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Nonlinear consciousness in selected feminist plays: Strategies for survival

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NONLINEAR CONSCIOUSNESS
IN SELECTED FEMINIST PLAYS:
STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVAL

A Thesis

Presented to the
Department of Dramatic Arts
and the
Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Caren Carr

December, 1986

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College,
University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts, University of
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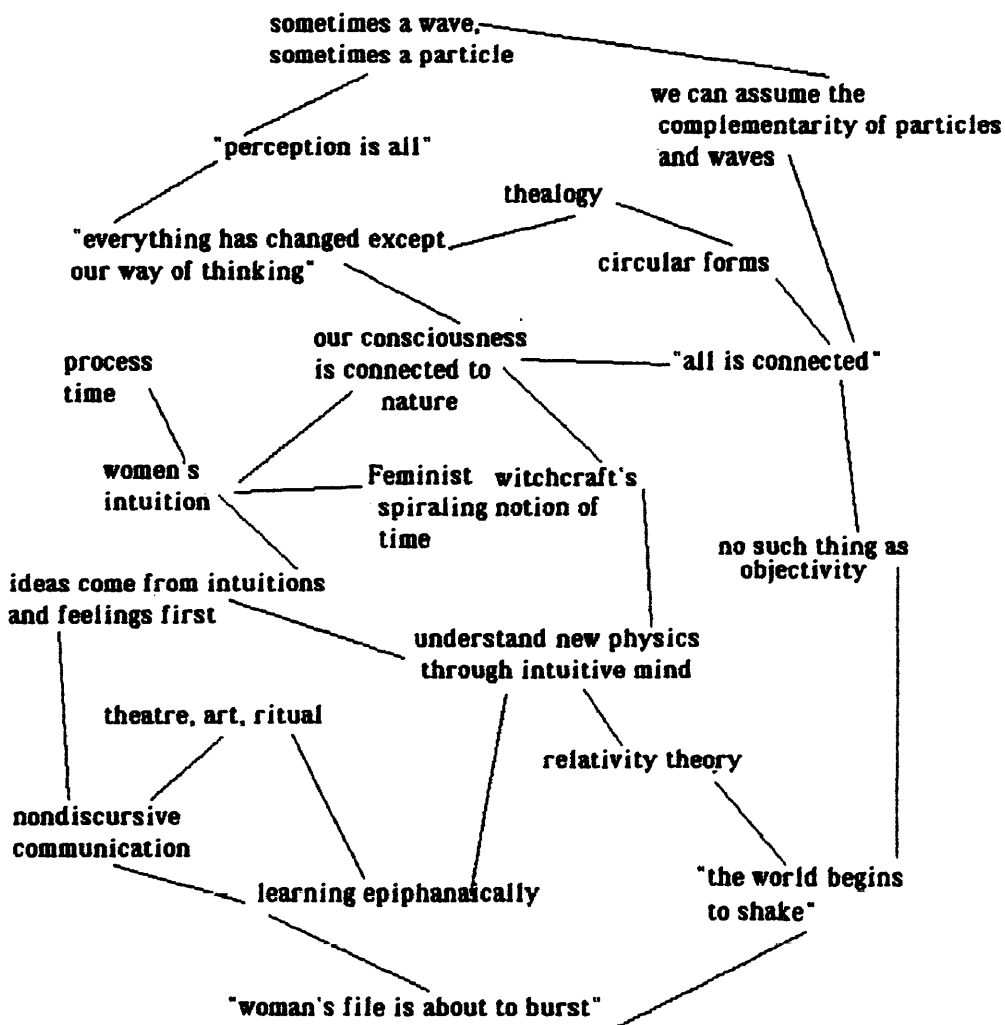
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This is a guide to survival in a hostile environment. The hostile environment is the patriarchy, the tools for survival are new conceptual patterns, and a guide to their use is found within the works of feminist playwrights. At the core of feminist thought is the mandate to change our way of thinking. The feminist point of view holds that the patriarchy is dangerous, not just to women, or to feminists, but to the planet, and one of the fundamentals of the patriarchy is a rational, logical, linear consciousness. In order to change this environment, feminists assert, a change in consciousness is necessary. The alternative includes intuitive, associative, and arrational ways of thinking, and taken together, these can be called a nonlinear consciousness. A world in which a nonlinear consciousness is valued is certainly a goal of feminism, but feminism

is also very much a process as well. Nonlinear consciousness can be used in the present in order to survive within and beyond the patriarchy. I assert that an examination of feminist plays offers nonlinear strategies for survival.

The notions of a nonlinear consciousness do not fall naturally into a linear pattern. In fact, the following web of concepts offers a more natural presentation of nonlinear consciousness:



This nonlinear consciousness is elusive; not only does it resist being organized neatly into a linear order, it also seeps into many areas. A mode of human consciousness will manifest itself in some way into every area of human endeavor. For the purposes of this study, I have found the thought on human consciousness to be clearest when divided into three areas: how we connect to the world, how we make models of the world, and how we express ourselves about the world, or, more simply, spirituality, physics, and language. The second chapter outlines the linear approach within each of these three areas, for a nonlinear consciousness becomes clearer by examining what it is not. The following linear outline is used to structure chapter two and is one way of organizing the theories and concepts of nonlinear consciousness.

A Linear Guide Through Nonlinear Consciousness

- I. Spirituality: Critiques of the "White Male System" and Explorations in Feminist Theology (as opposed to Theology, the study of patriarchal religion)¹
 - A. Linear Thought Manifest in Religion
 - B. Feminist Critiques of Patriarchal Religion
 - C. Feminist Spirituality
 - D. Feminist Religious Structure and Practice

- II. Consciousness and Physics: Newtonian Physics and Mechanistic Models, Quantum Physics and Holistic Models

- A. Cartesian-Newtonian Models
- B. Consequences of the Linear Model
- C. The New Physics
- D. Connections and Possibilities for Nonlinear Thinkers

- III. Consciousness and Communication: Linear Language and Epiphanaic Expression
 - A. Linear Consciousness and Language
 - B. Nonlinear Expression

A linear approach to nonlinear consciousness is limited. In each of these areas, the nonlinear values are contrasted with the linear values. Values affect behavior, and one place behavior can be examined is in literature. The plays which will be examined in chapters three, four, and five are for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf by Ntozake Shange, Ashes, Ashes We All Fall Down: A Ritual Drama About Nuclear Destruction and the Denial of Death by Martha Boesing, and Fefu and Her Friends by Maria Irene Fornes. These three plays deal with women making a change in consciousness in order to survive, and they use many nonlinear strategies to make this change. The linear introduction to nonlinear consciousness presents the nonlinear tools, and the plays offer us a guide to their use.

CHAPTER II

A LINEAR GUIDE

THROUGH NONLINEAR CONSCIOUSNESS

A nonlinear consciousness does not slip quietly into the thought patterns of one who has been carefully trained to be rational and linear. It is a world-view, and just as the linear, rational view has shaped culture on many levels, this alternative world-view also has far reaching implications. The feminist writings on spirituality value a cyclical spirituality against a hierarchal, dualistic religion, and the theories of the new physics explode the mechanistic, clockwork model of the universe. A nonlinear consciousness is also valued by feminist writers and artists, who use nondiscursive, nonlinear expression to communicate complex notions which linear language cannot express. In these three areas of religion, physics, and language, both the linear and the nonlinear

approaches are explored. A nonlinear consciousness becomes clearer when seen against the linear, rational thought and its effects.

Spirituality: Critiques of the "White Male
System" and Explorations in
Feminist Theology

The emerging feminist religious canon is made up of new feminist religious thought and critiques of patriarchal religion. Much of the patriarchal religion critiqued is the Judeo-Christian tradition. The following section on spirituality outlines some of the Judeo-Christian attitudes toward time, the feminist criticisms of that tradition, and feminist spiritual thought and practice.

The discussion on patriarchal religion will focus on some of the current lay practice, and is certainly no attempt to reduce thousands of years of thought into a distillate. Just as the feminist attitude toward time and consciousness is manifest in the experience of lay people, so is the Christian attitude. Neither is this an attempt to prove that linear time has been caused by patriarchal religions. For one thing, that would be a tumble directly into cause-and-effect thinking, and also, as Emily Erwin Culpepper has warned us, too many times feminist scholars have fallen

into "blaming it all on the Jews."¹ But the rational, dualistic, hierarchal thinking has been supported by Judeo-Christian religions, and in turn, religions have been supported and informed by rational, dualistic thinking as well. Sheila Collins reminds us that

Theology is ultimately political. The way human communities deify the transcendent and determine the categories of good and evil have more to do with the power dynamics of the social systems which create the theologies than with the spontaneous revelation of truth from another quarter.²

Linear Thought Manifest in Religion

One rendition of the linear consciousness in the Judeo-Christian tradition was Puritanism, which fostered such personality traits as "diligence, accountability, self-denial, and the scrupulous use of every God-given moment of time."³

How has linear thought been translated into some Christian practices today? Objectivity is highly valued, and fundamentalists see the bible as an objective source of truth rather than as a record of subjective experience. Order and time are seen as coming from an outside source as well. The notion that "order is from God, and disorder is

from Satan" is commonly held, and continues to be an effective means of control in Christian schools. The Puritans' "scrupulous use of every God-given moment of time" has filtered down to current practice as well. This is not the advice of the founding fathers of the faith, but of contemporary lay teachers. However mystical and experiential the Christian religion may have begun, linear thought is reflected in its practices today.

God is seen as the creator of time, having divided up space into light and dark himself, and as the creator, he is also the owner of time.

Our time belongs to God, just as our money, our talents, and our children do. He allows us to use it for a little while. When we acknowledge His ownership of our time, we also recognize that He also has the responsibility for stretching it to fit our needs. His promise to supply 'all we need' including all the time we need--relieves us from worry about not having enough.⁴

Having given us all the time that we need, God also expects time to be used wisely, and will ask for an account of how the time is spent. Cause-and-effect thought is in evidence in the area of time management as well. The time management teachers preach the value of a careful planning of every moment, and even interruptions to these plans are caused by an outside source.

We can look on interruptions as annoying, frustrating blockades to our best laid plans, or we can think of them as God's little nudgings . . . Not all interruptions come from God. Some arrive special delivery straight from hell. But we can turn these, too, into victories by offering them up to God and asking Him to use them.⁵

Apparently time should also be carefully scheduled for discerning the source of interruptions.

The view of time as an object owned by an outside source is one way a linear consciousness is manifest. A hierarchal structure has also been taught as coming from God. The King James version of the Bible states that God has made man "a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep, and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea."⁶ This structure is just one of the aspects of patriarchal religion that has been critiqued by feminists.

Feminist Critiques of Patriarchal Religion

In Beyond God The Father, Mary Daly outlines how a hierarchal structure is supported by and supports male-dominated religion:

If God in "his" heaven is a father ruling his people, then it is the nature of things and according to divine plan and the order of the universe that society be male dominated. Within this context, a mystification of roles takes place: the husband dominating his wife represents God "Himself."⁷

Another interpretation of the extremes of patriarchal religion is from Starhawk, who suggests that it has led to a whole system of estrangement and dualistic thinking:

Estrangement is the culmination of a long historical process. Its roots lie in the Bronze Age shift from matrifocal earth centered cultures whose religions centered on the Goddess and Gods embodied in nature to patriarchal urban cultures of conquest, whose Gods inspired and supported war. . . . Yahweh of the Old Testament promised His Chosen People dominion over plant and animal life, and over other peoples whom they were encouraged to invade and conquer. Christianity deepened the split--establishing a duality between spirit and matter that identified flesh, nature, woman and sexuality with the Devil and the forces of evil. [God] was removed from this world to a transcendent realm of spirit somewhere else.⁸

The symbol system of Western religions is so pervasive that even those who profess not to believe in God are not free of hierarchal, linear, dualistic thinking. These religious symbols continue to affect them because, as Carol Christ notes, "the mind abhors a vacuum. Symbol systems cannot simply be rejected, they must be replaced."⁹

Feminist Spirituality

In an effort to replace patriarchal structures, feminist spirituality and practice has developed. But what exactly is feminist spirituality? Just as feminism is not monolithic, neither is this loose collection of thought and practice called feminist spirituality. One definition of feminist spirituality has been articulated by Judy Davis and Juanita Weaver:

Feminist spirituality has taken form in sisterhood--in our solidarity based on a vision of personal freedom, self-definition, and in our struggle together for social and political change. The contemporary women's movement has created space for women to perceive reality with a clarity that seeks to encompass many complexities. This perception has been trivialized by male dominated cultures that present the world in primarily rational terms. Reality is not only rational, linear, and categorized into either/or--it is also irrational and superrational. Because we do not have a new word for this struggle to comprehend this totality and incorporate understanding into action, we are calling it spirituality. We choose the word spirituality because this vision presupposes a reverence for life, a willingness to deal with more than just a rational force, and a commitment to positive life generating forces that have been associated with a more limited definition of spirituality.¹⁰

Another word used to describe feminist spiritual thought is thealogy, as opposed to theology, a word suggested by Naomi Goldenberg to describe feminist witchcraft:

The teachings or doctrines of modern witchcraft should not be referred to as theology. In Greek, *theos* is the word for a masculine god. *Thea* is the word for "goddess" and is a more appropriate root for a term referring to theories of feminist witchcraft. The word *theology* has also come to be used almost exclusively in regard to Christian god-talk. The advent of witchcraft, with its colorful goddess talk, requires a new term--I hope witches and scholars of feminist religion will adopt my suggestion and name themselves theologians.¹¹

Feminist Religious Structure and Practice

A feminist theology values cyclical structures, cyclical time, and a world view that does not separate humans from nature. The circular form is valued in feminist witchcraft, which has as its working group the coven. Starhawk explains that the hierarchal form separates individuals from each other, but the circular form brings individuals together by balancing the energy.

The structures of estrangement are hierarchies. Their form is the ladder . . . We are expected to climb from rung to rung. The function of a ladder is to be climbed. The rungs keep those above separate from those below. Upon each rung, we wield power over those below, and must bow to the authority of those above . . . a small number always exercises power over a much larger mass. The structures of immanence are circular: clans, tribes, covens, collectives, support groups, affinity groups, consciousness raising groups. In a circle, each person's voice can be heard and valued. All points on a circle are equidistant from its center; that is its definition, and its function--to distribute energy equally.¹²

The person/nature split is one of the most prominent dualisms

of patriarchal thought, and aligning oneself with the cyclical processes of nature is one of the practices of feminist spirituality. Many women are relating their time sense to the cycles of the moon. The symbolism of the moon in its phases has been related to three phases of a woman's life.

...The female body alternates between receptive and active during each monthly cycle, like the ebb and flow of the tides. . . . The waxing moon signifies birth and growth, the full moon illumination and light, the waning moon death and healing power. These three--Daughter, Mother, and Crone, represent the archetypal stages in a woman's life and the alternating flux of everything in the cosmos.¹³

Emily Culpepper explains how this image may be used in a woman's life:

...This lunar consciousness particularly focuses on the moon's phases as a visible mantra, a moving mandala of waxing and waning, appearance and absence, a continuum of visible and invisible power. The process is one graphic means for leaving behind the hold of linear concepts and processes.¹⁴

Other cycles which a patriarchal consciousness would want to control and dominate are being valued as well, and "deep attunement to the rhythms of the seasons and our menses are also prominent and interconnected with lunar time."¹⁵

The moon's cycles are also used as a means for women to value their will. Goddess-centered rituals, which value a woman's ability to focus and exert her own will in her life are done at full moons and solstices when the natural energies are strong. The will is valued in feminist religion, as opposed to "Not my will but thine be done," which is the mantra of Christianity. The will which is focussed at these times is not, however, an ego-centered, power-over assertion of will. The ritual performed at the full moon "encourages the assertion of individual will in cooperation with natural energies and energies created by wills of others."¹⁶

Another symbol from nature which feminists have adopted is the spiral, especially as a model for change. The spiral "combines the inwardness of a circle and the thrust of a straight line."¹⁷ Culpepper describes the process:

Rarely does the pathway for change seem a simple linear process because the constricting lessons have been laid down over years in many layers and aspects of one's Self. Belief that change can/should come in straight ahead fashion impedes and obscures the realization of the spiraling quantum leaps that often bring full-fledged change. . . . Sometimes, confronting an old area of difficulty can seem like losing ground, like going backwards. But when Feminists envision this process as spiraling, we can see that we have the opportunity to bring to each reflection on the past, the

additional insights of the present. This includes realizing that often we must return with a new angle of vision, in order to move on.¹⁸

The spiral image is central to feminists' concept of time, and is found in feminist witchcraft, ritual theatre, and feminist analysis. Naomi Goldenberg explains her religion's view of time:

Witchcraft is a religion that does not hold to the notion of the linear progress of time to some judgement day of euphoria or catastrophe. Time--in its everyday, annual, and large scale varieties--is lived as circular and repetitive.¹⁹

A nonlinear approach toward time is also used by Batya Podos, a creator of feminist ritual theatre, who explains that

Many elements add to the creation of ritual theatre . The first is the use of nonlinear language. Time is not measured by our daily standards. The past, present, and future are experienced simultaneously, and are used interchangeably. The energy is cyclical. Getting from point A to point B is not as important as spinning a web of events.²⁰

Diane Mariechild notes that linear time is one of the fundamental myths of the patriarchy:

If you view time as an absolute (rather than as an organizing activity of the mind), you will believe that the past molds and limits you. But, in fact, the past, present and future are continually restructured and rearranged according to your beliefs.²¹

Anne Wilson Schaef, in her analysis of the "White Male System" in Women's Reality, includes the difference between "Men's Time" and "Women's Time:"

In the White Male System, time is perceived as the numbers on the clock. In other words, men believe that the numbers on the clock are real and that time itself is nothing more than what those numbers measure. Five minutes equals five minutes, one hour equals one hour, one week equals one week, and so on. Time is what the clock or calendar measures. One who accepts this believes that it is possible to be early, late, or on time, and that these concepts have real meaning.

In the Female system, time is perceived as a process, a series of passages, or a series of interlocking cycles which may or may not have anything to do with the numbers on the clock. Frequently, the clock is irrelevant and may even be seen as interfering with the process of time.²²

She sees the atomic clock at the National Bureau of Standards as "one of the citadels of the white male system."²³ She suggests that even this most accurate time-measuring instrument in the world could learn a lesson from the "Female System:"

... In spite of its incredible and meticulous accuracy, the atomic clock does not know about the universe. The universe is on process time . . . It is slowing down. So the atomic clock has to be set back a few seconds every year.²⁴

One way of experiencing time is not better than the other; there

are appropriate situations for using each. The point she makes is this: the White Male System often labels females (and Blacks, Chicanos, and Native Americans) as bad, crazy, sick, or stupid because they do not use time in the "right" way. "It is unfortunate, though, when our culture is denied information about process time because the White Male System insists that its way is the way the world is."²⁵

These feminist thought patterns about time, cycles, and change are not separate from the thought patterns from more "political" feminist concerns. Sally Gearhart calls these feminist spiritual practices "resourcement," and notes that the intrapersonal energy gained from rituals, mantras, and tarot is of primary importance, even before the interpersonal strength gained from marches, rallies, and caucuses. Here she answers the "political" critiques of the spiritual traditions:

It is no wonder that feminists committed to "real" political work doubt the value of the resourcement approach. It is no wonder that resentment runs high. I should use my earing power or my brain or my energy struggling every day against the dehumanizing establishment while some listless unpolitical sisters chant around a solstice fire or space out on their dreams? I should spend my life believing that dropped out sisters will come to Something Bigger Than All of Us, that by burning their menstrual blood in the light of the full moon they will be in touch with the Great Mother and somehow make the patriarchy go "poof"? I should stifle my giggles when they speak so seriously of

faith healing and procreation without men and obliterated matriarchies? . . .

The answer I am making to all this is *yes*. That is exactly what I have to do. Even though my criticism of it is strong and vital to my consciousness, it does not shake my belief.²⁶

Like any other religion, this belief in nonlinear consciousness from a religious perspective is an act of faith. Our linear, rational minds would like more substantial arguments for considering the merits of nonlinear consciousness. Feminist thought and theology indicates that a change in consciousness is necessary and timely; the new physics shows us upon what this nonlinear, interconnected, irrational world-view is based. In the finest rational, logical tradition, let us now turn to science to see what "objective data" we can examine about time and consciousness.

Consciousness and Physics:

Newtonian Physics and Mechanistic Models,

Quantum Physics and Holistic Models

"Just as yesterday's magic is today's medicine, so yesterday's philosophy is today's science."²⁷ An examination of yesterday's science is in order here; it has affected today's Western world view just as yesterday's religion has. This section will outline the linear view of

yesterday's science, criticisms of that view, and will introduce the "new physics," a physical model of nonlinear consciousness.

Cartesian-Newtonian Models

Yesterday's science was modeled first by Descartes and developed further by Newton. Descartes "based his view of nature on a fundamental division into two separate and independent realms: that of mind and that of matter,"²⁸ and every individual piece of the universe was precisely assembled like a clock. This view referred not only to large heavenly bodies, but also to plants and animals, who were essentially considered to be machines.

... He invested humans with the same characteristics he saw in nature at large: qualities of precision and orderly function that could be comprehended rationally. This view gave rise to a physicalistic view of man, which virtually demanded a dualistic definition of how man is put together.²⁹

Following this clockwork view, Newton maintained that "space and time was absolute for every observer in the universe,"³⁰ and had no connection to the material world. Time flowed from the past through the present to the future and space "was an empty container that was independent of the physical phenomena occurring in it."³¹

Consequences of the Linear Model

"The natural sciences, as well as the humanities and social sciences all accepted the mechanistic view of classical physics as the correct description of reality and modeled their theories accordingly."³² French mathematician Henri Poincare observed that "modern man has used cause-and-effect as ancient man used the gods, to give order to the universe. This is not because it was the truest system, but because it was the most convenient."³³ Nancy Passmore calls the materialistic, mechanistic, clockwork universe of 19th century physics "one of the most extensive superstitious beliefs of the age."³⁴ Newton's view that space is absolute, with no connection to the material world, is connected to dichotomous thought. Since nature is viewed as separate from humans, it has become something to be conquered. Robin Morgan warns that "unless men can be brought into an understanding that they too are a part of nature, they will continue to exploit the earth as other with irresponsible ease."³⁵ Passmore, in her "Consciousness Manifesto" asserts that

Every fact of Western metaphysical thought assumes a separation: material/spiritual, male/female, nomina/phenomena, infinite/finite, *ad infinitum*! All "approved" knowledge is based on implicit metaphysics as well as empirical reality. Patriarchy is

the cornerstone of feudalism, mercantilism, capitalism, and the one-way thinking of causality.³⁶

She suggests that "Most of us are still existing in a kind of Newtonian head-set of causality, determinism, and materialism."³⁷

This head-set is thought to lead to disease as well. Larry Dossey, in Space, Time, and Medicine, states that

...because we are convinced that linear time exists, and is escaping from us, we have developed time related maladies, such as heart disease, ulcers, and high blood pressure. Many illnesses, perhaps most, may be caused either wholly or in part by our misperception of time.³⁸

The classical view, with its emphasis on scientific objectivity, has also been related to male child development and the objective, detached nature of "cultural masculinity." Evelyn Fox Keller argues that "boys developed an especially acute sense of autonomy, of dis-identification with the object-mother, in part because of cultural pressures against retaining any connections with that which was seen as 'feminine.'"³⁹ The value of "objectivity" in science is in part a result of a self-selecting process. People who strongly value autonomy and objectivity are attracted to a discipline with the same values, and this objective method has held on long after scientific discoveries indicated that it may not be

appropriate. The scientific method has not only influenced who will enter the field, but also the methods and paradigms of science. Barbara McClintock's work on the operation of DNA "was largely rejected by the scientific community because she saw the structure as interactive with the organism it inhabited, rather than as dominating and controlling it in a hierarchal manner."⁴⁰ Discoveries about nature are dissolving objectivity as a value in science; perhaps they will alter the stringent values of masculinity as well.

The New Physics

Now that the "old physics" and its effect on culture has been examined, briefly, what is this new physics? Fritjof Capra introduces the new physics to us:

In twentieth century physics, the universe is no longer perceived as a machine, made up of a multitude of separate objects, but appears as a harmonious indivisible whole; a web of dynamic relationships that include the human observer and his or her consciousness in an essential way. Space and time are no longer absolute, nor are they separate dimensions. Both are intimately and inseparably connected and form a four-dimensional continuum called space-time. Subatomic particles are interconnections in a network of events, bundles of energy, or patterns of activity. When we observe them, we never see any material substance; what we observe are dynamic patterns continually changing into one another--a continuous

dance of energy.⁴¹

The new physics can best be explained by first examining the separate parts of which the clockwork model is made, then examining the relationships among all the workings of this clock, and finally by assessing the nature of our examination process. We find that not only are the parts of the clock not absolute, nor able to be analyzed separately, but also the parts as a whole system cannot be examined "objectively" at all.

One finding of the new physics is that the "absolute" elements which comprise the mechanistic world are not what they appeared to be, and are not "absolute" at all. Space and time were found to be the same and matter was found to be energy. The only absolute value is the speed of light, "and that not because there is an absolute value in 186,000 mile/sec, but because no material body can ever attain the speed of light."⁴² Even simultaneity is relative. "Every reference body. . . has its own particular time; unless we're told the reference body to which the statement of time refers, there is no meaning in the statement of the time of an event."⁴³ There also have been found to be phenomena in the universe which do not fit neatly into traditional either/or categories.

"They behave on some occasions as if they were particles, miniature lumps of matter, and on other occasions like waves"⁴⁴

Not only are the "pieces" not what they seem, but it has also been found that it is impossible to analyze the pieces of the world separately from each other. The findings that "matter is energy, that space is time" do imply that all is connected, and Mach's principle and the S-matrix theory support an interconnectedness.

... [Ernst] Mach held that a material body had inertia--i.e. it resisted being accelerated--not because of any intrinsic property of its own, but as a result of its interaction with all the rest of the matter in the universe. Thus, to remove any of the matter in the universe would be to change the inertia of the matter that remained.⁴⁵

The S-matrix theory

... radically posits that there are no fundamentals whatsoever in the universe--no fundamental laws, principles, building blocks, equations, or constants ... All particles are seen as having properties and interactions derived solely from their own self-consistent requirements. ... The universe is a network or web of events continuously and dynamically relating.⁴⁶

This leads into the third major jar to our mechanistic senses: an

objective, "scientific" examination of this web of events is no longer possible. Our consciousness is part of the web. As Geoffrey Chew has put it, writing of his S-matrix theory, also known as the bootstrap theory, "carried to its logical extreme, the bootstrap conjecture implies that the existence of consciousness, along with other aspects of nature, is necessary for the self-consistency of the whole."⁴⁷ On the quantum level, Bohr, Heisenberg, and others showed that the presence of the observer, and the instruments of investigation, actually affect the behavior of subatomic particles.⁴⁸ Not only does the presence of an observer affect the behavior, but human perception is questionable as well. "Even though three observers may affect the behavior of a particle, it is by no means clear that, even when confronted with identical phenomena, different observers will report identical observations."⁴⁹ We also tend to see only what we feel is important to us.

If a subject is fitted with special glasses that are designed to invert the visual field, at first the subject sees everything upside down. After a period of time, as the glasses continue to be worn, a correction is made by our perceptual mechanics and the image is flipped so that the world once again appears erect.⁵⁰

"These observations suggest that the models we make of the world

actually determine in some measure what we see, making the goal of scientific objectivity elusive indeed."⁵¹ We cannot objectively observe this quantum model of the universe, but the new physics theories make it clear that our consciousness is certainly interconnected with it.

Connections and Possibilities for Nonlinear Thinkers

The new physics theories have far reaching implications, and just as the mechanistic view influenced thinking throughout culture, so, it has been suggested, will the nonlinear view. Nonlinear consciousness has generated speculation about such diverse areas as scientific models, parapsychology, and feminist strategy.

Capra writes that

Modern physics can show the other sciences that scientific thinking does not necessarily have to be reductionist and mechanistic, that holistic and ecological views are also scientifically sound . . . such a framework is not only scientific but is in agreement with the most advanced scientific theories of physical reality.⁵²

He speculates about future scientific findings: "the explicit inclusion of human consciousness may be an essential aspect of future theories of matter,"⁵³ and as physicist Eugene Wigner states, "it was not

possible to formulate the laws [of quantum theory] in a fully consistent way without reference to consciousness."⁵⁴

In the area of parapsychology, nonlinear time helps to explain precognition, irrational, intuitive flashes, and altered states of consciousness; these are "simply examples of quantum leaps beyond space/time."⁵⁵ Passmore suggests that "by tapping inner power (via witchcraft, meditation, certain drugs, pregnancy, fasting, or what you will) we allow the possibilities of consciousness"⁵⁶ and let the unconscious grasp this notion of space-time.

Robin Morgan has taken the findings of quantum physics and related them to feminism. She writes that

... one of the nicest things about relativity theory is that it proves how accurately many different people from different perspectives can all be telling different truths at different (or the same) times. . . A relativity consciousness also precludes ethnocentricity, egocentricity, and pretty much every other kind of -centricity. . . It is, to say the least, the fundamentally opposite perspective from fundamentalism, from either/or thinking.⁵⁷

She suggests that nonlinear thought gives new energy to the strategy of the feminist movement. When confronted with a seemingly hopeless or stuck situation, "it scientifically shows a range of options, systems, forms,

and realities."⁵⁸ With an understanding of the models of new physics, a feminist's vocabulary of strategic images expands, and we can draw upon the notions of relativity, the particle/wave phenomenon, the interconnectedness of the universe, and the participation of the observer. The "spiraling notion of time" that is central to feminist spirituality is amplified further by the new physics theories concerning time flow.

Perceptions of Time

How does the nonlinear consciousness relate to an everyday experience of time? Now that we know that time is not absolute, that everything is connected, and perception matters, how does this change our perception of time? One of the most startling and difficult concepts to grasp is the fact that time does not flow linearly, and a linear perception of time is not the only way of thinking about it. As the physicist-mathematician P.C.W. Davies states, "no physical experiment has ever been performed that detects the passage of time. . . . Although physical experiments attempt to look at the world objectively, as soon as the objective attempt is made the passage of time disappears like a ghost into the night."⁵⁹ Dossey reminds us that there is no rational basis for a

real time; any basic unit for measuring time is entirely arbitrary. We may say that we "feel" or "sense" time passing, but "because no sense receptor or a biological clock for time has been identified, it is unreasonable to say that the passage of time is the stimulus for perceived time, since nothing we know of is being stimulated."⁶⁰ The one-way processes of aging and physical growth are called by Davies "time asymmetry," not "linear time."

"The sensation of a flowing time occurs when we witness the unfolding of asymmetric processes in nature, as in the movie of an aging person. It is the process of time asymmetry and not time flow which is intrinsic to nature. The sensation of time flow belongs to the mind, and not to nature itself."⁶¹ The idea that time flow "belongs to the mind" is connected to the idea that time is not "out there" but is connected to our consciousness. Our consciousness, in turn, is connected to time, and to the one absolute that remains, the speed of light.

...At the heart of the special theory of relativity is the notion that it is not the external events themselves but their sense impressions that provide us with our conscious thoughts of how events are arranged in time. It takes time for light to travel from an external event to our eyes, so that it is impossible for us to perceive the instantaneous or exact moment anything happens in the universe. Relativity reminds us that we do not know things as

they are; we must settle for our sensory impressions for our construction of "reality."⁶²

All of this can be difficult to grasp linearly and logically; Larry Dossey tells us to trust our unconscious to grasp the concepts of space-time. It is not "the logical, rational brain that is measured when I.Q. is tested--that comprehends space time at all--it is the intuitive, nonrational side."⁶³ How do these nonlinear concepts reach the intuitive, nonrational side? The intuitive mind is not reached through linear discourse, by one idea presented after another. The intuitive mind grasps ideas all at once. The limitations of linear language has not gone unrecognized by feminists, and in order to move beyond these limits, feminists are exploring nonlinear, associative, arrational means of communication. The following section, then, will discuss the limits of linear language and the possibilities of presentational expression.

Consciousness and Communication:

Linear Language and Epiphanaic Expression

Language and learning have been assumed to be naturally linear processes, but this is not necessarily the case. Language, in content and

structure, is affected by the world-view of the culture, just as the areas of religion and physics are. Contrast the English language with the Hopi Indian language:

The Hopi Indian language contains no words to refer to time in a linear fashion. Their verbs have no tenses. They live in a kind of continual present that contains everything that has ever happened. Even though they make no explicit reference to past, present, and future, they are able to function effectively within their own time frame, a fact that comes with a certain astonishment to our clock conscious culture.⁶⁴

Linear Consciousness and Language

Our "clock conscious culture" is also supported by our literacy.

Literacy . . . tends to categorize, to label, to name, and to impose a linear quality upon our perceptions of reality. Even the act of reading/writing compartmentalizes logic, meaning, and the resultant world view or reality-picture into segments that appear to occur sequentially, further reinforcing linear thinking.⁶⁵

Language apparently is inherently linear. Words are, after all, strung one after another, and exhibit a property of verbal symbolism known as discursiveness. Emily Culpepper outlines some of the problems of an exclusively linear language system. The "successive, linear order of discourse," she argues, "dissects and lays out for our use things, events, relations, and processes that really occur simultaneously and/or in a

different order than their grammatical order."⁶⁶ Furthermore, language names things and relationships, and

... they are presented as though they were objects, producing more static conceptions ... movement and process are named, and we can discuss them. But the action involved in moving is obscured and processes are, therefore only partially conveyed.⁶⁷

Richard Hornby suggests that this linear, logical thought process is not natural at all and is supported by the fast-paced clock-conscious culture:

The trouble is that we have become so conditioned by our technological society that we have come to believe that direct, logical meaning is the only kind that is important, or even the only kind that exists. Actually logical thinking is the exception in human beings and can only be learned with difficulty and applied with a certain amount of pain; our natural way of thinking is not linear but associative.⁶⁸

This associative mode of thought and expression has not been completely overcome by the linear, and one place it can be found is in the works of feminist writers and artists.

Nonlinear Expression

Feminist thought on the nature of language has taken many

forms. Developing antisexist pronouns and changing the language about the deity in worship services are two ways the most glaring patriarchal biases in language have been transformed. Women writers are developing their own grammatical patterns, such as a stream of consciousness style without periods, capital letters, or "precise beginnings and endings and patterns of subordination."⁶⁹ Carol Christ suggests that this style reflects

experience as lived and that the order expressed by the standard sentence is an imposition, an attempt to control reality. It may also be that those who lack power experience life differently than those who have it or that women experience the flow of life more fully than men.⁷⁰

She cites Virginia Woolf's remark that

the translation of women's speech into writing would require the introduction of a new sentence. Women's experience, she said, (and here we might add, the experience of all who lack power), does not fit neatly into the rhythms of dominant and subordinate clauses that were patterned after the ordered and hierarchical world of upper class (white) men.⁷¹

Nonlinear expression means much more than grammatical experiments on the printed page. The nonlinear expression of ritual,

music, visual arts, theatre, and poetry has been called "nondiscursive" by Langer and "meta-presentational" by Culpepper, because it presents information simultaneously, rather than in a linear order. The presentational mode of symbolizing expresses those complex processes, emotions, and experiences that cannot be expressed through linear language. "Non-discursive symbols cannot be defined in terms of others, as discursive symbols can,"⁷² so this symbol system has a specificity which is lacking in linear discourse. Linear discourse, in fact, is a secondary process to symbolization. Langer makes it clear that new ideas are not first generated through linear thought.

...it is not the essential act of thought that is symbolization, but an act essential to thought, and prior to it. Symbolization is the essential act of mind; and mind takes in more than what is commonly called thought⁷³

Langer notes that this form of symbolizing has been blocked and misunderstood because of two assumptions: "language is the only means of articulating thought, and everything that is not speakable thought, is feeling."⁷⁴ And these feelings have been relegated to the realm of irrational expressiveness. She argues that what cannot be expressed in a

linear fashion may very well be feelings and emotions, but they are not without intelligence and rationality. In discussing what the logicians would call the "unspeakable cries" of poetry, she asserts, "We are dealing with symbolisms here, and what they express is often highly intellectual."⁷⁵ And "is it not possible that 'intuitive' knowledge that is read in a flash may be perfectly rational?"⁷⁶

Culpepper suggests that a recognition of the rationality and intelligence imbedded in presentational symbolizing "moves us beyond a thinking versus feeling dichotomy that simply regards feeling as a process that is irrational."⁷⁷ Symbols are used consciously not only by artists, but by everyone in "daily life." Langer suggests that we know ourselves by symbolizing our experiences, and that the most serious threat to freedom lies in the loss of self-control of our own symbolizing processes. The valuing of presentational symbols, in short, may help create a "sustaining environment."⁷⁸

Nondiscursive language best expresses those concepts and experiences which cannot be communicated through linear discourse, and one of these is the process of feminist awakening. Nondiscursive learning and symbolizing is not only an effective tool for communicating complex

processes, connections, and emotions, but is also one way many women first understood feminism. Sonia Johnson has described her feminist awakening as "learning epiphanaically." She has compared it to a woman's file of "what it means to be female in a male world"⁷⁹ suddenly bursting, with the woman seeing the contents, not piece by piece, but all at once. Mary Daly writes that the woman coming to a feminist consciousness has to develop a kind of "multidimensional/multiform power of sensing/understanding her environment. . . . It is a complex way of perceiving the interrelatedness of seemingly disparate phenomena."⁸⁰ The way of perceiving that Daly calls women to develop is a nonlinear consciousness.

This chapter has presented the effects of linear consciousness and the nonlinear alternative in the areas of religion, physics, and language. But the nature of nondiscursive communication and learning suggests that this linear discourse is perhaps not the best way to change our linear way of thinking. It is appropriate that we turn to nondiscursive forms, the plays, to grasp what a nonlinear consciousness includes, and more importantly, how this new way of thinking can be used. All three of

these plays involve characters making a change in consciousness. In for colored girls, the change is from brokenness and fragmentation into wholeness. In Ashes, the women move away from denial behavior towards acceptance and confrontation, and in Fefu, the change in consciousness is from internalized oppression to a feminist awareness. These changes in consciousness result in the characters' surviving in and beyond the patriarchy. As they change their way of thinking, they exhibit many nonlinear values, thought patterns, and behaviors, and the structure of each play suggests nonlinear strategies as well. The first play under consideration is for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf, a choreopoem by Ntozake Shange. Its structure of poetry, dance, and song reflects the power of nondiscursive expression, and the women use a range of nonlinear strategies as they struggle against the "White Male System."

CHAPTER III

FOR COLORED GIRLS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED SUICIDE

WHEN THE RAINBOW IS ENUF

"One day I was driving home after a class, and I saw a huge rainbow over Oakland. I realized that women could survive if we decide that we have as much right and as much purpose for being here as the air and the mountains do."¹ This realization is a change in a way of thinking, and it is the origin of Ntozake Shange's for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf. It is a collection of poetry, dance, and song which celebrates, laments, and articulates Black women's experience. The characters are seven women known first to the audience as the lady in red, lady in blue, lady in brown, lady in yellow, lady in purple, lady in green, and lady in orange. The women share their stories with each other and the audience as they struggle out of

brokenness into wholeness.²

On this journey towards wholeness can be found many elements of a nonlinear approach. The theme of for colored girls, that wholeness can arise from fragmentation, is reflected in the imagery of separate colors making up a whole spectrum of light. The poems are not in a chronological, cause-and-effect order, and the structure of the women's relationships is circular, not unlike a consciousness-raising group.³ Shange has structured the play out of nondiscursive forms such as poetry, dance, and song, and the characters value these forms as well. The women move towards wholeness by sharing the importance of music and dance in their lives, by struggling against linear thought, and by connecting to nature and to each other.

Blending "Separate" Images

The fragmentation of for colored girls is outlined in the first poem, "dark phrases." The lady in brown speaks of "dark phrases of womanhood//of never havin been a girl//half-notes scattered without rhythm/no tune . . . it's hysterical//the melodyless-ness of her dance."⁴ She calls out for "somebody/anybody sing a black girl's song,"⁵ but the woman does not know the sound of her own voice; "She's half-notes

scattered without rhythm/no tune."⁶ The lady in brown introduces the separate pieces in search of wholeness; the half notes in search of a melody introduce the play's separate pieces in search of wholeness.

The separations among the women are also suggested by their names and home towns. They are not given names, but are referred to by the colors they wear. In "dark phrases," the women call out where they are from:

lady in brown: I'm outside chicago

lady in yellow: I'm outside detroit

lady in purple: I'm outside houston

lady in red: I'm outside baltimore

lady in green: I'm outside san francisco

lady in blue: I'm outside manhattan

lady in orange: I'm outside st. louis⁷

The separations among the women are suggested further by their locations; they are not even from inside a city, but vaguely on the "outside."

These separations among the women are not a picture of a permanently alienating situation; a nonlinear understanding tells us that

"all is connected." Just as the separate notes in "dark phrases" make up a melody, the fragments of the womens' lives and the play's structure make up a complete picture. The color delineations serve to illuminate a clearer view of the women's lives. A full spectrum is needed to make a beam of light, without which no color could be seen at all. The geographic diversity, rather than being a means of separation, suggests a universality of experience.

The theme of separate parts connecting to express a whole is found also in the structure of the poems. Though many of the poems are linear within themselves, when the emotions they express are very painful, the sentences break down into disconnected words. Langer's analysis of nondiscursive expression as the primary way of communicating strong emotion is reflected here. In the passages dealing with intense emotions, the "half-notes scattered" referred to in "dark phrases" are scattered further still as the complete sentences break down.

The lady in blue speaks in scattered words to present her harsh environment in "i used to live in the world." Her "universe of six blocks straight up brick walls"⁸ is presented by short phrases which only comprise a whole when taken together.

cats cryin/children gigglin/ a tavern wit red
 curtains/bad smells/ kissin ladies smilin dirt
 sidewalks spittin/ men cursin/ playin⁹

The most striking example of this is found in "abortion cycle #1."

It begins abruptly, after "latent rapists" with a sudden lighting change and "the ladies are all hit by an imaginary slap." The lady in blue and the lady in purple alternate the words "eyes," "mice," "womb," "nobody," and "tubes tables white washed windows grime from age wiped over once legs spread anxious . . ." ¹⁰ This poem is not a linear narrative of an abortion; the woman is presenting feelings and experiences that are not first expressed linearly. The fractured story is not only supported by the impressionistic use of separate words and phrases, but also by their nonsequential arrangement.

The images of separate colors and locations, the scattered notes, and disconnected words work together to express a whole. This mirrors the central theme, and also aids the audience in developing nonlinear thinking of their own, as they conceive of the whole from the parts. Elements from a nonlinear consciousness are also found within the structures of the play. The poems are arranged in a nonlinear order, and the women's relationships reflect the strength of circular arrangements.

Using Circular Structures

The play does not take the form of a linear, continuous narrative, but is comprised of twenty-one separate poems. These poems are separate in terms of perspective and were originally written separately, not intended to be performed as one piece. They are also not arranged in cause-and-effect order. After the initial poem of a girl's passage into womanhood, the poems do not follow a chronological order. The lady in blue describes her passion for dancing and music in "now i love somebody more than," which is followed by "no assistance," the lady in red's abandoning her efforts to "snare a possible lover." The lady in orange introduces a celebration of dance and poetry which is abruptly followed by a spare poem about rape and a desperate "abortion cycle #1."

The relationships among the women are circular, not unlike a consciousness raising group. Each woman is given a chance to speak, while the others listen and support her. Among the women on stage, there is no "leader of the chorus." As members of consciousness raising groups speak in turn, giving examples and supporting one another, so do these women often speak. Each member of the group adds something to the conversation. These are not always complete thoughts or sentences,

but when taken together, they make a stronger impression than if one woman read a finalized list. The use of separate words gives the impression of spontaneity and commonality of experience. Two examples of the women speaking over each other, as they would in a consciousness raising group, are "latent rapists" and "sorry."

"Latent rapists" begins with the ladies in red, blue, and purple repeating what society says to a rape victim:

lady in blue: a friend is hard to press charges against

lady in red: if you know him/ you must have wanted it

lady in purple: a misunderstanding

lady in red: you know how these things happen

lady in blue: are you sure you didn't suggest

lady in purple: had you been drinkin?¹¹

This listing of admonitions builds to a lament of how "the nature of rape has changed."¹² This situation is both so common and so urgent that by the end of the poem the women are to the point of finishing each other's sentences and thoughts.

lady in blue: we can now meet them in circles we
frequent for companionship

lady in purple: we see them at the coffee house

lady in blue: wit someone else we know¹³

Another example of the circular structure is found in the introduction to "sorry."

lady in blue: That niggah will be back tomorrow, sayin
"I'm sorry"

lady in yellow: get this last week my ol man came in
sayin "i don't know how she got yr number baby, i'm
sorry

lady in brown: no this one is it, "o baby ya know i waz
high, i'm sorry

lady in purple: i'm only human, and inadequacy is what
makes us human, & if we was perfect we wdn't have
nothin to strive for, so you might as well go on &
forgive me pretty baby, cause i'm sorry

lady in green: shut up bitch, i told you i waz sorry

lady in orange: no this one is it i do ya like i do cause i
thot ya could take it, now i'm sorry

lady in red: now i know that ya know i love ya, but i
ain't ever gonna love ya like ya want me to love ya, i'm
sorry¹⁴

The outward appearance of the play reflects many of the concepts of a nonlinear consciousness, such as the connections among

apparently separate parts and the value of a dynamic, circular structure. A nonlinear consciousness is not merely suggested by the images and the structures; the characters actively use nonlinear strategies. They value nondiscursive, nonlinear communication, they struggle mightily against dualistic, hyper-rational thought, and they celebrate a connectedness that ultimately keeps them from suicide.

Valuing Nonlinear Expression

The play form itself is nondiscursive, and Shange uses song and dance in addition to poetry as a storytelling device. The characters use nondiscursive nonlinear expression as a strategy themselves. Dance is used as an escape and a celebration, and as a way to express emotions presentationally.

In "no more love poems #2," the lady in purple explains, "i lived wit myths and music waz my ol man and i cd dance a dance outta time/ a dance wit no partners/ take my pills and keep right on steppin."¹⁵

The lady in orange in "no more love poems #1:

i can make the music loud enuf/ so there is no me but
dance/and when i can dance like that/ there's nothin

language that is theirs, such as the dance and the rhythms of words. Not only do they rebel against the white male system by using nondiscursive symbols, but also in some instances they explicitly reject rationality and logic.

Rejecting the "White Male System"

The lady in blue, in "no more love poems #3," rejects the division between emotion and reason:

We deal wit emotion too much so why don't we go
ahead and be white then/ make everything dry and
abstract wit no rhythm & no reelin for sheer sensual
pleasure/ yes let's go ahead and be white . . . let's think
our way outta feelin/ lets abstract ourselves some
families. . .¹⁹

The differences in the "rational male system" and the "irrational female system" are contrasted in "no assistance." The lady in red is explaining clearly to a man that she is no longer going to debase herself "for the love of another." She is explaining the duration of time in numerical terms that he can understand:

i have loved you assiduously for 8 months 2 wks &
a day

i have been stood up four times
 i've left 7 packages on yr doorstep
 forty poems 2 plants & 3 handmade notecards. . .²⁰

After she tells him "i am endin this affair,"²¹ she does not speak about the duration of time in his numerical clock terms, but in her "nature time:"

this note is attached to a plant
 i've been waterin since the day i met you
 you may water it yr damn self²²

In other instances their problems are brought on in large part by dualistic thinking. The same entrenched thinking that makes it difficult to think of light as both a particle and a wave at the same time is also that which brings difficulty to women. In "latent rapists," the women speak of the changed nature of rape; rapes are committed not by strangers but by acquaintances. Society, authorities, and family still do not see that an acquaintance can also be a rapist, or a rapist can also be a date. The lady in red explains the dilemma:

if you've been seen in public wit him
 kissed him goodbye lightly

lady in purple: wit closed mouth

lady in blue: pressin charges against him will be as hard as
keepin yr legs closed
while five fools try to run a train on you. . .

lady in red: we cd even have em over for dinner
& get raped in our own houses
by invitation
a friend

The roles in which women are placed can also be a part of dualistic, rational thought. The lady in red is made painfully aware of the starkly divided roles which she plays, in "one." She shares the story of a woman who adorns herself with "orange butterflies & aqua sequins ensconsed tween slight bosoms/silk roses dartin from behind her ears."²⁴

She "meandered down hoover street,"²⁵ and "waz desired & allowed those especially schemin/tactful suitors to experience her body and spirit."²⁶ This "passion flower of southwest los angeles"²⁷ then rises and washes herself "to remove his smell/to wash away the glitter/to watch the butterflies melt into suds."²⁸ She wakes this suitor up and explains: "You'll have to go now/i've got a lot of work to do/& i can't with a man around."²⁹ She gathers up her tinsel and jewels, puts away her silk roses, and cries herself to sleep. She is a "deliberate coquette"³⁰ and

also an "ordinary brown braided woman;"³¹ she has "hips painted with orange blossoms & magnolia scented wrists"³² and also "big legs and full lips/reglar."³³ Her suitor came there for her "sparklin thighs"³⁴ and to enjoy her being "so divine/ so devastatingly bizarre,"³⁵ but finally saw her as he left as a "reglar colored girl/ fulla the same malice/livid indifference as a sistah/ worn from supportin a wd be hornplayer."³⁶ It is the tension of this balancing act, of playing both of these roles, that leads her to cry herself to sleep.

That all the women are living in a dualistic "white man's world" is a fact that does not go unnoticed. The lady in yellow expresses it wryly: "bein a woman & bein colored is a metaphysical dilemma/ i haven't conquered yet/ do you see the point my spirit is too ancient to understand the separation of soul and gender."³⁷

Making Connections

In structure, the poems and disconnected words make up a whole play, and the audience is led to make connections. The characters, too, make connections to the past, to nature, and to each other.

In "sechita," the lady in green dances the dance of a "creole carnival"³⁸ dancer, who nightly must face "redneck whoops"³⁹ from the

men who were "aimin coins tween her thighs."⁴⁰ She wears her "splendid red garters/gin stained n itchy on her thigh/ blk-diamond stockings darned wit yellow threads/ an ole starched taffeta can-can."⁴¹ In order to cope with her humiliation, which she describes as "god seemed to be wipin his feet in her face,"⁴² she spirals back to the past, and conjures up images which give her power. She imagines herself as "sechita/ egyptian/goddess of creativity/ 2nd millennium" who "threw her heavy hair in a coil over her neck/sechita/goddess."⁴³ This connection to a symbol of an assertive female is an empowering one. Instead of seeing herself as an object, she empowers herself as a subject. While sechita may appear to be just a carnie sideshow, she is also the "goddess/of love"⁴⁴ who is involved in "performin the rites/the conjurin of men/ conjurin the spirit."⁴⁵ The painful differences between the Egyptian goddess and the carnival dancer are clear to her, and the spirit with which she dances is angry and defiant. She throws her "leg full-force/ thru the canvas curtain,"⁴⁶ and describes her legs that "slashed furiously"⁴⁷ and "kicked visciouly thru the nite."⁴⁸

Spiraling backwards to connect to powerful images is also a theme of "toussaint," which tells of a girl's discovery of Toussaint L'Ouverture, who "refused to be a slave // & he spoke french // & didn't

low no white man to tell him nothin//"⁴⁹

The lady in brown found Toussaint in the adult reading room, and remembers that he "waz the beginnin of reality for me."⁵⁰ As a girl she found strength not just in knowing that he existed once in the past, but she explains, "he waz dead & livin to me."⁵¹

Toussaint L'Ouverture// became my secret lover at the age of 8// i entertained him in my bedroom//widda flashlight under my covers//way into the night//we discussed strategies//how to remove white girls from my hopscotch games & etc.⁵²

These connections through time leap into the present to strengthen these characters; in "toussaint," the spirit of Toussaint is connected to the present as well. The lady in brown encounters a boy who had been named for him. "My name is Toussaint Jones," and he asks, "i don't take no stuff from no white folks//ya don't see none round heah do ya?"⁵³

She remembers that she "felt Toussaint L'Ouverture sorta leave me and i waz sad till i realized Toussaint Jones wazn't too different from Toussaint L'Ouverture . . . no tellin what all spirits we cd move down by the river."⁵⁴ These interconnections through time are a way to

understand the "spiraling notion of time." The movement is not only backwards to the past; perhaps these symbols of goddesses and role models can spiral forward as well.

The circular structure allows the women to connect to one another, and they also make connections to nature. In the final scene, they describe the unseen web of life, the bonding that is so important to their survival:

lady in red: i waz missin somethin

lady in purple: somethin so important

lady in orange: somethin promised

lady in blue: a layin on of hands

lady in green: fingers near my forehead

lady in yellow: strong

lady in green: cool

lady in orange: movin

lady in purple: makin me whole

lady in orange: sense

lady in green: pure

lady in blue: all the gods comin into me
layin me open to myself

lady in red: I waz missin somethin

lady in green: somethin promised

lady in orange: somethin free

lady in purple: a layin on of hands⁵⁵

This search leads the women to each other, but they want more than a layin on of bodies, they are lookin for "the holiness of myself released."⁵⁶ The search for wholeness leads them finally to nature. The lady in red explains how she came to the place where she could affirm: "i found god in myself//& i loved her/ i loved her fiercely:"⁵⁷

i wanted to jump outta my bones
 & be done wit myself
 leave me alone
 & go on in the wind
 it waz too much
 i fell into numbness
 til the only tree i cd see
 took me up in her branches
 held me in the breeze
 made me dawn dew
 that chill at daybreak
 the sun wrapped me up swingin rose light everywhere
 the sky laid over me like a million men
 i waz cold/ i waz burnin up/ a child
 & endlessly weavin garments for the moon
 wit my tears.⁵⁸

The women have made this journey from fragmentation to

wholeness using a variety of tools from nonlinear consciousness along the way. Their feelings for dance reflect the ability of nondiscursive expression to heal and sustain, and also to express that which linear discourse cannot. The strength they draw from one another in their circular relationship supports Starhawk's contention that circular structures balance energy well. Their rejection of linear thought patterns echo the fact that nonlinear consciousness often can be best understood by naming what it is not. Their connections through time and space, whether to an Egyptian goddess or to a Black man who refused to be a slave bring to mind the concept that "all is connected." Making connections, rejecting linear thought, and valuing nondiscursive expression are three of the strategies these women have adopted, and they have moved from brokenness into wholeness.

Making a change in consciousness in order to survive is central to the next play under consideration, Ashes, Ashes, We All Fall Down: A Ritual Drama About Nuclear Destruction and the Denial of Death. This play pairs a mother's dying of a degenerative disease with the planet dying from the nuclear arms race, and denial of death is the thought pattern which must be changed. The way the characters make this change expands our collection of strategies for survival.

CHAPTER IV

ASHES, ASHES, WE ALL FALL DOWN: A RITUAL DRAMA ABOUT NUCLEAR MADNESS AND THE DENIAL OF DEATH

Ashes, Ashes, We All Fall Down was written by Martha Boesing in collaboration with the company of At The Foot of the Mountain Theatre in Minneapolis. It is described as "a ritual drama about nuclear madness and the denial of death," and depicts a family coping with the mother's terminal illness. The family consists of "Miriam, a woman who lives with her two daughters, Petra and Sheila, and her sister-in-law, Birdie."¹ The denial of death, the first of the four stages of dying, illustrates our denial that, with the nuclear arms race, the planet is in the first stages of death. The death of the mother parallels the death of mother earth.

Interspersed among the family scenes are the mother's hallucinations, which deal with nuclear war and related topics, such as

the Holocaust, Hiroshima, the military-industrial complex, and patriotism. These hallucinations are presented by the family members, who portray such characters as army generals, businessmen, and Japanese citizens, as well as themselves. The hallucinations, too are in a variety of styles. Some are clearly didactic, such as the one in which Petra, as a college professor, lectures the audience on "the history of nuclear physics"² in Hallucination 6. Others take the form of spectacles and ritual such as Hallucination 3, a Fourth of July parade, and Hallucination 13, a Japanese tea ceremony in Hiroshima as the bomb is dropped. Other hallucinations are acted scenes such as the reenactment of a Jewish family on the way to Nazi death camps.

This collection of scenes presents nuclear destruction and the denial of death, and charges us to "change our way of thinking."³ Away from denial towards confrontation and acceptance is the journey that the audience and the characters are asked to make, and in order to do this, they must call upon elements of a nonlinear consciousness. Making connections, changing thought patterns, and attending to intuitive, nonrational states are three of the nonlinear strategies used in Ashes. The nonlinear concept that "all is connected" is apparent as the audience

members interact with the performers, and the separate scenes interconnect to produce a whole picture of denial behavior. The movement away from denial is encouraged by exhortations to "change our way of thinking" made by Paracelsus and Einstein in Miriam's hallucinations. Moreover, the process by which Miriam changes her thought patterns reflects a nonlinear consciousness as well. She changes her denial behavior through attending to nonrational states of consciousness, her hallucinations. These hallucinations make up an interconnected structure, and making connections is the first strategy we will examine.

Making Connections

An interconnectedness, which is a large part of a nonlinear consciousness, develops as the performers make a connection with the audience. The audience is addressed directly by the performers in the hallucinations and the family scenes, they are included by the use of "we" and "us" to refer to both the performers and the audience, and they are asked to participate most actively in a candle-lighting ritual.

The audience is addressed directly by a variety of characters in the hallucinations as well as by the family members. In hallucination 5, Petra plays a government executive who "works her way through the audience, shaking hands, ad libbing such lines as 'I'd like your vote.'"⁴

She tells the audience that the U.S. can wage and win a nuclear war. Sheila, as President Reagan, appears in scene 9, and waves at the audience, saying, "Now I wonder how anyone can get mad at me. I'm such a nice guy."⁵

The doctor addresses the audience in Hallucination 5, reminding them to "trust your government. Man has come a long way and we're more civilized now. We don't want to kill women and children anymore."⁶ The doctor appears as herself when sharing with the audience her finding the dead rabbit. "You might have thought--seeing me thus stricken--I had never watched anyone die before."⁷ In scene 17, the doctor comes out into the audience and passes out jelly beans to the audience. "Here take this. It relieves tension. Help yourself, . . . It's not going to get any better, this endless round of despair."⁸ And at the end of the scene: "You can take as many as you like. When you live this close to the graveyard, you cannot weep for everyone."⁹

The family itself speaks to the audience, including them in the experience of their mother's death. Petra shares her feelings:

My mother is dying. . . my mother--like your mother wherever she is--is dying. Our mother, who watched us take our first steps and listened to us learning hundreds of different languages all over the world is dying. Our mother who gave birth to us is dying.¹⁰

In scene 13, Miriam questions the audience about death and dying:

. . . Maybe everybody's dying and we're all supposed to lie down, as if living didn't matter any more. Well, maybe some of us aren't going to do that as nicely as they want us to. . . You know it says in the Bible that the Great Day of His Wrath is gonna come and I'm asking you this: who--which one of us--shall be able to stand?¹¹

The doctor speaks of "us" and "our body" and "we" in the scenerio of the aftermath of a nuclear explosion. She outlines what to expect:

Many of us will be vaporized. Our body is mostly water and when exposed to the heat of the sun, we convert to steam . . . Winds up to 500 miles per hour will suck us out of the buildings and convert us into missiles. . . If we get into a fallout shelter, the fire will suck the oxygen out and we will be asphyxiated. . . We will bleed to death, because the radiation kills all the cells in the bone marrow. . .¹²

The connections among people are most clear during the candle ritual near the end of the play, in which the audience is asked to participate. Miriam lights candles for her family, naming each one and sharing what they mean to her, then moves out to the audience and takes names from them.

You want to light a candle for anyone? You say what you want to light a candle for and we'll light it for you. You can light a candle for your mother or your dog or cat. . . or your brother. . . or nice things you like. . . music? roses? the rain? What is your name?¹³

When enough candles have been lit to go across the stage, the doctor presents this to the audience: "Suppose a 29 megaton bomb is dropped on Minneapolis."¹⁴ A siren is sounded, and Petra, Birdie, and Sheila quickly blow out all the candles. Not only does the content of this ritual illustrate the notion of interconnectedness, that the victims of war are real persons whom the audience knows, but it also breaks the barriers between the audience and the performers. Susanne Langer offers her opinion of breaking these barriers:

The whole conception of theatre as delusion is closely linked

with the belief that the audience should be made to share the emotions of the protagonists. The readiest way to effect this is to extend the stage action beyond the stage in the tensest moments, to make the spectators feel themselves actually present as witnesses of the scene. But the result is artistically disastrous, since each person becomes aware not only of his own presence, but of other people's too, and of the house, the stage, the entertainment in progress.¹⁵

In Ashes, however, the result is not "artistically disastrous." The awareness that the audience member is made to feel, "of his own presence, but of other people's too," is intentional.

The hallucinations present an interconnected picture of denial behavior which crosses space and time, and indicate that a change away from this type of thinking is in order. The extinguishing of the candles happens so quickly that there is no time to go through the stages of denial, anger, bargaining, and acceptance. Psychological connections are illustrated by this immediate and common reaction to death. But the process is not forgotten as these stages of dying are noted by the doctor as Miriam and her family cope with her illness and dying process. The Doc in scene 4 calms Petra:

Doc: You're going through denial. It's the first stage. It's normal. . .
 The second stage is anger, the third bargaining, the fourth
 despair and finally acceptance. You'll see. It's normal. . .
 Sometimes it's difficult to believe these things.¹⁶

The doctor points out that these reactions are found throughout history in the face of death. The family is planning a trip to the seashore to be taken after Miriam recovers, and the Doctor reminds the audience that

It's always like this. You can read about it in the medical journals. It happened at Auchwitz; it happened at Dachau. They say: It's impossible; it can't happen. They say: when this is over we'll be back to do what we do, do what we've always done. They say: everything will be fine.¹⁷

Miriam exhibits this behavior not only in reaction to her illness, but also in terms of nuclear war. Petra shows her an article in the newspaper about what to do in case of nuclear attack, and she asks,

Why should I read that?

Petra: Because it's things like this that make people all over the world think we're going to blow them up.

Miriam: I told you. We won't blow them up.

Petra: We might.

Miriam: I don't want to think about it.¹⁸

The denial is expressed in Hallucination 15, which depicts Jewish women on the trains on the way to the Nazi death camps.

Birdie: I thought: Oh, those must be the bakeries.

Sheila: They bake a lot of bread here.

Petra: It's a big camp.

(Pause)

They're going to kill us!

Miriam: That's impossible! You can't burn flesh!¹⁹

This denial behavior is a reaction to individual sickness, nuclear war, and mass holocaust, and these juxtapositions are a powerful tool for leading the audience towards making its own connections. The audience knows that the Holocaust did happen, yet sees the Jewish women deny it. They know friends and family who have died from a terminal illness, yet they see Miriam deny her death. Against this background of misperceptions, the audience's own tendencies to ignore the nuclear buildup appear to be a mistake as well. This interconnected picture of denial behavior is one way the play suggests that a change in our way of thinking is in order. An application of two theories from physics explains how these separate scenes make up a whole, and gives us a new thought pattern for conceiving complex situations.

Applying the "New Physics"

Two theories from the "new physics" explain how disconnected scenes work, and offer a strategy for conceiving of complex situations. Each scene is part of a whole system, but concepts from nonlinear consciousness suggest that it is altogether natural to focus on the separate pieces of the whole. Just as one cannot see both a particle and a wave at once, or comprehend the whole view of mechanistic thought and a nonlinear consciousness, so too nuclear destruction and denial behavior cannot be communicated through one scene on stage. Each event is part of a whole system. The same forces or world-view that lead to a Holocaust or a Hiroshima can lead to a denial of destructive disease or a denial of war. Linear thought would categorize all these scenes as separate events, but nonlinear thought would view them as part of the same whole. The two theories that clarify this are Heisenberg's Uncertainty Theory and the Principle of Complementarity.

Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle states that it is "impossible to determine both the position and the velocity of an electron at the same time; the more accurately one can determine its velocity, the more indefinite its position becomes, and the reverse."²⁰

Robin Morgan expands on this further and explains Niels Bohr's Principle of Complementarity:

Even if it is impossible to determine both the velocity and the position of an electron at the same time, nonetheless each (separately) is needed to gain a full picture of the atomic reality--just as both the "particle picture" and the "wave picture" are two complementary portrayals of the same reality, even if they can't be charted at the same time. In other words, despite one's methods being limited to either/or, one's conception can embrace both, and glimpse the whole.²¹

"One does not need to see the wave and the particle at once; one can imagine the whole from its fragments, or assume their complementarity."²² In like manner, by assuming the complementarity of the various hallucinations presented in Ashes, the whole can be imagined. This thought pattern is a nonlinear skill, and the nonlinear play structure guides the audience towards developing it. The characters, too, are involved with making connections.

The interconnections explain how the structure works to present a whole, but making connections is also an action taken by the characters as they expand their view of a complex situation. The political connections to war preparations is illustrated by Hallucination 16, in which Birdie, Petra, Sheila, and Miriam are "counting their money

furiously."²³

Doc: Taxes! Taxes! Pay up! 47 cents of every dollar goes to protect you from this war! Pay up! 47 cents for war!

Sheila: I earn \$150 a week, that's 75 hundred dollars a year. That's \$21.10 taken out for taxes each week. That's \$9.91 for defense, or \$515 a year for the war! (she puts her money in the hat)

Petra: I earn \$400 a week, that's \$20,000 a year. \$57.60 taken out for taxes each week, that's \$27 for war- \$1408 a year for the war! (she puts her money in the hat)

Birdie: I earn \$1200 a week, that's \$60,000 a year. That's \$381.60 taken out for taxes each week, that's \$179 for the bomb. That's \$9326 a year. I could have my very own bomb!

Miriam pulls her money out of the hat.

Miriam: I changed my mind!²⁴

Making global connections is one of the ways Miriam finally stops denying the nuclear situation. In the final scene, she expresses this:

OK God, I'm ready to see it your way. I guess we really are all in the same boat. And when the boat is sinking, it doesn't seem to matter who built it. We all have to start bailing. . . . I think I knew that all along. It's probably from worrying about the kids. They're all the same, you know---Russian kids, Japanese kids, African kids. Anyway, I'm glad I'm here today. Thanks.²⁵

Through making connections, Miriam has come to change her way of

thinking. The interconnected picture of denial behavior and the graphic depictions of the aftermath of nuclear war are two ways in which Ashes suggests that a change away from denial behavior is in order. There are other hallucinations, however, that are not suggestions, but are lessons and exhortations to "change our way of thinking."

Changing Our Way Of Thinking

We learn that a change in our way of thinking is in order not just by observing the characters' behavior. Like the characters, we receive explicit advice from the hallucinations. Einstein is constantly interrupting Miriam in order to remind her that "everything has changed except our way of thinking,"²⁶ and Paracelsus teaches a lesson on paradigm shifts. Einstein appears in the first scene as the first hallucination Miriam experiences, and continues to interrupt her in subsequent scenes. The context in which he appears makes his appearances all the more striking. As the family in scene 1 discusses the protests against nuclear weapons outside the American Embassy in Germany, Einstein appears and states: "E equals mc squared. The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything except our way of thinking, and so we drift toward unparalleled destruction."²⁷ In scene 2, Miriam admonishes Petra: "you

shouldn't contradict your mother, there are certain things that you should never change. And one is respecting your mother." Einstein interjects: "Everything changes. Everything splits open. Even the atom."²⁸ In scene 14, Miriam complains to God that

... "But I really didn't have anything to do with it. I didn't have time to build bombs. I was too busy taking care of the kids & cooking the rice & matzah balls. It was the guys who built the bombs. Actually it was the guys who killed the whales and the trees too. What? No! I am not in the same boat as them!"

Einstein interrupts, "Everything has changed except our way of thinking."²⁹

Einstein also appears in Hallucination 6, which is one of the most didactic scenes concerning new physics concepts. In this scene, Sheila and Birdie play Paracelsus, the alchemist, Petra portrays the college professor, Doc reappears as Einstein, and they explain "the history of nuclear physics. In the beginning there was light."³⁰ Here follows excerpts from this hallucination which outlines some of the relationships between the new physics and the Western world view:

Doc: The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything. . .

Petra: In the middle ages there was alchemy, which was the science of changing one substance. . . (She pulls a red and

blue scarf from her pocket and holds it up) one substance, into another. (She transforms the scarf into a green and gold scarf.) Such as a base metal into gold.

Doc: Except our way of thinking.

...

Petra: What he's talking about is a paradigm shift. Now a paradigm is a way of thinking, a way of seeing reality.

Doc: "Human beings have a kind of optical illusion. We think ourselves separate rather than part of the whole. This imprisons our affection to those few nearest us."

Petra: A paradigm shift is a sudden new look, a new way of thinking about old problems.

Doc: "Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle to embrace all living creatures."

Petra: One of the greatest paradigm shifts was when Copernicus said that the earth was only one of several planets that revolve around the sun. No one believed him either--even after Galileo Galilei proved he was right with his little telescope.

Sheila: Separate the earth from the fire,
Birdie: the subtle from the gross,
Birdie and Sheila: softly and with great care.

Petra: No one likes to make a paradigm shift, because you can't leap into a new paradigm unless you're willing to let go of the old familiar, comfy one. But eventually the new paradigm will win out because it's true. (She presses a small packet she has been holding and a bouquet of paper flowers bursts open), truer than the old one. And the old thinkers,

like the old soldiers, just fade away. (Pause) If there's time.

Birdie: Therefore man, learn and learn,

Sheila: question and question,

Birdie and Sheila: and do not be ashamed of it.³¹

The appearances by Einstein and Paracelsus stand alone as explicit lessons on non-linear consciousness. While changing one's way of thinking is not itself non-linear, in this case, it is. The change that Einstein speaks of is from a linear consciousness to a nonlinear consciousness. A move away from "if I don't look at it, it doesn't exist" thinking is a move away from linear thought. Says Vicki Noble, ". . .the rational mind dominates the irrational, intuitive forces, and lives by the slogan, 'If you can't see it, you don't have to believe in it.'³² So then, not only are there elements from nonlinear consciousness that can be used to survive in an overly linear world, but developing a nonlinear consciousness can itself be a strategy for survival. Another strategy used in Ashes is that of valuing and attending to arrational, nonwaking states of consciousness.

Paying Attention To The Intuitive Mind

This move from a linear consciousness to a non-linear one, or from denial behavior to acceptance, is aided by paying attention to

the arrational, intuitive, associative states of consciousness. In Ashes, Boesing shows that these seemingly nonsensical, illogical states are not meaningless at all, and Miriam shows that by attending to her hallucinations, she can move away from her destructive denial behavior. The parallel of the death process of a human mother and "Mother Earth" the planet to the mother's learning from her hallucinations suggests that dreams, nightmares, and intuitions should be attended to not only by terminally ill patients, but also by a terminally ill planet. In fact, "Dream-body language," says Monica Sjoo, in The Ancient Religion of the Great Cosmic Mother of All, "is the deepest type of thinking--it is right-brain thinking activated by the left hand--and it is a mode of perception that Western culture has scorned, to its own harm."³³ The way this right brain works is demonstrated through the startling juxtapositions of words and situations. Boesing often uses a nonlinear playfulness with language to evoke a range of possible connections and images. This wordplay on "iron curtain," for example, is not classically logical, but there is meaning to be found in it.

Petra: She remembers Ann Frank hiding in her attic. She remembers the picture of the mushroom cloud. She

remembers Birdie saying:

Birdie: Does this mean there's going to be a war?

Petra: She remembers the iron curtain.

Sheila: What's an iron curtain?

Petra: A wall made of iron, stupid.

Miriam: Did you iron your dress?

Doc: It's curtains for all of us.³⁴

Later in the same scene, parallel sentence structure connects childish behavior to the behavior of nations:

Petra: She remembers laying the tape down the middle of the room. You put your foot over that line, Sheila, and I'll break every bone in your body!

Doc: You put your missiles in Cuba, and I'll blast you off the face of the map!³⁵

A juxtaposition of contrasting actions throughout a scene brings together characters who, in waking life, would not act this way, but are allowed to within a hallucination. In Hallucination 7 Birdie and Doc, dressed as corporate businessmen, play global monopoly. They also discuss the government strategies for nuclear war. Birdie reminds the Doctor that "They're worried, JP." He answers, "Nothing to worry about,

JP:³⁶ For every concern that Birdie mentions, JP is ready with the answer.

Birdie: They're worried about the government.

Doc: There're rooms, tunnels, offices, banks, under the capital. They're ready, JP. . .

Birdie: They're worried about contacting their friends.

Doc: They should get a POD#809 Change of Address Card. Ready to go, nearest extant PO. Pick one up today.

Birdie: They're worried about pain.

Doc: 130,000 pounds of opium now in Washington, waiting for the survivors. . .

Birdie: They're worried about radiation.

Doc: That's what fallout shelters are for.³⁷

While they are discussing these contingency plans, they are also playing monopoly, but buying weapons to put in countries instead of hotels to put in blocks.

Doc: I'll put a B-1 bomber in Pakistan.

Birdie: That's 2.7 billion.

Doc: Cut CETA jobs, that's 2 billion.

Birdie: A C-G 47 Augie Cruiser for Guatemala.

Doc: That's 983 million.

Birdie: Cut Medicaid, that's 944 million.³⁸

Against this background of contingency plans and the graphic representation of the price of weapons, is the family. Throughout this scene, Petra and Sheila are singing "Love's Old Sweet Song" to their mother. This contrast between real human interactions and the dehumanizing monopoly game makes each image stronger.

This contrast is seen also in Hallucination 17, in which the monopoly game is interrupted by the doctor, who testifies about her fear.

I once saw a rabbit, lying in the middle of the path which meandered through the South Dakota hills where I was walking. He was dead. Radiation sickness. . . I recognized the symptoms. They were mining for uranium nearby. . . I picked him up and carried him in my arms back through the woods. I never felt such terror.--it sidled up to me like a fog. I hardly noticed it until I was almost paralyzed by it. . . I walked for miles like that, carrying the dead rabbit, enveloped in a shroud of fear--I buried him out behind the cabin where I was staying. And finally I wept.³⁹

This story in which the heretofore detached Doc reveals her emotion and powerlessness is interrupted by the corporate bosses, who are playing

their game much more urgently:

Sheila: I'd like to unload Vietnam.

Birdie: I bet you would. . . .

Sheila: I'm trading in my conventionals for a nuclear missile on Iran. . . .

Birdie: Honeywell!

Sheila: That'll be three grand.

Birdie: What?!

Sheila: Over 1 billion in defense contracts with the Pentagon, JP. Very profitable, Honeywell. . . .

Birdie: Argentina!

Sheila: Argentina's risky!

Birdie: Germany! I've got a nuke there! Pay up!⁴⁰

These juxtapositions, on one level, are just a structural device for breaking up the logical order, but they are also an illustration of the workings of the intuitive mind. Such an intuitive mind makes seemingly illogical connections. Why does Doc suddenly appear in the monopoly game? Why, for that matter, are these businessmen playing this oversized board game in the middle of Miriam's living room? These are

the types of questions that the intuitive mind does not address, but the meanings of the images remains clear. By paying attention to these images generated by the unconscious, Miriam, as well as the audience, can make the change away from denial behavior.

The change from denial behavior to acceptance, awareness, and confrontation is a change towards a nonlinear consciousness. A nonlinear consciousness is not just the destination; it is clear that nonlinear elements aid in the journey as well. The audience is made aware of interconnectedness as they interact with the performers and with each other. Both the characters and the audience are asked to make connections across space and time as the pattern of denial behavior is presented. Moreover, the Principle of Complementarity is the thought pattern that we use as we view the separate parts, while conceiving of the whole. Changing consciousness is further aided by Paracelsus' lesson on paradigm shifts and by Einstein's reminders that "Everything has changed except our way of thinking." This change in thinking is brought forward, too, by paying attention to dream-like states and the seemingly illogical connections that the right brain makes.

The understanding of nonlinear consciousness that we have

derived from for colored girls and Ashes will help us see the nonlinear consciousness in Fefu. The structure, the characters' behavior and values, and an application of nonlinear thought to the play suggests further strategies. The role of unconscious processes in making great paradigm shifts is central to Fefu and Her Friends, but the women in Fefu do not have the lessons of Einstein and Paracelsus to guide them through their paradigm shift. Their change in consciousness is quite bewildering to them, and no less necessary for their survival.

CHAPTER V

FEFU AND HER FRIENDS

Maria Irene Fornes places Fefu and her group of seven friends in a large farmhouse in the nineteen-thirties to hold a planning meeting, but first on the agenda is that the relationships among the women must be explored and reopened. Ordinary women are placed together with one another, yet the processes they are experiencing are extraordinary. These processes are paradigm shifts, and are only one of the ways a nonlinear consciousness is reflected in this play. It is also found within the structure, in the characters' behavior and values, and is amplified further by applications of nonlinear theories to the text.

Spiraling Through the Play Structure

The structure of Fefu is nonlinear and cyclical, and leads the

audience through a graphic model of spiraling time. Fefu and Her Friends is made up of three sections: the first and last take place on stage in front of the entire audience, and the middle section is composed of four scenes which take place in different locales. These middle four scenes are presented simultaneously, four times, and the audience, divided into four groups, is guided to each of the four spaces. The order that any given audience member may see is determined only by chance, and Beverley Byers Pevitts suggests that this reflects the cyclical nature of women's lives. "The eight women's lives viewed in Fefu are seen . . . as being repetitive and capable of being viewed in any random sequence: yet even as women we do not respond negatively to this suggestion"¹

The nature of this central section evokes several concepts from nonlinear physics: the notion that "Perception is all," the relativity theory, and the principle of complementarity. Even though these scenes are to be taking place simultaneously, the order in which they are observed has an effect on what the audience member perceives. The observer who sees a "1234" order will understand and make assumptions about the characters differently than the one who views a "3412"

order. Each scene adds to the previous scenes, and even though the audience may understand intellectually that these interactions and conversations are taking place simultaneously, the order of perceptions will change the meaning for the different audience groups. Certainly this is true of any play; different audience members frequently have differing interpretations of the same performance. But they are usually viewing the same scenes at the same time, which take place in a linear order. In Fefu and Her Friends, the audience is seeing different scenes at the same time, which take place simultaneously. These simultaneous occurrences are only put into a linear order by the audience's perception. This centrality of perception echoes Schrodinger's experiment, "which posited perception as All: it showed that a (hypothetical) cat in a box can be 'proven' to be alive and dead concurrently, until the moment one looks in the box and perceives the situation."² It is the timing and order of the perception of simultaneous events that creates a seemingly linear order, and the dramatic structure illustrates this non-linear concept. Another notion which is central to understanding a nonlinear consciousness and the play's structural dynamic is relativity theory.

Relativity theory takes into account the position and movement of an observer. Capra explains that

In everyday life, the impression that we can arrange the events around us in a unique time sequence is created by the fact that the velocity of light--186,000 miles a second--is so high, compared to any other velocity we experience, that we can assume we are observing events at the instant they are occurring. This, however, is incorrect. Light needs time to travel from the event to the observer. Normally, this time is so short that the propagation of light can be considered to be instantaneous; but when the observer moves with a high velocity with respect to the observed phenomena, the time span between the occurrence of an event and its observation plays a crucial role in establishing a sequence of events. Einstein realized that in such a case, observers moving at different velocities will order events differently in time. Two events which can be seen as occurring simultaneously by one observer may occur in different temporal sequences for others.³

However deeply hidden the model of relativity is, this central section could be considered a drastically slowed down version of what happens when observers moving at different speeds and in different positions view simultaneous events. The four scenes presented as occurring simultaneously are processed by the audience as occurring in different temporal sequences, and make up an experiential model of the concept of

relativity.

The play structure requires the audience members to develop nonlinear thought patterns themselves. Even though the audience may indeed have different reactions to the short central scenes, these scenes do take place at the same time. The audience is neither seeing an evening of four separate plays, nor are they in on a playwright's neat trick or contrivance with the linear sequence of events: they must still be aware that the events are simultaneous. The mechanics of the interconnections among the scenes aid in this awareness:

Scenes are intricately interwoven. Cindy and Christina are in the study through which Sue passes on her way with the soup to Julia's bedroom where Julia lies on her bed hallucinating. . . . Fefu, like Sue, weaves her way through two other areas during the four simultaneous scenes through all of Part Two. Fefu moves through the study/living room to the kitchen for lemonade and back out to the lawn. The fourth (last) time she takes other characters with her while Paula moves to the study/living room to play the piano.⁴

Experiencing these scenes linearly while taking into account their simultaneity requires a non-linear consciousness, which may be nurtured along by remembering the Principle of Complementarity. Just as

the velocity and the position of an electron cannot be examined at the same time, this does not matter. "Despite one's method's being limited to either/or, one's conception can embrace both, and glimpse the whole."⁵

Finally, the structure of Fefu allows one to experience the "spiraling notion of time" without joining a coven or riding on a light wave. The audience sees the first of the simultaneous scenes, which take place within a certain time frame, that afternoon, and then they must make the loop/leap back to the beginning of the same time frame to see the other scenes which theoretically take place during the same time. The time in which the individual scenes take place goes forward, but the audience must spiral back in time and conceive of the adjoining scene taking place in the same time frame. This spiraling time combines the qualities of linear, forward moving time, and the qualities of cyclical, repetitive time. This central section is one way to become physically acquainted with spiraling time, as well as to become acquainted with a model of relativity and the importance of perception. Thinking nonlinearly is encouraged by the structure, and is used not only by the audience but also by the characters as they change their way of thinking.

The audience is witness to playful, revealing, puzzling, and frightening conversations among the women, and imbedded in this portrayal of the way ordinary women behave with each other, are glimpses of a non-linear consciousness. One concept which leads to a range of strategies is the notion that "perception is all." Aside from knowing that Schrodiger's (hypothetical) cat can be proven to be both alive and dead at once, how is the "perception is all" notion useful? In Fefu, the centrality of perception has led to nonlinear thought patterns, an awareness of an unseen reality, the need to focus, and learning to trust one's unique perceptions.

Assuming the Complementarity

The strategic thought pattern exhibited by Cindy allows her to conceive of two parts of a whole, even if it is physically impossible to observe both parts at once. She discusses with Christina the probability of the gun being loaded:

Cindy: I don't like touching guns.

Christina: Why not?

Cindy: I never did.

Christina: It's not loaded.

Cindy: You never know.

Christina: You're not making sense.

Cindy: I'm not?

Christina: No. Either you think it's loaded, or you think it's not loaded.

Cindy: I don't see why I can't believe it's not loaded and yet think it might be loaded.⁶

While this may be regarded as wishful, naive thinking on her part, eliciting a rational admonishment that "you can't have it both ways," it may also be regarded as a sophisticated ability to hold two opposite notions in her head at the same time. What Cindy expresses is evocative of the Principle of Complementarity; even though one cannot perceive a wave and a particle at once, "one can imagine the whole from its fragments, and assume their complementarity." Assuming the complementarity is a nonlinear strategy, and requires an awareness that what one sees at a particular time and place, or what one has been taught to see, is not necessarily the whole picture. Assuming complementarity involves opening one's perception, and both Fefu and Emma do this.

Opening the "Gateway of the Senses"

Fefu discusses the necessity of recognizing the world underneath the surface, and Emma's speech is a call to open the senses to another, wider awareness. Sonia Johnson, when describing a changing feminist consciousness, compared it to a file about to burst. The violence of this epiphanaic way of learning is described by Fefu:

... Women are restless with each other. They are like live wires. . . either chattering to keep themselves from making contact, or else, if they don't chatter, they avert their eyes . . . like Orpheus . . . as if a god once said, 'and if they shall recognize each other, the world will be blown apart.'⁷

Fefu is also aware that that which is obvious is not necessarily the only truth, and that alternate organizations of reality exist:

... That which is exposed to the exterior . . . is smooth and dry and clean. That which is not . . . underneath, is slimy and filled with fungus and crawling with worms. It is another life that is parallel to the one we manifest. It's there. The way worms are underneath the stone. If you don't recognize it . . . (whispering) it eats you . . .⁸

Emma also recognizes that we are not always as perceptive to what exists as we should be. This speech is in part an explicit lesson on nonlinear strategy.

Environment knocks at the gateway of the senses. A rain of summons beats upon us day and night. We do not answer. Everything around us shouts against our deafness, struggles with our unwillingness, batters our walls, flashes into our blindness, strives to sieve through at us at every pore, begging, fighting, insisting. It shouts, "Where are you?" But we are deaf. The signals do not reach us.

Environment finding the gates closed tries to break in. Turned away, it comes another way. Keep back, it stretches its hands to us. Always scheming to reach us. Never was a suitor more insistent than Environment, seeking admission, claiming recognition, signaling to be seen, shouting to be heard. And through the ages we sit inside ourselves deaf, dumb and blind, and will not stir. . . .

Maybe you are not deaf. . . . Perhaps signals reach you. Maybe you stir. . . . The gates give. . . . Eternal Urge pushes through the stupor of our senses, making paths to meet the challenging suitor, windows through which to see him, ears through which to hear him. Environment shouting, "Where are you?" and center battering at the inner side of the wall crying, "Here I am," and dragging down bars, wrenching gates, prying at port-holes. . .

We will meet him. We will seize all, learn all, know all here, that we may fare further on this great quest! The task of Now is only a step toward the task of the Whole! Let us then seek the laws governing real life forces, that coming into their own, they may create, develop and reconstruct. Let us awaken life dormant! . . .⁹

What she is calling for is no less than a change in consciousness. Fefu and Emma know that their perceptions must be broadened, and even though

Fefu admits that she is aware of the shattering effects of this process, they have not experienced it fully. Julia, however, is in the midst of a change in consciousness.

Learning to Focus

It is Julia's hallucination, especially, that clarifies the dynamics of perception and suggests one strategy for moving out of the patriarchy. In Julia's hallucination, she explains, "They say that when I believe the prayer I will forget the judges. And when I forget the judges I will believe the prayer. They say both happen at once. And all women have done it. Why can't I?"¹⁰ The "judges" she refers to are the patriarchy, and the prayer is this:

The human being is of the masculine gender. The human being is a boy as a child and grown up he is a man. Everything on earth is for the human being, which is man. To nourish him. There are evil things on earth for man also. For him to fight with, and conquer and turn its evil into good. So that it too can nourish him. There are Evil Plants, Evil Animals, Evil Minerals, and Women are Evil. Woman is not a human being. She is: 1-A mystery. 2-Another species. 3-As yet undefined. 4-Unpredictable; therefore wicked and gentle and evil and good which is evil. If a man commits an evil act, he must be pitied. The evil comes from outside him, through him and into the act. Woman generates the evil herself. God gave man no other

mate but woman. The sheep is good but it is not a mate for man. The mate for man is woman and that is the cross man must bear. Man is not spiritually sexual, he therefore can enjoy sexuality. His sexuality is physical which means his spirit is pure. Women's spirit is sexual. That is why after coitus they dwell in nefarious feelings. Because that is their natural habitat. That is why it is difficult for them to return to the afterlife where they corrupt the heavens, and they are sent to hell where through suffering they may shed those feelings and return to earth as man.¹¹

Julia's predicament is that she sees the judges, the patriarchy, and they are asking her to "believe the prayer," the creed of the patriarchy. "Seeing the judges" is equivalent to becoming aware of the oppression of women. In her hallucination, she is being asked to see the oppressive system and to agree to it. The application of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle here points up the impossibility of Julia's task. Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle states that the more one looks at velocity, the harder it is to pin down position, and the more one looks at position, the harder it is to pin down velocity. The impossible situation of pinning down both pictures at once is what faces Julia. In the case of seeing the judges and believing the prayer, these are actions which are exclusive of each other. If a woman is able to see the patriarchy, and realize she is oppressed, she cannot go back to believing in her inferiority,

and as long as she allows herself to accept any part of the patriarchal system, the harder her oppression is to see. Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle suggests a strategy here for moving away from oppression. In order to stop internalizing patriarchal values, the nature of particle/wave thought suggests that a clear focus on the oppression must be held. Focussing, then, is an act which is necessary along with "opening perceptions." Even if one can assume the complementarity between two opposites, in order to see one or the other more clearly, there needs to be focus. Fefu and Cindy, too, speak of focussing on what may be unpleasant. This is in contrast to the linear "if I don't look at it, it doesn't exist" thought. Fefu knows that what she perceives on the surface is not all that exists, and she actively pursues knowledge of as much as she can.

Fefu: I like exciting ideas. They give me energy.

Christina: And how is a woman being loathesome an exciting idea?

Fefu: (with mischief) It revolts me.

Christina: You find revulsion exciting?

Fefu: Don't you?

Christina: No.

Fefu: I do. It's something to grapple with. What do you do with revulsion?

Christina: I avoid anything that's revolting to me. . . .

Fefu: Hmmm. Have you ever turned a stone over in damp soil? . . .
And when you turn it there are worms crawling on it? . . .
And it's damp and full of fungus? . . .

Christina: Ahm.

Fefu: Were you revolted?

Christina: Yes.

Fefu: Were you fascinated?

Christina: I was.

Fefu: There you have it. You too are fascinated with revulsion.¹²

Fefu knows that there is a "life parallel to the one we manifest,"¹³ but in order to see it, she does more than assume that it is there; she actively focusses on it. Cindy, even though she is able to hold two notions in her head at once, knows that at some point, she must take an action and look in the gun. She supposes that "I could only be absolutely certain if I looked. But I wouldn't look because it might go off while I'm looking."¹⁴

The notion that "perception is all" leads to the actions of opening perceptions, learning to focus, and assuming complementarity. The question of how we will ever connect if each individual's reality is unique is what Cecilia presents to us.

Connecting Separate Perceptions

In the two previous plays, the women learn to make connections in order to survive. Given the centrality of perception and the fact that each individual sees the world uniquely, how can persons ever connect to one another? Cecilia, a quite articulate nonlinear thinker, notes that teaching the individual to trust his or her own perceptions and feelings is the challenge to education ;

Cecilia: Well, we each have our own system of receiving information, placing it, responding to it. That system can function with such a bias that it could take any situation and translate it into one formula. . . .
We cannot survive in a vacuum. We must be part of a community, perhaps 10, 100, 1000. It depends on how strong you are. But even the strongest will need a dozen, three, even one who sees, thinks and feel as they do. The greater the need for that kind of reassurance, the greater the number we identify with. Some need to identify with the whole nation. Then, the greater the number, the more limited the number of responses and thoughts. A common denominator must be reached. Thoughts, emotions, that fit all, have to be limited to a small number. That is, I feel, the

concern of the educator--to teach how to be sensitive to the differences, in ourselves as well as outside ourselves, not to supervise the memorization of facts. . . . Otherwise the unusual will perish. As we grow we feel we are strange, and fear any thought that is not shared with everyone.¹⁵

Cecilia is suggesting that in order for connections among individuals to be made, the individual should learn to value and trust his or her unique perceptions, intuitions, and feelings. It is through feelings and intuitions that changes in consciousness are first made.

Trusting Feelings and Intuitions

The characters are at various stages of processing feminist feelings, and their descriptions of their feelings reflect Langer's analysis of the way ideas are first generated. Cindy and Fefu both express feelings that something in their world is wrong. Cindy describes Julia's hallucinations, and suggests that what Julia is experiencing is not at all foreign to her.

Cindy: . . . she was persecuted . . . that they tortured her . . . that if she talked about it . . . to anyone . . . she would be tortured further and killed. And I have not mentioned this before because. . . I fear for her.

Christina: It doesn't make any sense, Cindy.

Cindy: It makes sense to me.¹⁶

Fefu is experiencing her "becoming a feminist " process, and is closer to that realization than Cindy. As Julia notes, "He said that I had to be punished because I was getting too smart. I'm not smart. Neither is Fefu smart. They are after her too."¹⁷ Fefu is experiencing bewildering emotions and searching for what they mean.

Fefu: I am in constant pain. I don't want to give in to it. If I do I am afraid I will never recover. . . . It's not physical, and it's not sorrow. It's very strange Emma. I can't describe it, and it's very frightening. . . . It is as if normally there is a lubricant. . . not in the body. . . a spiritual lubricant. . . it's hard to describe. . . and without it, life is a nightmare, and everything is distorted.¹⁸

She reflects on her gnawing awareness of the dynamics between men and women:

Fefu: [Women] are always eager for the men to arrive. When they do, they can put themselves into a mild stupor. With the men they feel safe. The danger is gone. That's the closest they can be to feeling wholesome. Men are the muscle that cover the raw nerve. They are the insulators. The danger is gone, but the price is mind and the spirit, . . . High price. Why?--What is feared?-- . . . Do you know? . . .¹⁹

Cindy and Fefu are not yet to the point of articulating linearly the source of their feelings. But trusting feelings and intuitions, and knowing that

they are primary to thought is a necessary strategy.

A nonlinear consciousness with its lessons on perceptions provides an alternative to the rational, logical, linear way of experiencing the world. This alternative is illustrated in Fefu as Cindy conceives of separate ideas while glimpsing the whole, as Fefu and Emma pay attention to their intuitions that tell them to expand their perceptions, and as Julia moves beyond internalized oppression by focussing on the patriarchy. We learn from Fefu and Cindy to focus on what might be quite unpleasant, for if we don't recognize it, "it eats you."²⁰ Cecilia suggests a means by which our unique perceptions may connect, and Fefu and Cindy express their bewildering feelings which are not yet linearly articulated. We have seen that the structure leads the audience to develop nonlinear skills, and the characters' thought patterns, values, situations, suggest the strategies of focussing, conceiving of the whole, opening perceptions, and trusting intuitions. Other nonlinear strategies are found in the processes that the characters use. These are their use of "process time" and the process of becoming a feminist.

Using Process Time

The women exhibit a non-linear point of view in their approach to their meeting. Rather than depending on the clock, they depend on "process time." The meeting, which was discussed in section one as taking place "right after lunch," does not get started until early evening. Their purpose in coming together in Fefu's home is to have their meeting, but their relationships, conversations, and croquet games take priority in the afternoon.

Making A Paradigm Shift

The other nonlinear process that is under way here is that of making a paradigm shift. Emma and Fefu have responded to the call to open the senses and expand the awareness, but what one is suddenly aware of can be quite revolting. Accepting what she sees, rather than denying its existence is what Julia must do. The oppression of women is what Julia suddenly sees, and denial is the first reaction to it. Julia has seen the patriarchal system, and is now going through her "becoming a feminist" process. The ability to keep focussed on the judges, and see the oppressive system, rather than believe the prayer, which women have

been trained to do, is not an ability developed through rational, conscious practice. The messages of the patriarchy were internalized unconsciously, and they must be exorcised from the unconscious. The brokenness that Julia is experiencing is a normal part of becoming a feminist, and Julia's condition, too, can be regarded as a way of coping with her feminist consciousness. It is important to understand the journeys women take on their way to feminism. The circular relationship between a method of analysis and the literature is evident here. Each of these three plays informed the method, of course, and at this point Fefu requires an inspection of the process of becoming a feminist and its relationship to nonlinear consciousness.

It is one thing to understand epiphanaically that women are oppressed and quite another to know how to live with this knowledge. It is tempting to deny the oppression, for women have been trained more to be oppressed than to be empowered. When the patriarchy is first seen by a woman, one of the first expressions of this is anger. Susi Kaplow describes the experience of constant anger as one becomes a feminist:

This is an uncomfortable period to live through. You are raw with an anger that seems to have a mind and will of its own.

Your friends, most of whom disagree with you, find you strident and difficult. And you become all the more so because of your fear that they are right, that you're crazy after all. You yourself get tired of this anger--it's exhausting to be furious all the time--which won't even let you watch a movie or have a conversation in peace. . .Then this anger, burning white hot against the outside world, suddenly veers around and turns its flame toward you.²¹

What happens to this anger? Mary Daly cites Dr. Frances Howland's work on the phenomena of the multiple personality disorder:

. . . remarking that the possibilities in situations of danger are to fight back or run away, Dr. Howland stated: 'if you can't do either--as a child cannot--you can only do it symbolically. Dissociation is symbolic flight.'²²

Daly suggests that women, out of touch with anger and unable to fight back with anger, have been running low grade personality disorders for years.

. . . All women within [patriarchy] (even those with the most enlightened and well-meaning parents) have been psychically abused and starved for healing, inspiring Self-images. Since mind (or soul) and body are not separate entities, such deprivation inevitably has physical effects. . . Since women abused as children cannot fight back or run away, dissociation is a logical solution. I suggest that dissociation is the "missing contrary" of the passion of anger. Anger can be seen as different

from the other passions in this respect, namely, that when it is blocked, its movement or energy splinters into fragments within the psyche. . . This energy in women is frequently converted into the production of dissociated "other selves."²³

The origin for dissociation is also useful when examining Julia's growing feminist consciousness. When a woman first perceives the danger around her, she is not strong enough to fight back, so she processes the danger unconsciously.

Julia is processing unconsciously her sudden awareness of the patriarchy and her oppression. She is also coping unconsciously with her anger, which is directed at family, society, and the self. Self-hatred is a lesson from the patriarchy that is well learned. She is processing three concepts: the very existence of the patriarchy, her expression of anger, and her feelings of self-hatred, and as Langer has made clear, complex experiences are first processed and expressed through the intuitive, "illogical," "irrational," mind. These three interconnected processes that a woman feels on the way through feminism cannot first be rationalized logically, linearly, and analytically. While the knowledge that these unconscious processes are normal does not take away the intense pain, Fefu reminds women that a healthy appreciation of nonlinear thought

processes and nonlinear expression is necessary to survive "becoming a feminist." Other nonlinear behaviors in Fefu include depending on "process" time, assuming complementarity, opening one's perceptions, and focussing on the patriarchy. Becoming a feminist is the change in consciousness taking place, and it is a process necessary for survival in the patriarchy.

In each of these three plays, nonlinear strategies are in use as the characters make journeys out of fragmentation and brokenness, away from the denial of death, and out of internalized oppression. Nonlinear strategies are developed as the audience sees the interconnectedness of separate poems, as they participate actively in a ritual, and as they are led through a model of spiraling time. Our initial understanding of a nonlinear consciousness in the areas of religion, physics, and language has amplified each of these plays, and the images in the plays have amplified our understanding of nonlinear consciousness. The plays have been lessons on conceiving of the whole, trusting our intuitive processes, changing our way of thinking, using process time, recognizing linear thought, and focussing, perceiving, and connecting. Armed with these

strategies, we can see even more clearly the implications and applications of a nonlinear consciousness. The spiral continues.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

REFLECTIONS AND REVERBERATIONS

In none of these plays do we find a static reflection of nonlinear consciousness. The approach is reflected in action, in specific strategies that move the characters forward. In for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf the women have come to find the god in themselves, and have "loved her fiercely." They have connected to nature, connected to healing images from the past, and changed their way of thinking about spirituality. The god they speak of is not "out there," a part of a hierarchal structure, but is immanent. Miriam, in Ashes, has seen the connections between the global arms race and her personal behavior by attending to her many intuitions and hallucinations, and has moved away from her linear thought patterns of denial. The women in Fefu have moved away from their denial of the

patriarchy, and are learning to open their perceptions to more than what they have been taught exists. Julia is learning that in order to survive, a clear focus on the patriarchy must be held. Chapter two introduced us to the elements of nonlinear consciousness, and the plays offered suggestions for their use.

For colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf emphasized the need to make connections with nature, with one another, to the past and to the future, to actively reject linear thought patterns, and to trust intuitions that tell us to love god in ourselves. Ashes, Ashes, We All Fall Down suggested that we attend to our dreams and intuitions, make connections, and admonished us to change our way of thinking and stop our denial of death. Fefu and Her Friends led us through a spiraling structure of time, and suggested that we open our perceptions, trust our unconscious processes, and focus clearly on the patriarchy. The women in these plays changed their way of thinking and survived by taking action and adopting new thought patterns, but what do we do with this collection of strategies? We do not have a circle of supportive women laying their hands on us, or Paracelsus guiding us through a paradigm shift, or Emma exhorting us to open our senses. But if

these strategies can lead the characters to change their way of thinking, they can lead us forward also, into a greater understanding of a nonlinear consciousness.

By applying these strategies to the seemingly "separate" elements of nonlinear consciousness, the whole picture becomes clear. Making connections is one of the key strategies the women use, and we, too, can learn to see the interconnections among nondiscursive expression, right-brain thinking, the cycles of the moon, and Schrodinger's (hypothetical) cat, and the interconnections among denial behavior, cause-and-effect thought, clock time, and a hierarchal world-view. We can connect the denial thought of Miriam and Julia, and see that the denial of the arms race and death, and the denial of women's oppression is part of the same way of thinking. Julia's process of changing her denial behavior may suggest to Miriam the need to focus on the arms race, and Miriam's process of changing her denial behavior may suggest to Julia the strategy of attending to and trusting intuitive processes. As we continue to focus on these and other feminist works, we can connect to the characters, as the women connected to "Sechita" and Toussaint," and draw strength and sustaining energy from them.

Just as an understanding of nonlinear consciousness is elusive, so is a neatly "finished" conclusion. Given our growing awareness of nonlinear consciousness, we know that a "finished" conclusion would never be generated by nonlinear thinkers. The strategies are expressed in the form of action verbs, and the many elements of nonlinear consciousness are also in action. I am inclined to list such actions as sparking, weaving, rippling, reverberating, bouncing, pulsing, spinning and spiraling to describe my conceptions of this new way of thinking. The elements of this new way of thinking, whether explained to us by the lady in green, Einstein, Schrodinger's (hypothetical) cat, Fefu, Miriam, or Starhawk, reverberate infinitely against one another.

It is difficult to pin these reverberations down into a "finished" order. What is the image that will clarify the dynamic nature of these strategies? The web and the spiral communicate the relationships among the nonlinear elements, but they lack the quality of motion. I assert that these strategies for survival reverberate against one another in the same manner that electrons do. The electron is our image, and one of the fundamentals of understanding it is this: the more one focusses on velocity, the more difficult it is to see position, and the more one focusses

on position, the more difficult it is to see velocity; but the knowledge of both is necessary to comprehend the whole. If the image that most clearly describes a nonlinear consciousness is the continuous dance of electrons, then these strategies that we have derived from the plays have a velocity; they are in motion. We can no more pin down these strategies at the end of a "guidebook" than we can hold an electron in one position. A focus only on position leads neither to a full understanding of electrons nor to a full understanding of nonlinear consciousness. The plays offered a guide to the uses of nonlinear consciousness and suggested quite a collection of thought patterns and actions for survival. This collection, however, is not a list kept in our pockets of "things to do in the patriarchy" that can be pulled out at will. If we have really learned from these plays and acquired these strategies, we will find ourselves in new positions. A nonlinear consciousness will take us to some astonishing places.

How do we discuss the motion that this dance of strategies and elements is in? The velocity of electrons can be described with numerical formulas, but I have no formulas to describe how these nonlinear elements, thought patterns, realizations, and perceptions reverberate. I

do know that the way these strategies move us into new positions can be described as "learning epiphanaically." With these strategies at work in our consciousness, we will find ourselves suddenly with new realizations and new positions. The number of possible positions is infinite, thereby making a predictive, step-by-step survival program impossible to create. But just because we cannot count and categorize every connection does not mean that they are not real. We should have learned by this point to focus on that which is difficult to see. The plays have taught us that we need to focus on some of the possible positions while assuming the complementarity of the others.

The first of these many possible realizations occurs when the image of velocity interconnects with nondiscursive symbols. The section on linear language made it clear that it is through nondiscursive forms that we are best able to understand complex notions. It was not from the linear guide through the theory that we derived the strategies, but from the nonlinear art forms, and we saw that valuing nondiscursive communication was a strategy used by the characters in for colored girls. Their use of dance, song, and poetry was a coping device in the midst of

an unemotional, linear culture. The value of nondiscursive communication is not new. But the need to focus on velocity intensifies this value, and makes us more aware of the connections between art forms and survival. If we cannot fully understand nonlinear strategies unless we let them take us somewhere, that is, unless we focus on their velocity, and if the only way of experiencing velocity is through "learning epiphanaically," then symbols, art, plays, music, ritual, and poetry become more central to survival. If it is through nondiscursive forms that we become familiar with the feeling of velocity, and if it is through experiencing velocity that we understand more fully the strategies for survival, nondiscursive forms can no longer be seen merely as a diversion from linear language, but as an essential part of our existence.

Another realization that the velocity of nonlinear consciousness speeds us away to is that these strategies require new thought patterns to conceive of them. In order for a nonlinear consciousness to lead to survival, it must be adopted as a whole picture. It is our linear mind that separates the elements that make up a nonlinear consciousness from each other. Nonlinear strategies, I think, do not necessarily lead to a nonlinear consciousness, and these elements plopped into our rational,

linear, hierarchal world-view do not result in a change in consciousness for survival.

In none of these plays was there just one element of nonlinear consciousness. The nonlinear notion that "all is connected" suggests that we should learn to see nonlinear consciousness all at once. If taken separately and put into hierarchal, separate arrangements that our linear views are trained for, they do not result in change for survival. For example, nondiscursive forms of communication without nonlinear content may express information that has nothing to do with survival. One could symbolize and communicate nonlinear images of Nazism or racism. Even though nonlinear communication has been used by feminists, and has been used in this study to understand nonlinear consciousness, the forms by themselves do not lead to survival. Process time, too, cannot be adopted as a value by itself. Even though the numbers on the clock or calendar are not real, connections need to be made to most of the population that do rely on real numbers and deadlines to survive. Perhaps we need to adopt the thought pattern of "assuming complementarity" in order to conceive of both types of

measuring time. When the revelation from the new physics that "perception is all" is put separately into a rational, linear thought pattern, it seems to fit right into the linear way of thinking that "if I don't see it, I don't have to believe in it." When the notion from the new physics that "matter is energy, energy is matter" finds its way into our linear, hierarchal way of organizing ideas, there could be the tendency to arrange these two parts of the same into a hierarchal relationship. This arrangement reflects the linear thought that the spirit is more important than matter. If the matter and energy are arranged hierarchally, the linear consciousness could easily dismiss the material world (food, shelter, money) as unimportant, since "matter is energy" anyway. It is clear that this isolated theory from nonlinear consciousness does not lead to survival if inserted into a linear mindset.

We can also make connections among a range of nonlinear thought. We can "assume the complementarity" of the spiraling notion of time and clock time, of the notion that "perception is all" and the notion that we can only see either velocity or position, but not both at once. We can use these thought patterns to understand the whole of nonlinear consciousness and also to focus on two meaningful reverberations.

The first of these is the notion that "Perception is all." When taken as a separate element and put into a linear consciousness, it seems to support the notion that "if I can't see it, I don't have to believe in it." If perception is all, and we only see what we want to anyway, (remember the glasses that inverted the visual field?) how does this connect to the skill of conceiving the whole, and assuming the complementarity of two notions that we can't see? To a linear thinker, this seems to lead to a contradiction. Is it perception that is central, or is it conception that is central? Does the ability to conceive of opposite notions cancel the importance of perception? Not at all. For one thing, the notion of complementarity itself is one of the ideas that is perceived. More importantly, I think, it must be understood that the notion of "perception is all" is not an excuse to believe that only what we can perceive exists. Rather, it can be taken as a caution to be more aware that what one is perceiving may not be the whole picture. "Perception is all" that our minds will believe; perception is not all that exists.

The other theory from new physics which can be linked to our new found thought patterns is the revelation that "matter is energy is matter." When inserted into a linear world-view, there could be a

tendency to use this idea to value the spiritual more than the material. I don't think that the knowledge that the material world is really the same as energy is an excuse to float off into the spiritual world, and to deny that the physical world of survival, of having enough money, food, and shelter is important. If we apply the strategy of "assuming the complementarity" to this notion, the hierarchy of energy over matter disappears. Armed with this thought pattern, it becomes astonishingly clear that matter matters!! If energy is matter, and matter is energy, and there is no hierarchy, then our spirituality connects to "real life," and hence, to survival. By applying our thought patterns to the elements of nonlinear consciousness, we continue to be introduced to new ways of thinking. Two of these are that even though we may only believe what we see, what we see is not all that exists, and that matter and energy can no longer be put into a hierarchy; matter matters.

I think that what, finally, I want to communicate is this: nonlinear consciousness is not abstract theory. During the course of investigating this subject and organizing my ideas, friends have expressed their concern that I was going to "float away." The notions from a nonlinear consciousness seemed abstract, disconnected to real life,

and unrealistic. It is clear that it is not nonlinear consciousness that is disconnected and unrealistic. The plays have shown us that the linear denial of the nuclear arms race is disconnected, and that the denial of the existence of the patriarchy is unrealistic. It is the linear view that is an abstraction; after all, which view believes that the numbers on the clock are real? The plays have made it clear that what a nonlinear consciousness is in opposition to is not abstract either. The oppression of women, the nuclear arms race, and the situation of Black women are not abstract concepts. If we believe, like the lady in blue scornfully says, that we can "abstract ourselves some families," then we can continue to believe that the linear view that we have been taught will lead to survival. But survival is not an abstraction and neither is nonlinear consciousness. Adopting and expanding on the strategies we have found in the feminist plays, changing our way of thinking, and letting these strategies move us into action will lead to survival.

NOTES

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Chapter II

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CHAPTER IV

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4. Ibid. , Hallucination 5, stage directions.
5. Ibid. , Scene 9, line 15.
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7. Ibid. , Scene 17, line 24.
8. Ibid. , line 1.
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10. Ibid. , Scene 16, line 3.
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16. Boesing, Scene 4, lines 16, 20, 22.
17. Ibid. , Scene 8, line 28.
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