

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Audrey L. Perkins for the degree of Master of Arts in English presented on June 7, 1995. Title: Composing Ourselves: Women's Use of Personal Journals as Tools for Freedom, Exploration, and Autobiography.

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Scholars are ushering autobiographical writing of all kinds into the world of literary and scholarly writing: in course titles and syllabi, in academic journals and on bookshelves, autobiographical writing is flourishing. People's real stories offer insights into how people really live and view this life. They offer perspectives which necessarily challenge or strain academic institutions as they beg for new ways of looking at things, new voices to be heard, new academic frameworks to be constructed.

The focus of this examination is on women's stories—ones authored by themselves through their personal journals. Broadening the avenues of personal storytelling to also include diaries and journals as informal autobiographies by women allows women to write, frame, interpret and share their stories. Private, personal journal writing is a powerful tool that can empower women to freely explore their sense of themselves in the world. When women choose to share publicly the stories we author in our journals, we all give other women new "sisters," in struggle, in experience, in lived success. By living our varied scripts publicly, we offer role models for other women looking for other possibilities for their own lives.

This project is a celebration and affirmation of the power of journals to assist women in the process of naming, coming to terms with, and then finally sharing their own individual experiences.

Composing Ourselves:
Women's Use of Personal Journals for
Freedom, Creativity, and Autobiography

by

Audrey L. Perkins

A THESIS

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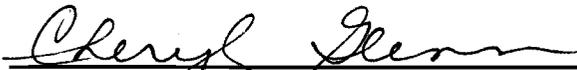
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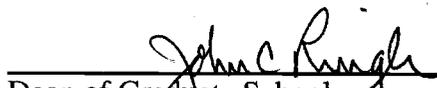
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Audrey L. Perkins, Author

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To my mother and father,
for your life-long faith in me
and your continual, loving support.

COMPOSING OURSELVES:
WOMEN'S USE OF PERSONAL JOURNALS AS TOOLS
FOR FREEDOM, EXPLORATION, AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

1. INTRODUCTION

Background

In a sense, I grew up alone. My only sister was much younger than I. My mother was busy with my four siblings, and when she did tend to me, she was supportive, but always reluctant to give me much guidance. I have virtually no extended family, and because my father was a naval officer, we moved around my whole life.

I needed sisters.

I really didn't find any older sisters until I was twenty-one when I picked up Revelations: Diaries of Women. Reading women's diaries has been like having a whole bunch of sisters, all chatting in intimate detail about their lives, their marriages, pains, doubts, ambitions. That year, I started reading and writing in the powerful genre of journal writing:

I'm reading a book called Revelations: Diaries of Women, which is blowing me away—it's beautiful. Beautiful for me to share intimately, though one way, with so many other women, to feel at one with them—to realize that, in effect, I am them. It helps me to get my own life in perspective. (1980 [All italicized text has been taken from my journals])

At thirty-six, I am increasingly interested in the curious path of my development as a woman. Journal writing, both my own, and the writings of others, has played a key role in my sense of self over the years. Private journals have been the prime place where I and other women have chosen to re-name the world in our own terms, re-see ourselves and our lives, work things out, and share our stories.

This project is a celebration and affirmation of the power of the written word to assist women in the process of naming, coming to terms with, and then finally sharing

their own individual experiences. It is an affirmation of the importance of telling our own stories, of creating and recreating ourselves over and over again, and of helping one another along the way.

Problem

The use of personal autobiographical writing is traditionally devalued in scholarly studies. A closer examination of women's use of personal journals is necessary in order to legitimate further this important tool for self-discovery and autobiography, and to assist women, and other marginalized people, in the ongoing process of establishing authority through self-definition, of valuing their lives, and sharing their life stories with others.

Solution to the Problem

The focus of this examination is on women's stories—ones authored by themselves through their personal journals. Broadening the avenues of personal storytelling, which recently expanded to include personal essay, to also include diaries and journals as informal autobiographies by women allows women to write, frame, interpret, and share their own stories. Whether in personal essay or through sharing diaries or journals, writing our own life-stories strips off the layers of editing and labeling with which well-intended biographers have girdled women and their stories. Women's own informal autobiographical writing provides valuable documents of history. Further, by studying women's uses of personal journals, we also have an excellent model for helping other historically marginalized people to find their voices, establish a sense of authority in shaping the definition of their lives, and share their stories with others.

Methodology

This project rests on the assertion that language is the most powerful tool for humans to claim authority in defining our own existence. Therefore my entire thesis will be informed by the early foundational work of French philosopher-phenomenologist, Georges Gusdorf, who explores the fundamental need of humans to express ourselves using language. For him, language is the most basic of human needs: we humans simply must assert ourselves into the world and claim territory. I will focus on the power that writing has to externalize, explore, and record our thoughts and feelings, and I will discuss the unique role of privacy in the writing process. In order to examine women's use of personal journals as tools for freedom, exploration, and autobiography, I will use excerpts from my own journals. Not only do they provide evidence for my claims, they add to the chorus of voices that my thesis, by nature, solicits.

Overview of Chapters

In Chapter Two, "Telling Our Stories," I focus on the rising interest in autobiographical writing. I review some of the recent scholarship on the current debate on using personal experience as a legitimate topic for academic inquiry; I then follow with a discussion on the tension between public and private writing. Chapter Three, "Using Personal Journals to Establish Authority," explores the ways in which personal journals are useful for establishing a sense of authority in one's self, one's writing voice, and the creative scripting of one's life. I also look briefly at why this tool is particularly useful for women. Finally, acknowledging that journal writing is a craft, and therefore, skills are useful, Chapter Three ends with an examination of two books—*The New Diary*, and *Writing Ourselves Home*, which teach this craft. Chapter Four, "Journals as Records and Autobiography," looks at personal journals as ways of recording and sharing our stories as women—for ourselves, and for one another. The final chapter

discusses my conclusions and implications for the ways in which focusing on women's use of personal journals is both a positive step for academe and a reflection of the ways in which academic institutions are being challenged to accept new voices as well as forms in writing. The two appendices include additional resources, and excerpts from my journal which represent my contribution to this celebration of the ways in which women use personal journals.

Conclusion

By highlighting personal, private writing as a topic worthy of scholarly study, we legitimize the powerful tool of journals writing. And by legitimizing it, we encourage scholars and non-scholars alike to read, study, and teach all people, especially those who lack a sense of power and control over their lives, to use this tool. Current techniques in journal writing offer a unique and powerful synthesis that represents the cutting edge in psychology, writing, and issues involving marginalization. Not only do we help others take creative control over their self-definition through private writing, we help others write diverse scripts and stories that can be shared publicly as inspiration and comfort for others.

2. TELLING OUR STORIES

Introduction

Scholars are ushering autobiographical writing of all kinds into the world of literary and scholarly writing: in course titles and syllabi, in academic journals and on bookshelves, autobiographical writing is flourishing. From *St. Augustine's Confessions* and *The Book of Margery Kemp* to Frederick Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom* to Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, such writings continue to make their intellectual mark.

We are practicing and studying the art of personal storytelling for both its form and its content. People's real stories offer insights into how people really live and view this life. They offer perspectives which necessarily challenge or strain academic institutions as they beg for new ways of looking at things, new voices to be heard, new academic frameworks to be constructed.

As forms of personal storytelling or autobiography are legitimized, they are, simultaneously, studied, taught, and published. Thus, we can anticipate rippling effects for our literary and academic culture (certainly for university English departments). Autobiography is a genre that is hard to pin down, hard to define, and one in which the author is automatically right. The implications for further inclusion of more forms of autobiography, then, are both public and private, affecting both universities and individuals, and involve both the form and the content of personal storytelling. Publicly, we stretch our methods of critical analysis: by including informal and formal autobiography in literary criticism discussions, we open new ways of looking at texts, authors, and author's relationships to their own texts. We notice the autobiographical in other forms of literature, and we begin to see literature in autobiography. In addition, because the form of the art is entirely democratic we hear from more and diverse

authors. New, even "uneducated" approaches to writing can stretch our familiar forms of literature.

New writing and new voices also has societal implications as we hear from more people about what their lives are really like. Richard Rodruquez, Mike Rose, Rigoberto Menchu—hearing from traditionally silenced people, in their own words, helps us to melt the hardened boundaries that create stereotypes of individuals, and helps us to see both our commonalties and our differences as individuals. As a culture, both academic and popular, we can learn new ways of seeing, develop new standards for how we define and measure things like success. Hearing from new voices also has private and personal implications for individuals as we empower more people by soliciting their stories, perhaps teaching people in and out of the academe that their lives are important. We can help people learn to value and express their stories, even privately, by teaching that those stories are important, perhaps even by teaching something as "unacademic" as journal writing as a craft. Most importantly legitimizing, in every way, people's real stories offers more possibilities and permission for all individuals to celebrate their precious, unique, and endlessly interesting lives.

A Selected Review of the Literature

Legitimizing the Personal Voice. An article in the June 29, 1994 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* states that "The recent movement to recognize the autobiographical voice as a legitimate way of speaking in academe is giving many of us permission to imagine a range of complex, daring, and compelling projects" (B2). Such projects include interviewing family members for anthropology projects, merging fiction and personal narratives, writing about one's experience in academe for scholarly publication, as well as different ways of interpreting and analyzing texts in literary criticism. The very concept of individual, personal experience as the subject of academic inquiry has sparked heated debate in universities around the country.

In "The I's Have It: Duke's 'Moi' Critics Expose Themselves," Adam Begley shows us that academics are arguing over the legitimacy of bringing personal experience into academic scholarship. The core of the debate is raising extremely interesting and critical questions about what kind of texts are "important" enough to be worthy of academic attention, what constitutes legitimate forms of academic writing, as well as who should make these decisions. Responses to these questions vary. Some hold firmly to the opinion that personal narratives are fine for scholars—but not on university time or stationery. Others feel that the move toward diverse and new forms of autobiographical perspectives is a fitting challenge to what has recently been the male-dominated canon. According to Begley, there's no question that the canon is being challenged:

The trend toward autobiography has often been traced back to the Sixties, to early feminist consciousness-raising groups and the succinct feminist motto, "The personal is the political." Autobiography has spread in tandem with multiculturalism: News about minority experience often comes packaged in the first person singular. (57)

According to Frederick Crews, chair of the English Department at University of California at Berkeley, "This swerve into the autobiographical mode indicates the exhaustion of the dominant critical idiom" (qtd. in Begley 57). However it may be that this "swerve into the autobiographical" indicates a new kind of critical idiom—the inclusion of the first person singular, perhaps a recognition that the author of texts is allowed to be an internal critic of their own work. The drive toward autobiography, toward allowing or inviting into the academy voices that are not sanctioned, official, or approved is surely a political challenge. This recent trend toward autobiographical writing raises a variety of interesting questions about what has been deemed public writing versus that which is assumed to be private writing.

Women's Private and Public Writing. Historically, the public realm has been populated by men, and the personal realm, the "private sphere," as it has been called,

has been consigned to women. More directly, women have been assigned to it. As Cheryl Glenn, historian of female rhetoricians writes: "For the past 2500 years in Western culture, the ideal woman has been disciplined by cultural codes that require a closed mouth (silence), a closed body (chastity), and an enclosed life (domestic confinement)" (180). Women have been relegated to that which is private, men to that which is public. So too in the academy, the relatively tidy lines between public and private modes of discourse have been drawn and kept in place. The public realm is where the "important" or "scholarly" writing is presented, catalogued, held as models, and discussed. And, of course, the public realm has been largely closed off to women. Consequently writing done outside of the public realm, writing by women, and therefore from within the private realm, is considered unimportant. Scholarly challenges to these tidy lines—with their powerful political implications—began to accelerate by about 1987.

In "Diaries: Public and Private Records of Women's Lives," Suzanne Bunkers shows that "women's diaries, journals, letters, and memoirs. . . . came to be labeled 'private writings'. . . relegating them to what was judged 'woman's sphere'—the private realm rather than the public realm" (17). However, Bunker's close historical examination of women's personal writing from Midwestern diarists leads her to conclude that most letters, memoirs, and diaries were not intended to be strictly private. In fact, many were meant to be passed on and preserved as historical legacies. The work of scholars such as Bunker helps us to see the political significance of bringing women's informal, personal, autobiographical writing into the public sphere. Such scholarship also raises important questions about the ways in which the issue of privacy may have been used to keep marginalized voices such as women's out of public discourse.

In "Expanding the Boundaries of Criticism: The Diary as Female Autobiography," Judy Lensink states that "the diary is emerging as a female text" (40). Lensink's article

raises some of the basic issues about this important area of scholarship, and shows some of the links between women's issues, autobiography, and the canon. "[T]he diary is resisted," she writes, "because in both form and content it comes closest to a female version of autobiography" (40). She continues: "The narrative of an American life that is both female *and* ordinary, the diary remains marginal." She calls for us as readers to allow women's diaries to tell women's stories in their own forms, not as unformed or unpolished, or "deficient" autobiographies, but as "a coherent world formed by the writer's perceptions" (42).

Carolyn Heilbrun's *Writing a Woman's Life* adds yet another dimension to the discussion: *Should* women write publicly rather than privately? Do we have an obligation to reach out to one another publicly, on paper? Much like Lensink, Heilbrun implores us to take a fresh and critical look at the narratives or stories by which we, as women, write, define, measure, and evaluate our lives. Not only should we read women's lives differently, more openly and with more possible plots and story lines as frameworks, Heilbrun asks women to *write* more scripts from which other women can choose and live. She cites the life of famous women such as George Sand, noting the ways in which they publicly stretched our concepts of the scripts available for women's lives. Those that knew and loved George Sand found it impossible to describe her. There was no model or script which her life followed, no story or vocabulary available to describe what it is like to encounter a woman who has decided to define herself. There was no public vocabulary available to describe the shape of Sand's life. Heilbrun implores us to take our place in the culture writ large, coming out of our diaries and into the public domain.

My own commitment as a scholar is to allowing women to define themselves, to write themselves, which necessarily recognizes the unique role of privacy in many women's exploration of their selves in writing. However, that does not preclude sharing our writing, our scripts. Heilbrun's message for women to live their lives

publicly is a powerful complement to the importance of privacy. By living our varied scripts publicly, we offer role models for other women looking for other possibilities for their own lives. Like Lensink, Heilbrun implores us to see women's lives as something integral in and of themselves without the traditional temptation to romanticize. Through learning to read and write women's lives with more and varied plots or scripts in mind, we can help women be the many people we are, rather than suffering as women like Emily Dickinson, Alice James, and Virginia Woolf did. Heilbrun asks us to resist defining women in any way—neither by what women are or are supposed to be, nor by the endless varieties in which we are "different" from the accepted, available scripts. Heilbrun's vision or goal is for women to have an endless array of plots by which to live and evaluate their lives. With more alternatives that have been publicly legitimized for women's lives and public identity, the dissonance and pain that many "different" women feel would diminish. In order to do this, women need more scripts, and importantly—they need to live those scripts in the public sphere.

Shari Benstock solicited a collection of essays which further complicates the discussion of women's private writing, publishing the volume in 1988 as *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*. Benstock's own essay, "Authorizing the Autobiographical," shows the difficulty of the autobiographical task. If one is supposed to be an authority on the subject of self, how then must one position one's self in order to reflect? She positions the autobiographical act as a space between the self and society, a kind of seam or crack, a "gap that the drive toward unity of self can never entirely close"(12). Benstock argues that "It is also the space of writing, which bears the marks and registers the alienating effects" of such a gap (12). Citing Virginia Woolf as an example, Benstock feels that when it came to writing about her own life, Woolf was impaired because she had no place to position herself from which she could claim any authority to define herself. This "gap" is unhealable, unmendable. Woolf's attempt to write her life only served to subject her to that most

uncertain territory in her being, this unintegrated zone separating the public from the private, the personal from the social.

Benstock also asserts that the genre of autobiography has been fully co-opted by those who have the authority to define that genre publicly. Woolf's tragedy, Benstock implies, is that she was caught in that gap within which she felt no real authority to define herself. If men are the only ones who sanction the language, scripts, and the lenses through which we women reveal their life stories, then women may struggle with autobiographical writing. Because it is easy to internalize the sense of authority that the male-dominated world of public writing has imposed, women may struggle even when attempting to use language to privately define themselves. Though I disagree with Benstock's final analysis that autobiographical writing necessarily plays a dangerous role in a person's psyche, she raises important concerns and questions, and suggests some connections for other ways of looking at autobiography, genre, gender, and especially their relationship to issues of authority.

Conversely, another piece in Benstock's book, Nancy Walker's "'Wider Than the Sky': Public Presence and Private Self in Dickinson, James, and Woolf," is a celebration of this private space, this gap. For Walker, this place of private writing where we go to negotiate the distance between who we feel we are privately, and the roles that we are supposed to perform publicly, is a place of healing. Examining the writing of Dickinson, James, and Woolf, Walker explores the ways in which they each used writing to successfully release and explore the tension inherent in being a woman. All three remarkable women struggled with the ways in which they did not conform to traditional female roles. More starkly evident in their historical contexts was the inevitable presence of two selves, the public woman and the private woman. As Walker points out, each suffered from a nervous disorder resulting from an intense and frustrated desire to have more control over their lives. The private woman suffered from the public woman's lack of control over her life; the public woman was forced to

conform. For Woolf, James, and Dickinson, writing offered a place where those dualities and the ensuing self-dialogue could negotiate. These women suffered from a "gap" between their private and public selves; writing was a way out, not a place that was difficult and dangerous, as Benstock implies. For Walker, the issue was not whether the writing is done privately, or publicly, but that the very process of writing is an act of empowerment and self-definition.

Personal storytelling. Personal storytelling in all forms is presently changing the nature of scholarship. Within that broad category, previously unrecognized forms of autobiography are being studied. The reasons vary. For some, these writings provide important historical documents. For others, they offer a welcome challenge to the officially sanctioned, traditionally male-dominated body of scholarship of the academy in English, history, and anthropology departments. More often, autobiographical studies are encouraged in women's studies programs as they serve to give voice and legitimacy to women and our stories. Honoring and allowing people to tell their own stories is important for all persons, but it is especially vital for those who have been marginalized, made to feel less significant, or who continue to be defined by others. Most important to this discussion are the ways in which autobiographies in the form of personal journals allow women to take a creative rather than passive role in the shaping and expression of their own lives through the powerful, transformative act of writing.

3. USING PERSONAL JOURNAL WRITING TO ESTABLISH AUTHORITY

*This book is mine. Not to be possessed by me—
but to be celebrated. (1980)*

Introduction

While teaching freshman composition, I have been struck by the numerous comments that students have made when they are asked to write about their experiences. Students have learned to think of their young lives so far as insignificant, unimportant, or, the phrase I have heard the most, "not very interesting." Students learn to take a passive role in the shaping of their lives, following rules others have made, reading about "important people," and learning to say the right things so that they will be awarded power. My particular concern here is women, but issues of power and authority are relevant for male and female students. Writing is a way out of passivity. Private, personal journals offer a safe place where men and women alike can practice using language to express and explore their thoughts and feelings about themselves and their unique experiences of their lives.

Naming Our World: Applying the Philosophy of Georges Gusdorf

When we write we can explore the dark alleys of our minds, bring thoughts and feelings into a light where we can see them, and then through writing, we can transform those thoughts and feelings. We also write to keep track of our lives, to record, chronicle, to come back later and check on ourselves, or to see patterns that are too large, or sometimes too painful for us to perceive without the aid of writing. We pull out our inner world and reveal its landscape, and we map its changes. "In many ways,"

Joan Didion says, "writing is the act of saying *I*, of imposing oneself upon other people, of saying listen to me." Or as Didion says in the same frequently anthologized essay, "Why I Write": "I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means. What I want and what I fear." All of these are private, personal reasons for expressing on paper. But expression, in many ways, is a deeply social act, one that connects us with the world around us. Sometimes we write to simply declare our existence. Whatever our reasons—simple, complex, personal, or social—the human urge to express is strong.

French philosopher Georges Gusdorf is considered an existential phenomenologist. His work focuses on the fundamental nature of the human reality. Although more recently he has written about biography and autobiography, the work of Gusdorf that most interests me, and upon which part of this thesis rests, is a book he wrote early in his academic life. *Speaking [La Parole]* explores the fundamental urge of humans to express ourselves through the use of language. Gusdorf's own language could be offensive to feminists because he expresses things in what many of us consider aggressive terms; he also refers to humans as "man." Apart from the term "man," which is understandable considering that his essay was first published in 1953, Gusdorf's "masculine" terminology is refreshing because it makes no judgment, nor any apologies for this most basic need of humans—to speak, to assert ourselves into the world, to claim territory. That territory is not land, nor is it gained at the expense of another; rather it is the assertive effort to claim one's existence as one's own. Gusdorf's message is one that can be applied to feminist goals as women learn to honor the human impulse to impose ourselves upon the world—privately in their journals, as well as publicly with others.

In *Speaking [La Parole]*, Gusdorf carefully outlines the fundamental need for humans to use language to define their world and its meaning in their own terms. According to Gusdorf, language is not merely a reflection of what we think and feel; it

creates thoughts and feelings through its structuring of reality: "The use of language creates for us beyond the present an enduring nature fit to explain the past and determine the future" (37). The use of language provides a way to take control over the shape of one's life and one's sense of self. It allows us to assign our own terms and meanings to the world around us. Defining ourselves and our world is essential for a fully creative, self-empowered human existence. Otherwise, Gusdorf asserts, we will be defined by others, even within ourselves. If a person does not actively discover and define his or her own terms or language, then other people's language "inserts itself into the self-consciousness of each man as a screen that distorts him in his own eyes" (43).

Expressing things in our own terms, defining, "speaking," is so important that it defines the human existence: it is how we live. In a discussion about the absolute importance of naming the world in our own terms, Gusdorf provides evidence for his argument by showing what happens when people do not feel this freedom:

In fact, the life of the mind ordinarily begins not with the acquisition of language, but with revolt against language once it is acquired. The child discovers the world through the established language, which those around him prescribe for him. The adolescent discovers values in the *revolt* against the language he had until then blindly trusted and which seems to him, in the light of the crisis, destitute of all authenticity. (40)

Stripped of the freedom to name the world ourselves, we will either rebel, or we will find private ways of expressing. In these situations, people create private languages which offer a sense of power and authenticity to this fundamental need: to express. Women have turned to private writing for such reasons.

In this discussion on Gusdorf's linguistic philosophy and its application to my thesis, the term "speaking" is defined as the use of language, even internally as self-talk. I will not attempt to harness all of the ways in which we use language, for that would defeat my purpose entirely; it is not for me to decide for others how they express themselves, only to establish that the act of expressing through the use of language is fundamentally human. "Speaking" is the very act of defining the world, of naming

things, of obtaining the distance to name something, to abstract it. This is the "assertion," because we decide what something is, we name it, then we decide, as Didion says, "what it means." We do not live in the world as other animals do, reacting to immediate sensations, desires, and fears, nor do we live in a world that we create—only a world that we humans name, an act almost as powerful:

Properly speaking, language does not create the world; objectively the world is already there. The power of language however, is to constitute, where incoherent sensations leave off, a universe to the measure of man. Each individual who comes into the world resumes for himself that labor of the human species, essential to it from its inception. To come into the world is to begin speaking, (*prendre la parole*), to transfigure experience into discourse. (Gusdorf 9)

Thus, to "constitute. . . a universe" takes on a power almost equal to the original creation. Through language, each of us makes the world according to our terms. Returning to Didion—we write to see what we think and what it means *to us*. Through language, we are constructing our world, ordering it, giving it meaning, encoding, decoding. "Language," writes Gusdorf, "is the being of man carried to self-awareness—the overture to transcendence" (10).

In effect then, as the creation myth clearly illustrates, by naming our worlds in our terms, we establish ourselves as the gods and goddesses of our own worlds. "For each of us language accompanies the creation of the world—it is the agent of that creation" (Gusdorf 39). Naming things give them a kind of magic for the namer. According to many religions names are magic, and those that give them and use them, in effect, appropriate or control that which is named. "The gods themselves, Gusdorf writes, "are helpless before the power of whoever calls them by their names" (12). As Gusdorf notes: "The great religions all make room for a doctrine of the divine Word in the establishment of reality" (13).

Speaking, as defined by Gusdorf, is our way of using language to claim our individual existence. Taken a step further, Gusdorf illuminates the unique power of writing. Of the printed word, he writes:

It exerts its influence on the very structure of consciousness. The man who reads and writes is no longer the same man who owes his inclusion in humanity to speech alone. . . .Speech is a captive of a situation. . . . In contrast, writing provides distance. It removes the reader from the enchantment of the present. It removes him from fleshly presence to spiritual presence, from massive actuality filled with feeling to a more abstracted actuality, no longer based on the event but now based on thought. (114)

Writing allows us to externalize what which holds us captive inside us, to look at it, define it, and through our naming of it, to take possession of it. Writing allows us to reflect, to ponder, to change our mind, to rewrite the world. Through writing, we claim our authority. Through writing, speech

manifests the transcendent power of man who, by inserting himself in the world, gives meaning to himself and to the world. It is this major task in which each personality manifests what it is capable of: its creative power or its inability to pass from mental confusion to human reality, from the chaos of impressions, things, and values to the fundamental unity of mature affirmation. (Gusdorf 46)

Writing gives order to our universe, and importantly, it is an order of our own making. One of the most fundamental roles that writing plays as an act of expression is to declare our mere existence. Graffiti on building walls, trees and bathroom stalls, traces of our urge to express abound; sometimes we simply want to say *I was here*. Gusdorf says that: "Expression is the act of man establishing himself in the world, in other words, adding himself to the world" (71). Expressing through writing is a simple, yet deeply comforting act. It allows us to hear our own voice, see, feel, assert our existence, and thus feel a part of the world. In Gusdorf's words,

It is the duty of each of us to so create his own balance, or to recover it, bringing his inner resources into play when the balance is upset. Language, by erupting toward the stars, thereby allows us to come down to earth. It has the power to re-establish us if we are abruptly cut off from our usual securities. Such is the function

of the least elaborated speech in which expression takes place in a pure state, independently of all discursive intelligibility. All the different kinds of cry, howl, exclamation, interjection, and oath are attempts to adapt the self to a world that is slipping away. (71-2)

Simply declaring our existence is an act of affirmation. "Expression," writes Gusdorf, "is a kind of exorcism because it crystallizes the resolve not to let go" (73).

Why Women?

I'm reading books by and about women. It seems a natural step in my growth. (1980)

Marginalization and disempowerment are not unique to women. Gusdorf establishes this need to use language to name our world as a fundamentally human need; men too require varied avenues for authentic expression. To appropriately complicate this discussion, it must also be said that women exist in many contexts; marginalization, or the inability to control one's environment, is only a factor in certain contexts of women's complex lives. Each of us experiences times when we are the ones who are naming and defining our worlds, but at times, each of us experiences times when others are naming and defining our worlds for us. The result is our sense of being silenced.

I have chosen to focus on women for two main reasons: I am a woman, and women represent half of the population, the largest single grouping of marginalized people. Because I am a woman, I have sought out the writing of other women. I have also examined my own writing in light of both my gender and the ways in which gender has informed my sense of self in the world. No matter what social or economic class we could study, women make up half—usually the lower half. Examining this as a women's issue makes sense, though it by no means excludes others. As the thread of Gusdorf's philosophy shows, the thread that binds this work together, the need to express and to use language to connect with the human community is human.

However, my woman-self reaches out most naturally to other women; women's stories interest me most.

Role and Importance of Privacy

*Enter the cozy room.
Sit down, feet up. You are free here
to think aloud. (1989)*

In writing classes when I ask my students to do in-class writing, they always ask, "Are you going to read this?" They need to know who they are writing for, how much freedom they really have. Privacy plays a key role in the success of my own journal writing process. When I am writing in my private journal, I write with a certain abandon that is unique to any other form of expression in my life. A private, personal journal offers the most useful venue for expression and self-definition. In my personal journals I not only have the benefits of speaking, of naming my world, I have the distance and order that writing gives to that process. I also have the added dimension of privacy.

Carolyn Heilbrun writes, "Women writing their own lives have found it easier to detach themselves from the bonds of womanly attitudes" (22). Heilbrun implicitly challenges many aspects of privacy by stressing public writing. She asks that women share with other women, particularly young women, their public lives and working relationships. Heilbrun also asks that female academics take their ideas about women out of the academy, making them available to the broader female community. Heilbrun's perspective could raise the question of the value and legitimacy of women's private writing. From a feminist point of view, privacy can be likened to isolation, and isolation to oppression. However, privacy can also be experienced as freedom. Women still feel a need to protect themselves from various forms of physical invasion and intellectual co-option. We are still learning to define ourselves rather than accept being defined by others, and the privacy of a journal can be a life-saver.

I am taken by Heilbrun's message to share our scripts with other women. We must first "come out" to ourselves, must see our own thoughts and feelings, must develop that sense of authority that gives our lives our signatures. Writing our own narratives can most effectively begin in our private journals where our free and ultimate authority is unchallenged, therefore, has room to take root. It is this authenticity that women may achieve for themselves by stripping the guises, or at least so complicating that it is impossible to define "woman." I doubt whether Heilbrun indeed advocates giving up the privacy of one's journal; it is with ourselves that we must first learn to take authorship. This is why privacy is important.

In "Some Myths About Diaries," Lawrence Rosenwald argues that "the notion that diaries are necessarily private is simply false" (98). Using the diaries of New England Puritans, as well as transcendentalists such as Emerson and Thoreau, Rosenwald determines that in fact people write with some audience in mind, even if it is only a few people with whom the author is going to selectively share entries. "Although some diarists of course neither read other diaries nor reveal their own, few, presumably, take the one step that can keep them private *in aeternum*, that of destroying them" (Rosenwald 98). As scholars like Linsink, Rosenwald, and Walker have noted, there is a tension that exists between the public and the private. Perhaps we always have some "other" in mind when we write?

I have detected in myself a deep desire to someday use what I have learned in my journal for the benefit of others. Perhaps hoping that somewhere in my journals are words, feelings, thoughts, and experiences recorded that may help comfort or teach someone else is a way of guaranteeing that my life has been useful. What is key to me is that I am in control of what I choose to share. Only that which I authorize will become public.

Sharing my Journals. Over the fifteen years that I have kept journals, I have come to experience the book as an actual place, a (private) extension of my interior world: *my*

trusty home in a dynamic unstable world (1989). I yearn for a place to express myself freely: I hope this really is free expression—someplace unedited (1987). I needed a place where I was sure I had no audience, no one to judge me, no one to please, no one to offend, a place where I could privately explore my own thoughts and feelings: I pray these delicate thoughts don't get beyond this book. I have so much exploring to do. And I don't feel I can talk to anyone. Actually, it's all so tender, I don't want to talk to anyone (1986).

I need strict privacy in my journal writing process. A series of entries following an event in 1988 that painfully heightened that awareness. After my journal had been read by a jealous lover, I was devastated:

Ever since R. read some of my journal last fall, I haven't really felt comfortable exposing my deepest feelings in here. It is so destructive to hold them in. What a violation that is. It felt like rape, and I continue to resent it (6-10-89).

Am I really alone? Is anyone looking over my shoulder? (7-23-90)

My trusty journal. Am I really safe here? Burned once is way too many. It makes it so hard for me to relax here. And if I can't relax here. . . then where? Where do I retreat? Into my mind only? Its dark and windy roads rarely lead to clarity without help (9-17-90).

I wish I could be SURE that I had privacy in here—a person should be allowed that privilege (10-16-91).

I will write then bind this tightly with a band around it, begging for privacy. I must confide somewhere! (10-16-91)

Tonight I feel a little freer in here than usual. . . I love having my journal. Sometimes I meet people who don't have one and I can't imagine it! It seems like psychic and emotional constipation not to let it all out—somewhere, somewhere outside of the mind (11-10-91).

I'm still so frightened that my journal will get read. My dear R. has no idea what he has done to me in this way. A person should be able to keep a private journal. Him reading my journal (twice) plants him in here as a permanent audience member. So it's all different. I feel like, integrity-wise, it's good for me to be honest in here--it's good for me. If I censor myself in here, then where am I honest with myself? (2-1-92)

R. You SHIT. Once more, my refuge, my privacy INVADED.

You are a corrupt government. You have raped me three times now, and you will never be in a position to invade my privacy again (2-27-92).

At this point I had left the relationship, and began the slow process of rebuilding my sense of security that my journal was private:

One really BAD thing is how self-conscious I am in here, because of R. reading my journal, several times. No more. Too bad. I don't care. If someone wants to dare invade my privacy, you lose my trust, so carry on--we are not meant to be together, for whatever reason. So I am going to blurt out whatever NONSENSE I feel like. It's your problem, whoever you are, if you read this and make "SENSE" of it. It doesn't need to make sense to me (2-28-92).

I'm still feeling burned by R. reading my journals, so I'm not writing in here as honestly or freely. It's SAD (2-29-92).

*I feel wounded.
I can't freely write in here.
It's not my playground anymore.
I've no refuge but my mind (3-14-92).*

*OK, so chances are, someday (soon) I'll look at this entry and "GET IT IN PERSPECTIVE." So what?!!! A piece of me entertaining these thoughts, so out they come. In a way, the more absurd, the more I want to record, or release them.
Look how I justify my journal now!
GET OUT! (3-16-92)*

Even though I was feeling more confident that my privacy would not be invaded, it is clear that I had implanted a sense of audience in my journal, and had begun to feel I had to explain, justify, please others in my personal journal. I had a sense that there was someone else in my house, and I could not relax and let down my guard. I moved in and out of the feeling of freedom that privacy allows, and gradually, did come to trust that I was alone:

More consolation in my journal. My journal (3-31-92).

My journal life is still impaired. Sad there is not peace for me here yet, again. I am drawn to it nonetheless. It is well worth the effort (9-24-92).

It's a relief to have somewhere to express that's confidential. I don't want to hurt anyone with my thoughts and feelings. I

suppose it's always a risk if one lets their feelings and thoughts out at all (9-25-92).

*I'm starting to take refuge in here again. Here, once more, it is safe.
(2-18-92)*

The most important function the journal serves for me is a place where I can use language to see what I am thinking and feeling. The journal is a place outside of my mind with its "dark and windy roads." Without free access to my mind through journal writing, I could not really be honest with myself, because the agility of a person's mind and ego can evade the truth at times. As Gusdorf says in *Speaking*, writing stabilizes reality. *Writing in my journal when I'm upset is hard for me. Trying to dodge the intensity of the pain, I avert such confrontive activities. But here I am. And I think it would be good for me (1990).* It is not always easy to face things in writing, but it is important to have that tool available when we need to look directly at something in our lives or psyches. As Gusdorf writes: "The advent of the word manifests the sovereignty of man. Man interposes a network of words between the world and himself and thereby becomes the master of the world" (7). Privacy allows the author to use language to construct her own reality, to establish an authentic sense of authority.

Exploring, Sorting

*As always, I want to use my journal to crack my secret code.
What makes me, me? What stops me from changing in the ways I
desire? What is within my power to change? (1989)*

As "master of the world" in my journal, I can decide how it serves me. The freedom of a journal allows for any form of expression. Although I sometimes use my journal as a record, as the next section will explore, more often than not, I write for the process itself, for the sheer freedom and insight I find in free and private writing. Sometimes, as the following entries show, I need a free and private place to sort things out:

It's so nice to be able to draw in here again. . . . I haven't felt the luxury or peace of mind to draw in here because I have needed this [journal] to sort through the details of an extremely upsetting, chaotic existence, or period of time anyway. (1988)

There are many uses of a journal, mostly they are all sheer expression and sorting. This is a sorting out of my schedule, which right now is driving me crazy. (1993)

It may seem obvious, using the journal to pull things out of your crowded mind in order to sort them, but I have found in discussions with women that many feel a vague need to please others even in the privacy of their journals. Therefore they are impaired because, like my students, they feel that their entries must be "interesting" to others.

In addition to feeling a sense of audience, whether through invasion of privacy or feeling a need to please others, another common obstacle for potential diarists is that many people simply do not know how to actually use a journal. Because private writing is by nature, private, it is difficult for people to learn by examples or models. Effective journaling is a craft which becomes most useful through experimentation, practice, and instruction. Like any art, freedom of expression is the goal, but skill and technique aid in accomplishing that goal. I have not always felt a sense of ease and control in my journal, and often was uninspired or frustrated when I approached journal writing. Taking a class from a community college on personal journal writing was my first step in gaining a sense of freedom and creativity in my journal.

Learning to Use the Tool: Two Sources

Oh. . . frustration. I don't know where to begin. I want to write in a journal, but I don't know how. (1984)

With the recent focus on the personal voice in scholarship, and increasing attention to varied forms of autobiography, more literature is available that teaches journal writing techniques. Some of the work out is geared toward all potential diarists; others focus on the parallels between the benefits of private writing for increasing one's sense

of authority in one's life, and the experience of being a woman. The most important lesson that new diarists learn is the diary is there for them—there are no rules.

I think when people say to me, "Oh, you keep a journal. I admire that; it takes so much time!" they must imagine something other than what I do. . . . My journal is not a demand because I use it to serve me, and it serves as an outlet, a friend, a therapeutic tool. It's for NOW mostly, not for someday to look back on. (1993)

Many do not feel this freedom and take with us into our diaries the ropes, chains, and shame with which society has shackled us good and not-so-good girls. Assuming a set of imposed rules, women are sometimes uncomfortable when they don't know what they are "supposed" to do: the idea of absolute freedom doesn't occur to many. If we do not know what is expected of us, we cannot obey and please, so we end up anxious, confused, or discouraged. Starting with taking charge of the form of the diary, we can practice walking into a world of our own making.

According to Tristine Rainer, in *The New Diary*: "The diary is the only form of writing that encourages total freedom of expression. Because of its very private nature, it has remained immune to any formal rules of content, structure, or style" (11). In the preface, Anaïs Nin writes:

Diary writing has become an increasingly popular activity. To answer a need for more knowledge about it I taught a course with my friend Tristine Rainer, who had been studying the diary for many years. We taught the diary as an exercise in creative will; as an exercise in synthesis; as a means to create a world according to our wishes, not those of others; as a means of creating the self, of giving birth to ourselves. (9)

Tracing her interest in the diary back to her years as a graduate student, Rainer states her intentions in writing the book: "I felt a calling to become an environmentalist of the mind. I wanted above all to proclaim and defend the diary's wilderness beauty" (11).

The New Diary is based partly on the courses which Rainer taught with Nin for UCLA's Women's Studies Program, and on her own courses in the English Department at the University of Indiana. *The New Diary* is mostly devoted to technique, for Rainer

wanted, above all, to help diarists actively stake out their own free environment by *using* the diary. Weaving together the work of Carl Jung, Marion Milner, Ira Progoff, and Anaïs Nin, Rainer offers perspectives, tools, as well as permission for individuals to "reflect calmly upon knowledge that comes from within" (21). As Rainer says, "You cannot do it wrong" (29). Simple words, but a message many of us good girls need to hear.

Rainer's choice to devote her scholarship to teaching people how to do private writing surfaces the tension between private and public writing. Rainer suspects "that the rich legacy of insight and information that has contributed to this book merely begins to tap a great river of knowledge that has been submerged for centuries and is just beginning to surface" (13). Writing that is considered private raises many political questions regarding the ways in which privacy can go in tandem with isolation. Encouraging privacy can be a tool for oppression. However, as Rainer notes, privacy and isolation do not necessarily need to be linked:

Individually, we diarists had been limited by secrecy and isolation. But in sharing our secrets and openly admitting our need for private space in our lives, we recognized that we were part of a worldwide phenomenon I have come to call the New Diary. The New Diary is not a system of rules on journal writing; it is an expanding new field of knowledge to be shared. (Rainer 13)

By exploring and honoring each other's need for privacy, we are helping one another establish authority in the writing of our own lives.

Rainer documents the ways in which the form of the diary has changed. Many people still think of a diary as something cumbersome, a chore involving recording events and dutifully filling pages for each day of the year. However, journal writing has changed into a self-empowering, creative process which reflects our current understanding of "modern psychology's recognition of the subconscious, the free experimentation of contemporary art and writing, and the recent popularization of certain psychological insights and concepts of personal responsibility" (Rainer 17).

Gusdorf writes that "The decision to express marks the difference between eating one's heart out and creative activity" (73). Through the use of personal journals, one can become an entirely active creative agent in the ongoing shaping of one's self.

Originally titled *Word Play/Word Power: A Woman's Personal Growth Workbook*, Kimberly Snow's work provides more evidence that women's studies, current work in the field of composition, and women's use of private journals are merging to create what could be seen as a new branch of feminism. This branch of feminism "made us realize that our perceptions count, and that we must choose our own words for naming, our own methods for expression" (14).

Retitled as *Writing Yourself Home: A Woman's Guided Journey of Self Discovery*, the book reflects Snow's experiences teaching women's studies and writing courses at the University of California, Santa Cruz. The book is divided into three sections: "Writing About Writing"; "Writing About Women"; and "Utilizing Your Writing." The main section, "Writing About Women," includes over seventy passages from authors such as Margaret Atwood, Betty Friedan, Alice Walker, Doris Lessing Marge Piercy, Toni Morrison, Susan Sontag, and Sylvia Plath which provide models and points of departures from which women writers can explore issues about themselves.

Besides being a book about process and self-discovery, *Writing Yourself Home* is also a contribution to the growing chorus of women's emerging voices in public writing. The last section takes private journal writers through exercises which help them translate private writing into public writing—personal experience into fiction, for example. In this section, Snow encourages women to think about themselves as public writers, and she includes a list of resources for those interested in publishing. Through her work, Snow hopes to show women that their lives, thoughts, and feelings are not only worth exploring privately, they are worth sharing publicly as well. "In the past two years the feminine side of our culture has developed its own literary voice, reporting experiences previously excluded from what had been defined and taught as

literature" (Snow 14). Heilbrun's concern that feminist scholars should do work which reaches and helps the majority of women, most of whom, of course, are outside of the academy, should be addressed by the focus of Snow's work. "The new writers are you and me, Adrienne Rich and the waitress who spends an hour with her journal each night" (Snow 14). Although it could be used as a text for English or Women's Studies courses, the book is designed to be useful to any woman interested in exploring and sharing her sense of self through her writing.

Journal writing is the perfect act of self-creation, for it allows for a continuous, dynamic transformation of our self. Through our journals we can face ourselves as honestly as is possible. We can move and stretch freely with language. We can sort things out. Composing ourselves in our journals allows us to name our world, to see what we think, to assign our own meaning to things, and to change our minds time and time again. Gusdorf writes that "It is words that make things and beings, that define the relations according to which the order of the world is constituted. To situate oneself in the world, for each of us, is to be at peace with the network of words that puts everything in its place in the environment" (39). With the creativity and power that personal journals can offer, private writing establishes us as the authors of our lives.

4. JOURNALS AS RECORDS AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Talking with my old friend, Ruby, age one hundred and one (!), has made me aware of the importance of a journal or diary. She kept none, and her memory is vague. So much is lost. (1992)

Introduction

When we write, we commit our thoughts and feelings to a realm which allows us to inspect them later, to ponder them, to see anew that which we were. Recording the ways in which we lived and sorted through our changing and unique lives also opens the potential for sharing those lives with others. If we make our diaries available in some form to other women, we give them sisters, describing their lives as women — intimately, and indelibly, as only writing can do. "The role of speech keeps shrinking," writes Gusdorf, "while the printed word endlessly increases the possibility of communication between men" (114).

Personal Journals as Records

I need to write. . . . It should be in here, because as time goes by, I will continue to learn from what I was feeling today. (1989)

The outdated image of a diary as a place to record events described by Rainer reminds us of how much the genre has changed. However, the freedom to use one's journal in various and creative ways does not preclude its use as a record. Having a record of dates, events, and perceptions empowers us to continue to learn from our experiences, and it helps us be honest with ourselves, also an empowering process. When we can look things up in our journal, we of course, discover not necessarily just what happened, but what we thought was happening, as well as how we saw and experienced these "events."

Sometimes we can record objective facts about our changing lives. For example, because of my time spent with Ruby, who lived to a hundred and two, I am more careful to jot things down "for the record"—lists of events, when I have moved, when I began and ended relationships—the structural frame of my life that contextualizes the other entries. The entries that simply record are infrequent and often are merely like a list of dates and events, but they help me continue to make meaning of my life and further open the possibility of sharing that meaning with others:

Thoughts after reading Revelations, passages from a woman in her eighties. I spend the majority of my thoughts just watching and learning about myself—it's no wonder that people write autobiographies. Each life is unique and fascinating, reflecting the world around them, its changes, conflicts, paradoxes . (1980).

No matter what I am feeling or doing, writing it down will inform me later, and will help me navigate through my life in a manner that I consciously choose:

I am going to intervene in this entry to jot down a few things that I don't want to forget. (1980)

I really must somehow record a drastic changing of my perceptions, as experience takes its toll on my attitudes. (1982).

Right now I'm just too damn lazy to write as much as I'd like to. I feel some funny obligation to catch the journal up on the changes, as if I shouldn't leave it in this unanswered state of anxiety. It's for me. For some reason, it is important for me to keep track of this whole situation. (1988)

We have made yet another revolution around the sun. As we take note of the passage of time and of our participation in the natural cycles, we look at how we are using that time. (1990)

There is something very comforting about watching your life unfold and roll along in time. Recording provides us with a sense of order and continuity.

Recording also allows us to be honest with ourselves, either about what actually happened, or what we felt about what was happening. Records provide us with ways of checking up on ourselves. Pride and self-deception can make our memories become vague or distorted:

I think it's important to be honest with oneself. I have been surprised so many times upon reading my journal: I [had] changed the past in my mind! I caught myself, thanks to this habit-compulsion passion of journal-keeping. (1992)

Because I was able to see what I had really been feeling in the past, I was better able to respond honestly and wisely to what was happening in the present. Understanding, honesty, insight, the ability to honor and be a creative force in one's life are all intertwined with personal power. Personal journal writing is a tool for gaining each of these.

Private Journals as Autobiography: Sharing Our Stories

Our lives are really so private. They intersect one another, but we so rarely see how a person's life evolved. What brought them up to the moment in time that we see them, and where do they go? (1987)

Private writing can be one of the most powerful genres, but we can read only that writing which is available to us publicly. Realistically, people's choices to keep their writing private or to make them public are often products of unanticipated circumstances by the writer. So, there are times, of course, when we are reading things that the author actually fully intended to be private. Many times, however, as Rosenwald suggests, one must suppose that if a woman does not destroy her diaries, or ask for them to be destroyed upon her death, that she intends for them to become public in some way. This could mean that the women wanted to share them with their daughters, other children, or leave them as a legacy for grandchildren. Or it could mean that the author intended them to become part of their community's historical records. When people's private writing becomes part of the public domain, it is a gift.

As much as we need to reflect and record in the privacy of our own journal, we are endlessly interested in the lives of others—how they lived, what happened to them, and how they felt. What is most exciting is to listen to them describe their own thoughts an

feelings, especially those explored privately. Reading other women's journals provided me with the sisters for which I longed.

Lyn Lifshin's collection of diaries was solicited by her from hundreds of women who consciously chose to share their personal, private writing. Inspired by an exhibit of self-photos, *Ariadne's Thread* provides a view of how other women live and how they write about their lives privately. Again, the tension between private and public surfaces as we watch women choose to make public that which was intended as private writing. Lifshin solicited answers to questions about the writer's feelings and thoughts on issues such as privacy. Her questions ranged from whether women had thoughts of someday publishing their diaries when they write, to asking whether there were things so private that they didn't even dare commit them to paper at all. The range of answers covers the spectrum from those that couldn't send any entries in for publication because that is not what they were ever intended for, to those that felt "they had absolutely no sense of wanting to keep anything secret" (Lifshin 17). Most were somewhere in between, and either found enigmatic ways to express things that they wouldn't want an unexpected reader to find, or carefully edited what they sent in for publication. What is key is that the choice to go public was made by each writer's personal authority. Further, the choice to make their private writing public reflects both a sense of honoring and valuing their own unique lives, as well as the generosity of spirit that causes us to reach out and share our private writing with other women. "In many ways," Lifshin writes, "these selections have expanded truths outside of myself for me, have helped me to say yes, helped me to know someone went through this, felt that, and survived" (18). Sharing our private writing can be a way of offering ourselves as sisters to other women who may feel, as I did, that they are growing up alone.

Privacy is key for absolutely free expression; sharing is key for breaking isolation and assisting other women in their understanding and comfort with themselves as women. "I have read many moving lives of women," Carolyn Hielbrun writes, "but

they are painful, the price is high, the anxiety is intense, because there is no script to follow, no story portraying how one is to act, let alone any alternative stories" (39). Through fiction, poetry, essays, and diaries, women can open up new possibilities for one another, write new scripts for the ways in which we can negotiate our way through this life as women.

Similarly, Susan Moffat and Charlotte Painter set out to examine women's diaries in order to see the inner worlds of women—as reported by themselves. *Revelations* is a collection of entries from the diaries of thirty-two women, most of them famous as writers; all of the diaries were previously published in one form or another. Moffat and Painter originally intended to write a book which attempted to define the diary as a literary art form, as well as establish a sense of the inner lives of women. What they found was a body of writing "that is so vast and varied the many shelves of anthologies would not exhaust the subject" (Moffat 1). Moffat and Painter found that despite how diverse were the lives of women, there was a thread of commonality:

What united these disparate lives for us was what we heard as an unconscious call by the women for redefinition of these concepts [love, work, and power] into a less divisive more organic pattern for existence, one where their capacities for both love and work blend, allowing them to be fully human and balanced, true to the power of their individual natures. (2)

Moffat and Painter quote Freud when he had been asked what the normal person should be able to do: Love and work, was Freud's reply. *Revelations* became a project designed to help women blend these two great drives, allowing them to inform one another. All possibilities should be open: women can love their work. As with Heilbrun and Lifshin, Moffat and Painter are scholars who devote their work to opening up new scripts for women, more ways possible to live, interpret, and make meaning of our lives. Those that focus on women's private writing provide a particularly useful tool because not only do we look into other women's minds and hearts, we learn more about journal writing as a craft and tool. Both Lifshin and Moffat

and Painter's work suggest the richness of private writing, as well as the rising interest in this area of scholarship.

In order for writing to have meaning as an act of sharing, of course, one must have a reader. As Gusdorf notes, this often anonymous encounter is an intimate and powerful one:

To be sure, there is no greater human achievement than the understanding of two human beings in authenticity, the full communion of two living persons. But beyond these exceptional moments, writing, which allows one's depths to speak and which gives echoes the time to come into being, offers immense possibilities to the spiritual life. . . . But still, if writing is to take on all its meaning, it is necessary for the reader to be able to receive this gift which is given to him. In the final reckoning, everything depends on his openness and generosity. (Gusdorf 115)

I found my first "sisters" in *Revelations*. Their writing was a gift to me, and I opened to receive the private thoughts and feelings of these women. Part of the comfort and insight I gained from this first collection of women's journals was encountering the interior landscape of other human beings, but more importantly, it was hearing from women about what it was like for them as women. Ironically, from these women's public sharing, I learned the importance of private writing as well as the importance of sharing my private writing.

5. CONCLUSION

Language is not just a record of our thoughts; it is the very structuring of thought, and therefore, of meaning. Without language we are relegated to the simple reflexive gestures of other animals, reacting only to immediate stimuli and desires. As the ancient art of rhetoric displays, language is a powerful tool. Further, language connects us to others, then ultimately, back to ourselves. In James Olney's collection of essays, *Studies in Autography*, Gusdorf writes that :

An uttered word exposes the inner-most human recesses to inspection and judgment by others. Language, an outpouring of thought, is thought's externalized form, which once expressed is able to return to its point of departure. Thus, it becomes consciousness, an inner speech, man's discourse to himself, self debating with self, by virtue of which man's individual destiny is formed. (qtd. in Olney 113-14)

Studying and teaching people's use of language to explore their own experiences, thoughts, and sense of self in the world is a natural step in our efforts as scholars to liberate human's minds and voices. Writing takes this powerful tool a quantum step further. We have known for a long time that writing is a unique, critical tool in the learning process. Not only does it aid in helping us to come to terms with and recording our own stories, as Heilbrun reminds us, it allows us to leave our stories for others.

Many may agree with Heilbrun that biography is important for providing scripts by which we can live, but not everyone agrees that private, "personal," or autobiographical writing is worthy of serious scholarly attention. However, personal scholarship, that is, work that is primarily based on individuals' personal experiences, is receiving more attention in the academy.

Personal journal writing is becoming a field of interest for those who study writing, women's studies, autobiography, biography, and literature. More scholars are

recognizing the power of such a tool. A private, personal journal provides a unique outlet for self-expression, serves as a record of one's thoughts, feelings, and events, and provides an informal autobiography of the writer. In effect, this process legitimizes the lives of the people who use it. In addition, personal journal writing can be used as the basis for public writing such as fiction, poetry, or essay. The form of the diary is expanding to include techniques from our current understanding of psychology, dream work, studies about the subconscious, and techniques in the process of writing; it is also deepening our understanding of the experiences of those who feel marginalized.

The current debate about adding personal scholarship to those which are considered legitimate fields of study seems to be caused by a number of factors, many interrelated among themselves. Our society is changing as we both acknowledge our historical cultural diversity, and gain more members who come from very different societies. With this recognition comes a set of questions about how to incorporate diversity into political and educational structures that have, historically, had the power to ignore cultural differences.

No doubt, we are still receiving the effects of the social revolutions of the 1960s when African Americans such as Martin Luther King and Malcom X were able to effectively challenge the hegemony of the traditionally white, male, European-descended power structure. When there are big shifts in a field, it is hard to identify cause and effect; movements seem to be circular as one shift ripples out and causes others. Feminism, too, caused as well as benefited from the shifts in perspectives which cried out for recognition of the diversity within American society.

The role of the academy is to both reflect and lead society in its evolution of our human community. Because the academy suffers from the negative effects of the same pressures as any institution—entrenchment, conservatism, solipsism, stagnation, and isolation—keeping pace with society's changes is challenging. Providing leadership for society is even more difficult. Advances in technology and the shifting global

economy bring changes in the social, political, and cultural landscape; education, it seems, is feeling the ripples of all of these historical changes. And so too, must it evolve. The current trend toward receiving personal scholarship as valid is a sign of a positive shift in education, an adaptation to the changes in the world. These changes include both the content and the form of scholarship. As new voices become legitimized in these structures, they call for new forms of expression as well. And, they threaten to crowd out some of the established voices and forms to which the academy has grown accustomed, and upon which many academic institutions have been founded.

Scholars can use their academic research, stature, and voice to empower the increasingly diverse voices in our changing society. Women's uses of personal journals provide well-developed models that scholars can use to empower others for whom we are trying to provide tools for self-expression. By studying women's personal journal writing as tools for freedom, exploration, and autobiography, we learn uses of private writing that help all people—students in our classrooms who must establish their own sense of authority, their own voice in the academy—or, perhaps more significantly, members of the larger community, outside the academe altogether..

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

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APPENDIX B: COMPOSING MYSELF AS A WOMAN:
SHARING STORIES FROM MY JOURNALS

Women writing their own lives have found it easier to detach themselves from the bonds of womanly attitudes. (Heilbrun 22)

I have found that by writing and reading about being a woman, I am more able to decide for myself what "being a woman" means to me. As I moved through my adult life, both reading and writing in journals has helped me to sort through what it means to be assigned, or rather, to choose to adhere to characteristics of gender. I will probably be sorting through the fine points of these questions for the rest of my life, but what matters, again, is that I have the power to keep exploring it—writing, reading, and sharing offers me that. I will continue to define or compose myself, according to my own continually expanding awareness. I offer these entries to my sisters.

I'm reading a book called Revelations: Diaries of Women which is blowing me away--it's beautiful. Beautiful for me to share intimately, though one-way, with so many other women. To feel at one with them—to realize that in affect, I am them. It helps me greatly to get my own life in perspective. (2-13-80)

Today when we were at a McDonalds, there were a bunch of old ladies in there--it looked like an old folks home. I guess they gather there in the cold weather as opposed to park benches in the summer.--but when you're young it seems that you imagine that you will be different when you grow old--you know, somehow if you think about it enough, hang-on to some young, growthful active image of yourself--that you will somehow escape the wrath of decaying bodies and minds. (2-14-80)

It's amazing to me how pre-occupied I am with how I look. Sometimes, like a few minutes ago in the women's room of the pancake house we were in, I look in the mirror and just go ahead and give up--not in a negative way, but I really waste a lot of energy being dissatisfied with my looks--And it affects the way I act and feel during the day. (2-16-80)

We visited my grandmother in Kansas about a week ago--she's supposedly not going to be in that body much longer. . . I don't really know the woman, having only brief visits about six seven

times, and I didn't know what to say--decided to lend my support in silence--I'm glad I saw her--for a sort of closure. (4-5-80)

I'm reading The Women's Room, its very profound, insightfully disturbing. It tends to separate John and I right now--John feeling himself the proclaimed enemy --a man. (6-29-80)

I am still reading The Women's Room--feverishly--I can't seem to put it down for more than a few minutes, although it never really ends, the pages just stop--the book (by nature) has no beginning and no end, because it is the story of life, through a woman's eyes, heart, experience. I'm learning a lot, so so much. For a while it seemed to mess up my perception, ruffle my feathers I suppose, blow my picture of how "things are." It seems to mess up the balance of responsibility between men and women for the mess were all in. I need to read it again before I can regurgitate any of it here--I'm too busy ooohing and ahing to stop. I keep reading faster and faster. (7-1-80)

I'm reading a book called The Woman Alone--it's pretty good. I'm devouring books about and by women. It seems like a really natural step in my growth. (7-22-80)

I've been noticing how women won't look around at other drivers out on the highway as much as men will. Projecting myself, what I see is women being tired of men looking at THEM, and just try to ignore the fact that they might be in the grips of a man's stare. Sometimes when I'm driving along and I look over at a driver, I see a woman, trying not to look back, I assume she thinks it's a man staring, and I want to shout to her--"it's only me!" But then again, we've been separate from each other even when men weren't around. For instance, in the woman's room, woman try not to look at each other while they're tending to their vanity (hair, make-up. . .), pretending they don't see each other--acting ashamed, as we're taught, of wanting to look nice, good, appealing.

If a woman is fixing her hair, or looking in the mirror for any reason and I walk in, the proper polite thing to do is to pretend you don't see her, give her her privacy.

And even more surprising is how we hide our tampons and Kotex from each other--even when we're carrying the cardboard inserters out from the stall to the trash can, we hide them in our hands--denying something, denying that "DIRTY, DISGUSTING" habit of ours--menstruation. (7-24-80)

I didn't have enough time to think about what it might be like traveling all night and day with two people I've never met. It's definitely interesting. I've been doing so much reading, observing, and talking about women and their roles, expectations, etc. So here I am with two men, one twenty-two, one twenty-six, listening to phrases being dropped like "She's a real womanly woman, real feminine" (a friend of Mike's). And I watch myself react, get angry when I try to pursue that statement, and they quickly remind each other that that's dangerous territory with me. "I'm one of those

women," is what they didn't come out and say. I don't want my women's studies to stir up anger, separate me so sharply with half of the human beings I meet in my life. It's tough. I suppose I have my work cut out for me learning more to develop more compassion, awareness, understanding, and let the anger go--it's hard. (7-25-80)

A new little woman, her glistening strawberry blond hair blowing with the breeze as she tricycles down the sidewalk—bare-chested, her skin alive with the breeze and sun pouring over it. What could be more beautiful? (7-22-81)

Tonight at the dessert place . . . I looked up at the mirror at the end of the table.

I do struggle with that woman/girl—who is she? Some image of an older woman flashes through my mind as I glance at what happened to me to be a young boisterous near-adolescent: Prankster, humorous, athletic, playful, talkative, I lack certain elegance, grace, and beautiful calm in my style and presentation of self. (5-25-87)

I am reading A Woman on Paper: Letters Between Anita Pollitzer and Georgia O'Keefe. It is touching me deeply and I feel near to each of the two women. . . . In terms of the book I'm reading, it also inspires me to want to go off in search of a pen pal—a devoted and intimate one. . . . Mostly I like writing my most intimate feelings in here. (8-17-89)