

**CHERISHING DIFFERENCE: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON  
NON-BINARY ETHICS AS A FEMINIST RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE**

**BY**

**KAREN L. SCHMIDT**

**A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of**

**Master of Social Work**

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## ABSTRACT

A paradigm of binarism teaches a politic of defense that prevents open development of nonviolence. In a theoretical study of nonviolence I put forward an alternative that considers instead the development of responses that are non-binary and non-enemy: in other words, non-oppositional and non-divisionary directions - ethics that seek to cherish and bridge difference.

Using a feminist framework the dichotomy between violence and nonviolence is considered in the context of Buddhist, North American Aboriginal and French Feminist ethics. In all, spiritual and political dimensions of nonviolence are studied in relationship to social change.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for my committee. Dr. Joan Pennell, my advisor who supported my independent and "idiosyncratic" approach to social change ethics and healing. Dr. Dawne McCance who gave me the encouragement I needed to write Coyote and who introduced me to the necessity of retrieving the poetic as the political force behind gestures of "reaching out" to the monstrous, inside and out. Dr. Joe Kypers for his kindness, enthusiasm and gentle regard for my work. All three for their intelligence and integrity.

I am lucky to have loving family and friends. This thesis was much more than an academic exercise and would not have been completed without the faith and support of my parents, Alice and Henry Schmidt and those friends who kept me spiritually and politically fed. Especially, thank-you to Mary Sweeney and Willy Ruth Wood for reading my draft with such love and interest; Ron Schwartz for late-night dialogues and tea; Richard Claxton, Lilith McClellan and Marilyn Wolovick in the Kootenay's for their tenderness and for treating my writing space with respect. Deep gratitude to Debbie Schwartz for introducing me to quantum physics theory and sharing with me a journey into Buddhist and Natural Law ethics with renewed questioning and commitment to our feminist visions. Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that at my 'defense' there sat three women, all mothers who have not had the luxury of studying in the way I have, yet were so generous in their support. Thank-you, Pat, Erica and Debbie.

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## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## INTRODUCTION

Between the conscious and the unconscious,  
the mind has put up a swing.  
All earth's creatures, even the supernovas,  
sway between these two trees,  
and it never winds down.

Angels, animals, humans, insects by the million,  
also the ages go by, and it goes on.

Everything is swinging: heaven, earth, water, fire,  
and the secret one slowly growing a body.

Kabir saw that for fifteen seconds, and  
it made him a servant for life.

Kabir

### 1. THE ABYSS

The mind creates the abyss and the heart crosses over it. Love is the bridge.

S. Levine

There is an immense abyss called war. The war is taking place daily in our own bodies and souls, in our homes, and between countries. We have all created the monsters inhabiting this planet. We are all responsible for finding ways of deconstructing the enemy camps here inside of each of us and there outside all around. It is a deep abyss.

The muscles in my neck strain with effort as I bend cautiously and take<sup>2</sup>  
a look. My head moves slowly, laboriously looking for one point of focus  
- an opening into understanding what this abyss has to teach and where  
I can ever find the bridge to cross over.

Well, the litany shows, the only way is through. This thesis signifies  
five passages or praxes in this journey. This introduction maps the  
preparation and principles I bring to these passages.

## 2. ETHICS AND VIOLENCE

Each gesture, each word, tentative, each person aware of how words  
and pain always derive from the same source, always seem to lie in  
the other.

The interminable train rides retracing journeys through cities and  
countryside emptied of voices and faces as if only silence could carry  
the weight of what's been said. ...when philosophy and God have  
grown silent in all languages.

L. Tostevin<sup>1</sup>

To whom does annihilation speak as if for the first time?

A. Rich

Since the mid 1970's, the battered women's movement has brought  
attention to a global scale, the scope and urgency of violence suffered by

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<sup>1</sup> *sophie*, "by the smallest possible margin," (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1988)  
p.48. This poem ("addressing absence turns that absence into presence")  
culminates in above quote: a description of Claude Lanzmann's film, *Shoah*.  
"Shoah, annihilation, a title, a promise. Nine and a half hours of interviews of  
Jewish witness survivors, Nazi officers and functionaries, Polish peasants and  
townspeople who lived in the areas of the extermination camps."

women and children.<sup>2</sup> Today, signs of decreasing violence are difficult<sup>3</sup> to find. Abuse shelters remain full, refugee camps cannot contain the overflow, and the Persian Gulf War rages. Models of binarism teaching oppressive sexual, race and class divisions seep into our children's lives through most educational and religious institutions and a multi-million dollar pornography industry that has infiltrated rock videos. Cynicism and negativism are easy to find and stand as important clues that the world is in need of deep caring. Competition and greed, if continued at the present pace, threatens 500,000 species of plants and animals by year 2,000.<sup>3</sup> Economic 'solutions' continue along a linear logos that defies ethics of indeterminacy, redistribution and global mutuality.<sup>4</sup> All in all, we live in a catastrophic time where the interdependence of all life has become a fragile web brutalized by politics of profit and militarization.

The reality of our lives calls us to acknowledge the divisions experienced and practised daily. In a paradigm of binarism, division is replaced with domination- a colonization of the "other" wherein supremacy characterizes response. Binarism teaches difference as something to be opposed and hated. It prevents difference from being understood and cherished. Understanding each other seems impossible

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<sup>2</sup> Griffin, Susan. *Rape: The Power of Consciousness* (Harper and Row, 1979).  
Schechter, Susan. *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*. (Boston: South End Press, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> Adair, Margo. *Working Inside Out: Tools for Change*. (Berkeley: Wingbow Press, 1984).

<sup>4</sup> Henderson, Hazel. *The Politics of the Solar Age: Alternatives to Economics*. (Indianapolis: Knowledge Systems, Inc. 1984). Henderson defines **indeterminacy** as "many models and viewpoints, compromise, humility, openness, evolution, learning societies;" **redistribution** as "justice, equality, balance, reciprocity" and, **mutuality** or **complementarity** as "unity *and* diversity, from either/or to both-and logics" (p.391-92).

when our foundations are shaped by ethics of separation and isolation that divide from the foundations of other human beings.

We have become so busy defending our positions, believing in them, and taking refuge in them. At times we reach over the walls of our foundations, institutions, and disciplines to greet another perspective or give reassurance of mutual collaboration. But the walls so often remain intact and the divisions continue to colonize the difference in others.<sup>5</sup> It has become an immense challenge to disarm our psychological and physical defenses of these walls but it is the only way forward if we wish our children to survive another generation.

The continuum of violence, in my view reflects no one observable point that any of us can absolutely determine where an action dominates another. We are all challenged to individually and collectively develop moral sensitivity to what constitutes an oppressive act in each situation we are in.<sup>6</sup> These tasks address each of us in our struggle to remain connected to our and others' lives in an ongoing and dynamic effort of nonviolence. Social response to violence often draws a strong line between violence and nonviolence. There is much focus on the distinction between nonviolent people and violent people. In reality, however, and from a global perspective of violence, it is not so easy to draw sides.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Metzger, Deena. "Personal Disarmament: Negotiating the Inner Government" *ReVISION*, (Heldref Publications, Spring, 1990, Vol.11, #4). Packer, Toni. *The Work Of This Moment*, (Boston: Shambala Publications, Inc., 1990).

<sup>6</sup> Adair, Margo. *Working Inside Out*, op.cit. Pellaure, Mary, D. "Moral Callousness and Moral Sensitivity," *Women's Consciousness, Women's Conscience*, eds. Anderson, Grurdof, & Company, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985).

<sup>7</sup> Thich Nhat Hahn, social activist and Buddhist poet and teacher exiled from his homeland Vietnam writes, "One can never be sure that one is completely on the side of nonviolence or that the other person is completely on the side of violence. Nonviolence is a direction, not a separating line." Interview in *In the Footsteps of*

I am concerned what long-term implications arise when we continue a politic of adversarial positions which estrange us further from deeper development of nonviolence. Within the question of what creates an ethical response I discuss the concept of enemy as a misleading and often dangerous premise. I put forward an alternative that seeks instead to develop responses that are non-binary and non-enemy: in other words, non-oppositional and non-divisionary directions - ethics that seek to cherish and bridge difference.

Vast change requires respectful consideration of what is appropriate for the given situation through co-operative and communitarian rather than adversarial strategy.<sup>8</sup> A binary model, proclaimed by patriarchal law as rational and irrevocable has become a disciplined system which has compartmentalized the whole of society. The journey home, so many feminists remind us, calls for subversion of logic that is enacted violently through a challenge of the dualistic status quo and the development of alternatives that cherish rather than violate difference. Helene Cixous, for example, writes an ethic that works from a position of "double gesture" -- of bridging. Moving forward for her becomes a gesture by which she includes both points of locus (polarity) by not capturing praxis as property and by being both-and.<sup>9</sup> Nelle Morton describes this journey not so much as a journey ahead, or a journey into

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*Gandhi: Conversations with Spiritual Social Activists* by Catherine Ingram. (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990), p.87.

<sup>8</sup> See Coover et al., *Resource Manual For A Living Revolution*, (Philadelphia, Pa: New Society Publishers, 1977); Eisler, Riane. *The Chalice and The Blade*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); Henderson, Hazel. *The Politics of the Solar Age*, (op. cit.); and McAllister et. al. *Reweaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence*, (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1982).

<sup>9</sup> Cixous, Helene. "Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forways," *The Newly Born Woman*, tr. Betsy Wing (University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1988).

space, but a journey into presence. "The farthest place on earth," she writes, "is the journey into the presence of the nearest person to you."<sup>10</sup>

The privilege of working with abuse survivors for many years has provided me with an immense opportunity to learn about the relational dynamic between the distance and affinity of pain, rage, grief, fear, change, continuity and joy. Increasingly, my work has searched for a balance between justice and forgiveness, political action and spiritual intention, profession and community. My interest in ethical responses to violence in our lives has also been influenced by the horrendous technological wasteland we are creating through ecological destruction. My heart breaks as the largest oil spill occurs in the Persian Gulf through acts of environmental terrorism.<sup>11</sup> My role as witness extends from humans to non-humans, to trees, the rivers, and the sky. Nourished by feminist and religious studies, community actions and dialogues an increasing awareness of the web of systems threading our lives developed in which I have become most committed to the relationship of ethics affecting the nonviolent and violent dimensions our lives are surrounded with.

I write from a socially privileged position. I am white and can afford most middle-class comforts. I have a home that is sanctuary and a country I can say I belong to. I have not had to experience the physical realities of political exile. But in my work I have been taught about the psychic realities of being exiled from one's own lifeforce: the three year old who in order to endure the pain of adult penile

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<sup>10</sup> Morton, Nelle. *The Journey is Home*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), p.227.

<sup>11</sup> January 25 1991, called "Black Death - The worst ecological sabotage in history." *Shared Visions* # 31, March, 1991, p.15.

penetration of her little vagina leaves her body not to fully return till 34 years later; the woman, whose identity has been so misshapen by patriarchal braindamage, beatings and accusations of her 'craziness' and 'ugliness' she has lost sense of self. Physical violence of any form is also a psychic act of turning toward or away in fear through acts of domination and supremacy. Eighty-eight per cent of all murders are male to female related and committed against a "loved one."<sup>12</sup> Spiritual murder accompanies the statistics on suicide and homicide. It is fear of the 'other' or 'difference' - the aspects within and outside ourselves that are marked unreconcilable by history, law and cultural construct that creates the estrangement necessary for violence to occur.

Turning toward a spiritual dimension has been an aspect of my own attempt to reconcile the unconsolable grief I have felt meeting young children whose lives have and still are terrorized by violence. Survival of violence does not always mean survival. Many are debilitated by the atrocious form of violence happening within the warfare practises of domestic and international prisons that is the theft and murder of the spirit - or the erosion of that which manifests the inner spark of life.

It is apparent to me that an incredible split is deepening in this world between those, who in their familial, political or daily ways, are committed to recovery of the soul by building bridges between differences and those still wanting the role of oppressor and jailor. But as this split deepens, the distance we take from facing the 'other' in our life becomes more obvious and I believe harder to ignore. My focus will be on the bridge builders - the social agents resolved in efforts of

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<sup>12</sup> Macleod, Linda. *Battered But Not Beaten*, (Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1987.)

nonviolent approaches to difference. I approach their responses and ideas as needing to be understood in terms of their interrelationships. As Richard Cooper illustrates in his methodology for studying "the other as a model for human structuring," meaning is derived from action and idea "turning round each other."<sup>13</sup>

Preparing and writing this thesis leads me to consider my own relationship to changes I am committed toward realizing. This is a journey in process, for as I move toward reconceptualizing frameworks and ethics that guide my work with abuse recovery and nonviolent development within the individual and community, I am constantly reminded of *how* my process is linked to the political concerns of today. My concerns and studies into the issues of violence are bound by an affinity that is feminist in both heart and mind. I am committed to engaging feminine principles and ways of writing commonly and tragically left out of male analysis and patriarchal investigation. Each passage represents an opening into something else; and the language I use often reflects the fluid process of these openings. My questions are multi-layered and integrative of a systems approach in which one level of inquiry is difficult to consider without another. Gregory Bateson early in the 70's argued that relationships should be used as a basis for all definitions.<sup>14</sup> This premise underlies my study of the interconnecting threads between ethics and nonviolence and is influenced by both feminist and religious thought applied to political, ecological and psychological dimensions of the sacred.

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<sup>13</sup> Cooper, Richard. "The Other: A Model for Human Structuring." *Beyond Method*, ed Gareth Morgan (Sage Publications, 1983), p.209.

<sup>14</sup> Bateson, Gregory. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, (New York: Ballantine, 1972). (and later) *Mind and Nature*, (New York: Dutton, 1979).

My own experience of uncovering healing pathways with individuals and communities has revealed a critical and central problem of dichotomy within individual and collective endeavor. I believe the culture of our time builds within each of us constructs of perspective, language and action that are grounded in a binary model of living that is enacted through opposition. There is no place this is clearer than in the language constructing our concepts. The separation of self from other has been described by Jacques Derrida as the development of *logocentrism*, a word-centered privilege, word as law, and *phallogentrism*, assumption of authority because of a male/phallic position.<sup>15</sup> Helene Cixous reduced these concepts to one, *phallogocentrism*, the rule of reason assumed by a male *but not gender specific*.<sup>16</sup> Inherent in these concepts is the assumption of a position as holding authority over another.

The positioning of one's power or word over another for the purpose of domination is a violence that is the norm of society.<sup>17</sup> In our own country, over one million women a year are battered.<sup>18</sup> The consequences are multiple and complex and all lead it seems, to a confrontation of adversarial responses to difference. The 1990's are noted by futurist and post-economist Hazel Henderson, as a time of breakthrough or breakdown.<sup>19</sup> Justice ethics based only on conduct of

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<sup>15</sup> Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962).

<sup>16</sup> Cixous, Helene. "The Laugh of Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. *Signs*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, Summer, 1976).

<sup>17</sup> Adair, Margo. *Working Inside Out*, op. cit. Starhawk, *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority and Mystery*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982).

<sup>18</sup> Macleod, Linda. *Battered But Not Beaten*, (op. cit.).

<sup>19</sup> *The Politics of the Solar Age*, (op. cit.).

individuals are not working. The ecological and economic catastrophes of our time speak to a larger underlying moral crisis. It is time that the principles and worldviews guiding our internal conduct be given deep consideration and change.

### 3. WALLS OF DISCONNECTION

what do you mean by real?  
that this table is solid  
and this ice in the heart is it real?  
as solid as the table

two of us face to face  
in the manner of a table

a chair

L. Tostevin

In the end, our only difference is our unwillingness to have a face-to-face confrontation with the object.

J. Kristeva

My experience and research teaches me that a great many of us fear desire, death and difference. To be conscious today demands an awareness of unprecedented peril which calls for an unprecedented response.<sup>20</sup> This means more than ever, we are challenged to explore the interface between spiritual growth and social change. The pain in our world is demonstrated despairingly as suicide becomes a collective potential under nuclear power and as an individual emotional, physical and spiritual response to fear. Our capacity to grieve is as fundamental

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<sup>20</sup> Macy, Joanna. *Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1983).

to our capacity to change as is our capacity for joy, peace and justice. Facing our anguish and despair for our world is in effect an initiatory passage necessary for growing into a renewed promise of nonviolent relationship. Without this passage we obstruct our precious interconnectedness with all life. How can we extend our lives beyond our private walls and perspectives into healing interdependence with the rest of the world?

The walls are crumbling. There is global evidence of this as I write. But it is not enough to be passive and watch the repercussion of decayed non-growth. To promise new life we need to consciously deconstruct the fortitude of our estrangement with the awareness of what foundations will ensure moral and social responsibility. The separation of emotion from rationality decreases our capacity to express with each other deep fear and despair along with empowering dreams and compassionate action. Action is often disconnected from idea, heart from mind, body from intellect and self from other. Binarism, as reflected in all forms of violence, requires disconnection. It is disconnection of self from self, and self from others that every victim, perpetrator and citizen must face.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4. WEBS OF CONNECTION

**The experience of interconnection with all life can sustain our social change work far better than righteous partisanship.**

**J. Macy**

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<sup>21</sup> Griffin, Susan. "Split Culture," *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, ed. Judith Plant (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1989), pp.7-17.

In an ecological paradigm, ...the main emphasis is on life, on the living world of which we are part and on which our lives depend. A holistic approach does not need to go beyond the system under consideration, but it is crucial to an ecological approach to understand how that particular system is embedded in larger systems.

F. Capra

The deconstruction and development of foundations can be a conscious effort but it needs also, to take place through the unconscious. For it is what is most hidden, repressed, and estranged from us that holds the most pain and the most creativity. Moral action depends on a new relationship with the unconscious. We have known this for a long time.<sup>22</sup> It is in the unconscious that we experience the poet, the mystic, and the trickster as social agents most familiar with the darkness. It is the aspect of ourselves most oppressed in social life and social science. It is the aspect we need in order to awaken these bodies of ours deadened by violence. **The poetic - the love that abides in the unconscious I will reveal, is the political force behind crossing over the lines that separate,** into a web of differentiation and connectedness that both "cradles and calls us to weave it further."<sup>23</sup>

Processes of growth and transformation, Joanna Macy writes, are never pain-free. "They require a letting-go of outmoded ways of being, of old assumptions and old defenses. As both science and religion confirm, this letting-go can be a passage through darkness."<sup>24</sup> The passage of any living organism into new growth cannot happen without

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<sup>22</sup> See Hampden-Turner, "The Paradigmatic Mind," *Maps of The Mind*, (New York: Colliers Books, 1981) for a clear enough summary of mind, dialectics and synthesisism from Hegel to Marx to Engels to Freud and Marcuse.

<sup>23</sup> Macy, Joanna.(op. cit.), p.27.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.28.

the systems supporting it openly reorganizing and changing. Closed systems create death through decayed and armoured rigidity.

The mechanistic approach of separating entity into smaller analytical pieces has failed to address how these separate parts interact to sustain life and evolve. Questions arising from this approach have caused scientists from all disciplines to shift their perspectives to look at wholes instead of parts, and processes instead of substances. This has brought us what is known as general systems theory and as will be illustrated in the Passage into Power is an illuminating pathway into nonviolent ethics. It is a pattern that connects unconscious desire with conscious will.

## 5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*Everything begins with love. If we work on a text we don't love,  
we are automatically at the wrong distance.*

*H. Cixous*

*This is what I am: watching the spider  
rebuild - "patiently," they say,*

*but I recognize in her  
impatience - my own -*

*the passion to make and make again  
where such unmaking reigns*

*the refusal to be a victim  
we have lived with violence so long.*

*A. Rich*

It is time social workers call on poets for help. Hence, my inclusion of many in this thesis. If our practise is not a practise of heart then our social service to so many will continue its dichotomous binary of either/or "solutions" and never fully celebrate the beauty and strength of both-and growth. My effort as a social worker embraces the gardener's attitude of gentle persistence in encouraging new life. I am never separate from the process. Therefore, I have looked at the relationship between physics and metaphysics and what this relationship means in terms of nonviolence. I accept Deena Metzger's definition of mysticism as the experience and physics as the science or cognition of reality.<sup>25</sup> I am interested in ethics that practise the unity of physics and metaphysics as a greater passage into birthing the wholeness of life - the justice and compassion we need to truly know this wholeness. Therefore, my theoretical objectives are inclusiveness, unification and relationship.

Theory, for me, is the seeing of patterns. The original meaning of the word theory is to see, to look at.<sup>26</sup> It is the linkages of one process to another or the study of linkages and spaces between which guide the passages forthcoming. I am interested in the webbing of social transformation. But, even more, the resonance, coloration, depth, and breadth between the strands. For is it not the spaces that give glimmer and substance to the spider's web? Does not the spider design her web according to the strength and softness that is the result of the distance between strands and spaces? And always, there is the incredible centre

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<sup>25</sup> Metzger, Deena. "Invoking the Grove." in *Healing The Wounds*(op. cit.), p.123.

<sup>26</sup> Bohm, David. *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p.p.3-4.

to a spider's web, shining like a jewel, the heart that inspires the creative and necessary act in the first place, from which she begins, and departs and returns to depart again. Surviving and being. Or, as Adrienne Rich describes:

Theory- ...showing the forest as well as the trees - theory can be a dew that rises from the earth and collects in the rain cloud and returns to the earth over and over. But if it doesn't smell of the earth, it isn't good for the earth.<sup>27</sup>

In short, the unconscious serves as the spaces that are explored while the conscious provides the strands that are formally represented. But what does this mean in concrete terms in regard to this writer's concern for this thesis?

What can be clear are the principles by which systems evolve. Central to my research of nonviolence are the principles that inspire openness to feedback, to self, to other, and to environment. "The power of open systems is not a property one can own, but a process one opens to."<sup>28</sup> A central theme in every major tradition I have studied is the effort of breaking through the illusion of separateness and realize the undeniable fact of our interdependence. This theme is often hidden or distorted by religious, institutional or patriarchal authority but it is there and has always been there. From Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and Native American and Goddess religions.<sup>29</sup> Each offer images of the sacred web in which we all live or as described in Buddhist theory as *interbeing* or the power to interexist (*paticca-samuppada*).

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<sup>27</sup> Rich, Adrienne. "Notes toward a Politics of Location," in *Blood, Bread and Poetry*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1986), pp. 213-14.

<sup>28</sup> Macy, Joanna. *Despair and Personal Power In The Nuclear Age*, (op. cit.), p.31.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

It could be said that this thesis is about moral action. But as the French feminist writers illustrate in the *Passage into Poetics* it is not about self-centered, self-righteous, closed and conclusive action. It is of the kind that celebrates openness, compassion and difference. These principles are my lanterns lighting theoretical implications. This thesis is about ethics that cherish the interconnected web as shared and which we are a part of weaving. It is my effort at retrieving awareness for myself of interexistence, spiritual perspective and social action that embraces dichotomy of sacred and secular to move to a place of immanent process. This thesis takes direction from Albert Einstein's premise that "matter is a verb not a noun."<sup>30</sup> and one which Helene Cixous says is constantly calling for a new opening, new sight and new love that refuses the "infamous logic of anti-love." Perhaps it most closely attempts John Forrester's definition of transformational theory: "pragmatics with vision."<sup>31</sup> And finally, I am influenced by postmodern interpretation that sees the individual as, "indivisible from, and participating in, the system being analyzed."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> "Mass is nothing but a form of energy. Even an object at rest has energy stored in its mass." Albert Einstein, cited in *The Tao of Physics*, Fritjof Capra (Berkeley: Shambhala Press, 1975), p. 63. Or, as Capra writes, "To recognize the relativity of our knowledge and of all the constructs of the universe and universes, macro and micro, of which we are so integral a part." (Ibid), p. 41.

<sup>31</sup> Forrester, John. "Critical Theory and Organizational Analysis," *Beyond Method*, (op. cit.), p. 246.

<sup>32</sup> McCance, Dawne C. "Physics, Buddhism, and Postmodern Interpretation," *Zygon*, (Vol. 21, #3, 1986), p. 295.

## 6. The Passages

I go where I love and where I am loved,  
into the snow;

I go to the things I love  
with no thought of duty or pity.  
H.D.

Where grief and laughter sleep together.  
A. Rich

Each passage is related to the others. Passage into Power begins by defining the problem. As President Bush announced last night (February 27th, 1991 - the eve of Iraqi retreat), the (Gulf) war is, "a success of all mankind - of rule of the law." For such destruction to be viewed as success, and for "rule of law" to be understood as a way to peace, separation of self from others is defined in enemy terms. I discuss this as power over/against ethics in which colonization and closed systems depend on dualistic thinking that draws the line by refusing to see the 'other side.' Duality is not violent unless viewed in a binary model where differences are split into dominant and subordinate levels and actualized, as in "to duel."

Power that doesn't violate an other is discussed in the context of self-governance and natural-law ethics - each of which teach the strength of open-systems. Here, social work is a process of decentering power into grass-roots systems based on municipalities that begin with the body politic of self. In this passage, as in others, connections are made between the body politic and the larger institutional politics "lording"

the world. It is precisely these connections which need further attention.

Remaking of dominant power structures begins but does not end with ourselves. Hence, the next Passage into Personal Disarmament. In this passage I am saying that the self-analyzing spirit espoused in this thesis is necessary if our intentions are going to align with nonviolent and ecologically responsible ways. A feminist process of disarmament begins first with an active return to our own life force. We have to remember the elemental ethic of feminism, that of process - *en procès* - movable thinking and action, constant growth and expansion. It does not exist for itself. Personal disarmament surrenders the armour of our hearts in the effort of inventing another way of existing, together.

If we look beyond ourselves as do the women and men of the Chipko Movement and the Tiep Hien Order discussed in Passage into Peace, we will find that what we need to recover already exists. The teachings of *pratitya samutpada* and the Native American medicine wheel tell us Buddhists and First Nations people realized dependent co-arising thousands of years ago. A Passage into Peace is desire for *bahu-syam-prajayera* or "the will to become many hearts." It asks that a non-enemy ethic be realized first with the self. "For without inner peace," the Dalai Lama tells us, "it is not possible to have world peace."<sup>33</sup> In Passage into Peace, as the Passages into Power and Personal Disarmament illustrate, a balanced effort is a constant remembering to open gently into the moment by approaching life whole-heartedly.

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<sup>33</sup> *In the Footsteps of Gandhi*, ed. Catherine Ingram (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1990), p.11.

This is not easy, for often as survivors our strength has come from drawing lines. Our defenses, at times, are what keeps us alive but, they can become also what kills us. The trick now is finding the wisdom to reach over the very lines that have at times kept us alive. The paradoxical nature of this act asks that we face unknown consequences of our reaching. The process can be painfully uncomfortable for it brings both despair and dreams into our reality. But, Macy assures us, the very state of facing, "bereft of assurance," the unknown so often hidden in the unconscious and metaphysical realms of our beings, has always been recognized by traditional paths as "sacred."<sup>34</sup> It's between despair and self-questioning that our truths come to us.

What has largely been missing in our analyses of and attempts at ending violence is the metaphysical component - the undefinable interconnectedness of all life. In my belief, it is the poet that has more than not, journeyed into this 'country' sometimes described as soul, sometimes as multi-systems acting together and sometimes, though too rarely, called love.

Metaphysics invites exploration into the problem of self/other. By exploring unconscious desires, French feminists show in the *Passage into Poetics*, how we can begin to unearth our 'monsters' for what they are, fearful and lacking love. The poets I include write out of their own love and persistence in order to catch a glimmer of freedom - that arbitrary twin soul to resistance. They seek to liberate the "monsters' into the cross-country of harmless love.

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<sup>34</sup> Macy, Joanna. (op. cit.), p.29.

Like the physicists referenced, these poets explore open space in hopes to reveal connections and learn what, "the word *understanding* really means." For Thich Nhat Hahn, it means:

This kind of realization is not the result of any ideology or system of thought, but is the fruit of the direct experience of reality in its multiple relationships. It requires the dropping of habitual thinking which fragments reality, a reality that is actually indissoluble.<sup>35</sup>

Poetics, like quantum physics, is shown to be a theory of open systems that relinquishes the codes and constructs by which it formerly interpreted and constrained experience.

The main emphasis in all the passages is life. This is why Coyote belongs in this thesis. He is the psychoses we are all experiencing - the shattered spirit putting himself together again and again. He teaches me, as the Buddhists and post-structuralists do, that I am the system I am subverting. Passage into Paradox reveals Coyote as the violence and nonviolence in all of us. Yet, this violence, Alanna Brown writes,

...is not sanctified by the intentions of the hero, as is typical in Western writing. The violence is more ambiguous, a recognition that those changing the world order also have the monstrous and asocial within themselves. Hoarding power generates the taking of power, ...violence begets violence, ...and greed becomes an insatiable hunger that brings loss, not gain.<sup>36</sup>

Coyote is the law-breaking aspect of myself still looking for a way into the paradox only to find I need to stop simply looking and start being.

Some censors in my own psyche say I do violence by writing Coyote at all. Perhaps, I do. In other efforts of nonviolence I have done violence. The risk is always there. But, Coyote keeps my eyes and ears keen and my heart open with observation and intention - good and bad,

<sup>35</sup> Hahn, Thich Nhat. *The Sun My Heart* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1988), p.76.

<sup>36</sup> Brown, Alana. "A Voice from the Past," *Women Review of Books* (Vol. VIII, #2, Nov. 1990), p.19.

he keeps me watchful and more alive. And through the voice of Peter BlueCloud he speaks in a few lines what has taken me a thesis to write:

"Coyote, do you understand the theory of relativity?" "Yes, yes I do. It's much easier that way. When I'm hungry I just stop at someone's place and get a meal. Yes, it's really good to know that all creatures are related."<sup>37</sup>

Coyote helped me pack in this thesis and move on to new territory.

All the passages are attempts at dialectical consciousness - both-and ways of thinking. Moving to both points of praxis at once. Walking the bridge over the dreaded blessed abyss. It is a place where Levine says, "it is not the fear of the dread happening that is the obstacle but the *identification* with it."<sup>37</sup> And it is a bridge on which, "before we can play with angels of compassion we need to take tea with demons of our holdings."<sup>38</sup>

The passages consider violence and nonviolence in a variety of ways and voices. As a result, my definitions of violence and nonviolence evolve across the passages. They seek new meaning and forms of reconciliation each time. What better place to do this 'bridging' than through social work? For social work is already a bridging science that works with the economics, psychologies, religions, myths, cultures and poetics of people's lives. Social work can bring cross-cultural perspective and research that looks beyond boundary, beyond polarity, beyond ego, ism and gender and beyond the expected to find the unexpected. This requires a constant "putting on trial," as Julia Kristeva and Toni Packer (and Coyote) teach, of our own inner and outer laws.

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<sup>37</sup> Blue Cloud, *Peter. Elderberry Flute Song: Contemporary Coyote Tales* (New York: The Crossing Press, 1982), p.105.

<sup>38</sup> Levine, Stephen. *Healing into Life and Death* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), p.220.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.228.

But, the decentering of one's own polis is meaningless if the heart is not the guiding force. For without the heart as guide we stay cleverly isolated from the vulnerability of touching humans with tenderness. With open hearts, it can be a passage into the "singable remains" of our wrecks where, "compassion is retrieved from its lonely exile."

The price of increasing power is increasing opposition.

L Ching

## 1. POWER OVER

### COLONIZATION

The scientific worldview of the founding fathers of modern science (17th century onward: Galileo, Newton, Bacon, Descartes) and the industrial revolution has produced an ontology of dichotomization. This Cartesian worldview has resulted in separation of systems - man from nature, man from woman, self from other, mind from body, secular from sacred...<sup>1</sup> Dualities once understood as dynamic interrelating forces are now hierarchilized into differences in terms of privilege and patriarchal norm.<sup>2</sup> Scientific reductionism has shaped much of the fragmentation suffered today by many through acts of sexism, classism and racism.<sup>3</sup> Under patriarchal law (Father Law), opposites are assigned different levels of power and "rightness" that are policed through many levels of violence. Underlying value systems that guide our language and behavior historically position difference as a threat to Eurocentric-Western values.<sup>4</sup> Abjection and rejection of the 'other' underlies the positing of subject identity and is believed to be fixed in

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<sup>1</sup> Merchant, Carolyn. *The Death of Nature*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

<sup>2</sup> Shiva, Vandana. *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India*. (New York: Doubleday/Anchor, 1981).

<sup>3</sup> D'Souza, Corrinne Kumar. "A New Movement, A New Hope: East Wind, West Wind and the Wind from the South," in *Healing The Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, ed. Judith Plant, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> Derrida, Jacques. "Semiology and Grammatology: Interview with Julia Kristeva," in *Positions*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

the historical exclusion of women and acts of violence that extend to 24  
First Nations people and the non-human. D'Souza from India describes  
such colonization as:

A cosmology that exalted competition, power and violence over convention, ethics and religion. Thus it has become a portmanteau of nationalism, imperialism, militarism and dictatorship, of the cults of the hero, the superman and the master race. A scientific worldview that has become the universal, a scientific worldview that also heralded the "masculine birth of time."<sup>5</sup>

Historically, masculinity has been enclosed in a male body and femininity in a female body restricting the breath of both genders. Science, has for the most part, depended on this strangulation in order to advance its politic of fragmentation, reductionism and appropriation. The forms of violences resulting have taken this planet and all its family forms, human and nonhuman, to the edge of annihilation.<sup>6</sup> Human death at the hand of man-made technologies is untallied. The extent of enforced poverty and hunger has never been measured against the development of Western capitalism.<sup>7</sup> Violence experienced in our intimate relationships has become more common than not and is tragically often the same warfare practises of colonization we see exercised over countries, human races, animal species and our solar system.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> D'Souza, Corinne Kumar. (op. cit.), p.31.

<sup>6</sup> Adair, Margo. *Working Inside Out: Tools for Change*, (Berkeley: Wingbow Press, 1984);

Henderson, Hazel. *The Politics of the Solar Age: Alternatives to Economics* (Indianapolis: Knowledge Systems, Inc., 1988).

<sup>7</sup> Lappe, Frances Moore and Joseph Collins. *World Hunger: Twelve Myths*, (New York: Grove Press, 1986); Shiva, Vandana. "Development, Ecology, and Women," in *Healing The Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> Adair, Margo. (op. cit.); Walker, Alice. *Living By The Word*, (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1988). And as Adrienne Rich put it thirteen years

Colonization has been built on the legitimacy of the value of supremacy, economy and dichotomy. The will to own, the desire for separation, and the obsession to create surplus surpass definitions of greed and exploitation. One form of violence, human rape, is not different in its *power expression*, from nonhuman rape, be it deforestation, technological terrorism or the unchecked excavation of the earth's minerals. The institutionalization of masculine value systems has permitted a breakdown of relationship, government, and economy that is now reaching its peak. Hazel Henderson tells us,

The roots of individualism, infantile fantasies of push-button technological gratification; obsession with control; as well as the relationship of autism, autarchy, and authority are various aspects of men's fear of dying and their loss of awareness of connectedness - are extremely unpalatable to current rationalization and political-legitimacy theories.<sup>9</sup>

## CLOSED SYSTEMS

Colonization of any matter depends on closed systems. Domination of anything violates the interdependent process of systems by creating a dependency based on control and exclusion. The domination of another human being depends on imprisoning and sometimes, completely eliminating the difference in his or her humanity. Difference, Audre Lorde writes, is most commonly defined as deviance - something to expel, exile or make into the enemy. She says:

Institutionalized rejection of difference is an absolute necessity in a profit economy which needs outsiders as surplus people. As members of such an economy, we have all been programmed to respond to the human differences between us with fear and loathing and to handle that difference in one of three

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ago: "The decision to feed the world/ is the real decision. No revolution/ has chosen it. For that choice requires/ that women shall be free." "Hunger" in *The Dream of a Common Language*, (New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 1978.

<sup>9</sup> Henderson, Hazel. (op. cit.), p.373.

ways: ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it dominant, or 26  
destroy if it we think it is subordinate.... It is a lifetime pursuit for each one of us  
to extract these distortions from our living at the same time as we recognize,  
reclaim, and define these differences upon which they are imposed. For we have  
all been raised in a society where those distortions were endemic within our  
living....This results in a voluntary isolation, or false and treacherous  
connections.<sup>10</sup>

The dominating force is the armour we close around our own  
humanity. Violence forges humanity into mechanistic parts. We are all  
part of the mechanization of the human heart. Our hearts have become  
like the Pentagon, armoured against knowing the truth of another heart.  
It is impossible to write about this without feeling the oppression of my  
own armour. Writing about systems that close in on difference, on life  
itself, is painful. Audre Lorde's words resound again as I examine this:

For we have, built into all of us, old blueprints of expectation and response, old  
structures of oppression, and these must be altered at the same time as we alter the  
living conditions which are a result of those structures. For the master's tools will  
never dismantle the master's house.<sup>11</sup>

Must we die from heartbreak, heartattack, closed hearts? Stephen  
Levine asks, "Do we only know how to uncover our heart's losses and  
hopes through violence to self and others?"<sup>12</sup> What is needed to melt  
the steel of the systems that close in on difference and desire so we can  
look deeply into the terror of our own loathing? We have become so  
separated in our efforts to understand. The political often doesn't know  
the personal. Theory without experience distills human tragedy into  
measured failures. The colonizer like the scientist detaches from the  
object in question- does not subject himself to the experience and so the

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<sup>10</sup> Lorde, Audre. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in  
*Sister Outsider*, (New York: The Crossing Press Feminist Series, 1984), p.115.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 123.

<sup>12</sup> Levine, Stephen. *Healing into Life and Death*, (New York: Doubleday, 1987),  
p.265.

more scientific he becomes, the less he will see of the phenomenon being studied or, appropriated.<sup>13</sup>

Closed systems, Joanna Macy teaches, are suicidal. By suppressing feedback, a Cartesian subject-object dichotomy detaches from life-sustaining linkages. When suppressing feedback, any system closes "its perceptions to results of its behavior."<sup>14</sup> In the mechanistic paradigm where dualism is viewed in absolutes or pure reason, theory becomes hard-edged altruisms rather than insight or a way of looking at the world.<sup>15</sup> The knower mistakes conception for reality rather than representation and keeps divorced from relationship. Here, power is seen as,

...a property of separate entities, reflected in the way they could appear to push each other around. It became identified with domination... it is seen as power over. In such a view power is a zero-sum game, "the more you have, the less I have" . . . "If you win, I lose. It fosters the notion, furthermore, that power involves invulnerability." <sup>16</sup>

Invulnerability needs defenses, armour and rigidity to stay inviolable. Colonization of the fluid unknown has become the police force of Cartesian or objective reality. Paralysis of change is necessary to uphold power. And this, I am asserting, begins and ends with the colonizing of the organ central to all life - the human heart.

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<sup>13</sup> See Fritjof Capra's discussion on Heisenberg and the Uncertainty Principle: "The more we emphasize one aspect in our description the more the other aspect becomes uncertain, and the precise relation between the two is given by the uncertainty principle" in *The Turning Point: Science, Society and the Rising Culture*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), p.79.

<sup>14</sup> Macy, Joanna. *Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age*, (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1983), p. 32.

<sup>15</sup> McCance, Dawne C. "Physics, Buddhism, And Postmodern Interpretation," in *Zygon* (Vol. 12, #4, 1986).

<sup>16</sup> Macy, Joanna. (op. cit.), p.30.

The closure of the heart to difference, desire and death has become a form of power that makes law the stultifying of life systems. As we incarcerate the power in our hearts to a singular position of "I", the other whom we breathe the same air with becomes another "I" and here we are, two walls barely breathing for the rigidity of our stances. And in between the binarism and singularity of our walls? - the dreaded abyss - the distance between. "Into this shadowy gulf the heart is called as an intermediary, the same heart that Jung defined as 'the place of the coincidence of opposites.'"<sup>17</sup> But, if we can face "not knowing" what the abyss has to teach, as some contemporary physicists, Buddhists, feminists and poets have, perhaps we can go deeper into this crisis of heart politics and instead of poking a head over the edge for a peek we can dive right in, heart first.

## 2. POWER WITHIN

### SELF-GOVERNANCE

The colonizer, I am saying, exists not just outside ourselves but inside too. In efforts to resist violence and stop injury it is essential to attend to the power dynamics within at all times.<sup>18</sup> And since this capacity is despairingly beaten out of victims of violence it is even more the responsibility of those not suffering oppression. The intentions governing our inner will is not separate from our outer actions. Though

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<sup>17</sup> Levine, Stephen. (op. cit.), p.52

<sup>18</sup> Macy, Metzner, and Packer all address this principle with clarity.

we may live peaceful lives we are not separate from the violence of others. As long as there is violence in our world our lives contain violence. Reacting to violence with warfare mentality only continues the war- the gap between resister and protagonist only widens with both sides eventually becoming the enemy.

"This is not a struggle to "seize" power so much as to release it for decentralized use in efficient self-governance."<sup>19</sup> Decentralizing power permits self-governance; decentralization can remove authority from the dominating closed system and return it to an open self. If the open self, many North American Native traditions teach, acts in accord with all systems then harmony prevails. However, nonviolence through self-governance is a "complicated truth."<sup>20</sup>

Nonviolence is ambiguous at best. Not - violent is only one part of it. Perhaps Gandhi's practise of *satyagraha* (truth force) is better or *ahimsa* (compassionate action). Nonviolence is not about passivity, not in this thesis anyway. It is about cherishing peaceful difference and change in ways that are dynamic.<sup>21</sup>

Within current ontological shifts of divisible to indivisible, and of oppositional to reciprocal we need to engage language forms that describe the active indeterminacy within the meaning of nonviolence in much the same way physicists are having to create new words to

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<sup>19</sup> Macy, Joanna. (op. cit.), P.34.

<sup>20</sup> Meyerding, Joan. "Reclaiming Nonviolence: some thoughts for feminist womyn who used to be nonviolent and vice versa", in *Reweaving The Web Of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence*, ed. Pam McAllister, (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1982), p.5.

<sup>21</sup> I will be more explicate in the section on Ahimsa and Tiep Hien precepts; however some good classical references are: Gandhi, M.K., *Nonviolent Resistance (Satyagraha)*, Sharp, Gene. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargeant Publishers), 1973; Martin Luther King, *Strength to Love*, and *We Are All Part of One Another: A Barbara Deming Reader*, ed. Jane Meyerding.

discuss quantum theory. As Heisenberg related, "Particularly in atomic physics, nature has taught us that some of our most trusted concepts have a strictly limited application. You have only to think of position and vilocity."<sup>22</sup> Nonviolence is a process Adrienne Rich describes as, "the passion to make and make again where such unmaking reigns"<sup>23</sup> - a making complex in its activism.

Violent means are sometimes unavoidable in resisting oppression.<sup>24</sup> As Gary Snyder commented,

Nonviolence is always the way, but you can't always do it. This is the compassionate and practical paradox of the first precept, the precept of nonviolence. ... And we sometimes have clear choices before us that are of a very paradoxical nature which throws us between responding with violence or choosing that violence be done to ourselves or to someone else... The response of the being who chooses not to be a victim is a fair response, and in some of those contexts it's hard to know who is being violent to whom.<sup>25</sup>

Here, self-governance is chosen over surrender to abjection. The Civil Rights Movement, the North American Aboriginal Solidarity Movement, the Palestinian Liberation Movement and the Women's Movement have all been examples of the dignity of human heart asserting itself over humiliation and threat to life. And this dignity can inspire the communitarian action and mutuality so often founded in natural law foundations.

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<sup>22</sup> Heisenberg, Werner. *Physics and Beyond*, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), p.135.

<sup>23</sup> Rich, Adrienne. "Natural Resources", in *The Dream of a Common Language*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), p.64.

<sup>24</sup> See interviews with the Dalai Lama, Mubarak Awad, and Desmond Tutu in *In The Footsteps of Gandhi* by Catherine Ingram, (Berkeley, Ca: Parallax Press, 1990.)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp.244-245.

## NATURAL LAW ETHICS

For a great amount of time natural laws have guided many First Nations people. Indigenous life needs to be recognized as perhaps the oldest tradition to which we have reference. During 18,000 - 10,000 B.C.E. the last ice sheets were thought to have moved back from plains and sub-arctic. From 9,500 - 8,250 B.C.E. the Fluted Point people were thought to have lived and are the earliest evidence of people in North America. The Plains people are known to live in western Canada and the Hudson Bay area dating back 8,500-6,000 B.C.E. In brief, Indigenous people have had a long history of pre-white contact.

Within Aboriginal natural law ethics the physical and spiritual are not viewed as separate.<sup>26</sup> Self-governance, in this context, is taught as an extension of respect for "all our relations." Although it is possible to generalize, different Aboriginal nations and respective traditions vary.

The Ojibway people understand the person and the place of the person in the whole differently from European understanding of the universe. In most white societies, persons are identified as a separate category and even as different kind of humans - "only certain kinds of humans, that is those that are intelligent and rational are humans".<sup>27</sup> Ojibway traditionally do not dichotomize in their worldview. All beings, animate and inanimate are inclusive and equal. All of nature is understood as both protector and destructor and permeated with spirit. Creative power is understood as immanent - everywhere. Violence is invited when overstepping the place one has in the natural kinship of all

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<sup>26</sup> Beth Brant, ed., *A Gathering of Spirit* (Sinister Wisdom Books, 1984), see p.12.

<sup>27</sup> Tedlock, Barbara and Dennis. "Ojibway Ontology, Behavior and Worldview" in *Teachings from the American Earth* (Liveright, 1986).

systems and beings. Heedless taking of life and superiorized distinctions between humans and nonhumans defies right conduct in this worldview. Here, transgression of theistic thinking invites harmony.

An ethic of reciprocity guides many nations such as the Navajoe, Gitskan and Cherokee. No separation is seen between crises and moral causes. During a discussion with Judith Plant, Marie Wilson explains that in the Gitskan language there is no word for "rights." The closest they come to any equivalent we are told, is jurisdiction and responsibility. The responsibilities are the ways a person chooses to govern him or herself with all beings. Right relationship for the Gitskan lies between self-authority and responsibility to others.<sup>28</sup>

What Marie Wilson and many other North American Native speakers and writers articulate is how the open and interconnected web of systems is being destroyed as the result of closing our hearts to the interpenetration of natural law. Central to any natural law ethic is the interdependence necessary for sustaining life. No clearer is this than in Diane Brown's (Gwaganad) appeal to the B.C. Supreme Court (Nov.6, 1985) for logging "rights" to be prohibited in Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands). She expresses how the economic and cultural traditions of her people are derived from their spiritual relationship to each other and the land. She brings alive the co-dependence of culture, environment and people as all parts of a larger whole resplendent in an inclusive ethic - one that recognizes interrelationship essential to all: the environment, the Haida culture and, the loggers. She says,

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<sup>28</sup> "A Conversation with Marie Wilson", in *Healing The Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, ed. Judith Plant (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1989), p. 215.

...the first lesson in my life that I remember is respect. I was taught to respect the land. I was taught to respect the food that came from the land. I was taught that everything has meaning. Every insect had a meaning and none of these things were to be held lightly.<sup>29</sup>

Dhyani Ywahoo of the Cherokee Nation teaches a biocentric worldview whereby all elements of nature are equally important to the survival of the whole. The industrial-paternalistic age, she believes, has moved away from the circle by compartmentalizing its elements, forgetting implications, and creating loss of continuity.<sup>30</sup> She writes,

We each have a duty to the earth and to each other. Each race, each nation, has its different purpose in maintaining the whole. The wisdom of all our ancestors, wherever they came from points to this truth. Native Americans say, "All my relations" acknowledging that connection to everything is alive... these are our relatives, the fire, the water, the wind, the earth, all of the creatures you meet upon this planet and within it.<sup>31</sup>

The ethic of considering impact of action on seven generations away is central to right relationship and realized through the practise, Ywahoo teaches, of "stilling one's mind and putting aside personal expectations and considering the balance of the Earth. This generates the practise of generosity."<sup>32</sup>

Generosity, she continues, is realized through the practise of "give-away"- a tradition of Native American people called pot-latch which permits renewal and freedom from attachment (a practise outlawed by the Macdonald government in 1884 and not amended by parliament till 1951).<sup>33</sup> Ywahoo explains how,

<sup>29</sup> Gwaganad. "Speaking for the Earth; The Haida Way," (Ibid.), p.77.

<sup>30</sup> Ywahoo, Dhyani. *Voice of Our Ancestors: Cherokee Teachings From the Wisdom Fire* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. "Renewing the Sacred Hoop," *Woman of Power*, (#2, Summer, 1985), p.20.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>33</sup> "Every Indian or other person who engages in or assists in celebrating the Indian festival known as the 'Potlach' [sic]. ... is guilty of a misdemeanor, and shall be liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than six months nor less than two months in any gaol or other place of confinement." as cited by Paul Tennant

The concept of the give-away comes from courageously affirming one's ability to act for what is good for other people and oneself, knowing that each day will be abundant because one is not grasping. The give-away is an outward expression of an understanding that all things are related in the circle of life.<sup>34</sup>

Understanding one's unconscious and conscious behavior as a step toward practising harmony of all relationship can be realized in the Cherokee tradition, through meditation and generous action. "Rebuilding the Sacred Hoop" then, is the result of nonviolent balance between thought and action. In this way, Ywahoo concludes, all our relations will return to working peacefully and openly by agreement and positive priority.

## OPEN SYSTEMS

In open systems power *over* and power *against* can become power *with* and power *for* or, power *through*.<sup>35</sup> It is what systems

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in *Aboriginal People and Politics* (Vancouver: University of B.C Press, 1990), pp.51-52.

<sup>34</sup> Dhyani Ywahoo. (op. cit.), p. 21.

<sup>35</sup> *The Alternatives To Violence Project* begun by Society of Friends (Quakers) in 1975 in response to requests from prisoners for skills in nonviolent living and action. The following definitions of power come from the Second Level Manual: 1. **Exploitive:** Power *over*, based on force and usually on society's expectations, open or covert. The powerful make use of others for their own benefit. The use of this kind of power is an implicit invitation to an answering violence or threat of violence "exercised by those who have been radically rejected." 2. **Manipulative:** Power *over*, based on persuasion. People influence others for the benefit of themselves (often a weapon of the con artist or the weak.) 3. **Competitive:** Power *against*, between equals. A one up, one down situation; on the positive side, it can test our mettle. 4. **Nutrient:** Power *for*. This power grows from one's care for another, concern for the welfare of another or of a group. The classic example is the power of a parent to nurture a child. Nutrient power may have the negative aspect of paternalism-of doing and deciding things for others that they would be better off doing for themselves. 5. **Shared or conjoined:** Power *with*. Comes into being when people join together in a cooperative effort to discover a truth or a path of action to which all can commit themselves sincerely. The effort itself involves honest feedback, sometimes

theory call synergetic power. The phenomena of synergy, Buckminster Fuller explained in his 1981 volume, *The Critical Path* as, "behavior of whole systems unpredicted by the behavior or integral characteristics of any parts of the system when the parts are considered only separately."<sup>36</sup> The union of two or more principles, when combined, can create a greater whole within synergetic potential. "Synthesism," Linda Glennon explains, "brings ...patterns together with their oppositions and in so doing, creates new forms of investigation."<sup>37</sup> It is the interaction of order *and* differentiation. This brings, Joanna Macy writes, "the interdependent release of fresh potential... And it is like grace, because it brings an increase of power beyond one's own capacity as a separate unity."<sup>38</sup>

General systems theory grew as a result of the radical departure from Cartesian epistemology to recovery of the study of relationships or patterns in life. Biologists were the first scientists to shift the perspective from examining separate unities to looking at wholes.<sup>39</sup> A "systems biology" sees an organism as a living system rather than a

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confrontation, and always a sincere respect for the positions of others and a willingness to listen and be convinced when appropriate. It involves both the use and the self-restraint of individual power. Once an understanding is reached, the group can act on it with a power greater than the sum of the individual power of its members. The consensus process at its best produces this result. 6.

**Transforming:** Power that acts *through* truth, justice and love. This power transcends 'human' forms of power. We cannot use it. If we are open to it, it can use us. (Alternatives to Violence Project, Inc., New York, 1990 edition), section F. pp.14-15.

<sup>36</sup>(New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), p.251.

<sup>37</sup> Glennon, Linda M. "Synthesism: A Case of Feminist Methodology." *Beyond Method*, ed. Gareth Morgan (Sage Publications, 1983), p.268.

<sup>38</sup> Macy, Joanna. "Awakening to the Ecological Self," in *Healing the Wounds* (op.cit.), p. 211.

<sup>39</sup> See Capra, Fritjof. *The Turning Point* p.266.

machine.<sup>40</sup> And, Macy writes, "these wholes = be they cells, bodies, ecosystems, and even the planet itself, - are not just a heap of disjunct parts, but dynamic, intricately organized and balanced systems, interrelated and interdependent in every movement, function, every exchange of energy."<sup>41</sup> The principles guiding these patterns shape general systems and quantum physics theory.

Contemporary physics is struggling to free itself from ideas of identity and the "conceptual couple" of cause-effect. For physicists and general systems theorists observer has been replaced with participant. Thich Nhat Hahn explains, "For there to be an observer, there must be a strict boundary between subject and object, but with a "participant, the distinction between subject and object blurs and even disappears, and *direct experience is possible*."<sup>42</sup> Process becomes more important than substance, wholes more evident than parts. One root of violence is believed by systems theorists to be this division between the observer and observed. Contradiction and hypocrisy become apparent with the belief that one can live a life of nonviolence while another is violent. What causes this division of thought and action then is extremely important.

Geoffrey Chew, a physicist renowned for his bootstrap theory, which suggests that "every particle is made up of all the others," recognized this by observing that no-one atomic particle such as electrons can exist independent of another. As Capra explains;

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p.227.

<sup>41</sup> Macy, (op. cit.), p.25.

<sup>42</sup> Hahn, Thich Nhat. *The Sun My Heart* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1988), pp.85-86.

"According to this bootstrap philosophy, nature cannot be reduced to fundamental entities, like fundamental building blocks of matter, but has to be understood entirely through self-consistency. The bootstrap philosophy not only abandons the idea of fundamental building blocks of matter, but accepts no fundamental entities whatsoever - no fundamental constants, laws, or equations. The universe is seen as a dynamic web of interrelated events. None of the properties of any part of this web is fundamental; they all follow from the properties of the other parts, and the overall consistency of their interrelations determines the structure of the entire web.<sup>43</sup>

As Thich Nhat Hahn explains:

"Some scientists proclaim that the properties of nuclear properties are nothing but creations of their own minds, that in reality particles have no properties independent of the minds of those observing them. This implies that in the world of particles, the mind which perceives reality in fact creates it.<sup>44</sup>

With this in mind, it could be said that the separations we impose, are based on *ideas* of difference but not necessarily on realities.

Poststructuralist theory takes this up as central to any linguistic interpretation.<sup>45</sup> Truth, it has been said, cannot be captured by concepts.<sup>46</sup> Cartesian objectivity and neutrality undermines the interdependent nature of forms. Poststructuralist interpretation and quantum physics theory show how looking free of all speculation reveals reality as an inseparable subject and object. "No totally objective phenomenon can exist, that is to say independent of the observer's mind. And correlatively, all subjective phenomena present an objective fact."<sup>47</sup> The known then, is not something separate from the knower.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Capra. (op. cit.), pp. 92-93.

<sup>44</sup> Hahn. (op. cit.).

<sup>45</sup> As elaborated in *Passage Into Poetics*.

<sup>46</sup> Hahn. (op. cit.), see p. 30.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.34.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.42.

Peaceful self-governance makes this linkage. By refusing to dichotomize self from self and self from other, fixed conceptual categories can be broken as the result of perceiving relationship. The pattern that connects which Bateson referred to, is the power gained with others in multiple and open relationships. Its ability is in the capacity to organize, balance, and interrelate through every exchange of energy. Or as Bateson's daughter, Mary Catherine Bateson later interpreted: the pattern is not a definable science, not something that can be seen as strands, but as I choose to think, something known as undefinable space. Bateson would teach this by asking audiences to look at their hand and see how many fingers they had and reply perhaps we don't have five fingers but four relationships between fingers.<sup>49</sup>

If violence is the result of erecting false dichotomy in an effort to appropriate or reject through domination an other, then nonviolence perhaps, can develop through interconnected interactions of open systems where dichotomy as force for opposing the "other" or difference would no longer hold. Joanna Macy expresses this more clearly:

What had appeared to be separate self-existent entities are now seen as to be so interdependent that their boundaries can only be drawn arbitrarily. What had appeared to be "other" can be equally construed as an extension of the same organism, like a fellow-cell in a larger body.<sup>50</sup>

David Bohm, in *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, stated the societal change we need asks for a complete change in consciousness.<sup>51</sup> The

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<sup>49</sup> Bateson, Mary Catherine & Gregory Bateson, *Angels Fear: Toward an Epistemology of the Sacred* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), p.204.

<sup>50</sup> Macy. (op. cit.), p. 26.

<sup>51</sup> Bohm, David. *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

change in consciousness may come from pushing to our furthest boundaries any presupposition of idea or notion of difference.

Ordinary language is difficult when describing non-conceptual insights which is why quantum physics has begun to have the symbolic nature of poetry. An exploration of no-boundary, of multiplicity, and of interconnectedness requires metaphysical considerations. Hahn writes, "The language of science has already begun to approach the language of Buddhism."<sup>52</sup> Because of quantum physics and general systems theory it is impossible to continue thinking as Descartes, that self and other, mind and object, inner and outer are separate and independent from each other.

Violence and nonviolence need then to be understood as arising from the same despairing binarism. The colonizer and colonized end up in the same abyss. It is the place between the abuser and the wounded we must move to - a place compassionate power can move through.

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<sup>52</sup> Hahn. (op. cit.), p.96.

## II PASSAGE INTO PERSONAL DISARMAMENT

What is war?

War is taking what has not been offered.

What is the opposite of war?

Gifts.

Deena Metzger

We wanted reconciliation, not victory. The situation in the world is still like this. People completely identify with one side, one ideology. To understand fear and suffering of a citizen of Russia, we have to become one with him or her. To do so is dangerous - we will be suspected on both sides.

Reconciliation, to understand both sides, to go to one side, and describe the suffering being endured by the other side and then to go to the other side and describe the suffering being endured by the first side. Doing only that will be a great help for peace.

Thich Nhat Hahn

### 1. CROSSING RATHER THAN DRAWING THE LINE

The stars will come out over and over  
the hyacinths rise like flames  
from the windswept turf

And I ask myself and you, which of our visions will claim us  
which will we claim  
how will we go on living  
how will we touch, what will we know  
what will we say to each other.

A. Rich

In Hazel Henderson's article, "Toward Holistic Relationships," she claims a key shift will entail a new view of life and asks how it can be expanded to care for each other in the new global interdependent multi-

cultural sense of the human family, "as a whole."<sup>1</sup> Love, as a precious resource, has for so long been viewed in scarce rather than abundant terms. In Metzger's book, (*The Woman Who Slept With Men To Take The War Out of Them*) Ada's hope, her act of resistance and freedom was to subvert the patriarchal context of love. When she crossed the road to go to the general, she feared for her life, not only with him, but also, with the others who judged her decision. The voices in the streets, in the backways of her psyche, of all the 'others' asked, "why didn't you plunge the knife into his chest and pull out his beating heart?" She answered, "And to what purpose? Yes. I could have founded an order of priestesses who practise the cutting out of hearts. ... But this time we have to do it with men."<sup>2</sup>

We have already tried separatism - a patriarchal tool that alienates rather than strengthens distinction. Can we not learn from our memories that this does not stop war? Why would we want to go back behind the walls? This time we must go forward or die imprisoned behind our and others' fortresses. Forward into what? The unknown new territory - unmanipulated, non-strategized, de-politicized, unreferenced, and unplanned movement taking lead from what else but love? I refuse to play priestess over priest. Let us return to being women and men in whatever form it becomes us. Let us take this risk with each other, women with women, men with men and women with men and all, always, with the children near us. This is the return I want.

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<sup>1</sup> Henderson, Hazel. "Toward Holistic Relationships," (*Futures* February, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> Metzger, Deena. *The Woman Who Slept With Men To Take the War Out of Them And Tree* (Berkeley, CA: Wingbow Press, 1978, [Two Works in One Volume]), p.91.

Let's take direction from the gardeners in our lives. Peace-bringers in the forms of hyacinth, lily, sunny marigold, cosmos, daisies, the sweetest roses, the most fragile irises and fall crocuses, each signifying renewal. How amazing and how inspiring to read of nazi-war hostages planting little seeds in dust - creating a life-serving act by planting a single nasturium seed. Tiny roots so full of hope.

Even Christianity acknowledges that there existed a garden in which woman and man co-existed with each other and nature harmoniously at a time before its own god would decree women subservient and separate. The apple and the snake are universal signs of language - of split consciousness (wisdom and woe): "double-tongued", "the highest apple": two metaphors endless in "écriture féminine."<sup>3</sup> Chinese Tao te Ching describes a time when the yin as feminine principle was not yet ruled by the male principle yang.

We are all at a cross-roads of structural collapse - today, the Persian Gulf War heads toward Pentagon planned ground invasion "Moon Strike." Moonstruck not for love but death. We have become cross-eyed in our cross-purposes, double-crossings, cross-currents, our "crosses to bear," in being cross, and being in the cross-fire. It's time now to cross-stitch the isolated threads back into the web and cross-over the lines before any more are drawn. But it is more than crossing over. It is becoming disarmed by cross-examining and cross-

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<sup>3</sup> French feminist term meaning feminine writing - one that always looks for a 'third' way. Or, as Daphne Marlett defines, "mother-tongue, - a language from which other languages originate - writing womanly (from the body), being capable of generosity, of spending, no need for appropriation or opposition." (see, Lola Lemire Tostevin, "Breaking the hold on the story: the feminine economy of language," in *Amazing Space*, Neuman & Kamboureli, eds., Alberta: Longspoon Press, 1986), p. 390.

referencing our disconnections. For, as Robin Morgan declared in *The Demon Lover: On the Sexuality of Terrorism*, "If I had to name one genius of patriarchy, it would be the compartmentalization, the capacity for institutionalizing disconnection."<sup>4</sup> It is a life normalized by terrorism that the hero has not solved:

Had he done so, he would have made himself unnecessary. The hero wears, as Campbell puts it, a thousand faces. But he has more or less a single profile... He is usually fatherless, the father slain or a mysterious god... recognizing only the redeeming ecstasy of a tragic death, the hero already lives as a dead man.<sup>5</sup>

He kills his own brothers and sisters - a democracy of fear and violence, all our relations a battleground. Can we deconstruct the enemy lines of hero ethics and cross-weave a "herethique de l'amour"<sup>6</sup> - a heresy of ethics that is moved by love? It is an effort of studying links rather than applying rank. A place, Morgan writes, woman "refuses to sentimentalize patterns - defying patterns... she is exhilarated by the model that isn't a model, the cheerful disorderly order, the unchaotic chaos."<sup>7</sup> Unpredictable and sometimes mysterious because "the sub-patriarchal reality in which women live is a third politics altogether. That is the reality now starting to manifest in the 'world of appearances.'"<sup>8</sup> As Aritha Van Herk demonstrates in her writing, it is a crossing over the social moral line by refusing the division: "Laying the Body on the Line."<sup>9</sup> Or as Joanna Macy related:

<sup>4</sup> Morgan, Robin. *The Sexuality of Terrorism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), p.50.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.61.

<sup>6</sup> see Kristeva, "Stabat Mater" in *Tales of Love*, Leon S. Roudiez, trans., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

<sup>7</sup> Morgan, Robin, (op. cit.), p.345.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.328.

<sup>9</sup> Herk, Aritha Van. "Laying the Body on the Line: A Feminist Makes a Pass, or Figurations in a Feminist's Erotics" *Border Crossings*, (1990), pp. 86-88.

"How could you put your life on the line like that? someone asked Molly Rush, the Pittsburgh grandmother jailed for civil disobedience at a nuclear weapons plant. 'Our lives are already on the line,' she said. 'My choice was only to set some terms on that.'<sup>10</sup>

Here, deconstruction takes on a personal purpose.

## 2. FEMINIST PROCESS

I came to explore the wreck.  
The words are purposes.  
The words are maps.  
I came to see the damage that was done  
and the treasures that prevail.  
I stroke the beam of my lamp  
slowly along the flank  
of something more permanent  
than fish or weed.

the thing I came for:  
the wreck and not the story of the wreck  
the thing itself and not the myths.

A. Rich

Deep down inside of me there's a war going on.  
One part of me wants to sing about the light.  
And part of me wants to cry, cry, cry.

Gabrielle Roth

During my first years working with abuse survivors, I had to hold my breath in order to hear the stories of torture, of rape, and of gas-lit souls. Each time, I embraced death, my own and theirs; each time I let go of a bit of my life in order to endure their stories of death. And

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<sup>10</sup> Macy, Joanna. *Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia, MA: New Society Publishers, 1983), p. 33.

when we were equal in her death, only then, would we begin to live, relive the motions of taking in and exhaling out. It was always a risk because we did not know if our breaths would escape freely. It's true my lungs suffered greatly but that injury was so little compared to a four year old forced into clitoral, vaginal, anal and sometimes, intestinal opening. These girls-women did not lose only blood but also, the freedom of breathing. I do not know if we will ever breathe again as before we knew about the enemy. That is my goal though. Because, you see, I want to live as much as I want others to live.

It is so wrong to force the opening of anyone - even in the name of healing. In any effort of support it is critical we not pathologize one's silence or worse, criticize the sounds newly emerging. Our rhetoric can be a form of rape - word-rape that steals the necessary "ah," "um," "ah aaaa," "but I think," "I was going to tell you," "I don't know," "I can't speak." How can we know which words are right? Only the words that allow a breath (even it's by chance or coyote trickery) to slip between the lips, a tiny unobstructed breath like the sweetness that comes from a baby's nose - if you hold your finger there (not too close) it feels like the down of a chick. A tiny breath completely within in its own.

In many ways the women we call battered victims and clients taught me about my own dying state (is not suicide a form of warfare - holding one's breath?) They reminded me again and again of the forced entries I have endured and accepted. I cannot escape any of it. No breath escapes until we go as far as possible into the darkness. As deep and far away from the light that exposes the opened and bruised lips and the

"tyrannies swallowed day by day and attempted to make our own."<sup>11</sup>  
 So far, that one day we find ourselves in new territory (a cross-country)  
 where no-one has ever been before. Not the hundred women or men  
 before her or me. And we have to light a match to see. The first thing  
 we see is each other looking. And the first thing we hear is each other  
 breathing. An agreement.

There must be an agreement between the sender and receiver to co-operate. We  
 can not invade each other, enter only with permission. Here we must be most  
 sensitive to the civil liberties of the psyche, and even in matters in love and grave  
 concern, even in matters of life and death, we must not impose upon another in  
 the body, psyche or heart without an invitation. But once accepted, we can  
 begin.<sup>12</sup>

Both practitioners of feminist process, A. Rich and D. Metzger write  
 they don't know the answers like they used to or can attach themselves  
 to one solution, political or spiritual practise. They no longer look for  
 "single causes or origins."<sup>13</sup> We often think ONE BIG TRANSFORMATION  
 can save us all while neglecting to notice small ceremonies that keep us  
 alive and create new love. Going "cross-country" with each other is a  
 journey into gardening gently the truths not with force but with gentle  
 persistence and patience. Deena Metzger surviving many experiences of  
 violence and illness chose to wrestle with life. She had wrestled with  
 death - "the lesser demon;" she felt ready "to take on the greater  
 power." What she found was almost everyone was afraid to live and  
 afraid to love:

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<sup>11</sup> Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider*, (New York: Crossing Press feminist series, 1984), p.41.

<sup>12</sup> Metzger, Deena. "Personal Disarmament: Negotiating the Inner Government," (*ReVISION*, Vol. 12, #4, 1990), p.263.

<sup>13</sup> Rich, Adrienne. *Blood, Bread and Poetry* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986), p.218.

So it goes in at least two directions: at once forward to what I do not know, and backward to recover what we've lost without standing still. ... You see between any two poles is another country of co-existence which is not neutral and that is the one we are going to discover.<sup>14</sup>

For so many this process is about uncovering silence. Not just the silence that comes from quietly and mindfully breathing and listening but the silences we endure to survive - the wrecks we later explore for treasures. The stretching of our bodies over to the soul. A memory like Walt Whitman's:

I have said that the soul is not more than body. And I have said that the body is not more than the soul. And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is.<sup>15</sup>

A recovery of both by naming the space between. Seeing the ways we internalize the oppressor. Describing her own recovery Metzger concludes:

This is a book about silence written by a woman who never thought of herself as silent ... So now, despite contradictory consensus, I have to look for my silences, for the places where the energy is stopped. You see the task, don't you, the dialectical - looking for public causes for disease but looking also, always, for our own complicity. ... We intertwine when necessary, the accident of the net we weave... And we can depend on the other. When it became clear that the energy in each case, of healing, of revolution, of feminism, is energy, the same energy which comes from the heart, the path became clear.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. DISARMING THE ENEMY WITHIN

Yet with nobler reason 'gainst my fury  
Do I take part: the rarer action is  
In virtue than in vengeance.

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<sup>14</sup> Metzger. (op. cit.), p.139.

<sup>15</sup> Whitman, Walt. "Song of Myself," *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959). p.66.

<sup>16</sup> Metzger. (op. cit.), p.215-218.

All torment, trouble, wonder and  
amazement  
Inhabits here! Some heavenly power  
guide us out of here!                      Shakespeare

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,  
There is a field. I'll meet you there.

When the soul lie down in that grass  
The world is too full to talk about it.  
Ideas, language, even the phrase *each other*  
doesn't make sense.                      Rumi

Please bring strange things  
Please come bringing new things.  
Let very old things come into your hands.  
Let what you do not know come into your eyes.

Walk carefully, well-loved one,  
walk mindfully, well-loved one,  
walk fearlessly, well-loved one.  
Return with us, return to us,  
be always coming home.

Ursula LeGuin

Besides being a social activist, Deena Metzger is also a poet. Although I refer to her article on personal disarmament for this section it is the metaphors in her books *The Woman Who Slept With Men To Take The War Out Of Them* and *Tree* that have inspired me the most. Without metaphor I am lost again in the warzone of silent restraint. In most healing processes the most important part of communication takes places at the metaphorical level. A social worker - client relationship works best when there is shared knowledge and that often begins with

a shared metaphor.<sup>17</sup> This kind of shared knowledge can't be quantified or codified. Metzger's metaphors are powerful because she is a guardian of the uncoded body text. She gently breathes fire where the steel is most shielding/least yielding.

For her, politics is a question of morals, of saving life. Like Ariel in Shakespeare's, *The Tempest*, her freedom begins and ends with love. She moves from the body to the body politic. This happens as her body inscribes her actions by taking full political responsibility for her location in the global scheme of things. She demonstrate a willingness to move from the centre to a de-centered and de-constructed self that positions itself in the margins and markings of the body.

In the article, "Personal Disarmament", Metzger writes nonviolence as a practise of examining 'internal' armaments and defenses and ways of 'negotiating the inner government' in order to develop internal and external peacekeeping efforts with our selves and each other. Her examination of inner states of oppressor and oppressed ("shades" and "sun") brings me to the question I posited in the introduction: How do we approach the continuing and increasing occurrence of violence in ways that do not further division, hatred and alienation?

Central to this question is the relationship between the 'sacred,' the 'other,' and 'nonviolence.' This relationship involves ways of breaking religious and political 'camps' to explore coalitions that unify through a politic of compassion. For Metzger, the process of exploring this relationship in her article began with the statement,

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<sup>17</sup> Capra, Fritjof. *Uncommon Wisdom*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), p.289.

I have come to understand that an individual is also a country, that one contains a multiple of selves who are governed as nations are governed, and the problems and issues that afflict nations also afflict individuals. For most of my life, I have been completely unconscious of the real mode of government and the status of the beings within my territory.<sup>18</sup>

It was a time, as it has been and will be for most of us, when, "There was no choice; my country - that is, my life - was at stake."<sup>19</sup> This is often when (change through crisis) we are moved to reconsider the organization of our life. Faced with death and our pain we are also faced with life and the promise it has offered us. This is a passage - an initiation much denied in Euro-Western civilization. What resists this passage into life and death?

Crossing this passage is different for all of us but for each of us it is in the "no-man's land between body and mind, that the unhealed is defined".<sup>20</sup> Levine tells us it is where healing becomes,

...a process of opening our hearts to the holdings of the past while maintaining a keen awareness of the heart. It is a coming home, a return to the living moment. But because there is so much more to us than just mind/body, because our original nature is without boundary, its edgelessness cannot be described. It can only be participated in.<sup>21</sup>

Metzger's passage into the unknown included this truth:

While nations suffer the delusions that they can destroy one segment of their populations and remain intact or thrive, a nation-state such as I was, like a physical body, cannot hack off one limb or cut out one vital organ, and remain intact. I had managed to suppress some selves up to this time, but suspected,... that extermination of the opposition meant death.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Metzger. (op. cit.), p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Levine, Stephen. *Healing into Life and Death* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), p.52.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p.48.

<sup>22</sup> Metzger, (op. cit.), p.3.

The selves she explored, as Levine describes in *Healing into Life and Death*, by leaving behind the usual hatred, rejection and numbness she typically brought to the unknown and dispicable parts of herself. "One cannot overcome the enemy", the I Ching states, "until one has rid oneself of that which they find dispicable in the enemy." However, instead of bringing self-loathing and "drowsy blindness" to these aspects of herself, she tries instead a new way - a way which brings tenderness to the far edges of her horror. She entered her pain not with the old hardness of her defenses but with the new softness of merciful exploration and each time her explorations gave rise to feelings of panic and helplessness she attempted to attend to these reactions until she could continue her journey.

This asks for a 'lightness' of heart. "A tremendous challenge" as Joanna Macy is often saying. But how else and what else is left to us? God knows we have carried the physical and metaphysical burden of a heavy heart. Bringing lightness to the terrorism that existed in both aspects of Metzger, the oppressed and the oppressor, was no easy "inner coup" in the making. More than anything Metzger was confronted in the internal disarming of her "minority supremacist govenment" with the censorship so deeply at work. The old government was very much active. But within the desperation of a censoring "country" something new, she wrote, was occuring:

There was someone in me watching it, some interim government on peacekeeping force that managed to hold another vision and to continue the careful process of change. Somehow, against inner public opinion, I made a decision to forego violent revolution or a new military coup and *was not drawn into either alternative...*<sup>23</sup>

(italics mine)

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.4.

This choice of Metzger came about through compassionate consideration of a more "natural affiliation" with the enemy; one that arose from her recognition of the interdependent nature of their lives. What she uncovered was that the "brutality and ethnocentricity" of her tyrants came from "enormous trauma, grief and pain" hidden in their own histories.

Black Elk, the great Sioux shaman and priest spoke of this passage into disarming as "walking in a sacred manner."<sup>24</sup> The sacredness comes from *acknowledging* not forcing change. The sacredness comes from meeting what is there not with the intention of getting 'rid of the enemy' but seeing him or her as a relation and deserving of a merciful meeting. And it is sacred when we do this with utmost respect to ourselves and to others. I am not talking about martyred surrender but instead, of integrative intelligence - a balanced heart - "a mind that has sunk deeply into the heart."<sup>25</sup> By participating wholeheartedly in our paradoxes, perhaps we will sense the "universality of our predicament."<sup>26</sup> Here "dreaming the dark"<sup>27</sup> of our inner and outer territory and the monsters inhabiting therein into liberation happens with mindful hearts and wakeful bodies.

Returning to our bodies' truths is often the first of many courageous acts survivors of incest undergo. These women and men teach that the

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<sup>24</sup> Neihardt, John G. *Black Elk Speaks* (New York: Washington Press Square, 1972).

<sup>25</sup> Levine. (op. cit.), p.47.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>27</sup> Starhawk describes "dreaming the dark" as a journey through fear and despair into hope and empowerment from within. She writes, "we need to dream the dark as process, and dream the dark as change, to create the dark in a new image ...dream the dark into love." *Dreaming The Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982), pp.xiv-xvi.

bridge between our thoughts and actions is the kind of crossing which embraces the body through belief in one's own sacred, living flame. This passage into light and dark, we know, is one which the whole planet faces. The journey has many long nights. But our bodies have kinship with both dark and light and if we listen closely we find the way is not unknown. The restoration our bodies deserve (like the planet itself) is one in which idea is coupled with action. The movement back to body wisdom is not separate from the larger feminist work of recognizing we are all one people on one planet. Our personal, spiritual and political concerns are interchangeable with larger global concerns - racial, sexual and environmental.

Returning spirit or full breath to our bodies is a political act. It defies disconnection and artificial boundaries by creating an ecology of the heart. It is important as we seek self-governance we remember the body politic taught by early feminists. This politic teaches that any spiritual action that is beneficial to more than self must consider the use of power forms that exist both inside and outside of ourselves. A politic of the body begins with a spiritual foundation that is not based on censorship. We know about this foundation. As women and men we move daily between the mundane and the profound, strength and frailty, fear and faith, longing and belonging, child and adult, labour and release... Our common hearts, like the North American Indian trickster, Coyote, balance juxtapositions constantly as we undo illusionary boundaries, build new ones, continue. Finding our ways to a nonviolent self is a different path for each of us. It is this that gives me most hope for injury of self and others to discontinue. The multiplicity of our lives

can remind us that our transformations and voice can be different each time - that there is no *one* sacred or best way.

#### 4. My Call To Hope

that we take into our lives  
the gentle persistence of gardeners  
that we take into our hearts  
the tenderness of a violet, the optimism of a daisy,  
the grace of a rose, the endurance of a marigold,  
the sweetness of a mimosa and the promise of a cosmos.

and with these gifts  
make an offer to our neighbour  
that he might receive and return  
to his own garden and notice  
the bluebells ringing truer,  
the glads standing taller, and  
the lilacs

reaching out.

### III PASSAGE INTO PEACE

#### **Please Call Me By My True Names**

**I am the child in Uganda, all skin and bones,  
my legs as thin as bamboo sticks.  
and I am the arms merchant, selling deadly weapons  
to Uganda.**

**I am the twelve-year-old girl, refugee  
on a small boat,  
who throws herself into the ocean after  
being raped by a sea pirate,  
and I am also the pirate, my heart not yet capable  
of seeing and loving.**

**I am a member of the politburo, with  
plenty of power in my hands,  
and I am also the man who has to pay his  
"debt of blood" to my people,  
dying slowly in a forced labor camp.**

**My joy is like spring, so warm it makes  
flowers bloom in all walks of life.  
My pain is like a river of tears, so full it  
fills up all the four oceans.**

**Please call me by my true names,  
so that I can hear all my cries and laughs  
at once,  
so I can see that my joy and pain are but one.**

**Please call me by my true names,  
so that I can wake up,  
and so that the door of my heart can be left open,  
the door of compassion.**

**Thich Nhat Hahn**

# 1. THE BOUNDLESS HEART

**For Self is a sea boundless and measureless...**

**Gibran**

**Learn to look with an equal eye, upon all beings,  
Seeing the one self in all.**

**Srimad Bhagavatam**

**If you can, help others;  
if you cannot do that,  
at least do not harm them.**

**Dalai Lama**

This afternoon, while I work, I listen to Isabelle Allende, an exiled Chilean writer tell her interviewer that in Honduras, children are being sold for their organs, to "banks." I wonder sickened, how many hearts? This is not the way I planned to begin writing this passage, but it is the way it begins me today. Our children and their hearts colonized into commerce. This terrorist trade that resists life. "Perhaps our greatest pain is our lack of acceptance of pain," Levine writes.<sup>1</sup> And this lack prevents other passages into love.

I celebrate many Buddhist poets; indeed, it seems most Buddhist writers are poets. Their poetic, their philosophy, and their politic, for the most part, is a passage into love. Some have challenged me to govern my heart in ways I never dreamed and to learn to look at and forgive what I thought impossible. Stephen Levine is quoted in the journal *Opening the Heart* as saying,

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<sup>1</sup> Levine, Stephen. *Healing into Life and Death*, (New York: Doubleday, 1987). p.51.

It is the tearing open of the heart, that we discover how guarded our lives have become, how small a cage we have traded off for safe ground.<sup>2</sup>

Writing *Passage into Peace* catches me "off-guard." I am left in an open, vulnerable and new place. And I can take cover or simply continue from where I am. I am trying to "learn by heart" what a non-enemy ethic means in my life, as a social worker and as a woman with many children on her mind.

The spaciousness of Buddhist theory is a good place, I believe, to examine non-enemy ethics as a form of nonviolence. "Deep down," the Dalai Lama says,

we must have real affection for each other, a clear realization or recognition of our shared human status. At the same time we must openly accept all ideologies and systems as means of solving humanity's problems. One country, one nation, one ideology, is not enough.<sup>3</sup>

No ideology or word can be a dictatorship if we strive for non-injury. That is his point. In my ideological ways, even now, I am persistent and guilty of sustaining political stances, *no matter what*. It is an ongoing challenge to unearth the foundations of our actions as we speak them. It requires constant examination and moral accountability for theoretical and practical premises *as they occur* in this rapidly changing world. It is a process of asserting and unasserting and asserting again. Or, it is a process of deconstruction much like the one I engage others and myself in therapeutic practise - one in which boundary is created and uncreated all the time - an act of doing and undoing, healing and releasing. How, do I ask, do we do this with awareness and honesty?

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<sup>2</sup> *Opening The Heart* (Oakland, CA: Dharma Enterprises, 1989), pages unnumbered.

<sup>3</sup> *Kindness, Clarity, and Insight: The Fourteenth Dalai Lama*, trans. and ed. Jeffrey Hopkins, (Ithaca, N.Y: Snow Lion Publications, 1984), p.60.

Toni Packer, in *The Work of this Moment* discusses awareness free of context. She writes,

Awareness cannot be taught, and when it is present it has no context. All contexts are created by thought and are therefore corruptible by thought. Awareness simply throws light on what it is, without any separation whatsoever.<sup>4</sup>

In Buddhist thought, as in poststructuralist thought, this awareness comes from boundless questioning of one's own state. "Real questioning has no method, no knowing - just wondering freely, vulnerably, what it is that is actually happening inside and out."<sup>5</sup> It goes to where the language opens - the open space which permits journey, where there is, "The slippage between God and the sacred."<sup>6</sup>

Packer calls for a constant reexamination of forms and attachments. The boundlessness of an open heart requires the dropping of separate identities - a difficult concept and practise especially given the North American feminist concentration and strength around 'woman' identity and accompanying politics. But I agree with Packer that this is the most important challenge to feminism today in terms of our work with difference and the 'other.' It is a willingness to move from the centre to "unsettled and improvised positions."<sup>7</sup> Here, non-enemy becomes non-other. For, it is our deeply rooted sense of a singular "I", of "self", and of "other," that creates the isolation and insufficiency that leads to separation and eventually violence. Even amongst "nonviolent" religions

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<sup>4</sup> Packer, Toni. *The Work Of This Moment* (Boston, MA: Shambhala, 1990), p.29.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.17.

<sup>6</sup> Kamboureli, Smaro. "St. Theresa's Jouissance: Toward a Rhetoric of Reading the Sacred," *Silence, the Word and the Sacred*, eds. H. Coward & E.D. Blodgett (University of Calgary, 1989), p.54.

<sup>7</sup> *The Difference Within: Feminism and Critical Theory*, eds. Meese & Parker (Benjamin North Arm, 1989), p.9.

such as Buddhism this is a problem for these divisions exist everywhere. Can I see, Packer asks, the need to feel my organization, my religion, or ethic as superior to all others and how this need fragments my thoughts and and actions?<sup>8</sup>

Boundlessness comes from a whole stream of self seeing without duality or division. All I can do is question how I contribute to this stream of division and separation. As with Aboriginal Self-Government, the only responsibility taken for peaceful action can be in myself. I cannot do this for someone else. I have tried many times in many abuse service organizations and it has taken me further away from questioning and *staying with the question* of what is the violence and nonviolence within myself and what are the connections each have with others. I have fear at times, facing this directly. My defenses are often mobilized by my very concerns. But is this not where war originates - within ourselves? ("Is this not the *overriding concern?*") Packer insists:

The torture and murder of millions of human beings of different races, religions, nationalities, and political convictions in concentration camps and prisons the world over has not come to an end. Fighting and hurting each other for the sake of idea and identity, as well as power and supremacy, is an indiscriminate human disease that keeps flaring up in all parts of the globe... It will continue as long as we human beings remain fragmented entities attached to self-image and group identity, which cut up the whole of humankind. It will continue as long as we live in ignorance of what we actually are thinking and doing to ourselves and to others from moment to moment. It will continue as long as remain unaware of the fact that we are the "others." The mind that is Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Christian, or Jewish is the same divided human mind.<sup>9</sup>

There are so many boundary lines, small and large, invisible and visible that prevent us crossing over this abyss. Reaching hands across the walls of our divisions seems only possible if there is an absence of

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<sup>8</sup> Packer, (op. cit.), P.33.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

walls - boundless space to look at difference, examine our fears, and consider carefully what nonviolence means in each reaching. The war today in the Persian Gulf has created new divisions. In our own country peace activists are divided from war participants. "Can these walls break down completely, so that nothing separates us from one another?"<sup>10</sup>

At the Los Angeles World Affair Council on Compassion in World Politics, the Dalai Lama spoke to how heart-to-heart contact is needed in order to understand that all humans are the same in being human. He said, "The problem of the the human heart must first be solved. Then the other human-related problems will be solved naturally."<sup>11</sup> And also, "Similarly, when we encounter human suffering, it is important to respond with compassion rather than to question the politics of those we help."<sup>12</sup> It is not possible to exist any longer in complete isolation. As quantum physics and natural laws show us we are bound by our interdependence. But the boundlessness in our hearts is fenced in by the problems we impose on our own ideological differences. Again, the Dalai Lama states this simply,

Deep down we must have real affection for each other, a clear realization or recognition of our shared status. With the basic understanding of all humans as brothers and sisters, we can appreciate the usefulness of different systems and ideologies that can accomodate different individual and groups which have different dispositions, different tastes. For certain people under certain conditions, a certain ideology or cultural heritage is more useful. This is the individual's business *on the basis of deep understanding of all other persons as brothers and sisters.*<sup>13</sup> *italics mine*

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.51

<sup>11</sup> *Kindness, Clarity, and Insight* (op. cit.), p.63.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

So simple and yet we bind any loving with the armour of our ideology. How to unbound the lack in our hearts that exists as a result of such invested and isolated identity?

## 2. THE BOUNDING HEART

**Love doesn't just sit there, like a stone:  
it has to be made, like bread,  
remade all the time, made new.**  
Ursula Le Guin

**While you here do snoring lie,  
Open-eyed conspiracy,  
His time doth take  
Is of life you keep a care,  
Shake off slumber, and beware:  
Awake, Awake!**  
Shakespeare

**Fling the emptiness out of your arms  
into the spaces we breathe; perhaps the birds  
will feel the expanded air with more passionate flying.**  
Rilke

Reaction to peril often comes in the form of disbelief, denial and double life.<sup>14</sup> Repression makes us violent and/or passive. Passivity makes us sleepy and not notice Shakespeare's "open-eyed conspiracy" - that is, love. Bounding into love out of our lack, requires energy and mindfulness. It requires us to be awake. Violence deadens our senses. Talk to any survivor of any form of violence and s/he will tell you this,

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<sup>14</sup> Macy, Joanna. *Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age*, (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publisher, 1983), see chapter one, "Planetary Perils and Psychological Responses.

at some time. We, "the walking wounded," are often like sleepwalkers silently or clumsily moving through a bad movie. "Awake, awake," Shakespeare's beloved Ariel cries out to us. But we are deafened by the bombs we drop on each other. A bounding heart requires keen and open eyes, ears and hearts. It requires we begin with ourselves, the practise of attentive non-injury, by bounding back into our bodies with intention to listen.

It is time to reverse/rebound the mechanical clock of the mind until it winds back to its original mother-sound - the heartbeat that puts us to sleep and wakes us again. Perhaps, we can revalue difference again by beginning with listening quietly to the precious and different sounds of our own breathing. Juan Mascaro writes, "The spiritual path is a watching, an enquiring and a returning."<sup>15</sup> The earliest tracing of the word spirit derives from the word breath - "*breath* of the body (closer than breathing), *breath* of life, then later the *wind* of the cosmos."<sup>16</sup> The bounding heart is one that returns with difference to the life force of his or herself *and* to the life force of others. But, there are so many differences we do not hear, and "there are those we do not have the courage to see."<sup>17</sup> How to make new these love-lacking hearts of ours so we do have the courage to hear and see, *each time*, the difference? How do we deconstruct the walls of violence that cause our love to jump in futile leaps in our effort for a way over? G. Spivak tells us,

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<sup>15</sup> Mascaro, Juan. trans. *The Dhammapada*, (New York, 1973), p.32.

<sup>16</sup> Morton, Nelle. *The Journey is Home*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), p.89. ("The root form in Hebrew is *rauch*, of feminine gender. However, *spirit* appears to be far older than the Hebrew language. Breath (spirit) was seen as provided by the mother at birth.")

<sup>17</sup> Meese & Parker. eds., *The Difference Within: Feminism and Critical Theory*, (op. cit.), p.2.

Deconstruction is not an exposure of error. Deconstruction notices how we produce truths. ... that the only way you can deconstruct is to love the thing you are criticising. You cannot not present your discourse through the structure you are critiquing. ... It is only a friend that you love in this way. This is the "love," knowing from the inside, that you give to an enemy your respect, so that this clear-cut distinction between friend and enemy begins to shift and blur. You must learn to know your enemy so well that you borrow the very structure of his discourse. That is, in fact, our relationship to patriarchy. We must deconstruct it because we "love" it in that broader sense; without it we are not in fact able to utter. Deconstruction teaches you that you must acknowledge that the only way you can criticize is by loving your enemy. This is also why deconstruction cannot by itself be a political question.<sup>18</sup>

Again, the bounding heart finding a way through need in the process of pausing again and again to question our own collaborative attitudinizing, our own distinguishing ourselves as better, and our own ways of locating our 'truths.' Like Spivak, incest survivors teach that we need to learn to love our truths, even in the forms of enemies, in order to speak them and see them for what they are. Do we collaborate with the enemy inside or out by feigning our lack (or our strength) and not seeing 'the problem' for what it is - loveless and without body beating bounding heart? Our own heartbeat is the sign we are all given to hear the 'truth' we need. Holding one's breath - stilling our hearts in fear so even the trace of our own heartbeat is inaudible is the first stillness in our body we must bring sound into. The pure joy of breathing in order to think and act and awake is a sign we are becoming alive in our efforts. From the *Dhammapada*

O let us live in joy, in love amongst those who hate!  
Among men who hate, let us live in love.

O let us live in joy, in health amongst those who are ill!  
Among men who are ill, let us live in health.

O let us live in joy, in peace amongst those who struggle!  
Among men who struggle, let us live in peace.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 214.

<sup>19</sup> *The Dhammapada* (op.cit.), p.64.

How many years have you held your breath under the conditions of threatening and oppressive reality?

Breathing more fully each time, my heart takes freer leaps that extend into a different kind of breathing - wider, deeper and gradually, with an awareness of others breathing. A different hearing. That is the difference of a bounding heart - "that we purposely chose to hear the other."<sup>20</sup> Our boundaries enlarge and the anesthetic numbing our hearts into protective closures dissolves. Boundaries dissolve even as we think the dissolution and the traces of our bodies' desires begin again to assert in their remakings. "This decision to read the trace as the sign of an absent presence is what deconstruction is."<sup>21</sup>

### 3. INTERBEING

*When the heart is right  
"For" and "against" are forgotten.  
Thomas Merton*

### AHIMSA

Ahimsa is derived from the Sanskrit meaning non-harming. It is one of five principles in Patanjali's 2,000 year-old Yoga Sutra and is generally defined as "non-injury" or "non-killing." In a positive Western

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<sup>20</sup> The Difference Within (op. cit.,) p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.212

context it means "dynamic harmlessness or dynamic compassion."<sup>22</sup>

Nonviolence and ahimsa are not the same thing though they are often used as equivalents. Nathaniel Altman makes an important distinction:

Ahimsa implies the active expression of dynamic compassion, while the accepted meaning of "nonviolence" denotes merely a passive state of refraining from violence.<sup>23</sup>

The teachings of ahimsa represent the essence of reverence for life to be applied in every facet of daily existence, and represents a creative involvement in life and its movement. Far from advocating the adoption of an escapist lifestyle, the true understanding of dynamic compassion encourages us to joyously accept personal responsibility to respect life and further it as much as possible. Ahimsa stresses positive action...Ahimsa can be called the dynamic expression of compassion and truth in some of the most difficult and dangerous situations.<sup>24</sup>

As does the North American Aboriginal and feminist ethics already discussed in Passage II and later the French feminist ethics explored in Passage V, ahimsa views self-confrontation with much importance..

Ahimsa can be expressed in many forms but all include the central force of *satyagraha* (sanskrit) translated into English means "soul force"<sup>25</sup> or truth realized through boundless (and bounding) compassion (*mahakaruna*).

In a discussion of Adrienne Rich's poetic interpretations of compassion, Matthew Fox defines her vision of compassion as, "learning that we are not unique."<sup>26</sup> Fox and Rich understand compassion as a mystery - "something not definitively named or controlled."

Compassion, Fox goes on to say, "is not pity," ...but, "a genuine love of all

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<sup>22</sup> Altman, Nathaniel. *Ahimsa* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1980), p.5.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.5

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp.6-7.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Fox, Matthew. *A Spirituality Named Compassion* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990 edition), p.ix.

our relations, a love of our shared interdependence."<sup>27</sup> Fox, a Creation theologian aligns with feminist poet, Rich. And both, are aligned with Buddhist action of "retrieving compassion from its lonely exile."<sup>28</sup>

Can compassion be understood in its "absent presence" as something needing to be retrieved from exile? It largely depends, don't you think, on whether we choose to permit relationship (with all our relations) based on caring or control. But what does this mean in the context of living daily with violence?

In Deena Metzger's book, *The Woman Who Slept With Men To Take The War Out Of Them*, the women of the village stand outside the town holding stones. Although Ada fears she may die for crossing over to the enemy, the stones are not used for killing. The women, in this story, choose instead to use them for rebuilding the road from her house to the community. They reach out, through the difference, to the other, the one that *voluntary* has gone into the enemy camp. The external women in Ada's life are also symbols for Metzger's internal censors. And it is the censors, both inside and out, that control the way we continue to politicize our sacred actions of caring.

Patricia Monaghan, in the *The Book of Goddesses and Heroines*, suggests that, "only the great pain of disconnection from the cycle of creation could have caused such radical departure in men."<sup>29</sup> The omission from the process of birth and child-rearing disconnected an essential relationship to the future. This, Metzger says in reference to Monaghan, has created madness and despair. And, "similarly when

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.ix-x.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., see Preface.

<sup>29</sup> see Metzger, Deena. "Invoking the Grove," *Healing the Wounds*, ed. Judith Plant, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1989), p.120.

women were cut out of creating the world, that is out of creativity," expression of the same 'illness' manifested, "albeit in different forms."<sup>30</sup> This is a gap, they both believe, that must be bridged through renewed partnership in an *engaged* ethic of *caring*.

The Chipko or "tree-hugging movement" demonstrates such an ethic of caring based on ahimsa - one that uses nonviolent means and non-exclusive action. It invites participation without rigid rule of gender or politic. Chipko is an Indian word for "embrace." Women and children literally hug trees to protect them from destruction. Their actions are a form of *satyagraha*, a nonviolent resistance to the timber industry. Vandana Shiva tells us,

It's a movement embracing life and protecting life, heavily dependent on women and women's vision, because its women alone in the rural area who continue to work with life and to protect life. ...The movement began formally in the 1970's, when Himalayan women sought to protect their area's fragile ecosystem from development by the timber industry. To the women of the Garwhal region of India, saving the trees is a matter of survival. The trees provide them with fuel, fodder, and fertilizer for crops, and stable slopes free from flood and landslides.<sup>31</sup>

Today, many of these women have been arrested while others have joined men in a 5,000 kilometre civil march to bring the dynamic satyagraha heart of the Chipko message to many. What is evident in this movement is the active expression of cherishing that which gives life.

The presence of joy in our lives is often the result of such caring. The women of the Chipko movement often talk about receiving strength from the empowering power, "of giving to the other, including to nature, to woman, to the child, to the aged, ... there's a continuum. The women

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<sup>30</sup> Abid.

<sup>31</sup> Shiva, Vandana. "Indian Women and The Chipko Movement," *Women of Power*, #9, Spring, 1988) pp. 26-27.

friends in the villages introduce their cattle in the same way they introduce their family and friends."<sup>32</sup> The women and men of the Chipko movement see themselves as protectors of life as part of the larger Indian world-view, "a world-view about how the cosmos is constituted, about the nature-person relationship."<sup>33</sup>

India has amazing, powerful categories of thinking, where the cosmos is defined by the very same principles by which nature is defined in the microcosm, by which the body is defined, and by which genders are defined. It's all based on the twin principles, the male and female principles called *prakriti* and *purusha*.<sup>34</sup>

Here, Shiva tells us, the macro and micro are inseparable. Joy, through ahimsa is found in celebrating the infinite and feminine creative capacity of the duality of these principles (*Shakti*). Duality is embraced not resisted. In this way, joy and compassion, Buddhists believe, are inseparable. In Buddhist tradition this is known as "*mudithā*" or "joy in the joy of others." It is, Macy says, the twin to compassion - as integral to our process of empowerment as our capacity to grieve or suffer with others:

Joy in the joy of others is a quality we tend to overlook. It is the flip side of compassion, and to the extent that you can experience the suffering as your own, you can also experience the joy and power and gifts of another as your own.<sup>35</sup>

A boundless heart needs both - *mahakaruna* and *muditha*. They are manifest in our lives through our capacity for recognizing and acting upon our capacity for interexistence or *pratitya samutpada*<sup>36</sup> - the core teaching of the Buddha on the nature of causality.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.26.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> *Opening the Heart* (Dharma Enterprises, 1989). pages unnumbered.

<sup>36</sup> Sanskrit spelling, in Pali, this doctrine is written as *Paticca samuppada*.

## TIEP HIEN

Thich Nhat Hahn, now 64 years of age, has spent a lifetime teaching how the experience of interconnection with all life, "can sustain our social change work far better than righteous partisanship."<sup>37</sup> During the 1960's he founded the Youth for Social Services and an underground network of Buddhist social workers in his homeland Vietnam in order to assist homeless, hungry and injured villagers on both sides of the war. One village was bombed and rebuilt four times. Out of these efforts grew a nonmonastic order called *Tiep Hien*. The teachings, as they have come to be known in the west, are called *Interbeing* and are represented within fourteen precepts. They are helpful for bridging the dichotomy between violence and nonviolence because of the way they uniquely deal with contemporary issues. The Tiep Hien Order is the result of citizen engagement with Buddhist ethics for practical reasons.

Although Hahn speaks often of the desire of many people-many countries for reconciliation, the real issue he writes, is healing. He asks that we look more deeply in our perception of each others reality without viewing each other as enemy no matter the violence we are confronting. This does not come from a superficial understanding of nonviolence as a technique of action, but rather, he continues, from a source of strength. Hahn writes, "Nonviolence is a direction, not a separating line. It has no enemies."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> see Macy, *Healing the Wounds* p.208.

<sup>38</sup> *In the Footsteps of Ghandi*, ed. Catherine Ingram, (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1990).

Tiep Hien embodies this strength. Tiep Hien teaches there are not those who are violent and those who are not. Instead, every person is viewed as participating, to some degree in violence and nonviolence. Tiep Hien approaches social work for nonviolence on the basis of no separation between 'enemy' and 'non-enemy.' Explaining the meanings of Tiep and Hien, Hahn writes, "Tiep means *to be in touch with* and *to continue*. Hien means *to realize* and to *make it here and now*."<sup>39</sup> Four principles are listed as the foundation of Tiep Hien which emphasize the meanings in the previous statement. These are, non-attachment to views, direct practise-realization, appropriateness, and skillful means. From my reading I summarize these four principles as simply:

- 1) non-attachment to views: getting rid of attachment to one truth permits change and deeper knowing or different knowing.
- 2) direct practise-realization: understanding comes from participation only. "Our own life is the instrument by which we experiment with truth."<sup>40</sup>
- 3) appropriateness: a teaching must be in accord to the needs of the people and realities of their society. Different doors need to open all the time to do so. "In order for Buddhist teaching to bring about understanding and compassion, it must be appropriate. ...It must truly help people."<sup>41</sup>
- 4) skillful means: are images and methods that bring about the power of creativity and the power to reconcile.

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<sup>39</sup> Hahn, Thich Nhat. *Interbeing*, (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1987), p.11.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p.17.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

The fourteen precepts (listed in appendix end of this Passage) of Tiep Hien were developed to realize the above principles. All precepts are viewed as guides and not as a set of rules. The first seven deal with the mind, the following two with speech and the final five with the body. However, Hahn views this division as arbitrary because through the fourteen precepts, "the mind is always present like a lamp of consciousness."<sup>42</sup>

In the introduction to *Interbeing*, Fred Eppsteiner remarks how, "existing at a time when the land and people of Vietnam were being destroyed, "in the name of supposedly irreconcilable isms," the Tiep Hien Order was acutely aware of the need for all people to realize the commonality of their experience and to renounce all views that posited the One Truth or One Way."<sup>43</sup> Therefore, fanaticism and religious and political self-righteousness are directly rejected by the first three precepts.

The fourth precept asks that a practise of compassion go to the heart of suffering by direct involvement - social work through engaged compassion. This is realized the fifth and sixth precept teach, through work that is in alignment with our principles and understanding anger through its interdependent nature: "If I had been born in the social

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.20.

<sup>43</sup> Ken Wilbur addresses this through reference to the Buddhist doctrine of *sunyata* - where the Way or Spirit is seen as, "neither One or Many, neither infinite nor finite, neither whole nor part-for all of those are supposed *qualifications* of Spirit, ...*sunyata* ("nonqualifiability"), the negation of all negations. ...for all of those are dualistic concepts, possessing meaning only in contrast to their opposites." *Quantum Questions* (Boston: Shambhala, 1985), p.19.

conditions of a (rapist) and raised like a (rapist), then I would be a (rapist) now.<sup>44</sup>

The seventh precept teaches deeper development of understanding through mindful breathing. The eighth and ninth precepts are models for "Right Speech" and "Right Action," while never "losing track of the need to speak out about social injustice and oppression."<sup>45</sup> The final precepts address manipulation, killing, non-stealing, profit-making and sexuality. Hahn writes: "We have the habit of opposing wars once they've occurred, but we do not strive enough to prevent them. To prevent war is to build peace. To accomplish this in our daily life, we should combat fanaticism and attachment to views, and work for more social justice. We should also work against the political and economic ambitions of our own country."<sup>46</sup>

This is a limited view of Tiep Hien but I include it as a living example of ahimsa that seeks to act in accord with an all-embracing, non-partisan viewpoint of social change through interdependence of all life. Tiep Hien has been translated as "interbeing," (a term from the Avatamsaka Sutra) because in the sutra, "it is a compound term which means "mutual" and "to be."<sup>47</sup> As a social work practice it has succeeded in helping thousands with food and shelter through the reconciliation of inner and outer peaceful action. It is the mutuality of inner and outer action that I believe necessary for beneficial social change and peaceful personal disarmament to occur.

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<sup>44</sup> Thich Nhat Hahn. *Interbeing*, (Ibid.), p.39. I have inserted rapist for sea-pirate.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.54.

<sup>47</sup> Hahn. *Being Peace*, (Parallax Press, 1987), p.87.

#### 4. Appendix - Tiep Hien Precepts

**First:** Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. All systems of thought are guiding means; they are not absolute truth.

**Second:** Do not think that the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth. Avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. Learn and practice non-attachment from views in order to be open to receive others' viewpoints. Truth is found in life and not merely in conceptual knowledge. Be ready to learn throughout your entire life and to observe reality in yourself and in the world at all times.

**Third:** Do not force others, including children, by any means whatsoever, to adopt your views, whether by authority, threat, money, propaganda, or even education. However, through compassionate dialogue, help others renounce fanaticism and narrowness.

**Fourth:** Do not avoid contact with suffering or close your eyes before suffering. Do not lose awareness of the existence of suffering in the life of the world. Find ways to be with those who are suffering by all means, including personal contact and visits, images, sound. By such means, awaken yourself and others to the reality of suffering in the world.

**Fifth:** Do not accumulate wealth while millions are hungry. Do not take as the aim of your life fame, profit, wealth, or sensual pleasure. Live simply and share time, energy and material resources with those who are in need.

**Sixth:** Do not maintain anger or hatred. As soon as anger and hatred arise, practice the meditation on compassion in order to deeply understand the persons who have caused anger and hatred. Learn to look at other beings with the eyes of compassion.

**Seventh:** Do not lose yourself in dispersion and in your surroundings. Learn to practise breathing in order to regain composure of body and mind, to practice mindfulness, and to develop concentration and understanding.

**Eighth:** Do not utter words that can create discord and cause the community to break. Make every effort to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

**Ninth:** Do not say untruthful things for the sake of personal interest or to impress people. Do not utter words that cause division and hatred. Do not spread news that you do not know to be certain. Do not criticize or condemn things that you are not sure of. Always speak truthfully and constructively. Have the courage to speak out about

situations of injustice, even when doing so may threaten your own safety.

Tenth: Do not use the Buddhist community for personal gain or profit, or transform your community into a political party. A religious community should, however, take a clear stand against oppression and injustice, and should strive to change the situation without engaging in partisan conflicts.

Eleventh: Do not live with a vocation that is harmful to humans and nature. Do not invest in companies that deprive others of their chance to life. Select vocation which helps realize your ideal of compassion.

Twelfth: Do not kill. Do not let others kill. Find whatever means to possible to protect life and to prevent war.

Thirteenth: Possess nothing that should belong to others. Respect the property of others but prevent others from enriching themselves from human suffering or the suffering of other beings.

Fourteenth: Do not mistreat your body. Learn to handle it with respect. Do not look on your body as only an instrument. Preserve vital energies (sexual, breath, spirit) for the realization of the Way. Sexual expression should not happen without love and commitment. In sexual relationships be aware of future suffering that may be caused. To preserve the happiness of others, respect the rights and commitments of others. Be fully aware of the responsibility of bringing new lives into the world. Meditate on the world into which you are bringing new beings.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Hahn. *Interbeing* (Ibid.).

## IV PASSAGE INTO POETICS

Woman does not entertain the positive belief that the truth is something *other* than men claim; she recognizes, rather, that there is *not* any fixed truth.

de Beauvoir

### I. BEGINNING

I've just listened to CBC Morningside on which Aritha Van Herk was interviewed. She spoke of many things that are important to me. She said she has a secret longing to be a poet that is sternly repressed. In each of us, I wonder, how is the poet denied? Are my gardens of flowers and weeds the words I am afraid to write and so choose this discursive planting instead? No-one knows what I am uprooting, digging out, overturning; another silent rebellion, another trace of the poet screaming for space. Each plant a poem, each garden a book. Herk said too, she chose to take Tolstoy's novel as her only book on a trip into the arctic wilderness because she felt she could have an argument with him. In the "prehuman arctic," her fingers touch the landscape and at the same time she reads about a woman from a century before us. She supplants boundaries of Anna Karenina's life and her own during her reading. Reading, she tells the interviewer is an active rebellion in the garden, in the eden, what gives us new life, new ideas, the capacity to transgress the law, the divine. "When we open a book, we open the mind." Anna Karenina always reading English novels - breaking Russian mores "while she's waiting for her lover, her child,"

reading in between those times. Her books, like mine, like any woman's, slippage, locating self somewhere new, a sortie Helene Cixous says, departure, excursion, breaking/bursting out.

I have little argument so far, with the writers I am reading for this passage. I am still learning their language. From the start, however, they have given me new and I feel, forceful arguments for how we approach and respond to violence in our life. I spend long hours with Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixous. I do not read them only for external social changing and ethical digressions in my work but also for my inner self, where, in the unconscious hidden garden something new is turning. This time I want those organic words on paper. The only way I know out of binary law is through poetry/love. There is a poem hovering above, under and around this passage; unwritten as yet but there. At least, now I know my own state of agoraphobia has been in not writing this poem.

## 2. ANOTHER BEGINNING

Since reading Cixous and Kristeva I have been caught between immense feelings of explosive and implosive energies. Sometimes, an exhilarating feeling of my own arteries full of renewal. This body awakening into new realms of sight and sound and breath. Other times, a peaceful quiet that stops me still in my tracks with the reminder that I read over and over that it is the remaking of ourselves that offers always and already a chance to bring into the world what is vital and ethical to each of us. That I do not have to kill myself in my own effort

to celebrate language, hence relationship. And if I fail or am overcome with fearful hesitation there is always the opportunity to begin anew from another place. Time is, the I Ching reminds me, no longer a hindrance but the means of making actual what is potential. And there is always potential and the best gift of all from these truly revolutionary poets is that there can always be a persistence.

These acrobats, Kristeva and Cixous, Sollers and others, give me a sense of daring and excitement in my own persistence. I am challenged to be not only kinesthetic with my intentions but also to be doubly watchful for the most untenable and multiple forces that can decentre my rigid wake on this flexible tightrope. I brace myself, I draw out blades to fight these forces, historically, culturally and psychologically forbidden; I hate them with all the passion I can muster. They are constantly throwing me off course - Laugh when I insist I know where I am going. But with my life I love these angelic demons who loosen my grip. I like the way these intruders wrestle my contradictions, until so exhausted I give up and give way.

In the last decade my main focus has been the personal violence so socially sanctioned in all our lives. I have raged with many women in an attempt to be heard, for our words to be recognized for what they are becoming. I have had the privilege of many journeys with women to territory we felt we would never survive. But we did and are still, day by day charting new ethics for our lives. These ethics are finding open voice. At times, so familiar our words are interchangeable with the bones in our bodies. At other times, so unfamiliar, the terror of violence, the other voice, keeps us silent or faltering with apprehension. The Monsters that have tortured, strangled and more than we suspect,

murdered our desires, words, and very lives are everywhere. But they are not separate aliens to be tortured or murdered in return. They are the forces inside and out, grotesque and violent and sometimes, even beautiful; it does not matter, for they are all our own and all in need. There are, Cixous tells us, "whole populations issuing from the unconscious, and in each suddenly animated desert, the springing up of selves one didn't know - our women, our monsters, our jackals, our Arabs, our aliases, our frights."<sup>1</sup>

It is my desire to understand these monsters from a local analysis, the warfarer here in myself and also, from a global perspective, the war-makers around us. This desire pushes me through fear and sorrow in a search for songs that I imagine possible for all monsters to sing. Singing our differences no matter how grotesque or beautiful, into loving embraces of self, of others, of word. My persistence causes leaping actions, albeit clumsy ones, on top those ghosts clutching too soon to death. These ghosts, deathly as they are, are real. And the crisis is, what semioticians and poets believe, a crisis of love.

A lot of the semiotic theory these European French feminists offer on this crisis is ambiguous to me. I can not easily or for long, take hold of it and say here, this is what it is. But that is its beauty. It offers a discursive map endless in sign, direction and meaning that turns around, away, turns back and toward the monsters most hidden from view, from life itself. Revealing the forever concealed, the writers of this map make another possible: one that lifts out from the desert a nonmap that traces

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<sup>1</sup> Helene Cixous. "Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays" in *The Newly Born Woman*, tr. by Betsy Wing (University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1988) p.84.

unprohibitive joy from the intersecting nature of ambivalence and misalliance - a text with round corners enslaving nothing.

I persist in my own undecided directions with love and hate - the knot tightens and loosens it seems, with a will of its own. I am used to having one voice, a stuttering tangle of hesitancy that has tried to gain power through inflexibility. Kristeva and Cixous have challenged me to love my voice enough to investigate deeper analysis, change and risk and in doing so catching sight of the jouissance that graces their work. They have tricked me into believing I can speak from many places and in that speaking find forms of love (and hate) not known before. They have taught me to love the knot in my throat and the other one, in my heart. They have tricked me with their leaps on their own tightropes in believing there are countless ways to subvert the monsters inside and out. Their ethics of subversion and embrace have brought new life to my efforts of peaceful co-existence with the "extra-terrestrials,"<sup>2</sup> as Kristeva so aptly puts, we are becoming. It is my intention, in this passage to express some of this life that they write. None of it is fully realized, but that is the humility of Kristeva and Cixous's teachings: no sooner do we realize - give birth to our creations then the conditions around us change calling for a different relationship. This passage attempts some testimony to this. All gestations connected by threads that grow longer and longer in their infiniteness and inanity. These gestations have been great jesters confusing me along the way with mixed sorrow and laughter. They are the unconscious and conscious threads that I cast out with the imagination they are linking with those

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<sup>2</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, tr. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) see "ExtraTerrestrials Suffering For Want of Love," pp.372-383.

already in love with instinctual economies and perhaps, with the same throw, those Monsters who reach out through lack.

### 3. "THE WALLS DO NOT FALL"

*Men, or women, complex, mobile, open beings.*

*Cixous*

*Help them, then, to speak and write themselves in  
unstable, open, undecidable spaces. Kristeva*

### AGORAPHOBIA

Agoraphobia: agora: gathering place or assembly; what used to be the marketplace in ancient Greece (agorae), phobia: from greek phobos meaning fear and flight akin to greek phebesthai to flee, be frightened. Agoraphobia: abnormal fear *of crossing* or of being in open spaces (Webster's). In *Recovering the Soul* Larry Dossey interprets agoraphobia as a spiritual condition in humans wherein fear of vast expanses include the infiniteness in time and space suggested by the nonlocal mind.

They feel safer when things are closed in, finite, and "local" - and a mind that is confined to the individual brain and body, and a mind that stays put in the here and now. A mind, in other words, that is soulless.<sup>3</sup>

Every system on this planet suffers agoraphobia. Every system, that is, Cartesian in form. It is one of the many diseases that binary law has cancered us with. It grows wherever closed systems offer only

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<sup>3</sup> Larry Dossey. *Recovering the Soul* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989) p.9.

either/or oppositions that defy the other. It is the result of choosing when neither choice is preferable- what feminists across the globe have been telling us for years: that we must form a politic of self and other that is more inclusive, more *multiple*.

French feminists, for the most part, have been politicizing open systems (linguistically and psychoanalytically). Their feminism looks at relationship or the configuration of relationships as subject rather than a specific entity as solution or one point of reference. Initially, feminism as an ideology and practise, was a celebration of deconstructing the past and restructuring the present. It was a process of transversion out of the phallic law of sameness (phallogocentrism)<sup>4</sup> into the territory of dialectical difference. And it still is; if, we remember to bring this practise to our own bodies by a constant overturning and renewing of our own processes.

This is most difficult in a world still possessed by fear of death, of difference, and of desire. We still live in world systems perpetuating agoraphobia and other forms of violence. We still live in systems of colonization: colonization that reaches far back into the unconscious. Opening our conscious actions is not enough. We need also to keep open our unconscious desires. Agoraphobia, for the most part is colonization of the unconscious expressed through a fear of the unknowable. It is the place where, as the poet H.D. wrote, "The Walls Do Not Fall."<sup>5</sup> It is a

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<sup>4</sup> Cixous' reduction of the Derridan concepts, logocentrism and phallogocentrism, see Introduction for definitions.

<sup>5</sup> From *Trilogy* (New Directions Books, 1973): In Norman Holmes Pearson's forward, H.D. describes an aspect of this poem as, "outer violence touching the deepest hidden subconscious terrors," a poem Pearson describes as spiritual etymology: "H.D. was trying to connect the experience of World War Two with her history and with history in general" (p.vi).

paralysis that petrifies the soul (wood turned to rock), and reinforces non-action and aphasia. It is a repressed hatred of what we don't know, hence, an unmoveable position on love/hate that can constitute rape and a bludgeoning of the unconscious. Agoraphobia, as a state of binarism (I must stay here or go there) is denotative thought that is part of the larger ontology of dichotomization. The Cartesian practise of reductionism and repression of everything to the lowest common denominator closes space (wherein the dirty secret lies). As we hide out in states of agoraphobia we take seeming safety in the lie that change doesn't matter. It has become a deathly social disease of the heart-soul, the theft of which denies us of our very capacity to be moved. Our alienation from difference and our estrangement from a transforming fluid humanness into a reified and historically bound identity is a process of subjugation to the Father Law, currently called patriarchy. As a dominating factor in all our lives, patriarchy has reduced fear into the forbidden.

The monolithic and dualistic thinking that results is death to desire for *open* positioning of mind and body. It is what Helene Cixous calls, one-sexed: fixed in the locality of its own self.<sup>6</sup> Prevailing ethics fit into this reification through law of social contract, models focused on rights of individuals, oppositional relationships set up by *drawing the line* instead of *crossing over*. Ethical models that do little for addressing the fixed hierarchical dualism of subjugation and domination. The dominant always wins in battles of right and wrong, fighting life with death. This is the Western model of ethics in which right and wrong behavior is

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<sup>6</sup> Cixous. "Sorties," (op. cit.).

*prescribed* It is a police state, a war zone of wardens armed against the socially forbidden or the unknown states of the unconscious wanting relationship outside the theocratic self. It is a place of allegiance given to the oligarchy and priests of the time. Agoraphobia is the result of a dictatorship wherein the dictator (and his or her intelligentsia), though knowing nothing of the spiritual values, mores and cultural values of the 'other' nevertheless controls and fears this country. It is a country in which, "the minority does not fear for its lives; it fears for its way of life." and where, in such a police state, "to change this would be worse than death."<sup>7</sup>

Overturning and leaping out of the disabled state of agoraphobia and dictatorship is an act of faith that calls for both inner and outer coups. These coups are outbursts/exits from solitary positions of exiles to transdisciplinary communities of language and sex and difference. It is trans-linguistic as well as being trans- migratory and trans-forming. The French writers I will be discussing do such faith leaping or crossing over into the oppressed and repressed marketplaces of sex and text. As Cixous declares:

We have been frozen in our place between two terrifying myths: between the Medusa and the abyss. It would be enough to make half the world break out laughing, if it were not still going on . For the phallo-logocentric *aufhebung* is there, and it is militant, the reproducer of old schemes ... Let them tremble, those priests; we are going to *show* them our *sex*... isn't the worse thing that, really, woman is not castrated, that all one has to do is not listen to the sirens (because the sirens were men) for history to change its sense, its direction? All you have to do to see the Medusa is look her in the face: and she isn't deadly. She is beautiful and she laughs."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Deena Metzger. "Personal Disarmament: Negotiating with the Inner Government," *ReVision* (Heldref Publications, Spring, 1990, Vol.12, #4) pp.3-9.

<sup>8</sup> Cixous. "Sorties", p.68-69.

## CROSSING OVER THE WALLS

The volatility of agoraphobic spaces in which we are checked into stillness (into anything) is the violence it imposes on self and the other. The assignation of the self, whether self or state ascribed, governs the full responsibility of one's location in the overall global movement of things. Crossing over the walls of agoraphobia is a journey of subverting the dominant 'Signifier' and signifying for ourselves our places in the world by subverting also, our own inner and outer defenses. The trials in this crossing, are of course, the walls themselves. What fortresses these walls build are the structures that we live. Deconstruction of our unconscious and conscious fortresses begins with the confrontation of the signifiers that tyrannize. It is also, *at the same time*, signifying our lives, our words, without the structure of new walls being fixed in position. It is a process whereby we keep the concrete out of the soil. It is finding "a system which allows infinite combinations, without itself imposing or *arresting* meaning"<sup>9</sup> (italics mine). In language, it is what semioticians call *discursive work* (travail discursif). It is the refusal within feminist discourse of monologist rhetoric. As Zepp writes in her analysis of Julia Kristeva's work:

the redefinition of the self, like the redefinition of society sought by the feminists, is closely tied to the redefinition, the restructuring of language.<sup>10</sup>

Through the process of psychoanalysis, Kristeva, herself a psychotherapist, brings the practise of semiology (the study of unconscious sign and meaning in language) to the dialogism and

<sup>9</sup> Evelyn Zepp, "The Criticism of Julia Kristeva: A New Mode of Critical Thought" *Romantic Review*, (January, 1982, Vol. 73, #1) pp.91-92.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.88.

ambivalence inherent in psychoanalysis. Here, she combines the Russian formalist, Bakhtin's views on dialogism with Freud's work on the unconscious. It is what she terms, semioanalysis (*semanalyse*): the discourse she believes essential for "the configuration of the discursive space of the subject in relation to the other and to discourse."<sup>11</sup> It is a science where the *production* of textual meaning is more important than the static entity or final product.

Semiotics can in no way be constructed except by obeying to the end the law which founds it, that is, the disintrication of signifying procedures, and this implies that it incessantly turns back on its own foundations, thinks them and transforms them. More than 'semiology' or 'semiotics', this science is constructed as a critique of meaning, of its elements and its laws - as a *semioanalysis* [*sémanalyse*]." <sup>12</sup>

This process puts on trial the very walls, boundaries that construct closure around subject, society and speech thereby enclosing desire - it is deconstruction of the Signifier by placing language (speech or writing) in an *intertextual* multiple dimension through which Kristeva writes,

"the very notion of status, the word is put into space: it functions in three dimensions (subject-recipient -context as a totality of semic elements *in dialogue* or as a totality [*ensemble*] of ambivalent elements."<sup>13</sup>

For Kristeva, semioanalysis and intertextuality can transgress the agoraphobic walls that prevent one from becoming herself.

For Cixous, another psychotherapist in France revolutionizing the self and other through semiotic practise, this transgression is the development of a feminine voice, the one that finds "ways out" of censored control into "feminine speech" - into a voice authentic to one's

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.90.

<sup>12</sup> Kristeva. *Séméiotiké: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris, Seuil, 1969), p.19 (as cited in Zepp, p. 91).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 145-146.

self - into "feminine writing" (*écriture féminine*) that creates texts out of one's own experience - into the place that has been denied/defied/displaced by patriarchal appropriation of the instinctual.

Transgression then, is the deconstruction of the laws/walls fixed by phallogocentric boundary. These laws are both physical and psychic and are socially categorized into hierarchical systems within which language is the key sign for the symbolization and the rationalization of dominant logic. Hence, Kristeva's emphasis on the unconscious, language, and the 'other' in which the trespassing of agoraphobia becomes possible. It is the place where we declare the laws as they signify. For women, this has meant taking up, "the exorbitant wages of carrying the rational project to the outer borders of the signifying venture of men."<sup>14</sup> But, as Kristeva explains further on in *Desire in Language*, this involves linguistic ethics that open up the other, that which is repressed, feared, confined by law; in short, the poet. Referring to Heidegger's attentiveness to such ethics Kristeva describes poetic language as the "opening up of beings."<sup>15</sup> The speaking subject leaves, she writes, "its imprint on the dialectic between the articulation and its process."<sup>16</sup> As a dialectic, poetic language or poetic positioning inscribes what is most "screened out by ordinary language, i.e., social constraint."<sup>17</sup>

...what is implied is that language, and thus sociability, are defined by boundaries admitting of upheaval, dissolution, and transformation. Situating our discourse near such boundaries might enable us to endow it with a current ethical impact.

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<sup>14</sup> Kristeva. *Desire in Language*, tr. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

In short, the ethics of a linguistic discourse may be gauged in proportion to the poetry that it presupposes.<sup>18</sup>

Social constraint within any stabilized unchanging society can be measured by the exclusion of poetic discourse. "Poetic discourse alone carries on the struggle against such a death."<sup>19</sup> It is the establishment of the infiniteness of rhythm, the place Kristeva refers to as *chora* (a Platonian word meaning "receptable, unnamable, improbable, hybrid, anterior to naming, to the One, to the father, and consequently, maternally connoted..."<sup>20</sup> -in which rhythm/tension (movement) is "as animated as it is regulated."<sup>21</sup> This is the place where the 'other' is in a constant state of becoming; the place, Cixous refers to as the "birth voice" of translinguistic expression, of the origin of song, "the first music of the voice of love,"<sup>22</sup> the Voice that sings "from a time before law."<sup>23</sup> The *chora* Kristeva describes is a choir of pre-linguistic utterance, of rhythm that is part of an ethic of refining over and over the production of meaning by freeing the subject from closure.

Poetic discourse measures rhythm against the meaning of language structure and is thus always eluded by meaning in the present while constantly postponing it to an impossible time-to-come. Consequently, it is assuredly the most appropriate *historical* discourse, if and only if we attribute to this word its new resonance; it is neither flight in the face of a supposed metaphysics of the notion of "history," nor the mechanistic enclosure of this notion within a project oblivious to the violence of the social contract and evolution's being, above all, a refinement of the various forms of dissipating the tension we have been calling poetic language."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 31.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 133.

<sup>21</sup> Dawne McCance. "Kristeva and the Subject of Ethics," *New Feminist Research*, (Dec. 1988, Vol.17, #4) p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> Cixous. "Sorties", p.93.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Kristeva. *Desire in Language*, p.33.

Further in "The Ethics of Linguistics", Kristeva refers to Roman Jakobson's practise of linguistic ethics as understanding, "the resurgence of an "I" coming back to rebuild an ephemeral structure in which the constituting struggle of language and society would be spelled out."<sup>25</sup> But, only "through the dramatic notion of language as a risky practise, allowing the speaking animal to sense the rhythm of the body as well as the upheavals of history."<sup>26</sup> This is Kristeva argues, a signifying process that contemporary linguistic theories and studies of ethics do not, for the most part, take into account. And it is what, crossing over the unconscious and conscious walls of agoraphobia demands. Early in her introduction to *Desire in Language*, Kristeva writes:

Such a theoretical stance could well be termed metaphysical. Still, if contemporary thought is often reluctant to adopt it, one must recognize that such a stance is the *only guarantee of ethics* that of knowledge as well as of all discourses.<sup>27</sup> (italics mine)

Keeping the poet free could well be the recovery of the soul, the cosmic libido, the open marketplace where agoraphobia desists.

#### 4. TRANSGRESSIVE JESTATIONS

*The poetic would be that which has not become law*  
**Kristeva**

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 34.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. ix.

## MISE EN PROCES

Any crisis takes on the socio-historical conditions (open and closed marketplaces) of its time. Poets/poetic discoursers have always been our crisis-workers, incest namers, missing mothers and fathers, and missing selves seeking a non-colonized home. They create for those of us estranged from the forbidden garden of the unnameable, a place that defies censorship, and that like their sister vehicle, analysis, revels in 'slippage'. Poetic language is indeed a powerful vehicle and those unstopped by social lore/more use this vehicle to unscramble the hideous infractions suffered through the assaults, "of deadly calculation," of phallogocentrism - "Father's Law," "of the old story of death."<sup>28</sup> It is the place of slippage agoraphobics resist and that poets in acrobatic insensibility find jouissance. It is where poetic language can "break down and reconstitute the social boundary [contrainte]."<sup>29</sup>

In her paper, "From One Identity to Another," Kristeva describes the "mise en question" that results when transgression of social code through destabilization of identity demonstrates the very crisis of society itself:

...poetic language... is an unsettling process - when not an outright destruction- of the identity of meaning and speaking subject, and consequently of transcendence or, by derivation, of "religious sensibility." On that account, it accompanies crises within social structures and institutions - the moments of their mutation, evolution, revolution, or disarray. For if mutation within language and institutions finds its code through its signifying practice and its questionable subject in process that constitutes poetic language, then that practice and subject are walking a precarious tightrope. Poetic language, the only language that uses up transcendence and theology to sustain itself, poetic language, knowingly the

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<sup>28</sup> Cixous. "Sorties."

<sup>29</sup> Kristeva. *Polylogue*, 1977, p. 519 (as cited in Zepp, p.87).

enemy of religion, by its very economy borders on psychosis (as for its subject) and totalitarianism and fascism (as for the institutions it implies or evokes).<sup>30</sup>

Arguing in favor of *analytical discourses* taking up, or more true to Kristeva, overthrowing the crises of present day (as they effect meaning, subject and social structure) she advocates a theory and practise that accounts for such crisis. She states conclusively,

I shall therefore ... argue in favor of an analytical theory of signifying systems and practices that would search within the signifying phenomenon for the *crisis* or the *unsettling process* of meaning and subject rather than for the coherence or identity of either *one* or a *multiplicity* of structures.<sup>31</sup>

It took me several readings of this text to get beyond my initial fear of its implications. In an attempt to understand the unsettling politics inherent in poetic subversions I first had to look beyond my definitions of 'crisis' and find that my own struggle with this is not far from what Kristeva describes. In fact, in all my intentions to look for and uncover in that search a crossing over this tightrope named violence I have arrived again and again at the same place: it is the sublimation of the maternal semiotic activity that prevents the necessary language/identity needed to precisely and discordantly break up the "powers of horror."<sup>32</sup> Kristeva writes:

...it is within the economy of signification itself that the questionable subject-in-process appropriates to itself this archaic, instinctual, and maternal territory; thus it simultaneously reinvents the word from becoming mere sign and the mother from becoming an object like any other - forbidden. This passage into and through the forbidden, which constitutes the sign and its correlative to the prohibition of incest, is often explicit as such..<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Kristeva. *Desire in Language*, p. 125.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Kristeva. 1980.

<sup>33</sup> Kristeva. *Desire in Language*, p.136.

Poetic discourse/politics in other words, prevents word and woman from becoming another forbidden object to be denied, hence, raped. It is the insurance that the heterogeneous meaning of the unconscious body/text of the subject-in-process remains plural and open. ("what a choral group the whole body")<sup>34</sup> or, as Kristeva explains:

A body, a text that bounces back to me the echoes of a territory that I have lost but that I am seeking in the blackness of my dreams... Territory of the mother. What I am saying is that if this heterogenous body, this risky text provide meaning, identity, and jouissance, they do so in a completely different way than a "Name-of-the-Father."<sup>35</sup>\*

But, as Kristeva does, it is necessary to go further with this.

Kristeva's remarks on the questionable subject-in-process of poetic language are important here as elsewhere. Poetic discourse prevents the abjection of word or woman from becoming the social horror it is only if it recognized for the semiotic activity it is: an instinctual economy of primary processes as they affect language and practise (a maternal gesture - or as Cixous calls, the birth voice or "feminine voice" that is finding ways out of censored control/law back to a feminine body, that is, one that is abundant and bounding in possibility of self); a

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<sup>34</sup> Philippe Sollers. *H* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), p.94. see Kristeva, *D.I.L.* p. 179.

<sup>35</sup> Kristeva. *Desire in Language*, p.163. \*This text reminded me of a similar place described by Maxine Hong Kingston in *Female Warrior* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975) p.192: "My silence was thickest - total - during the three years that I covered my school paintings with black paint. I painted layers of black over houses and flowers and suns, and when I drew on the blackboard, I put a layer of chalk on top. I was making a stage curtain, and it was the moment before the curtain parted or rose. The teachers called my parents to school, and I saw they had been saving my pictures, curling and cracking, all alike and black. The teachers pointed to the pictures and looked serious, talked seriously too, but my parents did not understand English. ("The parents and teachers of criminals were executed," said my father.) My parents took the pictures home. I spread them out (so black and full of possibilities) and pretended the curtains were swinging open, flying up, one after another, sunlight underneath, mighty operas.

"reinstatement of the maternal territory"<sup>36</sup> that by "storm and flank"<sup>37</sup> names the unnameable, the "*untenable*" in the symbolic, nominal, paternal function"<sup>38</sup> subverting "the place of the father" to, Kristeva writes:

"assume a different discourse; neither imaginary discourse of self; not discourse of the transcendental knowledge, but a permanent go-between from one to other, a pulsation of sign and rhythm, of consciousness and instinctual drive... a dissonance within the thetic paternal function of language."<sup>39</sup>

Kristeva names two "abysses" namely, psychosis and fetishism that threaten the untenable nature of poetic language, both children of the patriarchal censorer of a female economy of language, the undefinable and uncolonized 'chora' of creation. Kristeva describes each as a rigidification: of non-reference - wholly semiotic "panicking at all loss of reference" (*psychosis*) and absolute reference - wholly symbolic "an insipid formalism,"

(*fetishism*). Poetic process is a "permanent trial" of the two. In Kristeva's words:

Through the permanent contradiction between these two dispositions (semiotic/symbolic), of which the internal setting off of the sign (signifier/signified) is merely a witness, poetic language, in its most disruptive form (unreadable for meaning, dangerous for the subject,) shows the constraints of a civilization dominated by transcendental rationality. Consequently, it is a means of overriding this constraint. And if in so doing it sometimes falls in with deeds brought about by the same rationality, ... poetic language is also there to forestall such translations into action.<sup>40</sup>

It is borderline territory poets are well acquainted with. And being both abysses (like agoraphobia,) they represent great challenges of love

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p.137.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p.138.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p.139.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. pp. 139-140.

and faith that we, other than through poetic discourse have little chance of reaching out to and crossing over unless the tyranny of their realities is disrupted with the unlawful tenacity of poets. Otherwise, the abysses remain the gravesites of our hatred and fear, and the abject, "from its place of banishment, ... does not cease challenging its master. Without a sign (for him), it beseeches a discharge, a convulsion, a crying out."<sup>41</sup>

### KEEPING THE POET FREE

No matter the sound, poets hear, for it is the sound, any sound that provokes a poetic discourse into the study of relationships (agony and ecstasy) that it is. *What* is done with the jubilant cry of the beloved or the sorrow-filled moan of the bereaved is as important as *how* it is done. Thus, we are back to feminist process and ethics inasmuch as they refer to the liberation of poetic discourse. But this by now, is understood as inseparable from any liberation. The signifying power of language reveals the process of the human being in all its political and spiritual meaning.

Poets create carnivals not churches - something Kristeva has brilliantly analyzed in her essay, "Word, Dialogue, Novel." Poetic discourse frees the border/lines that maintain the rigid hierarchy of binary law - "The poetic would be that which has not become law."<sup>42</sup> Commenting on Bakhtin's study of the roots of the "polyvalent and multi-determined" word in carnival she says,

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<sup>41</sup> Kristeva. *Powers of Horror*, p.2.

<sup>42</sup> *Sémeiotiké*, p. 53. (Zepp, p.87)

Carnavalesque structure is like the residue of a cosmogony that ignored substance, causality, or identity outside of its link to the whole, *which exists only in or through relationship*.<sup>43</sup>

Figures germane to carnivalesque language, including repetition, "inconsequent" statements (which are nonetheless "connected" within an infinite context), and nonexclusive opposition, which function as empty sets or disjunctive additions, produce a more flagrant dialogism than any other discourse.<sup>44</sup>

It is here the hermaphrodite might live without an enforced masculine identity. Where the feminine aspect of her being is not exiled into absence; where one or the other isn't the "contrainte" determining desire and forms of love. Where the sickness of doctors and perversities of priests are talked about in the streets. In Kristeva's words, as cited in Zepp's paper:

*a mise en question of the whole concept of the subject, the freeing of "the subject from... psychic ... networks (Sémiotiké, pp.178-79). It is clear that if "The poetic would be that which is not law" (Sémiotiké, p.53), one must speak not only of social laws, but of the laws (the psychic structures) which determine our identity (and our discourse). Inner and outer cannot be separated: a different sense of the self is to be formulated dialogically not only between "male" and "female" principles, but also between inner compulsions and needs and social convention or formulation: Q.: How can we conceive of a revolutionary struggle which is not also a revolution in discourse...? K.: In the 20th century, after fascism, after revisionism, it will have been understood that there is no socio-political transformation possible unless it is a transformation of subjects: that is of their relationship to the social boundary [contrainte], to sexual pleasure and, more profoundly, to language. ... The solution? Infinite, for at stake is the passage from patriarchal society."*<sup>45</sup>

Death to the poet is death to the infinite significations of desire. Desire, released from patriarchal constraints celebrates free movement between the semiotic and symbolic, slips into the binarism strangling the two and returns to it the language of the open marketplace/carnival.

<sup>43</sup> Kristeva. *Desire in Language*, p.78.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p.79.

<sup>45</sup> Zepp. pp.87-88.

Or as Cixous invites, "Blow up the Law"<sup>46</sup> that makes enemies out of our hierarchilized dualities. Father/Mother, Head/Heart, Intelligible/Palpable, Logos/Pathos - oppositions Cixous immediately names in the start of her text, *Sorties*. "Always the same metaphor,"<sup>47</sup> and "all these pairs of oppositions are couples"<sup>48</sup> she writes. What poetic discourse offers in its subversive wake to this old torment is what Kristeva calls polyphony- an intertextual, sometimes parodic mobile rhythm undefinable and impossible to appropriate - a "jubilant recognition"<sup>49</sup> that the outer and inner are inseparable. It scribes the body as not withholding, as giving from many places, perspectives and positions. It writes "the laughter of Medusa" as the transformative snake tongue of a "feminine ecriture" where the binary logic fundamental to violent enactment is released into the female and instinctual economy of language it lacks.

For Cixous, this is a language that is abundant in its giving - "a love that has no commerce,"<sup>50</sup> that is "spacious, singing flesh"<sup>51</sup> writing the body by not censoring rhythm, desire or difference:

On the basis of my desire, I imagine that other desires like mine exist. If my desire is possible, it means the system is already letting something else through. All the poets know that... a kind of desire that wouldn't be in collusion with the old story of death. This desire would invent Love, it alone would not use love to cover up its opposite: one would not land right back in a dialectical destiny, still unsatisfied by the debasement of one by the other. On the contrary, there would have to be a recognition of each other, and this grateful acknowledgment would come about thanks to the intense and passionate work of knowing. Finally, each would take the risk of *other*, of difference, without feeling threatened by the existence of an

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<sup>46</sup> Cixous. "Sorties", p. 95.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.63.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.64.

<sup>49</sup> Kristeva. *Desire in Language*, p.141.

<sup>50</sup> Cixous. "Sorties", p.260

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p.264.

otherness, rather, delighting to increase through the unknown that is there to discover, to respect, to favor, to cherish.<sup>52</sup>

Cixous locates her self in her own body text by a double gesture, known through Derridan thought as deconstruction - an act of overturning the old and emerging the new= double writing=rewriting the body not as male or female but as a third body, one she calls bisexual. All this is implicit in her theory of a language that breaks free from the patriarchal signifier:

Bisexuality - that is to say the location within onelf of the presence of both sexes, evident and insistent in different ways according to the individual, the nonexclusion of difference or of a sex, and starting with this "permission" ones gives oneself, the multiplication of the effects of desire's inscription on every part of the body and the other body.<sup>53</sup>

Cixous believes it is the bisexual nature of our writing, of our political transformations that bridges the opponents suffering in the abyss of masculine law. Her writing is an act of rebellion against Father Law and a release into the abundance of the maternal.

Writing from a place of difference, of feminine body that one knows but doesn't claim as unchangeable becomes "sorties" into expressions of multiplicity. Cixous calls this a female libidinal economy - an economy that is based on abundance where, "all the ideas of management are surpassed"<sup>54</sup> unlike the male economies today collapsing hourly within an illusionary practise of scarcity and sameness. Instead, Cixous offers an alternative, or better yet, many alternatives, by transposing the theory (myth) of profit into a theory of feminine surplus: the

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<sup>52</sup> Cixous. "The Laugh of Medusa" (*New French Feminisms*, tr. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, The University of Massachusetts, 1981), p.78.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. pp.84-85.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.264.

bounteousness of the marketplace, the spectacle of the carnival. Her economy frees the signifier into a poetic practise of giving beyond restraint, revenue or return found in the development of a third body that delights in increasing and continuing difference. Here, the whole notion of desire is removed from a context of appropriation and placed instead in acts of love based on cherishing:

We won't advance backward anymore; we're not going to repress something so simple as the desire for life. Oral drive, anal drive, vocal drive - all these drives are our strengths, and among them is the gestation drive - just like the desire to write: a desire to live self from within, a desire for the swollenbelly, for language, for blood. <sup>55</sup>

Re(writing) the body for Cixous is realizing the third body of being that comes from desiring beyond and away from the ill-logic abyss of controlled polarities and couples to an un(a)bridged place of giving and recognizing ourselves through our desires and differences.

Building alliances with those others in a society kept at 'safe' distance in the margins has been an important practise in our feminist ethics of change. These margins are the boundaries which are the transformative edge of any social structure. It is those who embody such a place who know how to go beyond the cliff's edge. How can we continuously cross over the phallogocentric confines of our desires so we join with the poets, the minorities, the feminists, and the revolutionaries who are leaping off the cliff all the time and finding that each leap brings new life, new knowledge and new love? As Kristeva does in "Stabat Mater," can we build a "herethique"- a "her-ethics"- a heresy of ethics that does not foreclose? How do we ensure the "reaching out to the other" continues a double-gestured journey of plural logic in which

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 261.

dualism can celebrate the equality of differing principles without creating a hierarchical monolithic tyranny of opposites and where a third body of knowledge is always/already welcomed?

The messengers, the poets, those "undecidable characters" our tricksters, our contradictions, are our transgressive bridgers that "transmit no fixed message except itself should be the external joy of becoming."<sup>56</sup> By refusing to define the psychic universe *in any one way* these jesters keep open the unconscious desires of our conscious beings. It is the place of "slippage" these beings return to again and again, a place "between God and the Sacred,"<sup>57</sup> a bridge that will be different each time it is written because of the multiformity of life's rhythms. Keeping the poet free, in Cixous' and Kristeva's texts calls for endless breaking from tradition, especially our own, to ensure the absence of law: violence imposed through an ethic that colonizes the other. In her paper, "Kristeva and the Subject of Ethics," Dawne McCance writes:

For Kristeva, the ethical function is one of unending process, of permanently calling into question. While she has been both criticized and misunderstood for saying so, Kristeva insists that feminist social-political change cannot do without this calling into question, the interrogation (trial) of patriarchy's unitary, rational and transcendent subject. Her writing challenges women to open Western representational reason to a subject whose meaning/identity is unendingly and dialectically en procès.<sup>58</sup>

And in *Writing Differences*, Susan Sellers notes,

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<sup>56</sup> Kristeva. *Desire in Language*, p.84.

<sup>57</sup> Smaro Kamboureli. "St. Theresa's Jouissance: Toward A Rhetoric of Reading the Sacred," *Silence, the Word, and the Sacred*, ed. Harold Coward and E.D. Blodgett, (University of Calgary, 1989) p. 54.

<sup>58</sup> McCance. (op. cit.), p.21.

Countering the appropriation endemic to the successful functioning of the phallus, Cixous calls for a new attitude to difference which will involve 'feminine' acceptance of whatever is recognized as 'other'.<sup>59</sup>

And in this, Cixous believes, "the text should establish an ethical relation to reality as well as to artistic practise."<sup>60</sup> What she calls, "philosophical singing."<sup>61</sup>

We rewrite the bridge each time then, because each time the journey is different and therefore, subversive to what happened before and subversive to the Father's Law, to the phallogocentric society we live in. Slippage, as the place of difference, is a place not based on anatomical difference but a difference based on plural sight, sound, feeling and movement. It is an act always double in gesture, the act Kamboureli describes as "turning toward and away from divine locution."<sup>61</sup> Bridging, by moving toward both points of locus, by not capturing praxis, by allowing slippage, by being both/and is the journey from the binary model that confronts us all. The presence of polyphony, parody and persistent drives within poetic language are needed alliances in this confrontation. For they all help in naming our dislocated selves as does, unending analysis, the *subjet en procès*, the interminable trial.

## 5. IN THE NAME OF LOVE

*Reaching out to the other.*  
*Kristeva*

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<sup>59</sup> *Writing Differences: Readings from the Seminar of Helene Cixous*, ed. Susan Sollers (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988) p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> Cixous. *Ibid.*, p.152.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Kamboureli. (*op. cit.*), p.62.

"THE SINGABLE REMAINS"

Must hate be older than love? Violence more familiar than tenderness? "What's the matter with harmless love?" Ferron sings. A battered planet of people suppressed with fear of risking or naming love. This crisis in love has been exiled to the darkest corner of our hearts, our bodies' truths enclosed, craving a light, a mirror, a kindly gesture, a song, a word. There are the countless differences (the other: our love/hate) that we wed, we divorce, we wed, we divorce and the ones we do not hear and then those we are afraid to see (blinded by love/hate). And then all the forced arousals and abuses our babies later confuse with desire; the strangled and torn openings punctured with pain until, silence. The desire that is pushed so far to the margin it becomes invisible: the truth another edge slicing up unspoken/unheard words of I want, I want, I need, I need: desires pushed into the abyss by the Tyrant, himself or herself hanging on its edge. And there is the risky journey: crossing the tightrope, walking on fire in the name of love to the body before words, before love, before hate. Kristeva writes, "But why is the speaking subject incapable of uttering the mother within her very self?"<sup>62</sup> - the semiotics of milk and tears - the "linguistic communication not accounted for?"<sup>64</sup> This is the speaking subject retreated so far in the unconscious, the conscious self repressed. Psyche, best friend promising this is the place the Tyrant cannot come. Be quiet

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<sup>62</sup> Kristeva. *Desire in Language*, p.194.

<sup>64</sup> Kristeva. *Tales of Love*, p.249.

and he will not hear your hate. Be little and she will not see your fear. This is the speaking subject removed/pushed far from love. Yes, Kristeva is right. "It is want of love that sends the subject into analysis."<sup>64</sup> The transference of the crisis, the precious discourse, the childadult trying to trust no-one at this point but himself, the counterplay altering the psychic economy to include the unuttered edges, the silent pools, Narcissus drowned: the emotion before the word when love was not counted, calculated, coerced or closed. What crossing now?

This battered love moves therapeutically, haphazardly, silently, or politically from agonizing love/hate for rapist-marginalizer, the parent afraid of the open space, the open mouth speaking their own silent fright. So often we can move this silence into real hate, death-desire finally spoken, breathing air into the gasping truth, but too rarely is the word, the milk, the tears moved back to love- to the open space where, "the thought of death, bearable,"<sup>65</sup> the production of self becomes possible, where a feminine ethic returns the birth voice- the place where Cixous says,

I would hope that even in the most extreme exile there would be a force greater than everything, a force which continues to sing: what Celan calls the singharrest - the singable remains.<sup>66</sup>

The singable remains, her "footbridge:"

"... a way of crossing from a world so totally antipoetic ... very often I have had the feeling that all I can do is note the difficulty, the virtual impossibility of

<sup>64</sup> Kristeva. *In the Beginning was Love: Psychoanalysis and Faith*, tr. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) p. 3.

<sup>65</sup> Kristeva. *Tales of Love*, p. 263.

<sup>66</sup> Sollers. *Writing Differences*, p.150.

passage. There were echoes, recollections of one world by the other, but I had difficulty finding the crossings.<sup>67</sup>

Crossing over, nevertheless, the messenger of "not the infamous logic of antilove" but the child of love/hate, the third body, Eros returned, "Narcissus.. rehabilitated, as a poet"<sup>68</sup> returned in speech, the writing body, the nourishing, unending source, where:

The Voice sings from a time before law, before the Symbolic took one's breathe away and reappropriated it into language under its authority of separation. The deepest, the oldest, the loveliest Visitation.<sup>69</sup>

"Does this seem impossible?" she asks, and replies:

It's not impossible, and this is what nourishes life - a love that has no commerce with the apprehensive desire that provides against the lack and stultifies the strange; a love that rejoices in the exchange that multiplies. Wherever history still unfolds as the history of death, she does not tread.<sup>70</sup>

How to rewrite love each time, crossing over the crisis each time love lost or denied, a maternal body mothering this gap as body not withholding the multiplicities of love. Endless discourses breaking, in the name of love, this scarce resource into its infiniteness: "Breaking the Hold on the Story"<sup>71</sup> to reveal love that expands, increases, renews, crosses over to hate/love, that reaches out to the exile, to the forgotten self.

Only an ethic that *cherishes this crisis* can transgress love/hate. A tale of love, Kristeva writes, that is not afraid to speak of what is,

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Kristeva. *Tales of Love*, p.134.

<sup>69</sup> Cixous. "Sorties", p.93.

<sup>70</sup> Cixous. "Laugh of Medusa," (op.cit.) p.264.

<sup>71</sup> see Lola Lemire Tostevin. "Breaking the hold on the story: the feminine economy of language," (*A Mazing Space*, ed. Shirley Neuman & Smaro Kamboureli, Alberta: Longspoon, 1986).

... at stake *between*... of this state of crisis, collapse, madness capable of sweeping away all the dams of reason, as it is capable, like the dynamics of a living organism in full growth, of transforming an error into a renewal -remodeling, remaking, reviving a body, a mentality, a life. Or even two...<sup>72</sup>

An ethic that searches for the intermediary, not the murderer or the redeemer but the "watery prowler"<sup>73</sup> - Plato's "daemon", Jung's "shadow": "the messenger, the go-between, the medium of synthesis between separate domains ....Psyche's daemonic space indeed, intermediary, interpretative, and synthetic."<sup>74</sup>

#### PUTTING OURSELVES ON TRIAL SO WE DON'T HAVE TO HANG OTHERS

Understanding the unconscious demands, Kristeva believes, infinite analysis. Herein lies the questionable subject in process ( le sujet en proces) moving "from one identity to an other" where:

The "I" has become a strange physicist for who the quantum particle is not merely an "external" object to be observed, but also, an "internal" state of the subject and of experienced language. ...both wave and particle, matter coming through.<sup>75</sup>

Or, as Sollers put it:

... sometimes we are on the bank sometimes in the middle of the stream it is necessary that one feel very strongly the stream the bank two and one on top of the other and one underneath the other and one separated from the other and one linked to the other stream bank stream bank stream bank stream leaving the thread to the current<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Kristeva. *Tales of Love*, p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p.136.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p.63.

<sup>75</sup> Kristeva. *Desire in Language*, p.185.

<sup>76</sup> H, p. 83 as quoted in D.I.L., p.180.

Recovery of the agoraphobic soul is a process whereby matter is seen as a verb, not a noun. In describing Einstein's and Fritjof Capra's contribution to physics and its relevance to retrieving compassion to the lonely exile, Matthew Fox put it thus:

What exists is processes, activities and inter-relationships which in turn give form and apparent substance. "Relativity theory showed that mass has nothing to do with any substance, but is a form of energy. Energy, however, is a dynamic quality associated with activity, or with processes... The particle can no longer be seen as a static object, but has to be conceived as a dynamic pattern, a process involving the energy which manifests himself as the particle's mass." The basis of all reality, like the basis of all compassion, is a verb and an action. It is an action within a pattern, which at the level of compassion we have called love-justice. ...And this cosmic inter-relatedness, while it will be threatening to certain non-compassionate and nounlike people, is the only human energy that in the long run is lasting. It alone resurrects and re-energizes.<sup>77</sup>

The subject in process which Kristeva writes, deals with this "force of the continuous," or "the power of the continuum":

... the dialogical movement between non-exclusive couples in the "zero-two logic", thus defines the self as both and neither "inner" and "outer," "me" and "not me," social and individual.<sup>78</sup>

The translinguistic (or intra-linguistic or supra-linguistic) value in psychoanalysis Kristeva refers to is precisely the agent that creates the action of crossing-over so stressed in this thesis. The crossing over, like physics, is a study of a *field* of relationships; however, one that looks at the diverse configurations (or in Kristeva's work, crises or "undecidable characters") in a subject's discourse and one, in which poetic discourse is essential.

<sup>77</sup> Matthew Fox. *A Spirituality Named Compassion* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990, re-edition) p. 144-145.

<sup>78</sup> *Sémeiotiké*, p.151 as quoted by Zepp, p.88. \* See Kristeva's discussion on Bakhtin and "zero-two logic" in "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," (*Desire in Language*, pp.64-91).

Semioanalysis (sémanalyse) has become for Kristeva, the force that signifies boundary and bounding, what she says is "heterogenous to meaning (sign and predication): instinctual economies, always open to bio-physical and sociohistorical constraints."<sup>79</sup> It is her resurrection of the instinctual body or the semiotic, the "mise en procès": "that of a constantly changing subject whose identity is open to question." It is a theory that challenges any ethic of a fixed or biologically determined identity. "Considering the complexity of the signifying process," Kristeva writes, "no belief in an all-powerful theory is tenable."<sup>80</sup> Dawne McCance explains how,

For Kristeva, there can be no discussion of "ethics" today, nor of an "ethical feminism," apart from a perspective which takes account of the process/trial of the subject in language and meaning.<sup>81</sup>

Without this trial then, the crossing over the agoraphobic walls that privately constrain individual movement toward the other, is impossible. What Kristeva persists for in her theory of semiotic approach is what is most at stake: the confrontation of signifiers continuously liberated from a signified. Without such confrontation, colonization of difference and desire remains and the ethics governing most of the political and social systems today will continue to terrorize others within the mutually assured destructiveness (MAD)<sup>82</sup> of binary

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<sup>79</sup> Kristeva. *Desire in Language*, p.146.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.ix.

<sup>81</sup> McCance. (op. cit.), p.20.

<sup>82</sup> see Hazel Henderson, *The Politics of the Solar Age: Alternatives to Economics* (Indianapolis: Knowledge Systems, 1988) for discussion on the U.S. Defense Department's strategy of MAD - "psychotic technology" - a present day reminder of patriarchy's pathological obsession with death.

hysteria. Our "will to dominate"<sup>83</sup> and the power of penal systems will never resign. The poetic discourse releases the traces of body knowledge, breath and desire too often forgotten or forbidden. It promises the return to the "chora" of our polyphonic gestations ("community of dolphins")<sup>84</sup> not dying but becoming, the emotional traces hidden in the boundaries of the body, these "tissues of meaning,"<sup>85</sup> these "substrates of desire and communication."<sup>86</sup>

Kristeva's celebration of poetic language, as with Cixous, has become "a social, linguistic, psychic revolution against "Law" and "One."<sup>87</sup> More than reasserting the importance of ambivalence in the questioning subject and the continuous force of the intertextual nature of all relationship both women have demonstrated a recovery of the unconscious, thus soul. Poets live they say and will continue to live. They remind me of the line in H.D.'s poem, "The Walls Do Not Fall," "In me (the worm) clearly is no righteousness, but this - persistence."<sup>88</sup> They demonstrate the poetry in physics, the theory of slippage as it lies in the transgressing boundaries of official culture restoring the Singharrest and bringing Zhizneradostry.<sup>89</sup> A playfulness of spirit returns: where soul and love are our poets "dancing" on the edge of Kristeva's "volcano". Perhaps the Monsters/Ghosts of our lack can become what Maxine Hong Kingston suggests: not the walking dead, but

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<sup>83</sup> Kristeva. *Psychoanalysis and Faith*, p.62.

<sup>84</sup> as so beautifully described in "Stabat Mater," *Tales of Love*, p. 257.

<sup>85</sup> Kristeva. *Psychoanalysis and Faith*, p.6

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>87</sup> Zepp. (op. cit.), p.96.

<sup>88</sup> H.D. (op. cit.), p. 6.

<sup>89</sup> Russian, meaning life-glad gesturing.

a different species at home and not at home but at least revealed and revolutionized by the revelations.

## 6. BEGINNING AGAIN

death that which we don't know and we hate what we don't know  
 don't we? and we bring violence in order to breakthrough, breakup,  
 break  
 the unknown into ? conscious pieces that have form, reason but these  
 pieces drive us mad, madly back into the unknown back to the drive  
 forward, unconscious still increasing in mystery in death reminder of  
 life or  
 a black void belonging to no one not even you and significant of  
 everything every possible gestation brings life and death but first  
 we embrace each other know each other not know each other  
 and failing that rape one or the other heart beating the lack into his pain  
 her pain mommy who are you? who are you?  
 loveless so lost in desire ire ever since the rules changed  
 hiding her longings his knees unbendable no cyclamen behind his ear  
 fear letting go of love her body  
 daddy where are you? do you have a body??  
 the forgotten child the infant exiled tortured by calculations  
 of 20th century commerce tormented by his size lack of space of vigil  
 lack of food of love lack love lovesick homesick for lovelost  
 found again if you are lucky to find a way to begin again and again  
 from that street you cross or that line he wrote or the crying child  
 the grinning lover or what did you say?  
 the trees lake sky rock start anywhere again and again  
 or failing that Keep Speaking linking me to you estranging  
 by hoping for something different?  
 or failing that Scream into the day the night of your dark corner  
 corner of my heart breaks where the blue blood bypasses  
 LOUDER soften the ice stretch the branches in the forest of this throat  
 separating breaking free open mouth (     ) "our own familiar daemon"  
 take tenderly into your arms my arms can you imagine?  
 a baby loved then lost or a lost baby never loved - the word,  
 the wanted infant, the monster at home  
 or failing that in a broken home.

I break open the dam silence and then a rush of ice flooding filling the banks full of ceremony soon anemone, sapling, if you're lucky tiny purple crocus there in the melting water springing silver red salmon swimming jumping spawning upstream till still born falling dying home but more minnows than ever rebounding every which way.

Did you know that whales communicate through echolocations? finding one another through a series of rhythmic intonations and high frequency clicks they enclose air between two articulations of the tongue enlarging the space to rarefy the breath and then suddenly open the enclosure and a third space sings echo echo echoes of ancestors going back to the sea banks collapsing pacific, hong kong, new york, california homes falling into the sea money drowning in bottomless pools of calculation exchanging hands until invisible echoes. Whales are the Mothers that lived on land and returned to the sea. The original beings of opera of love -mozart's cherubinos singing.

## V PASSAGE INTO PARADOX

**Do I contradict myself?**

**Very well then, I contradict myself,  
(I am large, I contain multitudes).**

**W. Whitman**

### 1. COYOTE AS CRISIS-WORKER

#### *Coyote's Anthro*

A full moon was reflected in the water, shining as brightly as the one in the sky. Coyote sat down and began singing. Then, still softly singing, he leaned out over the water and touched the reflected moon. The water bent to his touch like rubber. Still singing he stepped onto the water moon, bouncing slightly. He jumped a bit and bounced up and down. Then he began bouncing in earnest, bounding into the sky, even doing a couple of back flips. He bounced as high as he could and grabbed the moon in the sky and hung there grinning at the anthro.

"Hey, look at me," he said, "and I wasn't even sure I could do it."

He let go of the moon, did a double flip, bounced once and landed next to the anthro. "Okay," he said, "I got it all nice and rubbery. Go ahead and bounce a little."

So the anthro jumped from the bank, creating a great splash as he sank from view. He was gasping and spitting out water as he climbed out of the pool.

"Well, well, look how you shattered the moon... You know, I thought only us coyotes were silly enough to try things we weren't sure of. And you, my friend, forgot to sing."

*Peter Blue Cloud/Aroniawenrate*

A lot of things have been said about Coyote and I'm going to say some more. Probably nothing radically new or anything. But what is radical or new? Coyote stories have been told all over North America and are the property of First Nations people. He is known by native tribes in many forms and many contexts. Coyote is not always a coyote,

"nor even a creature of strict physical dimensions."<sup>1</sup> This passage is an appropriation of his character if this is at all possible given his infamous and outrageous undecidability. He is widely shared in many of his dimensions. He is called many names and known in many ways from, "the trickster demi-god, a beneficent being, bringing culture and light to his people, and a creature of greed, lust and stupidity."<sup>2</sup> Coyote has been bothering me through this whole thesis and whether I like it or not he is here. He is like many poets, "alive and well in the modern world."<sup>3</sup>

Coyote, I am told, is not a scholarly character. Coyote is an open system and not one, even in his contemporary appearances that I can define or describe with any definitiveness. But I can say what Coyote has been doing in my life as I write this thesis. His entrance into my life has been the meddlesome stories and questions he interrupts, entertains and gifts my life with to keep me from thinking with such hardness. "Am I looking for solutions?" he asked late one night after I had written about something with intense certainty. "Forget it," he said. When things were worst for tear, (this heart of mine) he made me laugh at my efforts. Such serious and pseudo-noble efforts worth what? My incongruous leaps of faith seemed hilarious to Coyote and there were times even I'd see the silliness of my moralizing. Coyote's laughter often broke into backflips - rebounds into poetry and song and yes, celebration of this inconsequent effort.

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<sup>1</sup> Lopez, Barry. *Giving Birth To Thunder, Sleeping With His Daughter*, New York: Avon Books, 1977), p.xv.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. xvi.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.xii.

The biggest joke of course, was thinking there was a way out of binarism. Well, Coyote was quick to show me, in the light of day, that binarism is here, and probably here to stay, no matter what ethics I espouse. "But don't worry too much," he confided, "its the dance between the differences that counts" - "if," he snidely remarked, "you know how to dance." That place between dichotomy (the dichotomy itself) is pure magic, the dance itself. Well, I'm trying to learn after walking with such rigid legs all these years. Bit slow on the jump and tight in the knee.

In this thesis I have been writing about social tensions. But let me tell you, the personal tensions get a bit complicated especially if you're certain there's a solution to all this planetary peril. Or even that writing is a solution to anything. Damn, interminable processes. Coyote has been my late-night crisis worker, uninstitutionalized spiritual advisor, friend and dance partner when I lost even the desire to dance/write.

## 2. COYOTE AS LAW-BREAKER

### **The Battle**

**They were so angry that they decided to have a battle. So terrible was their anger that they would not wait, but declared that the fight must be fought now, immediately, on this very spot. Fox blamed what he considered to be the crime on Badger. Badger in turn was all for placing the blame on Cougar.**

**Jackrabbit hopped in agitation, calling for Mole and for Mouse, and for Deer and Bear to fetch their sharpest arrows and their heaviest warclubs.**

**By the time Coyote arrived the sides had already been chosen the battle lines formed, and the smell of hate and future bloodshed permeated the very air.**

He, Coyote, listened to all the threats and promises of broken bodies to be. He walked out and stood between the enemies, declaring very solemnly, and in a very soft voice;

"No, I cannot allow this great fight to happen just yet. There has been no battle-preparation dance. There has been no pipe of cleansing. No, the Creation does not wish this battle to take place just yet."

And some say it was Bear, but strangely, no one actually remembers just who it was. Bear denied the accusation, but someone ran from one of the lines and struck Coyote dead!

And Coyote fell and indeed lay there, very dead. And the cry for immediate battle was resumed, and the menacing cries for blood again filled the air,

when, from the opposite end of the battle line, Coyote again stepped out, dancing and brandishing a huge club.

He ran to his dead self and struck a tremendous blow upon the body, then turned to face the creatures, shouting: "Who killed this person? Who struck him down before I did? Was that person purified? Did he sweat himself and think of his children? Did he dance to assure that the life cycle continue?"

"Enough talking!" someone shouted and ran to Coyote and struck him dead.

And again, much later, no one remembered who or what struck the blow which killed Coyote for the second time.

Then from the left hand side of the centre, Coyote ran out swinging a great club and struck at his fallen selves until all that remained were two masses of fur and blood and broken bones and twisted sinew.

Then Coyote danced the dance of victory over his own fallen selves, pledging their death to his own great anger. Oh, he danced, he really danced.

"Now then," said Porcupine, "how is it that this one who dances the victory in battle dance, when it was not himself who killed himself? Is it within reason for him to claim this doubtful victory?"

"If I did not kill these two, then who did kill them?" demanded Coyote. "Let him step forward to claim these deaths, that I may kill him too in revenge."

When no one stepped forward, Coyote declared, motioning to his dead selves, "Then obviously these kills are mine!"

"It seems to me," began Elk, who was interrupted by Skunk, who also began, "It's quite obvious to me that ..." "Now hold on a moment," said Badger. And Coyote wheeled on Badger, shouting, "Hah! Don't you know that you can't hold onto a moment, let alone a minute?"

And so they argued, all the animal creatures, about the finer points of who might or might not claim a kill.

And the women of these 'great warriors', at the urging of Coyote, prepared a great feast, so that these mighty warrior-debators might continue on full stomachs.

And soon, the recent anger was set aside for the more important battle of words leading to reason.

And by this time, everyone having forgotten all about Coyote, he, Coyote, took his fallen selves by their tails and dragged them away uphill.

Then he took a good hot sweat bath and then sang a song of renewal known only to himself, and soon his other selves revived. "Now," said one of them, "that's what I'd call making your point the hard way. You know, it really hurt when you killed me."

"Yes," said the other self, standing up and stretching, "the next time this happens, don't forget it'll be your turn to be killed."

"Hey, maybe this won't ever happen again, huh?"

"Oh, it will happen again." Coyote said, "Yes, it always seems to happen again."

Then he merged into himself and walked away, far away.

Peter Blue Cloud/Aroniawenrate

Coyote told me one morning, "Irreverance, K.- you're getting too damned saintly in your dreaming." And he tells me another story to show how little has changed, how everything has changed. Double-crosser. If Coyote reveres anything (which I doubt) it would be relationship. "Crises," he says, "are all the same. Expecting something and getting something else." Crises for Coyote are a way of making connections, "relating," he says. He likes to make connections, especially sexual ones. But that's not all. Coyote is always trying to become something he isn't. Lots of people call him the Imitator. He hates that.

Even though, he constantly creates what he isn't and conjures crises out of his control.

Coyote is continuous in relentlessly tricking me into thinking one way then revealing the opposite truth despite some previous and impervious speech he made the night before (and he has many) that contradicts everything he says. His real presence in my life has been to confuse me. Just when I think I'm going along a sensible direction- nice and orderly and sane he'll bring chaos of the most messy disorder. Chaos, yep lots of that. Dichotomy, all you don't want. Contradiction, always/already.

Coyote deals with dichotomy by splitting himself in two. There's a good Peter Blue Cloud story about Coyote in the sixties when he used to do this often. Coyote is a multiple personality. Unpredictable and de-centered he belongs and is invited into none and all camps. He has as many friends as enemies. He's thrown out of towns again and again for his devious leachery and invited by countless academics into city universities for glimpses into this very same behavior. A back road is as much his territory as a centre stage. He lives on the edge as well as in the comforts of domestic bliss. In a white person's analysis (mine that is) he is diagnosed as schizophrenic. He's a pathology onto himself - pure pathos. But Coyote is his own doctor, his own crisis worker. After being dead for stories he can reappear accountably well.

Coyote is disarming in everything he does, sexual, spiritual and political. He double-crosses everything. Going from one side to another telling one side this and the other side that (often or always lying), he creates war. But bridges too, for all his comings and goings between camps, (he'll eat food with anyone) a path eventually forms between his

protagonists (sometimes his own mind and rear end). Somehow a relationship forms between the oppositions in his life. It happens, if only because of curiosity, as he crosses over, again and again forgetting the crossing each time. His tracks themselves and there are many if you are looking, are the physical traces of his double crossings - divergent and discordant bridges. Undecidable character? Definitely. His schizophrenia is the left-right, inner-outer, unconscious-conscious trails of his soul making circles. Coyote falls haphazardly into the abyss. He is the accident we are all creating.

Coyote knows no law and those he encounters he breaks. Berries and stars, shit and song are all the same to him. All the same poetry. He is law breaker in a big way - where paradox is his key to all the frozen banks of love. A heart warming double-crosser. He gets things stirring. He is violent and nonviolent. Himsa and ahimsa at battle all the time.

### 3. COYOTE AS POET

*When someone asked Coyote, why is there loneliness, and what is the reason and meaning of loneliness: Coyote took an empty gourd and began shaking it, and he shook it for a long time.*

*Then*

*he took a single pebble and put it into the gourd, and again began to shake the gourd for many days, and the pebble was indeed loneliness.*

*Again*

*Coyote paused to put a handful of pebbles into the gourd.*

*And the sound now had a wholeness and a meaning*

beyond questioning.

Let us  
shake the rattle  
always, forever.

Peter BlueCloud/Aroniawenrate

On world hunger and suffering - "Well," Coyote says, "what are you going to do, K. what are you going to do." "I'm going to go sing a few songs with a few friends. See you in week or something like that." And off he goes till he shows up in some bookstore, or down by the lake where I go after I realize, hunched over my computer, I've forgotten to take a breath of fresh air for three days. This is the kind of behavior of mine Coyote doesn't understand. He's down there skipping rocks - "See the dichotomy?" he grins, "Rock and water - not one, not two." "Go away," I say. "I need to stop thinking." "That's a big problem in your life, yes. Probably that crisis you're writing about wouldn't be so big if you could ..." "Be quiet," I almost hiss. "Okay," and skips enough stones to make a thunderstorm. I get home soaked.

Later, at home drinking tea, Coyote asks, "why would you want to explain everything?" "So I can understand it better - and I'm not trying to explain everything," I reply defensively. "Well, as Racoon said, I got my blackeyes because Coyote gave them to me. Pretty predictable stuff," Coyote says looking over my shoulder into my computer screen. "Leave me alone," I say. "You keep getting in my way." Coyote curls up in my lap (he does know how to make himself at home), making it hard for me to type. "Never much liked explaining away things," he mumbles sleepily, "there's just no logic to it."

Coyote sits on me like I'm a rock or a log by his favorite lake. "Get off of me," I yell. "Get off yourself," he yells back and walks away. All that day I wrestled with the question, "what is the dichotomy?" Only later when Coyote came by with food and seeing me still attempting a "break-through", he looked at my notes and asked, "remember how to break-dance?" Well, the flip side of this story is by the time I got through dancing with Coyote later that night I forgot dichotomy even existed. "Read my lips," Coyote said the next morning, "there isn't any." And danced another tune. "Living in the open isn't possible since they made it a criminal act." "But," Coyote whispered, "I know a place..."

Problem with Old Man Coyote is he goes out to make things right but makes them all wrong and doesn't feel any guilt - just keeps doing things. But like the bluebirds in the Languana story,<sup>4</sup> will we give our gifts only to take them back another time? And what if we cause violence or even death? Will we undo the law that caused us to take from where we have not been invited in the first place? Undoing law? What kind of magic is this? "The magic of the heart," Coyote says. Coyote says a lot of things though.

Coyote still has a lot of enemies but no matter the trouble he makes and the murder he commits and endures he is brought to life and loved again and again. This is the beauty - the essential tenderness that shines through Native lore on this undecidable character - he is loved no matter what.

Coyote brings chaos and with that, reorganization. Everyone ends up talking about relationships, 'bout the enemy, 'bout their values when

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<sup>4</sup> Lopez, (op. cit.), p.45.

he's around. He's a poet-physicist that brings energy to dead matter, healer that brings medicine to diseased hearts, and comic that brings compassion to cynics. He is all of us. We need Coyote. Do we have room for him? He's been cross-country for eons. He knew the universe when everyone slept under open sky. As long as we build closed systems - psychic and physical prisons, Coyote will be arrested for break-in and enter time and time again. He's everywhere. A church critic he'd rather dance and dance he does. He loves life. That's his big basket to carry. And carry it he does. With light heart (true or tricking) he plays out paradox till the sacred centre reveals itself in all its discordance and distinctions. Always different.

Well, enough writing about Coyote. Winter's over. It's well into February and in the Kootenay's the hyacinths are already blooming. Time to wake this body up. Time for love. "Sinkalip" that is, "Sin-ka-lip"<sup>5</sup> has been good company. But that Coyote, "he belongs to none."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Mourning Dove (Humishuma). *Coyote Stories* (University of Nebraska Press: Bison Book Edition, 1990). "Sin-ka-lip" is the Okanagon (Okan-nock-kane) native people's name for Coyote, meaning imitator.

<sup>6</sup> Blue Cloud, *Elderberry Flute Song: Contemporary Coyote Tales* (New York: The Crossing Press, 1982), p.134.

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**"Writing is an act of appropriation," Aritha van Herk notes in her acknowledgments in *Places Far From Ellesmere*. Each one of these books is a gift.**