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## Feminist Pieces, Women's Stories and Pastoral Counseling: Reflections of and Emerging Pastoral Counselor

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**FEMINIST PIECES,  
WOMEN'S STORIES  
AND  
PASTORAL COUNSELING**

*Reflections of an  
Emerging Pastoral Counselor*

**Joan W. Kaltsas**

**A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University of Chicago  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling  
January 1993**

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I  
sit under this tree  
along the road  
of my journey  
to the Emmaeus place

all meeting  
is on the road  
or at the table  
or in the embrace

buber says every journey  
has a secret destination  
of which the traveler is unaware

i struggle for awareness  
i search the stranger's face  
recognition in the breaking  
open

i feel like a loaf of bread  
how will the breaking be

self/Self  
within  
a safe place  
becoming  
what i already am

so much openness and brokenness

can my eyes open  
my heart burn  
will i return to  
the Jerusalem places

i talk of things pressing

carter heyward says nonmutual  
patriarchal therapeutic relations  
cannot empower

they live on in perpetuity of abusive power  
any power not mutual

i commit to dismantling the master's house  
how does one liberate and transform  
its stranglehold

nouwen says true ministry must be  
mutual and intimate  
rooted in one's  
own intimacy  
God and self

i attend conferences on religion  
and psychotherapy  
God seems to be  
an embarrassment  
they say  
"only if they ask for Him"

who is this God that seems to have so little place  
in this  
healing  
place

this God of sin and fear  
and so much punishment

is that all there is

how does one seek balance  
in the pain and lossness  
with this God looming  
so heavy and hard

there is no embrace  
have we done this

is there no faith left among us to save us  
is the body shared too broken wasted  
where is our anger  
moving us

dark nights of the souls  
and we want out of the murk so quickly

look for the sun/son places  
but he is in both

is there holiness  
in the wholeness

is Spirit in the science  
in the body  
in the change of heart

will healing flow through me like a river  
or be trapped with my words  
or no words  
freed empathic words

will i know wounds  
or know them  
too close  
to my memories

shalom to the sickness  
to the abundance of living  
he came to convince of us

grow  
let go  
make whole  
have life

the encounter on my road  
travelling  
hearing  
telling  
sharing  
loving  
even

always the story

i urge him to stay

**"reflections of an emerging pastoral counselor"**  
jwk

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper has been quilted together with many people contributing their own unique pieces, stitchings and stories as they gathered at my side. I receive with deep gratitude and love, their willingness, gifts and presence to my becoming pastoral counselor.

I am indebted to my husband, John. He is not only a patient and skilled editor; it is from our ever changing relationship that I come to know the beauty of creative tension. For my children, David, Mark, Joseph and Katie Grace, whose weariness with the two-year-long process and their constant question: "Mom, when are you going to finish the (expletive) paper, spurred me on. I hope we will now find some time to celebrate our accomplishment.

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I thank all the remarkable women I counsel for sharing sacred stories and holy selves with me, allowing me to re-tell the stories I have gathered here. Nobody can do what I have done without dear friends and family, especially my Grandmother, who passed away in the middle of my program. You have all continued to love, encourage and hold me, if only for the few moments of our time together these past two years. I know much comfort from the many people in my life who have believed in me, taught me in collaborative ways, prayed for me, gifted me when I needed hope, determination, a meal, some humor, a bit of inspiration, just a phone call or understanding. I have been and will continue to be empowered by your presence.

It has been the connectedness I feel with the voice of the Spirit within that enables my continued commitment to envisioning and working toward a new face of God and of all creation. I ask her to intimately stay close.

And finally, I thank myself. I embrace and hold in awe my psychospiritual bodyself of many experiences, of much wisdom, pain, intuitiveness, courage, and brokenness. I thank my God, the wondrous people of my life, this world in which I breathe and have my being and this passionate person of myself. Blessings on us all!

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## I. REFLECTIONS ON BEGINNING

*If we go to the depths of our traditions,  
down through our separate symbol systems,  
do we come closer to one another and to a common truth?*

*Nelle Morton  
The Journey is Home*

This paper emerges from many of my beliefs and experiences and from my knowledge of pastoral counseling, feminist thought and woman. It is predicated on a belief that if pastoral counseling is to hope to heal and liberate women, and not seek to help them simply adjust to the way things are so that they "fit", then the implications of feminist thought, theory, therapy and theology must become part of the counseling and the counselor's experience and praxis. How do the myriad pieces of feminist thought become connected, sewn into a "quilt" of pastoral counseling?

As I was forming the words, experiences, beliefs and feelings of this paper in my heart/body/mind, I felt a desire to piece them together like the intricate, interwoven pattern of a quilt formed by my great-grandmother over 80 years ago. I needed something to hold and to which I could feel connected. I was putting myself into words, entering further into my commitment to woman; I needed to ground myself, to touch something. I chose her quilt. It is comprised of hundreds of pieces---scraps of material--some from a dress that did not fit anymore, others from a friend, and some, material admired in the store. They are now old, still intact and filled with history.

They are an artform. I lay it over her large four-poster bed where her babies were formed and born and nursed and came in the middle of a stormy night and where she eventually died.

The circles of flowers become radiating sun or full moons or rounded wombs. They resonate within me an experience of touching a center place, of being grounded, of sharing and finding life in experiences other than mine, always connected to mine.

To find such centering and groundedness on such movable yet treasured ground, is what is sought in this paper. Like my great grandmother's quilt, this work shall be formed from the many holy places and pieces I journey to find and gather. They form patterns and meanings of life. I need to reflect on, name, record and share some of the insights, impacts, realities, visions, pains and paradoxes that I have experienced in knowing and becoming myself as a woman, a feminist, and a pastoral counselor. I need to hear myself into speech. I need to seek the truths within and without, as they impact both myself and the women who find themselves in a therapeutic relationship with a pastoral counselor of my name.

It is my belief that pastoral counseling, in its liberating fullness and Gospel essence, is intrinsically compatible with and congruent to feminist therapy and that both need each other to accomplish collaboratively the goals they seek. Both seek life and seek it more abundantly. Both pastoral counseling, with its Gospel roots meant to be lived without any forms of dominant-subordinate, Greek or Jew, male or female, servant or freeperson, and feminist therapy with its goal of mutual and equal relationships, resonate for me in the same way. Both find authenticity in the experiences and stories

and relations of people. Both value the body and its intrinsic wholeness. Both seek connectedness to what has been, is and is to be.

The implications of the growing body of knowledge about woman are profound and provocative. A major revolution is taking place in the world, affecting over half its population. What does it mean to those who sit as pastoral counselors in compassionate, empathic, healing places? What does it mean to have Christ as mentor and model---a person who not only sat at wells or on hillsides, at table or seashores with one person, but who also roamed the Galilee, crossed lakes, entered towns, argued over crumbs, was touched and touched in return, jostled by the crowds and spoke uncomfortable, challenging messages? What does it mean to journey with a person believing in her sacred presence, in the need for each of us to absorb and ultimately to be changed by the other? What does it mean as pastoral counselor to not only be a part of changing a mind or a heart, but also the face of the earth? Can the profession absorb challenge and change? Is pastoral counseling open to the "feminization of psychology?"

In Chapter Two I discuss these psychospiritual "pieces" with which I am becoming more committed and familiar. Carol Gilligan (1982, 1988), Jean Baker Miller (1984, 1986, 1988, 1991), Janet Surrey (1985, 1987, 1991) and others infer that all growth is relational. Anderson and Hopkins, in their revealing work, The Feminine Face of God (1991), state that woman needs to define for herself what is sacred--to search for both an indwelling and a communion. Woman's authenticity, is drawn from her experiences and relational understandings. These relational understandings are leading to new paradigms and certainly to new questions of pastoral counselors. And

resonating with the great Jewish question---why is the feminist pastoral counselor's perspective on self different than all the rest?

The message of feminist thought challenges the dualities, the labeling, the categorization, the splitting, the traditional tendency of psychology, religion, or medicine to narrowly focus on themselves. It is this dualistic approach which forces us to choose, to prioritize, to oppose. I propose a more dialectic way of union, of synthesis, by drawing together, intricately and integrally, the complexity of the pieces of people's experiences seen in the light and darkness of society--the political, the institutional, the cultural and the personal. Feminist therapy requires that the assumed, the obvious, the status-quo, the "way-it-has-always-been-done" be understood, but then that clients seek a new creation. This therapy asks those who seek its healing to look beyond where they are and have been, embrace their body and their pain, their yearnings and their intuitiveness, their anger, their experiences and to trust themselves to move toward this new framework, this new place, this new creation. Their journey will take them where they have never been before, to a place which they will come to recognize as embedded in their roots. I suggest that we are asked to meet in the valley place of El Shaddai (Chapter II).

Many women's issues are being reflected upon, studied, uncovered, named, recognized, agonized over and dismissed daily. I have discerned four issues which I consider significant for the pastoral counseling of woman. They are in areas negatively and pejoratively associated with women. They are certainly not inclusive of all significant issues, but will enable the implications of the feminist "T's" (therapy, thought,

theology, theory), to be seen as interfacing within the overall patchwork quilt of pastoral counseling.

1. Foremost is the area of the self--implicit with the right to self vs. the "duty" of every woman not to become a selfish woman. Woman's self-in-relation is the foundation of understanding and counseling woman.
2. How is woman able or not able to know and embrace herself, her body, her sense of her own sexuality? Women's stories and experiences carry within them centuries of innate difficulties and mores by which women suffer loss of body and their own healing abilities.
3. How does anger exist in a woman's life? Is it attended to or repressed, does it become destructive or does it signal for her a greater and deeper danger?
4. Finally, is the rather open, untapped area of ritual in therapy. For woman, ritual is part of an unconscious past, of her cycles, of her connection with the flow and ebb of her life, holding possibilities for re-leasing, re-framing and re-visioning relationships.

All of these areas are interconnected. All of them are embodied in the women I encounter in my counseling and in my life. These are places very hard for woman to visit, to believe in, to understand and de-mythologize for herself. These are the parts of herself that her culture and her church and her family and the significant people in her life and even she herself, often infer are not worthy parts of herself. These are the parts of herself of which she grows suspicious and with which she becomes uncomfortable, simply saying, "I don't know that part of myself. It would be selfish to spend time there. It would be wrong. I don't know what I feel." I hear these tragic admissions from

almost every woman I counsel or meet deeply. Her wounds and unknown, dark, hidden places are sacred and holy--if they can be touched and pieced together and embraced. They are body and spirit and soul, intimately broken, seeking connection.

Therefore, in Chapter Three I reflect on the issue of self and selfishness of woman. There is usually not much self left in the confused, unworthy, depressed, violated, misunderstood and unexpressed woman I encounter in counseling. She has been taught since early years on that a woman's place is defined in relations of service to others, not to herself. She does not know who she is anymore.

Within Chapter Four I attempt to better understand woman as she journeys into and with her body, encountering her physical needs. Essential to feminist pastoral counseling is the issue of how woman re-images her body as "the body of Christ" and honors her embodied sacredness.

In Chapter Five I examine the issue of anger in woman. This is an explosive and guilt-ridden area. For woman, it is usually a taboo area. But anger is a signal that pain and longing and shame, all found beneath the emotion of anger, are crying out to be heard.

Chapter Six presents the issue of ritual as it pertains to counseling, to woman, to redefining her role and to her collaboration in her healing. This area, is recently being written about and encouraged by some therapists. Ritual has always been a part of women's roots; certainly ritual and healing were intrinsically a part of Christ's ministry.

## Stories

*We are all diminished because story-telling is not a regular part of our work together in classrooms and churches..... If there's anything worth calling (therapy), it is listening to people's stories--listening to them and honoring and cherishing them, and then asking them to become even more brightly beautiful than they already are.*

*Katie Cannon  
God's Fierce Whimsy*

If anything or anyone has influenced my selection of the issues, it would be the women I have counseled during this past year of my internship and the women with whom I have sat and to whom I have listened and with whom I have become involved over kitchen tables, hospital beds, meetings, late night phone calls, school assemblies, wherever---the places and times and conversations fill my days and nights.

Essential to the formation of this paper is my belief in stories. I believe that my own stories as well as those I am sensitive enough to hear must be valued. I acknowledge and mourn the loss of those stories that have been told for millennia, but not recorded, not valued, not given power, not allowed to live. I will draw from the richness of 48 years of my own stories and those gifted to me. Most are documented nowhere. Some have never been re-told. As a feminist pastoral counselor, I am challenged by searching new stories--"to know how to live in a context of relationship and not betray [my] self" (Anderson & Hopkins 1991, 179). I always seek the story.

Woman is too often defined by other than her own story. There are psychological theories formulated without including women's stories. Freud and Erikson did not study and hear the more complicated variables of women, and yet definitive tenets and theories were formulated to include them. The Jellinek chart of alcoholism (1960) eliminated

all women from its recorded sample, but felt free enough to include them in its conclusions. Until Helen Singer Kaplan (1979, 1983), Wendy Stock (1986,1988), Lenore Tiefer (1991) and other sexologists began their studies, woman's sexual performance and pathology were predicated on the sexual behavior and preferences of men.

### Hearing

*Only women hearing each other  
can create a counterworld  
to the prevailing sense of reality*

*Mary Daly,  
Beyond God the Father*

This thesis is written from the heart/body/spirit of a feminist. The very word "feminist" is so powerful as to be intimidating to those who fear woman's wanting to be understood in a balanced way and from a perspective that includes the experiences of women. I seek the restoration of balance and wholeness of all and thus the changing of hearts, minds, fears and ignorances; in a word, what Anderson and Hopkins (1991) call "a new way." That is the task of the disciple--to spread the Gospel, the Good News, the more abundant Way of life. As pastoral counselor, I am foremost a disciple.

It is a belief of the feminist therapy approach that I cannot expect my clients to change in the midst of systemic dysfunction if I am not willing to both personally change myself and also to change dysfunctional systems. The roots of feminist therapy began within the women's movement of the '60's, mainly from consciousness-raising groups in which women sought to hear themselves. Brown and Brodsky claim that the uniqueness of feminist therapy is that it began outside of the behavioral sciences, with women at first



rather informally sharing papers, practices and concepts (1992, 51). Its focus remains on changing "out there", as we work to heal "in here".

To be a feminist therapist, specifically a pastoral counselor, is to be rooted in a community of believers who understand that people cannot just "be fixed"; drowning people cannot simply be pulled one at a time, from the swift moving stream. To prevent so many from being swept downstream, preventative action must be increased upstream. Ministry as modeled by Christ involves being risk-takers and change agents and healers. I believe that pastoral counselors are responsible for providing safe environs for their clients and that pastoral counselors are also responsible for leaving the safety and isolation of their therapeutic sessions. Christ was a person who sought radical change in the midst of what was. He was not a person who lived safely. He was killed for agitating change. I am suggesting that the ministry of pastoral counseling is more than a "helping" profession. It is a ministry of commitment, not by saving people from the current culture, but by changing the current culture, becoming both a changer and a changed person.

Therefore, in Chapter Seven I discuss the challenges of a feminist pastoral counselor. What are the implications in the personal, social, global lives of a voice and vision which seek to transform the earth, as well as the attitudes and tradition of a profession?

## Hope

*In the beginning everything was in relationship, and in the end everything will be in relationship again. In the meantime, we live by hope.*

*Jean Lanier*

*"The Second Coming" (quoted in Anderson, 178)*

I live in hope, but I live in connection to the ongoing changes for which I work. I am a counselor because I am gifted with an intuitive sense of facilitating people's healing and wholeness in the midst of their stories. I am a pastoral counselor because I believe strongly in the necessity for a holy psychospiritual place, which is grounded in the person and Word of Jesus Christ and because I believe myself open and capable of meeting with my client in that place. I am a feminist pastoral counselor because I believe that woman in particular and all creation in general can only become liberated and have life more abundantly, in oneness and connectedness, with the creation and becoming of a radically new way, transformation, conversion--a new paradigm. I am committed to witnessing that process of becoming.

This paper is undeniably limited, by no means an exhaustive study. It does not address every aspect of all issues discussed. Hopefully, it centers, with balance and insight, on a further understanding of the issues raised. I am a middle-class-white-over-21-woman of western culture and Roman Catholic tradition, and must write from my experiences. I regret having limited sharing in the experiences of women who are of different cultural and ethnic and racial backgrounds. I also regret that I had to write it basically alone. Too much of institutionalized learning is meant to isolate, drain and restrict creativity. The new paradigm is collaborative and connected to creation. I

would have found greater value, voice and vision in creating, confronting, bringing this paper into birth with another person.

This paper is, according to my institution, meant to be a thesis. It is, perhaps, more of a "prexis"--the hands on, experientially based combination of a project, a thesis and praxis. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz writes that after reflecting upon one's experience, we then need to move to strategizing, in an ongoing collaborative process . "To seek liberation, is to be in a constant interplay of reflecting from experience and acting collectively" (quoted in Cannon 1985, 17). It is not simply my one voice and vision. I have tried to connect that voice and vision to stories from the women I have counseled and known and read and reviewed. Their themes are becoming increasingly universal and powerful. Together we all are greater than the sum of our parts. In telling these stories, I believe we can feel we are more than we thought we ever were. And then we will know that what we are doing is good. We are good. It is good that we are here. And we come closer to a common truth.

## II. THE FEMINIST PSYCHOSPIRITUAL SELF

*Come with me to El Shaddai.*

*j.w. kaltsas*

### My Thesis

This chapter reflects the belief of which I spoke earlier--the belief that pastoral counseling draws its life from the meeting place of understanding and congruency that exists between the spiritual and the psychological. This is the place wherein there is the yearning--a place to bring one's shatteredness, brokenness, the pieces of soul, spirit, memory, shadow and light and have them held and warmed and made one. When I tried to envision what this merging place would look like, the ancient biblical name of El Shaddai, the "God with breasts" (eventually, with rising patriarchy, called the "God of the mountain peaks") appeared. The place to which the experiences, the praxis, the theories and the friends gather to tell the stories is the place found between the breasts. All are brought together in this "holding" place between the mountains, in a valley where one is not attracted to the dualisms, but to the relationship formed by the connectedness, freed of boundaries that constrain rather than create, that force one to choose one over another or to oppose one or the other. It is this place that I shall explore--the psychospiritual place wherein, I as a psychospiritual person, reside and from where I draw my strength, heart, understanding, and courage. It is the safe place to which I invite those I counsel, as well as myself, to discover themselves in yearning. This is the place to lay oneself down and hear the heart beating and know one is home.

There are tenets of feminist thought which when brought to the El Shaddai place of the psychological and spiritual offer greater clarity to understanding women's needs and problems--leading to a more whole and holy therapeutic approach. What is always sought in the pastoral counseling of woman should be that she seek, discover, claim, and live life as freely and as abundantly as possible.

The first of these feminist tenets is a process oriented one. Carol Christ, author and theologian, believes, as I noted earlier, that it is the telling of stories that releases understanding of human experiences. "Without stories, a woman is lost when she comes to make the important decisions of her life. She is closed in silence. If women's stories are not told, the depth of women's souls will not be known" (1980, 1). In this paper, my life as pastoral counselor is both receiver and releaser of the stories of the people I counsel.

Women's stories relate women's experiences. A second tenet is the conviction of feminist psychology that woman must define and validate her own selfhood out of her own experience and not out of men's or from male-oriented criteria and definition (Gilligan 1982; Jordan, Surrey, Kaplan 1983; Miller 1976, 1984). This dynamic also invites woman to decide and claim for herself out of her own experiences and not those of a patriarchal religious tradition that she is sacred in and of herself (Reuther 1983, 1985; Fiorenza 1983). How does woman find the dwelling place of the Shekina, the female soul of God, the Indwelling Goddess within her female self (Fischer 1988, 1990; Anderson & Hopkins 1991; Huff 1987; Christ 1980; Glaz & Moessner 1991)? How does she come to relationship with her own Spirit, the image of her own Spirit?

Studies of women, whether psychological or spiritual, have discovered that the "truths" of woman--her authentic self--are not always congruent with the person she has always been led to believe or thought she was. Woman's encounter with this possibility or reality, however uncomfortable or healing it may be, is profoundly disruptive. "Yet, for all the risks, it is precisely this disruptive, disturbing process of stripping away the old unexamined values that is central to the spiritual unfolding of...woman" (Anderson 1991, 18). It is the duty and the privilege of the pastoral counselor to journey with a client and her own experiences in search of and in belief of her own healing and holiness.

A third belief related to both the psychological and spiritual experiences involves the unique and different framework or paradigm women apply innately in their lives. Psychology tells us that women consistently use internal and external relationships as a centering place for their decision-making, meaning-making, and moral development. Kathleen Fischer in her book, Reclaiming the Connections (1990) writes that contemporary spirituality is about reclaiming the inner connectedness of physical, material, and body with the soul--a deeper relationship with the Spirit, the sacred, with herself. Anderson (1991, 183) writes that woman finds her authentic identity, her "permeable" boundaries and her connectedness in her relationships with others. Whether psychic or soul, woman needs to move from the disconnected opposites of dualism towards the conviction of what comes naturally to her and seek the relational. I believe that the feminist attempt to dismantle the dualistic nature of thought and worldview, and move into a re-creation and re-framing of partnering, co-creating and interdependence will require courage of both the pastoral counselor and client. Dualism is significantly a part of our roots, history, religious tradition and conceptualization.

There is need for the feminist focus on woman's stories, experiences, and relationships in individual therapeutic pastoral counseling with women. There is also much to be said for the feminist approach as it impacts and challenges the profession of pastoral counseling and the world in which it exists. Margaret Huff (1987) wrote her dissertation on the re-imagining prototype of pastoral counseling. She suggests that one of the greatest difficulties woman has in defining and knowing herself is that woman suffers from needing to re-image herself in her own, female ways, but that the language and images readily available are male and simply "don't fit". Traditional psychology does not even have words and concepts for some situations which arise in women's lives. Jean Baker Miller writes that "there is no easy leaping over the only systems of thought and language that we have inherited....we are becoming increasingly aware of the need for new assumptions and new words" (1986, xxi).

Sherry Anderson & Patricia Hopkins address the same issue regarding woman's spiritual development. "We cannot learn how women develop spiritually from men. In almost all accounts of the sacred, both language and story have been the expressions of men conveyed in male imagery" (1991, 7). It is becoming evident that without new language and images, not to mention the courage and the risk involved in becoming aware and in encountering the ambivalence, uncertainty, loss and very unsettling discord and disruption women experience, that the profession of counseling will continue too often, trying to force "round" womanselves into the existing and proverbial "square" and perhaps male holes.

### Psychological Pieces

This paper is filled with a searching for congruence among the trinity of psychology, spirituality and feminist thought as it resonates within myself and Spirit. As a feminist pastoral counselor I find meaning and significance in the theory of self psychology as understood by a disciple of Kohut, Christiane Brems (1991), a feminist professor of psychology, and in Miriam Elson's work, Self Psychology in Clinical Social Work (1986). The theory of self-in-relation is also integral to my work; much of its explanation is to be found in the Work in Progress Papers of the Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies of Wellesley College (1985-1991) and Jean Baker Miller's Toward a New Psychology of Women (1986).

### Self Psychology

As a feminist it is interesting to observe that an increased awareness of the self-in-representation psychological theory occurred concurrent with women's movements in this country. Karen Horney's work of 1922 and 1933 brought her acclaim as an early champion of the feminine movement (Eckardt 1991), which was then in its strong suffragist phase. She questioned Freud's understanding of women's development. In the 1950s Heinz Kohut, the "father" of self psychology, began formulating his theory and practice of self psychology at a time when Friedan, Greer, Millet (all women's movement leaders), the National Organization of Women, and women's consciousness-raising groups were becoming household words.

Christiane Brems, a disciple of Kohut, recently observed a parallel compatibility between Kohut's theories of mirroring and idealization in an empathic, therapeutic relationship and feminist theory with its search for relatedness and emphasis upon



empathy, nurturance, and security. Brem reminds us that empathy has always been a part of women's relationships; it was not until it was emphasized strongly by Kohut (1959), and she adds, by Stern (1985) that it became such a valued and researched concept of therapy (1991, 154).

Kohut focused on the interpersonal, rather than gender, but emphasized that there are many kinds of healthy selves that we can come to understand with the broadening of values and beliefs. Brems believes that this broadening of perspective, rather than a narrowing of rigid criteria for healthiness, "remain(s) unprecedented in psychoanalytic theory" (1991,157). This is certainly fitting with feminist values which seek a larger range of acceptable and healthy behaviors.

Kohut also argued that "the basic premise of self psychology is not psychological/ structural conflict between various parts of a person's psyche but rather arrested self-development" (1991, 155). This concept of a break in natural development, regardless of gender, for whatever reason, does not hold a person accountable for psychological "dysfunction" based on gender as it is measured against the male or "acceptable" norm. This is a different concept than either Freud's psychological standard or Augustine's theological standard of woman wherein she is impuned as deficient, underdeveloped, and biologically incomplete--not truly made in the image and likeness of man, let alone God.

Certainly the three transferences Kohut proposed: mirroring, idealization, and twinship relate to feminist concepts of re-creating within interpersonal relationships a healthy environment in which a cohesive, healthy self can re-develop. The "mother" transference that mirrors, affirms, supports, values, nurtures and cares for; the

idealizing (the "father" transference) which merges with, guides, and directs; and the twinning transference, needing to be part of and belong to a whole, are all dynamics in feminist therapy. They become intrinsic to the therapeutic relationship, offering an empathically attuned self-object, actively, intuitively, and receptively involved in the healing powers of therapy. Kohut believed that one's need for self-objects is a lifelong one, much as feminist therapy views one's healthy need for relatedness, not as an unhealthy dependency but as a strength.

The understanding of narcissism is an integral part of self psychology. Miriam Elson's approach allows for a greater congruency with my understanding of the narcissistic self. There is an empathic attunement, a focused attention and presence to one who is helped to realize that her needs do not make her unworthy. The goals of therapy are based on the client's own knowledge of what she can do--wants to do. Elson cautions that we need to examine needs before labeling them as healthy or not. Childhood may have left us unconfirmed, unresponded to, misunderstood, with barely varying degrees of self-esteem. Elson sees the therapist in a position to "absorb", "soothe", and "calm"--stilling the anxiety and becoming supportive of the "yearning for appropriate admiration, confirmation and guidance" (1986, 161). "Do not scold yourself, feel guilty, say you shouldn't have such needs...you could not stem the flow of unfulfilled longing...." (1986, 164).

It is this absorbing quality that is so intriguing to me. It not only allows oneself to be idealized, but also offers the self of the therapist as one with whom the client can establish a likeness and look to as a model, a mentor--not competitive--who will actively engage and empower the client to explore her own skills and gifts. The therapist

becomes a new self who notices and values and is willing to merge her strength and wisdom with someone. She offers the experiences of the therapy, where she may be empathically attuned to her client, who may need this experience before she can organize her feelings and talk about them. The therapist absorbs the anger and hurt, and experiences both herself and her client as worthy of having this offering and communion occur between them (1986,152).

### Self-in-Relation

The self-in-relation theory holds that for woman, the experience of the self is bound innately to relationship. Development and identity occur through relational differentiation (Surrey 1985) and connectedness--through a "we-ness" rather than through separation and detachment. The self exists only within a relational framework where the self-in-relation is fundamentally a relationship of co-subjects rather than subject and object. The primary developmental dynamic and interest is the relation itself and its continuity of care. Surrey stresses that the goal of the self-in-relation is the increasing development of mutually empathic relationships, self-esteem, and self-worth. The relational self relies heavily on a new definition of empathic competencies in woman (Surrey 1990).

Self-in-relation theory believes that **empathy, empowerment, and mutuality** are inherent to its goals. Self psychology places primary emphasis on empathy. I believe both theories would agree that empathy is the "inner experience of sharing in and comprehending the momentary psychological state of another. In order to empathize, one must have a well-differentiated sense of self in addition to an appreciation of and sensitivity to the differentness as well as the sameness of another" (1983, 2). Simply,

**empathy** is reflected feedback. I believe, especially in light of feminist intervention, that empathy is becoming, for the therapist, a more responsive, less withholding approach to therapy. It is the belief of feminist therapy that when a therapist is consistently withholding emotionally, the client's anger is bound to be elicited as she senses her therapist becoming more detached as "expert" or an authority rather than as an empathic partner. As therapist I try to discern my responsiveness as rooted in my own frame of reference while investing in my client's experiences. With self-disclosure becoming a more acceptable way of feminist therapy, empathy may continue to expand in its meaning but remains to be fully disclosed itself.

The empathic response is a reverencing of the client's experiences. It does not come as an imposition from the therapist's own frame of reference, but from a compassionate responsiveness, honoring the place in which the client is. Anne Carr writes that "Feminist spirituality...consciously struggles to free itself from ideologies in favor of the authentic freedom of the individual...as [she] attempts to be faithful to [her] own experience " (1988, 208). The empathic response remains faithful to the client's experience.

It is the concept of **mutuality** that most differentiates the Stone Center's work. Judith Jordan points out that few of the psychological theories address mutuality, partly because it is seen as an "ongoing interdependence...disregarded or sometimes even viewed as pathological" (1986, 3). While she acknowledges that several theorists, namely Klein, Fairbairn and Guntrip, consider mutuality of sorts in their writings, she does not believe that Kohut's concept of self-object relationship is characterized by mutuality, but simply exists for serving the narcissistic needs of the person.

Jordan sees the central aspect of mutuality as "having an impact on the other, seeing that our actions, feelings or thoughts affect the other, and then opening (ourselves) to the influence of others on us" (1986, 6). It breaks down when, in a relationship, one takes a self-sacrificing position which devalues the self and establishes innate resentment of the other which shifts the power and expectations of the relationship. Carter Heyward sees mutuality as "sharing power in such a way that each..is called forth more fully into becoming who she is--a whole person, with integrity" (1989,191).

Mutuality opens up all kinds of intriguing and exciting ways of re-relating and possibilities for relationship may exist. A mutual relationship wherein we are called friends, not servants, is an ultimately freeing experience for woman, especially for women who too often find themselves dominated in a hierarchical or authoritarian relationship. A relationship can arise where one's experiences are valued and cherished or where one's ability to re-image a relationship enables it to become more intimate. When we are able to look in each others eyes, new ways and places emerge. I have always had to believe strongly in mutuality to have the courage to re-image and to draw close to someone in intimacy.

Patricia Holmes Parker wrote an article in Prayer (1988, 22-3) in which she described her relationship with God. It did not become a deep and pervasive relationship until after her beloved grandmother died, and she began to envision a feminine image of God. "Sometimes I cannot tell whether I am praying to God or praying to my Grandma...I only know that when I am most in need of divine comfort and tenderness, my prayer is whispered to God the Grandma:"

Grandma God, sit in your rocking chair,  
 put your arms around me and rock me  
 back and forth.  
 Your breasts are soft  
 and smell of lavender.  
 Whisper to me, it's all right, little one.

I am safe with you....  
 It's warm in your arms,  
 Grandma God.  
 I don't want to be cold...  
 you are warm  
 and soft and safe.

**Empowerment**, the third concept of self-in-relation, is described as the "motivation, freedom and capacity to act purposefully, with the mobilization of the energies, resources, strengths or powers of each person through a mutual, relational process" (Surrey 1987, 2-3). Empowerment is different from a conventional model of power which entails a competitive or even, in a self-actualized mode, a highly individuated pursuit. Feminist theory views another image--power with others, i.e. power in connection or relational power. Empowerment is not lineal, not competitive, not highly individuated power, not power over others. Empowerment is eye to eye, knee to knee, arm to arm (Satir 1976, no numeration).

This is the heart of feminist therapy: respectful, engaging, absorbing mutual empowerment. It is the capacity to "empower relationship, to create, sustain and deepen the connections that empower" (Surrey 1987, 2). But how does a feminist therapist, working with oppressed, battered, broken, stalked, and deprived women justify a belief in counseling whose essence is the shattering of certainties and centuries? How does she work to place power--empowerment--in the hands of powerless women? Joan Chittister suggests that can happen by believing "in a power that pleads and a power that frees...that's gentle and cares for the people...that empowers (source unknown)."

I am in a ministry which seeks to empower woman to risk her life, her comforts, her old patterns and fears, her body and her spirit in order to struggle, to awaken, and to choose radically new, freeing, unknown places and ways for herself. My Gospel roots are not meant to challenge easily. I know there are those who question what "right" have I, how "responsible" am I as pastoral counselor to advocate such change--in persons, in society, in families. Are they ready for it, or, in fact, dangerously resistant to it? For many women, feminism has created conflict rather than resolved it. I cannot apologize or retreat from this belief in which I move and have my being. I do believe that in order for life to be healthy and to grow, in order for women not to have to live in undue constriction, we must try hard not to alienate those with whom we seek reconciliation while at the same time acknowledging that growing relationships will be lived in creative tension.

From a therapeutic place I use self-in-relation theory to bring a relational and supportive context to the therapeutic setting in which new modes of relationship can grow and develop. This might include having my client explore new self-images of relationships which may include her relationship with me. I describe our sessions as times to experiment, to try things out, to safely interact in our relationship. I describe our being together as a safe place and relationship, wherein I will not abandon her. Always present is my need to validate the loss and grief which are inevitable as the woman in counseling lets go of old images and struggles to find new ones.

My own self-in-relation as therapist is that of a woman who models human behavior not restricted to traditional stereotypes. I attempt to bring to each session an empathic, competent, respectful, nurturing, trustworthy, confronting, safe, expressive self as

therapist. I seek to interact with my clients in ways that are empowering, validating, and de-mything, allowing them the possibility of seeking greater options, more reciprocity, and less "authority" and counselor "expertise" than their stereotypes of counseling might allow.

### Spiritual Pieces

*Feminist spirituality would strive for an ever freer, but always human, self-transcendence before a God who does not call us servants but friends. And, as with all things feminist, feminist spirituality focuses always on women's experiences and the calling of friends.*

*Anne Carr  
Transforming Grace*

I am suggesting, that in the shadow of El Shaddai, my counseling, my seeking congruency of the whole person, takes place. I am always looking and listening for that place, wherever the shattered pieces of a person are to be found. Described below, are some of those sacred pieces--the places and moments to which I try to remain open. They are the spiritual supports of my feminist approach to pastoral counseling.

*The Stories.* As a feminist pastoral counselor, I most acutely listen for those places in the stories of the persons who sit with me in counseling. I also most intently hear those stories in Scripture. I draw my being able to discern and value the stories of my clients from the same roots with which I cultivate and nurture my own understanding of the stories of Scripture. I seek the words and person of Jesus Christ; I seek the meaning of a whole history with God through the further words of Hebrew Scripture. I come to Scriptural understanding through discernment of their meaning, albeit with what Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza terms a "hermeneutics of suspicion" (1983, xxiii).



*The Worthy Person.* The theories of both self psychology and self-in-relation merge in their approach to a person as innately valuable and worthy and in need of self-objects or relationship. Self psychology may see woman with an "arrested" development but not as intrinsically deficient. Self-in-relation theory believes that relationship, its growth or its inability to grow, is not only important for understanding the self, but for the very existence of the experience of the self. The emphasis feminist spirituality places on woman's considering herself in the image and likeness of a God who finds her unquestionably worthy and not flawed is, in my opinion validated by these two theories. I shall examine this area of self-esteem further in Chapter III.

*The Relational Self.* Both self psychology and self-in-relation theory view the therapist as having the power to uplift and set on course as she offers herself in response to another's "yearning" for connection and confirmation. As therapist, when I become a self-in-relation for another, I know it, I feel it. It is a laying down of one's life, a taking up of another, the absorbing of another onto oneself, a rising up and gathering. It is a making whole the torn pieces so that "my soul becomes your song, you songless one (source unknown)." It is the constant need to know our own scriptural question: "Do you love me?."

*Validating Our Experience.* I see depleted, diminished women in therapy. I need to very carefully understand them as rooted in their own experiences, and not somewhere else, named with somebody else's label. Even self psychology's mirroring, idealization and twinning are coming to be understood as legitimate needs we all have, whether in therapy or not, whether psychologically healthy people or not. Not too long ago, in the realm of sexual activity, woman was considered impotent, frigid, dysfunctional if she

could not reach orgasm with her husband. And then it was discovered that woman's "inadequacy" as a sexually (dys)functioning person who could not parallel her husband's ability to reach an ejaculation, was simply the complexity and timing of women's ways of reaching orgasm. A "normal" woman needs about 12 minutes to reach orgasm, compared to her male partner's 3 minutes. Understanding the implications and nuances of a "9-minute-differential" could relieve the pervasive sense of failure and shame experienced by countless women about their own potential, if applied to therapeutic reality.

*Taking off our Shoes.* I suggest that there are innumerable "9-minute-differences" in the psychological and emotional make-up of women. As Elizabeth Dodson Gray says, women are used to "being mythed upon" (1988, 196). I constantly need to ask myself as pastoral counselor whether I am trying to move woman to a place of healing which is not a natural, congruent place for her. Am I using somebody else's (male, heterosexual, educated, white, upper-class, institutional church or benignly patronizing) perspectives and norms and expectations, and not woman's own experiences? Pastoral counseling must be very careful to listen to woman's own voice, especially if it could be reflecting the voice of the Spirit within her. In the midst of helping to empower, there is always the need to remember to also entrust woman with her own sense of voice, connectedness to her God, and ultimately, with her own healing. "Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion is to take off our shoes. For the place we are approaching is holy...(and) we may forget...that God was there before our arrival" (Columban Fathers' Global Village card, no author given).

*Ever Changing.* Feminist writing is rife with the admonition to not become defensive and unchanging in what we are learning. Schussler-Fiorenza suggests we become insistent with our critiques, suspicious of what is, and definitely more imaginative. We are only beginning to understand all the possibilities of woman and who she is and where she came from and why. Jean Baker Miller says, "We've been laboring under only one implicit model....Much richer models are possible" (1984, 9). The implications presented by Anne Carr in the above quote regarding a God who calls us friend, opens up all kinds of intriguing and possible ways of re-relating. The premise of feminist spirituality that it becomes and grows with every woman naming and confronting her life (God's Fierce Whimsy 1985, 137), is as fluid and changing as the rivers of life. I contend that not only are the models and theories and praxis constantly expanding and always subject to change, but so also is God. I believe in a God that, in relation and in knowing, is also changing. David Hassel, in his article on "Jesus Christ Changing Yesterday, Today, and Forever" focuses on Jesus' continual development. I believe that God--open to relationship, also becomes. Hassel believes that "Jesus today is different from Jesus yesterday....My responses have been informing his human personality. And I, in turn, am being formed by his spontaneous responses to me" (1991, 12). Feminist motion attempts to move us beyond the unchanging, the immutable, the status-quo. It is dangerous to think that the journey is over, truth is known and there is nothing else.

*Mutuality.* Hassel goes on to ask whether this is not what mutual relationship is all about--"two people out of affection for one another mutually contributing and adapting to each other's growth in life" 12)? Carter Heyward writes that it is the "vision of mutuality...unlike equality, by which, (with the power of God), we call one another forth into our most liberating, creative possibilities" (1989, 34). Judith Jordan

points out that it is in mutuality where "we not only find the opportunity of extending our understanding of the other, we also enhance awareness of ourselves" (1986, 13). And finally, in my ever-present sense of relevancy to myself as pastoral counselor, I remember the words of Henri Nouwen: "True ministry must be mutual....(otherwise it) becomes a subtle way of exercising power over others and begins to show authoritarian and dictatorial traits.....Unfortunately, the so-called 'helping professions' have been so thoroughly secularized that mutuality can only be seen as a weakness and dangerous form of role confusion" (1990, 44). I believe mutuality to be the backbone of what a feminist approach to therapy is about. If mutuality is embraced and held significant, then the chances for abuse within the therapist or the therapy remain dim.

*Naming.* In Genesis 32:26-30, Jacob wrestles with the stranger asking both his blessing and his name. Counseling is both the encounter, the pain, and the perseverance of struggling with the unknown. It is a process of not letting go of self or another, even through an empty night, while waiting for the blessing of daybreak. Counseling is a search for that blessing, both from self and other, both from the darkness and the light. It is a search for the many names we may carry with us or in us. It is an attempt to learn those names, to speak them, to release their power over us, because we claim them for ourself. Within early Scripture, one's ability to name another, gave one responsibility and connectedness with that person. To call forth one's name, whether it be in anger or loss or in violation or pain or in gift or from unspoken, unbelieved parts of ourself, allows us relationships we have until now only wrestled with and been broken by. "When I call you by name, you are mine." This variation of Scripture is a tremendously empowering ability to unshutter the monsters and strangers and dark, frightening places and persons in our lives and to know blessing.

*Loving the Self.* As always, I cannot present my self in therapy without my own personal growth in self-understanding and self-acceptance constantly becoming. Unless I remain in touch with my personal paradox of strength and vulnerability, I have no right to approach another's. Without an awareness and nurturing of my own self care, my own trust of my self and my experiences, I cannot hope to strengthen my feminist balance of interdependence and nurturing in my own life and relationships.

### III. THE STORY OF ELLEN: SELF AND SELFISHNESS

*O Lord,  
I am not worthy  
to receive you,  
but only say the word  
and I shall be healed.*

*From the Roman Catholic Mass  
prior to receiving Eucharist*

Ellen could be Anywoman. She lives in fear and guilt of ever being selfish. She deprives herself acutely in order not to be. She follows her tradition of always taking care of others--of serving--of giving--of never asking for self. She is sitting in my room and crying. We have just talked about the answer Jesus gave about the greatest commandments. She is a practicing Christian of many years--since childhood--and she has never heard the implications of "Love...all else as you love your self." She is angry and defeated. She does not know how the essence of that teaching escaped her. She thinks of all the years she only loved her God and her neighbor. She thinks of the Sunday school classes and sermons rebuking her to do nothing else. She sits and cries for all the giving she has done and the never asking for anything else in return.

Ellen's sense of selfishness is painfully encompassed in her sense of failure--"I haven't done enough. I'm to blame. I can't get my husband to talk to me. My kids don't help at all." Ellen's despair is in not knowing how to have the significant people in her life validate the person she believes or wants to believe she is. "I don't see that happening

without somebody being hurt. I'm afraid that if I looked at what I need to be--need to do--who I am, everything would fall apart. I can't do that." Ellen's experience is that any of her attempts to listen to and answer her own needs is selfish. It certainly is met with resistance and dislike by the family. "I had to drop out of the choir, you know. They don't like me being gone two nights a week." During every session I spend with Ellen, I hear her plaintive question, "Who am I? Where am I going?"

Ellen aches inside when I ask her how her body is feeling. She has never felt her body, or her pain, or her emptiness, or her neediness. "That would be sinful," she tells me. She sits in the chair stunned and so very confused. If she really believes this new insight, she knows her life will never be the same. She cannot imagine her family accepting this revelation as pertaining to her. Ellen is frightened and hesitant. She does not want to trust the voice inside of her saying, "Finally. I may finally count for something." Ellen cries a little harder now.

The last time I saw Ellen, she came to our session and said she would not be back. "It is too hard to me to do what we're doing--peeling the layers off me. I feel so raw. I'm putting everything back the way it was. Caring about my self isn't something I can deal with."

Ellen turned her self back over to her children and husband.

In a patriarchal society, women are supposed to flow out all the time..to nourish, support and use their magic to be of service to others. It is taboo to keep some of the magic, the flow, the self for oneself...refusing to flow, claiming the right to space and time, nourishment, her own skills, gifts and passion, for herself. 'Intentional introversion' and 'holding back her flow' is seen in our culture as selfish and unnatural (Carlson 1990, 91).

There has been much written to indicate that male values permeate the definition of self or selfhood (Chodorow 1978). Man comes to know himself upon separation from his mother and renunciation of her, resulting in autonomy being considered by him as the highest good. Being too close to another or to oneself as an emotional and intimate person is considered dangerous to one's health. Woman becomes a cultural and psychological "failure" if she journeys in ways which allow her to know herself through others. Ellen could not live with that sense of failure--a failure she saw reflected not in her eyes, but in the eyes of her tradition, her upbringing, her society, her own guilt.

In therapy Ellen was engaged in an attempt to seek her own differentiation and autonomy, but not to abandon her family whom she deeply loved. Yet, she could not believe that taking that quantum leap of faith from caring for others to caring for self would not land her in the evil pit of "selfishness." She could not believe that connectedness to herself would not prevent continued close relationships with her family. She could not see that while she went about the tasks of supporting, nurturing, caring and connecting for them, her children (two sons and a daughter) and husband remained powerful and supported. She did not. The irony of this is that her daughter is about to marry a rather dominating man whose sense of superiority is quite evident. So, at least in this family, the men will remain in control and the women, even the next generation, will continue to be submissive.

Ellen is, as psychologist Sue Freeman describes, a "'good woman', whose struggle is not only against the upholders of the traditional views, but also against herself, her socialization, her self image and her formerly held beliefs about her life paths" (quoted in Berliner 1990, 37). And for this "good woman" change became too heavy a task.



As Freeman says, "What would seem to be an ordinary developmental task has become instead a moral dilemma for women who must overturn their socialization and their own self images to claim power over their lives" (1990, 37). Ellen could not balance both. Her answer was to take herself out of any experience in which she attempted to develop an authentic nurtured self.

Ellen's difficulty with self is common with the women I counsel--women who have not heard their own voice and only know themselves as victim, helpless and hopeless in a life which is not their own. "I was never taught to think about myself." "Taking care of my own needs is selfish." "I don't know what I feel. But it would be wrong to have my own feelings." "It's not Christian to think of myself first. That would be sinful. I was raised to take care of people. I come last." Gilligan (1982) suggests that woman, in seeking to stay connected with others, believes she cannot hurt or deny them even if she must hurt or deny herself.

One of the goals of feminist therapy, the nurturing of self-esteem--a sense of self--evolves as an alternative to being selfish or selfless. To a woman with little connection with self, they are the same--and both terrible. She can learn to live with emptiness, isolation and guilt. She has great difficulty in honoring and esteeming herself. Her painful and confusing conflict with her social and religious acculturation may have brought Ellen into therapy, but for Ellen, it also took her out.

Christiana Northrup, a woman physician, has a wonderful image as to how woman can listen and care for herself---she asks her to learn how to become a good mother to herself. She quotes Audrey Lorde's admonishments that "to be caring for myself is not

self-indulgence, it is self-preservation" (quoted in Northrup 1990, 18). I ask, "When will woman believe that she deserves time and care, her own preservation; when will she claim her own worthiness and sacredness?"

I counsel significant numbers of women who yearn for companionship and time with women friends. I counsel significant numbers of men who want their good wife/mother back. The two are not compatible. It is my belief that woman's yearning for friends, apart from family, apart from wifehood and motherhood, may become the eventual enabling straw that breaks women such as Ellen away from the consuming needs of her family and husband. Orbach and Eichenbaum state that, "perhaps the greatest conflict women are facing now as a result of the feminist's movement's explosive impact is the crisis in their relationships with one another" (1987, 31). Thelma Jean Goodrich believes that it is essential for women to find relationships where they can act with authenticity. "These...are virtually certain to be friendships with women---the prime resource of empowerment for women whether they are living in a traditional family or not" (Goodrich 1988, 24).

I spoke earlier, in Chapter II and above, of the place of "yearning" in woman's life. I believe we were created by a "relationship-yearning God". The Roman Catholic doctrine of the Trinity speaks of a God seeking and forming a relationship of parent and son and the Spirit of their Love. The doctrine of the Incarnation finds flesh in a God seeking humanness. God finds intimacy with creation. The Incarnate God yearns for oneness with all of creation, particularly the humanness of it. And conversely, much as a moth constantly seeks the source of light and warmth, so does creation seek its God. There is a homing device, so to speak, in the essence of all humanity. Yearning is the desire for

relationship--for ultimate connectedness and oneness. Yearning is the drawing of a person into relationship.

The essence of yearning particularly in women, must be examined more carefully in light of humanity's innate need for connectedness and conscious unity. Feminist motion is always seeking the more applicable, relevant and meaningful language. Perhaps we need to examine more closely the tendency of woman in particular, creation in general, to seek, with such yearning and need--connectedness and oneness. The visionary Teilhard de Chardin realized this relational truth of mankind and creation. He spoke of the universe, of mankind being "caught up in a dynamic, evolutionary sweep--upwards and onwards" (McElwain 1967, 59) toward the "Radial Energy" (41). Teilhard's evolution of the universe was a whirlpool of gravitational pull toward a center--a sun --a final fulfillment--the thrust into Divine Consciousness. He also introduced another empowering concept when he wrote that, "we are collaborators in creation" (Speaight, et al. 1970, 28).

I return the to myth of the "good woman"--in this case, the "good wife." Good wives stay home with their husband, sitting with them on the couch. They do not abandon their children. They do not run around with the "girls." The woman, who has been a stabilizing factor in the family and marriage, suddenly is saying, "I don't want to be the only person in your life, always yours, only yours." Self-in relation theory sees that as contrary to a multiplicity of relationships necessary for woman's grown. Self psychology sees this woman as refusing to be her husband's only self-object anymore--or perhaps, next to his work, his second self-object. Feminist eyes see Ellen in an unjust, oppressive relationship. My sense of feminist spirituality yearns for Ellen to

know herself responsive to the voice within her asking for a connectedness that embraces and unconditionally loves her--her own Spirit.

Too often culture, religious heritage, and therapeutic tradition is focused on supporting and maintaining women's relationships with men. Feminist thought, contrary to the patriarchal definition of a "good, unselfish woman" (serving all instead of herself), envisions healthy relationships as having a flexibility and possibility of each "dancing" into and out of the other's needs. "Historically, central formative relationships (of women) have not been founded on the basis of mutuality. Growth fostering...has been going mainly in one direction: women have been fostering other people's growth" (Jean Baker Miller 1988, 2). The perfect co-dependent is a perfect woman; women tend to be enablers. Women's dependability and availability is shifting and expanding. "I believe women have an urgent and historic mission....the more important work on both the personal and the global scene today is....how all people can build empowering relationships which, in turn, empower all the people in those relationships" (11).

Sometimes my attempts to be in empowering relationships with clients seem to go nowhere. I spoke of Ellen's lifetime spent fostering other people's growth and her inability to foster her own. When Ellen left the office that last night, I felt she left her newly discovered, uncovered self behind. I, feminist pastoral counselor, who believes so strongly that women can empower each other once in mutually supportive and nurturing relationship, was devastated. I imaged her slipping off the lifeboat we both had been on, into her swirling, tugging, angry sea. I imaged her a sacrificial maiden, appeasing the gods' fury and anger because of her short-lived attempt to challenge their hold on her. She returned to placate her system; she could not deal with her own

yearning questions. Ellen's initial attempt to define her self out of her own experiences, was not as powerful as her fear of her life dissolving and becoming disconnected. There was the fear of herself causing others too much pain and perhaps herself causing, ultimately, too much of a sense of sinfulness if she departed from her understanding of selfishness and sinfulness.

The challenge of integrating feminist thought into pastoral counseling is that there must be a "letting go"--not of the implied sinfulness, but of that constricting sense of "badness" and "wrongness" and "inadequate" so common to a woman breaking free. There must be a courageous, oftentimes leap of faith to what is and always was and always has been within each woman with whom I journey on the road--the sacred and the holy and the good that she is.

#### IV. THE STORY OF PAT: BODY AND SEXUALITY

*Women's bodies  
may be the hardest place  
for women to find  
sacredness.*

*Elizabeth Dodson Gray  
Sacred Dimensions of Women's Experience*

I first met Pat one evening when she and her husband nervously introduced themselves to my co-therapist and me at a sexual dysfunction clinic in which I did a rotation. Her husband had a sexual erectile problem. Pat had finally convinced him that he could use some help, and since only couples can be treated within the clinic, she was, of course, accompanying him. Her own sexual life, she explained, was rather unfulfilling and both she and her husband were somewhat frustrated by their inability to have a more mutually satisfying sex life. Pat's gynecologist had suggested this possible course of action with the clinic and Pat had reluctantly followed through on it.

Pat is a 40 year old, well-educated professional executive, with three children, in a persevering yet rocky marriage. Her husband is not a person prone to working out problems or ideas. Pat would like to resolve issues in her marriage that way, but decided it was futile years ago and now retreats to books when controversy arises between her husband and herself.

Throughout our weeks together Pat encountered several aspects of herself. She gave more credence to a date rape than she had before. She talked openly about her incredibly negative sense of self-esteem due to acne scarring, for which she had "unsuccessful" topical surgery several years ago. She revealed two earlier abortions. We spent time discussing her initial uncomfortableness with me present at her physical examination and what that meant. She cried when asked to look at herself in a mirror or venture into herself with guided imagery and touch upon painful places. She refused to talk about some of the bodily aspects of herself, especially those involving her two abortions.

Over 8 weeks and 50 hours of clinic work, Pat's body and her feelings about her body became better known to her (and to myself) than either of us ever imagined. The emphasis at the clinic was basically medical, yet rather eclectic, so everything from a vaginal exam to guided imagery into her body were a part of the treatment. The Director of the clinic's whole emphasis--both for the therapists and the patients--was on becoming familiar, appreciative, and comfortable with the sexual organs and functions of the body. I knew sometime into the second or third week of the rotation that I, as therapist, would never be the same.

I am concerned herein with understanding two aspects of Pat--both so interconnected that I can barely separate them. The first is what Carter Heyward calls the **bodyself**. "My bodyself is me. There is no split between my 'self' and my 'body' or between the core of identity as a person-in-relation and my sensuality" (1989, 191).

"Contributing to bodyself are embodied (centered and known through the body) feelings

of sensuality--the mingling of senses and emotions--and the embodied, relational responses of sexuality--a "touching toward" another with erotic/sacred power" (192, 3).

My second concern is how Pat both thinks and feels about herself, her self-worth--in pastoral counseling image--her reverence toward herself. How does Pat hold herself as sacred? How is Pat related to her body--to her bodyself? Pat came into the clinic not liking her bodyself. My concern in this chapter involves the possibilities of Pat's reconciling and experiencing some healing, some honoring of herself as a woman whose body and sexuality she knows and feels and with which she is comfortable.

One of the basic tenets of feminist therapy is that the therapist allows herself to be impacted and changed by the therapeutic relationship. The intimacy and respectful integration of Pat's experiences, revelations and struggles with her body and sexuality and self allowed for an intimate journey few women ever take together and was one of the most introspective experiences of both our lives. Our understanding and knowledge of body grew. Pat came to know herself in ways profound and I, as pastoral counselor, found that the ability to have such an open and increasingly comfortable relationship with this person, her body, her mind and her emotions, was an intensely integrative process. I felt myself, when in her presence, a more fully whole person. There are few fences left standing after a sexual history, a physical, and weeks spent examining, through many exercises and talks, one's sense of body and sexuality and self. The experience is not to be replicated within a "normal" therapeutic format. It took the clinical and medical aspects of the clinic to legitimize such an approach. It gave me an invaluable perspective and appreciation. I affirmed my belief that the integration of



body and soul and mind is profoundly necessary, especially for woman, in order to be cohesively brought together and healed in a therapeutic setting.

Pat came into the clinic in hopes of her husband "correcting" his sexual functioning and therefore, her own. She increased her own sense of "normalcy" because her husband's sexual "inadequacy" was modified, but valuing her own bodyself outside of her sexual relations with her husband was her greatest challenge. She left the clinic several months later, having come to deep realizations about her sense of bodyself that, at times, confused, angered, pained, comforted and challenged her. She was confronted with the realization that, having figured out a technique for greater sexual satisfaction with her husband, it was her own sexuality, her own sensuality, her own body that scared her. It was that body that she saw, as she did one session, in front of a mirror, with great pain and tears. How she could ever come to accept, value, touch and hold sacred this woman, this body, the image of a loving God, and receive what she wanted, both from her God and herself--to be embraced as someone beautiful, good and holy?

To a great extent, to understand sexuality and sensuality as a part of bodyself is to understand personhood as a self-in-relation. I experienced Pat's "wholest" self when she brought her body, soul, mind, and emotions closely together into our relationship. Pat came from a religious tradition which, as she was growing up, condemned many of the ways she had treated and regarded her body. Her tradition conditioned her to negate the body, to devalue it, to separate it, to think it apart from those things which must be most important or valued or worthy.

Therapy is usually necessitated by something that happened or causes pain in or is borne by--the body. Healing must include the body. The more I counsel, the more convinced I am that woman's body, her sense of its sensuality, sexuality and pleasure and her understanding of it--of herself--must be a part of therapeutic time. The way for woman to touch her soul, her pain, her needs, her esteem, her worthiness is for her to first be able to move into and through her body. Pat did not even want to come close. She brought her husband to the clinic to "get fixed"; she was only vaguely aware that her body also might be crying out for healing and that she had a right to reverence her own bodily needs. I am strongly suggesting that pastoral counseling needs a body-based therapy for woman to be able to heal herself, to come to know and honor herself.

Kathleen Fischer writes that "of all the broken connections which need healing, that between body and spirit is among the most fundamental to Christian spirituality" (1990, 70). She goes on to suggest that in order to "recover" the experience of wholeness (not to mention joy and well-being) that a new way of "envisioning the body in relation to the self" is necessary (70). Pat's relation to her self was, at best, tolerated and, at least, not abusive. Pat had little relation to herself; her body offered her highly functioning abilities and an articulate mind. Her body was a dwelling place of difficult memories and hidden places and unhealed wounds of pain. If Spirit dwelt within her body, Pat had not felt Her moving, nor felt Her warm presence.

The "body-integrity" (Gray 1988, 197), the "sacredness" of woman body, the embodied-embraceable were not sought by Pat. She had spent a lifetime of not knowing how to nurture her own pain, her loss of self-esteem, unborn children, sexuality, love of self. There was no wonder in her body or in herself or in her relationships. Her body had a

history of causing her pain, and she had tried to turn off the pain. She had been disconnected and violated and left by those to whom she had given her body. Pat was so out of touch with her own body that she had isolated herself from her self.

Pat was a twentieth century female version of the severe duality between body and everything else about her. Pat was traditional woman. The tragedy was that because she had so isolated and repressed and sought escape from the intimate groans, voices, confusions, and aches within her that she had prevented her from relating in close, intimate ways with her self, her husband and others in her life. Her sexual life with her husband was amazingly devoid of contact. It was not meant to stir the spirit within her, to move her to know herself better; it was meant to hold together a marriage in a depriving or deprecative, unknowing way. Sexuality for Pat expressed nothing; it was a weekly performance without a message for herself.

Pat did not consider herself to be a close friend to anyone although she was a social, articulate, enjoyable person. Her body was not meant to be in connection with anyone. For Pat, her body was merely a receptacle for her mind, her husband's sperm, and too many painful memories. She certainly could not envision the Spirit of God in intimate connection with her body. In light of her sordid past, how could she believe there was any connection between her own image and God's? Pat's incongruency with her self was tragic. She would cry whenever we spent time in the places of her life which related to her body. I am convinced that woman will feel this incongruency long before she can speak it. Kathie Carlson writes that women "continue to feel that something precious is being misperceived, something significant and real in their experience is not being seen.

We need to create a new language...to name our experience authentically and to risk more in revealing ourselves to each other" (Carlson 1990, 88).

This is how it began to change for Pat when she finally, and with great hesitancy, gave herself permission to go in search of the beauty, sacredness, erotic, and sensual goodness of her woman/body. After an evening during which she allowed herself to explore her "insides" through a guided imagery, she realized that if she could spend an hour on the "fantastic voyage" into all her hidden rooms, it might be possible to move into loving, affirming and embracing the depths of her soul as she was coming to believe it to be within her body. I hold that if we cannot move lovingly and intimately and with blessing over first the breasts and wombs and moist places and closeness of woman/body, then we cannot go in search of the Spirit within or without.

I believe pastoral counseling must eventually become comfortable with a body-based Spirit in order to form wholeness for woman. What a difference, a freeing, redemptive difference it would make if woman did not feel that she and her body were indentured to men, to male norms of performance, to a dogmatic uncleanness and incompleteness or to exploitation of cultural sanctions. She might choose instead to share and reach ecstasy and hold all things beautiful, including herself. Such a change cannot be actualized on merely a personal level; it is a social and political issue. And the "possibilities for creating a life-affirming society and culture rest on the question of whether all of us, men as well as women, can discover new ways of being "in" or "with" our bodies" (Saiving 1988, 118).

The character of Isabel in Mary Gordon's novel, Final Payments, reflects: "But now I understand. What Christ was saying, what he meant, was that the pleasures of that hair, that ointment, must be taken....we must not deprive ourselves, our loved ones, of the luxury of our extravagant affections" (1978, 298). Consistently in my therapy with woman, I suggest the extravagant affections. Out of my own ability to value my sensuality, sexuality, and my body, out of my own experiences both of deprivation and connection with the bodies, both my own and others of my life, I suggest "extravagant" possibilities. (I would caution pastoral counselors who are not comfortable and in a loving, pleasurable relationship with their own body, to be very careful here. Their suggestions may not seem very credible.) I encouraged Pat (and many of the women I counsel), for instance, to lock herself in the bathroom and take a bubble bath, by candlelight and music, and then to anoint her body with fragrant oils. I ask my client, who normally attends to very few of her own needs and feelings, at least in our time together, to be carefully attentive to her own body. I ask her in session, "How does your body feel right now? Can you feel anything moving within you? Is there a voice you hear, a whisper, a stirring within?" I comment that I find her eyes, her appearance, the way she carries herself, her face, her smile, or her personality as beautiful, attractive, or congruent with how I believe her to be. I am moved to tears with her pain or with her insights about her accomplishments or happinesses. I allow my own body to be animated in therapy; not overbearing or intrusive, but respectfully, and emotionally present. I touch it, I move it around, I sometimes sit in a nearer chair, I reach out to say good-bye as she leaves. I counseled a client tonight who, two months ago, came in, sat on her hands and did not move her body. Tonight I could not help but notice that her hands were moving in rhythm with her story. She had a myriad of expressions on her face.

This is the face of therapy that has not been gazed upon, studied, touched, or met eye to eye with much vision, compassion, or embrace. Sexuality and body, especially of woman, is terrifying and taboo in therapy. The newspapers and tabloids and novels are filled with therapeutic sexual abuses toward women. Pat is anywoman. Somewhere, somehow, her body and her soul and her sense of self and her ability to love are so deeply bound together that it is a wonder she can work and laugh and find friends and feel and have sexual relations. In fact, I contend that therapy, relative to woman's body and sexuality, is tragically too distant and analytical. Last night, in counseling, I was with a woman who has survived much incest. Her body shook with the tears and sobs of the memories of her story. The only other body in the room (my own) stoically and therapeutically correct seemed unmoved and passive, much like the bodies and persons of the adults in her young life that allowed the incest to occur. We send powerful messages by such behavior. I am not suggesting that the non-judgmental, empathic, and compassionate presence of a therapist is not significant and necessary. I am suggesting that the spirits in the room when sins and brokenness of the body are poured out may require a different kind of presence. I, as both therapist and client in that situation, know the awkwardness of being so close to rawness and the subsequent neediness felt for comfort and comforting with an uneasy shame of experiencing both. There are therapies taking place which involve body work, massage, and guided body imaging. If wholeness and relatedness are to become a part of a developing therapeutic approach, pastoral counselors must be aware and open to these growing movements.

Leonore Tiefer, one of the earliest feminist sexologists, when asked to review her work ten years after its initial publication, reflected that her still relevant work had found connections to other areas of women's studies. "This gives me continuing confidence to

pursue the feminist point of view...and gives me greater patience and compassion for those struggling with new ideas in unfavorable situations everywhere" (as found in Chrisler 1992, 98). We must always, as Chrisler writes, "...hope that our work answers some questions and raises others" (1992, 251).

I know, as a feminist pastoral counselor, that I always run the risk of being misinterpreted; I remain sensitive and acutely aware of the risk involved in seeking mutually empowering relationship. I also know that Jesus healed, to a great extent, with touch, risking a transgression of the societal and religious mores of his day. He was an intimately physical person. My sense of the Incarnational again enters this paper. The God of my experiences is an embracing, holding, bodily affirming God. My reading of scripture talks of "God and I (as being) one." And so I journey with Pat and her increasingly valued body. She is coming to know how much I value the privilege of our two selves being together weekly, that I care for her, and that I truly believe that the place wherein we gather is holy ground because two holy women are sharing themselves there.

## V. THE STORY OF JUANITA: ANGER

*Anger is inevitable  
when our lives consist of giving in and going along;  
when we behave as if having a relationship  
is more important  
than having a self.*

*Harriet Goldhor Lerner  
The Dance of Intimacy*

A black, emancipated slave woman, named Sojourner Truth, wrote, in the spirit of her sense of self and her anger and more, "Ain't I a woman. Ain't I got a right to be angry? Ain't I a angry woman?" Juanita is a Hispanic woman, living over a hundred years after Sojourner wrote those words. She had come to me after three months in a home for battered, abused women and their children. Currently she was living in transitional housing program with her two daughters, 12 and 8 years old, an older daughter having left home several years before. The program had offered to pay for her sessions if she came to counseling.

Juanita had been living for years with an abusive, alcoholic husband. He had controlled all moments of her life, blaming her for anything that went wrong, expecting her to work and support the family while he drank her earnings away and virtually terrorized her with his constant yet unpredictable attacks on her. Juanita had spent years suppressing all feelings, all thought, all voice, because they were only provocations for



his anger and possessiveness. They were all locked up in her like an old trunk full of once swishing, soft, flowing bolts of materials that had mildewed and become crumbly.

Her days were filled with her exhausting work; her nights were filled with him refusing to let her sleep while he used her body. Her nights were also spent trying to prevent him from abusing her in the presence of the children. In our third session, Juanita, who was emerging as a very intelligent, articulate woman of 38, said to me, "I know all the things Benny has done to me. I remember the time he locked Maria (her oldest) in the attic for days and wouldn't let us see each other. I know he's used me. I know I can never trust him. I'm afraid of him. Why aren't I angry with him? I don't think I know how to be angry. But I think I should be angry with him."

Young girls learn they should not have anger. "Anger destroys relationships." "Avoid the evil of conflict." "Anger and conflict are not feminine." "Nobody likes an angry woman." Little girls fear in their play that anger and fighting will lead to separation; someone will be mad and leave. Women tend to carry that fear with them into adult relationships--someone might leave--whether it be a playmate, mother, father, lover, husband, friend. Make peace at any price. Don't be mad. I don't want anyone to leave me. Women don't know how to use anger well. Women are too often forbidden its use. "I was never allowed to be angry in my house." Anger causes fear; it causes other's fear. So women become victimized by fear instead of being empowered by anger. She isolates the anger, and turns it inward and abuses herself. Juanita had done all these things to herself. She was the little girl, the young girl, the woman who was willing to be ravaged by violence and fear of abandonment, but not empowered by anger.

Anger is defined as "an emotion arising inevitably in development, which can, under conditions of mutuality, move the relationship toward greater connection" (Miller & Surrey 1990, 5). Juanita had repressed knowing her anger and using it constructively against something she knew was wrong. She could barely make a connection between her fear and her anger trying to warn her that her fear was legitimate. She had abandoned herself for so long, that her anger could not be a useful emotion, an instinctively protective emotion. She could barely trust her fear; she barely knew her anger. I would like to think that Juanita somehow heeded both however, when one freezing night, realizing she was about to be terribly beaten, she escaped.

Miriam Greenspan says that anger is the fuel we need to burn in the struggle to create a society without victims (1983, 315). Juanita was burning herself as fuel because she could not give life to her anger. Without the anger, the questions were not surfacing within her---"How is my self being violated?" "What valid needs of mine are not being met?" "Why am I hurting?" She believed she could not get out of the relationship with her husband without getting herself killed. (That still remains to be seen.) She could not use anger constructively and creatively. She could only see anger as her personal problem to repress at all costs. Without awareness, she could never know that anger is political and cultural; that it can and should exist outside of herself and not be explained away with personal guilt.

Carter Heyward says that nothing is simply "mine." No problem, no solution, no tears simply exist by myself or for myself (1989, 12). Anger is imposed; it is not only within ourselves. But when one feels it inside, one needs to pay attention. Our first inclination is to try and separate it from everything else we are feeling. "I am angry.

Get away from me, anger." In unhealthy relationships, it is used irrationally, or, it is repressed, as Juanita did, so that she might survive. "Healthy" relationships of love know that anger and love can be in a person at the same time. It is when they are split off that they turn into hate and destroy the possibility of wholeness and holiness in the relationship. Christianity has come close to killing love because it cannot keep anger connected with love, whether it is love of others, ourselves, or our world. The tradition says that anger is evil; it is one of the seven deadly sins. Christianity also has a Christ who cleansed the temple with his zeal--a zeal for a cause--his house--that devoured him.

Anger is also a holiness, a message, a revelation. Fran Ferder speaks of anger as a gift, as a source of energy, of fire, purposefully and lovingly created and shaped by God. " We do not have choices about whether or not we will experience it, unless we choose to cut off a very significant dimension of God's life in us" (Fischer 1990, 179). If it is a gift, if in fact, our God-in-relationship has accepted, encouraged and viewed our anger as a part of our relationship, then oppression over women, whether it be because of patriarchy or stereotype or imposed role, denies woman her rightful place with her own rightful emotions, with her own God.

We could have spoken of Juanita's civil and legal rights to be angry forever. But the most powerful time we spent was looking at Scriptural references to anger--the woman who challenged Jesus' stance with her, insisting that even the dogs get crumbs, the temple cleansing, the psalms, of course, and their angry diatribes before God. When Juanita could image herself standing before God, shouting the words of the psalms, when Juanita experienced herself, rightfully, even in God's eyes, as angry, unwilling to take

any more abuse, she was finally able to move the anger within herself. She eventually came to realize that there were political, cultural and patriarchal origins for it.

Her greatest gift to herself came one day, in the safety of a therapeutic session when she was able to release the question--"Why aren't I angry?"--and find the answer--"I have a right to be angry!" She would never be the same again. She really did not have the skills to be an angry, even a self-righteously angry woman. She had never been allowed to be angry at anyone. But her statement released her own message to herself--"you are destroying yourself." She had said she "danced around, all the time so she wouldn't set Benny off, so the kids wouldn't see or hear, so she wouldn't say anything." Harriet Lerner calls this the "dance of anger". Juanita's question to me that afternoon in April was the beginning of her moving from a helpless dance of terror driven by someone else, to discovering new steps in a dance that was going to be her own.

Women of course, are not only angry with violative marital relationships. As pastoral counselor, I counsel women who come to realize that they are angry with the institutional church. As with Juanita, if there is another version of anger--one that she is entitled to--then why, during her many years' affiliation with her church, did she not hear that she, a woman, was entitled to be angry! I believe an understanding of this dilemma is necessary in my counseling with a pastoral insight. In offering new interpretations of scripture, in re-envisioning the person of Jesus in a more expansive, mutually healing relationship, a client's anger with her church often follows. "Why didn't I know this? Why didn't I see this for myself?" There is a yearning for this more compassionate, understanding, accepting and loving Christ. I need to be wary of causing alienation or bitterness instead of healing and connectedness.

I speak of the culture, the society, the church, the tradition, the system that is a part of patriarchy, not of individual men or preachers or priests or fathers. The evil is in the system.

Carolyn Osiek, in her book, Beyond Anger, relates the movements women go through in their anger with the church. They parallel Juanita's anger. The first realization occurs when the believer allows herself to experience "the collapse of her religious symbol system" (1986, 22). There is a sense of loss and collapse of meaning. Juanita's world collapsed upon her; she escaped to a shelter with her children. Next, Osiek describes an even lower point of the impasse. No alternative holds any hope of life getting any better. Depression, emptiness and joylessness set in; this is the dark night. Juanita lived still in two worlds--the shelter and the home she left. But she could only go in one direction--"the way out is the way through, beyond rational and irrational modes of existence" (24). Juanita remained at the shelter until she could receive transitional housing. After nineteen years of living under the terror of one man, she was helped to discover a new vision of reality. She sought counseling and slowly is embracing and assimilating the pain and new skills which might enable her to reach a new order, truly a breakthrough for her. She still must decide, in living her new reality, whether she can survive the price she will have to pay in order to seek "psychological and spiritual health" (25). And she daily faces the question of whether or not it is "worth the pain."

I believe anger's place in the world of love needs to be celebrated; it is both divine and human. I believe we are worthy of our anger. Anger allows us to call forth change. We must love our anger--with our anger. When it rises, energy to act is present. I know something is wrong, not well. I am angry and connected, and I care. Anger operates

within a system of relationships. We need to know our relationships and when to become angry and when to make peace, and when to take action and when to be silent. We need to avoid using the experience of being wronged as a weapon and use it for a healing--a passionate healing.

I need to comment on the place anger can play in determining if one is in a healthy relationship or not. Carter Heyward says that "our fear of anger is a barometer of how badly we want to be, but are scared of being, in mutual relation" (1984, 143). Miriam Greenspan believes that most of our anger problems occur when we have to choose between having a relationship and having a self. The woman in this chapter, who knew no self, chose the relationship, even a violative, abusive one--because of her fear of not being in relationship. Ellen, the woman of Chapter III, chose the relationship with her family over having her self, and repressed the anger that said she was too afraid to choose her self first. Pat, the woman of Chapter IV, continued a sexual relationship, even when there was no reciprocity of self, because she valued her self so poorly.

In this paper I place ultimate value on relationships. But I base woman's availability and ability to have right, mutual relationships on her valuing and claiming a nurtured and worthy self. If there is conflict between that valued self and its yearning for relationship, what am I saying here? Both Greenspan and Heyward arrive at a similar place with anger and relationship. When relationships are filled with fear and resistance to change, and lack [any] real mutuality in the world and in our daily lives, or suffer from unjust power in the relations---we need to listen to the anger. It is a signal warning us to be more honest with our self, ground our self more serenely in our own bodyself, and make choices about the relationship. The goal of feminist therapy is a

self-grounded in a mutually empowering and empathic relationship. Anger is a "powerful emotion with the power to right wrongs and to....change hurtful relationships" (Miller & Surrey 1990, 4). It is also invaluable, for woman to know how to read the emotion of anger, and to understand that in choosing between relationship and self is significantly enlightened and empowered.

Finally, as Carolyn Osiek says, "anger is a completely appropriate response to the awareness of oppression (1986, 16).....but it is no final resting place" (15,16). Interestingly enough, when I consulted several Scriptural concordances, I found that anger was a frequently acknowledged characteristic of God in Hebrew Scriptures but considered an evil in the New Testament. Yet I experienced anger in Jesus' response overlooking Jerusalem when he pointed out injustices in relationships, and, as I pointed out above, when he cleansed the temple with "zeal". Perhaps that is the key. Scripture does not say Jesus acted in anger, but in zeal. Perhaps as we have been hearing for years, we need better and new language to express ourselves in a new paradigm. Perhaps we need to act, not in the gender-sabotaged terminology of anger, but in zeal! I believe the goal of therapy is not to rest in angry places, but to alleviate the sources of anger that deny differences, new images, mutuality, empowerment and right relationships and then to act with zeal.

When a client such as Juanita enters my office, "sources" of my anger get triggered. Several days ago, an anti-stalking bill was signed by the Governor in my state. I had campaigned for that legislation to be passed. I sit weekly with Juanita and listen to her tell of her week at work, her difficulty finding housing, her financial distress. I grow angry with her over the injustice in her life. I pick up the phone and call a friend at the

County Superintendent's office to see if Juanita's daughter really can be kept out of a gifted educational program. She can not. Juanita's anger (albeit mixed with confusion and passivity), does not have to remain as a depressive, resigned acquiescence to an unquestioned authority. I model for Juanita an assertive, non-explosive, immediate response.

In feminist therapy, anger can be understood "in" the session, but then can seek resolution, "out there." Another time, Juanita and I rehearse how she can respond to a situation at work which in my mind amounts to sexual harassment. In a low-paying job such as Juanita's, her complaining would probably get her fired; she is feeling angry though. How is she hearing this anger?

We talk of her hearing other voices within--happiness and exhaustion and love and satisfaction. We always talk of how these voices affect her body. We try and keep the voices connected to her body, along with her actions and feelings. If she can embrace the more comfortable voices, perhaps she can eventually embrace the more angry ones--provided she feels worthy to claim them all for herself. Juanita knows that one of the agreements of our sessions is that if she ever disagrees with me, or thinks I am being too--whatever--that she has a right and a responsibility to our relationship to say so. Our gathering is meant to be a safe, even experimental, enskilling place.

Speaking of safe, there were times when she feared being caught by her husband near my office. I met her in a "safe house". Pastoral counselors should not be "unmovable mountains." Juanita's needs may require my flexibility and journeying into her place, not always mine. Our work together allows an unconditional love to be present when we



gather. This is not always uncritical--she knows we seek honest responsiveness from each other. But, Juanita knows her feelings are accepted and ok to have and to share. She has come to believe that someone has loved her and her anger, and she is more whole and free because of that.

There are two other important issues regarding anger which I need to discuss. I have spoken of "just" anger and repressed anger. Juanita and I examined how not to let anger engulf her and destroy her. Another issue is present for women who are conditioned to not acknowledging or touching their anger. It makes them prime candidates for their anger becoming destructive to the people in their relationships--especially their children. Even if an single mother, strung out with little resources, acting-out children, overworked and exhausted, admits, "I am angry." The mind and the feelings and the responsiveness to her anger must work together in a constructive way. The constantly angry single mother, the frustrated but abusive adult daughter responsible for an Alzheimer's parent, the violent wife--just "letting it out", becomes a danger to herself and to the people in her life. The therapy cannot just release the anger and then let it run wild and fearsome. The real therapeutic issue is how one manages and expresses anger. In dealing with anger, there are several places to visit. First, one taps into the anger through story or incident and discovers it. This may be anger expressed or anger unacknowledged through fear or pain; it is difficult to be in touch with anger that hurts so. All anger does not have to be acted out; one can beat rugs or scream, but one can also talk about it, re-tell the stories, cry or write about the anger. Strategizing about anger is cathartic in and of itself.

For women, according to Lerner, there is another critical question about anger--that of reactivity. "Who is responsible for my anger and what do I do if they react negatively and emotionally to the way I choose to constructively handle my anger" (1985, 124)? Taking responsibility for one's anger, without feeling unduly responsible and guilty and filled with self-blame for other's reactions to the changing situation, is, for women, difficult and a "woman's problem" of epidemic proportion, according to Lerner" (125). "Women in particular have been discouraged from taking responsibility for solving our own problems, determining our own choices, and taking control of the quality and direction of our own lives" (124). How can woman learn to assume responsibility for herself and "less for the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of others" (125)?

The issue of anger and women is extremely complex and convoluted. In spite of the intense and painful search into one's anger, it will not emerge as its own source. Guilt, displaced anger from childhood and especially the deep pain of shame can all lie far below the emotion of anger. Anger, by its very presence, invites searching and understanding and the desire to seek forgiveness and peace. Kathleen Fischer writes that one needs to recognize and validate anger, explore the personal and social origins of it, find ways to use anger for one's spiritual growth and clarify the relationship between anger and forgiveness, always hoping for growth and creativity, not despair and violence and further oppression (1988, 176-77).

## VI. THE STORY OF MANY WOMEN: RITUAL

*There was a wonderful woman-camaraderie  
during this whole process.  
I remember a strong sense of purpose and identity  
(long before I ever knew such words)  
in the shared woman-experience of preparing  
and cleaning up after our festival meals.  
These women knew that they and their work  
were the center of the festival....  
They were the feast;  
they knew that in their bones and in their souls.*

*Elizabeth Dodson Gray  
"Feeding as Sacred Ritual"*

Ritual, as seen in this paper, has two purposes, each converging in the same sense of creativity, of connectedness, of empowerment, of inner depth. One purpose of ritual is certainly to call forth the power and strength of affirming and healing which we carry in our fibers and souls and memories. Rituals can help us heal our own self or each other. Rituals celebrate and communicate, but perhaps are not acknowledged or appreciated as healing and affirming. We can celebrate the sacred meaning of our ordinary lives. We can gather together with voice and action and ritual, seeking sacredness in the common or divine places of our lives, and in so doing, create another purpose of ritual--to change meaning in the midst of celebrating meaning.

Ritual for the purposes of this chapter, broadly includes symbolic acts, involving the self and others. These acts are prepared for and experienced through word, repetition,

song and/or action and understood as having an integrative impact connecting, creating and making meaning of the event they celebrate. At times, they offer support, often a shoring up, a holding up of motions and gestures and words when we do not know what else to do, what else to say, when we do not seem to be seeing any sense or sign in what is happening. Starhawk simply says that rituals are "patterned movements of energy to accomplish a purpose" (Plaskow and Christ, 1989, 326).

Nancy, a client of mine who has experienced the devastating loss of her daughter, Emily, wants to feel nothing more in her life or her body. She agreed, after 7 months of therapy, to begin our sessions with a song being played on the cassette player accompanied by a form of guided imagery. Her daughter is so locked up inside of her mind and her memories that she is unable to experience her anywhere else--the woods where Emily rode horseback, the school she attended, the books she loved, the picture just taken before her death, the friends she enjoyed, the swing she used. Nancy's daughter is nowhere but in the pain and the pit of her own being. I certainly was not proposing that she escape the pain and sadness; that is not possible. But I was hoping that through the safeness and growing comfort with ritual, that she be able to release the images and presence and accessibility of her daughter.

The song I play is a slow, meditative song reflecting on the presence of Christ as Light and Peace--around me, before me, under me, behind me, within me. (It is from an old Irish blessing.) I ask Nancy to place Emily's name in the song in the place of the names of Christ, of Light and of Peace. I hope Emily can be released using the ritual of music and the images her mother might visualize. Nancy is resistant; she admits to having little experience with visualizing and imaging. But she always wants to try again. She

is a very concrete and cognitive person. This experience is touching parts of her of which she has never been aware or willing to visit. The time for weekly ritual offers her the safe place and time of repeating an uncomfortable, albeit, intriguing new expression for her, which as I shall discuss below, may only be tapping into an ancient part of her power to heal herself.

Ritual has been a part of native American heritage, of women's everyday lives, of religious traditions--of all cultures. There is evidence that ritual is moving into the therapeutic area. Imber-Black (1988, see McGoldrick 1991), McGoldrick (1991), Whiting (see Imber-Black 1988), Ramshaw (1987) and other writers attest to this. The significance of ritual within this thesis is predicated on both an affective and cognitive sense of ritual. There is growing and developing research, and there is re-birthing and re-affirming and re-touching of what has been intuitively a part of women's lives. We can "know" something by methodically observing pattern and need. We can also "know it in our bones."

It is my belief that ritual has not been called upon, in any significant way, in the praxis of pastoral counseling. It is an untapped well, an unopened vessel. There is sad irony that the ministry of people who celebrate in ritually-significant sacramental ways in public have a hesitation or reluctance about ritual in the one-on-one relationship of therapy. I would conjecture that ritual in public is "safe"; ritual in private is threatening and too close for comfort. Can the pastoral counselor weave ritual into the patterns of sessions and integrate a shared sense of personal ritual with a client rather than put on an authoritarian display? I would also challenge, especially feminist pastoral counselors, to seek the awesomeness of voice or gesture or sacred pattern in

their counseling and to feel compelled to recognize the legacy, indeed the right and power to re-create, re-connect, re-claim ritual in their ministry. Ritual is re-appearing in increasing presence. Unfortunately, so also are the horrendous statistics of women being abused as children or raped as adults. So also is the awareness that medical and psychological understandings of women have generally tended to be domineering and controlling and sexist. Women's bodies in a clinical way are being shattered and violated and surgically and unnecessarily invaded. The rise of women's awareness and acceptance of her own body, of her ability for self-determination, of her understanding her own cycles of life, and of her celebration of those cycles gives the intervening and healing significance of ritual a renewed place in the healing of which pastoral counselors witness.

Disappearing are the traditional places where woman may have participated in ritual-- a "room" of her own, mealtimes together, companionship, coffee together, shopping or visiting relatives and friends. Too often, the fragmented, single-parent, poor, exhausted, too-busy-for-friends woman seen in therapy today has lost touch with herself, let alone the places she might find ritual. I have very few women clients who will permit themselves the luxury of a bubble bath or a lunch with a friend, and in many cases, the luxury of continuing therapy for herself. Life is too confusing, too chaotic, too possessed by the people demanding her time and her space. If I ask a woman, "Where is the sacred space in your home, the altar of your self?", she does not know. And yet, she usually has one-- a place of pictures or memories or mementoes or treasured pieces. Woman can instinctively do that and not even know.

The re-connection of both the men's and women's movement to ritualistic re-creations of original and deep-seeded reality is drawing ritual out of the primitive past and up to the hospital bed or office or living room or quiet place or seashore. The symbolic uses of ritual have a power over pain and brokenness leading to new integration and healing.

I will share several stories of women and ritual. There are thousands of stories such as these. They represent women on their journey, with their bodies, their sense of self, their needs to be touched and understood and cared for by connectedness with another. The stories carry within them centuries of the innate difficulties and mores by which women suffer pain and loss of body, or celebrate a sense of self and of healing. Some stories carry the rituals and solidarity and attempts women intuitively or relationally seek for healing in order to return to their cycles of life. Some do not. Women need each other in ritual. Some cannot heal without help. Others do not know how. Some may never feel worthy.

Janet, in her mid-life, in the process of her ongoing therapy with me, came to realize that previously unrecognized and submerged childhood abuse had enormous repercussions on her adult life. The shame and anger and violation she feels when she approaches the child within her represents a major need to be-friend her self, to heal her self and to reclaim her self-esteem, wholeness and happiness. She is frustrated by the therapy which talks and consoles and empathizes and is present to her. In the midst of it all, she knows something is missing. She is in a pastoral counseling setting and she says to herself, "Is this all there is?". She has never known so acutely the need for healing; she feels she is surrounded by banquet tables of food, but is starving.

Dana, a friend, is in the anguish of dealing with the unexplainable sense of failure and crushed expectations because of a miscarriage. Her life is incredibly empty and her self-esteem has no body to reliably depend upon. Her family and friends give her space and time to "return to normal". She seeks a return to her cycle--both menstrually and to her patterns of life. She seeks it alone. Miscarriages defy our societal order. They are too intangible to count enough for entitled grief or recognition of legitimate attachment to life within. Her body aches within its failings, its aborted creativeness. Our culture quickly passes over this loss. Yet there remains a yearning for re-connection, a re-meaning with the cycles of her life. We met one day and held each other. And our wombs touched and felt closely connected; fertile womb next to empty one. And we shared some words and held each other until the flowing between us felt strongly of an age-old force. This is the re-connecting, the energizing, the touching, the absorbing of ritual. We are both counselors; we could do this with each other. How do we draw ritual into our own counseling setting, into our own therapeutic relationships?

Fay, on the night before her hysterectomy, was visited by several women friends, including her counselor. They gathered around her hospital bed, acknowledging her fear and the impending radical invasive loss of a part of her which had been hers actively since she was twelve years' old. And within the rituals of prayer and touch and emotion, they allowed for the naming and honoring of her life as a child-bearing woman, the pain that was imminent, the loss that was incalculable and the new life that was meant to be hers following surgery. She fell asleep that night, knowing what it meant to be gathered up, immersed in ritual and prepared for the journey. Her need for healing was met with ritual.



Evan Imber-Black, a feminist family therapist, writes of the links between normative and therapeutic rituals. She admits to being fascinated by the capacity of rituals to both stabilize and to change what is, to proclaim and to transform, to act in compliance and to empower, to constrict and stereotype and to expand and surprise (McGoldrick 1991, 452). She reviews the interest in rituals as therapeutic intervention since the 1970's (the Milan team), even though they were thought to be extremely difficult and elusive. During the 80's, whatever attempt at ritual made had to do with alcoholic families, was hierarchical in nature, and the therapist controlled or created all ritual. Recent work, including her own, attempts to include the family in the ritual process, "in keeping with the collaborative and demystifying values of feminist family therapy" (453).

An excellent tool with which to examine and alter women's positions in families can be found in both the normative and therapeutic rituals. Normative rituals are defined as: (1) daily rituals; (2) family traditions; (3) family celebrations; and (4) life cycle rituals (McGoldrick 1991, 454). Within the therapy, both family and therapist can come to understand the meaning of these rituals--do they maintain traditional social structure where woman is subservient to man, do they allow for and affirm a sense of an empowered, equal, expressive, creative self? Is it necessary or possible to rework and redesign rituals "capable of expressing both greater equality and appreciation for women" (McGoldrick 1991, 464)?

Therapeutic rituals seem to be less a family event than a marking of events in a woman's life, co-created by both the therapist and the client, thus empowering and valuing the woman's contributions to her own experience and development. Imber-Black relates the incident of a single-parent woman, who, through ritual, throws off her feelings of

inadequacy and pity and assumes a decision-making and leadership role of parent. She recounts an instance where a woman, emerging from years of rather abusive psychiatric history, challenges her old identity as psychiatric patient, much of it highly negative and untrue, and together with her husband, redefines herself as a strong woman struggling with life's problems. She quotes Laird, another woman therapist involved with ritual, who helped design with a family, a ritual transitioning an adolescent girl into womanhood. First there was a "women's time" in the therapy, where mother and older sisters imparted their stories of being a woman to her. Then there was a celebratory dinner prepared by father and grandfather, with gifts belonging to the women, passed along to the newest woman (McGoldrick 1991, 460).

My own experiences with ritual are still rather sparse, but growing. Especially when doing marital or family counseling, an early piece of information I try to glean from the family's recounting of its daily goings and comings, is how does the family eat dinner. I believe somewhat in "the family that eats together, stays together" refrain. So I gather information on how they do eat, especially dinner. Do they eat at various times in front of the TV? Are they usually all present? Is their meal an event? I have had families respond most strongly and affirmatively to the implementation of a family dinner/supper meal. If it is at all possible, knowing it will require time and effort to adjust to a half hour or so spent within close proximity of each other, we try and figure out how possibly they can gather together. The resistance, at first, is incredible, although there are usually one or two members who are intrigued enough to at least want to try. It sounds like an old tape of the "Brady Bunch". I have not met a client yet who does not somewhere within yearn for a family like them, or like "Father Knows Best", or, that "really neat" family they knew.

There is also ritual present as one of my clients and I explore the themes of the woman's movement through books. She is an avid reader and asked early in our therapy for suggestions on reading. At the beginning of our session, we usually talk about what she has read, and it invariably leads us to places where, either through identity, resonance or query, she needs to be. It is bibliotherapy, but it is a collaborative, mutually engaging way of empowering and healing within an agreed upon framework of ritualizing our time together.

I have another client whose only son recently died in a tragic accident. She has yet to go into her son's room, sort through it, or "put it in order." Her very efficient husband has no understanding of her need for time or grieving or space in which to prepare herself for the ritual of bringing closure to Erik's possessions and memories. My client and I have an agreement, that, if it is too difficult to do, and if she feels a need, that when she is ready to enter the room, to absorb it, to decide how to transform it, that I will come. And we will, with our own pre-imagined movable ritual, come to some peaceful place with the memorabilia of Erik.

Interestingly enough, her husband, who I am also counseling separately, has agreed that for him the place he is readying and for which he spends time preparing, is the tombstone at the cemetery. It has taken months to design, prepare and have made. It is almost ready to be set in the ground and when it is, he will invite me to come. I am not sure what we will do, but I believe there will be ritual.

One of my ministries as pastoral counselor, especially appreciated in my parish church, is my work with families of recently deceased members who seek help in

putting together a funeral liturgy. The Mass of Resurrection in the Catholic tradition, when more clearly and deliberately formulated, through word, song, music, homiletic reflection and prayer, offers a powerful means of healing ritual. The comfort and familiarity of the ritual enables the community to gather in supportive and connected ways--a sense of interdependence and faithfulness to each other becomes wonderfully evident--God's kingdom on earth. I recently worked with the family of a man, well loved by all his grown children. I asked each of them over the course of his imminent dying, what, if anything, they would like to contribute to the liturgy. All but two (of the seven) made meaningful contributions to the service. They felt ownership and active participation in a time of healing. None of the "children" were practicing Catholics, so I explained how the liturgy is not meant to be a private service for the family. In fact, many people would gather who considered themselves part of their father's worshipping and working and social community. The service is meant to be, within the ritual of time-honored and relevant prayers, songs and blessings, a celebration of their father's life and now, new life. Each was touched by the ritual with which they had lost touch. It was a powerful and deeply healing time for all of them.

Mary Hunt writes that seldom does our culture celebrate loss of friendship. The loss, whether it be through a move, a breakup, a change of interest or when one marries and the other does not, is seldom celebrated except through death rituals (1991, 136-7). Mary came to counseling, depressed and unsure of what was happening to her. Several weeks before, her closest friend, Pam, shared the news that she and her family would soon be moving to a far distant state. Mary, a woman of 30, could not believe that this impending separation could be causing her such fragmentation and pain. My perception

was that the frightening loss of her friend, the fear of their future and her sense of abandonment, were indeed the powerful reasons Mary was grieving.

Unfortunately, both women, who were married, were caught in a cultural void of not knowing how to respond to their mourning. It culturally and socially, seemed so adolescent and "girlish". They needed, for themselves, what Mary Hunt calls, to "sacramentalize" their friendship, both privately and publicly. Mary, in therapy, was able to verbalize to me, and then to Pam, her feelings and emotions. The two of them, with Mary's understandings derived from our therapy together, took their mourning seriously and decided to ritualize it in several ways. They planned a luncheon to which they invited their closest friends, not to bid farewell to Pam, but to celebrate with both Pam and Mary, the significance and sacredness of their relationship. Both women had planned a liturgy on connectedness, in which all shared. Each woman had been asked to bring a story, relative to Pam and Mary which they shared with all. It was a wonderful afternoon of laughing and crying and supporting and celebrating. The two also then spent a day, free of kids and packing and Little League, and, from morning to night, did all the things they had always talked about but for which never had found the time. Their rituals offered them a new way of drawing strength, affirmation, expression and meaning into their relationship. And their tears were turned into dancing.

There is a need for caution and care when considering new creations or rediscovered creation. Rituals cannot simply reverse roles of hierarchy and power in a family. Starhawk warns that ritual can cause alienation as easily as it can cause empowerment. She also cautions that we should be careful not to reinforce dualism by focusing on light to the exclusion of dark (in Plaskow and Christ 1989, 328).

Collaboration in forming ritual is important. Too often the woman becomes responsible for "doing as usual". It is incumbent on the therapist to involve all the family or clients in this effort. The capacity to co-create a new creation is opportune in planning ritual. Rituals facilitate finding new and hopefully, greater, more life-giving meanings in our often ignored, untouched, painful or joyous events. They can be powerfully moving moments of transformation, carrying people into changing places and behaviors.

Jan Ellis, in Healing Voices, recounts how she asked a woman client to create a ritual for herself in order to mark her transition into health and wholeness. "We can do it in my office, or any setting of her choice....there must be at least one witness. If (the client) has any strong spiritual ties, she will find herself using something about her religion in a way she has never used it before. This time will feel empowering. If she is like most women, keenly distanced from organized religions, we will simply make it up, trusting herself to include anything she needs, allowing her own inner voice to guide her. [This] approach includes what I love about the feminine assumptions about life. Everything is connected. There is no power in isolation" (in Laidlaw 1990, 260).

We have come full circle--the voice, the creation of community, of heart, of a center, the intuitiveness, the forming of story, the healing, the sacredness, the vision. Whether ritual be spontaneous, proscribed or freshly collaborative, it offers a profound sense of connectedness with the possibility of releasing a Spirit. This is the Spirit of comfort and new meaning. I believe that woman carries within her an ancient sense of ritual. From my own experiences with ritual, though, I know we need to peel off layers of hesitation, disbelief and unfamiliarity with those deep roots within. But, our continuing yearning for connectedness and healing need to be held by the embrace of ritual.

## VII. CHALLENGES OF A FEMINIST PASTORAL COUNSELOR

*We influence each other so deeply  
it is hard to decide where one leaves off  
and the other begins.*

*Joanna Rogers Macy  
Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age*

### Piecing the Quilt Together

This paper has been about pastoral counseling and psychotherapy, feminist thought, theory, and theology, and the stories of women. I have sought to piece into the quilt of pastoral counseling the trinity of these feminist "T's". I have sought to demonstrate how the stories of Ellen, Pat, Juanita, Janet, Dana, Fay, and all the many women storytellers and writers whom I have assembled for this "bee", carry a challenge to pastoral counseling. "Listen to my story with new ears, see with new eyes, open up your arms to the new possibilities. We may need to find new images, new approaches, new language." It is my deepening belief that within the convictions of the feminist movement, are to be found the seeds and empowering winds and rains of new life and growth for woman. I am committed to a profession to which I believe I bring intuitive and innate healing skills with which I have been gifted. It is my ministry to be a pastoral counselor because of my answering a call to join those whose journeys meets and becomes mine. I am a Christian pastoral counselor because in psychospiritual places I find meaning and congruency with the person and words of Jesus Christ as healer and human. I claim myself as a feminist

pastoral counselor because, for me, there is no other way. I have said "Yes" to a radical movement of the Spirit involving me with the soul and song and suffering of woman. I find great congruency, hope, oneness, reality and relatedness in the wholeness of my mission and ministry. The place of El Shaddai is becoming the most alive place I experience.

### Spirituality

Before I entered the pastoral counseling program at Loyola, I spent a year studying in a woman's graduate school of religious studies. I did not know at the time what I was experiencing and forming. Through praxis, discussion, reading, reflection and writing, I was forming the embrace in which I would hold and piece together the constantly growing and enveloping quilt of my ministry and profession of counseling. I did not realize that it would be through the challenges and creative tensions raised by the three areas of spirituality that I would integrate myself as pastoral counselor. I immersed myself for that year, in Creation-Centered Spirituality, Liberation Theology and Transformation Theology, all from a feminist perspective. They were presented by persons who had committed themselves to believing in living lives impacted and changed by the implications of those three belief systems. Subsequently, as I experience my self as pastoral counselor, I constantly am opening myself to the new creative tensions and paradigm shifts engendered in the three areas. New images and naming and changes in feminist therapy, especially pastoral psychotherapy are being born. I believe there is no more fertile, yet frightening place for therapy to be taking place. The demands that the three new paradigmatic experiences are making is only beginning. Their winds are winds of change; nothing will ever be the same.



## Creation-Centered Spirituality

*A breeze passes in the night. When did it spring up? I suddenly become conscious that I am alive to a particular perception of the divine spread everywhere about me...a new spirit has crossed my life.*

*Teilhard de Chardin  
The Divine Milieu*

Through the study of Creation-Centered Spirituality (Hildegard of Bingen, [Fox 1985]; Teilhard de Chardin 1960, [McElwain 1968], [Speaight 1970]; Matt Fox 1984, 1988; Francis of Assisi [Eloi 1977]; George Maloney 1968), I came to realizations enfolded in the humanness and relationality of an Incarnate God. The secular and earthly life is meant to be lived with reverence and gratitude for the planet, the environment, the body and the Kingdom. They are to be cared for now--not destroyed, neglected, injured and abused while one waits for and rushes toward the only life that has historically counted--the other-worldly life in a Kingdom that is to come after death. To believe in Creation Spirituality is to be filled with a responsible, collaborative and significant sense of one's adulthood and Co-Creatorship with one's God for a new order of creation and all it contains. The earth and its creatures are ours to become one with, to love and care for and to know, in Teilhard's words, their "fire" and "soul."

Also inherent in creation-centered spirituality is the need to move from oppressive and constricting dualistic thinking of either/or to a sense of the dialectic--the both/and --the interdependence intrinsic in an inclusive embrace of blessing and creativity. Relationships need to move beyond the dichotomy of the Fall/Redemption mentality that orders and elevates and demeans everything as being either good or bad, as superior or inferior, as divine or human, as holy spirit or unholy body. Patriarchy must be

dismantled and mutuality, a sense of partnership and an acute sense of interdependence must be allowed to grow and prosper.

The implications for pastoral counseling are radical. If one is engaged in co-creatorship with one's God, then how much more should one's therapeutic endeavors be mutual and aware of another's intrinsic sacred right to work toward their own becoming? Therapy needs to be free of the old order of seeking to save in order to expand options and alternatives, to expand the choices inherent in an adult, co-creating Kingdom. When one accepts that one is living an eternal life that is now, forgiveness, hope and transformation become more important than repentance, sin and pessimism. Teilhard wrote that, "...by virtue of the Creation and still more, of the Incarnation, nothing here below is profane for those who know how to see" (1960, 66). He encouraged us to "go in search of new forms" (1960, 71). We need to break away from the pathological hold our profession often burdens us with however. Matthew Fox said that the "...creation-centered spiritual tradition will bring with it a 'new and stronger life urge'" (1983, 25). There is great sacredness in the holy ground upon which we find worthiness and brokenness in those who seek therapy.

### Liberation Spirituality

*The prophet lives in tension with the tradition  
and needs to break free from tradition  
to assert the new freedom of God*

*Walter Brueggemann  
Prophetic Imagination*

Liberation spirituality (Paulo Friere 1970; Leonardo Boff 1983; Gustavo Gutierrez, 1972, 1984, 1992; Walter Brueggemann, 1980, 1982; Abraham Heschel, 1969; John Kavanaugh 1983; Ettie Hillesum 1983) is considered to have been born into the

barrios and grass root communities of South and Central America but in actuality, it has also been born in the psalms and in the Holocaust and in the poor and the downtrodden.

Liberation theology is born where there is oppression and where one yearns for freedom and self and justice. It begins as a seed in a human heart and eventually finds fulfillment in the community, both local and global. Liberation theology can only find meaning in life, in struggle, in journey, in risk, and in a new order of things. It is the attempt to seek "tekun alan"--a Jewish phrase wherein there is a seeking out and restoring--a healing toward wholeness of the fragmentation of self and body and community and environment and planet.

Its implications for pastoral counseling are risky. In the words of Gustavo Gutierrez, we should learn to expect that when Jesus appears on the scene everything gets turned upside down (the "Messianic inversion", quoted in McAfee Brown, 1992, 32).

Liberation spirituality believes in struggling for life in the face of death in order to eliminate the lack of bread in the midst of a hunger for the God of Life (McAfee Brown, 32). Liberation theology seeks to tell the stories of shatteredness and then to be released from them. The story of Juanita, attempting to break free of a terrorizing husband, of Pat, from a stereotyped woman's body, of Ellen, from the role of woman as oppressed into service have all spoken to the need to claim more life and light for ourselves as woman, to see more, to awaken ourselves and to claim bread in the form of liberation, justice and covenant with a God who promises such things.

## Transformation Spirituality

*We must change our lives radically if we want our world to change. The only way we can move ahead is by living the reality we envision. It is up to us to change our lives radically if we want our world to change.*

*Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz  
quoted in Inheriting our Mothers' Gardens*

Transformation theology is found in the writings of the feminists (Plaskow & Christ 1989; Rosemary Ruether 1984, 1988; Russell, Cannon, Isasi Diaz 1988; Phyllis Tribble 1978) and countless others quoted throughout this paper. Transformation theology starts from within one's body and spirit and mind and moves dynamically outward. It involves a conversion, a resurrection, an embodiment, an experience and an ecstasy with the Spirit within. Transformation happens in dialogue, not in silence. It happens when, in naming one's experience, one is empowered through the words. Transforming lives is what feminist therapy is about--not "maintaining" a client or teaching them to cope or resigning them to the status quo or the "inevitable". Transformation therapy is the journey into the draining and exhausting and terrifying and risky. It is predicated on the belief that it is both necessary and empowering to hear and see and speak new words, new possibilities, and to have new visions. It can also, in the case of Ellen, have you declared selfish and not a good wife or mother, or in the case of Juanita, it can get you killed.

## The Stories

*We told our stories--that's all.....  
Oh, listen to my story and share my pain and death.  
Oh, listen to my story and rise and live with me.*

*Edwina Gateley  
"Celebrating Women"*

I have shared in this paper, the heart and soul and body and words of women who have both entrusted and empowered me and I them. They are not case studies. They are not DSM-III-R' assessments. They are the stories of incredible persons of worth and weariness. The experiences of the women I have unfolded hold truth and yearning. I love and cherish their lives. I have presented their stories and asked that they be treasured and validated--that the women be treasured and validated. I can prove nothing by doing so. Jesus proved nothing by telling stories. I believe he was such a teller of parables, or paradoxes, of people's experiences, because he knew that was where the connectedness and beauty and meaning was found--in how another's experiences and mine intermingle and integrate and infuse us both with healing and hurt.

There are dark stories as well as stories of light, and untold stories and re-told stories and idealized stories and distorted stories. Stories may make us uncomfortable, but we feel, whether we are children or adults, compelled to listen because we know that in the valuing of the storyteller and her story, we know relationship with her and with ourselves. I have spoken in this paper of the power of sharing stories, of creating words. We seek to understand the truth and the balance in all the stories. Dorothy Sayer, a creator/writer of experiences, says that the power of words is a dangerous one, seeking to incarnate itself. "It may for some time incarnate itself only in more words, more books, more speeches; but the day comes when it incarnates itself in actions, and

this is its day of judgment" (in Say 1990, 101). I have talked about the connection between words and the flesh and the divine within and without. If the word can be made flesh and the flesh made divine, we are always in sacred space and movement as we hold our words and our clients' words holy and sacred. My tradition is a Word-made-flesh tradition. The Word is always, for me, changing--Word becoming more fully human and divine.

Ellen spent years trying to love only her God and her neighbor. She thought of the Sunday school classes and sermons rebuking her and mandating her to do nothing else. She had never heard the implications of "Love...as you have loved your self." Ellen felt both betrayed and frightened when she came to hear another voice. But the power of that story was too much for her and she, like the rich young man, walked away. She could not hear any more.

Pat's body and her feelings about her body were buried beneath years of religious tradition which relegated, devalued and separated the body, conceptualizing it apart from those things which are most important and valued and worthy. To touch herself, to hold herself and "make all things new" within herself, was going to mean a new way of life for her. She picked up her fragrant oils and thought of herself in relationship with herself in new ways.

Juanita learned early that young girls should not have anger. They should make peace at any price. She became victimized by fear rather than empowered by her anger--which has the ability to move relationships toward greater growth and aliveness. Juanita

recently came for a session and was a vibrant, alive, determined woman. She had begun to embody empowerment.

Janet, a victim of childhood abuse, and Dana who suffered a miscarriage, and Fay prior to a hysterectomy all told of needing to be healed by rituals of prayer, and touch and emotion. What else can we do, if we cannot seek our healing and hope in our relationships with each other? Where else do we go, but to the company and comfort of our experiences?

Each of these stories calls for a "praxis"--a method of reflection and resolution. In this paper I have reflected on and uncovered the paradigms that shaped these women and their stories. Through these stories and those of many other women I have come to believe that it is pastoral counseling, rooted in the person and words of Christ which claims the greatest ability to work toward the completeness, oneness and connectedness of the psychospiritual person.

### Change

*I ask you to move with us into our places of alienation as well as onto our commongrounds. Come with us into our remembering, our naming, our silences, and our speech. Join us in holding and withholding. Be with us in our affirmations and our denunciations, our mourning and our raging, our laying to rest what we must and our lifting up what we can. Think with us critically about where we have been, what we have done, where we are going, and what we are going to do.*

*The Mud Flower Collective  
God's Fierce Whimsy*

I wrote this paper hoping that these women of stories and all women will come to have life and have it more abundantly--freed and embraced. I wrote this paper that men will come to have life more abundantly--freed and mutual. We need each others' freedom.

We need each other to change. The change of which I write, seeks to re-balance and re-value the diversity and experiences of all. It seeks to re-claim the reality of woman's experiences as normative and valuable--"good" in the eyes of God, her eyes and the world's. As suggested by Elizabeth Say, there can be no "common good" if it emanates entirely from or is simply a "derivative" of a patriarchal tradition (1990, 136).

The process of expanding or re-creating the common good, however, is threatening. In a pastoral counseling situation, a common good of woman, emanating from her own experiences, may offend or contradict the view of the tradition as viewed by the pastor, the creed, the congregation, the client herself. Feminist critique and goals, writes Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, question the very foundations of knowledge (and dogma). The questions raised are--who formed the dogma and knowledge, and how, and what implications are there to both our thought and theology as it is derived from the concept of a single ordering force of mind (in Say 1990, 135)? [This single force, is the primary cause of the mind/body and male/female dualism; the single force is man-made, normative and definitive and everything else is not.] Say admits that, to one coming out of Western thought, the idea of there not being one common good is intolerable (135). She cautions against the seduction and impossibility of women seeking a "common good", a community, a cooperative vision, if it is understood within the patriarchal tradition and not from within their own experiences. "...Have they heard that patriarchy is not the common good" (136)? I would suggest a more Talmudic approach-- "These and these are the words of the Living God."



## The Call to Witness

*If what we change does not change us  
we are playing with blocks.*

*Marge Piercy  
"To Be of Use"*

Prevention--and intervention--is what is needed. I am suggesting that if pastoral counselors are willing to have the eyes to see and the ears to hear, that there are voices calling out for new visions and new values. If the stories and the experiences and the pain and struggles are to be believed, it is incumbent on the pastoral counselor, on her profession and ministry to become more proactive socially and more integrated personally in a new creation. The paradigms which have shaped the women of the stories of this paper, have, for the most part, been oppressive and not able to honor them as sacred. The way has to be changed if future generations are to live with more abundant life and with more abundant freedom. In most instances prevention does not happen quickly. Most times there will be opportunities to facilitate small evolutionary changes. At other times, though, with inspired vision, there will be opportunities to be part of transformations.

Diane Fassel believes that there can be no transformation without recovering what we have lost, been deprived of or abandoned. She believes both transformation and recovery need to be supportively in process at the same time (in Schaef 1989, 23). The system will not transform itself. And so woman seeks new ways, new creations, right relations, conversions, mutually empowering relationships, paradigm shifts, transformation, different voices, selves-in-relation, interdependent relationships, more inclusive ritual and scriptural interpretation and images of God, and always, the

liberation of a freeing God. Both she (as client) and I (as pastoral counselor) seek these possibilities in our therapeutic relationship. Both of us need to also seek them in the rest of our relationships. But it is our therapeutic relationship which should provide and allow our clients the support, empowerment, confidence and skills to search; it is that relationship which should more highly motivate, inspire, empower and affirm my search.

Feminist therapy advocates that responsible therapists extend themselves into the world of social injustice, activism, legislation, and "becoming involved" in order to change "the system". The system maintains the perspective that all things personal for woman are also political. The system is perpetuated by power-brokers, whose unilateral power is used to maintain political, economic or social injustice. Power in the system is perceived as being able to define and impose the norms, aspirations and possibilities for and on everyone. Most power in western culture is held by the dominantly powerful gender--white, wealthy, male. Patriarchal power is dependent on dualism wherein man is placed above woman, mind above body, youth above age, wealthy above poor, materialism above nature. We have become too saturated with the right of these systems to exist. It is incumbent on us to become more aware of the structures--where and how they are to be found in the economic, social, political, religious, and psychological places.

Ironically, if, as Goodrich states, in her seminal work on Women and Power, "power is the capacity to produce a change" (1991, 38), then, in order to be committed to change, power--or a concept, a dynamic of being--is needed. That form or concept may not even

be visualized or named yet. Jesus embodied a form of power disappointingly different from the expected Messianic power. Feminist hope seeks a balance of power, embodied in greater awareness of differences and freedom to work in a mutual partnership with others. This idea of shared power, based on a concept of interdependence, understands that one's expertise or gifts are shared in an empowering way with their community. No one gender, class, race, etc. alone possesses the authority, which in a hierarchical or linear format, is dispensed to those below. Feminist theology, especially that of Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, believes that no one, including the patriarchal structure can claim power and authority which is God's alone.

### The Journey

*I have counseled all day. I take the long way home.*

*My little convertible has the top down.*

*I am in need of the wind.*

*I drive through the fields freshly cut, past yards pink with the overwhelming fragrance of wild flowers.*

*I pass through the evening air, heavy with dew and coolness.*

*I have absorbed so much pain, oppression, confusion, loneliness, worthlessness and brokenness of the persons with whom I journey.*

*There is too much of it in the world. I am only one person.*

*I pull off the side of the road and stand in tall grass in the midst of trees.*

*I need to "ground" myself.*

*I need to touch the whole earth with my body and let the suffering and anger and brokenness sink into its soil and roots and underground aquifers.*

*I call out for the Spirit to gather me up.*

*I feel embraced by her air and winds, the great tree next to me.*

*I am not alone.*

*Flowing through me, I feel the pulse of my being caught up in the oneness of all life.*

*There is no where else to go, no other way to be.*

jwk

I keep returning to the stories. In the heart of the stories is the seed of becoming changed. It is the middle of the summer of the writing of this thesis and I grow weary and saturated with my work. The readings this Sunday include Deuteronomy 30:10-14,

written during the Babylonian captivity of the Jews. I identify with them. It is followed by the "Choose Life!" passage. They speak profoundly to me as I sit immersed in feminist thought and the psychospiritual and pastoral counseling:

What I ask is not beyond your strength or your reach, it is not too mysterious or remote. It is not up in the sky, so you need not wonder, 'Who will go up in the sky and get it for us, and tell us of it, that we may carry it out?' Nor is it beyond the seas, that you should say, 'Who will cross the seas for us and bring it back to us and tell us of it, that we may carry it out?' No, it is something very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts; you have only to carry it out.  
(Deuteronomy 30:10-14)

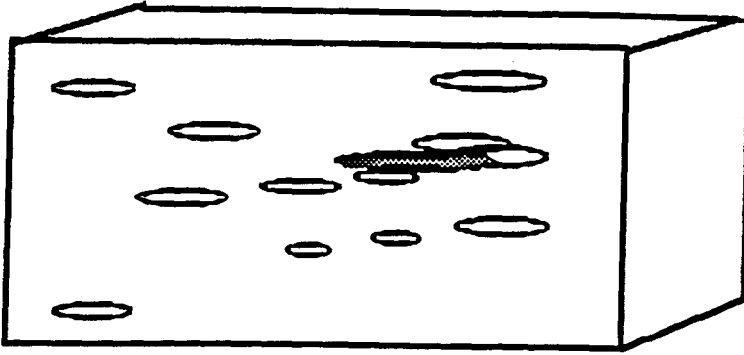
The Gospel reading is Jesus' discourse with the lawyer over the issue of "who is my neighbor." The story of the "Good Samaritan" ensues. Jesus found truth in the stories. He meant to prove nothing by them. The experiences of his stories offered choice and change and life more abundantly to those who would "carry (them) out."

I continue my journey.

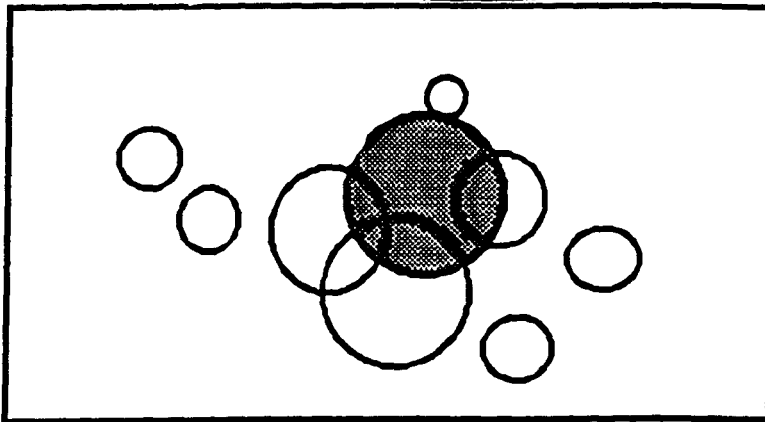
Amen

**APPENDIX A**

**SELF-IN-RELATION THEORY MODEL**



**COMMUNAL / COSMIC THREE-DIMENSIONAL VIEW**



**INDIVIDUAL SELF-IN-RELATION**

**J. W. Kaltsas, 1992**

## **APPENDIX B**

### **PIECES FOR A PASTORAL COUNSELOR'S DO-IT-YOURSELF QUILT**

The metaphor of the quilt has been pervasive in this paper. The quilt represents a collaborative, communal patchwork, using the myriad of sizes, shapes, colors and textures of feminist thought and women's experiences and stories. The task of quilt-making has, for ages, included the sharing of pieces of material whenever women gathered for a quilting bee. Individually, the material appears as scraps, but, when sewn together, they take on beauty and wholeness. I include 76 pieces which I offer for your own reflection, skill and creative endeavor.

**.....the first task is to name oneself**

**.....a healthy woman's worldview is compatible with her own experiences**

**.....we are called upon to live lives of "creative disorder"**

**.....the maleness of God has been equated with normative humanity**

**.....celebration of the Eucharist celebrates the inequality between women  
and men**

**.....it is the suffering who are working to alleviate the suffering**

**.....all are called to become responsible for the planet, the church, the  
society, the government, the family, the relationship, our self**

**.....responsible, mutual, caring relationships are no perfect solutions**

**.....friendship and motherhood and wifehood are political activities**

**.....an American tendency is to believe that everything be the same---it  
cannot**

**.....schools can be places to get people to think "like we do"; therapy can  
be that same way**

- .....to be a feminist is to give up a sense of time
- .....there is a need to "rethink" and "revision" the body outside conventional, biological and patriarchal models
- .....therapy is about unconditional, not uncritical love
- .....all ends in the oneness, in the communal, in the other
- .....be careful in accepting any "fact" or role as a given
- .....it is often when one is afraid to claim a strong love for another of the same sex as oneself, that self-love becomes so difficult and unacceptable
- .....men's experiences of self have been widely articulated while women's have been largely ignored or misrepresented
- .....men are not in a position to know what is for women's "own good"
- .....dualism and its representation in language dictates that there be a superior-dominant and an inferior-subordinate
- .....there is a difference between women being liberated and being very happy
- .....telling our stories help us to know how we are hurting and how we are healing
- .....empathy is the capacity for enlarging the self with another's experience
- .....a healthy person's options include either or both, not just one or another
- .....woman tends to grow "within" rather than "out of" relationship
- .....old words or language has yet to describe intimacy and mutuality and a new form of power
- .....the developmental task facing women is the formation of identity with boundaries that allow her space and interdependence, not distance, dependence or even independence
- .....classical psychoanalytical theory is based in a genital, inferior view of woman and her body
- .....our children need to have instilled within them, a more urgent responsiveness to the planet

- .....embracing one's own self-image needs a creative, active imagination
- .....the personal is political
- .....by loving myself well, I am enabled to love others well
- .....I am limited, not perfect and often in need of support
- .....woman cannot *ask permission* to be equal or hope that men will *grant* them mutuality or that men will *give* them some of their power
- .....traditional religion does not speak or respond fully to woman's experiences
- .....mutual relationships exist with fewer rules
- .....remaining silent prevents nothing
- .....the inevitability of the Incarnation enables the inevitability of the body's worthiness and equality with the Incarnate
- .....mutual relationship is always moving to claim one's adulthood
- .....when men control theology and the story of God, men remain in power
- .....women are as responsible for the church as men are
- .....the myth of the male God defines normative humanity for all
- .....mutual empathy expands the self with the other
- .....thousands of years of woman fearing abandonment from man has wrought unbelievable tragedy and suffering
- .....pleasing herself is a very rare experience for women
- .....men cannot teach women everything they need to know about sexuality
- .....women are the majority of the older population--who will define the value and worth of older women?
- .....woman has traditionally been discouraged from entering her own illnesses
- .....woman needs to be valued over and above the roles they play
- .....feminist scholarship does not separate theory and practice
- .....God created men and women as equals



.....accept and celebrate the YES within

.....intimacy is a process of knowing and being present to the self

.....it is not enough just to know

.....the implications of liberation theology, as it continues to grow, need to be understood carefully

.....all relating is through our bodies

.....both exploitation and friendship thrive in relations of trust

.....beware of systems which exclude or suppress outsiders, enclose "classes" or "genders" of people in different places, and eventually relinquish to a few unquestioned moral authority

.....always claim the right to question "truth", the law, those with power and authority

.....a client, at some point, may have to become responsible for her own collusion or acquiescence to her own oppression

.....empowerment is to act within and beyond the relationship

.....the Gospel is about changing the face of the earth, a New Creation, a Co-creation of God and humankind

.....right relationship both empowers and entrusts

.....the kingdom is here and now

.....vulnerability is necessary in the therapeutic relationship for both client and therapist

.....always encourage one's sense of adulthood, one's womanhood, one selfhood

.....for many, feminism has created conflict rather than resolved it

.....we need to tolerate the tension of conflict until we find the creative solution

.....all creation groans and yearns for oneness

.....paradigm shifts are meant to take us, with surprise or shock or liberation, to places we may not have envisioned or thought possible

.....feminist therapy is convinced it must extend itself into the world of social injustice and legislation

.....woman must become the center of her life if she is to change her relationship to patriarchy and to the system

.....pastoral counseling is rooted in the person and words of Jesus Christ

.....patriarchal power is dependent on dualism

.....there is no need to be perfect--give it up

.....all of what we seek is not going to inevitably be "a good thing"--we will fail, make mistakes, perhaps be sinful and cause brokenness and destruction--it is better than doing nothing and leaving things the way they are.

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The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Art, Pastoral Counseling.

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