

The Calgary Participator

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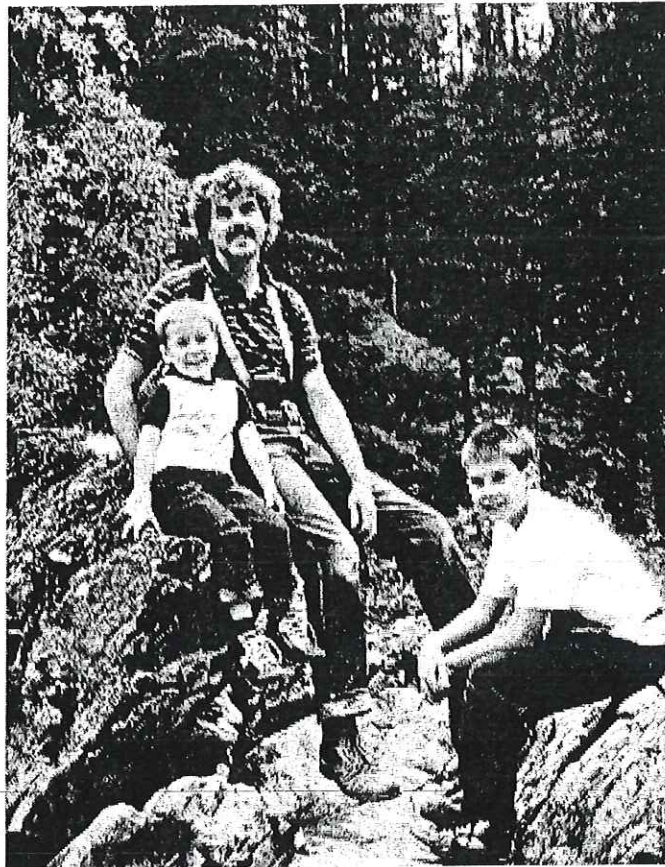


Summer 1992

Healing Men

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Steve Hall and sons, Benjamin (5) and Nathan (11).

Photo by Joanne Schultz Hall

Guest Editorial...

Men and Their Strange Attractions

Jon Amundson
Calgary, Canada



Chaos Theory provides us with yet another hard-science metaphor within which to ground the random thoughts of family therapy. Found in the lexicon of this new science is the concept of the *strange attractor*.

Strange attractors are anomalous features which emerge at the edge of dominant or stable systems and exert influence. Like a *new kid* on the block, they attract attention and have the potential to influence things around them, simply by their presence. The nature of the influence of a strange attractor, however, is often indeterminate, at least during inceptional

phases. Whether the something different, *the strange attraction*, represents or creates something different for the larger system, *and* the nature of such difference—is to a large extent unpredictable.

The *feminist critique* has existed as a strange attractor for society at large, and family therapy (FT) in particular. What is coming of this considerable force is yet to be completely determined but few in the FT field have been untouched. Recently, a number of us have been “strangely attracted” to one by-product of the women’s movement, the emerging issues for men. In having to face differences as a result of changing women, the newer **men’s movement** has ranged through agendas which are: (a) against or in symmetry to the women’s

movement; (b) attempts to cooperate with/participate in the women’s movement; or (c) focused exclusively upon men reclaiming their own lost or disowned masculinity.

Pseudo-Gender Equality:

With the civil rights movement, the question on the lips of many whites in the early 1960’s was, “Yes, but what about me?” As this social contingency, the demand for universality of civil rights—a “strange attractor”—began to pull at a previously dominant and stable social system, those most advantaged by

the *status quo* feared the marginalized group they had previously created. Too quickly, as “women got rights,” did men begin to assert their concerns with what this

might mean for them. “Special treatment,” “non-equal access,” “token,” and “quota” fears—fears about the potential loss of privilege—erupted. Yes, it is all well and good that women seek access to the market place but they: (a) better not get pregnant; (b) must only be satisfying a whim and leaving a *real breadwinner* out; (c) may degrade the quality of serious work; or, (d) might get more than they deserve. This reactionary posturing arose, in no small part, from the fears of what women would begin to believe and desire, not only in the world at large but in the bedroom at home. It revealed itself not only in men’s general anxiety about what equal rights would really mean, but in the formation of such patriarchal determined movements as *Father’s United*, *Parents’ Rights Groups*, and *Real Women*. Only recently, we see not only its proponents but the presumed solidari-

The feminist critique has existed as a strange attractor for society at large, and family therapy in particular.

ty of its position, in the remarks and attitudes of Bill Kapling made apparent by his response to Sheila Copps in the House of Commons; or *Fil Fraser*, by title, watchdog of human rights in Alberta, in his attribution of multi-cultural malaise to “uppity women” (*Calgary Sun*, Sunday, September 21, 1991). In many ways, this aspect of the *men’s agenda* might, in fact, be called the “old boys” movement.

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Genuine Concern Under Patriarchy:

As women's issues become more than just passing fancy or intellectual curiosity for men, a second wave of men in movement has been forthcoming. This has involved, a degree of participation in retribution and compassion for acknowledged wrongs. It has focused upon providing support for the goals of women by making these goals our own. In some ways, this was accomplished by: assum-

Feminism has provided for us an alternative point of view, and even a vocabulary, but now we seem to be beginning to speak for ourselves.

ing politically-correct postures; employing non-gender-specific terms; shouldering the responsibilities of co-parenting/co-householding; and seeking to implement policy at appropriate levels.

At its worst, this became patronizing, as Alan Parry stated some time ago, in a conversation, "Men sought to hurry up and join the club, in order to be elected president!" For awhile, it seemed we would transform ourselves from oppressors to good fathers, caring for the wounded daughters of the movement and offering succor in our responsible role modeling what men should be about. This is an insidious and limiting role for men. It can, at best, digress into an indirect dependence upon women to mother us along or, at worst, become a smug politically-correct posture as we all too quickly co-opt by our kind and gentle ways, the very core and energy of women's concerns.

Men with Men:

While ongoing sensitivity to women's issues does appear to be an agenda item for men, there has been a focus emerging which no longer requires the women's movement for justification. It is my contention that men, aside from a select minority, would probably never

have focused upon themselves in a critical, self-evaluative light without the women's movement, but that we now seem sufficiently of age to take some of our own steps. Feminism has provided for us an alternative point of view, and even a vocabulary, but now we seem to be beginning to speak for ourselves.

One voice we are discovering comes from the mythopoetic movement of men like Robert Bly, James Hillman, and Sam Keen. They acknowledge the importance of stewardship to the planet and partner-

ship with others, yet they also call out for a return to the deep, perhaps trans-cultural aspects of maleness. This is a belief that men have been cut off from their spontaneous capacity for strong and resonant emotion. We have

lost our capacity for clan or moiety affiliation; lost our place with each other and the world we live in.

Borrowing from depth psychology and the concept of archetypal determinant aspects of the psyche, Bly especially emphasizes reconnecting with what he refers to as the "wild man" within each of us. This, he says, is the true or free capacity of each man to experience and tame inner power and go freely into dance, music and the poetic and mythical domain of human understanding. It is not enough to become sensitive, open, receptive or caring—to actualize the archetypically feminine in a man's life but also to regain access to what maleness is, "deep in our guts."

This celebration of masculinity has not been without controversy. For women, it often appears to glorify the very features associated with patriarchy in the first place. When Bly, or others, suggest that a "relationship requires

something fierce" no wonder women shudder at the potential ramifications. Not only do women find the image of tribal men disturbing, gay men—another important aspect of the men's movement—have reason to fear "fierce" masculinity under the influence or direction of homophobic sentiment.

Nonetheless, emphasis upon a renewed form of masculinity is probably the direction the movement will go. This will mean challenging the limitations patriarchy imposes upon even the instruments of its influence, ourselves. Men are held fast, it seems, by patriarchy albeit in different, perhaps more indirect ways. Reclaiming full/fierce/archetypal/powerful masculinity will come from assessing the ways self-imposed patriarchy seeks to dominate, control and direct psyche at the level of the individual. Though coming at this issue from an entirely different direction, Bateson suggested much of the mischief in social systems arises from undue emphasis upon conscious control and willfulness. *Conscious control and willfulness* it seems, is as good a definition of patriarchy as we might find. Emphasis upon determinance through conscious control and the exercise of power/certainty may work well, say, in the limited domain of science and technology—that is, with relatively trivial phenomenon like space travel, computers and internal combustion engines—but is decidedly inadequate when faced with the complexity of

...gay men...have reason to fear "fierce" masculinity under the influence or direction of homophobic sentiment.

the human spirit. Patriarchy, as epistemological basis for our undue emphasis upon conscious effort and willfulness, decries being sullied by "trans-rational", "control-evasive" issues. In our search for those aspects of ourselves decried by patriarchy it might serve us to think about what in our domain of experience might be oppressed, marginalized, devalued, or

feared.

The Strange/Fearful Attraction of Mystery:

If patriarchy is all it's been rumored to be, then probably anything smacking of femininity, indeterminance, tentativeness, mystery and spontaneity might be its first targets. Irrationality, no let us say extra-rationality, is the demon which

both attracts and repels us; it is the encounter with things that don't easily fit into a utilitarian or patriarchal world view. It is not by accident much of the new masculinity is celebrated through myth, ritual and abandonment of rationally-based encounter. If we dance; if we drum; if we sing or approach one another through poems and myths, we touch the extra-rational dimensions of our character. This has been, at times, referred to as spiritual or transpersonal in nature and its experience may hold a clue for men as they seek to escape patriarchy and its limiting definitions of maleness.

This is not to say that the transpersonal is automatically immune to patriarchal assault and reductionism. One need go no further than fundamentalist religion, East or West, to see how quickly patriarchy seeks to control and "bottle" mystery. Patriarchy will not permit us to be carried forth on the shoulders of the mysterious (see Robert Bly's *Iron John*). Instead, it must lay down rules, structure and commandments within which mystery becomes desiccated and lifeless. It is not in seeking a new larger form of willfulness, prediction and control, the assurance/insurance offered by a politically correct position, ideological belief or religious creed, that promises new masculinity but in the forceful sensitivity and passionate restraint that is necessary to sustain a relationship to mystery. It is not escape from the struggle with mystery and indeterminance that tells us things are okay but struggle itself which does justice to what masculinity, femininity and the whole living thing is about.

Whether Men?

What then shall the agenda of the men's movement be about? Initially, it will be a commitment to abandoning the privilege and luxury of fixed opinion for the anxiety of relationship. This is, at best, a joyous anxiety as we seek to fit pieces together, patch our way along and

abandon hope for any grand unifying theory out of which to garner solace or sustenance. In Bali, they have a saying, "We have no art. We simply do everything the best we can." Next, men must court this indeterminance and mystery within themselves and with others by exploring the back alleys and not just frequenting the main streets of not only life in general, but, also, the movement of changing men and women.

One back alley we have neglected

*In their struggles, ...
gay men have had to
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dignity and pride.*

health-care challenges, gay men have had to both fight and find a place "at the table," and do so with dignity and pride. For straight men, the relationship potential with gay men may be the place where we will finally be able to overturn patriarchy's mandate to deny, vilify, and even eliminate anything but what traditional masculinity has been about. Finally, perhaps most importantly, we will need to follow and listen carefully to what women say and do, not to emulate nor co-opt their direction but to find our place in that which might be. As we challenge prevailing ideologies, personally, and socially, I am sure our strength, passion, and deep-felt maleness will be welcomed.



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that which might be.*

is the richness of the *gay men's movement*. When we speak of supporting and renewing our commitment to each other, when we speak of demarginalizing women and other excluded voices, we would do well to seek to hear of the experiences of gay men. In their struggles, especially in the light of the recent

Queer Fears And Gay Examples¹

Gary Dowsett
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Gay men are usually seen as a race apart. They are victimized and vilified, the butts of both humour and violence. Yet if we are looking for the men who have done the most creative thinking about masculinity we should go to their door.

It shouldn't be surprising to see a section on homosexuality in a magazine about masculinity. After all, gay men have their own perspective on the male condition. Nor is it surprising that this is

tions some choose that gay men find a niche. Separation from traditional masculinity has also come with the development of gay urban ghettos, which offer gay men greater chances than we once

tastes and fashions, supported by specific businesses, services and venues. It depends upon which city you inhabit, but it is easy to move around Sydney, London, Toronto, New York and San Francisco and be familiar with gay bars and resorts, discos and shops.

And even if it is heavily North American in origin, there is an international gay style. Events such as the annual Gay Mardi Gras in Sydney, which attracts 50,000 spectators to the parade and 8,000 dancing men to the all-night party that follows, are outstanding celebrations of modern gay male life. They are the most visible examples of the differences which exist between heterosexual and homosexual men. And they are differences which point out possibilities for the male sex often ignored by the straight world.

Gay challenges to conventional expressions of maleness existed long

There are lessons about sharing and caring here for everyone.

usually a *separate* section. The homosexual man is still a counter-image, a marginalized alternative. One reason for this is that heterosexual men make us 'also-rans' in the male race, declaring most of us unfit for the opportunities and rewards available to them.

We gay men find participation in conventional maleness difficult and often choose to live our lives in less harassed circumstances. There is something to be said for the safety of hairdressing, teaching, nursing, telephonist work and the arts. However, it is not just in the occupa-

had to opt out of heterosexual male life.

These new inner-city gay communities are evidence of the dramatic changes which have happened in the lives of homosexual men in the last 18 years, partly as a result of the impact of gay lib-

We gay men find participation in conventional maleness difficult and often choose to live our lives in less harassed circumstances.

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eration. There are distinctive gay male lifestyles, definable personal images,

before the modern gay liberation movement and its communities. Gay male life,

as we are now discovering in our once-hidden histories, has always offered space for the different, the marginal, the creative. In London's 'molly houses'² of the late 17th and early 18th century and in its literary and socialist circles 200 years later, the molly and the drag queen contradicted the idea of maleness by dressing as women. The radical crossdressing of early gay liberation teamed dresses and beards to flout conventional masculine and feminine images. Today's 'clones' - the self-mocking name adopted by jeans-wearing and moustache-bearing gay men - use extreme macho images and yet commit the worst 'crime' against conventional masculinity by loving and having sex with men. Disputing gender images and resisting restriction on sexual behaviour have been constant themes in gay life.

The earlier versions of this resistance to conventional masculinity were mounted in the face of great social disapproval and condemnation³. They occurred also in times when it was much more difficult to comprehend homosexuality in oneself. The flouting and aping of traditional masculine images were as much statements of pain as of resistance. Today's gay men are at least supported in our efforts by a politics and theory of sexual liberation, a sense of pride in ourselves and a determination to fight oppression - as in the successful campaigns to decriminalize male homosexual behaviour in many Western countries. These, the sharpest points of our challenge to traditional masculinity, are deliberate, conscious and collective. But our other significant challenge lies in simpler things. It comes from living our daily lives as gay men.

Daily life is the central arena of sexual politics, something often buried unintentionally in a barrage of theorizing. Every day, each gay man is responsible for his job or career, his social life, sporting and cultural interests, and for his family life - including children (yes, gay men do have them). He has to maintain emotional attachments to lovers and commit-

ments to longstanding networks of friends. Along with all of this comes the housework, the shopping, sewing, washing and ironing, and organizing the domestic relations of a household, be it the rural gay male commune, the subur-

The straight world often overlooks the fact that gay men actually love one another, in all meanings of that word.

ban monogamous couple, the inner-city collective house or the bachelor flat. While gay men are no keener on housework than the next man, it is true that years of being wimpish children and mother's little helpers mean that a queen's home really is his castle.

Each gay man struggles in his own way to be a self-sufficient being. After all, we were brought up male and should experience the same dilemmas as straight men in balancing the private and the public aspects of modern life. The struggles

men lies in gay men's relations with other men - because in this one can see the potential of all men to love and care for each other. The straight world often overlooks the fact that gay men actually love one another, in all meanings of that word. We love another man, his body, his passions and desires. We love another man's loving of ourselves, our bodies, passions and desires. That love is more than sex. It is the creation and maintenance of relationships of significance. This is no easy feat for anyone, but it is made more difficult for homosexuals because we lack the social support offered to heterosexual relationships by the law, the institution of marriage, by tradition, tax benefits and overt cultural validation. Our successes and failures here are object lessons in the relationship between social structure and personal life.

In addition, sex between gay men is remarkably egalitarian: the giving and receiving of pleasure is expected. As a result gay men have a lot to say to straights about existing male capacities for genitally and non-genitally focused sex. We know more about male sexual pleasure from inside and out than anyone else. We have a great deal of experience with the notion and practice of promiscuity and reject the idea that meaningful relationships can only occur in lifelong monogamous contracts. We can say a lot

The issues raised by homosexuals are still frequently excluded from serious social thought...in a context of social disapproval, often expressed as rejection, as cruel repression and discrimination, and too often as murder.

of heterosexual men in managing careers and family life seem foreign to gay men because, except in the case of the wealthy, gay men 'do' for themselves without much fuss, very much like women always have. Looking after oneself is simply part of life.

A further challenge to heterosexual

about serial monogamy, multiple relationships, jealousy and possessiveness, and celibacy. The idea that sex should be a private act between two people is constantly subverted by gay men (2). It is these pioneering experiences of sexual relations, which continue to challenge conventional ideologies about sex and to

confound most of the moralists, theologians and medico/social theorists from the Biblical patriarch Abraham to Foucault.

What's more, it is not secret knowledge. We are very open about our sexual and emotional lives. There are shelves and shelves of books by gay men about sensuality and sexual liberation in theory and practice available for all to read. There are films, plays, art, novels, newspapers and magazines. And there is also a substantial body of theoretical work procured by gay men about sexism and its effects on males, and about heterosexism - the domination of the sexual domain by heterosexual practices and ideologies. It is interesting to note how many people with so much to say about masculinity have never read very much by homosexuals. I've read *The Limits of Masculinity*; have you read *States of Desire*⁴?

The issues raised by homosexuals are still frequently excluded from serious social thought. And meanwhile our daily living is accomplished in a context of social disapproval, often expressed as rejection, as cruel repression and discrimination, and too often as murder. In any society the oppression of homosexual men - along with the oppression of women - is yet another marker of the extent to which men hate themselves and fear their own humanness. Gay liberation coined the term 'homophobia' to represent the irrational fear of homosexuality exhibited in our societies. Its manifestations are found in laws which prohibit same-sex love-making, in the ready vilification of a person's homosexuality regardless of his or her contribution to society. It is found in the endless fascination of the British press with the genital wanderings of its MPs. It is found in the 'Kill a queer for Christ' mentality of US Christian fundamentalists, and in discrimination against homosexual priests in parts of the Anglican Church in Australia. It is found in the butchering of gay men in the streets of Sydney, Amsterdam, Toronto, New York, Tehran and Madrid, in the mental institutions of Russia, and in the prisons of Chile and South Africa.

The effect of living in a hostile society, of negotiating daily life without social support, of being a self-sufficient but marginalized human, can be devastating. Gay lives can be difficult to live with respect and honesty - the struggle by gay *koories*⁵ in Australia to live between two cultures is but one example. Emotions and behaviour can become distorted when gay men believe that the cruelty inflicted upon us must somehow be warranted. Every victim faces the crippling effects of self-blame. Gay liberation called it 'internalized oppression'. It's just one more difficulty to add to those already mentioned.

The extent of the terror which homosexuality inspires in the hearts and minds of many heterosexual men must raise serious questions for any society about its raising of male children. We must question the mothering and fathering boys receive. We must challenge the way in

The experiences of gay men are worth considering when thinking about the process of restructuring masculinity...

which we deliberately shape boys' sexual energies, and how we present them systematically with misinformation about themselves, sex and love.

Many women use us as an example to their wayward mates of what is possible (though not perfect) in masculinity. It must annoy many straight men to be told that the object of their scorn and derision for many years has more to say about the possibilities of being male than they have. Some heterosexual men are listening to us. I often read in 'men's liberation' magazines articles about the need to get closer to gay men and to confess to past episodes of 'poofter bashing'. In academic circles, some men, trying to come to grips with feminism personally and professionally, consider our contribution worthy. The boundaries of the concept of patriarchy itself are blurred by male homosexuality: it becomes too simplistic to see sexism just as the expres-

sion of male power over women.

It is not all plain sailing for gay men. The struggle we are now facing with the spread of the AIDS virus is daunting. When gay communities raise money, undertake research, implement education programs and care for people with AIDS, we do so in the absence of adequate public services and in the face of unhelpful, ignorant condemnation. Without doubt, Australia's relatively successful response to the epidemic so far could not have occurred without the dedication, strength, skill and determination of our gay communities. There are lessons about sharing and caring here for everyone.

The experiences of gay men are worth considering when thinking about the process of restructuring masculinity, and of achieving the liberation of men and women from relations which are hurtful and damaging. Our offering lies in the progress we have made so far. It comes from our history, our theory, our contribution to societies everywhere. Most of all it comes from the examples of our daily lives. Many of us believe we have some ideas about the way ahead and we are avidly pursuing them. You are all warmly invited to come with us.

Notes

1. Permission has been given by the author and the original publisher, *New Internationalist*, Canadian Office 1011 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, M6H 1M1 (416) 588-6478.
2. Male brothels discussed in Bray A., *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, 1982
3. Rechy, J., *Sexual Outlaw*, 1977
4. Tolson, A., *The Limits of Masculinity*, 1977 and White, E., *States of Desire*, 1980
5. The name for themselves preferred by Aboriginal Australians in New South Wales. 🍏

Patriarchy and The Men's Movement

Frank W. McGrath
Calgary, Canada

Near the end of a recent follow-up session with Mike, a "reformed batterer," I was handed a self-help book he had picked up at the local men's bookstore. "This is really helping us—maybe you should have a look at it."

I was intrigued by the offer, not only because the book was called *The Angry Man* (Stoop & Arterburn, 1991), but Mike's "reformation" had a hollowness that worried me. As he boasted that he had just completed his Batterer Treatment Program and passed a six month milestone of abstaining from alcohol and physical abuse, I kept in mind the words of Donna, who had been on the receiving end of the abuse for eight years. "If this is the man behind the violence, I am not sure if it is an improvement." As I heard Mike's story of how he had graduated from his anger-management group into a men's group, I began to appreciate her discouragement. While listing his accomplishments, Mike was unable to fill me in on how the other members of his family had been doing over these same six months. In contrast, he offered that his new men's group seemed to really understand and support him.

In *The Angry Man*, the authors draw from their experience in personal growth, addiction and psychiatric treatment to support a view of men as "caught between a rock and a hard place" and women as needing to "learn some practical steps to better understand their husbands." As I read on, I found that the "rock" was an absence of nurturing models of manhood and the "hard place" was the demands placed on men by society (read "women"). The authors offer St.

Paul's advice for men to "Be content whatever the circumstances ..." The authors also advise women to initiate sex more often and more enthusiastically, so that the man feels appreciated; and to counter-balance the media's message of masculinity by reassuring their man "warmly and continuously" of his adequacy as a sexual partner.

My own anger began to seethe as men were described as socially immature, lacking in control, selfish, and generally incompetent in all areas of intimacy. What happened to the ideas that men use anger and violence as a means to keep the woman pre-occupied with the man or that women are also "between a rock and a hard place?" I felt my anger shift to a profound sadness for both the male and female readers of this and similar material. The dedication of the book to "our wives, Jan and Sandy" seemed a poignant reminder of the pervasiveness of patriarchal beliefs in the men's movement.

For the past three years, I have considered myself an active member of the men's movement. The men who I have met through my involvement in both large and small gatherings have become a source of enduring support and spiritual awakening. With these men I have explored and challenged the mythologies, rituals, and cultural expectations which support men's emotional impoverishment and social irresponsibility. I have celebrated the masculine within me and learned to appreciate the feminine. I have watched men struggle with and redirect their relationships with their fathers and sons, their mothers and daughters. Most of all, I have seen men constantly re-evaluate their marital (or intimate equivalent) relationship in search of understanding

and fulfillment.

Parallel with my involvement in the men's movement has been my clinical exploration of men's violence against women. As a therapist for violent men, I have been struck by their overwhelming interpretation of the men's movement as a defense against feminism and a refuge from being victimized by women. Having recently attended a few large gatherings in the men's movement, I have been struck by the focus on men's vulnerabili-

While listing his accomplishments, Mike was unable to fill me in on how the other members of his family had been doing...

ty in isolation from his responsibility for the vulnerability of others. When I heard Mike talk about the support he received in his men's meetings without any apparent attention to his need for reciprocity, responsibility or simple empathy with his family, I began to wonder if the men's movement and its focus on men's needs is at all relevant to the violence afflicted by men on women.

Whether men are moving towards responsibility or a more subtle form of patriarchy can best be determined through an examination of the *Bibles* of the men's movement written by Robert Bly and Sam Keen.

Robert Bly's *Iron John*, while providing a rich metaphor for men's recovery in the company of men is, I believe, primarily an eloquently disguised entrenchment of male privilege and entitlement. In promoting the need for initiation of men into the world by older men, he implies the irrelevancy of women's experience in the lives of men. In fact, the

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fairy tale which Bly hangs his philosophy on is devoid of female experience or sensibility. Women are either to be resisted as mothers or won as wives. The argument that "the son often grows up with a wounded image of his father - not brought out necessarily by his father's actions, or words, but based on the mother's observation" (p.24), chastises women for their deceit with their sons while vaguely implicating men for inadvertently being absent from their son's lives. This continues the mythology that women are bent on controlling men and must be restrained or replaced by strong father figures.

Although Bly, at times, applauds the "women's movement," he appears to have missed its point altogether. Most feminists are not saying women are good and men are bad, or that men should learn to be soft and vulnerable like women. The point they are making is that the problematic aspects of "masculine" and "feminine" are socially constructed and place power, privilege and resources primarily in the hands of men.

Sam Keen in *Fire in the Belly*, takes a more academic path through the burden of masculinity. He attempts to move beyond either "mother blaming" or "father blaming" to focus on the absence of meaning in men's lives. This existential vacuum is the root of men's preoccupation with "trying to control, avoid, conquer, or demean women." This vacuum, combined with men's training to be competitive and aggressive, are offered as explanations for men's violence. The argument appears sound, if simplistic, until it evolves into another version of *women blaming* when Keen declares that:

Until women are willing to weep for and accept responsibility for the systematic violence done to the male body and spirit by the war system, it is unlikely that men will lose enough of their guilt and regain enough of their sensibility to weep and accept responsibility for women who are raped and made to suffer the indignity of economic inequality.

This argument is elaborated in the areas of business and sex where men are seen as preoccupied with proving their manhood. Keen's solution is for men to face their guilt and their fears and embrace their wild or fierce inner self—their "Fire in the Belly." A spiritual pilgrimage, which explores the mythologies that both men and women have lived by, is outlined as the path for the development of "mutual emphatic understand-

When men gather together their enthusiasm for intimacy with each other and their need for acceptance is likely to promote a focus on men's rights rather than men's wrongs.

ing", which will save humanity and the world.

Keen's defence of men's self righteousness is reminiscent of Warren Farrell's *Why Men Are The Way They Are*. Keen seduces his readers into a co-creational view which holds women equally responsible for the violence committed by men. Although a therapist in his own right, he does not seem to be aware of the struggles that the therapy field is having with the questions of power, privilege and responsibility. Instead, he takes us back to a position of neutrality which serves only those who benefit from the status quo.

The men's movement has the potential of bringing a generation of emotionally disenfranchised men into the world of introspection. Whether it be a sincere search for fulfillment, a failed machismo seeking power in the wild man, or a latent adolescence looking for a new "boys only club", many overwhelmed, hurt, and lost men are gathering together—without women to lean on. Without women, they will learn emotional competence. They will benefit immensely from their newfound vulnerability, support and rituals of belonging. Many of their relationships will improve as they learn how to take responsibility for their emotions rather than ignoring or projecting them.

Whether or not these changes are only self-serving attempts to feel good or move to the level of personal and political responsibility, remains to be seen.

When men gather together their enthusiasm for intimacy with each other and their need for acceptance is likely to promote a focus on men's rights rather than men's wrongs. This leaves them at great risk of ignoring the fact that women have been wronged in profound and pervasive ways by a society which has been

designed and maintained by privileged males. In this society, it has been men who have access to resources and status that either challenge or support the status quo. It has been men who abused and silenced women. It has been men with power and resources who sexually harassed and assaulted women. It has been men

who have benefitted from the violence perpetrated by their "brothers" on their "sisters" which allows men to capitalize on women's vulnerability by offering protection. And finally, it has been men who gather together to hunt, fish, golf, or "find their wildman," while their partners are at home looking after the children.

Shortly after our follow-up session, Mike was disappointed to find that Donna was not going to forgive and forget. While he was out of the home, she had gotten used to self-respect and wanted a partner committed to mutual respect, equality, and collaboration in all of family life. Mike, in turn, found a girlfriend who would "let me be me." After growing dissatisfied with this new relationship and weary from a custody and access struggle, he called me to see if I could go over that stuff about men and responsibility again.

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*Where was I
I was invisible*

*the outer world
could not see me*

*the Outside Grandfather
could not see me*

*where was I
no one knew*

*the outer world
did not know me*

*the Outside Grandfather
did not know me*

*yes but he knows you
he knows you well*

*the outer world
pretends you're not*

*but the Outside Grandfather
he knows you*

*oh yes
he's moving toward you*

Grandfather

by Susan Seddon Boulet

In *Shaman: The Paintings of Susan Seddon Boulet* Susan Seddon Boulet, 1989 pp 84-85.
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Karl Tomm On Feminism

A Participator Profile Interview with Dr. Karl Tomm

Carol Liske
Calgary, Canada

Carol: In thinking about having this conversation with you, it seemed to me that it would be really important to understand your own idea of feminism. What for you is a feminist perspective?

Karl: Well, the thing that comes to my mind with the notion of feminism is the importance of deliberately attending to the possibilities that women have in our culture and trying to take a proactive stance in moving in the direction of women having more of an egalitarian position with respect to men. Before I became pro-feminist, I would say I was humanist. But I didn't recognize how humanism obscures the structural inequities in our culture with respect to women—that women are disadvantaged in so many respects in our culture. As I became more aware of that, it seemed to me more appropriate to be pro-feminist than to be humanist, because humanists haven't paid enough attention to those inequities.

Carol: Could you say something about your idea of humanism and how from that perspective you feel there were inequities?

Karl: I think a humanist stance would be

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a stance of trying to be humane and to enhance the lives of other people; trying to give value to human life as a priority; being respectful and treating people with dignity and honour; having a positive orientation to other human beings; and accepting oneself as equal to others. That general stance is something that I support, I feel good about, and have always been committed to, but it doesn't pay attention to the issue of built-in gender inequities. It doesn't highlight them as a focus and it assumes that men and women are equal, both are human

al traditions maintain implicit inequities that people might even be blind to.

Karl: Right.

Carol: Do you hold to any particular aspect of feminism that you most wish to highlight in your own work?

Karl: I don't know if there is a specific aspect. I focus a lot on the notion of oppression, and try to clarify the patterns of interaction that are taking place so that the patterns that are oppressive can be recognized as such, and that people can then act so as to challenge those patterns and modify

them. I would say that if there is any feminist focus in my work it would be attending to patterns of oppression facing women. People sometimes see me as having gone too far in this respect, to

...the feminist movement has made a major contribution...by helping us become more aware...of the structural aspects of our culture that build in disadvantage to women.

beings and as such, they are the same. My feeling is that the feminist movement has made a major contribution by problematizing gender relations, by helping us to become more aware of these inequities, the structural aspects of our culture that build in disadvantage to women. Once I became aware of this, then, I felt that a feminist perspective was a preferred orientation to adopt. I decided to continue my humanism, but put it into the context of being proactive with respect to giving women more possibilities to be genuinely, and more fully, equal.

Carol: So, it's not simply a matter of person-to-person behaviour, but a matter of how cultural roles or cultur-

favor women over men. Mind you, it's usually men that feel that way and I think it's more a function of their own limitations in recognizing the pervasiveness of gender inequities. I think, to some extent, there may be some truth in the perception that I sometimes give women priority in therapy. By virtue of my own personal experience, I think I have a strong interest in women's entitlements and women's privileges.

Carol: How did you come to have that strong interest? Would you be willing to talk on that? Of how you've made that journey to developing an interest in women's oppression?

Karl: There are many factors, of course,

associated with that. One early issue for me would be the relationship I had with my mother when I was growing up and seeing her in an oppressive relationship with my father. I remember taking sides, and being on my mother's side. For instance, when she wanted him to stop smoking, I would go on her side.

I remember there was one occasion when I took a cigarette out of my father's mouth and I broke it in half and put it in the

ashtray. Afterwards, I was trembling in fear about what my father would do. I think I was much closer to her emotionally than I was my father, because he was working all the time. Then, when she died, this left me with, I guess, some unfinished feelings, in relation to her. That was an important early life experience. My experience as an adult was one of gradually coming to recognize the degree to which I internalized patriarchal assumptions and became quite a chauvinist myself. The biggest influence on me in recognizing those patterns was the interaction with my wife. Winnie helped me enormously to recognize the way in which I was taking her for granted and making assumptions about my privilege and her role, being one of serving me. It took a long time for me to get a good understanding of that, and I'm still coming to new realizations as I move along.

Carol: That's interesting because your chauvinism suggests that you identified with the role of your father.

Karl: Yes, but I was heavily influenced by our culture as well. I never wanted to do the kind of work my dad did. I think I was much more sensitive to and willing to attend to women's experiences than other males might have been because of the relationship I had with my mother.

Carol: You were ready to listen to Winnie when she had things to tell you.

Karl: Sometimes. Sometimes more than others. Right now, she is writing a book about feminism and we talk a lot about these issues. Most of what I know about the subject, I've learned

one early issue would be the relationship I had with my mother when I was growing up...

from her. I think another factor would be the fact that we had two daughters rather than any sons. And this, of course, made it even more significant to me to be concerned about the opportunities for women and the situations they can get into where they don't have equal privileges. An important development for me has been to recognize that I can never know what it's like for a woman, to have some experiences that women have. I can hear about their experience and I can try to relate to it on the basis of some of the experiences I have had, but I can't ever know what it's like, say for a woman to walk into a dark garage and go to her car alone at night-time when there could be men lurking around, and fear being raped or something like that. I cannot know what that feels like. I can listen to women's expressions of their experience, but I recognize that I can never know it directly. That's why I feel a bit uncomfortable to call myself a feminist. I'm comfortable with being a *pro-feminist*. I want to take a position of being pro-feminist, but I don't want to make a claim that I can be a feminist, because I'm not sure I can because I can't be a woman, I can only experience the world as a man and then secondarily try to understand a woman's experience.

Carol: Having come to a mindful will-

ingness to make strong efforts to understand women's experiences, how do you think that you now treat men differently in family therapy?

Karl: I think that I tend to be much more willing to confront men and hold them responsible than I used to. I'm much more supportive of women in general, than I used to be in therapy. For example, when women who are in relationships with men present with problems, I often assume there are very significant patterns of oppression in the relationship, that are contributing to their problems. I'm less likely to do that if a man presents in therapy when he's connected to a woman. I certainly attend to those issues and examine them, but I don't immediately assume that's likely to be the case. I think there is a difference there.

Carol: Is there any risk that you may exaggerate the oppression coming from the male?

Karl: I may over-emphasize it in certain areas. I'm sure there are always areas where women are limiting their male partners too, but I don't think they're nearly as pervasive.

Carol: So you're making a very profound cultural assumption?

Karl: Yes, it's an assumption that is intended to predispose me against the prevailing patriarchal pattern that's so prevalent. And that's where I prefer to be. I might err on the side sometimes of being too hard on men in therapy, but I prefer to err on that side than erring on the side of being too hard on women in therapy, especially as a male therapist. To add my oppression to the female partner, in a relationship, I think would be unacceptable.

Carol: What, if any, difference would you make in working with children, as a result of a feminist perspective?

Karl: I'm certainly mindful of the inequity with respect to parenting. The tendency in our culture is to take for granted the presence of mothers and their availability to children. I'm much more oriented now than I used to be to bring forth parenting in fathers—to help them to recognize the

opportunities they have and their own personal enrichment from the experience of being closely connected with

I am much more oriented...to bring forth parenting in fathers...

their children. Part of this comes from my own experience, where I felt I didn't have as much interaction or involvement with my children when they were growing, which I regret now, and it's too late now as they're grown. I'm spending more time and attention to them now which Winnie has noticed too, and she appreciates. It makes her feel less burdened and less responsible for [our daughters' welfare]. It's a healthy shift, and I try to facilitate that in families with younger children so they can make that shift earlier.

Carol: It sounds like the aspect of personal enrichment or enrichment of life experience is another area that you value in working with men from a feminist perspective. That men's lives become richer, and that they have more options or possibilities for positive experience.

Karl: Positive experience in the sense of being more connected as human beings to other human beings. In that sense, yes.

Carol: More of a genuinely shared life rather than a compartmentalized one. The likelihood that a better experience occurs within family systems, as a result of feeling that men care for the welfare of other family members, seems increased from this newer approach you're taking. I understand that you may invite men to examine cultural assumptions that may underlie their behaviour. What do men show you about how they experience that being brought to their attention?

Karl: I think that they tend to be threat-

ened, initially. I think it's hard for them to appreciate the degree to which they may have bought into certain patterns of thought and behaviour that are oppressive in relation to their wives or their children, particularly their female children. When I draw attention to these patterns that are taken for granted and help them recognize the oppressive

aspects, I think they feel very threatened by that and I find that it's really important for me to help them identify with another way of being a man so



Photo by Joanne Shultz Hall

that they can see themselves as a modern man rather than a traditional man. By modern, I'm referring to

being more committed to a genuinely egalitarian relationship; to developing more connectedness as a human being to other human beings; to initiating more connectedness to one's own emotional experience; and to having the willingness and the ability to share these things with others.

Carol: How do you take care that men don't feel personally blamed? That they could see that they were embedded in a cultural context?

Karl: I use Michael White's method of externalizing problems. I externalize patriarchy or I externalize certain ideas that stem from patriarchal assumptions. By externalizing and

separating these patterns of behaviour or thought from the person they can feel less directly threatened. It opens space for them to also take a position against those ideas.

Carol: Would these individuals feel blamed, personally, for their behaviour, at times?

Karl: Sometimes, I think they do. It could be that's inevitable insofar as a person identifies with their own behaviour and that behaviour is problematic for someone else. There may be some blame associated with that. Now, I prefer to bring forth a sense of responsibility rather than blame and the difference I would see there is the difference in awareness. With blame,

the individuals, themselves, are not aware of the negative [effects of their behaviour], but an outside person may

be aware of that and impose that [view] upon the person being blamed. If I, as a therapist, can invite the recognition of the negative consequences of certain ways of thinking or behaving, and that that's not the desired result, then, responsibility increases automatically along with that awareness.

I'm more committed ... to increasing my connectedness as a human being to other human beings...

Carol: You emphasize the effects of behaviour?

Karl: Yes.

Carol: What do you observe as being the effects of this approach to treatment on the women with whom these men are partnered?

Karl: I have the impression that they feel very much enlivened in the sense that they feel they have more space. If the men are able to respond to what I'm raising for them, and to take a more pro-feminist stance themselves, then their female partners are able to enter into that space and appreciate it and they value the relationship more. These women appreciate their partners more, feel safer, more comfortable, and more fulfilled as persons. I've seen women who, at one point, decided not to ever go back to a man that they had been married to, and change their minds because their male partner made a shift to a pro-feminist stance. I'm thinking of a particular couple, where there was some violence in the relationship. The wife found that intolerable, left her husband, and was proceeding in the direction of divorce. Then, her hus-

band made some major changes in his way of thinking and being, which she responded to very positively. A couple of years later they were back together again.

Carol: Have you ever had a treatment that involved a couple that wasn't able to join you in seeing the positive benefits of a pro-feminist position?

Karl: I would speculate, yes, that some of my work with families has ended prematurely because of that. I can't say with certainty because I don't know, they didn't come back. But I would speculate that there are some couples I worked with where I raised these issues and addressed them and they didn't come back, probably because the husband was quite threatened by what I was saying and he imposed his view upon his wife in a patriarchal manner. So I assume that has happened.

Carol: Have you undergone any major transformations in how you approach your pro-feminist work with men over the last, say two years?

Karl: I think that I'm trying to become more sensitive to men's experiences of being threatened; to work at the pace that they are able to bear; and to accept what is being introduced so that I don't impose my expectations on them to change faster than they are able. That would be one area that I feel like I've been developing in the last two years.

Carol: You're becoming more gentle with men now?

Karl: Yes.

Carol: More accepting of where they are at the present time and inviting of a new kind of mindfulness rather than pushing?

Karl: Yes, I think I'm evolving in that direction, but I still would not hesitate to confront if I felt there was no other way to interrupt what I saw as a severe ongoing pathologizing pattern.

Carol: This is interesting! You'd be at some logical risk from using an authoritative posture to invite an egalitarian one.

Karl: I don't see the therapeutic relationship as an egalitarian relationship. It's not the same as a marriage, say. I think that there may be more similarity between a therapeutic relationship and a parental relationship than a marital relationship, because there is a difference in power. The client comes with pain asking for some help. It's not an egalitarian relationship. That's not to say that the therapist has all the power and all the control, I don't think that's true. But they do have a privileged position and they have some special expertise, or they should have specialized expertise, to respond to the kinds of problems that they are trying to address.

Carol: I think that's important that you made that point.

Karl: I don't try to have an egalitarian relationship with my clients. I try to be respectful, but I have some responsibility as a therapist to try to move things in a therapeutic direction.

Carol: The co-construction here is not an equilateral co-construction, it's definitely coming from a place of expertise having greater influence.

Karl: In certain domains. For instance, I would say that I would have more influence with respect to the direction that an interview might be going in in terms of the healing potential of that direction. I would deliberately make contributions in the direction that I thought would be more healing. The client would always have more influence with respect to the content issues that were raised, because I'm attend-

ing to and following their experience.

Carol: The clients can make the final decisions about their choices.

Karl: Yes. I don't have equal influence with them with respect to what choices they make. They have more choice,

other end of the continuum. While I see the need for both ends of the continuum, I privilege the more pro-feminist stance. I prefer to work in that area, but I also recognize the need of other contributions in terms of some-

women back into the home to be traditional homemakers where they would have less authority and increased need to "listen" to their husbands, rather than [welcoming them into] the work place. That troubles me a great deal. I think it places a serious limitation on the potentials of various family members, not just the husband and wife but the children too—everybody.

Carol: There might be a way of valuing a feminist perspective, valuing a special kind of connectedness, and yet not imposing specified notions about "correct" modes of family living. Family life could be constituted within a wide variety of conditions of membership and function.

Karl: Yes, and I think there is a general drift of families being together more through their desire to be together than through outside pressures. With the institution of marriage, for instance, there is a lot of cultural pressures that keep people together as couples. This becomes really clear with gay and lesbian families, because they are chosen families. They are not supported by cultural pressures, they're not maintained by the culture, whereas, marriages are. People are often forced together and held together longer than they should be because

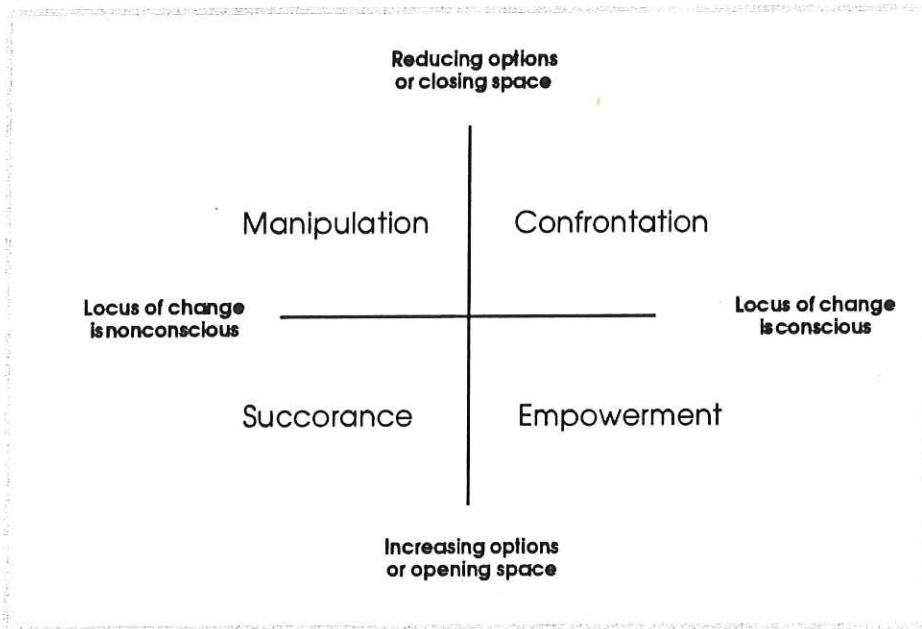


Figure 1 - Therapeutic Ethical Postures

more authority and influence to decide.

Carol: Have you done any more formal theorizing or thinking about integrating notions of feminism into notions of family therapy? I was thinking of whether you're ready to integrate that as a formal aspect of your work?

Karl: I think I am beginning to more and more. For instance, my work in the *Ethical Postures* (See Figure 1) incorporates some feminist distinctions. The vertical axis of therapeutic violence vs. therapeutic loving reflects a dimension from patriarchy to feminism. Therapeutic violence is more consistent with the patriarchal patterns that we're accustomed to through domination by authority. Whereas, the lower part of the figure where the therapeutic loving or opening space becomes the priority, that to me is more of a feminist orientation, of enhancing relatedness and being caring—the *ethic of caring*. Whereas, the *ethic of justice* is more in with the

times adopting a position of authority and simply not accepting certain patterns that are pathologizing.

Carol: It's more of a discrimination of what ethical posture is needed at a particular time, rather than attending more to pro-feminist orientations.

How do you see the implementation of a feminist perspective impacting family-as-a-whole and family member survival and fulfillment?

Karl: I would see a feminist perspective as much more open to a pluralistic view of different family forms and I see that as a very constructive development, for example, by honoring same-sex families—lesbian and gay families. I worry about the family movement that is driven by conservative forces oriented towards forcing

I don't see the therapeutic relationship as an egalitarian relationship.

of outside props. But I think our culture is evolving in the direction of being less based on these kinds of external pressures and more prepared to honour inner desires for connectedness. And that I think is going to be enriching.

Carol: Can you see how the feminist perspective will have an impact on helping children have adequate support systems, from early life till they

are old enough to be self-sufficient?

Karl: Yes, a feminist perspective supports that, in trying to promote a greater recognition of the value of

integrated in its conceptual formation.

Karl: I don't see anything clearly emerging that I would want to embrace and carry forward. Certainly,

One future vision could be for both women and men to be empowered...

parenting, so that it's not taken for granted and not assumed that anyone can do it; that it doesn't matter what you do; and that parents will recognize the significance of their time and energy with their children, feel valued for investing that time and energy, and feel good about doing it. It'll be better for the kids.

Carol: By increasing connectedness on the level of desire rather than enforcement, you see the children having improved developmental outcomes?

Karl: Yes, because I think they'll internalize views of themselves as wanted, desired, valued, and as being meaningful persons.

Carol: That's important! It just seems like such a big leap from where people are now, to getting to that more idealized place of where they would choose a preferred culture, or a shared cultural story that would be maximally making space for individual potentials and still a good connection among people. It just seems like we're such a distance from that.

Karl: I agree.

Carol: The last thing I was wondering was if you saw any sort of integral philosophy emerging from what is currently known as the "men's movement" that might prove as life-supporting as the feminist perspective. That it might be uniquely more of a male-oriented perspective and yet very life-supporting and somewhat

there are some developments. Robert Bly's work and so on, but I am deeply troubled by his metaphor of the warrior. I think it's a very unfortunate choice of term. I worry a little bit about Sam Keen's work, as well, where he raises the responsibility of women participating in a *culture of war*—war in culture—because again it's shifting responsibility to women when I think men need to carry more there. Not that women aren't involved, I think they are. But to me,



Photo by Joanne Shultz Hall

it feels like a premature shift. While these leaders, in the men's movement, I think, are making contributions and are certainly inviting men to become more aware of themselves, as men, as males in the world, that they are connected to other men and women, which I see as positive, I don't see any clear philosophical emergence yet. But that could just be my own limited vision, that I'm not aware of or am blind to certain things.

Carol: What I've been thinking is that

men may be, fundamentally, so profoundly different, as they now are discovering more and more differences between the sexes in brain chemistry, etc., that there is something from the masculine that is of equal importance to the feminine, and that the challenge may be how to integrate a masculine perspective in a more life-supporting way. Instead of patriarchy, hierarchy, and competition, another place could be arrived at that would beckon strength, forthrightness, and effectiveness.

Karl: I would hope for that but I can't say that I can see a particular idea or paradigm emerging yet.

Carol: I just wondered if you had a personal vision of that—I wondered if you could see what that might look like?

Karl: One thing that I personally have come to appreciate and value in terms

of my association with the men's movement, and myself as a man, is being more prepared to take responsibility for myself, in many ways; instrumentally, but also emotionally, more significantly emotionally, where I can appreciate myself for doing what I do for women and not depend on them for appreciation. It's not that I don't want their appreciation, I like it, it's great, but I

don't want to depend on it. To appreciate myself, and to feel self-sufficient, that's what increases my sense of *being* and *balance*. One future vision could be for both women and men to be empowered, that they relate to one another on the basis of their own power; not to have power over each other, but to live with a sense of being centered in their own power—as equals; yet different from one another in mutually enriching ways.



Joy of Youth

Gazing

mystified by simple miracles

Crying

But not feeling sorrow

Laughing

Without knowing why

Learning

but not knowing

Growing

but not being grown.

by

**Joanne Deborah
Anderson**



Benji at the Beach

Photo by Joanne Schultz Hall

Male And Female Created She/He Them: The Rise And Fall Of Patriarchy

Thomas Alan Parry
Calgary, Canada

Remember this Alan: Every woman would like a wife,
but she doesn't want to be married to one.

Elke Parry.

My wife uttered these words of wisdom to me one Saturday morning, in the aftermath of an effort on my part to appease her annoyance at me for an episode the evening before. I had kept insisting, "Just a few more minutes; it's nearly over!" while trying to catch a glimpse of what turned out to be that historic World Series game that went into extra innings and ending with the barely mobile Don Gibson's dramatic home run that gave the Los Angeles Dodgers their first victory over the heavily favored Oakland A's and which gave them the inspiration that proved to be the A's unanticipated downfall. "If you wanted to watch the game, you should simply have said so. What upset me most was that you wouldn't just say what you wanted, which was obviously to watch the game!"

Somehow I felt that I had just received the answer to Freud's exasperated and exasperating question: "What does the woman want?" She wants, as I interpret the answer I received, someone who is fully her equal, who therefore makes no claim to being her master, but is by no means willing to be her slave either. At the same time as he is her equal, he is unmistakably other than her. If she is to be everything a woman

can be, then he had better get ready to be everything a man can be. Each is, therefore, to seek to become a full partner in the sense of being completely a match for the emerging strength and confidence of the other.

The feminist movement, it goes

*She wants...someone
who is fully her equal*

without saying, is busy seeking to enable women to come fully into their own as strong, confident persons. Until the recent

subordinates and cheerleaders—merely pro-feminist. That was all very well so far as it went. After all, in the face of one of the great historical shifts in the ordering of human relationships, who among concerned men could be content to sit this one out?

As long, however, as the pro-feminist position was all that was available for the awakening man, we could only wait upon the women to give us, in effect, our marching orders. Small wonder that many feminists considered that what men did about women was up to them. Women were too busy getting on with their own mammoth agenda of overturning the entire order of things, founded as they experienced it to be, on male domination in virtually every nook and cranny of human social life.

Meanwhile, men could always count on the nicer ones and there remain lots of those—women, after all, could not entirely escape their patriarchal socialization, nor, for that matter, their genes. The nicer ones would take pity on our confusion and our eagerness to place ourselves as *good men*, and let us know that they wanted us to be more sensitive.

Well then, if sensitive was what they wanted, then sensitive we would be. We'll show you just how sensitive we can be. We won't even choose what movies we want to see. We'll defer to the woman's choice. "What do you want to see?...No, I want to see whatever will make you happy." It took me, personally, an embarrassingly long time, to realize just how infuriating this must have been to women who want-



Elke and Alan Parry

Photo by a passerby

emergence of what is perhaps best referred to as the dawning of a men's awakening, the only position available to men who wanted to join with feminists in a rejection of the traditional gender hierarchy was the "me-too" position. This got us into fruitless arguments over whether men could be feminists or if we had to settle for the unaccustomed position of

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ed to experience, in themselves and in their lives, a genuine strength. It would be all the more infuriating to face such a condescending position, for it is only from the weakness of certain kinds of insecurity masking as strength that one can be content with a mindless, compliant slave for a partner.

Of course, here, precisely, is where we hit upon the fatal weakness of the patriarchal

order of things. It was not founded, I suggest, upon anything so simplistic and one-dimensional as

oppressive men dominating victimized women; rather, it had its source in the male terror of the power and mystery of the woman who gives life, who sees through him, and who holds the key to good sex.

Patriarchy involved, among other things, an attempted *gloss* on each of these. The realization that the male participated, after all, in the procreation of life made room for the outrageous claim that his contribution was primary; the woman was only a receptacle. His increasing capacity to exploit and seemingly control the natural world allowed men to insist that the technical and the public world was the *real world*; the more subtle world of relationships, of feelings, of inner life, otherwise so mysterious to him, was a *bunch of foolishness*, fit only for women. And sex, his great obsession. His by right! And if not given, then his right to take by force. Alas, it could not then be good sex. Unless, of course, the act of force itself became eroticized as rape, which, all too often, became the case.

Patriarchy probably emerged as a response to various geoeconomic forces that placed men in an increasingly dominant position economically and socially vis-a-vis women. The discovery of agriculture and the domestication of livestock, both undoubtedly creations of women, introduced surplus and, in due course, wealth into human life (Glantz & Pearce, 1989). Whenever, say Glantz & Pearce, surplus and wealth enters human groupings, a more complex social order,

inevitably including hierarchy, emerges.

Once humans began to free themselves from the struggle for survival of the hunting and gathering life through the creation of abundance, two streams of social organization seem to have developed. Where planting was predominant, life was settled in a particular locale, the origins of life remained a sacred mystery and woman, the life-giver, continued to

be held in reverence and respect. She remained, as well, the image of the sacred itself, as the *Great Goddess*

(Cf., Gimbutas, 1989). Where the domestication of livestock came to predominate, movement from place to place became necessary in search of pasture lands. The arduous nomadic life was heavily male-dominant and, since it could not but be at the mercy of weather conditions, the sacred, that which was beyond human control, was sought in the heavens. For stock-tending men, birth was losing its mystery as the male role in the procreative process was increasingly understood. Indeed, it must have seemed that life would not happen unless the male took the initiative (even if only at her more subtle behest). In any case, the male became supreme in the nomadic world and with it the male god in the heavens.

With the increase in resourcefulness and wealth, living conditions must have become more equitable, life less prey to predatory animals, hence, the human population could only have proceeded from a beleaguered small number to ever larger numbers that required more space. Nomadic tribespeople, in particular, would have been much on the move in search of fertile pasturelands. As they came up against the undoubtedly more pacific settled agricultural peoples it would have been easy enough to over-run them, particularly given the readiness for violence and contempt for the softer ways

of the settled peoples that we read about in, for instance, the Bible, where the nomadic Israelite tribes invaded and conquered the agricultural, matriolatrous Canaanites (Joshua). Similar events must have taken place in ancient Greece and Old Europe as nomads from the Eurasian steppes over-ran these settled societies.

Life must have been harsh amongst the nomads, and the subordinating of the hitherto equal if not exalted women became, perhaps, a brutal operation, compounded as it must have been by a triumphant euphoria in their almost blasphemous realization that the woman who they had held in such awe, was now effectively beneath the man. It is at this point, I propose, that patriarchy emerged, less as the problem of male supremacy as its attempted solution. Patriarchy, in my view, was the effort that was undertaken to soften and humanize the harsh brutality that would otherwise have been the legacy of any social order based on the domination of one group over another. All the more must it be the case where the dominant group was the more aggressive male lording it over the gentler female whose mystery, moreover, as life-giver and whose personal power over him emotionally and sexually he could never really deny and as a consequence never forgive.

A kinder, gentler social order, indeed any viable human life at all would require a return to the singular twofold basis upon which human beings have evolved and the human brain grown into its immense capacity. That basis consists of

The male body is singularly equipped for hunting while the female's is not.

the active parenting of the human male and the honor bestowed upon the female as mother. Notwithstanding much speculation concerning the emergence of patriarchy as coterminous with the discovery by men of their role in procreation (which would locate that event not earlier than about 6,000 years ago), there is considerable circumstantial evidence at least that males were assuming a fathering role

far back into the Paleolithic, if not even earlier (Durden-Smith & de Simone, 1983, p. 218).

The male body is singularly equipped for hunting while the female's is not. Since the early humans were meat-eaters, it stands to reason that the males must have hunted for at least that portion of the diet on behalf of the women and children. Indeed, evidence from the field of evolutionary biology suggests that amongst the factors that the female considered in her choice of a mate was the likelihood of him being willing to help care for their children (Glantz & Pearce, 1989, p. 104). Monogamous relationships, which appear early in human community life, go hand in hand with an evident willingness of the male to assume, with the female, a parenting role.

The woman, meanwhile, was honored as a sacred symbol well back into the Paleolithic, some 25,000 years ago, as we see in the plethora of heavily stylized females with huge breasts and massive hips that clearly celebrate and honor her for her life-giving capacity. It is safe to say, with Durden-Smith and de Simone, that where the woman has been revered and honored in human affairs, it has been in her capacity as life-giver. Lest such a notion sound familiarly exploitive to the contemporary liberationist ear, the notion of reverence to the woman was in the pre-patriarchal or, what I call, the matriolatrous era (from *matri* for mother, *latreia* for worship), where the woman was truly held in awe. Her esteem was not compromised by the later patriarchal practice of honoring motherhood even as she was made subservient to her husband by being kept busy looking after his children while he paid her in the coin of the pedestal upon

which she was elevated.

The man as father, and the woman as mother, seem to go hand-in-hand, at least with respect to the development of the capacities to father. It is as if the man's regard for the woman in her capacity to mother is what activates his willingness to assume his role as father. This is by no means to suggest that a woman's exclusive or even primary role in life is that of mother, any more than that a man's exclusive role is to father. It is to say that in the vital human task of encouraging men to father actively and responsibly, the mothering capacity of the woman dare not be minimized, otherwise the consequences are deleterious. The male,



Photo by Joanne Shultz Hall

then, seems to lapse into a socially irresponsible role more typical, in fact, of that displayed by other mammals, independent of and indifferent to his connections with others while he engages in aggressive behaviour toward other males and various displays of male posturing. The female becomes exclusively a sex object, to be taken by force if she does not submit and, outside the maternal and sexual realms, a rival in the struggle for worldly achievement and recognition. Once women are seen as competitors, particularly of men who experience themselves in danger of losing out to them,

any urge toward deference much less protectiveness gives way to the aggressiveness that men more typically direct toward those who threaten them.

The commitment of men to active fatherhood may be crucial to the very existence of a viable human society. Nonetheless, it remains to this day a tenuous factor in our affairs as a species. I suggest, in fact, that it invariably wanes during times of societal disruption. The behaviour of alienated and unattached males tends to become such an additional source of further disruption, due to their reversions to aggressive and sexually exploitive behaviour, that a major cultural revision cries out to be created. Such a

revision will invariably require recalling men to the necessity of their commitment to active fatherhood and, at the same time, the adoption of an attitude of nurturance and responsibility toward whatever emerges as a new vision of the good society. Both of these elements were actively carried out in the era, now disintegrating, of patriarchy. The challenge before men today is to begin to envisage what form responsible and nurturing masculinity might take in a world where men feel confident and strong enough to share equally with strong and confident women.

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Just when you thought it was safe: A review of Camille Paglia
and her book

Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson¹

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Nefertiti: A cast Hydrostone sculpture
by Calgary Artist Wm. Lee Keating.

Note:

¹. It is with some trepidation that we offer this review of Paglia and her views. After all, here are two white males of European descent writing about a woman who dares to criticize the politically-correct view of academic feminists and other interpreters of gender politics. So, even the fact of this review - with no female perspective offered - may seem unacceptable to some. This raises an important question: Is it acceptable for two men to offer up a review of Paglia's work without being castigated as hopeless misogynists? Is there a role for criticism in the discussion of sexual politics? Even if that criticism is outrageous, as in the case of

Ms. Paglia's challenges to "group-think?" What is refreshing is her invitation into Western traditions of skepticism and disputation which define the work of the scholar and the intellectual, not the careerists. Even if though there is no "truth" in the scholarly vocation she feels called to, she invites us to join her in a search for the truth. Whether you might agree or disagree with her, it is an invitation that is hard to refuse.

So you thought Freud was dead. You felt you had finally got a grip on the politically-correct posture regarding men and women, or politics and violence. Out of the post-modern afoundational lassitude of the French intellectuals and the polemics of family therapy's ethical prognosticians, it seemed we were ready to chart a course through the (non) gendered waters of the last decade of the 20th century. Wrong. Not only has the work of Camille Paglia let us know Freud is alive, but that men and women are different, in ways perhaps far different from what we've thought.

Camille Paglia is a 44-year-old academic who teaches in the Humanities Department of Philadelphia College for the Performing Arts. The editors of *Image* magazine called her "a string of firecrackers tossed into a faculty tea party...an avenging angel of the '60s come to wrest control of the ivory tower" from the "Frenchified intellectuals," the likes of Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault, and "doctrinaire feminists." She would like to sweep the campus clean of those who would impose their "politically cor-

rect certitudes" on the rest of us.

In her writing and in her media presentations, Paglia lets us know that the issues of gender are probably as facile as some would make them and as complex an issue as we can confront. Simultaneously damned by misogynists (honestly, her depiction of male homosexuals as the guardians of masculine cultural dominance!) and feminists ("if it had been left to women we would all still be living in grass huts"), Paglia cuts her own path through the perennial wilderness of gender, for those who would hide behind their safe, politically-correct stances on gender politics, beware. Her writing seems to seek you out, scream in your face, and demand you come out of hiding from behind your platitudes and public pronouncements. Here is a street fighter armed with a classical education and an attitude. Paglia's exhaustive 750 page book offers the reader her myriad constructions of sexual personae—which are illustrated in everything from western visual premises to the works of Goethe, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Balzac, Baudelaire, Bronte, Swinburne, Wilde, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, Emerson, Whitman, James, and Emily Dickinson. Moving from historical literary criticism to interpretations of contemporary cul-

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ture, she ranges across ages and genres to elaborate her themes. She compares Byron to Elvis Presley, both of whom she insists were "world-shapers, conduits of titanic force." Byron, with a charismatic sexual personae, created a cult of youth that glamorized defiant energy. His life and lifestyle served as the genesis for the self-congratulating and annoying youth culture we experience today. Byron's combination of energy and beauty created a cult of youth that would eventually propel Elvis into his revered state in contemporary culture.

Paglia values William Blake for his study of the nature and the enslavements inherent in the life of the body. Blake was willing to look into the abyss of nature, a female domain. She calls him the British de Sade, turning sex and psyche into a Darwinian maelstrom of natural energies that are "fleeing, chasing and devouring." These contradictions are reflected in his writing which reveals a desire to free sex from its social and religious constraints while, at the same time knowing that sex can never escape the dark embrace of demonic nature.

Freud, The Second Time Around

According to Paglia, Freud is one of the major thinkers in world history. She would call our attention to his "bold play of speculative intelligence" and seeks to trash the feminist position that he was anti-woman in his work. Without necessarily agreeing with his conclusions, she insists that you must nevertheless read him for the ways he characterizes nonverbal psychic phenomena and for "the way you feel new tracks being cut in your brain" as you read him. The three greatest literary psychologists in Paglia's mind are Spencer, Shakespeare, and Freud. Post-Freudian psychologists will never rival Freud because they think he wrote science, "when in fact he wrote art." Paglia seeks to restore Freud's contention that we are at base primitive and ambivalent. The unconscious is a demonic (in the Greek sense—containing both good and evil) realm. The demonic, revealed in our dreams at night, fantasy, and artistic

efforts is governed by sex, cruelty, and metamorphosis. She insists Freud's theory of family romance has within it demonic greatness in that it represents, "an incestuous constellation of sexual personae that we carry from childhood to

According to Paglia, Freud is one of the major thinkers in world history.

the grave that determines whom and how we love or hate. Every encounter with friend or foe, every clash with or submission to authority bears the perverse trace of family romance" (p.4).

Paglia wants to not only remind us of the demonic Freudian realm that governs the lives of both men and women, she wants to push our face into it. Every beleaguered parent might agree with her when she boldly asserts: "Somewhere in every family romance is hostility and aggression, the homicidal wishes of the unconscious. Children are monsters of unbridled egotism and will, for they spring directly from nature, hostile intimations of immortality. We carry that demonic will within us forever" (p.4). In terms of male-female relationships, she

Somewhere in every family romance is hostility and aggression...

believes that "at some level, all love is combat" in which we are wrestling with ghosts from our unconscious. "We are only for something by being against something else" (p.14). There is no middle ground.

She reminds us that we spring from "chthonian" ("of the earth") nature. In the

West, we repress this chthonian view of nature. Here, she is speaking not of earth's surface, but its bowels. Chthonian realities are "the blind grinding of subterranean forces, the long slow suck, the murk and ooze. It is the dehumanizing brutality of biology and geology, the Darwinian waste and bloodshed, the squalor and rot we must block from consciousness to retain our Apollonian integrity as persons (pp.5-6)." One need not go very far these days to be reminded of the chthonian reality even in civilized contemporary life. Pick up a newspaper or turn on the television these days and hear about Jeffery Dahmer's trial. The media caricature of serial killers by their neighbors, "He was always such a pleasant and soft-spoken fellow." drives home the point of the chthonian nature lurking just below the surface of civilized life.

According to Paglia, Dionysus is the heir to the Great Mother of chthonian nature," and Apollo is the "line drawn against nature." The Apollonian and the Dionysian govern sexual personae in both life and art. Keeping the wolf of nature from the door of civilization, is the Apollonian side of human experience: objectification, rationality, and analysis. Apollo is the god of individuation and creates boundaries against chthonian nature. The murky, primitive night-world Paglia describes as the Dionysian side of human experience and it ain't pretty. The "Dionysian" side of human experience is "energy, ecstasy, hysteria, promiscuity, emotionalism—heedless indiscriminate-ness of idea or practice." The eternal

quarrel between these two gods is the quarrel between the higher levels of thinking in the cerebral cortex and the lower levels of functioning in the older limbic and reptilian brain. In Western civiliza-

tion, Apollo represents "law, history, tradition, the dignity and safety of custom and form." But Dionysus represents the eternal new which in its rude manner sweeps everything away in a playful frenzy to begin again.

The Wrinkle of Gender

All human existence is the struggle, and compromise, that takes place between these two polarities; nature with all the horror and dread, all the violence, death, decay, and libido there is and all the sublimation, other-directed and redeeming effort we can stage to rise above this. We are, to quote the latter day Freudian Ernest Becker, "a God that shits and a worm that dreams". Paglia, however, adds a gendered wrinkle to all this. She sees men as especially ravished by this dilemma. Unlike women, men are plagued by unremitting fear of nature—the mysterious dark side of life and death which women live with in the very biological imperatives of their body. Women contain and commune with nature in the confines of their own inner world. They alone possess the self-sufficiency to address not only the demands nature presses upon us but set their mark upon eternity through procreation. Life, death, physicality, and submission, Paglia suggests, are women's companions and men's demons. Fleeing from nature, the Dionysian, with which they cannot commune freely, men rush willy-nilly into the world, spewing forth their creative efforts and swilling out their anguish in creative violence upon themselves, the world and others. In fact, the very fate of culture and social "progress" is in the hands of these frail creatures who, out of their discontent, out of their flight from "the mother," the chthonian and Dionysian, seek to substitute technology, art, intellectual, achievement, and public presence for the fearful embrace of nature. "The reason there has been no female Mozart, is the same reason there has been no female Jack the Ripper. *Our gendered fates are set in stone.*"

Patriarchy as Ally Not Enemy

Biology is destiny. Women, Paglia says, are not only the strong sex—less torn and worn by the inherent paradoxes of life, but in danger less from men than from within their own ranks. Patriarchy, oppression, and latent masculine-violence

(attitudes Paglia does not deny women adopt but suggests) are best treated with vigilance and resignation rather than misplaced polemics and utopian mus-ing) are not the problem. The problem is indiscriminately buying into male behaviour—fleeing mystery, decrying while embracing rationalizing attitudes.

Rather than submit to and revel in the "intellectual paganism," that the Dionysian dialectic promises with the inevitable givens of the masculine and feminine equation, Paglia says that women run the risk of seeking shelter in oppressive Apollonian rhetoric. Her favorite target in this regard has been mainstream and "politically-correct" academic feminism. "Women's studies is institutionalized sexism...a comfy, chummy morass of unchallenged *groupthink*. It is, with rare exception, totally unscholarly" (1991, *Image*, p. 16). Rather than decry society, Paglia admonishes women to celebrate the safe harbor it provides—even gentle men, she reminds us, descend into the dark side of nature when societal and cultural constraints fall away. Times in history, where war and civil strife have laid bare the Dionysian, are never remembered for the protection they have afforded women. Instead, she suggests women, and men, need to ground themselves in truths beyond the moment, to look at history, art, culture, myth, and literature for the recurring themes that tell us who we are. In her tirades against feminists—who else would call Kate Millet an "imploding bean bag of poisonous self-pity!"—she suggests it is time to think more deeply; to think larger and incorporate, wild, expansive, and even threatening ideas rather than cut things down to any size that fits the politics of the moment.

She does this by explicating the predicaments of men and women through the lens of art and literature. She does this not only through the writers of the

mainstream, but through noticing those previously relegated to backwaters and eddies. For example, in her brilliant chapter on Rousseau and de Sade, she juxtaposes the idyllic, politically comforting Rousseau-image of gentle, wholesome-ness, with the free reign given "nature," in the work of de Sade. Rousseau underwrote and philosophically sponsored the French Revolution. De Sade, it would seem "predicted" the inevitability of the reign of terror. Paglia reminds us in this chapter that reality dances between polarities; relentless pursuit of the good will always invite the shadow or dark side. The sexual personae of (natural) man as benevolent and ultimately rational pales before the primal sexuality nature seems to endow men with.

Really Ms. Paglia, You Can't Be Serious!

Moving in her work the way American culture has moved through history, one is never sure where the rabbit will pop out next. Can it be true, as she suggests, that gay men are the saviours of the masculine cultural imperative? In their "flight from the mother" (i.e., all that the mother represents of chaotic nature), the male homosexual lives the creatively fearful life culture and progress demands. All periods of history which have pushed beyond themselves are times, she states, where homosexuality has been emergent. The rebellious, challenging posture of the gay man in relation

Can it be true...that gay men are the saviours of the masculine cultural imperative?

to the (dominant) provenance of the cultural moment is the essence of progress. However, as with every aspect of her writing, even that which she champions she takes to task. Speaking of the trivialization of the *gay-rights movement*, she warns that in redoubling their efforts for recognition and social acceptance, they run the risk of losing their larger aim. At base, it seems Paglia is deeply romantic and pagan (in fact, she feels the beauty

*...she challenges us continually ...
and invites us to take our best shot
at her.*

and underlying unity of pop culture and the Catholic Church is the fundamental paganism both celebrate). Gay liberation, she says, for all its richness better not wrap itself in smug and self-serving sincerity or it runs the risk of desiccating the very vital mystery it feeds off of.

My methods," she says, "is sensationalism," and so after the roller coaster ride of her writing and commentary, one must perhaps pause and question what she has said. Can she really mean it when she suggests that women are responsible for their own plundering at the hands of men? Can she be serious when she asserts that rape is the result of women not protecting themselves or realizing that sex for men is *hot*, or that women find sexual danger appealing and play a fast/loose game with men? Did she really say the woman in the Kennedy-Smith trial should have been convicted of ignorance (i.e., "everyone knows Kennedy is spelled s-e-x")? Does she really advocate a return to both a somewhat stultified acceptance of men as basically animals and women as their zoo keepers? Does she really feel we can all embrace Eros, live with profound ambiguity and dance the night away?

We think both, "Yes and no/know." By her admission, she writes listening to Puccini or Mozart on the Walkman while watching TV soap operas with the sound turned off. This seems to be quintessentially American—both intellectually and as reflection of the rich, protean existence American life reflects. For an American, "going to one's roots" is to embrace the

explosion of forms that post-modern life creates itself out of. Paglia, like other American things in action, often I fear trashes the environment as she goes along while remaining capable of generating rationalizations, if not alternatives, to regroup or re-construct around. Though opposed to French intellectualism with its de-constructivist emphasis, she does not seem purely essentialist either. "The fashionable (French) posturing—that there are no facts—has got to stop. There are no certainties, but there are well-supported facts we can learn and build on, always with the flexible scholarly skepticism that allows us to discard prior assumptions on the basis of new evidence" (*Image*, p.15).

Moving Targets — Dead Certainties

Like so many Americans, Paglia is easily bored. However, in her boredom, she goes hunting, her target any "certainty" that doesn't move fast enough. For her, a "certainty" seems to be any popular set of ideas that become too settled. She is not so much contrary, it would seem, as interested in keeping the game going. She stays quick on her feet and keeps moving. Graham Greene once said, when asked of his religious sentiments, "Among Christians, I am an atheist, however among atheists I am a Christian." So too perhaps with Paglia. She infers that it is far better to engage in lively conversation than sit in the smug politically-correct silence that redundant rhetoric represents.

Conclusion

Reading this long and sometimes exhausting and exhaustive book, I am struck with the layer upon layer of interpretation she applies to prose, poetry, and painting. The sheer number of outright declarative statements can be overwhelming at times. The interpretation runs heavy and thick. Hardly a constructivist or social constructionist, she challenges us continually with her pronouncements and invites us to take our best shot at her. This is the price she is gladly willing to pay for speaking out. If you weren't the recipient of a classical undergraduate education, after reading her book, you might wish you were. Her command of literature, art, and literary criticism is astounding. Her free association, out of the richness of the skeptical scholarly enterprise she invites us all to engage in, is not an attempt at any final answer but rather a log on the fire that is dialogue. However, one gets the feeling that if you chose to challenge her, she would welcome your arguments, but you had better come prepared and have done your homework first. Still, she says that all of civilized life is a *dance*. We need to learn the steps of the dance without becoming rigidly enslaved by them. And above all, for Ms. Paglia, as the song goes, there is "No parking, baby, no parking on the dance floor."

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I will not forget these stones that are set
In a round, on Salisbury Plains
Tho' who brought 'em there, 'tis hard to declare,
The Romans, or Merlin, or Danes.

Myrddin (Merlin)

by Susan Seddon Boulet in *Shaman: The Paintings of Susan Seddon Boulet*, 1989, pp 86 - 87.
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Being Mindful Of Mindfulness

Peter Glossop
Calgary, Canada

The stability of thoughts, its one pointedness, its immobility, its undistraughtness, its one-pointed calm, its non-distraction, that is called mindfulness as to thought.

Thich Nhat Hanh

Being mindful of one's breath, through gently focusing one's awareness on one's breath is the traditional first step of *being mindful of mindfulness*. This is followed by being able to focus on other aspects of one's experience--posture, physiology, stimulus frequency, thoughts, and feelings.

Mindfulness is acknowledging what "is" in a non-judgmental and accepting manner, which can allow what may seem unlivable, to be livable. Thich Nhat Hanh (1975), in his book *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, outlined non-mindfulness as:

Vexed and pressed hard on all sides, thought proceeds without any staying power, like a monkey or like the wind. It ranges far, bodiless, easily changing, agitated by the objects of sense, connected with one thing after another.

(Hanh, 1975, p. 136)

Initially, in 1989, when I started to explore the use of mindfulness in my work, I was drawn to the reflection/meditation component of mindfulness.

Nan Shin (Nancy Amphoux; 1986) illustrates this component in her writings as she struggles with ovarian cancer.

*On
the lake
early in the morn-
ing, a young couple
casting from a rowboat,
more nature lover than preda-
tor, drift past a canoe nudging
slowly in the opposite direction
close to shore; both in silence.
An osprey patrols overhead,*

*woodpeckers hunt through the
trunks, a flock of chickadees scour.
On the surface billions of waterbugs
rush round in circles, their patterns
overlying the complicated geometry
of underwater reflections flickering
against a third complicated pattern
of the edges of matted oak leaves,
brown and thick, spread above the
ooze. Pattern on pattern on pattern,
motionless leaves under rollicking
webs of light under scrolls of insect
tracks.*

*In the shallows on the west
side of the lake, where the sun
strikes first rising over the eastern
trees, where the ice first melts in
spring and the water warms, lie
spawning holes. I've visited them
for forty years but they have had no
reason to move for thousands; and
they are made fresh each spring on
those days before anybody has
noticed that winter is over. Roughly
circular depressions in the bottom
mud or sand or pebbles, the center
fanned clean by fins, leaving a
round gravel area a foot or more
across where the spawn is deposited
to hatch.*

*At three or four points around
the lake in very shallow water, a
scatter of shell fragments shows
where clams can be found in the
ooze. There are usually one or two
big ones lying two-thirds buried.
Near them are some large sub-
merged stones, a fringe of clean
bottom around them--can there still
be crayfish here, after all these*

years of motorboats and boys?

*Drawing out from there into
deeper water, the paddle attracts
larger fish, bluegills and sunfish.
They hang back watching, two or
three at a time, and the sunlight
catches a flirt of pale yellow and
blue on a fin as they turn and dart.
Small sapphire dragonflies that the
French call demoiselles streak past,
from time to time a huge brown one
big as your fist; six or eight swal-
lows skim the surface twittering
amicably; and as many least sand-
pipers, the first I've ever seen, fly
past following the shoreline rather
timidly, as though they were just
passing by and preferred not to be
noticed.*

*The blueberries are on the
bushes but mostly still green. Ferns,
mosses, sprigs of baby tree, winter-
green, spikes of flag, pine-barren
milkwort, goldenrod; a mound of
branches on the shoreline the size of
a small car means that the beavers
have extended their domain since
last autumn, when there were seven
dams and two big houses in the mid-
dle of their pond. Not a twig-snap,
not a creak from them in the day-
time, though.*

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Small pocks in front mean frogs hopping in as the canoe edges closer. Almost the same sounds heard at one's back mean the striking of a line cast from the rowboat. The weight of silence, weight of sounds, balanced, shaped and framed by a wide clear pale blue sky.

Lake conversation boat to boat:

"Looking for anything?"

"Whatever there is."

(Shin, 1986, pp. 200-201)

Gradually as I continued to work with mindfulness, I became aware that there were other different levels of mindfulness- – **integration and action.**

An example of integration mindfulness arose during a three-day retreat I was co-leading. A woman, when asked to bring something "that caught her eye" returned with a thin, dry spruce twig that had a small bright green piece of moss attached. She described the twig as representing the "deadness" she felt (and at times still feels) around memories of her childhood abuse and neglect, in her role as the family scapegoat. The moss represented her healthy self and the growing, if yet fragile, feeling of hope she has. Furthermore, she verbalized that just as the moss needs the twig as a foundation and as "something to grow from," her personal growth is tied to her pain. It is as if she is now able to hold two seemingly oppositional feelings; deadness and growth within the same *self chalice*.

Using the analogy, a house to represent the different components of mindfulness, the acknowledgement of separate parts of the house could represent *reflective mindfulness*. *Integration mindfulness* would be represented by the building of the house into a meaningful structure or home. Active mindfulness would be living and interacting with self and others in the home.

Victor Frankl (1959) writes about his ability to reflect, integrate and act mindfully even while experiencing and observing unspeakable horrors while a prisoner at Auschwitz Concentration Camp.

Another time we were at work in a trench. The dawn was grey around us; grey was the sky above;

grey the snow in the pale light of dawn; grey the rags in which my fellow prisoners were clad, and grey their faces. I was again conversing silently with my wife, or perhaps I was struggling to find the

Then, at that very moment, a bird flew down silently and perched just in front of me, on the heap of soil which I had dug up from the ditch, and looked steadily at me.

(Frankl, 1959 pp. 60-61)



Graphic by Gwenda Sobush, Calgary, Canada

reason for my sufferings, my slow dying. In a last violent protest against the hopelessness of imminent death, I sensed my spirit piercing through the enveloping gloom. I felt it transcend that hopeless, meaningless world, and from somewhere I heard a victorious "Yes" in answer to my question of the existence of an ultimate purpose. At that moment a light was lit in a distant farmhouse, which stood on the horizon as if painted there, in the midst of the miserable grey of a dawning morning in Bavaria. "Et lux in tenebris lucet" - and the light shineth in the darkness. For hours I stood hacking at the icy ground. The guard passed by, insulting me, and once again I communed with my beloved. More and more I felt that she was present, that she was with me; I had the feeling that I was able to touch her, able to stretch out my hand and grasp hers. The feeling was very strong: she was there.

He is very mindful of the grey and hopeless situation he is in, but he is able to integrate that darkness with the light from the farm house window (existence of an ultimate purpose). Similarly, the presence of the little bird represents his wife's love allowing him to survive in a loveless camp.

Furthermore, Frankl is able to go on to support his fellow prisoners and, due in part to his mindfulness of his suffering, develop new and useful forms of psychotherapy.

In summary, I've found the need to be mindful about my use of mindfulness and to look at this experience not only as a reflective resource, but also as one that can create space for integration and action.

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The Work Ethic: A Survivor's Tale

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When I was a young boy growing up in Scotland, one of my favourite pastimes was to cross the street to the wheat field where the tall grasses would tickle my chin and I could pretend I was an explorer in Africa. Perhaps, in these moments, on a warm August morning, the spirit of adventure and my spiritual connectedness with nature, were embedded in my soul forever. Perhaps, that is why some thirty years later, I still find myself on a quest for a life that is balanced between work and spiritual growth.

For many young boys, myself

*We have traded away
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for the company of a
pay cheque...*

included, school comes along and we are trained from an early age for a noble career, usually academic in nature, that takes us away from the essential qualities of spirit, adventure, and nurturing that we were all born with. Many men today are discovering what they have unconsciously bought into a cultural system which places work and career above all else and they find themselves feeling trapped, lonely, and frustrated. These potentially explosive feelings, if left untreated, often lead to alcoholism, infidelity, and most tragic of all—family violence.

I can certainly relate to the feelings of being trapped in a career as I recall my life in 1987. I had just secured a new job, which offered everything (I thought) that I had ever wanted—more money, more responsibility, and more authority. I was

33, at the time, and soon discovered that I didn't want to get out of bed in the morning. I found myself coming home at lunch time just to escape the office for a while. In short, I was terrified of all the increased responsibilities I had taken on.

Isn't this story the same for many of us? Our society (and our egos) equate "more" with success and we drive ourselves ever more onward and upward into the "heights" of success, further and further away from our bodies, our souls, and our true selves. Are we leading our own lives or are we blindly following a mythical path laid out for us by our parents and by society?

As a man (or woman) climbs up the "ladder" of success inevitably there is less room for other people, and an incredible sense of loneliness and isolation sets in. This may take years to discover, but many men I talk to, in our group work, tell of how

lonely and alone they feel. How could it be any other way in a corporate hierarchical system where there is only room for one at the top?

We are taught these competitive, *beat-the-other-guy, win-at-all-costs rules* early in our development. For me, it started in Junior School where I was first introduced to the practices of *pass/fail, top/bottom, and win/lose*. If this is the way we are trained at age five, is it any surprise that we will live the rest of our lives that way? No wonder as men we experience such feelings of abject, bone-chilling loneliness.

Our frustrations are severe. We have traded away our *wonder-selves* for the company of a pay cheque, the mortgage, and an illusion of self-gratification through the consumption of material goods. And the system is failing us rapidly and painfully. The great unspoken argument (I'll get a degree and be a loyal lifetime servant in exchange for lifetime job security) is being broken on all fronts. Here in Calgary, the pillars of the corpo-

rate world are laying-off staff at a moment's notice. Men and women are being turned out into the street after decades of service, and having made their careers their priority, they feel shattered, broken, and destroyed. I experienced all of these feelings when the intervention took place in my life. As bad as it felt at the time, it has now led me to a fuller understanding of life and on to a *new self-chosen career* which is much more in-line with my true self.

I work now as a facilitator for support groups, family violence prevention programs, and organizational renewal teams. *The situation is bad but it is not hopeless.*

Many corporations, having gone through the trauma of downsizing, are realizing they had better invest time and money in the employees they have left, and in the building of a caring organization.

A number of agencies now offer assistance to men in the *seas of addictions and family violence*. Support groups are emerging all over the city. It is not that work is unimportant—of course it has a place in our lives, but when work

*...when work
becomes our life -
our God - we are all
in serious trouble.*

becomes our life—our God—we are all in serious trouble. We, as men, need to re-balance and re-focus our energies, so we can build caring families, a caring community, and a caring planet. I feel very blessed to be of this *men's awakening*, and I encourage all people to start asking themselves some questions like—"Do I want to do this job for the rest of my life?" If we start answering, "No!" to some of these questions maybe it's time to start looking honestly at ourselves and saying, "Yes!" to our truer/deeper selves.



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Healing Men

Michael S. McKernan
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with Carol Liske
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In what context(s), now, are you working with men?

In quite a number. I have been surprised by the number of times I've been asked to speak in different contexts to professional groups, and to client groups, about male issues. This can be anything from groups of men interested in fathering or undertaking a healing process, to specific groups of professionals (i.e., church clergy), and so forth. So, I've done a lot of talking at workshops. I also run men's groups—about one a year is what I can manage. Additionally, I see quite a number of men in therapy, in part, because people refer to me in seeing me as someone who likes working with men and who maybe has something to contribute that they're not sure about. I get a lot of referrals that way. I've been pretty busy. I'm even working with some graduate students doing doctoral dissertations, on men's issues, so I've had that chance to look at the research area. I've been very fortunate, and I guess if you present enough times people begin to see a little bit about what you do and are interested in hearing more, so they approach you in different ways.

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Have you had a sense of any common concerns that these men are bringing to you?

Yes, there are. I think anytime you're dealing with a specialized group or you attach a label and set expectations about that group, you can always make the mistake of assuming too much. Generalizations about men's experience have similar effects to those about

Generalizations about men's experience have similar effects to those about women's experience.

women's experience. Sometimes they're right. But some of the themes that I see and that strike me is that not every man is interested in this questioning about male socialization as a positive thing. My sense is that it is the men who are the most disenfranchised or discouraged that are questioning the male situation. I think we only question things when we feel there is something wrong. And I don't think that every man thinks there is something wrong in what's happening. In fact, it's the questioning process that they would think of as the wrong thing. Sensitive reactions to feminist criticisms about patriarchy are not something that every man feels is a supportive or a good thing. Conversely, men who don't have socio and economic opportunities, don't often attend men's conferences. The real

trend, it seems to me, is middle-class men who are over 30, into their 30s and 40s—*mid-life*. That's certainly a very strong theme. I think men have responded to the media and to things like the gatherings of men with someone like Robert Bly. These sorts of things have caught men's attention and have made them think. They've seen their buddies going to men's workshops and talking about their experience more. There's more activities happening. But still, it's not reaching the full wide-range of men. It's reaching those men who question and they are still, I think, a minority.

The common issues that I see men coming forward with doesn't always mean that they say "I'm coming forward thinking that my male experience or my socialization is really troubled here or a problem here." They come forward saying "I'm really at a loss. The things I used to believe in, I don't believe in anymore." They are questioning the fundamental parts of their roles—corporate accomplishments, being the best, being a responsible family man—and this quite often doesn't come out of the blue, it's usually in the face of loss or threatened loss. The most typical scenario is a marital difficulty where the wife has threatened to leave or has left. Another scenario might be that a man has had an affair or that he's having a health crisis or that he's been laid off from his work. Those are the kinds of scenarios where men have been pressed to question seriously how they have been living, in feeling betrayed by some of the rules that they felt were part of the game, part of the insurance that if they followed the rules, they would feel okay. Many men are feeling betrayed by: systems that have laid them off after 15 years or 20 years of

devoted service (i.e., in the oil industry); a marriage that seems to have dried-up on them; kids who aren't interested in them; their own lack of paternal interest; their own limited sense of satisfaction in life; their bodies when they suffer illness—that's the kind of pain that's often there. The other thing I notice is that more often than even five years ago, I will see men who are actually saying "I've decided I want to deal with some of my experience." Five years ago it would have been more common to say, "my wife," or "my boss," or "the judge," or "my priest," or "my minister—has said I should be here." Now, there is a trend towards men taking charge of their issues and feeling like they have some change work to do.

How do you attribute that men are now coming forward on their own initiative?

I think there is more permission for men to recognize that it's okay to have issues and uncertainties. I think the feminist movement has challenged the traditional tolerance that has been there for men to have issues but to not acknowledge them. And there is more encouragement for men to speak about their experience. Some men remain in a defensive posture of "I own nothing. I

won't acknowledge my hurts or my wounds or my shortcomings, someone else will have to find them and convince me that I should work on them." Some men still do that. Fortunately, I get referrals from people who are very motivated, they have momentum, and it's easier for me to simply be a support in their exploring what it is they need to do, to live differently. It's easier to take on that supportive role of working and noticing with

these men. One of the great dilemmas, in my experience, for example, has been sitting down with a couple, and the wife (usually the initiator for the session) often has a very explicit idea of what's going on that needs to get changed. If you ask

...there is an implicit sense of having lost something.

the husband that question, they know what their wife wants but they don't know what they want. It's hard for anybody to take risks in a situation where they're not sure they want anything from it or they're not clear what it is they're working towards. There's a tendency to

When people say, "Something has to be different!" that's a kind of change in itself. I'm seeing more of that. That's very gratifying. It's easy for me to contribute my own perspective and work in a non-adversarial way.

What are men seeing with respect to worthwhile choices they could make?

I think there is a greater recognition about men needing to be responsible for their emotional lives. There is a greater tendency for men to be willing to challenge themselves and see some of their behaviours as being wrong or inappropriate, and feeling the need to do something about that. I hear about their pictures of life without their symptom(s). I see men struggling with what it is that would be, a good man. I see men struggle with that now because the old models such as John Wayne, have been solitary, tough, and invincible. I think, now, men are feeling and recognizing how painful the isolation

has been for them.

However, they struggle with "How can I be less isolated?"

What's my picture of being a good man that would be less isolated?" I think there's a lot of confusion about what that picture would look like. By and large, what feminism has been able to offer is to question what is really wrong with male socialization. That's what I think a lot of men have been able to identify with in the feminist movement. And quite often they see it in their fathers. They

say, "My experience of my father was, *ya that!*" And then, a harder one to acknowledge is, "Actually my wife sees that in me too...my failure to be there...my failure to be emotionally available..."—and so forth. They see the negative downside of what masculinity has come to mean in our culture, and they see the significance of the criticism, but it's harder to discover what the positive statement is. "What is it that you would be if you weren't isolat-



Brothers Meet - Durga and Benjamin Liske, May 1977

Photo by N. Liske

back off. Now, when I watch men come forward and they say, "this is what I know I need to deal with. I've been abusive to my wife, I have these questions about my marriage, I know I drink too much, I have no friends, and I'm depressed."—when they come forward and say, "These are my issues and this is what I want to change."—I know there is already momentum there and there is already a kind of change that's happened.

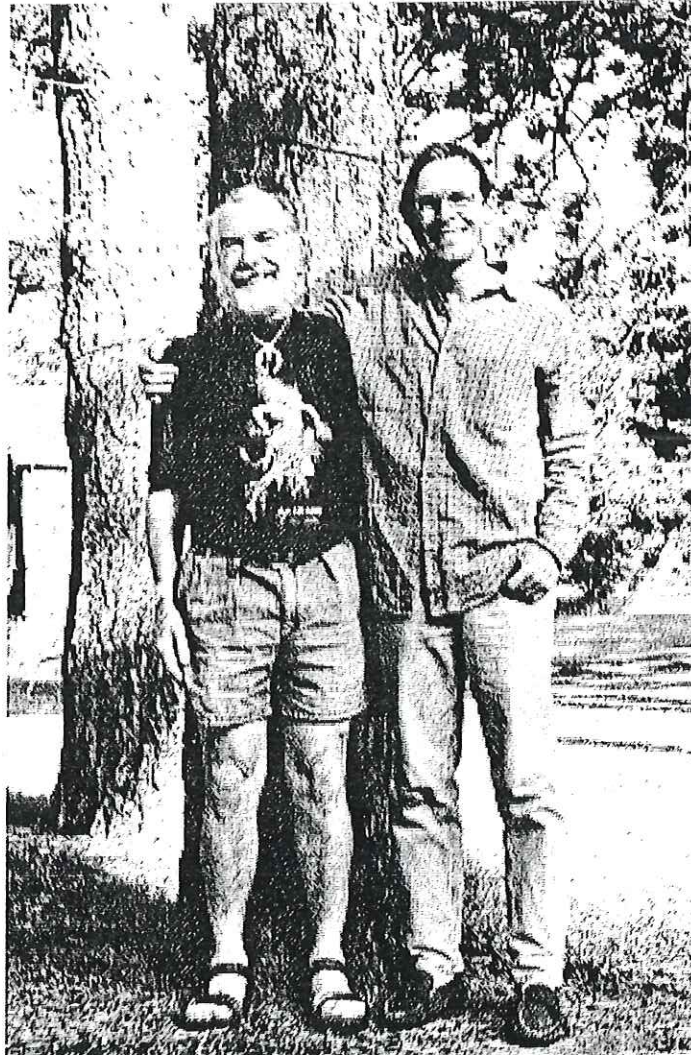
ed? If you weren't abusive? If you weren't avoidant? What would that mean? How would you be that way?"

*...shame and issues of loss.
Those seem to be two really
consistent and powerful themes
in almost every man's life...*

And they're struggling with some of the implicit *male-behaviour rules*, like being too open, too warm, or too vulnerable. I think, generally, women and men struggle with that, because there are a lot of contradictory images about male behaviour. There are a lot of women and men who would like to see vulnerability alongside remarkable strength—*John Wayne with feelings*. They'd like to see the hybrid. It seems to me that none of us are completely ready to let go of the appeal of *John Wayne*, and that none of us feel completely comfortable with being vulnerable and allowing that vulnerability to become part of how we would interact with people. None of us feel free to let go of the isolation we've found protective and comfortable, without feeling like a rule has been broken. John Wayne wouldn't be messy. He knew exactly what to do. *Father knew best*. I think that struggling and being messy is a very human and admirable thing. It's what good therapy usually involves. But there have been *rules, a male code of ethics*, and although the required behaviour hasn't been explicitly written out, any man could recite it quite well, quite reliably.

How would you help a man build a picture of how to replace 'the space in his life' that the symptom(s) had once filled?

It depends on the individual and what they are ready for. Some people are simply there for symptom relief, and to speak to them about underlying issues would be, in their mind, a waste of time, and getting off the point. I try to be respectful to what it is that they are asking for. If solution-



Friends - Alan Parry and Rob Doan

Photo by Elke Parry

focused symptom relief is what they're looking for, we may never talk a lot about male issues or never give a specific label to that. Then there are other men...we all appreciate when someone says "I really want to grow. It's not just symptom relief I'm looking for." Or, "I

know this symptom. I know how I can get rid of it. I know that it will come back again at another point, and there's something else I need to deal with." I think there are two principle issues that are part of what I look for and see as important factors in the symptom as well as in the change process, and these factors are issues of *shame* and *issues of loss*. Those seem to be two really consistent and powerful themes in almost every man's life, probably in every woman's life too. It takes on a particular character for men.

First of all, *loss* as a theme tends to include a recognition that there is an implicit sense of having lost something. Research highlights that boys at 18 months-of-age are reliably able to distinguish *so-called* gender-appropriate toys from non-gender-appropriate toys. They are already recognizing that there are some things they can't allow themselves to have—some things that are not okay—and in the emotional realm, that can include that sometimes it isn't okay to be too dependent. There is a sense of having to say, "No!" to a lot of dependency needs. In the process, there are a lot of losses involved, in terms of having to let go or devalue dependency needs. When you develop a *style* for letting-go and avoiding dependency needs, there are a lot of losses such as failed relationships when you couldn't be there on your own terms, and sharing. There's an implicit sense of having lost something, lost a connection. You let go of mom, and dad was at work—an ambiguous figure to imitate. How do we connect and internalize a relationship experience that is mostly in terms of unavailability?

Where is the connection? Quite often that is a place of loss for many of the men that have grown up in the generation that I'm in. Perhaps they learned to think like Mark Twain when he said, "When I'd reached 12 and I thought it was time to be a man, I wanted to know what to do.

There were no answers. So, I decided to imitate the men around me and I've been doing that for the last 40 years." Imitate. There's a kind of loss that's in their head, a recognition that somehow you're doing all the right things, but you're not gratifying the need that is there to belong and to be authentic. Many men say, in groups, that this is one of the first times they've ever allowed themselves to cry; or to say how much they hurt; or that they really don't feel like they want to be this kind of a man anymore; or how they feel betrayed by the corporations, the *daddy rules*; etc. It usually centres around a particular loss issue. You can take the theme and merely validate and support the grief involved in the loss. By validating loss, it can be seen as something not to be terrified of, but as something that if one were to accept and to be with, it could leave a person feeling stronger and more accepting, or patient. Therefore, one could become more likely to seek out relationships and expect that others would understand and offer support. The loss theme is very powerful.

The *shame* issue has, I think, a lot to do with the rule book, the *incredibly rigid rule book*. Research tells us that as parents, both men and women, are anxious about boys who deviate from the rules, who demonstrate too much attraction to the feminine. There's a real hyperconsciousness about that. Somehow, that ties into a sense of *okayness*, and to fail the rules, is something that lurks in the back of the minds of most men, to some degree—"Am I doing it okay?" Or, "Am I blowing it? Am I letting down that code book, that male course in the back of my mind that tells me what's okay and what's not okay." And there is an incredible amount of shame because implicitly men recognize that they have a greater need to embrace the feminine, to let go of some of the masculine thing, and it's a secret. For most men it becomes a secret thing. Unfortunately, shame seems to be tied to secrecy and a feeling that, "If I could ever let this part of me out, I would be rejected, I wouldn't be accepted." Men in groups often talk about the experience of, "I often felt like I'm the one fraud in the room. The rest of the guys have legitimate card-carrying memberships to the

I'm -A-Man Club. I feel like I'm only faking it. I don't feel right. I don't feel connected. I don't feel like I have any sense of belonging. I think I'm the only one who feels this way, so I have to keep acting as though I feel fine too." These men discover, in groups, other men have felt that way. And so, stories of shame get shared. There is a lot of relief. "Finally, I can get a chance to talk to a man about this event that happened." I was sexually abused and afraid to talk about that." Or, "I was sexually abusive and I have to talk about that." Or, "I've never had a relationship with my father and feel very

I make a point of sharing something of my story.

depressed and have been afraid to talk about that." Part of it is just to get some of that covert belief out in the open where it can be examined for its usefulness. A lot of useless ideas govern people's lives and as long as they're kept secret they remain powerful and unaltered.

What creates fear in a group of men?

Probably nothing different from any other group dynamic in the sense that the fear of exposure and that shame can feel so threatening that it's hard to let go of the outer personae.

Can a woman effectively lead a men's group?

I think a woman could do that, but just like the question of a man leading a woman's group—I don't think it would be appropriate to have an opposite-gender leader for a specific group geared to gender. It's credibility, I think. I would have difficulty as a member of a men's group led by a woman. A woman might convince me over time that she deserves to be recognized as someone who can carry that role off well, but there will be a credibility gap, initially.

What can the men who are leading a

men's group do to bring out an environment of trust and the experience of freedom to share shame and/or loss?

I think the best thing that they can do is to be willing to share something of themselves in terms of their own story. I make a point of sharing something of my story and interestingly enough, I think my tendency of self-disclosure has increased, as a result of my work with men's groups. Valuing self-disclosure is an important ingredient because there is such a strong male tendency towards hierarchy in a group—measuring and comparing. I try to break through that by *putting-it-on-the-level*—I'm prepared to share something of my story. I'm also prepared to tell you about my conviction of how valuable it can be for men to give sincerely from their personal experience. I'll present myself as someone who is not prepared to hold out in judgment, but rather, I will begin by giving my idea of the kind of stories that are there and

what are the values of that and how it's okay to speak them. The interesting thing is that I find that most men are becoming pretty sold on the idea of a group of men. That was a bit of a surprise to me and, in fact, surprised some of my colleagues. They don't need any encouragement. They are already sold on the notion that sharing has value, that the issue is important. That may be due to the screening, but I think it's the media. I think it's supported by other therapists who see the value of it.

I want to set a norm for sharing and for breaking out of the traditional hierarchical theme that so easily comes into play with men. We compare and measure ourselves against each other. When I see it I'll just comment on it. I try to do that supportively. I don't think there is any need to take people apart on those sorts of things. I may say, "You seem to be really coming on strong there." or "You seem to be really holding back there, I'm wondering are you concerned about whether your position is okay? Your thoughts are okay? Your beliefs are okay? How do you feel other men in the group are reacting to what you shared?" I try to bring in a question of making that covert self-assessment and assumptions about what other men think into an overt thing where

it can be explored and challenged. It can be validated for where it's been true (maybe in the past), and examined for whether or not it has to be true now. "Does it have to be true that you still are at the bottom of the class?" or, "that you have to be the hyper-achiever and at the top-of-the class or you don't feel good about yourself? Is that still a compelling belief for you? Does that still control how you're going to handle your experience in the group?" I think there is a sense that somehow men need the right mixture of challenge and support and my sense is the mistakes that quite often get made in therapy are either because we bend too much towards the confrontational style of dealing with men (i.e., "You have a lot to account for and I'm going to make you do it. You can't earn any respect from me until you've admitted to your flaws or your faults or you've really seen the error of your ways.")—that kind of approach—or the one that says, "You poor person, look how you suffered in the past, little wonder you've done this." Those are two mistakes when you get into using one style or the other. The balance means that there is room to challenge, but it's always the connection, the respect with the clients or within a group, that provides the possibility of effectively challenging someone. In fact, that's the most respectful thing you can do. It's straight-forward within an atmosphere of trust. You will get challenged and you'll also be respected. That is important for all men to see. And also that they have the responsibility to challenge and respect the other men in the group, and the other therapists in the group. That's an important thing because quite often men can't see some of the destructiveness of their abusive behaviour, or they can't see the way they minimize, until men that they've had some connection with can say back to them, "You're really out to lunch on that one." "You don't even see how you're hurting your wife or your girlfriend." Or, "You don't even see how you've been wrong." That's important to hear from people you trust.

What do you think the effects of men's groups are on the lives of the menfolk who have participated in them?

It can be very positive. I have watched men do individual work after they've done the group work. There is

this sequence. Typically, a person does some individual work in preparation to make a group workable and worthwhile. Quite often, there is left-over business from the group work, and you can just see a difference in these men's experience of themselves and their readiness to move, as a result of having done the group. In therapy, improvements are evident. The other thing you hear about is that wives inevitably react to the experimenting behaviours of men in a group. The men come out of a group with a resolve to say what they haven't been saying, tell their wives what it is they want that they haven't been saying, pick up an issue of difference and deal with it rather than avoid it. When they begin to experiment you hear the stories of the

What I think is ideal, is for men and women to live their lives in balance.

wife reacting and being surprised, or being suspicious, but nonetheless in some ways their eyes are open in a different way to their husbands. That kind of change happens. I've seen men make major decisions about their lives in the work that they've hated and felt they were obliged to carry. Many men have a lot of their identity staked in their work, and once they begin to question and to develop the sense of who they are internally, they actually begin to have a different idea about what it is to find value in one's life. There's that kind of a change. One man, for example, who was very depressed and quite suicidal, an accountant, quit his work, went to Vancouver and established something very positive for himself on the basis of simply being confronted in a group with, "You're so unhappy, why are you continuing?" — and from looking at all the reasons why he was afraid to change. It was helpful just that men were talking amongst each other and challenging each other, "Why

do you keep talking about the same thing, you're not doing anything different?" This particular man was someone who hadn't moved in individual therapy all that much and then made this dramatic decision. And it was a good decision for him. That would be an example of the kind of change I've seen from the work in men's groups.

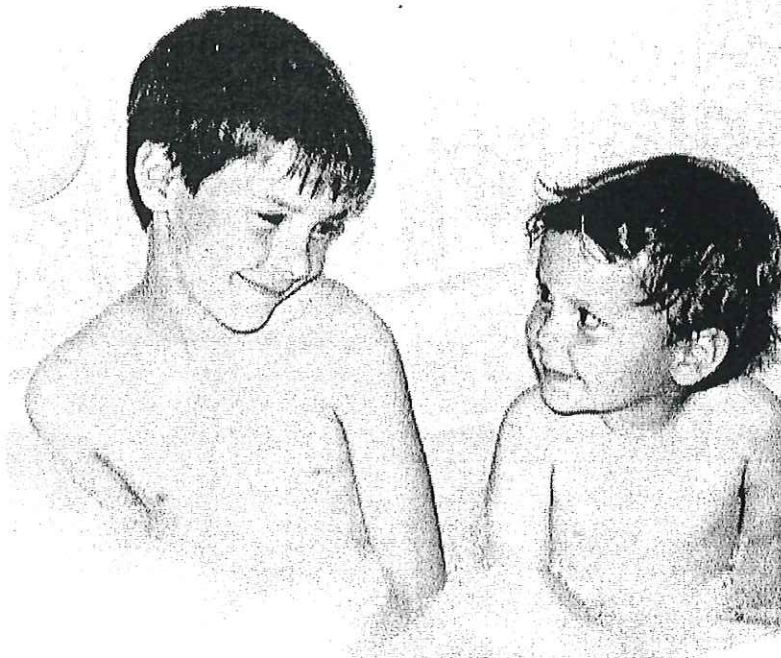
Eventually, will male persons become more able to deal with situations from a place of being mindful of the factors within the situations and a clarity about the effective actions they could take without being disrespectful to the others involved and without making hierarchy, competition, or other types of egocentric motivations central to their behavioural decision making?

What I think is ideal, is for men and women to live their lives in balance. I think there is a traditional notion about an operational or a *doer/achiever* side of us, and a *being side* of us. The *doer* side has been over-valued in our culture, particularly with reference

to men, much as the *be-er* and *caretaker* side has been over-emphasized with reference to women. I think there are a lot of good things about what men do already. What would be good is to see men feeling more able to make choices based on both sets of means—what they need to do and accomplish as well as what they need to be sensitive and in caring relationship with others. That's probably a political issue because there's a system of rewards in the culture. How it's geared makes it easy or hard for people to take the risk of being more open, more vulnerable, and more sensitive. When I see men changing, I see them adding *relationship consciousness*. They add that strength to the strength they have as *doers*. It would be great, on a very practical level, to see men making choices to opt out of work and out of the achievement system in favour of staying at home with their kids, just because it would be good for their kids, as well as for them. It would be neat to see men making decisions about their

careers and their lives taking into account not just the pull of achievement and the

lution in their own therapy process is one of increased awareness of their responsi-



Nathan and Benjamin Hall

Photo by Joanne Shultz Hall

appeal of having more and doing more, but also addressing the question of "Does this make sense for me as a person? Does this make sense for people who are close to me to be doing more of this, or is this really a mistake to take this promotion that will involve sacrificing too much." For men to be able to ask themselves more freely, "What is it that I need to do here that would suit my values, my convictions—the best," instead of the *knee-jerk reaction* of more is better, bigger, longer, stronger which invites choices that seem mindless and self-destructive. There are many men at mid-life or at retirement point who are totally alienated from their kids, alienated from themselves. You see men who die within a short time of their retirement (the average man who retires at 65 doesn't live to receive 17 pension cheques). That's astonishing, and an indication that somehow their life has been too invested in one way of living. If men could be more in-tune with their bodies, that means sometimes going to doctors more often, it means feeling their feelings and making choices based on what they think, as well as what they feel. That's the kind of balance that I hope for. And, for example, men who abuse or have abused, the evo-

lution in their own therapy process is one of increased awareness of their responsibilities. They need to look at the guilt that they may carry, about what they've done wrong and what they need to do to change that, in order to compensate for their failure in relationships. This helps them to look at their own experience of themselves, their own shame, their own fear, and to begin to take care of that hurt in a way that opens the door to better

congratulated for choosing not to take unwanted job transfers (and being respected for that); if there was room for men to take a leave-of-absence to be at home with their kids. There is lip-service to that but I don't think that occurs often, in practice. I think that if there was more of that activity happening with more *balanced men* happening, you would eliminate what the Native people used to comment on—men who are hard outside but soft inside. This man is seen as a dangerous man. Many men are that way with a hardened shell and all kinds of unresolved issues within themselves that often makes them dangerous and frightened men, men who are so out of touch with their own feelings that they have no capacity or way of connecting with others and respecting others' needs. The evolutionary product would be a man who could be soft on the outside and hard on the inside—a man that can be strong within his own convictions, and yet open. And that's the kind of image that the Natives suggest to emulate—that man can be a healer. *If more men were healing there would be more healing men*—men who took healing into various walks of life whether they are engineers, football players or whether they're staying home with their kids. Whatever it is, that they could be healers in those roles because of the balance that makes them strong on the inside and not just a posture. 🍏

*If more men were healing
there would be more healing
men.*

connections with people. That's the kind of *balancing activity* that can make them more whole people. There would be significant change if you saw a lot of men doing that, particularly men in high profile situations. Men's lives would improve if you saw men being congratulated for not being high achievers (which doesn't happen for men); if men were

Of Love and Lenses: Gay and Lesbian Affiliations¹

Gary Sanders
Calgary, Canada

Queer, dyke, fag, fairy, poof, - all these terms have been flung at persons suspected of loving someone of the same gender. Such irony to be defiled because of love itself!

The term *homosexual* only appeared as an English word in 1891 in John Addington Symonds treatise *A Problem of Modern Ethics* (Persky, 1989). Its counterpart, *heterosexual*, first appeared ten years later in 1901. Persky writes,

In Dorland's Medical

Dictionary (1901), 'heterosexual' was defined with unconscious poetic justice as 'abnormal or perverted appetite toward the opposite sex.'

Some would say that under tyrannical patriarchy, there is a sense in which all male heterosexuality is a 'perverted appetite.' ... But not until the 1955 addenda to the third edition of the Oxford English

Dictionary is heterosexual again required to officially define itself and, even then, does so in blatantly ideological language as 'pertaining to or characterized by the normal relations between the sexes.' One only has to reflect glancingly on the monstrousness of the relations between the sexes, recorded in a

torrent of studies, to absorb the impact of that usage of 'normal.'

For too many persons the word homosexual brings forth a view of sexual choice embedded in a context of irresponsibility, immorality and occasionally crime. However, most of us, both gay and straight, have been misled by the term homosexual. We orient towards the genitalization of human experience. Homosexuality actually has more to do with one's love-affiliation than simple genital lust. Oscar Wilde, in his turn of the Century trial for sodomy spoke to this basic and painful issue:

"The Love That Dares Not Speak Its Name" is such a great affection as there was between

*The Love That Dares Not
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David and Jonathan, such as Plato made the very basis of his philosophy, and such as you find in the sonnets of Michelangelo and Shakespeare. It is that deep spiritual affection that is as pure as it is perfect. It dictates and pervades great works of art. It is in this century so much misunderstood that it may be described as the 'love that dares not speak its name' and on account of it, I am placed where I am now. It is beautiful, it is fine, it is the noblest form of affection. There is nothing unnatural about it. That it is so, the world does not understand. The world mocks at it and sometimes puts one in the piliary for it."

(Excerpted from Oscar Wild's reply to the Solicitor General in the second of Wild's three trials. The Crown Prosecutor had asked him to explain a phrase he had used in a letter to Lord Alfred Douglas. [G.F.T. 1981])

I propose, like Oscar Wild, that what we have come to call homosexuality has much less to do with sexuality than it does with the experience of human affiliation. Of course, by its very nature there can be a sexual component to that affiliation, either in mind and/or in practice. However, it is my suggestion to view homosexuality through the lens of a human affiliation. This affiliation is based on a preferential love relationship along

with, perhaps, a hope for congruence of sexual activity. I suggest this view instead of that which sees homosexuality through the lens of genital activity alone. That is, rather than simply privilege

behaviours and subsequently confuse these behaviours with a person's inner experience, I propose to view the inner experience as more fundamental and the behaviour as either being congruent with that experience or denying of it. Further, it is my belief that the existence of a compelling invitation to keep one's love affiliation secret and the succumbing to that invitation is the poison that robs gay and lesbian persons of their joys in life and hopes for the future.

Historical Overview

It is believed that gay and lesbian persons have existed since the beginning of time. Although the word homosexual was only recently coined in human history, descriptions of preferential love between persons of the same gender exist in all

Note

1. This paper is an excerpt from the chapter *The Love That Dares To Speak Its Name: From Secrecy To Openness - Gay And Lesbian Affiliations* published in *Secrets in Families and Family Therapy*, Norton & Co., NYC, 1992, Edited by Evan Imber-Black,

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human records from the earliest of writings to the thousands of human languages that carry on today. Across these many voices over time and culture, there is not a single unifying theme. Anthropologists (Tripp, 1975) suggest we look at the world's cultures as being divided approximately into thirds when dealing with the issue of homosexuality. One third of human cultures, they tell us, really has nothing to say about same sex love relationships. In these cultures, such as the pre-Christian plains native Americans or pre-Christian Polynesians, there were not even actual words to describe affiliative orientation. If words were used at all, they were to describe the lifestyle activities and were considered neutral in tone of judgement and acceptance. Another third of world cultures, say the anthropologists, view same sex relationships from some degree of a positive perspective. The most obvious to a western person's eye, is the golden age of Greece. During this era, male homosexual love was valued above heterosexual love as being more pure and god-like. Despite lesbianism being attributed to the island of Lesbos in classical Greek times, little was said of it; perhaps due to the patriarchal values of the times minimizing the importance of women in Greek society. Recent examples of a positive valuing of same-sex love exist as well in the indigenous cultures of the Brazilian rain forests and equatorial Melanesia. The same anthropologists tell us that one third of the world's cultures (which are now the dominant world culture), has something negative to say about homosexuality. It is in this latter third of the world's cultures that our North American, western, and Christian cultures are embedded. The anthropologists point out that the cultures which are most negative about homosexuality are also the most negative about affiliation and sexuality in general. In other words, these cultures have the greatest restrictions placed on the expression of all love and sexual liaisons with perhaps prejudicial restrictions placed on same sex expression. There are many examples from Moslem to Latin American. These also tend to be the same cultures that have rigid patriarchal hierar-

chies of social order.

It is in the neo-Christian tradition as manifest mostly within North America, and particularly the southern parts of North America, where same sex love has been viewed with the most vehement hate and the most vicious actions. Not only, therefore, do people in such cultures experience an invitation to keep their orientations secret but they are, in fact, invited to erase the secret even from their own minds.

Since the time of Paul, various Christian traditions have emerged. Only relatively recently has the dominant Christian tradition reverted back to Paul's anti-sexual statements in general

...for many centuries love between men was condoned, accepted and, at times, promoted within Christian tradition.

and anti-homosexual comments in specific. Boswell (1980) outlines how for many centuries love between men was condoned, accepted and, at times, promoted within Christian tradition. Only since the beginning of the middle ages has there been an increasing preoccupation with homosexuality culminating in the coining of a term during the Victorian era of Europe to describe those who practice same sex sexual behaviour. Even though there are now some literalists who choose to believe the words of the apostles, as re-written during those epochal times of tension between Church and belief, over the words of the Master (Christ chose to say nothing of same sex sexuality), there are others who choose to look to the inner intent of Christianity based on a message of acceptance and love. As a result of the diversity within the Christian faith, there is also diversity in the practical lives of those living within Christian tradition. For instance, in Denmark, lesbians and gay men have access to legal and valued same sex marriages, many in the western world have access to spiritual fellowship as lesbians or gay men, yet in some parts of the United States of America, gay and lesbian persons are

legally persecuted, their love outlawed, and if publicly known, they are shunned socially or their lives are put in danger.

Partners in Oppression - Patriarchy, Heterosexism, and Homophobia

It would be all too easy, however, to take the historical context of Christianity and some of its relatively recent over-literal interpretations to task for being the primary restraint that keeps same gender love affiliations secret. I believe there is more which supports such tyrannizing beliefs and further seduces the larger culture to blindly accept acting with violence toward lesbian and gay persons.

For instance, the tradition of privileging one gender's view of the world over the other gender's experiences and beliefs can be tyrannizing. In Western Culture, a tradition of patriarchy dominates so that the values, beliefs and experiences of men are valued more highly than those of women, chil-

dren and other living beings. Similarly, our culture's habit of privileging of an economic view of life over an experiential knowing of life depersonalizes everyone's love, but lesbian and gay persons' in particular. Since our cultural tradition is one of patriarchy and heterosexism (the belief in only one true form of love - only that which occurs between males and females), it is also patriarchy and heterosexism that define any economic view of life. If, for example, one takes a position of patriarchy, believes either blindly or knowingly in heterosexism, and then privileges an economic view of the world (with accumulation of material wealth as success), a same sex male union could be feared as an unfair advantage and same sex female relationships would traditionally be seen as non-threatening (after all, women have for eons been the 'property' of men). It becomes clear, then, how same sex male unions would be disqualified, vilified, and punished.

However, in dealing with the issue of gay and lesbian love experiences, heterosexism is perhaps the greatest villain. Heterosexism is a culturally held belief while individually internalized heterosex-

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Old Woman in Moccasins

Chris Kinman
Abbotsford, Canada

Coming through the snow
There is an old woman in moccasins
She carries on her back a small child
Not the child of her womb
But a child of no parents
A child forgotten
But then remembered

Perhaps I am that child

Today
I walk in dress shoes
Through the corridors of influence
Fantasizing about perching on a pyramid

Visions of control
Obsess the eye
And I no longer can see
A child being carried
By any-one

With an eye on an opulent future
I also cannot see that behind me there is
Blood in the snow
Marking a place
Where neglect
Stabbed and raped
Her

They say that somewhere in the wilderness
Is a scarlet cross
Stationed over a white mausoleum

Guarded, not by memories of a remembered child
But by the invisible grace
Of a forgotten creation
And the ghost
Of an old woman in moccasins
Carrying on her back
The ghost of a small child



"Buffalo Woman"
by Susan Seddon Boulet
in *Shaman*, Susan Seddon
Boulet, 1989.
Painting reprinted with permission

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ism can be described as homophobia; those negative feelings generated on becoming aware of gay or lesbian persons or experiences. Heterosexism can be either conscious or non-conscious. For instance, a person may not feel that they are disturbed by awareness of gay or lesbian love, yet act in ways that minimize the opportunities to be aware of it. On the other hand, someone may in fact consciously believe that heterosexual love is more natural or 'normal' without being affectively negative toward gay or lesbian persons.

...homophobia can be active within social institutions...

The belief systems of heterosexism and homophobia operate at any of three levels. One level is within a person's own inner experience. Most clinicians have seen someone who has experienced homophobia while reflecting on their own thoughts and feelings. These people can include, in fact, gay and lesbian persons who have come to believe the larger heterosexist discourse more than their own valued inner experiences. Another level of homophobic activity can be within an immediate community such as a

family of origin, amongst friends, or small social groupings such as church or

Heterosexism can be either conscious or non-conscious.

place of work. Here, homophobia may be overt, such as gay and lesbian 'jokes' which erase their subjects' humanity, disqualifications of valued relationships, or proposals to personal erasure for being different than the expected heterosexist

stereotype. Or it can be covert, such as a refusal to acknowledge the importance of other persons of same gender in a gay person's life, a refusal to hear

the beginning offerings of openness on the part of a lesbian or gay person, or the persistent invitation to the lesbian or gay person to follow a more heterosexual lifestyle.

Finally, homophobia can be active within social institutions where the internalized conversations that have been generated through heterosexist values come to form rules, regulations and expectations. Here, a parallel can be drawn with the experience of women in our patriarchal culture. Women have often been

socialized into disbelieving their own experience, reflecting negatively on those experiences in which they do believe, seeing themselves as less than men, and accepting the status quo as somehow the normative to which they must avail, even though it is defined in deference to men. Similar experiences occur for lesbian and gay people except that for them the experiences often occur even more forcefully and less obviously.

Our culture has, over many centuries, come under the influence of an increasing tyranny of sameness. Such fundamental cultural beliefs – that we should be more similar than diverse, love through our genitals rather than through our souls, privilege property above experience, rules above relationships, and so on – when inculcated into most individuals within the society, are the true poisons supporting the keeping of gay and lesbian love secret. 🍏

Susan Seddon Boulet was born in Brazil and she currently lives in Oakland, California. She believes that the greatest story is our own life story. Susan feels drawn to the understanding of how all our stories are connected – across all cultures.

The Calgary Participator would like to thank Susan and all of our contributors for their sharing with us.

The Editorial Committee

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