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CREATIVITY AND LIBERATION: A STUDY OF WOMEN
WRITERS AND ARTISTS

A Dissertation Presented
by
MARY CLARE POWELL

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

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

February 1992

School of Education

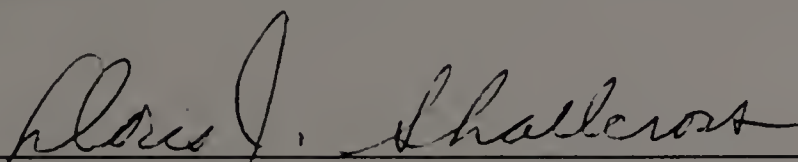
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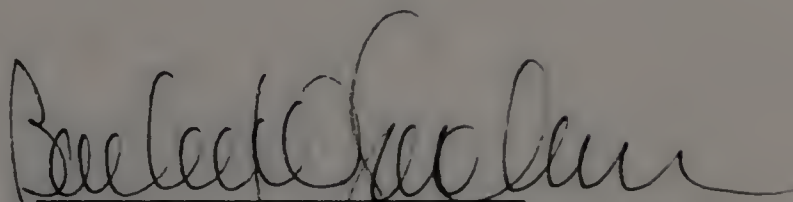
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A piece of work that builds for three years and then takes another one and a half to create is never solitary. I've done the research and writing, but the other people have contributed in so many ways to the endeavor. I'm grateful.

Thank you to the women artists and writers who shared their lives and work with me. I appreciate your openness, generosity, and belief in what I am doing. I offer that back to you in this paper.

Thanks to my committee, Doris Shallcross, Lee Edwards and Bailey Jackson, for their good feedback, encouragement and general well wishing. Special thanks to Doris Shallcross, an amazing facilitator, who kept me on track, was always there for support, and opened lots of doors for me.

And special thanks to Bett Farber, for careful reading and excellent questions; to Annie Cheatham, for always standing by; to Ron Baer, Teddy Grady, and Sheila Pepe for thoughtfully reading and responding to my draft; and most especially to Violet Walker, for living beside me while I

went through the whole process--for her time, her good cheer, her belief that this work was worth doing, her advice, her love. And to my mother Ruth Powell, for her financial support and her parental pride and pleasure.

ABSTRACT

CREATIVITY AND LIBERATION: A STUDY OF WOMEN
WRITERS AND ARTISTS

FEBRUARY 1992

MARY CLARE POWELL, B.S. TOWSON STATE UNIVERSITY

M.L.A. JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

ED.D. UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

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The dissertation proposes a new model of the artist in society--the artist-educator. This model is explored by investigating the lives and work of ten women artists and writers, who are accomplished and innovative creators as well as facilitators of the creativity of others, especially individuals and groups considered marginal by our society.

These artists represent a new model of the artist-educator because of (1) how they view the creative process, (2) their social/political vision, (3) their approaches to teaching, and (4) the force of their impact on others. First, they view the creative process as one which calls for boundary breaking; i.e., taking down distinctions between one's art and one's life, between the uses and functions of various art media, between themselves and other artists, between artists and their audiences.

These artists have a social vision: they see themselves as part of a larger whole, a diverse society, and at the

same time, they see themselves as artists somewhere near the edge of their particular artistic or literary worlds, not in the mainstream. They also see themselves as change agents who use their art as a means of transformation.

In their teaching and facilitating work they are committed to cultural diversity and intend to call forth the voices of those not previously heard from. They tend to believe that everyone is creative, and to assume that one's creativity is linked to one's wholeness and development as a person. They facilitate creativity in women in prison, people in nursing homes, persons with AIDS, the old, the homeless, drug and alcohol abusing teenagers, mentally retarded adults, and others.

As artists and educators equally, they represent a new paradigm for who the artist in society might be, and they require that we broaden out the definition of creativity beyond a mysterious process which only a few geniuses and artists possess. The artist is to be among us, because we are all capable of creating, all able to speak in the voices of our diverse cultural groups.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xi
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose of This Study.....	1
Formative Experiences.....	3
Reading.....	6
Formulation of Thesis.....	8
Work With Women.....	9
A Continuum.....	12
Conclusion.....	14
2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	16
Creativity and the Self.....	16
Women and Creativity.....	19
Woman/Artist.....	25
Conditions Facilitating Creativity.....	29
Creativity and Autonomy.....	31
3 METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES.....	37
Definitions.....	37
Subjects.....	40
Methods of Research.....	43
4 THE SUBJECTS.....	46
Pat Schneider.....	47
M.C. Richards.....	49
Margaret Robison.....	51
Pauline Oliveros.....	53
Genny Lim.....	56
Liz Lerman and The Dance Exchange.....	58
Gloria Anzaldua.....	61
Deborah Kruger.....	63
Bonnie Sherk.....	65
Kathy Jackson and Maryat Lee.....	68
5 THE NATURE OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS.....	71
Defining Creativity.....	72
Art and Life.....	75

	Women's Oppression and the Creative Process.....	84
	Authenticity and Creativity.....	92
	Artmaking As Creating the Self.....	99
	Breaking Boundaries.....	104
	Media.....	104
	Collaboration.....	113
	Artist and Audience.....	122
6	THE ARTIST IN SOCIETY.....	127
	The Social Vision of These Artists.....	127
	Part of the Whole.....	129
	From the Periphery.....	132
	The Artist as Change Agent.....	138
	The Artist in Society.....	146
7	THE ARTIST-EDUCATOR.....	152
	Social Oppression and Creativity.....	153
	Liberation and Creativity.....	155
	Examples of Teaching Work.....	158
	Deborah Kruger-- No Limits for Women Artists.....	158
	Pat Schneider-- Chicopee Writing Workshop.....	160
	Liz Lerman and the Dance Exchange.....	165
	Genny Lim-- Multicultural Theater.....	171
	M.C. Richards-- Clay, Community, and Creativity.....	176
	Maryat Lee and Kathy Jackson-- Ecotheater.....	180
	Common Threads.....	184
	Characteristics.....	184
	Assumptions.....	186
	Methods.....	188
	Artmaking As Social Change Work.....	191
8	THE DEVELOPMENT OF VOICE.....	197
	Art and Artmaking.....	197
	Silences.....	199
	The Development of Voice.....	201
	Impact on Others.....	204
	Healing.....	204
	Empowering.....	207
	Giving Access.....	212

Building Community.....	217
Conclusions.....	219
9 THE ARTIST AS RAINMAKER.....	221
The Function of the Artist in Society.....	221
The Artist in Society: An Alternative.....	225
The Artist-Educator at Work.....	226
Creativity Redefined.....	230
The Artist as Rainmaker.....	233
APPENDICES	
A. COPY OF RELEASE FORM SIGNED BY SUBJECTS.....	236
B. QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN INTERVIEWS.....	237
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	240

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1 "Sitting Still I," Performance Art by Bonnie Sherk, 1970.....	79
2 "Living in the Forest," Performance Art by Bonnie Sherk, 1973.....	80
3 <u>Variety</u> Article about Maryat Lee's Play "Dope!".....	83
4 "A Sea of Cabbages," Poem by Gloria Anzaldua. (<u>Borderlands/La Frontera</u> , pg. 132).....	88
5 "Tribe of Dina," Installation by Deborah Kruger.....	91
6 "The Only Language She Knows," Poem by Genny Lim. (<u>Winter Place</u> , pg. 52).....	93
7 "Grandmother," Poem by Genny Lim. (<u>Winter Place</u> , pg. 16).....	94
8 Kathy Jackson as John Henry in an Ecotheater Production.....	101
9 Drawing of Pauline Oliveros in Performance by Mary Clare Powell.....	107
10 "To live in the Borderlands means you," Poem by Gloria Anzaldua. (<u>Borderlands /</u> <u>La Frontera</u> , pg. 194.).....	111
11 Dance Exchange Community Programs.....	112
12 Dance Exchange Description of Solos.....	114
13 Dance Exchange Description of Dances.....	115
14 Maryat Lee, Founder of Ecotheater.....	121
15 M.C. Richards, Potter, Poet, Teacher.....	133
16 Pauline Oliveros.....	135
17 Liz Lerman With Dancers of the Third Age.....	140

18	Description and Sketch of A Living Library (A.L.L.) by Bonnie Sherk.....	145
19	Article about Deborah Kruger.....	148
20	M.C. Richards with The Seven I Am's. (<u>Towards MC</u> , pg. 17).....	150
21	"In a Room in Chicopee Women Write About Their Lives," poem by Pat Schneider. (<u>White River Junction</u> , pg. 14).....	163
22	Dance Exchange, Community Classes Schedule.....	168
23	Poets in the Galleries Newsletter. (Genny Lim).....	173
24	Poets in the Galleries Newsletter, Poems by Children.(Genny Lim).....	174
25	"To Break Silence," Poem by Pat Schneider (<u>White River Junction</u> , pg. 4).....	194
26	"Nostalgia," Poem by Genny Lim. (<u>Winter Place</u> , pg. 9).....	202
27	"Here, In This Room In This Prison," Poem by Margaret Robison. (<u>The World Split Open</u> , introduction).....	206
28	Front Cover of <u>Po-What?</u> , Publication by Margaret Robison.....	213
29	Poems by Children of Donahue School, Holyoke, MA. (<u>Po-What?</u> , pg. 103).....	214
30	Photograph of Children With Elder in Nursing Home.(Margaret Robison's Poetry Class in <u>Po-What?</u> , pg. 30).....	215

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

What if people are endowed with extraordinary gifts, but all access to them is miseducated out of them? What if it is now the calling of artists--in return for those high flying moments--to draw their fellows into the dance instead of leaving them to sit stuffed on the sidelines in their endless misery with glassy admiring eyes? The sense of connectedness and equality with humankind, we all need and are deeply missing. It once was possible through artists who, perhaps alone, are people who can inspire, enable, stir creativity, pull the 'other' into this real world, give them power, discipline and guide their early clumsy efforts.

Maryat Lee, Ecotheater
Letter, March 20, 1987

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to broaden and deepen understandings about human creativity, and to propose a new model of the artist in society, by focusing on the lives and work of ten creative artists. These are women deeply committed to artmaking in one field or another, talented and accomplished artists, but also facilitators of creativity in others, often disadvantaged others. These are artists who do not fit the Romantic idea we have of the artist--the isolated, self-absorbed, special being who generates art products out of himself. They offer an alternative view of the artist--a person of spirit, deeply engaged within her society, offering both herself and others the opportunity to create.

The description of the work of these artists, and the picture of who the artist might be rests on two basic underlying beliefs about human creativity and social oppression.

It is my belief that creativity is inhibited by oppression. Oppressed people are those defined as Other by the dominant group in a society. In the case of United States culture, the dominant group is white, male, middle class or owning class, heterosexual, physically able, educated, young, Christian. Therefore oppressed people include women, poor people, people of color, disabled people, uneducated people, homosexuals, old people, non-Christian people. Such groups are inhibited in the manifestation of their creativity. Why? One characteristic of oppression is that the oppressed tend to internalize a picture of the self put forward by the oppressor, rather than one that is self-generated. Often this picture includes feelings of inferiority. The oppressed are therefore cut off from deep sources of their creativity, which lie within the self.

And it is also my belief that exercising one's creativity has the power to break into such oppression. It has the power to release the false picture, the old view of the self, to confront the authentic self, to heal, to empower into movement. To create has this power because, by its very nature, it is a process of saying "I," a process of

self acceptance and self affirmation. For a person to create out of the materials of her unique life, she must believe on some level that she "has something to say" that other people may find worth hearing. She must assume that she is entitled. This sense of entitlement is missing or weak in victims of oppression.

I am studying a group of artists who appear to make possible the liberating effects of the creative process for people who are oppressed by gender, race, age, sexual orientation, ethnic group, education, and socio-economic status.

Formative Experiences

The original source for these ideas about creativity and liberation came from my own life and work. I have reflected on the development of my creativity, both on the times when I failed to take myself seriously or to give myself what I needed to create, and on the times when I did. From reflection on my experiences, certain threads are clear.

In 1973, I took a year off to write poetry, took all my savings to live, and turned down the best teaching offer I'll probably ever get. I began with a month on the beach in Portugal, living cheaply in a pension, and literally writing all day. No traveling to Spain or North Africa, no reading except one novel every Sunday I was there. Writing

and rewriting was all. Now that was serious. I gave myself the time, the space, the money, and the materials for creating. Thread: I chose my own path, though it was an unconventional one, and I believed in myself enough to give myself what I needed to write.

Several years later, I was creating in the medium of black and white photography. I was also reading feminist literature, and hanging out with feminist artists. At this time, I began to use the raw materials of my own life as source for my work. No longer did making perfectly exposed negatives seem the thing I wanted to do. I knew how to make beautiful silver prints, but even the best of them seemed static. So I began to create sets of images, as if one image could not say it all. I began also to cull from my life experience as a woman, as a lesbian, as a tall and awkward teenager, as a social misfit--the subject matter for my photographs. I did endless variations on the self portrait. Often the material I brought up out of me was painful, embarrassing, and humiliating. It brought me face to face with some truth about myself that I'd never dared admit before, especially in public. Thread: I began to use personal material, which in the art world, was seen as too personal. I drew on my own sources.

At first I explored narratives created with images alone, and then words got folded back into the mix. I would make a set of images, and let them hang on my studio wall.

Then one day a set of words would come up from within, or from a dream, or the day's newspaper, and I would jam together that verbal narrative with my visual one.

Sometimes such sparks would fly! I began to see that not only did I have something to say, but that I had the power to say it in my own way. That I could create new worlds, new realities, just by juxtaposing unlike elements. I felt truly in charge of what I created. It was grounded in who I was, and seemed to speak with power to some others. Thread: I generated totally new forms of expression, original to me.

To self-publish my first book was to take myself even more seriously. I did fund raising to get the money for the book, a graphic designer friend taught me how to paste up the text, I worked directly with the printer selecting paper and type, and supervising the press run, so that the images were as good as we could make them. Then I distributed the book nationwide. What I learned from that experience was that if I had a word to put out, I didn't need to wait for some publisher to say OK. I knew how to put my word out.

During this same time I helped start a feminist artists group in Washington, DC. and we began to create our own exhibits. Each month one of us would select a show of her work, hang it in her studio or a borrowed one, and invite friends, critics, and each other to an "Evening." There was time to describe the origins, meanings, and issues in one's

creative process, time to see the work, time for feedback, reflection and fun. Instead of begging a gallery owner for a show, we took control of how our work would be seen.

Thread: I learned how to make my work visible in the world.

Finally, I did a major research project which took five years and culminated in a second book, This Way Daybreak Comes: Women's Values and the Future. Without institutional support or grant money, my partner and I traveled across North America interviewing almost 1000 women about the alternative social structures they were creating -- for families, for businesses, for political campaigns, for artmaking and peacemaking, for law practices, architecture, community building, spirituality. We listened and sifted and wrote. We named new ideas that were taking shape in real women's lives. We declared that their work, and ours, was important. Thread: I evaluated my own work and set standards that were my own. I named reality.

Reading

When I began to read women artists and writers about their process, I saw these same threads in their lives. When women artists and writers describe their process, they tell of continually confronting the voices in them that say they are not worthy, or talented enough. The voices say that a woman cannot be both a parent and an artist, that the

needs of others come first. These are deep-seated voices, these disbelieving voices, formed in us before we ever knew.

But also from these same source books, I heard women tell about the power of focusing on themselves, of telling their stories out as loudly and as truly as they could, of finding voices to speak in, of listening to each other and seeing commonalities, of naming themselves writers and artists. They record how often this liberation comes from turning inward to the very source of pain and powerlessness. How it involves embracing and loving oneself for the very reason one has been oppressed--race, sexual preference, gender, ethnic origin. Flying in the face of all that says we are not worthy, and risking saying "I am." "I am black, I am blind, I am poor, I am lesbian." I noted how when they told the deep truth of who they were, their work had a freshness and a power to move that were rare.

When I began my doctoral program, I began to read the canonical literature in creativity, and was struck with a contrast. What I had experienced about creativity seemed in a different realm from what I was reading. The study of creativity seemed firmly bound within psychology, with applications primarily for education. Artists were studied for the light their processes could throw on the creative experience, but their social roles were ignored. Tests to measure creativity often judged solely on the basis of how fast and how originally one could solve problems. Most of

the books and articles were written by men, involving studies of men. Creativity was certainly valued, seen as a common good, life-enhancing and broadening for the individual. But I found few studies which saw its political/social implications. I believed that what was life-enhancing for relatively privileged middle class people could be equally life-enhancing for those more severely disadvantaged, either by poverty, racism, homophobia, ageism, or sexism. And this understanding of creativity was thrilling to me. I did find a few researchers who saw correlations between creativity and healing, creativity and self-concept, creativity and gender role identification.

Formulation of Thesis

I put my experiences together with my reading in feminist literature, and I formulated this notion: The creative process, because it is at the heart an I-saying process, addresses internalized oppression (the belief of the oppressed in the picture of themselves put forward by the oppressor) by creating value where it was not seen before. It heals by exposure. One who creates is empowered by saying, "This is the way I see the world." To create affirms the self of each person, including the cultural, racial, class experience of that self--the person in her context. And individuals who create make visible other cultures to stand alongside the dominant culture. Creating

causes change to happen by making one visible in the world, in books, in public places. It functions to overthrow existing conditions and create radical change. In short, creativity addresses oppression, and can be a tool for overthrowing it.

Work With Women

At this point I met a group of women in a writing workshop who lived under multiple oppression: they were poor, uneducated, unskilled, welfare-dependent, some women of color. I saw my ideas being lived out in the lives of actual women, women on the survival level. In 1988 I was invited to do photographic portraits of these eight women living in housing projects in Chicopee, MA. The pictures were to be used in a book of their writing, In Our Own Voices, collected by their teacher, Pat Schneider. I agreed, and thus entered into relationships that were to focus my work on women and creativity, and reinforce my thesis about the liberating power of creativity. I also found some new friends and colleagues.

These eight women had participated in a writing workshop led by Pat Schneider, Director of Amherst Writers and Artists, for three previous summers. The fourth summer, after photographing them, I joined Pat in co-leading the workshop, adding drawing and photography to what we offered that summer. As I got to know the women, I came to see how

powerfully their lives had been changed by Pat's workshop, and I created a small research project to determine the impact of the workshop on their lives. I saw them getting GEDs (Graduate Equivalency Diplomas), applying to junior colleges or finishing A.A. (Associate of Arts) degrees and entering four year schools. I saw the journals they bought for their kids to write in. I heard them talk about getting out of the projects, getting off welfare, being writers, being proud, leading their neighbors in protests, tutoring illiterate friends, writing letters for other neighbors. I saw that releasing one's creativity had a positive impact on self image and that this touched other aspects of one's life.

About that same time I taught a course at the University of Massachusetts, "Women and Creativity." The first assignment was to tell our "creative autobiographies," accounts of our lives from the perspective of when we felt full, whole, powerful, at one; i.e., creative. The pattern I began to notice was that for many of these relatively privileged, white, educated women, a release of their creativity followed an experience of breakdown, break out, or break through. Some dramatic breaking of the pattern of a traditional woman in this culture freed her creativity. Sometimes it was mental breakdown, or physical--several told about being anorexic or bulimic. Some described overcoming drug and alcohol addiction. For some it was foreign travel,

or terminating an abusive domestic relationship. Some traveled to the other side of the continent for no apparent reason. Some left well-paying jobs to take time off. Sometimes the break came from from an outside intervention--an influential teacher or mentor. I saw that in many cases, creativity followed from a marked and profound shift in how a woman saw herself.

I realized that feminist writers had spoken of this phenomenon in various metaphors: Sonia Johnson calls it going out of our minds, Virginia Woolf calls it killing the angel in the house, Cherrie Moraga names it the quest for the self who has become the other, Paula Bennet describes it in terms of rage and images of Medusa in the work of women poets. It appears that for creativity to flower in women, and in other oppressed peoples as well, some definitive severing has to come about at some point. The conventional image of woman carried inside the mind and lived out in the life must be questioned and discarded so that a true notion of the self, with a history as it actually was, can emerge.

Pat Schneider provided this sort of break-in for the women in the Chicopee Writing Workshop, by creating a place of affirmation and support. She assumed that everyone can write, because everyone can use the language. She also assumed that everyone has engaging and moving stories to tell. The women found support from each other. They began to explore their lives, write their lives, heal their lives,

free their lives. Their sense of themselves changed, and they began to make moves to get out of poverty. They began to feel entitled.

Perhaps women who experience themselves as creators will begin to feel entitled. And this new sense of self will enable them to make positive decisions about their lives, and their children's lives. In women, creating is apparently related to autonomy, self confidence, and healing. Creativity can thus be seen as a political force, a liberation process.

A Continuum

The image of a continuum emerged in my mind. At one end are the Chicopee women -- second generation welfare recipients, single heads of households, raised in dysfunctional families, with incest, drug and alcohol abuse common. Most had their first children as teenagers, worked at factory and other nonskilled jobs, had dropped out of high school. These women are oppressed not only as women but as poor women, uneducated women, welfare-dependent women, some as disabled women and women of color. For these women, creating is not a luxury; creating helps them change their sense of self, and that helps them change their lives in practical ways.

Next on the continuum are women like me, my class members, other students I knew, or colleagues. Mostly

white, middle class, college educated, women of some privilege. These women struggle with binding relationships with men which seem to cripple their lives, making them self-destroying rather than self-creating, making them fearful of taking hold and taking risks. I see them giving themselves away for the nurturance of others, and not claiming the time, space and energy they need for themselves to thrive. They seem basically fearful of their own voices, their own power.

At the other end of my continuum are a few women artists I knew, who have claimed the time, money, energy and self focus it takes to create. They have achieved in their media, they are committed to artmaking in various forms-- theater, visual, dance, music, writing. They are recognized in their fields, though most have chosen a peripheral position in relation to the mainstream. They appear to share my view about the liberating and transforming power of creativity, though they might use different images and words to explain it.

These are artists whose work is not limited to the ordinary idea of the artist in society--the isolated, self-absorbed, special being who generates art products out of her unconscious. They have what I call a social vision: they see their creative work as political work, liberation work perhaps. To me, these artists, in the way they are living their lives and making art, are putting forward an

alternative paradigm about who the artist is. I began to see them as rainmakers.

Conclusion

An old Chinese story tells about a village that needed rain and how finally in desperation they hired a rainmaker. He came looking like everyone else, and for several days he lived in the small hut provided for him. He tended his garden, washed his rice bowl, walked and sat in the sun. And then one day it rained. They were pleased, they paid him, and he went away. Now this rainmaker didn't do anything to make it rain. He just lived his life. And around him the rain came.

These artists are rainmakers. Around them creativity happens, just by their living it. I invited some of these women to be my subjects for this paper so I could continue to investigate the creative process as a liberation process. In studying the work of these women artists, I noted their experiences of the creative process (Chapter Five), inquired about their social vision (Chapter Six) and sought to understand how they put the two together. I studied their teaching and facilitation methods (Chapter Seven), and noted their impact on others (Chapter Eight).

My conclusions support what I had come to believe about creativity: engaging in the creative process aids in the development of voice, and the development of voice

liberates, affirms, empowers, and makes forward movement possible. The creative process, as experienced in artmaking, is more than a psychological phenomenon, a high item on Maslow's self actualization hierarchy, a common good to be supported and nurtured as in gifted and talented programs in schools. It is more than a pasttime of the elite. It is a basic, radical and primary liberation activity. And because these artists are the ones who offer this possibility to others, they are the center of my study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In addition to the origins of my thesis previously described, there is another context out of which my ideas have come. The relevant literature for my work comes from the fields of creativity, feminism, and the writing of women artists and writers. A search of such literature shows the relationship of creativity to the sense of self, and how, in women in particular, socialization leads to a sense of self that does not foster creativity, and a sense of self that is often in conflict with the role of artist in this culture. In addition, the literature shows the relation of creativity to autonomy and self perception.

I have done most of my reading and research about women and their oppression, so my literature survey reflects that. However, I believe that the same dynamics described for women probably apply to people damaged by discrimination based on race, age, ethnic heritage, sexual orientation, disability, religion, education, or socio-economic status.

Creativity and the Self

Creating as a process rests on a certain sense of the self. Tillie Olsen describes it best: "...the will, the measureless store of belief in oneself to be able to come

to, cleave to, find the form for one's own life comprehensions." [1965, p. 27] I call it a sense of entitlement. And in many women that sense of the self is missing or damaged. George Kneller notes in The Art and Science of Creativity [1965] that the creative person has an inner confidence in the worth of his work, an ultimate faith in what is potential in him. Despite troubles, he is sustained by his faith in his creative process. He writes that educators must help young people have self knowledge-- that they are unique selves with unique destinies, who must cultivate an ability to think their own thoughts, not just try and be secure. I believe that this describes the ideal experience to nurture creativity. Erich Fromm [in Anderson, 1959] writes that the sense of self means means that one sees oneself as the true center of one's world and originator of one's acts. This, not discovering something new, is what it means to be original. One believes that experience originates in oneself.

Listen to these voices of male creators. (The emphases are mine.) W. A. Mozart: "When I am, as it were, completely myself, entirely alone and of good cheer...it is on such occasions that my ideas flow best and most abundantly." [Vernon, 1970, p. 55] Peter Illich Tchaikovsky: "I have learnt to master myself, and I am glad I have not followed in the steps of some of my Russian colleagues, who have no self confidence and are so impatient

that at the least difficulty they are ready to throw in the sponge. This is why, in spite of great gifts, they accomplish so little and that in an amateur way." [Vernon, 1970, p. 59] Stephen Spender, poet: "The faith of the poet is that if this vision is clearly stated it will be significant."...The poet's faith is therefore, firstly a mystique of vocation, secondarily a faith in his own truth, combined with his own devotion to a task. All one can do is to achieve nakedness, to be what one is with all one's faculties and perception, strengthened by all the skill which one can acquire, and to stand before the judgment of time." [Vernon, 1970, p. 74]

Liam Hudson in Contrary Imagination [1966] explores the causes of originality, and names the experience of entitlement as I conceive it. The characteristics of original thinkers are first persistence, or dedication to work. They are single-minded. Second is self-confidence, or adventurousness; they are "swashbucklers." Original thinkers are assured and self-reliant as adults, and often were as children. They are independent from external standards of value. They have ambition, predatoriness, and a propensity for being right. He wonders whether the "killer instinct" isn't a motivator for creators as well as for professional athletes, and sees the successful intellectual as a predator, not of flesh, but of new ideas.

Women and Creativity

Contrast these descriptions above with a description of women's conditioning. The classic description comes from Simone deBeauvoir in The Second Sex. [1952] She describes how the stages of childhood condition females for their later roles, illustrating her idea that a woman is not born, but made. Beginning with the "second weaning," the mother's body is withdrawn from the boy, but the girl continues to be cajoled and allowed to cling. Next comes discovering the genitals, with the boy's penis projecting free of the body, a natural plaything. Female genitals are invisible and therefore receive little attention. The boy has an organ he can see and grasp and at least partly identify with. He projects the mystery of his body and its threats outside of himself, enabling him to keep them at a distance. The girl, on the other hand, becomes concerned about everything that happens inside her in a kind of "diffuse apprehension." The boy's apprenticeship for life consists in free movement toward the outside world, playing rough and independent games. The girl is taught to please, and for that purpose she must make herself an object, and renounce autonomy. She is treated like a live doll. The less she exercises her freedom to grasp, discover and master the world about her, the fewer resources she finds within herself, and the less she dares affirm herself as subject. Everything the little girl hears and sees confirms the hierarchy of men over

women, and more and more she orients herself towards passivity. Her spontaneous surge toward life, her enjoyment of playing, laughing adventure, become restrained, often turning to nervousness. The strange experience is of an individual who feels autonomous discovering inferiority in herself as a fixed reality. This is what happens to the little girl when she understands what it means to be a woman in the world.

This was written almost 40 years ago, but contemporary psychological research [Block, 1984] still supports the notion that female socialization discourages career interests in women, and for those women with careers, advancement in status is most likely in those who diverge from the traditional feminine sex role stereotype. The socialization process for women tends to reinforce nurturant, docile, and submissive stances and to discourage self-assertiveness, achievement orientation, and independence, qualities defined as masculine.

Other contemporary research findings support this view of women's socialization, noting correlations between self trust and creativity. In a study [Earl, 1987] to clarify the variables operative in self trust (defined as faith in oneself to carry out a task), using as subjects high school students, emotionally disturbed teenage girls, and junior college students, the researcher found that in general self trust predicts creativity. In a related study of college

women [Daniels, 1984], the researcher noted that in general the women had trouble with risk taking, and had low scores on self strength (related to self trust), but that training in "creative perception" appeared to help address both these issues.

There have been several studies exploring connections between sex-role orientation and creativity. Milgram, Vitzhah, and Milgram [1977] found that children high on both masculine and feminine scales engaged in and excelled at a wide variety of creativity activities, but that sex-typed children (both masculine and feminine) were more restricted in their choice of creative activity, preferring only those which are seen as either masculine or feminine; i.e., sports and science for males, dance and music for females. Carter [1985] found that those students scoring higher on an androgyny scale also scored higher in tests of cognitive flexibility. He speculated that adherence to strict sex role typing constricts creativity. A high score on an androgyny scale could mean that the person feels free to go beyond the bounds of strict sex-role conditioning. Persons who score high on androgyny also appear to score high on creativity, perhaps for similar reasons: they are able to go beyond the boundaries.

Burch [1979] explored characteristics of women and their creativity and Swartz [1980] the barriers to women's creativity, self confidence being one of them. Phillips and

Hudgins [1974] investigated the correlation between rule-orientation, gender and creativity, concluding that because females are generally socialized to maneuver within more limited life space than males, that women will adhere to more efficient and economic methods of creative problem solving, rather than allowing themselves to use more divergent thinking.

Barbara Sang, an artist and therapist both, has worked with many female artists in therapy. In her article, "Women and the Creative Process," [1981] she comments on several recurring themes. One of the most common difficulties is for women artists to translate their desire to create into actual creativity. Many women are immobilized in their work because at some level they continue to believe that they don't have the right or privilege to create, creativity being a male domain, and nurturing and practical daily survival the female domain. These women expend great quantities of energies debating with themselves whether they have anything of value to say, and if they do speak, they worry that they are not capable of expressing it and wonder how it will be received. Fear of self-expression is often manifested by not providing themselves with the necessary tools, workspace, or time to create. She notes that the female socialization process does not help women create original work. Creativity requires risk, autonomy and

adventuresomeness and most women have been trained to value security, conformity, mediocrity, and social approval.

The relation between the self and creativity is seen vividly in three extreme examples: the self-hater, the un-self, and the selfless syndrome. The self-hater is named by Starhawk in Dreaming the Dark, [1982] as an inner representation of power over. It reminds us of our helplessness, powerlessness, and victim status. It tells us we are responsible for our situation, and we alone. In order to heal ourselves as self-haters, we must confront the self-hater, descend into its fear and terror. We can use ritual to do this, or a journey of breakdown, or breakthrough, as described by many of the women in my course. Sylvia Perrera in Descent to the Goddess [1981] uses the Sumerian myth of Inanna descending into the underworld to describe the healing power of breakdown and darkness in liberating contemporary women.

Nabaneeta Deb-Sen [in Schipper, 1984] describes her situation as a creative women writer in India. She says a woman writer in Calcutta with a piece published in a prominent literary journal would be told by her father to put an end to such nonsense. Her mother would explain why she was ruining any hope of a good marriage, her brother would tell her she had put him in an awkward situation. If she had a husband, he would be deeply unhappy and implore her to give up writing. Her children would ask why she

couldn't be a normal mother like all the others. And writing could only be possible when the last item on the list of duties had been crossed off. She reveals the heart of the matter: that a woman writer must express her "unself," meaning that she camouflages and disassembles her original thought.

Finally, psychotherapists Jeanne Lemkau and Carol Landau [1986] present the concept of the "selfless syndrome." This is a cluster of cognitive, affective and behavioral symptoms seen in many therapy clients who have followed cultural prescriptions to seek satisfaction via self-denial and fulfilling the needs of others. The goal in treatment is to manage whatever crisis has arisen and attempt to enhance the woman's awareness of how she views women, how she has responded to the pressures on women to be selfless and not selfish, and how the selfless stance is encouraged by familial and cultural forces that support and maintain the syndrome.

It is difficult enough to believe in one's self in order to create out of that self. But when the self is conditioned to deny the self, how can that self create anything? It seems hardly a matter of "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" as Linda Nochlin asks, and more a matter of "How Is It Possible That There Have Been Any Women Artists and Writers At All?"

Woman/Artist

In western culture, the arts are where creativity is thought to happen most; they are, in a way, the official repository of creativity, and artists, as opposed to ordinary people, are thought of as creative. As this body of literature shows, women don't easily fit into the prevailing notion of artist, at least the stereotype existing in the popular mind. In Old Mistresses, Parker and Pollock describe the antimony between the ideas of artist, on the one hand, and woman, on the other. "The term artist not only had become equated with masculinity and masculine sex roles--the Bohemian, for instance--but notions of greatness--'genius'--too had become the exclusive attribute of the male sex. Concurrently the term woman had become loaded with particular meanings. The phrase 'woman artist' does not describe an artist of the female sex, but a kind of artist that is distinct and clearly different from the great artist. The term 'woman,' superficially a label for one of two sexes, becomes synonymous with the social and psychological structures of 'femininity.'" [1981, p. 114]

Women artists and writers writing about their processes of creativity are primary sources for understanding the struggle of women who would also be artists. Gloria Anzaldua, Chicana writer, writes, "We are the wild beast inside the cage, because the dominant culture says we're the wild beast, we're the animals, we're the non-literary

center....Class has a lot to do with it. It's harder for a working-class writer to get her work out and published. And you have the added mental condition, internalized, that your language isn't good enough. That you're not good enough." In addition to race and class, ableism and ageism are other bars on the cage. [1989, p. 50]

And then, more subtle, is the impact of internalized oppression, the inner battle, the swing between despair and confidence that women artists and writers describe. Michelle Murray [in Sternberg, 1980] writes about how she alternates between great confidence in her work and killing depression. She tells how she wanted to become somebody, an artist entire, beginning with nothing. Her fantasy was to create herself from scratch through language only, to see her face without a mirror. She concludes that she has failed, naturally.

Nancy Mairs: "I gave up writing altogether and went mad in a homely way. I had got everything I wanted more than to write a book: the man of my dreams, and then a daughter for him, and then a fine job to put him through graduate school. I was twenty-three years old, poised, articulate, well-dressed, cultivated. And then one night in an Italian restaurant I stopped breathing. Agoraphobia." [1986, p. 101]

Poet Adrienne Rich lists some of the ways women writers destroy themselves. Self-trivialization is one.

Believing the lie that women are not capable of major creations. Not taking ourselves or our work seriously enough; always finding the needs of others more demanding than our own. "Being content to produce intellectual or artistic work in which we imitate men, in which we lie to ourselves and each other, in which we do not press to our fullest possibilities, to which we fail to give the attention and hard work we would give to a child or a lover." [1977, p. 122]

Celia Gilbert echoes the struggle of women in the domestic arena. "To give myself to my work--to admit that I loved it as much as husband and children, needed it as much, perhaps more, was the most terrifying admission I could make...the challenge of work is using the whole self in the struggle for growth." [Gilbert in Ruddick and Daniels, 1977, p. 318-19]

Adrienne Rich notes that

"For a poem to coalesce, for a character or an action to take shape, there has to be an imaginative transformation of reality which is in no way passive. And a certain freedom of the mind is needed--freedom to press on, to enter the currents of your thought like a glider pilot, knowing that your motion can be sustained, that the buoyancy of your attention will not be suddenly snatched away. Moreover, if the imagination is to transcend and transform experience it has to question, to challenge, to conceive of alternatives, perhaps to the very life you are living at that moment. You have to be free to play around with the notion that day might be night, love might be hate; nothing can be too sacred for the imagination to turn into its opposite or to call experimentally by another name. For writing is re-naming. ..But to be a female human being trying to fulfill traditional female

functions in a traditional way is in direct conflict with the subversive function of the imagination. [1977, p. 43]

Tillie Olsen named the key to the issue in this passage from Silences. "How much it takes to become a writer...the conviction as to the importance of what one has to say, one's right to say it. And the will, to find the form for one's life comprehensions." [1965, p. 27] This sense of entitlement lies at the heart of women's attitudes towards themselves and their creative work.

Two other writers affirm the centrality of it. Susan Griffin [in Sternberg, 1980] describes how she is certain before she begins writing that she will not be able to put sentences together, or that she has nothing to say. Then she must find the place in herself where her words have authority, some fresh words that speak with feeling, so she can make proof of authenticity just by her very telling.

And Gloria Anzaldua: "Why does writing seem so unnatural for me? I'll do anything to postpone it--empty the trash, answer the telephone. The voice recurs in me: Who am I, a poor Chicanita from the sticks, to think I could write? How dared I even consider becoming a writer as I stooped over the tomato field bending, bending under the hot sun, hands broadened and calloused, not fit to hold the quill, numbed into an animal stupor by the heat." [1981, p. 166]

Conditions Facilitating Creativity

Tillie Olsen said that every woman who writes is a survivor. We could broaden this to include every women who dances, acts, composes music, paints or sculpts. Those who find a way to create can survive. African-American writer Toni Cade Bambara [in Sternberg, 1980] sees writing as one way she participates in struggle. Her writing tries to celebrate the tradition of resistance, to tap Black potential, and to join the chorus of voices opposed to exploitation and misery.

But there is always the doubt. Louise Berkinow quoting Gertrude Stein applies here.

You write a book and while you write it you are ashamed for everyone must think you are a silly or a crazy one and yet you write it and you are ashamed, you know you will be laughed at or pitied by every one and you have a queer feeling and you are not very certain and you go on writing. Then someone says yes to it, to something you are liking, or doing or making and then never again can you have completely such a feeling of being afraid and ashamed that you had then when you were writing or liking the thing and not any one had said yes about the thing.

"Who will say yes?" asks Berkinow. [1980, p. 135]

Women need someone to say yes to the stories and perceptions they hold inside. Bettina Aptheker [1989] notes that we have not known how to begin from our center, our own experience, how to make ourselves as women the subjects of the act of knowing. But now we are beginning to write from our experiences as women without apology, and to build a literary and artistic tradition. Adrienne Rich writes in

"Toward A Women-Centered University," "What present day radical feminists have come to recognize is, that in order to become a force against elitism and exclusivity, we must learn to place each other and ourselves first, not to hinder other human beings but to tap the kinds of power and knowledge that exist--buried, disused, misnamed, sometimes misdirected--within women." [1977, pp. 133-34]

Women and other oppressed people must begin to write from their deep sources, named by Audre Lorde, black lesbian poet, as the erotic. The erotic is our source of power which has been vilified, abused and devalued, mis-used, mis-named, plasticized. It is deep and non-rational, a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings. It is a bridge between the spiritual and political. "In coming in touch with and creating out of the erotic, we give up numbness, suffering, self-negation, powerlessness and embrace that which is "female and self-affirming in the face of a racist, patriarchal and anti-erotic society." [1978, unpaginated]

Helene Cixous [in Ostriker, 1986] wrote that woman must write herself, must write about woman and must bring woman to writing. By her own movement, woman must put herself into the text.

It appears that writing, and possibly other forms of creative activity, has more of an impact on the self image of those creating when it happens with others, not in

isolation. A creative context can be the presence of others. Adrienne Rich [1979] notes that one powerful catalyst for the decade of the 1970's was the speaking of women with other women, telling secrets, comparing wounds, sharing words. This activity has broken many a silence and transformed the way we see. What does the company of other women provide? Louise Berkinow [1980] believes that woman friends help each other stand when the winds of culture try to blow them over or pull the ground out from under them.

Creativity and Autonomy

One's sense of self is clearly related to one's ability to create. Carolyn Heilbrun [1988] describes writing as an act of self creation, an awakening which can help women discover their real talents and selves. In an essay on "The Transformation of Privilege in the Work of Elena Poniatowska" Bell Gale Chevigny [in Kessler-Harris and McBrien, 1988] notes that Poniatowska, a radical Mexican novelist, saw that woman artists could help release the strength of women which has been buried, release it and convert the loss to gain.

Gloria Anzaldua notes that "For women of color, the subject has always been white and male. We're used to addressing white people. We never have the luxury of being subjects; we're always la otra, the other. In our writing [now] we speak to ourselves--mestizas, women of color, women

marginalized, not the white patron. We stop translating. We have been transmitting our culture to the dominant culture--explaining this and that. Now in our writing, we're not doing that. We're explaining it to ourselves."
[Trivia, 1989, p. 49]

Gisela Breitling in Feminist Aesthetics [1985] believes that when a woman writes down her unconscious fear and desires, she can actually free herself from them and begin to reconsider herself, her culture, and her society.

For women, to create is a healing act. As Mary Daly [1978] notes, the realm of healing is within the self. The task is to become, and the realm is a healing environment, which environment one can actually become. Gloria Orenstein [1985] describes how many women, creating in many different media, are reclaiming themselves both as artists and as healers. They are wresting healing away from medical professionals and returning it to the arts where it belongs. They function as women warriors, earth magicians, earth rescuers, vision-questers, resistance fighters, shamans, life-givers, life-birthers and harbingers of peace. The healer replaces the invalid as the hero of the new myth of the artist, and thereby connects women with many aspects of their ancient and original powers. In another article, Beverly Baer [1985] discusses the rehabilitative influence of art and the healing qualities of creative expression by focusing on the experience of an artist confined to a

wheelchair. She notes that visual experience can lead to a feeling of mastery vital to self-respect and well-being. This experience can lead to new perceptual and attitudinal windows on the world and serve to resolve stress, as well as enabling the person to cope and adapt to conditions necessitated by one's physical condition.

Women, taught to de-value women, must find in other women that which they can love. In this way they affirm and love themselves. Adrienne Rich claims "It is the lesbian in us who is creative, for the dutiful daughter of the fathers in us is only a hack.... It is the lesbian in every woman who is compelled by female energy, who gravitates toward strong woman, who seeks a literature that will express that energy and strength." And this is not simply two women going to bed together. "It was a sense of desiring oneself; above all, of choosing oneself (emphasis mine)..." [1979, pp. 200-201]

Writer Rita Mae Brown [in Myron and Bunch, 1975] describes it as seeing ourselves as prime, and finding our authentic centers inside ourselves. With that real self, she says, we can begin to end coercive identification and bring about maximum autonomy. It is what Georgia O'Keeffe [1976] described when she studied her paintings at one point in her career and concluded that now she could strip away what she had been taught and accept as true her own thinking. [O'Keeffe, 1976] Or Ntosake Shange's conclusion

of "For Colored Girls....," about finding God in herself and loving her fiercely. We go to the source of ourselves, as in the image Gloria Anzaldua brings from her mestiza heritage--the image of the Mayan underwater cave, a symbol of the reservoir of the writer. "Bushes and things are growing out of it, fish and animals live in the water. It is a sacred well into which objects were thrown. We have to somehow tap it--all the images, feelings and information we have inside." [Trivia, 1989, p. 37]

To write is to say "I." We establish our identity by discovering what we really think and feel, writes Anthony Storr in The Dynamics of Creation [1972]. Creative work is one way to do this. He recalls Aaron Copeland's idea about how each new creative work brings more self-discovery. One creates in order to know oneself, and each new work leads us to different answers.

For many women, to say "I" is powerfully new. For writer Joan Didion [in Sternberg, 1980] writing is the act of saying "I," imposing oneself on other people. One says, 'Listen to me, see it my way.' Setting words on paper, she wrote, is a writer's imposition on the private space of the reader.

The connection between women who feel autonomous and women who create has been well established in research. Ravenna Helson [1985] notes that an autonomous person expresses the self in creative activity, asserts her

independence, and feels her feelings. She offers herself and her creative product for admiration. This can consolidate an unclear identity. Sid Parnes [in Vernon, 1960] describes the outcomes of tests on students enrolled in a creative problem solving course: students in the course gained in a measure called dominance, which measures confidence, self-reliance, persuasiveness, initiative and leadership potential. He notes that dominance is a trait found in creative people. In a 21 year follow-up study [Rieger, 1983] about the predictive ability of the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking, results showed that the highly creative women subjects seemed to maintain a stronger sense of personal independence. They were more likely to be unmarried or divorced, to marry later, to have fewer children, to have advanced degrees and to be able to handle simultaneous career and family responsibilities.

In a study of personality characteristics of creative women, Louise Bachtold and Emmy Werner [1973] found that women artists tended to be aloof, intelligent, emotional, aggressive, adventurous, imaginative, radical and self-sufficient. In a study of the lives of women who became autonomous, Ravenna Helson, Valory Mitchell and Barbara Hart [1985] describe the autonomous woman as one with the capacity to acknowledge and cope with inner conflict, someone for whom self-fulfillment emerges as a salient goal, someone interested in psychological causation, some who

recognizes the limits of autonomy and cherishes personal ties, someone able to see objectively and from multiple perspectives, and someone open to the future. Elsa Gidlow in "The Spiritual Significance of the Self-Identified Woman" [1989] notes that the autonomous woman must choose to purge herself of false, debilitating images, must accept her erotic capabilities and her strength for creativity. She then discovers she is not auxiliary or partial, but whole and in herself, just like every person is born--whole.

I have detailed readings about the relation of creativity to the sense of self because the woman artists I am studying in this paper, in their personal creative artmaking, and in their work with others, demonstrate the processes I have just described. These women artists are making opportunity available, opening the possibilities of self revelation, self proclamation, and self transforming. They know, often from their own experiences with oppressive conditions, the power of one's sense of self to keep one from creating, and also the power of creating to change that self perception and to heal that self. Their work facilitating creativity in others convinces me that to create is to strengthen the self, the true self, and to create enables one to see one's power, efficacy, and worth in the world.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Definitions

Creativity: In a popular sense, creativity is understood as novelty or originality. Advertising agencies and businesses hire "creative" individuals, people with a lot of "fresh" ideas, and with the capability to generate new concepts. Creativity is often associated with facility at problem solving. In the literature on creativity, measurement of such abilities is often the focus: aspects of creativity are said to be fluency of ideas, ability to think both convergently and divergently, use of metaphor and symbol, a preference for complexity, a tolerance for ambiguity, and others. Creativity has also been tied to one's ability to link unlike concepts together, to deal with juxtaposition, and to have access to unconscious or preconscious materials. It is assumed that creativity is a human characteristic which varies in "amount" from person to person, is a generally assumed "good" quality to have, and is measurable.

For the purposes of this study, I am not defining creativity as any set of qualities. Rather, I am defining the creative process, by which one brings up material from inside the self, and forms it into a shape sharable with others. It is this process I am interested in: (1)

noticing what is inside which pushes for expression, (2) choosing a medium of expression in which to embody the inner ideas or perceptions, (3) fashioning the inner material (and other material drawn to it) in a conscious and deliberate way, working within the requirements and limits of the medium, into a (4) product which can be experienced by others.

This definition makes no distinction between creative products which are pronounced valuable by dominant cultural standards and those which are not, between those considered art and those considered something else. One can retrieve personal material, formulate and present it in an infinite variety of ways, with various results, and varying value placed on the product. My definition of creativity puts aside for now the question of value. It is based on the assumption that all people have perceptions, emotions, responses, ideas, and stories that are worth sharing with others. If there is value, it is on the truthfulness and honesty of the revelation, even more than on the skillful handling of the media. The value attributed to the product is not of chief concern here. Rather, it is the process the creators engage in.

Creativity is not a quality that some have and some don't. Because I am calling creative the process of bringing what is inside out in a form that can be shared with others, all people are creative. I am choosing to make

it this inclusive partly in reaction to how exclusive a term "creativity" has been. I am saying that one can be said to be creative if one is willing to find, form, and share the inner material. I am saying that originality is in some way a hallmark of creativity, but it is less about novelty than about the uniqueness of each person. I study creativity as a process of linkage to the self, as connected integrally to self-regard, based on a willingness to listen to the self. I study creativity as it takes place in the artmaking process because creativity is particularly visible in various art forms.

Oppression is defined as a system of domination of one group over other groups in a society, such that the oppressor group has the power to define and determine reality for the oppressed. It is an interlocking system consisting of ideology or sets of beliefs, acts of discrimination and harrassment against the subordinated groups, and institutions and traditions which maintain certain realities and practices. The oppressor group creates culture: history, language, norms and standards, myths and religions. All these aspects of social oppression occur on an external level, but the real nucleus lies inside individuals. This may be called internalized oppression, in which both the oppressed and the oppressors internalize the descriptions of reality and culture which serve to maintain oppression. The

picture of the self of an oppressed people is based on their conditioning in the oppressive society; it is essentially a false picture of the self.

Liberation is the process of freeing individuals and groups of oppressed peoples from ideas and values perpetuated by the dominant culture, enabling the free expression of the lives and culture of the oppressed, and pronouncing that expression legitimate. Liberation involves self-definition, speaking out of a valued self, being an equal participant in the formation of diverse human culture. The process of liberation thus takes place on an interior level (a change of consciousness) as well as on the level of changing institutions, practices, laws, and values.

Subjects

I invited sixteen women artists to participate in my study, and ended up studying ten. Some I had previously interviewed in 1983-84 for a book, others I knew the work of, but had not met personally. I chose them because their work interested me, and I believed it had an impact on others: it changed people and situations, it addressed human oppression. There seemed an integrity about them-- their work and their lives and their beliefs held together as some integral whole.

I chose artists working in a variety of media. I chose artists rather than people who facilitate creativity, like social workers or teachers. I also chose artists rather than critics or art historians. I wanted only practicing artists for my study, not researchers or thinkers. I wanted artists with an articulated social vision, who believed that artists had social/political efficacy and meaning. I wanted those who not only made their own work, but worked with others as well. Basically, I chose this group because their lives and work exemplify my ideas about creativity and human liberation.

I chose women because women are by definition oppressed, in patriarchy, and because all my work so far has been with women. I am committed to the freeing of gifts and power in all disadvantaged people, but my special focus is women. There are male artists doing work like I describe here, acting as leaven in the societal loaf, but I chose to focus on women's work. I believe that, being essentially Outsiders in patriarchy, women, whether through conditioning or genes or their bodies, tend to live and work with a different focus than men. Women, with less investment in maintaining things as they are, tend to develop different values than those in dominant culture.

I chose women of as many different ages, races, sexual preferences, ethnic backgrounds, and classes as possible. I invited half women of color, half white women, hoping to see

as broadly as I could what women's experience was. Several of the women I invited had to decline because of unavailability. So I decided to work with who I had even though it is not in any sense a representative sample of the various voices of women artists in this country at this time. I am sorry not to have more input from women of color for a personal reason: the writing of women of color like Audre Lorde, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Cherrie Moraga and bell hooks has guided me and named oppression for me most clearly since I began to read feminist literature many years ago. I assume that each woman here speaks only for herself. I do not assume that a Chicana woman represents all Chicanas, for example, only that she brings a different perspective from a white woman in a predominantly white culture.

The artists in the study are:

Gloria Anzaldua--writer, teacher. San Francisco.

M.C. Richards--potter, painter, writer, teacher.
Pennsylvania.

Kathy Jackson/Maryat Lee--Ecotheater--indigenous local theater. West Virginia.

Bonnie Sherk--performance and environmental artist. New York City.

Pat Schneider--writer, teacher. Amherst, MA.

Margaret Robison--writer, painter, teacher. Shelburne Falls, MA.

Genny Lim--playwright. San Francisco.

Liz Lerman/Dance Exchange--dancer, choreographer.
Washington, DC.

Pauline Oliveros--composer, performer, teacher.
Kingston, NY.

Deborah Kruger--visual artist, teacher. Montague, MA

Methods of Research

In spring 1990 I visited most of the artists in their homes or places of work. Two in California I interviewed over the phone. When I visited the artists, I often watched them work--teach or create or perform--as well. I asked each of them for written materials about her work--articles and papers, samples of work, resumes. Each interview lasted 2-3 hours, with observation beyond that. During the observation I made notes of her process and procedures, her impact on those she worked with, and my own subjective responses.

The interview questions were modified as I went along, but basically they covered these areas: what is your creative process? what is its connection with your being a woman? what is your social vision? what is your teaching? what impact do you think you have? A copy of the specific questions is in Appendix B.

After transcribing verbatim each tape, I sent a copy of the transcript to the artist, inviting comments and clarifications. I will also send each one a copy of my final paper, at least the parts about her, and offer a chance for correction and clarification.

These were my research questions:

1. What is their experience of the creative process?
 - A. How are art and life connected for each woman? What are the sources of her ideas and explorations? How has one's experience of oppression affected one's creativity?
 - B. How are boundaries between media breached, collaborations done, artist/audience dicotomies overcome?
 - C. What are images and metaphors they use for the creative process?
2. What is their social vision--as a group and as individuals?
 - A. How does their art work reflect their views of society?
 - B. How is spirituality connected to their creative process?
 - C. How do they see the role and function of the artist in society?
 - D. How does artmaking bring about social change?
3. What characterizes their teaching and facilitative work?
4. What is the impact of their work on other people?

The dissertation is a study of these women artists and their social vision, a vision which makes explicit connections between creativity and issues of oppression, and which reveals the liberating potential of participating in the creative process. The dissertation will provide, among other things, a new portrait of the "great artist." In our culture we have a myth of the great artist as one who creates in isolation, indulged and misunderstood, a slightly odd, mysterious being who generates out of himself powerful themes embodied in art materials. I propose another model for the "great artist," seen in the lives of artists like those in this study. Here, the great artist is one whose

creativity is so tied to the self, and therefore so available, that it flows out in her own products, and also spills over into the lives of others, who are encouraged to actively participate in the process. The great artist is a generator of creativity.

Such a portrait rests on a broadened definition of creativity, an ethic of social justice, and the assumption that art and its making belong to everyone.

CHAPTER 4
THE SUBJECTS

In this chapter I introduce my ten subjects in order to establish their distinctiveness as persons and artists, trying to give the reader a sense of each voice so that in the chapters of analysis that follow, the reader will know who is talking. Among the subjects are one African-American woman (Kathy Jackson), one Chicana writer (Gloria Anzaldua), one Asian-American woman (Genny Lim). Two are Jewish (Liz Lerman, Deborah Kruger). Two are explicitly lesbian (Margaret Robison, and Gloria Anzaldua). They range in age from 28 to 70 years old, and they live in several parts of the United States, in both urban and rural settings.

There are three visual artists (Deborah Kruger--fiber arts; M.C. Richards--painting and pottery; Margaret Robison--painting). Five are writers (Pat Schneider--plays, poems, novels, songs; Gloria Anzaldua--autobiography, criticism, fiction, children's literature; M.C. Richards--poetry and nonfiction, Genny Lim--poetry and plays; Margaret Robison--poetry). One is a dancer (Liz Lerman). One is a musician (Pauline Oliveros). Bonnie Sherk is an environmental artist. Three are involved in theater (Genny Lim, Maryat Lee, Kathy Jackson).

These women are not a sample of anything. They do, however, represent an idea of the artist that is alternative to our current one. Their work is innovative, vigorous, emulated, and praiseworthy. In addition, they impact greatly on other lives, offering opportunity and possibility for wider participation of others in the creative process. They embody the very values I am studying--a creativity that is broadly defined, and widely available; an assumption that creativity is in everyone, and that what is needed is opportunity; and that expressing oneself in the making of art products is self affirming, empowering, and ultimately freeing for the person.

Pat Schnieder

Pat Schneider is a writer and writing teacher living in Amherst, Massachusetts. A poet, playwright and novelist, she has published widely in many literary journals. A volume of her poetry, White River Junction, came out in 1987. Nine of her plays have been published, many of them produced. She has also written libretti and lyrics, including My Holy Mountain: An Oratorio and I Have a Dream: A Black History Oratorio. She is currently a member of the B.M.I. Musical Theater Workshop in New York. Her most recent production was "Berries Red," a one-woman play based on material from her early years.

In 1971 she founded Amherst Writers and Artists, a loose affiliation of writers, the staff of which offers many writing workshops in the Pioneer Valley. Amherst Writers and Artists Press publishes a literary journal, Peregrine, as well a journal for the work of children, Picnic in the Mind, a poetry chapbook series, and occasional books like In Our Own Voices, a collection of the writing of women in low-income housing projects.

For a Danforth Grant in 1975, Pat first defined her philosophy of teaching writing. Pat says, "In an academic setting, the assumption is that people learn from having their mistakes pointed out. I think people learn from having their strengths pointed out." Her conviction is that we are all writers--because we all know how to use the language and we all have stories to tell. Based on this notion, and on her experience growing up in the slums of St. Louis, she teaches writing workshops to, among others, poor women living in housing projects in Chicopee, MA.

Speaking of her work with the Chicopee women, she said, "In their first session I said to them, 'This workshop is not about writing. It's about power. About getting up and getting out of poverty. The only way you can get out is through education, and the only way to get education is through writing. What we are about is not being writers for Good Housekeeping magazine. It's all about power.'"

Every human being is as creative as I am," Pat told me in our interview. "We've just not all had the same opportunity." She seeks to provide it.

"Why don't people create?" I asked her.

"Discouragement," she responded. "There's so much that passes judgment, belittles, derides, discourages, and puts grades on things."

Dorothy, one of the Chicopee women, wrote this letter to Pat at the end of one summer's session.

Good-bye. Good-bye to a wonderful soul. A lady who gave me more than she'll ever know. I grown with you. And learn I had a true soul, that nightmare of my past couldn't hurt anyones soul.

Thank you for being more to me than any woman was. God bless you and take care of you till we meet again.

Pat, your just like my mom. Loving and giving. And I thank you for what you done.

Opening your heart to me and everyone.

Love, Dorothy

M.C. Richards

If you want to live with all your burners lit, you live through this: community, self, and artistic making.

Toward M.C., by M.C. Richards

What intrigues me about M.C. Richards is how she puts it all together. She makes a whole out of her life and her work, her own art work and her work teaching others, her intuitive living of life and her writing about the creative process in her books. She makes one always aware of the context and conditions of her artmaking. She is a gifted

teacher and a respected potter; she is a spiritual searcher, an older woman of depth and wisdom.

She lives in Kimberton Hills, Pennsylvania, a Camphill Community started originally in Scotland by a group of emigrees from Germany, followers of Rudolf Steiner, who sought to provide a home for mentally retarded children. She lives in an old stone farmhouse with several mentally retarded adults, and several other adults and children. The community is based on principles of bio-dynamic agriculture (organic plus a spiritual component), and consists of several households in the green rolling hills. M.C., like all the other community members, has her own room, and she cooks, eats, plans, works, lives with, and negotiates conflicts with her "family." She is also a garden helper and edits a community newsletter.

M.C. is a potter, a poet, and a painter. She teaches a class in clay for the retarded villagers, and another class for apprentice farmers who come to learn bio-dynamic agricultural methods. Her paintings hang in the headquarters building, and her students' clay work sits in a gallery space in the same building. She is an artist embedded in community.

M.C. Richards is the author of Centering (a meditation on creativity and its spiritual roots, in print for 25 years and recently reissued). She also wrote The Crossing Point, which takes up where her first book left off, and Towards

Wholeness: Rudolf Steiner Education in America. After leaving formal academic teaching, finding it too onesidedly intellectual, she joined the faculty of Black Mountain College. There John Cage, Merce Cunningham, and other innovative artists became her colleagues and friends.

"Black Mountain had a threefold program: community life, studio arts, and intellectual disciplines. Nobody could graduate from Black Mountain who didn't qualify in all three," M.C. wrote in Toward M.C.

She is a thoughtful and reflective woman, spirit-driven, an innovative potter, a painter too old to learn painting technique (she says), a writer about the wonder and mystery of life and art and how they meet. And they all meet clearly in her life.

Paulus Berensohn wrote about her, "Her gift to us lies in the way she lays images on us. Her scholarship and imagination become visual seed images which open us up to new connections and insights. She keeps reminding us, fruitfully, that it is not just pots we are making but our whole life that we are forming." [Toward M.C., p. 12]

Margaret Robison

When I arrived for my interview at Margaret's small apartment overhanging the river in Shelburne Falls, MA, she was sitting by the window in her wheel chair, looking out.

Margaret is recovering from a major stroke, slowly reclaiming the use of leg, arm, and voice.

Margaret is a painter, a poet and a teacher. Among other projects, she has worked as poet in residence for an elementary school in Holyoke, MA, teaching the entire school how to write poetry. She produced Po--What?, an anthology of the children's work. Another project, a collaboration with actress Sheryl Stoodley, involved a workshop with women at M.C.I. Lancaster prison. This work resulted in another book, The World Split Open, and a performance at Smith College by the prisoners, "Ain't No Man Dragged That Moon Down Yet."

Her current work is to produce a book of poetry about her stroke and recovery from stroke.

To write this book I think will help in redeeming the stroke experience for me, because I would have been so grateful to find something that I could have read. Already people with strokes have read my stroke poetry. That makes me feel very good. My speech therapist at Cooley Dickenson said she was talking with a man who was very depressed, and she was able to find one of my poems that would help him. So that's one way that I want my poetry to be used. I know that's important, because it would have been important to me.

In June 1990 she did two poetry readings, the first since her stroke--one for doctors and staff at Cooley Dickenson Hospital and one for the public at the Shelburne Falls library.

In our interview, she talked slowly and deliberately, often exclaiming that she wished she could go into more

detail. She wanted to tell me stories about the children at the Holyoke school and the women in prison. She was afraid, she said, of having another stroke and losing all her stories. We ended up doing a second session of stories.

Margaret's work is to enable voice where there has been none. In the past, she's enabled inner city kids, old people in the nursing home that she hooked up the kids with, and women in prison. At this time, she works with herself, seeking to heal and enable her own voice once again.

Pauline Oliveros

One day I read an announcement in an artists' newsletter from the Hudson Valley in New York.

Womens Studio Workshop is delighted to invite you to become part of the Deep Listening Chorus on Monday, January 29 at 7:30 pm. Led by the world-renowned musician Pauline Oliveros, the chorus will meet for the first (and possibly only) time for an evening of participatory vocal pieces.

Slowed by a blizzard in the Berkshires, I arrived late, and sat in the hall of Pauline's huge Victorian house in Kingston, NY, listening to a roomful of people lying with their feet at the hub of a wheel, making sounds together. The music rose and fell, led by one voice, then another, now a playful interruption, then a sustained fog horn tone, now a stacatto from someone else. A half an hour later when they finished, I joined them for their second "piece." I was intrigued and delighted.

Pauline Oliveros has been a significant influence on American music with her work in improvisation, electronic music techniques, teaching methods, meditations, and physical consciousness raising. She is a composer, accordionist, and teacher whose work emphasizes listening strategies and improvisational skills.

She left a full professorship at the University of California at San Diego (1967-1981) to work as an independent composer, performer and teacher. Through her records, tapes, video and radio performances, live performances, books and articles, lectures and classes, thousands of people have experienced her unique way of communicating sounds and ideas. As the composer of Sonic Meditations, she is considered the originator of today's meditational music. The Meditations are 33 pieces for musicians of all ages and skill levels to learn how to focus on, listen to, and produce sounds naturally. She has done commissions like the recent Dream Horse Spiel, commissioned by West German Radio and performed at the Whitney Museum in NYC, and the music for Mabou Mines' production of LEAR, performed in New York City. In 1985 a retrospective of her work was performed at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC. She has recorded 15 albums.

Deep Listening, released in 1989, is a collaboration of 3 performers playing in an underground watertank in Fort

Worden, Washington. The tank has a 45 second reverberation time, and using this, the performers interact with each other and the audience, using original tunings.

John Cage, innovative composer, says, "Through Pauline Oliveros and Deep Listening, I finally know what harmony is...it's about the pleasure of making music." [Oliveros promotional material]

In 1985 Pauline created the Oliveros Foundation, believing that "Creativity is the vital spirit of personal and public growth." It attempts to support artists who are challenging notions of what art and music is, those whom she describes as "walking along the edge, trying to take some risks and chances."

Pauline's work is based largely on her deep interest in sounds.

MC--Do you work every day?

P--I listen every day. That's the basis of it. That's the key issue for me.

MC--How do you listen every day. Do you set aside time?

P--No, I just do it. All the time.

MC--How do you filter things out, like that airplane?

P--I don't. I know it's there.

MC--Isn't that chaotic in your head?

P--No, it's there....The field of sound is there all the time. You focus on various aspects of it, like a lens.

That snowy night in her home in Kingston, she created a special environment in which to listen, to make sounds, to play around. Lying on the floor, we were asked to tune in, to pay attention, to be there exactly in the present moment-

-hearing all the sounds--the breath of the person next to us, a car crunching the snow, the creak of a tree, the whisper of the heater. Then she asked us to make our own sounds, following and leading one another, with no plan and no score, entering into a community of sound makers, not knowing where the music we were all making would go once it left our mouths.

Genny Lim

I didn't know how to articulate it when I was a theater student at San Francisco State, but there was always something missing.... It [theater] wasn't connected socially and politically with the heartbeat of the people. You know, we're living in a multicultural society, and Neil Simon plays just aren't going to do it anymore.

Genny Lim is a Chinese-American poet, playwright and performer working in San Francisco. An early play was "Paper Angels," based on stories of Chinese immigrants detained on Angel Island in the early years of this century. While they waited to enter the country, they wrote poems in Chinese on the walls, reflecting their fears and humiliations. Genny's father was one of them, but he would never talk about his life there. "Paper Angels" was produced in San Francisco, New York and Seattle, and was shown nationally on American Playhouse (PBS) in 1985.

Her recent work includes a volume of poetry, Winter Place, and several innovative plays produced in San Francisco, where she has collaborated extensively with a

Japanese Butoh dancer, a jazz musician using idioms of Chinese opera, actors, a doll sculptor, filmmakers, a musician who has a very strong Indian and Balinese style, and others. Cross cultural collaboration has become a hallmark of Genny's work. XX, recently produced, is an exploration of the oppression of women from a social and historical point of view.

I took the mythological woman from ancient China and explored the whole metaphor of footbinding, and how it became symbolic of beauty. Oppression became synonymous with being bonded, bound, deformed, and brutalized. And how in contemporary terms the metaphor has changed into more subtle types of bondage, more insidious because now the bondage is psychological.

Genny's current teaching work is in two arenas. She was invited by the DeYoung Museum to curate an exhibit of African, Oceanic and American art objects from the Museum's permanent collection. She then invited school children to see the work, and to engage with the masks, tools, images and sculpture. And to create poetry, which was mounted and hung next to the work. The poems were changed every week.

The main thing [the children] had to get into was having some kind of a spiritual connection with the art work, and allowing whatever that energy or spirit was to speak through them...Allowing them to become the conduit or the messengers for some voice that comes from elsewhere. It was real freeing for them.

Genny is also on the faculty, and Performance Coordinator of the Arts and Social Change Department at the New College in San Francisco. She teaches a course called Imaging the Other, using traditional approaches to theater

in a modern context. "The whole emphasis," she says, "is on change, and on changing the whole concept of art--how it is done, who it is for, and the effect of it. It's pretty exciting."

For Genny, creativity is about unblocking energy, being open, honest, hiding nothing. "Whatever that energy is," she says, "you have to not block it off or be afraid of it, and you have to take whatever it demands of you." That is what all her work is about -- unblocking.

She has unblocked herself by leaving her family's traditional ways and moving a continent away to pursue her dreams. Now she pushes at the boundaries of conventional understandings of theater, seeking to unblock its power for all people. She embraces her Chinese-American heritage of myth, memory, and ritual, and also opens herself in extensive collaboration with other traditions and forms. She offers the children sprawled on the floor of the De Young Museum free access to ancient art images. With her students at New College, she models the openness, and honesty required to create with integrity. Her goal is to remove obstacles so the spirit can come through.

Liz Lerman and the Dance Exchange

Believing that dance is empowering and that dance is for everyone, in 1976 Liz created The Dance Exchange, a company of young and older dancers doing experimental modern

dance. "I'm interested in how much dancers know and how little we share it with the rest of the world, in how much dancers know and how little the rest of the world knows we know it." Later she created Dancers of the Third Age, a company of dancers 60 years and older, and still later she published Teaching Senior Adults to Dance. "I'm interested in what dancers have to learn from people who have been in motion for over 60 years." She and her company travel and perform around the country, in dance centers and festivals, at colleges and universities. She has won seven choreography fellowships from NEA. Liz is an artist who wrestles with the issues of content in dance, as she creates dances about the defense budget, the Helms amendment, and nuclear waste disposal; they are performed at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts as well at Jacob's Pillow each summer.

Just as I arrived to spend the day with the company, The Dancers of the Third Age were returning from a morning's performance for Head Start kids at Wolf Trap Center for the Performing Arts in Virginia. "I'm interested in the aesthetic, physical and social implications of combining young and old in making an environment that somehow leaves room for individual and collective participation but stays loyal to an artistic idea and focus." The troupe performs regularly at elementary schools, senior centers, universities, and arts festivals. The company includes

dancers with a lot of previous experience and training, and some with none at all.

Liz and her dancers not only perform for diverse audiences, they teach as well. "I'm interested in the time when people who are too fat, too clumsy, too old, too sick to dance, actually step out and dance, and how transformed the dancer and the watcher are in that moment." Each member of The Dance Exchange teaches at least one class in the community, and at the most unlikely places: nursing homes, senior centers, homeless shelters, Children's Hospital, other hospitals, psychiatric centers. They teach special needs kids, the physically disabled, the old, the mentally ill, the sick, AIDS patients and their caregivers, the destitute, the homeless. They offer dance classes to the people least likely ever to have the chance.

The day I was there the company rehearsed a piece they had been working on, in a rich creative process that used words and images, sounds and movements, that worked individually and collaboratively, repeating, varying, watching, and giving feedback to each other. After lunch we sat in a large circle and each dancer described his or her teaching work. One by one, they discussed problems and difficulties, and then helped each other think of ways to deal with them. "I'm interested in who gets to do the dancing..., in the idea that dance is a birthright..., in

the continuing challenge of making personal expression valuable to me, the dancers, and the lady next door."

Gloria Anzaldua

How hard it is for us to think we can choose to become writers, much less feel and believe that we can. What have we to contribute, to give? Our own expectations condition us. Does not our class, our culture as well as the white man tell us writing is not for women such as us? (From This Bridge Called My Back.)

In This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color, which Gloria edited with Cherrie Moraga in 1981, she named the lack of a sense of entitlement which women of color, and most women, I believe, feel. Today as a doctoral student and teacher at the University of California at Santa Cruz, she continues the process of naming in her writing the conditions under which women, especially women of color, write.

One image she uses these days is mestiza, the woman of multiple cultures. She describes herself as a borderlands dweller, a person in whom intersect multiple identities. She notes in Borderlands that such a life is not comfortable. It is a place of contradictions, with hatred, anger and exploitation being prominent features of the landscape. But there are compensations: "Living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an 'alien' element. There is an exhilaration in

being a participant in the further evolution of human kind, in being 'worked' on." [1987, Preface]

In her writing workshops, classes at the University, lectures and readings at conferences and other universities, Gloria names the borders--the geographical, sexual, spiritual, psychological, academic, racial, and ethnic intersections. She does not choose one or the other, but holds them all in her self. And from that vantage point, she reaches out in many directions. By always writing out of her own life and her several selves, she articulates common ground for many women. In 1990 she edited a second book of writing by women of color: Haciendo Caras: Making Face, Making Soul, again providing access to voices not often heard. As always, her life experience and her writing flow from one powerful inner source; there is a particular integrity about life and work. She is singleminded about her work as she continually draws on the deep well of herself. "A writer, to me, is a woman who utters, wails, screams, howls. We break silence. And that's what we do--we wail in the night."

Gloria is a powerful model of the woman artist where the lines between life and art are down. She writes out of her deepest, often most pained self; she names boundaries and seeks to reach over them, holding all the disparate parts within herself.

Deborah Kruger

Deborah and I were just beginning our interview when her daughter Aviva, almost 5, comes into the studio, in a nightgown, having gotten out of bed.

D--Viva?

A--Yeah. I have a picture to show.

She runs over to us. Aviva and I talk about the picture for a minute, who's who and what they're wearing.

Deborah breaks in. "Hey, pumpkin, where are you supposed to be right now?"

A--In bed.

Aviva and Deborah snuggle on the couch/bed.

D--Listen. It's late and I know you're having a hard time falling asleep, but you need to lay in bed. I love you...I hope we have a more cooperative day together tomorrow...Sweet dreams.

Aviva runs to the door.

D--Don't get out of bed again. You stay in there.

A--Uh-huh.

D--Thank you.

Deborah Kruger is a visual artist in western Massachusetts. A large part of her creative work in the last few years has been to discover how a woman can be both a full parent and a full artist. Deborah noted in a newspaper interview that when you are both an artist and a parent that you actually have three careers--the parenting, the artmaking, and a third career to finance the other two.

Deborah was trained at the Fashion Institute of Technology in NYC, and most often uses fiber as her art medium. "Anatomy of Worship" consisted of large crosses composed on wallpaper swatches interspersed in a latticework pattern with color xeroxes of hard core pornography,

suggesting the crucifixion of women by the porn industry and the abuse of women at the heart of Christian culture.

"The Tribe of Dina" is an installation of 17 female torsos (breastplates made from friends' bodies) with skirts, hung above a fallen female form. It refers to the Biblical story of Dina, who went out to search for a group of women in the desert and was raped on the way. This piece was shown in several college galleries and in a NYC gallery. Deborah's current work is a quilt which modifies the Noah and the Ark text to include women's experience. "Three philosophical bases define who I am," she wrote in an article in Gallerie 82, "Art, Feminism, and Judaism. Some of her work she defines as feminist Midrash (Bible commentary).

Besides creating artwork and parenting Aviva and Jonah with her husband Rob, Deborah leads workshops and gives lectures. Her current teaching takes the form of No Limits for Women Artists workshops, to help women artists identify and overcome obstacles to their artmaking, to deepen their commitment to their work, and to create the support they need to make these changes. Deborah trained with Betsy Damon, the originator of No Limits workshops and an internationally recognized performance and environmental artist.

This workshop is designed to help women understand how all activity, particularly art-making, exists in a social and political context. Women artists face

sexism and other obstacles that affect their thinking, confidence, relationships, and beliefs in their own ideas. As female members of society, we tend to isolate ourselves and establish limits for our lives. The antidote is to realize there is no limit to what we can envision and do. [From the brochure describing No Limits workshops]

Deborah is always trying to take off the limits of her own life as well.

I've just gotten clear that something's gotta change, something's gotta shift in a major way. Something in me is dying because I can't work. And I think it's coming out in depression. It's just imploding in me.

Before, I was thinking where can art fit into my life? And now, I want to let the art be the spin point. That's what I'm trying to change.

Bonnie Sherk

The artist is a person who is really a transformer of culture, you know, a leader of transformation. The artist has a vision. But it's not the artist of conventional description, it's not the artist as object maker only, but the artist as actualizer of whole systems. And the artist actually is found in all forms of human endeavor, from business to theology, from painting to life styles. The manifestations are infinite in terms of the forms that art can take.

In 1982 I met Bonnie Sherk at her small apartment in Greenwich Village. The apartment was filled with mirrors of all shapes and sizes, irregular and plain, placed in nooks, against baseboards, on walls too high or too low to see yourself in. Dangling at odd angles, some you spotted right off, and some you discovered as you sat. As we talked, I began to understand the mirrors. Here was someone who wanted to see everything, see it all whole and from every possible angle. All those mirrors were about multiple seeing, but they didn't fracture reality. Instead they made

a more interesting whole. When I returned to interview her in 1990 she lived in the same place but the mirrors were gone. Maybe that broad, multi-faceted seeing had been internalized.

Bonnie Sherk is a visionary performance and environmental artist. Trained originally as a visual artist, she found the boundaries between art forms too rigid, and began doing performances on the streets of San Francisco. It began with Portable Parks, large scale public landscapes and performance pieces, one involving closing a street near a major shopping area downtown and installing turf, cows, trees, goats, chickens, sheep and llamas. Then in a series called "Sitting Still," she dressed in a formal gown and sat near a garbage dump in an overstuffed chair as cars zoomed by. "Public Lunch" took place in the Lion House at the zoo. She sat and ate a formal catered dinner in her own cage. After this piece her work with animals intensified. She lived in her studio for a year with a rabbit, chickens, a rat and a pig. She studied their behavior and learned "about life, art and myself."

Then she created The Farm beneath a freeway in San Francisco, at the intersection of several different cultural neighborhoods. It brought together people of various cultures, artifacts, vegetables, animals, children, clowns, theater, a library, a darkroom, and a pre-school. The Farm was what Bonnie calls a life frame: a vehicle that

integrates the resources of a locale--human, ecological, economic, historical, technological, and creates a shape that integrates all these elements so that they work better together.

Then came A.L.L., A Living Library, which remains her work today. The original prototype was designed for Bryant Park in New York City, formerly an elegant formal garden which had become the habitat of drug pushers. For this particular site, adjacent to the main research library of the New York City public system, she would use the Dewey Decimal System as the organizing principle for the garden: one bed would be social sciences, one literature, one natural sciences, and so on. The park would hold banners, flags, international garden beds, sculpture, workshops, tapes, food, and human projects. A Living Library would provide experiential learning opportunities and serve as a magnet for the community.

She has broadened the concept of A Living Library so it can be used in any community. It takes the form of an outdoor/indoor culture-ecology park, bringing science and humanities to life through plants and other life forms, the arts, lectures, and demonstrations. Video displays provide a potential link via satellite to other such sites around the world. A Living Library draws on all the resources of a place and creates a space where all can participate. It is

a new approach to public spaces, an innovation in thinking about public projects.

Kathy Jackson and Maryat Lee

I feel that Maryat has given me something to live for, and she certainly did help me grow and help me want to become somebody. I started caring about myself and the people around me.

Kathy Jackson

Maryat Lee was the founder of Ecotheater, a process for creating indigeneous theater. She thought that theater should be a place "where you could really be," and first began to push at the boundaries of theater when she was a theological student in New York City in the early 1950's. She created a street theater, using people she met in the tenements, and produced a play called Dope! She found the people by standing on the street with a large sketch pad and drawing; then she picked a house--the third house, the third floor, the third door--and went up and knocked. Finally the inhabitants let her in, and they became friends. Later they acted in Maryat's play about addiction, which was a big hit, and was headlined in Variety.

After that she created Soul and Latin Theater with Hispanic high schools kids. And finally she brought the concept of indigeneous theater to the hills of West Virginia, and it became Ecotheater. The process is unique. From oral histories, the playwright/director writes a scene and invites the person who gave the story to tell it on

stage. These non-actors are not trained to act, but rather are coached to be themselves as fully as possible. Not to act, but to be. The results are powerful theater pieces where both a sense of place and the impression of real, lived life are conveyed. People who have been silent have voices, and are affirmed and empowered.

The summer that Maryat began working with teenagers in West Virginia, Kathy Jackson was one who came. She was fifteen years old, having had a baby at 13, afraid, from an alcoholic family, a poor black woman with a hearing loss. That summer Kathy felt so affirmed and visible that she stayed on every summer after that. Other non-actors--an insurance salesman, a middle aged housewife, a hardware store owner, Charlie a Vietnam vet--joined the company, and together they produced "The Hinton Play," the story of a small West Virginia town after its days of glory as a railroad center. They performed in the streets of Hinton, and from a hay wagon on farms. For eight summers they have performed for the tourists at Pipestem State Park. The campers and tourists come to the outdoor performances with their Cracker Jacks and popcorn, expecting summer romance or comedy, and leave with tear-stained faces, their snacks uneaten.

In 1989 Maryat died of cancer and Kathy became Director of Training at Ecotheater. Maryat's method had been written down and Kathy is currently helping replicate it as a number

of playwright/directors from seed companies in Texas, Kentucky, and other places are being trained in this method of indigenous theater.

Kathy also uses the Ecoheater technique in her work with disturbed teenagers at a state facility in Hinton. She invites them to tell their stories, finding the common ground among them, then to write scenes and perform. In the process, they find their voices, and selves, growing stronger. Maryat gave Kathy an opportunity that changed her life, and now Kathy passes it along to troubled kids and to the seed companies she trains.

CHAPTER 5

THE NATURE OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS

For many years researchers have studied the creative process by asking artists to describe how they experience it. The researchers have wanted to understand the "mystery" at the core of the process, to know where ideas come from, to connect the ideas with the life of the artist, to understand how the artist works with idea or image, sensation or memory to come up with a poem, play, sculpture, or dance. What part do juxtaposition, metaphor, convergent thinking, divergent thinking, inspiration and perspiration play? How are art products of beauty and power created by individuals?

I asked my ten subjects some of the same questions: What is it like for you to create? What are the sources of your creative work? How has your experience of oppression influenced your work? How have you chosen your particular media? How do your artmaking and your life fit together? How do you work--collaboratively, with an audience, for money? How do you determine your work's value? What images and metaphors do you use to define the creative process?

Defining Creativity

Creativity is probably one of the most frequently used words in the language. Jacques Barzun notes that the word is often cited as a vague general good, but seldom pinpointed as to its meaning. Any one definition seems only to touch on part of the meaning. Some definitions highlight causality or the motivation for creativity: Creativity is mysterious and comes from sources beyond the individual. Or creativity is in the genes, or it is not in the genes, but comes from a nurturing environment. Or creativity is from the realm of the unconscious, where we have no control. A second group of definitions features the products that result from certain behaviors we call creative. These products can be in the arts or in science, and this definition stresses the "making" aspect of creativity, bringing something into being that did not exist before. Definitions which emphasize the product raise additional questions about aesthetics, the value of the product, and the standards for determining such value. Here we touch on areas of art as business, critics and criticism, and art history. Or we get into expressive therapies, where the product is negligible beside the healing or self-actualizing of the person. The third sort of definition of creativity, and probably the most common, attempts to describe the nature of the process. Is it invention, where originality is the key factor? Is it just novelty, or a more complex

synthesis? Is creativity the combining of ideas remote from each other? Is creativity basically an interaction between the individual and the environment, what Rollo May calls encounter? Is it problem solving? And what qualities does the creative person possess--tolerance for ambiguity, self confidence, ability to think convergently and divergently, fluency of idea generation?

Whatever approach one takes to defining creativity, and whatever definition one posits, by such defining, one situates oneself vis a vis the subject of creativity. The way you look at it determines what you see. In this chapter I attempt to synthesize the view of creativity put forth by my subjects which focuses on the nature of the process, including questions of motivation. There is little about product here, except to note the uses made of media by these artists. My definition does not describe specific ways of working or characteristics of the creative person; rather it names the connections between the act of creating and the rest of the life of the artist. It looks at the context of creating more than anything, the personal and social context. It also names some outcomes of such creating.

The description of the creative process given by these artists is not new, but there is a new slant. The image that best describes the creative process of these women artists is boundary breaking: Breaking down distinctions, walls, barricades, and previous divisions. Crossing lines

and borders, letting it flow together, putting it all together. Or more precisely, as M.C. Richards writes, not trying to put fragments together, but seeing that they have always been together at the core. This view of creativity, as embodied by these artists, is only one way to investigate the process, but it seems a fruitful one because it sees creativity related to the lives of the artists, and also related to social/political realities in the United States in the late twentieth century. It takes into account what we might call the politics of creativity.

What are the boundaries breached, or at least questioned, in this definition of creativity? Here we see lines down between art and life, between uses and functions of various art media, between artists as they collaborate in creating, and between artists and their audience. These artists tend to disregard hierarchies between high and low art, craft and art, proper and improper processes. Their use of media is fluid and they cross divisions easily. Collaboration is very common among them: they work freely with other artists as well as with non-artists. Finally, they have shifted the relationship to their audience, tearing down an invisible but seemingly inviolable partition.

Art and Life

These artists appear to see their art and their lives as one single thing. There is no clear demarcation. Art and artmaking are almost literally the same thing as life and living. The usual distinction is not there. M.C Richards says, "Life itself is the biggest art."

I'd have to say my work is my life. My intuition is that there is, in life itself, a deep artistic archetype at work. And the creative process, which I see as a process of touching down, as it were, touching between the archetypal world and the personal world, takes place all the time in life. As I try to live my life, probably I'm monitoring myself unconsciously to see that I'm fostering as I can the creativity that's at work in the creation of forms. Imaginative forms, social forms, plastic or sculptural forms, agricultural forms--life is all a fantastic artistic activity, in my experience of it."

In her three books, Centering, The Crossing Point, and Towards Wholeness, M.C. has explored this notion in depth. She describes centering as a process of bringing in rather than of leaving out. Centering is a discipline because one is often tempted to say 'nay' rather than 'yea' to life. It is a means for all people--called artists or not--to be alive to the "concreteness of the moment." [1966, p. 56]

Life is an art, and centering is a means....Every person is a special kind of artist and every activity is a special art. An artist creates out of the materials of the moment, never again to be duplicated. This is true of the painter, the musician, the dancer, the actor, the teacher, the scientist, the business man, the farmer--it is true of us all, whatever our work, that we are artists so long as we are alive to the concreteness of a moment and do not use it to some other purpose...

All the arts we practice are apprenticeship. The big art is our life. [1962, p. 43]

In The Crossing Point she describes the artistic experience as central to the human being because it affirms one's inner life. Life is artistic, she believes, because its physicality is created by inner processes, and such inner processes are generative. "Life in fact is creative." [1966, p. 32-47]

She questions the distinctions between living and working.

Forms of living and forms of artistic working, these are our concern. What do they have in common? Work is usually thought of as that activity to which we give most of our time, our best effort, and our awareness. Living can be thought of this way too.

I get up in the morning and do exercises before breakfast. Is this living or working? I prepare something to eat: living or working? I eat and digest, write letters, make phone calls, go shopping, talk to people--living or working? I harvest the squash, weed the garden, clear out the ditches that carry water out of the planting area--mow the lawn, pick flowers--living or working?

I make eight pitchers, six candlestick holders, a plate, three teapots, two bowls, for the first firing of a salt-glaze kiln which I help build at Karen Karnes's studio last month--living or working? [1966, p. 124-25]

She insists that the mindful life is a great art work. Life works the same way art works, which is why we call any undertaking an art when it draws on the fullness of inner feeling and is based on careful regard for physical expression. One's life is a continuum of an unfolding form, whose beginnings and endings are unknown, and this makes life like creating a work of art.

Life, she goes on, is best understood and practiced as an art, relying on inspiration, a feeling for materials, knowledge of how to put things together well, patience, physical strength and awareness. For her the verbal arts or the visual arts, graphic arts, theater arts, musical arts, or liberal arts, are part of something. They are not the whole story. And they are interconnected at the center with all the other parts. [1966, p. 176]

The way artist Bonnie Sherk approaches her art is a good example of this interconnection. "One's life can be one's art, our sources are not just for creating objects for others, but for creating the self. And one's art can be one's life--literally, and we can begin to see everything we do as part of the same process of life uncovering life, revealing at the core the essential oneness. The big art is our life," she says.

For Bonnie, being an artist has always been an intentional, deliberate decision to follow what interested her, to be an explorer. That has sometimes meant not becoming well known, or waiting for society to catch up with her visionary ideas. She describes the evolution of her art and life this way:

I trained myself to be an artist in a particular way, to be an explorer. And I remember very consciously in the early 70's, really meditating on this, and feeling that to be an artist was to be an inventor, and to be out there, looking at the edges, and really interested in creating blurred boundaries.

And if anything, I'm successful at that. Because I'm way out there. I remember when I was painting, I gradually became bored with just two dimensions, so I did lots of these things that popped out, then collage and assemblage. And gradually I started making objects in the environment, sculpture we call them. And then I began realizing that one could put these various objects together and arrange them into installations. And so I started making the whole environment. Then I became one of the elements in the environment, a performance artist. The early performance was about myself as material. The earliest life frames that I did were visions, literally visual frames, tableaus of living forms, still lives. [Figures 1 and 2]

Gradually she developed what she calls the life frame, a vehicle which creates a shape to integrate several elements so they work better together. She sees the life frame as a new form of art, evolved throughout her career as an artist. At first it meant framing life so it could be seen, as in her early performance pieces in San Francisco. Gradually it became more interactive, as in her piece in a cage beside the lion at the zoo. Today it is very interactive, involving people and other species, as in the concept of A Living Library. These wholistic parks are created by members of a given community, bringing together people and their various resources.

For playwright/director Maryat Lee, art linked to life meant she brought her passion about theater to an unlikely place--the streets of Harlem in the 1950's.

Maryat had decided that there was nothing in theater as she experienced it that would satisfy her, so she switched to religion and went to graduate school. She was there in the early 50's when the East Harlem Protestant Parish was



Fig. 1 "Sitting Still I," Performance Art
by Bonnie Sherk, 1970



Fig. 2 "Living in the Forest," Performance
Art by Bonnie Sherk, 1973

beginning its innovative ministry in New York City. Maryat brought with her an interest in the medieval mystery plays, where a guild of shipwrights or farmers would put on a play based on Biblical material pertinent to their work. The shipwrights would present Noah and the Ark, for example, or the farmers the parable of the sower.

She wanted to know the people of East Harlem, but she wasn't sure how to begin. Eventually she went knocking on doors.

The door opened a crack with a chain around it, and I saw two or three sets of eyes. The eyes just kept glued at me and finally somebody said, "What do you want?" I said something about, "Anybody here want to draw? or paint?" They thought I meant paint the walls. They were giggling and carrying on, but finally they got curious and opened the door. I ended up going back every Wednesday, and I took a pad of paper. We'd talk and draw.

Nitch lived there, and one of her men, and Toni, her little girl, and two or three other people. I told Nitch I was going to try and write a play about things that happened on this block, and that intrigued her. She was very dramatic anyway. They took me to their parties, and they would prepare me ahead of time--"You watch out what this one says, and don't believe that one."

At one of the parties, I finally said, "What in the world is this guy talking about?" And they kind of giggled and smirked and told me it was heroin. I had never heard of heroin. And so I asked all about that, and then I realized that Nitch was on it, and all the people who wandered in and out, they were stoned.

So then I began to get very fascinated with addiction, and I had to struggle with the whole thing of whether you use art to convey a message, because at that point I thought you did. But as I worked on the play, when I was trying to make it propagandize, it didn't work. Finally the characters began to get a mind of their own, and I followed them, and that's when the play took off.

Maryat ended up producing "Dope!" a street play acted by the people she knew; the play was tremendously successful, and attracted the attention of the media and the drama/theater community of New York. Life and The New Yorker wrote stories about it, and Variety gave it a banner headline. [See Figure 3] It was subsequently named a "Best Short Play of the Year."

In the case of visual artist Deborah Kruger, the art/life connection is manifested in her woman's body. The day I visited, she was working on a luscious quilt, piled thick with the texture and swirl of various animal forms, writhing and twirling amongst each other on the surface. All creation was there.

That day I birthed four quilt ideas. It was the muse, channeled energy, who knows? And Jonah was born a month later. Actually I was two weeks from my due date, but he was late. I was ripe.

And here's the text on the quilt I'm working on. "For forty weeks, day and night, Noah and Nahmah's children floated in the waters of her womb. When her waters finally broke, all the creatures of the earth burst forth and fed on her breasts until she became dry."

I had been telling the Noah story over and over to my daughter Aviva. I was thinking about it, just sitting there pregnant, and finally it occurred to me-- it wasn't forty days, it was forty weeks! They just got it mixed up as usual. Those forty days are the forty weeks of gestation! And so I did a sketch, and started putting fabrics together. It really was a very organic piece.

The lives of these artists literally lead them into new forms of their art. Their elemental curiosity, their bodies, their deepest hunches and impulses are followed.

VARIETY

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 1951

HARLEM'S THEATRE-IN-THE-LOT

ANTI-DOPE DRAMA IN STREET PITCH

Political, church, show biz and sports figures have teamed up in a unique dramatic project to spotlight the narcotics evil to Harlem residents. With an empty lot as a stage amidst the area's squalid tenements, the group of public leaders premiered on Monday night (23), the first of a series of productions of a documentary play, "Dope." Play is set for a week's tour through East Harlem, an area where drug addiction—from reefer to heroin—has been found by officials to be alarmingly widespread

Presented by a mixed cast of amateur and visiting semiprofessionals, the arena-style production puts over its message with clarity and punch if without finesse. Fully packed streets, with some viewers perched on over-hanging fire-escapes of adjacent buildings, received the play's message with mixed reactions. The youngsters hooted and scoffed while the parents in the audience listened attentively to the sad truth revealed in the drama. An information booth which was set up near the stage by Narcotics Anonymous to advise "users" on how to break the addiction, received no queries before or after the show.

Jackie Robinson, one of the sponsors, who was expected to take part in the production in the role of narrator, failed to show due to his labors in a 16-inning ball game between the Dodgers and Braves that afternoon. His role was taken by the Rev. J. Archie Hargraves, colored minister of East Harlem Protestant Parish. Other sponsors were Manhattan Borough President Robert F. Wagner, Jr., Nipsy Russell, Willie Bryant, both colored comedians, Tex and Jinx McCrary and the East Harlem Protestant Parish.

Scripted and directed by Maryat Lee, a white social research worker for the local parish, "Dope" is staged on a raised platform without benefit of scenery or props. The 40-minute one-act tells the

story of a young drug addict in vivid if not polished professional style. The central character is a heroin-user whose attempts to break away from the drug peddler's clutches is frustrated by an uncontrollable desire for more "junk." The denouement has the dope peddler fatally shooting the addict as the latter attempts to call for police aid. Written with the aid of neighborhood "users," Miss Lee's dramatization hits home. Neil McKenzie of the New School's Dramatic Workshop, played the white addict convincingly with the rest of the cast, composed of neighborhood Puerto Ricans, Negroes and whites. In this theatre-in-the-lot venture joining in spiritedly.

At show's closing a petition was distributed asking New York Mayor Impellitteri for revision of the current drug laws and the establishment of rehabilitation centers in the New York area.

Fig. 3 Variety Article about Maryat Lee's Play "Dope!"

One's life is not just seen as a source of raw materials for art making, shipped in as from some colony for manufacture by the industrialized country. It is more radical than that: there appears to be no distinction made between art and life. Art does not simply reflect life, give a picture of it passed through the life of an artist. Art is not just a mirror held up to life. It is as if art and life are one seamless fabric. The artist's life is the artist's art, and to create is to live. In fact, artmaking and living life are paradigms of the same process. Artmaking is not merely a pasttime or even vocation, but is the very fabric of life. Making art requires of one the same as living life--"living with all burners lit," being receptive, being transformed and transforming.

Women's Oppression and the Creative Process

Let us assume, with these artists, that the "true source of our images is within life itself." Let us assume that every person is an artist and every activity a special art, that the "big art is our life." Then let us note the reality of women's lives. Women's art springs from women's lives, and will be rooted in the fact of women's oppression--lack of access, social conditioning, law and custom, all maintained by incredible violence against women of all ages. I use the word oppression, not some less blunt term, because though all seems plentiful and peaceful for white, middle-

class women, oppression is still our situation. And for women who are colored, lesbian, old, poor, or disabled, life is further squelched, distorted, warped, and broken. So for many women artists the roots of their work--their subject matter, concerns, perceptions, feelings, memories--are clearly located in their experiences of oppression. This is especially true of the women of color in this group, and of the lesbians, but it is also the experience of at least one white, middle class, heterosexual woman.

For centuries, women's sphere of life and women's perceptions about their lives were not seen as appropriate subjects for art. Art did not spring from the same source as dirty diapers. But the experience of this group of women directly overturns that notion: for many of them, the daily and the hidden, the suppressed and the subordinated is the richest source of creative expression. The very aspects of life for which women are set aside or demeaned turn out to be those which have tremendous power when transformed into art statements.

For many women, the experience of creating is not just a high, euphoric experience of unity and joy, the self speaking its word into the world. For many women creativity springs from rage, despair, depression, violation, or abuse. If they can get to it at all, creating may be a survival activity. So the oppression of women cannot be separated from their experience as artists, and permeates their work

in all aspects--their sources, their use of materials, the ways they work, their sense of purpose, the ways they share or do not share their work. And the experience of being oppressed--the pain, humiliation, suffering, deprivation of being discriminated against, unvalued, kept down--are not just past events in the lives of these artists. They are very current reality, subtly destroying the springs of creativity.

So artmaking, if it dwells in the land of women, dwells in some dark places. In order to explore women's experiences of creativity--how their lives and their art are one--one has to explore women's oppression. Artmaking can be a scream of protest, a wail of terror or pain. For Gloria Anzaldua, writing is

A survival tactic, as well as an escapist tactic, because I was born a freak, born very different from other people. I started menstruating at the age of 3 months, and I went into puberty at the age of 6. So I shot up in height, and had breasts when I was in the first grade. So I always felt like I was different.

In her family were great storytellers, and she began to tell stories to her younger sister. And she began to read. Literature, she says, opened up a whole new world for her.

But the reading that I was doing didn't represent me and my experience. I realized that there were whole realities and experiences and people that were not represented. I would look at these books and I would not see myself in them. I read a lot of Westerns where the white guy comes riding on his white horse with his shiney gun, and he just kills all these Mexicans and these Indians, and they're like vermin. And here I was

a Mexican and an Indian, reading these things and believing them.

She decided she wanted to write, and to write about "Chicano and Chicana things, and to use our Chicano Spanish language."

I think my primary motive for writing was just to howl and rage and rant, rave because of all the injustices. I saw the farm workers and the day laborers, but also just my own feelings--you know, anger against my mother, and me bleeding at such an early age, and having these painful menstrual cycles that would last half a month. It was this shameful secret. And all the injustices against women, that I felt personally as well, as injustices against me. And in my Mexican culture, as in all cultures, a woman is not as highly valued as a man. So anger fueled my writing. [See Figure 4]

And Gloria's oppression, and her consciousness of it, continues to be a painful, infuriating fact of her everyday life as a doctoral student at the University of California at Santa Cruz. She feels oppressed by her race, ethnic background and lesbian identity.

And here I am, a person who's known in the university and the community. And if I get treated badly, can you imagine how they treat a black woman or an Asian woman who's just coming in, who's young? And then there's the whole thing about being a lesbian. This university is not as bad as the other universities, in fact, there are a lot of gay courses taught. But it's white, again.

And about financial aid. Next year, there's nothing they can give me. Instead they're using the money to recruit people of color, Chicanos. They're using my name to say, 'Oh, Gloria is here,' so all these Chicanos will come here. But I can't make it. I can't pay these fees, and the rents are high here. So things are really bad. I feel oppressed academically, intellectually, economically, racially, by class, and as a lesbian of color.

So that's why it's anger and wanting to subvert and make changes in society, opening people's awareness, that motivates a lot of my writing. A writer has power, has the power of language.

A Sea of Cabbages

(for those who have worked in the fields)

On his knees, hands swollen
sweat flowering on his face
his gaze on the high paths
the words in his head twinning cords
tossing them up to catch that bird of the heights.
Century after century swimming

with arthritic arms, back and forth
circling, going around and around
a worm in a green sea
life shaken by the wind
swinging in a mucilage of hope
caught in the net along with *la paloma*.

At noon on the edge
of the hives of cabbage
in the fields of a *ranchito* in *Tejas*
he takes out his chile wrapped in tortillas
drinks water made hot soup by the sun.
Sometimes he curses

his luck, the land, the sun.
His eyes: unquiet birds
flying over the high paths
searching for that white dove
and her nest.

Man in a green sea.
His inheritance: thick stained hand
rooting in the earth.

His hands tore cabbages from their nests,
ripping the ribbed leaves covering tenderer leaves
encasing leaves yet more pale.
Though bent over, he lived face up,
the veins in his eyes
catching the white plumes in the sky.

Century after century flailing,
unleafing himself in a sea of cabbages.
Dizzied
body sustained by the lash of the sun.
In his hands the cabbages contort like fish.
Thickened tongue swallowing

the stench.

The sun, a heavy rock on his back,
cracks,
the earth shudders, slams his face
spume froths from his mouth spilling over
eyes opened, face up, searching searching.

The whites of his eyes congeal.
He hears the wind sweeping the broken shards
then the sound of feathers surging up his throat.
He cannot escape his own snare—
faith: dove made flesh.

—translated from the Spanish by the author

Fig. 4 "A Sea of Cabbages," Poem by Gloria
Anzaldua. (Borderlands/La Frontera, pg. 132)

For Deborah Kruger, her oppression as a female came clear to her as an adolescent. What happened then is still influencing her choices about her life and her artwork.

As a child I was encouraged to be artistic--classes at the Art Students League, special camps, and this and that. I was also a very good student. And never got a single word of praise for my intelligence or thinking ability. My brother was a brilliant scientist, and he got all that. And I got all the arts stuff.

Then my parents said I couldn't go to art school, which totally floored me. They said, "Well if you go for liberal arts, and you get through that, and you still want art, then you can transfer to an art school."

And so I applied to liberal arts colleges, and I got into Bard, which also had a strong arts program. And much to my complete shock, they wouldn't send me. I had a boyfriend who I was kind of serious about, and one day they asked me if I thought I would finish college. And I said, "How am I supposed to know that? Sure, probably. Most people who go to college, they finish college." And because I didn't say yes, they wouldn't send me. I still counsel regularly about this.

She ended up marrying her boyfriend at age nineteen.

"It was all I had left at that point. And I was a completely devastated person." Her family sent her brother to MIT for five years, and Deborah went to a trade school, got a degree in Textile Design, and began working in the industry. After years of working as a commercial artist, she began to do her art work which she continues to this day. Now, married and with two young children, she ponders her current life situation, a parent with children to raise, an artist without adequate time to create.

I think I've been pretty depressed on and off for the last five years. You know, the Goddess put me on this earth to make art. Being in relationships, having children are very peripheral to me, to be completely honest. But I love my kids, they're pretty extraordinary kids.

She described her struggle to be a good girl and to please, noting the high price she has paid for it. She pondered her choices of marriage and a family, wondering how freely she had chosen it all. [Figure 5]

I wonder now, if I'd really stuck to my guns, if I would have had children. I remember at age 15 saying, 'As soon as I hit 21, I'm getting sterilized.' I never wanted a family. Never! And it's not like I was talked into it. But I got married, and I had parents pressuring me. It's like this was the next thing I was supposed to do. I've really put my creative voice on hold for too many years. Something in me is dying to not be working.

For Deborah it takes the form of depression, implosion.

For Genny Lim, the image of her oppression is demons.

I guess I've always dreamt a lot, and as a child, I had a lot of nightmares and dreams, like all these demons that I didn't know how to exorcise, how to pacify or whatever. And so art became a means of coming to terms with, grappling with, all of those demons, whatever they were.

Genny's experience of oppression came in her Chinese-American family. She described how her parents brought with them to this country the old Chinese values. Genny was the seventh of a large family of mostly girls, and she got a message very early that her parents didn't want any more girls. She believes she was lucky because she was the youngest, and her older siblings forged the way for her. She describes the process of working out from under the



Tribe of Dina, 5'x9'x8'; fibre, plaster, paint, dye. photo: John Polak

Fig. 5 "Tribe of Dina," Installation by Deborah Kruger

expectations of her as a Chinese-American young woman. [See Figure 6]

They didn't like it when I moved away to college, but my mother simply cried a tear and that was it. And then when I moved to New York they didn't like that either, and they told me to come home, but there wasn't anything they could do about it. Getting married to a traditional kind of Chinese-American guy was in many ways to satisfy them, but it did not turn out well. So we divorced. I think after that they decided it was my life.

And when I was on my own, with the two girls and surviving, they realized that I was doing OK, and that I was also able to make my art work, and pay my bills. So now my mother's very proud.

Genny's play XX reflects her concerns with liberation, especially for women. It is an exploration of the oppression of women from a social and historical point of view, where she explores the whole metaphor of footbinding, and how that became symbolic of beauty. And how, in contemporary terms, the metaphor has changed into a more subtle type of bondage, more insidious, because the bondage is much more psychological now. In the play she investigates the relationship between males and females, and how women believe they are more liberated than they really are. [Figure 7]

Authenticity and Creativity

If art and lives are of one fabric, and if women's lives are scarred by violence, repression, or stultifying domesticity, then artmaking might be seen partly as uncovering the true sources of one's life, and telling one's

THE ONLY LANGUAGE SHE KNOWS

The woman downstairs
who is my mother
who yells at me
to come down and
help put a mustard patch on her back
no, three
bends over
I touch the fleshy curve of her back
with my icy hands
She tells me in *thlee-yip*
how to place the bandages across her spine
one by one
commenting in *thlee-yip*
how she is going to *oon go-lai* for me
to make my blood grow
to make my hands warm
She speaks in *thlee yip*
the only language she knows
and reads *The Young China Daily*
in the john
She gets up
pulls her blouse down
and I'm guilty
she hurt her back
mopping
on her day off

Fig. 6 "The Only Language She Knows,"
Poem by Genny Lim. (Winter Place, pg. 52)

GRANDMOTHER

Don't let me forget
to light the candles of my ancestors
and not abandon them to ghosts
who wander deep into my dreams
Don't let me forget
the beauty of the phoenix
When I grasp its luminous tail
it is your piercing bones I find
curving into the lifeline of my own hand
When I look into its slender eyes
it is the deep lagoons of yours I find
drowning tradition

China's past is but a coffin to me
It is a legacy of thirst and hunger
embroidered with the tears and
sweat of centuries
It is a dream
passed down in jade heirlooms and
shut inside small lacquered boxes

I have never kissed your high cheeks
nor stroked your pale, scented feet
yet I know how grandfather must have loved
the subtle furrow of your waist
between his peasant's hands and
the gentle incline of your neck
whenever you cried

I imagine him grieving
when there was nothing left but
the delicate memory of your song
emerging from the ashes
weaving so deep a valley
its echoing slopes
carried you over the wind

Fig. 7 "Grandmother," Poem by Genny Lim. (Winter Place,
pg. 16)

truth. When women's lives, essentially hidden for centuries from the pages of history and philosophy, are revealed, the picture probably won't be as serene and pleasing as we have imagined. Several of these artists defined creativity as closely connected to telling the truth: Finding the sources, following the life as it plays itself out, uncovering and working out of materials that may be painful.

Creativity is identified with that which is true, and authenticity is the hallmark. To the degree that one is able to be truthful, the created artwork is powerful and moving. This approach tends to devalue the masterfully composed work of art in favor of that which might be more crudely wrought, because the value of the piece lies in its truth-telling.

Genny Lim names the quality of truthfulness as a key to her artmaking. "Spiritual means being true to yourself at that moment in time when you're doing your art." At the point, she says, when you're delivering the goods, you've got to be honest with yourself above all. To her creativity is unblocking energy, being an open channel. And the only way to be open is to be honest, with nothing to hide. "And so whatever that energy is, you have to not block it off or be afraid of it, and do whatever it demands of you."

Recently she performed for a faculty presentation during recruitment week at New College. She picked a piece she'd written about a woman in a coma after an accident.

When her turn came, she asked the jazz students who had just played a set to keep playing, and began to read her poetry.

I started working with my voice and trying to use my voice as a way of getting to myself. And since this piece dealt with stripping away, I wanted to use my voice to strip away. How would the voice sound stripped of all the defenses, as if you were totally paralyzed and immobilized?

And all of a sudden, I don't know how the transformation happened, but I started speaking really, really, really fast, and then there was a breakthrough, where the words became pure words, and meaningless. I'd never ever done this before. I started speaking like someone who had no muscle control, with some kind of a palsy or dystrophy.

It was totally unplanned, and then it ended at a perfect place. I found the words, 'I can see you but you can't see me,' and then it ended with her totally coherent and staring directly at the audience--I can see you but you can't see me. And you could have heard a pin drop, and I knew that it had connected. It felt like the energy had come from somewhere else, outside of me, because I was able somehow to get the sense to cooperate.

Liz Lerman experiences similar moments of authenticity when she dances with people in nursing homes.

I have seen some of the most beautiful dances I will ever see in settings like that, and I don't even have to change the standards by which I'm measuring. They're the same standards --a person is moving with incredible intent and authenticity. They have something to say. They have an awareness that what they're doing is expressive. They're doing it the best they can. They're bringing their entire life's commitment to it in that moment. They've spent time on it, they've refined it. There's an audience ready to hear it. And often the courage of that moment, it's almost more than I can bear.

Gloria Anzaldua's metaphor for the creative process is La Llorona, which is usually associated with night,

darkness, evil and transgression. It is like a monster, or demon or beast.

I feel that writing is an act of transgression, especially for people like myself, who are transgressing (not only the literary canon and the dominant culture) but also our own racial and class indoctrination. We exceed the expectations that the culture and class have about women. We're not expected to write--ever.

One of my associations about writing is that I am this kind of writing demon. Yes, there is the positive liberating aspect of writing, but there's also this kind of hunger for language, a search for identity, hunger to make order and sense of the world. Hunger to look at one's life, especially since I do a lot of autobiographical writing, which I think a lot of women of color do. We look back at our lives and we try and make some sense of them.

There is this part of the unconscious, part of the horror of our lives, part of the pathologies of our lives, that has very much to do with looking at and trying to make sense of our lives. We have to look at the pain we have gone through.

La Llorona, by the way, is also the horse. In one of her guises, she's a woman with the face of a horse. And the horse to me has always represented either the instinct, desire, or the power of that kind of energy, which is a very creative energy. A writer, to me, is a woman who utters, wails, screams, howls. We break silence.

The truth of most women's lives is not pretty, not manageable and tidy. Only on the surface, in stereotype, do we appear placid and pleasing. The authenticity that artmaking calls for is drawn forth in pain from the hidden lives of women, all the hidden conditions of woman in our culture. The truth about our lives takes courage to tell, because these lives have been invisible.

In 1988, an image came up in the middle of my writing a scholarly paper on women's oppression and creativity. It

was a woman sucking her own breast. I was rather shocked by it, it seemed so unnatural. All sorts of inner voices rose to protest: "Breast milk is intended for another, not for the woman. It's silly. What does it have to do with this academic paper? It's a prototype of self centeredness. It's infantile. It ties a woman to her reproductive functions." And so on. But I knew enough about the creative process to pay attention to what had, in fact, come up, and to think about what it meant. And I knew enough about internalized oppression to know that whatever sounds silly, heretical and unnatural to me is probably a deep spring of something normal and female that has gotten distorted by patriarchy.

So for the next few months I drew the image, photographed it, wrote poems about it, free associated with it, and two years later it has developed into a central metaphor for my work about women and creativity. It speaks about women needing to nurture themselves, providing time and space for their selves to create in. It speaks about sucking from one's inside one's own stories and perceptions, paying attention to the self, becoming self-identified, and telling our own stories out of our deepest selves. It signifies how it is that women can be liberated by creating--it is to turn to themselves and their own sources and nourish themselves from that source.

For women artists to tell the truth about their lives means that we will come up with some pretty shocking images, some risky performances, some howling words on paper, some very unorthodox dances and dancers.

Artmaking As Creating the Self

The creative process may be just as Bonnie Sherk and M.C. Richards have named it--the process of creating a life. Kathy Jackson's story bears that out. Kathy was a woman oppressed on many fronts: she was young, poor, black, female, not well educated, and disabled. Her life was opened up by her participation in Maryat Lee's Ecotheater. She tells her own story here.

My father was an alcoholic, and I had a hearing disability. I still have it. Because of my hearing disability I didn't get along with a lot of kids. I didn't always hear what was going on and couldn't really carry on a good conversation with people. I always felt sort of a loner. I got myself involved with some older people who made me feel important by involving me with drugs and alcohol. And I was taken advantage of. I got pregnant when I was thirteen years old.

I went to Ohio to have an abortion and found out I was too far gone. I had planned to put him up for adoption and found out that I had toxemia, which is kind of a blood disease, and they had to take him at eight months. After they took him, they told me that I would probably not be able to have any more kids. I decided then that I would keep him, because that might be the only baby I'd ever have.

Then I had a lot of problems with my mother. I didn't get a whole lot of support from anyone. They were always telling me, "Here, this is your responsibility," but then anything I did or said just wasn't right. It wasn't too much longer before I had gotten back into taking drugs and stuff. And that's when I tried to commit suicide.

Then I signed up for the Governor's Summer Youth Program in 1978, hoping to get a job picking up trash. But I evidently had signed up too late, or maybe they requested me to go there because I had a lot of problems in my life, and had tried to commit suicide several times. So anyway, I was assigned to Ecoheater. I didn't know what I was getting into.

A few days after I got there, the lady says we're going to put on a few plays. Right then, I just wanted to leave, it just terrified me. Here I am--I gotta get up there on stage and play some parts. There was one guy who was perfect for John Henry, but he wasn't reliable, sometimes he wouldn't come to work at all. So it was only me and this other black girl who was in the program. So when they thought of casting, they said, 'OK, we don't have no black John Henry male. We either have to have a white John Henry male or a black John Henry female.' So anyway, this other girl, she just didn't play the part too well. So I dressed up and I was playing John Henry.

Maryat just worked with me, telling me not to become John Henry, but just to read the lines. So I did. At the time I didn't read well, and I didn't even know what I was reading. Anyway, I learned the lines, she worked with me, and I played John Henry for three years. [See Figure 8]

I signed up again for the following year, I liked it so much. It was a way of letting me know that I was somebody, it gave me a voice.

Margaret Robison notes how the exigencies of her life compell her creative process. Her subject matter is that which in her inner life demands attention, rather than simply what her mind thinks she might like to explore. Her lived life is the impetus for what she creates. She cited an example.

I went to a writing workshop a couple of weeks ago. When I came I was elated, because I was able to walk without the cane for the first time. And before it began, Pat and I put on some old music and danced. If you can call it dancing, with a paralyzed leg. But we moved a bit. It made me just feel elated. So when the time came to write, I thought I would just write about my joy in being able to dance.



Kathy Jackson as John Henry at the moment of victory. (Photo by Fran Behm)

Fig. 8 Kathy Jackson as John Henry in an Ecotheater Production

As I started to write, I began to cry. What happened was that in that joyful place, that hopeful place--knowing I will get much, much better--in that place I began to remember all the difficult times in the hospital that I had not thought of. So I had to go back and deal with what I had not dealt with. And I spent the next morning just crying, just sobbing. It felt wonderful. That's healing, you see. And now I have released those feelings. So now I'm writing about dancing.

Margaret Robison's art has never been separate from her life--her growth as a person, her interior emotions, her healing. When I asked her what her current work was, she answered,

Right now my work is to heal myself through writing, to work on the stroke book. Throughout my life, I have done many things, but all the same thing really. I've spent many years trying to wipe away the influences and conditioning that obscures me from me. That's really what I do. To see me clearly and to be me clearly. Just to be. Basically, that's what my work is about.

That Margaret's work as a poet was also her life work of healing became even clearer when she suffered a stroke.

I still have the journal that began the day I had the stroke, while I was waiting for help. I was writing to my friends to say that if they were to find me in some awful way, or not being able to speak, or making those crazy, frightening, guttural sounds, that my mind was clear, and not to think I'd gone some place. I thought my brain could be destroyed before anyone came.

And then when I was in the hospital I would write again and again, "Be sure, please, that I have enough pens and paper to write. It keeps my panic under control." To not be able to speak is very frightening, and that's the worst thing. When I was able to really speak again, I didn't feel so claustrophobic. I felt I had been given wings. Before that I felt so upset, so confined in this paralyzed body. But with speech, with speech I was freer.

Margaret's route to the recovery of her arm and leg and voice has literally been tied up with the process of creating a book of poems about the stroke. Her art is tied to her life in this basic a way. In her case, the art/life conjunction is no abstract model, but literal truth.

What exactly does it mean that art and life bleed so together? When what one is working on in one's art is precisely the thing one is confronting in one's personal life? When what is going on in one's body manifests itself as a quilt? When one's life experiences have propelled one to howl and rage in one's writing? Where exactly does Margaret Robison's life stop and her writing begin? Exactly how is the healing of her brain and body taking place? As M.C. asks, is making breakfast art or life, is throwing a pot art or life? Where does Gloria Anzaldua's experience of oppression leave off and her art begin, or are they so woven together that they can't be separated? The way Ecotheater has changed the course of Kathy Jackson's life can't be separated from her facility as an actor, a playwright/-director, a trainer. For Bonnie Sherk, there are no lines; in her life, which is her art, she is an explorer on the edges.

Here the lines are down, the boundaries are blurred. Art and life do begin to look alike. It is no longer as tidy as an artist making art products.

Breaking Boundaries

Media

The ways these artists use their media is one example of how life and art are one. Media are more than art supplies used by the artist to make something. In No More Secondhand Art: Awakening the Artist Within, Peter London defines media as "things that stand between, in the middle of other things." They stand between imagination and expression, between the mind and the act, the hand and the canvas. "Media shuttle between the realm of thought and feeling and the concrete world of things and events. Media are the stuff that permit will to become manifest." He conceives media in an "I-Thou relationship, not as mere inanimate things that have to be manipulated to create an expressive image, but as potential sources of power with which artists can ally themselves. [1989, pp. 169-176]

Media are more than tools, they are partners in transformation. If media are lively things, then the lines that have been set up to distinguish art from craft or visual from verbal art lose their power. The women artists in this group know how to use media in a free way, without a lot of respect for conventional boundaries.

In the case of Pauline Oliveros, working in music means exploring on an elemental level what sound actually is and does. Her work is not about generating finished products which can then be sold, or be entertainment for others.

Rather, her focus is to explore sound, the basic building block of music, and from that exploration diverse products come, perhaps compositions, perhaps recordings, perhaps collaborations. She explores the sounds which capture her attention, rather than focusing on any external requirements or expectations.

Pauline's colleague, performance artist Linda Montano conceived of a seven year art piece, performed once a year. The piece was based around the seven chakras, or energy centers in the body, one being highlighted each year. Her home, which is also the Art/Life Institute in Kingston, NY was the scene of the performance based on the seventh chakra in 1989. Her life stages, her body, and her home--all were art.

Linda had painted the inside of her house purple and invited artist colleagues to bring their videos, music, words, dances. For seven hours on the day of the performance Linda sat in diving gear and a dress slit down the back facing the wall with a 2x4 held upright between her legs. A writer, Ione, constructed a dream tent on the back wall and invited guests to come in. Pauline Oliveros sat in one corner on a round piano stool, dressed in a violet suit, a brown straw hat, and red leather shoes.

She is flanked by two sets of amplifiers in layers, one with a row of red lights, one with green. She is slapping a red flat block of wood with two swinging smaller pieces of wood on either side, slapping it into two mikes on sticks that perch like

heron before her. Then she rings a brassy bell into the other mike, and the room picks up the sound. The red and green instruments rise to it, grab and multiply it over and over as she spurs them on with a foot pedal. The sounds fill the room full.

For the next hour she plays very slowly with the bell and a wooden mallet. She tips up the bell as if to examine its clapper, and it makes clicking sounds. She runs her finger round and round the lip of the bell. The amps blow every small sound up big. Pauline sits like a monk on her stool, doing what she calls deep listening. She is playing around, paying attention, opening up to every sound she hears. When she is not tapping or ringing something, she keeps her head down and the hat covers her face.

Now she pulls the bell's clapper to its side with her finger. She taps the side of the bell with her fingernail. How can she get so many different sounds out of a bell not even rung! From Ione's Dream Tent a tape plays of a woman telling a dream. "Dr. Jack said my back is completely out. He adjusted it....My mother and I are in bed together...."

Pauline reacts to the sounds of the tape by making sounds like the chattering of old teeth. Now she slides the handle of the wood thing around the rim of the bell, and the room is filled with sounds sliding into one another. Now Pauline is rubbing the bell onto her belly, curling it around and round. So slow, so careful an exploration. This is a musician's musician, I think, interested in the bare bones of music, the raw sound, the elements, the atoms, the quarks. And willing to explore them over and over. This is a lover of essences.

She picks up her accordian now and begins to play with it with her eyes closed. She plays a fifth, like an orchestra tuning up. Now she taps on the keys without opening the bellows and a little tiny tap with no real tone comes out. The amps reverb this small sound, bounce it between the walls. Now she unfolds the thing without playing keys. She is exploring the details. This art piece will go on for seven hours.

[See Figure 9]

Later I asked her what she was doing sitting there all those hours. "I'm listening," she said. "I'm having a good time. I'm listening to the sound and hearing what's coming back from the delayed processing and reacting. I'm just having a great time."

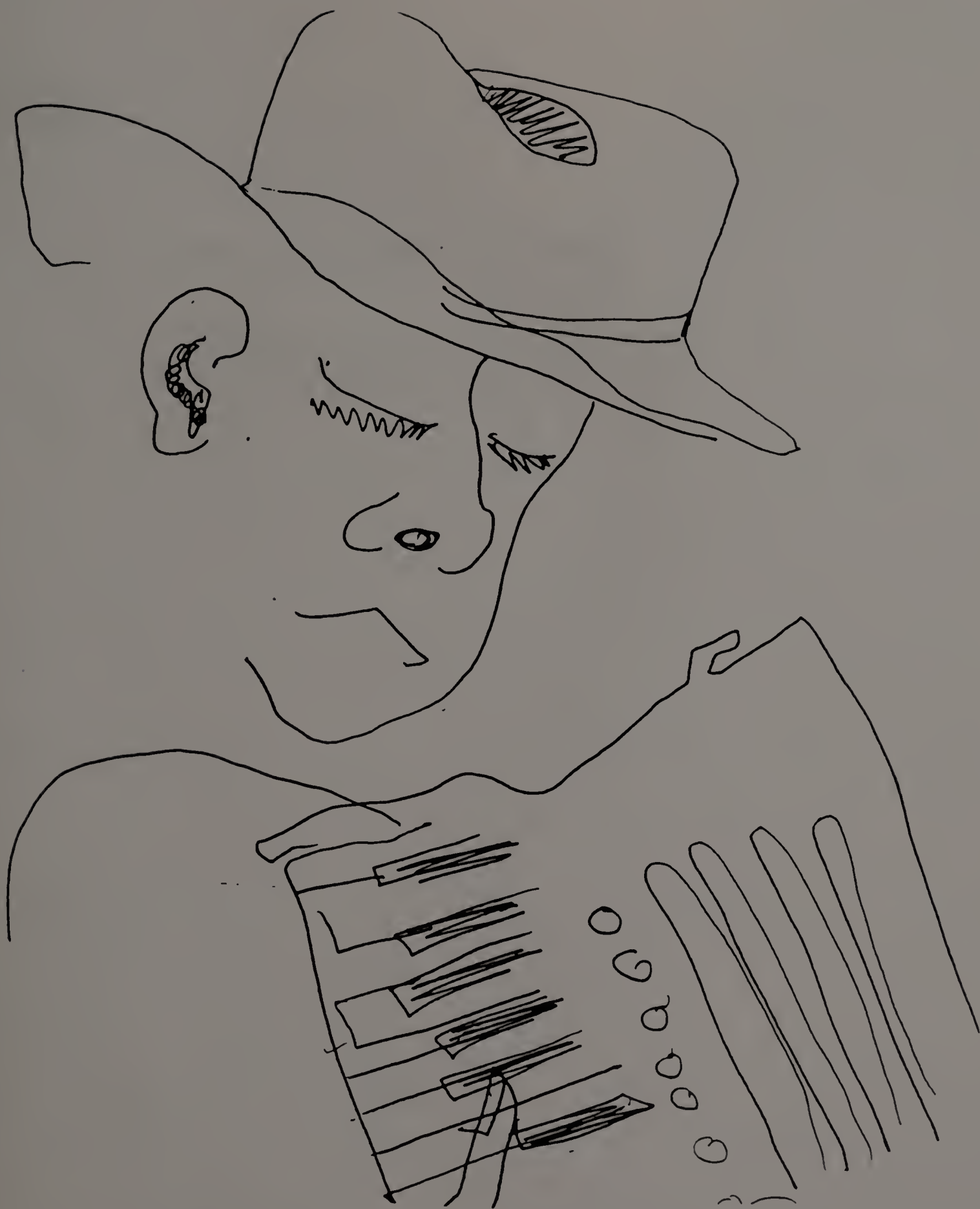


Fig. 9 Drawing of Pauline Oliveros in Performance by Mary Clare Powell

"You're playing?"

"Of course. I'm trying to create an environment that other people can enjoy, but also that I can have a good time in."

She says she has always been tuned to her own inner ear, in addition to all the influences that she heard. She has always been interested in something that she'd never heard before, not in the stuff she could hear all the time. "I'm still that way, she said. "I'm delighted if I can hear something that I haven't heard before."

The focus of the creative process for Pauline is listening to new sounds, and responding, engaging with the basic elements of her media. What emerges from that playing around takes many different forms; the forms don't matter as much as the exploration. She is regardless of the boundaries around the forms.

For a writer like Gloria Anzaldua and a dancer like Liz Lerman, taking down the boundaries means chipping away at the fine distinctions that have come to separate fiction from poetry, autobiography from fiction, or in Liz's case, content from dance, or dancers from teachers of dance.

For Gloria Anzaldua, eliminating the boundaries between various forms of writing is not just a personal preference but a political necessity. It means not categorizing literature into the primary and the secondary, high and low literary forms, in and out of the canon. She described her

current negotiations about her dissertation, about canonical and non-canonical texts.

There's this kind of wanting to keep the students in a kind of tradition, a kind of western tradition of literature, and they're so resistant to anything that's different. They claim that literature is novels and short stories and poetry, and theory and criticism. Autobiography is not literature. And...what I'm trying to do in my writing is to try and blur the borders. I don't consider one primary and the other secondary. In my own writing, they're both primary.

In Borderlands/La Frontera, Gloria uses the image of the borderland, inhabited by the mestiza, to describe her intentions to "blur the borders." First she evokes the literal U.S.-Mexican border, "where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country--a border culture." Borders, she says, are set up to separate us from them, so "a borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by an unnatural boundary, inhabited by "the prohibited and the forbidden." "Los atravesados lives here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal.'" [1987, p. 3]

In our society los atravesados are relegated to the borderland, "to the margins, to the interfaces between two worlds," to the barrios, the ghettos, the fringes of university life and classrooms--in the middle of a white

frame of reference. And writing from the borderlands is often in "hybrid style: poetry, description, essay--we cross genres, cross the borders." [See Figure 10] [Trivia, 1989, pp. 48-49]

Liz Lerman is interested in exactly the same blurring of boundaries. She deplores how the dance world conceives and maintains distinctions between various types of dancers and dancing.

I think dance--art, actually--has the possibility of being one of the last places of integrating a lot of functions, as opposed to separating a lot of functions. Unfortunately, what has happened in dance is that you can either be a dance therapist, or a dance anthropologist, or you can do what they call liturgical dance, or agitprop dance. You can be a post modern dancer, or a ballet dancer, or a social dancer, or an ethnic dancer. But dance really suffers, because it doesn't have any practitioners who are in touch with more than one of those things. And that denies it its very strength.

And it drives me crazy when they ask me to separate the teaching function from the performing function. You know, if you want to study choreography in this country, you can't get on an educational track in college. You have to choose--choreography or teaching. This means that we get bad choreographers and bad teachers. And if you want to be a dance therapist, forget it. You never dance. And you pay a hefty price for leaving. As, and my point is, does dance. It pays a hefty price for their leaving.

So one of the strongest messages that I try to keep putting out to people is to integrate, integrate, integrate. [See Figure 11]

Also, the way Liz deals with the supposedly abstract medium of dance reflects her defiance of dance as a non-content art form. She has decided that she wants her dances to have literal content, and so they do. She has choreographed work dealing with the Department of Defense

To live in the Borderlands means you

are neither *hispana india negra española*
ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata, half-breed
caught in the crossfire between camps
while carrying all five races on your back
not knowing which side to turn to, run from;

To live in the Borderlands means knowing
that the *india* in you, betrayed for 500 years,
is no longer speaking to you,
that *mexicanas* call you *rajetas*,
that denying the Anglo inside you
is as bad as having denied the Indian or Black;

Cuando vives en la frontera
people walk through you, the wind steals your voice,
you're a *burra, buey, scapegoat*,
forerunner of a new race,
half and half—both woman and man, neither—
a new gender;

To live in the Borderlands means to
put *chile* in the borscht,
eat whole wheat *tortillas*,
speak Tex-Mex with a Brooklyn accent;
be stopped by *la migra* at the border checkpoints;

Living in the Borderlands means you fight hard to
resist the gold elixer beckoning from the bottle,
the pull of the gun barrel,
the rope crushing the hollow of your throat;

In the Borderlands
you are the battleground
where enemies are kin to each other;
you are at home, a stranger,
the border disputes have been settled
the volley of shots have shattered the truce
you are wounded, lost in action
dead, fighting back;

To live in the Borderlands means
the mill with the razor white teeth wants to shred off
your olive-red skin, crush out the kernel, your heart
pound you pinch you roll you out
smelling like white bread but dead;

To survive the Borderlands
you must live *sin fronteras*
be a crossroads.

gabacha—a Chicano term for a white woman
rajetas—literally, "split," that is, having betrayed your word
burra—donkey
buey—oxen
sin fronteras—without borders

Fig. 10 "To live in the Borderlands means you,"
Poem by Gloria Anzaldúa. (Borderlands /
La Frontera, pg. 194.)

DANCE EXCHANGE

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS FOR SENIOR ADULTS AND SPECIAL POPULATIONS

The Dance Exchange Community Programs for Senior Adults & Special Populations implement our philosophy that dance belongs to all members of the community. By tradition, dance is a means of sharing and communicating between people about communal, as well as personal, experience. When older people dance, two stereotypes are exploded: the image of what a typical dancer looks like, and the image of what a senior adult is and can do. When people in special situations (such as schools or hospitals) dance, their art acts as a reminder of the power and hope possessed by active participants in a community.

Our programs began when Liz Lerman started teaching one class a week at the Roosevelt Hotel for Senior Citizens in 1975. Since then, our work has expanded to include four major areas of activity:

PERFORMANCES IN THE COMMUNITY

In addition to performances in traditional theatres and performing arts centers, the Dance Exchange's two companies — Liz Lerman/Exchange and Dancers of the Third Age — offer informal performances in a variety of settings. These performances take place in schools, hospitals, prisons, nursing homes, senior centers, clubs and libraries for a wide range of audiences. Their appeal stems from what one critic described as *"a rare example of give and take between the audience and the stage."* The performances require little technical support.

CLASSES FOR SENIORS

We currently conduct several weekly classes for senior adults throughout the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. These classes reach over 200 seniors who represent a broad spectrum of racial, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Class sites are frequently attended by dance students and teachers who are training to work in dance for the elderly. A guiding concept in our dance work with the elderly is that we are offering an artistically oriented experience — the process of creating movement for aesthetic and expressive purposes, as opposed to a therapeutic approach. Because of this, improvisation and informal performance have evolved as the primary features and natural goals of our classes.

CLASSES FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

In addition to classes for senior adults, Dance Exchange reaches many people who, for various reasons, do not have easy access to the performing arts. This includes the mentally or physically handicapped, hospitalized individuals and the incarcerated. Our aim, as with older adults, is to provide opportunities for people to express themselves creatively through movement. Dance can be used as a tool to explore in a positive way an individual's personal history and his or her relation to society. Speaking of special populations, we also do a lot of work with professional dancers.

SPECIAL TRAINING

The combination of physical and creative energies found in dance succeeds in motivating and inspiring activity and interaction in people who are often isolated and inactive. Because of this, we consider the education and training of others in the techniques and philosophies of our community dance program to be an important part of our work. Over the years, we have found that people who work with special populations (therapists, activity directors, doctors and nurses,

Fig. 11 Dance Exchange Community Programs

Budget, Jesse Helms, the National Endowment for the Arts and censorship, men and their war rituals, time, US--Soviet relations, and other topical subjects. Some of her choreography is unashamedly literal. [See Figure 12]

You want to be able to be literal when you want to be literal. You want access to that for its power. But that's been trained out of us for a long time. I try to imagine our ancestors in tribal dancing when they were being lions. I don't think they were pretending. I think they were the animals. I think they became the animals, and that belief was so strong that the power was too much to bear. That's why they did it only once a year. The job in our work is to find out how to be literal with that kind of power.

In Liz's political pieces, she hopes to allow people to have feelings and information at the same time, which is not frequent in our culture. We're supposed to get our feelings from art and our information from the news, but she wants to put those things together again. [See Figure 13]

Collaboration

Just as these artists are breaking down boundaries between various art media, they are also crossing lines between their own creative process and that of others. Collaboration is a strong and frequent theme in their work. Contrary to the old saw about art created by a committee, Bonnie Sherk believes that "all art is collaborative." Collaboration not only means people working together, but "being influenced at all times by all sorts of things,

DESCRIPTION OF SOLOS

DANCE EXCHANGE

JOURNEY (1980)

"Journey" uses as text an excerpt from Peter Handke's *Self Accusation*. It combines the austere and beautiful language with a gestural vocabulary that illuminates the surprising discovery of the self.

"With her fuzzy hair, childlike voice and sturdy delivery, Liz Lerman is the most endearing of performers . . . That singular presence illuminated her Journey."

— THE NEW YORK TIMES

"A Tour de force."

— THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

TWO BY NIRENSKA: EXITS and SNOW IN SIBERIA

Pola Nirenska was born in Poland in 1910 and graduated with first honors from the Mary Wigman School. She became an internationally acclaimed dancer, and is presently a choreographer. *Exits* was first made in 1953, and re-choreographed for Ms. Lerman in 1982. It is based on the Dylan Thomas line "Do not go gently into that dark night." *Snow in Siberia* was created as part of a full evening work, *Russia*, but it stands alone as a stark and haunting view of isolation.

"A wonderful contrast in style to Lerman's own work. . . one senses within the isolation, a deep connection to humanity."

— ATLANTA

WHO'S ON FIRST? (1978)

A very serious dance to a very funny monologue which addresses the highly charged question of why sports are more popular than art.

"Wonderful . . . the elements are so simple. The dance engages our feelings on a level of happiness that transcends satire."

— THE WASHINGTON REVIEW OF THE ARTS

MYTH, MYSTERY, DREAM AND STOLEN LIGHTNING (1987) Choreographed by Tish Carter

"Playful' and 'Jungian' may not sound like compatible traits, but Carter has made them so in this whimsically esoteric charade about primitive creation myths and their echoes in modern consciousness . . . the effect is disarmingly thought-provoking."

— THE WASHINGTON POST

DOCUDANCE 1983: Nine Short Dances About the Defense Budget and Other Military Matters

This dance explores various aspects of the defense budget including statistics, weapons systems, defense contractors, and the arms race. The dances are both funny and scary.

"It is Lerman's Nine Short Dances that make one realize that activism and artistry can sleep together in the same bed and still wake up good friends the morning after. Liz Lerman. . . long may she wave."

— THE SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER

"Simple, but staggeringly powerful."

— THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

"Under Lerman's witty scrutiny, the silliness and danger of the world around us come clear."

— SOUTHLINE

For more information on
Liz Lerman, call 202-
232-0833.

"A mesmerizing, lyrical solo full of political reminders, wisps of sentiment, evocative gestures. . ."

— THE VILLAGE VOICE

"Simple, effective and intelligent . . . the funniest form of political satire I have ever seen."

— DAGERS NYHTER (STOCKHOLM)

Fig. 12 Dance Exchange Description of Solos

DANCE EXCHANGE

DESCRIPTION OF DANCES

STILL CROSSING (1988)

Commissioned by New York's Dancing in the Streets for the French/American Dance Exchange at the Statue of Liberty, *Still Crossing* evokes the struggles of immigrants and the beauty of simple human acts.

"A visionary work of extraordinary eloquence . . . deeply moving . . . Still Crossing drew tears from more than one observer."

—THE NEW YORK TIMES

"Incredibly moving . . . for me, it was like seeing flesh made spirit, or spirit made flesh — if you can tell the difference. I can't."

—THE VILLAGE VOICE

"Here Lerman has created one of her most moving works . . . The imagery remains long after the dancers have left the stage.."

—WASHINGTON DANCEVIEW

"Still Crossing had a gently urgent force, instilled with hope and majesty."

—CHICAGO READER

"A lyrical, penetrating ode to immigrants crossing the ocean for a new life."

—BOSTON HERALD

RUSSIA: FOOTNOTES TO A HISTORY (1985-87)

A two-hour dance piece that incorporates movement, language, period and original music, history and fables, and is designed to immerse an American audience into the Russian experience. It takes a broad view of that experience, exposing some of the more obvious themes of Russian history. Short stories and fables are intertwined with historical episodes to reflect a people's response to political events. In addition to the history and short fables, there is a third level to the piece which is incorporated through a series of footnotes delivered by the choreographer; this allows for a contemporary American response of a more personal nature.

"Emotionally riveting . . . wrenchingly beautiful . . . Russia continues to pose the kinds of hard questions Lerman has been investigating for more than a decade — not about international politics, but rather the nature of dance, and its relationship to reality. By casting an unconventional group of dancers, by dealing with unexpected subject matter, and using many movements adapted from 'real life,' Lerman makes us shiver and guffaw. Most remarkable of all, she shows us how to SEE differently."

—WASHINGTON DANCEVIEW

"Lerman's finest realization thus far of the concept of a thematic, multimedia epic."

—THE WASHINGTON POST

PRIVILEGE FOR TWO OLDER WOMEN (1983)

Four generations of women are represented in this very quiet, slow dance. The score by Richard Lerman is for amplified knitting needles, thimbles, other household objects and trombone. The dance itself is based on the movements of two older women (ages 61 and 86) who have danced with the Dance Exchange for ten years.

"A touching portrait of the daily routines and rituals of women of all ages."

—THE WASHINGTON TIMES

"This is the real thing, larger than life, and it can't be imitated."

—AFTER DARK

Fig. 13 Dance Exchange Description of Dances

collaborating with the past, present, and future. The whole cultural moment, the environmental moment."

One of Pauline Oliveros' recent pieces, "Dream Horse Spiel," was not only a collaboration among various types of artists, but drew from several hundred sources for its material, thus making many people unintentional collaborators.

She began with her text, "really a list of all the words you say with horse, like sawhorse, or horsesplay, or seahorse, or horse hooves." Additional text came from dreams and stories about horses which she'd collected from people from various parts of the world speaking in their native languages. She sees the horse as a very powerful metaphor which is disappearing from our daily life. "It's a relationship to an aspect of nature," she says, "an aspect that reflects tremendous change in our century."

Having received a commission for the piece from West German Radio, Pauline then began work with a group of dancers in Amsterdam. For the performance at the Whitney Museum in New York there were four vocalists--one actress, two singers and a dancer who vocalized. They each recited the text in four languages, and the actress delivered funny one-liners. Pauline created the sounds by processing and mixing. Stories on tape were added in, including a current newspaper story about computer jockeys; there were horse sound effects, and Kundalini movements by the dancer. "What

I told them in rehearsal was that we were to create an environment in which the audience could experience their own theater mentally, in their own imaginations and memory. You hear an item and then the imagery has a chance to form."

Genny Lim is a relentless collaborator in her latest series of plays produced in San Francisco. She did XX partly so she could "explore the idea of interdisciplinary collaboration." She worked with a Tamano, a Butoh dancer. Butoh she calls "a dance of darkness," going back to the primal, the roots, where the dancers wear white powdered faces and move very slowly and painfully. She also worked with a woman who studied Kyogen, comic Japanese theater, which is very different from Butoh. The third collaborator was a musician, Fred Ho, who explores jazz through the idiom of Chinese opera. He incorporated a lot of Cantonese opera instruments and percussion into the piece.

The hardest thing to do in the very beginning was to explain the concept. It had never been done before, and people really didn't have any idea what I wanted visually, or what I really wanted to say by combining all these different forms. The whole idea was that form and content should really be one and the same thing. It was very, very powerful and very controversial.

For other plays, Genny has collaborated with a doll sculptor, other jazz musicians, filmmakers, and multi-media theater people. For a multi-cultural, multi-media performing arts festival in San Francisco in fall, 1990, she collaborated with John Jang and his Pan Asian Arkestra.

Their performance would be put together with that of musician Max Roach and poet Sonia Sanchez, from the east coast. And John Santos, who heads up a band called Machete (Afro-Cuban sound) would sing with a Puerto Rican poet, Victor Hernandez Cruz. Each segment was a separate entity, but they were put together for the festival.

Liz Lerman and the Dance Exchange engage in regular collaboration as they create dances. The ideas for the dances come from the whole company, Liz says, though Liz is the choreographer and director.

[In the piece on censorship] I had given them a phrase of my movement, and then asked them to think about something that they were really offended by, then do movements of how they felt when they were offended. Tom Dwyer came up with this one--the finger. I found that really offensive, and I was about to edit it out of the piece when I realized that that's what the piece was about. I said, 'Wait a minute! Who has finger stories?' Well, we got incredible finger stories, really funny ones, and that became a thread in the dance.

In a similar vein, Maryat Lee believed that the essence of the Ecotheater process was a collaborative one. The playwright-director collaborated actively and purposely both with people who gave their oral histories, and the non-actors who eventually acted out the stories. Sometimes the storytellers and the actors were the same people, but not necessarily.

First of all she believed that the split between playwright and director should never have occurred. The playwright was not just someone who provided a written set

of lines, then disappeared from the process. Neither was the director a person who could play God with the playwright's play and the bodies and voices of actors. Rather, the functions overlapped. And the purpose of the whole endeavor was not entertainment, but to "provide a form where people could come through."

Maryat believed that the stage could be a safe place, such safety coming from the intervention of the playwright / director, who would take a story from a person's oral history, write it as a scene, and give it back to them. This she believed was not the same as playing a character, but was a blend: this is me, this isn't me. The audience doesn't know which is which, and the resulting ambiguity helps make the stage safe.

Ecoteater is designed to unite playwriting, directing and performance into a single force. The performers are the Public. They live next door. They do not want to act. Once they believe we don't want to "do theater," that we don't want them to imitate what's on TV, once they believe they can be who they are in the safety of the stage, a wonderful thing begins to happen. These performers are not talking about, or acting out, or imitating the meaning of life. They are experiencing it in front of our eyes, and they are incandescent.

When the playwright-directors, almost by accident, begin to discover this ever-so-soft voice in ordinary people, they gape in astonishment at the clarity and color of that which they wrote now coming from the mouths of these people freed even for a second on stage to BE, and the writing turns around. Playwrights began to write for that voice, or, write out of that voice. And when the performer reads what is written specifically for him or her in this inspired mode, the performer is truly inspired, and another leap is made.

"By working together," Maryat wrote in "A New Look at Playwriting" in The American Voice, "the playwright and company develop an esprit as they recreate scenes from their own lives and from the history of their community. They become a natural unit, an ensemble, and the risk is shared." [1986, p 153] [See Figure 14]

What results from this collaboration is very moving. One night I sat underneath a cool, late summer sky, and watched the citizens of Hinton, WV, perform "The Hinton Play." The setting was Pipestem State Park, and the audience was tourists and campers. There wasn't a sound. Lucinda Ayers, for twenty years a single parent with four children, made me weep when she remembered the loveless life of a waiting wife. And Joe Bigony, part owner of Hinton Builder's Supply and vice president of the Chamber of Commerce, sat on a stool and thought out loud about the man who "sold out his family for things." I saw myself in their lives.

And now, even after Maryat's death in 1989, this model of theater goes on. Kathy Jackson, Maryat's heir, creates the same powerful theater from the stories of the young people she works with. Based on the kid's lives, they produce several different scenes. First Kathy teaches the kids how to interview each other, in the process getting to know who they all are and building trust among them. The stories they tell each other are common: date rape, being



photo by Fran Belin

MARYAT LEE, AT LEFT, TALKING TO MYRTLE HOSEY, ONE OF THE PEOPLE LEE USED AS THE BASIS FOR THE CHARACTER OLE MIZ DACEY

Fig. 14 Maryat Lee, Founder of Ecotheater

sexually abused by fathers, drugs. Still working together, the group writes scenes from the various lives, which often by that time have come to resemble one life. Then some of the teenagers choose scenes they will act in, and the process of assembling the finished theater piece begins.

In the area of collaborative work these women artists are radical, because they break directly into the myth of the solitary artist who makes art in privacy and quiet, alone and self absorbed. They put forth another idea about a shared creative process. Suzi Gablick in "Making Art As If the World Mattered," writes, "Once relationship is given greater priority, art embodies more aliveness and collaboration; partnership necessitates a willingness to understand art in more living terms. It may even come to be seen, not as the solitary process it has been since the Renaissance, but as something we do with others." [1989, p. 74]

Artist and Audience

For the women artists who work in performance arts, collaboration implies both a changed view of performance (a safe space where people can come through), and a changed view of audience. Not only in motivations, sources, and uses of media are boundaries challenged, but in this last phase of the creative process, where the product is offered. In the performance work of these women, the notion of the

superstar performing before the envious audience--"sitting stuffed on the sidelines with their endless misery with glassy admiring eyes" (described in the headnote to this paper by Maryat Lee) disappears.

Maryat wrote that in the Ecotheater concept the "barrier between audience and actor just isn't there." She first saw it in her street theater productions in New York City, where the people on the street watching the play "just didn't have the audience role implanted," and would interact with the people on stage. She found herself, instead of dealing with a few instruments up on the stage, dealing with three or four hundred instruments that were somehow in this thing together. "In comparison," she noted, "an indoor audience seems to be like little papers, pretending that they're not there."

Later in front yards, hollows, on the streets of Appalachian towns, and finally at the state park, she noted how the new audience was sort of "flabbergasted, in a way, sort of knocked off their roles. They didn't act like an audience. It was almost as if by identifying with these plain people up there, who took their roles off, the audience, in a sense, also took a chance in removing their role as audience. I've seen couples who come up afterwards, and the woman starts to talk, and the man looks at her like, 'My God! Where's that coming from? Do I know this woman?' And vice versa."

Maryat speculated in an Ecotheater newsletter about whether it was possible to provide a place where theater actor and audience can, within the safety of form, remove the weight of roles and risk a glimpse of what hides behind the masks and roles. She suspects that religion and theater were once joined at precisely this nexus.

Liz Lerman alters her dance company's relationship to the audience by regularly performing works in progress. It allows her to step out of herself and see things from another perspective. Also she thinks a lot of things jell in performance that she can't tell without an audience. "I also know that I never get things right the first time, so I may as well admit that, and start educating my audiences to help me." Sometimes she does discussions, and always she requests letters. "In the Russia piece, the letters ended up being in the piece. That was a great way to acknowledge what audiences were feeling."

Genny Lim is trying to create new audiences for her work and other experimental theater.

What I'm trying to do in theater, I find, has no audience, because by and large people are still under the notion that theater has to be a certain way. And so there's a whole alternative movement that's being ignored. What better way to develop audiences for alternative theater than to teach people to do theater in an alternative way that embraces different philosophical stances?

Our theater today is so passive. There is always something missing--the soul of theater, and how it actually connects with the communities. It isn't connected socially and politically with the heartbeat of the people.

In "The Wings of Privacy," feminist art critic Lucy Lippard notes the circumstances in which art is made in this society: "a commercial market supported by the great American values of planned obsolescence, a greed for constant novelty, and a notion of 'quality' defined and imposed from above by a single class." The result, she says, is the artist alienated from the audience, the artist "'expressing' an experience unfamiliar or irrelevant to most people." She notes that in ancient and native societies the arts had healing powers and provided connective tissue among social and spiritual forces. [1988, unpaginated] These women theater artists reassert such connective tissue.

These women artists call into questions the distinctions on which the artmaking enterprise in our culture rests. They change the whole undertaking really, from the way the creative process is experienced to the way artists relate to their audiences. Perhaps women's view of the world, if there can be said to be any such thing, is a world where membranes are permeable, and things are connected and undifferentiated at the core. Where we know that things appear discrete and clear cut only because human beings have applied their systems to them. The creative process of these women might represent another whole way of responding to life, and to the creative impulse--one of openness and flow rather than boundaries and categories. One of inclusion and nurturing. Perhaps a "womanly way" of

creating would be a diffused process not just limited to self expression and self achievement, but available to others, because the process itself is so life-giving. And of course, such a "womanly way" is not limited to the female gender.

The women in this group are innovators, pushers at the boundaries; they just don't play the art game within the conventional framework. Instead they offer an alternative idea of what it means to be creative, to use media to create through, to form art products to be shared with audiences. And it is this alternative, no matter what its sources, that breaks into the ways we have conceived of human creativity. Boundaries are literally breached, and we must examine a whole new paradigm of the creative experience.

CHAPTER 6

THE ARTIST IN SOCIETY

In the last chapter I described how this group of women artists experience the creative process; in this chapter I turn to how they see the society and the world they live in. These artists exist in a time and place; they come from various classes, racial groups, and ethnic heritages. How do they define the larger context of their lives? How are they connected to the larger art movements of their day? How do they see the artist's function in society, and their own function? Does their work enable social change, and if so, how? These were some of the questions I asked.

I sought to understand their perception of the creative process first, and second their social vision, believing that the conjunction of those two areas would shed light on why they are artist-educators, why they facilitate the creativity of others.

The Social Vision of These Artists

A social vision, as I am using the term, is based on some analysis of social realities--noting the impact of class, race, gender and age on individuals and groups. Often this analysis is based on personal experience of social discrimination. A social vision may be grounded in a

spiritual understanding of how human events are connected to larger meanings and realities. This kind of spirituality is not separated from political, social, cultural, and personal aspects of life, but instead provides a bedrock for them. For my interviews, I developed several questions intended to reveal the social visions. I also drew further conclusions about their social visions by looking at how these artists spend their time, energy, and money; how they describe their working processes; how they live their lives. One obvious example is M.C. Richards, who lives in an intentional community of mentally handicapped adults and other adults and children who care for them, in several farm houses in the Pennsylvania countryside, growing organic food, rooted in anthroposophical philosophy. She functions as community member, household member, and artist. From visiting with her for two days and watching her at work, as well as talking with her, I concluded certain things about her social vision.

The social vision of this group of women is no monolithic thing, but there are some common threads. First, these artists tend to define themselves as part of a whole. Of course everyone is part of some whole, but these women artists consciously name such a unity. Once again, the boundaries are down, and their vision is large and inclusive. Second, these artists tend to locate themselves on the periphery of the culture and even of of the various

art worlds they inhabit. Often they are on the edge because they choose to be. And third, these artists tend to see themselves as change agents, bringing about some type of social transformation.

Part of the Whole

For Gloria Anzaldua and Bonnie Sherk, the quality of wholeness grows from their spiritual understanding. Gloria's experiences of living in nature, in Mexican and Indian cultures, meant that she does not make separations between nature and culture.

In my growing up in a ranch settlement, a very rural, farming community, there was a lot of living in the landscape, living with nature, living with other realities. And a lot of folklore and supernatural in the Mexican, in the Indian. If you left your windows open at night, a malagra would come in, the evil wind. There were spirits riding the wind.

I did not make the separations between nature and culture, and I didn't make the separation between the soul, the mind and the body. Very early on, they were all related to me. At the age of seven I came into contact with the white world and the schools, and I started getting white Anglo-American, European culture, literature, and ideology. And that frame of reference splits you; it tries to fragment the body from the mind, the emotions from rationality. I write a lot about that, that kind of forced...putting the walls up between different aspects of personhood.

For Gloria, her awareness of "the world of ideas, the world of the imagination, the world of fantasies, and the spiritual world--the world of nature, the world of the wind, and rain" became connected with her being a woman. "I think that a woman is right at the crossroads between nature and

culture, the supernatural, the natural, and the unnatural. She's a biological entity, she bleeds, she can reproduce, she's close to nature, animals." For her, there are natural connections between spirituality, the world of the imagination and ideas, and women and woman's body.

Bonnie Sherk describes a similar sense of oneness and connection, also stemming from her childhood.

There's our intellect, and there's our body, and there's spirit. And what I'm interested is in integrating all those elements into beingness, and into work that I create. Having a holistic understanding.

When I was very young, I have the memory of putting out my arms and embracing the whole world. "I love the whole world," I said. I felt very at one at that early age, and it wasn't just an idea, but a feeling.

This sense of connection with all, an organic flow of spirit and matter, is reflected in Pauline Oliveros' term "attunement."

Attunement? Instruments are tuned, spaces are tuned, ensemble interactions are tuned, everything has to do with tuning. There's tuning in different ways. You see it at football games, or you go to a horse race and you'll be on your feet, shouting, when you get tuned in. And the same thing happens more subtly and on different levels. There are deeper and deeper levels to tune to.

The equanimity that I'm talking about has to do with spirit. Spirit is a word that is used in a lot of ways: there's a spirited horse, or the spirit of the moment, or a lack of spirit. Spirituality seems to be really connected deeply to giving and receiving, and this can be interpreted on many levels.

This need to attune is addressed by Pauline in her work, Sonic Meditations, created at the end of the sixties.

These tapes required nothing except people together somewhere to do them. "Teach Yourself to Fly" was a simple piece about observation and breath, breathing and allowing the vocal chords to vibrate in any manner natural to the breath cycle. This allowed people, singly or in a group, to explore voice without feeling the need to sing. Pauline worked with a group of women for several years; they met in silence, did massage, journaled, and shared dreams. Then they did a sonic meditation. Other exercises that she does with groups include an "environmental dialogue," listening to whatever is going on, and then blending with it, building sound.

For Deborah Kruger, the sense of oneness is related to her Jewish tradition. Being an artist is a spiritual experience, she believes, a holy activity outside this world. The spiritual is set aside from ordinary time and life, like the Sabbath is set aside from the world of work, but also "the most spiritual times are in the midst of profane, common life." She described eating breakfast with her kids when suddenly her daughter spotted the moon at 7:30 am, and everyone forgot about the cereal spilled on the floor, and they sat and told moon stories. This, she says, was a spiritual experience, a time and space when life was whole and seamless.

M.C. Richards sees the world of spirit embedded in the matter of everyday life.

I remember the day, probably more than twenty years ago, when I went to my studio to work and stood momentarily gripped by a deep longing I didn't understand. I want to live the religious life, I was saying. What was that inner question all about? The angel on the compost pile said not to worry about it.

The word "religious." It comes from the Latin, "re" and "ligio," "again" and "to connect." To reconnect: the human spirit with spirit in the universe. To come into life from the inside. To be fed by the clay as by a divine soup!

Now I can live the religious life wherever I am. A religious community feels the presence in its daily life of something more than the peeling of potatoes, or the hoeing of corn. These are actually implicit acts of praise. It's as if our raking were scratching the backs of the gods. We can live inwardly and outwardly, like a clay vessel. [See Figure 15]

For these women artists, life is of a piece: spirit and flesh, daily and extraordinary life. Their perception of the context they live within is vast and without ordinary boundaries, where one thing is separated neatly from another thing. One opens one's arms wide for an embrace of all life, one tunes in, one notices the holy in the midst of breakfast. Nature and culture cohere.

From the Periphery

At the same time as these artists view themselves part of a whole scheme of things, they also locate their position on or near the periphery of society. Mostly, they occupy these positions by choice, by virtue of where their work takes them. Artists who follow where their lives/art leads,



Fig. 15 M.C. Richards, Potter, Poet, Teacher

who purposely disregard boundaries between artist and artist by collaborating, and between artist and audience in performance, are not going to get all the rewards of the art world. They see the whole artmaking enterprise quite differently, perhaps best described as an exploration or investigation of reality. Most of the women to whom I asked the question, "What's your relation to the mainstream art or dance or music or theater or literary world?" said they were on the edge. They wanted the recognition, of course, and in some cases, they were getting it. But they did not locate themselves in the center.

Pauline Oliveros:

There's the industrial, commercial, pop world of music, then there's the symphonic kind of world, which includes opera and ballet, and then there's the academic world of new music. I'm pretty much outside all of them these days.

My music has taken me to places that are not mainstream. I'm fairly well known in the establishment as well as in academia; they study my music in schools. But because of the nature of what I do, I'm not invited to things that others who use more conventional means are.

I think I would like validation just as much as anyone else. But if I don't get it, that's not going to stop me from doing what I do. [See Figure 16]

M.C. Richards:

I asked them [when honored at a conference of the Association for Ceramics Teachers] what I was being given the award for. The man who introduced me went on in a way that suggested that it was all overdue, and I thought, well, that's interesting, why would he think that? As if there's some thought that I'd been a presence in the overall scene, both through my writing, and through my work.

There are two strong friendships that have probably influenced my relationship to the arts a lot-- with John Cage and Merce Cunningham. I met them when I first came to Black Mountain College, and we've been

PAULINE OLIVEROS

"The best came first with Pauline Oliveros in one of her mystical, shimmering sonic meditations... It was intense and moving."

"On some level, music, sound, consciousness and religion are all one, and she would seem to be very close to that level."

--The New York Times

Composer, performer, author, philosopher—Pauline Oliveros has influenced American music extensively through her works and with improvisation, electronic music, teaching, myth and meditation.

Whether it's the stage of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. or underground caverns in the U.S. and Europe, New Music America Festivals or countless performances in concert halls & performance spaces worldwide, Pauline Oliveros has given music a new dimension. From her early years as the first Director of the Tape Music Center at Mills College to a fourteen year tenure as Professor of Music at the University of California at San Diego, and from *Sonic Meditations* to *Deep Listening*, her innovations have already established a place for her in music history.

As the composer of *Sonic Meditations*, she is considered the originator of today's meditational music. Her music and philosophies have served as an inspiration and guide to *Deep Listening*—influencing artists, musicians, and healers who use the meditative process.

Deep Listening for Oliveros in performance involves risky, breath taking commitment to interaction in the moment. While perceiving any and all sounds as musical material, whatever their source, her remarkable sound insights bring new depth to audience perceptions.



Oliveros uses a custom *expanded* accordion, uniquely tuned in two different systems of just intonation. Her performances with composer/electronicist Panaiotis, founder and president of PanDigital Corporation, utilize computerized electronics to alter the sound of the accordion and to explore the individual characteristics of each performance space. One example of this collaboration is her recent compact disc *The Roots of the Moment*, listed by *The New York Times* as one of the best recordings of 1988.

"Nobody invented music; we are privileged to tune into it through the filter of our own culture."

--Pauline Oliveros

Pauline Oliveros is a member of ASCAP.

Fig. 16 Pauline Oliveros

good friends ever since. My sense of excellence was influenced by I guess you'd say the avant garde. Then through the book I translated on the theater--The Theater and Its Double--that's very offbeat. So that it's not just that there hasn't been a kind of mainstream concentration, but also that there has been a relationship to this other stream.

Pat Schneider:

I have attempted to do too many things, and I have started too late on the right track to have achieved any kind of national reputation. I have achieved some recognition in libretto and in the small literary journal arena. I've had a lot of success in the non-professional theater scene, but with the exception of the libretto that was done by two major orchestras in the U.S., I really have not had work produced that's been nationally visible. So my place in the larger literary scene is very small.

Liz Lerman:

I think a lot of people would say I'm a great teacher, that I'm excellent with people who don't know dance very well. I think some of them would tell you they don't think my choreography is what it should, or could be. I think that's because they use different standards to measure than I do, and I'm not interested in attaining the level that they're interested in. I think the mainstream dance world values beauty, form, and movement invention. I would place two of those fairly low down. My top three are having something to say, the formal structure, and the ability of the dancers to be people while they're dancing.

I think that my work, and people like me, is really where the avant garde is. It's really, truly, what is new and different.

Bonnie Sherk:

I've trained myself to be out on the edge, and I've done a good job of it. About the art world--I'm sort of beyond it. Frankly, much of it is very boring, because it's so limited, and limiting. I find the greatest art happening not in the art world at all. But in fields of science, for example. And it's extraordinary what's going on in Eastern Europe these days--talk about transformation! I'm much more drawn to peoples and things that are happening in a larger context than just the art world. The artists who are dealing with larger social, environmental issues are the ones who interest me now.

I really think that the work I'm doing, and that other transformative artists are doing, is becoming

more acceptable, and is being looked at as being more vital.

Genny Lim:

I sat on several arts panels for different arts commissions, and it was always the same thing. By and large, the panelists usually were white males, people with a very rigid concept of artistic excellence. So you couldn't even talk about race or gender, they were taboo. It was like we were just judging applications on the basis of artistic excellence. So I always found that a real interesting innovative project was totally ignored.

It was a lot of work, and a thankless job. But it was critical work, because the people who have the time to sit on the panels are the ones to control the outcomes of the processes.

Deborah Kruger:

I would say that I have a very peripheral or non-existent relationship with the fast track art world. I would say that I'm a player in the women's art world, that a lot of women around the country know my work.

I think the art world is very sexy and seductive. And empty. And competitive--the word competitive doesn't even come close to describing it. And I have come too far in developing a quality of life, and I would never sacrifice that for the goodies out there in the art world. I'm going to have a healthy life, full of good things. And if it means not being current, I'm happy to let it pass me by.

Here are serious artists occupying a peripheral position in the art world, often by choice, and always because their work has led them in ways that don't somehow correspond with the values of the mainstream art world. They follow their work first, and although, like anyone, they want recognition for their achievement and success, they don't give up their line of inquiry in order to have it. They remain grounded in themselves, defining the values by which they live, remaining on the edge of the mainstream art world.

And, as this story by Maryat Lee tells, sometimes mainstream artists envy the values that have kept these women on their own tracks.

I went to this artist's colony for a month, and even though I'd been there two times before, I'd never talked about Ecotheater, because they were all so very professional. Finally I said I would talk about Ecotheater, and I thought maybe four or five of them would come. But most of them came.

I read a couple of scenes and talked about it, and, to my shock, instead of saying, "Oh, this is amateur stuff," they were all wistful, and they asked a lot of questions. One composer said, 'I live on 8th St. East, and it's just this cacaphony on the streets when I go out to walk my dog. It fascinates me. And I feel there are all these things I could do musically.' And here he's off writing closet modern music. And others were saying things like, "Do you really work with real people?"

The Artist as Change Agent

From the periphery of the art world, these artists put forward the belief, in words, and in their lives, that artmaking is a process for everyone, inclusive, not exclusive. They are out there with "everybody," making art. They ally themselves with those who have no part in the art world--Appalachian small towners, homeless kids, women in prison. For them, the artist has a distinct social function--as teacher, as model for new forms, as namer of invisible realities, as transformer of culture. They define artists like themselves as leaders in the culture--connectors, models, teachers, channels, and transformers.

One major issue is providing access where there has been none before. Liz Lerman has a comprehensive vision of

everyone dancing. "Nobody is too old, too sick, too fat to dance. Dance is for everyone." She envisions a continuum of dancers.

I have seen some of the most beautiful dances I will ever see in settings like nursing homes, and I don't even have to change the standards by which I'm measuring. I would not take that dance and put it on the stage, and invite a critic, and put light on it, and tell everybody to go spend \$20 to see it. That would be a travesty. It doesn't make it less art. It's just not the right context for it.

I think dance is at its best when it's participatory, and that if everybody in the world danced, we would not need any of this discussion. If you and I got up right now and danced together, we would understand a lot about each other in this moment, and we'd work a lot of things out, and we wouldn't need the subject. We would be the subject. But as soon as you are sitting and I am dancing, the rules change entirely. And the dance world thinks everyone's interested in watching some other people get a kinesthetic thrill, whereas I think people get a thrill from moving themselves. [See Figure 17]

But, as a rule, dance isn't available for everybody, nor is writing or many other art forms. Margaret Robison has always been interested in working with people--women in prison, people in nursing homes or children in inner city schools--"who don't ordinarily have the chance to tell their lives, or an audience, or an opportunity to write. I have a passion to show other people what I have found to be of value in my life. More than any other way, I have come to see myself as a worthwhile person through my writing. I have come to feel that I can create my life through my own words. It gives me a sense of my own worth, and power too. And I want to share this."



Fig. 17 Liz Lerman With Dancers of
the Third Age

Here, perhaps, is the heart of the matter--the motivation for the work these artists do. One has found something that heals, illumines and empowers. And one wants to share it.

Offering those without voice the chance to write is serious political work for Gloria Anzaldua. Creating with words is not just a nice little activity that feels good to do, but is a crucial, self defining and determining activity for the silenced ones. Gloria writes in the introduction to Making Face, Making Soul, "Art is a sneak attack while the giant sleeps, a sleight of hand when the giant is awake, moving quick so they can do their deed before the giant swats them. Our survival depends on being creative." [1990, p. xxiv] In an interview she said "for women of color, the subject has always been white and male," but now, women of color are not writing to the white patron, have stopped translating, and are writing to themselves. "So here we are: we're creating a space for ourselves where we can BE ourselves, where we can speak in our own languages." [1989, p. 49]

In "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers," Gloria writes movingly to her companions. She considers how difficult it is for women of color to become published or visible in a white male world. She considers the internalized voices which tell women of color they cannot write: "Who am I, a poor Chicanita from the sticks,

to think I could write?" She notes how the white man advises that she speak in his language, or bleach her bones. But the Third World woman revolts: "We revoke, we erase your white male imprint. When you come knocking on our doors with your rubber stamps...we will vomit the guilt, self-denial and race-hatred you have force-fed us right back into your mouth." [1981, p. 167]

Gloria writes because she has no choice. She writes to keep the spirit of her revolt and herself alive. To put order in the world. To record what others erase when she speaks, to rewrite the stories others have miswritten about her. "To discover myself, to preserve myself, to make myself, to achieve self-autonomy. To dispell the myths that I am a mad prophet or a poor suffering soul. To convince myself that I am worthy and that what I have to say is not a pile of shit. The act of writing is the act of making soul, alchemy. It is the quest for the self, for the center of the self." [1981, p. 168-69]

She urges women of color to write, and by her support and encouragement offers them outlets, access, and places to publish. In a most compelling passage, she evokes the words forever hidden in them.

There is no need for words to fester in our minds... Throw away abstraction and the academic learning, the rules, the map and compass. Feel your way without blinders... Write with your eyes like painters, with your ears like musicians, with your feet like dancers. You are the truthsayer with quill and torch. Write with your tongues of fire. Don't let the

pen banish you from yourself. Don't let the ink coagulate in your pens. Don't let the censor snuff out the spark, nor the gags muffle your voice. Put your shit on paper...find the muse within you. The voice that lies buried under you, dig it up. [1981, p. 173]

For Pauline Oliveros, access for the silent ones means "making a theater that allows people to participate. I think the key issue for me is how others can participate in this experience without being passive spectators. It's not, 'Hey, look at what I'm doing.' It's about getting in there and trying a few things." It is a big part of her work to make a space where the human spirit can express openness and joy, in a safe and comfortable way. She sees this sort of environment as far from the hostile, menacing, terrorist kind of get-what-you-can marketplace, which is common daily experience. For Pauline it is profoundly political to offer humanity the chance to have fun in a creative way, while aware of the presence of the other.

"I'd like to create an environment that's fascinating to people who never heard anything like it before," she said. "I'd like to do it in places where they can come upon it, and be taken into it. And that's transformative, that brings about change."

Another idea about creating environments as a socially transforming activity comes from the work of Bonnie Sherk. She describes how the A.L.L. (A Living Library) life frame concept originally developed with her work in Bryant Park in New York City. It was a very beautiful park, yet had become

primarily a place for drug dealing and pimping, and yet it was a very beautiful park. She spent time sitting in the park, trying to understand what could be there.

And I came up with this concept of creating A Living Library in Bryant Park. Although it was built in 1934, it's a seventeenth century French formal garden design, so the integrity of that place--formal elegance--was necessary to maintain. Also the New York Public Library's main research branch was across the street, so I came up with the idea of creating gardens of knowledge based on the Dewey Decimal System. There would be a generalities garden, a philosophy garden, one for religion, social sciences, science, technologies, the arts, literature, and history.

It was A Living Library, another living library, which would bring the inside of the library outside. And in each of these gardens of knowledge there would be plants, visual and performed art works, lectures and demonstrations, research institutes, and video and computer technology to communicate detailed information. All these materials would relate thematically to the garden. The transformation of the park would involve all sectors of the community in both creation and maintenance. Involving all these people, and creating a really beautiful environment, would systematically transform the problems in that park. Not just a cosmetic overhaul, but a systemic transformation. That's what A Living Library is about.

She went on from here to develop a concept of A Living Library that would differ in each community, and would serve as a way of integrating the local resources of the place--ecological, technological, aesthetic, and historic. The indoor-outdoor park environment would become a community magnet, involving artists, students, teachers, historians, business people, environmentalists, horticulturalists, senior citizens and families. She also conceived of linking various parks with telecommunications satellites. [See Figure 18]



A LIVING LIBRARY - SKETCH OF INTERACTIVE LOCALES

This drawing illustrates two different locales of A LIVING LIBRARY.

On the left side of the picture, we see an interactive park environment near an urban setting, possibly somewhere in Asia.

On the right side of the drawing we are in an interactive park setting near some mountains.

The two sites are linked programmatically through various on-line computer and video technologies.

- In the locale on the right, watched by a group of people, we see a giant round video screen showing images of the procession occurring in the locale on the left.
- Some of the people watching the live procession in the left-hand locale are also able to see the performance occurring in the upper right locale on the "Video Parasol".
- The locale on the right shows interactive touch/sound/voice activated screens embedded in the "Video Computer Hedgerow" with a more detailed blow-up of hands on a screen in the foreground.
- The lower right-hand corner of the drawing shows a group of people gardening. Details of this activity appear in the "Tree Video Gate" framing the picture on the upper right.

Fig. 18 Description and Sketch of A Living Library (A.L.L.) by Bonnie Sherk

The Artist in Society

The artist, seen by this group of women artists, is a vigorous agent of transformation in the culture. The artist is not removed, not some isolated, underground figure. Artists are proactive, producing change, not just responding to it with extra sensitive antenna. The artist is one who brings about change, beginning with, but not limited to, her own life. Again, the artist begins with life.

Because Deborah Kruger is addressing crucial issues about women as caretakers, the transformation she is personally undergoing will have widespread impact. Her struggle is a common one--being wife, mother and artist--and has been much described in the literature by women artists and writers. Deborah and her husband work endlessly developing schedules so that child care is equally shared. Even so, now the pressure is too great for their present system, and Deborah strains after what is the next change for them. This is not just a matter of one woman artist's attempts to make it work for her. This is work that seeds new gardens for all women who want to create.

Since I've started childbearing, my work has reflected childbearing, as far as content. And although I don't see any of my work as being that autobiographical, I suppose everyone's work is. It's been tits and cunt for the last several years. And since I'm nursing, it's been mostly tits.

Deborah and Rob share child care half time each, so that both can pursue creative work. Deborah hates all the

planning that goes into each week's schedule, finding it a great waste of creative time. [See Figure 19]

Here's the sort of schedule we come up with. Basically on Mondays both the children are home with him, and he has another child he watches. The parents of that child relieve him at 2, and he has 3 hours off. Wednesdays Jonah is home, and I'm on with him, with no relief, although recently I've been buying some extra childcare time, since I'm finding that even though it's only one kid, I'm not good for more than about 6 hours. And the rest of the days they're in child care. And then we share equally the pick ups and drop offs. Saturdays is our Shabbas family day, we hang out. Sundays we hire teenage sitters, and we work in the morning for three hours, and then we have family time in the afternoon.

She believes that making art is what she is really, really called to do. She's quit various organizations and doesn't see much of her friends any more, and still, there is not enough time. "Before, I was thinking where can art fit into my life? And now, if art is central to my life, what else can fit into it? Let the art be the spin point-- that's what I'm trying to change."

M.C. Richards lives as an artist within a structured community, perhaps such as Deborah envisions. M.C. in this community is like a microcosm of the artist in society. Her roles in the community, taken more broadly, might be the roles adopted by the other artists within the larger society. She sees herself as fostering the creativity that's at work in the creation of all kinds of forms: imaginative forms, social forms, plastic or sculptural forms,

'When you are an artist, and a parent, you have three careers'

By ANNE-GERARD FLYNN

Seminars have been given on almost every topic these days, but when Deborah Kruger and Susan Boss present a workshop Tuesday on being artists and parents, they feel they will be covering new territory

"It's a completely unaddressed issue in the art world and in women's organizations," said Kruger of the subject she and Boss, who are both 34, parents and artists, will discuss from 7 to 9 p.m. at Carnegie Library in Turners Falls.

Kruger, the mother of a two-year-old daughter, and Boss, whose children are 12 and 16, feel artists face particular challenges in rearing children because they are frequently self-employed. This, they say, often means limited income with

little money to pay for child care.

"When you are an artist and parent, you have three careers," said Kruger. "You have your career as a parent, your career as an artist and then a third career to finance the other two."

* * *

A native of New York City where her family worked in the garment district for several generations, Kruger attended the Fashion Institute of Technology there, concentrating in textile design. She moved to New England to find work in the mills designing wallpaper and now lives in Montague with her husband, Rob Okun.

"I was on the fence for five years," said Kruger about her decision to have a baby. She said her husband's promise to share half the child rearing responsibilities encouraged her.

"My husband promised he would do half. I said, 'Why should I believe you?,' and he said, 'I swear to you that I will do half,'" recalled Kruger, adding, "We share everything including the dirty diapers, making the phone calls to the sitter, the housework and cleaning."

Kruger received a \$400 Massachusetts Arts Lottery grant from the Montague Arts Council to do the workshop that is free to the public. She and Boss, who said they have had calls of interest from musicians, are hoping the workshop will attract people from all the arts.

Among some of the solutions the women plan to propose to artist parents on limited budget is that those present get together to teach each other skills and do child care exchanges.

Continued on Page D-12

Continued From Page D-1

In a field that allows for flexible work hours but lacks benefits such as paid health insurance, Kruger and Boss said they will also "talk about ways to make money."

Kruger, who said it has been estimated that only about one percent of artists in the state make a living from their art work, stopped designing wallpaper several years ago. She now creates installation art, which incorporates a variety of media into a set design, and derives extra income as a bookkeeper. She and her husband also run a cultural lecture series whose topics include "Fund Raising and Marketing in the Arts."

Both Kruger and Boss feel that having sufficient finances to raise a child is a particular concern for women artists because they say women are still under-represented in museums and galleries and the professional status of their work such as in making quilts or pottery has not always been recognized.

The women, who both had previous marriages, added that "having some kind of working agreement" with a spouse or partner is crucial for an artist. They said women sometimes find themselves in relationships where cash is tight and their partner will not allow money to be used for studio rent or art supplies.

"If you have a partner who's working against you, you are swimming upstream in a glacial flow," said Boss.

Kruger and Boss will begin their workshop with a slide show introducing themselves and their art to the audience. Kruger, who has exhibited in New York City, has traveled around the country documenting installation art done by women.

LIVING
Sunday-Republican OCTOBER 4, 1977

Fig. 19 Article about Deborah Kruger

agricultural forms. She sees all aspects of her life in the Camphill Community as a fantastic artistic activity.

As I participate, say on a committee, or a care group that meets every Tuesday morning, I try to bring into that group what I feel is the artistic archetype at work in life itself. So we don't have to go off and be artists, for God's sake, but let's start our meeting by singing or by modeling or something.

The community in which M.C. lives is based on the work of Rudolph Steiner and Karl Koenig. In the community mentally handicapped people live together with other adults and children, and everyone grows the food that sustains them. In addition to being an artist, teaching classes to the mentally handicapped and intern farmers, M.C. reflects on the meaning of all her work and life there. She concludes that all her work is an art, and that just living as she does, in a community with alternative values, is socially transforming work, because it brings about the creation of new social forms. [See Figure 20]

And she sees this creation as fostering a sense of the wholeness of all beings. In the preface to the Second Edition of Centering, she wrote, "The handicapped have a special role to play in the inspiration of community. They teach us to be concrete, to be particular. They have no gift for abstraction. It is now. It is here. It is this kind of question they ask, "Is yesterday gone yet?" We see ourselves mirrored in their helplessness before onslaughts of feeling or sensory overload. Emotionally, we are mostly



*With The Seven I Am's in the chapel at
Camphill community, Kimberton, Pennsylvania.*

Fig. 20 M.C. Richards with The Seven I Am's.
(Towards MC, pg. 17)

still in our childhood and adolescence. How much we need to grow toward healing. We will do it together. Soon the 'they' will disappear into a larger 'we.' [1962, xxiii]

And this is where we began, with the vision of these artists as belonging to a large "we." They affirm their place in the whole universe of being, they note their peripheral position in their various art worlds and the power of bringing new vision that this gives, and they envision themselves as agents of change in the whole society, yeast in the loaf. They live outward from their lives as they work to bring about change. Deborah Kruger struggles with basic issues about women's creativity and women's domestic situations. M.C. transcends the nuclear family that binds Deborah and lives in a rich and varied community. She affirms the artistry of all aspects of her life there, from pulling weeds to firing the kiln. Bonnie Sherk has a vision about creating public spaces which bring the sense of community we're hungry for. These public spaces, and the processes used to create them, are her art form. This is social change happening daily in the lives of these women artists and the people they live and work with. This is the social vision lived out. This is life as art.

CHAPTER 7
THE ARTIST-EDUCATOR

These women are more than a group of artists with a particular view of themselves as artists in society -- a view from the edge, and a view towards social change. They are actively pursuing social transformation by facilitating creativity in others. Liz Lerman's Dance Exchange company members teach everybody in town to dance, Genny teaches the techniques of theater to students from many ethnic groups, so they too can speak out of their particular heritage. Deborah's No Limits for Women Artists workshops help other women artists break down the barriers to their own success, and Kathy Jackson asks Appalachian teenagers to listen to each other's stories, and then create hard-hitting theater pieces. Pauline creates sound environments in which people can attune, grow, and connect. Bonnie coalesces whole communities in the creation of Living Libraries; M.C. teaches mentally retarded adults and young farmers in her Camphill community. Gloria, Pat and Margaret encourage writers. Gloria's arena is her classes at the University of California at Santa Cruz, her workshops and speeches, her editing of anthologies (This Bridge Called My Back 1981, Making Faces, Making Soul 1990), and in her encouraging and advising women of color writers. Pat's format is her many

writing workshops, including one for women in housing projects. Margaret taught a whole inner city elementary school to write poetry, and helped a group of women in prison tell their stories.

These women artists are offering to others what they themselves have experienced -- the opportunity to create. Most of them see their teaching/facilitating work not just as a way to earn a living to support their own creativity, but as equal to their own art making in importance and time. They are deliberately artist-educators. They have come to believe in the power of their own voices, and they consider it good work to help others find their voices also. They are recognizing and acting on a connection between creativity and human freedom. Many of them see artmaking and the encouraging of artmaking as profoundly political work, and in this way, they bring about new values and practices, thus encouraging the society to change in directions they deem worthy.

Social Oppression and Creativity

These artists directly address human oppression in the many forms it takes in our society. Oppression sounds like a severe word to describe social injustice, but I use it purposely because I believe it is not just happenstance that it exists and is perpetuated. Neither is it the natural order of things. Oppression is not merely a matter of an

ideology or set of beliefs (prejudice) that asserts one group's superiority over another. It is not merely random acts of discrimination or harrassment against a group. It is a system of domination with interlocking parts, described by the fact that the oppressor group has the power to define and determine reality for the oppressed. What is normal, what is creativity, what is a woman? these are all determined by the oppressor group, and our socialization processes lead us all to internalize these descriptions of reality. Such internalized oppression means that actual physical domination is not necessary. A "psychological colonization" perpetuates the status quo, as both oppressors and oppressed play out their roles, seeing them as normal and correct. Unequal treatment becomes institutionalized and systemic and appears to be "the way things are."

Paulo Friere [1972] calls the situation of the oppressed one of duality: though the oppressed know that without freedom they cannot exist authentically, and though they desire authentic existence, yet they fear it. He says that the oppressed are both themselves and the oppressor, whose consciousness they have internalized. The oppressed are in conflict: between being wholly themselves or being divided; between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting him; between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between action or having the

illusion of action through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and re-create, in their power to transform the world.

All of this applies both to individuals and social groups. If the oppressed group is a cultural, religious, or ethnic group, their culture will be disregarded or appropriated by the dominant culture. The oppressor group creates history, language, norms and standards, myths and religions which the oppressed are part of; in other words, the oppressor group creates culture. Often, when the oppressed begin to perceive themselves as a group, and find voice, they begin to create their own culture to stand alongside the dominant culture. [Hardiman and Jackson] Ira Goldenberg [1978] writes that oppressed persons cannot exploit their own creativity; i.e., experience the fullness of power which attends the maximum use of one's capacities. These capacities therefore remain unknown and creativity is not possible.

Liberation and Creativity

These artist-educators break into the cycle of oppression and internalized oppression in a unique way. They offer the possibilities of creating to those who have never had the opportunity. They provide the chance to create with bodies, with life stories, with sounds and

responses to sound, with dreams and the sources of spirit within. People are invited to free themselves from externally and internally imposed blocks, to create theater, to paint, to write out of the deepest selves they can find. These artist-educators believe that everyone is creative. They know how to make a safe environment in order to elicit the creativity of others. They value the process of creating at least as much as the product. They seem to value authenticity more than perfection of execution. They offer artmaking that heals, but it is not art therapy. It is artmaking. It is truth telling, and it serves to free those who create.

Such creating liberates precisely because it offers an opportunity for the authentic self to emerge. In "Oppression/Liberation Development Model," [No date given] Bailey Jackson and Rita Hardiman describe how an oppressed group unlearns oppression. At stage one, there is both conscious and unconscious identification with the oppressor's logic system, to the point of outright denial of the existence of oppression. Stage one ends because some occasion makes one doubt one's situation. This could easily come with some outside intervention, like Pat Schneider's offering a writing workshop for women in housing projects. Questions are raised, one's situation is examined, and challenges to one's previous assessment of self are offered.

At stage two, movement becomes visible as members of the oppressed group openly question oppressive practices and policies, express feelings of anger, pain, hurt and rage, and attempt to cleanse themselves. They begin to develop a sense of "who I am not" and move toward a clearer sense of "who I am." Telling one's story and seeing it transformed into a scene in an Ecotheater production could be such a mirror, or the consciousness raising of Deborah's workshops. At stage three a search begins for new ways to define the oppressed group; the naming process results in a new group name or definition, a new conception of the self. Coming on a "new name" might take the form of a senior citizen dancing or a retarded adult creating with clay. Or it might happen as one notices the wholeness of one's community by participating in Bonnie's park building enterprise. In stage four, the person fully identifies with the new name, and the new identity becomes internalized, and is nurtured against efforts to resocialize it. The women in prison who wrote their stories with Margaret Robison and created theater out of them did not return to being the same prisoners. The college students who made alternative theater with Genny Lim have a new sense of who they are as Asian Americans or Latinos or lesbians.

Examples of Teaching Work

Here are examples of how that process works, using the work of six of the artist-educators as examples.

Deborah Kruger -- No Limits For Women Artists

No Limits For Women Artists was originally developed by New York City performance and environmental artist Betsy Damon, and grew out her work in Reevaluation Counseling. It represents, Deborah says, "a synthesis of all the work she's done over 20 years with women artists." Betsy invited a core group of women artists to come receive training from her, with the specific intention that these artists would pass on what they had received. Deborah took the training. "Betsy's vision is to train other people like me to go out and do it, Betsy thinks the more the merrier, with support groups in every community, and lots of them."

Deborah describes the purpose of the workshop.

No Limits gives women a context within which to understand why it's so hard to be an artist. Women, by virtue of our socialization, tend to think that when things are going badly that it's our own fault. Recently someone pointed out to me a study of male and female entrepreneurs, where when the males' businesses failed, they said, 'The economy was bad, I didn't have enough capital.' Something external. And the women's reasons were, 'I didn't know enough, I didn't do a good job, and I didn't work hard enough.' It was totally personal.

The workshop also explores what success looks like. I mean if they want to be on the cover of Art News, they have my support. But what I want them to think about is what do they really want? I'm looking at the kind of success that lasts till the day you die, or the day you lay down your paint brush.

The workshop provides community building, telling of one's history as an artist, and listening carefully and at length to each other. "Some of them have never had anybody listen to them for 20 straight minutes before," Deborah said. "It's a completely new experience for them."

Deborah first introduces No Limits theory, describing women's oppression within and without the art world, and also covering related oppression like racism or homophobia. She believes that if the artists can see the similarity of their struggles, they will move beyond isolation. The women share their work with each other in the evening of the first day. In the second day, she deals with specific issues of whoever is at the workshop -- "If there are a lot of lesbians I deal with homophobia; if a lot of Jews, I deal with anti-Semitism." She talks about layers of oppression, role models, and support groups, "to totally support what they're doing, so that they can see themselves as successful and moving forward."

By the end of the weekend, the women have identified what support they need, and have made some plans to get it. "I get really concrete. You know, if you have to call a gallery back, and you need someone to sit there with you literally holding your hand, then ask them over for tea. And they can sit and cry with you afterwards or celebrate, or whatever."

After the weekend, Deborah sets up an ongoing group for mutual support and for training new leaders to offer workshops to other women artists. In the ongoing group, the women delve more deeply into specific issues of money, self defeating behavior patterns, use of time, blocks to creativity. At each meeting, Deborah works individually with each artist, considering the same basic questions each time: What's going well for you? Where's it getting hard? What's your next step? What kind of support do you need? "Those four questions are so simple, and you could do them year in and year out, and they always provoke growth. To have 15 or 20 minutes of complete attention, seven intelligent observers, listening carefully to everything you say and loving you -- that's the core of No Limits. Anyone would flourish with that."

Deborah is doing this work because it changed her life. "And just as I feel I should do art because I'm really good at it, I feel that this is a way I can really heal the world. This is my political work right now." She imagines that if all the artists in the US were getting this kind of support, the whole art world would look very different."

Pat Schneider -- Chicopee Writing Workshop

For Pat Schneider, the creative act is holy. "Western mythology gives us a picture of God creating the world ex nihilo, out of nothing, and tells us that we are made in the

image of God. That makes us creators. And if anything is holy, it is the making of something new. And so, as a workshop facilitator, I am calling forth and evoking something that is very holy. And in my mind that makes it spiritual. It's very close to the spirit of a person to ask them to reveal what's inside them."

Pat leads writing workshops for all sorts of writers, but one in particular is offered to a special population-- women living in housing projects in Chicopee, MA, a factory town near Springfield. She offers such a workshop because she grew up in a St. Louis slum.

For my adolescence I lived in a house with 8 families and one bathtub. It was filthy, two toilets, one for seven families. Dark, dingy, roach infested. I was ashamed to bring friends home. I remember sitting in the window and looking at the lighted street cars, the woman in fake fur coats on their way to night shift waitress jobs downtown. I thought they were rich women and I hated them because I thought they were going to the opera. I wanted them to look up there and see me. I vowed I would get out of there and never forget.

One reason I think I'm effective is that I'm able to talk about and write out of my own experience, which is like theirs. I'm able to say I got out and you can too, and by education. They see me as a role model.

Pat believes that gifted writing has to be separated from the skills of grammar, and that effective writing is the ability to articulate as you would to a friend or lover, not the ability to put it on the page.

After earning her MFA, Pat started teaching workshops on the academic model. "Very quickly it bothered me that we handed out words on paper, and sat around seeing who could

be the most clever in tearing it apart. I decided to teach differently."

In academic settings, they think people learn from having mistakes pointed out. I think people learn from having their strengths pointed out. Writing is communicative art, and if you have communicated, you have succeeded at some level. We teach ourselves how to write by getting honest feedback about where we have communicated, where we have moved our audience. The writer hears where she has succeeded and those successes grow. Those things which are never mentioned wither away. We come to sound less and less like each other, and more and more like ourselves. It's a matter of honing our communicative skills against the rock of other people's resistances and other people's ability to hear. That's the only kind of feedback an artist needs.

After many years of teaching workshops, Pat was invited by a social worker to lead one for the Chicopee women. These were mostly second generation welfare recipients, dropouts whose idea of school was failure. In the first session she said to them, "This is not about writing. It's about power. About getting up and getting out of poverty. The only way you can get out is through education, and the only way to get education is through writing." [See Figure 21]

The Chicopee Writing Workshop has met for three hours once a week for five summers, and continues less often throughout the year. At each session the women are offered a stimulus -- a poem, an image, or a set of words -- and then they write for 20 minutes. When they re-convene, they are invited to read their work, and only two responses are asked for: What did you remember, and what did you like?

IN A ROOM IN CHICOPEE
WOMEN WRITE ABOUT
THEIR LIVES

When I ask the women to write
it is their fathers they write about
and their sons.

I say *Please, write about yourself now.*

Lyn writes about herself ten years old
in a place with no heat and no hot water.

*That apartment was ten dollars
and fifty cents a month.
Me and my sister Marcelle woke up.
There was a crash. Our window was on fire.
It was the middle of the night.
I had on my slip. My brothers
had on underwear. There were six of us
kids and only Marcelle
had brains to grab something for herself.*

*it was bad.
We lost everything.
My mother sat on the neighbor's porch.
She just kept saying
"Hasn't anybody got a cigarette?"*

*What was good is that
we got to stay in a motel kind of place
for two nights and there was a shower*

Robin writes a letter to her sister.

*Why do you guys want to hurt me so?
I never meant to hurt you.
You say my baby should have died
and your baby should have lived
cause you did everything right
and I'm not married and my kids were born
on welfare and what you really mean
is you can't stand the color of my baby's skin
and why don't you all just disown me
and get it over with
maybe if I kill myself like Mom did
you'll be happy.*

Robin writes about that man
beating on her every night
until his third baby came out
weighing only four pounds and blood
all over the bed and still
the baby lives and she named that little boy
so his initials spell L.A.S.T.
and then she found a clinic that wasn't Catholic
and got an operation and she told that man
get out and take his woman with him.

She is crying so hard she almost can't read her words
and every woman in the room is crying too
and she looks up at us and laughs O.K.
I can take whatever God hands out to me today.

Lyn says she can't believe
a person can write and not know how to spell
There's a lot of things that I can write about
she says *I've got a lot of stories . . .*

Fig. 21 "In a Room in Chicopee Women Write About
Their Lives," poem by Pat Schneider.
(White River Junction, pg. 14)

This technique is not unique to the Chicopee Workshop; it is what Pat does in each of her workshops, with academic and professional writers. To her, the newly written words are like a newborn baby who needs protection and nurturing, not criticism.

As they began to write more, Pat invites them to give her their manuscripts. Pat types them up exactly as they are written, then types subsequent versions with editing and polishing. "Sometimes it is the first time they have ever seen their worked typed. The look on their faces is wonderful. It is an incredible achievement to see your own work in type. With a beautiful clean text, suddenly you join the world of the literate."

The subtleties of their thinking and writing is just as profound as any sophisticated, educated woman in my Amherst workshop. And these women are so educationally, economically, and in every way deprived. One woman wrote a Jungian analysis of herself, without knowing the terms, all about the darkness inside her and wanting to come to terms with it. These woman are brilliant, they are brilliant survivors. Taking their words and giving them back to them in comprehensible ways is just incredibly healing.

Essentially, Pat's process is one that gives permission to risk, permission to do anything on the page, knowing that one is never going to be under pressure to read it, and that one's work is not going to be critiqued when it's brand new and raw.

Pat Schnieder understands that the climate for creativity is one of encouragement, and the provision of

space, material and time. She is able to make an environment in which people write freely, drawing on their deepest sources, even when those sources are painful and shameful, by creating an atmosphere of radical acceptance and empathy.

Liz Lerman and The Dance Exchange

When I came to watch the Dance Exchange work, I found them in an old amusement park in suburban Maryland, now recycled into an arts center. Their rehearsal space is the old Hall of Mirrors. I study the dancers. One older man has gray hair combed back like Ronald Reagan, only longer. He wears little black dance shoes. He is a little awkward, but what is a man of 60, lean in his sweat suit, doing here in a dance class on a Thursday morning anyway? I find out later he's an ex-CIA agent who has joined the company.

Another older dancer is Judy, who tells how she had pelvic cancer, chemotherapy, then vaginal cancer. How the doctor said no strenuous abdominal movement, so she stayed still for twelve years. How finally she couldn't sit any longer, and, having been a dancer when she was younger, she joined The Dance Exchange. "It's nice to be around someone who wants old people in their midst. Dancing integrates me," she says. "It keeps body and soul together, so to speak. It makes me whole."

Another older dancer, Bea, tells me how she accidentally got into the company, thinking she was getting into a senior citizens ballroom dance class. She'd never studied dance. She gets a lot out of it, she says, and likes giving something back to the community. She's just come from Wolf Trap Center for the Performing Arts, giving a dance recital for Head Start kids.

They stand in a loose circle as Liz describes what they will do. She is small, with curly brown hair in a top knot. She wears blue sweat pants, dancers' socks, a purple T shirt(long) with a violet sweat shirt (short) over it. She leads them in exercises, all the time chatting about how her daughter knows her colors now.

The older dancers move like older people, the younger ones like more conventional dancers. The contrast is nice. Now they are speeding up the little routine. They begin a shuffle kick of the feet, out and back, out and back, adding arms. Faster and faster. Liz provides the music with her voice-ah,yuh,yuh,yuh,yuh,yuh.

Then they begin to work in groups of three, one person doing a movement which the others pick up, copy, and amplify. Then each one takes time to practice alone, developing and expanding the motion. Afterwards they show it to a partner and add extensions and repetitions. The group's creative process moves from individual work to small groups, then the whole group, then back to small groups.

Next they spend an hour improvising a dance for a New York festival. The subject is the number ten. Liz stimulates them with questions like What were the most profound ten minutes of your life? and they wander around, trying to bring together ideas, words, and the movements of their bodies. Finally when they have each worked out something, they show their movements to each other.

One woman does ten ways to interrupt. The ex-CIA agent tells how his son was born at 10:10 in Taiwan, on Double Ten Day, October 10. A young man with a pony tail stamps and spins, talking about having to be perfect. They clap for each other.

Then they sit down then and Liz asks them what they noticed about the process. They talk about how to put the head material together with the body material. They name movements they remember from each other's dances. They consider how they might weave it into a whole ensemble dance. Finally they fall into silence and sit together for a minute or two.

After a lunch break each person describes their teaching work, and shares problems with the whole group. This is the other part of their work as dancers. [See Figure 22]

(Liz from our interview) A lot of times people say, 'You must see enormous changes in the people you work with,' and I can recount thousands of anecdotes in which people are changed by the dancer's presence, but it's equally true that the dancers are transformed.

**THE DANCERS OF THE THIRD AGE
PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE
Washington, DC Area**

**THE DANCE EXCHANGE
COMMUNITY CLASSES
SCHEDULE
Washington, DC Area**

<u>Location</u>	<u>Time</u>
Brookhaven Elementary Rockville, MD	January 5, 9 & 10 AM
Sleepy Hollow Falls Church, VA	January 9, 1 & 2 PM
Holy Redeemer School College Park, MD	January 12, 9:30 & 10:30 AM
Simon Elementary Southeast DC	January 19, 9:30 & 10:30 AM
Meadow Hall Elementary Rockville, MD	January 22, 9:30 & 10:30 AM
Pine Spring Elementary Falls Church, VA	January 26, 9:30 & 10:30 AM
Brown Station Elementary Gaithersburg, MD	January 29, 9:15 & 10:15 AM
Bel Pre Elementary Silver Spring, MD	February 23, 9 & 10 AM
Watkins Mill Elementary Gaithersburg, MD	April 6, 9 & 10 AM
Washington Grove Elementary Gaithersburg, MD	April 20, 9:30 & 10:30 AM
Artspring Festival Leesburg, VA	May 6, 1 PM

<u>Location</u>	<u>Time & Teacher</u>
Children's Hospital 111 Michigan Avenue	Tuesdays, 10 -12 Kim Boyd
Sarah's Circle 2551 17th St, NW	Friday, 11 AM Celeste Lawson
Episcopal Church Home 1515 32nd St, NW	Friday, 9 AM Amie Dowling
Barney Neighborhood House Mt. Pleasant Library 16th & Lamont, NW	Tuesday, 1 PM Amie Dowling
Friendship House Purity Baptist Church, SE	Monday, 11 AM Thern Anderson
Senior Citizens' Counseling & Delivery Services 2500 Martin Luther King, SE	Monday, 12:30 PM Ashley Clarke
DC Village #2 DC Village Lane, SW	Monday, 11 AM Ashley Clarke
Matthew's Memorial Baptist Church 2616 Martin Luther King, SE	Wednesday, 12:30 PM Ashley Clarke
Knox Hill Jasper & Alabama, SE	Friday, 12:30 PM Ashley Clarke

Fig. 22 Dance Exchange, Community Classes Schedule

Beth had been dancing for nine years in New York, and was one hell of a dancer technically, but disconnected. And that's why she came to the Dance Exchange. She found out again why she was dancing.

Kim works with children ages 6-13 at Children's Hospital, in inpatient psychiatry. She develops story structures from the children's lives, and makes these events into dances. Tom and Amy teach a class for people with AIDS, their families and caregivers. They describe how they are creating a safe environment so the participants can take risks. Amy is having a hard time dealing with the class, and Liz tells her how she learned to handle her feelings when she worked with senior citizens. 'I used to go out in the car after working with the old people and cry for an hour because my Mom was dead.' Amy cries a bit, and Liz affirms her tears.

Becky works with people aged 20-60 at a halfway house for mental patients; sometimes the class members are so heavily sedated that they sleep through the whole class. Boris teaches both in a nursing home and with visually impaired kids. He asks for advice about how to get the patients out of their rooms, and other dancers make suggestions. He says he is trying to stretch their range of motion and enhance their confidence.

Amy describes her class of homeless kids from the shelter. They seem to go crazy when they get into the room, she says. Others help her figure out how to structure the sessions and be consistent about boundaries.

One of the reasons people come to our dance classes, in the nursing homes for example, is the relief they feel [when dancing] of being so immediately alive. Also, they feel some of what Boris was saying about the confidence you get when you have control of your body. And with the older people, there are a lot of physical changes: less paralysis, less arthritis, less senility, less depression.

And it's very important for some older women, who hate their own bodies, hate them. Still. They're gorgeous women, and they are still bemoaning five extra pounds. It just destroys me. I spend a lot of time in those settings just affirming their physical selves. One of the things you have to be able to do in this teaching is to say in all honesty, 'You're beautiful, right now, just the way you're sitting.' I really think they are gorgeous, especially when they start dancing.

So we see a lot of changes around esteem and self valuing.

Here is a master teacher, helping others learn to teach also. She continually affirms, and at the same time upholds standards of professional dance performance. She is respectful of differences and of individual contributions, and she knows how to make it all come together. She knows how to lead the group in generating dances, working from individual additions. She flows in the creative process with them--from mental to physical to emotional, from individuals to group work, from their work as teachers in the community to their bodies as dancers, with old and young dancers, with professionals and with homeless kids. It is all of a piece for her. And she is teaching this way because she wants to change some societal values.

Probably my vision falls a little short of massive social restructuring; it feels more intense and concentrated. But what would happen if everybody could

tell their story and other people would listen? And if everybody's story were equally valued? So that if you said yours in Spanish and I said mine in English, we would still be OK. What would happen if all the dancers I know could get paid for teaching all the old people who are dying because they have nothing to do?

She believes that artists are teachers, but also that there are times for focusing just on one's creative work. If we all did this, she believes, the art that would get made would be so much better. "The culture might have more great art if this was how artists traditionally thought of themselves; we would end up with a more vibrant, living culture."

Genny Lim -- Multicultural Theater

Genny Lim teaches people of all ages, serving on the faculty of the New College in the department of Arts and Social Change and coordinating their performance program. She also works with Poetry in the Schools, and most recently curated an exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Art, inviting school children to respond to the work by writing.

"It was really liberating for the kids," she said, "because they could use the medium of the artwork to free up their subconscious. And they made these fantastic associations." The exhibit, chosen by Genny, focused on African, Oceanic, and American art objects, displaying things like a mammoth tusk, Quakudil masks, pre-Columbian ceramic bowls, Amazonian headdresses, and necklaces from the Gilbert Islands. She picked the pieces with children in

mind, then invited them to the gallery to see the objects. Genny provided suggestions for writing, often incorporating chant or ritual, and then the children wrote poems, which were typed and hung alongside the objects. Each week the exhibit changed.

People's minds were really blown by the poetry, and they wondered how I got them to write such great stuff. But kids--I've always had a great deal of respect for them anyway. They're much closer to the source of genius than adults are, and it's so natural. And they respond very honestly to the world around them through their senses. They don't have all the defenses.

We worked with rhythm, and all the technical stuff like metaphor and similies, and how to heighten the language. But the main thing that we got into was having some kind of a spiritual connection with the art work, and allowing whatever energy or spirit was in the piece to speak through them. They had to become the conduit or a messenger for voices that come from elsewhere. [See Figures 23 and 24]

Genny also teaches at the New College, an alternative college in downtown San Francisco. Many of the students are continuing education students, adults and professionals working on their undergraduate degrees after years out of school. In the Theater, Performance and Social Change Department, there are theater arts, video and graphic arts components. Genny teaches courses in mask making and mask movement, a laboratory where students create their own theater projects, and a course called Imaging the Other, which uses traditional approaches to theater in a modern setting. The emphasis in all her work, and the college's,

POETS IN THE GALLERIES

20 JANUARY-15 APRIL 1990

M. H. DE YOUNG MEMORIAL MUSEUM

THE FINE ARTS MUSEUMS OF SAN FRANCISCO

POETS IN THE GALLERIES EXHIBITION

If art is the unpredictable mirror of the human soul, then poetry is its language. The ancient voices locked in catacombs, burial sites, and ruins, where dreams and fears were expressed yet hidden away for decades and centuries, have today become unleashed through the voices of young Bay Area students.

The joining of the artwork and the poetry was a form of alchemy emerging from workshop sessions, which I conducted with visiting classes. Sprawled on the gallery floors with paper and pens, the students found ways to connect with silent objects by investing the objects with their own intuition and imagination. The silent communion between past and present, object and human, reenacted a solitary ritual between man and nature, giving voice and credence to each student, who discovered the powerful magic of naming. Naming is empowerment and imagination is the source of human possibility. Once a student discovers the key to language, it unlocks imaginary doors.

These student poems were written in the fall of 1989. The doors open for you now with poetry written during the exhibition.

Genny Lim
Poet in the Galleries



Martin Johnson Heade, *Orchid and Hummingbird*, ca. 1885.

ORCHID AND HUMMINGBIRD

Standing alone in
the mist with
the breeze
slightly moving my
petals
A lonely hummingbird comes
to sip nectar from
my beautiful self
A lonely orchid
A lonely hummingbird
alone in the world

Alethea Benally
Spring Valley
4-5th grade

UNFOUND LAND

They lie in the new morning
unknowing their fate to come.
Eating the fresh flowers and grasses.
At peace with their souls.
Positive of their existence.
The clouds allow their sun to
break through, eager to give their
children's last days happy ones.
Like the Heavens
showing their glory . . .

Lavinia Frank
San Francisco Community School
7-8th grade

Fig. 23 Poets in the Galleries Newsletter.
(Genny Lim)



Alexander Pope, *The Trumpeter Swan*, 1900



Bowl with "Occulata Being," Nasca.



Totem Pole, Coast Tsimshian, Prince Rupert, British Columbia, late 19th century

THE TRUMPETER SWAN

Here I hang,
 with no feeling left in my body.
 Once my beautiful wings
 carried me far...
 to an unknown destination.
 Now, my soul has left my body.
 Fate, left me desolate and alone.
 One instant, my body...
 alive, beautiful, with not a care was
 flying
 the next...
 BANG!
 Here I hang.

Claire Lang
 San Francisco Community School
 7-8th grade

A SWAN WANTS TO FLY

A beautiful swan hung on the wall
 She was hunted by a hunter,
 She was already dead
 But her wings are opening,
 She wants to fly!
 She is saying,
 I want to fly!
 I like the sky!
 Freedom is what I like,
 I'm the angel in the sky!

Winson Quock
 Newcomers High School

CERAMIC

The pot is like life,
 you start out with a full bowl
 then you start getting older and
 life slips away from you.

Kimberly Woo
 A.P. Giannini
 6th grade

TOTEM

There were four animals
 On top of each other
 All happily standing
 On top of each other

One day a man came by
 And saw the large animals
 On top of each other
 And made fun of them all

The bear took the man
 and held him by his feet
 Shook him upside down
 And took him for meat

The spirit of animals
 Came to see the four
 And with all cruelty
 Turned them all into stone
 And the totem holds their spirit

David Lem
 A.P. Giannini
 6th grade

TOTEM

The representation of my God is
 an Eagle, Seal, Grizzly Bear holding
 a man and a Sea Wolf monster.
 So I'm here in front of my God Eagle.
 For me this represents life, moreover,
 it is my mother seal. She is the
 representation of the Oceans with the
 little Fish. After the Seal comes my
 brother Grizzly holding a man.
 After him, comes my sister Sea Wolf.
 She is the Future of the new culture.

So they are my God in my crazy world.
 For me, it is very important because
 tomorrow I will die and my spirit will
 return to life. The Gods said to me that
 colors are like the grass in the mountains.

Roberto Sanchez
 Newcomer High School

Fig. 24 Poets in the Galleries Newsletter,
Poems by Children. (Genny Lim)

is changing the concept of art--how it's done, who it's for, and its effects.

The New College class is directly related to what I'm trying to do in theater. By and large, people are still under the notion that theater has to be a certain way, pretty prescribed and formulaic. And that pretty much shapes the public taste. But there's a whole alternative movement that's being ignored unless we develop audiences for it. What better way to do that than to teach people to do theater in an alternative way that embraces different philosophical stances?

Genny teaches by coaching students about how to tap into their creativity.

[Creativity is a matter of] unblocking energy, because the only way you can channel energy is if you're open. And the only way you can be open is if you're honest and have nothing to hide. And so whatever that energy is, you have to not block it off or be afraid of it, and take whatever it demands of you. In my classes, I tell them how I do it, and while they're working, I can see when they're blocking themselves, and then the best I can do is coach them: "It's not happening because of this or that, or you're getting too hung up about your body.' Who cares, you can look like a total klutz or idiot, that's the least of your concerns. You have to stay true to what the goal is, within the piece you're working on. The key is truthfulness.

Genny believes that teaching shouldn't be devalued as something that takes away from one's art. "It was because of teaching that I got into this whole thing about voice and a new theater aesthetic." Teaching, she believes, forces you to grapple with issues that you ordinarily would escape.

M.C. Richards -- Clay, Community, and Creativity

M.C. Richards is an artist living in an intentional community, whose work is both to create and to enable others to create, all in the context of her ongoing life as a community and household member. Her class, Creativity in Clay and Words, is mostly offered outside of the community, at Omega Institute, Haystack School, and other arts centers. At home she teaches classes for mentally retarded community members, providing various experiences with the clay. And she works with intern farmers, who come to the community to learn biodynamic agricultural methods.

Creativity in Clay and Words "is a way to come upon the polarity at work in the world and in the human being. I try to begin by evoking some sense of the ancientness of the clay and of the hand. And then when these two meet, it's something really special. And what the hand brings with it is the warmth, the pulse, the lifeline." She does exercises to work with the polarity, making stones and bowls out of clay--exploring hollowness and fullness.

She offers other exercises to trigger language out of the clay forms. "We begin to get words into the air, and to give them some freedom. And to hear them. And that's the beginning of poetry. Because often we talk about using words. Well, we're not going to use them; we're going to bless them."

In an exercise called Giving and Receiving, she asks partners to make something out of clay for each other, and then each partner responds to the gift with something else made from clay. Then each person has a two part piece--the one given to her, and her response to it. This requires the person to arrange the set, deciding if he wants them to be closer together or apart, this way, or that. So that it's a new piece, not two pieces.

A more severe exercise is called Fear and Friend. My assumption is that we tend to be more aware of our fears than of our inner friends. So first we think of our inner fears, and it can be anything, a wild mushroom, or a father, or whatever. And you make an expression of that in clay. And then you make another form, which is the friend. And again you have a two part piece, the fear and the friend. And the point of it is to find the friend to the fear. It's not exactly heavy, but there are tears, and people are surprised at how much they long for a friend.

The class she offers for the villagers (the mentally handicapped adults in the community) offers activities with the clay, and is not primarily instructional. "My main concern is that they have an experience of the clay, and for them to see that they have made something."

Some of them, no sooner have they started making it, then they've already decided who they're going to give it to. And that's a big thing to them. Well, that seems to me worth feeding, that impulse that they have so strongly. So they're making things, something that would be nice enough to give to Norma, or their mother, or whoever. It's like making their mark.

Like Kate. Kate has been a real problem to herself and to me often. She's a real handful. She gets so tired, and she'll say, "I'm just too tired," and I'll say, "Well, why don't you go up to bed?" And now I know that when she does something, when she has

some success, she's not tired. She has energy, she feels good, and that's a big discovery for us both. I helped her a lot with her clay basket, and she was just so happy. And also terrified the whole time that she wasn't going to do the braid right. And finally she did it, and she felt so strong.

The Renewal of Art Through Agriculture class for the intern farmers attempts "to lift into the imaginations the processes in which they are engaged in their agricultural study and work, so that the art that they do is renewed. Like the masks they make--they are nourished and imbued with an imagination that lifts their actual agricultural experience, lifts it into art."

M.C. attends their agricultural classes to see what they are working on, then incorporates it into an artistic experience in her class. "The day Jim Merowski taught them how to sow rye, he was making gestures like this. And then we came into the studio, and I said, "Now we're going to sow the rye. See what you're doing. It's a ritual. That's where the dance and drama comes from. That's the renewal of art through agriculture."

The day I observed the class, they held a Council of All Beings for their last meeting together. "Earth and nature is a living entity," M.C. said, "and it has a face and there's an expression on the face. She asked the interns to consider what this countenance might be, and what it might be saying. They were to create a mask representing one aspect of nature, and to write a statement dramatizing and imagining these spirits that live in the Council of All

Beings. The realm of the imagination is a sort of bridge between the material fact and the envisioning. So they sat in a circle, with their masks on, glorious diverse faces, some grotesque, some beautiful, and read their statements aloud. The whole event was a moving ritual, incorporating art, religion and the earth.

M.C. Richards has thought a lot about educational processes, the centrality of the arts in education, and education and spiritual growth. In Towards Wholeness, she describes the Waldorf School movement in America, the system of education conceived by Rudolph Steiner.

For M.C., the teacher is like the artist, "in touch with inner sources, with creative imagination, and with the unconscious world of the archetype. Inner sensing and daily practice combine in order for the inner being to take on outer form. Education is a social art," she writes. [1980, p. 69]

She sees school as the world of forming, of experiencing oneself as source. She notes that when we create artistically we have a certain kind of experience: we sense when we are painting or modeling with clay that something is coming. It gradually incarnates, takes on form. In this act, we are in dialogue with the material, and we both know what we are doing and don't know. We are both helping something and aware that something autonomous

coming into being. This, she says, is true for both the process of artmaking and the process of education.

Helping something and being simultaneously aware that something autonomous is coming also describes M.C.'s work, as a potter and poet, as a teacher, and as a member of her community. Her goal is to notice and call attention to the myriad ways spirit is breaking into our material lives, and one obvious way she does this is through the creative arts.

Maryat Lee and Kathy Jackson -- Ecotheater

Maryat Lee created a model for theater which calls into question many of the conventional understandings about theater and performance, including the nature of performance, the training of actors, and the relationship of playwright / director to both actors and audience.

Before she died in 1989, Maryat Lee knew that the Ecotheater model she had developed worked very well. "It's worked in an urban area, low income; it's worked in a rural area; it's worked with kids; it's worked with adults; it's worked with people from different economic classes, all of them together, in a very limited way." For her the next step was to see if it worked without her leading the process. She set up training sessions to train playwright / directors and create seed communities around the country.

She taught them the techniques she developed in her play about drugs, "Dope," and later work with Latino

teenagers in the Soul and Latin Theater in New York City. In 1966 when she was teaching a course on Street Theater at the New School, she was led into a relationship with teenagers at Benjamin Franklin High School. They did two or three plays each summer, all sensationally received.

The process Maryat developed began with students coming up with an incident. The group would tell the story several times, each time with a different student talking, while Maryat taped it. "I wanted to have it in their language, not mine." Then she would write them a script, and by a careful process of improvisation with the script, they would develop the scene. As they worked together, the vitality of the original story would re-appear. "Finally they began, reluctantly, to memorize it. And one of them would slip, and it would come out the way it had before. And then, after that everybody began to slip. After that, it took off like it was spontaneous."

Finally leaving New York, Maryat moved to a small town in West Virginia, wanting to see if her ideas about grass roots theater would work there. "But the word 'theater' didn't cross my lips for four years. I wrote, fixed the house, painted, played the piano, ran the farm, started a book." It was there she met Kathy Jackson, as she began to work with local people to create theater. She found that the process worked in exactly the same way, and created several theater pieces before she died.

Now, after Maryat's death, Kathy carries on her work -- training playwright / directors who will develop seed companies in other communities, and working with drug and alcohol abusing kids at the Seneca Mental Health Center in Hinton, WV.

The current training program has six levels, and anyone wishing to start an Ecotheater in their community must take all six courses. The training begins with learning to take oral histories. "This means going out, interviewing someone in your neighborhood or your community. Most of the time you just explain what you're doing, and that you want to write plays about the people in the community. You let them know that you're trying to make a voice for your community, so people can see what the community is all about." Most of the time, Kathy says, people say they will contribute oral histories but want nothing to do with performing. Sometimes, though, they get drawn into the acting process.

The oral histories are then written out and people read the scenes. Then they improvise on the scenes. In her work, Kathy tries to find the scene that fits a person the best, which means "who can tell the story without having to act, who can become the old lady who is telling the story?"

Sometimes, she says, that means that you take away the script and ask the person to tell the story in their own words. "That's the way it becomes their story." Then the script is rewritten. In this way, non-actors act without

playing a role. The next step is to polish the scene "once they get it to fit." Then they start memorizing, and after that, they move to the stage.

This is the Ecotheater training sequence which Kathy offers others who want to create indigenous theater. It is also the process Kathy uses in her work with teenagers. In the summer of 1989 Kathy and her teenagers produced several different scenes, not one complete play. "The last three summers the scenes were based on their own lives, dealing with subjects like date rape, being sexually abused by their father, or drugs. This will be the first year we will perform at the state prison, as well as at Pipestem State Park."

The kids Kathy works with have been sent to the program by a probation officer, a counselor, or parents. "It's an eight week program, and after the eight weeks are over, they don't have to attend, but a lot of them continue to come because of Ecotheater. They get to write about their personal lives under the safety of another person's name, and they get some of the pain of their lives out."

The work of Ecotheater continues to spread. "It's growing," Kathy said, "and believe it or not, that was one of the things that scared most of us, especially me, when Maryat passed away. I just knew for sure that it was going to go down the drain. But our Board is supportive, and I think we'll be fine."

Here is a simple-sounding but actually complex process which radically diverges from conventional theater production, because it begins with different assumptions about what theater is all about. And it works--it touches those who do it, and those who see it. Oral histories are the basis--the stories of a community--followed by a collaborative process by non-actors and a playwright / director who writes and directs. They work with the script until it comes alive, producing a replicable theater piece. At the heart is the belief that the stage is a safe place, where non-actors can take off masks and roles, and by performing, invite the audience to do the same.

Common Threads

These artist-educators are not just do-gooders, seeking to help the downtrodden. They are really social revolutionaries, or as Bonnie Sherk might say, evolutionaries. They teach for the same reasons as they dance or choreograph, sew quilts, or make sounds. They live out of lives that are all of a piece. Their teaching work grows from the same motivations, assessments of society, commitment, and joy that their art work does.

Characteristics

First, the teaching grows organically from the self and the life of the artist. It is not a task, but is rather

more like a calling, or a thank-you for what one has already received. Like the unity between the art and lives of these artists described in Chapter Six, their teaching work has that same integral connection to their lives. Deborah teaches the No Limits workshops because she herself was offered such a workshop, and seeks to replicate the model. Kathy Jackson works the Ecotheater process with West Virginia teenagers because she herself was one such teenager, and her experiences in Ecotheater meant that her life took a totally new turn. Pat Schneider leads writing workshops for poor women because she herself was once poor, and education enabled her to move out of poverty. Art and life are indeed one, and in this case, it is the art of teaching.

Second, many of the artists seem impelled by a political or social vision. Genny is committed to teaching theater techniques to as many people from as many cultures as she can. She is committed in her teaching as well as in her presence on funding panels to make widely accessible the resources needed to make theater which grows out of many different cultures. Liz Lerman has a vision of everyone dancing, which is to her like each person telling his or her story, and being attended to. Deborah's work grows out of her feminist analysis, which has examined the way internalized oppression keeps people, women artists in particular, from success.

The commitment appears to be to what is called cultural democracy. Named first by Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard [O'Brien and Little, 1990], cultural democracy assumes that cultural diversity is a positive value, that democratic participation is essential to shaping the cultural life of a people, that authentic democracy requires active participation in cultural life, and that this participation calls for an equitable distribution of cultural resources and support throughout the society. [In O'Brien and Little, 1990]

Third, the intention of these women is to call forth the words and dances and sounds and stories of others, in particular from those who have never been asked to tell their stories, or make their sounds. They are working with people who don't participate in the art world, or even in the social mainstream. They are offering access where there has been none. To West Virginia mountain people, to women in housing projects, to women of color, to senior citizens, to nursing home residents, to children in homeless shelters, to people from minority cultures, to mentally retarded adults.

Assumptions

The invitation to the uninvited is based on two related assumptions. The first is that everyone is creative. Pat says it directly. Liz probably wouldn't be asking her

professional dancers to be teaching in the most unlikely settings in the community unless she believed it. Genny trusts that all kids can have a true and original response to art. M.C. notes with delight the clay creations of the mentally handicapped in her community, and Kathy Jackson is impressed by the scenes her teenagers produce and perform. We all have important stories to tell, says Pat Schneider. "I believe every person is as capable of being a gifted artist, a gifted writer, as any other. We're all equally gifted. And I want to help liberate that gift."

Second is the assumption that creativity is somehow linked to wholeness, to the well being of the person. M.C. describes how working in clay seems to add to the energy of her student Kate, how making masks pulls together the lessons that intern farmers are learning. Liz talks about the growth in confidence, community, and self esteem that result when children in a psychiatric ward or patients in nursing homes dance. Using one's creativity is no fringe activity for these women, but a core that pulls other pieces of life in around it. To create makes life change: the women in Pat's workshop reclaim their lives, go back to school, buy their children empty journals to write in, and tutor their neighbors. M.C. Richards writes,

Why does the human being long to work artistically? Why are the art programs in the public schools and communities so popular? Because there is a natural enthusiasm for creative activity built into our bodies. There is an essential connection between

artistic activity and human nature, between art and nature and universe and human being. Painting, modeling, music, movement, speech, architecture, and drama are not electives. They are the ground of our intuitive understanding of ourselves and the world around us. [1980, p.94]

Methods

The methods of teaching used by these artists are congruent with their intentions.

One method is to break down barriers and create egalitarian relationships with the learners. They dismantle traditional hierarchies between teacher and learner, and engage fully with the learners. They do not seek to find the downtrodden and then to wow them with the wonder of the artist's creativity and power. Rather, they work with them, seeking common goals. There is no "master" to follow, no genius artist to gawk at, no tyrannical or whimsical director to cower from, no perfectionistic paragon. Mostly the teachers join in the creative process, are part of the activities. Maryat Lee developed a process of making theater by dismantling the customary hierarchy where the director is above the playwright and the actors. Liz Lerman dances with old and young professional dancers, with mental patients, senior citizens, homeless kids, people with AIDS. She believes that all have the power to move authentically. Pat Schneider produces an environment where there are no experts whom everyone tries to please or copy. Genny Lim coaches her drama students at the New College by watching

carefully how they work, and seeking to help them drop barriers. She does not assume she knows the way they should unfold; she simply watches and coaches.

Another method is actually a shift in values. These artists as teachers appear to value truth telling and authenticity more than artistic perfection. Pat creates an environment of trust and respect and invites the women writers to put out the grimmest, most painful experiences of their lives, to put "their shit on paper," as Gloria Anzaldua puts it. Deborah asks each of her women artists to reveal herself as she is, with her problems, before new steps can be taken. Liz values the authentic movement of members of her company above more conventional values in dance, and seeks to help dancers know always why they are moving the way they are. Genny explicitly states that truth telling is the hallmark of powerful theater, and in her own work she exemplifies this. Kathy Jackson evokes gritty stories of her teenagers' lives and helps them turn them into theater pieces that move total strangers.

The third method is to create environments of support, often within the context of one kind of community or another. Creative activity requires, above all things, support. Though it may be natural for human beings to create, it is not easy. Trusting that what one finds inside, unformed and unknown, will be worthy material to bring up and to share in some art form, is hard. Genny Lim

encourages that sort of risk taking with her poetry-writing students. And in her work at New College, as well as in her own theater productions, she has chosen to deliberately teach new forms for theater.

Pat Schneider describes why support for creativity must be offered.

The child draws a bird and brings it to you. The first thing you say is not, 'Oh-oh, the left wing is hanging down.' But an eighteen year old brings a story to a workshop at UMass and the first thing that's said is, 'This sentence is awkward.' The little person inside who has dared to put something on the page says, 'Well, if I've learned anything, it's that I'm never going to do that again.' You don't learn to fly that way.

Instead you say to the child, 'Ah, what a wonderful bird. Look how the right wing is soaring!' And the child looks at how the right wing is soaring and goes back and does something to the left wing. It's common sense. I think it's basic, gut, woman, common sense. The way a good mother mothers her children is the way you evoke creativity in other people. It's by saying, 'I want it, I call it forth, I welcome it into the world. And oh, isn't it wonderful?' It's seeing the brand new work of art as a new born baby that has to be treated gently.

Deborah creates a supportive environment which helps artists free themselves from their socialization as women. Using just four simple questions -- what's going well, what's the problem, what do you want to do, and what support do you need? -- and working with these in the context of a supportive group of peers allows women artists to deepen their creative work. Pat sets in motion a process of writing and reading one's writing in a supportive

atmosphere, where the only two questions asked are "What did you remember?" and "What did you like?"

Maryat Lee and Kathy Jackson create a situation where non-actors offer strong performances, finding the stage a safe place, revealing the truth of themselves as they tell stories and act in scenes. How does this happen? By a relatively simple process of collaboration--the use of stories, the writing of a script by a playwright who is also a director, and the improvisational work to find the resonance between the scripted words and the person speaking them.

Artmaking As Social Change Work

This teaching work of these artists is more than social work, therapy or social responsibility. The work these women are doing is liberation work, political work, social change work. It directly addresses internalized oppression, in which persons no longer believe themselves to be efficacious in determining their situation, in which a sense of entitlement is missing or weak. If you are a single mother of three living on welfare in a project, the chance to create is not just a nice opportunity; it is an intervention that alters the course of your life because it alters how you see yourself. Because creativity draws on the self, and telling the truth about that self, to create may call forth a truer self from a situation of oppression.

And that self, having emerged, does not ever go back to passivity and compliance. It knows something about its power now. In this way, individuals and social groups are empowered. By creating. That is what empowered means: that one knows oneself as agent, with the power to bring about change. With the power, as Pat Schneider says, to create something out of nothing.

Gloria Anzaldua's words from "Letter to Third World Women Writers" come to mind. "How hard it is for us to think we can choose to become writers, much less feel and believe that we can. What have we to contribute, to give? Our own expectations condition us. Does not our class, our culture as well as the white man tell us writing is not for women such as us?" [1981, p. 166]

Imagine that into a mindset like this comes someone like Pat Schneider, with a simple yet profound writing workshop format. What may happen?

Every Sunday evening eight women gathered in the empty offices of the Valley Opportunity Council in Chicopee, MA. They came up the dark steps with rubber treads, through the hallway painted institutional green with faded signs over each doorway, to a back office, where they sat at desk chairs and old couches.

Who are these women? Evelyn is 63 with several children and grandchildren. She writes often about her Polish family. Teresa sometimes writes dark pieces about

drugs and alcohol and sex, or describes her son fishing in the river. Enid explores her childhood as a Puerto Rican brown girl in a white world. Lynn weighed three hundred pounds when the workshop began, and has lost one hundred. She plays with language, often repeating sounds and images. Maryann describes how she makes wallets all day at the factory and raises her granddaughter, whose mother is addicted to drugs. Robin has been crying lately about her mother's death, sobbing as she reads. Diane always says what she's written is no good, but then she reads neatly formed episodes from a chaotic childhood. Dorothy has been absent for a while--she has agoraphobia--but she says will be back some time.

"We will do a fantasy tonight," Pat says. She tells them to get comfortable in their chairs, and to relax from their toes up to their brains, one body part at a time. She asks them to go back through their lives and to stop at some point where they see themselves sitting on a couch. Their eyes slowly open, they pick up their pens. They write in silence for 20 minutes, and then whoever wants to, reads. And they respond, communicating to each other about what works.

What are they doing here in this room? They are liberating each other and themselves. They are exchanging power, mining diamonds in stories and poems. They are generating freedom. They are saying "I." [See Figure 25]

TO BREAK SILENCE

To break silence
is to shatter the glass
invisible

wall

between the waters of dreams
and the waters of waking
in the blue and green denial
of connection.

To break silence
is to be on the far side
of the gate to the garden of origin

fallen

to consciousness,
angel and flaming sword
held against the possibility
of innocence.

To break silence
is to take upon oneself the burden
of one's name

called

nothing, now, derivative.
It is to turn, to face the presence
in the primal wilderness
of creation.

Fig. 25 "To Break Silence," Poem by Pat Schneider
(White River Junction, pg. 4)

For five summers these women stood on the small naked piece of ground of themselves in a world of welfare checks and overwork and drugs and kids who need new shoes and the Department of Social Services. They wrote in spite of not feeling qualified to write. And as they wrote, the ground got larger.

They wrote together. They began to see how much the same they were, and to cherish the other women there. They risked telling the truth about their lives. They turned into, not away from, the pain, the neglect, the failures, the severe limits, the abuse, the poverty, the discrimination, the fears and dangers of their lives, which no one had ever seen. Week after week, they said, "This is the way it was for me, listen to this. See it my way for a moment." They took their half formed or barely remembered perceptions and brought them into the light. Selves spoke: "Here I am. I select what I will tell you. I am taking charge."

As they took charge, their lives began to shift. They began to examine their relations to men, to their children, to the teachers at school, to the housing authorities, to all the helpers. Their new selves said, "I see that I have the power to speak and make others hear, so I will no longer remain in silence. I will describe myself to the world, and no one else will describe me. I will nourish this self that no one ever nourished, because this self is wise and

infinite and creative. I see that I can form, can choose, can change. I can form my own life as well as I can a poem."

And they began to heal, to love themselves and each other, to return to school, to get off welfare. They became women going someplace and taking their children with them. No one gave these women more money, a better attitude, a new lease on life, a new social program. They got the power, the dignity, the sense of entitlement, the ability to move and change because they are creators--in a third floor office, sitting at desks, sprawled on the floor, smoking on the fire escape, and writing, writing, writing their lives.

CHAPTER 8
THE DEVELOPMENT OF VOICE

The work of this group of women artists--both the creative work and the teaching work--is clearly based on different values and different assumptions about the creative process and its power. They see it differently, so they do it differently.

Art and Artmaking

How are art, artists and artmaking generally viewed in this society? First, art is big business, centered in a couple of urban areas, and access to gallery space is limited to a few well known, stylish artists. Large museums and art galleries continue to show the work of dead men, for the most part, and newcomers are let in very slowly. In this way, "standards" are maintained, and prices kept high. Critics have a lot of influence over who thinks which art is good. Second, out in the masses, artists are still thought to be slightly kooky, certainly self-engaged, strange beings who for some reason wish to paint or dance. We don't exactly understand what they are exploring, though occasionally we read about the most famous in the New York Times magazine section. We know that creativity is, as Jacques Barzun writes, "incessantly invoked, praised, urged,

demanded, hoped for, declared achieved, or found lacking," but the real meaning of creativity in our lives seems limited to marveling at a particularly clever new toothpaste holder, an original drawing by an elementary school child, a new recipe concocted by whoever cooked dinner. The arts, seen as the province of creativity, are what children do in elementary school when they are not studying the real subjects, and are frequently dropped first when budgets are sliced. Most people wish they were more creative, but can't possibly see how they could think up as good an idea as an artist does. It seems not in us; it seems reserved for a gifted few.

This way of seeing is socially constructed reality. If we lived in a society with different values, we would see creativity and the arts very differently. These women artists already see it differently, and work to change these perceptions. They appear to work from two major assumptions: One, the arts are for everyone, not just a select few. Kids in trouble in Appalachia, people in nursing homes, women of color writers, persons with AIDS. The second assumption is that artmaking, the act of creating, is a process that changes the creator in positive ways. A process that leads to power, self-actualization, attunement, healing, self-efficacy, liberation. A process that moves people from silence to voice.

Silences

In our society, as in most, there are the famous people whose names are known, and there are the passive consumers who buy magazines about the famous people. The silent ones are often spoken for, to and about, but seldom speak for themselves. The silent ones are most of us, and among us are economic, racial, ethnic and other minority groups. The condition of the silent ones is described by Alice Walker, here in terms of African-American women.

How was the creativity of Black women kept alive, year after year and century after century, when for most of the years Black people have been in America, it was a punishable crime for a Black person to read or write? And the freedom to paint, to sculpt, to expand the mind with action, did not exist. Consider, if you can bear to imagine it, what might have been the result if singing, too, had been forbidden by law. Listen to the voices of Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Roberta Flack, and Aretha Franklin, among others, and imagine those voices muzzled for life. Then you may begin to comprehend the lives of our "crazy," "Sainted" mothers and grandmothers. The agony of the lives of women who might have been Poets, Novelists, Essayists, and Short Story Writers (over a period of centuries), who died with their real gifts stifled within them." [Walker in Ruddick and Daniels, 1977, p. 94]

Tillie Olsen's Silences is a landmark study of how the voices of women writers are silenced. In the book she searches through the letters and diaries of well-known men and women writers, seeking to describe the conditions needed to create. She pinpoints a sense of entitlement as key to being a writer, a "conviction as to the importance of what one has to say, one's right to say it. And the will, the

measureless store of belief in oneself to be able to come to, cleave to, find the form for one's own life comprehensions. Difficult for any male not born into a class that breeds such confidence. Almost impossible for a girl, a woman. The leeching of belief, of will, the damaging of capacity begin so early." (emphasis mine) [1965, p. 27] This leeching of belief is a result of internalized oppression, and seems to characterize women's sense of their creativity--a lack of a sense of entitlement.

Paula Bennett in My Life A Loaded Gun, a study of the lives and writing of Emily Dickenson, Sylvia Plath and Adrienne Rich, defines the conditions needed for female creativity. "For the woman poet to exercise her creativity to its fullest, she must first be able to heal the internal divisions that have historically distorted and controlled her relationship to her craft. The acceptance of the self, whatever that self is, is the base upon which the woman poet must work, the source her greatest authority and strength." [1986, p. 5]

She notes that "The woman writer's principal antagonists are not the strong male or female poets who may have preceded her within the tradition, but the inhibiting voices that live within herself." [1986, p. 10] In order for women to become creative, they must accept themselves as they are, not mold themselves to fit the social stereotypes that oppress them. This is true whether they are white

women or women of color, lesbian or heterosexual, middle or working class. "For the woman artist to become self-empowered in her creativity and capable of originality, she must have a clear sense of an integrated and separated self." [1986, p. 264]

What Bennett and Olsen note about women no doubt applies to other silent ones. It is the impact of internalized oppression; i.e. defining oneself according to the norms of the dominant group, to distort the sense of self so that a person "does not think he is creative," or "has nothing to say." But experiences creating in the arts can lead people to believe they have something to say. I asked this group of women artists how they had come to believe they had something to say, how their voice had developed and been strengthened.

The Development of Voice

Kathy--(about playing John Henry in an Ecotheater production) It was a way of letting me know that I was somebody, it gave me a voice. I've been put down, and my self esteem's been so low for all of my life. I feel that Maryat has given me something to live for and she certainly did help me grow, she certainly did help me want to become somebody. I started caring about myself and the people around me.

Genny--I always had other creative people who supported me in this community--the Curtis St. Workshop, and other Asian American writers. We were a community of outcasts supporting each other, saying, "You're OK, you're not crazy." [See Figure 26]

Liz--There have been enough people along the way cheering me on. They haven't always been the people I

NOSTALGIA

Chinatown

a still life

embossed in copper

Fruit stands overflowing with

tangerines, pomelos, bright as the

sun browned faces peering

behind orange crates

fake jade and china

asking, always asking

"Will you buy? Will you buy?"

the song becomes a lament and

the eyes never blink

they only get older

Chinatown

perched high on a hill between

Transamerica and Nob Hill

the family home

dwarfed by skyscrapers

sold to double-breasted demons

On a rooftop

a woman is chanting

Bai sun

a chicken for the gods

roast pig

three cups of rice wine

She is waving her arms

calling back the new year

but no one hears

Under her slippered feet

the world grows smaller and smaller

Concrete cracks beneath

hammering jacks

Chinatown turns into fog

Fig. 26 "Nostalgia," Poem by Genny Lim.
(Winter Place, pg. 9)

wished would cheer me on, but that's just one of the things I've just had to accept.

Pat--The first thing I ever wrote was "My name is Patsy B. and I'm in the class 4B." "My name is Patsy B" is a claiming of self. My mother was a nurse, and she had to stay up all night. I would write 12 poems and put them in her nurse's uniform for her to read them on the hour, every hour. And they were little love poems to her, telling her how wonderful she was. And she praised me, and liked the poems. So my writing functioned as a way to communicate, and a way to say 'I am,' and a way to get some rewards.

Deborah--I was always artistic. I was always recognized. And I was always the best, or among the best. And I got a lot of attention for my artistness. And my parents, although they were very poor when I was young, and struggling all through my childhood, would spend their money on Saturday afternoon art class, or dance class, or music lessons.

Bonnie--When I was still in graduate school, the Portable Parks won a first prize in a competition sponsored by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. So this first really major project went out over the wires, and went out into the world, and was responded to very well. So that gave me an unusual and early acceptance and support. And that was followed by several other projects and situations where I got support.

Gloria--I have a sense of myself as having power, but it's only been recently that I've accepted it. Because I always associated power with power that was held over me, power that was used to abuse. For me to accept the fact that what I had to say was important, I had to listen to a lot of people say, 'I'm affected by your writing. It did this to me, I'm doing this because of it, it opened this door for me.' I had to listen to literally hundreds of people come up to me and say that in meetings and conferences before I could believe it. Can you believe that?

Margaret--When I was very unhappy, before I left my husband, I was very depressed, and I saw no way out of my difficulty. And I came across a quote from Martha Graham. "There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening, which is translated through you into action, and because there's only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist."

MC--My mother and I took a trip to the East when I was twelve. We stopped in Wyoming to visit Uncle Earnest and his two daughters about my age. One evening I got up on top of one of the farm outbuildings. I was seen walking the ridge pole. My cousins became alarmed and ran into the house to ask what could be done. My mother came out and saw me up there on the ridge pole and said, "Oh, Mary Caroline, your silhouette is so beautiful against the sunset." Well, maybe that indicates the space for poetry.

The development of voice in these women appears to be related to experiences of (1) being offered an opportunity to explore, express, and affirm oneself, (2) praise--as children, as adults (with repetitions necessary to overcome doubt), from peers, and (3) public recognition and affirmation. When these same women facilitate the creativity of others, they tend to set up environments where experiments can happen, and where praise and recognition are paramount.

Impact on Others

What is the impact of these women when they do offer to others the opportunity to speak? Their impact is varied and distinct, so I have selected several stories to show some results of their work.

Healing

Margaret Robison describes healing that was actually a two-way process in her writing workshop with women in prison. Zenida de Jesus was Puerto Rican, illiterate, a

hooker, and a drug addict; she lived in the NY subway with her kids. At the beginning of the class, Margaret took notes as Zenida poured out her story, and later Margaret typed them. "Just to see her face, to feel her new life because she had a purpose. She said, 'I'm raging for my life.' We didn't know then that she had AIDS."

In the class, there were women who would never have been together. There was Puerto Rican Zenida, a middle class white woman who had murdered her husband; a white woman who had a degree in electronics, an illiterate black woman who had escaped from maximum security prison and turned herself back in when she got converted to the Jehovah's Witnesses. There was a woman in for embezzling, from Pittsfield's upper crust, who is now in Harvard Law School. "It was just crazy, the mix. But we all came together, we all came together and that in itself was incredible." [See Figure 27]

Toward the end of that workshop, my mother went into the hospital. The last nineteen days before she died, we were rehearsing to go to another prison for a reading. And I was writing all this time about my mother's death. Cathryn, who was in for murder, was very frightened of standing up to read. She said no. Finally, she said to me, "I want you to read with us, to go to Framingham, and read that poem." It was a poem that I had just written about my mother's death. And that day was my mother's funeral, so I said, "Cathryn, this is new, mother just died, I'll read it and cry, it's very vulnerable." But I agreed to do it if she would stand up with me and read. She could not refuse me.

And then at the end of that class that night, Lisa sang "Amazing Grace." That was my mother's funeral for me.

HERE, IN THIS ROOM
IN THIS PRISON

We begin again here
together in this room, our way
lit by what the blood itself knows,
not the harsh fluorescent lights
that interrogate each word, each
sentence on the page.
that the heart knows - not
the knowledge that fences and walls
hold on their stiff, insensitive backs.

We claim our lives
word
by word, this
slow birth, this
becoming.

Catherine's fingers curl around a shell
as if in another time
they might have found a home
on some sea's ancient floor.
We come our different ways
to who we are.

Hands of mine, even cuffed
you were still loved, Catherine writes.
Lisa's large rings click together in the quiet.
Her hands are dark
birds of becoming.

Where do we begin?

Catherine, Christina, Jo Ann,
Ruth and Elaine
together in this room.
Lisa, Zenaida and Sheryl.
I am here too. I begin
the poem, the word
the line on the page
that is the lifeline
I lay down before me,
the tightrope I walk.

Where do we begin again?
Here. In this room
in this prison.

The sewing machine's plug dangles free.
How many miles of fabric
have been guided under the needle
by the hands of women in factories? Women
stiff with necessity, in their hard
straight chairs.

The ironing board that stands
against the wall
could hold the whole of women's history
in the Rorschach
of scorch marks on its cover.

The only women's history
we'll ever know for sure
is the history we write and live ourselves.

It scares me.
How do you begin again? Zenaida writes.
Sometimes I lie awake at night
while my heart knocks
against its cage of bone.
Woman alone woman alone.

How do you begin again?

Word by word by word I claim
my life, I claim
the stories of my life
as if they were water
I could scoop up in my hands
to quench my thirst,
as if they were bread,
a heady, rich bread for my hunger,
as if they were earth,
firm ground for my bare feet to stand on.
And they are.
They are.

Margaret Robison

Fig. 27 "Here, In This Room In This Prison,"
Poem by Margaret Robison. (The World
Split Open, introduction)

Empowering

Pat Schneider tells this story about how one participant, Diane, began to write in her workshop.

The first time she came, within the first five minutes she conveyed to me, 'I'm mean, I'm a bitch, and I'm not going to write a thing.' Here was a challenge I loved, and I loved her for telling me how it was right from the beginning. I put out the objects and tried to explain the writing. When I began to give directions, this glaze came over her eyes and she tuned out. She sat there looking confused while they wrote. When they started to read, she was surprised and interested. So I thought I'd whetted her appetite. For the next piece of writing, I asked them to write about a place they knew, and I gave them an example from the St. Louis slums. Diane got out her paper and wrote the whole time. After we wrote, Lynn shared her writing--about 23 toilets all lined up in a row. Before I could ask the group to respond, Diane leaned over to Lynn saying, 'Were you at Brightside?' Diane said, 'I wrote about that too.' It was an orphanage. Then she read her paper. She told about how her mother took her to the orphanage, her two little sisters were put in a room together, and she alone. How she stood at the window watching her mother run away as fast as she could. I asked everyone, "Is that good writing?" I said to Diane, "Look at us, we're all crying. That is incredible writing! You really moved us with your writing." I took it home, cleaned it up, and Diane began to really write after that. A dam had opened. I believe it was the first time anyone ever told that woman that what she thought was valuable.

This workshop is the most wonderful privilege. The image I have is that I'm at this banquet table and it's loaded with food, a king's store. And I can open the door and say to these people, come in and eat. It's wonderful.

Other women from that same workshop tell how the workshop helped them believe in themselves.

Lynn: Before you don't care, you think you're not worth it. Then you find out you do belong, can learn, can make a difference. You can get somewhere if you know the rules. You can fight back. They can't step on you. Before I didn't know I had rights, that I

could learn anything. I gave myself an F before I started.

Evelyn: I learned that if there was something I wanted to do and wanted it badly enough, I really could do it. Like going to school. I missed out on my high school diploma, and in the back of my mind it always stuck there. When I had the chance for the GED, I said I'd try it.

Evelyn got more self confidence from the workshop and began to feel good when she was with other people, not afraid she couldn't talk right. "You say to yourself, I'm gonna say what's on my mind and that's all there is to it. I'm not gonna worry about it if I use a ten dollar word or a dollar word." For Maryann, a factory worker who had confidence in her ability to do her job, it extended the arena of competency.

It gave me the confidence that if I want to seriously get into writing songs and get the money up I could probably do it. From the workshop I learned that I can be a little more confident about myself and talking up in front of other people. And I found out I could write about anything--something I saw that day--anything--and that it's OK. I thought something had to happen in my life for me to write it down.

The impact of this one writing workshop has moved out into the families, neighbors and communities of these women. Like ripples, bringing energy and confidence. The women are parenting their children differently. When I interviewed Diane, her three small daughters were around. Each of them, Crystle, Cynthia, and Christina, had a small spiral notebook of her own. They brought them to the table and wrote and drew in them as we talked. At her interview, Robin said, "My kids all keep journals. I told them I didn't care what

they wrote, I wasn't going to look at it. I respect their privacy and they have to respect mine. We keep all our journals together on the shelf over there."

Evelyn has become a teacher to her grandchildren. "A week ago my granddaughter was here and she had to write something for school. I tried to be like a Pat to her, to motivate her." Enid Santiago Welch has actively reached out to children in the projects as well as neighbors, giving to others what she got from the workshop: "Even if no one else had gone, I would have walked up there just because I wanted so much for someone to listen to my writing. The workshop emphasized what I always felt--I could write. I know I need work on my grammar. Pat said, 'Don't worry about your grammar. Just write in your own voice, how you talk!' She said my English was good and strong and honest."

In addition to being a full time nursing student, and tutoring a neighbor illiterate in both Spanish and English, Enid offered a writing workshop to the Boys and Girls Club near the project she lives in. In a compilation of their poems and stories, Enid introduced their work, "These writings are honest, intelligent, and above all, creative. It is wonderful to see the world through the eyes of these young writers. They have let their imaginations be free and brave." And Margareta, Enid's daughter, wrote this note to Pat Schneider, "Dear Pat. Thank you for helping my mom out with the hard times she's been through. I really appreciate

your help for my mom. Thank you for the desks and shelves you gave us. I never got a chance to write you a thank you letter for the Christmas gifts you gave me and my brother. Maybe one day when I am older you can help me. Love, Margareta Welch."

Kathy Jackson's work with teenagers results in a similar sense of empowerment for them.

What is satisfying about my work is that these kids are able to see and open up, to find out that they're not alone, that they can tell their stories. I really relate to that, because that was the chance I had when I started. I started as one of these kids.

It gives them a chance to look inside of them. If people are able to have a voice then they can find out who they really are. If they continue to not speak, to not talk about their feelings, they become someone else in order to hide those feelings. If they have that chance to tell their stories, they eventually are able to find out who they really are, accept it, and be it.

Kathy's work with ten young people in the summer of 1990 was described this way:

It was just short of amazing to see how effectively they performed as actors...it helped build their self confidence. They exuded authoritative confidence, an almost professional aplomb. Beyond creating presence and improving writing and speaking skills, these young people also improved their thinking abilities. I was impressed with the sophistication of their diction--their ability to find just the language they needed to articulate the concerns they had written about. Kathy Jackson deserves full credit for the success. She took disparate teens with varying levels of ability and created a family of actors, who bonded to produce real drama from their life experiences. (Jean Cash about the Governor's Summer Youth Program performance in Ecotheater newsletter, Summer 1990)

Margaret Robison has many stories to tell from her work with students in a Holyoke public school. "In no time all

these kids were writing like crazy. I had no discipline problems. It just amazed me. It took me a long time to realize that what was important, and why they were writing like crazy, was they had never been respected for their own life stories. And they were so happy that it mattered."

Not only did she teach an entire school to write poetry and produce a literary journal, but she hooked the children up with seniors in a nursing home.

She told the story of Chris Cruz, a boy bigger than all the other boys, who sat in the back of the room. He would never write anything, but just sat and looked at her. He said he wanted to go with the group to the nursing home, but wouldn't write. He would only copy poems from a book. One day he found Poe's "Annabel Lee" and copied out the entire thing to show Margaret.

At the nursing home, Chris developed a relationship with 98 year old Emma. "He loved Emma," Margaret said. "This big Puerto Rican boy and this old, old white woman." Margaret took the children and the elders to a mall just before Christmas and remembers looking up the third level where Chris and Emma were zooming along in her wheel chair, she just howling with laughter. "She adored him," Margaret said.

One day Emma gave Chris an orange, and then we came back to school. And again, I invited him to write about what had happened that day. And he finally said, "All right, I will." And it was very flat writing, but when he got to the place where he said, "Emma gave me

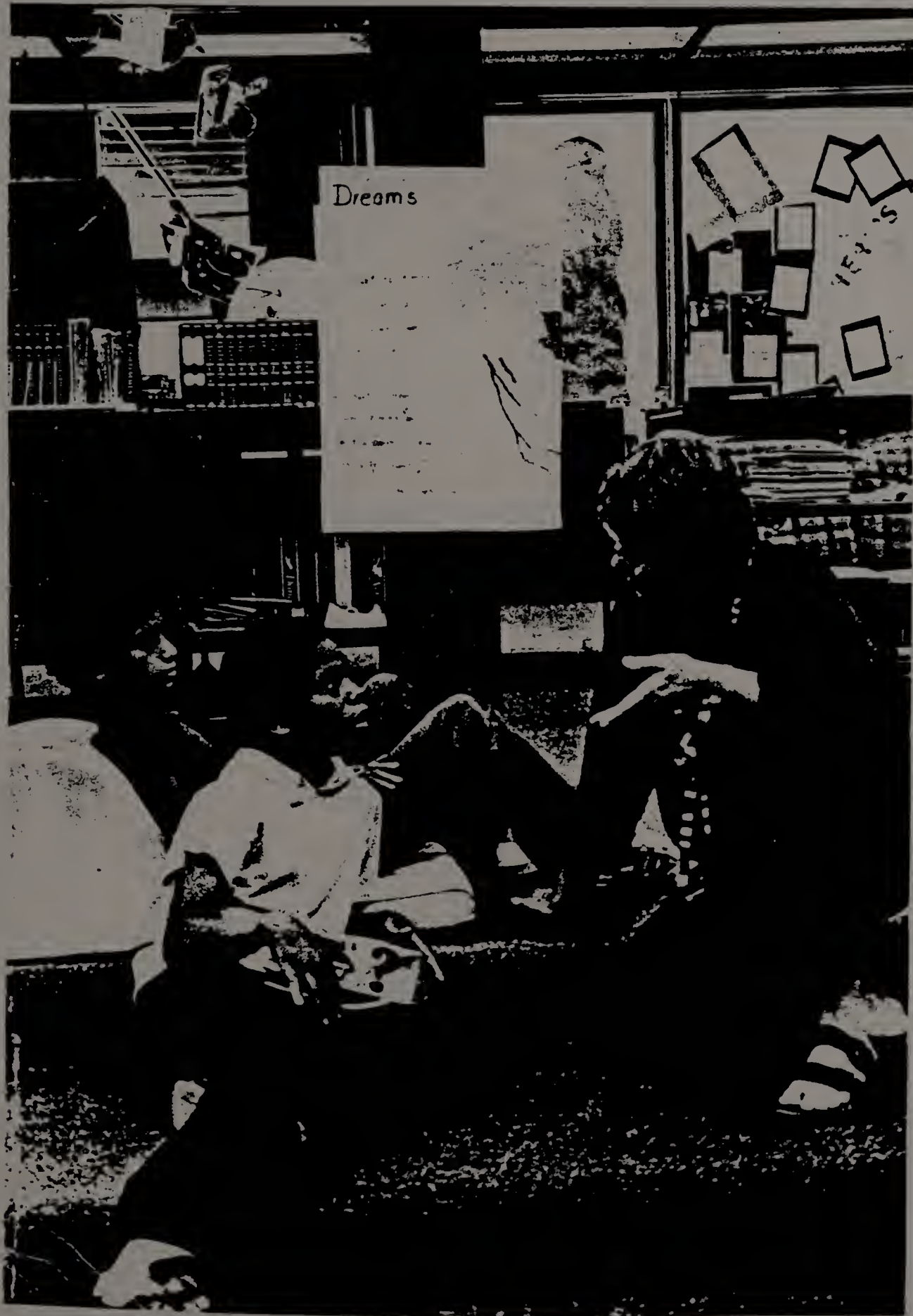
an orange," the writing just sang, and you could feel and taste that orange. Beautiful writing.

So I remembered about "Annabel Lee," and I thought perhaps Chris learns by hearing. I said, "Chris, read me your poem, please." He read it. I said, "Could you read it again?" He read it again. I said, "Would you please read it again to me?" On the third time he read, "Emma gave me an orange." and read right through. And he said, "It's poetry! I can feel it in my heart when it's poetry!" He knew poetry then, he knew it. [See Figures 28, 29 and 30].

Giving Access

"I thank my sister-writer Gloria Anzaldua,for reading earlier drafts of this work and for sharing her thoughts with me," Kristal Brent Zook wrote in a footnote to her essay "Light Skinned-ded Naps" in Gloria's newest anthology of writing by women of color, Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras. I've seen Gloria acknowledged in this way in many articles in other anthologies. It is part of Gloria's political work to encourage women of color writers. In the introduction to Haciendo Caras, she tells how she originally intended for the collection to consist of previously published material only. But as she worked on it, she found herself wanting to include the "unknown, little published or unpublished writers. Because there is little publication support for our writings, I've made a special effort to work with women who do not consider themselves writers, or at least not yet. The book provides space for some ethnic mestizas who have been silenced before uttering a word, or, having spoken, have not been heard." [1990, p. xvii]

“PO—WHAT?”



POEMS
BY THE
CHILDREN
OF THE
MAURICE A.
DONAHUE
SCHOOL

NARRATIVE
AND
EDITING
by
MARGARET
ROBISON
Artist-in-Residence

1
9
8
4

Fig. 28 Front Cover of Po-What?, Publication
by Margaret Robison

MY SADDEST POEM

My saddest poem is not that sad
My saddest poem is when I
almost drown because I didn't
know how to swim I try to
but I can't I'm too scared
Even my brother knows. I almost
drown him to save me. I was
terrified that day I never got in
a lake.

Auria Velasquez, Age 11

THE MONSTER UNDER MY BED

Every night I look under my bed cause I think
there is a monster under there. One night I looked
under my bed and I saw a werewolf and he grabbed me.
And then he bit me and I died.

Brian Bienvenue, Age 11

DEATH

I like to watch or play death
I do not like the smell of
your breath. At least I don't
slup my coffee. Well at least I
don't yawn at night I don't
even understand what you say. It
drives me nuts y'm, y'm. At least
I know how to laugh ha ha ha What
do you do koukshi KoukShi Kouk Shi
And they got into a fight. That's
Death.

Eliezer Feliciano, Age 9

Fig. 29 Poems by Children of Donahue School,
Holyoke, MA. (Po-What?, pg. 103)



Fig. 30 Photograph of Children With Elder in Nursing Home. (Margaret Robison's Poetry Class in Po-What?, pg. 30)

About promoting the writings of women of color, sometimes I will read their work and say, "Send it to Sinister Wisdom, or send it to Bridge: Jewish Women and their Friends, send it to Third World Women, send it to Chicano Writings, which is an annual, or NWSA Journal. So I'm sort of like a conduit for other people's writing.

When I first came here I taught a writing class at the university. And I do a lot of critiquing of my friends' work. I also start up a lot of writing support groups. I'll go the first couple of times, and then I'll let them carry on. Some of them continue for a year or two.

Gloria uses the image of a transmitter. When somebody reads something she's written, they start connecting it to something in their experience. They are exposed to a new way of thinking, and they take something with them. As a result there are new possibilities, and this is how people are changed by what they read. Things were passed on to Gloria, and now she works and shapes the material in order to pass it on.

I don't consider myself so much a person making changes in the world, but more as a person who passes on. But I'm very conscious of the fact that I do have power, and that I can say, "Look people, these are some of the issues we're grappling with. This is my take on them. What do you think?" And then dialogue with them. And if in the audience is a Chicana who was disconnected from her culture, and she all of a sudden connects, it changes her whole life. But it's not so much that I did it; it's that I'm part of this whole community of people who are doing this. All these Chicanas who are writing, all these women-of-color who are writing, all these feminists who are writing, all these dykes who are writing.... It's a communal effort, and I realized that writing to me is not a single, authority kind of endeavor. It's a collective effort, it's me, all the people I've encountered, all the people I've read, all the people who've spoken to me.

Genny Lim opens doors by teaching theater in a way that gives students from other ethnic groups a model of how to create theater out of their own cultures.

I think the most common reaction I get, especially from ethnic groups, like Jewish or Armenian people, for example, is that it really makes them want to do their own stuff. They want to go out and do it themselves. A strength I see in my work is that it inspires people who want to participate and do their own theater. Till then, they don't see their experience as being valid enough or stageworthy, but when they see that's exactly what I am doing--taking my own experience, my insights about life, and making theater of it--then they feel that it's OK, and theirs can be good too.

Building Community

The essence of Bonnie Sherk's work is community building, bringing people and resources together and linking them in common endeavor. She sees the artist as a problem solver, whose ideas bring about transformation. In her case, the idea of the life frame has become a vehicle for a workable, sustainable community.

Each community has its own resources, but there are certain generic things--families, senior citizens who are not working, people involved in business, historians, environmentalists, gardeners, just all sorts of people who normally wouldn't be communicating with one another. Developing A Living Library presents an opportunity for all these different endeavors to come together. And that's a transformation right there.

And then in terms of creating place, and an ongoing place, A.L.L. becomes like a magnet, a place that people will want to become part of. And also, if these places are created in communities, they are going to generate income, jobs, tourism and visibility for the community. And then they are going to link that

community with other communities in other parts of the world.

For Bonnie, the building of a park by a community gives both a sense of who a community is locally, and broadens understanding of how it is connected to other places. "The planet is an ecological system, an organic whole, and for us not to realize that is foolish. The creation of Living Libraries is a way of being directly on line with other parts of the world, tuning in; and it is a way of taking more effective local action."

For her, artmaking is education, which is "making things whole, and getting people to see how ideas and events and endeavors from around the world, in different times, are connected. In my opinion, A Living Library is really the future of the schools. It's a way of making learning exciting, meaningful and relevant. And connected."

Her idea is to link the curricula of schools with Living Libraries, so that students are actually developing research institutes. And students will not only use books for their research, but oral histories and other local resources. And then they will transform, translate the information into visual, textual and digital forms. "All sorts of art forms--the total range of creative possibility," is how Bonnie puts it.

Conclusions

What then is the impact of the work of these women? Healing, empowering, transmitting, connecting. The impact is that Diane moves a group to tears with the starkness of her writing about childhood deprivation. She knows something then about the impact of her words, her power, that she didn't know before. It means that Lynn finds out she can learn, and that she knows some of the "rules." She begins to think she has "rights." And Maryann begins to believe that she can write as well as make wallets in a factory all day. She knows that the events of her life are good things to write about. Just as they are. Women of color who risk writing find Gloria to help them place their work with publishers and in periodicals, so they can be heard from. Kathy Jackson's teenagers in Hinton, WV can open themselves to others and not be crushed, they can see that they're not alone in their experience, they can look inside themselves, find out who they are, and "be it." Chris Cruz learns how to write about what happens to him and to find the heart of it. He learns to hear his own poetry. He loves an old woman, and they befriend each other. The citizens of the towns where Bonnie Sherk helps them create Living Libraries find out what their place is all about, invest in it together, and link themselves with other such places in the world.

This is power, this is the self emerging and speaking in her own voice. This is power--to know what is potentially in one, to dare to tell it, and to then see others respond. And to conclude, from that experience, some new thing about oneself; i.e., that one is efficacious, a strong writer, able and capable and competent. And beyond individual transformation is the cultural. Walter Gropius, architect and founder of the Bauhaus School of Design, wrote, "Aesthetic creativeness cannot survive either as the privilege and occupation of an esoteric few or as an embellishing cloak thrown over the unlovely features of the contemporary scene. It should be a primary function of all, with a solid foundation in popular custom." [in Thruelsen and Koebler, 1959, p. 294]

The impact of the teaching of these artist-educators is not just that a few people learn they can speak for themselves, and thus feel better about themselves. Each person whose life they touch brings with him/her a culture, a racial group, a particular heritage. When they begin to speak out of who they are, then we all begin to know of the existence of hidden cultures within the dominant culture. We begin to see what cultural democracy might look like, what many voices from many sources might sound like. And such diversity and "all of us listening to each other's stories, all stories being equal," as Liz Lerman wishes, means a richer, more vigorous and spirited society.

CHAPTER 9

THE ARTIST AS RAINMAKER

At the beginning of this paper, I called these artist-educators Rainmakers, because around them creativity happens, just as around the rainmaker in the Chinese legend, the rain fell. These artists-educators live and work in this society in quite different ways from either the way we have pictured artists working, or from the ways many artists do work. They operate out of different values, their methods are often unorthodox, they cross boundaries and divisions with ease and pleasure. They spend some of their creative time working with other people, and don't feel that this takes away from their "own creative time." They often stand on the edges of their literary or artistic world, and they are often critical of society's norms. They see themselves as contributing to social change on basic levels; they offer the opportunity to create to traditionally disenfranchised populations. The lives they live, the ways they work, and their values create an alternative picture of the artist in society.

The Function of the Artist in Society

In earliest times, "artists" made marks and images on cave walls, marks perhaps intended to "be the real thing," a

hunted animal, for example. Perhaps one who could render the animal, or the hunting scene, with skill was seen as artist. In early recorded history, artists also designed symbols of gods and created rituals which told of such gods. Perhaps they created ceremonies of healing, like the ritual sand paintings of some American Indian tribes. In their art, they tended to depict the ruler or the gods, producing their products at the behest of the king, or as time went on, religious authorities, or wealthy individuals. In early art, visual narratives of war and conquest were common. The artist served as recorder of exploits, ritualist, healer, and in some cases a link with the divine.

By the time of the flowering of Greek culture, some artists had begun to sign their work, and various artists began to be distinguished by styles. Artists worked in more permanent materials--stone, for example--indicating some consciousness of immortality, or the self as creator. In the early Middle Ages, religion became the chief inspiration for artistic work, displayed in cathedrals where teams of masons and sculptors worked together with a designer or architect. Illuminated manuscripts, at first done exclusively by monks, gave way to painting, and by the time of the Renaissance, painters were producing not only commissioned work from popes and kings, but catering to the tastes of well-to-do citizens. The Renaissance saw the emergence of individualism--self awareness and self

assurance--and humanism, where human concerns tended to overshadow divine ones. [Janson, 1962]

In Old Mistresses, Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock trace the history of the idea of the artist from the 16th through the 19th centuries. "The modern definition is the culmination of a long process of economic, social and ideological transformation by which the word 'artist' ceased to mean a kind of workman and came to signify a special kind of person with a whole set of distinctive characteristics: artists came to be thought of as strange, different, exotic, imaginative, eccentric, creative, unconventional, alone. A mixture of supposed genetic factors and social roles distinguish the artist from the mass of ordinary mortals, creating new myths, those of the prophet and above all the genius, and new social personae, the Bohemian and the pioneer." [1981, p. 82]

This transformation began with craftsmen striving to become respected members of the intellectual community and the cultural elite. The artist, unlike the artisan, became conscious of his intellect and creative powers; manual skill was replaced by intellect. Academies of art in the 17th and 18th centuries changed the status of the artist by creating a system for training and professionalizing the practice of art. Artists were educated rather than trained. By the 19th century 'artist' became increasingly associated with everything that was anti-domestic, outsidersness, anti-social

behavior, isolation from others, disorder and the sublime forces of untamed nature. [1981, pp. 82-99]

Throughout all this history, women were artists also, but their work is seldom highlighted. In fact, most of them are forgotten. As Pollock and Parker note, "artist" came to refer to men. By the nineteenth century, "Artists who were women were not only subjected to the institutional restraints of the developing nuclear family but also to the assumption that, therefore, the natural form their art would take was the reflection of their domestic femininity." As the term artist came to signify anti-domestic, so at the same time femininity was to be "lived out in the fulfillment of socially ordained domestic and reproductive roles. A profound contradiction was established between the identities of artist and of woman." [1981, p. 99]

Just as the idea of the "great artist" tends to exclude women and other minorities, so "art as big business" tends to be exclusive also. In the art world of today, hype, greed, and hunger for money and glamour seem predominant. We see a system where artists and gallery owners spend millions of dollars to create a "star" by maneuvering and manipulating to create a market for the work of a particular chosen artist. Often placing the painter in certain shows, getting proper attention from the right art magazine, or throwing the right sort of opening parties is very important to an artist's career. Art represents investment, and it is

rumored that some artists are even "trained" by dealers to produce the sort of art that will bring big bucks.

The Artist in Society: An Alternative

The existence of this group of artists, and others like them, draws a different picture of the artist in society, in some cases picking up some of the original functions of the artist--ritualist, healer, and namer. These artists come to artmaking with a different consciousness. One of them has the radical idea that a community drawing on its own resources to create a park is an act of high creativity and artmaking (Bonnie Sherk). One lives and works within the context of an intentional spiritual community and sees her art as her whole life (M.C. Richards). Another believes that non actors can produce powerful theater (Maryat Lee and Kathy Jackson), another is convinced that everyone can and should dance (Liz Lerman). One visual artist who experienced the curtailment of her gifts because she was a woman offers workshops for other women artists to liberate themselves from similar circumstances (Deborah Kruger), and another woman whose life was turned around continues to work with young people towards that same goal (Kathy Jackson). Many of these women know that the experience of creating frees those who do it and so they work in a variety of ways to help people find that free access to themselves. Pat Schneider, Margaret Robison, Genny Lim, and Gloria Anzaldua

all offer such opportunity. Gloria writes from the "borderlands" of her multiple identities--lesbian, Chicana, writer, feminist--and seeks always to be crossing those borders.

Many of these women are committed to a new society, and to that end they generate forms for new ways of being, and they confront directly and indirectly the forces of dehumanization and despair (Liz Lerman, Gloria Anzaldua). Here are women artists who maintain their lively curiosity about the elements of their medium--music and sound, dance and motion, words and images (Pauline Oliveros). Here are women who seem whole beings, whose work is their life and whose life is their art.

These are new ideas about who the artist is, and what she does. The work of these women is work of vision, full of spirit. It is political work, it is subversive work. It uses the creative process, that mysterious and ancient human capacity, and it invites those who have never been associated with art and artmaking to join in. As M.C. Richards describes it, the artist embodies the artistic paradigm that is in all of life, and reveals such a paradigm at work everywhere.

The Artist-Educator at Work

By being new models for the artist in society, these women are providing resources for positive social change.

They show, in their lives and work, that artmaking is linked to both healing and educating. They work this way because they see art and artmaking differently: they see healing and teaching as the province of the artist, because the self is seen as in-relation, connected to the rest of society.

They also constitute a model of informal education in this culture. If to create means to call forth the self, to find voice, to become visible, to say, "This is how I see it," then the persons taught by these women, experiencing themselves as creative, can thus affirm themselves and their special perspective. This enlarged, strengthened self is a fertile ground for their future growth and learning.

Bonnie Sherk writes that "Art is education...and as such, it is the most powerful transformational methodology available to the human species, and is a functional necessity for our evolution and survival on the planet... By understanding art as a methodology as well as a manifestation, we can harness the tremendous problem-solving potentials and energies that are available to us and use them in sensitive, balanced ways." [Sherk, 1988.]

Art as a methodology means that the creative process becomes, in a broad way, a political process, political meaning having to do with power. Groups formerly invisible become known to us all, and may thus claim access, resources and opportunity formerly denied them.

It is political to eliminate distinctions between artist and audience, one medium and another, professionals and amateurs, art and life, creativity and ordinary people, spirituality and social change. When art is a professional activity and an academic discipline, and galleries, museums and concert halls are the only places art is, then people are intimidated into thinking that art is an activity of the educated, the professional, or the creative genius. What if we thought of art-making as a playful, joyful activity, as basic to life as food or breathing? What if we wanted everyone to use objects, words and other means to put forth their idiosyncratic perceptions?

This group of ten women artists I have talked are only representative of a larger group of artists constructing a new paradigm. Re-Imaging America [O'Brien and Little, 1990] is an collection of writings by artists of all kinds, men and women, who are attempting to say what motivates and sustains them as artmakers, and under what conditions their art can effect social and political change. Who are they? A Puerto Rican Jew who is "learning his people's dreamlife" and seeking to embody that in his printmaking; the director of the Alternative Museum in New York City founded in 1975 "to expand the boundaries of the American mainstream." [1990, p. 35] A woman working in anarchist theater, another working to elicit the stories of refugees, a man whose videos and films address issues like AIDS, an alliance of

native American artmakers. Tim Rollins, a reading teacher, and the Kids of Survival are a group of fifteen South Bronx young people who create create visual art out of the literature they are reading. Chinese musician Fred Wei-han Ho writes about how the artist of color is "often necessarily an archivist, archeologist, oral historian, sociologist, and social worker all rolled into one." [1990, p. 125] Willie Birch is a Black painter who sees "little difference in the way I create and the way I teach art." [1990, p. 137] He works with children in schools, his goals being "a positive self-image, the importance of understanding the world, and how art can be used as a means of empowerment." Tim Drescher directs community mural projects, John Malpede creates theater with a group of homeless and Skid Row people in Los Angeles called LAPD (Los Angeles Poverty Department). Rebecca Rice, a writer and educator, focuses her work on creating art that "brings voice, breadth and beauty to the life experiences of those who live in a state of shame, isolation and hopelessness." [1990, p. 205] Hundreds more work like this, many totally unknown because they are not visible in our mass media.

By operating in the society in very different ways from mainstream artists making mainstream art, these artists not only provide a new paradigm of the artist in society, but they broaden the very definition of creativity.

Creativity Redefined

The work of these artists broadens the idea of creativity from its academic base, from a purely psychological perspective, from a male domain, and from a vague value of general good. Their work suggests a definition of creativity that involves reaching inside, by virtue of curiosity or pain or whatever impulse; drawing out the roots of the self; creating from those roots; and putting the product into the world. And this activity is often done in a context of relatedness, rather than in some isolated state.

Seen in this way, the creative process becomes a self-revealing, self-proclaiming process. It is characterized by authenticity, not just by originality, divergent thinking or novelty. It becomes a process inherently linked to the self, to the willingness to tell truth about that self, to risk doing that when one does not feel all the privilege of being a white educated male in a white educated male culture. The assumption behind this understanding of creativity is that the spark is in us all. That in itself is a radical idea. We are all free to be artists in the same sense people were before artists signed their work or went to New York to become famous.

Creativity becomes connected with having an inner sense of confidence, faith in what is potential in oneself; creativity becomes related to self knowledge, and a sense of

entitlement. Erich Fromm [1959] writes that being original means that one experiences himself as the true center of his world and the true originator of his acts. Originality has less to do with discovering something new than it does with experiencing something in such a way that the experience originates in the self. Such a connection relinks creativity to the self, reconnects something that seems to have gotten lost in the art and artmaking of our times.

This different understanding of creativity is embodied in the work of these ten women. It is not possible to jump from a study of ten women working alternatively to the notion that their way of working might represent "women's ways of creating." Who can say what "women's ways" are? Still, it is true that the creative process and its manifestations in the art world have been chiefly defined by men, so an alternative might conceivably be called women's way. It certainly does spring from other values and motivations than conventional artmaking apparently does.

Silvia Bovenschen in "Is There A Feminine Aesthetic?" notes that "Art has been primarily produced by men. Men have neatly separated and dominated the public sector that controls it, and men have defined the normative standards for evaluation. Moreover, in so far as they came into contact with this sector at all, women have for the most part acquiesced to its value system." [Bovenschen in Ecker, 1986, p. 30] But these women artists do not acquiesce.

Instead they re-define who is creative, what is art, what standards of value are appropriate in judging art, and what art is for.

The stereotypical picture of the artist is a man who creates alone, tapping the muse or the god within, sweating and agonizing, and finally bringing the new work to birth. What might an alternative picture be? There would still be products, still outpourings, with an individual stamp or style. But these products might be arrived at differently-- by collaboration, for example, or using processes of generation that incorporate professional and non professional artmakers. What would be done with the products? A number of things, not just showing in a gallery and buying by collectors. Healing perhaps, sharing to inspire, social commentary and critique.

An alternative idea about creating might take place in what Suzi Gablik calls an "empathic mode," where listening to others is added to merely expressing ourselves, where artists might "help organize people who can speak for themselves, but lack the vehicles to do so." [1989, p. 76] Relationship would be embodied in the motivation, the process, the product, and the presentation. One would not necessarily strive to set oneself apart, to posture, to proclaim, to claim exclusivity. There would always be bonds. so that one might naturally seek to bring forth the same gifts in others as in oneself. One could be a dancer

and a teacher, a writer and a writers' helper, a visual artist and an encourager to other visual artists, a musician and one who helps others listen and create sounds. There would not be such distinctions.

There would be a wholeness about the person, and thus about the creative process. Creativity would be named as for all, from all. Creativity might only peripherally be connected to money, to business. It would be encouraged at the grass roots, on the fringes of society. It would be seen as empowering, and power for all would be seen as a good. Suzi Gablick writes, "The capacity to move beyond the old art-and-life polarities is precisely where the frontier of a post-aesthetic is to be found--and is the starting point for new modes of relatedness, in which the paradigm of social conscience replaces that of the creative genius." [1989, p. 76.]

The Artist as Rainmaker

From my studies in creativity, I have concluded that creativity is blocked by, among many other factors, internalized oppression which tells a false story about who the self is. I am also concluding that the process of creating empowers and liberates because it directly addresses that sense of self, and that as individuals risk bringing up and out their unique perceptions, then the sense of self shifts; the self is strengthened and validated.

This group of women, in their diverse work, are visionary models because they show what it could be like for the artist to be in real relation to a society where all were invited to the banquet, as Pat Schneider puts it.

In the introduction I called them Rainmakers. In the old Chinese story, the rainmaker is called to the village when all attempts to make it rain have failed. Prayers have failed, priests have failed. The crops are dying. Their lives are threatened, the society is in great need. And the rainmaker comes, and apparently just by being--being creative, we might say, in the case of these women artists--the rain comes.

The rainmaker does not make it rain. But around her the rain comes, and she is receptive, she allows it, she seeks it, she fosters it. These women artists are rainmakers in the larger parched society of the United States in the late 20th century. Not only is the art world desolate, but the society at large has lost a sense of connection with all its parts. The privileged have moved far off from the needy, homeless people sleep in streets, children are poorly parented and poorly educated so that their springs of creativity are dried up, the plague of AIDS wipes out thousands without much national alarm except for individual safety, we continue without significant reflection or corrective to contaminate and squander natural resources, our society is riddled with drugs legal and illegal. A war

distracts us and makes us feel good. The society seems to have no center, it does not hold together. Truly, our ground is parched.

These women, these Rainmakers, offer some new possibilities. They do not make everything all right again, but they do offer a new picture of the artist as someone who speaks from her heart, who creates powerful and moving artwork. The great artist is someone who offers to others the chance to join in, to let go, to give themselves, to create. She passes around the exhilarating possibilities that are released each time any one of us creates. They "inspire, enable, stir creativity, pull the 'other' into this real world, give them power, discipline and guide their early clumsy efforts," as Maryat Lee wrote in the headnote of this paper. They do not hold the self so precious, they do not clutch their impressive creative gifts solely for the enhancement of themselves. Instead they create with fervor in their various forms, and around them creativity seems to happen. Around them the rain falls.

APPENDIX A

COPY OF RELEASE FORM SIGNED BY SUBJECTS

I, _____, give my permission for the material tape recorded in the interviews with Mary Clare Powell to be used for her dissertation research and writing (this dissertation is undertaken at the School of Education, University of Massachusetts in 1990). I understand that I and my work will be described, in a case-study method, as part of a dissertation about women artists with a social vision. The use of the taped material will be restricted to this one purpose, unless I am contacted by Mary Clare and she secures my permission to use it for other written documents (articles and books.)

Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN INTERVIEWS

My work is an investigation of the liberating power of the creative process, and of the artist in society engaged in that process. It began with my own experiences as a woman, lesbian, visual artist and writer, and continued with a group of poor women I worked with in a writing/visual arts workshop. I'm interviewing a small group of women artists whose work is linked to social transformation. The questions begin with a description of your work and your creative process, move to your facilitating work, examine your experience of oppression and liberation, the development of voice and power, the place of art and artmaking in your life. The final questions ask about your social vision, the artist in society, and your work as social change work.

The Creative Process

1. How would you describe your work in general. What is it?
(All aspects)
 - A. What is your medium? How did you choose it?
 - B. Has this always been your medium, or did it evolve from other things?
 - C. How much time do you spend on your work?
 - D. Where do you do your work?
 - E. Do you do it with others?
 - F. Do you make money from it?
 - G. How do you put your work out in the world?
 - H. Why are you doing this work?

2. Think of a specific piece of work that was/is significant to you.
- Describe it.
 - How, step by step, did you create the work?
 - What keeps you going on it? Who or what supports your work?
 - Where do you get blocked?
 - Why are you doing this piece of work?
3. Are you creative? Have you always been creative? What is creativity, to you? What sort of a process is it? (Perhaps use metaphors. Creativity is _____, _____ or creativity is like _____.)

Facilitative Work

- Do you consider yourself a teacher or facilitator?
 - Of what?
 - To whom?
 - Why? (Is it based on some idea or belief?)
 - What impact do you think you have on those you teach?
 - Is there a conflict between this teaching work and your artmaking work? Is there any difference?
 - If you had all the resources you need, how would you be spending your time?

Oppression, Artmaking, Liberation

I want to explore how oppression on the basis of race, gender, class, age, sexual orientation, etc. has affected you and your work.

- Do you experience yourself as oppressed? On the basis of your gender, race, age, education, ethnic background, religion, sexual orientation, class, physical ability? Does your experience of oppression relate at all to your being an artist, a creator?
- Did you ever have any sort of breakdown, break-out, or breakthrough? What was it and its impact?
- How, through the course of your life, did you come to think you had something to say? Why and how have you used art and artmaking to say it? What are you trying to say?
- Do you have power? What sort? Where does it come from?

Other Aspects of Your Work

- How does your work fit into the rest of your life? (Partners, relationships of other sorts, children, home,

friends) How do these relationships feed, and starve, your work?

2. How do you put your work out into the world?

3. How would you describe yourself in relation to the literary or the art world?

4. Is your work spiritual? How?

Women Artists and Social Vision

1. As it is currently set up, do the structures, values, institutions, practices of this society enhance and promote you and your work? If not, how do these structures limit you?

2. What changes need to happen for this society to support you and your work?

3. How do you think such social change happens?

4. Do you have a vision of the sort of society you'd like to live in?

Where did this idea about society come from?

5. How does the work you are doing help create a different world? (Why use art and artmaking?, How might your work facilitate human liberation?)

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