreement on the value of education generally, and that daughters deserved as much education as sons. This was not the view that most of the adult women's parents held however. Many women felt that when they were growing up it was the tradition in Armenian families to give preference to the education of sons. One woman in her forties recalled that she and her sister were expected to get jobs after high school to help put their brother through college. Other women felt that their education was as highly valued as their brothers'. While there was little disagreement over the hope that daughters would have careers, there was controversy over premarital sex for both female and, in some cases, male children; the majority of the women holding the traditional

view that women should remain chaste until marriage and the minority accepting sexuality as a healthy part of their children's lives whether or not they were married. The issue of parents' attitudes about relating to the opposite sex was fairly clearcut for the high school women. Most of their parents did not allow them to go out on dates, and while they did want them to go to college, not one of them was permitted to consider going away to school. Some of them accepted their parents' decisions, and others felt frustrated by what they viewed as an overly restrictive attitude.

In both the discussions with older women about their adolescent and young adult years and the sessions with the high school women there was a strong sense of parents wanting to control the lives of their children, males as well as females. It seems that parents were anxious to keep their children at home as much as possible. Only two of the adult women who had been to college lived away from home, and one came home every weekend to play the organ at church. Most of the older women left their parents' homes only when they married. For the few women who did not marry, the decision to live on their own came late and with difficulty. Yet, there are exceptions here too. One of the women left home at nineteen to pursue a career as a designer and did not marry until she was forty. Another woman emigrated alone to this country from Lebanon when she was in her mid twenties.

Except for some of the women in the professional group and the women in the Amherst group, none of whom had children, most women did not think of themselves primarily as career women, but those who did had

a strong sense of themselves as competent, even exceptional, in their professions. They attributed this strong sense of self to the influence of the parents, particularly the models of strong women provided by their mothers, although none of their mothers had been professional women.

In each of the discussions with the adult women there were some women who talked about their mothers as strong women, while others felt that their mothers were submissive. Yet, the majority of women felt that even if the women in their families were strong, they deferred to males. Focusing on the phenomenon of women who have a strong sense of themselves deferring to males, the Amherst group made a distinction between strength and power, attributing strength to the women and power to the men. They saw the women as strong only within the parameters of the highly patriarchal traditions of Armenian culture.

The sense of Armenian heritage and pride in Armenian culture and history was seen by some women as the main reason they had never had the feeling of being "other" in their contacts with the dominant culture. One group did not even respond to my question about problems they had relating to American culture. One woman in the Amherst group, however, related experiencing discrimination from her peers as well as her teachers in high school, and the high school students experienced verbal and physical abuse from "American" students. The Armenian teacher worried about the ability of her immigrant students to negotiate what she described as the two worlds of home and family and the American environment of school and work. One of the older women, again from the Amherst

group, felt she suffered psychologically from living within this dichotomy.

Certainly one of the things that would make Armenians feel "different" is the experience of the genocide, but not all women were willing to discuss its effects. While the genocide came up in every discussion because it was part of the childhoods of the adult women whether or not they were themselves children of survivors, one group flatly refused to focus on what it meant to them. In other groups, some women attributed their mothers' strength to having survived the genocide and its aftermath. Those women who were willing to discuss the effect of the genocide on their lives felt it was either a burden to hear stories of massacres and/or that it gave them a sense of purpose in life, a feeling that they had a mission to let the world know who they were--that they were Armenians.

While there were many differences among the women and some points of heated controversy, there was one thing that was the same for all the groups. They all continued long past the allotted time and most of us felt that we had only begun a conversation that was long overdue. Although most of the women indicated that they had not thought much about being Armenian women before coming to the session, all the discussions remained focused on women's issues without direction from the project team. There was a sense in all the groups that the women deeply appreciated the opportunity to discuss their lives as women with other Armenian women. Women in the adult groups expressed the desire to meet again to continue the discussion, despite the fact that most of the

women in the Boston area groups know each other very well and see each other quite frequently. The Amherst group is, in fact, going to meet again. One had the feeling that having had the opportunity to think about themselves as women and share their concerns as women with other Armenian women had been an important experience.

In many ways this project is the first word on Armenian-American women. It is a conversation that needs to be continued.

