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Voices Production

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VOICES PRODUCTION

ELSA BURROUGHS FRITTS, BGS

A Culminating Project Presented to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Lindenwood College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Fine Arts
(1986)

Thesis

D919v

1986

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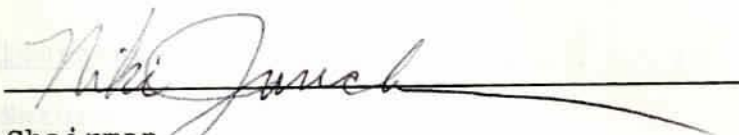
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LINDENWOOD
COLLEGE

Department of Theatre

Upon the recommendation of the Department of Theatre, this thesis is hereby accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

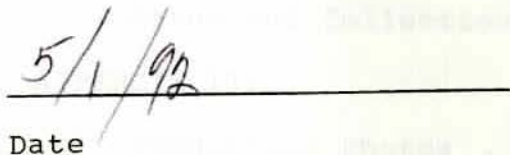


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Date

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Elsa J. Burroughs Fritts

Voices

in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for
MFA Degree

Lindenwood Colleges

Spring 1983

Prospectus

A. Goals of the Project:

1. To provide a vehicle for major acting experience for undergraduates. So, if possible, the cast will consist solely of Lindenwood students.
2. To provide challenges for undergraduate actors that might be inappropriate or unavailable in the major season productions.

3. To exercise subtlety and control in my own directing because I often rely on movement to provide direction, focus, and control.
4. This play, Voices, will be performed April 7, 8, and 9, 1983.
5. Voices will be performed in the Memorial Arts Building Studio with minimal setting, properties, and lights to avoid overburdening the already stretched technical capacities of the theatre department.
6. Voices should be like a piano sonata. Mostly, melodic and soft, yet resounding with dissonance and fortissimo used only for specific dramatic effect (the climaxes, major or minor).

B. Specific details of the procedure:

1. The script will be analyzed according to the format used by Francis Hodge in Play Directing Analysis Communication and Style.
2. I will research theories of musical harmony and rhythmic structure as well as general musical form to help get a better grip on how to handle these elements in the play.

3. Casting will be done on March 7 and 8 from 6:00 to 8:00 p. m. in Fine Arts Building room 202. I will use each character's first major speech for initial audition material. Maya, p. 11-13; Kate, p. 13-15; Erin, p. 16 and p. 9-10; Rosiland, p. 16-18; Grace, p. 18-20. Rhythm and vocal quality (variety and blend) will play a major role in casting. For further details on each character, see section II of the analysis.
4.
 - a. The rehearsal process will begin with two full read-throughs of the script.
 - b. Next, I will work with each character individually for a total of 4 to 8 hours (or more) depending on individual progress and understanding of the character.
 - c. The next step will involve full-cast rehearsals for a total of, at least 35 hours, not including technical rehearsals.
 - d. We will move rehearsals to the Memorial Arts Building (MAB) studio (performance space) no later than four days prior to opening.

- e. Technical rehearsals will begin on Monday, April 4, with props and costumes. Sound and lights will be added on Tuesday, April 5.
- f. Performances will be held April 7, 8, and 9 at 8:00 p. m., MAB studio. Call for the actresses will be 7:00 p. m.

C. Potential goals to be achieved:

1. Because this play takes place only on stage (see Analysis I.A.), the overall feeling of time in the piece should be immediate.
2. This play is about the changes and cycles that women go through in life, that all women throughout history have gone through:

Grace: And the
generations are
repeated and the
same
mistakes are
lived through over and
over again.

Each character faces a particular crisis in her life. Grace deals with the emptiness she feels since her children have gone (Analysis IV. C.).

Grace: Here I was
having gotten
what I wanted,
not knowing what
exactly to
do. I said to myself
I am tired

When my children
left home I am tired
I said
I see the end
I said.

Erin deals with emptiness after a long series
of failures (Analysis IV. D.).

Erin: My demands on life were too great.
I wanted everything
I got nothing

3. This play is also about listening to yourself
(as a result of each crisis) as witnessed by
the dramatic structure of the speeches which

tightens and begins to overlap by the end of the play, so that it might even be one speech, spoken by one woman. That woman is all of them combined, so that they would be "hearing" everything by the end of the play. Until page 104 (in the acting edition) each speech is from one-half to thirteen pages long (and only a few are less than one page), the subject matter, although linked from the end of one to the beginning of the following, is separate in nature. Each speech has to do with the individual's past experiences. However, the speeches from 104 on, shorten and tighten. The subject matter is of emotions, and those emotions are at least linked, if not overlapping:

Grace: I see the end

I said

Erin: No one is to grieve for me

But only

Utter a sign of relief

it has all been pain

I am glad
to go back
to the earth
again.

Grace: Mightn't I just lie down now?
Mightn't I just float downstream
like Ophelia?

or repetitive:

Erin: Dear Mother
these are the last words I will
ever write.

Rosiland: "Dear Mother"
I wrote home
or one train of thought:

Grace: No, you are too
young yet
for this train of thought.

Maya: What held me then like a magnet

Kate: Was the possibility of death.

Erin: What is kissing me now

Rosiland: On the left side of my head,
under my ear,

Grace: Is the actuality of life.

- D. Method of evaluating the success of the project:
1. Were the characters clearly defined from one another?
 2. Were each character's objectives clear and clean?
 3. Were the builds to climaxes steady and motivated?
 4. Was there enough variation in mood, rhythm, and intensity to hold audience interest?
 5. Did the production seem controlled or did it seem out of hand?
 6. Did the actresses seem to understand their relationships to each other?
 7. Were the technical aspects of the production in keeping with the mood and idea of the play?
 8. Did any technical aspect detract from the effectiveness of the production?
 9. Did the production, in any way, become tiresome or offensive?
 10. Was the concept clear from the production?

INTRODUCTION

In Susan Griffin's, MADE FROM THIS EARTH, she says of Voices simply:

Voices was originally written in 1974 for the public radio. Since then it has been produced on TV (where it won an Emmy Award) and on the stage throughout the United States and Europe. In New York, it was directed off Broadway by Estelle Parsons. The action of the play takes place in the mind, or on the stage. The five characters can be thought of as one character, and at the same time as five different people. They have never spoken to one another. The play has a structure like a musical fugue.¹

The fugue form at its most basic can be described as imitative counterpoint, or, for example, musical instruments in an orchestra or, different voices in a choir which sing the same melody or sequence of chords, although they each begin at a different time. This reiteration of ideas builds upon itself to a climax or resolution; in the play, it might even be described as revolution. Christopher Headington might have been referring to Voices when he succinctly described the fugue as:

¹Susan Griffin, Made From This Earth, an Anthology of Writings (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1982) p. 27.

Polyphonic, based on a single subject (very occasionally, more) and cumulative in interest. Usually there are three or four parts or 'voices' which enter in turn with the subject. This section, called the exposition, is followed by changes of key and new treatments of the subject with incidental, episodic material leading to a final section in the main key. This final section is the climax of a building-up of concentration, a kind of raising of the musical temperature in many cases.²

Mr. Headington refers mainly to Bach's fugues, which are basically melodic in nature. For a better musical understanding of Voices, I looked to the fugal examples of Bartok, particularly the opening movement from "Music for Strings--Percussion and Celesta," which, fugal in structure is more dissonant in tone.

The most difficult production decisions involved those which were geared to soften a play that is so inextricably tied to the feminist movement as to be bitter and alienating.

One of the problems I had hoped to solve in casting was to broaden the scope of the play by casting at least one black and, preferably, another minority member. This would have been in keeping with Ms. Griffin's philosophy of the "other" or anyone not white and male (see notes on Rape: The Power of Consciousness). Unfortunately, standards of acting and ability to work as an ensemble took priority in casting decisions. In addition, there was very little variety among the auditioneers.

² Headington, Christopher. History of Western Music (New York: Schirmer Books, 1976) p.

Another way in which I hoped to soften the feminist elements in the play was to emphasize the growing up process as it applies to both women and men. For this, I enlisted the help of Gail Sheehe's book, Passages, which describes the predictable patterns and crises in everyone's adult life. I found this particularly helpful in the characterizations of Kate, Maya, and Grace. The book provided fewer insights into the characters of Erin and Rosalinde, perhaps, only because they are younger. It is interesting to note, however, that not only does each woman pass through two or more stages of development (each involving a crisis period), but between the five characters, all the stages that Ms. Sheehe describes are illustrated.

CHAPTER I: RESEARCH

Biographical material on Susan Griffin proved very scant. That which is most concise is included in Appendix I. Although this material is interesting, I found it less useful than her other writings.

This play seems to be a poetic culmination of many of Ms. Griffin's other works. Themes such as nature, motherhood, circumstance vs. choice, etc., are expanded at length in several books and articles. The second part of this chapter contains sketches and conclusions, parallels and paradoxes from each of Ms. Griffin's other major writings. The chapter is subdivided accordingly and was used as an overview by the actresses.

In addition, each actress read at least part of these books, which she felt pertained to her. This was necessary because Susan Griffin's writings, while rational, provoke deep emotional response which cannot be summarized. Several passages were read for warm-ups during the rehearsal period. They were very effective.

Also helpful, although surprising, was a book by Gail Sheehe, PASSAGES. This book is about life's stages or plateaus. It was of particular interest because of our (the cast's and my) collective youth. Several of the characters in VOICES are much older and somewhat untouchable to us. Ms. Sheehe's book helps tie the psychological boundaries while we relied heavily on Ms. Griffin to care for the emotional form.

CHAPTER 1A: PASSAGES BY GAIL SHEEHE

PASSAGES by Gail Sheehe is about the predictable stages or crises of adulthood. She does for adults what so many have done for the parents of children and adolescents. These are stages that everyone goes through, she calls them the "growth plateaus" from ages 18 to 50. They are "points of turning" or "passages" from one level of development to another.

These "passages" became interesting to me in relation to VOICES when I read Gail Sheehe's own midlife crisis which she claims everyone endures somewhere between the ages of 35 and 45. She felt alone. She had been traumatically forced into seeing the inevitability of death. She experienced an overwhelming sense of fear to the point of paranoia. She felt listless with the knowledge of her own non-accomplishment. She was riddled with self-doubt, blame and a feeling that she was stuck in neutral and might possibly never get in gear again.

It occurred to me that each of the women in VOICES experiences these same feelings for approximately the same reasons

(with the possible exception of Rosalinde, who never seems to look realistically into the face of death; she is too young). I began to wonder if this book could lend other insights into the actual emotional progression of the characters.

A "passage" is the shedding of a protective shell. It is a period of growth and development which enables a person to enter a more stable period which will last longer and be less trying. In general, these "passages" can be predicted by and recognized by their marker events: graduation; marriage; childbirth; divorce; getting or losing a job. However, change occurs at predictable times regardless of the presence or absence of any marker event.

During each passage changes occur in each of four areas of perception. The interior sense of self changes in relation to others. The proportion of safeness to danger we feel changes. The perception of time changes (do we have enough? Too much? None at all?). The person's sense of vitality or stagnation changes. Each passage requires that we let go of old techniques of living and finding new tools of development.

We can resist growth. Untimely marker events can rearrange the internal growth schedules. Also "life accidents" such as war, depression, death of a spouse, death of a child or the untimely death of a parent or any real

life-threat such as an auto crash, near drowning, etc., can rearrange this internal schedule.

. . . each person engages the steps of development in his or her own characteristic stepstyle. Some people never complete the whole sequence. And none of us "solves" with one step . . . the problems in separating from the caregivers of childhood. Nor do we "achieve" autonomy once and for all by converting our dreams into concrete goals, even when we attain those goals. The central issues or tasks of one period are never fully completed, tied up, and cast aside. But when they lose their primacy and the current life structure has served its purpose, we are ready to move on to the next period.³

I. PULLING UP ROOTS

The "pulling up roots" process begins around age 18. There are external factors which assist this process, college, military service, and short-term trips away from family and home. Each of these factors help in our attempts to separate our family's view of the world from our own. It is a period of following the crowd (so long as our mother doesn't happen to be part of that crowd). This period is marked by the fear that we can't make it on our own, that we will be dependant and childish forever. These fears are concealed by defiance and mimicked confidence. Rebounding back into the safety of the family unit are common until about age 22.

The tasks of this passage are to locate one's self in a peer group, discover a sex role and find an ideology or come

³Sheehe, Gail. Passages (New York: Bantom Books, 1976), p. 36.

up with our own world view. It is also a time in which we are to anticipate a life's occupation. We leave home physically during this stage. The beginnings of a separate identity are formed and we begin to leave home emotionally as well.

This is a time of great stress and loneliness. As in most crises, we feel vulnerable and in danger. Therefore, we begin to seek safety. Many "piggyback" or attach themselves to a "stronger one" or even a group. This often only prolongs financial and emotional ties and puts off the impending self-sufficiency.

A person "pulling up roots" may experience sudden mood swings and anxiety attacks. They suffer mysterious maladies. Frequently, they hold inflexibly to a standard of very high ideals. They experience a very negative view of themselves or of their family. They seek an idea to believe in, attempt to find a role model. The haunting questions of this stage are, "What am I to do with my life?" "Who am I?" "What is truth?" A person in this stage is consumed by the desire to do what he wants (even if he does not have the foggiest notion of what that is). Identity crises are common during this stage.

Rosalinde is in this stage throughout most of the play. She, characteristically, bounces from one extremist group to another. The further from home she gets the more drawn to it she becomes.

II. THE TRYING TWENTIES

This is a period of trying to take hold of the adult world and there is a preoccupation with working out the external factors.

The major questions of this stage are: How do I affect my aspirations? What is the best way to begin? Where do I want to go? Who can help me in making and carrying out these decisions? (And most importantly) How did YOU do it?

The tasks in this stage are monumental. We are to shape our life's dream. We must prepare for our life's work. Many need to find a mentor during this stage. And finally, we must form a capacity for intimacy which does not include loss of self-identity.

We are consumed with the desire to do what we "should." This is determined by family models, the social ideal of the time, the press of culture, and pressure from our peers. We fear that these decisions are irreversable. They are permanent and we will live the rest of our lives with them just as they are today. There is the fear of our own inability to set up a structure for our lives as well as the fear of getting "locked in" to that structure.

During the trying twenties we have an unshakable belief in the power of our own will. We KNOW we are quite different from our parents.

III. CATCH-30

Usually, this crisis begins between the time we are 28 to 32. We become extremely impatient with "shoulds." We begin to feel narrow and restricted by the choices we made in our 20's. Most importantly, we feel a new vitality to go on to conquer new plateaus.

Often, this new vitality precipitates a crisis. We feel that we have hit rock-bottom and we have an overwhelming desire to bust out. We want to tear up the life we made for ourselves during our 20's. We seek to define new dreams and goals. We push (often with super-human strength) to broaden ourselves professionally. We also push to expand our personal lives. There is renewed love of our home and family and a new concern for ourselves, for our personal growth.

During catch-30 we experience the first major split in needs between husband and wife. She generally seeks something more, such as returning to school or beginning a career outside the home. He is desirous of more family. During this period he cannot be bothered by her troubles and, at the same time, she wants him (and feels that he should be) to be more concerned and helpful.

People settle down in earnest during this period. They buy houses; they show genuine concern regarding their climb up the professional ladder. Their social lives suffer reduction as they focus on raising their families.

IV. THE DEADLINE DECADE (35-45)

Somewhere in our mid-thirties we begin to feel the time squeeze. We have hit our half-way mark. And, "Where are we?!" We become suddenly aware that we are no longer youthful. The purpose of heretofore accepted roles fade as we face a spiritual dilemma. We need a chance to rework our identity as we feel our lives giving way to a genuine authenticity crisis. In order to come through this, we must re-examine our purposes and re-evaluate how to spend our personal resources.

We question ourselves. Why am I doing all this? What do I really believe in?

We discover a terrifying fact: We are alone. We are the providers of our own safety. We discover new aspects of our own masculinity or femininity. And, as our old self dies, we grieve for it.

Generally, women reach this stage earlier than men. Their assertiveness rises as they feel the crunch of their "last chance." There is a strong sense of urgency to whatever they have chosen to pursue.

Most men push harder in their careers as they realize that they are no longer the "promising young" person they were a few years ago. They feel a need to lurch ahead of their peers. He usually finds that he has been too anxious to please and too vulnerable to criticism. By about 40 a man feels "stale, restless, burdened, and unappreciated." He worries about his health and wonders "Is this all there is?"

At this point a man may depart from his established baselines; he may change his career or opt for divorce. He feels a strong interest in developing his ethical self.

V. RENEWAL OR RESIGNATION (mid 40's)

Somewhere in the middle 40's most people regain their equilibrium. However, if the questions of the early 40's have not been faced or remain unresolved, the staleness one feels calcifies into resignation. There is a feeling of abandonment as a person's safety nets disappear. Parents become dependant on their children. Children grow away and go away. Perhaps, one's mate has grown away or goes away. That exciting career mutates into a job. If all these remain unresolved, the crisis will reappear around the early 50's.

However, if the 40's crisis were met head-on, and the person has found a renewal of purpose on which to build the rest of his/her life, there is a new eagerness present in the later 40's. Personal happiness soars as that person comes to accept new truths.

That person will come to accept the fact that no one will ever fully understand her. He can forgive her parents and he can let go of his children with warmth and understanding. Friends become more important. Privacy becomes more important. This "new" person's motto is "no more bullshit."⁴

⁴Ibid, p. 46.

I cannot even imply that the characters in VOICES are textbook lives straight out of Ms. Sheehe's book; however, we did find many insights into character within its pages. Rosalinde found the section on "pulling up roots" particularly valuable. Erin was helped by the sections on "the trying twenties" and "catch-30." Maya is obviously living in "deadline decade" as Kate and Grace struggle between "renewal or resignation." The book was used as a tool for character development and was made available for each of the actresses to read.

CHAPTER 1B: MADE FROM THIS EARTH,
AN ANOLOGY OF WRITINGS
BY SUSAN GRIFFIIN

MADE FROM THIS EARTH is an anthology of Susan Griffin's writing between 1967 and 1982. Essentially, it traces how one book or article led to another. For this reason I have included the table of contents for Part I to serve as a chronological guide.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part contains selections from all Ms. Griffin's essays and follows her train of thought through those years. I skipped much of this section in this part of the manuscript because many of the essays later turned into books which are included under separate headings all their own. The second part is a reflection on writing and the creative process of the unsilencing (if you will) of women. The third part is a collection of poetry, plays, and stories which bear a relevance to VOICES. Many of those have been included in their complete form in this manuscript under Appendix I, "Notes and Collections for the Actresses."

The introduction to MADE FROM THIS EARTH is really a subjective autobiography by the author. As biographical material on Ms. Griffin is scant, it is included in Appendix I.

"Interviews on Abortion"

This article is based on interviews Ms. Griffin recorded between 1969 and 1970. Having had an illegal abortion some years before, she is not an objective interviewer. The poignancy of her report is only enhanced by this fact. These interviews were taken only shortly after abortion had been legalized in several states. Most of the abortions referred to by the interviewees are illegal and, therefore, carry double implications of guilt and regret.

Chiefly, these are (true) horror stories. In the first account, the woman is raped by her doctor while heavily drugged for the operation. The second woman questions whether or not she secretly wanted to get pregnant.

That's always the suspicion. But I think stating it that way is almost a Freudian simplification. I think it was more pure. I simply did not recognize that I was a woman and capable of conceiving. In some very basic way, I did not believe in my own existence.⁵

The third woman's actual abortion is less harrowing, but the aftermath proves to be the nightmare. Physically she seemed

⁵Griffin, Susan. Made From This Earth, an Anthology of Writings (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1982) p. 27.

to be doing just fine, but, as so many times happens, she sought to punish herself.

I remember doing a very strange thing--during the birthday party there were some people there whose car wouldn't start and I deliberately went down in my party clothes and really threw my back into helping them push their car down the street--it was like I was trying to punish myself and I knew I shouldn't do that. And in the middle of pushing this thing, sure enough, I got this feeling that something had come loose inside. It wasn't serious, but I did it deliberately. It was one of those deep hidden things that go on because you are made to feel such guilt.⁶

She also speaks of her initial inability to talk about her ordeal with anyone. Only her boyfriend was privy to her experience, and he left shortly after the abortion (when she seemed to be recovering physically). It was only after she finally began to talk about the abortion that her psyche began to heal.

"Rape and the Power of Consciousness"

This section became part of the book by the same name and is covered in more detail in another section of this manuscript.

"Women and Children Last"

This is a nation, and a world power, run by and for the benefit of a minority, mostly grown-up men, who complain louder than all the children in the world about a meagre welfare programme while they themselves steadily waste⁷ the world's resources in pollution and warfare.

⁶Ibid, p. 34.

⁷Ibid, p. 68.

The fact remains that in single parent households, chiefly headed by women, over 35 percent (in 1972) made less than \$2,000 per year. Only 2 percent made over \$10,000 per year. Yet the welfare system and availability of adequate day care work together to prevent these statistics from changing.

It is mainly against the unavailability of day care and the inadequacies of existing centers that Ms. Griffin complains. These two factors significantly reduce the incentive mothers feel to go out and acquire work outside the home. This keeps them dependent on society and gives their children none of the privileges and benefits most children in the United States enjoy--swimming lessons, summer camp, braces, etc. This, she holds, teaches the children that they, for some unknown reason, are undeserving of these things and are somehow inferior to the other children. It creates a whole cycle of dependance/unworthiness/dependance

Ms. Griffin points out that the laws are made with economics and convenience (for the ruling sector) in mind, not the children.

"Feminism and Motherhood"

When she wrote this article, Ms. Griffin had been divorced for six years. Her daughter was eight years old.

She is angry. She is angry with her mother for "not mothering" her. She is angry with her daughter for always interrupting her. Her daughter is well aware of this fact. From having a child, she has learned vulnerability. She argues with herself that she spoils her child, that she doesn't spend enough time with her, that she spends too much.

. . . all around me floated archetypal mothers, Italian Madonnas, the red velvet framing their breasts as unstained as their smiles, young, carefree-looking women running in slow motion across fields, swooping to caress angelic children, unbearably lithe models grinning over clean babies in clean blankets. I could not see through them. My own experience waited blind and dumb, unspoken.

. . .
And scrutiny is painful. Society's suggestion of guilt is involved. And too much suffocation. Too many contradictions. So that when a woman is finally free of her children's needs, she wants to forget. She does not want to face or express her rage. And rage must come before analysis. Even now I feel I want to escape this. It is said, 'I do not want to think about my children now.'⁸

Our society defines motherhood as sacrifice of the mother to the child. Through the child, a mother must lose herself. So, when the children leave, the mother loses herself completely. And who does this benefit? Most children in our society are totally alienated from their families by the time they leave home. And why are women blamed for this?

⁸Ibid, p. 71.

"Sacrifice and suffering are the definition of woman-
liness in our culture."⁹

We have only pieces of an analysis and the barest fragments for any vision of the way things could be. That the experience of mothering changes one; that is learned; that men, in our culture, do not learn this; that women are not in power; that some children are called bastards; that the children of fathers who will feed them and who can are well fed; that those without fathers are more often not well fed; that a mother is asked to give up her life for her children; that mothers are idealized; that mothers are hated; that children are unhappy . . . that women go mad; that the order of life as we live it now is dangerous.¹⁰

We must learn to speak the truth.

"Women and Nature"

This article also later turned into a book which is covered in more detail in a separate section of this manuscript. It is a musical and harmonic book moving through echos and choruses. She depends heavily on scientific and technical manuscripts for her facts, but the conclusions are forceful and emotional. The book is shaped by the conflict between these two voices. It is a book about culture's historical views of women and the earth and how those views are contradictory to the truth. It ends with a section on how those views are changing.

"Sadism and Catharsis: The Treatment is the Disease"

This section is a protest against pornography. It is a protest that pornography claims to be the method by which

⁹Ibid, p. 104.

¹⁰Ibid, p. 81.

society purges itself of "natural" urges, but in fact does nothing of the kind. Pornography, according to Griffin, promotes itself. It is evidence of an ideology that is sick. This ideology dooms its society to lies, injustice, and pain. This article is a precursor to Ms. Griffin's book, PORNOGRAPHY AND SILENCE.

In fact, pornography teaches men of their need for violence. It teaches women that men, were it not for these tidbits pornographers throw them, would be no better than howling wild creatures too dangerous to be let out of their cages. The absurdity of this picture is obvious. But, society buys it daily in magazines, books, movies, and nightclubs. The men themselves believe that this is truly "masculine" behavior. It is not only a depressing vision of men, but a depressing look at the culture that breeds such thought. Ms. Griffin cites the work of Norman Mailer. I am reminded of many writers and books including Henry Miller, and LORD OF THE FLIES.

Ms. Griffin points out that science helps reinforce this image:

The words of Robert Ardrey: 'The territorial imperative is as blind as a cave fish, as consuming as a furnace, and it commands beyond logic, opposes all reason, suborns all moralities, strives for no goal more sublime than survival . . .' Lionel Tiger's descriptions of the aggressiveness and dominance of male masques, Darwin's theories of the struggle for existence, Herbert Spencer's social protes, almost hysterically, man will always be violent.¹¹

¹¹Ibid, p. 104.

And what does this image promote? The need for pornography. It promotes the need for women to be protected, ironically, by men. It also promotes the image of head severed from and above body, humanity, particularly men, as two separate beings joined at the neck.

She asks: "What if we imagined our true natures, male and female, as undeniably tender?"¹²

Tenderness . . . That laced through our profoundest stories are moments of confrontation when the soul of the heroine is overwhelmed because she perceives the depths of her ability to love and this takes the greatest courage, tests her being. Oh, but this is soft-minded. This is the culture of pornography, which is the culture of sadism, is the height of soft-mindedness.¹³

In fact, pornography asks us to believe that:

. . . a man may look at a picture of a woman bound and gagged and feel sexually, but feel no desire to bind or gag or cause pain.

. . . Advertisers in the last decades have spent millions of dollars to create associations between their products and sexual pleasure in order to fabricate a need for those products. In this case the product is brutality toward women.¹⁴

"It is dangerous to confuse the therapeutic experience with the experiencing of the symptoms of one's illness."¹⁵

For catharsis is a healing; pornography is promotion.

¹² Ibid, p. 107

¹³ Ibid, p. 106.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 107.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 109.

"Pornography and Silence"

"Pornography and Silence" is the next in this anthology (it, too, is covered more completely elsewhere in this manuscript). It is a continuation of the thoughts begun in "Sadism and Catharsis." In it Ms. Griffin studies pornographic texts to reveal their symbolic codes. It gives an understanding of the fear and hatred toward women, blacks, and Jews (any minority, any "other").

"The Way of all Ideology"

What if all our efforts toward liberation are determined by an ideology which despite our desire for a better world leads us inevitably back to the old paradigm of suffering.¹⁶

As she writes about pornography (PORNOGRAPHY AND SILENCE):

I discovered that pornography itself was not so much an art form as it was an ideology . . . which, like the ideology of racism, requires the creation of another, a not-I, an enemy. This is a world view in which the self is irrevocably split so that it does not recognize its other half, and in which all phenomena, experience, and human qualities are also split into the superior and the inferior . . . For the righteous must have authority over and control of the evil.

And the other, the not-I, bears all those qualities which are lesser and bad; thus the other is the enemy who must be controlled or annihilated.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 161.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 163.

She begins to see a society that, through this ideology, fears the natural. There is a desire to hide from nature (especially the natural self) and desire to control it. This is impossible, however. We can hide, deny or reject our feelings, but we have them just the same. We are born. We grow up. We age. We die. We cannot overcome these things. We cannot control them.

. . . Through this ideology's fantasy that the other is dangerous, one sees above all a mind which fears natural life. The desire to hide from nature is the secret *raison d'être* of this ideology. Through this ideology the mind imagines that to wish is to command, or that feeling can be replaced by concept.

. . .
Because of the very persistence of feeling, the mind which wants to deny this life must give it some mode of existence. Thus the mind creates a fantasy of another being, the other, who embodies all the qualities of the denied self.¹⁸

For this same reason, creativity in this "other" is spurned. For this reason culture and nature must be kept separate, lest the space between the self and the "other" be closed.

Nature and creativity share a common origin.

And now I begin to suspect that all ideology must share a hidden tendency. For beyond a just description of the truth, an ideology holds the promise that one may control reality with the mind, assert the ideal as more real than reality, or place idea as an authority above nature, and even above our sensual experience of nature: What we see, what we hear, what we feel, taste, smell.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 164.

. . . and with this promise, always, inevitably, no matter what the ideology, the idea of the other is born. For another must become a symbol and a scapegoat for the ideologist's own denied knowledge that this ideology is not more real than reality and must bow to contradictory natural evidence.¹⁹

Persecution is bound to this ideology.

This way of thinking demands resolution and cannot see the gray areas. Everyone is either enemy or not. Everything is either good or bad. Every thought is either right or wrong. Nature is not so clearly defined. Art, creativity is rarely so defined.

Theory springs from feeling, but when it turns to ideology, it turns from feeling as well. Ideologies have the answers; they no longer need to look at, much less respond to the truth. That which ideology cannot explain is dangerous. Those who question it are its enemy, even though it itself was born from question.

Is truth more truthful when it is objective, when the emotions are not involved?

This is one of the ways ideology hides the truth. One is only allowed, through the justifying framework of ideas, to acknowledge certain emotions toward certain people. A woman can hate a man for oppressing her. Black can hate white. Working class can feel rage at the ruling class. All of these are made acceptable by theories of liberation. And as such they are liberating angers. But another whole range of emotions exists which ideology defines as unacceptable.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 166.

Suppose, for instance, one feels a love for the enemy, or a particular member of the enemy class. Suppose one feels anger and hatred toward another of the same oppressed group? Suppose a woman hates a woman? These emotions are defined as 'incorrect'. And they become hidden. Thus, I become blind toward my own anger and fear of another woman, because this feeling is not correct. In this way, by its own denials and blindnesses, each new ideology creates its own forbidden, subterranean world of reality.²⁰

Is ideology, by definition and out of necessity, closed-ended? Is it possible to exist outside of an ideology to give definition of our world? These questions go unanswered.

I can be angry. I can hate. I can rage. But the moment I have defined another being as my enemy, I lose part of myself, the complexity and subtlety of my vision. I begin to exist in a closed system. When anything goes wrong, I blame my enemy. If I wake troubled, my enemy had led me to this feeling. If I cannot sleep, it is because of my enemy. Slowly all the power in my life begins to be located outside, and my whole being is defined in relation to this outside force, which becomes daily more monstrous, more evil, more laden with all the qualities in myself I no longer wish to own. The quality of my thought then is diminished. My imagination grows small. My self seems meagre. For my enemy has stolen all these.

This is the state my mind is in now: contradiction. At one and the same time, I agree with a political description of reality and with a psychological description of reality. At one and the same time, I see that social and economic forces shape human behavior and that human behavior is shaped by the life of the child. At one and the same time, I believe that we are shaped by circumstances and that we shape the circumstances around us. In my own mind I experience the same dualism which haunts civilization between psychological thinking and political

²⁰ Ibid, pgs. 169-170.

thinking. Yet, I cannot give up either vision, because both to me are equally true and experienced as such every day, every moment.²¹

This paradox of circumstances is a major question in VOICES, symbolically argued in the lives of Erin and Kate: "Circumstance surrounded me"/We make choices."

"Everywhere the old either-or begins to break down."²² Light is either a particle or a wave. It is both. Love and hate are said to be very closely related. The "other" is a denied part of the "self." We must learn to tolerate questions, contradictions and unclarity, even paradox.

"When a movement for liberation inspires itself chiefly by a hatred for an enemy rather than from this vision of possibility, it begins to defeat itself."²³ It becomes as oppressive as its predecessor. In short, the way to overcome the trappings of ideology is to embrace all thought, all emotion.

PART II: "EVERY WOMAN WHO WRITES IS A SURVIVOR"

In the title of this part, "Every woman who writes is a survivor," we are reminded of Grace's efforts which were squelched upon the birth of her first child.

In this section, Ms. Griffin revels in the fact that more women have found a voice and that they are writing.

²¹Ibid, p. 178.

²²Ibid, p. 179.

²³Ibid.

She points out that, in so doing, women are becoming conscious of and admitting their own existence. (That they have not done so before, see sections on rape and abortion).

The same culture that fears nature and desires to prove its power over nature also seeks to silence women, as symbols of nature and the natural voice. Circumstance has shaped this silence. Women are responsible for the children. These children have needs (Maya: "endless needs") and these needs demand attention. That "motherhood is a 48 hour per day job" is a well known saying. Although it may be an exaggeration, it reveals a certain truth. There is very little time for a mother to do anything else other than be a mother. There is very little time for creativity. Moreover, up until the past few decades, it has been largely impossible for a married woman not to become a mother. Further, if she was not married, or, if married, she was unable to bear children, she was seen as a freak. People do not listen to "freaks of nature." Her voice was silenced completely or denounced as unnatural or worse.

Further, to be a writer and to have people read your work, (so that work can live) one must be published. Until the past few decades most of the publishing houses were run by men. These men did not feel that women's stories about themselves were worth publishing. These stories were

trivial. So, in order to be published, most women writers wrote about men. Their voice became unclear.

Speech is a path to knowledge. Listening is a path to courage. Writing is the path to healing.

Additional research is contained in Appendix I. It is mostly poetry by Susan Griffin that closely relates to the characters. The notes on the top of the page indicate which character. There is also a bit on Isadora Duncan, for Kate who is enthralled with her as well as for the other actresses, as she stands for a symbol of women's freedom.

There is also a section on structural artistic principles. This is a director's aid. It helped solidify ideas regarding the musical flow of the production.

The last segment is a short autobiography by Susan Griffin. It is the most concise material on her life. It is reprinted in it's entirety.

CHAPTER 1C: RAPE
THE POWER OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Every man I meet wants to protect me.

Can't figure out what from.

May West
as quoted on page 9
RAPE THE POWER OF
CONSCIOUSNESS

The premise for this book is that rape is accepted and actually encouraged by the politics of our (western) society. The basis for this theory is that (a) Men are the protectors/aggressors in our society. (b) Women are those who must be protected. They are passive in nature. (c) Women are the possessions of men. Therefore, they do not exist outside of a relationship to a male. Therefore, a woman without a male protector cannot be raped. She does not exist. (d) Rape is seen as a crime, not against a woman, but against another man. Rape is defilement of his property. (e) Rape in itself is a denial of a woman as a person.

Rape is an act of aggression in which the victim is denied her self-determination. It . . . always carries with it the threat of death. And finally, rape is a form of mass terrorism, for the victims of rape are chosen indiscriminately, but the propagandists for male supremacy broadcast that it is women who cause rape by being unchaste or in the wrong place at the wrong time--in essence, by behaving as though they were free.²⁴

But rape is not an isolated act that can be rooted out from patriarchy without ending patriarchy itself. The same men and power structure who victimize women are engaged in the act of raping Vietnam, raping Black people, and the very earth we live upon. Rape is a classic act of domination where, in the words of Kate Millet, "the emotions of hatred, contempt, and the desire to break or violate personality," take place. This breaking of the personality characterizes modern life itself. No simple reforms can eliminate rape. As the symbolic expressions of the white man hierarchy, rape is the quintessential act of our civilization, one which, Valerie Solanis warns, is in danger of "humping itself to death."²⁵

Ms. Griffin cites an attempted rapist's own confession as proof of the objectifying of women:

I grabbed her from behind, and turned her around and pushed her against the wall . . . she said, 'All right, just don't hurt me.' And I think when she said that . . . all of a sudden a thought came into my head: My God, this is a human being . . .

It was difficult for me at that time to even admit that when I was talking to a woman, I was dealing with a human being, because, if you read men's magazines, you hear about your stereo, your car, your chick . . .²⁶

²⁴ Griffin, Susan. Rape and the Power of Consciousness (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1979), p. 21.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 22.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 74.

In tune with this philosophy is the history of rape and rape cases where rapists are tried, and the women are revenged, or not revenged, as if they were possessions of their husbands, fathers, or even brothers, but not revenged as themselves, victims of great wrongdoing.

As historical proof of this theory, Ms. Griffin cites examples from the height of "chivalry" in the United States--namely, the "old South." Not only was rape used as a tool to keep women "in their place" (in the safety of the home), but also, as an excuse to persecute blacks. (Any black even suspected of looking at a white woman was subject to lynching). This of course meant dual persecution of anyone having the misfortune of being black and female. Black women were twice removed from personality and, therefore, fair game for black males, and even fairer game for white males (who frequently took advantage of the situation).

The black males, on the other hand, also made the best of the situation by using white females as targets for their frustration against a white (male dominated) society. In SOUL ON ICE, Eldridge Cleaver says succinctly:

Somehow I arrived at the conclusion that, as a matter of principle, it was of paramount importance for me to have an antagonistic, ruthless attitude toward white women . . . Rape was an insurrectionary act. It delighted me that I was

defying and trampling upon the white man's law, upon his system of values and that I was defiling his women--and this point, I believe, was the most satisfying to me because I was very resentful over the historical fact of how the white man has used the black woman.²⁷

This attitude of course was in perfect keeping with the white man's theory (that the black man is a dangerous animal), proving the inferiority of the blacks and keeping the women frightened and dependant.

In VOICES, this reversal of victim/criminal is exemplified by Maya's tale of her college battle in the Dean's office (beginning p. 42). Just as in rape, the victims are left alone, questioning their own guilt, and questioning the worth of their own souls, "We were left . . . with . . . a strange echoing in our ears; the crowds were back inside.

This is very similar to the tales of rape cases tried before 1978 (and even after) where the victim finds herself on the witness stand, staring at her attacker and trying to defend herself according to a moral code, which, even then was shifting, becoming less defined. Cases such as this too frequently ended in dismissal as the court determined that either (a) the woman had provoked her attacker by wearing and acting in a provocative manner (meaning anything from stripping on the sidewalk to having taken a bath yesterday):

²⁷Ibid, p. 19.

(b) the woman was incapable of being raped because she frequently engaged in extramarital sex (or was simply no longer a virgin); (c) that the man was a sexual libertine and was not guilty on the grounds that he was simply confused as to the woman's wishes; (d) the man was innocent on the grounds that when a woman says "no" she means "yes" as it is only proper and decent behavior for both the woman and the man.

This history, the history of women in all but a few cultures is portrayed vividly in Unit 9 (We were sold) in VOICES which recounts that history, beginning:

Circumstance surrounded us

We were carried off in ships

and sold.

It is interesting to note that it is Erin who opens the unit, not Maya (the role which was originally cast black). This clarifies the idea that all women, not just black slaves are considered possessions. In this unit, we see the black and women's movements for freedom and equality closely bonded. If we can expand the idea further to include every human living, regardless of sex, race, or religion, the play will grow in scope. This is in keeping with Ms. Griffin's philosophy (see notes on PORNOGRAPHY AND SILENCE).

1971. For me a year of rages. We rose like a chorus of Erinyes. The furies. All that had been

held back, the stories we never told; what we did not see or refused to recognize. And none of us alone in this. Now any woman, a neighbor, one's blood relatives, strangers become allies, part of an unspoken network of thought. A whole new connective tissue began to grow between each of us and the women around us and a past we now claimed as our own and the lives of our daughters, or girls unborn which we wanted to imagine as different from our own, unscarred, not damaged by the list of atrocities we could suddenly now name.²⁸

To accomplish this, it was my goal to have this section sound like one voice. Therefore, the speeches were further broken up and occasionally spoken at the same time, so that it becomes impossible for the audience to distinguish the different voices and different characters. In addition, the actresses themselves are to become more neutral, dropping ideosyncracies and the accents of their characters. The effect is to be like that of a chorus wherein all voices are blended in pitch, rhythm and tempo. This is not to sound monotone, however, rather harmonic and compulsive. It is in this section that we hear the fugal repetition most clearly so that, as the unit changes, we hear an echo in the silence.

Care must be taken in this unit to avoid the obvious distanced feelings of martyrdom: sarcasm and hatred, the feelings of people who hear of injustice, but are not actually affected. The key emotion in this passage should be fear. Illustrated in the poetry is fear of rape, fear of

²⁸Ibid, p. 23.

pain, fear of losing one's self and one's family, fear of imprisonment, and fear of isolation.

The train of patriarchal thought which supports rape is the same which binds Erin to an "other", without whom she feels lost and inhuman, not even alive. Her life, from the beginning, was tied to a male "other" whom she considered not only her protector, but her better. For Erin to discover that her brother was totally incapable of dealing with the realities of life is for her to realize that she is incapable as well. It is only her need to "go on," with or without courage (as Kate says) that keeps her alive.

Creation. One allows. One follows feelings. They open and reveal deeper feeling and finally deeper meaning, and finally at some point those meanings began to transform and transmute.²⁹

This is what Rosalinde will chant throughout the play, "Impulses, Impulses, we must listen to our impulses." Meaning that we should listen and change with our hearts as well as our minds. But, these impulses are lost in the ideology of patriarchal thought. We learn to accept ideas of the world from outside ourselves. We learn that our vision of ourselves is incorrect. We learn to look at

²⁹Ibid, p. 19.

ourselves through the eyes of another. Finally, we do not know ourselves. No one knows us. We are lost. The women in VOICES find themselves.



CHAPTER ID: WOMEN AND NATURE
THE ROARING INSIDE HER

Women and Nature helped me to define the overall shape of the play in regard to metaphysical cycles. In the play and the book, (a) matter (b) separates only to be (c) restructured into a (d) new vision. This is very similar to the process each character experiences. First, they take stock of themselves, chiefly in physical and environmental terms. That "self" is lost to emotion, the emotion is encountered, producing a new concept of the original self. In many ways that self is no different, only different parts are emphasized to create a new image.

Women and Nature

I was concerned that the ecological movement had often placed the burden for solving its problems, those that this civilization has with nature, on women. I said in that lecture (on women and ecology) that women were always being asked to clean up, and to this I added the observation that men consider to be more material than themselves, or more a part of nature. The fact that man does not consider himself a part of nature, but indeed considers himself superior to matter, seemed to me to gain significance when placed against man's attitude that woman is both inferior to him and closer to nature.³⁰

This was the springboard for the thoughts in Susan Griffin's book, Women and Nature, the Roaring Inside Her. The book is humanity's scrapbook, much like Voices is a collage of its characters' memories. It calls as its witnesses such unlikely sources as famous paintings, The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology, Surgeon's manuals, The Journals of Lewis and Clark, and farming journals.

Women and Nature embraces and illuminates the anger and conflict so central to Voices. The anger, according to Ms. Griffin is borne out of years of injustices and misunderstanding much like the profusion of hostility felt by the blacks before it was violently unleashed during the 1960's. The anger of women, particularly Maya, is savage and brutal. However, this anger, as we see in Women and Nature is in direct contrast to the political conditioning

³⁰Ibid, p. 26.

that women have been subjected to for centuries. Therein lies the conflict. Traditional conditioning teaches women passivity and dependence, denial of sexual urges, and separation from emotion. These are the things expressed by the "voices," both past and present.

This conflict is chiefly internal, yet leaks out in other disguises. Erin's surfaces as a suicidal desire when she loses her strength/her brother. Kate's explodes in overbearing bursts and defensive questions, contrasted by soft reflection. Grace uses her anger efficiently as an umbrella for her children and as a shield to fear. Rosalinde is yet too young to accurately remember or question her heritage, so conflict is generally tossed flippantly to the deciding winds of her moods (or the mood of her "group"). Maya studies her conflicts. She is angry over the "death of the American family," or her idea of the American family, yet cannot make that dream live in her own life because of the resentment she feels toward its demands.

In some way, each of these women both nurture and reject the idea that "woman is nature." This idea may be true--in that humanity is part of nature and vice versa. Unfortunately, as Ms. Griffin observes, both (women and nature) are seen as existing below men; and are, therefore, subserviant to his demands.

Woman = Nature = Earth

Where patriarchal thought uses this idea toward the exploitation of both (women and "his" earth) the play and the book seem to use it as a reason to preserve both, as well as proof that neither can be duplicated, artificially enhanced, or even artificially brought to bear at will after too much forced and unchecked use. This idea is underlined by the ways in which man has chosen to make "his" possessions dependant on him. To the earth, this comes in the form of fertilizers and pesticides. For women, the control and dependance is both physical and pychological. Not only is "she" dependant for drugs (especially during times of stress such as childbirth), but also for food, clothing, housing, etc., as well as protection from the unknown, protection from the "nature" of man himself (see, Rape, the Power of Consciousness).

In Voices, the idea of preservation and independence is described (appropriately) in much more physical terms. In one of Rosiland's most endearing and revealing speeches she "dreams" of giving birth to herself. In her dream, her father is present, but seems mostly superfluous to the action. It is Rosalinde and her child (herself) who provide the impetus and the action. This makes their accomplishments both joyous and triumphant much in the same way that Rosalinde feels her purchase of the motorcycle as a triumph.

"One of the loudest complaints which this book makes about patriarchal thought (or the thought of civilized man) is that it claims to be objective, and separated from emotion 31

. . . to him

if you are tired, you sleep.

I have never been able to

penetrate the

simplicity of his logic

which is

after all

the logic

of most of the world.

VOICES pp. 19 & 20.

"It is decided that that which cannot be measured and reduced to number is not real." 32

Objective! Objective

I screamed. No, I am not

objective

on the death

or the life of

the American family.

My mother was not objective.

My grandmother was not objective.

VOICES pp. 25 & 26.

³¹Ibid, p. XV.

³²Ibid, p. 11.

"It is said that the sensation of color is produced by the action of these particles on the retina of the eye. That the particles are real, but that the sensation they produce is not." 33

"And it is seen that the senses are deceptive, and the ancient texts reveal that of understanding there are two kinds: one authentic and the other bastard, and sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch are all bastard understandings." 34

What Ms. Griffin attempts to do (and, indeed does by critical, and emotional acclaim) is to unify fact and emotion. She uses the facts, memories, to call up an emotional response which is chiefly anger. In this way, Women and Nature and Voices proceed along the same emotional course. Both begin with seemingly random recollections and move from confusion, to questioning, to isolation, to anger, and finally to resolution, calmness, and a sense of unity.

This process, in Women and Nature, progresses in four steps:

The first, "Matter," explores analogies between women and nature and the earth itself.

Into her soil he places his plow. He labors. He plants. He sows. By the sweat of his brow, he makes her yield. She opens her broad lap to him. she smiles on him. She prepares him a feast . . .

³³Griffin, Susan. Women and Nature, the Roaring Inside Her (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, P. 12.

³⁴Ibid.

Whatever she brings forth he calls his own. He has made her conceive. His land is a mother . . . without reason, she refuses to yield. She is fickle . . . He is determined he will master her. He will make her produce at will.³⁵

It is particularly interesting to note the section on "The Show Horse" pages 76-82 in Women and Nature, as this methaphor is used by Maya in relation to her relationship with her husband.

One day
on a drive in the country
in back of an orchard
I saw one old
swaybacked
horse in a yard
fenced to small. The
animal wasn't
complaining or even
moving just
standing dead
still while her
tail paced, her eyes
were frantic with
hatred. She was
"domesticated."

³⁵Ibid, p. 53.

Girls ought to be active and dilligent; nor is that all; they should be early subjected to restraint. This misfortune, if it really be one, is inseparable from their sex, nor do they ever throw it off but to suffer more cruel evils. They must be subject, all their lives, to the most constant and severe restraint, which is that of decorum: it is, therefore, necessary to accustom them early to such confinement, that it may not afterwards cost them too dear; and to the suppression of their caprices that they may the more readily submit to the will of others.³⁶

Jean Jacques Rausseau,
Emile

It is this submission to the "will of others" which causes Maya to feel "mad." Then, as a result of this same conditioning, she almost immediately, guiltily asks herself, "What kind of mother am I?"

The second step is "Separation," separation between "his vision," and "our voice," or, rather, factual and emotional views of the world. This unnatural separation is seen as the basis for patriarchal thought, and thus the ruling thought thus far. It is this doctrine which preaches separation of womb from body, mind from emotion, and body from soul. It teaches that separated from a mate, a woman is nothing, and that joined to a mate, she is a lesser, worse part of him. It teaches that she should cater to his needs and wishes in defiance of her own.

. . . in that moment of carnal knowledge both husband and wife are changed forever; he can never return to ignorance, she never returns to virginity . . . (And the body of the wife, it is set down, is part of the body of the husband. And it is recorded that of that body, she is the flesh, and he is the head.)³⁷

³⁶Ibid, p. 79.

³⁷Ibid, p. 100.

Her body is a vessel of death. Her beauty is a lure. Her charm a trap. She is irresistible. Her voice is deceit. Her word a plot. Her gesture a snare. She plans her seduction. She cannot help herself her mind is a theatre of seduction . . . Her body was made for seduction.³⁸

It is suggested that, while "she" must be joined to another in order to service, so does that junction doom her mate to unwilling destruction. Ms. Griffin also points to proof of this theory in the doctrine of the church in the story of Adam and Eve.

This separation of self in the form of separation from a mate is identical to that which is felt so strongly in the middle of the play when all the women feel that they are "alone." It is at this point that each either marries, finds a new lover, or joins a group. In any case, each tries to join herself to an "other." For Erin, this separation occurs again, and most strongly, on the occasion of Eric's suicide. She feels her life suddenly is worthless and seriously seeks to rejoin her other, her better, half through death. Erin even looks jealously out her window at couples whom she sees as complete, the couples who "hear only each other speak." She has lost her rational self and now her emotional self had become dumb without anyone to whom to talk.

³⁸Ibid, p. 83.

For Erin, the news of Eric's death translates as total devastation. Her world has gone, in one instant, from full, rich and colorful to an empty dull gray, hazy with the sense that her only "safety net" has been permanently removed. It was Eric who kept careful vigilance over her life, kept her safe from dark places, and warm from the coldness of the world. Eric filled her silences and determined her reality. ("His knowledge".) He was her ears and her reason, her controller and her reason to keep living. It is ironic that he was not just lousy at all of these things, but probably the least capable person in her life. It is clear from the beginning that she is the stronger person, and clearly illustrated in the relationship with her grandmother.

The third step, "Passage," separates "our" consciousness from the consciousness of patriarchy. The "Passage" "teacher her . . .to face her secret feelings." This step separates what women have been taught they are, taught they feel, and have been conditioned to think from what they really are, feel, and think. This process is described as "coming through a labyrinth," and can be considered the crisis portion of the book. This section is the shortest, the most confusing, and, in many ways, the most critical. It distinguishes those things which have kept women separate from each other. It begins to define that which makes all women throughout history the same. (The latter will be defined more clearly in the fourth section, "Her Vision".)

Where mirrors are like eyes of men, and the women reflect the judgments of mirrors. Where the women stand next to each other, continue dressing next to each other, speak next to each other as if men were still with them. As if men could overhear their words. The room of the dressing where women sometimes speak in code. The room where each makes her own translation. The room where the women keep to themselves and she teaches her daughter to put on make-up. The room of the half real. Where the women partly see each other. Where the women partly laugh. Partly laugh at the shapes they see in the mirror and the girls once reflected there.³⁹

This self-reflection corresponds, in the play, to Maya's jail experience wherein she is forced to find the "dark side" of herself. She begins to see that the enemy is not necessarily those who would ignore or suppress the truth (the students' findings), but the conditioned inner responses that kept her from truth in the first place.

Where we go into darkness. Where we embrace darkness. Where we lie close to darkness, breath when darkness breathes and find darkness inside ourselves. The room of the darkness of women. Where we are not afraid. Where joy is just under the surface. Where we laugh. Where laughter fills us utterly when we see what we thought was horrible. Where our demands are endlessly received. Where revelation fills us with glee.⁴⁰

The overwhelming feeling in this portion of Women and Nature is of a compelling, magnetic fear. The same riveting fear that compels us to continue to watch The Twilight Zone, or draws us to the edge of a high cliff even though we feel as if we will fall off the edge at any moment.

³⁹Ibid, p. 155.

⁴⁰Ibid, p. 159.

The shape of a cave, we say, or the shape of a labyrinth. The way we came here was dark. Space seemed to close in on us. We thought we could not move forward. We had to shed our clothes. We had to leave all we brought with us. And when finally we moved through this narrow opening, our feet reached for ledges, under was an abyss, a cavern stretching farther than we could see. Our voices echoed off the walls. We were afraid to speak. This darkness led to more darkness, until darkness leading to darkness was all we knew.⁴¹

Rosa: So I was
 cleansed and cleansed and cleansed
 until I was
 bored to death.
 My head was so clear
 I heard
 my voices
 speaking to me
 loudly: Rosalinde
 they said
 your commune
 days
 are over.

Grace: Here I was
 having gotten
 what I wanted,
 not knowing what

⁴¹Ibid, p. 159.

exactly to
do. I said to myself
I am tired.

. . .

Erin: I am
alone.

. . .

Grace: Mightn't I just lie down now?
Mightn't I just float downstream
like Ophelia?

. . .

Maya: I do what is necessary
I do not stop
to pause
while writing the graph of my life.

. . .

Grace: People are born and all of us die.
The generations pass
each wearing new costumes
so at first we do not
recognize the
similarity.⁴²

⁴²Griffin, Voices, pp. 103-106.

But in this nothing we find what we did not know existed. With our hands, we begin to trace faint images etched into the walls. And now, beneath these images we can see the gleam of older images. And these peel back to reveal the older still. The past, the dead, once breathing, the forgotten, the secret, the buried, the once blood and bone, the vanished, shimmering now like an answer from these walls, bright and red. Drawn by the one who came before. And before her. And before. Back to the beginning. To the one who first swam from the mouth of this cave. And now we know all she knew, see the newness of her vision. What we did not know existed but saw as children, our whole lives drawn here, image over image, past time, beyond space.⁴³

This section of Women and Nature is full of circular images and images of the sea. These are the images I hoped to borrow for much of the play, particularly in the last few units. Both rhythmically and physically (through blocking) I hoped to emphasize the circular nature of the play, as well as clarifying the characters' relationships toward each other.

The fourth section is "Her Vision, now she sees through her own eyes," "The separate rejoined," and "Matter revisited." Here is the voice of healing. First there is the naming of injustices, the uncovering and voicing of truth. "It is said of us that we had nothing of value to say . . . That left to our own devices, we lack passion . . . That we needed moreover to be protected from the

⁴³Griffin, Women and Nature, p. 159-160.

harshness of life." There is pain, anger, loneliness from separation, misunderstanding, doubt, and fear. This is the voice of emotion, the voice of nature and the earth. The images in this section are volatile, full, and emotional. "Space filled with the presence . . .," "never separate from matter;" "ringing with laughter;" "filled with the love;" "Starlight in darkness;" "Space lit up with her thoughts;" "Space shaped by her anger;" "Her feeling of having room;" "A motion circling the void;" "motion;" "electrified."

These, too, are the voices of nature, voices which have never been silent, only ignored. These voices demand attention, change, and respect. In point of fact, Ms. Griffin refers to Mt. Vesuvius:

This story is told to us about the mountain. That one day suddenly with no cause fire began to pour from her. That those living trustingly at her sides were frozen in their steps by the hot ash which she gave off, that without warning a terrible death issued from her and stopped a whole city. That at that moment when she chose to strike, food was being set forth on tables and daily life continued innocently. Thus when we are shown the form of the dog whose agony was preserved forever in this ash, we see why she cannot be trusted.

They asked her to feel sorry for their plight How dominance had been expected of them That hence they were not responsible for what they did or said That one could not change overnight That she must be more patient 'You are unreasonable,' they told her

Yet beneath this layer of ash, which the rain made into mud, and the sun dried for centuries, we find another story. We discover that the ash did not come suddenly and all at one moment. But first a black cloud appeared in the sky above the mountain. And that afterward ash fell over the city for two days, until the sky became darker and darker, and the ash piled thicker and thicker. That those who perished would not leave, but chose to stay in their houses, to guard their possessions; that the dog died in that agony was chained to the door; that those who died, died struggling for breath poisoned from her fumes, that only at the last moment must they have wanted to flee, only then believed in the power of this mountain to change their lives.⁴⁴

Clarity comes from vision through emotion. That emotion should neither be denied nor hidden. "We stare in almost disbelief. We do not rush to speech. We allow ourselves to be moved. We do not attempt objectivity."⁴⁵ Emotion gives way to intuition. Intuition gives way to truth.

FOREST

The way we stand, you can see we have grown up this way together, out of the same soil, with the same rains, leaning in the same way toward the sun. See how we lean together in the same direction. How the dead limbs of one of us rest in the branches of another. How those branches have grown around the limbs. How the two are inseparable. And if you look you can see the different ways we have taken this place into us. Magnolia, loblolly bay, sweet gum, . . . bishop pine. And we are various, and amazing in our variety, and our differences multiply, so that edge after edge of the endlessness of possibility is exposed. You know we have grown this way for

⁴⁴Ibid, pp. 183-184.

⁴⁵Ibid, p. 197.

years. And to no purpose you can understand. Yet what you fail to know we know, and the knowing is in us, how we have grown this way, why these years were not one of them heedless, why we shaped the way we are, not all straight to your purpose, but to ours. And how we are each purpose, how each cell, how light and soil are in us, how we are in the soil, how we are in the air, how we are both infinitesimal and great and how we are infinitely without any purpose you can see, in the way we stand, each alone, yet none of us separable, none of us beautiful when separate but all exquisite as we stand, each moment heeded in this cycle, no detail unlovely.⁴⁶

This is the feeling and image I hope to capture after the last lines of the play are spoken. This should be in direct contrast to the opening of the play when each character is introduced in her separate pool of light, surrounded by darkness. They should all stand together, forming one unified picture. The line (for the audience's eye) should be unbroken so that, although the characters do not touch, or even look at each other, there is a bond between them. To emphasize this, we use two images. First, we use the circle as the last lines of the play are spoken. Then, in darkness, the women move to one line facing the audience in front of all obstructions. The lights should be very bright, and warm, also in direct contrast to the beginning which is dark and cool.

⁴⁶Ibid, pp. 220-221.

Although Ms. Griffin makes the observation in this book (and in Voices) in direct reference to women, I think the lessons to be learned should have a much larger audience. At the basis of her arguments are the concepts of naturalism and causality, along with a healthy respect for nature, the individual, and the relationship of one to the other. Certainly, this should not be restricted to any one section of humanity.

CHAPTER IE: PORNOGRAPHY AND SILENCE:
CULTURE'S REVENGE
AGAINST NATURE

One is used to thinking of pornography as part of a larger movement toward sexual liberation. In the idea of the pornographic image we imagine a revolution against silence. We imagine that eros will be set free first in the mind and then in the body by this revelation of a secret part of the human soul. And the pornographer comes to us, thus, through history, portrayed as not only a "libertine," a man who will brave injunctions and do as he would, but also a champion of political liberty. For within our idea of freedom of speech we would include freedom of speech about the whole life of the body and even the darkest parts of the mind.

And yet, . . . to move toward human liberation, we must begin to see the pornography and the small idea of "liberty" are opposed to that liberation.

. . . pornography is an expression not of human erotic feeling and desire, and not of a love of the life of the body, but of fear of bodily knowledge, and a desire to silence eros.

Further, it is an expression of oppression, taking revenge on nature. Bodies in pornography "mastered, bound, silenced, beaten, and even murdered, are symbols for natural feeling

⁴⁷ Griffin, Susan. Pornography and Silence, Culture's Revenge Against Nature (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981), p. 1.

and the power of nature, which the pornographic mind hates and fears."⁴⁸

"We will come to see that 'the woman' in pornography, like 'the Jew' in anti-Semitism and 'the black' in racism, is simply a lost part of the soul, that region of being the pornographic or the racist mind would forget and deny."⁴⁹ In pornography, the woman is an object. She is a thing with only a body, no soul. This is the lesson that pornography teaches. It teaches that a woman exists only for a man's pleasure. It teaches that a wife's body is her husband's possession. It teaches that she must be mastered and controlled.

"It is the pornographer's idea of love which creates this illusion."⁵⁰ It is his love of the physical, not the spiritual being. Thus the content of his love is reduced to the purely physical. This, however, is only an expression of denial of self, denial of will and desire. She becomes an image of himself, especially those parts of himself that he would deny. She is an object which must be mastered, as he would master the feelings within himself.

⁴⁸Ibid, p. 2.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid, p. 37.

So, the pornographer, despite his conscious intention to make a woman an object, would give the woman he creates a will because she is a mirror of himself. And then in fantasy he would master that will. He is in a terrible conflict. He would let his body speak; he would let the knowledge of the body in himself live; and yet this is also precisely the knowledge of which he is terrified. And so he tries to resolve this conflict by depicting the body without a spirit. He tries to separate culture from nature. He would have what is natural in him be mute. But what is natural speaks in him. Therefore, he gives "woman" a voice in pornography, but he gives her this voice only in order to silence her.⁵¹

Ms. Griffin draws evidence of this objectification from the accounts of pornographic dolls. These dolls are built so that they resemble a "real" woman as closely as possible, only better, because she is " ' unresisting and complacent, ' 'all obsequious' to his 'wanton will.' "⁵² These dolls are in evidence in novels, historical accounts and pornographic shops. Even as the pornographic mind shapes the object, it sets the scene for his dissatisfaction with it. This dissatisfaction, rage, is not for the fact that the dolls are not real, but because, in their complacency, they are defiled by his sexual will. So, "from the moment the mind decides to deny nature through culture, it becomes committed to an ordeal of cruelty and suffering."⁵³

51Ibid, p. 40

52Ibid, p. 41.

53Ibid, p. 46.

This cruelty, in the form of abduction, verbal abuse, physical torture, bondage, and even murder has its ultimate enactment in the story of Christ's crucifixion. "Cruelty, the most numinous transgression of pornography, is identical to that transgression which men played out against the body of a god who was to have redeemed the human soul from the original sin of carnality.⁵⁴

" . . . not only the objectification but the mere revelation of a woman's body is a degradation. The moment at which flesh, the material aspect of human nature, is revealed is humiliating to a mind which defines the body as degraded." ⁵⁵ Thus, sado-masochism is said to include both active and passive (voyeurism) participants.

But this reduction of the soul within the body, by making a whole being into a thing, is no accidental by-product of the pornographic mind. Rather, it is a central part of its purpose. The pornographic mind would separate culture from nature. It would desacralize matter. It would punish matter with image. Pornography's revenge against nature is precisely to deprive matter of spirit Yet here we must remind ourselves once again that in pornography a "woman" is not a woman. She is a symbol. She is denied self that is human. As we look more deeply into a culture which has fashioned itself after the pornographic mind, we will find that sadism and masochism have not been derived from the biological behavior of men and women, as some theorists have supposed;

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid, pp. 47-48.

but rather that the ideas of masculine behavior and of female behavior have been shaped by culture to embody sadomasochism.⁵⁶

"The obscene mind makes an alliance with the Judeo-Christian vision of the world. Both render death to the things of the material world."⁵⁷ Thus, nothing in the material world is worshiped, even beheld as valuable. In this way beauty, animals, children, even the earth itself is seen as dangerous. All these things which would produce a natural desire in the beholder are transformed into a path to hell and everlasting damnation. Hell is, therefore, a place where bodies are tortured forever through "frustrated desire."

Heart, we read in the book of symbols, a presence at the center. As in Unto whom all hearts are open. The heart in the body defined as the vital function, the seat of life. Man with the head, the place of lifeblood, woman with the heart. The heart is the essence, the heart of the matter, of winter, of the artichoke, of all things. And the inner being (the sage has even orifices in her heart, all open). My heart was not in it, she said. The soul described as the eye of the heart or the heart's vision. Heart, the place between head and sex, partaking of both. Heart knowledge. The authority of the heart. And the place of joining. Defined as the center, the seed, the flowering place. She took heart, we say, she was lion-hearted, brave. And we say Nature's mighty heart. Heartbeat. Pit-a-pat, as in Dear heart, Sweetheart. She is all heart, we say, I poured out my heart to her; he lost his heart. The place of

⁵⁶Ibid, p. 49.

⁵⁷Ibid, p. 71.

longing. (Where the heart is in flames, we read, we find great ardor.) As in the inflamed heart of Venus. The burning heart. We say, to be loved, to be filled with light, to love, to illumine. As in her tears pierced my heart, or my heart, the place of compassion, we say, went out of her. Or my wild heart. Wild nights, she said. As in the secrets of the heart. (In my heart, I know, she said) and the heart's language.⁵⁸

The heart is the expression of the soul. However, in the pornographers vision this heart is murdered. The objects have no hearts, or their hearts are dead, so that sympathy with the victims is also killed.

Therefore, pornography, in itself, is sadism and all womankind is its victim. This is because, in the face of pornography, it is every woman's body that is revealed (revelation being the equivalent to defilement, and masochistic acts). If this is true, however, man too is defiled by this action inasmuch as the woman's body is a symbol "for a man's hidden vulnerability."

For this reason, pornography is ugly. It is ugly out of necessity and out of a further attempt to kill the heart, which beauty and nature would evoke in its witnesses.

We read that a pink triangle pointing downward was sewn on the uniforms of homosexual prisoners in the Nazi concentration camps. (The downward-pointing triangle meaning the feminine, the yoni, the shape of the vulva, mouth, that place of darkness, from which we were, that place of birth,

⁵⁸Ibid, p. 81.

the dark memories, the dark side, the abyss.) And we read that a brown triangle pointing downward was worn by the Gypsy prisoner. And a red by the political prisoner. And black by the shiftless. And green . . .

And of the triangle which points upward we learn that this means the masculine, the sky, sunlight, logos, that this means spirit and the flame of knowledge.

And of two triangles touching, we read this means death. And we learn that two triangles, one pointing downward and one pointing upward, placed on top of each other, were worn by the Jewish prisoners of the concentration camp. (The Mogen David meaning as above, so below.) The union of opposites. Described as male and female (the hermaphrodite), as the spirit in the body (the cultured woman, the female man). Each being the image of the other. Interpenetration and knowing. Meaning nature who knows nature, who sees nature. As in self-knowledge, and we say, I am the star which goes with thee and shines out of the depths.⁵⁹

There are two kinds of delusion. Private delusion is seen as madness because it separates that person from the rest. The other is mass delusion, "it consists of a shared set of beliefs which are untrue and which distort reality." Pornography, racism, anti-Semitism are all forms of mass delusion.

The question Ms. Griffin asks is "But are we arguing that because of the prevalence of these delusional systems they are an inevitable outcome of civilization?"⁶⁰ Her answer is no. Civilization has a profound influence over

⁵⁹Ibid, p. 154.
⁶⁰Ibid, p. 157.

the way we think and what we think, but it is not inevitable that we live in the shadow of delusion.

In fact, what she sees is two deluded groups, racists and pornographers, who are obsessed with each other.

For the pornographic mind and the racist mind are really identical, both in the symbolic content and in the psychological purposes of the delusory systems they express. And now, if we undertake to study this mind, we shall begin to see precisely how a cultural delusion gradually shapes itself into such devastating social events as the mass murder of European Jewry, which we have come to know as the Holocaust.⁶¹

She labels this mind the "chauvinist" mind and includes any attitude which disregards the individual and acknowledges only the projected qualities of the group. In this way, any person can be reduced to an object in the regard that he has lost personality and his individuality. He has lost his spirit. Furthermore, each individual is portrayed as evil, having only the attributes of his given group, different from the 'norm'. Traditionally the chauvinist mind sees this "other" as evil, stupid, and morally and socially inferior to himself.

In the chauvinist mind, all three (women, Jews, and blacks) are described as possessing what may be called an animal cunning. All three, for instance, are called liars. Schopenhauer calls women the masters of deceit. Hitler calls the Jew a master of lies, and the racist invents the figure of the black trickster, the con artist who can never be believed.⁶²

⁶¹Ibid, p. 158.

⁶²Ibid, p. 163.

The next step is for the chauvinist mind to believe that this group of people (which his own mind has created) is a threat to his religion and a desecration to his God. "Thus, as the anti-Semite tells us he hates the Jewish intellectual, he speaks of the 'materialism' of his thought. . . . Thus we are given a portrait of the Jew as a brutal man, without Christian compassion, whose spirituality only serves mammon. Similarly, and in the same historical period, womens' intelligence was described as essentially devilish." 63

The female is "little more than an animal," he declares, she is "nothing." Thus is one stroke he has told us that women and bestiality do not exist.

But the more the chauvinist mind denies the existence of power of nature, the more he fears this power. The pornographer, the racist, the anti-Semite, begin to believe their own delusions. The chauvinist begins to believe he is endangered by the dark other he has invented . . . the other must now symbolize the chauvinist's own fearfulness.

A monstrous black man threatens a defenseless white woman. But now we can see the meaning of the drama. Here are two aspects of the self personified. In the black man, the force of desire, of appetite, of wanting, is played out, and in the white woman, an awareness of vulnerability, weakness, mortality, fear can be lived. Through the forms of these two imaginary figures the memories of infancy and the knowledge of the body return to haunt the mind which would erase them. 64

63 Ibid, p. 164.

64 Ibid, p. 165.

The chauvinist mind is full of contradictions. The contradictions give rise to fear which breeds hate. Because that hate cannot be directed toward himself, its cause is projected onto an "other" who becomes the target of his vehemence. "A common defense of the mind wishing to control the power of nature is to claim a supernatural knowledge of that power. In this way the most unnatural acts are defended as acts of nature's will."⁶⁵ So, the chauvinist mind uses this excuse to manipulate those he has transformed into his nature. Then, it is "natural" for him to control this "other". Thus does the chauvinist mind manipulate his own experience of nature.

The circle that mouth makes. O. The body speaks, the cry at the center of, voice; my feeling goes out to go; kiss, I take you into me. (And the elephants stand in a circle, they say, to protect their young.) And I take your left hand with my right hand and your right hand with my left hand, the circular structure of waves of sound: resonance. From the one to the other to the one again. Let the circle be unbroken the circuitous path to the center I look at you the coincidence I see the long trail of your coming. The spiral of DNA. The calculus of variations. (Round being the most natural of shapes, they say, the egg, they mention, the womb, we know the round belly, we remember, the stomach, the round grave.) Fate. Capable of being the mother of the world--the flower of possibility. Everything its own vortex. May it be beautiful above me. May it be beautiful behind me. Before me. The energy of the leaf, below me, into the air, around me, into

⁶⁵Ibid, p. 169.

the water, into the earth again to the root of the leaf. Ceaseless change and becoming. (The circular tree trunk telling time, the diameter of star light, telling time.) as in "How long has this star been shining?" or Where does this light travel? We ask, or What space is in this circle? The circle from which I came. and the law of gravitation. Why I am here and not there. The circle which means all bodies in the universe attract one another. And the pilgrim circles the heart of the universe which is her own heart. And the circle whose center is everywhere but whose circumference is nowhere. As in Zero. As in the terrifying void. As in emptiness. Closing. Opening. And all circled around her, the continual continuity, and responded to her, the infinite finitude. As in shell, cell, cervix, as in star, snowflake, crystal, as in atom, as in flower. The infinite As a whirlwind as opposed to the bound shakes my heart and the sound which speaks our names.⁶⁶

Legal silencing of the "other" has been used for centuries by the chauvinist. If he could not silence their individuality through threat, torture or murder, he has used laws to keep those voices silent.

These several centuries of the silencing of women are a palpable presence in our lives--the silence we have inherited has become part of us. It covers the space in which we live; it is a blank screen, and onto this screen a fantasy which does not belong to women is projected: the silence of women the very surface on which pornography is played. We become other than ourselves.⁶⁷

The silencing works to change that "other" into what the chauvinist mind decides it is. The woman, the Jew, and the black no longer defines him/her. That definition is

⁶⁶Ibid, p. 200.

⁶⁷Ibid, p. 201.

quiet (and eventually lost) so that the chauvinist voice gives him/her shape and existence.

The image of woman as void is a dominant theme of pornographic culture. A woman is less. She is less strong, less intelligent, less creative, less spiritual. She does not exist for herself. Rather, she is a shadow, whose existence depends on the real existence of men. She exists for men and is not, in Freud's words, "an end in herself."

Therefore the pornographic mind conceives of female sexuality as a kind of bottomless pit, and empty space which craves male presence, and which cannot exist without the male.

It is hardly coincidental that pornography's expression of female nothingness should erase the identity and presence of a female body and replace this with male identity and male presence. For finally we discover that pornography's adulation of the sex goddess and pornographic culture's denial of the female self are essentially expressions of sadomasochism. Through the ordinary or the extraordinary woman, a denied self is humiliated and punished.⁶⁸

Rose of the eye of the hand of the mouth. The scent of the rose. The enrapturing scent. . . . Rose of the eye of the hand of the mouth. How shall we name thee, rose. By the song like a rose on our lips, rose, who is in us, wondrous, large rose, as large as we can imagine, rose who is in us, rose that we are, partly open, blooming, bloomed.⁶⁹

How can a soul be taken, and where does the soul go, and how can my soul leave me?

We never lose the soul. But we do lose knowledge of the soul: we cease to know ourselves, we become ignorant, and we cease to know others.

⁶⁸Ibid, p. 217, 218.

⁶⁹Ibid, p. 250.

Others cease to know us. We begin to believe the world is soulless, and our belief makes this true.⁷⁰

Pornography creates a world full of soulless beings. The pornographer steals not only the soul of the oppressed, but his own, as he denies his nature. However, "we cannot say we have entirely forgotten. The heart. The circle. We have emblems. The triangle. We have knowledge. The rose. We have choice."⁷¹ We have the choice to deny pornography or deny nature.

⁷⁰Ibid, p. 263.
⁷¹Ibid, p. 265.

CHAPTER II: ANALYSIS

This analysis form (and content) are based on the Hodge style as explained in his book Play Directing Analysis Communication and Style. I have always preferred that my analysis remain in an outline form for quick reference and clarity. Nuances, and interpretive decisions are taken from these facts, and left for the actress. Each actress kept her own notes in her script and are not included herein.

I. GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES

A. Environmental Facts

1. This play takes place "nowhere," but in the theatre. Although the characters "live" somewhere, or are from somewhere, at "Curtain" they exist only on stage.
2. Date: Likewise, the play takes place or will take place on April 7, 8, and 9 at 8:00 in the evening.
3. Because of place and time, the characters in VOICES exist together only in the play. Their relationship is a universal, not personal one. Therefore, their personal histories remain different and separate (although links are certainly made in the play), and their economic and social environment, etc., will be discussed separately under each character.

B. Previous Action:

1. Again, because of the nature of the play, it is more effective and less confusing to discuss each character's history separately.

As far as the action of the play is concerned, there is NO previous action in the dramatic sense.

I wish to note here that, just before the play begins, the moment before, a "voice" asks each character, "What are you going to do?" However, the "voice" exists only in each's own heart and mind. As such, it can be considered neither previous nor action.

B. Polar Attitudes

1. Maya:

At the beginning of the play sees her life as flat statistics, and demands that she remain coldly rational.

At nine a.m. I take out my
notebooks. I play my
tapes and type them
People's lives reel out
before me . . .
And for me?
This is the year
of the dissertation,
the year Danny entered Kindergarten,
Rachel entered second grade, or
the
year of
the
Food Stamps,
the last year
of my grant from the bank of America . . .
p.p.

By the end of the play the implications of the statistics have left their mark. She is forced to confront her feelings and speaks from the heart, "I am angry."

2. Kate:

At the beginning of the play, Kate is headstrong, confident, and declarative. "My name is Kate, one makes choices," for which she has no regrets, no second thoughts.

As the play progresses, and Kate begins to confront the possibility of death (an ever sobering concept), she begins to wonder, and finally to wonder if her choices reflected her true feelings (her inner self). Wondering, finally if she has actually lost her soul to her characters.

3. Grace:

Her family is her life, it is her Self. In the beginning of the play, Grace can see herself only as a mother, wife . . . she is secure there, but feels as if something is missing.

By the end of the play, she, too, "will open the door." She opens herself to her thoughts, her feelings, and the voices that express those feelings.

4. Erin:

Poor, stagnant, stifled Erin. In the beginning of the play. Erin is incapable of

movement. Her feelings have died (with her brother) and she is left empty and alone. She has no one to turn to and no one to live through. Worse, she doesn't recognize the source of her depression.

By the end of the play, Erin begins to see herself as a separate person. One who, at least, deserves the right to explore her own thoughts and feelings. One who may even deserve to explore her own life.

5. Rosalinde:

VOICES shows Rosalinde in the transition from girlhood to womanhood. At first daring, over-exuberant, naive, idealistic, and rebellious, she is thoroughly convinced that what she is feeling is not only her ultimate true feelings, but that no one has ever felt them before, or will again.

By the end of the play, she is more cautious, much more patient and contemplative, even a bit scared, but listening to her heart and beginning to realize that she is not alone.

6. Although change is continual throughout the play, the turning point, or crisis for each occurs in Unit 7, as death becomes a real possibility.

II. DIALOGUE

A. Maya:

1. Maya's speech is flat, harsh, almost worn out, like a stiff piece of burlap constantly grating against a chain-link fence. She rattles off the facts of her life like computer print-out, one whose tape remains unchanged, but circular, so that it just prints the same information over and over itself.

I have had two children
forty-nine lovers
one marriage
two affairs

Her words are precise. She does not overuse adjectives.

2. By the end of the play, however, she does use more description, more adjectives, as well as more emotional verbs:

"I screamed"

"I am angry"

"a kind of stunning beauty."

B. Kate:

1. Like Maya, Kate states facts. However, she states them with more energy and determination than Maya, especially in the beginning of the play:

My name is Kate.
One makes
Choices.
I don't mean though
That one should be narrow . . .

2. By the end of the play, her speech is softer and her vivacity has cooled:

I go on anyway.

I work at what I
have always worked . . .

3. In speech as well as attitude, Kate is almost diametrically opposed to Erin. Seemingly strong and forceful we see her weaken, lose hope and energy although her actual passion for life increases similarly to Erin's

C. Grace:

1. In the beginning, a chatter-box, warning, complimenting, stroking, nagging. Although caring, her speech is almost mechanical and mostly on auto-pilot. She does not speak to herself, another character or even to the audience, but to people who no longer listen.

Oh, yes
but if only you could,
manage not to lose your coats . . .

2. By the end of the play, her speech is slower and more defined, she is more contemplative,

yet her speech patterns embody more energy,
more controlled energy than in the beginning
of the play:

The reality is
I hear voices.
The reality is
I am a middle-aged
former mother a
housewife
worrying about coats and
groceries
who hears voices.
. . .
And I
hear my own voice
singing back . . .

D. Erin:

1. Erin's speech is alternately rushed and clipped.

This of course
I did not know
when I was
six, nor did
Eric as we
did our own
wanderings,
we never
knew where she was
but only
the empty house
and our
empty stomachs
and a cold
clawing feeling of fear
as the sun casts long shadows
through the venetian
blinds and no sounds
came of keys
in the door
or plates descending
in the kitchen.

2. By Unit 8 Erin's speech has taken on a totally different tone. She is declarative and precise.

Dear Mother
these are the
last words I will
ever write . . .
You are not to
blame yourself
for my failures.

E. Rosalinde:

1. Rosalinde is full of herself and full of the earth. She has all of Erin's momentum, but her thoughts are longer and more sustained.

All I saw was my own
belly button
distended and pink
sinking up and down
with the undulations of
my womb.

Indeed, Rosalinde's rhythm is more undulating, her speech warm in comparison to Erin's cool, clipped staccato.

2. By the end of the play, Rosalinde is less glib. This is reflected in her more determined and more sharply punctuated speech patterns.

Mother,
I am
waiting
for
myself,
love,
Rosalinde.

WE grew hips.
We grew breasts.
We put on bathing suits.
We curtsied to the judges.
. . . .

III. CHARACTERS:

A. Maya:

1. Desire:

Maya wants to find a reason for her life. She wants to sort out her accomplishments and the events of her life just as she has done with so many others in her dissertation.

2. She is willing to dig through the tender parts of her past, including the proud, frightening, harsh, even the painful and embarrassing moments. Maya looks for themes in her life as well as her connection to other lives and the earth.

One day
on a drive in the county
in back of an orchard
I saw one old
swaybacked
horse in a yard
fenced to small. The
animal wasn't
complaining or even
moving just
standing dead
still while her
tail pace, her eyes
were frantic with
hatred. She was
"domesticated."

3. Moral Stance:

Maya is a product of the 1960's. She was brought up in the middle American tradition with virtues such as hard work, decency, and truth as personal goals. Her present cynical outlook is borne out of her radical college years as well as her divorce and subsequent hardship and unhappiness. She struggles to find faith in those ideals, but thinks she should know better.

4. Maya is a bit overweight. She is strong, but not athletic. Many times she seems drawn, even soft, but not soft from soft living, the type of soft that comes from constant pummeling.

5. Summary list of adjectives:

- a. Tired
- b. Soft
- c. Cool
- d. Precise
- e. Nervous
- f. Intense
- g. Plodding, consistent

6. Character mood-intensity:

- a. At the beginning, Maya is jumpy and highly nervous. She is easily startled and reacts with a good bit of anger.
- b. By the end of the play, she takes in "too much at once" much more calmly and easily as if she realizes that she is not expected to master every piece of information all at once.

7. History (direct outline from play)

- a. Her mother left her father during the depression.
- b. They lived with her grandmother after the divorce.
- c. She has two sisters.
- d. Her mother was married before.
- e. Her mother later remarried.
- f. Her mother and father were members of the Communist party.
- g. Her grandmother and grandfather died of Tuberculosis.
- h. She was arrested in college, and subsequently jailed and expelled for sitting with a group of protestors in the dean's office and going through his files.

- i. She was married once, subsequently, divorced.
- j. She has two children.
- k. Rachel, her eldest, is in second grade.
- l. Danny is in kindergarten.
- m. During her marriage, she had two affairs.
- n. She has had 49 lovers.
- o. She is in the sixth year of her doctorate.
- p. Her dissertation is on "The Death of the American Family."
- q. She presently has a lover, although she never mentions his name.
- r. She is on food stamps this year.
- s. Her grant from the Bank of America ends this year.
- t. She draws graphs of her life.

B. Kate:

1. Desire:

Kate wants to feel good about her life and the things she has chosen for herself. She wants to feel important.

2. She is willing to recount and defend her choices. By the end of the play, she is even willing to admit that some of her choices might not have been the best. This is very

difficult for her, as she has not had to admit that she has been wrong very often in her life. Probably, very few people have had the courage to question her authority, especially concerning her personal decisions.

3. Moral Stance:

Kate broke away from the moral values of her generation, yet still firmly believes that she is a moral person. She believes in doing "what one must do." She does not regret, but, by the end of the play, begins to question whether or not she has taken full advantage of what her life has had to offer and the meaning that it might have had.

4. Decorum:

Kate is still very fit and vital. She exercises daily with a routine tailored by and for herself. She has no need for classes or other outside stimulus. She was once strikingly beautiful, and remains so, although age is beginning to take its toll. Still, few would guess her real age.

5. Summary list of adjectives:

- a. Strong
- b. Courageous

- c. Artistic
- d. Theatrical
- e. Polished
- f. Elegant
- g. Classical (in speech)
- h. Graceful
- i. Large
- j. Warm
- k. Decisive
- l. Blatantly honest
- m. Somewhat affected

6. Character mood-intensity:

- a. In the beginning of the play, stable, but very energetic, intense and dramatic. Each word has been carefully processed before it is issued from her mouth. That is not to suggest slowness, but rather firmness.
- b. By the end of the play, she is actually more intense, but less sure of her rational attitude. She is, at the same time, more aware of her emotional attitude. She is less dramatic in her speech. It is less controlled and less confident, less considered.

7. History:

- a. Her family is from New England.
- b. Her mother and father are both well-educated.
- c. Her family is at least upper-middle class, fairly well-to-do.
- d. She has never been married.*
- e. She has no children.*
*Both d. and e. make her feel a little inferior and guilty.
- f. She is an only child; one abortion.
- g. She moved to Paris when she was 17.
- h. She attended Sorbonne College.
- i. She saw Isadora Duncan (presumably, when she was seventeen or eighteen) and, subsequently, went into the arts.
- j. She "fell in love" with art in Paris.
- k. Lived with a designer in Paris.
- l. Following that affair, she moved in with an actor (with whom she did not get along).
- m. Turned to acting during her affair with the designer.
- n. Parts played:
Horse in UBU ROI
A spy (for which she learned sky-diving)

A mad man's daughter, devoting her life to
his care

Mary Stuart

A missionary in Africa

A lawyer defending the right of women to
passion

A gossip columnist

A shy spinster living with her brothers
on a farm

A wealthy aviatrix

A woman abandoned on the edge of poverty
by her drinking husband, trying to save
daughter in a world of fantastic dreams
and banal cruelties

"Jo" in Little Women

Alice Adams

Eleanor of Aquitaine

- o. At first, acted mainly on screen.
- p. Later, redirected her efforts toward the
Classical stage.

C. Grace:

1. Desire:

Grace wants to find herself, the self she has
forgotten from years of children, husband, and
living through other people.

2. In order to achieve her desire, she is willing to be honest with herself for the first time in years. She is willing to hash through her own history, now almost forgotten, and try to evaluate its worth. She is willing to accept her faults and strengths on their own merit.

3. Moral Stance:

Grace still believes in the values with which she grew up: Home, family, peace, truth (mostly home and family). As the play progresses, she adds Self to the list of values, and wonders if that Self has become lost in the others.

4. Decorum:

Grace is dark, healthy (although a little plump). Her body is soft, even as her mind grows harder. Her movements are soft and subdued. She is genteel. She is a neat and tidy person and remains "pretty."

5. Summary list of adjectives:

- a. Dark
- b. Bright
- c. Motherly
- d. Efficient

- e. Caring
- f. Friendly
- g. Warm
- h. Graceful (as her name implies), both socially and physically
- i. Benevolent
- j. Amenable
- k. Cordial
- l. Courteous
- m. Mannerly
- n. Urbane
- o. Ladylike
- p. Obliging
- q. Indulgent
- r. Good-humored
- s. Bounteous

6. Character mood-intensity:

- a. First, wound-up, tight confused. Executes motion for its own sake. She is nervous and making herself more so. She is unfocused and, therefore, lacks some of her later energy.
- b. Later, as she becomes more focused, her energy increases and nervousness

decreases. Her intensity increases with quiet stability. As she becomes more relaxed, so she becomes more methodical and sure of herself.

7. History

- a. Wrote poetry as a girl.
- b. "The war was over on my eighteenth birthday."
- c. Attended one and a half years of college.
- d. Grace had one lover before she was married.

With her Classics Professor,

He was married,

Clandestine affair,

They went for drives in the country,

He read her poetry,

She became much more "continental" during this affair, largely encouraged by her professor.

He must have been quite a bit older.

Thought she was pregnant.

It took him one day to find a doctor in New York, gave her \$500 cash, a plane ticket, and said goodbye.

In New York, she found she was not pregnant, but stayed anyway. End of affair, end of college.

- e. Lived in a one room flat with a small bathroom and "miserable shower."
- f. Saved money to return to school.
- g. Worked on 45th Street.
- h. Worked typing insurance forms.
- i. Wanted to work as a secretary for a publisher, but never did.
- j. Made up stupendous stories at this time, but never mentions setting them on paper.
- k. Did not make any friends in N.Y.
- l. Before college, had wanted to be a lawyer, then an English teacher.
- m. Married: William.
- n. Had four children:
Andy, Jessica, Kathy, Dan, in that order.
All are old enough to be out of the house now.
- o. The silence (absence of children) seems recent.

D. Erin:

1. Desire:

Erin wants someone to rescue her. She wants someone to define and give meaning to her life. She wants someone actually to give her life, before she takes it from herself. Her attitude is extremely negative and she does not expect anyone to show up to save her from herself.

2. She is willing to wait. While she waits for her rescue, she is forced to sort through the events of her life, although she has pretty much forgotten the happy times. Actually, this is closer to procrastination, which is at first unconscious. By the end of the play, however, it is quite conscious and sustained.

3. Moral Stance:

Erin takes the moral stance of the moment; rather, she lets life flow over her without much consideration for its morality--certainly not as it pertains to suicide, which she considers rather lightly. She probably considers herself a moral person, but has not considered the exact implications of specific morality, immorality, or amorality.

4. Decorum:

Erin is fair of complexion, light-haired and waifish of figure. She could be pretty were she not so pale. She is thin, but not muscular, certainly not healthy looking. She does not pay particular attention to her looks. Although she is clean, she has an unhealthy, unkempt air about her. Her eyes should be her most prominent feature.

5. Summary list of adjectives:

- a. Lethargic
- b. Depressed
- c. Whimpering
- d. Cool
- e. Tired
- f. Empty
- g. Timid
- h. Apprehensive
- i. Pale
- j. Skittish
- k. Martyr
- l. Diffident

6. Character mood-intensity:

- a. At first, Erin proceeds with a calm intensity that is almost spooky. Her

blank stare and soft monotone suggest boiling in a tightly covered pan. As she speaks of her past we can see the flame underneath dying down as well as the boiling reduced to a slow simmer.

- b. By the end of the play, anger has taken over, and the lid has been lifted, as her fire is rekindled. This time, however, her simmering has an escape and she is able to verbalize her feelings.

7. History:

- a. Had a twin brother, Eric.
- b. Father, "a simple man," a mailman.
- c. Mother, beautiful, went crazy.

Many times she left the children alone in the house.

When she was there, she was very attentive

Made cookies for them,

Knit matching outfits for them,

Let them grow vegetables,

Let them keep cats.

- d. Left alone, she and Eric would beg around the neighborhood for food.
- e. At six, Erin was sent to her maternal grandmother's to live.

- f. Eric was sent to his paternal grandmother's in New Mexico.
- g. Later, Eric was returned to his maternal grandmother's.
- h. Eric describes nights at their mother's as "violent," days as "numbed, vacant."
- i. For many years they were bounced back and forth from living with their mother (who as in and out of institutions) to their grandmother's.
- j. Eric was her idol, she thought him brilliant. He must have been fairly bright as he knew three languages by the age of fourteen. He wrote music to which she wrote lyrics.
- k. Eric mentions:

At seventeen
though we
lived in
different
towns
we were so close
neither could imagine
having another lover.

p.p.

Possibility of incestuous relationship?

Will be decided by actress during rehearsal.

- l. Only Eric was sent to college (because of finances).
- m. Eric promised to "rescue" her by becoming rich and giving her an education as well.
- n. Erin stayed at home one year.
Worked as a waitress.
Went to her grandmother's at night.
Her father remarried and moved East.
They rarely heard from him.
He sent Eric money.
Erin took care of her grandmother.
Fought with her grandmother "like mountain lions."
Grandfather died that year.
Grandmother quickly became helpless.
Grandmother suffered a series of strokes.
One morning Erin found her on the bathroom floor.
Her grandmother died that day.
Funeral.
- o. Erin then "chose to live alone."
- p. Changed jobs to work in a nursery school.
- q. Year of:
Reading Jr. College reading list.
Lost virginity.

Wine.

Eric's suicide, after dropping out of college, by overdose.

- r. Marriage to a very practical, down-to-earth man who did not enjoy poetry, but built their house, and made other things out of wood.
- s. Marriage lasted only a year. He hit her one night, and then didn't come home.
- t. Now lives in an apartment, alone, and rarely leaves.

E. Rosalinde:

1. Desire:

I dreamt I gave birth
to myself.

This about sums it up for Rosalinde. She wants to suddenly emerge (from what?) as a new and complete person. Of all the characters, she is the closest to her feelings in the beginning of the play, but has a great deal of trouble sorting them out. They come too fast, and are usually too intense.

- 2. She is willing to pay very close attention to herself, but generally, especially in the beginning of the play, lacks the concentration that might take.

Her attitude is terminally positive.

3. Moral Stance:

Rosalinde's moral stance changes (like everything else) with the breeze. She is never malicious, and takes a stand toward "right," even though her "right," in the next moment, may be "wrong." Her opinions are strong, as well as her defense of them. She believes in nature, in the earth. In this respect, she is the closest to Ms. Griffin's own voice (refer to section of Women and Nature).

4. Decorum:

Rosalinde is lythe, willowy, and strong. She is thin. She should be pretty, but not in a contrived sort of way. She should be very natural, and at ease with her looks. She should be strong and agile, but not bulky in frame.

5. Summary list of adjectives:

- a. Young
- b. Energetic
- c. Headstrong
- d. Happy
- e. Friendly
- f. Vivacious

- g. Carefree; glib
- h. Malleable
- i. Warm
- j. Earthy
- k. Dynamic
- l. Sensuous
- m. Sensitive
- n. Romantic
- o. Daring
- p. Flighty
- q. Animated
- r. Quizzical
- s. Radical
- t. Quickly changing

6. History:

- a. Respectable, middle class family.
- b. No mention of any brothers, one sister.
- c. Father and mother attentive, well-educated, well-meaning.
- d. Once, while mountain-climbing with friends, she almost fell to her death. It made her high with ecstasy.
- e. Wanted in early (probably high school) years: to join the circus, to fight in Vietnam.

- f. Her parents wanted her to go to teacher's college
- g. She went to a two-year art school instead.
- h. Dreamed she gave birth to herself.
- i. Visits parents once a year.
- j. Mother is a teacher, a liberal democrat.
- k. Mother is "sensible and efficient"
- l. Father is anesthesiologist
- m. The year her younger sister graduated from college, her parents seperated, but they are back together. Almost as if they planned to spend exactly one year apart.
- n. Rosalinde lived in a Woman's Collective that year, and asked her mother to join her.
- o. The collective subsequently split, without too much concern from Rosalinde.
- p. After art school, she did not return home, but instead of paying for rent and food with the money her father gave her, she bought a blue and silver motorcycle.
- q. Walked the John Muir trail.
- r. Quizzical round with drugs.
- s. Lived in four different communes where she learned about farming (especially pig farming).

V. IDEA

A. Meaning of the title: VOICES.

The voices in this play are those of intuition and of universal feeling. They are those of all women throughout history trying to define themselves through or around society. The characters hear their own voices saying the same thing every woman's voice has said at some point in her life, for centuries.

What those voices describe are the natural, universal cycles and changes that occur in everyone's, certainly every woman's, life. They speak universal truths that pertain to every living being.

As this play was originally written as a radio production, most simply "voices" are those of the characters. The "voices" are those with which they speak and those that speak from their hearts, as well as those that speak to everyone from history.

B. Philosophical statements in the play:

1. Who am I?
 - a. What one does comes out of circumstance.
 - b. One makes choices.

CHAPTER III: SETTING THE PRODUCTION

When choosing the performance space for this production, I considered three requirements as vitally important:

1. The simplicity of the script required a simple setting and space.
2. We would have minimal scenery in accordance with a minimal budget.
3. We should require no set changes and no curtain.

The spaces I saw as being readily available were:

1. The FAB lounge. This space was interesting because of the audience. We could either put them in the pit and act in the hall, or vice versa. The space is fairly neutral and we could probably use most of the existing furniture. I liked the fireplace area which gave us good possibilities to use different levels in blocking. However, lighting would be difficult and would probably be restricted to trees (side lighting). The windows in the area let in a good deal of light even at night.

The walls surrounding the space limited vision from several angles. We would lack privacy for rehearsals. Interruptions would be inevitable. It is the only space in the building for students to congregate without interrupting someone's work.

2. Outdoors. Considering the "earthiness" of several sections of the play, this might work well. It could even add to the quality of universality.

However, the outdoors would be less intimate. We would have to deal with the weather as well as bugs. Any lightning equipment and sound equipment would have to be set up and struck after each rehearsal and performance. Again, private rehearsals would be impossible.

3. The Acting Studio would certainly be neutral, except for the sink, etc. on the counter. Time slots would be tight.

4. Dance Studio. Besides lighting limitations this might be a good space, except that we would have to perform either in front of the mirrors or in front of the windows. I doubt whether we would be able to incorporate the space as a true setting, it will always look like a dance studio.

5. MAB Studio. This, by far seems the best choice. Few people are using it right now. The wall with the

fireplace seems to be an appropriate backdrop as is. The windows are small and black sheets with which to cover them already exist. I question the acoustics. But, the beams on the ceiling are certainly sturdy enough to hold lighting equipment, even if they are too big.

Finally, I chose the MAB Studio for the performances of Voices. We did nothing to the space other than arrange five stools in front of the fireplace. No other furniture was required.

Lighting:

Of necessity to the space, and in keeping with the style of the play (and the production), the lights will be kept very simple and straightforward. The concept I try to execute is: separation/coolness growing into unity/warmth.

It is the separation which seemed most difficult to achieve, as it required theatrical lighting equipment rather than simple home or classroom instruments. Finally, I used a mixture of both (see lighting plots in Appendix II).

In the very beginning of the play, the lighting cues, as well as the areas lit will be well defined, even abrupt. This should change gradually over the course of the play so that by the end the audience is unaware of any change between cues.

Sound:

Except for the preshow and "curtain" music, we will use no sound during production other than the actresses' voices. If this choice is not an obvious one, I cite the poetic form of the play as the reason behind it. I feel that it would be impossible to find music perfectly suited to the musicality of the play short of having someone compose a work specifically for that purpose. Any attempt to play a medley would be distracting.

This is not to say that we will not use musical underscoring during rehearsals in order to draw out certain rhythmic and melodic aspects of the poetry. Those pieces that we used are included on tape at the end of this manuscript.

Casting:

General casting requirements were simple--variety, poetic sensitivity, and the ability to work within an ensemble.

Kate, of course, had to be someone with a good presence, a certain amount of grace and the ability to be fairly intense. Preferably the actress would be over 40, or be able to look as though she were. She must speak clearly.

Grace should be softer looking. She should also be able to speak well and slow down, if necessary. She should be in control of herself.

Erin should look as though she spends her entire life indoors. If possible, she should have light hair and complexion. She must feel cool. She should easily be able to work at a lower energy level than the other actresses.

Rosalinde, by contrast, should look as though she belongs to the forest. She should be lithe and strong. She should have a great deal of energy, but not be nervous.

Maya should be the largest actress physically; she should be able to convey a good deal of strength and stubbornness. She should speak with conviction.

More importantly, this cast should be able to both blend and contrast with each other, vocally and physically. I will look for actresses who are friends, or who I feel will be friends for working on this play. This ensemble/friendship feeling is key.

CHAPTER IV: REHEARSALS

VOICES

Rehearsal Schedule

Group rehearsals:

MON.	Mar. 28	6:00 - 10:00	Rm. 202
TUE.	Mar. 29	6:00 - 10:00	Rm. 202
WED.	Mar. 30	6:00 - 10:00	Rm. 202
THU.	Mar. 31	8:00 - 9:40 am 6:00 - 8:00 pm	Rm. 202 Rm. 202
FRI.	Apr. 1	6:00 - 10:00	Rm. 202
SAT.	Apr. 2	9:00 - 12:00 1:00 - 5:00	MAB Studio MAB Studio
SUN.	Apr. 3	6:00 - 10:00	MAB
MON.	Apr. 4	6:00 - 10:00	MAB
TUE.	Apr. 5	8:00 - 9:40 6:00 - 8:00	MAB MAB
WED.	Apr. 6	6:00 - 10:00	MAB
THU.	Apr. 7	7:00 call	8:00 Performance
FRI.	Apr. 8	7:00 call	8:00 Performance
SAT.	Apr. 9	7:00 call	8:00 Performance

PRIVATE CHARACTER REHEARSALS:

TUE. March 29	Stephanie	9:00 - 10:00
	Jacki	10:00 - 11:00
	Lisa	11:30 - 12:30
WED. March 30	Stephanie	9:00 - 10:00
	Jacki	10:00 - 11:00
	Lisa	11:30 - 12:30
	Annie	3:50 - 4:50
	Dara	5:00 - 6:00
FRI. Apr. 1	Stephanie	9:30 - 10:00
	Jacki	10:00 - 10:30
	Dara	11:30 - 12:00
	Annie	10:30 - 11:00
	Lisa	12:00 - 12:30
SUN. Apr. 3	Dara	12:00 - 1:00
	Annie	1:00 - 2:00
MON. Apr. 4	Same as Friday, April 1	
WED. Apr. 6	Dara	11:20 - 12:30 & Lunch

MONDAY, March 28:

First, we read through the entire script. I instructed the actresses to refrain from making any emotional choices during the initial reading. The idea was to listen to the play as a whole without making any judgements. We must remember that the entire play is a reflection; unlike most plays, the characters are aware of the end of the play from the beginning. Or, at least they are aware of the physical aspects of their lives, those that they recount here.

This reading would also give me a chance to listen to the individual voices and try to sort out some of the natural cadences and rhythms of the poetry before trying to introduce character.

I find that the poetry carries itself naturally to climaxes and silences. I made notations in my script in order that I might remember them. I doubt we will accept all of them, but I find that mostly they make sense for the characters.

Next, we had an open discussion of the characters. We discover that perhaps Kate is jealous of Grace and vice versa. Erin doesn't like Rosalinde. Rosalinde likes everybody. Maya feels a certain compassion for Grace, although she cannot say why. She also feels motherly toward Rosalinde and Erin.

We all wonder what it feels like to have children. I doubt seriously that any of us will find out before this play goes into performance. This, I think, is unfortunate.

TUESDAY, March 29:

Private rehearsal with Stephanie, Jacki and Lisa. We first took a careful look at the facts that each reveals during the course of the play. We divide the play into units and I discuss where I feel the character is in her life (referring to "Passages").

Lisa seems to be the furthest removed from her character. We decide that she should talk to her mother about her character.

Group rehearsal:

Another read-through. Stephanie is trying to establish a through-line, but is tending only to use one emotional level throughout most of the play. We talk about taking one section at a time (for all the actresses). Even though we know what happens to the characters, they themselves do not know the emotional outcome until the end of the play. We must work against reaching those feelings before we get to them in the dialogue.

Erin is already working in a monotone. I ask her to look for the humor in her story and separate it from the sadness.

Lisa and Annie may not yet fully understand their characters, but seem to have a natural rhythm that suits them. Grace seems to be identifying with certain parts of her character better than she did this morning (especially,

I am tired). Maya starts out angry. Like Stephanie, she seems to want to play the end too soon.

Blocking went well at this rehearsal as we got through most of the play. During the last half hour or so we read through the parts we had blocked rapid-fire using the blocking. I did this to (a) set the blocking in the minds of the actresses, and (b) to help me see the overall flow of the movement thus far.

I made a mental note to think about the flow of the lighting during the next rehearsal.

WEDNESDAY, March 30:

A chance to work individually with each of the actresses today. Character discussions went well. They did their homework and I have new things to add to their character analyses. Lisa hasn't had a chance to talk to her mother yet, but says she feels more comfortable with Grace, working on one emotion at a time. She knows what it is to be tired. She knows how she feels when she performs mindless tasks for hours at a time. This is a good beginning.

Group rehearsal:

Finished blocking. Ran the new section, then the entire play for blocking. Made a few changes.

Break for 10 minutes around 7:40.

Worked through first third of the play. Reran that section. Notes included.

THURSDAY, March 31:

Morning.

We worked through the second section of the play. We began to rerun that section, but did not quite finish in the time allowed.

Evening.

We worked through the last section of the play.

Break through 7:00 to 7:07.

We reran the last part of the second section (that we left undone this morning) as well as the remainder of the play. The "We were sold" section of the play needs considerable work. No time tonight.

FRIDAY, April 1:

Another chance to work with each of the actresses privately. I made some changes in the line division in the "We were sold" section of the play and discussed these changes at this time. I had asked that the actresses read through each of their parts as if it was one huge monologue. They had done so and we discussed any insights this had given them for their characters. Grace and I worked through her speech about college and her professor. Kate and I worked the section where she recalls her Paris experience after leaving school. Erin and I tried to work through the section where Erin dies, but did not get finished. We

decide to schedule an extra rehearsal. Rosalinde and I work the "Motorcycle" section. Maya and I work through the sections on her divorce and her imprisonment.

Evening.

A bit of a late start. We run the play from top to bottom. This may seem a little premature, but we only have four more days before we open!

We break around 8:30.

Back by 8:45. We take a few minutes to discuss costumes. We will try to pull things from the actresses own wardrobes or costumes on hand.

We use the last hour to work the "We were sold" section with the changes.

SATURDAY, April 2:

Morning.

This is to be a musical day.

We began by listening to parts of Debussy's La Mer and trying to incorporate its rhythms into the last section of the play. We then worked through that section using that as background music. It was a bit confusing at first, but seemed to help pick up many of the speeches, especially for Erin. I definitely will not play it during the performances.

Before breaking for lunch, we had a partial line rehearsal. They seem to be coming along. It is not so much

the sections they do not seem to know at all that I worry about, but the sections that they seem to know very well--incorrectly that make me nervous. They promise to help each other during the next few days.

Afternoon.

Good rehearsal.

We ran the entire play to the tunes of "The Goldberg Variations" (Bach). More than anything, I think this helped the actresses fill in their silences. I also think it helped the overall tempo.

15 minute break.

We used a concentration exercise. All the actresses stood in a circle and began reciting one of their speeches. They were to try to get any one of the others to listen to them. Floundering, at first, but eventually they got the hang of it.

Another run-through. It is wonderful to be in the MAB studio finally. We enjoy the space and the echo of the room. Perhaps, it is too much echo? I will count on a full house to attend the problem!

SUNDAY, April 3:

I met with Dara and Annie earlier in the day for some private character work. Annie does not seem to be taking Rosalinde anywhere. We work on the changes Rosalinde should

be making during the course of the play and how those changes should affect her physically and emotionally.

Dara still relies heavily on lack of energy to express solitude and sadness. We are looking for places in the play for her to break out of this.

Evening.

A fairly good run-through. The actresses called for very few lines, which is heartening, because this is the last night that they will be allowed.

MONDAY, April 4:

Private rehearsals.

Mostly running lines. This is an unfortunate necessity.

Evening.

A rough run. There are a lot of line mistakes. Cues are slow. Thanks to Annie for thinking on her feet!

We continue to work on pacing and vocal climaxes, but it is very difficult with everyone missing lines. The poetic nature of this play is unforgiving in that regard. We work for more continuous flow and cleaner breaks, where appropriate. The actresses seem to handle the basic emotions well.

"Playing" with lights after the actresses leave. They look good without people--will see.

TUESDAY, April 5:

Morning.

We have a line bash. We get through the play almost twice.

Evening.

Thank heavens! Lines are nearly perfect. Everyone was thinking. The play is beginning to flow as it should.

I experimented with some of the lights. Well, their inadequacies are becoming apparent. Time to refocus. I am having trouble getting both sharply defined areas and even coverage of the stage. I suppose every play needs a bigger budget!

WEDNESDAY, April 6:

Everyone is nervous. Dress rehearsal. The costumes look fine except for Erin's scarf, which we will cut and Rosalinde's sweater which has suddenly turned neon. We found a replacement shortly before we began the run at 6:30.

The actual run goes pretty well. I further readjusted lights during a break at 7:15.

We begin again. This time, no stops. There were some nervous pauses; but, in general, the play seemed to flow nicely.

CHAPTER 5 - EVALUATION

With regard to the goals initially set for this production as stated in the prospectus (p. 4), this production went rather well.

No one other than Lindenwood students auditioned for the play, so the first requirement was met fully. This did have its drawbacks, as I had hoped for more ethnic and age variety among the actresses. In close proximity such as we had in the M.A.B., extensive make-up is difficult. I opted not to use it.

The roles were certainly challenging to the actresses. Extensive lines to memorize, lack of props and elaborate set, close proximity to the audience and remaining on stage for the entire production increased their burden. Each role was a major one and demanded extensive cooperation and a great sense of each other.

I did rely on the actresses' sense of space and relationship. Because of the small space, I think the audience was able to become a part of the awareness. I wanted the audience to feel a kinship with the characters without

being physically drawn into the action. I think we achieved this, although I think it was achieved chiefly through the dynamics of the play.

I also relied more heavily on movement to control focus than I had intended. The original blocking was rather static. As more was added, it increasingly began to control momentum and focus. This is either a natural expression of the poetry, or a natural expression of my directorial style; I remain uncertain which.

Voices performed without delay, events though rehearsal time was short. This is a testimonial to the actresses' cooperation and hard work. In that regard I think it could not have been more successfully cast. This cast was a constant source of inspiration in their ability to overcome fatigue and stress to come to every rehearsal prepared, cooperative, and energetic, with a professional attitude years beyond their age and experience.

It is to their credit that we were able to perform this play with minimal amenities. Because of the limits of departmental technical support (already overtaxed), it was my hope to perform with minimal set, lighting, properties, and costumes. Although I was somewhat unsatisfied with the lighting, I think the lack of technical support enhanced the production.

Our ability to control the sound of the play was less than I had hoped. I think the ensemble speeches, overlapping speeches and fugal arrangement of voices and ideas worked

rather well. However, our use of extreme dynamics was limited a bit by the echo of the room and outside noises. I anticipated extraneous noise, but had hoped the natural acoustics of the studio would be more of an asset than they were. The space dictated the production's volume and speed more than I had hoped.

In general, I was very satisfied with the individual performances. Each character was clearly defined by her distinct personality as well as in her relationship to the group. It is the latter that I felt most difficult and most important.

Because the characters never hold a conventional conversation, we worked extensively on spatial relationships and idea continuity. Their ideas and objectives had to be well defined, agreed upon, and well understood because many times they were shared with another character. It was my feeling that clarity in this sense was essential to the clarity of the play in general. Without this agreement between characters, their relationships would never be clear. It is to the actresses credit that they were able to work so closely. In a very short time they were able to sketch in and agree upon their relationships. Each remained open to suggestions and change. Each remained responsive to changes another would make. This continued through the run, making each performance fresh and dynamic.

As mentioned earlier, our space limited our acoustic ability somewhat with respect to the planned climaxes. We

tried to compensate with emotional intensity. It was also helpful to adjust timing particularly when overlapping speeches. We tightened some and added pauses in others. This was very difficult. I think that it was somewhat successful, although it did not always work out as we had rehearsed.

Even so, I think the natural variation in the poetry as well as mood, rhythm, and intensity changes were enough to keep audience interest. We had to exercise a great deal of control because of the space, but I think it enhanced awareness of the other variables.

Our technical amenities were sparse and simple. In part, I chose this play because I felt that it lent itself to such treatment. I think it worked. The sound worked well. We did not use props, elaborate sets or set changes. This play is intellectual and reflective. I think simplicity suited it perfectly.

On the other hand, I think the lighting could have been better. It was never quite what I had envisioned. I suspect that two more lights for a general wash, as well as three more focusable instruments would have taken care of the problem. However, we had neither the equipment nor the places to hang them. They were missed. I hope not severely.

The production was not tiresome. I hope not offensive to anyone. This is a feminist play and easily could have been heavy-handed. We worked against this. It was not offensive to me; however, I am a woman.

In regard to concept, it was clear to me. From the

feedback I received from the audience, it seemed clear to them as well. The problems and questions posed in the play were understood by young and old alike. This, in my opinion, is a great measure of success. I had not intended to offer answers. I think this is in agreement with Susan Griffin's intent. But the questions were clear, the facts highlighted and emotions measured. In this regard, the play satisfied my concept of it.

APPENDIX I

NOTES AND COLLECTIONS
FOR THE ACTRESSES

Autobiography of the Author

A Woman Defending Herself
Examines Her Own Character Witness

QUESTION: Who am I?

ANSWER: You are a woman.

- Q. How did you come to meet me?
- A. I came to meet you through my own pain and suffering.
- Q. How long have you known me?
- A. I feel I have known you since my first conscious moment.
- Q. But how long really?
- A. Since my first conscious moment - for four years.
- Q. How old are you?
- A. Thirty-one years old.
- Q. Will you explain this to the court?
- A. I was not conscious until I met you through my own pain and suffering.
- Q. And this was four years ago?
- A. This was four years ago.
- Q. Why did it take you so long?
- A. I was told lies.
- Q. What kind of lies?
- A. Lies about you.
- Q. Who told you these lies?
- A. Everyone. Most only repeating the lies they were told.
- Q. And how did you find out the truth?
- A. I did not. I only stopped hearing lies.
- Q. No more lies were told?
- A. Oh no. The lies are still told, but I stopped hearing them.
- Q. Why?
- A. My own feelings became too loud.
- Q. You could not silence your own feelings any longer?
- A. That is correct.
- Q. What kind of woman am I?
- A. You are a woman I recognize.
- Q. How do you recognize me?
- A. You are a woman who is angry.
You are a woman who is tired.
You are a woman who receives letters from her children.
You are a woman who was raped.
You are a woman who speaks too loudly.
You are a woman without a degree.
You are a woman with short hair.
You are a woman who takes her mother home from the hospital.
You are a woman who reads books about other women.
You are a woman whose light is on at four in the morning.
You are a woman who wants more.
You are a woman who stopped in her tracks.
You are a woman who will not say please.
You are a woman who has had enough.
You are a woman clear in your rage.
And they are afraid of you
I know
they are afraid of you.
- Q. This last must be stricken from the record as the witness does not know it for a fact.
- A. I know it for a fact that they are afraid of you.
- Q. How do you know?
- A. Because of the way they tell lies about you.
- Q. If you go on with this line you will be instructed to remain silent.
- A. And that is what they require of us.

A book stained with
years of use:
The Joy of Cooking.

The pieces
of a mixing bowl
taken apart
displayed
by her Granddaughter
as sculpture.

Her sweater, knitted
magenta wool.

Her hands, long
misshapen fingers spotted
brown.

The old needles
the old patterns.

He voice still saying,
'If my face is stern
it is because it has grown
to look that way
despite me.'

ii

A walk through a
museum, women
in photography, a
picture of
an ironing board, an
iron before a window,
a shadow cast in the
natural light..

iii

She remembers holding her hand,
her Grandmother's secret
knowledge,
the two boarding the trolley, the
yearly trip downtown,
the school clothes, the
joy that day, the
laughter between the two, the
promise of something sweet at
home, the old woman, her
promise.

She remembers longing
to walk
the light out there
beautiful
through the open door.

She remembers words
to her daughter, 'Hurry,
be
careful, don't
spill
over me.' She remembers

her Grandmother's voice
the hardness, then,
the weariness.

Words in an old diary
Sunday, March 23, 1958

Home all day. Black clouds. Quite
dark at times. However I did laundry
so I could go out in the morning. Dried
in and out. Quite a breeze. Washed doll
clothes. Must make her a footstool.
Finally made Ernie's fudge. Fried the
chicken in the pan and was moist
and very good. Rest and after went
to sleep. Bed at 9:30. Read a bit.
...Awake for ages. Too tired to get
up or read. Just tossed and turned.

v

In the museum
photographs of women
their hands over their mouths,

women standing
side by side
not touching
the lassitude of
unloving
in them,

etching of a woman alone
called waiting,

woman and child
asleep in the railway station,

a face staring into the lens
'I am what I am
broken, you will
see that in time.'

a woman passed through
slavery, letting her eyes
blaze. 'My body
carries this pain
like an emblem.
I do not apologize.
I survive.'

vi

Child's memories
dolls cut
from cloth
new faces threaded
each year

candy distilled
to hardness
over the fire

an old drawing sent
through the mail,
'I love you
Mommy,'
Archaeology

the waters
of sleep we had
no time to swim

My cries at night
the ache in my knees
her old stockings
around my legs

my daughter's nightmare
my arms around her, my
face pleading, 'Don't
wake up again.'

Her tenderness, my desire to
please breaking like vases
along the line of
old faults,

the flower I gave her
she did not believe would bloom
ink spilled on the satin

bed covers, the furies
if you don't
welling inside her
stop crying
the darkness of my room
if you don't
stop

vii

waters of sleep
flowers blooming
my daughter brought forward
like a sweet

My Grandmother
floats in my dreams
we sleep
like sisters in
the peach-coloured room
where I slept
as a child, and in
my womb I feed
the Great Grandchild
she always wanted.

Archaeos, the
shards of
disbelief
the last words never
spoken how I
loved you old
complaining woman, the
pieces, the stairs
were slippery,
and she slipped,
broken one more
time,
pieces
her mixing bowl on my
the silver bell she saved for me

viii

Do you know
I ask her
calling through time
I write this
with your pen?

ix

Becky, my
daughter rocks
in my Great Grand
mother's chair, that
chair,
I tell her,
sat
in my Grandmother's house
in the peach-coloured room,
don't sit too hard
it's been
years.

x

Night, darkness, the healing
sleep, the vessel fused
once more,
one of us writes in her journal
A tiredness has left me
A heaviness
one of us whispers
O world is this what you were
and tenderness,
Grandmother
your tenderness sings
in my skin.

I like to think of Harriet Tubman.
Harriet Tubman who carried a revolver,
who had a scar on her head from a rock thrown
by a slave-master (because she
talked back), and who
had a ransom on her head
of thousands of dollars and who
was never caught, and who
had no use for the law
when the law was wrong,
who defied the law. I like
to think of her.
I like to think of her especially
when I think of the problem of
feeding children.

The legal answer
to the problem of feeding children
is ten free lunches every month,
being equal, in the child's real life,
to eating lunch every other day.
Monday but not Tuesday.
I like to think of the President
eating lunch Monday, but not
Tuesday.

And when I think of the President
and the law, and the problem of
feeding children, I like to
think of Harriet Tubman
and her revolver.

And then sometimes
I think of the President
and other men,
men who practise the law,
who revere the law,
who make the law,
who enforce the law,
who live behind
and operate through
and feed themselves
at the expense of
starving children
because of the law.

Men who sit in panelled offices
and think about vacations
and tell women
whose care it is
to feed children
not to be hysterical
not to be hysterical as in the word
hysterikos, the greek for
womb suffering,
not to suffer in their
wombs,
not to care,
not to bother the men
because they want to think
of other things
and do not want
to take the women seriously.
I want them
to take women seriously.

I want them to think about Harriet Tubman,
and remember,
remember she was beat by a white man
and she lived
and she lived to redress her grievances,
and she lived in swamps
and wore the clothes of a man
bringing hundreds of fugitives from
slavery, and was never caught,
and led an army,
and won a battle,
and defied the laws
because the laws were wrong, I want men
to take us seriously.
I am tired wanting them to think
about right and wrong.
I want them to fear.
I want them to feel fear now
as I have felt suffering in the womb, and
I want them
to know
that there is always a time
there is always a time to make right
what is wrong,
there is always a time
for retribution
and that time
is beginning.

Mother
I write home
I am alone and
give me my
body back.
(She drank
she drank and
did not feed me
I was the child at home.)

You have given me disease:
All
the old
areas of infection reopen themselves:
my breath
rasps,
my head
is an
argument,
my blood ebbs, you
and your damned Irish genes
did this to me.

I pretend
someone else
cares for me,
catches my
falling body,
cradles my
aching head,
cries when my fever rises
in alarm.

And meanwhile
mother
from my dying bed
I have
finished you, you are
not even a
spot upon the sheet,
you are gamma rayed
clean gone.

You are not
absent anymore
you
never were.

And your child
is the driven snow, she
is innocent of
all action, the
articulate say victim,
a word
she neither speaks nor
knows.

She is buried. She is only
bone, polished clean and white
as if with
agonized toil
a shrunken jeweller
crouched inside
her box
tumbling her body
by hand but
she was alone.

She was alone, but
her casket
was glass. And when she
cried she turned
her body
in shame
to the earth, and
turning and turning
wore her
body away.

Now
in my dreams
the mother who never was
finds the bones of her child
and says,
'How we have both suffered.'
Now the
child opens the
box which becomes
a mirror. She stares at her
bony self
and does not
look away.

There you are at the stove again
a woman too intelligent for absolute
paranoia, stirring the cereal
again, is there something that draws you
back and back to this
the light, the plant you must
water, the bacon, the eggs in the pan
you consider five years in this
place, two lunches made in the
ice box, your daughter with
one big tooth crowding the babies
makes blue snakes in the next room,
the cereal is poured in blue
bowls with blue rims,
you have chosen the colour
chosen your daughter
chosen the number on the house.

2

You say the
entire world can exist
in one imagination.
And you tell the story
of the sisters over
in your mind
how they longed for the city
how they died in the country
and that not in the city
but somewhere
behind them
not in the country
I dreamed last night
the men made plans for the future
your husband and mine
with the correct explosions
underground, they said, we locate caves
and stay there while the holocaust
rages on the surface, then
according to the laws of probability
we will find our way out
in two thousand years.

4

No, I woke up screaming
I would rather die
in the fires.

5

And you wake
to a quick silence
like disaster, like the
moment the pot falling
seems to rest in air
before it
splits in two
and you wonder
is the fire
real?

You remind yourself how easily you forget
the mind thinking itself quick recites outlines
and leaves out all the textures,
invents a reason
and is irritated by the wrong details.
The body goes on defending itself
every movement, the boiling of water on
the stove, the pouring of salt in a shaker
a proof of theorems, when suddenly
I remember every moment.

7

Self-preservation in the making of breakfast.
Self-preservation in the cry on waking.
Self-preservation in reason.
Self-preservation in memory.
*I remember every moment, I am shocked
at the daily loss.*

Grace

Revolution — *glace*

I would not have gotten in this boat with
you.
I would not
except
where else was there
at the dock's end
to go?
The water
was cold.

I would not have let you row the boat.
I could see
what kind of man you were.
I would not but
who was there to choose
between
you and me?

I would not have let you throw away the
oars.
I knew what would happen next,
except
what else was there to do,
struggle
in a boat with a leak
over cold water?

a thought

Immersion ¹₂

1

This is the beginning.
 You are chilled to the bone.
 How can one speak of it?
 You have taken off your clothes and
 walked into the wind.
 How can this be told?
 You have immersed yourself.

2

We sail up a brilliant coast.
 Some of us will swim ashore.
 The sharks are indifferent
 but I am bleeding.
 Not this close in,
 I'm told, trust
 this water.
 A long swim and
 hard, they say.
 Black caves, red valley,
 sand shore so vivid,
 terror in my body,
 I slip into the sea.

3

Joy comes loose
 inside me.
 I am maddened.
 You stand under the waterfall.
 In your element.
 Now I know you.
 The cave looms large behind us.
 Such beauty has
 ripped away all pretence,
 all the normal.

4

Back on the boat
 I am still alive.
 Porpoises met us meaning
 wonder. I was so
 afraid,
 there in the water.
 I sank in fear.
 I was fear.
 I was immersed.

5

How water
 on the skin
 washes away and
 awakens.

6

on the boat's bow?
 You sleep beside me and can go
 away into darkness can become
 only a voice promising return.

7

Every way that I turn
 to the vast void of the sea
 the high fingering cliffs
 the emotional slap of waves
 whether I am angry, holding
 myself away from you, afraid,
 whether I resist or resent
 this or that object left
 the complaint, the irritation shading
 perfection, whether you jump to
 conclusions, give orders, create
 disorder, cause sleeplessness
 I listen all morning for your footsteps
 everywhere I turn
 a question you answer over and over
 opens out in me, everywhere

8

In my dreams I look
 into the water, the deepest
 water I've seen looks back and the
 brightest with wonders
 beneath the surface. Close to me
 fish dazzle yellow white orange green
 red large I cannot
 resist them though
 two sharks haunt the distance.
 My heart pulls me down.
 I will risk this.
 I swim into what
 is precious to me.

9

You are away from home.
 I stare into fire.
 The shape of the smoke is
 exquisite.
 Time is present.
 When I say I
 miss you, this is a feeling
 in my body like pain.
 Each day you come closer to home.
 At the edge of this sorrow is
 delight.

Is the Air Political Today? - *Mu*

Is the air political today?
The air, my thoughts,
is this a
political hour? did you
choose a political chair
to sit in; was
my logic political, were my
eyes, did they
show a political grief or
was it personal; would my political
self have been happy
when I was not; would they
have fought over me
struggling over the tongue; is my tongue
political when it rests still
between my teeth and I dream;
what was birth
the placenta that was pulled from me
was that political?
I cannot
shut myself up
anywhere; is that
a political feeling? Are you
more political than I, tonight,
or were you this morning and tell
me now
in which journal shall I write
that I miss my child
and want to hold
her, let her political
head rest between my
political breast and shoulder?

Erin

The Awful Mother *W*

The whole weight of history bears down
on the awful mother's shoulders.
Hiroshima, the Holocaust, the Inquisition
each massacre of innocents
her own childhood
and the childhood of her mother
and the childhood of her child.
What can she do?
She remembers.
The child's drawing, the lost
mittens, the child
cold, the awful mother shouting
the child's story of shadows
in her room, the child waiting
the awful mother

waiting, and *her* mother
waiting, already asleep
and the awful mother
knowing too late
the howling of children
in cattle cars and fires.
The wind blows so hard
it is as if the earth had fallen
on its side.
But nobody wakes up.
Only the awful mother stirs stricken
with grief.

All

Our Mother *W*

At the centre of the earth there is a mother.
If any of us who are her children choose to die
she feels a grief like a wound deeper
than any of us can imagine.
She puts her hands
to her face
like this:
her two palms open on her cheeks.
Put them there like she does
Her fingers cover her eyes.
She presses her hands into her eyes.
Do that.
She tries to howl.
Some of us have decided
this mother cannot hear all of us
in our desperate wishes.
Here, in this time,
our hearts have been cut
into small chambers
like ration cards
and we can no longer imagine every
morsel nor each tiny
thought at once, as
she still can.
This is normal,
she tries to tell us,
but we don't listen.
Sometimes someone has a faint memory
of all this, and she
suffers.
She is wrong to imagine
she suffers alone.
Do you think we are not all
hearing and speaking
at the same time?
Our mother is sombre.
She is thinking.
She puts her big ear
against the sky
to comfort herself.
Do this. She calls to us.
Do this.

I wake feeling green grown over me
 And the death of a friend in my dreams.
 The dead one and I
 float in the water.
 Around her are all the flowers
 I meant to give her,
 as shame comes up a liquid
 out of her mouth
 and I hold her pleading
 this is alright, oh
 let yourself be comforted,
 let yourself *be*.

I wake thick with memory and the paintings of trees.
 The dead one, and the one who mourns her mother,
 and the one whose distance I mourn, stay with me,
 and this story, recently told: that one twin brother
 breaks a knee, and the other breaks another bone,
 and the one breaks his hand.

Because her mother had died,
 we touched the edge of hands, blessed, we
 gave her a green heart, a blue heart
 to circle her throat, her bone, we
 made a hole in the earth and ringed
 a tree in her mother's name.

Because of distance, I wrote letters
 forsaking my old friend, I imagined
 both of us free.

This is what we saw happen:
 Two boys made mirrors
 of each other's bodies
 fell apart like petals
 then broke bones to show
 the world something
 had happened.

Waking I heard the painter
 painting the trees
 said
 nothing is dead
 not even a
 corpse.

And I remembered myself
 a small girl
 who talked to her dog
 whose tears streamed slowly down her cheeks
 as she whispered into the curling fur
 how she had a centre
 a brown ache like the cave
 in the trunk of a tree.

When I dream of the dead
 I ask the air now as
 silence waits in my ears

**make a green arc back
 across distance. I imagine
 a pain beyond touching.**

*Painting the forest
 the painter said
 should you sit down
 the great, dry, green sea
 would sweep over and engulf you.*

Awake now, I feel part
 of the forest
 sunken deep
 in the green not
 drowning not dead
 but alive with the dead and
 the distant a cave
 in the centre filled with
 weeping and singing the old cry
 of longing, the old cry of loss
 come home.

Duncan, Isadora (1878-1927), was born in San Francisco, California, of Irish parents. Her mother was a music teacher and from her Isadora absorbed an understanding of the relation between music and movement. She studied ballet as a child, but soon broke away from the conventional classic form to express herself in her own way. Her debut in Chicago (1899) was not successful, so she went with her family to Europe where she danced for the first time in Paris in 1900 and was appreciated much more than in the U.S.

Her vaguely expressed theory of dance was that movement, or dance, basically was the expression of an inner urge or impulse. She tried to locate the source of this impulse, which she considered fundamental and universal, physically, in the solar plexus. Though she had little formal education, she was self-educated to a remarkable degree. She was much influenced by Greece and Greek art. Her usual costume was a flowing tunic, and she was the first Western dancer to dance barefooted and to appear on the stage without tights.

Duncan's Paris success led to engagements in Budapest, Berlin, Florence, and other European cities. In 1904 she founded her own school in Berlin and two years later appeared with a group composed of her pupils. By then she had established a firm attitude toward dance form, which she called the "free dance" as opposed to the formal dance form of ballet.

In 1905 Duncan made her first appearance in Russia where she created a heated and lasting controversy between the old-school balletomanes and critics on one side and advocates of the reform of the ballet on the other. It is an established fact that she had a strong influence

Michel Fokine, who was then formulating his ideas about the "new" ballet. His ballet *Eunice*, in which the dancers appeared barefoot and in Greek tunics, was a manifestation of this influence.

The art of Isadora Duncan was closer to pantomime than to actual stage dance. It avoided definitely set movements and steps and transformed the dance into seldom, if ever, repeated improvisations which were never solidified into an unchangeable formal system. For this reason the strength and charm of Duncan's art was destined to disappear with the retirement of the dancer. Sympathetic critics always considered Duncan a personal phenomenon in the art of dance. Her influence on modern dance is felt now more than it was during her lifetime.

Duncan revisited Russia in 1907 and 1912. She established schools in France, Germany, and the U.S., but these were only schools, not a new system of training. Attracted by the Russian revolution, Duncan returned to Russia in 1921 and established there a school which existed through 1924. Though the U.S. at first received her coldly, she returned to her mother country at various times (1909, 1911, 1917, and 1922—the last time under the aegis of impresario S. Hurok).

Isadora Duncan died tragically near Nice, France, on Sept. 14, 1927, as a result of a weird accident. The end of a long scarf which she was wearing around her neck while taking a trip in an open automobile became caught in the rear wheel of the car and strangled her.

During her lifetime, Duncan had been unique in that she seemed to belong not so much to the dance world alone as to the world of art. She dared to use the music of master composers for her dances and although she was criticized for this, her superb musical taste was soon recognized. Cosima Wagner presided herself over Duncan's dancing to music of Wagner at the near-sacred Bayreuth Festival; the pianist Harold Bauer worked with her and felt that he learned of undiscovered



Isadora Duncan. (An enlargement of a postal card which had a wide distribution in Europe ca. 1919. Part of the Duncan Collection of the New York Public Library.)

ered musical details through watching her dance. Sculptors, painters, poets, essayists and, indeed, many artists of the century (Rodin, Clara, Craig, Bourdelle, Walkowitz, Grandjouan, Van Vechten, among them) found in her an inspiration. And after her death, artists of all kinds—not dancers alone—found in her a continuing source of inspiration.

Many books and chapters within books have been written about her but the most famous is her own (*My Life*), in which she touched upon her art concepts but dwelt more with her tempestuous personal life, her flaunting of conventions (she bore three children out of wedlock; two were drowned in a tragic accident, the third died soon after birth); her much publicized marriage to the hard-drinking, mentally unbalanced Soviet poet (Yessenin) who ultimately committed suicide; and other aspects, both tragic and ecstatic, of a remarkable life.

I was born in 1943, near the end of the Second World War. I came of age in California, and lived near Hollywood during the period in America known as the Red Scare, a time when Senator McCarthy was hunting down and persecuting radical writers and screenwriters in order to silence them. Luminous figures such as Bertolt Brecht, Lillian Hellman and Dalton Trumbo, to name a few, were called before this committee in an effort to expose them to public ignominy. Yet, even though I was raised in a Conservative Republican family, and was used to hearing my grandfather complain about the 'Commies', anyone who had appeared before this committee as an unfriendly witness immediately became my hero.

In my passionate belief in liberty and social justice, I was typical of my generation. We were the ones who peopled the student movement, protesting and seeing an end to McCarthyism, joining the newly risen Civil Rights movement, crying out against our country's part in the Vietnam War.

Though we were the originators of this movement we were also shaped and educated by it. I began to understand the need for economic as well as political equality. I witnessed and then studied the growth of a new movement for Black Power which spoke of the anger of the oppressed, and of the many ways in which a racist culture can subtly destroy one's sense of natural authority. And, most important, I learned that it is necessary to have a pride in one's own identity in order to restore that natural authority.

It was against the backdrop of this movement that I became a feminist. Were I to draw a portrait of myself as I would wish myself to be, I would not draw a picture of a 'political writer'. I have always wanted to touch more deeply the intricacy of human emotion than a political viewpoint allows. Before I found myself a feminist, my political writing, for the most part, had a hollow sound, as if the mind had dictated its shape without the body and the heart participating. But when I became a feminist this was no longer true. I could no longer separate any part of myself from my political consciousness.

The year when my knowledge of myself as a woman in society became conscious was a kind of watershed in my life. I had been married the year before. The next year I was to give birth to my daughter. I had been on the staff of an American radical magazine. There I was disturbed at a clearly prejudicial attitude which the radical employers had towards their female staff. But it was when I stopped working at that magazine to spend a year in solitary writing, working at home alone, at times very lonely, despairing of ever being heard, that I was deeply changed.

I cannot say which came first. At one and the same time I began to write more simply and honestly about what I felt and lived - remembering again whole moments from childhood, discovering a direct and intense language of emotion - and I began to write and think through my growing anger at the oppression I suffered as a woman.

To write one must have a sense of self. It is not that one must feel one knows for certain what the truth is. Rather, as Goethe implies, truth comes to one. But, one must begin with the sense that one's own life is worthy of scrutiny.

I know that all human beings who grow up in this culture suffer, to one degree or another, from a sense of unworthiness. But society systematically teaches and intensifies this feeling in women. Directly, through the words, for instance, of a literary critic who can praise twenty novels about adolescent boys, but who is impatient of more than one novel about a woman divorcing; and indirectly, through a

female characters as trivial or auxiliary beings. In this way, the young woman who writes learns that she is not a fit subject for literature. When I was eight years old and I decided to write a novel, I chose to centre my narrative around the life of a war hero. Later, at fifteen, I made the hero of my short story a teenage boy.

I cannot say whether it was feminism that gave me the right to speak about my own life in my writing, or whether it was speaking about my own experience that transformed me into one who would demand her own rights. It is one of the errors of our civilization's habit of mind to look for single causes. In nature, most things are both cause and effect. In my life, probably each change ignited the other.

But I do know that even though I came to my own consciousness in a solitary way, I was not alone. Countless women of my generation and older, many also isolated from each other, suffered a similar change.

To speak, write and act out of one's own experience is a radical idea, but not new. And yet, whenever in this society a woman speaks from her own experience, something new is revealed. For in this culture, female experience has been silenced and it is, therefore, unknown.

I had turned inward, to question myself and to reform the notion of who I was, and what I wanted. I discovered secrets. Women began to confess to one another. We met formally and informally, socially and in small 'consciousness-raising' groups. We confessed we were afraid we were ugly. We did not like housework. In our sex, we were afraid we wanted too much, or too little, or were not pleased enough. We spoke of large things and small. Anger that a husband never did the dishes. Shame, fear and anger over rape, over abortion. We were, as Marge Piercy has written, 'unlearning not to speak.'

I had had an abortion before I was married. I decided to write about it. I wanted to reveal how common the experience was, and how frequently abortion was kept secret, and thus I interviewed women who had had abortions. I interviewed women about abortion. In these interviews, I did not pretend to be objective. I questioned the notion of an 'objectivity' which claims that one can arrive at truth without feeling. I spoke about my abortion, and revealed my own feelings. Hence my interviews resembled conversations between women.

It was from such conversations that the feminist movement was being born. Women's talk had been considered insignificant in the

social sphere. In 1968, at the very beginning of this feminist movement, much of a woman's experience was invisible to intellectual scrutiny. The events of our lives – childbirth, domestic labour, child-raising, abortion; our sexual lives, rape, our work as secretaries, or nurses – faded into the background, as if these events had nothing to do with the social structure or politics or culture but rather were part of the landscape, the given of existence. When I came to write about rape I said, 'I, like most women, have thought of rape as part of my natural environment – something to be feared and prayed against like fire or lightning.' And because these events remained unquestioned, our oppression, too, was invisible.

But now, our ears were tuned to hear the political significance of our conversations. We said, 'The personal is political.' This was a rallying cry. By saying these words, we asserted that our lives, as well as men's lives, were worthy of contemplation; that what we suffered in our lives was not always natural, but was instead the consequences of a political distribution of power. And finally, by these words, we said that the feelings we had of discomfort, dissatisfaction, grief, anger and rage were not madness, but sanity.

The feminist movement itself, in the first years of its formation, became a vessel of anger. We had entered upon an argument with society. Society had told us that housewives do nothing, were lazy. We answered with a statistic from the Chase-Manhattan Bank: housewives work an average of 99.6 hours each week. It was said that women were no longer oppressed. We pointed to statistics showing that women earned consistently lower salaries (sometimes for the same work men did), worked more often at menial jobs, and suffered a higher rate of unemployment. We uncovered and protested a multitude of injustices, large and small: that fewer women were lawyers or doctors, that we lost our names in marriage, that we were denied the right of abortion, were terrorized by rape. And we were not tenuous nor apologetic in our protests. What we said was said in anger.

As I became more conscious of my oppression as a woman, I found myself entering a state of rage. Everywhere I turned I found more evidence of male domination, of a social hatred of, and derogation of women, of increasingly insufferable limitations imposed upon my life. Social blindness is lived out in each separate life. Like many women, I had been used to lying to myself. To tell myself that I wanted what I did not want, or felt what I did not feel, was a habit so deeply ingrained in me, I was never aware of having lied. I had shaped

my life to fit the traditional idea of a woman, and thus, through countless decisions large and small, had sacrificed myself. Each sacrifice had made me angry. But I could not allow myself this anger. For my anger would have told me that I was lying. Now, when I ceased to lie, the anger I had accumulated for years was revealed to me.

A self more whole than I had allowed to live before was being born in me. 'There is a meaning for us in birth,' the midwife Arisika Razak writes, 'there is a seed, and a strength, and a place of knowledge and power.' And there is some pain in labour. All change is accompanied by pain.

I left my marriage. Poetry often comes before conscious knowledge for me. A year before, in 1969, I had written in a poem,

*I would not have gotten in this boat with you.
I would not
except
where else was there
at the dock's end
to go?
The water
was cold.*

Marriage had been seclusion and protection for me. I did not want to be a single woman. I did not want to be a woman alone raising a child. I was afraid I could not earn a living, and be a mother at the same time. And there was more.

I knew that I was a woman who loved other women more than I loved men. But I did not want to use the word 'lesbian' about myself. It was a word whose implications I knew well. My sister had been a lesbian for years. In my hidden self I suffered from all the many forms of social disapproval directed at her. To be a lesbian, I knew, was to become in the eyes of convention ridiculous. Unnatural. Untenable. (In those years, all women who were feminists were accused of being lesbians, as if the presence of homosexuality immediately corrupted an authentic argument for justice.) To become a lesbian was to become a social outcast.

Yet, as the depth and dimension of the oppression of women became more real to me, I became more real to myself. And this gave me the courage. Feminist insight had allowed me to reach a deeper

who had come to life in me. And now, because of this self, I was more radical and more demanding of life than I had been before. I felt everything more intensely, including desire, and the wish to love and to be loved. I could no longer pretend that I did not love women.

I had become far more radical than that radical movement which had been a parent to my political thought. I have said that when female experience is revealed, the unknown is revealed. But the unknown is not always welcome. It unsettles old assumptions and old ways of being. Many parents fail to recognize their own principles when their children take these principles to heart. 'Is this my child?' a parent will say, disowning influence.

Men on the left said to us that we were not oppressed. Or that our oppression, in the light of historical change, being outside of the question of production, was not significant. You need to wait, we were told, until after a socialist revolution.

But the feminist movement was also critical of its radical progenitors. I remember the beginnings of my own critical opposition. In the year before the birth of my daughter, Martin Luther King was murdered. The United States was pursuing a merciless campaign of violence in Vietnam. But at the same time, the left was taking a turn toward violence.

There is, in the American left, an old and ardent tradition which believes, as Barbara Deming wrote in 1971, 'If we kill, we kill . . . our ability to bring into full being the new society.' This non-violent tradition continued in this decade with strength and tenacity. Yet many young, white radicals began to fashion an image of revolutionary courage modelled on terrorist acts committed by those suffering from far more urgent circumstances, living under colonial governments, or military dictatorships. In the United States a group of radical men and women split themselves off from the rest of the radical movement and went underground to act as terrorists. While most of the left in America did not take this course of action, violence had taken on a kind of numinosity, as if to risk or to lose a life were the ultimate test of revolutionary passion.

During these years, the late sixties, it was popular to speculate that the true revolutionary should have no strong personal ties, no wife or husband or children. But I began to think differently. After the birth of my daughter, a new capacity to be connected to others had grown in me, and as a mother, I made a new acquaintance with human vulnerability. Now it occurred to me that a revolutionary ought to have a deep commitment, not only to abstract humanity, but to actual flesh and blood beings, that a radical should risk intimacy, and enter the simple world of the child.

One day *Life* magazine arrived at our house. When my daughter was taking her nap, I opened to pages of photographs of women's and children's bodies, wounded, dying. A child lying in the mud, face down, its small ass uncovered, the way I let my daughter walk about, a child's body with the same delightful beauty. I wrote.

(Oh God, she said, look at the baby)

*saying 'hi' 'Ho' 'Ha' hi hi goggydoggyamadada Hl
and the light was coming through the window
through the handprints on the glass
making shadow patterns, and the cold day
was orange outside and they were muddling
in their underwear, getting dressed,
putting diapers on the baby,
slipping sandals on her feet.*

*(Oh God, she said, look at the baby
He has blood all over, she cried.)*

These women and children were Vietnamese villagers, shot by American soldiers at Song My. I cursed and wept for a week,* and through my tears began to see myself not as an American, nor a radical either, but as a woman with a child.

I was not the only one to perceive that the violence of these times bore a relation to our idea of masculinity. In 1973 Adrienne Rich wrote of the American bombing of Vietnam, '... the bombings are so wholly sadistic, gratuitous and demonic that they can finally be seen, if we care to see them for what they are: acts of concrete sexual violence, an expression of the congruence of violence and sex in the masculine psyche . . .'

During the years of this violence, and the more prevalent violent rhetoric, I began to see a disturbing resemblance between the cocky stance of my radical brother and the brutal policeman who aimed his club at our heads. In the ensuing years a series of incidents, including the Manson family murders, the murder of Marcus Foster - the superintendent of Oakland schools - and the kidnapping of Patricia Hearst by the 'Symbionese Liberation Army',* caused the left to

*An underground radical group of men and women who practised terrorism.

begin to question this atmosphere of violence. There was no dramatic repudiation. It was just that the sacrifice of the living became less romantic, and instead inglorious, sad, senseless.

Now, with the advantage of hindsight, I see that this violence was an act of despair arising not so much from material suffering, as from a bankruptcy of vision. It was a suicidal course for the left, followed by some at a moment when they could see no other way. The left had reached a kind of impasse and this expressed itself not only in ideas of violence, but also in a general waning of the radical movement itself.

Looking back on this moment in history, one sees that in the decade preceding, the left had had a significant effect on American society. The Vietnam War had been forced to an end. And though racism, and the effects of racism, remained, and the power of a military-industrial complex was still a danger to all our lives, a new generation had learned to think differently about this society.

This new generation wanted equality and peace, had learned to recognize the injustice of racism, had questioned the value of might and thus had precipitated a change in consciousness. But now that shift in consciousness had gone as far as it could. It had come up against an old blindness that the left could not acknowledge: a prejudice against women, and against those qualities in human nature which women have come to symbolize. The aesthetic of the left required hardness, 'guts', rigour. And to argue against violence or for reform had become soft, 'feminine', sentimental. The image of the radical was an image of machismo. We know now that this image placed disastrous limitations on the imagination. It truncated radical consciousness, and affected not only tactical questions, but also theory and analysis.

When the boundaries of consciousness are closed, the mind begins to despair. I found myself despairing. Yet, as the poet Roethke wrote, 'In a dark time/the eye begins to see.' Now it was women who would waken consciousness to new understandings. Out of our lives and our thoughts which had been obscure we formed a new way of seeing.

In its earliest beginnings the feminist movement was imbued with the tone, the style and the thinking of the radical left of the late sixties. We carried on the politics of confrontation, used the tactics of the sit-in, the speak out, the picket, the demonstration. We framed our identity as women within the concept of oppression. But feminist

As I became more and more a feminist, my thought became autonomous. And then original. In the United States and internationally, a feminist movement exists which is at the same time a socialist movement, and Marxist. This is a valuable movement, but I am not part of it. This movement asks that the socialist movement include the oppression of women within its understanding of oppression. But I was seeking a more essential change of mind than this.

I wanted to free my thought from the old categories so that I might look at each phenomenon from the perspective of a woman, and from my own experience. I wanted to erase old assumptions, and let theory evolve from the conditions of my life. This I did. That I could even begin to think and write as I did depended on the fact of a social movement for feminism, and on the many other women who also dared to tread over the line of what is accepted as sane thinking. From our transgressions against the acceptable, a new way of seeing became possible.

Among many men and some women we encountered a strong opposition to our thinking. But we had begun to establish our own atmosphere. Yes, it was easier for a critic of feminism to be published in the trade press, than a feminist. But we established our own presses (my first three books of poetry were published by women), our own publishing houses, magazines, newspapers, bookstores. Women musicians formed groups, record companies, and held concerts. We held meetings and formed organizations which excluded the censorious presence of men.

Whether we separated ourselves entirely from men or not, we had succeeded in making a separate movement which had the flavour of a separate place, a nation, a world. And of course, we carried the conflicts and differences of society into our world. Within us there were working-class women, middle-class women, white women, women of colour, Jewish women, Catholic women, heterosexual and lesbian women, women with and without children. We had to learn to speak among ourselves not only about our shared oppression but about the different conditions of our lives, and like any movement, we have at times faltered over these differences, and quarrelled over the definition of who we are. But above all we have created for ourselves a measure of independence, a culture within culture that allows us to question all that we were taught, and to think in new ways about the world.*

*Even though it has been necessary for women to meet separately from men to forge our own ideas, I am not a partisan of separatism, in the strict political sense in which that word means to cut off all relations with men. I have come to feel that forging coalitions and understandings with groups that include men is an essential need, not only for our survival, but to the quality of feminist thought. I have observed that the most fruitful and creative political movements have come from those directly affected by the social circumstances they protest: the women's movement, the trade union movement, the Asian-American movement. I used to believe that these movements were viable because they were direct expressions of self-interest. But now my ideas have changed. Now, I feel that the strength of these movements comes from the direct experience and therefore knowledge of oppression that oppressed people have. And, at the same time, I have come to see that the idea of self-interest can be narrow and blind in its vision of the human condition. It is a human need, scarcely recognized but still felt, and often felt as an unmet hunger, to care about the fate of others, of every gender, race or culture.

When I look back on my own theoretical work, I can discover a line of thought which moves from one insight to another. But my progress was not linear. Rather, with each issue that I wrote about I felt as if I were in the centre of a labyrinth, sometimes covered with mirrors, sometimes with mirages, through which I had to make a path to the light.

In one of the interviews that I did on the subject of abortion, a woman said to me, 'I simply did not recognize that I was a woman and capable of conceiving. In some very basic way I did not believe in my own existence.' It is common for the oppressed either to deny the existence of their oppression, or to deny their own existence. To be a woman, for example, is to live almost continually with the possibility and hence fear of rape. It is to live in a state of suspended terror. One cannot go about one's life always feeling afraid. Thus, one says to oneself one is not afraid. Or, in a voice not fully before consciousness, one tells oneself one is not really a woman, and therefore will not be raped. Or one denies that very many rapes take place. Or says to oneself that the woman who has been raped has acted foolishly; she has brought it upon herself. Underneath all this, one knows better; one fears. But in consciousness, one chooses not to believe oneself.

Left secret and unexamined, a fear of rape can cause a timidity which then would lead one to believe that women are naturally reticent creatures who do need the protection of men. But when it is admitted, this fear leads to another line of thought. Suddenly one asks why this circumstance – that before seemed a part of nature – exists. Could it be natural that women live in a state of terror? 'Why does rape take place?' one asks.

This is no longer the surprising question it once was. I remember a long argument with a friend, a radical and a man. When I said I was writing about rape, and the fear of rape, he asked me why would a woman be afraid? After all, rape was simply sex, he said. In the back of his mind, no doubt, was the old idea that women want to be raped. I could not convince him that rape was a brutal experience for women, until I reminded him of a suspense film we had seen, in which a man was attacked, and murdered by a stranger. Only then did it come home to him that when a woman is raped her life has nearly always been threatened, and that sometimes her life is taken. When he encountered a woman's subjective experience in himself, his thinking was transformed.

As I thought through the question of rape, I saw that rape is essentially an act of dominance and aggression. I wrote that women in a society dominated by men were the weakest members, and that thus we had become the scapegoats for aggression. Yet, so intimately connected in this culture are our ideas of sex and violence that, when I wrote about rape, I failed to ask why a sexual act should become the vehicle for aggression. I was not to ask or answer this question for myself until almost ten years later, when I wrote *Pornography and Silence*.

In the next decade the feminist movement spoke out against rape and the threat of rape as a daily fact of women's lives. All over America women formed rape crisis centres, places where women could go to talk about what had happened to them. Court procedures which included a woman's private sexual history as evidence were challenged and changed. Women acted as advocates for one another during police investigations. We learned self-defence. And more. In protesting the fact of rape, and a continual threat of extinction, we defined ourselves as essential to ourselves, as subject and not object, as beings who existed in order to exist.

In the next two years I was to write two articles about motherhood. During these years, I raised my daughter, rented rooms in my house, worked at three different part-time jobs, all this time living in that

the poor. We had the least social and economic power, the least ability to affect the course of the world. I felt overtired, overworked, unable to make ends meet, worried over my child and my neglect of her. And I was not alone. Too many women and children knew these difficulties. Our condition spoke a grave criticism of the society in which we lived, a society that does not cherish its young.

In 'Feminism and Motherhood' I explored the resonances of this situation. Women held responsible for children. Men ignorant of the child's need, not knowing how to mother, to feed. Forgetting the vulnerable feeling world of the child. Women, with the knowledge of how to help a child grow, with a knowledge of human life's frailties and capacities and imaginings, but without the power to shape the social body to these understandings.

It is an extraordinary feeling to be part of a movement at once social, political, intellectual and cultural. I wrote about motherhood out of the urgencies of my own life. Yet, returning from the solitary act of writing, I found I was not alone in my concern. And neither was I alone in my heterodox view of society. An organization for single mothers, 'Momma', now existed. It formed support groups, lobbied, published a newspaper and then a book. Adrienne Rich was completing her classic study, *Of Woman Born*. And Merlin Stone published a scholarly book, *When God Was a Woman*, which suggested that a social body governed by mothers, and worshipping the image of the mother, had existed before patriarchy. Within the feminist movement, another movement grew up around the idea of matriarchy. Women began to imagine a female cosmos, to retrieve the history of witches; they conceived of a spirituality which worshipped the goddess.

What existed in prehistory is now only a subject for speculation. We cannot know. And yet, what one imagines to have existed in the past, in a Golden Age, stands in the mind for the hope of wholeness we might be able to find in the future. To consider the possibility of matriarchy requires a shift in thinking. To be certain, the idea of female rule is a significant part of that shift. But women entertaining the idea of matriarchy were not seeking exclusive female governance. Instead, they sought a shift in values. Just as I had explored the difference between the world of mothers and children, and a society dominated by men, so the students of matriarchy explored significant differences between socially masculine and feminine values. The roles society had given to men and women had produced different thinking and different ways of being in us. Now, it was being suggested, as it had also been during the nineteenth century, that men, valuing power, produce nations, conflict and wars, and that women, valuing life, produce relationship, continuity and peace.

Even given that each particular man and woman may not actually fit into these categorical descriptions of their gender, this is far too simple a description of men and women in contemporary society. Yet ideas which are too simple often have an emotional accuracy. They describe correctly what is felt, and point therefore to a new and more complex matrix of explanations, which is to come later.

The mother goddess is most often an earth goddess, and, increasingly, women were beginning to investigate the identification of woman with nature. In the middle seventies I was asked to address a class at the University of California on the subject of feminism and ecology. When I complained that I was not an ecologist, the professors in the course agreed to let me approach the subject philosophically, and so I prepared a lecture. Again, I took my own experience and feeling as the place to enter thought.

At that time, the ecology movement had made a dramatic and moral issue out of the way that households disposed of tin cans, bottles and other refuse. Because I was so overworked, I resented this tactic, and my resentment led me to a discovery. Following the reasoning of my own anger, I said that women are always being asked to clean up after men. We do the dishes, wash the toilets, even take away the baby's faeces, and now we are being asked to take care of a mess created by a society run by men. It was from this complaint that I began to understand that our culture identifies matter and nature with women, but culture and spirit with men.

Speaking to a lecture hall of undergraduates, I told them that because of the division of labour between men and women, many men could live their lives with the illusion that either they did not have bodies, or they were the masters of their bodies. For in general the problems that the physical world presents to us through our bodies are handled by women. When a man is hungry, a woman prepares the meal. When he defecates, a woman cleans the toilet. True, he must work for a living. But already, because of social structures and money, more often than not his efforts take place in a different sphere than the material world, in a world of abstraction. Thus, a man can live his whole life with a disdain for the simple needs of the human body, and for the labour needed to sustain that body. And the more

power a man has, or the more he is part of the ruling class, the less his work outside the home includes direct material experience.

I traced this dichotomy between the material female and the spiritual male through the history of speculation back to our creation myth – the story of the Garden of Eden. It was Eve who was said to have brought death into the world. And all women, in this mythos, share in this act because we are reputed to be more corporeal and are therefore agents of the devil. Now I understand why woman had become, as de Beauvoir writes, 'other', the scapegoat. In our culture, men had associated woman with nature: woman had become a symbol for the power of nature to alter our lives, cause suffering, loss and death. Thus I began to see that out of a desire to control nature, men dominate women. I decided to write a book about women and nature.

I have always thought of myself as a poet. Poetry is the easiest form for me to write. Thus, when I began to write *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*, I wrote in a kind of prose poetry. I started by writing about domesticity, with this sentence. 'We are the mules,' in the voice of a mule who complains. Because I liked this piece so well, I decided to use this form. And later, when I began to do research regarding the history of science from the thirteenth century to the present, or the development of modern agricultural methods, I realised that my strength as a writer on this subject was not an expertise in science or technology but the poetic sensibility which I could bring to these facts and events. Later, I came to realize that poetry is a powerful way of knowledge.

While I was reading various scientific texts, I found that the words of scientists and historians of science had a chilling effect on my own thought. They had such a tone of authority for me, I was afraid to question their judgments. Moreover, I was worried by an aesthetic problem: how was I to convey scientific attitudes in the very personal, emotional language I had used for the voice of the 'mule'? Finally, in that dream state between sleep and waking, the solution to these problems occurred to me. I would write in two voices. One would be a parody of the scientific voice in which I answered my own fear of authority by making fun of the disembodied, seemingly 'objective' voice of authority. The other voice would be the embodied, feeling voice of woman and nature. Now I had two characters and a drama. The voice of authority – a male and patriarchal voice – attempted over and over again to dominate the female voice of the body, of forests, of wind, of mountains, of horses, cows, of the earth.

also motivates the destruction of ecological balance: the desire to dominate nature, to be in control. I also saw that the derogatory way in which men see women was a mirror of culture's derogatory view of matter, and that this derived from the philosophical separation between spirit and matter. Now, speculation about my own feelings and my own experience as a woman had led me to speculations about the nature of Nature, and about epistemology, and I began to see human psychology in a new way.

My interest in psychology was accelerated by my personal life. Since I was an adult, I had had periods of severe depression. I had read of other writers who would sink into a depressed state after finishing a book. Now, having completed *Woman and Nature*, this happened to me.

I had been in psychotherapy for many years. But now I entered a very intense process of healing, in which I relived the events of my childhood. I experienced the truths of psychological understanding of human nature vividly. It was not only my life that had been affected by this process, but my thinking. I did not so much change my mind as see again what I had understood before, but now through a different lens which added a deeper level of understanding to my thoughts.

One of the first pieces that I wrote out of this new level of understanding, 'Thoughts on Writing', is included in this book. In it I say that the two voices in *Woman and Nature*, the voice of patriarchal authority and the voice of woman and nature, also exist inside me. I had recorded an inner dialogue as well as a social dialogue. What I experienced as myself, in the act of writing poetry, was a split. I was both censor and poet.

It seems obvious that a culture which has created dualisms between mind and body, intellect and emotion, and spirit and matter would also produce, in its individual members, a divided self. But this had not been obvious to me, in the fullness of its implications, before this time. When I began writing about pornography in *Pornography and Silence* I encountered the same dualism again, and I found the divided self again.

Freud compared the process of psychology to an archaeological expedition: the human mind, he wrote, had layers similar to those in a building whose foundation covers the traces of earlier buildings. I believe that pornographic fantasies make up a record of our culture's otherwise hidden thoughts and I approached pornography the way an

archaeologist approaches a ruin. But in order to reach pornography for these meanings, one must read as a student of literature reads a text, symbolically.

I soon realized that the dualism between nature and culture is expressed throughout pornography. The pornographic heroine is frequently associated, and in a debased manner, with nature. The pornographic hero represents cultural power. And within pornography, the sexual act is an act of dominance. But now, I came also to see that the woman in pornography is not a woman! She is entirely unrealistic and hardly resembles any actual woman. Thus, I understood that the pornographic heroine is a symbol for a denied part of the pornographic hero's psyche.

The dominant mind of our culture is a mind in conflict. And the pornographic hero who represents this mind plays out this conflict in pornography. Afraid of the vulnerability of his own flesh, he tortures the flesh of a woman. Afraid of his feeling, he ridicules the feelings of a woman. Afraid to lose control of his own body, afraid of the power of natural circumstances, he ties and binds a woman, he rapes her, or even murders her. Pornography provides this hero, and the reader who identifies with him, with the illusion that he can control nature. And pornography itself is part of a larger delusion that culture can control nature.

In a culture of delusion, women symbolize a denied self who experiences what it is to be human, to be in and of nature. This self knows that we die, this self feels, suffers pain, knows love without boundary, grieves loss, knows the world through sensation, through the body, accepts that we are sometimes powerless before the powerful circumstances of this earth.

It was from this understanding that I began to see why the sexual act is used to express aggression toward women. A man can avoid confronting nature when he eats, for example, because the male role protects him from 'domestic' work. But he cannot avoid an experience of nature in his own sex. At the heart of the sexual experience, and of sexual longing, is orgasm, and orgasm itself necessitates a loss of control. Moreover, in a sexual embrace we return to the sensual experience of the infant, a pre-cultural being, not yet educated into culture's delusions of power. To be held, to feel skin against skin, to search another's body with mouth and hands is to return to our original knowledge of the body. And from this I saw that the rapist turns the vulnerable act of coitus into an act of aggression in order to avoid the knowledge that comes from this experience of vulnerability.

Here, too, I saw why women are associated with nature. We are the first 'other' the infant encounters, the mother, and for the infant we represent the power of circumstance: we can feed or not feed, comfort or not, come or go away leaving the infant in fear of pain and death.

I subtitled this book 'Culture's Revenge Against Nature' because I felt that pornography humiliates women as an act of revenge against the natural world. I realized that I had encountered this habit of mind before; for the mind of the pornographer was like the mind of the racist. Both minds choose a scapegoat on which to project a part of themselves they deny. Both take revenge against this scapegoat through humiliation and acts of dominance.

Now I understood why it was that a feminist movement had grown out of the movement for the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century, and why the contemporary feminist movement followed the beginning of the contemporary civil rights movement. It is not so much that women and black people suffer in the same way. Sometimes we do and sometimes we do not. But in this culture we are defined and victimized by the same habit of mind, a habit of delusion.

In seeking to discover the psychological origins of pornographic imagery, I have come to understand the political significance of self-knowledge and denial. Out of denied selves and denied realities, the mind creates an enemy, and this enemy 'can be a whole nation, race or sex'. In 'The Way of All Ideology: The Need for an Enemy', I extend my thinking about culture as delusion to include the way in which any theory, even a radical or feminist one, can become a means to deny insight and create enemies.

Once more, I find myself part of a larger movement of heart and mind. A new generation of thought by women and men attempts to heal our social and political troubles with a deeper understanding of the human by entering that undefined realm between a political philosophy and psychology where psyche and circumstance shape each other.*

And what of this word 'human'? What I thought was a break with radical thought was really a coming home. I tore myself away from the old modes and began again from my own experience and my own feeling. Is this not to confirm that matter and spirit are forever linked, to know that the best thought originates from the wholeness of our

*See Sue Mansfield, *The Gestalt of War*, New York, 1982, and Deena Metzger, *Tree*, Culver City 1981.

own existence? Thinking I was discovering only my own answers and then answers for women, I came upon a new way of seeing the human. The word 'human' has not really included women, nor people of colour, nor any 'other'. But is this not why the human being has suffered so much in these times? For in excluding otherness from ourselves, we have excluded our own vulnerability and our tenderness, our tears, our anger, our wholeness, our *selves*. Now I reclaim the word human, and I know myself as a radical again.

This is a difficult year. Prospects for women and the world look bleak. The old economies decline, and poverty always falls hardest on the forgotten, other self, the darker, older one, the woman, the child. An American president speaks of the possibility of a 'limited' nuclear war. It becomes a part of sanity to fear that soon there will be no human life on earth.

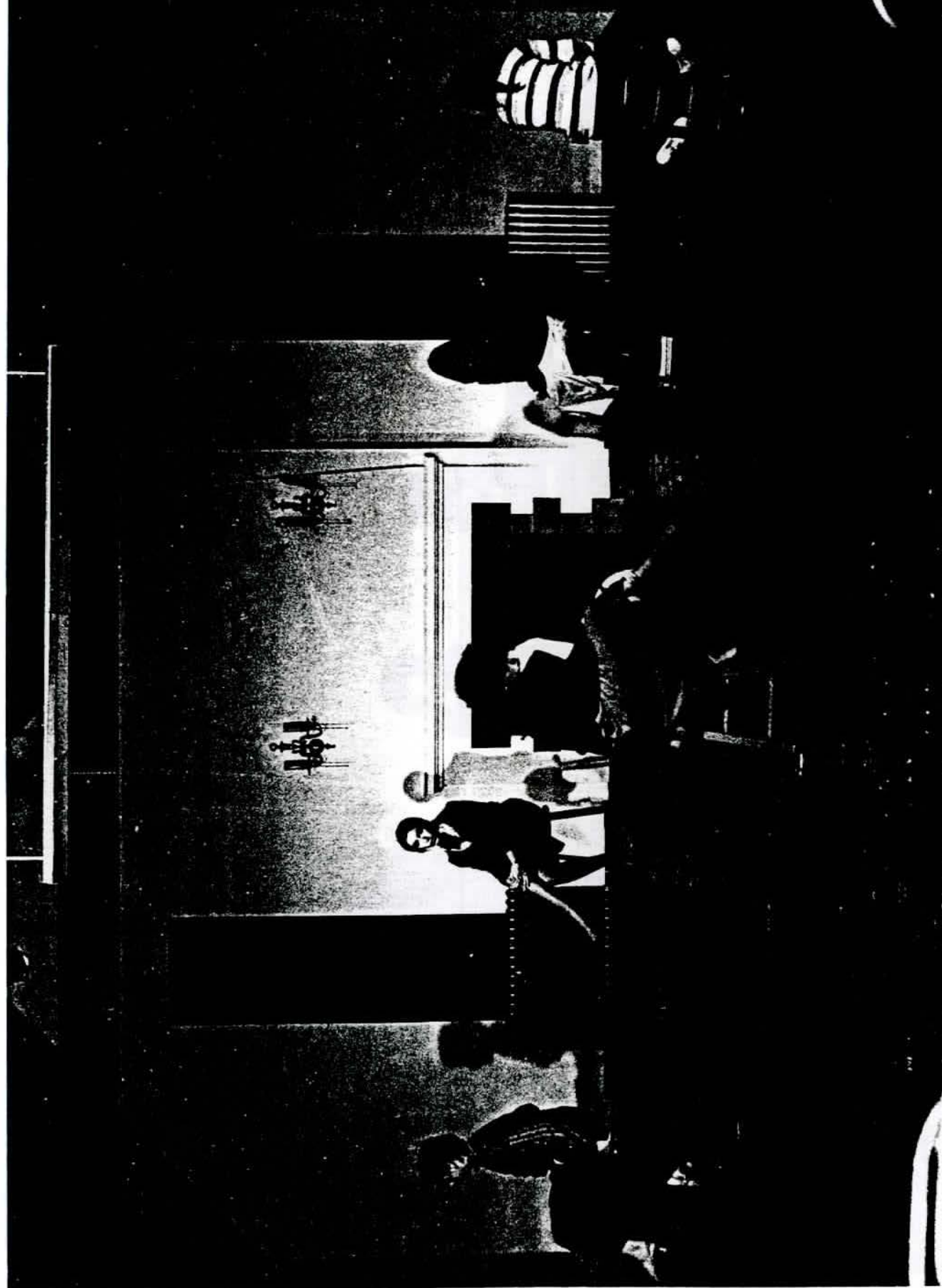
But fearful as I am, there is joy in me. While one eye sees disaster and the causes of destruction more clearly, the other eye awakens to beauty. I am beginning to put the shattered being, myself and the world, back together. We are all connected. I know this. Dark and light. Male and female. We are a tribe whose fate on this earth is shared. I do not know the outcome. I have moments of despair. But I have learned that when I see out of my own experience, and chart it as precisely and clearly as I can, I see what I have not seen before: I am surprised.

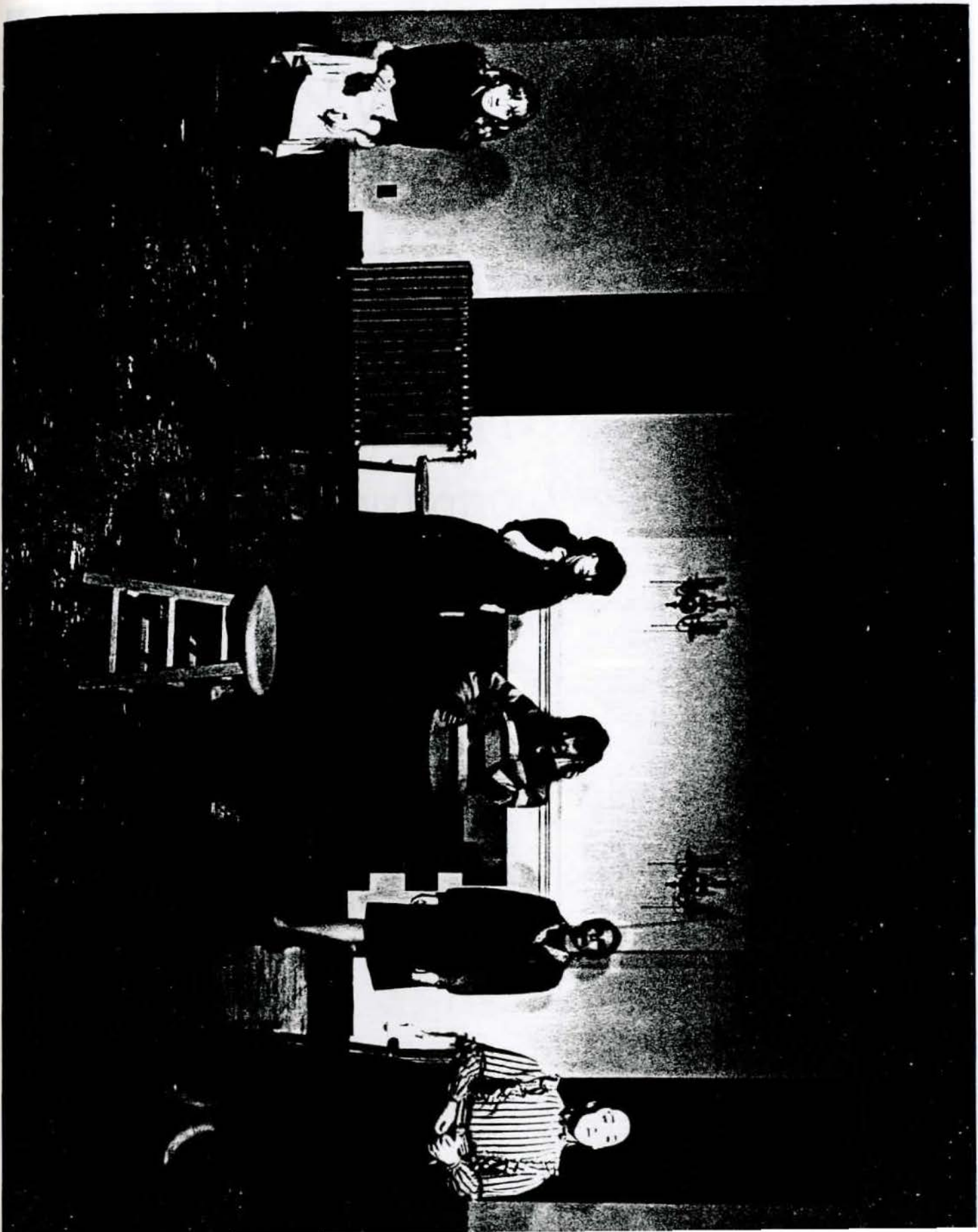
This earth holds a vast wisdom and a capacity to heal that we are only beginning to comprehend. We are made from this earth. This is my hope.

Berkeley, Winter 1982

APPENDIX II

P R O D U C T I O N P H O T O S



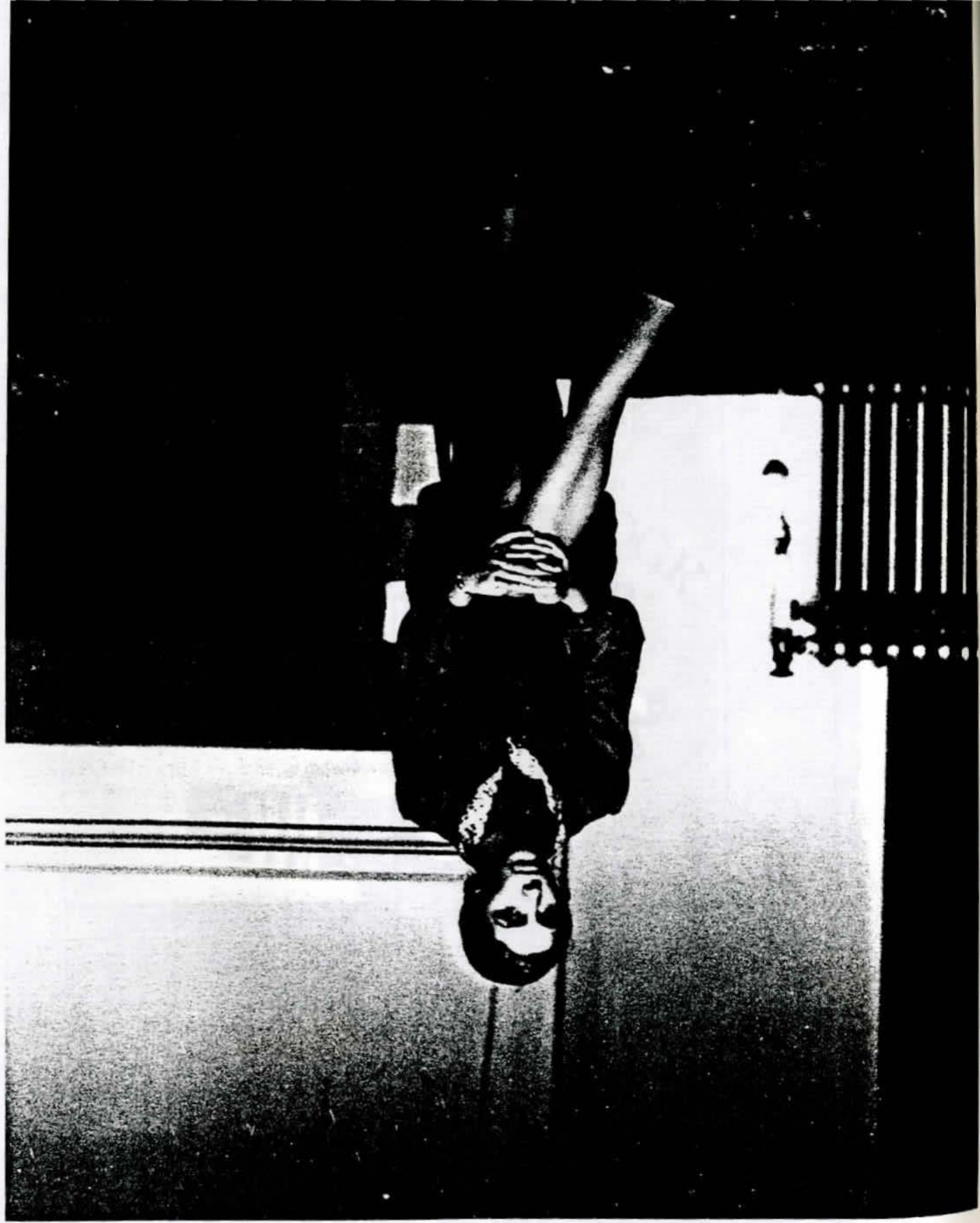


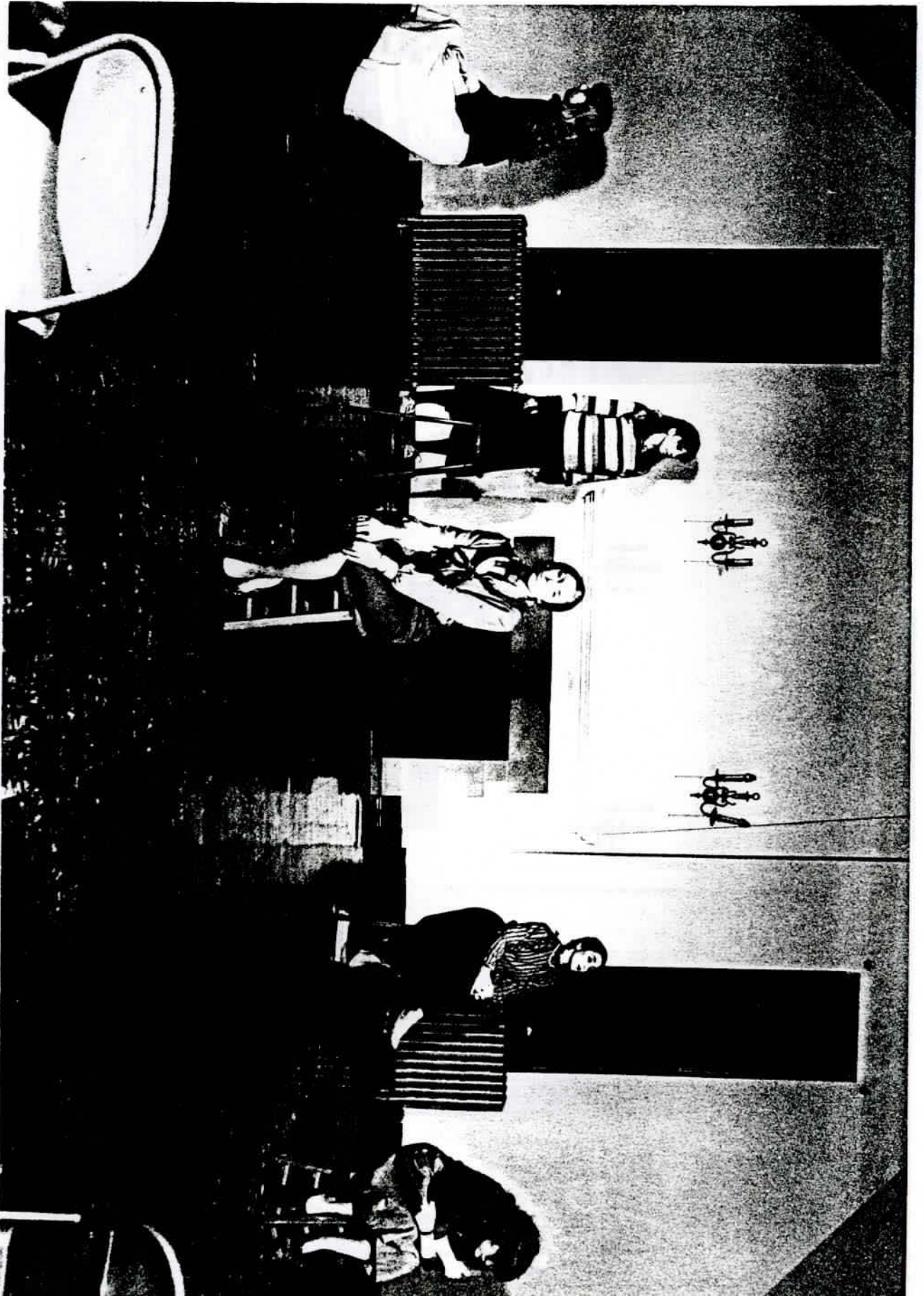


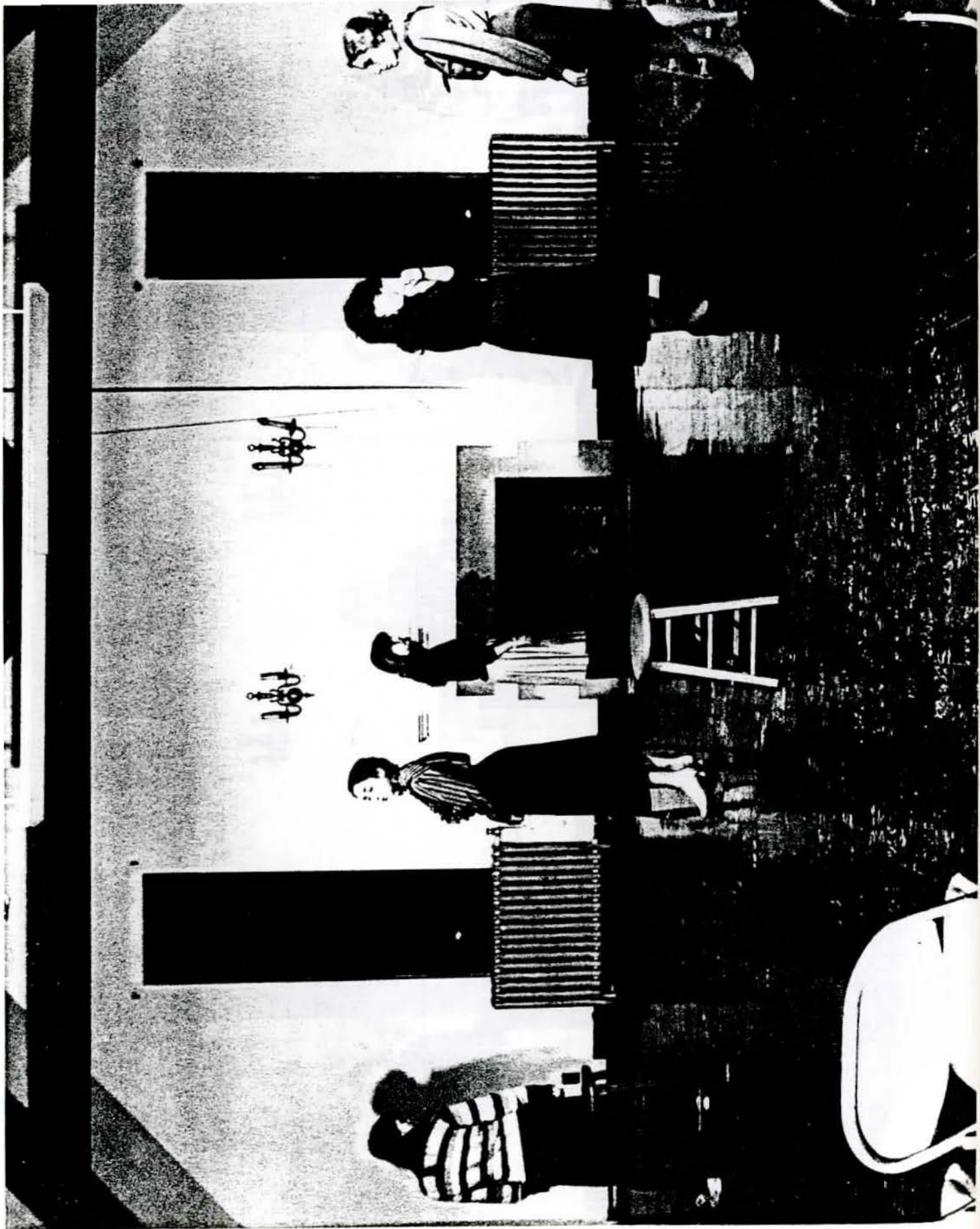


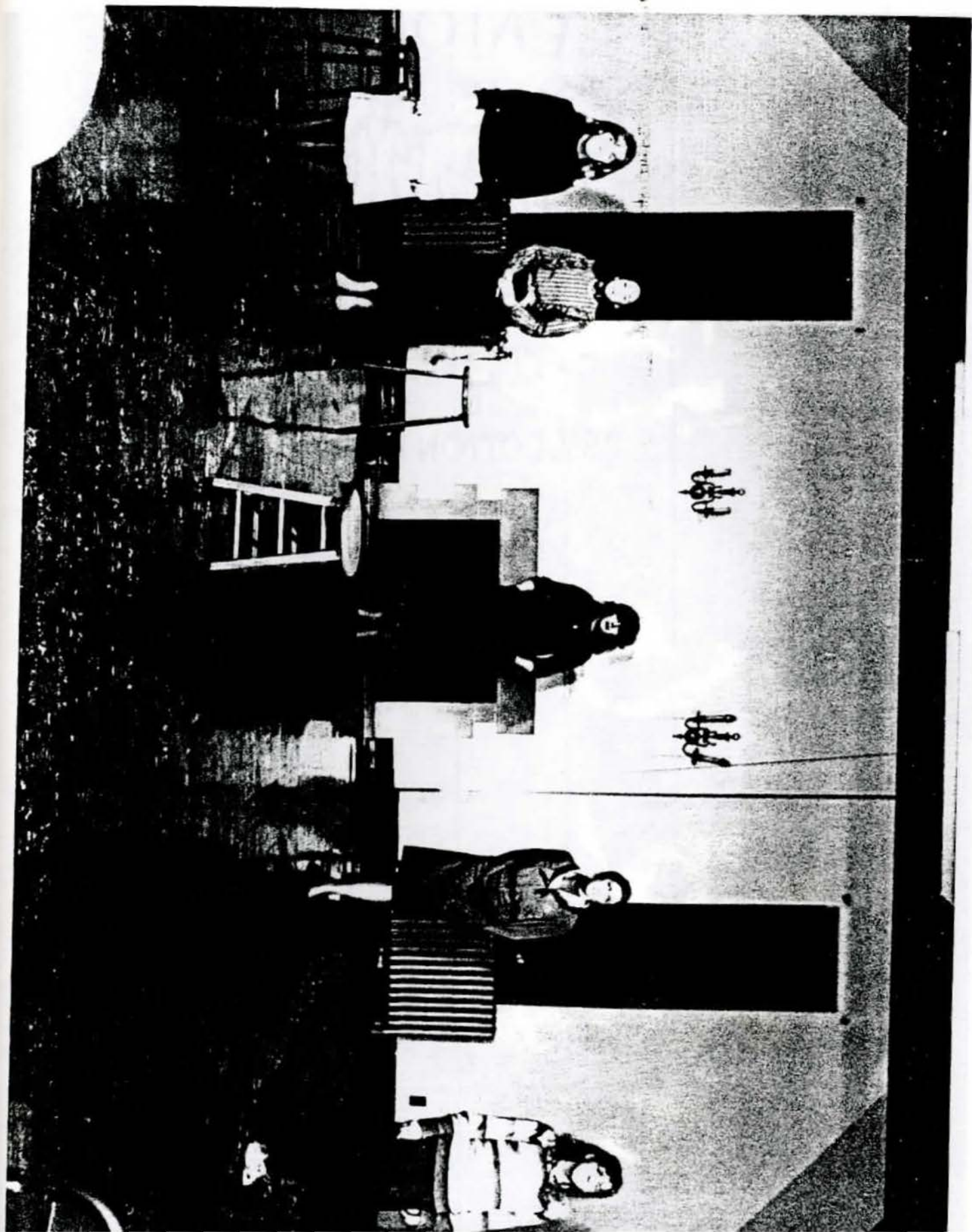














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