

Work In Progress

Feeling Like a Fraud

Peggy McIntosh, Ph.D.

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Work in Progress

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Peggy McIntosh, Ph.D.

About the Author

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Abstract

Many people — especially women — experience feelings of fraudulence when singled out for praise, press, publicity, or promotion. While such feelings of fraudulence may be deplorable, especially if and when they trouble women more than men, these same feelings also may indicate a wise reluctance to believe in the accuracy of absolute ranking, and may point the way to a valid critique of hierarchical structures. Apology and self-disparagement may indicate an honest refusal to internalize the idea that having power or public exposure proves one's merit and/or authority. Apologetic or hedging speech may indicate uneasiness with rhetorical or coercive forms of speech and behavior, and may signal a desire to find more collaborative forms. People who feel in public like imposters are perhaps more to be trusted than those who have never experienced feelings of fraudulence. The analysis is placed in context of a theoretical model of a double and conflicting structure within the psyche and within the society: overvalued, overdeveloped, "vertical," competitive functions at odds with undervalued, under-recognized, "lateral," collaborative functions. A double vision of these double functions within both psyche and society is recommended to understand feelings of fraudulence and to overcome them in contexts where that is necessary.

This paper was originally presented at a Stone Center Colloquium in April 1984.

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Not so long ago in Wisconsin at the Wingspread Center I attended a conference on women's leadership in higher education. Seventeen women in a row spoke from the floor during a plenary session and all seventeen started their remarks with some kind of apology or disclaimer. The self-deprecating comments ranged from "I just wanted to say . . ." to "I have just one point to make . . ." to "I never thought about this before, but . . ." through "I really don't know what I'm talking about, but here goes!"

Ironically enough, all of us had been funded to attend the conference because we supposedly knew something about Women's Leadership. Yet we seemed to share a feeling of illegitimacy when speaking in front of women like ourselves. The apologies started me on a new train of thought which led to this talk on "Feeling Like a Fraud."

I find that this title triggers a flash of recognition in both male and female friends and colleagues. For many, it calls up a familiar feeling — the feeling that in taking part in public life one has pulled the wool over others' eyes; that one is in the wrong place, and about to be found out; that there has been a colossal mistake in the selection and accreditation process which the rest of the world is about to discover. One dreams recurrently, as I do, that one has been exposed as "not belonging," or as having "gotten in" under false pretenses. In my case, someone from Harvard University calls to say they have found out I never took the Ph.D. qualifying exam in German. Or one feels like a play actor, a hypocrite, a stager of charades, or like sixteen personalities without a common center. One feels illegitimate in doing something, or appearing as something; one feels apologetic, undeserving, anxious, tenuous, out-of-place, misread, phony, uncomfortable, incompetent, dishonest, guilty. Many women and men I know seem to share these feelings. But some research and much observation suggests they are especially severe in women, both in chronic life-long forms and in acute forms in particular situations.

I think we need to take a double look at the phenomenon of feeling like a fraud. I will discuss it here from two apparently opposed points of view. I suggest *both* that we mustn't let the world make us feel like frauds, *and* that we must keep alive in ourselves that sense of fraudulence which sometimes overtakes us in public places. I suggest that on the one hand feeling like a fraud indicates that we have, deplorably, internalized value systems that said most people were incompetent and illegitimate in the spheres of power and public life and authority. But then on the other hand, I suggest that when we apologize in public, we are at some level making a deeply wise refusal to carry on the pretense of deserving and feeling good about roles in conventional and oppressive hierarchies. I think that most feelings of personal fraudulence need to be analyzed politically and deplored, especially feelings of fraudulence in lower caste people. But on the other hand, I also think that feeling like a fraud is conducive to social and political *change*, and that some forms of it should be applauded and developed in us, so that we become better at spotting fraudulence in, and trying to alter, the forms of our culture.

You may be wondering which of these sides I will come out on. I am coming out on both sides. My talk is like a Moebius strip. On one side it says, "We must not let them make us feel like frauds." And on the other side it says, "Let us continue to spot fraudulence in the roles we are asked to play." And when I twist over this strip which has two "opposing" sides and join it together again as a circle, I have the Moebius strip phenomenon. You run your finger along the surface. Without changing sides, you cover all surfaces of the twisted circle of tape. In the end your finger comes back to the very spot it began without having changed sides. I feel that the two kinds of argument I am making here are similarly, so to speak, both "on the same side."

Let me give some more specific examples of the feelings of fraudulence which I am talking about. In students it often takes these forms. "The Admissions Committee made a mistake. I don't belong here." Or "I got an A on this paper. *So he didn't find me out.*" Or "I got a B on this paper. *So he found me out.*" Or "I got a C on this paper. *He really found me out.*" All three reactions to the grade are variants on the same feeling that one was an imposter to begin with as author of the paper. Or in reaction to the comment: "You made your points beautifully in this paper," the student may think, "It can't be true. I can't even remember what I said." Or a student who works on a committee may be praised by the Dean for her organizational skill, and think guiltily of the mess on

the desk which the Dean hasn't seen. Analogously, a person feeling like a fraud when told that someone likes her will feel "Then, he must be a jerk." Or, if told she is beautiful, will think only of her faults. Likewise, a graduate student, told that she has written "the definitive work" and will very likely have a brilliant defense, is likely to think that it is all a colossal mistake, and that she couldn't "defend" a guppy. When a letter of recommendation states: "Ms. X is one of the brightest students I have taught in the last 15 years," Ms. X is likely to think, "What a pushover! But, how long can I keep fooling her?" When a commencement speaker says "Medicine will be better off with people like you entering the field," the graduates are likely to think, "These speakers are all hypocrites." If an executive says, "She has set her goals high and has met them in a truly professional way," the employee may feel, "This is no picture of me. I just hold the office together. I just talk to people, for goodness sake." The book reviewer may say, "This book is a path-breaking study," while the faculty member feels, "No, I just cobbled my term papers together into a book of essays because I want to get tenure." Within life in general, one may feel like a fraud speaking in meetings, calling in to a talk show, writing to the newspaper, being praised, telling people what one thinks, claiming to know anything, being called an expert, taking a strong point of view, putting one's head up in any public place, having opinions, and, most terrifying of all, having one's opinions taken seriously.

I have begun to touch on the tip of the iceberg for a few rather privileged people in rather academic and elite situations. There are myriad other examples from spheres of experience which are more widely shared in terms of class and race and culture. But I notice as I think through feelings of fraudulence that they seem to me not to occur in some areas of life. I pat our cat and the cat purrs. I don't feel like a fraud. It's not the same as getting an A on a paper. When I bring home chocolate chip mint ice cream, the kids' appreciation doesn't throw me into a panic about who I am. I think that being praised for a good spaghetti sauce or for finding a bargain is not so unnerving as being praised for giving a speech.

I do not think that it is simply the public nature of certain activities which makes us feel fraudulent. Kiyoo Morimoto of the Bureau of Study Council at Harvard/Radcliffe has said that a majority of the incoming freshmen feel that they were admitted to the college by mistake. Feeling fraudulent can infect lives even within not-very-public situations.

I have come to think of it this way. The more hierarchical the activity or institution, and the higher up we go in it, the greater our feelings of fraudulence are likely to be. People feel fraudulent especially when ascending in hierarchies in which by *societal definition* they do not belong at the top of the pyramid. I call hierarchies pyramidal because most resemble mountains, with far less room at the top than on the bottom. On the top there is less territory but more power, more money, more press, more praise, and more prizes. On the bottom is far more territory and more people, but less of the powers and privileges. Women and lower caste or minority men are especially few in the tops of the hierarchies of money, decision making, opinion making, and public authority, in the worlds of praise and press and prizes, the worlds of the so-called geniuses, leaders, media giants, “forces” in the culture. Women are not considered, for example, to be actors in real history, but only in women’s history. Our perspectives are not featured in mainstream psychology, but only in “Psychology of Women” courses. We are featured not on the front page, but in the Living section of the newspapers. And so on and so forth through the curricular and noncurricular matrix (or should I say *patrix*?) of our lives. And so when we rise up in hierarchical worlds, while socialized to feel that we *shouldn’t* be there, it is not surprising if we appear to ourselves to be fraudulent. “If this is ‘one of the best colleges in the country,’ then I don’t belong here.” “He thinks I am wonderful? Then he must be a loser.” “She said I argued brilliantly? Then I fooled her.” I think most people who feel like frauds have internalized systems of seeing which say most people are not valid and don’t belong in the worlds of worth, distinctiveness, excellence, authority, creativity, opinion, or forceful expressiveness, positive or negative.

In recent discussions, people have used terms such as the “imposter syndrome” in “high-achieving” women. They talk about some of the problems I have been discussing, and especially about executive or highly-placed women’s feelings of tenuousness and illegitimacy in their careers. Very often such discussions turn to parental attitudes, particularly parental attitudes toward girl children, and some say that when parents supported nontraditional career aspirations in girls, this correlated with fewer feelings of being an imposter.

I like the phrase “imposter syndrome.” This is very useful. I also admire the work of Irene Stiver (1982) on this subject. But I think that it does not make sense to start with a unit like the nuclear family to try

to account for the imposter syndrome. The unit to study, though it is much harder to study than the individual family with its individual actors, should be the whole society. Most people receive messages from *every side, throughout* the culture, that they are not legitimate in places of authority, not legitimate wearing the white coat, not legitimate behind the podium with the presidential seal, not legitimate as a female or minority male within frameworks of the boardroom, the corporate executive office, the banking industry, the Defense Department, in the worlds of making and shaping technology, opinion, and policy. Adults’ failures of nerve may relate, of course, to specific attitudes in specific parents. While our own parents may have failed to encourage, for example, nontraditional career aspirations in women, the society as a whole reinforced in a thousand ways that failure to encourage anyone to challenge the hierarchical winners-and-losers arrangements of the whole culture.

We have some remedies for the feeling of personal fraudulence. Particularly in the United States and over the last two decades, we have been introduced to courses on assertiveness training and confidence building, and, for some of us, also courses in public speaking, or workshops in surviving interviews. We have won greater chances at athletics, and now more women than before are developing an ability to compete in athletic situations with confidence and self-respect and enjoyment. These correctives help some women and men to feel that they are not frauds, and that they are, on the contrary, competent, whole, entitled, and legitimate, both as private persons and as public speakers and actors.

In addition, exposure to mentors and to role models apparently helps to create a feeling of competence and of being sponsored and encouraged in high places by those who “ought to know” our worth. I have benefitted very much from some of the correctives mentioned above, and especially from two courses in public speaking given by the wonderful Merelyn Jacobs of Dartmouth College who told us, “Say what you want your audience to know. They have come all this distance to hear you, and you owe it to them to get to the point.” Such advice helped her listeners to cut down on the apologies. But such remedies do not go beyond the first way of seeing feelings of fraudulence. They help only to correct the problem as I have outlined it so far, that we feel like frauds because we were socialized to think we do not belong high in hierarchies, and that most feelings of fraudulence come when one is rising in — or appearing to rise in — hierarchical territory, by taking

the pulpit, or taking the podium, or taking the front of the class, or taking a position in the news — taking positions which the world associates with people of merit and importance. The higher we go in those hierarchical structures, the more likely we are to feel, hollowly and in our inner selves, that we do not belong and the more we are likely to ask, “What am I doing here?” Assertiveness training *can* help us to look around and check out the people around us, and then say, “I am here because I have as much right to this podium as anyone else, as much competence in this presidency as anyone else I see around me.” This translates into “I may be a fraud, but I am *no more fraudulent than the next person.*”

Now suddenly, the plot thickens. Is the next person fraudulent? This question leads to my second perspective on feeling like a fraud. Here we move into territory where assertiveness training and speech workshops may be of no help. The next person behind that podium is, yes, very likely to be playing a role which entails fraudulence, pretense, imposter behavior. And it has less to do with that individual than with the roles which develop out of the public *requirements* at the tops of hierarchies as now constructed.

I now shift from the Moebius strip message “We must not let them make us feel like frauds” to the other Moebius strip message which is contiguous yet apparently opposite: “Let us continue to spot fraudulence in the roles we are made to play in the hierarchies of power.” And here I want to tell a story about a woman colleague in a large United States research university who dared, figuratively speaking, to move in public from one side of the strip to the other. Her university was holding a faculty-wide debate on whether affirmative action guidelines for hiring should also be followed for decisions about tenure and promotion. The heated meeting on this important subject included all of the undergraduate and graduate school faculties. I was not there, but I heard that, one after another, white male faculty members stood up to say they had their doubts; when it came to promotion and tenuring, the university had to be on guard against *mediocrity*, and not let down its high standards, and that when it came to giving people a lifetime vote of confidence, one couldn’t just take “any old person” and give that vote of confidence — one must make a financial investment in excellence. The woman psychologist to whom I am grateful stood up and said, “I am hearing a lot of talk about excellence. But then I look around me and I see a lot of mediocre men. For me the real test of affirmative action will be whether or not I can stand up here in 20

years and see equal numbers of mediocre women and mediocre men.” She called the men on their claim to excellence, on their equation of power with merit.

This relates to my second perspective on feeling like a fraud. We feel fraudulent, I think, partly because we know that usually those who happen to get the high titles and the acclaim and the imagery going with them are not “the best and the brightest,” and *we don’t want to pretend to be so either.* When we entertain nagging thoughts about whether we belong or deserve to be at the podium, or in the boardroom, or tenured, or giving an interview to a newspaper, or earning a good salary for what we like to do, we may be deeply wise in feeling anxious and illegitimate and fraudulent in these circumstances. Those men who feel the same way in such settings may be deeply wise as well, for the public forms and institutions tend to demand that one appear to be an authority figure, an expert, “the best.” The forms require that one appear to be a person who sets goals and knows how to meet them, a “leader” who is superior in certain qualities over those who are “followers.” The public forms and institutions insisting on these images do require fraudulent behavior of us, and they will turn us into frauds if we accept the roles as written. The roles are dishonest and people who are still in touch with their humanity and with their frailty will properly feel fraudulent in them. What the public roles entail and promote are usually not those qualities we have really specialized in ourselves. What the systems reward in us rarely corresponds to what we are really good at, and most humane in being.

This point brings me back to the conference of women who appeared to disown their own ideas when they took the floor. When 17 women in a row apologize, then perhaps we should listen to what they are saying, particularly when the 17 apologists are known as “leaders” but are not acting like them. We need to listen to what they tell us about *the way they want to lead.* My first response was to think that these apologetic women were testimony to women’s incompetence. And that *is* the world’s judgment on them. But an alternative way of listening to them, on the assumption that women *are* competent, brings out a message their behavior delivers, which is not that they can’t stand behind the podium, but that they can’t stand the podium. And in their apologies these women were, let us say, trying to change the forms of public speaking to make them less fraudulent, less ridiculous, less filled with pretense. Conventions of public speaking entail many uses of rhetoric; effective rhetoric requires that one speaker persuades a group of followers. What if a person at a conference simply

wants to put new ideas on the table? She may begin by saying, "You may not agree with this, but . . ." In this apparent apology, she is creating an opening which is nonrhetorical, and her words accomplish several important ends. "You may not agree with this, but . . ." This opening not only acknowledges the presence of the Other; it also postulates the engagement of the Other in what is going on (as they say in literature, it postulates reader response). It also acknowledges the validity of the Other's ideas. "You *may not* agree with this, but . . ." and it creates a tentative tone, a conversational matrix, a sense of give and take. As I see it, this opening acknowledges and strengthens the social fabric before it can be torn by rhetoric. It says, "I am not taking the floor from you. I recognize you are there. I am trying to make this more like a conversation than like a speech." The woman who says, "I have just one point to make . . ." is saying also "I don't want to interrupt the flow," or perhaps "I am not saying this in opposition to what has already been said . . ." Research has indicated that girls in playgrounds often break up a game rather than having it disintegrate into conflicts over rules. The woman speaker who says, "I really don't know what I'm saying, but here goes!" inspires neither confidence nor respect in the boardrooms of corporate America; but she is not pretending, and perhaps we need more of her in the boardrooms. At any rate, I find I want to make the case for some of the apologies I heard as refusals to pretend, refusals to be a fraud, refusals to carry through with the rhetorical conventions of public speaking, or writing, or performance in which one must pretend to be a strong man overcoming others, or a woman strongly identified with white males' functions and rules for power and success.

I wish to return now to undergraduate students' feelings of fraudulence, of feeling guilty and out of place. "The Admissions Committee made a mistake. I don't belong here." If one insists on defining certain colleges as "the best," any intelligent woman will feel that no one has done the tests to know whether either the college or she *can* be called "the best." It's a valid doubt. When she gets an A on a term paper, beyond the idea that "this means he didn't find me out" is this idea: An A is a grade absolutely better than B. Even when used together (in A-/B+), there is a slash between to show they are not the same grade. But is the student with the A *absolutely* better than the others who took that exam and who scored lower? A woman down the hall may have studied all month, never having had a course in this subject before, and have gotten a B. Another may never have really understood what was going on, but her questions

really showed others what the course was about. Let's say she got a C. Our "A student" may not have done any work until the last two days, and then crammed all night. That puts her up, away from the others, on a pedestal. Does she belong there? A woman may say to herself, "He thinks I am beautiful. But I hate that Beauty Queen stuff; I won't get trapped by it." Or, "They call me an expert. That's because they don't know any better. They probably don't know who the experts *are* on this subject. I certainly don't." Or, "They call me a pathbreaker. But I don't think of myself as breaking paths. I think and write." It seems to me that the absoluteness of hierarchical rankings and ratings and of the existing metaphors of originality or strength contain many elements of fraudulence. For women, especially, this absoluteness, and those metaphors of pathbreaking and being expert don't correspond to our complex sense of the web of circumstances in which we are born, circumstances in which our lives do not have trajectories and goals, but are, rather, threads in the fabric of circumstance, only partly of our own social and emotional weaving.

We resist, in other words, the building of pedestals, and the awarding of titles which we feel are not quite appropriate and which separate us from others like ourselves and which imply that we are self-sufficient or independent loners. And this resistance is healthy for us and others. Or, rather, it can be seen both as good and bad for us, but as good for the whole society.

A colleague told me that she attended a conference in which, in the relaxed aftermath, students began to ask the visiting professors, all of whom were women, how they came to their public lives and their academic fields. One woman, in examining her past, put her distinguished present down mostly to the circumstance that she had been rich. Another, examining her past, put her distinguished present down mostly to the circumstance that she had been poor. And a third put her success down to the fact that she entered the library and the books that interested her more or less fell on her head. None of the women acknowledged her own competence or excellence or enjoyment of her field. None said, "I liked the field; I read the books; I understood them; I got my papers in on time; I became competent; I saw new possibilities; I add to the world; people appreciate my work and I do, too." These women were perhaps then, let's say, deplorably modest, rejecting credit for themselves. But on the other hand, I would say they were applaudably honest. From one point of view, they were all feeling rather like frauds as "success stories," or "notable women," so they put their lives

down to circumstances. On the other hand, they were feeling a fraudulence attaching, as I think, to the myths of self-realization which go this way: "I came up from nothing, rags to riches, from pink booties to briefcase on Wall Street. I did it all myself. I knew what I wanted and I was self-reliant. You can be, too, if you set your sights high and don't let anything interfere; you can do anything you want." Now, it seems only honest to acknowledge that that is a myth. When women refuse to take sole credit for their mid-life status and insist on mentioning circumstances of birth and color and wealth and regional and ethnic setting and rejecting the pretenses of the pedestal and the podium, they are doing something that the whole society needs. We need it, in other words, in our highest policy-makers, this sense of how circumstances of birth and status and social network more than individual selves bear on life outcomes. False pictures imply that the individual is the unit of actualization in this culture, and that self-actualization is the main business of all competent people. But most of human life is bound up in collective and social and private experience which is not linear and not filled with clear upward trajectories and not identified with the aspirations of white, upwardly mobile men. Most of human sensibility is not covered by what authoritative experts tell us because their frameworks for thought are often wrong, and are in fact, fraudulent when they claim to cover all of us.

What, then, should we teach students about feeling like a fraud? First, that it is a feeling taught to us. Second, that this teaching is no accident. Third, that it is not good for us to feel like frauds insofar as that feeling perpetuates hierarchies. And fourth, that in another sense, it *is* good for us to feel like frauds insofar as that feeling may help us to undermine hierarchies. I advocate in this a *double vision*, as I do in virtually all other kinds of work with students and in the society at large. We need a double vision both of what the dominant culture stands for, and of what we lower caste people who are undervalued can develop in the way of a critique of the dominant culture. Within the dominant culture, people who can't deliver the goods from behind the podium will look incompetent. Therefore, we need to get over the socialized feeling of being a fraud and stand behind that podium and deliver the goods. This is learning the present ways of power. But, alternatively, it is constructive for the whole society if we question why there must be a podium, and ask whether the town meeting or the Quaker meeting or the March on Washington weren't perhaps better experiments in public speaking. Only when we examine the

difference between the conversation and the speech can we suggest that world leaders try conversation.

Let me turn now to the linguistic aspect of feelings about fraudulence in writing. When one writes a paper on virtually any subject, one is likely to begin with a complex of myriad ideas that constitute what William James called "a buzzing, blooming confusion." But one must choose among these ideas in order to put a paper together, because the rules for the sentence and the paragraph are very arbitrary. The rules insist on beginnings, middles, and ends. Within the sentence, conventions of grammar dictate that the subject act on the object through the verb. Moreover, traditional conventions of expository writing insist on something still more autocratic, that one make a case which is cohesive and clear, an argument which has no holes in it, a position from which one can take on all comers and defend one's self. This assumption about what writing is, the making of a case against the fancied attacker, permeates our teaching of writing from the expository courses through the graduate student's defense of the thesis, which is a kind of king-on-the-mountain in which you take on all attackers of your small piece of territory. It's silly, isn't it, that the paper must make a "watertight," "unimpeachable" argument, must make "points," and be like the world of boxing or dueling, holding off imagined attackers. The rules surrounding formal writing leave sensitive people with a feeling that the finished paper makes a statement which is fraudulent. Those who want to use language for other purposes are uneasy with the praise which comes with using language for making arguments. A student who says "I am such a fraud; I can't write this paper" will tend toward self-censorship or silence, and she needs help against those feelings. A student who says that one is, after all, a fraud in writing this kind of paper is in better shape. She knows life doesn't come in sentences; life doesn't come in paragraphs. And although institutions are encouraging her to use the expository essay as a kind of combination attack and defense mechanism, she wants to find alternative uses of language. I think we need to help students to have both states of mind. First, we need to help them get past the feeling that they are *more* fraudulent than anyone else, and help them get past the feeling that everyone else in the class is really writing a first-rate argument, whereas they are blocked individually. Second, we need to help them to project some of their feeling of fraudulence onto societal forms. They should be encouraged to see that the public forms of our lives are a construct for organizing us, and that they particularly serve to keep the present economic, political, racial, and sexual

hierarchies in place. Students as actors can gradually change those forms as they use and become successful in them. So the student may wisely repudiate that pinnacle-shaped A in the terms in which it was offered to her, as praise, for example, for “winning” argumentation. She may keep her own rich sense of connection which the subject nevertheless gave her before she wrote the “winning” paper on it, and which may enrich her life as she tries to write new scripts for her own public performance.

Likewise, students can be helped to get high grades or prizes for successful debating, learning to make a point against all comers. We need also to teach them to see fraudulence inherent in the conventions of debate, in that you become a polished expert in making the case for the side you have been assigned, rather than making a case for what you may perceive as the truth. Students need to be helped to see there is a reason why they can accept “You are good to talk to” more easily than “This is the best paper I have had in 15 years.” The letter and the conversation as forms have less of fraud in them; they don’t force us into authoritativeness and gross simplification.

My husband, on hearing me work through these ideas, said, “You’re saying that those who don’t think they are fraudulent are the real frauds.” Yes. We have been socialized to feel like frauds but have developed some strengths in the midst of that fact, and because of that fact. Those who were socialized to feel absolutely entitled have made a habit of fraudulent behavior in proportion as they have internalized the view of themselves as the best and the brightest. So our task is complex. When a student says “I get so nervous talking in class,” I think we need first to point out that she/he was set up to get nervous: Hierarchies are disempowering, and nearly all people are socialized so that they *will* feel like failures in public and need help to feel confident. At the same time, students are right deeply to mistrust what anyone says authoritatively, including themselves. We need that tentativeness in high places. We need it in the Pentagon, in the White House, and in makers of public policy. We need that conversation, that ability to listen, to have a nonrhetorical, a relational self.

I hope we can move students from “My voice should not be heard at all” to “I don’t like the official tone I am forced to take in those situations; it misrepresents me” through “What *other* voice can I find to convey not an autonomous, self-confident me (which doesn’t exist), but the self-in-relation, not coercive, and not deceptive, but social?” If we give students a double vision of social reality, I think they can learn both the language of power, which we use

standing at the podium and delivering those straight sentences, and the language of social change, which suggests alternate visions of how to use power.

Women and others who have been disempowered are not all able to bring our truths to light yet. Many such people tend to apologize. But in doing so we are creating a voice which, though sounding tentative, has the seeds for the future in it. When we say, “You may not agree with this, but . . .,” we are creating an atmosphere of *detente*, peace, negotiation-making tentativeness, rather than using the podium for the violent act of bringing everyone over to our side. Perhaps, then, we women should be seen as canary birds testing for the carbon monoxide poison in the atmosphere. When seventeen women in a row apologize, there may be something wrong with the air in the nonapologetic world. Our habit of smelling the poison in the air and trying not to add to the poison can be seen as a strength, not a weakness, creating a healthier kind of atmosphere. The fraudulent-feeling people in the culture are perhaps our best canary birds. When they begin to keel over, we know we are really in trouble — that the air around them does not have enough life-sustaining oxygen. Those situations in which they sense the poison in the air most clearly are those situations connected with grades, titles, promotions, public accreditation, and public pronouncements, in the hierarchies which have the clearest absolute ranking systems, with a clear demarcation between winners and losers.

So, “which of these things do you want?” says the mind seeking only one vision. As I have said, I want two things at once: to mitigate apology which reinforces hierarchy, and to intensify revisionary tentative behavior, so that we see and criticize fraudulent forms and customs in the expert, the leader, the “self-made” man, the “self-reliant” person, the self-righteous American certain that God is on our side, and that He intends us to be a winner. We need more training in seeing the public presences of winners and authority figures as personae, fraudulent actors in high places, and in bringing the material of the private consciousness into public life, as feminists are already trying to do on so many fronts.

My theory of two ways of seeing fraudulence should be put here against my theory of the psyche and of the society in general. I see both our individual psyches and the whole society as having the shape of a broken pyramid, with a kind of geological fault running more or less horizontally through the center and dividing the top part from the lower part. The public and competitive functions of our psyches are

contained in the top part of the pyramid, and the most ordinary, lateral, everyday business of simply getting along “without accomplishing anything” is, in my view, at the base of the psyche, and of civilization, and of the pyramid which I am drawing here.

All institutions and psyches have both public, competitive functions and, underlying these and making them possible, a substructure of the ordinary work of upkeep, maintenance, and making and mending of the social fabric. At the tops of the pyramids are concentrated money, power, and decision-making functions, and in the very much wider base are the more ordinary functions which have either no visibility at all in most of what we read and do and think and are told, or very little visibility, and have seldom been named and identified. The grain in the public part of the psyche and in the public part of our institutions is vertical and contains many ladders to promotion, “success,” praise, and prizes. The hidden prescription under these competitive functions of personality and society is that you win lest you lose, because those alternatives are seen to be the *only* alternatives: *Either* you are on your way up, *or* you’re on your way down, falling toward the bottom. One wouldn’t want to be on the bottom, so it is assumed one will be striving toward what the world calls the top — that is, toward “accomplishment,” “achievement,” “success,” defined as leading to individual power. In the lateral functions of the psyche and of the society occur the experiences of washing the dishes and patting the cat, and having talks with one’s friends, and earning enough money to put the bread on the table, and getting the bread on the table, and washing the dishes, and loving those who cannot help us “get anywhere.” These are the functions of answering the phone, of driving home at night, of being a person intimately involved with others for the sake of the involvement. They are not what the world would call the functions of achievement or success. They have instead to do with survival. The hidden prescription in this basis of our institutions and our psyches is that one works for the decent survival of all because therein lies one’s own best survival. This is not an altruistic prescription; you don’t simply work for others, but you live *with* others because that is one of the impulses and conditions we were born to. One finds one’s development through the development of others. One develops, as the researchers here have defined it, a self-in-relation (Miller, 1984; Surrey, 1984).

Now, unfortunately, the functions represented by the top parts of my broken pyramids have been projected onto white males born to circumstances of

cultural power, and the functions of the psyche and the institutions which I place at the base of the pyramids have been projected onto women and lower caste males. Much research is now showing, of course, that women aren’t so happy with that assignment — that projection onto us — of all of the lateral functions of survival, nor men with the projection onto them of the world of winning versus losing — a world which has only two alternatives: yes/no; right/wrong; top/bottom; win/lose; self/other; success/failure.

By now it is clear to you that the first type of feeling like a fraud occurs chiefly in these top-level public functions of self and society. If one has internalized the view that only the win/lose value system and version of reality are real, women at the podium (or lower caste men) will feel fraudulent, since by definition they are losers trying to act like winners in occupying the podium. If, however, we have educated our students and ourselves to a double vision, to both the public functions of psyche and society and the hidden, lateral functions of psyche and society, the survival functions, then we can see feeling like a fraud as something else again. In its second aspect, the feeling of fraudulence is the *critique* of the vertical from these lateral parts of the personality, objecting both that the vertical behavior is partial and misrepresents us and that the lateral realities which are the ground of our humanity are not honored in the culture’s value system or its most conventional praise.

My view of curriculum change superimposed on this diagram goes this way. In Phase I you study womanless History. In Phase II, women in History, but only as exceptions, and still on History’s terms. In Phase III, women are seen as a problem, anomaly, or absence in History, as a problem for historians and also for the society, as victims, the oppressed, the losers, or the incompetent. Then one moves further to that main work of women which has been assigned to us — finding one’s self through the development of others, and then one is doing Phase IV: *Women As History*, redefining history so as to make us central. In Phase V we will have *History Redefined and Reconstructed to Include Us All*. Now once one has come to see the traditional lives of women as just as real as the rest of what history has named, and more plentiful, why then everything shifts. The feeling of fraudulence at that point is seen to arise out of the sense that all people are interconnected, and that in no absolute way is one student different from the one down the hall who studied for weeks, or the roommate who never really understood the course. Each of us has done something that cannot be absolutely ranked. When we resist that ranking

system that awarded us the A, because of our consciousness of the lateral functions of life and personality, then we are resisting fraudulence in a way that may become useful to the whole society.

Now what do I mean by that? According to my dream of the next hundred years, we can, if we live that long, bring into public life with us our sense of the now-named and reconstituted surviving functions, and we can call into question and change the behavior of those who see the world only in terms of winners and losers. And, of course, we need this work on a global scale to keep from blowing ourselves up. We can see already that so much of public performance is based on rules of acting and image-building, and we can spot the inaccuracy of the hierarchies in that they are not the meritocracies they claim to be. We know that our consciousness coming out of the survival aspects of personality can help us encourage the whole society not to pretend to be what it isn't. The pluralistic version of reality that comes out of seeing women *as* history — and that means all women, not just a few white women — also conduces to a kind of foreign policy which says that the Russians and we and the Chinese are equally valid people. The seventeen apologies come from this deeper level, and if we will *listen* to them and *learn* from them, they will bring revisionary strength to the whole culture. The apologies suggest that most leaders are poseurs, and that the “top” is *not* the top. I think Alice in Wonderland was right when she said to the Court, “You are nothing but a pack of cards!” Wise people go behind the screen and perceive the Wizard of Oz as the little shriveled man. Until we see the authoritative forms *as forms*, we will continue to deny those parts of ourselves that have no words, that don't come in paragraphs and chapters and footnotes; we will be forced to deny the woolgatherer, the conversationalists, the imaginer, the lover of women and lower caste men, the one who likes people and joins with them without necessarily “achieving” anything. The world of neighborhoods and of human communities is the world of survival. If the public world becomes more honest, it may help us invent a form of podium behind which honest people don't have to apologize for their connectedness to others.

I wish to end with the apology, which is not *only* an apology, which might have introduced my talk. I appreciate the invitation to speak in this colloquium series. I am not an expert in women's development. I am only an observer, but you thought I might be a resource for the series. In the same way, in your Stone Center work you invite us all, and not just the experts, in on a process. You show us not a finished theory,

but a *process of reaching a theory*, a process of reseeing women and renaming some of our apparent weaknesses as potential or actual strengths. Your work in reconstruing and reconstructing enabled me to do some work, personal as well as public, which goes into my observations tonight. Your work, I think, can help us convert “feeling like a fraud” into resisting fraudulence and pressures toward fraudulence which originate outside of us in absolute, hierarchical systems and in definitions of our strengths as weaknesses. To this audience I want to say that I do see myself as a amateur observer, very limited, merely human, narrowly circumstanced and therefore half blind in observing all of what I have described. But also I would like to ask whether it wouldn't have been good for us all if every *expert* lecturer, every general, and every leader had demonstrated an ability to appreciate the process of living more than the products of success and victory. Wouldn't it have made quite a difference to ourselves and to human life in our time?

Discussion Summary

After each colloquium lecture, a discussion is held. Selected portions are summarized here. In this session, Dr. Janet Surrey joined in leading the discussion.

Question: Don't you think it's more important for women to try to build their self-confidence by learning to be competent in the way the world does operate at this time?

McIntosh: For numbers of women that may be satisfying. I really cannot judge for any one person. However, I've found that for a great many women that isn't enough. They know that there are other parts of themselves, parts which the major institutions of the world, as they operate, do not recognize as existing and valid. I believe it is important to recognize these parts and their importance for all people.

For example, if I am trying to help a student write a speech and I want to help her do things in ways that will be valued according to the standards of our major institutions, I would take her speech and scratch out all of the apologies. But, if I'm trying to help a student see the systemic factors which create fraudulence in the roles we're asked to play, I'd go back and put all the apologies back in, helping her to see the wisdom of her apologies, and applauding her resistance to a fraudulent tone in writing.

It's important to recognize that we have large parts of our personalities which will feel uncomfortable according to the rules of the “vertical

world.” And we have strengths which come from the “nonvertical world.” Women can be held back if we don’t recognize this for each other.

Comment: I wonder if we can describe this as a need for different ways of operating in different situations. For example, in a seminar with students, it may be better to take an “apologetic” view, saying, for example, “You may disagree, but let me ask you what you think about this explanation . . .” You are then saying you don’t know everything and inviting an exchange. But if I have to meet with the president of my university because he is doing something that I think is not good for the women at the university, I would not want to apologize for what I’m about to say.

McIntosh: That is a very valuable way to extend this discussion. As I hear it, you’re suggesting a kind of “taxonomy” of varying situations.

I’ve talked about this topic really in a very rough “first cut” way. We probably need to work out a much more specific taxonomy of apology.

Surrey: It may be useful to know that we have to work in these different modes and in different kinds of settings, at least at this time in history. For myself, I find it important to work within a workplace which operates very much in the ways that you say are generally valued in public life. It’s important to know this reality because it is the way the world operates and it is so powerful. However, it is very important for me to work and be with groups of women — and sometimes men, too — who value the “lateral” parts of life. Even if the dominant world does not recognize these parts of life, it is essential that we keep recognizing their value for each other.

McIntosh: At this time we do have to recognize the existence of these two worlds, so to speak. It means we have a kind of double consciousness or double vision. While it’s complicated, I feel that it helps us to provide for these parts of life which are really essential to our psychological well-being.

Comment: Despite what is happening in actuality, what is “invented” by those at the top is going to be the construction that’s put on everything—including the explanations about everything that goes on in the lateral parts of life. There’s good reason to believe, then, that most explanations of the lateral life are not likely to be valid representations.

McIntosh: I agree, especially since if you think only in terms used at the top, you’re not likely to have a well-developed “double vision”: you really won’t have seen everything from *within* the lateral world. Your account of it will be that of a person who has

looked down at the surface of the water in the Caribbean rather than snorkeling in it. The life underneath can’t be guessed from the surface.

Comment: I’m thinking of the world as a place in which power is very real. The people in power are not going to act on a basis derived from the recognition of the importance of those lateral parts of life. Perhaps we should begin to think in terms of effective transitional forms — ways of building some bridges between these two realms. Are there ways that we could think about creating such forms?

McIntosh: Power is there all the time in all situations. It’s there in the family, too, yet within that political setting we try to recognize that everyone has her or his needs, and try to find the ways to meet them. At least we project this as a valid way to be within the family. Is this, then, perhaps a “transitional form?”

When I talk about the aim being the “decent survival of us all,” that means granting recognition to everyone’s needs in all of life, including public life. If you make that your stated aim, then you work toward that and you cannot simply work toward a win-lose, one up-one down way of being. You become “transitional,” again.

We are just not yet attuned to bringing this value system into all of the situations in the world, in public life; to say, for example, that the secretaries really keep everything going at times. If their work were recognized as equally important or sometimes more important than what the “top” people do, our forms in public life would be very different.

Yes, I think we should work on devising more transitional forms which may help us to move this comprehensive sense of meeting everyone’s needs into more parts of our life in the world.

Comment: I think it’s dangerous to talk this way about the “bottom” or lateral parts of life. It’s important not to romanticize this. It really represents what oppression has done to us, to women and other people who have been made disadvantaged.

McIntosh: I agree it is dangerous to romanticize. But I don’t see these lateral parts of life only as those phenomena produced by oppression. I’m describing *functions* — the differing kinds of sustaining functions that are needed in all societies but also within everyone’s life and personality; I’m saying that we would all be better off if we recognized the crucial validity of these functions of making and mending the personal and social fabric. They do not result simply from our being victimized.

The oppression — and the misunderstanding — come when these parts are devalued and then

projected on to women and lower caste people *only*.

It's important for all of us, female and male, to fulfill ourselves in the lateral parts of our personalities.

Comment: I think it's important, too, to point to the illusions of those who operate at the top or only in the vertical mode. It's really clear if you look at a great many of the people who are said to be leading people and the people who are at the top in institutions that are said to be leading institutions, that they are flawed in many ways.

The people who are most fraudulent may be those who would never be able to consider really asking themselves if they are fraudulent, as you said.

McIntosh: Yes, and you remind me, too, of Elizabeth Dodson-Gray's book, *Patriarchy as a Conceptual Trap*, which is very valuable in helping us see that whole point.

Comment: When you were talking, I was thinking that you were talking a great deal about students. I think there is an important age factor. I have been talking to older women, really old, in their eighties or seventies. In the whole way that they talk they do not seem to feel like frauds. They seem to have come to a certain resolution.

McIntosh: That is very encouraging to hear. Perhaps they have seen what really counts for themselves and for others, and what doesn't, and they have gained the courage to state it more openly, and live in a less divided way.

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Work In Progress

Feeling Like a Fraud - Part II

Peggy McIntosh, Ph.D.

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Work in Progress

Work in Progress is a publication series based on the work of the Jean Baker Miller Training Institute at the Wellesley Centers for Women. Work in Progress reflects the Institute's commitment to sharing information with others who are interested in fostering psychological well-being, preventing emotional problems, and providing appropriate services to persons who suffer from psychological distress. These publications also reflect the belief that it is important to exchange ideas while they are being developed. Many of the papers are intended to stimulate discussion and dialogue, while others are finished research reports.

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Feeling Like a Fraud: Part Two

Peggy McIntosh, Ph.D.

About the Author

Peggy McIntosh, Ph.D., is Associate Director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. Her projects focus on bringing materials on women and perspectives from feminist thought into the liberal arts disciplines and into the basic curriculum of United States schools and colleges. Her programs have been funded by the Andrew W. Mellon, Ford, Dodge, and Valentine Foundations, The Kentucky Foundation for Women and the Anna Wilder Phelps Fund. This talk was first presented in the Stone Center Colloquium Series in December, 1987.

Abstract

*This talk, a sequel to *Feeling Like a Fraud* (Stone Center Work in Progress No. 18, 1985), posits a baseline sense of authenticity which gives one the ability to have feelings of fraudulence. The sense of authenticity creates the awareness of a lack of fit between what one feels and what is said about one's virtue or competence, or expected in public behavior. Vignettes of situations inducing feelings of fraudulence are contrasted with vignettes of experiments in teaching or public speaking which involve newly-invented forms and which have brought feelings of authenticity in public performance. The talk is cast in the metaphor of a house tour, and features both a greenhouse and a Madwoman in the Attic. The analysis is placed in context of a theoretical model of a double and conflicting structure within the psyche and the society, in which over-rewarded, vertically-oriented elements are contrasted with laterally-oriented, affiliative, informal elements of a "home-sense." Invention of less fraudulent forms for public performance may be made possible by taking a complex and pluralistic home-sense seriously. Such home-work is seen as societally desirable personal work for the creation of more broadly useful theory and public policy.*

I first gave a talk on this subject in April, 1984, as part of an earlier Stone Center series. I proposed a dual view of feelings of fraudulence, using a Moebius strip as metaphor and as visual aid. This strip, when twisted once and fastened at the ends, becomes a loop on which both of two apparently opposed statements turn out to be, so to speak, "on the same side." I suggested both that "We must not let them make us feel like frauds," and that "We should continue to spot fraudulence in the public roles we are asked to play." I praised the observer in us which may feel uncomfortable when rising in hierarchies which purport to be meritocracies, if we know they are not that. I applauded the part of the self which hesitates to claim isolating titles and rewards, and said that there are pretenses in official language and behavior which may imply that we are more than we feel we really are in terms of merit and singularity, and less than we feel we are as human beings embedded in matrices of circumstances and relationships.

I suggested that we trust some feelings of fraudulence or apology and analyze them more closely. I think that many of our feelings of fraudulence come from deep and wise sources. The trick is to trust the very feelings of discomfort that are giving us the most trouble, and try to follow them where they may lead. Recently they have been leading me to look for what I imagine must be some feelings of *authenticity* which give us the ability to recognize our feelings of fraudulence. Some baseline sense of authenticity in us must be responsible for our registering a lack of fit between our own sense of ourselves and what is said about or around us.

This talk builds on, italicizes and extends the previous discussion. But this time I am shifting the emphasis from what's wrong with "them" to what's right with "us." I want to focus not on the pretenses of "official" worlds which may make us feel like impostors but on some authentic elements of life in us which I think prize-giving systems usually miss, and which seem to me fundamental and central grounds of

our being.

Because of my excitement in making this shift from the subject of fraudulence to the subject of authenticity, I had been eagerly looking forward to this talk for months. I knew that the first talk on feeling like a fraud had triggered a flash of recognition in many people, and I was happy at the opportunity which the Stone Center gave me to go into that subject once again, in the company of many people whose work I value. The atmosphere could not have been more welcoming. I wrote page after page of new ideas. But I couldn't organize those pages. The day of the lecture approached and still I couldn't outline the talk. And so, naturally, I began feeling like...

As I have said, the trick in this matter of fraudulence is to try to hold onto the very feelings that are giving you the most trouble, and trust them to lead you to some new ground, some new way of seeing or being. Given months' accumulation of animated notes, why could I not outline the talk? It dawned on me, then, that the outline itself makes me feel fraudulent. In my 1984 talk, I described the student who finds the formal expository style fraudulent, given her sense that language is an invention and that life doesn't come in sentences, paragraphs or arguments. For me, the outline now joined the argumentative paper as a problematical form, requiring pretenses such as subordinating all ideas to one "main" or governing idea. I realized that for me the outline is, and always has been, a fraudulent form. My genre, I realized, is the *list*.

What is the difference? What makes the outline give me such discomfort, the list such relief? On a list, everything matters; you need not rank, subordinate and exclude; you can add or subtract, elaborate or delete. The sequence doesn't much matter; sequence doesn't claim to provide a governing logic for a list. With an outline, one must (pretend to) justify the sequence, and to know and deal appropriately with the relative significance of each item or idea. One cannot be generous in an outline. One must decide that some things matter a lot and others hardly at all. Vertical and hierarchical outlines force one to (pretend to) link ideas, to rank, to judge and to eliminate. They force what are for me unacceptable simplifications.

The list allows me to keep everything, to expand, to add at any time. There is no pretense that everything in a list has been sorted out. The outline pretends to have a place for everything and everything in its place; it implies that what's left out didn't fit, and that what got in all fits together.

I knew that I wanted to talk here about several different encounters with feelings of fraudulence and

five or six attempts to track and act on feelings of authenticity. I also knew that no single idea seemed to be more important than the others, and that starting with any one of them as *the* most important distorted my sense of the whole matter.

At that perception, the topic turned metaphorically from an argument into a house. The talk turned into a house tour of places where I go when I am thinking about feeling like a fraud, and trying to get better grounded. I will show you some of the rooms; we can start or finish anywhere. Within the house metaphor, I do not feel like a fraud. I do not have to demonstrate to you that the living room in any sense *follows from* the kitchen, or the attic from the bedrooms. The only danger is that I will talk too much on this tour, since now I feel *at home*.

Though we could start the house tour anywhere, I will first take you to the shelves where I have accumulated some key readings since my last talk. But to tell the truth, papers and books lie in heaps everywhere around the house. For this is a house, not an outline. One thinks with the help of others in all rooms of life. But here are some key readings which have fetched up on the shelves of one particular paper-laden room. Blythe Clinchy and Claire Zimmerman, in "Growing Up Intellectually: Issues for College Women," described "connected" and "separated" knowing, and drew on Peter Elbow's contrast between playing "the doubting game" and playing "the believing game," as described in Elbow's book, *Writing Without Teachers*. This paper has been important to me in identifying as "the believing game" a learning mode I find congenial, non-fraudulent. Further work along the same lines is in Belenky, Clinchy, et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing*. Next comes Jane Martin's recent book, *Reclaiming a Conversation: The Ideal of the Educated Woman*, and several of her articles advocating that we educate for the 3 C's: care, concern and connection, as well as the 3 R's. Here is Alfie Kohn's book, *No Contest: The Case Against Competition*, which I consider to be, along with Mark Gerzon's *A Choice of Heroes*, among the most important books by men on the damage done to the whole society when socialization forces men into postures of dominance. Here is P. R. Clance's 1985 book, *The Impostor Syndrome*, which focuses, like her earlier work with Imes, on the pathology of feelings of fraudulence. Next comes Carol Cohn's paper, "Sex and Death in the World of Defense Intellectuals," and the paper by Carol Gilligan and Jane Attanucci called "Two Moral Orientations: Gender Differences and Similarities." Here is an unpublished paper on "double helix management style" by Helen Regan of Connecticut

College, Jean Baker Miller's preface to the second edition of *Toward a New Psychology of Women*, and a *New York Times* article on the "impostor syndrome" in winners of Nobel and Pulitzer prizes. Then comes Stephen Berglas's very unreflective book on a related topic, *The Success Syndrome*, and last but not least, an article in the American Psychological Association *Monitor* of July, 1987 on the "impostor syndrome" in therapists.

I was particularly delighted with this last article. It reported on a study of 62 doctoral-level therapists who responded to a questionnaire about whether they ever felt like impostors in their roles as therapists. In this study, 79% of the therapists reported that they felt like impostors "occasionally," and the remainder reported that they felt like impostors "frequently." This affirmative response made me feel *very* good about these therapists; they apparently did not embrace the image of themselves as experts, though their credentials might allow them to do so. The author of the article implied that therapists' impostor feelings are problematical, but as you know from my Moebius strip analogy, I think that feelings of fraudulence within our present systems can be very wise, instructive and constructive, and we need these feelings especially in "experts."

I want to take you now to the living room, where we play a lot of music, and there are a lot of instruments, records and tapes. I'm going to put on a tape of the 1984 "Feeling Like a Fraud" talk and play fragments which anticipated my present emphasis on that *authenticity* in us which evaluation systems may miss. Fast forward...

I listed some ways in which one may feel fraudulent: "One feels illegitimate in doing something, or appearing as something; one feels apologetic, undeserving, anxious, tenuous, out-of-place, misread, phony, uncomfortable, incompetent, dishonest, guilty." The two words I want to focus on now are *misread* and *uncomfortable*.

I described people repudiating praise which makes them feel misread and uncomfortable:

If an executive says, "She has set her goals high and has met them in a truly professional way," the employee may feel, "This is no picture of me. I just hold the office together. I just talk to people, for goodness sake..." A graduate student, told that she has written "the definitive work" and will very likely have a brilliant dissertation defense, is likely to think that it is all a

colossal mistake, and that she couldn't defend a guppy.

I also noted that in my experience, feelings of fraudulence are not so common in domestic or everyday life.

I pat our cat and the cat purrs. I don't feel like a fraud. It's not the same as getting an "A" on a paper. When I bring home chocolate chip mint ice cream, the kids' appreciation doesn't throw me into a panic about who I am. I think that being praised for a good spaghetti sauce or for finding a bargain is not so unnerving as being praised for giving a speech.

I noted that feelings of fraudulence may be felt when people who were socialized to think they do not belong high in hierarchies rise up into public view in any way, but I also noted a related feeling of not trusting hierarchical reward systems to read us rightly. In those hierarchies which force us to adopt isolating roles, titles or modes of discourse, we may feel misrepresented. "They call me a pathbreaker. But I don't break paths. I think and write." The metaphor of pathbreaking implies that one is isolated, brave and aggressive, while one may in fact usually feel tied in, connected and interconnected. Thinking of ourselves not as solo pioneers, but as threads in a complex web of circumstance and interaction, some of us may be reluctant to accept special praise and the "loner" status it falsely implies.

I said that I hoped we could move students and ourselves from feeling "My voice should not be heard at all" to "I don't like the official tone I am forced to take in these situations; it misrepresents me" through "What *other* voice can I find to convey not an autonomous self-confident me (which doesn't exist), but the self-in-relation, not coercive and not deceptive, but social?" In answer, I suggested the voice of conversation, which as a form has little of fraud in it; it demands neither solo authoritativeness nor the soloist's accountability. I said that some of women's apparent apologies may be antirhetorical strategies for avoiding dominance, and for staying connected to listeners through a tone of conversation and dialogue. I said that for some of us who look unsure of ourselves in public speaking, the problem may be not that we can't stand at the podium, but that we can't stand the podium.

I described an either/or, win/lose pyramidal

structure of psyche and society which rests on a wide, lateral base of collaborative potential. The vertical part of our psyches and our institutions pushes us to ascend toward power and individual visibility at the tops of institutional pyramids, while the more hidden lateral functions of society and self tell us to keep working for the decent survival of all, for in this lies our own best chance for survival. I suggested that feelings of fraudulence may amount to a critique by wise, well-grounded, laterally-oriented parts of the psyche of the too-strong emphasis on, and reward for, the vertical in present-day U.S. psyche and society.

This is why it is quite possible to feel both that we are not good enough to be taken seriously, and that there is something wrong about the systems which have excluded us from serious consideration. We may sometimes get the message that we do not do the important work of the world, and at other times feel that the realest part of us, which produces the results honored by the world, is never recognized even by those who praise us. I know that the part of me that is at home sitting here in a dimly lit living room musing about this paradox without any single-minded focus is not the part which gets public kudos. And I am thinking of an alumna of a New England school who didn't attend her fiftieth reunion because she felt that according to the alumnae notes version of things, she would be seen as having done nothing of importance with her life. Yet she knew that that perception of her life was deeply wrong. She was up against a version of reality which says that those who chiefly make families and communities and private worlds are not really in the picture. Sometimes what I do is, at heart, domestic thinking made public. And usually the press, the praise and the prizes are not given for what I feel I most deeply am. They are given for a set of other traits. For many of us, the filter systems within which we are screened, rewarded or praised may have missed out from the very beginning on what we consider *the most genuine ground of our being*. In these cases, I think we need to insist on its genuineness and its centrality to our work in the world.

As I feel this shift from an analysis of "what's wrong with them and their fraudulent forms" to "what feels important to me," I feel the positive emotion of what in faculty development groups I call the shift from Phase III study of excluded people's *issues* to Phase IV study of "ordinary" people's *experience*, seen on their own terms. One shifts from anger at low status and victimization to the conviction that we are all valid, and that we in non-dominant groups may have a lot to teach, if only we can take our

home-selves seriously enough to word, to name, what we observe and feel about our lives. I think that what I call the home-self here may correspond to my sense of baseline authenticity which allows me to feel uncomfortable with certain kinds of performance expected of, or rewarded in, public or hierarchical situations. So, from this *living room*, I am trying to center on that home-self for *what it can offer as alternative forms* to forms that feel fraudulent. For I believe that public embarrassment has virtue at its core, and that if we follow it to its sources, it will help show us our potential wholeness.

Anyone's particular search is specific in many ways, so mine may speak best to white, Anglo-American women of middle age who have economic security and who share some of my academic and personal circumstances. We need testimony and research on many diverse people's experiences of feeling like a fraud, but since I am talking here about tracking a sense of authenticity, I must, in this case, stay very close to home.

Now I want to take you to the study upstairs, and pull out some old photo albums which will show me in positions of feeling like a fraud. Each situation involves what I now see as a denial or misrepresentation of some element of my authentic identity, in the context of award or credentialing ceremonies. Here's a commencement photo from June, 1967. I am in a voluminous crimson gown signifying a Ph.D. from Harvard, and also serving as a spectacular maternity dress, for I am eight months pregnant. As Harvard's President, that pinnacle-sitter among pinnacle-sitters, has awarded our degrees, he has said, "I welcome you into the company of educated men." As women getting Ph.D.'s, a great many of us have been suddenly defined right out of the picture, or rather the instant camera has produced a picture with blanks in the places where we are standing. Here's another photo of six short, smiling, mostly straight-haired rather innocent-looking, fresh-faced women, most of them my friends, at a Phi Beta Kappa initiation ten years earlier. The dean doing the honors has said kindly to all of us at once, "You don't look like Phi Beta Kappas," defining us right out of the identity we have just earned. We are politely speechless, and perhaps a little flattered, pleased not to look like Agnes Bluestocking. But we sorely needed then, as now, for our mental health, Gloria Steinem's exemplary behavior in rejecting pictures of her which, in the guise of compliments, leave her out. She knows how to haul others' definitions of her right back to where she herself is. Told by a reporter, "You do not

look 40," she said, "This is what 40 looks like." "You do not think like a woman..." "This is what a woman thinks like."

Here is a photo, going back another four years, of my first college roommate. It is November, 1952, and our Greek professor, quoting Polonius' "Neither a borrower nor a lender be," has asked us to come to his office. It seems that my roommate and I have been making the same mistakes on our Greek exercises, which are otherwise very good. Yes, we do the daily homework exercises together. The aim is to learn Greek, no? No — Professor Finley, renowned scholar of epics, explains that we must be judged alone. We can be rewarded only for solo feats on the battlefield of learning. We will be rewarded for competition against each other (which we do not do well) but not for collaboration (which we do well). We feel like criminals. We work separately, and each get "C+" for the course, perhaps through refusal to create a loser or to be a winner in a win/lose system, or perhaps through simple inability to face irregular Greek verbs alone. The reward system does not acknowledge *as* learning the kind of learning that works for us and that we do well. Unless we have a stance over and against others, we are not genuine students.

Here is a plaque on the wall and a commencement photo from June, 1979, at the University of Denver. The plaque reads, "Outstanding Academic Advisor." But six faculty members had done intensive advising together. We were not competing, and we consulted students as well as each other on how to do this intricate relational work. The presentation of an award created one winner and five losers, and created a pinnacle where we had tried to create a plateau. The *valued relations* between us, and between us and our students, were undermined by the establishment of a prize. I was grateful for the thought of those who wished to honor me just before I left the university, but being rewarded as an individual was destructive of what I valued most in that situation and in myself. The reward system and its attendant naming system not only misrepresented, but also harmed the basic nature of the work.

The sense of fraudulence in these cases came from having my actual ways of being ignored, and a condition created in which if I disowned part of my identity. Leaving it *out*, I could paradoxically feel like one of the *in*-group. My sense of *authenticity* had consisted in my good feelings at having a rather unorthodox, complex identity; being female, reflective, somewhat solipsistic and also effective in public or institutionally accredited ways; working with friends;

collaborating in learning and in advising; and being tied in and supported. The prize-and-grade-givers at every turn were giving the prizes for versions of "excellence" alien to or actively excluding me, even when this entailed defining away what was standing right in front of them.

The next photo is from a private New England girls' school in June, 1982. I am sitting on the platform feeling like a fraud because my publications have been given the most prominent place in the introduction of me as commencement speaker. Publication is hard for me and usually makes me feel somewhat fraudulent, for reasons I will go into later. Conversation with other people is at the center of my work. I feel like a fraud, sitting there and hearing about the publication which sets me at a distance from this audience of parents and students, rather than about the conversations which tie me in. I want to say to the audience, "I'm not separated from you; we are all in this together." I especially want to say this to the sixty seniors sitting there in the sun in their white dresses. They hate writing, don't they? Most of the research indicates so; the rhetorical style of expository writing they have been drilled in has worked against their trusting themselves as writers, and underrated many of the kinds of thinking they do more easily.

So I go up to the podium with a stricken feeling of a great chasm to cross, much damage and misunderstanding to be undone, before we can get to the unnamed territory of my sense of the best that we can do together. To try to tell the seniors of my respect for their experience, I say something heartfelt. I say, "We need you, *just as you are*, in the White House." The seniors look at me in disbelief, as do their fathers, who hold corporate America together. Just then, three U.S. Army helicopters, flying in close formation, swoop low over the commencement ceremony and hover in place, drowning us all out. So while they churn overhead, circling twice over the ceremony with their motors chattering, I'll tell you why most publication makes me feel like a fraud.

First, as you know, I trust lists, not outlines. Second, I like conversations, in time and space, in situations and with bodies. Publication locks words into place and launches them into the void. One can't converse with or respond to a faceless audience. So the traditional academic tone is guarded, depersonalized, lacking in conversational voice. Since the author can neither imagine nor adjust to various readers' needs and reactions during the act of reading, the author must accept isolation, and must risk being *misunderstood*. For those of us who fear being

misunderstood, and who like to keep the social fabric as whole as possible through conversation, presenting ourselves in black print on white pages can be daunting.

And then there is the matter of footnotes. Footnotes are a courtesy to the reader, says my colleague Elizabeth Minnich. Footnotes are for information, says Jean Baker Miller's editor. These are valid observations. But since conventions of academic footnoting have always intimidated me, I now look to see whether there is an element of fraud in them. Footnotes create the illusion that there's a systematic edifice of knowledge that one is adding to: that one knows the past work on a matter, has read it, knows what one is adding to it, and moreover, knows what the ancestors of one's ideas are — the ancestors or the influences upon one's ideas. The writer of footnotes purports to be adding a clear piece to an accumulating body of knowledge in a conscious, systematic way. But where an idea came from is often unclear, especially in the interdependent worlds of feminist thought in which I now spend so much time. For example, this talk bears influences of at least 50 writers and artists, and maybe 300 conversations. Footnoting is frequently used, I think, to perpetuate the illusion that knowledge-making is systematic and rational, sequential and cumulative. At least this is true in most of formal study as I have experienced it.

And so, there I sit, the visiting speaker, praised most for what I do least well, praised not at all for what I feel is authentic in me, the reactive, responsive, impulsive, synthesis-making, conversational self-in-relation. I do not like the public image of myself as published authority. So my talk must repair that misfit between what I actually do and trust, and the image of me conveyed by the words of the well-meaning person doing the introductions.

Now those U.S. Army helicopters have headed back to their base, and I resume telling the seniors in their white dresses that I trust them in their authentic seventeen-year-old selves, more than I trust our present leaders in high places, too few of whom have ever felt like frauds. But they are young, and perhaps feel too vulnerable to believe in their own authenticity; they may have to settle, for now, for being trapped in and subtly undermined by single-minded views of what excellence is.

Now I want to take you into the bedroom of one of our daughters, Janet, and let you see a student closer to home trapped in this kind of situation. She is writing a college paper on a Schubert sonata, and has invited me in to read her final draft. I have been cynical about the assignment which sets a Schubert

sonata movement beside four statements made by literary critics about the Romantic Era. The instructor has told the students to describe the ways in which the Schubert sonata bears out the critics' analyses of the Romantic Period. Since the students must state in detail *how* the music confirms the descriptions, not *whether* it does, the topic forces them into perhaps-fraudulent agreement with the instructor's premises.

Janet practices the piano intensively and cares about 19th century music. She has played the Schubert movement over and over but is continually derailed from the paper topic, which seems quite unreal to her. Reading through her draft, though, I find it nonetheless impressive. I tell her that it is amazing what she has done with the topic; she has even made it interesting. I tell her that when I was a teaching "fellow" at a university, this is the kind of paper I would have given an "A" to. She bursts out, "It's a bullshit paper." I tell her bitterly, "I know it's a bullshit paper; you were set up to write one. And you were set up to feel like a fraud, no matter *what* you wrote." I tell her that when I was an instructor, we would have mistaken a first-year student's ability to write such a paper as an indication that there was nothing wrong with our assignment. That is, only a few students would do well on such an assignment, but wasn't it true that only a few could ever do well in these highly sophisticated subjects? Her singular success in leaping over the hurdles we had set would have confirmed us in our sense that nothing was wrong with our hurdle system of teaching. But now I ask why it is that most of what we ask students to do in school has little meaning for them, and not much for us, either. Why are we always telling students what to do? Our habits as teachers, I tell Janet, now don't seem to me as rational as they used to. For example, we often ask students to be clear on subjects which we ourselves find confusing. No wonder they feel like frauds.

Janet will call later to say she "got the 'A'." I will say I knew she would. She will say again, "But it is a bullshit paper." At least she is getting at home the doubled vision, of being both part of and alien to the dominant systems, learning to see the way her grade here will be earned by complicity, as she agrees to pretend there's nothing wrong with the assignment, and that this relentless analytical drill in jumping through hoops and over hurdles set up by others makes sense to her as education.

For her, later, and for those of us who are now not so trapped, it is possible to consult our authentic, dissenting selves to arrive at some *alternative* ways of doing things. The trick here is to ask the authentic

dissenting self, "What would make you feel better? What would allow you not to write the bullshit paper?" I will give you some examples, and for this we should move into my bedroom, for it is in the early morning hours and in bed that I get my best alternative ideas on how to act.

I was about to visit Pasadena Polytechnic High School in California. Having never spoken to California teachers before, I wondered what I could tell them, but felt a problem in the idea of "telling" them anything. So I decided to put the discussion period first. At the school, I listened for an hour to what faculty had to say about the topic at hand, and then identified seventeen subthemes. While we took a coffee break, I constructed the talk from those themes. The talk synthesized a conversational event. I felt wonderful about it.

Once, on being asked to give a keynote address at a conference on Women and Education, I said that I was tired of the pinnacle system of having a keynote speaker. Couldn't we have a kind of conversational plateau on which two or more people talked to each other in public? As a result, Ted Sizer and I, who met for the first time the night before, held a public conversation for an hour and a half, sitting in two armchairs on a stage before an audience of educators at the Bryn Mawr School in Maryland. We talked back and forth. It was risky to participate in this simultaneously private-and-public exchange, but it made good on the usually fraudulent claim that we in education have dialogues with each other. On balance, I felt very pleased with the event, though it revealed among other things that I had read Sizer's work carefully and that he had not done so with mine. At least this was out in the open for all to see.

The elements of authenticity which I enjoyed in these situations came from having more than one voice heard, from making a public social occasion for the consideration of ideas, from sharing responsibility and from creating an atmosphere for exchange rather than an argument. These were work-in-progress sessions.

In connection with the American Bicentennial, when asked to give a talk at the University of Denver on "Rugged Individualism," I was filled with ambivalence about the topic. On the one hand, we may need qualities of rugged individualism to resist much of what we are told and taught, and to tap into our authenticity. On the other hand, the idea of rugged individualism has rested on a myth, a *macho* illusion, even an infantile delusion in the United States, that the self is the main unit of society, and that selves do not have strong past and present

connections. Enacted in white men's lives and reflected in public policy, this myth now does more harm than good, I think. I felt fraudulent, not being able to come to a clear sense of one important "main" opinion or argument on Rugged Individualism. So I devised a pluralistic form of lecture, in which the medium could be the message. I arranged twenty chairs in a semi-circle and labeled each with a different facet of myself. I gave the talk jumping from chair to chair and giving a wide variety of perspectives on the subject, e.g., as from "Daughter of Presbyterian Grandmother" and "Mother of Two Young Girls" and "Pediatrician's Wife" and "Reader of *Field and Stream* in the Dentist's Office." At the center of the horseshoe was an armchair labelled, "Central Self." The students asked afterward, "What is the central self?" I said I didn't know; I simply assumed that there must be one, to act as a kind of moderator, though not necessarily as the central authority. It keeps the personality from flying apart from centrifugal force. It moderates between various voices in the self, which are also the voices of others inhabiting the imagination. The central self does not, however, come up with "the answer," dominating or overriding some voices. All stay there, in plural variety, corresponding to what goes on in my head.

Jamaica Kincaid wrote about the many voices in her head on the subject of how to be a girl, in a tiny piece, in a genre all its own, which is found at the start of her book, *At the Bottom of the River*. As soon as I read her piece called, "Girl," I went upstairs, got into bed, and wrote my own version of it, echoing the voices in my head from my childhood about how to be a girl. This piece of writing seemed so authentic that I decided it could provide a good opening exercise for faculty development seminars. Our traditional format, "My name is, I teach at and I am here because...," separated people, not necessarily because of their names, but because of accents, differences in their institutions and regions, differences in perceived status and because of the semi-official accounts some people gave of themselves. Within a few minutes of beginning such introductions, a few in the room were usually feeling like frauds; whereas when I asked everybody to write a piece paralleling Jamaica Kincaid's "Girl," and used those as our sole introduction to one another, we heard the voices of our experiences *as girls* coming through, with no distinctions being made between us except out of the testimony of our own memory and experience. This way of beginning has transformed each seminar series. It also makes me part of the group; I simply read my own piece, as we all begin with what we have in

common: being raised as girls. We are all in it together, in a lateral relation, each the authority on her own experience, which none of the rest of us can know better than she.

Now I want to take you to my desk in the living room where much correspondence from my colleagues in curriculum change has piled up. We who are in this work really do keep in touch with each other, and these are reports of real situations. A colleague at University of Michigan writes about how a group of instructors replaced a fraudulence-inducing assignment with a better one. The first assignment, in a Greek and Roman Art History course, which is also a sophomore writing course, had been a complete failure, from the six teaching assistants' point of view. After several weeks of instruction in Art History, the instructors in this course had devised this assignment: Go to the Museum of Classical Art in Ann Arbor, choose a Roman sculpture and write an analytical essay on it. The papers were wooden, stilted, poorly organized, boring, and filled with the language of art criticism badly used or misused.

The faculty cancelled the assignment altogether and redesigned it. The second assignment went this way: Go to the Museum of Classical Art, choose a work of Roman art, make a copy of it in any medium you choose and then write an essay on your experience of copying it. These papers asked students to be *authorities on their own experience*. Whereas the first papers had been written under the shadow of students' knowledge that all of the teaching assistants were getting Ph.D.'s in Art History, and "knew more" and cared more than the students did about the works under discussion, the second assignment put the students and the instructors in a more lateral relationship to the works of art. There was no way that the instructor could "know more" than the student did about his or her own experience in making the copy. Students stopped asking the usual question, "What do you want?" and did not need to wonder, "How can I appear to know what I'm talking about when I really don't?" The papers were interesting, vivid, unusual, clearly-organized narratives about what it was like for a student to have a particular learning experience. In terms of Belenky and Clinchy's description of the modes of "procedural knowing," the students had been allowed to move from "separated" to "connected" knowing.

The next piece of correspondence comes from teachers on both coasts of the country. At schools in California and Maryland, American History teachers tried to compensate for the fact that the texts that they

were using omitted women's history altogether. One experiment was a valiant attempt at a corrective which did not work. The teachers invited the students to create a supplement to the American History text, focusing on the lives of women. The students could not do it. How were they to know about women's lives if the many editors of their thick textbook didn't? And in any case, how could they possibly imitate textbook style, which sounds as if nobody in particular wrote the book? The students were very uncomfortable with this assignment, partly, I would say, because it put them in a position of claiming more authority than they felt. But the teachers were trying in good faith to put students in positions of authority, to compensate for the history text which had left them out.

At a girls' school, a history teacher in a similar effort asked each student to imagine that she was a female person in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1638, three years after the colony was founded. She said, "You are a female person in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Here is a ten-page questionnaire I would like you to fill out to tell about your life. We don't know a great deal about women and girls in your situation. Here are twenty American history books from which you can pick up a little information and insight on women and girls. Do consult these books; don't just make up everything. But once you've schooled yourself a little, using these as a resource, make some educated guesses and invent your personality and your life." The students loved this assignment, whether or not they were known as "good" students. One said, as she handed in her paper, "I don't care what I got on this; it's the best thing I ever did in school." Some students said that for the very first time ever, they had found a real person in history. Many got a sense of identity from the project, which they cannot get from routine assignments merely asking for their reasoned *opinions*. The only doubt they had about the assignment was that it made them *make up* so much of what they said. This raised the question, "What do you think historians do?" And that question had the effect of making them see themselves as historians, not readers of others' history, but into *makers* of the stories which "History" is. Historians triangulate off available evidence, using their common sense.

In the Shipley School, an English teacher grew exasperated at giving 8th grade students repeated assignments in writing about short stories' plots, characters, settings and themes. She felt the whole course was pointless. She transformed the course into

one which turned the students into writers. Every assignment for a 13-week period was the same: for Monday and Wednesday the students read two short stories, and for Friday they wrote a fraction of one themselves. They could write a very short passage, a scrap of dialogue, a bit of description, a different ending, but she asked that whatever they wrote be in some way triggered in their imaginations by what they had read. This assignment had a transforming effect; students became for the first time *interested in the craft of writing*. They would come into class and say, "I just don't see how Hemingway did that!" or, "She's meant to sound sort of disconnected, like a Tillie Olsen character." The teacher did not ask the students to look up the ladders of talent to admire other authors, but rather to see other authors as colleagues similarly engaged in the writing process. Tillie Olsen, Shakespeare and Hemingway became related to the students in that all were writers.

I think the authenticity of these assignments for students came into being when teachers at least temporarily put aside the mantle of authority and let students become the authorities on their own experience and on their own sources of creativity. It is very important to this discussion that in all of these cases the teachers reported feeling *comfortable* with the revised assignments as well as impressed with the work they inspired. The teachers felt well-grounded, as they do not in the familiar situation of scrambling to "stay on top of the material."

Finally, here is a love letter from a past student, forwarded by a colleague in American Studies at the University of Denver. We faculty members from that program get such letters still, years after a profound experiment in curricular re-vision. Four of us who were teaching American Studies realized that we were teaching courses on "American Culture" in such a way that all ancestors of people like ourselves were left out. Our group consisted of a black woman who had traveled around the country a great deal, had been married to a military man and was now, as a widow, raising two children as she taught English at the University; a white man who had been raised as a fundamentalist Baptist in rural South Carolina and who taught Black Religion in America; a Jewish historian who had grown up as the son of a haberdasher in the garment district of New Haven; and I, an English teacher, a "good girl from New Jersey," though now I would say a "good" (middle-class WASP) girl from New Jersey. We decided to end the omission of people like ourselves by teaching our American culture courses twice through. First we ran

through the presidents and the most famous writers of a given period, all of whom were white and male, and generally from the eastern United States. Then we went back and asked the students to help fill in whatever had been left out in the first part of the course. In general, the students denied that anything had been left out, both because they didn't want to hurt our feelings and because they honestly thought that we had included everything that counts. Their impression was, "You went too fast, but basically you hit the high points." We pressed them for a description of what had happened in America except these "high points" during the decades in question, and why history should be defined as "high points."

At last, when the floodgates broke, they spent many days listing phenomena of American culture which had been left out, and blaming us for the gross, unconscionable exclusivity of the curriculum! Students spent the rest of the semester in their own research on many aspects of life: children, dolls, tools, toys, recipes, church services, etiquette books, artifacts, students, elders, invalids, brides, bridges, bankers, butter churns, broadaxes, songs, dances, courtship, drink, food, punishment, death, disease, dying, hymns, quilts, patches, shrubs, conservatories or gold-headed canes.

In the final exam in such courses, we asked students to compare the versions of American culture conveyed by the first few weeks of the course with the versions of American culture conveyed by the latter part of the course. The letter on my desk is from one of the many students who have written thanking us for this kind of teaching; we gave him the ability to see what he was learning as versions, rather than as truths. We helped him to see systemically (i.e., to see social systems at work) and to understand epistemology and to take an interest in the *politics of ways of seeing*. In learning all this, our students also felt authentic, for they were able to find themselves in the second part of the course in a way that they had never experienced in college before.

The same was, of course, true for us as teachers. For us, the authenticity came in putting ourselves — the unseen Others — into the curriculum, no longer obviously purveying versions that left us out, but now discussing with students, as part of course content, the politics carried by various versions. Authenticity here involved taking the power to speak as ourselves, and to see ourselves and all students as part of American culture. Most teachers in most places are passing on versions which exclude themselves — as teachers — and exclude students' experiences,

reinforcing systems of power that do not serve most of us well. But as the mail on this desk accumulates, I read of the changes taking place as consciousness of this problem grows.

After all this wordiness, I want to take you over into a room in this house which I love because it is so completely nonverbal: a quirky old greenhouse. I open the door and smell! It's the smell of earth and of growing things. Here, it is all growth and development. These plants don't feel they're on trial. Here they are all bodies in the body of the world. The foliage is diverse and green, and has its seasons. The greenhouse helps to explain to me what I so dislike about grading in education. My aim as caretaker here is not to put plants in competition with each other. Quite the reverse; in gardening, to help each plant fulfill the potential which its seed contained, you *reduce* competition. This is what I try to do in education. In the greenhouse I feel authentic, helping differing plants to thrive as themselves and trying to create conditions for that.

Now I must confess to you about another room in the house. If you are a reader of Charlotte Brontë or Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, or if you love Lily Tomlin and Jane Wagner, you will not be surprised to hear that there is a Madwoman in the Attic. You go up there and her room is absolutely draped with Moebius strips. She scrawls on them, in red ink, and covers the walls with angry graffiti. She is alternately *off the wall* with anger at those who have made *her* feel like a fraud, and *off the floor* with a visionary sense of her own elemental connection to the universe. You can never anticipate her mood. She loves MacDonald's french fries, and when I go up there to clean up the greasy red buckets, she blurts out, "Don't you snoop in my papers!" But now and then she throws some poems, scrunched up in spitballs, down the stairs from the attic, and if I simply throw one away, she shouts: "I'll kill you if you don't read my poems!" She harangues me if I give her any attention and harangues me if I don't. Here's a Moebius strip on which she has written: "I MAY NOT KNOW WHO I AM BUT YOU SURE AS HELL DON'T, YOU GODDOM PHONIES, SO DON'T YOU TELL ME WHO I AM." The other day she looked at me and said, "You need me. I'll be here for you." Now, I spend a lot of time taking care of her, and when I do it is very hard on my family. And here she is, telling me I need her. Thanks a lot.

Today she threw down a poem which I will read to you. I have told her, by the way, that I was going to start telling audiences about her. She said, "Don't be that crazy. You're not dead yet." Yet I think she was

also moved.

I think that in this poem she is dealing with one of the things I have been saying: that prize-giving systems may completely miss out on what we feel is most authentically *us*. She has written:

The prize fish flops, and dies.
I pass through the nets.
I escape the hooks.
I am the growing medium — water.

The prize roses wilt and die,
Brushed free of soil.
I am the growing medium — earth.

The princess swoons over the perfect
three-star omelette.
I am the steady stove.

The jet assumes its power. —
It levers against me — the air,
The necessary body for its rise and its
descent.

Water, Earth, Fire, Air,
I am the growing medium, the
genuine element.
Trust me.

I will end by taking you down to the kitchen and then back to the bookshelves again. Here on the kitchen table, as it happens, this very day, is an encouraging article on the front page of the newspaper. By contrast with the usual horrible disjunction between what a kitchen is for and the conflict and violence brought to us in the pages of newspapers, we find a picture of two powerful heads of state who have signed a treaty agreeing to destroy certain nuclear stockpiles.

The journalists have characteristically misread this meeting. They are trying to decide who *won* the event, and even which statesman's wife won the contest to be seen as the perfect wife of a head of state. They cannot see peacemaking except as another species of warfare. Moreover, the journalists have got it wrong in that they see the precedents for this historic occasion as coming only from men, not from women. The journalists have not mentioned Eleanor Roosevelt, who had the idea for the United Nations; nor Randall Forsberg, who had the idea for the nuclear freeze nor Helen Caldicott, who gave Physicians for Social Responsibility its recent power. The editorials instead cite Marshall McLuhan on the subject of the

global village, and Jonathan Schell on nuclear danger, and a male astronaut on the subject of seeing that the world is One, and Robert McNamara, who has recently taken a position against nuclear proliferation.

But despite the silencing and censoring of women's voices, and the denial that women are, in the words of Mary Beard, *a force in history*, this article reports events which come from the work of many men and women who have been thinking and acting laterally. And here, at least, is a picture of two men in power, sitting at a table in 1987, signing an agreement to reduce nuclear weapons. Our work in critiquing militaristic values is sometimes momentarily recognized as having an authentic or sensible base, though it is also exploited cynically by many to serve other purposes as well.

I want to go back to the shelves now and pick up one of the articles there which has made most sense to me in illuminating work towards authenticity. It is a paper that suggests that unless we study what we *haven't* noticed, we will never understand what we think we have noticed. According to the Gilligan and Attanucci paper, human moral development was seen by earlier researchers as simply a neutral and universal kind of development in which approximately two thirds of the (male) sample were seen to mature fairly well and one third seemed to be anomalous, immature. The (male) subjects who did not develop along normative lines were simply seen as failing to achieve moral maturity. When, through research on women, Gilligan identified the "ethic of care," the previous model of "moral development" began to look like a specific model for tracing development of the ethic of justice. Now "anomalous" men could be seen as people in whom the ethic of care and the ethic of justice were combined. They now matched a sample of similar women. All were recognizable *only because a further sample of women who specialized even more in the ethic of care had been identified*. Until the voices of women had truly been listened to and the previously unlooked-for "ethic of care" identified, the ethic of care was not in the spectrum of moral concern; therefore men who did not fit the first norm could not be placed at all. Now they seemed understandable, having in their moral sense both an ethic of care and an ethic of justice.

Most of the research on this subject of feeling like a fraud, or impostor, has been done on college students or on white, middle-class, employed American women in early middle age. I suggest that until we study the sense of fraudulence or authenticity in other people more fully, and in many cultures, we will not understand them in any one. It seems that

until we study people of many groups, we will not understand people of *any* group well, for we will have only naming from the most-heard-from groups. We need studies which identify the sense of authenticity in many different groups in different cultures, which are likely to put in a whole new light the things I have said here.

Though I cannot generalize from my own explorations, I will summarize. I have focused here on feelings of fraudulence which I experience in hierarchical systems rewarding individuals for being physically male and for habits of competition, separation, isolation, "rigor," impersonality, formality, single-mindedness, official speech and the controlled language of "rational argument." My feelings of authenticity came with feeling physically female and being in situations of connection, uncertainty, conversation, solitude, informality, sociability, collaboration, domesticity, repetitive life, spontaneity, expressiveness and what the world calls madness. I have often felt authentic when doing what Jean Baker Miller calls "finding one's development through the development of others," or when entertaining many contradictions and differing people, emotions and ideas.

For most men I know, feelings of fraudulence may well be triggered by the very qualities of life which seem authentic to me. Some men I know feel fraudulent if they don't sound official and somewhat opaque; if they respond spontaneously or make informal-sounding statements, they feel a little soft in the head. They may be raised to fear the intricate, contingent connectedness which feels right to me, or find that if they have what I am calling a baseline sense of authenticity, it draws on different aspects of the personality or experience. At the same time, some employed white women I know say they feel somewhat fraudulent even in the home sphere, today, when confronted with superwoman images, and feel they fall short of domestic ideals projected onto them there, as I do in the public sphere into which I feel not at all invited on my terms. Some people seem never to feel like frauds at all. Factors of age and class, race and region, as well as personal circumstance play into all of this. Our diverse senses of authenticity should be mined further.

For me, the shift from rhetorical argument to house tour was the breakthrough allowing me to go from feelings of fraudulence caused by separation from myself to an authentic sense of self-in-domestic-connection. The shift from that abstract Moebius strip to an imagined house allowed me to feel more comfortable, being simultaneously *at home* and *with*

you in public, bringing the public life to the home ground and home-work to the world.

Going public with our sense of, or search for, authenticity seems to me an important step for people who do not thrive in the public worlds of confrontation and challenge. Once I felt only silence and misery on the subject of fraudulent feelings, and then entered what Belenky, et al. call a position of "received knowing," agreeing in this case to the commonly held opinion that women simply lacked confidence. Then followed an important switch to a kind of street-wise, angry, "subjective knowing," which may remind you of the Madwoman: "There's a lot of phonies out there, and I don't like them." These 1984 and 1987 talks on "Feeling Like a Fraud" illustrate, I think, the two kinds of "procedural knowing" described by Belenky, et al. The Moebius strip analysis was an example of "separated knowing," in which I tried to get some distance on the whole complex subject, and this talk, connecting with deeper elements of myself, fits with what I think of as an essential part of the "connected knowing" pattern, though Belenky, et al. did not describe it as such, which is playing the believing game with one's *own* deepest sense of authenticity.

Academic training encourages me to value the abstract, "separated-knowing" analysis of the Moebius strip talk more than these homelier vignettes. But the gardening self, the half-awake person in bed, the woman who broods over old photos and the Madwoman make essential and original observations. In fact, the Madwoman says she gave me the Moebius strip idea to begin with, and resents the fact that its contradictions are seen as madness in her and intellectual complexity in me. Connecting with these *many* parts of the self is a way of doing what Belenky, et al. refer to as "constructed knowing," choosing one's versions from a wide variety of understandings, sources, voices and guesses.

I don't think that we will be able to do what I call the meta-doubting, the necessary meta-criticism of the main invisible structures of psyche and society, until we try to get in touch with our personal senses of authenticity and talk about how things really are for us on a daily basis. Though my imagery for authenticity is personal, and therefore feels somewhat "unintellectual" and even embarrassing, I think that we need to mine this kind of layer to reach better theoretical understanding of what our various situations are. It can help us to understand what seems wrong to us in many areas of life, including media representations of human nature, or public pronouncements and policies.

Many individuals daily bring what I have been

describing as the home or friendship sense into their routine lives and into institutional worlds. A larger task is to create whole value systems, policies and institutions which place at the center this concern for growth, development and survival without violence and with dignity for all. Listening to voices of personal authenticity, however tentative they are, may help us to develop theories of human nature and systems which fit experiences and serve basic human needs better than most present theories and systems do. The mostly-submerged baseline sense of authenticity in those who unaccountably feel like frauds may help to reveal the places in which present theory or policy do not fit with what people are, or want or do most constructively.

Discussion Summary

After each colloquium lecture, a discussion is held. Selected portions are summarized here. Drs. Jean Baker Miller and Janet Surrey joined in the discussion.

Comment: I'm not sure how to put this without sounding a little challenging. Sitting here at Wellesley College, it is easy to say, "I don't need this way of behaving..." Once you have gotten to the top, you can say it. If you don't have these economic and social conditions, it's harder. You can't say it.

McIntosh: One thing many of us here have is power. Once you've "made it" in these systems, you do have some power to do the critique while those who've been most disenfranchised within these systems may not. To those who don't have enough money to put food on the table, it may sound like cultural arrogance for anyone to suggest questioning the world's definitions of success. But I think those who have "made it," and are highly privileged and paid, can call the meritocracy on some of its claims, if they are willing to do so. They have the power to point to fraudulence in high places, and shouldn't necessarily expect that work to come just from those who are struggling most to survive, and feeling they can't do anything but try to keep their heads above water.

Comment: The most important issue for women is first to get power.

McIntosh: In 1984, the first questioner made a related point. But I said that I favored a double vision in which we teach both survival according to the "rules" and give an alternative view of those rules and of the reasons they make so many of us uncomfortable or angry; they give power to so few people or functions of personality. I agree with you that those with the most privilege and power may be able to see or say that most easily, and perhaps getting vertical

power for some must be the top priority. But the question is, "What will be most empowering?" It may be different things for different groups and individuals. There may be a taxonomy of different degrees of empowering cynicism.

Miller: May I complicate that issue a bit? I think that people who are "the outsiders," not the privileged ones in society, know a lot about the fraudulence of people who are claiming privilege and value and truth and so on. So I don't know that you can't talk about that to us outsiders. We know it already. It's very validating to hear it said in ways that are truthful. That doesn't mean disempowering people, necessarily. I think people have to be related to reality; you choose your way. There are certain things you don't have to be in the world, certain positions you don't have to aspire to. It's complicated. But I'm not so sure that you have to avoid being critical when working with us "outsider people."

McIntosh: You pointed to yourself when you said "outsider people."

Miller: Well, I think in some general way, all women are. And then people who have not come from privileged backgrounds - which I didn't - are "outsider people."

Comment: I think we shouldn't forget that you can get power in cooperation and affiliation, not just in individual public behavior.

Miller and McIntosh: Yes.

Comment: I love your examples of your teaching. I'm struck, as a faculty member, that when I try to teach what I feel, I have to walk a very fine line between being myself and being what the kids want, not only for the dean or the school, but for the students. I had a student once come to me and say, "I get so confused coming from this other woman's class to yours. She is so tough, has all this data, and she's so smart. I think, 'That's what I want to be.'" And then the student comes to my class, and I'm really making contact with her. I'm talking about really thinking, and I reach her in a different way.

McIntosh: This is a set-up for teaching about both/and thinking as against either/or thinking. Your student has — we all have — affiliative talents and soloistic talents. She doesn't have to choose. The dominant systems in our culture value the soloistic more, and talk as though the self is the main unit of society. Therefore, that view is in the political ascendancy, and the other is considered extracurricular, unrigorous and connected with, say, just being a "nice person." But you can teach that student she is both part of and alien to the dominant value system. Being in both classes, she can be part of

your plants-in-the-greenhouse world and learn also how to work in the more officially recognized world of "hard data." She can decide how to develop herself, knowing that the politics work against the development of affiliative talents, especially against bringing them into public life or public view as though they were important.

Surrey: I'm thinking also about the value to women who have, for example, written a Ph.D. thesis. There is a lot of value to living in two worlds. I live in both a feminist world and a patriarchal world, and feel my authenticity constantly challenged in each. I feel that the movement between worlds results in growth. There is a growth which comes from movement around different ways of looking and being. It is a movement rather than a grounding. Women can learn other ways of seeing beyond themselves and learn how to create their values in the world. We need to allow students, as you say, to use the tools of the main society so long as they don't get overwhelmed by them, and that is a challenge in both therapy and in teaching.

Comment: What would you have the teacher say to her student?

McIntosh: I'd say that it is great that she appreciates both ways of being, and she definitely contains both or she could not appreciate them. She can develop what feels right to her as a mix of her own. The first teacher's style may be admirable, but make the student herself feel fraudulent when she tries only to imitate it. Whatever she works out, I think we should encourage her not ever to let the world talk her out of her feelings. Her own preferred styles may carry little press, praise or prizes, but they may have authority of a deep kind. Every so often they may even be seen as making a public difference. After all, here are these two statesmen at the table signing a weapons agreement, with a lot of fanfare, and just for a minute, from the things they are saying, you might think they have been reading feminist theory.

Comment: Would you read "Girl"?

McIntosh: Yes: I'm glad you asked. I think it is a most wonderful work, and when people write their own versions, this releases deeply authentic and usually long-forgotten voices in themselves. I met Jamaica Kincaid at M.I.T. a couple of weeks ago. I told her that I wanted to thank her especially for "Girl." Her answer relates to the theme of authenticity, for she told me this was the first piece that she ever wrote. I said that it was in a new genre, all its own, unlike anything else ever written. She said that she thought that was so. She wrote it on a rainy

Sunday afternoon in March, sitting in her living room on a sofa. She said, "I wrote and wrote, and said to myself, 'I don't know if anyone else will like this, but I like it...'"

McIntosh read Kincaid's "Girl" and her own version of it.

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Feeling Like a Fraud - Part III: Finding Authentic Ways of Coming into Conflict

Peggy McIntosh, Ph.D.

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Feeling Like a Fraud, Part III: Finding Authentic Ways of Coming into Conflict

Peggy McIntosh, Ph.D.

About the Author

Peggy McIntosh, Ph.D., is Associate Director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women and Founder and Co-Director of the National S.E.E.D. Project on Inclusive Curriculum (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity). She consults widely in the United States and internationally with elementary, secondary, and higher education faculty who are creating gender-fair and multicultural curricula. A graduate of Radcliffe College and Harvard University, with degrees in English, Dr. McIntosh has been awarded honorary doctorates in Humane Letters by Augustana College and the College of Saint Catherine and has taught at the Brearley School, Harvard University, Trinity College (Washington, D.C.), the University of Denver, the University of Durham (England), and Wellesley College. Her many studies on systems of unearned privilege have been influential in a range of fields.

Abstract

This talk, a sequel to Feeling Like a Fraud, Parts One and Two (Stone Center Work in Progress, No. 18, 1985, and No. 37, 1989), tracks the author's search for ways of coming into conflict which do not bring up feelings of fraudulence. It analyzes her exploration of what feel like more authentic methods of approaching contentious interactions. One key discovery is that she feels most authentic fighting the idea that life is conflict, i.e., life is war. Another is that intense class, gender, and race strife go on in her psyche, which serves as a micro-battlefield for macro-systems in the society. The analysis is placed in context of a theoretical model of double and conflicting structures within the psyche and the society, in which over-rewarded, vertically-oriented elements are contrasted with laterally-oriented, affiliative, informal elements of a "home sense." Invention of less fraudulent forms for coming into traditional conflict is made easier by taking the complex and pluralistic home-sense seriously. If the self is plural, then conflict may nearly always be a simplification of it.

Thank you to the Stone Center for inviting me to do yet another rumination on "Feeling Like a Fraud." This is the third in a series which I began with talks on the same subject in 1984 and 1989. I respect the work of the Stone Center and have been delighted to be included in this Colloquium series over the years.

I want to tell you how I came to this subject of Feeling Like a Fraud. I heard seventeen women in a row apologize as they came to the mike during a general session of a conference. Courtesy of the Johnson Foundation, we had been flown in at great expense to the Wingspread Center near Racine, Wisconsin to talk about the subject of Women in Educational Leadership. Supposedly we were all educational leaders, and indeed many in the group were college presidents and deans, or were leaders of projects which were considered to be substantial. Yet seventeen women in a row started their remarks with words like "You may not agree with this, but," or "I don't know, but," or "This is just a brief comment that I want to make," or "I only want to say one thing. . ." At first I was very upset and impatient with these disclaimers, and also bewildered. If we were such leaders, where was our confidence? And I felt, "Women, we will never make it in the boardrooms of the United States if we can't stand at the podium and deliver the goods." And then, because I was working at a Center for Research on Women, where we try to put women's lives and experiences at the core of what we look at, I wondered, "What are these seventeen women really saying with these disclaimers?"

I thought it might be a way of trying to create a relationship with the next person, as if to say, "You are real; I am real; you may not agree with this, but my aim is not to lord it over you with my superior position here at the podium with the amplified voice. And we can talk later." It occurred to me that the traditional aim of much public speaking, deriving from Greek rhetorical arts, is that I, the speaker, try to

persuade you, the listener, of my point of view, no matter what your point of view may be. So I thought that in this sense, which Sally Gearheart has named as potentially coercive, rhetoric can tear the fabric. Perhaps what these women were trying to do with their disclaimers was to strengthen the fabric before it could be torn by rhetoric.

And I came back from that conference and thought that maybe each of these women, standing alone up there, isolated, at the microphone, felt like a fraud. I knew that feeling. Perhaps we didn't want that isolation, and that sense of being above others. So I wrote a little yellow memo to Jean Baker Miller on a "Wellesley College internal memo" sheet. "To: Jean Baker Miller; From: Peggy McIntosh; Jean, Do you ever feel like a fraud?" I got back a little yellow sheet, another "Wellesley College internal memo." I still have it in my file. "To: Peggy McIntosh; From: Jean Baker Miller; I feel like a fraud all the time." And I thought, OK, if this woman who has mounted the major challenge to Freud in our time, and is loved all over the country already, and feels like a fraud all the time, I think there's a topic here. So I told Jean I thought there was a topic, and she invited me to give a talk in 1984 on what I was thinking about feelings of fraudulence.

For the first talk, I made a Moebius strip. I was trying to say two things. It's deplorable if some of us feel fraudulent more often than others. I wrote a kind of fight song on one side of the strip. "WE MUST NOT LET THEM MAKE US FEEL LIKE FRAUDS!" That can apply to any "them," or any "us," in cases where some are made to feel less entitled than others to a voice, to recognition, to power. But then, because I felt it might be deeply wise to feel like a fraud when you are surrounded by fraudulent forms, I presented a different point of view. Maybe it's not that we can't stand at the podium, maybe it's that we can't stand the podium. And in that other mood, on the back of the strip I wrote, "LET US CONTINUE TO SPOT FRAUDULENCE IN THE PUBLIC ROLES WE ARE ASKED TO PLAY," by which I meant the roles of expert, leader, superior, or even competent person. I wanted to show that, for me, both of the exhortations are part of the same analysis. So I configured them as a Moebius strip, following the Austrian mathematician Moebius, who discovered this marvel: If you pull together the two ends of a strip so that they meet, and then twist one and fasten the ends together, you've created a one-sided strip, in which you can pass your thumb over "both sides," yet it won't change sides. I wanted to see both of these messages as part of the same analysis. (As I pull the strip along, my thumb is

going over each side in turn, without changing sides.) The rest of that first talk elaborated on the proposition that feelings of fraudulence can be seen plausibly as both deplorable and applaudable, in different contexts.

For the second talk five years later, I explored the question, "How come you know you're feeling like a fraud?" I wondered what inner mechanism lets a person know they're feeling fake, or uncomfortable. What is this baseline knowledge? I posited and tried to identify in myself what I called a "home-self" that is made uncomfortable by being called out of itself into arbitrarily created systems of awards and acclaim or expectations about its worth. And at the end of that paper, I described the "home-self" I had identified as providing my own "baseline" sense of authenticity.

During that exploration, I had traveled through the house of my psyche, looking at various rooms in which I feel like a fraud sometimes, in different ways, and I had decided to contrast the parts of the house in which I feel most fraudulent with those in which I feel most like my home-self. My conclusion to that paper read this way:

I have focused here on feelings of fraudulence which I experience in hierarchical systems rewarding individuals for being physically male and for habits of competition, separation, isolation, "rigor," impersonality, formality, single-mindedness, official speech, and the controlled language of "rational argument."

My feelings of authenticity came with feeling physically female and being in situations of connection, uncertainty, conversation, solitude, informality, sociability, collaboration, domesticity, repetitive life, spontaneity, expressiveness, and what the world calls madness. I have often felt authentic doing what Jean Baker Miller calls "finding one's development through the development of others," or when entertaining many contradictions and differing people, emotions, and ideas.

That was the second paper. One of my favorite parts in visiting the house of my psyche was dipping into a small greenhouse within our house, in which I breathed in the smell of growing things and realized that to help plants thrive, you reduce competition among them, and that the point of the conservatory is not competition but growth and development of plants.

My other favorite part was in going upstairs, where there is a "Madwoman in the Attic." She has Moebius strips all over her room. They're covered in angry red writing. One of them, for example, says, "I MAY NOT KNOW WHO I AM BUT YOU SURE AS

HELL DON'T, YOU GODDAMN PHONIES, SO DON'T YOU TELL ME WHO I AM." And when I go up to her room to clean up the red french fries containers lying about, she says things like, "I'm here for you." And I'm thinking, "Thanks a lot. It's very hard on me and my whole family when I have to take care of you." Her room is a terrible mess. Every now and then, she throws down a little poem, wrapped up as a spitball, from the third floor to the second. And if, in my imagination, I pick up this wet thing and drop it into the wastebasket, she shouts, "I'll kill you if you don't read my poems!" But if I pry it open and try to have a look at what it says, she says, "Don't you mess with my things!" She harangues me when I give her attention, and when I don't. And the morning of that second "Fraud" talk, she had thrown down a spitball poem. Now actually I wrote it on the steering wheel of my car, stuck in traffic on the Southeast Expressway that afternoon, but it does have to do with the "home-self" as I had defined it, and it came through my pencil like automatic writing. The Madwoman wrote about a world beyond the fraudulence in competition:

The prize fish flops, and dies.
I pass through the nets.
I escape the hooks.
I am the growing medium—water.

The prize roses wilt and die,
Brushed free of soil.
I am the growing medium—earth.

The princess swoons over the perfect
three-star omelette
I am the steady stove.

The jet assumes its power.—
It levers against me—the air,
The necessary body for its rise
And its descent.

Water, Earth, Fire, Air,
I am the growing medium,
the genuine element
Trust me.

Ten years after I wrote the second paper, it came to me more and more, as a flood subject, that it was difficult to bring what I felt was my home-self into the world of conflict. This is not entirely true. My work in the SEED Project, which I founded 14 years ago and have co-directed with Emily Style ever since, challenges the world of education—the world of

formal schooling. However, it does so obliquely, by enabling educators to start their own faculty development discussions led by themselves in their schools. Some probing questions like how well the curriculum is including all students, and what sets of values are being conveyed by the curriculum, are directly provocative, and I experience the SEED Project as a deeply radical undertaking. But it is not simply conflictual, coming from an attack position. It involves groups of people doing much inner searching based on the premise that we are all part of what we are trying to change. It seems to me to fit with my home-self in being a program that empowers others to do work on their terms, and on their turf. The SEED Project is very speculative, conversational, ruminative, imaginative, and often transformative, in the way it is felt, the way it is constructed, and in its results. It hosts healing conflict without self-righteousness or simplicity.

I also have little difficulty in coming into conflict in context of the many public talks I give and the consulting work I do. When I am in a room with the actual bodies of other people, I feel less vulnerable to being misunderstood myself or dismissed or taken for a fool. I can recognize or add or play with the nuances which keep conflict complicated in a way that feels authentic to me.

But when I am acting on my own and feeling a need to come into conflict, then I have a very hard time doing so, so I suggested to Jean that I do yet another talk on "Feeling Like a Fraud," but that she let me think about it for a year. During that year, I have been watching my own processes and testing ways of coming into conflict to see which feel comparatively more authentic to me. My talk tonight will end with some of the difficulties of coming into conflict when my home-self feels multivariate and complex, whereas conflict is usually staged in a reduced world of this versus that, me versus you, them versus us, taut, dire, and frightening. And as I will also sketch out, my non-home self as defined by the rest of the world fears to lose power and its sense of security and good reputation by coming into conflict.

In order to illustrate some of my findings, I will first map here the interior landscape that I learned from my earliest schooling, which forms the backdrop of most of what I have realized and put into written form in the last twenty years. What I am going to draw is five frames of mind, superimposed on a two-part psychological and sociological structure which helps to shed light on my fears of coming into conflict as an individual. My fears include these thoughts: my home-self is hopeless at fighting; I was taught others

should do this; I can't do it; I'm bad at it; I'm not a warrior, I'm a woman; I'm a loser; I'm not courageous; I'm afraid to take sides; I hate to do anything bad to people; I hate it when they do anything bad to me. I don't want people to think I am a bad person. And conflict is too simple for the life I am trying to lead; life is more complicated. Conflict is damaging; I want to avoid it. I was told to avoid playground bullies. Why take them on? They just want to smash us up. And look at the conflict in the world already. Why should I add to it? The conflict in movies, in the news, on TV; the violence in ads, rap songs, textbooks, academic language: everything as a contest. Why should I join the fighting?

While I was writing that, I noticed that the brand name on the very pencil I was using was "Invader." This increased my feelings of fraudulence: I'm hopeless at this contentious world; I'm going to stay out of conflict; it is not for me, it is not about me. And of course all of you who are psychoanalysts here, or psychologists, know that such thoughts come from somebody who is filled with conflict! I didn't quite register on that as essential self-description, but I think that my feelings of fraudulence show the truth of it.

All of that train of avoidance and fear derives from what I think was put into my mind in early childhood. It is a picture of the world which I carry with me still, and every one of its five frames of mind, which I have called Interactive Phases, contains different versions of the role and nature of conflict.

In grade school, these are the functions of personality which I was taught were important: being right, being in control, being very exact in our answers, doing our work alone, without help from or to any other child, and turning into a specialist some day. This was presaged in school by being, say, class clown, or "most artistic," having some little specialty which set us apart from others. These are the functions of personality which schooling rewarded in us, and these are the psychological properties which I felt were most important. We were told we must try to move toward "the top" of our propensities, lest we fall toward "the bottom." What was at the bottom was not spelled out very well. What was clear was that we should move toward "the top." Stasis was not all right. I'm talking about my schooling in suburban New Jersey public schools in the 1930s and 40s. We were given the slogan "Better and better every day, in every way." So being yourself was not okay. The assumption was that you were not going to grow and develop as a matter of course. You had to improve all the time or you would be a loser. This made life scary.

In math, you got it right, or you got it wrong. And

in those days, you wouldn't bother to show your work because your train of thought was not what was being graded. In spelling, you got it right, or you got it wrong. Right/wrong; yes/no; success/failure; quick learner/slow learner; either/or. Either you climbed toward the top, or you fell toward the bottom. Your sense of life was polarized, and put into vertical terms. "Win lest you lose," was the hidden ethos. The territory of the losers was much larger than that of the winners, so there had to be competition for the limited space at the "top." There was a nagging sense in lots of us children, male and female, that we were not doing quite well enough, ever, to be "top," and that other people would be "top."

Having drawn that psychological picture of vertical functions of personality a couple of decades ago, I then turned it into a sociological picture of the institutions of the culture, because I realized that my pinnacled psychological structure felt as though it were mapped onto the pinnacles of the public institutions. Wherever there's an institutional form that has a lot of decision-making ability, power, money, and few people at the top, that's a pinnacle, whether of government, or school, or business, or the military, or law, or medicine, or the institutional forms of the church, or whatever. I felt these pinnacles had ladder-like structures going up them, and the rungs on the ladders were the markers by which you can answer the question, "How am I doing?" The rungs are pay, promotion, press, praise, prizes, prestige, and all together, power. Then I knew why I had been so anxious in school though, like many of you, I had "done very well in school." It was so hard to reach the pinnacles, and most people would be shouldered off the ladders and be losers, and the space at the top was so narrow, no wonder the competition was so nerve-racking.

And those who were at the so-called top could look down and know how isolated they were, how far away from most, and also how surely they would be toppled themselves by those coming up. Reconstructing those impressions, I could understand how I was made nervous by the pyramids of the school and the culture, and the sense that I should head for the so-called top, or support those who were pinnacled. And yet we were in World War II when I was a child, and it seemed at that time, and it was true, that Hitler made the war against him seem morally defensible. So "kill or be killed" did seem like one law of life to me. Yet it seemed to me too terrible to be the only law of life. The war was too simple for my view of things, and I remember feeling sorry for German and Japanese people. I felt frightened on my own

behalf, not wanting to kill, or to be killed.

I think what I was divining then was that I was connected within my psyche and in the society to what I was being taught to hate and fear. Traditional conflict implies I am not connected with what I am conflicting with. But I am connected with it. Armies need to train soldiers to break the feeling of connection with those they kill. Soldiers have to be rigorously taught to disconnect with whole groups of people. One lesson I learned by participating in the work of the A.K. Rice Institute is that when someone in an unguided discussion said something, I was likely to relate to some part of what they had said. It seemed to speak for a little part of me, even if it was in opposition to something that had been said before. That fellow-feeling makes conflict of the either/or kind seem too simple, and I know now better than I did as a child why war terrified me so much, not just for the deaths it brought but for the torn fabrics in every part of the psyche.

When I was a child, the role of killer was not being asked/required of girls directly. We were merely meant to support the boys as heroes. I realized my exemption from their masculine war-training most acutely one day in fourth grade when I got home from school and felt enormous relief that I could go indoors, while my brother had to stay out of doors and to play "Guns," in the neighborhood. If he went indoors he would be considered a sissy. The game of Guns was something the boys had to play. The only script was "Bang, bang, you're dead!" There were three groups, the Germans, the Japs, and the Yanks. And everybody wanted to be a Yank. The boys "played guns" from behind garages and barns and houses.

I remember feeling so grateful that I could go indoors and play with my stuffed animals. What I did with my stuffed animals was ritual and obsessive, and I see it now as highly symbolic: I married my stuffed animals to each other every afternoon. Moreover, I married different animals to different other animals every afternoon. I see that as diversity! I think that as a girl, and indoors, I was trying to make the civilization that was the opposite of the wars outside, in the neighborhood and the world. I would gather my mother's flowers if any were in bloom, and put them on the piano: beauty. I would play the piano: harmony. And then I would conduct the ceremonies on the altar of the piano: union. I didn't think of it as sexual union. I imagine Freud would say, "Yes, my dear, you did." In any case, the boys were suffering out of doors in their "win lest you lose/kill-or-be-killed" mode of training for what was (and still is) seen as masculinity. It was through no fault of their

own that they obsessively played Guns. It was projected onto them. Making domestic peace was projected onto girls.

I don't use the word "projection" quite as psychologists do. I see a projection as a visiting on to people of an image of what they must be, whether or not they're actually emitting any data that would support that image. The projection onto Caucasian men that they will thrive in this world of "win lest you lose/kill or be killed" has made them suffer horribly. And I believe that the projection is quite false. I believe we all have in us the capacity to make and live in pecking orders. It shouldn't have been projected racially, ethnically, class-wise, or sex-wise.

Below the fault line in my diagram is the world that is projected on to the rest of us. I see it in very humdrum terms, below the world of win/lose: either/or. Above the fault line, the grain of the rock is vertical; below the fault line, horizontal. It's hard to describe the life below the fault line because it is not about winning, and most description I have been schooled to do in my life involves working at an apex—developing my best talent or putting forward my key point, making my strongest argument, recovering my most precious memories, or defending my most original idea; in other words, prioritizing.

Below the fault line there is little prioritizing. It is the area of daily upkeep and maintenance and the making and mending of the world. It is very humdrum, it holds the world together, it is healing, and it is beyond winning and losing. My most personal metaphor for it is dishwashing. You wash the dishes, you wash the dishes, and you wash the dishes, and you don't win. And you're really crazy if you think you can win. And just as I begin to say, "Hey, the liberal arts curriculum never taught us we would need to wash"—it's time to wash the dishes. And I can't even start to write the theoretical essay on this before it's time to wash the dishes. Here's another example from my white suburban life in the late twentieth century. You wait for the repair person, you wait for the repair person, you wait for the repair person. The repair person comes, and doesn't bring the right part, and you are already late for work, but you do not use your top-down, pinnacled rhetorical skill to tell him where you feel he belongs on the ladders of competence because you need your plumbing back and he needs his money. And liberal arts education has in no way taught you how to deal with this moment. Not even psychology courses, though in psychology courses which have been influenced by Stone Center work, you might find some sense of how to engage relationally with the

repair person in this situation.

Or agriculturally, you plant the seed, you water it, perhaps fertilize it, perhaps pray over it, perhaps weed it, and if you're lucky, you harvest, or others do. And if you're lucky, you bring food to your table, or buy food. But you will never have the "mega-meal" and be done with eating. The agricultural cycle must be repeated again and again, or life will not go on. So here is the making and mending of the personal fabric, the agricultural fabric, the kitchen fabric. In the pedagogical fabric: you talk to a student; you talk to the same student the next day about the same thing; you talk to the same student the next day about the same thing. The aim is not to win, but to stay in decent relationship until, say, the end of the semester, or the end of the year, or until graduation, or until death do you part. If you're lucky, the students keep coming back, and you see that the achievement wasn't that you got the better of them, or they got the better of you, for here they are again, sitting on a step saying, "Remember when you said such and such, and I said such and such," and you are still in relation.

And family life at its best is like this. You don't set the children up in a row in the morning and ask which will be the winner and which the loser. You try to work it out so that the growth and development of the whole family is provided for as well as possible. For parents, it has to do once again with what Jean Baker Miller named as finding one's development through the development of others. And the development is more through survival than through what the world calls "achievement." The ethos isn't "win lest you lose," but rather, "you work for the decent survival of all, for therein lies your own best chance for survival." When I first began to speak in this way in 1981 and '82, some listeners concluded that I had been tainted by California New Age thought, or was sentimental or Communist. But with the disappearance of the ozone layer, and of so much clean water and clean air, this has stopped seeming like such a "pie in the sky" ethos, and people in many places are working for language beyond "either/or" to express an ideal of sustainable balance in the mind and soul and social and biological fabrics.

I believe that beyond the making and the mending of the domestic fabric and the educational fabric are further worlds of necessary relationality. The world of sex doesn't go well when the aim is to win, the world of love doesn't exist when the aim is to win, and the world of friendship is sorely strained when the aim is to win. We see this when too great an adrenaline rush and a will toward winning breaks up friendships in individual sports. To me, in addition to containing the

worlds of sex, love, and friendship, this world below the fault line includes the enormous globe of the complex, multifaceted soul in each of us, which has in it all the experiences which have moved us and become a part of ourselves. And anybody who is even half-way awake in the late twentieth century, and has had the kinds of experiences we have had, has a complex, multifaceted, and I would say multicultural soul, comprised of connections and understandings that have had deep, deep positive meanings for us. And these rays which I sketch, emanating from the globe of the multifaceted soul, are the connections to everything in the universe which we cannot see, but which gives meaning to us. And we would be crazy to try to master our divinities.

I see this soul, beyond the world of winning and losing, as a site which can enable a blessed solitude, by contrast with the loneliness of the climb up the ladders. Some people listening to me have told me that the climbs up the ladders are not as lonely as I think they are. They say that in teamwork, the whole team strives together. I see this, but I also keep noticing that you are fired from the team alone. It may be called teamwork, but in the long run, does it feel durably supportive? I feel the evidence is mixed.

In any case, I am quite convinced of the complexity of the "solitary" soul and its possibility for myriad connections, and I have felt and seen many instances of loneliness and pain on the ladders, especially the pain of getting your fingers smashed by the person whose rung you are trying to climb up on, or smashing others' if you feel they threaten your ascent.

This business of climbing the ladders was projected on to white males. And the business of life below the fault line was projected on whatever males were considered to be "lower caste," together with all women designated to do the work behind the scenes, making and mending the fabrics and doing what Jean has called the emotional housekeeping of the world, as well as the physical housekeeping. I believe that the sectors above and below the fault line are in all of us by nature. We all have it in us biologically to make and live in pecking orders, and we all have it in us biologically to live in symbiotic relationships within biodiverse habitats. If we were to go out into the grounds of this institution, in any two square yards we would find the land teeming with organisms whose main aim is not to wipe each other out. And except within the human world, there's not a biological effort to create a master power, a superpower, a dominator organism for the planet. And in fact, this is not the main human preoccupation. We engage in the

symbiotic relational life below the fault line all the time within the mechanisms we've designed for our survival. For example, by stopping at a traffic light so as not to crash into someone else. We live symbiotically most of the time. Just noticing what is happening and fitting in so that one doesn't make new dangers for oneself or others is a symbiotic way of living. I don't have very well developed words for life below the fault line. It is the life in which we make our way day by day without doing damage, insofar as we can, making and mending the fabrics, not necessarily getting ahead but getting through. I believe it is also, spiritually, what the theologian Paul Tillich called "the ground of our being."

It was my own world below the fault line which fueled my interest in asking about conflict. Couldn't I reclaim this part of myself as an adjunct, an actual aid in undertaking conflict and fearing it less, maybe even feeling I could do it well? And couldn't it help me to understand climbing the ladders better, and to resist feelings of being *reduced* by competition? I wanted to be able to come into conflict using my home-self. Usually, when you come into conflict, only one aspect of you is likely to be marshaled against one aspect of what you are opposing. But I feel like one of those balls on the old electric typewriter which had all the letters on it. I feel multifaceted. There's more to me that could come in contact with the paper than the one letter at a time which in the old technology actually hit the paper. And there is more paper than gets marked by the print of that one letter. And I felt many more resources in me which might be useful in conflict than I had been taught I could use, especially as a female of my class and place and race who was not meant to be in conflict to begin with. So—what would it require for me to see what was oversimplified in what I had been taught to develop in myself? And oversimplified in what and how and with what parts of myself I had been schooled to come into conflict, where that had been allowed at all?

To reflect on these questions required some self-rescue, some coming into conflict with acculturated self-annihilation. I saw that the pinnacles of authority in what I call the Phase One part of my personality were womanless and all white. I had neither studied women nor noticed that I hadn't, and this phase of oblivion is still in me and is a happy handmaiden of, or adornment for, wealthy white male authorities. My Phase Two personality had studied and noticed exceptional Others, who were presented as unlike their kind and therefore worthy of study, and so I had admitted to my awareness "exceptional" men of color, or women of any color, who were allowed to occupy

minor pinnacles in the scale of importance. This worked to awaken an "ambitious" part of me, and did not really change the oblivion to patterns of subservience in the Phase One personality. In Phase Three, I experienced life at the "bottom." This was about the Issues. In this frame of mind, I recognized sexism, classism, racism, heterosexism, colonialism, and other grievances and kinds of oppression. The lines were drawn and the sense of conflict was a stark one: winners vs. losers, victimized vs. victimizers, oppressors vs. the oppressed. Here I could take sides, as a woman, though the internal and external monitors from Phases One and Two reacted harshly to my coming into conflict at all over issues of any kind.

In Phase One, my mind had assumed that conflict is necessary to keep down the "lower orders"; in Phase Two, my mind licensed competition against the "lower orders" so as get into an assimilated, or accepted state with the "authorities." In Phase Three, my mind took on a feistiness of going to war for my and others' dignity, self-respect, rights, money, property. This was important growth, but it often made me feel like a fraud, too. For Phase Three casts all of life as war, and oversimplifies in this way. The oppositional sense made my mind and heart defensive, angry, righteous or self-righteous, more socially and politically useful than before, but feeling always oversimplified, and cowardly at fighting, feeling that I did it badly, and wanting to capitulate early on.

Below the fault line, in Phase Four, life looks much more complicated than in the realms in which the vertical political axis underlies thought and feeling. In the lateral realm, I feel we are, to use a phrase of Leroy Moore, bodies in the body of the world. We all have our stories, and they are all complex. There are no single issues and no single identities. In defining this realm, I go from issues to experience. Sometimes when people ask, "What do you do?" and I say I do multicultural women's studies, they say something like "Oh I'm sympathetic to all of your issues." And I feel impatient because issues do not constitute my life, experience does. I'm interested in experience in all its complexities. Below the fault line, we are all in it together: here is my Virginia Grandmother, and here is her Black cook, and here am I, and my children and grandchild, and here is Thomas Jefferson, and here are my mother and sister and I visiting the gardens at Monticello, and here are the plants and diseases of the gardens, and we all have our complex interwoven stories.

Below the fault line, when I am criticized or critiqued, I partly credit the critique, not simply

because of internalized oppression or self-hatred, as in Phase Three, but because a little of the complex multivariate “me” has an imaginative and empathetic affiliation with the integrity of the opposer. Simply “answering back” is not representative of me. I am reminded of a dean in a Boston area university who said to a frustrated young faculty member, “Your role is to give me your ideas about what you want to change. My role is to give you my ideas about the contexts for change. Don’t let my role interfere with your role.” One of my roles is to see how I am seen and not to try to do all the defining; another role is to ignore how I am seen and try to do the defining. I hold both roles and use both.

I am looking for a better balance between the vertically positioned capacities of Phase One, Two, and Three which are natural to us all, and the lateral capacities of Phase Four which are also natural to us all. And I see Phase Five as getting beyond the projections, and furthering a more balanced development in all people of both our potential for making and living in pecking orders, and our potential for living in symbiotic relationships within biodiverse habitats which seem to me to be both in us and around us.

So how does each of these five internal frames of mind bear on my history of coming into conflict? In Phase One, I was a cheerleader for the football team of my high school. In Phase One I tucked myself up under the aegis of the powerful; I cheered for the football players who were the high school heroes. I had two problems, however, as a cheerleader. First, I never really learned the rules of football, and second, I didn’t really care who won. Or rather, I felt sorry for the losers. So I never quite got into the spirit of either/or: them vs. us. In Phase One, life is war. Men are the fighters. They fight to keep what they have already won, and women, together with men of color, can apparently be sheltered by the powers that have accrued to the heroes, but only on their terms. We can taste some of that power perhaps through patronage or marriage or cultural assimilation. We can partake of the so-called “top.” As women, we can do sexual favors, we can make ourselves useful, we can do the work which sometimes results in praise: “We could not have done it without you.” But we must not fight, and we don’t come into conflict with those we serve if we want to keep their semblance of support. While we “cheerlead” for the apparent protector, we do not register on the statistics that show men are actually not such great protectors of women, or which indicate that, for example, marriage serves men better than women, economically, psychologically, and in terms of

physical health.

In Phase Two, exceptional “Others” make their way toward the top. The spotlight is shifted a little lower on the mountain, and here is Elizabeth Cady Stanton, scrambling up the rocks. She’s admired. What an effort she is making! What a fighter! In this phase, or frame of mind, I work to win power that women have previously been denied. I work hard for the grades or the grants, and tried to keep what I feel I have earned, and also feel pressure to keep hold of my rung, to see that other contenders for the same rung are kept lower. In this frame of mind, I also feel the inclination to distance myself from noisier or more publicly active feminists: those who are “down below,” and who talk in a more outspoken way, or shout, about “their issues.” As a Phase Two achiever, I was trained to identify against them, and to wish they would shut up, for they endanger my climb to the top. In this scenario, I come up against the glass ceiling but also do not want to lose favor with those who put it there. In the Phase Two frame of mind, I wish to be patronized by, but not opposed to, authority, so the people whom the authorities point out to me as lower, and undesirable, become a component of my perceived enemy. This is misplaced enmity. It is self-damaging enmity which results from being caught in the oppositional simplicities of Phases One, Two, and Three. But in the Phase Two frame of mind, I don’t realize that, so I keep my distance from those below me on the ladder, and convince myself that I may “get ahead” because I am as good as the best of those who are “above” me, and better than the worst of them. And I feel competitive with those who are further “down,” racially, in terms of social class, or in any other way.

In this frame of mind, I am vulnerable to forgetting that I am seen as a woman, which is a big mistake. I think it is a very ignorant set of teachings and advice which tell women, “Go for it. You’re just a person, you’re entitled to fame and fortune and respect.” If we make the mistake of not knowing that we will be seen as women, and that that carries consequences, then we go into our futures alone, and at the first set-back, or each successive set-back, we must take it personally and internalize it as our own failure. I think it’s very debilitating to give young girls the message, “You can be anything you want to be.” I tell them, “No, you can’t be Pope, for starters.” I try to give them a double message from Phases Four and Three realities: You are Wonderful, and you will not be seen that way. I think this is good preparation for living confidently while seeing systemically also.

If you climb toward the glass ceiling, presenting

yourself as a loner, apolitical, outside of the systems of power, you will probably not realize that those at the so-called top do not have your interests at heart. And you will make common cause with the authorities, against those who are more like yourself but seen as lower down. You will present yourself as a new kind of winner. I know that feeling and can play that role. In my project work, it feels like constant competition and conflict in order to make the case with donors, getting the grant we need and keeping the grant, always somewhat uncomfortable relative to issues of power, feeling fortunate to be funded, but uncomfortable with the need always to justify the work as more “outstanding” than others’. The hype can make me feel like a fraud, even though at the same time I feel we do very important and effective work.

In the Phase Three issues-oriented frame of mind, life feels like war, for sure. And I know it not from the top, but because now I’m on the bottom. I see and feel it as conflict, among the abused and victimized losers making war against the winners; the have-nots against the haves. War for what? For survival, resources, voice, influence, protection, respect, opportunity, influence. For justice, for dignity, and freedom. For a decent life for everyone. I feel it as a battle and take part through lobbying, demonstrations, petitions, donations, workshops, meetings and projects. I feel in Phase Three that I am coming into conflict with huge systems of injustice and also with what feel like two kinds of embodied enemies: Phase One power-holders, oblivious or not, and Phase Two go-getters. In Phase Three, I tend to see men unfairly as a single group making war on women. And I may see men unfairly as a uniform group projecting onto women, especially feminists, that we make war on men, and that we make war on the natural state of things. This kind of picture is too simple, when the real problem is overarching power systems, such as patriarchy. Phase Three issues-oriented work is simpler than my feelings and observations, simpler than actual lives, though brave and truly intelligent in recognizing broad power-related patterns. It is the phase in which I get angry, bitter, frustrated, and sometimes eloquent. It fuels a lot of hard work.

Much of what I do in the area of Phase Three issues is complexified by the fact that I benefit from power in several systems of privilege: white privilege, heterosexual privilege, class privilege. In those respects I get power from the existence of Phase One and Phase Two assumptions and frameworks for social and economic life. I can’t take the moral high ground in these areas, except by coming into conflict

with individualistic, capitalist, and white cultural accounts of deservedness, which I have done in my papers on privilege systems. I know that in doing my work, I have benefited from money and class and power that I inherited from others. And getting the balance right between knowing what I earned and knowing what I didn’t earn is difficult, not just for me, but for thousands of others who are also trying to think more systemically as we assess our past assumptions, behaviors, and gains or losses.

I feel that my life took on new energy when I got into the issues of Phase Three, but I notice that sometimes the discussion takes on too much of a Phase Three flavor after one of my public talks, and then I try to steer it into more nuanced territory in which the blame is not put on Them about whom some speaker in the audience feels morally outraged. This relates to my own discomfort at coming into simple conflict, when I know myself as being situated in many locations, all of which are part of me. I try to reflect to the speaker something beyond blame, but afterward I may feel like a fraud whether I added fuel to the fire or tried to damp it down. For any speaker’s rage usually speaks to a part of me.

In Phase Four, my sense of the world begins to cohere. Phase Four awareness is based in experience. I’m much less ambivalent. I feel I am involved in the making and mending of the fabric of society and of thought. My aim is beyond winning and losing; I am *exerting* myself working for the decent survival for all, for there lies my own best chance for survival. And here I can use and develop the both/and thinking projected onto lower caste people, which I believe is endemically, biologically in all of us. I shelter and foster and admire and enjoy growing things, and there is a more organic and even relaxed feel to my conflicts. The main aim of biological organisms is not to eliminate each other. They do give pain to other organisms, but there’s no superpower thinking, no effort to get into a position mastering the world. I feel much more relish in the day-to-day activities of Phase Four. Conflict recedes and exertion takes on. I play my roles and others play theirs, and it is not necessary to declare a winner. My main projects and consulting jobs have this feel. I will lead the discussion for an hour before I give the talk. I co-create dozens of kinds of interactive exercises. I also work with two or three co-leaders or with 14 planning staff, or with 40 people at a conference which is chiefly interactive. This kind of event gives me joy, because the conflicts we experience are owned as part of our psyches, as we do inner work on the myriad ways we were schooled to

not take ourselves or each other seriously. And when we do take ourselves and each other seriously across inner and outer lines we were taught not to cross, this feels like a good dream.

Since I believe that the capacity to be conflict-oriented exists in all of us, and the capacity to be laterally-oriented at the same time exists in all of us, I envision Phase Five, in which it is possible to experience a balance between the vertical and the horizontal propensities in each of us, though for U.S. society it may take 100, 200—who knows how many years?—to create wide awareness of and marked commitment to this possibility. Already, however, I glimpse or experience the balance now and then, especially among people not immersed in the media, in formal schooling, or in making a lot of money, but using their imaginations to create better balances as they use life's resources.

The media strongly sell us win/lose thinking, and given something violent to write about, or to show on TV, or to make movies about, moguls will chose it, and sell things that way, and also I think aggrandize their sense of being male in that way. Right now there are seas of white male conflict corresponding to dominant white male psychological structure in society as a whole. And no wonder our so-called leaders, and no wonder the so-called "misfits" in school, act violently. And without our recognizing it, the jocks in the schools are licensed by adults to act the same way, and cause some of the violence they can later self-righteously distance themselves from, as in the case of Columbine High School. In my Phase Four self, what I come into conflict with is precisely this state of things, and the way I do it is to co-invent alternatives which leave me and others moved. They increase our ability to share testimony, our ability to be respected, our ability to relate to ourselves and others plurally, and our ability to make intellectual and social change. I help to make safe spaces in schools for teachers to talk about how their own teaching comes from the basic messages that they received about life-as-war, and how they might change their teaching to bring into the fabric the students' and their own intellectual, emotional, social, and political lives, so that education includes all of us and makes us know that we and our knowledge belong. This is a Phase Four use of transformed conflictual energy, in the service of plural survival.

As I watched myself coming into conflict over the last year, within all of these frames of mind in my psyche, I came to this conclusion: the conflict in which I feel most authentic is the conflict in which I oppose the idea that conflict is all there is to life. I come into

conflict most authentically with the idea that life is only war, and that conflict is the law of life, and that our main relationships are conflictual. And in correspondence with that outer feeling, I come into conflict with the idea that my identity is single, simple, and unitary, and must make war on the not-me inside or outside. I learned that I come into conflict authentically with the idea that my "self" has only one identity. I also conflict with the sense that the outer world is about conflict and the inner world is about peace. No, the world I feel as "inner" is partly about conflict. And the world I experience as "outer" has conflict in it, but is only partly about conflict. I have found I can insist on this. In fact, I get angry about this, and harangue people about it. Whenever I "lose control" in the presence of audiences, I find in retrospect it was likely to have been on this theme. And I feel I can get angry about it without feeling I'm necessarily going to shatter, humiliate myself, or endanger my future. I feel authority, as well as authenticity, in saying conflict is not all there is. And I have learned I can say this even to some who were capital-letter Authorities for me in the past.

So paradoxically, I use the warring part of me to say that war is not all there is, that there is something larger around it. War is in me, but not the only thing in me or anyone else. This recognition tied many things together for me. This is why I had felt sorry for the other football team, and for the Germans and Japanese, and for the men who are so damaged by the teaching they receive that they are warriors, and then sentimentalized by being told that they are nice guys when they know they have been trained and rewarded for being competent killers and haters of parts of themselves. They and we bear the burden, the hypocrisy, and the consequences of this.

The world of conflict or war is partially present in all of us, I believe. And why? It is an element of survival, to live in and make pecking orders. But I believe Darwin was misrepresented badly when he was taken to be writing *only* about pecking orders. In his famous passage on "the tangled bank," biodiversity abounds. Social Darwinists who want to use Darwin, and do use him, to justify capitalism have sketched him as a scientist recording only the ways in which organisms compete for themselves. He is misrepresented as the discoverer of "Nature red in tooth and claw." Darwin was not about that only. In his home, he kept earthworms, studying them for decades. He was not studying their conflicts, he was studying their lives, observing their behavior. He's misrepresented when he is heard to conclude that competition is the law of life. Growth and

development are also laws of life.

I believe that residing too much in Phase Four stories of experience can be sentimental if it ignores the power systems which have influenced our experiences. And I believe that staying just with the Phase Three issues has a different and equally important drawback, which is that it produces the same story again and again: the bad guys fight the good guys. This feels too simple for most actual lives; it is so bipolar. I think the complexly informed soul with all its stories, understanding itself as having been shaped by many intricacies of society, is a soul gathering knowledge and wisdom. I feel most authentic myself between Phases Three and Four, going back and forth across the fault line, trying to recognize both abstract issues and lived experiences.

I also know that the vertical schemes that I grew up with are still in me and will never go away; they make me afraid of conflict, of getting out of line, afraid of not being seen as the good female, or "feminine," yet unwilling to just accept the authority of winners, either. When I was a child, competitive games scared me. "Checkmate" in chess terrified me, and even in checkers, the sound of that victorious "clack, clack, clack" of the checkers piling up seemed to me to carry a gloating sound. In tennis, I liked rallying. Once we began to keep score, in the win/lose system, I didn't want to be a loser. But in the lateral, affiliative way, I didn't want to create a loser. Sukie Magraw, an instructor here at Wellesley, had a fascinating observation related to this. She found that students who had just played squash against a visiting team didn't want to be in the company of the person they had just played, whether they had won or lost. I read this in terms of my Phase Theory; they did not want to be a loser, but did not want to *create* a loser. I read it relationally, and thought that it tied in with their being women, schooled to the rules of taking care of others' feelings, yet now also breaking into the win/lose athletic world in which they would not be "nice" and give away games. This made them uncomfortable all around.

Walking in the mountains with my family as a child, I liked the first sensation of being together on the trail. But a certain winning streak in certain family members meant that they got ahead on the trail, and had a tendency to make something of it, emotionally. It made me feel bad. I identified with the role of our Shetland sheep dog who tried to round us up by running back and forth on the trail from the first person to the last. My parents tell me, and I remember, that I simply adored the large campgrounds where we would occasionally stay. I liked being all together,

with everybody equally needing food, clothing, and shelter, and living as my class-conscious parents said, "cheek by jowl." Everybody needing to put up their tent, or cook supper; everybody getting rained on. The community feeling was wonderful, by contrast with the competitiveness of the trail. I loved the peacefulness of it. And I remember that when I encountered Jean Baker Miller's book, and read that conflict was essential if we were to move toward our own development, I thought, "I can't bear this." I remember shutting this book, when I found it, at the age of 45. I trusted this author, and suspected she was right about most things, and I couldn't bear that she was advising us that we need to come into conflict. What I now think is that that book alerts us to consequences for us of systems of power that are not good for any of us. She was not asking me to interfere with my sense that the campground was wonderful. She was pointing out how rare the campground is, and telling readers that to have the campground at all we would need to come into conflict with systems that were bad for the growth and recognition of our relationality.

Seen in a Phase One light, my resistance to her words on conflict came because I was so firmly trying to stay in the role of good girl, good white girl, good upper-class girl contained within the systems of authority. I thought then, I can't do this thing that she asks. Now, as it happens, I have on my refrigerator a magnet with an Eleanor Roosevelt quote which reads, "You must do the thing which you think you cannot do." But then, at the age of 45, I still hoped to get through life by being nice personally within the authority systems, and hoped that I could just find the communal and communitarian campgrounds again and again.

As I observed my feelings of fraudulence on coming into conflict this past year, I saw that one aspect is my dislike of trying to "make a case for" my ideas in writing. This correlates with my comparatively slim body of published work and with the fact that I like to keep to the Work-in-Progress feeling in what I do publish. I feel like a fraud in the conflicts which surround academic and media life in general, the tendency to shoot others down and get shot down. Kill or be killed. I do not want to get shot down, and I have found that my work circulates in underground fashion among those who are interested in my complex, conversational, and autobiographical methods of getting into the creation of new theory. I do not really fear bringing my ideas into words when I am doing public speaking, public dialogues, or the highly charged work of the SEED Project with

teachers. What makes me feel like a fraud is writing for faceless audiences. I found I had a variant of this fear in that I feel fraudulent in sending letters to people I do not know, in situations in which committing myself on paper may cost me something and make others see me as angry or stupid.

Through pondering this, I saw I was invested more than I knew in being seen as an intelligent, self-controlled, high class, undefeated woman, a kind of combination of Phases One and Two. I realized that in the presence of an audience I give some of this impression, and I believe it gives a special protection to my talks, which are unexpectedly issues-oriented, provocative, and original, like Phases Three and Four together, and yet usually applauded. In print, I am much more vulnerable to the thrashings which authors with even the faintest political awareness may get from anyone who wants to do them in. Yet whenever I do have the courage to go into print before faceless audiences, I reach thousands of readers. I decided to go ahead in the future and try to put more of my feelings into print even if this put me in the vulnerable "angry, stupid, low-class female/feminist" category, open to attack, and even if by writing more I will not write much lasting work of strong importance to readers. In addition to co-writing a new book chapter with Emily Style (I find co-writing feels like a comfort in that the blame as well as the praise can be shared), I wrote more letters of protest and support than usual this year, and practiced putting some of my home-self into them rather than being abstractly argumentative.

Here are just a few examples. To Christopher Lydon, host of "The Connection," on National Public Radio, I wrote, one day,

Dear Christopher, I am very discouraged to hear you say, quoting Ezra Pound, that "*The Iliad* is all we need. It has enough drama for a planet." I am discouraged because it appears from time to time when you interview women that you do "get it" about our being left out of the liberal arts curriculum, and out of the main ways of seeing "life" which you and I were raised with. Yet in declaring that "*The Iliad* is all we need," it is as though you have forgotten all that the feminist women scholars and writers have been saying about most men's and women's daily lives. I'm discouraged that you mistake a war epic and its adorer, Ezra Pound, for a universal and adequate story to cover the experience of us all. Who is this "we," in "It's all we need"?

Sincerely, Peggy McIntosh.

This time, instead of agonizing over what tone and words might be more effective than others, I just went

ahead and sent the letter. You will have seen that it declares conflict is not all there is, and that I came into conflict with Lydon over that. In preparation for this talk, I pulled it out of the file and saw this theme in retrospect. This was a letter in which I did not feel that my emotions oversimplified my own multifaceted self, and I let my anger and discouragement show, instead of censoring them.

Here's a second example, to a *Boston Globe* editor and columnist:

Dear David Nyhan, Thank you very much for your column of today. I hope you will now pursue further the matter of the right-wing activity of about ten huge foundations and 100 major operatives who have indeed infiltrated the institutions of the United States with a view to taking power for the right, as against earning it. Meanwhile, I appreciate your analysis of the media's role of creating "news" as well as doing what it purports, which is reporting news. The right-wing is brilliant at getting the media to strengthen its hand. Thank you for your awareness of this.

In the first example, my letter to Christopher Lydon, I was coming up against a powerful figure knowing that this would probably preclude my ever being asked to appear on *The Connection*. In the second letter, I was only offering support to a journalist who usually sits on the fence, and encouraging or goading his more liberal side. Looking at my letters over the year, I realized I was much more comfortable in the second, ally and supporter role, than in the one in which I challenge a well known person. I take the second role more often, and I think it can be seen as more traditionally female, allying with someone else's brave work. I aspire to get to a point at which I can do with equal poise, both the lateral work supporting someone else to come into conflict and the riskier solo vertical work. The risk with Lydon, incidentally, was calculated; I thought that he would probably never have me on the show even if I wrote a book, and meanwhile, if I dared to write, I might lessen his unconsciously arrogant use of "we" to refer to everyone, which would be an accomplishment for any of us..

Just a year ago, after agreeing to do this talk, I came into conflict in a way that burned some of my bridges in another way. I sent a letter of resignation to the president and board of trustees of Radcliffe College. My protest meant that I renounced the power I had in that institution with which I had many connections over 47 years. At the time, I was Second Vice-president of the Alumnae Association, and I was angry that through a series of secret talks the Radcliffe

president and board of trustees were arranging to sever their ties to Radcliffe College undergraduates and to abdicate their mandated responsibility to advocate for the interests of undergraduate women at Harvard. Yesterday's paper showed that my action and the protests of others who agreed with me merely delayed the outcome by a year. Radcliffe has now voted not to be a college any longer. I am glad that I took that stand then. It got a lot of publicity in the media, and I felt brave. But I find that the final defeat of what we stood for has made me withdraw into myself somewhat. Yesterday I was called by a writer at the *Washington Post* who said that I was referred by a writer at the *Harvard Crimson*, and I found that I did not answer the call immediately. Maybe I didn't want to say, "We called it correctly. And they went ahead and did it. They won." I did not want to say I was humiliated; I was a loser.

As I have said, taking that stand means that I have burned my bridges with Radcliffe, which is now just a series of highly visible graduate institutes doing work in some ways akin to my own. So what did I salvage? Self-respect, a sense of being a Cassandra, a sense of protecting young women's interests. And also I salvaged this story to tell, which becomes part of the story of my life. Was it worth it? I will never know. But the protest made me feel integrated. I think I was expressing my connection to the institution which Radcliffe was in the 1950s, protecting and also furthering the development of women like me within the patriarchy of Harvard, like a rare mother allowing one to develop "home-self" in the midst of the male-centered ethos of the family or in this case, the university. And now I am furious that the mother abandoned the daughters to the "care" of the abusive father in return for being given a little Phase Two desk of her own in a branch office elsewhere.

I also wrote a letter to Brett Lott, a journalist, thanking him for quoting something he had read elsewhere about writers' needs for support at certain times: "This deadening of one's gift by learning not to believe in it is the most dangerous time in the life of an artist." I thought he was also alluding to how hard it is to come into conflict with external evaluators who do not believe in one's gift. I wrote to him a letter to say that I saw a parallel in children's learning not to believe in their own gifts, and I told him that I think it is a key moment in a child's life when she or he comes into conflict with authority by saying, "I don't think the grownups are telling me the truth."

This was an easier letter to write, serving as another ally piece, and also a mini-conversation, coming off another's thought. I feel that such a letter

can encourage a writer to follow a train of thought which I want to see more of in the world. It feels relational and I did not feel I was a fraud in writing it, but it was slightly scary at the same time, like all of these letters written to those I cannot see. Will I be misunderstood? I am now trying to write these letters sounding more and more like a complex, situated human being and less like someone trying to claim abstract authority on a single point or two. But my fear remains that I will be construed as a harridan, an obsessed woman who has nothing better to do than to write crank letters. If I learn that I am seen this way, and feel I haven't been effective, I am likely to forget the long histories of women who have made a difference, and to punish myself as a woman who should have kept her ideas bottled up. Such self-recrimination efficiently continues patriarchy's work.

After working on many home-self efforts toward more authentic and courageous writing, I thought, Peggy, this is pretty timid. Why don't you take on one of the big guys, instead of keeping to these local correspondences? So I wrote to Rush Limbaugh, whose attacks on me have been a burden I have suffered with in silence for years. I took the draft of my daring letter to Limbaugh on a trip to California last weekend. It was all finished and just about ready to go. When I got back here, I found I had left it in California. So I can tell I am ambivalent about this letter, which does take on one of the most powerful media figures in TV and radio. But I feel it as a victory for me, stimulated by the prospect of this talk, that I found a way to address him on my terms, as a scholar, and not simply as his victim.

Dear Mr. Limbaugh, It has come to my attention over the years that you continue to refer to me and some other women as feminazis. I have decided that I would like to discuss this with you. I would like to discuss your knowledge of feminism and Nazism and learn also how you came to associate these two phenomena with each other, and both with me.

I suggest that we meet in a place which is neither your work place nor mine. I will plan to bring a lawyer, one other person, and a tape recorder, so that there need be no question about what was said between us. I suggest that you bring the same. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely, Peggy McIntosh.

Though Limbaugh still terrifies me, I chuckled as I wrote this. My daughter said, "It sounds as if you're inviting him to a duel." Yes, but it feels like a duel with a difference. I decided to take him on where I am, that is, as a scholar, as well as a person whom he has hurt. I am not encountering him only as the sick

playground bully, whom I was taught to avoid, and who wishes to injure me further, but also as an ignorant blusterer. But I have been unable to find his address. Can anybody tell me how to reach Rush Limbaugh? (Various audience members give suggestions and ask more about who Rush Limbaugh is). He is a thoroughly irresponsible right-wing commentator who says anything he wishes. In fact, there is a whole book called *Rush Limbaugh is a Big Fat Idiot* about the fact that he doesn't have even a single fact-checker, but says outrageous things off the top of his head to his following of millions who proudly call themselves Dittoheads. He says the country belongs to those who have worked hard and sweated and that the founding fathers are sacred and that "America" is going down the tubes because of its enemies: immigrants and feminazis and black criminals and liberals and abortionists.

Writing the letter to him takes me back to a time at the Bronx Zoo in New York when I was a small child, perhaps five years old, and got up on a railing and said to a lion with a huge mane, on the other side of the fence, "Hi." My brother said, horrified, "Peggy, don't talk to him." I asked, "Why?" He said, "He might answer." That is the way I had gotten to feel about these most powerful men. That they might answer. But my courage is strengthened by the knowledge that there are some fences which can protect me from their worst replies. And in the case of Rush Limbaugh, I felt that my authentic home-self authored that letter, and was proposing a connection of sorts, literally a guarded conversation.

I will end with two matters, one of which is somebody else's diagram, which has been useful to me in complexifying conflict. And the other is the experience of starting a journal recently called "Gender and Conflict" for a conference I was invited to attend at George Mason University on that subject. The journal-writing experience surprised me.

As you know, I think that our hearts are filled with different voices, and the problem with the war-like either/or is that it over-simplifies the complications of the soul. I am not saying the complications of the issues, but the complications of the heart's many affinities. The men I admire most are those like the writer Donald Murray, who brings tenderly traced mixtures of emotion to his account of his experiences. I have said that I come into conflict most authentically with the idea that conflict is all there is. I have also said that the contests and contentions take place in me too. I am not Gandhi or Martin Luther King, or William James, whose writing on the moral equivalent of war moves me very much.

I am interested in moral leadership which discusses in a still more narrative and textured way how the power relations around us get trained into psyches, and can also be seen and resisted there, and I think this is one thing Jean Baker Miller's work is telling us. But I got a new angle on some dimensions of this when I started the assigned one-week journal on Gender and Conflict to take to the conference in Virginia.

The previous Saturday morning, I was at home and decided that while I was thinking about what to write in my gender diary, I would clean up some piles of papers in the kitchen. The first paper I took up had on it a date of 1997, two years earlier. I was embarrassed, and then mortified to find that the papers under it dated from 1996. I was giving myself such grief over my messy habits that finally I couldn't think about Gender and Conflict at all. Inside me was a noisier conflict, with voices calling me by my name and shouting, "Peggy, you are such a mess! Why are you such a mess? How could you do this?" So I asked these voices, "What's wrong with being a mess?" And they said, "We don't do that." And I said, "Who is we?" And suddenly I had a vision of one of the streets in the town in New Jersey where I spent most of my first twelve years. There was a row of houses which seemed to me unbelievable, like a bad mistake. Poor people lived in them, poor people with strange faces. And my voices said, "We're not like that." It flashed into my mind that these voices were saying I must be neat so as not to identify against my class and race and ethnicity. I was not being policed for being a messy woman. I was being policed as a person from a well-off, "professional," white family, threatening our family's reputation by crossing over into behaviors which I was taught to project onto poor people, working class people, and people of color. As a white female, I was being used as a counter and a battleground, being shouted at to keep my identification with whiteness, maleness, and wealth. And I think also to keep my identification with "law and order," meaning "a place for everything and everything in its place," referring to things and also to people.

In this fight the oppressor had become internalized. I experienced dominance of just some aspects of my identity set against the rest. A part of me was viciously attacking another part of me, telling me that I must not cross the line into "their" mess. My psyche was being used as a site for class/race battles in the larger society, against people who lived in houses "like that." And as the image of poor people's houses flashed on my mind, I stumbled on the construct of me being divided against myself

dishonestly to save "our" face, projecting problems of mess and everything else onto "them." So it was a complicated interior picture of a conflict staged in me, in which I am not the righteous person writing to the liar Rush Limbaugh. Here I am the host of a well-setup internal police state, supervised by the white and wealthy female voices, making me disown, and to project onto others, parts of my psyche and part of my self-knowledge, which is that I am in fact messy, to keep the wars going outside. I was the battleground and the perpetrator, and something that women of color have often pointed out became clearer than usual to me. The female shriekers were trying to get me back into place with the men of my race and class, and away from identification of women in those other houses. I saw the truth of this working in my vision of Other People's houses. And seeing and knowing and coming into conflict with that internal police state became one of the most empowering sensations of this year-long observation. I am apprised of it and now I can infiltrate this police state in the and try to see more about how it works.

Meanwhile, I have not cleaned up most of my papers. I am an accumulator of papers. If I do not take my history seriously, who will? I feel on better terms with my papers, now. In fact, the reason I keep them is that they are so interesting; they mean so much to me. Why should I let my history be disappeared? Now the voices shouting about unseemly mess have receded to the background, regrouping for their next attack.

I think they will attack as I work on my own next conscious effort, which is to find ways of coming into conflict with people "like me" face to face in a way that does not leave me feeling destructive, fraudulent, or reduced. I can practically hear them shouting about this kind of conflict, "We're not like that." Once again the race and class punishments will loom and the voices will try to keep me in the white lady prison. I feel readier for them this time. What I am trying to develop is the knowledge of being, complexly, what they say "we" are not.

I want to end with a diagram from a Buddhist, a man who lives in Bangkok, Thailand, whose name is Sulak Sivaraksa. His work on conflict has been very useful to me. He draws a circle and imagines that there are the numbers of a clock face on it. He says that at 12 o'clock, noon, you may feel at peace, perhaps too peaceful. At two o'clock, you have noticed the suffering in the world, and at four o'clock, you begin to try to alleviate the suffering in the world. At six o'clock, you are HIT by those who did not want the suffering to end, or did not want you to end it. At eight o'clock, you begin to understand why they hit

you. At ten o'clock, you can even empathize with the suffering which made them hit you. And at noon you are restored to peace. The cycle is repeated in a day, minute, year, or continually, as one grows in awareness.

Two years after I saw Sulak draw this diagram, I visited him in Bangkok, where I was attending a conference. I had been "hit" by the *Wall Street Journal* and Rush Limbaugh and *Heterodoxy Magazine* and other right-wing forces. I told him that I was having trouble moving upward from the position of having been hit, at six o'clock on his diagram. As it happened, I was visiting him at eleven o'clock on a Sunday, Protestant "church time" in the United States. I think I expected a little sermon.

Instead, he answered me very simply in a sentence. He said one could not move away from six o'clock up into the rest of the cycle until one recognized how angry one was at having been hit. It made complete sense. I found this a great antidote to the tendency in me to deny injury, insult, or real defeat. Sulak's statement said I must face injury and pain honestly if I was to get beyond them. I realized that I had a tendency to save face, to play the untouched person when feeling like the loser, and also that I had theological sanctions in my past against any acknowledgment of pain. When I dawdled in talking to *The Washington Post* about the actual demise of Radcliffe College, I think I was avoiding saying that my desire to salvage the College had been defeated, and that I was angry about it, even though I had predicted it. Yet Sulak's cycle also urged me into relationship with those who had hit me, urged me to feel empathy for their disconnection, and perhaps it led to the semi-relational stance I was able to take for the strategic letter to Rush Limbaugh, offering to learn from him about the grounds of his "knowledge." Sulak's teachings gave me permission for both the anger and the move toward communication. It felt familiar as well as new, for it corresponded to some of those feelings of empathetic identification with critics which I have already described. Sulak's prescription is useful in talking back to the police-state voices in me which said, "We are not like that." They have been hit themselves, so now they hit the more integrated parts of me. I doubt they enjoy their jobs. I see them trapped in the police state.

I am grateful to Jean Baker Miller and the Stone Center staff for having given me the time to think over this matter of coming into conflict and for having allowed me once again to use a narrative and conversational style of approaching the subject which corresponds to my home-self. I feel that during the last

15 years, preparing talks for this Colloquium Series first helped me to make a case for the possible wisdom of feelings of fraudulence, and then helped me to define a “home-self” as a baseline resource for the development of authenticity. Working on this talk has helped me to recognize some of the elements that are present when I avoid conflict, and when on the other hand I feel I am coming into conflict in more authentic ways than before. It seems that I feel best in conflict when I am opposing the tendency toward polarized structures and behaviors inside of my psyche and in the society, and acting on the recognition that my identity contains and knits multitudes, like the campground, and feels at home with the complexities of interrelatedness among all living things.

The Moebius strip derived from this rumination reads on one side “I must not let them make me feel like a fraud in coming into conflict.” And on the other side, “Let me continue to spot the fraudulent simplicity of conflict.” Colloquially translated, I feel at times, “I am not up to the fray.” But at other times, “This fray is not up to me.”