

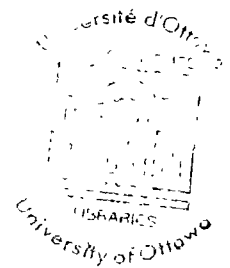
One Woman's Construction of Self and Meaning

**A qualitative study of the life of Alice Koller based on her
autobiographical texts:
An Unknown Woman (1981) and The Stations of Solitude (1990)**

By



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SUMMARY

One Woman's Construction of Self and Meaning

**A qualitative study of the life of Alice Koller based on her autobiographical texts:
An Unknown Woman (1981) and The Stations of Solitude (1990)**

This research project is a qualitative interpretation of the life of an American woman, Alice Koller, born in the mid-1920's, who described her construction of self and meaning in two texts, An Unknown Woman (1981) and The Stations of Solitude (1990). Within the framework of qualitative research, the autobiographical text provides an appropriate document through which to study an individual woman's reflections on her changing construction of self and meaning over her lifetime and within her specific socio-cultural and psychological contexts. The long term objective to which this project hopes to contribute is the development of our understanding and broadening of our appreciation of how those twentieth-century women who have written about their lives make meaning in their lives and transform their construction of self.

Alice Koller was born in Ohio around 1925 and was raised in a middle-class, Jewish family, with a 'stay-at-home' mother, a father who was educated as a lawyer and who either owned or managed a hardware store, and a brother and sister. Within this seemingly model family environment, however, Koller experienced her growing-up years as conflict-ridden and devoid of maternal affection. In 1943, after finishing high school, Koller was eager to leave home, travelling to Chicago to study acting at the Goodman Theatre, eventually leaving acting for study at the University of Chicago. After working at a variety of 'odd jobs' across the country to support her education, Koller completed a Ph.D. at Radcliffe in Philosophy in 1959, at the age of 34 years. Even with her doctorate, she struggled to find work, only rarely being employed as a university professor, which was her ambition and purpose in studying. Instead, from 1960 until 1990, Koller was variously employed as a researcher, a writer, and an editor. A turning point came in Koller's life one morning in October 1962, when, at 37 years of age, she looked in a mirror and saw herself as a woman who was unknown: unknown both to her self and to others. For three months over the winter of 1962-1963, she fled to Nantucket Island where she struggled to construct a new self and to silence the voices of others who had had so much power over her. This period of crisis and self-scrutiny and the resulting transformations in her construction of self and meaning form the narrative of An Unknown

Woman (1981) and The Stations of Solitude (1990).

This contextualized study will seek to answer two interrelated questions posed of Koller's texts. Firstly, against the conceptual framework of the major psychological research which seems to bear on her development, what was the nature of Alice Koller's transformational crisis, at age 37, on Nantucket Island; and, how did Koller change her construction of self and meaning during this transformational process? Secondly, situated within her socio-cultural context, how did Alice Koller respond to the conflicting ideals and images facing an educated woman in twentieth-century America? In order to explore these questions, this project will be divided into two sections: the first section will consist of two chapters contextualizing Koller and her work; the second section will consist of an interpretative analysis and a conclusion.

The methodology of Renata Tesch, supplemented with some strategies from Kirby and McKenna, provided a framework within which I was able come to understand Alice Koller's construction of self and meaning. Tesch's basic methodology, premised on a total immersion in the texts, allowed the direction of my exploration to arise out of Koller's own words and phrases. In keeping with the principles of qualitative research, therefore, the theoretical issues I selected to review were embedded within Alice Koller's story: I worked from the data towards the theory in the "context of discovery" rather than in the 'context of verification' " (Giorgi, 1985, p. 14) Following the methodological processes of Tesch from the many readings of the texts, to the careful identification of topics, to the sorting of excerpts related to each topic - I gradually moved from topics to themes, from description towards analysis. Working through Tesch's process gradually moved me from the words and phrases of Koller's narrative to an interpretative analysis of her construction of self and meaning. Some transferable learnings can be gleaned, by other researchers, from this comprehensive methodological process.

Moreover, while each woman's story is unique, hopefully there are some general understandings that can be drawn from Alice Koller's story about the experience of constructing self and meaning for women. In writing her narrative, Koller has told the story of the most important quest of all: her story is of one woman's struggle, against many odds, to construct her own self, her own way of knowing and being, and her own meanings.

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Chapter 1

AN INTRODUCTION

to

One Woman's Construction of Self and Meaning:

**A qualitative study of the life of Alice Koller
based on her autobiographical texts:**

An Unknown Woman (1981) and The Stations of Solitude (1990)

In keeping with recent feminist and qualitative methodology and ethical principles¹, this project will present, wherever possible, Alice Koller's own voice.

INTRODUCTION

This research project proposes to be a contextualized study of a woman's construction of self and meaning, using her autobiographical texts as principal documents in that study. Within the framework of qualitative research, the autobiographical text, as a uniquely personal experiential account, provides an appropriate document through which to study an individual woman's reflections on her changing construction of self and meaning over her lifetime and within her specific socio-cultural and psychological contexts. The long term objective to which this project hopes to contribute is the development of our understanding and broadening of our appreciation of how those twentieth-century women who have written about their lives make meaning in their lives and transform their construction of self. This particular project proposes to present a qualitative interpretation of the life of an American woman, Alice Koller, born in the mid-1920's, who wrote two autobiographical texts, An Unknown Woman (1981) and The Stations of Solitude (1990), outlining her developing construction of self and meaning.

As such, this thesis is part of a number of research projects, each studying the

¹ Feminist and qualitative researchers -- such as Kirby and McKenna (1989), Fowler and Fowler (1990), Tesch (1990), Brown and Gilligan (1992), Reinharz and Davidman (1992), Denzin and Lincoln (1994), Apter (1995) -- all stress the importance of valuing the actual voices of the women with whom and about whom they are researching

construction of self and meaning of one woman using autobiographical texts as principal source documents for the research. All of these projects have been completed under the direction of Professor Maureen Slattery at the Institute of Pastoral Studies, St. Paul University, Ottawa. This present project proposes to study the construction of self and meaning of Alice Koller, as set out in her two works, An Unknown Woman (1981) and The Stations of Solitude (1990). Together these two autobiographical texts recount the narrative of her developing construction of self and meaning and of the subsequent experiences and decisions which resulted in her remaining alone.

As with many who have written such a narrative of their lives, a personal crisis became the trigger and motivation for Koller's writing her texts. (Shapiro, 1968; Heilbrun, 1988; Apter, 1995) For Koller, a midlife transformational crisis on Nantucket clearly became the turning point during which she first began to transform her construction of self and her meanings and later it became the focal point around which she wrote about her transformed construction self and her changing meanings.

Koller speaks of her first work, An Unknown Woman (1981), as the "reconstruction" of that intense three-month period in Koller's life when she fled to Nantucket Island, in the winter of 1962-1963:

... I could reconstruct the series of events on and preceding Nantucket as though they were being recorded while they happened. ... It is a reconstruction, a consciously crafted record, something I could do only afterward, after I succeeded in coming to know myself, after I grasped the beginning, middle and end, and all the steps between ... the process by which I came to understand myself. (Koller, 1990, pp. 49-50)

Koller's second text, The Stations of Solitude (1990), presents the narrative of her journey after leaving Nantucket and, likewise, is her recounting of her changing construction of self and of her own meanings:

I write these chapters about solitude as I wrote those about Nantucket: primarily for myself. To learn what I think, to understand certain things I've done, certain things that have happened to me. To discover the path from there to here. ... by displaying the process. ... [It is] a philosophical inquiry into what it is to be a person: how one becomes a person, and what it is that one has become. (Koller, 1990, p. 67)

This second work is a series of thirteen essays about the stations of solitude, through which Koller contends each of us must pass in order to be

... the kind of person you wish to become. The line of travel is the process of shaping a human being, and the stations are stopping places in the process ... (Koller, 1990, p. x)

Each of these stations was a stopping place for Koller as she continued the journey in her construction of self and meaning after leaving Nantucket.

Furthermore, it becomes clear that Koller's autobiographical works are not merely evidence of her changing construction of self and meaning, but are, more importantly, the very means by which Koller actually transformed her construction of her self and her meanings:

An inward journey lasting three months had altered the entire vision of the world that thirty-seven years had heaped over me. ... I wanted to reconstruct for myself alone how, exactly, that journey took me from there to here. The writing of that journey became another journey. ... I would know, in all its particularity, the precise path by which the woman I am now, who was once unknown to me, came into being. That was my subject. To understand what had happened, what I had done, three years earlier, I needed to write it. Not that I understood it and then wrote it, but that the understanding came in the course of the writing. (Koller, 1990, pp. 48-49)

Koller's texts are, therefore, less about what *actually* happened in the past, before, on, or after Nantucket, as they are about how she had reconsidered and reconstructed events in order to depict her self and her meanings in the present. The events that Koller chose to give us are, not so much her 'true' history, as they are fragments of her life, selected to express and explain her self and her world view. For Alice, then, as with other women writing their life stories, "the challenge of fracturing and discarding old ways of seeing" herself involved reconstructing, from a clearer vantage point in her life, the "truth content" of her past life experience. (Conway, 1992, p. 2; Eakin, 1985; Spacks, 1976; Laird, 1989; McAdams, 1993; Ashley, Gilmore & Peters, 1994; Gilmore, 1994)

For this project, in addition to these two principal autobiographical texts, other works by Koller have also been consulted: her doctoral dissertation, The Concept of Emotion: A Study of the Analyses of James, Russell, and Ryle (1960); and, six articles, entitled "Hers", written by Koller and published in The New York Times in 1983.

ALICE KOLLER

In her texts, Koller is primarily concerned with recounting her changing construction of self and meaning and, as a result, she provides very few biographical details. We do know that she was born in Ohio around 1925 and that she was raised in a middle-class, Jewish family. Although Alice reviles her uneducated, 'stay-at-home' mother, their relationship is fundamental to the development of Alice's sense of self. In contrast, Alice's beloved father was educated as a lawyer and, during Alice's childhood, either owned or managed a hardware store. Alice had two siblings, a younger sister whom Alice called 'Memo' and a brother, whose name and birth order are never revealed in Alice's texts.

In 1943, after finishing high school, Koller travelled to Chicago to study acting at the Goodman Theatre, eventually leaving acting for study at the University of Chicago. After working at a variety of 'odd jobs' across the country to support her education, Koller completed a Ph.D. at Radcliffe in Philosophy in 1959, at the age of 34 years. Even with her doctorate, she struggled to find work, only rarely being employed as a university professor, which was her ambition and purpose in studying. Instead, from 1960 until 1990, Koller was variously employed as a researcher, a writer, and an editor. Indeed, her employment was so sporadic that she often lived through the generosity of her friends or on welfare.

A turning point came for Alice one morning in October 1962, when, at 37 years of age, she looked in a mirror and saw herself as a woman who was unknown: unknown both to her self and to others. For three months over the winter of 1962-1963, Alice fled to Nantucket Island where she struggled to construct a new self and to silence the voices of others who had had so much power over her. This period of crisis and self-scrutiny, as told in An Unknown Woman (1981), marked a transition during which she was able to cut her silenced self loose from the shell in which it was encased -- a shell built up of the voices of others in her life. Unfortunately, this nascent self, brought forth out of so much pain on Nantucket, remained forever fragile. In the years that followed Nantucket, in order to protect her vulnerable self from others, Alice Koller remained a solitary woman, as she recounts in The Stations of Solitude (1990).

THE QUESTION

This project will seek to answer two interrelated questions posed of Koller's autobiographical texts, An Unknown Woman (1981) and The Stations of Solitude (1990):

1. Against the conceptual framework of the major psychological research which seems to bear on her development,
 - a. What was the nature of Alice Koller's transformational crisis, at age 37, on Nantucket Island? and,
 - b. How did Alice change her construction of self and meaning during this transformational process?
2. Situated within her socio-cultural context, how did Alice Koller respond to the conflicting ideals and images facing an educated woman in twentieth-century America?

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS PROJECT

In order to explore these questions, following this introduction, the project will be divided into two sections: the first section will consist of two chapters contextualizing Koller and her work; the second section will consist of an interpretative analysis and a conclusion.

The first chapter of the first section will outline Koller's socio-cultural context, highlighting the conflicting ideals and images facing an educated woman in twentieth-century America. Alice Koller lived during a pivotal time in American history bridging the era when cultural expectations for women were more traditional and restricted and the period when they were becoming more liberated. In seeking to situate Koller's life story, this chapter will highlight the conflicting ideals and images facing an educated American woman of her generation. Such an exploration of the socio-cultural factors influencing Koller will help us to contextualize her transformation of self and her construction of her life story and its meaning.

We will begin by situating Alice within the sphere of her mother, Sarah, born at the end of the 1880's. We will then explore, in some detail, the period from the 1920's through the 1950's, from the decade in which Koller was born until she was in graduate school, when there existed an intense cultural environment of an idealized role for American women: exulted domesticity in which they were to stay at home, if possible, and to 'look after' their husbands, their children, and their homes. For an educated woman, like Alice Koller who was able to earn a doctorate in Philosophy in 1959, such a restrictive environment engendered personal conflict.

During the winter of 1962-1963, Koller experienced a personal crisis, coincidental with the beginning of the women's movement. Koller's transformation focused on many of the same conflicts and dilemmas about self and other as signalled by Betty Friedan in The Feminine Mystique (1963). What American society suggested was possible in 1959, though perhaps 'exceptional', what Koller's education prepared her for and 'promised' her, remained in conflict with the generally accepted roles allotted to women of her generation. After her crisis, Koller continued to struggle with barriers against women's admission to academia, supporting herself by a variety of writing and editing jobs, most of which left her living in poverty.

The second chapter of the first section will examine the psychological context of Koller's developing construction of self, of voice, of knowing, and of meaning, again from a gender-specific point of view. This chapter will explore several factors which influence the development of a female's construction of self, beginning with the foundational impact of the family environment. We will also investigate recent theories of feminist researchers outlining how girls and women typically construct self and meaning in which there is an emphasis on connection and affiliation, on being in relationship and picking up the feelings of others. Such research has also suggested that, unfortunately, many girls and women do not learn to balance listening to the voices of others with their need to voice their own self. For these girls and women, as it was for Koller, the 'other' often becomes more important than the 'self' and so the self is silenced. However, we will also note that it is possible, often during their middle years, for many silenced women like Alice Koller to transform their construction of self and meaning and to reawaken their voices.

Lastly, in understanding the psychological framework of Koller's construction of self, we will investigate the various ways in which women come to 'know'. Feminist researchers have found that women speak of the sense of self, of voice and of knowing as being intricately intertwined and variable in concert with their environments and with their stage of personal development. Of the several ways of knowing that have been postulated, four are of particular importance to our understanding of Koller's developing construction of self and of meaning: knowledge that is received, subjective, procedural, and constructed. (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986)

The second section of the project will consist of an interpretative analysis and a conclusion. The analysis will explore the over-arching theme of transformation which emerges from within Koller's own texts. While outlining the unfolding construction of her self and her own meanings, Koller presented a number of recurring themes in her two autobiographical texts. I will, however, focus on the four which I believe are essential to an understanding of Alice Koller's maturing construction and expression of self and meaning: **self** -- knowing and living out of self; **others** -- relating with others and learning to balance the voices of others with the voice of self; **knowing** -- ways of knowing and sources of knowledge; and **working**. Moreover, these themes are constructed by Koller around her midlife transformational crisis which she experienced on Nantucket Island, producing, therefore, three distinct developmental stages: before Nantucket, on Nantucket, and since Nantucket. Tracing the development of each of the four key themes, within each of the three critical stages of Koller's life, will hopefully give us insight into the nature of and the meanings ascribed by Koller to her transformed construction of self.

This project will conclude with an examination of the various issues raised in this exploration of the works of Alice Koller. It will provide one last opportunity to frame Alice's changing construction of self and meanings against the specific contexts of her socio-cultural and psychological environments. Moreover, it will allow us to reflect more generally on what we might learn from her story. Lastly, the conclusion will be an occasion to consider the value of the methodology employed in this exploration of one woman's construction of self and meaning.

AIM

This project respectfully listens to the story of one woman, Alice Koller, set against the background of her socio-cultural context and taking into account relevant psychological research. As one of a number of research projects under the supervision of Professor Maureen Slattery, of St. Paul University, Ottawa, the long-term aim of this project is that it will contribute to the development of our understanding and the broadening of our appreciation of how twentieth-century women who have written autobiographies have constructed their selves and made meaning in their lives. It is hoped that by listening to such stories, one at a time, women will regain their voices and strengthen their sense of self.

JUSTIFICATION

The study of autobiography complements recent qualitative trends in scholarly inquiry in so far as it emphasizes learning beginning in and based on concrete individual experiences. These life-writings, using the author's own language, metaphors, and voice, are unique, self-revelatory documents. Within the framework of such qualitative research, therefore, the autobiographical text provides appropriate source material by which we can study one individual woman's reflections on her changing construction of self and meaning over her lifetime and within her specific socio-cultural and psychological contexts. (Jelinek, 1980, 1986; Heilbrun, 1988; Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Reinhartz & Davidman, 1992; Slattery, 1996) Indeed, as feminist researchers have noted: "women's personal narratives are essential primary documents... provid[ing] data... particularly in the areas of personality development and values..." (Braham, 1995, p. 1); and also, "personal documents ... are central to understanding women's consciousness." (Reinhartz & Davidman, 1992, p. 157)

The choice of Alice Koller's autobiographical texts was, to some extent, accidental in that I happened upon An Unknown Woman and first read it out of personal interest, months

before being assigned to a research supervisor. When it was time for me to choose an autobiography for study, I simply could not silence the sound of Koller's words. This 'informal method' of selecting a woman's life to study echoes the chance method described by Plummer (1995):

In all of these studies there is little sense of a sustained search for a suitable participant through explicit criteria; rather the feel is that the researcher scooped a 'good find' or 'key informant' - someone who was congenial to the researcher, had a good story to tell and who could say it well. ... psychologists should be looking for the valuable story-tellers. (Plummer, 1995, p. 51)

In the end, I chose Alice Koller's two autobiographical texts, An Unknown Woman (1981) and The Stations of Solitude (1990) for a number of reasons:

- a. Most importantly, I have remained intrinsically interested in Koller, in her sense of self, in her language and voice, and in her story. As Plummer would say, Koller is a good story-teller and she has a good story to tell. Indeed, Koller even describes herself as "The storyteller... Storyteller. I smile at the old nickname..." (Koller, 1981, p. 104);
- b. Koller's texts are deeply self-focused², speaking eloquently of her changing construction of self and meaning out of which she lived and would, therefore, allow for an exploration and interpretative analysis;
- c. Koller's American context is similar enough to my own as to enable me to understand her environment; and,
- d. Some of Koller's other written materials were available.

² Indeed, An Unknown Woman was not published until 1981, 14 years after Koller had written it. In those intervening years, from 1967 until 1981, fully 30 publishers rejected the manuscript as being "too personal" (Koller, 1990, p. 66). This rejection of the intimate has been labelled as the "autobiographical fallacy" in that many autobiographies, especially those written before 1970, were not generally introspective, intimate or self-revelatory as the term autobiography might imply (Jelinek, 1980, p. 10).

PARAMETERS

This research project is about how one woman, after experiencing a profound personal transformation at age 37, wrote of her developing construction of self and her making of personal meaning in her life. While this project has attempted to place Alice Koller's story within the framework of her psychological and socio-cultural contexts, it remains the story - a case study - of only one woman's construction of self and meaning over her lifetime. Nonetheless, it is important to note that, from the perspective of qualitative methodology, the very "value of the case study is its uniqueness". (Janesick, 1994, p. 217; Plummer, 1995) Moreover, because I have been the sole researcher and author of this project, my work has been limited by the cultural and historical contexts and theoretical frameworks which I have brought to it. As a result, therefore, the exploration presented herein remains the story of one woman by another and, as such, is not generalizable to the larger population of women, even those who have written autobiographies in twentieth century western culture. Lastly, time and resource constraints have limited the exhaustiveness of this project: I have not been able to search for Koller's more obscure writings, nor have I been able to ascertain her current circumstances³.

METHOD

As previously noted, this research project proposes to be a contextualized, qualitative study of a woman's construction of self and her meanings, using her autobiographical texts as principal documents in that study. Working on such a contextualized interpretative study requires a multidisciplinary approach, combining the methods and resources of history, sociology, and psychology. Fortunately, as a researcher, I bring some degree of expertise in each of these areas: I have a M.A. in History from the University of Windsor; I have completed doctoral level studies (all but dissertation) in sociology and psychology at the College of Education of Wayne State University in

³ I have received personal correspondence from Alice Koller as recently as November, 1996. I do know, therefore, that she was living in Massachusetts, at that time, but I have not been able to obtain from her any other details of her recent life circumstances

Detroit; and, I am currently completing the second year of a Master's level programme in Counselling at St. Paul University, Ottawa.

This project had its beginnings in a non-stop reading of An Unknown Woman (1981) in the fall of 1993. Like Koller, I too had left my home and had travelled to another place. Like Koller, I too hoped to learn more about my self, but I was in a place where I also hoped to acquire further knowledge and skills. After that first 'recreational' reading, Alice Koller's compelling construction of her quest remained with me. And so, after being accepted by Dr. Slattery to work with her on an independent research project related to women's autobiographies, I cast about unsuccessfully, and perhaps halfheartedly, for another woman autobiographer, preferably a Canadian woman.

During that time of fruitless searching, I also reread An Unknown Woman and read, for the first time, Koller's second autobiographical text, The Stations of Solitude. Dr. Slattery had two central criteria for selecting an author: Could I remain fully immersed in and captured by her work for the months that lay ahead? and, Was the author sufficiently open about her introspection, revealing her developing construction of self and her changing meanings?⁴ When I was convinced that Alice Koller's texts met these criteria and were, therefore, appropriate for me to study, Dr. Slattery gave her approval.

In preparation for this project, I reviewed many additional sources. I began with an examination the first project in this subject area supervised by Dr. Slattery, A Feminist Enquiry into a Woman's Life: Emilie Carles' A Life of Her Own (1994). I also surveyed several texts related to qualitative methodology, including Kirby and McKenna's Experience, Research, Social Change: Methods from the Margins (1989); Reinharz's Feminist Methods in Social Research (1992); Culler's On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism (1990); Giorgi's "Sketch of a Psychological Phenomenological Method" (1985); Miles and Huberman's Qualitative Data Analysis (1994); and, Tesch's Qualitative Research-Analysis Types and Software Tools (1990). After completing these reviews, some of the principles of qualitative methodology that were highlighted for me included:

- the focus on the understanding of individual experience;

⁴ As noted previously, An Unknown Woman was not published for 14 years. Over the years, fully 30 publishers rejected the manuscript as being "too personal" (Koller, 1990, p. 66)

- the importance of context;
- the centrality of respect for the participants'/subjects' own voices; and
- the flow of the qualitative research process, moving as it does from data, carefully collected, to topics or themes, to clusters of topics, and finally to an interpretative analysis based on theoretical concepts arising out of and appropriate to the data.

Now that I had chosen to 'work with the texts of Alice Koller', what was that 'work' to be? I read through explanations of various qualitative methods, searching out a direction in which to proceed. I considered, in particular, the interpretative analysis method of Tesch (1990), Kirby and McKenna's ideas about organizing and analyzing data (1989), and Giorgi's "Psychological Phenomenological Method" (1985). I recognized some differences between my data and that described in these sources. While I would be working primarily with two texts written by one person, many of the studies presented relied on data from different sources which could be analyzed by noting similarities or differences across them. Moreover, many of the individual pieces of data being analyzed were considerably shorter than the two lengthy narratives which were my source material. I was aware, therefore, from the outset, that the nature of my data may require that I modify whatever method I selected.

With Dr. Slattery's support⁵, I settled upon Tesch's methodology, which is both comprehensive and flexible, as the principal foundation for my way of working with Koller's two texts. Tesch developed her model out of a number of sources: her own qualitative research in education⁶ and a thorough review of the qualitative methods used in anthropology, sociology, and psychology. In researching the history of qualitative research and in examining various qualitative methods as far ranging as

⁵ During that year, 1994-1995, I was also fortunate to be able to attend several of the seminar sessions with the research team working with Dr. Slattery. Being able to meet with that group, Patricia Amyot, Alexa Delroy and Kathryn Guthrie, provided me with invaluable inspiration and encouragement, without which I would have floundered many more times than I did. To them, I extend my thanks.

⁶ Other methodological texts written by Tesch include The Humanistic Approach to Educational Research (1976), Santa Barbara: The Fielding Institute, "Emerging Themes: The Researcher's Experience" in Phenomenology and Pedagogy (1987) 5 (3), pp. 230-241, and "The Contribution of a Qualitative Method: Phenomenological Research", a paper presented in 1988 at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in New Orleans.

ethnomethodology, grounded theory, content analysis, life history study, phenomenological research and case studies, Tesch concludes that any qualitative method is flexible.

Qualitative researchers... are usually eager to point out that [their method] is just one way of doing it, which others should feel free to adopt as much as they see fit, and modify and embellish it according to their own needs and ideas. Thus the notion of qualitative analysis is fluid ... (Tesch, 1990, p. 4)

And so, of her own method of interpretative analysis, Tesch states:

I will point out posthaste that it is not the only way in which such system can be created. It is a way to start if you don't have any idea at all. If you do have ideas, some of the details in the description might stimulate you to flesh out or refine your own process. (Tesch, 1990, p. 142)

The first step of Tesch's method, as with most qualitative methodologies, **is to "get a sense of the whole" by reading through all of the data** - in my case, Koller's two texts - **and "jot[ting] down ideas about the data as they come to your mind."** (Tesch, 1990, p. 142) In fact, by the time I first began jotting down any notes, I had read through An Unknown Woman twice and The Stations of Solitude once. In this first step, as Tesch suggests, I began noting, on the inside of the covers of the texts and on any blank spaces at the beginning and ending of each chapter, my ideas and questions, significant portions of text, Koller's use of metaphors, and any obvious references to psychological issues. Some of the captions that still remain, for example, include: mother, self, method, no feelings, purposes, choices, beginnings, sexuality, depression, suicide, mirrors, fragmentation, splintered, and shattered. Beside each of these terms is a page number, or more usually, notations to many page numbers. There are also page notations without 'explanatory' captions beside them.

As I was proceeding with my work, I was also trying to ascertain answers to my own personal questions about why I was interested in Alice Koller and what of her life and mine were similar. Many qualitative researchers attest to the importance of examining these sorts of personal questions. For, who the researcher is as a person, including the experiences, emotions, and assumptions she brings, effects what it is that can be known. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Tesch, 1990; Reinharz & Davidman, 1992; Munro, 1993; Thornton, 1993; Wolcott, 1994; Plummer, 1995) One qualitative

researcher, Munro (1993), even speaks of her choosing a qualitative life history method for her research because she “required a methodology that would allow me to practice the self-reflexivity necessary for revealing my biases as well as the emergent and evolving nature of my understanding”. (Munro, 1993, p. 164) So too, Plummer (1993), another life historian, speaks of a set of files called a personal log, which is “designed to convey the researcher’s changing personal impressions of the interviewee, of the situation, of his or her own personal worries and anxieties about the research” (Plummer, 1993, p. 56) As I became immersed in and connected to Koller’s life story, like others, I also kept a personal reflection log in a small note book and added to it throughout the entire research process.

Tesch’s second step in her interpretative analysis is to look for topics within the data and “as you read it, pay attention to switches or transitions from one topic to the next. Be sure to make a distinction between content and topic.”⁷ (Tesch, 1990, p. 142) Moreover, **as the researcher reads, each topic is to be identified in the margin of a working copy.** (Tesch, 1990, p. 143) Having read and reread An Unknown Woman and The Stations of Solitude, noting ideas as I went along, I sensed that I needed some sort of additional framework for working with Koller’s complex texts that would complement Tesch’s idea of simply noting topics and transitions between topics in the margins of the text.

I read through Unknown again, carefully trying to tease out common thematic threads which might tie together each chapter, but found none since the text seemed to be written in a ‘stream-of-consciousness’ format. Each chapter represented, in chronological sequence, Koller’s experiences on Nantucket Island, both in relation to her external environment and to her interior rememberings and experiences. And so each chapter was a complex composite of carefully crafted descriptions of her interactions with nature, juxtaposed with memories of her childhood and early adulthood, as well the mix of emotional and cognitive reactions to all of her experiences, both external and internal. Sometimes all of this rich mix was captured in a single paragraph, thoughts, words,

⁷ The topic tells you what the piece of data is about, for example ‘working’. What is actually said about working is the content.

feelings, anguish all pressed together and stirred around.⁸ While Tesch speaks of attending to topics and to switches or transitions between topics and making marginal notes, I found the data with which I was working too complex to note consistently such switches and transitions solely in the margins. And so, from the second step in Tesch's methodology, I knew that I had to modify her basic method; I had to devise a different way than marginal notes of working with the complexity of Koller's texts. But I was unsure what that different way would be.

Nonetheless, knowing that topics were foundational to this type of research, I began, at this stage, with a simple list of topics and some key page numbers which were representative of the material in Koller's An Unknown Woman. Initially this list was derived from memory, without the benefit of a rereading the text, sensing that this technique would be an effective way for me to highlight those issues of particular significance for Koller - those issues which had stayed with me over the intervening weeks. My first list was fairly short, including topics such as family of origin - mother and father; sense of self; relationships with others; relationships with men (lovers); relationship with Logos (Koller's first dog); acting school; Ph.D. studies; work; and ways of knowing. I then turned to The Stations of Solitude, but quickly set that text aside, deciding that the two texts represented such completely different stages in Koller's life, in her sense of self and the meanings which she ascribed, that working on both texts would result in data from one contaminating the other. And so, as I worked through this very long step in my research process, I worked first with An Unknown Woman and then with The Stations of Solitude.

As Tesch suggests in steps 3 and 4, as the researcher reads through the data and works with their initial list of topics, "you might discover new topics, if it turns out certain important segments cannot be coded at all with your preliminary system." (Tesch, 1990, p. 143) With each rereading of An Unknown Woman, the initial list of topics underwent revision. Indeed, as I continued to read and reread An Unknown Woman, it became clear that most of my initial topics were too general

⁸ Jelinek suggests a connection between the style of women's autobiographies which she describes variously as being episodic, non-chronological, and disjunctive as reflecting the disconnected and fragmentary texture of women's lives and sense of self (Jelinek, 1980, p. 17, 1986, p. xiii)

and needed to be further refined by teasing out other related topics or sub-topics, for example:

- “Acting school” was broadened to include all the meanings Koller ascribed to “acting”: acting / acting school; acting method; and acting / pretending.
- “Sense of self” was refined to include many of the ways in which Koller understood her self and all of the principal elements of her construction of self, for example: beliefs / principles / habits; emotions; freedom; love / loving / being loved; new beginnings / maintaining changes; self / true to self / own decisions / own purposes; self / self-knowledge; spirituality / religion / fierce beauty; and writing.
- “Relationships with others” was expanded to include acting / pretending; appearance / attractiveness; approval / attention / applause; authority; love / loving / being loved; obligations / rules / habits; others / friends / support; relationships with men; women’s roles.

In the end, after several rereadings, I had settled upon the following lists of topics for An Unknown Woman:

- acting / acting school
- acting method
- acting / pretending
- adolescent experiences
- alcohol
- alone
- appearance / attractiveness
- approval / attention / applause
- authority
- beaches / out-of-doors
- childhood experiences
- depression / suicide
- emotions / feelings / body awareness
- family: family, brother, sister, father, mother
- fun / enjoyment / pleasure
- home
- jobs / work
- Logos (Koller’s first dog)
- love / loving / being loved
- Nantucket
- new beginnings / maintaining changes
- obligations / rules / habits
- others / friends / support
- own life / own decisions / own wantings / own purposes
- Ph.D studies / philosophy
- relationships with men
- religion / spirituality

- self / self-knowledge
- sexuality
- truth
- waiting
- ways of knowing / thinking
- women's roles

As I worked through this process of refining the list of topics, I was continually aware of relationships between and among topics. This lengthy process helped me to capture **Tesch's fifth step of "refin[ing] my organizing system"**. (Tesch, 1990, pp. 143-144)

And so, through several rereadings, I had developed a comprehensive list of topics - a refined organizing system - for An Unknown Woman. But I was still not sure how I would work with this list, since, as previously explained, the complexity of Koller's packed writing style made it increasingly obvious that each bit of text related to each topic would need to be identified in a way other than marginal notations, as suggested by Tesch. Initially, I had simply constructed a list of topics with some key page references. But this approach was equally inadequate. After several 'false starts', I finally decided to note all references to every topic, using the 'tried and true' method of index cards. I then set about reading and rereading each portion of the text, with index cards in hand, noting all references to each of the topics. Each topic had its own card and each time I read a piece of text related to a particular topic, I would write down the page number on the card. I noted many sections on more than one card, since the theme of the excerpt related to more than one topic. Again, this process was supported by **Tesch's comment in her sixth stage,**

Remember that categories have fuzzy boundaries, and if a segment is too rich in content to fit in just one category, put it into two or three. Don't allow yourself to be paralysed because you cannot make decisions about where things go. (Tesch, 1990, p. 144)

In this manner, I reread An Unknown Woman, cover to cover, twice more and portions of each text many more times, collecting an extensive list of page references for key themes.

So with my index cards in hand and with her explicit authorisation⁹, I searched about for other systems to assist in the sorting and analysis of each bit of text. Because of the

⁹ See again, Tesch, 1990, pp. 4 and 142 as noted on page 17 above.

complexity of Koller's writing style, I eventually turned to Kirby and McKenna's¹⁰ Experience, Research, Social Change: Methods from the Margins (1989) where they speak of organizing "bibbits" of data

Bibbit a passage from a transcript, a piece of information from field notes, a section of a document or snippet of conversation recorded on a scrap of paper that can stand on its own but, when necessary, can be relocated in its original context. This data must be divided into bibbits in preparation for coding and cross-referencing. Each **bibbit** (piece, snippet, or bite of information) needs to be put into as many category files as its content and context require. [And each] bibbit must be identified in such a way that it can be quickly and easily be relocated within its home context. (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, pp. 135-136)

At that point, using the index cards, I typed out each section of text related to each topic or theme, producing a very lengthy series of documents—some as brief as half of a page, some as long as 10 pages, single-spaced. By typing out each item as it related to each particular theme, I often found myself referencing key sections of text several times, since they related to many different themes.¹¹ In addition, each topic was cross-referenced—eg. "home" was also related to "beaches / out-of-doors", "loving" to "Logos", "self" to "work" and "writing", and so on. As I spent months working my way, topic by topic, index card by index card, through Koller's An Unknown Woman, I was not certain of the use to which I would put all of this material. I could see, however, no other way of ensuring that I was 'capturing' all that Koller said about her transformation of self and meaning. Moreover, I believe that this process in itself allowed me to become more fully aware of and to preserve more completely recurring themes, meanings, and connections within Alice Koller's text.

Throughout this process, as I was reading and rereading, typing, and considering, I was also accomplishing **Tesch's seventh step**:

When you have finished coding, assemble the data material belonging to each category in one place, and perform a preliminary analysis. .. look at the collection of material in one category at a time... pay attention to the actual content. Identify and summarize the content for each category. Then look specifically for

¹⁰ S. Kirby is a professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of New Brunswick who has done qualitative research in athletics. K. McKenna was a student of Dr. Kirby.

¹¹ Thank goodness for the invention of the personal computer. Otherwise this project conducted in this manner would not have been conceived.

... commonalities ... uniquenesses ... confusions and contradictions... (Tesch, 1990, pp. 144-145)

As I read and typed, I was not only collecting all of the references to each topic or theme, I was also becoming aware of patterns and contradictions within the content expression around each topic. By means of the very act of collecting together all the texts related to each particular topic, I was, therefore, beginning to analyze what meanings Koller ascribed to various topics at different times in her life. From the first reading of the texts to the sorting of excerpts related to each topic or theme, I was gradually moving from description towards analysis.

No more story, just the facts, now organized in such a way as to reveal those underlying properties and structures and relationships that are the stuff of analysis. (Wolcott, 1994, p. 30)

After completing this process for An Unknown Woman, I turned to The Stations of Solitude, and repeated the entire process again - this time with a little more dispatch. For The Stations the list of topics that I ended with included:

- alone
- approval / attention / applause
- beliefs / principles / habits
- dogs: Logos, Ousia, Kairos
- emotions
- family: family, brother, sister, father, mother
- for its own sake
- freedom
- health / illness
- home
- love / loving
- Nantucket
- others
- out-of-doors
- philosophy
- poverty
- pretending / impact of authority
- self / true to self / own decisions / own purposes
- spirituality / religion / fierce beauty
- Stations
- teaching / university
- Unknown
- ways of knowing
- women's roles / relationships with men / sexuality
- work / job
- writing

As with the first text, several detailed readings of The Stations followed, wherein I noted page references for each of the topics on index cards and then typed out all the excerpts,

cross-referencing each notation to all of the relevant topics.

Using a modified version of Tesch's method of interpretative analysis had taken me from the original text of Alice Koller's story, to a restructured story, still using her words and phrases, but reorganized into thematic categories; it had taken me from her story to an analysis of her story. **In Tesch's eighth step**, as I was collecting all of the references to each topic or theme in each text, **she suggests that the researcher:**

ask yourself whether some categories can be crystallized into concepts of the kind that are considered research outcomes. ... When your organizing and interpreting process is completed, your organizing system is likely to help you structure the flow of your report. (Tesch, 1990, p. 145)

After working my way from reading the text to restructuring it by themes, I then began to write my findings.

Moreover, in addition to an interpretative analysis of Koller's texts, I was also interested in couching that analysis in an examination of Koller's contexts which informed her construction of self and her meanings: both the socio-cultural context within which she lived and her internal psychological context. Indeed, it is only in understanding "the meanings their psychological and social worlds hold for respondents" that we can understand the data. (Smith, Harré & Van Langenhove, 1995, pp. 4-5) As previously noted, within the framework of qualitative research, personal narratives are seen as appropriate source material by which we can study individual's reflection on their changing construction of self and meanings over their lifetimes and within their specific socio-cultural and psychological contexts. (Jelinek, 1980, 1986; Heilbrun, 1988; Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Fowler & Fowler, 1990; Conway, 1992; Reinharz & Davidman, 1992; Munro, 1993; Plummer, 1993; Braham, 1995; Slattery, 1996) Indeed, some feminist researchers have noted that women's personal documents, such as autobiographies, provide the ideal source material for understanding women's construction of self within their socio-cultural milieu. (Braham, 1995; Reinharz & Davidman, 1992)

In the fall of 1995, I began to write, committed to expressing as much as possible in Koller's own words, thereby letting the sound of her own voice be clearly heard alongside

mine. In working through each chapter of my research project my detailed topical/thematic transcriptions proved their worth. As I considered each aspect of Koller's socio-cultural environment or each aspect of her psychological framework, as I tried to shape each aspect of the interpretative analysis of her transformed construction of self, I was able to ask and to answer: what does Koller say about this? Because of my detailed methodical approach to organizing the key topics/themes in Koller's texts, I was able to use Koller's own words to guide the direction of this project. I was able to use her words to animate the complexities of her construction of self and meaning. My detailed transcriptions allowed me to express in her own voice, therefore, who Alice Koller had been and was becoming, in "the beginning, middle and end, and all the steps between ..." (Koller, 1990, p. 50)

Since I was more currently familiar with psychological concepts and research, I began the actual writing process with the third chapter, "Some Psychological Factors Influencing A Woman's Development of Self". In keeping with the principles of qualitative research, the theoretical issues I selected to review were embedded within Alice Koller's story: I worked from the data towards the theory in the "'context of discovery' rather than in the 'context of verification'." (Giorgi, 1985, p. 14; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) In selecting the psychological theories that would help inform Koller's own developing construction of self, I took my cues directly from her texts rather than impose my preconceived theoretical constructs onto her texts. Working with texts such as Koller's, which are so introspective, provided me with an abundance of data which spoke to issues of psychological import.

Clearly, Alice's family, in particular her relationship with her parents, was critical to understanding her sense of self before Nantucket. Indeed, it was the sudden insight about her relationship with her mother that first triggered Koller's intense period of self-examination and transformation.

... it was as though you punched a button that released the machinery that was holding the structure of me together. A long time ago, when I knew she couldn't love me, I must have decided I'd take the next best thing: I'd get her attention ... I knew that day that I had grasped a piece of truth unlike any I had come upon in all my years of trying to understand what I was about. (Koller, 1981, p. 97)

And so Alice's silencing of her true self in order to get attention found its origin in her relationship with her mother and moved into her relationships with many others in her life.

The applause I played for everywhere and the attention I made my mother give me were exactly the same thing: substitutes for her love. I tried to make the whole rest of the world give me what she couldn't give me. ... I've never stopped being that five-year-old, old enough to know that I was missing something ... And I've been trying to buy it, lying and pretending ever since. (Koller, 1981, p. 125)

Moreover, in coming to understand the impact of others in Alice's silencing of self, it seemed important to review the recent research on self-in-relation with others, especially how girls' and women's construction of self is often silenced in relation to others. The third major theme for this chapter, women's ways of knowing, became apparent in examining other issues of concern to Koller. As a woman doctorate, 'knowing' was an essential aspect of Koller's way of being and working. Furthermore, her transformation on Nantucket was unquestionably about developing a new way of knowing, one based more on her own feelings and wantings. Therefore, in order to maintain my commitment to presenting authentically Alice Koller's psychological context, I not only built this chapter on issues of concern to her but also on her own words, by regularly seeking answers to the question: what does Koller say about this?

I then wrote the second contextual chapter, "An Overview of Some Socio-cultural Factors Effecting Alice Koller's Narrative of Self". Once again, I began with Alice Koller, framing her developing construction of self and meaning with the socio-cultural environment within which she lived, using, wherever possible, her own words. Unfortunately, the material for this chapter is only more generally guided by Koller, since she provides so little biographical detail about her life. From her texts, I was able to determine that she was born in the mid-1920's and lived in Ohio. In 1943, after finishing high school, Koller spent a year in Chicago studying acting. She then moved on to university, eventually earning a Ph.D. at Radcliffe in Philosophy in 1959, at the age of 34 years. And so Alice Koller was formed in an American socio-cultural milieu which emphasized a more traditional role for women; but she completed her doctorate at a time when that same American culture was on the verge of the women's movement. Guided by the importance of context and working with the biographical material which Koller does provide, in this chapter, I posit a plausible representation as to how Koller's socio-cultural context informed her construction of self and her meanings. Even with sparse data, as I considered the socio-cultural forces impacting on American women in the twentieth century, particularly on educated women, in

order to support my direction and expression, I repeatedly inquired what does Koller say about this?

After completing these two chapters which gave Koller's socio-cultural and psychological contexts, I moved on to the interpretative chapter, "Alice Koller, an Unknown and Solitary Woman" Building on the theoretical concepts framed in the socio-cultural and psychological chapters and based on the issues presented in Koller's texts, my understanding of the key themes presented in Koller's texts gradually evolved It was apparent from the beginning that the over-arching theme of transformation of self and meaning lies at the heart of Koller's texts, since the presentation of this transformation is, after all, Koller's purpose in writing her texts Moreover, in the process of combining and recombining bits of Koller's text, coming to know her more intimately, I developed a sense that four central themes, a manageable number, would allow me to make more explicit the preeminent processes in her transformation

- **self** knowing and living out of self

I was there [on Nantucket] to try to find out what I had been doing with my life up till then (Koller, 1990, p 2)

In circuiting the stations of solitude, your destination is the kind of person you wish to become (Koller, 1990, p x)

- **others** relating with others and learning to balance the voices of others with the voice of self

it belongs to me In fact, I've done away with every other criterion for truth trying to tear away everybody else's standards to see whether anything remains that is mine Particularly, specifically, uniquely mine (Koller, 1981, p 98)

- **knowing** ways of knowing and sources of knowledge

He thought They thought The department thought I've got to stop using other people's eyes I must find some way to know what I think (Koller, 1981, p 118)

that's why I don't know what I want, or want to do I don't know how to use my own evidence I don't even know what counts as evidence I'm supposed to be able to know whether I'm angry or unhappy or irritated or cheerful or fond or loving Know it with the same certainty that I know that this is my own hand (Koller, 1981, p 135)

• **working:** the never attained dream:

The job for which my doctorate would qualify me was teaching in an American university...I asked one of my professors how I should go about getting a job. "Too late in the year," he replied. Too late forever, had I only known. (Koller, 1990, pp. 141-142)

Moreover, these four pivotal themes are shaped by Koller around her midlife transformational crisis which she experienced on Nantucket Island, producing, therefore, three distinct developmental stages: before Nantucket, on Nantucket, and since Nantucket¹². For the interpretative chapter, I settled upon tracing the development of each of the four key themes - self, others, knowing, and working - within each of the three critical stages of Koller's life hopefully shedding, thereby, insight into the nature of and the meanings ascribed by Koller to her transformed construction of self. And so, working from a sense of both Alice Koller's context and from her own words, I proceeded, reading by reading, bibbit by bibbit, to discern what I believe is the essence of Koller's changing construction of self and meaning.

INTERNAL VALIDITY

In working with texts as source material, it is essential to be aware that the meaning and interpretation of a text is "an account of what happens to the reader ... an account of the reader's activity" as much as it is about the text itself. (Culler, 1990, p. 46) Therefore, as a woman, reading about another woman's making meaning of her life and transforming her construction of self, there was an urgency to be aware of the ways and places in which Koller's story and mine overlap and intertwine. This awareness was made more difficult in that I, a woman alone, was interacting with the text. The reverse, however, has also been noted: that a certain truth can be reached by a woman, reading as a woman, that cannot be attained by a man. (Culler, 1990)

In feminist research, the research process must not only be 'rooted in experience', but

¹² I will follow Koller's use of the phrase "since Nantucket", rather than "after Nantucket"

must also be continually framed by the researcher's process of critical "self-reflection as one of the participants in the process of creating knowledge." (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 44) That is, who the researcher is as a person, including the particular experiences she brings, affects what it is that can be known. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Tesch, 1990; Reinharz & Davidman, 1992; Munro, 1993; Thornton, 1993; Wolcott, 1994; Plummer, 1995) To this end, the researcher must be fully aware of all that she brings to the research process, not just knowledge and skills, but also personal reflections and emotional responses. Therefore, in order to harness the fullness of the interaction between Koller's texts and my readings of them, throughout this research experience, I actively engaged in critical self-reflection. I regularly noted for myself places of contact between Koller's experiences and mine by seeking answers to questions such as:

What, in my experience, has led me to be interested in this research topic?

How do my experiences contribute to or inform the research as a whole or any particular aspect of it?

Moreover, I routinely reviewed and responded to the guidelines for internal validity as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). In particular, I was concerned with the "credibility" and "authenticity" of my work: would any other reader of Koller's texts and my project, indeed would Koller herself were she to read this work, find a ring of "truth", "apparency", "correspondence" and "plausibility", in what I have written? (Miles & Huberman, 1994, pp. 278-279; Munro, 1993; Janesick, 1994; Leininger, 1994) In fact, my commitment to express as much as possible of this project in Alice Koller's own words came out of my concern for authenticity. An important caution must, however, be acknowledged: namely, that there are multiple and partial truths in all research. (Munro, 1993) Just as an autobiography is, in itself, only one possible reconstruction of a person's life story (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994), so too, an interpretative analysis of such a text is only one possible understanding. Nonetheless, is this particular exploration and interpretation of the texts credible? Stated another way: if Alice Koller were to read my thesis, would she recognize her self, her meaning, and her story in my representation of her? I do believe that she would recognize her own voice alongside mine.

In addition to maintaining a ring of truth, I also followed other of Miles and Huberman's

guidelines for internal validity:

1. by providing "context-rich and meaningful ('thick') ... descriptions;
2. by linking data from Koller's texts with prior or emerging theory;
3. by providing findings and conclusions which are internally coherent; and,
4. by providing a credible and convincing account which enables "a 'vicarious presence' for the reader". (Miles and Huberman, 1994, pp. 278-279)

Additionally, I also reflected on the recent work of Leininger (1994) which articulates criteria for the evaluation of qualitative research studies. In addition to credibility, her first criterion, Leininger also discusses five other criteria to which I have attempted to respond in my work:

1. Confirmability. Since I was working with published texts and did not speak directly with Alice Koller in order to confirm or validate my understandings of her words, I tried to do so by collecting and juxtaposing all of her texts around a particular issue, thereby highlighting the full complexity of her meanings.
2. Meaning-in-context. The focus of this thesis has been to present such meaning-in-context both by providing a sense of the socio-cultural and psychological contexts of Koller's life, but also by struggling to keep her words and her meanings within the context of the narrative she wrote.
3. Recurrent patterning. The detailed process which I selected for working with Koller's texts clearly promoted an awareness of patterns and exceptions.
4. Saturation. Likewise, so far as it was possible since I was working with a set body of work, I fully immersed myself in Koller's words, metaphors, experiences and meanings.
5. Transferability. Transferability is not to be understood to hold the same import as generalizability. Indeed,
 ... the goal of qualitative research is not to produce generalizations, but rather in-depth understandings and knowledge of particular phenomena... (Leininger, 1994, pp. 106-107)

From this study, two essentials are, however, transferable: the method by which I worked to reveal Koller's processes and meanings, and some of the general understandings which touch on the experience of transforming a construction of self and meaning for women. In hearing one woman's story, other women have a

model by which to regain their voices and strengthen their own constructions of self.

In addition to my own self-reflection and my studied efforts to produce a work which would meet the criteria for solid qualitative research, I relied on the regular feedback from Dr. Slattery - feedback which helped me to explore and validate my ideas and expressions and to hold in check personal biases or unfounded statements.

ETHICS

As I began my research project, having read through Alice Koller's texts and having reviewed some of the central works in qualitative and feminist research, the foundational ethical principle that formulated the rest of my work was the importance of valuing and respecting Koller's own words, her own voice. (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Fowler & Fowler, 1990; Tesch, 1991; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Reinharz & Davidman, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Apter, 1995) As I moved slowly, step by step through the process, I would ask myself: what does Koller say about this? and, if Alice Koller were to read this, would she recognize her self, her meanings, and her story in my representation of her?

Moreover, in reading Koller's texts, it is apparent that she feels passionately about what she writes, the very words she chooses and phrases she constructs, since, for Koller, writing "is some elemental component of my being". (Koller, 1990, p. 201) As we hear in The Stations of Solitude:

By the time I have written something, the words on the paper exactly as I wish them to be, I understand the matter they crystallize. ... I write these chapters about solitude as I wrote those about Nantucket: primarily for myself. To learn what I think, to understand certain things I've done, certain things that have happened to me. To discover the path from there to here. (Koller, 1990, p. 67)

The words that appeared on paper were not at first the ones I wanted, but they opened doors into hallways into caverns where I found the ones I wanted. They were not

lying there, waiting for me to carry away. But where I dug and pressed, they came to hand ... Is this what I mean to say? Does it belong here, right here, no other place? Suppose I move it to the last chapter instead. But then those final lines are redundant. Throw them away. Those good lines? No where else for them? Not here, anyway. Perhaps back in the early pages? No? Well, keep them for something, sometime. And this word: how could I have read it a dozen times and not noticed that it doesn't at all say what I want it to say? It needs unpacking, that space I thought so small: this poor word covered over a chasm. I write the sentences that fill it out. Now the words lie quietly, one to another, and my eye runs from beginning to end without stopping, because I've banished some misshapen idea, some ill-fitting sequence of words, some rhythm that breaks where it should flow, some awkward element in the pattern of sound. (Koller, 1990, pp. 200-201)

It is also very clear that Koller is passionate about her absolute ownership of her work and, therefore, its inviolability.

Sometimes I have not heeded the warning signs of future enmity. ... For more than a dozen years the book [An Unknown Woman] I had tried to get published carried the title I had given it. ... Who would have guessed that anyone but I would have the right to name my own book? I did not guess. ... Who would have dreamed that anyone but I would have the right to approve the final version of my book, the one that would be printed on real paper, bound between real covers, sold in bookstores, circulated from libraries, my name permanently attached to it? I did not dream. My editor sent on to me the copy editor's proposed changes, which laid rough hands on my book's language, its punctuation, the connections and disconnections between its sentences and paragraphs, and my editor concurred. ... it was my book: I had sustained its life for fourteen years until it could take up residence in minds, in lives, other than mine. What *is* a piece of writing if it is not a making that one's loving attention shapes by selecting from among all the details that come to hand in the course of bringing it forth? (Koller, 1990, pp. 270-271)

Clearly, it was essential to me, from the beginning of my work, that I stand far enough to the side to let Alice Koller speak for herself. I trust, therefore, that in reading this project, you hear two voices, mine and Alice's, and that the difference between them is clear.

In choosing this way of telling the story of Alice's transformation of self and meaning, I then had to wrestle with the issue of consent. Even if I were using her own words, letting her own voice be heard, how would Alice respond to the manner in which I was using them

and the purpose to which they were set? I gradually came to terms with this concern for two reasons. First of all, I was working with published texts, whether they be her autobiographical works, or her dissertation, or the articles she wrote for The New York Times. Her words and phrases were, therefore, in the public domain. As it were, she had sent them forth to take up residence in the minds and lives of others.

Secondly, in The Stations of Solitude, Koller states her purposes in writing in relation to her audience. In that text, it seemed to me that she gave permission for her words to be used by others to assist them in understanding how to become free, how to become more their own selves. About An Unknown Woman, Koller says:

You may know my "Journey" as *An Unknown Woman*. Many who read it understand that it is not a novel, not a journal, not ultimately about me, but that in tandem with the narrative about my coming to understand myself it is an account of the *process* of coming to understand oneself: both tale and explication. Those readers have let themselves do philosophy along with me... (Koller, 1990, p. 66)

After a while, I understood that the pages then written, and whatever else I could get onto paper, could be for other persons as well. I was free, and by my own hand. I was therefore able to lay open to other eyes exactly what such a journey was like. Not as a pattern to be imitated ... By rendering visible the everydayness of what it was like to free myself, I could make it less mysterious even though I couldn't make it less frightening. I could place the map of my journey into a reader's hands, intending it, not as a map for his or her journey, but only as a sample map that would best serve its purpose when the reader could lay it aside to draw his or her own. ... Just so, my Nantucket book is my way of holding a reader's eyes open during the time it takes to learn that you can see. My central purposes changed very little once I let that unknown reader in. I was still writing to please myself first of all. ... I merely had to say a bit more for the extra pair of eyes than if only I were able to see the page. ... I extend unalloyed gratitude to those who see it and use it to think through their lives. Having made explicit my own understanding, I thereby laid open the path along which anyone else's understanding can travel. The philosophical skill I deliberately cultivated of being able to say exactly what I mean lets me articulate my own thinking in such a way that readers believe I am articulating theirs. (Koller, 1990, pp. 202-203)

About The Stations of Solitude, Koller states:

In a sense, this whole book is a philosophical inquiry into what it is to be a person: how one becomes a person, and what it is that one has become. I am teaching not by telling

but by displaying the process. By writing of what it is for me to be solitary, I am sketching the outlines of the life of solitude everyone else lives. Can live, if you choose. (Koller, 1990, p. 67)

But it matters not at all to me how you interpret what I do. By the time you reach these final words, if I have not made clear to you the idea of doing something for its own sake, the fault is in me or in your understanding, not in the idea. If, on the other hand, I have clarified the idea but you have not yet woven it into the fabric of your days because you need an exemplar from your own experience, this is the station at which you can find it. Even understanding the idea, you may choose not to let it pattern your doings. Your circuit of the stations of solitude will thereby differ from mine. Not only in detail, as is to be expected, but in principle as well. Each station of solitude is a choosing, the whole circuit is a collection of choosings. It is up to you to choose whether even to begin. (Koller, 1990, pp. 363-364)

And so, it seemed to me that, in her own words, Koller was inviting her readers to make use of her words if, by that use, they shed light on their becoming free, on their becoming more their own selves. I set out to do just that.

Arising out of and closely touching this importance of valuing and respecting Koller's own words and voice is the respect and care with which I hope I have treated her story, as a whole. As already indicated, since I was working with published texts and since Koller speaks openly about her readers making use of her works as they would, I felt some comfort in freely quoting from her texts, making use of Koller's words as a foundation for the construction I was designing. My goal was always, however, to present her words and story and my constructions in a respectful manner, not resulting in any harm to Koller, nor to her reputation, nor to any of her family or friends. Moreover, any interpretations or conclusions which are presented in this thesis grew directly out of the data of Koller's words and narrative and have, I hope, been carefully framed by the dual principles of respect and protection from harm. (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Fowler & Fowler, 1990; Tesch, 1991; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Reinhartz & Davidman, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Apter, 1995; Slattery, 1996)

As well, before I began, I considered the worthiness of this study. Clearly, this project fits within the whole thrust of recent feminist scholarship to provide a forum for women's voices and stories. In more traditional historical, sociological, and psychological research,

the researchers, the subjects, the experiences, the narratives, the paradigms, and the theories have often been male-centred. Theories about human society and history and about human psychology and development have, as a result, generally been focused on the male experience and voice.

Exciting life stories that have been told have been, for the most part, stories about men. Indeed, what has been considered to be important, to be normative, has often been male, with the female experience usually being seen as either less important or only in relation to and defined by the male norm. Within the past 20 years or so, a new feminist research scholarship has emerged, giving voice to the issues, experiences and stories of women. (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Fowler & Fowler, 1990; Tesch, 1991; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Reinharz & Davidman, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Apter, 1995; Slattery, 1996) By respectfully listening to the stories of women, one story at a time, it is hoped that women will gain their voices, their stories, and strengthen their construction of self and meaning. As Heilbrun noted in Writing a Woman's Life, since girls and women "have been deprived of the narratives, or the texts, plots, or examples, by which they might assume power over -- take control of -- their own lives", [they] will starve in silence until new stories are created which confer on them the power of naming themselves." (Heilbrun, 1988, pp. 17, 33) Therefore, by listening to the story of one woman, Alice Koller, this project hopes to contribute to this new feminist scholarship, thereby giving voice and power to women's stories and to their constructions of self and meanings.

Chapter 2

AN OVERVIEW OF SOME SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS EFFECTING ALICE KOLLER'S CONSTRUCTION OF SELF AND MEANING

INTRODUCTION

Women are now laying claim to significant and satisfying work in the professions as a **normal** part of their lives and laying claim also to the authority, prestige, power, and salary that professional work commands. They are laying claim, in short, to professional equality, and the breadth of change this signifies can scarcely be overstated [since] an equal role for women...has never been the norm... It is true that for over a century there have been women professors, lawyers, doctors, scientists, engineers, and executives, and, with women's suffrage, elected officials as well. But they were clearly **exceptions to the norm**. (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988, pp. 3-4; emphases mine)

Alice Koller is a woman whose life was lived in the tension between the time when learned women were exceptions to the norm and today, when such women are, more and more, seen to be part of the established norm. As a woman living in that pivotal time, along with other women of her generation, she carried much of the burden which has emancipated those who have followed her.

Alice Koller wrote two autobiographical texts, An Unknown Woman (1981) and The Stations of Solitude (1990), both of which focus on the search for and expression of her interior self and, as a result, neither provides many biographical particulars. This sparse detail presents a very limited background against which we can analyze Koller's socio-cultural framework. As a result, it is up to the reader to deduce much of the chronology and social milieu of her life, from the few names, dates, and places that are given.

From the details that are provided by Koller, we know that she was born in Ohio around 1925. We also know that she was raised in a middle-class, Jewish family, in which her

father, who was educated as a lawyer, either owned or managed a hardware store during Alice's childhood and in which her mother was a stay-at-home homemaker. Alice had two siblings, a younger sister, 'Memo' and a brother, whose birth order and name we never know. Following high school in 1943, she travelled to Chicago to study acting at the Goodman Theatre, eventually leaving acting for university. After working at a variety of 'odd jobs' across the country to support her education, Koller completed a Ph.D. at Radcliffe in Philosophy in 1959, at the age of 34 years. Even with her doctorate, Koller continued to struggle to find work, only rarely being employed as a university professor, which was her ambition and purpose in studying. From 1963 until 1990, Koller was variously employed as a researcher, a writer, and an editor. Indeed, she was also often unemployed, living off the generosity of friends and on welfare.

During the winter of 1962-1963, at 37 years of age, Koller experienced a personal crisis, an epiphany, on Nantucket Island. Koller's subsequent transformation of self and meaning paralleled the beginning of the women's movement which focused attention on the conflicts and dilemmas facing American women's identity, as heralded by Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique (1963). After Nantucket, Koller continued to struggle against barriers to her admission to the world of the university, supporting herself by a variety of writing and editing jobs, which left her living most of her life in poverty.

In seeking to situate Alice Koller's life story, this chapter will examine the socio-cultural context within which and against which she constructed her self and her meanings. It will attempt to discern the ways in which Koller's struggles with her identity and role were representative of the struggles of other women of her time and place. This chapter will highlight, in particular, the conflicting ideals and images facing an educated woman in twentieth-century United States. What American society suggested was possible, although perhaps 'exceptional', what Koller's education prepared her for and 'promised' her, was, in fact, in conflict with the generally accepted roles allotted to women of her generation. An exploration of the socio-cultural factors influencing Koller will help us to contextualize her transformation of self and her construction of her life story and its meaning.

Throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century, Koller was maturing and

constructing her life story against the backdrop of conflicting messages about the options available to women in America. On the one hand, a majority of Americans, including women, supported a very traditional view of the role of the American woman: exalted domesticity in which every woman was to devote her energy to her husband, her family and her home. Alongside this ideal, however, increasing numbers of women were being educated, were working outside the home, and were also engaging in professional careers. How did these women resolve the realities of their lives with the ideals espoused by the culture around them and which they too had, to a large extent, internalized as their own?

In placing Alice Koller within her socio-cultural context, I will focus most particularly on the period from the time of her birth to the decade after her experience on Nantucket Island. All of this will be set against the background of the traditional narrative of Alice's mother's life at the turn of the century. Such a time period, ranging from the 1920's through the 1960's, from the age of the flapper to the women's movement, contains many and varied social, economic, and political threads which impact on women's lives. My emphasis will be on those key socio-cultural factors which speak to Koller's struggle with her role and identity as an educated woman, trying to construct her life story in the United States during the middle of this century.

SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS EFFECTING WOMEN'S CONSTRUCTION OF SELF AND MEANING

According to Carolyn Heilbrun, stories that we hear serve as models for our lives. (Heilbrun, 1988) What were the stories that formed the text by which Alice Koller patterned her own narrative? Throughout history, girls have heard the romantic love and marriage story at the knees of their mothers. (Heilbrun, 1988; Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988) They have heard a culturally assigned script in which

Women's identity was located in the body and emotions,
men's in the mind. Women gave birth, suckled infants,
nursed the sick, cleaned homes, cooked meals, provided
sympathy, enchantment, inspiration. Men learned,

calculated, bought, sold, built, fought, wrote, painted, philosophized. (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988, p.4)

The virtuous woman is patient, accommodating, receptive, peace-keeping, modest, nonaggressive, unselfish, and, of course, chaste. (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988, p.13)

Girls who listen to this script in stories, fairy tales, and in the lives of women around them know that it applies to all women, married and unmarried alike. They know that the love and marriage plot defines what all girls and women *should* want, how they *should* all behave, and the choices each of them *should* make. Girls and women have, for centuries, lived out of this paradigm. (Heilbrun, 1988; Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988) For centuries, women have generally been “deprived of the narratives, or the texts, plots, or examples, by which they might assume power over -- take control of -- their own lives” (Heilbrun, 1988, p. 37)

A few ‘exceptional’, ‘eccentric’, ‘sinful’, and, perhaps, even ‘mad’, women have constructed a different narrative of risk and individual achievement -- a narrative more akin to the quest plot which has, also for centuries, been assigned to boys and men. (Heilbrun, 1988; Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988) For those women who have set out on a personal quest, the path has not been easy. “Unavoidably, women follow the old scripts even as they embrace the new, which means that to a certain extent they are carrying on a battle within themselves, as well as with the outer world.” (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988, p. 7)

So what kind of narrative would Alice Koller construct for herself? Would she follow in her mother’s steps along the marriage path? Would she set her eyes towards her own destiny, becoming a woman of quest, a woman of ‘exception’? Would she struggle to combine the narratives of home and career? Or would she set out on her personal quest only, in the end, in conflict with herself and unsupported by others, fall short?

Sarah, Mother of Alice Koller

Alice Koller’s mother, Sarah, was the eldest daughter born into a working-class household at the end of the nineteenth century. She later married a man with a law degree, who

either owned or managed a hardware store, thereby moving, through marriage, into the narrative of the middle-class American woman. By the turn of the century, when Sarah was maturing and marrying, for most Americans, including women, the story of a woman's life was that her place was in the home, financially supported by men, raising children and keeping house. (Chafe, 1991; Woloch, 1994) Within the home, the middle-class wife, who rarely had more than elementary school education¹³, had assumed "all authority and management of home and family" and was expected to meet increasingly stringent standards. (Woloch, 1994, p. 278) The homemaker had to

'keep the world clean' ...She had to know how to buy appliances to foster efficiency, and to master techniques of scientific management... In addition to schedules and files, she had to keep itemised lists... And she had to adopt a self-critical posture, asking herself... 'Can I do better than I am doing?'... 'Is my house right as to its sanitary arrangements?'... 'Can I make the best use of my time?' (Woloch, 1994, p. 295)

Based on Koller's descriptions of her mother, we see Sarah's life as exemplifying this very traditional view of the role of the middle-class American women: a full-time homemaker, with only an elementary school education, seemingly uninvolved with the public sphere, entertaining her friends at bridge parties, and devoted to

...her house, which she kept ready for the times her friends and relatives would visit her.... I think of her as being always occupied cleaning her house. I hold a vivid image of her: she passes the kitchen clock, glances at it, then gasps..."There won't be enough time!" She wouldn't have enough time to wash the dishes, so that she could make the beds, so that she could wash the walls upstairs, so that she could clean the mirrors, so that she could get the evening meal ready. And all of this took place on some interior schedule that she followed faithfully....I understood what she had been doing with her life: she cleaned her house. I understood then, too...cleaning her house was her career, and no matter how well it had been done yesterday, she had to make new gains every day, or else be a failure. (Koller 1981, pp. 58-59)

Moreover, for Alice, and presumably for her other children, Sarah provided all the opportunities: "elocution lessons because my upper lip didn't meet my lower lip when I talked...There were also tap-dancing lessons." (Koller, 1981, p. 48) And, in Alice's memory, Sarah demanded perfection of Alice, as perfection was expected of her: "My

¹³ By 1900, only 7% of all Americans went to secondary school. (Woloch, 1994, p. 276)

mother wouldn't let me show her my new steps until the old ones were perfect." (Koller, 1981, p. 48)

Within the cultural milieu of the turn of the century, Sarah Koller was a woman whose life demonstrated that she understood that a woman's roles were generally limited to the family household and a woman's accomplishments were measured by a clean house and well-raised children. Moreover, no matter how restricted her life nor how frustrated she was by it, it is understandable that Sarah would expect that her daughters follow a very similar lifestyle. Indeed, according to Alice, her mother tried to pass on to her some of the traditional 'home making' skills, for, as the eldest daughter, Alice was "chosen to be her assistant." (Koller, 1981, p. 58) And when Koller was fifteen, her "mother's highest goal for [her] was to become a dental assistant and marry a nice Jewish boy", much as her mother had married a nice Jewish lawyer and shopkeeper. (Koller, 1981, p. 200)

From the 1920's to the End of World War II -- A Promise Unfulfilled

Nonetheless, Alice Koller, born in the mid-1920's and raised in a middle-class household in Ohio, did have options which were not available to her mother. Out of these choices, however, came conflicts for women, like Alice, who elected to construct narratives different from those of their mothers. In the decades between the end of the two world wars, as educational and employment opportunities for women were expanding, a wider number of life choices were open to American women, but marriage and childbearing were still held to be the highest goal to which a woman could aspire. These contradictory messages to young women: 'develop yourself' yet also 'be a good wife and mother'; 'live according to your intellect and gifts' yet also 'follow the destiny of your biological endowment' reflected the ambivalence towards women's roles found in twentieth-century American culture. (Friedan, 1963, 1976; Chafe, 1991; Woloch, 1994) These conflicts were the milieu in which Koller was growing up and maturing in the 1920's, 1930's, and 1940's.

After World War I, American culture became increasingly devoted to technology, progress and prosperity, marked by the general availability of new means of mass communication

and popular culture: the automobile, radio, telephone, records, movies, and large-circulation magazines. (Sochen, 1974; Chafe, 1991; Woloch, 1994) This was the age symbolized by the flapper,

'cigarette in hand, shimmying to the music of the masses'... The flapper, with her aura of self-indulgence and independence, came to personify the 'point of view' of her generation. She stood for a shift in middle-class sexual mores, of which birth control¹⁴ was a pivotal part. She signified a demand for equality, since she seemed to be adopting privileges and liberties once reserved for men. And she represented individualism, the keynote to modernity. Like the heroine of a *McCalls* story in 1925, her philosophy was 'To live life in one's own way.' (Woloch, 1994, pp. 382-383)

Alice was born into a decade of promise for women. Those years saw a variety of options increasingly available to women, especially middle-class women: they could seemingly choose from among the narratives of the college coed, the modern housewife, and the new professional and business woman. Indeed, by 1920, in 'winning the vote', even women's entry into political life had been officially sanctioned.¹⁵ (Chafe, 1991; Woloch, 1994) Popular magazines were speaking of the New Woman's goals:

She wants money of her own. She wants work of her own. She wants some means of self-expression, perhaps, some way of satisfying her personal ambition. But she wants a home, husband, and children, too" (Woloch, 1994, p. 395)

This woman, symbolic of the 1920's, was reaching for independence, trying to construct her own life's narrative, combining traditional women's roles with her own personal quests. In reality, as with Sarah Koller, most women of this era followed the more acceptable narrative of husband, home and family and shunned the exceptional narrative of independent career woman. (Sochen, 1974; Solomon, 1985; Chafe, 1991; Hulbert & Schuster, 1993; Woloch, 1994)

The decade of the 1920's did see increased educational opportunities for all Americans, including women. By 1930, over half of Americans of high school age attended secondary

¹⁴ In 1912, Margaret Sanger began her campaign to make birth control information widely available to women. By the 1920's such contraceptive information and devices were more generally accessible. (Woloch, 1994)

¹⁵ On August 26, 1920, the last state needed to ratify the woman suffrage amendment to the American Constitution voted to approve, and the vote for women was finally legal across the nation.

school, and 12% went on to post-secondary education. Additionally, a wider spectrum of American society pursued a college education. In the late 1800's, members of the upper classes were predominant, but by the 1920's a trend of increasing numbers of middle-class students could be seen. (Woloch, 1994) Moreover, women were attending college at almost the same rate as men, although the actual proportion of women in college declined somewhat from a high of 47.3% in 1920 to 43.7% in 1930. (Woloch, 1994, p. 403; Solomon, 1985; Chamberlain, 1988; Chafe, 1991)

These better educated women sought to make use of their skills in a variety of ways. While most women in the 1920's still saw marriage and family as their goal, a growing number of them also entered the work force. (Chafe, 1991; Woloch, 1994) With the expansion of the business world in the 1920's, there was a dramatic increase in women office workers. By 1930, 2 million women, one-fifth of the female labour force, worked in offices. Moreover, during the 1920's, the proportion of married women who were wage earners rose to 25% overall. The 1920's also saw an increase in the number of women professionals, rising from 11.9% to 14.2% of the total. Nonetheless, 3 out of 4 professional women entered 'women's fields' such as education and social welfare. (Woloch, 1994, pp. 389-396) For example in New York state in the early 1920's, among the women professionals, there were 63,637 teachers and 21,915 nurses, but only 11 engineers and 7 inventors. (Chafe, 1991, p. 100)

While more women were being educated and more were working in the labour force, more women than ever were also marrying and they were marrying at younger ages. By the 1920's, even women college graduates were marrying at near the rate of the general female population. Of those women who graduated from college between 1919 and 1923, over 90% wanted to marry and fully 80% did -- statistics which stand in contrast to the women graduates of 1912, half of whom remained single and formed the core of female professional workers of that era. (Chafe, 1991, p. 111, Woloch, 1994, p. 407) The number of married professional women also increased: doubling from 12.2% in 1910 to 24.7% in 1930. While twice as many professional women were marrying than had 20 years earlier, it is important, however, to note that professional women most often remained single. (Woloch, 1994, pp. 395, 389-396) Although, popular culture idealized a woman of the 1920's as 'having it all', many women still suffered from an "intolerable

choice between career and home." (Chafe, 1991, p. 100) As one historian of the education of women in the United States has noted, "the bad news is that they were forced to choose; the good news was that they indeed did have a choice." (McClelland, 1992, p. 84)

The budding optimism which marked the 1920's as a time of prosperity and progress, of increased freedoms and choices for women, soon faded before the social and political crises of the 1930's and 1940's -- the formative years of Alice's childhood and adolescence. In rallying to defend their culture and country through almost two decades of crises, Americans confirmed their belief in the sacredness of the home and its domestic ideals: man was the breadwinner and protector, while woman's place was naturally in the home, caring for and supporting the man and his children. (Chafe, 1991; Woloch, 1994)

Alice Koller makes no direct references to the depression and only a few brief references to the war. At no time does she make any allusions to her family experiencing financial difficulties; certainly there is no indication that her mother ever worked. She describes a seemingly middle-class childhood, with a 'stay-at-home' mom who had her friends over to play bridge and a father, educated to be a lawyer, who, during Alice's growing up years, had a hardware store and used to golf on Thursday evenings and Sunday mornings. These are not the 'hard luck' stories of a depression family. As for the war, Alice's few comments are restricted to using the war as a point by which to date events in her own life: "Here's a letter ... dated April 1943, two years before he was killed in the war" ; and, "That was only days after my twenty-first birthday, a year after Hiroshima, sixteen years ago." (Koller, 1981, pp. 55, 88) Even though these great events seemed not to have engendered comment by Koller in her texts, nonetheless, as a young girl in a traditional middle-class household, daughter of Sarah Koller, Alice could not have escaped the impact of these domestic values publicly espoused during the 1930's and 1940's: the belief that the home was a refuge, created by the hand of a woman, and that the man was the family's breadwinner and protector.

Although the American response to the national 'emergencies' of the Great Depression and World War II seemingly impacted in very different ways on women's roles, both at home and at work, in actuality, responses to both crises sent a unified message:

women's personal narratives are secondary. For, in reaction to both of these crises, women were urged to adapt their lives and roles to suit the nation's economic needs: with the depression in the 1930's, women were advised to stay at home, giving up their jobs to the male breadwinners; by contrast, during the war, women were encouraged to return to work, to fill in the places left by the men who went to war. And, in addition, throughout the 30's and 40's, the percentage of women attending college declined, once again reflecting the social, political and economic pressures facing American women during those decades. (Bernard, 1964; Solomon, 1985; Chamberlain, 1988; Chafe, 1991; Hulbert & Schuster, 1993; Woloch, 1994)

The Great Depression of the 1930's gave new potency to the belief that a woman's place was in the home and that jobs should be reserved for the male breadwinners. Federal, state, and local governments, school boards, private businesses and labour unions all joined in a crusade to prevent women, especially married women, from taking full-time jobs. (Chafe, 1991; Woloch, 1994) These actions reflected American public opinion. In 1936, in a Gallup poll asking whether wives should work if their husbands had jobs, 82% of all respondents and fully 75% of women respondents said no. In 1937, another Gallup poll found that over half of all respondents and 42% of female respondents believed that no wife would work outside the home, whether or not her husband was employed. (Chafe, 1991, p. 118; Woloch, 1994, pp. 440-441) Women professionals were particularly hard hit. By the end of the decade, the proportion of women in professional work had dropped, as men sought jobs in education and social welfare. (Woloch, 1994, p. 445)

Nevertheless, public animosity to women wage earners, especially married women, was counterbalanced, in practice, by family need. In fact, while the proportion of employed single women declined during the depression, the proportion of married women in the work force actually rose. From 1930 to 1940, the percentage of women wage earners who were married rose to 35%. In addition, although wages fell overall during the depression, women's wages actually rose until they were proportionately 63% of men's wages. (Woloch, 1994, pp. 445-446) It must be remembered, however, that these working women were not expressing their individualism and independence, as was the ideal woman of the 1920's, they were working to support their families. While some married

women took on new roles as wage earners outside the home, often in temporary or part-time work, most women retained their traditional role as homemaker. Clearly home management skills assumed new importance, as the successful homemaker of the 1930's 'made ends meet'. In addition, some of these housewives, took in paid work, such as laundry, dressmaking, or boarders. (Sochen, 1974; Chafe, 1991; Woloch, 1994)

As with the 1930's, the 1940's also saw conflicting cultural and economic messages to women. By 1942, the policies which had restricted the employment of women were reversed and, as a result of the war, women workers seem to have been reclassified from a marginal to an essential labour supply. During the war, over 6 million women took jobs for the first time, increasing the number of working women by 57%, and bringing to 36% the percentage of the working force who were women. Moreover, the variety and range of jobs open to women also expanded, resulting in more women moving into higher paid manufacturing jobs, out of lower paid service work. As well, during the war, women in many occupations experienced an increased opportunity for occupational mobility. (Chafe, 1991, pp. 122-129, 133; Woloch, 1994, pp. 459-468)

Nonetheless, there was a pervasive cultural fear of the kind of role reversal epitomized by a well-muscled Rosie the Riveter. In order to encourage women to move into the labour force while, at the same time, reinforcing traditional sex-role stereotypes, wartime ads appealed to traditional female qualities, such as altruism and affection, and emphasized women's loyalty to home, husband, and nation. In portraying the woman war worker as an attractive wife and mother who was sacrificing her home life to patriotism, wartime propaganda minimized any challenge which might undermine traditional roles. Any changes in women's behaviour, according to this propaganda, were only as a result of the national emergency, not as a result of any intrinsic change in women's attitudes towards their natural roles as wives and mothers and were, therefore, only temporary. Popular American culture, as typified by mass media, reflected both admiration for female war workers and affirmation of the underlying primacy of domesticity for women. (Sochen, 1974; Chafe, 1991; May, 1991; Woloch, 1994)

Just as the Americans became involved in the war and just before her seventeenth birthday, Alice Koller took a huge step towards constructing her own life story. With her

father's personal and financial support she enrolled in acting school at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago. But why acting? Acting was an unusual career choice in a society in which women's consummate role was that of wife and mother, and other jobs or careers chosen by women were most often within a narrowly defined set of parameters -- jobs such as Koller had throughout her young adulthood when she was financing her education. As she reports, "Thirty-five jobs. And none of them meant anything to me except as a means of feeding myself and paying the rent." Other than her desire "to be the greatest actress of my generation" (Koller, 1981, p. 116), Koller generally worked at service jobs, typical of single young women of her time, such as selling toys in a department store at Christmas, playground leader, cashier in a movie theatre, selling candy, selling blouses, working in the school cafeteria, modelling at the art institute, working in the lab of a rubber factory. (Koller, 1981, pp. 88-89)

Koller is uncertain about her reasons for choosing to be an actress. She is able only to recount that, beginning with a part in a production of *Hiawatha* in the second grade, people told her that she had a good voice and also that afterward she took "every opportunity to appear before an audience throughout grade school and high school." By age 13, "acting became a way of guaranteeing ... attention."¹⁶ (Koller, 1981, pp. 48, 84-85) Perhaps Koller saw acting as a means, at least in some measure, by which she could gain attention and recognition and could become just who she wished she could be, in the process. For, as Carolyn Heilbrun asserts about creative women, "I believe that women have long searched, and continue to search, for an identity 'other' than their own. Caught in the conventions of their sex, they have sought an escape from gender." (Heilbrun, 1988, pp. 111-112) It was almost as if acting were a way by which Koller could begin to construct her own fulfilling life story.

We might gain some insight into Koller's choice of acting when we examine the place movies played in the popular culture of Americans during the 1920's through the 1940's. First of all, American movies have been described as the "most popular medium for the creation and dissemination of mass values." (Banner, 1983, p. 282; May, 1991) Moreover, from the inception and popularization of movies in the 1920's, American girls

¹⁶ The issues surrounding Alice Koller's need for attention and applause will be explored in the next two chapters, "Some Psychological Factors ." and "Alice Koller, An Unknown ."

and women were presented with stories of women, not only acting out the marriage plot, but also of women who had careers and who were assertive, independent, and free. (Banner, 1983; Woloch, 1994) By the 1930's a new female image had emerged in the movies -- "strong, autonomous, competent, and career-oriented." (May, 1991, p. 560) In fact, in the 1939 movie *Gone with the Wind*, more sympathy was evoked by Scarlett than by the meek and virtuous Melanie. (Woloch, 1994, pp. 456-457) Although the movie heroines of the 1930's were competitive, resourceful careerists, they were all willing to give up their jobs for the right man, while the women of the 1940's movies worked in an array of wartime jobs, waiting for their men to come home. (Woloch, 1994)

And so it was with Koller. With an air of romance, Koller tells us: "And yet, the very week I was to leave [for the Goodman Theatre], I almost didn't go because Bob, whom I had loved *in absentia* during most of my senior year, was due home on army furlough." (Koller, 1981, p. 41) We might construe from Koller's recounting of her attempted acting career, that she was, to some extent, living out the conflict between narratives available to American women in the 1930's and 1940's: trying to sort out and balance the publicly espoused belief that a woman's place was in the home with the increasingly common images of women working and making their own choices. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, as we will examine in the next chapter on Koller's psychological context, understanding her need to guarantee attention and approval is fundamental to understanding Koller: acting was one attempt to secure such a guarantee.

In the mid-1920's, Alice was born into an era of prosperity and progress, a time of increased freedoms and choices for women. Soon, however, the social and political crises of the 1930's and 1940's, the formative years of Alice's childhood and adolescence, confirmed Americans' belief in the sacredness of the home and its domestic ideals. The fundamental cultural message was clear: although there was a steady increase in the number of women, single and married, in the labour force, the vast majority of Americans, including women, continued to believe that a woman's place was truly in the home. (Chafe, 1991; Woloch, 1994) "By the end of the 1940's, a vigorous cult of domesticity had emerged, more strident in tone than earlier versions. The emergencies of the 1930s and 1940s ... laid the groundwork for a conservative division of gender roles...." (Woloch, 1994, p. 439) The promise of the 1920's faded.

During Alice Koller's maturing years of the 1930's and 1940's, therefore, there was an inherent conflict in the narratives available to women. While some women were educated, worked and had professional careers, the publicly espoused norms for women became even more traditional and restrictive throughout her youth. Women were, as with Koller, confronted with an internal conflict as they tried to balance their own aspirations, which were seemingly becoming more possible, with the relentless social pressure toward domesticity.

Returning Home -- 1945-1960

When the GI's came home, along with them came a renewed and reenergized conviction in domesticity and in a traditional identity and role for women. The post-war years saw a revitalization of a traditional view of femininity. At a time with the United States had just passed through years of deprivation and war and was experiencing continuing political and social tension, the nation turned to the comfort of traditional cultural stereotypes. Femininity was defined as softness and passivity, giving and caring, nurturing and loving, in counterpoint to the harsh, 'masculine' world of wars and competition. For women in post-war America, living according to the traditional feminine ideal meant, therefore, commitment to home and family, to homemaking and child rearing. (Chafe, 1991; May, 1991; Hulbert & Schuster, 1993; Woloch, 1994)

In the second half of the twentieth century in America, woman's world was confined to her own body and beauty, the charming of man, the bearing of babies, and the physical care and serving of husband, children, and home. (Friedan, 1963, p. 31)

Given the pervasiveness and power of such narratives for women, it is not surprising that, even today, the 1950's have been acclaimed as the embodiment of traditional family life and family values. From television families like the Nelsons (*Ozzie and Harriet*) and the Cleavers (*Leave it to Beaver*) to the Doris Day / Rock Hudson moves, the age was dedicated to the celebration of conventional sex roles and the feminine mystique. (Chafe, 1991; Woloch, 1994)

And so, women, much like Alice Koller who was 20 in 1945 and who had grown up during the depression and war, also looked forward to stable, traditional lives in secure and successful environments. In 1946, more marriages occurred in the United States than in any other year and the average age at marriage for women dropped to 20. By 1951, one woman in three was married by age 19 and by 1958, the largest age group at marriage was women between the ages of 15 and 19. Subsequently, in 1947 the birthrate began to accelerate, marking the beginning of the 'baby boom' which peaked a decade later in 1957. (Chafe, 1991, pp. 186-187; Woloch, 1994, pp. 468, 494; May, 1991) In a Gallup poll for the *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1961, young women aged 16 to 21 were quite able to envision themselves as housewives, in the suburbs, married to established businessmen, living in a "split-level brick with four bedrooms with French provincial furniture", with built-in ovens, formica counters, finished woodwork, and four children. (Woloch, 1994, pp. 496-497)

Growing out of this intense cultural emphasis on domesticity, beginning in the late 1940's and continuing into the 1950's, the proportion of female high school graduates who went on to college declined year by year. (Solomon, 1985; Chamberlain, 1988; Chafe, 1991; Hulbert & Schuster, 1993; Woloch, 1994) Moreover, a large proportion of women who did go on to college dropped out prior to graduation. Indeed, by the early 1950's, "two out of three girls [sic] who entered college were dropping out before they even finished." (Friedan, 1963, p. 142; Chafe, 1991; Hulbert & Schuster, 1993; Woloch, 1994) And so, in 1940, 40% of college students were women, but by 1950, women made up only 31% of the student body and only 25% of the graduates. (Woloch, 1994, p. 506)

In 1946, at age 21, Koller became one of a declining number of women enrolled in post-secondary education when she registered in the prestigious University of Chicago. While we have very little information about her first enrolling in university, Koller reports that, when she wanted to leave after less than a year, "the woman in the dean's office said, "Stay and learn...What value will you be to the world without any education or training of any significant sort? You'll be able to do something if you learn something; otherwise, likely not." (Koller, 1981, p. 42) Despite this advice, Koller states that she did not stay even another quarter. Perhaps, at that time, Koller believed that there were limited options available for her to 'do something of value', even with an education. And

so, Koller became one of the women who dropped out of college.

Research investigating the reasons why women dropped out of college discovered that they did so either to marry or because they feared that too much education would be a "marriage bar". (Friedan, 1963, p. 154) In 1956, a Mellon Foundation study of Vassar students who stayed in college found that "strong commitment to any activity or career other than that of housewife is rare....perhaps a third are interested in graduate schooling and in careers, for example, teaching. Few, however, plan to continue with a career if it should conflict with family needs". (Friedan, 1963, p. 143) These 'modern' Vassar graduates of the 1950's stand in contrast to those who graduated prior to 1912. Among Vassar women who graduated in the first decade of the twentieth century, most indicated that a desire for a professional career was a principal reason for their having selected a Vassar education. (Chafe, 1991, p. 111)

The post-war American college woman learned that truly feminine women do not want careers and independence. They learned that women seek fulfilment as wives and mothers.

The one lesson a girl [sic] could hardly avoid learning, if she went to college between 1945 and 1960, was not to get interested, seriously interested, in anything besides getting married and having children, if she wanted to be normal, happy, adjusted, feminine, have a successful husband, successful children, and a normal, feminine, adjusted, successful sex life. She might have learned some of this lesson at home, and some of it from other girls in college, but she also learned it, incontrovertibly, from those entrusted with developing her critical, creative intelligence: her college professors. (Friedan, 1963, p. 148)

In her study of post-war women college students, Komarovsky, found that they personified the messages about true feminine fulfilment which they were receiving from the culture around them. As college students they were expected to work hard, to achieve, and even to excel, but, as women, they sensed that these same attributes became liabilities. A tension, therefore, existed between working hard and getting good grades and being warned against being 'too smart' and scaring off prospective suitors. In an attempt to overcome the 'handicaps' of intelligence and independence, Komarovsky reported that these college women learned to 'play dumb'. (Komarovsky, 1953) The impact of this internal conflict can be heard in the voices of some of the women

Komarovsky interviewed:

Well, everyone knew that on that campus a reputation of a 'brain' killed a girl socially. I was always fearful lest I say too much in class or answer a question which the boys I dated couldn't answer.

I am engaged to a Southern boy who doesn't think too much of the woman's intellect. In spite of myself, I play up to his theories because the less one knows and does, the more he does for you and thinks you 'cute' into the bargain...

My mother used to tell me to lay off the brains on dates because glasses make me look too intellectual anyhow.

On dates I always go through the 'I-don't-care-anything-you-want-to-do' routine. It gets monotonous but boys fear girls who make decisions. They think such girls would make nagging wives. (Komarovsky, 1953, pp. 78-80)

Being a woman of her socio-cultural milieu, in An Unknown Woman (1981), we can hear echoes of the voices of Komarovsky's informants in Koller's own words as she speaks, years later, of these same internal conflicts. Although Koller struggled valiantly against succumbing to the dictates of femininity, without enough culturally accepted alternative role models to follow, she eventually submitted, as we hear in her questioning.

But that can't be what being a woman is: a creature who sits passively, waiting to have things done for her; an unthinking doll; someone who has no opinions except those that some man hands her, ready-made, not to be examined....why do men bother to invent that...kind of female? I know: because she'll give them no trouble.... With George, I fell naturally into the frame of mind that other men had tried to push me into artificially.... It was being the sort of creature I could be *only* in the presence of a man.... It was giving over the initiative to him... (Koller, 1981, pp. 151-153)

And with Stan,

I set myself to understand him in order to discover what he wanted from a woman, so that I could give it to him. I did learn; I still know. I told him that I knew, just before he got married. (Koller, 1981, pp. 179-180)

In spite of an intellectual understanding of the denial of self implicit in the traditional view of femininity, when Alice found herself in an intense emotional relationship with men, she slipped into that very behaviour pattern which had seeped into her spirit from the culture around her.

Moreover, as with other women college graduates of the 1950's, Koller expected to -- needed to -- marry. Indeed she recounts many tales of chasing after failed relationships with men, a "trail of men", a "procession of men", in search of a man to marry. (Koller, 1981, pp. 1, 176)

As far back as I can remember, I've wanted to marry the men I've been involved with... I've wanted to get married. And each time the affair came to an end, I'd try to get the man back. But then, in time, I'd meet someone else, and fall in love with him, and be glad I hadn't married the last man because *this* man was so right for me. (Koller, 1981, p. 179)

I don't know which of two men I want to marry when neither of them has ever asked me, nor likely ever will. Why not? What's wrong with me? Am I not smart? Thoughtful of their needs? Attractive? A storyteller to amuse them? What haven't I done for them, in bed or out? That's giving, isn't it? That's what the thing between a man and a woman is supposed to be, isn't it? (Koller, 1981, p. 193)

During the late 1940's and 1950's, the followers of Freudian ideology, popularized the theory that 'anatomy is destiny'. Helene Deutsch, wrote in 1946 that the feminine woman "leaves the initiative to the man and out of her own needs, renounces originality, experiences her own self through identification." (Woloch, 1994, p. 497; Friedan, 1963; Chafe, 1991) And so, Alice Koller, like other educated women of her era, struggled with the conflicts presented by theorists like Deutsch, between being feminine and a "well-adjusted homemaker" or being regarded as a "feminist neurotic" (Chafe, 1991, p. 182) Farnham and Lundberg in their 1947 best seller, Modern Woman: The Lost Sex, claimed that women's needs were "a wish for dependence, inwardness, a wish to be protected and made secure, a strong desire for passivity and compliance." (Woloch, 1994, p. 497) The more women emulate men, according to these sociologists, "the less are their capacities for satisfaction as women." (Woloch, 1994, p. 497; Friedan, 1963; Chafe, 1991) As Betty Friedan noted in The Feminine Mystique,

'Normal' femininity is achieved, however, only insofar as the woman finally renounces all active goals of her own, all her own 'originality', to identify and fulfill [sic] herself through the activities and goals of husband, or son. (Friedan, 1963, p. 113)

Nonetheless, as with previous decades, the decade of the 1950's had a split character: a publicly endorsed agenda, the return to domesticity, typified by the suburban housewife; and, a hidden agenda, a massive movement of women into the labour market

in part-time, temporary, or full-time employment. When the veterans were demobilized in 1945, women were again called upon to alter their roles to suit the nation's needs. The proportion of women in the labour force dropped from a high of 36% in 1945 to 28% in 1947. By the end of 1946, 2 million women had left the work force voluntarily and another million had been laid off. But 3 million remained. While Americans supported the traditional roles for women, as was seen in a post-war Gallup poll, in which 86% of respondents opposed the employment of married women, all of the gains made by women since the turn of the century could not be erased. (Chafe, 1991, pp. 157-160; Woloch, 1994, pp. 467-468)

The flourishing postwar economy of the United States had a great need for an expanding pool of labour. This pool of female workers soon became an integral part of the economy. (Chafe, 1991; Woloch, 1994) Before the war, only 25% of women worked in the labour force, but by 1960, 40% of all women held jobs. In 1940, only 15% of married women were employed; in 1950, 21%; and by 1960, 30% of married women worked outside the home. Employment opportunities for women in the professions fared somewhat differently in 1950's. While the actual number of women in the professions rose, the proportion of women fell, even in the 'women's professions', such as elementary school teaching and social work. (Woloch, 1994, pp. 500-501; Chafe, 1991, p. 200; Hulbert & Schuster, 1993) While the American woman easily found work in the post-war boom, her role as a wage-earner was socially suspect. Moreover, she had learned her lessons well; even she regarded employment as secondary to a woman's true vocation of wife and mother. As a result, she was most likely to defend her employment in terms of family need, not personal achievement. (Chafe, 1991; Woloch, 1994)

A cultural challenge to the feminine mystique began early, but did not begin to be heard until the early 1960's. As early as the summer of 1947, *Life* magazine featured a 13-page article on the "American Woman's Dilemma": the internal struggle and frustration created in women by the conflict between the traditional ideas about woman's place and the growing reality of women's involvement in activities outside the home. The article spoke of a "deepening sense of bewilderment among many American women over how to define their identity in a society that failed to offer adequate alternatives." (Chafe, 1991, p. 175, 185) Unfortunately, the message in these voices was not loud enough to be heard until more

than a decade later. In the following exchange that takes place between Alice Koller and two women in a bookstore in Nantucket, she makes poignantly real for us, the 'oddity' that she is, even in 1963, as an unmarried, educated, career woman alone on the island.

The owner thinks she has seen me before... "What are you doing out there?" The predictable question, right on cue. "Well, I'm doing a little writing. It's very beautiful out there. I have the beach all to myself." The owner laughs. "I bet you do. And does your husband work at the Navy station?" "I'm not married." Both women stare at me. Courtesy prevents their mouths from saying what their faces ask... I can't enter the Nantucket of these two women. (Koller, 1981, pp. 162-163)

The 1960's -- Authors of Their Own Narratives

The 1960's was a decade of social and political turmoil. The civil rights movement, the sexual revolution, the protests against the war in Vietnam, and the women's movement all came together, each adding intensity and power to the other. In 1963, Betty Friedan published The Feminine Mystique, urging Americans to understand the devastating impact that the narrative of 'feminine fulfilment' was having on women's identities, on their sense of self.

It is my thesis that the core of the problem for women today is .. a problem of identity -- a stunting or evasion of growth that is perpetuated by the feminine mystique...our culture does not permit women to accept or gratify their basic need to grow and fulfill [sic] their potentialities as human beings. (Friedan, 1963, p. 69)

[Women] who live according to the feminine mystique do not have a personal purpose stretching into the future. But without such a purpose to evoke their full abilities, they cannot grow to self-realization. Without such a purpose, they lose the sense of who they are, for it is purpose which gives the human pattern to one's days. (Friedan, 1963, p. 302)

At the same time that Friedan was publishing her foundational work, Alice Koller fled to Nantucket in search of her self. As she says of the beginning moments of her crisis:

I stare into the mirror. I don't have a life: I'm just using up a number of days somehow. There is no *reason* for me to be here. No plan formulated at some point in the past has led me to this void that is my day, every day. ...I must

have something certain in all this flux: no career, no home,
no man. (Koller, 1981, pp. 1-2)

During the winter of 1962-1963, Koller found herself, therefore, in virtually the same dilemma as Friedan's suburban housewife: without an identity and without purpose in her life.

Acting out of the voice of Friedan and others like her, NOW, the National Organization of Women, was founded in 1966. NOW demanded "a fully equal partnership of sexes, as part of the worldwide revolution of human rights" calling for changes in "the false image of women now prevalent in the media." (Woloch, 1994, p. 516) NOW pointed to the psychological impact of sex discrimination by opposing "all policies and practices [that] not only deny opportunities but also foster in women self-denigration, dependence, and foster contempt for women." (Woloch, 1994, p. 516) Moreover, NOW did "not accept the traditional assumption that a woman has to choose between marriage and motherhood, on the one hand, and serious participation in industry or professions on the other." (Woloch, 1994, p. 516)

The 1960's saw a gradual increase in the proportion of women attending college. In 1940, 40% of college students were women, down from a high of 47% in 1920 -- a percentage not to be reached again until more than a half a century later, in 1977. In 1950, after the GI bill funding veterans' post-secondary education, only 31% of college students were women but by 1960, the percentage had begun to rise again, reaching 36% in that year. In 1970, the percentage of women college students was 41%. (Solomon, 1985, p. 133; Chafe, 1991; Hulbert & Schuster, 1993; Woloch, 1994) Nonetheless, early in the decade of the sixties, women college graduates remained non-career-oriented, and, much like their 1950's predecessors, saw their future "through a wedding band." (Woloch, 1994, p. 506; Chafe, 1991; Hulbert & Schuster, 1993) By the end of the decade, however, as typified by the Radcliffe class of 1969, women came to college expecting to pursue their own careers and to remain employed throughout most of their lives. (Hulbert & Schuster, 1993, p. 25) It seems as if attitudes had come, full circle, back to those promised in the 1920's.

Moreover, gains were also being made in employment for women. By the end of the

1960's over 40% of all women, married and unmarried, held jobs. Even mothers were working: approximately 50% of all mothers with children 6 to 18 years of age were employed outside the home. So by the end of the decade, for the first time in the nation's history, half of the adolescent girls were growing up with examples in their own homes of women who were able to combine outside employment with marriage and family. In a study of these girls, they were more likely to name their mothers as those persons they most admired if, in fact, the mother was employed outside the home. These daughters of working mothers also scored lower on tests of traditional femininity and tended to view the female role as having a variety of alternatives outside the home. (Chafe, 1991, pp. 200-201; Woloch, 1994)

Perhaps, in the 1960's, American girls and women, like Alice Koller, had finally begun to write their own narratives.

WOMEN OF ACADEME

Being a 'learned woman' of her generation makes Koller an exceptional woman. Therefore, we must not only place Alice Koller's life story within the socio-cultural context of American women of her generation, but we must also situate her life within the exceptional peer group to which she belonged, that of women with Ph.D's.

Trends in Post-secondary Education for American Women, 1870-1980¹⁷

Year	Percentage of women undergraduates	Percentage of B A 's granted to women	Percentage of Ph D's granted to women	Percentage of women as faculty
1870	21	15	0	12
1880	32	19	6	36
1890	36	17	1	20
1900	36	19	6	20
1910	40	23	10	20
1920	47	34	15	26
1930	44	40	15	27
1940	40	41	13	28
1950	30	24	10	25
1960	35	35	11	22
1970	41	42	13	25
1975	45	43	21	24
1980	51	47	30	33

Some interesting interpretations can be made on the basis of these data

- 1 Clearly the promise of independence and freedom for women after World War I is reflected in the number of women attending college in 1920. Thereafter, through the 1930's and 1940's and into the 1950's, the percentage of women attending college declined, reflecting the social, political and economic pressures facing American women during those decades. The 1960's and 1970's indicate a clear and rapid increase in the proportion of women attending college, again representative of the values of the modern age of equality.
- 2 From 1910 through 1970, the percentage of women receiving doctorates, on average, remained around 12%. That percentage clearly skyrocketed after the mid-70's.
- 3 While 1880 was clearly an aberration in the percentage of women faculty members, over the decades from 1870 to 1980 (excepting 1880), the average percentage of women faculty was 23%.

¹⁷ Adapted from Woloch, 1994, p. 587 and Solomon, 1985, p. 133

As an adolescent, aware of her own intellectual gifts, Alice Koller set a goal for herself attaining an education as outlined by Burckhardt in his Renaissance

To be taught, as men were taught, whatever there was to be learned, to speak on equal terms with any person, to read everything of value ever written, to see everything beautiful ever made, to be at home anywhere in the world (Koller 1981, p 200)

And that she did She, along with many of her women friends became an educated women of the twentieth century “Not that our education was handed to us, but that we tore it from the hands of men who dared us to take it” (Koller, 1981, p 144)

At least two studies of women with post-graduate studies can be examined in order to shed some light on Koller's peer group First of all, Astin's study (1969) of women who received doctorates in 1957 and 1958 clearly has some relevance to Koller, who earned her doctorate one year later, in 1959 Secondly, although with somewhat less applicability, there is Yohalem's research (1993), initiated in 1963, on graduate students¹⁸ at Columbia University in 1945-1951 While Koller's doctoral work came after this time frame, it is important to note that Koller was from the same birth cohort as those studied by Yohalem and could reasonably be assumed, therefore, to share similar socio-cultural experiences and values as those of the Columbia students¹⁹

Astin began her work by reminding us that the woman who earned a Ph D during the academic decade 1955-1965 was indeed rare During that time, while about 1 in every 10 - 11 male bachelor's degree recipients went on to attain a doctorate, while only 1 in 100 women did (Astin, 1969, p 4) In Astin's analysis of this discrepancy, we can note how the values impacting on women in the broader American society are also central to our understanding the context of women receiving doctoral education

It is easy to understand why parents are more concerned about the education of their sons than of their daughters A man's status in our society is usually determined by his occupational achievement, whereas a woman's status often depends on the kind of man she marries, her home, and her children Moreover, very early in life, most girls come to feel that, whatever, else they may do, their societal

¹⁸ The women graduate students in Yohalem's study were working towards a variety of graduate degrees M A 's, Ed D 's , and Ph D 's , as well as professional degrees in medicine and law

¹⁹ The median age of the women when surveyed by Yohalem study in 1963 was 40 Koller was approximately 38 in that same year

role will be (and ought to be) that of wife and mother.
(Astin, 1969, p. 4)

Moreover, because of societal limitations on women's options, those who did achieve a college education were more likely to be oriented to careers which did not require graduate studies, such as in the traditionally 'women's fields' of health and education. Conversely, careers requiring further training beyond the baccalaureate, such as medicine, law, science, and university teaching, together attracted only about 4% of all women college graduates of that period. (Astin, 1969, pp. 4, 6) We might conclude, therefore, that Alice Koller was eminently exceptional in completing her doctorate in Philosophy at Harvard in 1959. Koller was not only exceptional in comparison to the 'typical' American woman of her day, but also with reference to other women college graduates in terms of her chosen field of study and her occupational aim of university teaching.

With reference to Astin's (1969) and Yohalem's (1993) research, two particular questions touch on our analysis of Koller's life, that of marriage and employment. As we have noted throughout this chapter, all American women, in varying degrees at different times throughout the period under study, have struggled with the choice between fulfilling their career aspirations and doing what most of their female contemporaries were doing at that time -- marrying and staying home, at least for a time, to raise children. As Koller observes, "my [Ph.D.] diploma says I am that: *femina optimae spei*, a woman of great expectations." (Koller, 1981, p. 18) Upon completing her doctorate, what did Koller, an exceptional woman of her time, expect from her life? "There are two things worth having: a work that would absorb me and a man to love who would love me. I have neither one." (Koller, 1981, p. 206) And so, we see that Koller tried to combine both the narratives of her time: a career and traditional domesticity.

Astin's study focused attention on the questions which were facing women who earned doctorate degrees in 1957 and 1958 -- questions which were similar to those facing many American women of that era.

The highly educated woman faces a number of important decisions that clearly affect her career pattern: Should she get married or stay single? If she has children, should she withdraw from the labor force temporarily until her family responsibilities ease somewhat, or should she attempt to combine career and family, even when her children are of preschool age? By choosing to involve themselves in a

lengthy and demanding educational program, and by earning the doctoral degree, the women in this sample have already demonstrated that in some ways they are unique, pioneering, and unconventional. One wonders, then, to what extent their lives as married women and mothers resemble those of women in general. (Astin, 1969, p. 26)²⁰

While the cultural norm for American women was marriage and family, Astin found that the overall marriage rate for woman doctorates was low when compared with that of women in a comparable age group (40 - 44 years): only 59% had ever been married²¹, compared with 90% for women in general. (Astin, 1969, p. 26) Even when compared with other groups of college-educated women, the marriage rates of women with Ph.D.'s was low. For example, a study conducted of women physicians in 1965 found that 63% were married and living with their husbands, as against only 45% of the women in Astin's study; and, yet another study of women earning B.A.'s in 1957 found that fully 81% were married in 1965 - far closer to the 90% marriage rate of women in the general population. (Astin, 1969, pp. 27-28) Yohalem's study also found that those women who studying for their Ph.D.'s had a low rate of marriage, even lower than for those pursuing other graduate degrees. Among women doctorates, Yohalem reported that 41% had never married, about twice the proportion of unmarried women among those with other graduate degrees. (Yohalem, 1993, pp. 142-143) Moreover, both studies did find that highly educated women, if they married, did so at a much later age than was typical of other women of a similar age. (Astin, 1969, p. 28; Yohalem, 1993, pp 142-143)

Some interesting hypotheses have been offered as to why the marriage rate for these learned women was low when compared with other groups of women of the same age. Astin suggested that the women Ph.D.'s remaining single may be the result of their motivation and dedication to their studies and their career goals which "settled" their marital status, "whether by their own choice or not" Similarly, Yohalem pointed to the issue of "timing", which she explained as the impact of dedication to education and to career on a woman's interests in and opportunities to marry --- i.e. 'missed opportunities'.

Even though Astin was clear in stating that "there is no evidence to support the contention

²⁰ Astin, writing in 1969, does not raise the issue that male peers of these women likely did not ask themselves these questions at all, assuming that marriage could be, not only compatible with, but perhaps also advantageous to, their academic careers

²¹ Astin excluded women religious from this statistic

that when a woman earns a doctorate, she thereby reduces her chances of getting married" (Astin, 1969, p. 28), there may, in fact, be some cultural evidence to the contrary. Perhaps, for example, some of the opinions which Margaret Mead articulated in 1935 were still commonly held in the 1950's and 1960's; namely that a woman had two choices: either she declared herself

'a *woman* and therefore less an *achieving individual*, or an achieving individual and therefore less a woman' If she chose the first option, she enhanced her opportunity of being 'a loved object, the kind of girl whom men will woo and boast of, toast and marry.' If she selected the second alternative, however, she lost 'as a woman, her chance for the kind of love she wants'. (Chafe, 1991, p. 110)

Interestingly we can see similar convictions expressed in the only examples Yohalem chose to illustrate her understanding of the factors influencing the low marriage rate of educated women with the following quotations. One was from a woman who had decided not to complete her work towards her doctorate, explaining, "I felt it would be a serious disadvantage in regard to marriage." The other two were of a similar nature:

The higher you go academically, the harder it is to find a suitable husband because (a) you are fussier and (b) American men are scared of educated women.

I was sure I wanted to marry and felt I wanted to choose someone who could share my interests and whose interests I could share. I felt that I could not give up a career in order to marry.... (Yohalem, 1993, p. 143)

In spite of Koller's earlier, almost desperate search for a man to marry, in The Stations of Solitude, we see that, in later years, she had moved towards an awareness that she had clear expectations for a man whom she could marry - and that no man had met her criteria. As we hear Koller explain:

I have never married because...I would not be his mother, his teacher, his audience, his child, most especially not his housekeeper, his concubine, his punching bag. He would not be my father, my teacher, my audience, my child, my provider. I would not need him, nor he me. We would only want one another.... I have never married because the men I've met are still at the level of needs. (Koller, 1990, pp. 196-197)

Bernard, in a related monograph, Academic Women (1964), presented an interesting analogy. The difficulty for intelligent women in finding an appropriate marriage partner is similar to the difficulty for a very tall woman to find a man taller than she. Talented young

women are unwilling to “keep on intellectually stooping all their lives in order not to appear intellectually ‘taller’ than their husbands” and, therefore, they decide not to marry. (Bernard, 1964, pp. 210-212) Koller supports Bernard’s notion in a brief remark in An Unknown Woman, suggesting that most of the men with whom she was involved were less intellectually capable than she. “I, the brilliant...was going to do the favor of falling in love...But he turned out to be the one who was brilliant. I had walked rings around the [other] men I knew, but he had me racing to catch up with him.” (Koller, 1981, p. 181)

Although the research by both Astin (1969) and Yohalem (1993) suggested that women with graduate degrees had a lower rate of marriage, their research also demonstrated that these women tended to show an elevated measure of career commitment. In Astin’s sample group of women Ph.D.’s, 91% of them were employed²² in their chosen profession at the time of the survey and, when they had interrupted their careers, they did so only for short intervals and generally because of family responsibilities. Moreover, fully 79% of those who were employed full-time had never interrupted their careers. This rate of employment for women doctorates was double that of women of comparable ages in the general population. (Astin, 1969, pp. 57-58, 75) Of those employed, 70% were employed by colleges and universities -- Koller’s unmet, lifetime dream; 10% by junior colleges and school systems; 3% were self-employed; and the remainder in a variety of government, health, and non-profit organizations. (Astin, 1969, pp. 70, 72) In 1963, the time of Yohalem’s initial survey of her wider sample group, 74% were employed: of which 62% were employed full-time and 13% part-time. The remaining 25% were homemakers, unemployed outside the home. Almost 1/3 of Yohalem’s group were college or university teachers.²³ Interestingly, only 20% of the women in Yohalem’s study had had continuous full-time employment since their graduation as would be commonly found for their male colleagues. For these ‘under-employed’ women “part-time work was rarely an indication of inability to obtain full-time employment”, but was most often an indication of their commitment to family responsibilities. (Yohalem, 1991, pp.147-148) Such employment decisions would likely not be expected of their male counterparts, most of whom would have expected to work full-time and have a family.

²² Including both full-time and part-time employment (Astin, 1969, p. 57)

²³ Not all women in Yohalem’s study received degrees that prepared them for such employment.

Here again, in contrast to other women doctorates as studied by Astin and Yohalem, Koller's career history is unique. Even though she never married and raised children, Koller's work history was constantly that of under-employment and unemployment. "During the ...twenty-five years, I have moved sixteen times.... I forage for my living where the food supply is." (Koller, 1990, p. 69) For Alice, the woman of great expectations,

the day came when I had thirty-five dollars in the world... To feed ...us, I sold almost every possession I had so carefully chosen or been chosen by nearly ten years earlier ... For more than six months we had no house. I boarded Logos and Ousia...and drove to and from the couches of friends and acquaintances looking for jobs... for a week we lived in my car in a state forest.... By the end of the week the writing assignment I had been hustling came through, and I moved us into a motel... We stayed for two months...but when the assignment came to an end I packed our things into the car and we moved on. In western Massachusetts I enrolled for welfare and food stamps... (Koller, 1990, pp. 88-91)

Alice Koller, as with many other women doctorates did not marry, but she also did not achieve a career. And we wonder what might have happened that the "two things worth having: a work that would absorb me and a man to love who would love me" both eluded her. (Koller, 1981, p. 206)

Two other findings of Astin's research are also of particular interest and may shed some light on Koller's unfortunate work history: namely, women who held assistantships during their doctoral training, i.e. were already part of the system prior to obtaining their degree, were more likely to be working full time at the time of the survey in 1965; secondly, those women who either worked full-time in their career or had a postdoctoral fellowship immediately after obtaining their Ph.D.'s also were more likely to be working full-time in 1965. (Astin, 1969, pp. 60-61)

Alice, however, did not know the rules of the game; she did not know how to be successful. (Vartuli, 1982; Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988) In graduate school, she recounts being swept up by her love of philosophy, ignoring the more mundane aspects of the profession of academia.

Yet I was very excited to go to graduate school. I remember thinking that now I'd be able to study philosophy all day long. Too bad the graduate student council didn't publish

their unofficial guide to graduate life until my second year. "Remember," they told me, too late, "that you are not here to get an education. You are supposed to be educated already. You are here to get a degree." (Koller, 1981, p. 129)

Moreover, she did not even seek out possible employment for the time when she would be graduated. After all of her effort, with her doctorate finally in hand, Koller "didn't begin the work that I have been preparing for. I tucked the degree away until I could think about whether I wanted to use it." (Koller, 1981, p. 81) And so when Alice did turn her attention actively to seeking a teaching position in a university, she found that

my qualifications are questionable. Of the five semesters since I received my degree, I've taught during only one; I've written no articles; my thesis hasn't been published; and, with the exception of Henry, none of the members of my graduate department will give me strong recommendations. A race began a long time ago, and I, unaware that it was a race, have not been running strongly...I can only stand helplessly by. because to cry "Foul!" would merely announce that the foul was by my own hand. (Koller, 1981, p. 229)

And by the time that Alice fled to Nantucket, she

was not being paid to do philosophy. I had held [at least] six other jobs: publisher's reader; secretary to a city planner; freelance writer of encyclopaedia articles; scientist at a contract research company; assistant to a magazine editor; one semester of a university's nonrenewable teaching appointment at its lowest rank and salary, obtained only after writing two hundred letters of application and only because the philosophy department had a last-minute vacancy. (Koller, 1990, p. 43)

And nearly two decades later, in Stations of Solitude (1991), we discover that she was never able to achieve the prize for which she had quested.

I had in fact earned the privilege of being centred at a university as a philosopher and writer... I belong there but I have almost never been there. Somehow it has been denied me. (Koller, 1990, p. 165)

CONCLUSION

Alice Koller was born into a family in which traditional American 'family values' were epitomized: she was the daughter of an educated father who worked to support his family and a less educated mother who stayed at home and looked after her husband, her children, and her home. Within that family, Alice, as the eldest daughter, was expected to follow her mother's example by marrying a nice Jewish boy and taking care of her home and family. Moreover, the cultural norms within which Alice was born and matured worked to support her mother's way of life. For, from the 1920's through the 1950's, from the decade in which Koller was born until she finished her doctorate, there continued to exist in America an intense cultural belief in an idealized role for American women: exalted domesticity in which they were to stay at home, if possible, and to 'take care' of their husbands, their children, and their homes.

Alongside this publicly espoused belief, however, more and more women were pursuing higher education and were entering the work force. Therefore, unlike her mother before her, Alice did have an alternative model within the culture in which she matured. Yet, these two models often created conflict within those women who sought both. In 1963, Betty Friedan drew the attention of the American media and public to the discontent and waste of the "feminine mystique" and to the conflicts inherent in the messages given and the models provided American women.

In that same year, 1963, three years after earning her doctorate, Alice Koller fled to Nantucket in search of her self and her own way of being in the world. Alice found herself to be, therefore, a woman living in a pivotal time, caught between the traditional and the emerging roles for women. She lived in the tension between that time when independent, educated, professional women were exceptions to the norm and today, when such women are more generally seen to be part of the established norm. What Alice Koller's education had prepared her for and had 'promised' her remained just beyond her reach, just beyond the norm of accepted roles allotted to women of her generation.

As a woman caught between the traditional and the emerging roles for women, Koller expected her dreams to be fulfilled. Since she lived in a time when the romance and

marriage narrative was still the norm for women, Alice expected to marry. But she did not, even though she learned, as did other college graduates of the 1950's to "become the sort of creature I could be *only* in the presence of a man.... It was giving over the initiative to him." (Koller, 1981, p. 153) Since Alice lived at a time when the quest plot seemed a possible dream for women, Alice worked diligently to earn her doctorate, struggling against ill-health, academic failure, and financial worries. She achieved her degree, but she remained underemployed in an academic world, still dominated by males, whose rules she did not learn until it was too late.

Chapter 3

SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING ALICE KOLLER'S CONSTRUCTION OF SELF AND MEANING

INTRODUCTION

I've accomplished nothing in two different attempts at a career. No relationship I've ever had with a man was genuine. ... I've accomplished nothing in the eyes of people that I've let judge me ... I failed because the things I set myself to do weren't things I *chose* to do. There was no real "I" to do the choosing. That hollow creature led by a child's heart. ... I've torn it all away. And look what's left: this small shuddering self. (Koller, 1981, pp. 253-254)

Alice Koller was a woman who, in 1962 at the age of 37, fled for a winter to Nantucket Island. She went there in search of her self, her voice, her own way of knowing, and her own way of being in the world. This chapter will explore the psychological factors which influenced Alice's construction of self and meaning, particularly before Nantucket. In so doing, arising out of Alice's own story, it will focus specifically on the various elements which contribute to the development of self for girls and women: the role of the family; the development of self-in-relation; the silencing of the self in childhood; the reconstruction of self during commonly experienced midlife transformational crises; and, lastly, the development of a woman's ways of knowing²⁴.

While Koller provides few details of her family life, it is clear to her readers that her relationship with her family played a major role in her development of self. From the scant information Koller does supply, we know, for example, that she felt close to and loved by her father, who was educated as a lawyer and later either owned or managed a hardware store when Koller was young. By contrast, every description of Koller's mother, a woman

²⁴ This chapter will use a variety of expressions in relation to the concept of self reflecting the variety of sources *construction* of self (a principal theme of this project) and *development* of self, especially in relation to Koller's childhood and to her years before Nantucket

minimally educated and devoted to her domestic duties, is filled with intense rage and rejection.

“But I don’t want anything from her now. I’ve hated her too long: nothing resembling love is left in me. I don’t even want her love now, not from that woman for whom I have no shred of respect. She’s almost the perfect model for what a human being shouldn’t be. (Koller, 1981, pp. 125-126)

In addition to her parents, Koller had at least one brother and one sister, from whom she was estranged: “A poison touches my every interaction with my family; I can free myself of it only by freeing myself of them.” (Koller, 1981, p. 307) Overall, Koller presents an image of a family life in which she doesn’t “remember anyone ever laughing when I was a little girl.” (Koller, 1981, p. 48) It was within the environment of this family that Alice’s psychological identity was fostered.

And yet, even within such a family context and within the wider socio-cultural environment, girls, like Alice, are socialized to develop a self that is in relation to, and in connection with, others. Girls and women typically develop in a way that results in a self in which there is a greater emphasis on relationships and interdependence and on the self in context. Feminist psychologists have recently begun to tease out the origins of and implications for this concern with connection and affiliation. (Miller, 1976, 1991a, 1991b; Chodorow, 1978a, 1978b; Gilligan, 1982, 1988; Jack, 1987a; McGoldrick, 1989; Kaplan, 1991; Jordan, 1991, 1993; Surrey, 1991, 1993; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Debold et al., 1993; Knudson-Martin, 1994; Apter, 1995)

One of the most serious negative repercussions of the development of self-in-relation is that many girls and women, like Alice Koller, internalize the belief that, in response to the other with whom they are in relationship, they are not fully and freely able to develop and express all of their selves. Recent feminist research suggests that many girls and women do not learn to balance listening to the voices of others with voicing their own selves. In Koller’s words, she had learned to be

what others expected me to be: the seductress with a man; the humble student with a teacher; the rebel, only sometimes silent, with administrators; the sophisticate in the city; the tomboy on walks. (Koller, 1981, p. 285)

Koller had learned to hide her own self so well that she came to believe that she had lived her life "in the reflection of other people's eyes." (Koller, 1981, p. 284) By the time Koller set foot on Nantucket Island at age 37, she had lost all sense of who she really was; she was an unknown woman.

Koller's winter on Nantucket marked, therefore, a midlife transformational crisis in which she struggled to reconstruct her self, to silence the voices of others, and to nurture her own voice. In listening to Koller's words as she begins her journey, we hear that she believes that she had been listening only to the voices of others and silencing her own voice completely:

Each thing I do during the course of a day is something I've been told to do, or taught to do. I have to replace all of it with what I choose to do. (Koller, 1981, p. 21)

Nantucket was a time for Alice Koller to search out and to reconstruct her self.

A woman's self and knowing are intricately intertwined. (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1988; Jack, 1991; Apter, 1995) And so, Nantucket also marked a time for Koller to develop her ways of knowing. As she reconstructed her self, Koller moved away from a way of knowing that relied solely on received knowledge, on the knowledge passed to her from the voices of authorities: "I now have to examine every opinion I've ever held, in order to see whether I'd still hold it once the authoritative voice who spoke it to me is removed." (Koller, 1981, p. 131) Throughout her sojourn on Nantucket, as she learned to discard her reliance on received knowledge, Koller learned to rekindle her own subjective source of knowledge -- her own feelings, wantings, and purposes.

As Alice Koller left Nantucket Island, she was aware that it was a birthplace of sorts for her, a place of new beginnings and new freedoms:

I try to sort out the parts of it and come upon the shapes of ideas new to my repertoire: being alone, burgeoning in it; making my own decisions, insisting on it; uncovering my own authority, reveling [sic] in it; seeing other people as beings in their own right, astonished by it. (Koller, 1981, p. 311)

THE FAMILY: THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE SELF

A child is embedded within a complex system of interacting family members. The quality of that system leaves its mark on the child, for better or for worse, from the moment of birth. Indeed, even before the child's birth, the history of each member of the family comes to bear on the potential of that child. An infant may be born into a household warmed by abiding love and respect between the parents, or torn from the beginning by marital strife and hatred; burdened by the mental illness of mother or father or both, or blessedly free of the grinding strains that anxiety and depression bring; without competition from other children, or filled with siblings whose place is more secure and beloved; supported by an extended family available to help meet the child's needs, or isolated and alone, bereft of loving human contact from outside the boundaries of the immediate family. It is within the environment of the family that the psychological destiny of a child is, in large measure, formed.

Relationship with Mother

While other relationships and social contexts play a role in the child's developing self and skills, most psychologists stress the importance of the primary care-giver, usually the mother, and the relationship that develops between her and the child as being central to that child's development in the early years of life. (Bowlby, 1966, 1982; Mahler et al., 1975; Miller, 1976, 1991a, 1991b; Chodorow, 1978a, 1978b; Flax, 1978, 1993; Gilligan, 1982, 1988; Stern, 1986; Jack, 1987a, 1991; Cashdan, 1988; Lerner, 1988; McGoldrick, 1989; Surrey, 1991, 1993; Debold et al., 1993; Gilligan & Rogers, 1993; Jordan, 1993) Since Koller's relationship with her mother was central to her epiphany on Nantucket, at the age of 37, it is with the understanding the nature and importance of the mother-child relationship that we will begin. For, as Koller says:

Now I know what I came here to find out. There's nothing further to learn. Or do. Thirty-seven years of being blind. Deaf. Marking time on the same spot. A little girl looking for her mother to hold her. Everything else is fraud... She is the extraordinary thing I've been waiting for.... There is no Me unpoisoned by that need. (Koller, 1981, pp. 197, 199)

It is essential to state from the outset, that while we will begin with an exploration of the unique relationship between mother and child, that we not do so in a tone of "mother-blaming" (Caplan, 1990; Flax, 1993; Surrey, 1993). Even though it is pivotal to our understanding of Koller that we examine the impact of her relationship with her mother on her development, we will strive to frame that relationship, in so far as we are able, with an empathy for the personal and socio-cultural contexts impacting on, and perhaps restricting, the life and skills of Alice's mother, Sarah Koller.

Our study of the relationship between mother and infant will be based on the research and theories of Margaret Mahler and her associates which have become foundational to modern psychology's understanding of the role of the primary caregiver in the development of the infant and young child. Mahler has proposed a framework for understanding how the early years of a child's life, in dialogue with the family context, most particularly with the mother, contributes to the development of the child's self, to its foundational understanding of human relationships, and to the child's growing mastery of its physical environment.

According to Mahler, during the first 3-4 weeks of life (autism), the neonate exists within a closed system and is unaware of others as being outside of self. (Mahler et al., 1975; Flax, 1978; Cashdan, 1988). It is the next phase of infant development, which Mahler labelled the symbiotic phase, lasting from the end of the first month until about the sixth month²⁵, that forms the "primal soil from which all subsequent human relationships form" (Mahler et al., p. 48). During this phase, the infant in symbiosis with the mother "behaves and functions as though he [sic] and his mother were an omnipotent system -- a dual unity within one common boundary." (Mahler et al., p. 44). The infant has no sense of its own body as being separate from its mother and is, therefore, extremely sensitive to its mother, the provider of all of its needs and wants. (Mahler et al., 1975; Flax, 1978; Cashdan, 1988)

It is during these early months, in response to the mother's caregiving, that the child begins to develop an awareness of pleasurable or good experiences which relieve its discomforts and tensions or 'bad' ones which do not. Moreover, when the mother

²⁵ Please note, as with other developmental theories, the age guidelines suggested by Mahler and her associates are approximate.

provides for its needs, the child develops a sense of mother as good; if, however, the mother does not meet the child's needs, the child experiences unresolved tensions and anxieties and comes to sense the mother as 'bad'. (Cashdan, 1988) Therefore, in order for the child to benefit most from the relationship with its mother, the mother must be emotionally available and consistently responsive to the child. Specifically, as Bowlby reports, the infant's sense of security within the first six months, correlates highly with two key characteristics of maternal behaviour: the extent to which a mother's responses to her infant were adapted to the infant's unique characteristics and rhythms and the extent to which she stimulated and encouraged the infant's unique developmental processes. (Bowlby, 1982) If, however, the mother-child relationship is inconsistent and ungratifying, wherein the mother responds to her own needs and not to those of her infant, a child will likely develop chronic feelings of emptiness, frustration and anger and will feel unwanted, unloved and unlovable. (Mahler et al., 1975; Flax, 1978; Cashdan, 1988) It is these feelings of being unloved and unlovable that Koller remembers from her relationship with her mother. As Koller relates:

Incredible that I knew so long ago not just that my mother didn't, but that she *couldn't* love me. And that long ago I gave up trying to get her to love me and was willing to settle only for getting her to look at me, to give me some attention....I've never stopped being that five-year-old, old enough to know that I was missing something... (Koller, 1981, pp. 124-125)

She should have loved me. How unlovable could I have been? She made me feel that I had to deserve her love, and that I never did. So of course I was too worthless to deserve anyone else's. (Koller, 1981, p. 198)

During the very early months of life, therefore, the responsiveness of the mother to her child is critical to establishing the emotional and psychological climate within which the child will develop. The symbiotic bond of the first few months provides the grounding, the ontological security as it were, on which the infant relies as it moves out of the symbiotic orbit with its mother into a growing awareness of self and the outside world. If the symbiotic experience has not been adequate, if the infant does not feel secure in its relationship with a loving mother, the process of separation and individuation, the development of self and skills, that follows is made more difficult. (Mahler et al., 1975; Flax, 1978; Cashdan, 1988) "The sense of self and ability to form relations with others are likely to be more fragile and impaired." (Flax, 1978, p. 176) Koller recalls this core

feeling of insecurity and its powerful impact on her relationship with others:

I tried to make the whole rest of the world give me what she couldn't give me. If I were the greatest actress... a brilliant philosopher... I'd have her love. So of course I could never get enough attention from other people, because they were always giving me the wrong thing: they weren't giving me her love. (Koller, 1981, p. 125)

He held me while I cried... Larry held me, too. And Jurgen. And Jack. And Tony..... My thoughts fly back through years of men... They all gave me that: they held me while I cried. And what, please, what, oh what, was I crying about?... Why did I have to *cry*, though? I *had* to cry. ... So he would hold me. Oh. Not that they held me while I cried, but that I cried so they would hold me.... Hold me? Cry so they would hold me?... That's what a mother does to a child. No... How do I live through the next minute? And now the next.... I went to bed with men, looking for her to hold me. I was an actress and then a philosopher, to get her to look at me. My head is cracking open... A little girl looking for her mother to hold her. (Koller, 1981, pp. 195-197)

The next and most complex phase for Mahler, separation - individuation, lasting into the child's fourth year, is itself made up of four subphases: differentiation, practising, rapprochement, and consolidation of individuality phases. (Mahler et al., 1975; Cashdan, 1988) These subphases are marked by the infant's developing motor abilities, resulting in the child's ability to physically distance itself from the mother. Mahler calls this the beginning of the 'psychological birth' of the infant, when the child takes pleasure in its own achievements and in expressing feelings of self-assertion and separateness. There remains, however, a strong need within the child for support and reassurance, "emotional refuelling", from the mother. (Mahler et al., 1975) The seeming belligerence of the 'terrible two's' comes out of the conflict within the child between continuing to need the mother, on the one hand, while sensing an increased need for separation and individuation, on the other. This internal conflict can be seen as the child alternates between running away and shouting "Me do it!" and running towards the caregiver, seeking physical contact and reassurance.

As with the symbiotic phase, this stage of development proceeds optimally when the mother expresses pleasure and confidence in the child's developing abilities. If the mother is ambivalent or not able to be consistently responsive to the child's needs, the child will find it more difficult to take pleasure in its own developing abilities. (Mahler et al., 1975; Flax, 1978; Cashdan, 1988) During this stage in the child's development of self and of

mastery, "one cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of the optimal availability of the mother during this subphase." (Mahler et al., p. 77) As Cashdan explains of this sub-phase:

The mother's ability to successfully provide the child with the right balance of emotional support and firmness, while still allowing the child to engage in a healthy level of independent activity, is an important factor in the resolution of the crisis. (Cashdan, 1988, p. 15)

Koller recalls that there was little encouragement, little praise and support from her mother for her, as a child and likely also as an infant, to develop a positive self and mastery of skills:

...elocution lessons... tap-dancing lessons... But at no time did anyone give me a hint that any of this was supposed to be fun or exciting. They were simply things that had to be practiced [sic] at home; that was all I knew. My mother wouldn't let me show her my new steps until the old ones were perfect... I don't remember anyone ever laughing when I was a little girl. I was twenty-two before I knew what "fun" meant... If I have to use only a single idea to characterize my growing up, it's that I had the feeling that everything had to be paid for, nothing was free. (Koller, 1981, pp. 48-49)

She couldn't even acknowledge other people's praise of me. Upstairs in my room during her bridge parties, I'd hear her friends: "Sarah, aren't you proud to have such a pretty daughter?" And she'd say, "I don't believe in giving her compliments. It will make her conceited. (Koller, 1981, p. 125)

According to Mahler, Cashdan, and Flax, towards the end of this separation-individuation process, a degree of object constancy is achieved and the separation of self and object representations is established. (Mahler et al., 1975; Flax, 1978; Cashdan, 1988) By the approximate age of four, mother is clearly perceived as a separate person in the outside world, and at the same time has an existence in the internal representational world of the child. This internal representation of the mother allows the child to maintain a stable inner vision of mother in her absence, thereby enabling the child to function independently and separately from mother. (Mahler et al., 1975; Flax, 1978; Cashdan, 1988) As Cashdan argues, the achievement of an internalized representation of mother

presumes that positive and negative maternal introjects have been integrated. If integration is incomplete, the child -- and later the adult -- responds to those in his [sic] interpersonal environment either as punitive and rejecting or as unrealistically gratifying. Both positions...stem from

faulty early object relations. Both in their own way lead to the corruption of adult object relationships and to the eventual onset of psychopathology. (Cashdan, 1988, p. 15)

As we can see, by the end of the early years of life, a core identity, or a distorted one, will have been established, developed largely out of the nature of the relationship between the primary caregiver and the child. The child's developing self interacts with the mother's personality structure, the developmental process of her parental function, her ability to maintain continued emotional availability, while, at the same time, encouraging her child to explore and develop, "to give him [sic], as the mother bird does, a gentle push, an encouragement toward independence." (Mahler et al., 1975; Flax, 1978; Cashdan, 1988)

With this awareness of the nature and the impact of the relationship between mother and child, we wonder about who Koller's mother was and what the nature of her mothering skills were when we read Koller's words:

The applause I played for everywhere...were...substitutes for her love. I tried to make the whole rest of the world give me what she couldn't give me... So of course I could never get enough attention from other people, because they were always giving me the wrong thing: they weren't giving me her love... I've never stopped being that five-year-old, old enough to know that I was missing something, but not old enough to know that it sure ought to have come to me without my having to pay for it. And I've been trying to buy it, lying and pretending ever since.... I've hated her too long: nothing resembling love is left in me... (Koller, 1981, pp. 125-126)

Before we continue, in order to avoid simply 'blaming' Koller's mother, we should place her mother briefly in social context. Several aspects about Koller's mother's life come to mind as a way of framing some of the complexities impacting on her relationship with Alice. First of all, Sarah Koller was the eldest daughter, with three brothers and two sisters, born into a working-class household at the end of the nineteenth century. "Barely in command of an elementary school education" (Koller, 1990, p. 17), Alice's mother learned a very traditional view of the role of women in the household .

I think of her as being always occupied cleaning her house. I hold a vivid image of her: she passes the kitchen clock, glances at it, then gasps... "There won't be enough time!" She wouldn't have enough time to wash the dishes, so that she could make the beds, so that she could wash the walls upstairs, so that she could clean the mirrors, so that she could get the evening meal ready... cleaning her house was her career... (Koller 1981, pp. 58-59)

According to Koller, her mother expected that her daughter would follow a very similar lifestyle. Indeed, her mother tried to pass on to her some of the traditional 'home making' skills, for, as the eldest daughter, Alice was "chosen to be her assistant." (Koller, 1981, p. 58) And when Koller was fifteen, her "mother's highest goal for [her] was to become a dental assistant and marry a nice Jewish boy", much as her mother had married a nice Jewish lawyer and shopkeeper. (Koller, 1981, p. 200)

Moreover, Koller's mother also learned, from her family of birth where her father was dominant, to lie in order to 'get her own way' As Koller reports, Sarah learned

the principle that a girl gets what she wants from a man only by guile, and even then, even after she tries all that, she's still at the mercy of the king's whim.... when "No" is equiprobable as "Yes" from absolute authority... And since the only way she knew how to deal with authority was to placate it by half-truths, that became her path toward achieving her purposes in relation to everyone else...she was telling lies within her home and outside of it, too. (Koller, 1990, pp. 19-20)

And yet:

My mother could not have made a poorer choice of husband... He had no inclination to dominate her or anyone else, and she, who understood only how to be subordinate to someone in power, came to nurture an immense contempt for him that quickly became her determination to head the household. Whatever she had learned of coyness, of girlish ways, in being the daughter of her father turned inside out in being the wife of my father. (Koller, 1990, p. 19)

Perhaps, then, from the perspective of Sarah Koller, we can come to understand some of the frustration and anger that we feel in her, the "raging, screaming fury", that Alice describes. (Koller, 1981, p. 271)

And so, we see that Alice Koller was the eldest daughter of a woman who understood that, within the male-dominated culture, the scope and power of women's roles were limited to the family household. We see that Koller was the daughter of a woman whose life was restricted by her socio-cultural and family environment, whose principal accomplishment, as understood by her daughter, was her clean house. We also see that Koller was the daughter of a woman whose marriage, again according to her daughter, was probably not ideal for her on-going development as a mature woman. It was within

this context that Koller's mother established a way of relating to Alice that resulted in an enormous hatred felt by the daughter toward her mother. Koller tells her readers:

Long after I was able to free myself from the stranglehold she had on me, long after I had cut myself off from her so totally that she had been dead three months without my knowing it...(Koller, 1990, p. 19)

Perhaps, though, Koller was not able to recognize that her mother could only give her what she has learned as a girl within her own family and socio-cultural environments; perhaps Koller was not able to recognize that Sarah could not give her daughter a sense of self-esteem which, she herself did not possess. (Arcana, 1979)

Although Koller's relationship with her mother seemed particularly conflicted, all mother-daughter bonds are marked by vacillations between intimacy and distance, passion and anger. (Hirsch, 1990) As many feminist psychologists have noted, infants and children are most often raised and socialized in family and socio-cultural systems in which the mother is principally responsible for child-rearing. In such social environments, since daughters are destined to be more like their mothers than unlike them, girls' identity is formed in continuous relationship with their mothers, rather than through the type of separation and individuation experienced as necessary by boys as they move out of infancy. (Miller, 1976, 1991a; Chodorow, 1978a, 1978b; Flax, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Marcus, 1987; Apter, 1990, 1995; Jack, 1991; Kaplan, 1991; Surrey, 1991; Jordan, 1991, 1993; Gilligan & Rogers, 1993) As a result, feminist psychologists have noted that, in adequate mothering situations, there typically develops a unique bond between mother and daughter, leading to a protracted process of differentiation of self within relationship and to enhanced capacities for attachment, relationship, and commitment-to-other. (Miller, 1976, 1991a; Chodorow, 1978a, 1978b; Flax, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Marcus, 1987; Apter, 1990, 1995; Jack, 1991; Kaplan, 1991; Jordan, 1991, 1993; Surrey, 1991, 1993; Debold et al., 1993; Gilligan & Rogers, 1993) Even during the seemingly violent acrimony of adolescence, recent feminist researchers have concluded that the adolescent girl is not so much struggling to break free and to be independent of her relationship with her mother, but is rather attempting to change the nature of that relationship so that it will be marked by honesty and openness in which each recognizes the other as fully separate selves, while still in relationship, one with the other. (Gilligan, 1988; Apter, 1990; Debold et al., 1993; Gilligan & Rogers, 1993)

For Koller, however, the animosity of her adolescence marked one last attempt by her to establish some kind of relationship with her mother, if not one of affection, at least one of attention. She writes:

All those years of fighting with her while I was growing up were my way of getting some, any, substitute for her affection. What I got was her attention: her needling, nagging, ignorant, unloving attention. (Koller, 1981, p. 97)

So I provoked attention from her, in the form of screaming quarrels. I used every occasion to show her my contempt, and she gave it back in kind. (Koller, 1981, p. 124)

We might ask ourselves, if Koller's mother was so unprepared and unable to provide adequate caregiving, what of her father? Koller, in fact, asks herself that same question:

Why do I cry for his [her father's] loving me? I have it all upside down. I should be crying if he didn't love me, not because he did. Does.... And why wasn't his loving me enough? Why didn't my father's love free me to grow out of my childhood? Why did I so desperately need my mother's? Maybe because it wasn't there. (Koller, 1981, p. 250)

Relationship with Father

In stark contrast to the animosity and vilification Koller expresses in relation to her mother is the love and adoration with which she speaks of her father. Even though her father's love was unable to replace the maternal deprivation she experienced, it is clear throughout both An Unknown Woman (1981) and The Stations of Solitude (1990) that Koller loved her father deeply and was strengthened by the knowledge of his love for her. She comments:

My father, asking the question of the youngest child during the Passover service...I see his essential sweetness. Now he lies in a hospital, treated as though he's no longer a human being, and I'm helpless to change any part of his life. Nothing can stop the brain deterioration. Nothing can stop my mother and brother from thinking of him as a recalcitrant child. "Daddy," I said, placing the bound copy of my doctoral dissertation in his hands..., "this is my thesis. I did it for you. See, I dedicated it to you." And I opened it to the page where his name stood alone. (Koller, 1981, p. 72)

Daddy. ... Even before he was so sick, I'd cry whenever he

did things for me. The time he clipped a check for ten dollars into his letter, saying: "Don't tell anyone. Just spend it for something you'd like." I cry even now, remembering. The time I announced my engagement to Randall: "I'm sure he's a fine boy. I liked him when you brought him here. If you think he'll make you happy, go ahead and marry him." The time I wanted to go to Goodman: "If you want to study acting, it's okay with me. I'll try to help you as much as I can." Or to Radcliffe; or to Texas; or to Chicago. Always the same: "If you think it will make you happy, go ahead." (Koller, 1981, pp. 249-250)

He was bright, perceptive, gentle, not ambitious but hardworking, far better educated with his law degree than she [Koller's mother]. He had no inclination to dominate her or anyone else. (Koller, 1990, p. 19)

At my very last I will unstop at last all the mourning that lives in me for those I loved, still love: my father, my Logos, my Ousia....as I lay dying I'll unlock all the tears that still remain in me for Andrew Koller...(Koller, 1990, pp. 351-352)

Throughout both texts, the only family member that Koller recalls positively and lovingly is her father.

Our first introduction to Koller's father is emotionally charged as the aroma of a hardware store in Nantucket elicits memories of the "thousand small things I used to help my father sell....Daddy...Daddy...Daddy." (Koller, 1981, pp. 28-29). It is with her father that Koller recalls happy times: in the hardware store, out caddying for him, during Passover services. It was her father that Koller remembers supporting her, "Daddy, listening quietly, asked me whether I was sure it was something I wanted to do, and promised his help." (Koller, 1981, p. 41) From her childhood, Koller sensed a special relationship with her father:

I've always been 'I': separate. Particularly separate from the members of my family. Except Daddy. Yet even he seemed remote from that warring household." (Koller, 1981, p. 190)

As a result, Koller's father became somewhat of an idealized figure for her -- the hero who might someday rescue her the one who affirmed her for being, not just doing -- if he only had not gotten sick. And so Koller might be described as a Daddy's Girl with whom she developed a stronger emotional bond than with her mother.

However, in a traditional household like that in which Koller was raised, such a close relationship between father and daughter could not fully replace the daughter's relationship with her mother. For no matter how conflicted the mother-daughter relationship was, it was that relationship which was primary, since Koller's father, like most men of his generation, left the private space of the family and went off to work, leaving mother and children behind. (Secunda, 1992; Sharpe, 1994) Moreover, it seems as if Koller was able to see her father, in spite of his love for her, as being unable to protect her from her mother, just as he was unable to protect himself.

'Life is just one damn thing after another.' That not very profoundly stated truth has remained in my memory for eighteen years, more as a signal of his misery than of some beacon I can use to steer my days by. (Koller, 1981, p. 55)

Koller's relationship with her father was not only incapable of substituting for her mother's missing love but was inadequate in protecting her from her mother's animosity. For, just beyond this close father-daughter relationship, we can see the faint outline of an angry, rejected woman in Koller's mother. "If I went to Daddy instead, she'd snipe at his way of talking with me in a pleasant voice as we exchanged reasons -- she called it 'spoiling me'." (Koller, 1981, p. 125)

Interestingly, recent research with exceptional women such as Alice Koller, who admire and identify with their successful fathers, has discovered an indication of a long-term negative impact on "ambitious, non-traditional women" of the idealizing of their fathers and the concomitant devaluing of their mothers. (Silverstein & Perlick, 1995, pp. 104ff) This research has suggested an increased incidence of what is referred to as *anxious somatic depression* in such women. The researchers define this disorder as

the persistence of a combination of symptoms -- including depression, anxiety, disordered eating, headache, and several other psychological and somatic symptoms -- that afflicts many women who define themselves nontraditionally, who aspire to achieve in areas historically reserved for men. (Silverstein & Perlick, 1995, p. 5)

And certainly, we can see, in Koller's life, several symptoms of what Silverstein and Perlick have labelled anxious somatic depression: including, for example, depression:

I'm alone. The liquor warms my chest and belly...I drink again, and dry the tears. ... Go on and cry. I's one more Christmas Eve to be gotten through... "No!" I get down on

my knees and strike the floor. "No. No. No. No. I can't stand it any more!" ... Not a chain of unconnected Christmas Eves, but an endless chain of days. Christmas Eves are only one day in each group of 365 empty days. Not only Christmas Eve, but all the other days, too, will be like this day. Why must it go on? ... This is the shadowy thought that's been skipping around the circumference of all my thinking for these two months. ... Thirty more years of having no one who matters to me. ... To die is only to stop breathing. ... Like what I leave behind: nothing, no one. ... Even Daddy can't mourn for me. Daddy: no one loves him as I do, and no one loves me as he does. As he used to, before.²⁶ Two months after he and I are gone, who will remember that either of us had lived? (Koller, 1981, pp. 203-204)

And also physical disorders related to eating and digestion:

My stomach sustained me. But there's no stomach left now. (Koller, 1981, p. 2)

I, however, had a digestive tract five or six feet shorter than normal. Twice my doctor had surgically removed diseased segments from my intestine ... I was also daily taking the highest sanctioned dose of a drug made from belladonna. This regimen would not cure my disease: it would only hold it more or less in check. ... it dictated the timing of almost every activity of my day and it would accompany me to my grave. (Koller, 1990, p. 219)

In aligning herself emotionally with her father, perhaps Alice's self was even further muted.

Family Systems

Koller was not just a member of mother-daughter and father-daughter dyads, but also part of a whole family system. Koller provides us, however, with very little information about her family and her growing-up years. We do know that, in addition to her mother, Sarah, and her father, Andrew, Koller also had a brother, who remained unnamed throughout both books, and a younger sister, 'Memo'. Other than the brief description of the birth family of Alice's mother, we are given no information about extended family members or relationships.

²⁶ By the time of her flight to Nantucket, Koller's father had already been hospitalized by some mysterious, unnamed neurological disorder: "the slow irrevocable atrophying of my father's brain" (Koller, 1981, p. 28)

Koller provides very little information about her brother: we don't know his name, his age, his birth order, or anything about his life as a child, or his circumstances as an adult. There are only two key references to this brother in An Unknown Woman (1981), both of which clearly place the brother 'in her mother's camp': "my mother and her chief adviser, my brother"; and, "her son, her most loved being." (Koller, 1981, pp. 75, 297) We might safely assume that, in declaring her brother to be her mother's closest ally, Koller was indicating that, as an adult, she had chosen to distance herself from her brother.

Koller gives us almost as little information about her sister, with only a few lines of reference to her. We do know her name, 'Memo' (perhaps a nickname), and that she is younger than Alice. We also know that, at the time of Alice's writing of her texts, Memo has a family of her own. In the references to her sister, Koller is less dismissive of her than she is of her brother, although, based on the few references to her, the reader would not describe Alice as loving her sister:

My sister has decided not to fight their [Koller's mother's and brother's] version of what to do; and anyway, Memo has a family of her own. I'm only the eldest daughter. Who will even tell me how he is? Memo would, if she knew... (Koller, 1981, p. 297)

From Koller's texts, we sense that her adult relationship with her sister was generally distant, with most interactions between them occurring only around her father's health.

As we look back over all the references to her mother, the references to her father and her siblings, it feels as if Koller and her mother were the two central characters in her childhood, locked in battle, with the others standing on the periphery. Koller's relationship with her mother, according to her own description, was generally conflictual and most often intense, as well. By the time of her winter on Nantucket, Koller appeared to have cut herself off from her family, especially her mother, almost entirely. "A poison touches my every interaction with my family; I can free myself of it only by freeing myself of them." (Koller, 1981, p. 307) Indeed, Koller says:

Long after I was able to free myself from the stranglehold she had on me, long after I had cut myself off from her so totally that she had been dead three months without my knowing it...(Koller, 1990, p. 19)

One of the most telling of Koller's remarks about her family stands in stark contrast to

Lerner's description (1993) of a healthy family:

“...families promote a sense of unity and belonging (the ‘we’), while respecting the separateness and difference of individual members (the ‘I’).” (Lerner, 1993, p. 85)

However, of her family, Koller tells her readers:

I've always been “I”· separate. Particularly separate from the members of my family. Except Daddy. Yet even he seemed remote from that warring household. “We” implies someone will stand behind you no matter what; someone who has a right to your loyalty, no price attached, and who will give you his or hers on the same basis. (Koller, 1981, p. 190)

It seems clear that, from Alice Koller's point of view, life within her family could be described as being almost opposite that found within functional family systems.

Juxtaposed to Koller's recollections of her family life, the following are some of the characteristics of a functional family system that are presented by Covington and Beckett (1988), but are also supported by other researchers discussing family systems (Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Foster, 1993; Lerner, 1993; Knudson-Martin, 1994):

- connectedness: a feeling of closeness, solidarity, and cohesion
- acceptance: the acknowledgement and respecting of the uniqueness of each family member
- appreciation: the acknowledgement of personal successes and contributions to the family
- trust: the fostering of a consistent, predictable, reasonable, and forgiving environment
- safety: unconditional physical, emotional, and psychological safety is prized (Covington & Beckett, 1988, pp. 19-33)

For Alice Koller, other than in her relationship with her father, her family did not provide for her an environment of connectedness, acceptance, appreciation, trust and safety.

And as we have already noted, the quality of the family system into which a child is born, leaves its mark on the child, for better or for worse, from the moment of birth. It seems as if Alice was born into a household marked by maternal indifference, if not hostility; by

marital distance, if not strife; by siblings whose place was more secure and beloved than her own. It was also a family bereft of loving extended family contact. It was within such a family environment that the psychological destiny of Koller, her self, her understanding of human relationships, and her sense of mastery over her interactions with the world around her were, in large measure, formed.

SELF-IN-RELATION

There has always been a 'his' and 'hers' version of human development and, until very recently, the former has been the version that has been primarily studied and described in the literature. In this traditional research, the researchers, the subjects, the experiences, the paradigms, and the theories have, for generations, been primarily male-dominated. What has been considered to be *normative, therefore, has been male*, while the female experience has been seen only in relation to and defined by the male norm. For example, the work of classic developmentalists, such as Freud, Kohlberg, Erikson, and Piaget, have all spoken out of the male voice and the male experience of development. Based on such male-focused research, differentiation, separation, and autonomy have come to be considered the primary values and goals of normal human development. As a result, when measured against a scale based on the experiences of the dominant male group in society, women have often been evaluated as 'less well developed' and have appeared to be and have come to feel deficient. (Broverman, 1970, 1972; Miller, 1976, 1991a, 1991b; Chodorow, 1978a, 1978b; Gilligan, 1982, 1988; McGoldrick, 1989; Stiver, 1991a, 1991b; Jordan, 1993; Surrey, 1993; Knudson-Martin, 1994) Indeed, "women's failure to separate then becomes by definition a failure to develop." (Gilligan, 1982, p. 9) However, within the past 20 years or so, a feminist psychology has emerged, giving voice to the experiences and issues of women. These feminist researchers have begun to demonstrate that women typically develop in a way that gives them a self in which there is a greater emphasis on relationships and interdependence, on the self in context, than has been traditionally emphasized by developmental psychologists who speak of separation and individuation in men. Within this self-in-relation model, development for

girls and women occurs as a process of differentiation of self within relationships. (Jack, 1987a)

The Development of Self-in-Relation

Feminist psychologists have begun to tease out the origins of girls' and women's concern with connection and affiliation. Throughout their development to maturity, girls and women are socialized, not to develop a self that is separate from others, but rather in relation to, and in connection with, others. For girls and women, being in relationship, picking up the feelings of the other and attending to the interaction between, is the accepted and appropriate way of being and acting. (Miller, 1976, 1991a) As Kaplan notes, "the self is organised and developed through practice in relationship where the goal is the increasing development of mutually empathic relationships" (Kaplan, 1991, p. 54) It is normative, then, for females to experience themselves as relational and connected, rather than as separate and autonomous. Moreover, being 'present with psychologically' is experienced by girls and women as being self-enhancing. (Surrey, 1991) Hence, being-in-relationship for girls and women is not, as traditional psychoanalytic theory suggests, a sign of dependency and a failure to mature, but is rather a central, positive, and crucial aspect of their psychological development and functioning. (Miller, 1976, 1991a, 1991b; Chodorow, 1978a, 1978b; Gilligan, 1982, 1988; Jack, 1987a; McGoldrick, 1989; Kaplan, 1991; Jordan, 1991, 1993; Surrey, 1991, 1993; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Debold et al., 1993; Knudson-Martin, 1994; Apter, 1995)

In understanding self-in-relation for girls and women, we need to consider its developmental sources in childhood. Research on infants has focused our attention on infants' predispositions to social interaction and relationships, thereby playing their part in the development of a symbiotic relationship between mother and infant. These same researchers have gone on to describe the gradual decrease in the importance of relationship to the development of self as the child matures through stages of differentiation, separation, and autonomy. (Mahler et al., 1975; Stern, 1986) Beyond this early predisposition to connection, however, as many feminist psychologists have

noted, infants and children are most often raised and socialized in a family system in which the mother is primarily responsible for child-rearing. In such a family environment, girls' identities are formed in continuous relationship with their mothers, rather than through the type of separation and individuation experienced as necessary by boys as they move out of infancy. There typically develops, then, a unique bond between most mothers and daughters, leading to an experience of boundaries and identities that is different to that experienced by boys. For most girls, this early primary care-giving by the mother implies a less decisive, more protracted process of differentiation of self --- a process which feminist psychologists are arguing leads both to enhanced capacities for attachment, relationship, and commitment-to-other and to a differentiated self within relationship (Miller, 1976, 1991a, Chodorow, 1978a, 1978b, Flax, 1978, Marcus, 1987, Gilligan, 1982, Apter, 1990, 1995, Kaplan, 1991, Surrey, 1991, 1993, Jack, 1991, Jordan, 1991, 1993, Brown & Gilligan, 1992, Debold et al, 1993, Gilligan & Rogers, 1993)

The on-going childhood experiences of girls are such that they continue to be socialized to be other-oriented. In contrast to the play-yard activities of boys, girls tend to cluster in dyads or small, best-friend groups in which the emphasis is on talk and relationship rather than on rules and winning. Throughout middle childhood, young girls' social environment is such that it continues to foster the development of empathy and sensitivity to the other as different from self. Indeed, research has indicated that when conflict develops in these girls' groups, the activity is often ended rather than jeopardize the relationships through the resolution of the conflict (Lever, 1976). School-aged girls' relationships and games, therefore, reinforce nurturant skills, expressions of personal feelings, cooperation rather than competition, and the development of self, fully in relationship with others (Lever, 1976, Miller, 1976, 1991a, Gilligan, 1982, Jack, 1988)

The themes of connection and relationship that were enacted in the school yard continue to be addressed in adolescence, as the identity of the girl is forged in connection with others. "the self is defined by gaining voice and perspective and [is] known in the experience of engagement with others" (Gilligan, 1988, p. 17). Even Erikson's theory, in a 'back-handed' way, noted the fact that for the adolescent female, the development of identity and intimacy is fully fused. "Intimacy goes along with identity, as the female comes to know herself as she is known, through her relationships with others" (as quoted

in Gilligan, 1982) For traditional developmentalists, however, this was a mark of difference rather than of maturation. (McGoldrick, 1989) Feminist researchers, on the other hand, emphasize the continued importance of relationship for adolescent girls' developing self. As Apter has concluded, for example, the conflictual behaviour characteristic of adolescent girls in relation to their mothers is not so much part of a struggle to break free and to be independent of the mother-daughter relationship, but is rather an attempt to change the nature of the relationship so that the mother recognizes the daughter's developing self and responds appropriately. (Apter, 1990) Indeed, relationship and dialogue -- speaking, listening, and being listened to -- are seen as being essential to the adolescent girl's development of self. (Gilligan, 1988; Brown & Gilligan, 1992)

Feminist psychologists argue that, from infancy through adolescence and into adulthood, the developmental challenge for females is to become different while maintaining connections; to develop a self in relation to others. Maturity for women, therefore, is seen as being able to integrate the self and the other, being able to listen to others while still being able to hear one's own voice. (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1988; Jack, 1991; Jordan, 1993; Knudson-Martin, 1994; Apter, 1995)

If self is conceived of as contextual and relational, with the capacity to form gratifying connections... others will be perceived as participating in relational growth in a particular way which contributes to the connected sense of self... Further, if mutuality prevails, not only will I be influenced, moved, changed by my context, and most importantly by my relational context, but I will also be shaping and participating in the development of others' 'selves' This growth and movement is participatory and synergistic. (Jordan, 1993, p. 139)

Learning to Silence the Self

As we have noted, within traditional family relationships and socio-cultural systems, each girl tends to develop a self that is connected to being in relationship. However, she may also internalize the belief that, in response to the other with whom she is in relationship, she is not fully and freely able to develop and express all of her self. From George

Herbert Mead's description of the self as known through others' reflection and Cooley's theory of the "looking-glass self", to Erikson's emphasis on the development of self in interaction with the expectations of others, the impact of others on the development of self has been widely accepted. (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1988) These traditional developmentalists would argue, however, that the role of the other in the definition of self gradually declines as the self becomes separate, independent and autonomous.

In contrast, recent feminist research suggests that many girls and women, unfortunately, do not learn to balance listening to the voices of others with the need to voice their own self. (Lever, 1976; Miller, 1976, 1991a; Jack, 1991, 1987a, 1987b; Lerner, 1987, 1988; Grinnell, 1988; Apter, 1990, 1995; Kaplan, 1991, Surrey, 1991; Stiver, 1991a, 1991b; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Debold et al., 1993; Wetzell, 1994) For example, as Koller discovered on Nantucket,

Mirrors mirror: they reflect. As I must reflect on what mirrors mirror to me. On why it is that when I look at a mirror I see one face, whereas when other people look at me they see another... Not that I see my face differently from the way other people see it, but that I've chosen to believe what they see rather than what I see. (Koller, 1981, p. 84)

For these girls and women, like Koller, the 'other' often remains more important than the 'self' As Jack comments: "women lose themselves as they try to fit into an image provided by someone else -- the husband, parental teachings, the culture." (Jack, 1991, p. 32) We hear this theme repeated in Koller's admission that she was always "...playing different roles with different people: the seductress with a man; the humble student with a teacher;....I was what others expected me to be." (Koller, 1981, p. 285) Therefore, in order to be what others expect them to be, in order to live according to the socio-cultural ideal of feminine goodness, many girls and women learn that they have to silence many aspects of who they are and continue to listen to the voices of external authorities -- both from within their smaller family environments and from within the culture, as a whole.

Recent feminist researchers have been interested in the various means by which girls and women learn to silence the self in order to fit within this socio-cultural ideal of goodness. Much has been written, for example, about how women's beliefs contribute to their silencing of self in relation to others: in particular, how girls and women define *being*

good; how women see themselves in relation to men; and, how women define themselves in response to acts of self-assertion, such as dealing with conflict, anger, and competition.

Much of the research of feminist psychologists has been to understand how girls and young women come to define what it means for them *to be good*. Feminist theorists argue that, through the normal socialization process and within a structure of inequality in which women's roles are subordinate and undervalued, girls learn to associate women's roles with giving to others, putting others' needs first, and silencing their own wants and needs, their own voices, their very selves. (Lever, 1976; Miller, 1976, 1991a; Jack, 1987a, 1987b, 1991; Lerner, 1987, 1988; Grinnell, 1988; Apter, 1990, 1995; Kaplan, 1991; Surrey, 1991; Stiver, 1991a, 1991b; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Debold et al., 1993; Wetzel, 1994) "As subordinate group members, women operate under profound injunctions against voicing any thoughts or feelings that might threaten others or disrupt relationship harmony." (Lerner, 1993, p. 106) As a result, many girls and women have come to measure their very self from the perspective of the other. This placing the other first, always being polite, seeking to nurture and to please others, and striving never to hurt anyone are seen, therefore, as the central tenets of *the code of being a good girl*. (Miller, 1976, 1991a; Lerner, 1988; Jack, 1991, 1987b; Kaplan, 1991; Surrey, 1991; Apter, 1995)

As Lerner argues, in order to fit this socio-cultural image of goodness, females learn to silence their real selves by pretending to be something other than what they really are:

...pretending more frequently reflects a wish, however misguided, to protect others and to ensure the viability of the self as well as our relationships. Pretending reflects deep prohibitions, real and imagined, against a more direct and forthright assertion of self. Pretending stems naturally from the false and constricted definitions of self that women often absorb without question. "Pretending" is so closely associated with "femininity" that it is, quite simply, what the culture teaches women to do. (Lerner, 1993, p. 14)

In keeping with Lerner's analysis of the impact of this image of goodness, Koller similarly reflects on how, by pretending, she denied her feelings in order to appear 'good':

I'll pretend something is funny just so the person telling the story won't be hurt that it didn't come out right. I'll pretend to be interested in what someone says to me just because he's interested in saying it. (Koller, 1981, p. 138)

Feminist psychologists also note that the significant beliefs that are most potent for women's silencing of self are beliefs about the self in intimate relationships, specifically their understanding about how women *should* act in relationships with men in order to secure intimacy and about what it means to be *good enough* to be loved. (Corob, 1987; Joseph, 1987; McGrath et al., 1990; Jack, 1987b, 1991; Apter, 1995) Indeed, many women, pretending to think and to be something other than themselves, "dissolve their own outlines in order to form a self acceptable to the intimate partner." (Jack, 1991, p. 32; Lerner, 1993) Many girls and many women would share the notions expressed in The Good Girl Syndrome:

You are "good" to the degree that you give men what they want and follow the rules that they have laid down for you. You sacrifice your own personal satisfaction in return for being told how nice and sweet you are by the men whose approval you are seeking. (Fezler & Field, 1985, p. xii)

Women, young and old, especially within intimate relationships with men, come to hold the belief that goodness is selflessness. They come to believe that they have to choose between care for the other **or** care for the self; between staying in the relationship **or** speaking out of their own feelings and needs; between losing self and being subordinate **or** losing the other and being isolated; and between being selfless and good **or** being selfish and bad. (Jack, 1987b) In relation to males, therefore, many girls and women are vulnerable since they are socialized to silence their voices and alter their selves in return for the socio-cultural promise of being deemed good and being loved and cared for, as a result. (Gilligan, 1982) Koller exemplifies this socialization process:

Marriage would have been a way to legitimize myself: the man I married was to save me from the dishonor of having failed at my career; he was to turn me into an honest woman...No, I'm not in need of rescue any longer. ... I was available for a very low price. The man had only to give me a hint that he might someday begin to consider that I might be a woman he could possibly think of loving, at least a little bit. On that hint, I fell at his feet. (Koller, 1981, p. 301)

Many adolescent girls and adult women, in search of the ideal feminine image, not only silence their inner voices and their very selves, but also mask their external appearance through apparel, cosmetics, and even surgery. Certainly societal expectations change for young adolescent girls, as developments in their bodies visibly disconnect them from the world of childhood and identify them with womanhood and as they come to be looked

at as objects of beauty (or not) and as models for idealized or fantasized relationships. (Apter, 1990, 1995; Miller 1991a; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Debold et. al., 1993) For Koller, at age 13, when Stuart, "the best-looking and the most popular boy" kissed her, an awareness dawned that what she looked like made a difference to her receiving attention and to her being loved. (Koller, 1981, pp. 82-83) The importance of her appearance, of her beauty, was so ingrained that, as she rode the ferry to Nantucket, her dreams shattered, she suddenly remembers:

how bad [her] skin looks up close. Twenty-five years of
evading strong light, especially when a man is near, battles
with a fragile half-morning's start on shedding pretences.
And wins." (Koller, 1981, p. 14)

In adopting external social norms for feminine goodness, girls and women learn to silence their own ideas and needs, especially if expressing them is likely to lead to any conflict with those with whom they are interacting, especially with those with whom they are 'in relationship'. (Lever, 1976; Miller, 1976, 1991a; Jack, 1987a, 1987b, 1991; Lerner, 1987, 1988; Grinnell, 1988; Apter, 1990, 1995; Kaplan, 1991; Surrey, 1991; Stiver, 1991a, 1991b; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Debold et al., 1993; Wetzel, 1994) As we have already noted, as early as childhood, when conflict develops in all-girl play groups, play is most often ended rather than jeopardize relationships through the resolution of the conflict. (Lever, 1976) As they develop, many girls and women continue to try to avoid conflict, being unwilling to explore differences and to risk arguments, thereby possibly rupturing relationships. (Miller 1976, 1991a; Gilligan, 1982; Jack, 1988; Apter, 1995) Moreover, in order for girls and women to express their own point of view, to speak out, first of all, they would have to believe in the legitimacy of their own voice, a premise which is outside many females' self, and, secondly, they would have to be willing to risk self-assertion which, to them, seems 'selfish' and hence morally dangerous. (Gilligan, 1982; Belenky et. al, 1986; Jack, 1991; Apter, 1995) As Apter's recent research suggests, when facing "clashes between affiliative needs -- to be closely, carefully involved in the emotional well-being of others -- and expansive needs -- to achieve, to meet challenges, to gain social recognition for skill and competence", many girls and women silence their own voices in order to avoid conflict and to maintain their relationships at the expense of their personal expression of self. (Apter, 1995, p. 31)

Even beyond silencing any sense of conflict, most girls and women come to believe that

the expression of anger by them is even more inappropriate. Indeed, the very expression of anger in women is often seen as unreasonable or even pathological, since "the inflicting of hurt is considered selfish and immoral in its reflection of unconcern, while the expression of care is seen as the fulfilment of moral responsibility." (Gilligan, 1982, p. 73; Lerner, 1977, 1985, 1988; Miller, 1976, 1991a, 1991b; Jack, 1991) As a result, women strive to be without anger and without even the need for anger. For example, Koller recalls:

It's like my own sidwinding way of dealing with something difficult: appease it, because if you say what you mean, all hell will break loose. All hell: my mother's raging, screaming fury. ...So that's why I never became angry: to avoid the anger... Another little-girl lesson learned too well. (Koller, 1981, p. 271)

Such silencing of angry feelings within a woman takes its toll, as Miller says:

For a woman, even to *feel* conflict has meant that something is wrong with her "psychologically" since one is supposed to "get along" if one is "all right." The initial sensing of conflict then becomes an almost immediate proof that she is wrong and moreover "abnormal." Some of women's best impulses and sources of energy are thus nipped in the bud. The overwhelming pressure is for women to believe they must be wrong; they are to blame; there must be something very wrong with *them*. (Miller, 1976, p. 131)

As a result of silencing their voices, their selves, their anger, and their energy, girls and women are often uncomfortable with any form of overt competition. For many, competition and subsequent success, which is often seen as being at the expense of others, stand in stark contrast to their ideal of goodness and being for others. From childhood, girls inhibit competitive behaviours so that they don't appear to be better than others and so that they don't inadvertently hurt others' feelings. (Miller, 1976; Gilligan, 1982; Stiver, 1991c) Even where women have overcome their internalized values and beliefs and have achieved personal success, many feel that their "accomplishment[s are] not worthwhile unless there is another person there to make it so... that other person must be a man.... But what does it all mean if there isn't a man who cares about me?... [Without a man,] she felt empty and worthless." (Miller, 1976, p. 85) Koller summarizes this tendency to validate herself in a relationship with a man:

I wanted to marry him. My stomach curls. I wanted to marry Mike, too. And Stan, certainly Stan. ...I run my eye down the years of men and wince at each name. As far back as I can remember, I've wanted to marry the men I've been

involved with.... I've wanted to get married. And each time the affair came to an end, I'd try to get the man back. ...I'd set myself to understand him in order to discover what he wanted from a woman, so that I could give it to him. (Koller, 1981, pp. 179-180)

There are two things worth having: a work that would absorb me and a man to love who would love me. I have neither one. (Koller, 1981, p. 206)

In conclusion, in order to live according to this ideal - *to be good; to be for others; to get and keep a man* - girls and women learn to silence their own authentic voice and their own self. This silencing of self often produces an appearance of dependency, which has long been associated by traditional psychology with failure to develop as fully autonomous persons. (Broverman, 1970, 1972; Miller, 1976, 1991a, 1991b; Chodorow, 1978a, 1978b; Gilligan, 1982, 1988; McGoldrick, 1989; Stiver, 1991a, 1991b; Jordan, 1993; Knudson-Martin, 1994) Feminist psychology would argue, however, that the truth lies not in actual passivity and dependency, but in a very active process, born of a socialization process which is designed to make them act in accordance with the culturally established 'ideal of womanhood' (Wetzel, 1994; Grinnell, 1988)

I suggest we take another look at the realities of women's lives, for their culturally subscribed dependence does not reflect the actuality of their daily existence. They are neither weak, unable to cope or function, inadequate, inept, unskilful, nor ineffectual. On the contrary, they are often courageous, resourceful, flexible, and able to handle a multiplicity of responsibilities and problems, not only their own, but those of their families and friends. It is not the personhood of women that needs to be changed, but their self-perception and perceptions of others about them. (Wetzel, 1994, pp. 99-100)

Women silence themselves, not because they are dependent, helpless, and passive, but because they want to live according to their socialized ideal self and because they value relationship. In so doing, women must exert tremendous energy and willpower to restrict authentic self-development and self-expression. In silencing the self in order to achieve and maintain relationships, women often suffer both loss of their true identity and also, coincidentally, the loss of any possibility of that for which they strive - a truly intimate mutual relationship. (Jack, 1991, 1987b; Kaplan, 1991; Miller, 1976, 1991a; Surrey, 1991; Lerner, 1988) And therein lies the irony: in silencing their own voices, these women experience loss of both self and other.

"No career, no home, no man ... [no self]" (Koller, 1981, p.2)

Reconstructing Self

It is possible, however, for a silenced woman to reconstruct her self, to regain her voice. For many women in our culture, the middle years are just such a time of transformation and reconstruction. (Belenky et al., 1986; Heilbrun, 1988; Gergen, 1990; Apter, 1995) This transformative midlife crisis can be precipitated by a number of factors, or combinations of factors: pressures of work; release from her usual domestic burdens, as children leave home; a partner's departure; the ending of a relationship; the realization that youth, beauty, and fecundity no longer apply to her; or

sometimes, deep within her, as she confronts her surprise discovery that her potential must be realized now or never, she retrieves neglected needs and wishes, and finally wages battle against the dragons that have stood in her way. (Apter, 1995, pp. 23-24)

For Koller, many midlife awarenesses seem to have propelled her into her crisis of self:

The October morning sunlight pours against my reflection in the bathroom mirror.... My makeup has ceased to be a subterfuge... My thirty-seven years haven't been visible until now. I can no longer conceal them. Yet I must. If I look thirty-seven, I have to explain why it took so long to get my Ph.D... I'm not teaching at a good college.... I haven't even decided if I want to teach. If I said that out loud, someone would ask why I went so far in philosophy. And I don't know. ... Thirty-seven with a trail of men I try not to remember: I have to say stupid things about why I never married. I stare into the mirror. I don't have a life: I'm just using up a number of days somehow. There is no *reason* for me to be here. No plan formulated at some point in the past has led me to this void that is my day, every day.... no career, no home, no man. (Koller, 1981, pp. 1-2)

That October morning in 1962 saw Koller coming face to face with her age and waning beauty, her failed career aspirations, and her failed relationships.

Out of such crises in their middle years, "they [midlife women] seek to establish their own knowledge and their own vision. ... Hence, women, proud of their battle, emerge with a stronger sense of themselves and their own powers." (Apter, 1995, pp. 23-24) Women in their middle years do, indeed, have a store of lived experience which enables them to achieve a unique vantage point from which to reflect on their own lives. They are now able to move into a new relationship with themselves, one marked by a shift from external reference to internal reference whereby women develop the confidence to trust their own

perceptions, judgments, and abilities. (Belenky et al., 1986; Heilbrun, 1988; Gergen, 1990; Apter, 1995) This development is reflected in the pivotal question asked by midlife women in Apter's research:

Why did it take so long to trust myself?...How, indeed, women asked themselves, could they have been constrained as they were, knowing what they did know, but what they somehow ignored? How could they have been guided by ideals that they must have known ... false constructions? ... How could they have been shadowed by their concern for what others thought, or how others judged them, knowing as they must have known ... that the approval they sought would never be gained --- or, if gained, never fulfill [sic] the function they had imagined. This query, "Why did it take so long to trust myself?" ... The lesson that one's own experience matters, that it provides the best line to truth, is knowledge that we are born with, and then taught to forget, and then learn anew. (Apter, 1995, pp. 27-28)

In listening to Koller's words as she began her journey on Nantucket, it seems as if she believed that she, like many other girls and women, had been listening only to the voices of others, silencing her own voice completely for many years: "Each thing I do during the course of a day is something I've been told to do, or taught to do. I have to replace all of it with what I choose to do." (Koller, 1981, p. 21) And so Koller, at the precipice of her middle years, in search of her own truth, says of her experience of Nantucket:

I've done away with every other criterion for truth merely by being here alone, trying to tear away everybody else's standards to see whether anything remains that is mine. Particularly, specifically, uniquely mine. I didn't realize until just now that my whole intention is to work out my own truth, something that is true for me alone. I can't let it matter whether anyone else would find it true. (Koller, 1981, p. 98)

It is often, then, through the wonderful crisis of middle age, that women learn to listen to their own experiences and feelings and eventually, perhaps, when their own voices are stronger, to integrate the voices of others with their own. (Apter, 1995; Knudson-Martin, 1994; Jack, 1991; Gergen, 1990; Heilbrun, 1988; Gilligan, 1988; Belenky et al., 1986) But, a few weeks later, when Koller was about to leave the island for a few days, she expresses concern about her ability to maintain her newly reconstructed self when in contact with others.

Confronted with the possibility of talking seriously to people again... I think of ways of avoiding it. I think I don't want to go. No, that's not it.... I think I'm afraid I'll start to do things the way I did them then, as though none of these weeks here had taken place. I'll act. I'll exaggerate. I'll

pretend....I'll dress for the stares....(Koller, 1981, p. 138)

And so we wonder, in the end, if Koller was able to emerge from her midlife crisis with a stronger self and voice and set for herself a life course which included finally achieving her goal of working at a university and also of establishing personally satisfying intimate relationships.

Years after her midlife transformational crisis on Nantucket Island, at the approximate age of 65²⁷, when she wrote The Stations of Solitude (1990), we learn that Koller had never achieved her personal quest nor been able to express freely her own voice except when she was alone. Of the more than a quarter century since leaving Nantucket, Koller had lived in poverty for all by 5 years, living with friends, living on welfare and food stamps, and even living for a week in her car. (Koller, 1990, pp. 88-91, 184) Moreover, she never became a university professor:

Wherever the campus might have been, I ... could have driven however many miles were necessary into (wherever) for my scheduled classes and my other academic duties. To me teaching would have been work, not a job. I would have been a seamless life. "Are you bitter?" a man asked me over lunch. He is a philosopher, the holder of an endowed chair ... "Enraged is closer," I replied. (Koller, 1990, p. 195)

In addition, in all the years after Nantucket, we learn that she had remained alone -- "alone elementally" (Koller, 1990, p. 3) Koller had not been able to strengthen the sound of her own voice sufficiently to allow her safely to be able to establish intimate relationships with others.

...being alone is merely the starting point (of becoming) the person you wish to be, the life you wish to live...solitude is an achievement... During the more than two decades of my solitary life I have been at pains to point out that I am not alone in fear and trembling. I am only, have only been, without other human beings... In that place (of solitude), wherever it may be, where you will know no one, have no obligations to other persons to deflect you from your unbinding, you will learn ...that you are a ragtag assembly of relationships and of memories of events and hopes for the future.... you have patched together a life from the leavings of others....To lone (I am inventing the verb) is to become oneself... (Koller, 1990, pp. 4-5)

²⁷ Again, as a reminder, because of Koller's focus on the interior self, her texts do not provide clear autobiographical particulars. It is up to the reader to deduce details such as dates and places from the few specific pieces of information that are given. As a result, there may be some 'miscalculations'.

It was not part of my plan to become solitary. In the beginning I made myself seek ways to endure it for the time (I was certain it would not be forever) because it grew out of my choices. Yet not out of these alone but also out of the decisions of others and out of chance events. In time its benisons made themselves known to me, and finally I came to love it. (Koller, 1990, p. 95)

In the words of The Stations of Solitude (1990), we learn that Koller was unable to find the balance between the strong self that she was able to achieve when she was alone and the silenced self she tended to become when she was with others.

And so, we continue to wonder why it was that Alice Koller, even after her transformational experience on Nantucket, was unable to emerge from the battle with a self that was strong enough to allow her to achieve her personal quest and to learn to balance her own inner voice with the voices of others.

WOMEN'S WAYS OF KNOWING

In Women's Ways of Knowing (1986), Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule listened to women's voices and put women's stories about how they know back into our understanding of human ways of knowing. They found that women spoke of the sense of voice, self, and knowing as being intricately intertwined. In the rhythm of their voices and their silences, the women they interviewed revealed stories about their developing selves.

By telling us about their voice and silences...women told us about their views of the world and their place in it.long journey they must make if they are to put the knower back into the known and claim the power of their own minds and voices. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 19)

Other feminist researchers have also reported on this same use of the metaphor of voice and silence around which women frame their understanding of their struggle for self and knowing. As Jack (1991) notes:

the loss of self coincides with a loss of voice in relationship. Voice is an indicator of self. Speaking one's feelings and thoughts is part of creating, maintaining, and recreating one's

authentic self. (Jack, 1991, p. 32)

And, according to Gilligan (1988), in earlier research:

the central metaphor for identity formation becomes dialogue rather than mirroring; the self is defined by gaining voice... The themes of silence and voice that emerge so centrally in female narratives convey the moral dimensions of listening, but also the struggle to claim a voice...(Gilligan, 1988, p. 17)

However, as researchers have noted, the nature of a woman's self and voice varies with her environment and with her personal development. (Belenky et al., 1986; Apter, 1995) Of the several ways of knowing which Belenky and her associates outlined, four are of particular importance to our understanding of Koller's developing construction of self and of voice: knowledge that is received, subjective, procedural, and constructed.

While a few women, living within harsh circumstances, may be silent, selfless, and voiceless, most women do have a voice and a self out of which they know and act for themselves. For some women, like Koller, however, their own voices may be quiet and unsure, since their principal way of knowing is embedded in receiving and using the knowledge of others or in following the procedures for knowing the truth established by others. These women may be very skilled in determining and articulate in expressing knowledge, even though it is knowledge essentially received from others. The way of knowing of these women, then, is intimately connected to the ways of knowing of others. (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1988; Jack, 1991; Knudson-Martin, 1994; Apter, 1995) The ways of knowing for women at other stages of development are quite different in that they turn their backs to others in order to listen to their own private and subjective truth, in order to hear their own voices. In time, often through the transformation of midlife, the voices of these women may grow louder than the voices of the authorities around them. (Apter, 1995; Belenky et al., 1986) It was at 37 years of age, during her three months on Nantucket Island, that Koller began to listen to her own voice, learned to judge by her own criteria, and started to speak her own truth. Yet other women, perhaps after a midlife transformation, strive to combine all their ways of knowing, combining the voices of external authority their own inner voices and integrating rational thinking and subjective feeling into a confident self and voice out of which they can speak in any situation. This integrated or constructed way of knowing is the keystone of a mature woman's way of knowing. (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1988; Jack, 1991; Knudson-Martin, 1994; Apter,

1995) In reading The Stations of Solitude (1990), we hear how Koller, by age 65, was finally able to construct for herself a way of knowing that integrated her reason with her feelings.

Received Knowledge - Listening to the Voices of Others

Women who rely on received knowledge learn by listening to the voices of others, rather than by expressing their own voices. They have only quiet, rarely expressed voices of their own, sure that their own words are of less value than those of others. Moreover, according to Belenky and her associates, these women tend to be quite literal and intolerant of ambiguity and "they assume that there is only one right answer to each question, and that all other answers and all contrary views are automatically wrong." (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 37) These women understand truth as objectively existing and as being passed down from one authority to another, until it comes to them. They do not understand that there are different points of view and that knowledge is constructed, not just 'passed on'. (Belenky et al., 1986) Clearly we will see that for most of Koller's life, she focused on learning the correct procedure - or method as she called it -- and when she was unable to achieve what the correct method dictated she ought to, she believed that she was incompetent. Her first recognition of this came in her dawning awareness of why she quit acting:

I construed that method as a standard I had to meet in order to count...and when I found I couldn't meet it, I let it disqualify me. A standard, a rule: this is how we do things. Someone else's rules. Again. ... That each of them described his own method at all means that what they were taught didn't suit them. It means there was a gap between what they were taught and what they knew....I gave up at exactly the point at which these actors dug in. I said to myself: What I'm being taught doesn't match what it feels like to be on stage, therefore I'm not competent to be on stage. They said to themselves: What I'm being taught doesn't match...therefore what I'm being taught isn't the whole truth about acting.... I left; they reshaped the craft of acting. (Koller, 1981, pp. 108, 112)

As with most women of received knowledge, Koller's life to age 37 was spent living out of her concern about what others thought and how others judged her, rather than out of her

own voice and experience.

Mirrors mirror: they reflect. As I must reflect on what mirrors mirror to me. On why it is that when I look at a mirror I see one face, whereas when other people look at me they see another.... Not that I see my face differently from the way other people see it, but that I've chosen to believe what they see rather than what I see! ... Other people. The "they" I came here to get away from. The ones who make the rules that I follow even as I rebel against them... (Koller, 1981, p. 84)

So as we can see, for women of received knowledge, the idea of self is not formed around questions such as "Who am I?" and "What do I want?" Rather their identity is formed around questions such as "What do *they* want me to be?"; "What do *they* want me to do?"; and "What do *they* think of me?" (Belenky et al., 1986) We hear these words echoed in Koller's own questioning: "Wanting. **What** have I wanted? No: What have I **wanted**? Not right yet: What have I wanted?" (emphasis Koller's; Koller, 1981, p. 57)

Women, like Koller, whose knowledge is received from external authorities are often women who are silenced by their family and socio-cultural environments. Unlike the women described as being totally silent and voiceless, these women do have a budding voice -- a timid, quiet sense of who they are -- but silence that whisper both out of a belief that 'others know best' and out of a wish to fulfil the internalized role of *the good girl / good woman*. Jack labels this phenomenon the 'imperative of the Over-Eye' in which women internalize socio-cultural expectations about being *a good girl / good woman*, established to maintain the status quo: listen to and obey the voice of authority; conform to the rules; place others' needs first; avoid conflict and even the appearance of conflict; silence your own voice; defer to males, anticipating and reacting to their needs; and, understand that this is part of the God-given order of creation. (Jack, 1991) Living within a traditional cultural and family system, girls and adolescent and adult women so completely accept these cultural expectations, that they come to believe that the dicta of their culture are, in fact, a part of their own self, a part of their own voice. (Jack, 1991)

Koller, at age 37, was a woman whose own voice had been silenced, silenced at first in her relationship her mother and later in her relationships with others to whom she turned for attention and approval. Being on Nantucket alone, provided an opportunity for her to begin instead to silence the voices of others and, in so doing, to give expression to her

own voice.

What will I look like now that now one I know will see me?
Can I dress without following any else's rules?...I'm fighting
to break out of the pattern...I have to smash its hold as fast
as I can. Each thing I do during the course of a day is
something I've been told to do, or taught to do. I have to
replace all of it with what I choose to do. I have to learn
how to choose one thing over another, one way of doing
something over another way. (Koller, 1981, pp. 20-21)

Koller, at age 37 and with a doctorate in philosophy, was a woman whose own voice, whose own truth, had been silenced. Amazingly and sadly, only after a number of weeks alone on Nantucket Island, only then was she able to judge that she had spoken "the truth to someone in authority for the first time in my life." (Koller, 1981, p. 231) And what was her first truth? In answer to a former professor's query about what work she was currently engaged in, after a false start, she chose not to hide the fact that she was not presently teaching. In the end, Koller chose to tell him that she was on Nantucket

reading and writing. Getting some things clear.... "What a waste." Of what? "My words aren't so important that someone has to hear them." ...Quine reaches out his hand. "Good luck, Alice." I thank him. He goes his way. I watch him for a moment, and then I ascend the very stairway on which I spoke the truth to someone in authority for the first time in my life. (Koller, 1981, p. 231)

Subjective Knowledge - Listening to The Inner Voice

Often, in their middle years, women begin to listen more to their own inner whispers. (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1988; Jack, 1991; Knudson-Martin, 1994; Apter, 1995) "This interior [still small] voice has become...a hallmark of women's emergent self and sense of agency and control." (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 68) For Koller, at 37, as she looked into a mirror in the bathroom of an apartment that wasn't hers, she noticed the flaws in her life, she noticed the failed promises that were her life:

Two long lines are being etched on either side of my mouth.
Semicircles are beginning to form under my eyes. My
thirty-seven years haven't been visible until now. I can no
longer conceal them. Yet I must. If I look thirty-seven, I
have to explain why it took so long to get my Ph.D. ... If I
can pass as ten years younger, I'm a brilliant young

scholar. ... I'm not teaching at a good college. ... I haven't even decided if I want to teach. [If just] twenty-seven without a husband: I can smile and murmur, "I've been too busy working for my degree." Thirty-seven with a trail of men I try not to remember: I have to say stupid things about why I never married. I stare into the mirror. I don't have a life: I'm just using up a number of days somehow. ... no career, no home, no man. (Koller, 1981, pp. 1-2)

According to Belenky and her associates (1986) and, more recently to Apter (1995), generally a crisis, resulting in anger at failed authorities and outrage at their own compliant selves, propels these women inward in search of their own authority. As Apter notes: "...when the fantasy of the ideal of who they should be is shattered by the mature reflection in the mirror, they grow strong enough to listen to their own answers to the questions they pose." (Apter, 1995, p.23) For Koller, this tiny self germinated on Nantucket in a crucible of anger and torment towards the voices of others in her life and towards her self for giving others so much power over her. And so Koller struggles:

If I could learn how to see with my own eyes, I'd be able to make a comparable leap, leaving behind everybody else's rules. My own truth, again. I'm beginning to understand how badly I need it. (Koller, 1981, p. 113)

He thought. They thought. The department thought. I've got to stop using other people's eyes. I must find some way to know what I think. (Koller, 1981, p. 118)

During this subjectivist phase, women like Koller, focus on hearing their own voices.

One week already. Seven days falling on the heels of one another, tumbling me along. ... Working by thinking. But the thinking is a kind of fighting. I'm defending, and laying siege, all at once. I'm even the prize. But I'm also the only one who'd want it. (Koller, 1981, p. 57)

In beginning to listen to their own voices comes the sudden awareness of self-responsibility. As received knowers, these women responded to the voice of others and, to the extent that they saw themselves as not actively making choices out of their own authentic self, they "correspondingly excuse[d] themselves from the responsibility that decision entails." (Gilligan, 1982, p. 67) Now as they come out from behind external authorities, they become aware that they are responsible for their own beliefs, behaviours, and voice, and they feel vulnerable, as never before. (Belenky et al., 1986) And we see in Koller, the growth of this awareness of self-responsibility brings a sense of inadequacy and vulnerability.

That means I have to want one thing, or one way, more than another. My stomach tightens. Want one thing more than another? What will I use as a criterion? I don't know. I know only that I have to uproot all of the old while I'm learning what I want. Tear out every habit, every way of responding to people or to things. Or to ideas. Look at it without mercy and ask: Is this mine? Mine as the specific human being that I am. Do I do the things I do because I'm Alice Koller? Or do I do them for reasons that I don't yet know. I've arrived at this outermost edge of my life by my own actions. Where I am is thoroughly unacceptable. (Koller, 1981, p. 21)

It's that the source outside me [the voice of external authority] starts to dry up, and that sets me to doubting myself. (Koller, 1981, p. 114)

I don't trust my own judgment because I have nothing of my own in terms of which I can judge. Nor will I have, unless I find some way to know what I feel. (Koller, 1981, p. 164)

And as they watch and listen to others, they begin to notice differences between their own experiences and the experiences about which others' speak. As Koller says:

Now I even see that there's an outright conflict between what other people see and what I have to learn to see. I shouldn't regret that other people might not find my truth to be the truth they'd see about me. I should consider it an achievement. (Koller, 1981, p. 113)

As these women quietly begin to explore their self, they are gaining a voice. In fact, Belenky and her associates noted that there were very few women in this group who were not "actively and obsessively preoccupied with a choice between self and other." (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 77) In Apter's recent work, Secret Paths: Women in the New Midlife (1995), she refers to Alice Koller's midlife transformation wherein she learns to mute the voices from outside and to awaken her own voice.

In *An Unknown Woman*, Alice Koller speaks of her wish to leap out of the "safe inadequacy" of what she has learned and to see with her own eyes; yet she does not know what to look for inside her, and she does not know how to identify her feelings. As she discovers that she can be the source of her own knowledge, she confronts a new puzzle: What responses count, what gives her information about her world, and how does she name, or describe, or define the feelings she has? (Apter, 1995, p. 155)

Eventually, on Nantucket, Koller comes to realize that she must look inside herself to learn what she is feeling, to seek her own evidence, to become her own judge. And so, as Koller leaves Nantucket, only beginning to hear her own voice, she is aware that her old

way of knowing - of listening always to the voice of authority - is still only barely torn free from her soul:

Because I had no gauge within me. The standard for any performance of mine, on stage or off, existed in other people's eyes. Now I seem to be growing a gauge of my own. Still fragile, still very small, but mine. (Koller, 1981, p. 267)

And in going back into to the world of others, before her own voice is strong, Koller is aware that she has to be careful if she wants to hold on to her own voice and to live out of her own experience and vision.

The old reaches up to drag me down again on the very page where I'm trying to start out fresh. I have to try to free myself from it. Maybe all I can do is realize that the traps are there, and try to avoid them. Until, if ever, I won't need to ask anyone for anything at all. ... My own past is trying to lock me in again. I will *not* let it.... I'm exhausted merely considering going back into that world.... Did I think it would be simple? (Koller, 1981, pp. 262-263)

Procedural Knowledge - The Voice of Reason

As we have seen, in received knowing, the woman automatically obeys the voice of external authority; in subjective knowing, the woman automatically obeys her own inner voice. In what Belenky and her associates have labelled as procedural knowing, we see a fusion of these two ways of knowing. It is as if the woman learns to use reasoned reflection before she speaks or acts; it is as if objectivity and responsibility have been added to the woman's way of knowing, as she engages in "conscious, deliberate, systematic analysis" of what **she** believes and wants. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 93) As women become more aware of their own voices, in contrast to the voices around them, they become more critical. They understand more fully that there are many ways of looking at any given subject and that all points of view are not equally valid. They, therefore, seek out ways to reflect on and critique their thinking before they speak so that they will be more able to explain or substantiate their opinions. Indeed, as they begin to learn the procedures for developing an objective and reasoned argument, they often become more preoccupied with getting the form correct than with the intrinsic meanings of

the argument itself. (Belenky et al., 1986)

This procedural way of knowing reflects an empirical or quantitative approach to knowing in which there is an emphasis on impersonal, objective, and value-free procedures for determining the truth. The goal of this procedural knower is to explain something, whereby the knower stands separately from the known and, in explaining it, gains some mastery over it. Procedural knowing focuses on critical thinking or the 'doubting game' in which the knower actively searches out errors or flaws in an argument or point of view. It is as if the procedural knower were an 'abstract brain', concerned with facts and argumentation, cut off from her own feelings and personal beliefs. These women often become more preoccupied with getting the form correct than with the intrinsic meanings of the argument itself.

Born out of her years studying philosophy, much of Koller's struggle on Nantucket was about developing a procedure, a method, by which she could listen to her own voice, find her own criteria, and express her own truth, silencing the power in her life of the voices of authority. Koller describes beginning with a plan to keep two sets of writings as a way to begin to establish her own criteria:

I reach for my journal and record the events of arriving on Nantucket, of the walk this morning, the extraordinary silence. I'll write two things while I'm here. The journal, which I'll keep on the desk: for saying what happens here, outside. The other pages will come out of the typewriter: whatever I can exact from my memory, whatever I can force myself to fit together. (Koller, 1981, p. 24)

Koller moved on to a number of other schemes by which she hoped that she could search out and strengthen her self, her own voice. She tells of trying to use packages of old letters from friends.

How shall I sort them? I begin by years... Bad idea: so few of them are dated... How else then? I'll sort them by person.... I can get a person-by-person view. ...I must impose some order on all the letters. (Koller, 1981, pp. 30-31)

But soon Koller was frustrated with this method, too, since "there's no unitary Me"; she was instead portioned out into splinters of herself held by each person's relationship with her. (Koller, 1981, p. 31) Having lived by methods and procedures for most of her life,

Koller tried a number of other approaches, including work schedules and lists. As she reports:

Over coffee I try to work out a schedule. Walk to the ocean in the morning...? Or go in the afternoon...? Or both? How long can I stay writing at one time? (Koller, 1981, p. 44)

But, those procedures, too, did not provide the sole answer - the one and only method which will give her the knowledge she seeks.

It's not working out. I've lost the patience to sit down and write while I think. The thoughts come too fast, or they come in their own time instead of when I'm ready to welcome them. Or they leap from problem to problem, not letting me pursue one single thread all the way to its end. (Koller, 1981, p. 73)

But, out of all of her struggles and pain, as she left Nantucket, Koller had discovered that there is no single method for finding the right answer, but there is a way to live, cognizant of and responsive to her own feelings, wantings and voice. As Koller reports:

I have a peculiar sense of newness. ...The sense of newness now is that the script is gone. I *find* myself thinking. I find myself talking. My words don't follow a prearranged pattern. They surprise me, even as I speak or think.... I discover what I *mean* to say. I know what it is: I'm not being tested any longer. I've stopped submitting myself to an unending examination that I keep failing... In its place is a sense of exploring, of tentativeness, almost of daring. (Koller, 1981, p. 259)

Alone on Nantucket, Koller had found a voice and constructed a self that was not constrained by the procedures of others, but could this new self be held securely when in the presence of others?

Constructed Knowledge - Integrating the Voices

For mature women, the goal is the integration of thinking and feeling into one confident self and voice out of which they can speak in any situation. An integrated way of knowing combining the voices of external authority with one's own inner voice and integrating rationality with one's own feelings and emotions is the keystone of a mature woman's

way of knowing. (Apter, 1995; Knudson-Martin, 1994; Jack, 1991; Gilligan, 1988; Belenky et al., 1986) Belenky and her associates refer to this integration of a woman's own reason and subjective feeling with the expertise of others as constructed knowledge.

This constructed way of knowing often arises out of a time of self-reflection when women look back over their lives and determine to integrate the various voices with which they speak, out of a time of transformation during which women pull together seemingly disparate threads into their own way of knowing. (Apter, 1995; Belenky et al., 1986) Indeed, both Apter and Belenky and her associates, after reading An Unknown Woman (1981), use Koller's midlife transformation on Nantucket as a model for other women who try to construct an integrated way of knowing by putting together their rational, procedural knowing with their own nascent self, experience, and feelings.

For women like Koller...thinking and feeling are split asunder; they feel fraudulent and deadened to their inner experiences and inner selves. Alice Koller planned to go after the inner self with the methods of her training. She planned to ferret out the evidence. ...Koller hoped to turn inward, find herself, and construct her own ways of knowing. (Belenky et al., 1986, pp. 135-136)

Eventually, on Nantucket, Koller came to understand that she was able to bring together the two compartments of her knowledge: received knowledge and subjective knowledge. She came to realize that she could look inside herself to learn what she was feeling, to seek her own evidence, to become her own judge; and that she could use the knowledge of her past, the reasoned logic of philosophy, to help her to establish her own criteria and test her own truth.

Pieces of unimpeachable truth: no diet for a philosopher. Everything I know in philosophy forbids me to accept the truth of that afternoon in the terms I which I do nevertheless accept it. I know only that it carries a mark by which I recognize it: it belongs to me. In fact, I've done away with every other criterion for truth merely by being here alone, trying to tear away everybody else's standards to see whether anything remains that is mine. Particularly, specifically, uniquely mine. I didn't realize until just now that my whole intention is to work out my own truth, something that is true for me alone....I realize that tonight is the first time I've thought of philosophy as having any bearing at all on what I'm doing here. I'm sobered to understand that what I learned during those brutal years at Harvard seems to exist in a different compartment from this hands-down battle against some unknown enemy for some imperfectly glimpsed goal. But I know that what I understood...that day was true. For me. (Koller, 1981, p. 98)

On Nantucket Koller learned to integrate her ways of knowing so that she could combine the best of what she had learned as a philosopher with what she had come to know, after her rebirth on Nantucket, as her own true feelings and wantings.

From The Stations of Solitude (1990), published when Koller was about 65, we read that she had been able to maintain the strength of her own subjective knowledge based on her experiences and her inner self and had been able to continue integrating her own voice with the skills of philosophical inquiry.

I tore away all the beliefs and attitudes that had hobbled me up till then. After three months I left Nantucket ... knowing for the first time the difference between telling myself the truth and telling myself lies.... By having removed all socially imposed regulation of my activities, I began to uncover the intimate rhythms of my being.... Without my philosophical training, I could not have done it. I knew how to ask questions, and I knew what counts as an adequate answer. I knew how to open my beliefs out to merciless study. I knew how to take the role of my own worst enemy attempting to refute me. (Koller, 1990, pp. 43-44)

For its own sake. It is how I love. It is how I work... I weave together my work and my love, living with no demarcation between them, as much one as I can make them. Persisting in unifying my life...is a moral and an intellectual pursuit. Moral, in being about the kind of person one is or can become. Intellectual, in being unceasingly concerned to clarify and to bring together into one consistent whole what would otherwise be the erratically joined parts of my mind and my actions... The philosopher I am is inextricably entwined with the person I am. (Koller, 1990, pp. 223-224)

But Alice Koller retained this subjective sense of knowing within her station of solitude.

CONCLUSION

Alice Koller was a woman who was essentially unknown to her self. In the winter of 1962-1963, at the age of 37, she fled to Nantucket Island in search of her self, her voice, her own way of knowing, and her own way of being in the world. While many factors had worked together to inhibit her self and to silence her voice, the foundational issue was

the fact that Alice's mother did not love her. Out of this one central fact of her life came Koller's search for attention, approval, and affection from others; the subsequent silencing of her self in relation to others; and her reliance on the voices of authority for her way of knowing.

Out of her unsatisfactory relationship with her mother, Alice developed a sense of being unwanted, unloved and unlovable; she developed a sense of an unremitting emptiness.

Incredible that I knew so long ago not just that my mother didn't, but that she *couldn't* love me. ... I've never stopped being that five-year-old, old enough to know that I was missing something... (Koller, 1981, pp. 124-125)

It was out of her earliest beginnings that Alice's intrinsic self was corrupted, that her essential way of being in relationship with others was distorted.

As with many girls and women in North American culture, Alice developed in a way that resulted in a self in which there was an emphasis on the other rather than on her self. However, in addition to the typical socialization processes which all females experience, Alice also sought to replace the affection she did not receive from her mother, with approval from others.

I tried to make the whole rest of the world give me what she couldn't give me. ... So of course I could never get enough attention from other people, because they were always giving me the wrong thing: they weren't giving me her love. (Koller, 1981, p. 125)

In seeking such attention from others, Alice learned to suppress and silence all those aspects of her self which she believed might result in censure or further rejection.

She made me feel that I had to deserve her love, and that I never did. ... So of course I was too worthless to deserve anyone else's. (Koller, 1981, p. 198)

Alice had never fully and freely been able to develop and express all of her self.

Nantucket was, therefore, a time for her to search out the origins of her silent, unknown self. It was in coming to understand that her mother was unable to love her, unable to provide support and recognition, that Koller was able to break free of the constraints of her childhood self, to break free of the expectations of others, and to begin to construct a self

and a voice that was truly her own.

Indeed, in listening to her words as she began her journey on Nantucket, we hear: "Each thing I do during the course of a day is something I've been told to do, or taught to do." (Koller, 1981, p. 21) All of Alice's life had been marked by following the voices of authority, in hopes of 'getting it right', thereby earning their recognition and applause. And so, as she reconstructed her own self, Koller moved away from the way of knowing that relied solely on the voices of authority. As she learned to discard her reliance on this 'safe' knowledge received from others, Koller learned to risk living out of her own subjective source of knowledge, out of her own feelings, wantings, and purposes, out of her own truth.

Chapter 4

ALICE KOLLER, AN UNKNOWN AND SOLITARY WOMAN

INTRODUCTION

The island of Nantucket lies thirty miles out to sea, south of Cape Cod in the Atlantic Ocean. For me it is a time as well as a place: I often say 'before Nantucket' or 'since Nantucket.' ... I was there to try to find out what I had been doing with my life up till then. ... I compelled myself to become aware of my ways of perceiving the contours of a situation, of responding to other persons, of recognizing the impact of others on me and mine on them, of gathering information, of selecting what would count as relevant, of deciding what to do and when and why. I did not rest from my questioning. And one day I came upon the purpose I had been pursuing all the preceding years. I had not known I had been doing that thing: I had believed I had been doing something quite different. So it was a huge thing to learn. Understandable, but ugly. ... I spent a night and a day deciding whether to continue living. ... I did not exactly decide to live. I only did not decide not to. ... I had only to cast out the purpose I had allowed to reside in my heart since I was four years old. ... With it, I could discard the beliefs and attitudes that had arisen from it, fed on it. ... I set myself to chart a fresh life that I was unexpectedly eager to, unexpectedly uncertain I could, shape for myself. The day after I left Nantucket I knew that I had never elsewhere done anything so important. ... afterward ... I was joyously in the thick of the new life I was daily designing, tailoring ever more closely to my own contours. (Koller, 1990, pp. 1-3)

Alice Koller wrote two autobiographical texts, An Unknown Woman (1981) and The Stations of Solitude (1990), which together recount the narrative of her developing construction of self and meaning. Such writings provided a vehicle by which Koller could connect and give meaning to the events of her life. Indeed, it was through the very creation of her story that Koller was able to recover and reconstruct her self. (Laird, 1989; McAdams, 1993) These texts give us, therefore, not so much her history, as they give us fragments of her life, selected to express and explain her self and her world view.

In 1962, at age 37, Alice Koller saw herself as a woman who was unknown: unknown both to her self and to others. On Nantucket Island, for three months over the winter of 1962-1963, Koller struggled to reconstruct her self and to silence the voices of others who had so much power over her. This period of crisis and self-scrutiny marked a turning point, a time when Koller was able to cut her self loose from the shell behind which it had been barricaded. Unfortunately, her self, brought forth out of so much pain on Nantucket, remained fragile. And so, to protect this nascent self from others, Alice Koller remained a solitary woman. Her two autobiographical works, An Unknown Woman (1981) and The Stations of Solitude (1990), recount the narrative of her search for and reconstruction of self and meaning and of the subsequent experiences and decisions which resulted in her remaining alone.

While on Nantucket, Koller intermittently wrote about her experiences, both internal and external. In her journal, she recorded the daily experiences of living on Nantucket; in her other writings, composed on the typewriter, she recorded her memories and her understandings of how her past and present intersected. (Koller, 1981, pp. 24, 50) These two written records, along with her memories of Nantucket, served as the foundation for An Unknown Woman. A year after leaving Nantucket, Koller began to consider writing about her experiences on the island. (Koller, 1990, p. 96) The actual writing, however, was started about two years later when she had some money available from other jobs to support herself for the 12 months it took to write it. (Koller, 1990, p. 62) This first text was not, however, published until 1981, 14 years later --- after having been rejected by 30 publishers as being "too personal". (Koller, 1990, p. 66)

Around 1966, Koller began to piece together the journey that had taken her from the crisis which had catapulted her to Nantucket forward to the time when she "was joyously in the thick of the new life [she] was daily designing." (Koller, 1990, p. 3) She began to write of her 'Journey'²⁸ at a time when she was "living in joy. A life of days in which my freedom was palpable. ... life which [was] secure at its very centre." (Koller, 1990, p. 48) She began to write when she needed to understand how she had "come to such a life from one so unlike it." (Koller, 1990, p. 48) She tells us that it was in the very writing of her 'Journey' that she came to understand its meaning for her self, and her way of being

²⁸ Alice first titled An Unknown Woman "Map of an Inward Journey"

and knowing:

An inward journey lasting three months had altered the entire vision of the world that thirty-seven years had heaped over me. That journey was an unguided one between two unknown points: what I was when I undertook it, and what I could become. I wanted to reconstruct for myself alone how, exactly, that journey took me from there to here. Writing of that journey became another journey, this time a directed one between two known points: what I had become and that other life that suddenly, as I began writing of it, seemed to belong to a woman unknown to me. I wanted to retrieve the path between before it dimmed. The journey that was the writing would lay before me the journey that was the doing, and then I would know, in all its particularity, the precise path by which the woman I am now, who was once unknown to me, came into being. That was my subject. (Koller, 1990, p. 48)

Koller wrote An Unknown Woman as a reconstruction of the "events on and preceding Nantucket as though they were being recorded while they happened." (Koller, 1990, p. 49) She achieved this illusion by writing in the present tense and using flashbacks, techniques which she states prevented her from explaining or excusing and constrained her to write of her state of mind and of events exactly as she remembered them. An Unknown Woman is, therefore, in Koller's mind

a consciously crafted record, something I could do only afterward, after I succeeded in coming to know myself, after I grasped the beginning, middle, and end, and all the steps between. (Koller, 1990, p. 50)

Koller asserts that, while it is a reconstruction, it is not, however, fiction. Indeed, as with current researchers, for example Laird (1989) and McAdams (1993), Koller argues that "no one ever really records an event. The only sort of 'recording' that ever takes place is of events that are already half-told through customs or rules that implicitly organize them." (Koller, 1990, pp. 49-50) And so An Unknown Woman

is not a novel, not a journal, not ultimately about me, but in that tandem with the narrative about my coming to understand myself it is an account of the *process* of coming to understand oneself: both tale and explication. ... It is, rather, ...the tangle of my thoughts and feelings and plans and hopes and despairs. A mind unraveling [sic] itself. An enterprise that can be presented to others only afterward, from the vantage point of the skeins untangled, the knots removed, the fabric an unbroken whole. (Koller, 1990, pp. 66-67)

Koller's second text, The Stations of Solitude, was begun around 1988 and published, far

more quickly, in 1990. (Koller, 1990, p. 181) This second work, presenting the narrative of Koller's journey after leaving Nantucket, is, in some ways, very similar to An Unknown Woman. Of The Stations, Koller says:

I write these chapters about solitude as I wrote those about Nantucket: primarily for myself. To learn what I think, to understand certain things I've done, certain things that have happened to me. To discover the path from there to here. ... by displaying the process. (Koller, 1990, p. 67)

In other ways, The Stations of Solitude, is a very different sort of text. It is more overtly organized around a number of themes, each presented in a titled chapter. Moreover, it is less apparently a chronological account than "a philosophical inquiry into what it is to be a person: how one becomes a person, and what it is that one has become." (Koller, 1990, p. 67) In this text, Koller takes her readers, station by station, along the way to their destination of becoming

the kind of person you wish to become. The line of travel is the process of shaping a human being, and the stations are stopping places in the process: they are recurring circumstances in which a certain kind of decision, and then acting on it, are required of you. The decision you're called on to make will have far-reaching consequences for the person you are, the person you wish to become. It is the price of the journey: that at this stopping place you must make a choice. ... The stations form a circuit that I chose to enter upon. My circuit will end when I do. (Koller, 1990, pp. x-xi)

Out of the pages of both An Unknown Woman and, to a lesser extent, The Stations of Solitude, we are able to piece together something of the unknown woman who Koller was before Nantucket and something of the processes through which she came to know and to reconstruct her self and her meanings while on Nantucket. It is out of the pages of The Stations of Solitude that we are able to piece together the choices presented and the decisions taken which shaped the person Koller was to become after leaving Nantucket. In addition to these two principal texts, I will also refer occasionally to Koller's doctoral dissertation, The Concept of Emotion: A Study of the Analyses of James, Russell, and Ryle (1960) and to six articles, entitled "Hers", written by Koller and published in The New York Times in November - December, 1983.

Throughout both of the two principal texts, in unfolding her authentic self, Koller presents a number of recurring themes. I will focus on those four which I believe are essential to an

understanding of Alice Koller's construction of self and meaning: self -- knowing and living out of self; others -- relating with others and learning to balance the voices of others with the voice of self; knowing -- ways of knowing and sources of knowledge; and working. Moreover, these themes are constructed by Koller around the midlife transformational crisis which she experienced on Nantucket Island, producing three distinct developmental stages in her growing understanding of self and being: before Nantucket, on Nantucket, and since Nantucket²⁹. Tracing the development of each of the four key themes of self, others, knowing, and working, within each of the three critical stages of Koller's life, will give us insight into the nature of and the meanings ascribed by Koller to her transformation of self. This interpretative analysis will be guided by two questions posed of Koller's texts:

1. Against the conceptual framework of the major psychological research which seems to bear on her development,
 - a. What was the nature of Alice Koller's transformational crisis, at age 37, on Nantucket Island? and,
 - b. How did Alice change her construction of self and meaning during this transformational process?
2. Situated within her socio-cultural context, how did Alice Koller respond to the conflicting ideals and images facing an educated woman in twentieth-century America?

BEFORE NANTUCKET

An Unknown Self

In her dissertation, written three years before her flight to Nantucket, Alice Koller defines self-image:

Let us say that your image of yourself consists of a set of assertions which are surrogates for (1) actions you recall performing, and (2) actions you envision performing. ... In short, one's conception of oneself is what one takes one's

²⁹ I will follow Koller's use of the phrase "since Nantucket", rather than "after Nantucket"

present self to be, which in turn may be understood as a set of assertions which record actions one recalls, and also actions one envisions. (Koller, 1960, pp. 204, 206)

Three years later at the age of 37, as she walked the moors of Nantucket Island reviewing her life, what was Koller's conception of her own self, based on what she had done and what she could imagine she would do in the future? For Koller, her own self was essentially unknown: unknown both to her self and to others. In An Unknown Woman, Koller describes this unknown self using a variety of metaphors, all of which emphasize the silent emptiness of her self, hidden beneath an external façade:

I am closed off into myself and no one but me can ever help me get out. (Koller, 1981, p. 13)

I feel that I'm about to burst a prison. (Koller, 1981, p. 15)

... my face ... my voice ... my body ... This whole organism that I've turned into my façade. (Koller, 1981, p. 84)

...it was as though you punched a button that released the machinery that was holding the structure of me together. (Koller, 1981, p. 97)

I don't know what to look for inside me... I think I've been anesthetized [sic], deadened. (Koller, 1981, p. 135)

I cut the cord. The cord. .. See what happens when I cut it. All the little pieces that were stuck to it fall away, revealing what it's been holding together: nothing. Empty, hollow, nothing. (Koller, 1981, p. 198)

But at the very centre of this hollow, under layers of accretions, Koller describes her core as containing an undeveloped, infant self:

But now ... slitting the crust that kept me preserved as an infant. An infant: not innocent, but ignorant. And it's as an infant that I now have to turn my eyes toward the world. My eyes...closed off beneath the layers that mummified me. (Koller, 1981, p. 129)

Her unknown self was so tiny and so barricaded that Koller was unable to connect with her own feelings, wantings and purposes.

As we read An Unknown Woman, we learn that Koller was never aware of knowing what she wanted, or how she felt, or what her purposes were. It was as if the actions she recalls performing were not based on her own wishes, but only on the influence of others in her life:

I'm fighting to break out of the pattern of what I've been doing for, my God, twenty-four years. ... Each thing I do during the course of a day is something I've been told to do, or taught to do. I have to replace all of it with what I choose to do. I have to learn how to choose one thing over another, one way of doing something over another way. That means I have to want one thing, or one way, more than another. ... My stomach tightens. Want one thing more than another? (Koller, 1981, pp. 20-21)

What I savored was the acclaim someone else could give me. What is it like to savor the thing I'm doing? (Koller, 1981, p. 56)

What is it like to want to do anything at all? I think I don't know. I don't know what wanting is. ... Not know what wanting is? Ridiculous. Wantings move the day along. Wantings pave the path for a life. Or so I've been told. (Koller, 1981, p. 129)

I've probably never done a single thing I've wanted to do, for the simple reason that I've never understood what it is to want to do something ... to know what wanting is requires that I be able to recognize what I feel, but that I don't know how to do that, and I don't even know how to begin learning how. (Koller, 1981, p. 148)

Purposes. What is a purpose? Something to be achieved ... they depend upon a previous wanting, which shapes the path toward their fulfillment [sic]. I'm back at my old unknown beginning: not knowing what wanting is. (Koller, 1981, pp. 164-165)

How did Koller's self came to be so tiny, so constricted, so unknown? Why she was so out of touch with her feelings, her wantings, and her purposes? Why was it that she had always been more aware of the voices of others in her life than her own voice? In listening to Alice Koller's voice in An Unknown Woman, we become aware that her relationship with her mother is key to understanding her being "closed off into [her]self" responding to "something I've been told to do, or taught to do" by others. (Koller, 1981, pp. 13, 21)

Relying on Others

Needing Her Mother's Love

In understanding how Koller's relationship with her mother impacted on her developing self, we first have to turn to theory presented in a previous chapter: namely, that the early years of a child's life, in dialogue with the family context, especially with the mother, are pivotal to the development and nature of a child's self, its understanding of human relationships, as well as its growing mastery of the environment. Each child's development is significantly effected by the mother's personality structure, the developmental process of her parental function, and by her ability to maintain continued emotional availability. As a result of the mother-child relationship, by the end of the preschool years a core identity, or a distorted one, will have been established in the developing child. Koller's own words suggest that, during her crisis on Nantucket, she became aware that, by 5 years of age, her core self had already been twisted by the negative nature of her relationship with her mother:

I have to realize that my thirty-year trail away from being a little girl has been nothing more than standing on the same spot, moving my legs up and down. I've never stopped being that five-year-old... (Koller, 1981, p. 125)

Moreover, as we have noted, if a mother consistently does not respond to the needs of her child, that child will likely develop chronic feelings of emptiness and will feel unloved and unlovable. It was in just such an unsupportive environment that Koller was raised. As the theory suggests and as we have already seen, Alice did develop feelings of emptiness. As well, she also speaks of developing an intense awareness of being unloved and unlovable:

She should have loved me. How unlovable could I have been?...I hated her because she didn't love me. ... She couldn't love me. (Koller, 1981, p. 198)

And so we see that Koller's childhood relationship with her mother played a foundational role in fostering in her a frail and silenced self.

Furthermore, because of her mother's unresponsive pattern of mothering, Koller did not develop a sense of confidence in her abilities and mastery over her environment. As she recalls, there was little encouragement or praise from her mother around which Alice

could build a confident self and a positive sense of her skills:

...elocution lessons ... tap-dancing lessons... But at no time did anyone give me a hint that any of this was supposed to be fun or exciting. They were simply things that had to be practiced [sic] at home; that was all I knew. My mother wouldn't let me show her my new steps until the old ones were perfect... (Koller, 1981, p. 48)

If Koller did not feel loved and lovable, if she did not develop a strong a self and confidence in her skills, then, what did she learn from her relationship with her mother? In order to live by her mother's seemingly never-satisfied standards, in order to be judged, somehow, as *being good*, Alice learned to behave in certain ways. She learned to silence her own feelings, wantings and purposes. As she declares:

I've never understood what it is to want to do something ... to know what wanting is requires that I be able to recognize what I feel, but that I don't know how to do that. (Koller, 1981, p. 148)

And she learned to live by patterns of behaviour developed as a child in hopes of meeting her mother's expectations and gaining her affection. Looking back over her life, Alice attests that

she made me feel that I had to deserve her love, and that I never did. ... Of course I was always looking to some indeterminate but very severe standard that I had to meet in everything I attempted. (Koller, 1981, p. 198)

At the age of 37, Koller discovered that many of these ingrained behaviour patterns still dominated her life, affecting her daily routines. As she reveals to us:

I hurry to finish so that I can watch the sunset in peace. The thought arrests me....Finish unpacking, because you've started it. Finish (whatever) because you've started it. My mother: "You can't start the new book until you finish the one you're reading, ... At seven I was too unsophisticated simply to turn the pages slowly, feigning reading ... Thirty years later, I'm still obeying. Why ...? She told me too. (Koller, 1981, pp.18-19)

Even Koller's body posture reflects the ever-present impact of her mother's rules on her:

... aware of my tense shoulders. I let them fall a hand's breadth to their natural position. A stupid habit. I still do it, even knowing why. It's how I used to hunch over my book, reading fast to get as much read as I could before my mother called me downstairs.... To do something in her house. ... I still hunch my shoulders, waiting for her to call me away from whatever I'm doing, hurrying against her

deadline... (Koller, 1981, pp. 58-59)

There is an even more poignant example wherein Alice's mother's voice has, for 37 years, silenced Alice's own most basic needs:

The room is dark when I awaken... I lie quietly trying to fall asleep again. Left side. Right side. On my back. Counting. Breathe deeply. ... I reach for my watch, but in the dark I can't read its face. Irritated, I return the watch to the night table and fall back on the bed. And then an unfamiliar idea comes to me: I can turn on the light. I fight against it even as I consider it. My hand hesitates all the way to the switch. ... I lie in the light-filled room as though I've entered another world... The newness disorders my thoughts. ...I reach for my book. ... Something hot to drink could put me to sleep. But that's downstairs. ... It strikes me that the idea of going down to the kitchen gives me the same feeling that the idea of turning on the light gave me moments ago. A restraint, almost as tangible as a hand, stops me now from getting out of bed. Just as it half-stopped me from turning on the switch. ... a battle of unaccountable intensity. With what? With whom? Working against the presence... I throw back the covers...then out of bed... astonished that nothing terrible has yet happened.... I sit back on the bed as though thrown. I'm breaking another rule: When you go to bed, you stay there until it's time to get up. If you wake up in the night, just go back to sleep. No lights. My mouth falls open. Is it possible that I have lived thirty-seven years as though I were still the little girl my mother had to make go to sleep? ...I think swiftly back on the terrifying nights of sleeplessness throughout the last ten years. I've never turned on a light to read myself back to sleep, never gotten out of bed after the night began. (Koller, 1981, pp. 78-79)

In order to try to earn the love her mother kept from her, in order live by her mother's rules and expectations, Koller learned to silence, almost completely, her own wantings, her own self, her own awareness, and replaced them instead with empty, fruitless habits and, eventually, with the voices of others.

Sometime in her early childhood, Koller learned that her mother did not, could not love her, and that she, Alice, could not successfully find a way to earn her love. And so Koller recalls turning instead to getting her mother's attention:

A long time ago, when I knew she couldn't love me, I must have decided I'd take the next best thing: I'd get her attention whatever way I could, even to have her yelling at me. All those years of fighting with her while I was growing up were my way of getting some, any, substitute for her affection. What I got was her attention: her needling, nagging, ignorant, unloving attention. (Koller, 1981, p. 97)

In time, such acerbic attention was not sufficient to fill Koller's hollow, child-self. She then turned to others, hoping to fill the emptiness of not having a mother's love.

Seeking Approval from Others

The applause I played for everywhere ...were...substitutes for her love. I tried to make the whole rest of the world give me what she couldn't give me... So of course I could never get enough attention from other people, because they were always giving me the wrong thing: they weren't giving me her love... I've never stopped being that five-year-old, old enough to know that I was missing something, but not old enough to know that it sure ought to have come to me without my having to pay for it. And I've been trying to buy it, lying and pretending ever since.... I've hated her too long: nothing resembling love is left in me... (Koller, 1981, pp. 125-126)

And so, primarily because of a very detrimental relationship with her mother, Alice left her childhood with a very fragile self and a lack of confidence in her own abilities. When she couldn't get her mother's affection, Alice began, instead, to replace it with approval from others. For Alice, such attention and applause were earned in a number of particular ways: through her appearance and intelligence and by learning to pretend to be what others wanted her to be - especially those in authority. In so doing, however, Koller learned to silence, even further, that small, frail self which she brought with her from her early childhood years.

The analysis of the nature and impact of Koller's relationships with others on her personal narrative must always be understood within the overarching cultural environment within which Koller lived. (Laird, 1989; McAdams, 1993)

Wider cultural and historical narratives (as well as the storytelling context itself) provide the frames of reference within which individual narratives can be either constructed or understood. The culture, or the collectivity, provides exemplary story models from which the individual's story draws shape and expression and within which interpretation is possible, connecting the individual to the culture. (Laird, 1989, p. 432)

And so, as we continue our exploration of Koller's story, we will regularly remind ourselves of one of the principal questions we are asking of Koller's texts: situated within her socio-cultural context, how did Alice Koller respond to the conflicting ideals and images facing an

educated woman in twentieth-century America?

• *Through Appearance*

For Koller, the age of 13 marked a significant turning point in her life: it was the age when she first won approval from others for her appearance. Koller remembers when she

...was thirteen. A Sunday evening meeting of young people ... Stuart, the best-looking and the most popular boy, asked to take me home. ... On my doorstep, he kissed me. ... I was so stunned ... in front of the bathroom mirror, staring, wondering, dreaming, baffled. I can still see that face. ... that thirteen-year-old looking to see what was in that face to get all that attention that evening, what there was in that face to prompt that kiss. The kiss was my initiation, not just to sexuality, but to a new reality ... By kissing me, Stuart showed me that I was Alice ... He didn't *have* to kiss me. ... His reason was that he wanted to. And the basis for his wanting was my face, what I looked like. ... I just had to stand there, and look like whatever I looked like ... It was beyond my understanding ... the girl who was receiving all that attention. ... Mirrors and my face. My face and receiving attention. My face and loving. (Koller, 1981, pp. 81-83)

In one evening, with one kiss, Alice learned that others found her to be beautiful and that she could use her attractiveness, without effort, to get attention, approval, and even love.

In some respects, this emphasis on appearance is typical of adolescent females. (Apter, 1990)

In adolescence, too, girls develop a searing self-consciousness through which they are aware of how they "look" --- how others see them, how they might be defined and criticized. They long for a perfection that will protect them from rejection. (Apter, 1995, pp. 33-34)

In emphasizing her appearance, her 'looks', Koller was expressing a commonly held cultural value for girls and women: "the pursuit of personal beauty has always been a central concern of American women." (Banner, 1983, p. 3) Indeed, it has long been part of American culture that beauty is, in fact, a "woman's duty", whether it be the pleasing environment which she creates in her home or whether it be in her own personal beauty. (Banner, 1983, pp. 9-10) But, for Alice, this emphasis on appearance, so typical of others of her age, became a long-term reliance on her looks as a way to assure attention and approval and, hopefully, to ensure her protection from any further rejection. And so

she condemns herself:

I'm spoiled because I always use my looks to get something I want when I'm not sure I can get it by ways that other people have to use.... for the last twenty-five years ... (Koller, 1981, p. 81)

Beginning with that kiss, Koller learned to depend on her physical attractiveness to get attention and approval. Even in the midst of her crisis on Nantucket, when she briefly left the island to attend the annual convention of the Philosophical Association in New York, we see the pervasiveness of her reliance on her beauty. We can listen in to her colleagues' reactions to her, as recalled and selected by Koller, and see how much they responded to her appearance:

"You look gorgeous, Alice, as always. Don't you get older like the rest of us?" (Koller, 1981, p. 218)

He looks down at me, attending now to me. "You're looking very good as usual." (Koller, 1981, p. 221)

..."you're the most popular girl here." ... "Alice, you look marvelous [sic]. What color is your dress, anyway? .. I stand, turning a full circle to show him the dress. (Koller, 1981, p. 226)

Relying on her appearance for attention and approval, unfortunately further contributed to Koller's silencing of her authentic inner self and creating an external shell within which she could hide. And so Koller comes to bemoan her very appearance, the appearance which had brought her so much attention and approval:

... my face ... my voice ... my body ... This whole organism that I've turned into my façade. (Koller, 1981, p. 84)

Interestingly, in spite of others responding to her appearance and Alice apparently relying on their response as a way of being in the world, she herself was not sure whether she believed that she was beautiful. She wonders:

I think of myself as beautiful, and yet I'm always surprised to be told that I am. How can I begin to untangle all this? ... A mirror should be able to tell me what I look like. Yet it's when I look into a mirror that I'm stopped from thinking myself beautiful. Once every now and then if I look long enough, or if the light happens to be just so, I begin to get some faint hint of what people have been telling me for the last twenty-five years. (Koller, 1981, p. 82)

Alice reports believing, however, that others were attracted to her appearance and, therefore, that her appearance did gain her the attention and approval she sought:

I think back to the day I finally saw my face telling me my age. But if I don't really think I'm beautiful, why should it matter that my face will now have lines and shadows marking it? I know: it's that I'll stop being treated as a beautiful woman. But I should welcome what's true. If it's true that I'm not beautiful, then I should be glad when people stop treating me as though I were. What I've known all along will be even more obvious to everyone else now. I should welcome getting older because it diminishes the distance between what I've known and what other people tell me. (Koller, 1981, p. 109)

But, it did seem to matter that she was aging. And at age 37, part of what catapulted Koller into her midlife crisis was her changing appearance and, with the changes, the threat of losing her one effortless source of approval.

My makeup has ceased to be a subterfuge ... Two long lines are being etched on either side of my mouth. Semicircles are beginning to form under my eyes. (Koller, 1981, p. 1)

- *Through Intelligence*

The applause that I knew would come when I finally had my degree: the admiration would reach beyond my face. (Koller, 1981, pp. 115-116)

In addition to her looks, Alice discovered that “my talent, my brains” (Koller, 1981, p. 164) were also aspects of her self which gained other people’s attention and recognition. She describes

... being smart. Now there's something I *knew*, from the time I was the littlest girl until the catastrophe of those exams at Harvard [qualifying exams for her doctorate]. ... Years of getting the best grades, winning scholarships, knowing that I could learn anything simply by setting myself to do it; then unbelievably failing the Harvard exams; and in all the years since, wondering whether I was really smart after all. ... The department actually voted to pass me at one point in their deliberations: they thought I was smart. ...he thought I was smart enough to have passed the first time. ... He even implied that the department thought so too. (Koller, 1981, pp. 114-116)

Even after Koller began to doubt that she really was smart, she still used her intelligence as a way to get people’s attention: by dramatizing her talents and her academic successes. By emphasizing her intelligence, Koller recognizes, however, that she was

continuing to build a illusory self within which her real self remained muted and dormant.

Look at me: I'm being intellectual. I even underplay having my doctorate, to make my eyes open more widely when I, oh so reluctantly, announce, oh so quietly, that I have my degree. (Koller, 1981, p. 62)

• *By Pretending*³⁰

I've never stopped being that five-year-old ... I've been trying to buy it [her mother's love], lying and pretending ever since. (Koller, 1981, p. 125)

As we have seen, within our culture, girls and women learn that they have to silence many aspects of their authentic selves; they learn to pretend and lie; they learn how to construct a self of which others will approve. In order to fit the socio-cultural image deemed appropriate for girls and women and, thereby, to please others, females learn to silence their real selves by pretending to be something other than what they really are and, in the process, lose their selves. In Koller's own words, she was always "...playing different roles with different people: the seductress with a man; the humble student with a teacher;.... I was what others expected me to be." (Koller, 1981, p. 285) Koller similarly reflects on how, by pretending, she has denied her feelings, learning to 'put on a self' which is polite and responsive, always considering the other before her self:

I'll pretend something is funny just so the person telling the story won't be hurt that it didn't come out right. I'll pretend to be interested in what someone says to me just because he's interested in saying it (Koller, 1981, p. 138)

And so, through pretending and lying, in order to gain attention and recognition, approval and applause, Koller silenced her true inner self and became what others expected of her. As she affirms:

The only truth I've ever told is the kind that would get me my applause. (Koller, 1981, p. 126)

But think of all the ways there are to lie, and I'll have done every one of them. Pretending to like something because someone in authority does. Evading a question. Saying only part of what I believe. Not saying anything at all.

³⁰ I am maintaining Koller's choice of language in her use of the terms "pretending", "lying", and "dissembling" to describe a culturally produced behaviour pattern common among girls and women. See pp 90-91 above

Shaping my words to fit what I know will be acceptable. Smiling when someone intends to be funny. Looking serious when my thoughts are elsewhere. Agreeing when I haven't even thought over the matter. ... Trying to amuse in order to avoid talking about something I'm not sure of. Acting. ... And I don't know where it ends. I have to try to think of one thing I've done that was free.... By pretending, by acting, by lying, what have I bought for me? ... my way of getting some, *any*, substitute for her affection. (Koller, 1981, p. 95, 97)

• *By Accepting the Voice of Authority*

In addition to learning to rely on her appearance, her intelligence, and her ability to pretend and to please, Alice turned to the voice of authority as a guideline for acceptable, approvable behaviour - and as a surrogate for her mother's lost love. As she states:

I'm fighting to break out of the pattern of what I've been doing for, my God, twenty-four years. ... Each thing I do during the course of a day is something I've been told to do, or taught to do. (Koller, 1981, pp. 20-21)

Come to think of it, I didn't accept every opinion, I singled out the opinions of persons in authority, yes, but it was the authority of excellence. Now there's a piece of subtlety for you. I had been toadying to ordinary authority, I might have noticed long ago that I was creating surrogates for my mother. (Koller, 1981, pp. 163-164)

Two years after leaving Goodman, and after one year at the University of Chicago, when Koller would have been about 22 years of age, she seems to have consulted a psychologist, for reasons which she does not indicate:

The psychologist I talked with in Chicago a long time ago: "You are hobbled by something having to do with authority. You're as unable to move as though your legs were bound together by a board. (Koller, 1981, p. 90)

As we follow Koller's story, it becomes clear that she was unable to follow this quest placed before her by the psychologist. Years later on Nantucket, one of the central issues confronting Koller remained her abdication of her own voice and her own self to the voices of authority. Faced with so many examples of her acceding to authority, Koller tries to fortify herself:

From now on I must stop being shocked by how much authority I have acceded to, in the unknown hope that the authority before would magically turn into my mother,

who would then open her arms to me. I have to stop being shocked, and instead become aware of the pervasiveness of it. (Koller, 1981, p. 131)

Women's Roles and Relationships

As we have seen in a previous chapter, many feminist theorists suggest that through the 'normal' socialization process in our culture, in which women and their roles are generally subordinate and undervalued, girls and women learn to associate their roles with giving to others, putting others' needs before their own, and, indeed, silencing their own wants and needs, their own voices. In examining how Koller responded to women's roles and to relationships with men, we will see that she was generally representative of the cultural norms within which she was raised and matured. In keeping with the cultural expectations of her time, Koller largely silenced her self and her voice and her dreams. For example, we can see her undervaluing females, in those times, although few, when she dismissed her self, by specifically dismissing her gender: "ignorant bitch" (Koller, 1981, p. 60); "stupid girl" (Koller, 1981, p.102); "this ignorant female" (Koller, 1981, p.104); "oh, stupid, stupid female" (Koller, 1981, p.178)

A most revealing analogy of Koller's undisguised internalized beliefs about men and women can be seen in her imaginings about Logos, her first German Shepherd dog who she bought to accompany her to Nantucket, and Ousia, her second shepherd, a female originally bought to have Logos's offspring:

If Logos had been a human being he would have been awarded graduate fellowships in his junior year at college, taken his doctorate in no time flat, and then sat back to have his choice of academic appointments. He would have published four papers revolutionizing whatever field he was studying; in three years he would have been chairman of his department; in five, president of the university. ... Ousia would have been a long-haired girl wearing organdy dresses that flowed to the floor. She would have sat in calm silence while young boys broke their hearts for her, and she would have chosen one of them for some reason that only she would know, and she would have remained faithful to him for all the days of her life. (Koller, 1990, p. 117)

In this analogy, taking into account the cultural norms of the time in which Koller was maturing, we see a sketch of success that would most commonly be achieved by a male

juxtaposed against a culturally normative view of femininity. Set against Koller's own narrative, we might also read into this analogy, two aspects of Koller's own vision of herself: the 'masculine' career goals which she had set for herself at a young age, which we will see that she did not ever achieve³¹, and the 'feminine' narrative of romance and marriage, about which she also dreamed, but, likewise, did not attain. Koller, like so many educated women of her era, had wanted it all: she wanted to marry and to have a career. She honestly writes:

There are two things worth having: a work that would absorb me and a man to love who would love me. I have neither one. (Koller, 1981, p. 206)

By then [after graduate school] everyone I knew was marrying and having children, although some also stayed in their careers. (Koller, 1990, p. 261)

Koller reports that, at a young age, she set for herself a goal which was most commonly reserved for males in her generation:

I think back to rereading Burckhardt's *Renaissance* in Berkeley last summer. I wanted to see whether the sections on the education of women had withstood all the years since high school when I chose them to guide the course of my own education. To be taught, as men were taught, whatever there was to be learned, to speak on equal terms with any person, to read everything of value ever written, to see everything beautiful ever made, to be at home anywhere in the world. Oh, yes, Burckhardt. The surprise, then, of rereading those pages twenty years later and discovering that I had forgotten what purpose that kind of education had for fifteenth-century Italian women: not glory for themselves, but to render them suitable companions for Renaissance men. It was the wrong point to forget. I had been looking for the glory for myself. (Koller, 1981, pp. 200-201)

Koller had set this academic goal for herself eventually as a preparation for a career in a university. While she did attain the education, she was not able, as was the imagined Logos, to go on to a successful career in academia.

Like the invented Ousia, Koller also wanted to live the romance quest. Characteristic of most American women of the 1940's and 1950's, Koller expected to fall in love and to marry. She speaks of her dearest hope:

a person to be there with me. No, he himself would be

³¹ This aspect of Koller's narrative will be discussed later in this chapter, under the subtitle Working.

the home. No matter how often we might have to move, I'd be taking my home with me. Yes. That's home: an unbreakable connection with a man who would never go away from me. (Koller, 1981, p. 189)

And that Alice also hoped to have a family can be heard behind the few references she makes about mothering and children:

I stand at the base of the lighthouse, hoping to be permitted to go in, despite the signs. Close by are two houses. I decide which one of them might contain someone awake, and start up the stairway. Before I can knock, I hear a baby cry inside and I come away. (Koller, 1981, p. 38)

How long before new mothers take their babies home? It's the sort of fact I'll probably never confirm firsthand. (Koller, 1981, p. 264)

Koller was more than expecting to marry; it was as if she needed to marry. Prior to her flight to Nantucket at age 37, she seemed to be living as if her being single was some sort of temporary, transitional stage. It was as if she were a 'lady in waiting', believing that sooner or later a man will come along to rescue her. (Hicks & Anderson, 1989) As Dr. Kant, Koller's psychologist during her doctoral studies, observed about one of her many men, "You wanted him to rescue you, too." (Koller, 1981, p. 186) As we read the pages of An Unknown Woman, we observe Koller behaving almost as if she were desperate in her search for a man to marry.

Before Nantucket, in spite of a "trail of men", a "procession of men" (Koller, 1981, pp. 1, 176), Koller acknowledges still not having found a man to marry:

I wanted to get married. And each time the affair came to an end, I'd try to get the man back. But then, in time, I'd meet someone else and fall in love with him, and be glad I hadn't married the last man because this man was so right for me. (Koller, 1981, p. 179)

And we see that often, after the relationship had ended, she would chase after the man, trying to 'get him back': Koller pleads "... tell me why I was always chasing some man who had left me." (Koller, 1981, p. 95)

[Jim] had gone away first by marrying someone else while I was in Europe. ... he had gone furthest away of all by welcoming my initiative that we pick up our affair when I returned. (Koller, 1981, p. 63)

And even though I helped set up the scene for the farewell, I couldn't really believe that he [Mike] had gone. I called, I

wrote, I plotted ways to be in places where I thought he'd be when I thought he'd be there ... Why didn't I let him alone? ... I have never, no once, accepted the end of any of these things. (Koller, 1981, p. 93)

Two weeks later he [George] told me that he had never stopped seeing Elizabeth. ... I waited. Why did I wait? Because I wanted that Eden, by then lost. ... He had her, and he also had me. ... I was clutching and grabbing in order to keep him with me, and he was fleeing like a cornered animal. (Koller, 1981, pp. 168-169)

All the time I was with Larry, I was waiting for a chance to be with Stan. As soon as there was the remotest possibility that Stan might be available, I was off and running. Running after him. To be slapped. (Koller, 1981, p. 187)

Reviewing her list of lovers who had left her to marry another, Alice ponders why "they talk to me, but they marry her"? (Koller, 1981, p. 152) Randall married Mary; "Stan had a Genevieve, just as George had an Elizabeth"; (Koller, 1981, p. 181); and Jim married "someone else while I was in Europe." (Koller, 1981, p. 63)

Why have the men I've loved left me? I'm no closer to understanding it than I was after each breakup. Something's wrong with me that makes them go away, and I can't see it. ... (Koller, 1981, p. 188)

For Alice, it was even more puzzling that these men had left her because, after all, hadn't she become whatever they had wanted? Hadn't she silenced her own self and her own voice in order to be whatever they might desire? She asks:

What's wrong with me? Am I not smart? Thoughtful of their needs? Attractive? A storyteller to amuse them? What haven't I done for them that they might not even have known they wanted done for them, in bed or out? That's giving, isn't it? That's what the thing between a man and a woman is supposed to be, isn't it? (Koller, 1981, p. 193)

As with so many girls and women of her time, Alice silenced her self, in order to win and keep an man. But she never did win.

Alice Koller's mother did not love her. And so she turned instead to others to fill the empty hollow that was her self. But by being so fragile and by working so hard to win others' attention and approval, Alice chose to conform ever more closely to others' expectations of her. Even in this endeavour, Alice was rebuffed: she failed her doctoral exams; she was unsuccessful in feeling accepted by conforming to the voice of authority; what she

earned by pretending and dissembling was of questionable value; and, she never found a man “who will love me, even though he knows me.” (Koller, 1981, p. 187)

I always expect to be slapped when I fall in love. I'm holding one hand out to give something, but I'm keeping the other hand close to my face, ready to protect myself from being struck. Pushed away. From having the thing I'm giving thrown back at me. No one will take the thing I'm giving. Simply take it. (Koller, 1981, p. 187)

Unfortunately, unlike her fabled Logos and Ousia, Koller was unsuccessful in reaching either of her dreams. And so she laments:

... no career, no home, no man. (Koller, 1981, p. 2)

I'm still unattached: to anyone, to any work. (Koller, 1981, p. 88)

There are two things worth having: a work that would absorb me and a man to love who would love me. I have neither one. (Koller, 1981, p. 206)

After so much effort and pretence, Alice did not know who her self really was; after so much pain and rejection, Alice did not trust her relationships with others. And so as her journey on Nantucket began, Alice reports believing that no one would accept her as she truly was, no one would love her for her own self:

On my way here, I tested all the lines connecting me with people and found them ready to be cut. If indeed the lines weren't already cut before I tried them. So back there I leave nothing and no one. I may as well be here, alone, where there's no one to seek, as to be somewhere else where I might begin to hope again. (Koller, 1981, pp. 36-37)

Knowing

As we have noted in an earlier chapter, some women learn by listening to the voices of others, rather than by expressing their own voices. And as we have also seen, Alice Koller was just such a woman. According to Belenky and her associates, these women, identified as those having a received way of knowing, tend to be quite literal and unable to tolerate ambiguity, assuming that there is only one way of doing things and only one

right answer to each question. (Belenky et al., 1986) They understand truth as objectively existing and they understand ways of establishing criteria and collecting evidence as being passed down from one authority to another until it comes to them. Until her transformation on Nantucket, Koller's most typical way of knowing was to determine what others knew and how they knew it and to reproduce it successfully in her self, so that she could say:

Each thing I do during the course of a day is something I've been told to do, or taught to do. ... I have to learn to choose one thing over another ... want one thing more than another. What will I use as a criterion? I don't know. (Koller, 1981, p. 21)

For most of Koller's life, in search of attention and approval, she focused on learning the 'correct' procedure or method; she focused on 'getting it right'.

Before Nantucket, the situation that most clearly exemplified how Koller strove to achieve a particular method was her experience in acting school at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago. Koller went to Goodman believing that she was a good actress, indeed she wanted to be "the greatest actress of my generation." (Koller, 1981, p. 116) When she was unable to achieve the 'correct' method as described by the faculty, Alice no longer knew that she was good, but rather believed that she was incompetent and so she quit. Alice tells of her decision to leave:

... at Goodman .. only Stanislavsky deserved to be studied. So I decided that I couldn't act Goodman's way, and then went on to decide that I couldn't act at all. (Koller, 1981, p. 87)

I stopped acting because I couldn't act according to the method that Goodman taught. ... I construed that method as a standard I had to meet in order to count...and when I found I couldn't meet it, I let it disqualify me. A standard, a rule: this is how we do things. Someone else's rules. Again. (Koller, 1981, pp. 107-108)

I said to myself: What I'm being taught doesn't match what it feels like to be on stage, therefore I'm not competent to be on stage. (Koller, 1981, p. 112)

Koller's way of knowing was in making her own the voices of others and her source of truth their methods and procedures. For herself, Koller had no source of knowledge, no criteria for judging evidence, and no truth that she felt was her own. She admits:

I don't know how / respond to things. I don't know how to

find out what's going on inside me. ... I don't know how to use my own evidence. I don't even know what counts as evidence. (Koller, 1981, pp. 134-135)

I don't trust my own judgment because I have nothing of my own in terms of which I *can* judge. (Koller, 1981, p. 164)

In trying unsuccessfully as a young child to earn her mother's love, Koller first severed her connections with her emotions and feelings. In listening to the voices of authority, in trying to understand and to 'get their methods right' as a guide her life, Koller, once again, severed her connections with her own emotions and feelings. When Koller arrived on Nantucket at the age of 37, she did not know what she felt or what she wanted. And so she speaks out of her frustrations:

I'm supposed to be able to *know* whether I'm angry or unhappy or irritated or cheerful or fond or loving. Known it with the same kind of certainty that I know that this is my own hand. ... I just don't know what my own feelings are. ... I don't know what to look for inside me. I don't know how to identify *that* I'm feeling something, let alone to give a name to it. I thing I've been anesthetized [sic], deadened. (Koller, 1981, p. 135)

Koller's concern with emotions has a history that goes back at least as far as her doctoral dissertation, The Concept of Emotion: A Study of the Analyses of James, Russell, and Ryle (1960). Through an analysis of the works of William James, Bertrand Russell, and Gilbert Ryle, Koller intended to examine "what emotions are" and to be able to demonstrate that there was "no fully adequate analysis of the concept of emotion." (Koller, 1960, pp. i, ii) She proposed that viewing emotions simply as either "things-had or things-done", as either "states of mind or actions", was insufficient for understanding the concept of emotions. (Koller, 1960, pp. v, viii) Koller's goal was to find a way of discovering a set of referents that would consistently correspond with a particular emotion such as anger, love, or grief. (Koller, 1960, pp. xi, xii) Her principal question for investigation was:

What sort of thing serves as the reference for specific emotion-terms? (Koller, 1960, p. 181)

I wish to maintain that we do not seem to know what sort of thing we are talking about when we use specific emotion-terms; and that until we are able to characterize a common reference for all such terms (if they have a common reference), we do not seem able to explicate certain assertions which use the concept of emotion. (Koller, 1960, p. 182)

... that is, we do not yet seem to know what sort of thing anger and love are. ... we seem forced to admit that we do not know what sort of thing anger and grief are. (Koller, 1981, pp. 183, 184)

Koller's dissertation is a reasoned, philosophical analysis of the concept "emotion", as presented by the three philosophers selected. It is not so much about *experiencing* emotions, as it is about *knowing* about the experience of emotions. Koller's dissertation is, therefore, an excellent example of received knowledge, as she works her way towards an understanding of emotions, using the methods and procedures of philosophy.

While others wondered about her choice of dissertation topic, Koller states that the choice of this particular topic was "probably one of the few genuine choices I've ever made, in philosophy or out." (Koller, 1918, p. 136)

"It sounds as though you want to know what feeling feels like." Even the tone of the comment implied that I couldn't be so foolish as not to know what feelings range around within me. I remember replying sarcastically. But now I see that that's a rather close description of what I don't know. (Koller, 1981, p. 135)

As she began her journey on Nantucket, three years after writing her dissertation, what she claimed she did not know about herself was, in fact, her feelings and emotions. Even as an actress, Koller reports feeling cut off from her emotions:

But to [be good] an actress has to *feel* the character, feel as the character would feel throughout the performance, night after night. Otherwise, it's not acting: it's merely giving the actress a chance to strut. It wasn't something I could do. I could only feel *myself* playing the character. I couldn't help knowing, as soon as I'd hear certain lines, that I was supposed to be angry or happy; I prepared myself to be angry or happy (Koller, 1981, p. 87)

No doubt, reflecting on her belief that she had difficulty expressing feelings even as an actress, in her dissertation, Koller makes reference to actors who just

... 'emote'. This term, however, is a barbarism. However, no actor considers what he does is called 'emoting', but simply 'acting'. If an actor does speak of someone as emoting, he means that the person is acting badly. Further ordinary persons who use the term to refer to the activities of non-actors thereby accuse such persons of exhibiting behavior designed to draw attention to themselves. 'Emoting', that is to say, is always a pejorative term. (Koller, 1960, p. vi)

Nonetheless, in An Unknown Woman, Koller does describe herself as being melodramatic and reports that others also saw her as being theatrical, perhaps even 'emoting':

What a fake, a fraud, a phony ... I sit here on an island with a typewriter and some paper, expecting the truth to unfold before my waiting eyes. I'm playing a part: another role for the big actress. Footlights up. Houselights down. Curtain. Scene: the hermit in her retreat. ... So: still acting. .. Still starring in plays I invent as I go along. I've tried so often to stop it. .. I left the Goodman Theatre in the fall of 1946. Now it's the fall of 1962. Sixteen years of making people look at me. Look at me: I'm being passionate. Look at me: I'm being intellectual ... (Koller, 1981, pp. 60, 62)

Think of how many people have accused me of being theatrical, of exaggerating. I'm just beginning to understand that I behaved that way not for the effect it would have, but because that was my interpretation of what being angry, or being loving, or being fearful was. I learned it from reading plays, watching plays, working in plays, talking about plays. Of course it was theatrical: it had to be big enough to get across the footlights; it had to get to the last row of the balcony. And because I've never gotten off the stage, I've never noticed that I didn't feel the things I was trying to make other people believe I felt. (Koller, 1981, pp. 135-136)

Sadly, when she is considering suicide on Nantucket and wondering to whom she could reach out for assurance and support, Koller concludes:

...not one of them would offer her undivided attention to what I'm thinking about, if I were to say I needed her right now. They'd think I'm drunk, or depressed. Or that it's one more wild play I wrote for myself. I sigh. From what they know of me, I understand how they'd think those things. I've used up their sympathy for my crises. (Koller, 1981, p. 251)

And so it seems that, to others, Koller was able to depict emotions quite well. Indeed, even as a reader follows Koller's experiences from paragraph to paragraph, her ability to present how she is feeling is fully engrossing.

In order to get attention, for most of her 37 years Koller had been using her emotions as a way of presenting an image of self to others. This presentation of emotions had become part of her façade, behind which she could hide her real self. The issue then for Koller, before Nantucket, was not so much that she was unable to feel and to express emotions, but rather that she was unable to use her emotions as a source of knowledge.

Working

Unlike the fictional Logos, Alice Koller never had her choice of academic appointments. Indeed, as she gazes into the mirror on that October morning, propelled by what she saw into her midlife journey, Alice writes of feeling so defeated that she claims:

I haven't even decided whether I want to teach. If I said that out loud, someone would ask why I went so far in philosophy. And I don't know. (Koller, 1981, p. 1)

After 13 years of struggling to earn her doctorate, when she finally submitted her completed dissertation, Koller felt empty and unable "to start the life to which my new doctorate entitled me." (Koller, 1981, p. 149)

Even when I finally took my Ph.D., I didn't begin the work that I had been preparing for. I tucked the degree away until I could think about whether I wanted to use it. (Koller, 1981, p. 89)

When Koller arrived on Nantucket, she looked back over the years that had passed and observed that she had not yet begun the work for which the degree had prepared her. Alice recounts:

Yet, two years after receiving that diploma, I was not being paid to do philosophy. I had held six other jobs: publisher's reader; secretary to a city planner; freelance writer of encyclopedia [sic] articles; scientist at a contract research company; assistant to a magazine editor; one semester of a university's nonrenewable teaching appointment at its lowest rank and salary, obtained only after writing two hundred letters of application and only because the philosophy department had a last-minute vacancy. I had lived in New York, Cambridge, Santa Barbara, Boston, then New York again, where one autumn morning I awakened in terror and despair to stare into a mirror at the ruin that was my life. (Koller, 1990, p. 43)

Why was it that Alice was unable to achieve that for which her education had prepared her? Why was it that Alice engaged in occupations that were little more than the jobs she had held before the degree?

It may be that, like so many other women students, Alice did not know how to be successful; she did not know the rules of the game. Often, according to Aisenberg and Harrington (1988), women graduate students do not devote their energies to gaining

needed credentials, but rather focus on the power of and love for ideas. They do not plan their professional career, with intermediate five- and ten-year strategies, but rather move forward with "only a vague, long-distance vision of scholarship and teaching." (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988, p. 45) As Koller describes, she did not make use of graduate school as a time of apprenticeship in which she was to learn the more mundane aspects of the profession of academia. Instead, Alice recollects being swept up by her love of philosophy:

Yet I was very excited to go to graduate school. I remember thinking that now I'd be able to study philosophy all day long. (Koller, 1981, p. 129)

Too bad the graduate student council didn't publish their unofficial guide to graduate life until my second year. "Remember," they told me, too late, "that you are not here to get an education. You are supposed to be educated already. You are here to get a degree." (Koller, 1981, p. 129)

After finishing her doctorate, Alice looked back to see that she plainly did little to gain entry into the professional ranks. And those who could have helped her to understand what she needed to do, seemingly did little to support her. We can hear some bitterness in Alice's words:

The job for which my doctorate would qualify me was teaching in an American university, but while I was writing my dissertation I did little to find one. I wanted only to have done with the thesis, to pass the orals, then to get away from Harvard so that I could untie myself from the demands I had allowed it to place on me. So that I could find out what I wanted to do. It is a question one ought to ask at the beginning, not at the end, of eight years in graduate school. ... Even so, even in spite of my not knowing during my final year at Harvard whether I wanted to spend my life teaching philosophy, I would have accepted an appointment if one had been offered to me. ... A few weeks before the sweet June morning in Sanders Theatre when the ancient and honourable community of scholars welcomed me into its midst by slipping the doctoral hood over my shoulders, I asked one of my professors how I should go about getting a job. "Too late in the year," he replied. Too late forever, had I only known. ... (Koller, 1990, pp. 141-142)

After receiving her doctorate, Alice worked that summer at Houghton Mifflin as a reader at \$1.50 an hour.

Three degrees and twenty years later, I was still earning the minimum wage for unskilled labor. (Koller, 1990, p. 142)

It was also during that summer that Alice happened upon a philosopher from Columbia. And it was he who drew to her attention that she had been passed by. Alice tells us how she learned of her naivete:

"What are you doing in New York, and why haven't you visited the department yet?" I described my freelance job ... "But, my dear, you shouldn't have to fend for yourself like this. Your department should have helped you get a teaching job." My jaw must have fallen. He stared at me. "You didn't know? Those people at Harvard!" ... I was to go at once to the chairman of the Columbia philosophy department and asked to be placed on the mailing list for departmental colloquia and guest lectures. By that invitation alone, Nagel was welcoming me to the gatherings of my peers. But more: I was to ask the chairman to try to find me a teaching job. "You understand that we have to assist our own graduate students first, Dr. Koller, but there's bound to be a job for you. ..." (Koller, 1990, pp. 142-142)

And so Alice painfully tells us how she became aware of what should have been:

I turned to the Harvard philosophy department. Since they had an obligation to me, my not having pressed them to fulfill [sic] it had in effect relieved them of it. I arranged to meet then-chairman Roderick Firth at the annual philosophical convention the following month. ... He looked at me as though we were meeting by chance and said. "There are no jobs for you." While I sat in stunned silence he turned to a male graduate student and said, "Let's go. Professor Blank is waiting to talk with you about the job in his department." He did not care that I heard him. (Koller 1990, pp. 143-144)

It was as if she did not achieve the transformation from student to expert that both Aisenberg and Harrington (1988) and Vartuli (1982) discuss. Koller was not transformed into an authority, amassing "a résumé of recommendations and other proofs of accomplishment" (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988, p. 20); she did not earn "her rite of passage into the professional job world." (Vartuli, 1982, p. 14) Instead, we hear Alice declare:

Of the five semesters since I received my degree, I've taught during only one; I've written no articles; my thesis hasn't been published; and with the exception of Henry, none of the members of my graduate department will give me strong recommendations. A race began a long time ago and I, unaware that it was a race, have not been running strongly; yet now the results are being made known, and I can only stand helplessly by, because to cry "Foul!" would merely announce that the foul was by my own hand. ... Is it not the case that my alternatives are either to play the game their way or not to play the game at all? That if I want a job teaching philosophy I have to have good references, a

good publication record, a gapless history of teaching? Or else stop looking for a teaching job? (Koller, 1981, p. 229)

Alice gradually came to understand more fully what had happened to her as a woman graduate of philosophy at Harvard.

The Radcliffe Appointment Office had merged with the Harvard Appointment Office, ostensibly to give women access to the job information that poured into Harvard, but in fact men continued to be plucked out of the larger pot first. ...I was beginning to piece together what had been happening on my periphery during graduate school. It was a time when professors could arrange teaching jobs for their male students ... Prestigious universities sent one another their graduate students... perpetuat[ing] the system. ... The system didn't lie idle, waiting for the student to receive his degree. Long before they submitted their dissertations, sometimes five or seven years before, most of my male classmates were already teaching at Princeton, Berkeley, ... They had been taken in hand ... Of these things, Harvard did none for me. ... These days [there is] lip service paid to affirmative action policies ... But in those days ... nothing. Yet I, almost alone among these men, had completed my dissertation, had received my degree, ignorant that the dissertation, the degree, were the last things that counted. I had crossed the finish line, but, not having been coached in the rules of the game, I didn't know that at some point near the first turn the track had been shifted elsewhere. (Koller, 1990, pp.146-148)

Other reasons can be postulated for Alice's failure to be transformed into an expert. Her health was certainly a factor in that she was hospitalized for half a semester during her first year in graduate school. While she didn't see her illness and surgery as anything but an excuse, it was clear that others saw it differently. We hear others say to Alice:

I don't have to give you the excuse. It was perfectly legitimate. You're the only one who seemed to think you didn't need extra time to catch up. (Koller, 1981, p. 117)

As a result of her illness, Alice failed her general exams. Unfortunately, failing those, for legitimate reasons or not, fed into her intrinsic lack of self confidence and she

became terrified. The second time, three of the four exams won the highest grades. Faculty congratulated me on the streets, stopping me to shake hands. But the fourth grade was a D. And the third time, a C. By then I had shrunk into myself and was slinking around back streets. ... the fourth time I passed. (Koller, 1981, pp. 117-118)

And so Alice fell into the background. Her repeated taking of her exams meant that she was left behind by the other students, her support network, with whom she had begun

graduate school and her work was likely devalued in the minds of her professors. Indeed, Alice counted eight years in graduate school before she earned her doctorate. Alice recounts for us her sense of time and place:

My second year in graduate school ... trying to study for the exams again. ... feeling cut off from all the students who had been friends the year before, when I still showed promise of being among the bright ones; they had now passed exams that I had failed. (Koller, 1981, p. 115)

Failing her exams in first year, also meant

not being appointed teaching fellow for my second year; it meant not being involved in new things, but rather going back over the same work. Because the department let me try again, having made a special concession to my novel way of failing. (Koller, 1981, p. 116)

Eventually Alice did get teaching fellowships, in France and at Tufts. But instead of being remembered as representing the tradition of her profession, Alice was remembered as 'rocking the boat', as engaging in unconventional political activity. This conduct likely contributed to Alice's not being accepted as an equal into the fellowship of academia, for, according to Aisenberg and Harrington (1988), women graduate students diminish their professional standing through their nonconformity to the rules of their profession. Alice tells of such nonconformity:

"You know, they'll never forget you at Tufts." ... "Why she wrote a letter to the board of trustees telling them that the teaching fellows were grossly underpaid. She used as an argument the fact that she had eight years of higher education, but that as a teaching fellow she was earning only about four times as much as she had earned at her very first job. Selling toys, I think." ... "They were the basis for the raise. The teaching fellows throughout the university know the story, not just the ones in the philosophy department." (Koller, 1981, pp. 222-223)

Moreover, according to Aisenberg and Harrington (1988), women graduate students also diminish their professional standing through their interest in what they refer to as "soft subjects". Such "soft subjects" are those research questions which are outside of the conventional topics associated with various disciplines and in which the subject matter is treated as *connected to* ordinary human life, rather than as something distanced from ordinary experience by language, form, and expertise. (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988, pp. 77, 90, 102-106) Koller selected just such a "soft subject" in choosing as her dissertation topic an examination of the concept of "emotion", which could be considered beyond the

norm for philosophy at that time. To the extent that women's work in the academy does not fit conventional definitions, they are often shunted to the margins. (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988) And so, in acting unconventionally, Alice gradually comes to understand that she had been pushed out to the margins of her profession:

Others like me, inhabit the fringes. Qualified by virtue of possessing the degree, yet never receiving the endorsement of those who have the power to hand us on to the desirable jobs. .. They look the way I've felt: baffled, hurt, expecting slights, ready to fight back. (Koller, 1981, p. 228)

Moreover, Koller's marked degree of self-doubt, her need for approval, and her dependence on others in authority, all of which we have examined, would have conspired to construct an almost unsurmountable barrier to her seeing herself as an authority figure.

To be loveable ... a woman must be silent. To express professional knowledge and wisdom, the goal of the quest plot, a woman must speak, and speak authoritatively. ... women must struggle, consciously or unconsciously, to resolve contradictory norms and this struggle unavoidably compromises the development of the voice of authority that normally attends professional empowerment. (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988, p. 66)

In the end, no academic appointment was offered to Alice. For whatever reason, the faculty at Harvard did not introduce Alice into the fellowship of philosophers. Perhaps it was because she had failed her exams so many times, taking so long to finish her doctorate. Perhaps it was because she was always on the periphery as witnessed by her choice of dissertation topic and her conduct at Tufts. Perhaps it was because she was a woman in a field that was not typically selected by women for study. Perhaps, in fact, they had tried, but Alice could not hear them.

ON NANTUCKET

Constructing a New Self

One October morning in 1962, at age 37, Alice Koller looked into a mirror and saw herself as a woman who did not have a life. She was perched in an apartment that was not her own; she was engaged in one of a long line of 'busy-work' jobs; she had taken over a decade to finish her doctorate, but was not employed in a manner to which her degree entitled her; she had had a long trail of relationships with men, but had no prospect of marrying; and, she could no longer conceal the signs of aging on her face. Alice tells us what she saw:

I stare into the mirror. I don't have a life: I'm just using up a number of days somehow. There is no *reason* for me to be here. No plan formulated at some point in the past has led me to this void that is my day, every day. ... no career, no home, no man. (Koller, 1981, pp. 1-2)

And so, in November 1962, at the age of 37, Alice Koller began to piece together the thin threads that were her self, coming to understand how unknown, silent, and fragile her self was when she first stepped off the ferry onto Nantucket Island.

The life that is beginning now is the one that will make sense of all the other ones. The only thing left for me to do now is to understand all the things I've done up to now. (Koller, 1981, p. 15)

It's rather that this adult's body has contained a nonmaturing seedling. Now I'm opening windows everywhere and exposing it to the light. I don't even know whether it can still grow, or yet what the most favorable conditions are. (Koller, 1981, p. 136)

Koller began her new life by setting aside, item by item, everything that had governed her daily life. She tells us of searching:

What will I use as a criterion? I don't know. I know only that I have to uproot all of the old while I'm learning what I want. Tear out every habit, every way of responding to people or to things. Or to ideas. Look at it without mercy and ask: Is this mine? mine as the specific human being that I am. Do I do the things I do because I'm Alice Koller? Or do I do them for reasons that I don't yet know? (Koller, 1981, p. 21)

In this crisis of identity, Koller is representative of many women in their middle years.

Many researchers suggest that the middle years form an important developmental phase for women: a time of awakening and transformation; a time when a woman develops autonomy and independence. (Belenky et al., 1986; Heilbrun, 1988; Apter, 1995) Women in their middle years have a store of lived experience which enables them to achieve a reflective position regarding their lives. They are moving into new relationships with those around them; they are, above all, moving into a new relationship with themselves, one marked by a shift from external to internal reference whereby a woman develops the confidence to trust her own perceptions, judgments, and abilities. (Belenky et al., 1986; Heilbrun, 1988; Apter, 1995) As Apter describes the women she studied who were experiencing what she labels a midlife transformational crisis, we hear echoes of Alice Koller's voice.

Alongside this [energy and eagerness] I heard something else, which nearly, but not quite, contradicted it. I heard hectic self-assessments, full of doubt and anxiety. I witnessed self-recrimination and self-correction. I heard resentment... I heard of defeat and confusion, of change and uncertainty. I heard about the frustration of compromise, of being constrained both from within and without. I heard, in effect, the language of crisis and the language of conflict, and, often, the language of anger. ... Like adolescents emerging into a new self, these midlife women were foraging among their pasts and presents to forge their futures. The pivot of development from anxiety and anger to liberation and energy was defined as women confronted the question: **"Why did it take so long to trust myself?"** The question could leave a woman bewildered: The people, the images, the models, the advice, the ideals she once trusted might, for a time, seem thoroughly untrustworthy. ... How, indeed, women asked themselves, could they have been constrained as they were, knowing what they did know, but what they somehow ignored? How could they have been guided by ideals that they must have known (they decided on reflection) were false construction? ... How could they have been shadowed by their concern about what others thought, or how others judged them, knowing as they must have known (they decided upon reflection) that the approval they sought would never be gained --- or, if gained, never fulfill [sic] the function they had imagined. This query, **"Why did it take so long to trust myself?"** arises in the wake of a woman's special experience of conflict and compromise. (Apter, 1995, p. 27; emphasis mine)

Indeed, in reading Apter's work, many insights can be gained into the experience of being a woman in her middle years. In fact, Apter refers specifically to Alice Koller's experience on Nantucket.

Alice Koller speaks of her wish to leap out of the "safe inadequacy" of what she has learned and to see with her

own eyes; yet she does not know what to look for inside her, and she does not know how to identify her feelings. As she discovers that she can be the source of her own knowledge, she confronts a new puzzle: What responses count, what gives her information about her world, and how does she name, or describe, or define the feelings she has? (Apter, 1995, p. 155)

On Nantucket Island, over the winter of 1962-1963, Koller struggled to reconstruct her self. This period of crisis and self-scrutiny marked a turning point, a time when Koller was able to cut her self loose from the shell which had encased it and to silence the voices of others who had had so much power over her.

Alice's first decision came very quickly, the others were born out of much pain and suffering. As she reports:

I must stop doing what I've been doing. And I can't stop doing it until I know what I do. So I'll wear something if it's clean and will keep me warm. I'll try not to think whether it fits or is without patches or holes or is too long or too short. Except: the color will matter. ... I'm sure of my sense of color. So soon. It's my first clear judgment, *my* judgment. A very tiny step I take. How will knowing that I trust my eye for color take me to knowing how I want to live my life? The chasm stretches before me. (Koller, 1981, p. 21)

And so Koller began the anguished analysis of every action, every decision, every idea: from wearing lipstick or a watch, to her relationships with her mother and with men. One day she believed she gains some insight, only to lose it the next. It was as if she were warring within her self:

I'm defending, and laying siege, all at once. I'm even the prize. But I'm also the only one who'd want it. (Koller, 1981, p. 57)

Gradually, Alice notices the gains coming more often and more quickly, adding one advancement to another:

I'm beginning to know what it's like to do only what I want to do: it's feeling no constraints of any kind. From other people, from myself. Perhaps a day can be packed full, if it can be spent that way....whatever the contours of my self will turn out to be. I'm tearing out one more old habit. (Koller, 1981, pp. 52-53)

I'm sitting quietly now, watching the connections take place as they they were outside of me with a life of their own. (Koller, 1981, p. 115)

As Koller examined her relationships with others, her ways of knowing, as she survived a suicidal episode, and began to plan for her future, the connections continued and the nonmaturing seedling that was her self began to grow

Silencing the Voices of Others

Koller, at age 37, was a woman whose own voice had been silenced. Being on Nantucket alone, provided an opportunity for her to begin instead to silence the voices of others in her life and, in so doing, to give expression to her own voice. Alice affirms

I realize now that no one will ever again be able to tell me something about myself that I don't already know. I've torn down all the fortifications. The thing inside doesn't require defending anymore. And I don't need anyone to tell me what I'm like, what I do well, what I ought to try. I know who I am a little bit more each day. I simply am this or that, so compliments and reassurances are both irrelevant (Koller, 1981, pp. 289-290)

Separating from Her Relationship with Her Mother

Koller's first awareness of the negative impact of her relationship with her mother on her self and on her life came about a year before her flight to Nantucket. As she talked with a friend, bemoaning her failure to maintain a relationship with a man and to get a good job after her doctorate, she wondered, "Why I did what I did, when I was always so unhappy doing it" (Koller, 1981, p. 96). As if 'out of the blue', Alice reports that her friend responded

"You know, you can't keep on blaming everything on your mother. Just because she didn't give you attention when you were a little girl, you can't hold her responsible for . . ." I barely listened. She could have said simply that my mother didn't love me. Instead she said that my mother didn't give me "attention." I screamed at her. "*What did you just say?*" The shocked face turned to me. I was crying. For God's sake, what you said. You said she didn't give me *attention*, but what you meant was that she didn't give me affection!" It was as though you punched a button that released the machinery that was holding the structure of me together. I'm not crying because she didn't love me. I've known that for too long. I'm crying from the

shock of finding out what I've been doing to try to make up for it. The energy I've wasted, to try to get her to look at me. ... I knew that day that I had grasped a piece of truth unlike any I had come upon in all my years of trying to understand what I was about. Today, a year later, the whole memory retains the same quality of being unimpeachably true. (Koller, 1981, pp. 96-97)

Building on this terrible insight which Koller carried with her to Nantucket, she gradually pared away the constraints that needing her mother had placed on her self, on her relationships, and on the meanings she gave to her life. Until finally, she asks herself:

How do I begin to think about what I want to do? ... What is it like to want to do anything at all? I think I don't know. I don't know what wanting is. ... What I've thought were my wants were merely well-disguised attempts to get her to love me. All my wants were collapsed into that one. That one has kept on reproducing itself, thickening a shell around me, throwing up layer upon layer against the intrusions from any other want until that one could be fulfilled. But now I've torn it out, slitting the crust that kept me preserved as an infant. ... My eyes could see only one thing, could use only one criterion for what was valuable: Will it make her look at me? But now I can see what there is to be seen, because I don't have to try to transpose it into something that it's not. I still have to peel off the disguises in which my mother appears to me. (Koller, 1981, pp. 128-130)

Alice gradually took up responsibility for her own life, leaving behind the mother's love for which she had been waiting all of her life. Until finally, she is able to ask:

It occurs to me that I've been waiting ever since I came here. Waiting for what? Someone to find me? Something to being? ... Waiting: for someone to come out and show me what it is to be a human being? For someone to take me inside where it's warm? ... I've been waiting ever since I can remember. ... I've discovered at thirty-seven ... that nothing, nothing is going to happen. All the men. The degree. The years of bending over books. Teaching. The theatre. All the hours of talk. Nothing? Nothing compared with the thing I've been waiting for. Which is? (Koller, 1981, pp. 184-185)

Waiting for what?

Home is where, when you go there,

They have to take you in.

There's no such place. (Koller, 1981, pp. 188-189)

Now I know what I came here to find out. There's nothing further to learn. Or do. Thirty-seven years of being blind. Deaf. Marking time on the same spot a little girl looking for her mother to hold her. Everything else is fraud. ... She is the extraordinary thing I've been waiting for. (Koller, 1981, pp. 196-197)

my life has been one unified whole, after all Yet all the fragments of that life have been tied into one bundle by one single strand that held me together without my knowing it to find some way of getting her to love me It's a way of being whole that nullifies thirty-seven years Yesterday, today, from now on, I cut the cord The cord Of course The only "I" there is is a little girl, kept a dwarf for thirty years by a need that has only to be said out loud to be discarded I grew up all around it, festering around a core that I didn't know existed I don't know how to want my wantings have been guided by that core There is no ME unpoisoned by that need (Koller, 1981, pp 198-199)

Every relationship, every idea, every pattern of behaviour then had to be examined to see if it were really of Alice and not something of her mother, in disguise And as she prepared to leave Nantucket, Alice speculates

How often I used to ask my friends what their love for their children was like how different my life might have been if, as a child, I had sense from my mother the feeling I now have for him [Logos] (Koller, 1981, p 296)

Distancing Her Self from Her Reliance on Others

As Koller came to understand the role her relationship with her mother had played in her life, how it had contaminated every relationship which she had ever had, every activity in which she had ever engaged, Koller began to redefine who she was and what she wanted from her self and from others, gradually ending her reliance on her appearance, on pretence, and on the voices of authority to get the attention and applause she needed to fill the hollow left by her mother's failure to love her She knew, however, that her reconstruction of self and had only just begun and she had to be constantly vigilant to guard against slipping back into old ways of being, into long-established patterns of behaviour And so Alice deliberates

But I'm not finished here yet, even though I don't know what I still have to do I know only that I'm not at the end, and so I fight going back to the very place [Cambridge] that was the center of my horror for so long I think I'm afraid I'll start to do things the way I did them then, as though none of these weeks here had taken place I'll act I'll exaggerate I'll pretend something is funny I'll pretend to be interested I'll wear makeup How can I stop doing all that again? The four weeks I've spend finding out what I do seem puny, now that I have to try to weigh them against the way I behaved for all the thirty-seven years that preceded them I have to decide whether to go back to the old way I've no "old way" to go back to It's gone

I've torn it away Not all Not yet But what's gone can't simply be retrieved from the dustbin, like an old costume I've done away with protections I can't let anything cushion or come between me and my juxtaposition to my surroundings What is that even like? I've surely never known (Koller, 1981, pp 138-139)

Koller was aware that having torn her self away from relying on others for approval was, in itself, insufficient and that she still had a long journey ahead of her Indeed, the reader wonders if the distance that remained would, in fact, be possible for Koller to traverse

Because now that I've stopped playing the game, there isn't anything real to take its place I'm not even capable of recognizing what I'd be looking at if I were to come upon something that wasn't a game (Koller, 1981, p 200)

Those are exactly the deceptive purposes I've been tearing away here I'm no person yet I feel naked and very small But new Nothing ever again has to be the way it was If I can only hold back the world until I can catch up with my own unclad response to it (Koller, 1981, pp 276-277)

And so, we watch Alice Koller, with her naked face and newborn self, look off Nantucket towards her new life

Wait I's true that I've accomplished nothing in the eyes of people I've let judge me But suppose I use my own eyes Suppose I take myself as my judge That doesn't transform my failure into accomplishment, but it lets me see what the failure was I failed because the things I set myself to do weren't things I *chose* to do There was no real "I" to do the choosing That hollow creature led by a child's heart, fighting rearguard actions all over the place to prevent anyone from noticing I've torn it all away And look what's left this small shuddering self And yet I know some few things I love Logos I must have him with me I can't think of myself without him This ocean matters to me my free access to it, the silence and the beauty, the vastness of the view Suppose I start with these things And with the idea that other things may join with these I don't know now what they'll be Or when they'll come to me Or whether there will be anything else at all But I start with these They are all the self I have But they are mine (Koller, 1981, pp 253-254)

Transforming Her Relationships

As Alice began to reconstruct her self, as she began to understand her own wantings and purposes, she gradually became aware that others had wantings and purposes,

separate from her own. And so she considers:

Their purposes? I didn't understand my own until last week. But *that's* the connection. If I didn't know what I was doing, how could I begin to understand what [others were] doing? ... It has kept me from understanding my own purposes, and that, in turn has kept me from understanding the purposes of other people, too. (Koller, 1981, pp. 164-165)

This awareness, not only liberated Alice, it also liberated those who would be her friends.

Not needing people frees me to look at them. To look at them and see them; to listen to them and hear them. ... Now I'm not looking to other people as mirrors to tell me who I am; I can see my own outlines. *That's* why I'm able to see other people: the glass that used to reflect me is now transparent. I know where I end and where other people begin. (Koller, 1981, p. 290)

• *Relationships with Men*

In particular, Koller's epiphany about her relationship with her mother had a significant connection with her relationships with men. For, it was in examining those relationships that she became more fully aware of the pervasiveness of her mother's power over her.

We listen as she laments:

Why did I stay with him? There was no one else? Why did I stay. ... He held me while I cried. I catch my throat to stop the words. While I cried. Dear God, how I cried. ... But nothing could uproot the terror that carried within it other terrors adhering together, waiting only for a chance to burst out, one after the other ... And he held me. ... But would anyone else hold me? I sit forward abruptly. Larry held me, too. And Jurgen. And Jack. And Tony. ... My thoughts fly back through years of men. Not just the ones I stayed with at length. The casual ones, too. And George, even George. Even the men who mattered to me. They all gave me that: they held me while I cried. And what, please, what, oh what, was I crying about? ... I *had* to cry. ... I had to cry. I would get drunk so I could tell the man about the terrors that haunted me. So I could cry. So he would hold me. Oh. Not that they held me while I cried, but that I cried so they would hold me. ... Hold me? Cry so they would hold me? ... That's what a mother does to a child. No. ... How do I live through the next minute. Time ... opens up into little holes that I fall into, then climb out of, only to fall into the next. I went to bed with men, looking for her to hold me. (Koller, 1981, pp. 194-196)

... now I know that all I ever wanted was to have my mother love me. That all I ever wanted from a man was to have him hold me while I cried, and that what I was crying

about was that he wasn't my mother. (Koller, 1981, p. 201)

And so Koller, armed with this knowledge, came to understand more fully why her relationships with men had never lasted: they had not been based on an honest expression of self and purpose.

Two experiences while she was on Nantucket helped Koller to come to terms with her way of relating to men. First of all, at the convention of The Philosophical Association in New York, she was confronted by her 'two great loves', Stan and George, together. And she must confront her self:

And now we are four. Henry introduces Stan and George. They reach across me to shake hands, murmuring that they have heard of one another. ... Something starts to swirl within me and I shoot up out of my chair. ... "Excuse me" comes out. That lets me move away into the crowd. But why away? Back there...half of me belongs to each of them. Torn in half, jointly shared: oh, let me go away. ... I want to see: Myself. I run into the ladies' lounge and stand straight up against the full-length mirror. ... I look at my face. Is that what it looks like to be me? I stare at my image for a very long minute. I am one person after all. It will be all right to go back to that table now. (Koller, 1981, p. 227)

But it was at the convention, fortified with the knowledge about herself that she had been gathering daily on Nantucket, that Koller began to understand that neither one of them, neither Stan nor George, was ever really available to her, for her.

Back on the island, continuing her thoughts about how she has related to these men, Koller speaks of arriving at a new awareness about her self and her lovers:

Not that there's anything wrong with me. I sit up quietly in my chair. The fact that Stan doesn't love me doesn't *necessarily* mean that there's something wrong with me. ... Stan's not loving me wasn't *my* fault. There was nothing at all I could *do* to make him love me. He simply didn't. Doesn't. Can't, in the only sense that is relevant: he isn't able to ... No matter how lovable I try to make myself, someone who doesn't love me can't be made to. But it's not something lacking in me: it's that there's nothing in him that responds to me in a loving way. ... But I've thought of loving as something I had to deserve. My little-girl solution to my little-girl problem. And now I see that people either love each other or they don't. What, exactly, loving consists in, I'm not sure. I have to think about it. I'd have to know what it would be like to deal with a man as himself, rather than as a potential source of motherly love. (Koller, 1981,

pp 248-249)

And so, freed from her desperation for acceptance and for love, before she left Nantucket, Koller vows

It will be a long time before I touch a man again. I think I haven't often *liked* the men I've made love with. Maybe allowing myself time to find out whether I like the next man can spare me an unnecessary involvement in advance. I know now that my being drawn to a man is the best reason of all for never seeing him again, because the thing in him that draws me is something I no longer need. I suddenly understand that the idea of female chastity is psychologically sound. It is a way of giving the woman time to discover what sort of person her companion is, to learn whether a valuable relationship can be built with him. Then chastity for her will have to do only with whether she, knowing herself, has shared something valuable with another person who is also her friend. (Koller, 1981, pp 272-275)

It's important to be honest with a man. True. I just didn't know what "being honest" meant. I'm honest when I refuse to deceive myself or the man. I haven't been honest with men, then, because my responses have almost never been genuine. (Koller, 1981, pp 275-276)

In purging from her self her desperation for a man, in pledging to distance herself from men, Koller did come to recognize that she might never achieve the romance and marriage plot which had been one of her aspirations. Alice is aware that

I may never marry. What's marrying, anyway? Being able to, wanting to, live your life with a man. But I'm just now beginning to learn how to live with myself. There are only fragments of my knowing who I am and what I want, and only rarely do I find some of the pieces coalescing. No, I'm not ready to marry, not until I can stand separately as one unified whole being. I won't need the man I marry. I'll only want him. I'm not in need of rescue any longer. I had no sense of who I was. I was available for a very low price. The man had only to give me a hint that he might someday begin to consider that I might be a woman he could possibly think of loving, at least a little bit. On that hint, I fell at his feet. I can't be that way again. Can't. That doesn't mean I vow not to be. It means that I, what I am so far, am not like that any longer. (Koller, 1981, pp 300-302)

Much of Alice Koller's midlife transformational crisis was about finding a way to rid herself of her mother's poisonous power buried deep within her soul and to silencing the voices of others in her life. In ridding her life of these two burdens, Koller was able to recover

and to give expression to her own self, her own voice, her own knowledge.

Knowing

As we have seen in a previous chapter, for women experiencing midlife transition, one goal is the integration of thinking and feeling into one confident self and voice. This integrated way of knowing combines the voices of external authority with the woman's own inner voice, thereby combining reason with feelings and emotions. This constructed way of knowing arises out of a period of self-reflection when women recall their lives and determine to integrate the various voices with which they speak. Indeed, Belenky and her associates, cite Koller's midlife transformation on Nantucket as a model for women seeking to construct an integrated way of knowing by combining rational, procedural knowing with their own self, experience, and feelings.

For women like Koller ... thinking and feeling are split asunder; they feel fraudulent and deadened to their inner experiences and inner selves. Alice Koller planned to go after the inner self with the methods of her training. She planned to ferret out the evidence. ...Koller hoped to turn inward, find herself, and construct her own ways of knowing. (Belenky et al., 1986, pp. 135-136)

In the years before Nantucket, Koller had learned to rely primarily on received ways of knowing. In order to get attention and win approval from others, she had worked diligently at learning the correct methods and procedures. If she were unable to "get it right", she would give up the activity, fearing others' disapproval more than failure. On Nantucket, in trying to recapture her own self and expel the power of others in her life, Koller constructed a way of knowing which allowed her to balance her received knowing with her new way of being on the silent, solitary island of Nantucket. Alice writes of her search:

My urgent need was to find out what I believed and wanted and felt independently of what anyone else believed or felt or wanted me to believe or feel. Two factors were working for me. First, I know how to think: I knew what should count as the statement of a problem; what evidence was persuasive and what inadequate; what a pointed question was and what was mere idleness ... I subjected everything I had done that I could remember to that kind of thinking, and I placed every conclusion I reached alongside one single question, "But is it true?" I kept raising that question hour after hour, even though I had no criterion for what true would

mark out until I was about halfway through my task. The other factor was that I was at the same time learning what the shape and texture and locus of my daily life had to be .. I acquired a taste for wildness and silence almost immediately. I did discover what was true for me, thereby disburdening myself of worn hobbles almost at a stroke. I was then free to resolve that each moment of each day had to be lived in whatever way my then very weak understanding grasped as being right for me. ... I alone would judge the fittingness of everything I did. (Koller, November 24, 1983)

As Koller began her reconstruction of her self, what did she know for certain? She reports knowing that she knew how to reason, as a philosopher reasons:

... all that accumulated discipline can now be shaped into the one tool I need: to be able to say with perfect care ... what I mean. (Koller, 1981, p. 40)

And so, An Unknown Woman contains numerous examples of Koller's attempts to understand her self, using a variety of methods or strategies, as she had been taught to do. Repeatedly, Koller attempted some form of deliberate, systematic analysis to discover what she believed and wanted. She tried using letters; establishing different types of writing for different purposes; creating schedules about when to write and when to rest.

Eventually, however, she began to experience ideas and feelings that were outside the methods she had established to contain them. Koller then sensed a need to turn inward, away from the academic methods for knowing, in order to construct her own self and her own way of knowing. And so she tells of trying to set aside the dictated standards of thinking:

It's not working out. I've lost the patience to sit down and write while I think. The thoughts come too fast, or they come in their own time instead of when I'm ready to welcome them. Or they leap from problem to problem, not letting me pursue one single thread all the way to its end. ... And ... it's hard to stop the thinking. (Koller, 1981, p. 73)

Moreover, as she walked the beaches and moors of Nantucket, Koller was bombarded with intense feelings and vivid reactions to memories of the past and to experiences in the present. She was discovering that understanding her emotions was central to her knowing anything at all about her self. Alice writes of discovering:

I don't trust my own judgment because I have nothing of my

own in terms of which I *can* judge. Nor will I have, unless I find some way to know what I feel. That has to be related to what I'm trying to understand now. And it is! I'm back at my old unknown beginning, not knowing what wanting is. The only way to know what I want, supposedly, is through having a certain feeling. So either I don't have that feeling, or else I don't know how to recognize it if I *do* have it. (Koller, 1981, pp. 164-165)

Gradually she developed some degree of confidence in her feelings, as she was flooded by memories and emotions. "I must know something about what I feel" (Koller, 1981, p. 150). But she was not able to let go of her rational way of knowing and so she turned, once again, to the methods that she knew and trusted even to understand her feelings.

In trying to connect with her feelings, Koller describes exploring the work of C. I. Lewis regarding "felt satisfaction"

No, I can't break through. I'm dealing at too abstract a level. Maybe I can look for examples of the feeling in what I've already done. I have to try to unearth from that massive deception I practiced on myself the things that were true. Real. What do I use as a criterion to sort them out? Suppose I circumscribe some arbitrary time. Say, the past years. What things can I remember doing during the past year that carried this sense of fullness? Clear cases only. If I hesitate, then I haven't happened upon a good example. I think of three, then four. I go to the typewriter for the first time in weeks and start the list. In four hours, I fill one page, double-spaced. Thirty items. Thirty times in twelve months I've done things that I've found good in the doing. Do they fall into groups in any way? I try to uncover common features. I find myself doing something I like. a criterion. What I'll want to do will have to have this same quality of what? Fitting me. (Koller, 1981, pp. 130-133)

In combining her rational way of thinking with her memories of her feelings, Koller had discovered a pivotal criterion by which she could recognize something as belonging to her, something that fit her, something that is "particularly, specifically, uniquely mine" (Koller, 1981, p. 98).

And so, as Alice Koller endeavoured to construct her self, she struggled to balance her philosophical way of knowing with the intense, unorganized emotional experiences taking place daily on Nantucket. Koller gradually learned to integrate her ways of knowing so that she could combine the best of what she had learned as a philosopher with what she

came to know, after her rebirth on Nantucket, as her own true feelings and wantings.

After a day and a night of struggling with whether to live or to die, Koller tells us that she was able to say that she, Alice Koller, knew something:

If I live, my life will have to be all mine, not anyone else's. ... I haven't very much to go on, but I'll find my own way by myself, not by anyone else's version of what I can or cannot do. I don't know yet what I want to do, but when I find it out, I'll do it. ... "Is this the thing I want to do?" There's the point on which my pressure won't relent. Each [day] makes up my life. Each one of them must give me the same sense of whatever-it-is that being with Loos gives me, that walking along the ocean gives me. Closeness. Fitting me. Belonging. Yes, from now on, I'll shape my day to make each thing in it fill me. ... I shall now ask, "Is this thing I'm doing worth being alive for?" The very doing is what matters. ... I won't let there be hours that I only tolerate. I won't ever again put up with unthinking habit or being bored, or ugliness in things or persons. ... Each thing I touch or see or smell or taste or hear during my day must give me the sense of something good in the doing. ... Nothing to wait for, because I'll initiate what happens to me. Nothing to wait for, because these minutes now passing *are* my life. They are the minutes in which my living is to be done. Whatever I do, I'll do in my own time, and / will do it. (Koller, 1981, pp. 255-257)

Working

On Nantucket, Koller also struggled with the issue of what working meant to her and what kind of work she wanted to do. In hearing her words, it becomes clear that Alice knew that she had somehow been left behind in philosophy:

All the people who had entered Harvard with me being given fellowships and grants and awards, but none for me. (Koller, 1981, p. 194)

In fact, for most of her sojourn on the island, she continued to grapple with whether or not a career in philosophy was for her.

Suddenly I'm very amused. Here I am, defending the purity of philosophy, trying to prevent its being dirtied by hands that don't know how to deal with it, yet I don't have the first idea whether philosophy means anything at all to me, whether I *want* to spend my life doing philosophy. I have

to begin thinking about all of that Soon (Koller, 1981, p 77)

As Alice considered her options, she came upon a distinction which will hold true for her even after she leaves Nantucket the difference between working and having a job As she affirms

Getting a job will be only a means for staying alive, rather than a reason for being alive I'll never be able to pretend that I have a work that occupies my mind, some far-ranging series of studies that will make use of my knowledge and skill and interest (Koller, 1981, p 74)

to break down the distinction between a job and work you work when you spend your time doing something you want to do, and almost in passing, you get paid for it Everything else is a job I think I've never worked I think I've only had jobs Because I was never doing something I wanted to do, not knowing what I wanted to do (Koller, 1981, pp 89-90)

Yet, philosophy remained the only viable source of working or 'jobbing' that Koller knew In her words, however, we continue to hear the distinction between her love for the work of philosophy and the more mundane issues of the discipline, a distinction which has so often contributed to women's restrictions in academia (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988)

And so, while on Nantucket, Koller continued to look for work, continued to hope that, like the fabled Logos, she would find an academic appointment at a good university and would advance in her field, publishing papers and gaining recognition, able to express her love for philosophy Alongside this dream was the nagging realization that she had not been attending to the worldly aspects of the profession, not following the rules of the game and would not, therefore, likely get the work to which her degree entitled her It was only halfheartedly that she looked And so she comes to speak of her options

Have I learned nothing at all on Nantucket that I can put to use? Is it the case that my alternatives are either to play the game their way or not to play the game at all? That if I want a job teaching philosophy I have to have good references, a good publication record, a gapless history of teaching? Or else stop looking for a teaching job? I'm oppressed because I feel apologetic, and I feel apologetic because I'm trying to follow their rules and can't They don't want somebody to teach philosophy they want somebody who fits their requirements But there are teachers, and there are requirement-meeters I know how to reach students, to make them talk to me about their concerns, to thrust philosophy into their lives so that it uproots

unfounded beliefs and gives them an instrument for exploring and comparing the adequacies of beliefs they haven't yet examined.³² Picture putting that on a job application. (Koller, 1981, pp. 229-230)

But, "in case I live, I'll need a job." (Koller, 1981, p. 230) As a result, regardless of her doubts, Koller pursued a teaching appointment at the convention. And there, unable to resolve her conflict between the work of philosophy and the job of employment at a university, we witness her sabotaging of those very pursuits:

The man coming toward me to talk may have a job open next fall. "But if you had your choice of how to spend your life, without having to worry about the money, which would you do: sit quietly at home reading and writing, or be out among young people teaching?" ... He's asking me what I want to do. ... "Will you believe that your question is one that I've been thinking a great deal about lately, and that if I can't answer you, it's only because I can't answer myself?" It's like pushing a stone uphill ... "Well, your inclination must go one way rather than another." ... "You know it's so quiet on Nantucket that one day, walking near the lighthouse, the only sound I could hear was the flag flapping in the breeze." ... "I'm getting so used to that silence..." I look into the fire again. ... "So, then it's the quiet fireside and writing by yourself that you prefer." ... "I suppose it is. Yes, probably that kind of life is closer to what I'm comfortable doing. And yet, I'm not completely sure." He looks at his watch. ... He's gone. ... I talked myself out of it. If I could have said, straight out that I like teaching, he might have started to talk about the job. Instead, I allowed myself to believe that he was interested in the windings of my private thought. ... His interest extended only to the point of considering me a potential member of his department. Nothing wrong with that, except that I didn't happen to notice it in time. (Koller 1981, pp. 236-237)

Indeed, this conflict might be understood to come from another source, as well: Koller's inability - unwillingness - to compromise her newly-won and very fragile awareness of her own self and her own wants with the needs of others, from which she had only just broken free.

³² There is much irony in these words, since, until Nantucket, more than a decade after beginning her study of philosophy, that study had not helped Koller to uproot her own unfounded beliefs

SINCE NANTUCKET

As Alice Koller prepared to leave Nantucket, there was both a hope for her future and a warning. In coming to know more about her self, her own feelings, wantings, and purposes, Koller was able to disentangle her self from others in her life; she was able to envision 'taking charge' of her own life. As she writes:

The routine of my day fits me like an old sweater: comfortable, easy to move with, room enough to stretch. ... I'm beginning to be able to rank things in order of importance. Before, I responded to everything at peak pitch, without gradations of intensity. ... Because I had no gauge within me. The standard for any performance of mine, on stage or off, existed in other people's eyes. Now I seem to be growing a gauge of my own. Still fragile, still very small, but mine. (Koller, 1981, pp. 266-267)

But that's brand new: throwing off any inclination to look outside myself for confirmation of my own beliefs. All the years I spent reading and trying to learn how to think may not have been a total loss. Perhaps what I freely believe lies buried in my mind beneath the weight of other people's standards, and I have only to try to tear way whatever is foreign in order to bring my own beliefs to light. (Koller, 1981, p. 275)

I try to sort out the parts of it and come upon the shapes of ideas new to my repertoire: being alone, burgeoning in it; making my own decisions, insisting on it; uncovering my own authority, reveling [sic] in it; seeing other people as beings in their own right, astonished by it. (Koller, 1981, p. 311)

At last, at age 37, Koller believes she is free and so she is able to write:

I am disburdened. That's it. Free: not obliged, not required, not compelled to do anything. Free: no longer condemned to keep repeating the disasters of the past. (Koller, 1981, p. 264)

But along with this sense of hope, this newly found freedom to be her own self and to live out of that self, there was a warning that Koller's new way of being was indeed very fragile, that perhaps some new 'disaster' awaited. There was an apprehension that the maintenance of her self may have depended on her building yet a new barricade, this time not to keep her self in, but rather to keep others out. We can hear this apprehension in her words:

The old reaches up to drag me down again on the very page where I'm trying to start out fresh. I have to try to free myself from it. Maybe all I can do is realize that the traps

are there, and try to avoid them. Until, if ever, I won't need to ask anyone for anything at all. (Koller, 1981, p. 262)

If I can only hold back the world until I can catch up with my own unclad response to it. (Koller, 1981, p. 277)

This is the same old world. I'm deluding myself to think that I can be different from what I was, in relation to it. (Koller, 1981, pp. 278-279)

This is how you get what you want. First, you figure out who has it; then you figure out what its possessor needs and whether *you* have *that*. Then you're in a bargaining position. (Koller, 1981, p. 282)

A Solitary Self

Alice Koller had fled to Nantucket to find her self and, in that, she was successful, although the self that she discovered was tiny and fragile, having been locked away since she was a very young girl. She writes of her self as an infant self:

When I stepped off the Nantucket ferry onto the mainland on a cold February evening in 1963, any passing observer would have described me as a grown woman. From the inside, however, I looked out onto the world as an infant, confident of only three things:

Logos was of my heart.

I had to live near the sea or other wildness.

I possessed a passion and perfect eye for color.

You could pack it into a thimble, that tiny collection. But it was mine, freely chosen by me. ... Three things, where before I had not known there would be any! They had made themselves known to me when I slit my surface covering and wriggled free of it, as a snake its skin, a caterpillar its molt, walking away from everything that had hobbled me, everything that was not mine. ... What is it like, to want? Genuinely to like, to want? I raised these questions daily, hourly on Nantucket. Now I knew the answers, and the journey from there to here was short, all but instantaneous, once I removed the constraints on my spontaneity. To like is to incline naturally toward, to bend naturally toward. Some object or person inclines you to itself, bends you toward it, without promptings of any sort from any other person, from any "should," from any rule. You want something whenever you, trusting your own spontaneity, find yourself moving toward the thing, smiling. Liking, wanting, are pure, plain, direct, when you've unbound yourself from ancient longings. I had come this far --- three items! --- by doing nothing more than standing

open to what there was, right there before my eyes. ... I was open. I therefore let myself be open (I could have run for cover again.) ... Having discarded all previous guides, I let myself be unguided. (Koller, 1990, pp. 8-9)

On Nantucket, in standing open and in being unguided, Koller found her own self and her own way of being and doing; she found her own feelings and her own voice. It is of this that she writes:

There was only one me: one, undivided. Just there is the mark of being open: nothing intervened between me and doing, feeling, speaking. I found myself doing some new thing without having considered in advance the doing of it. I found myself being angry, interested, apprehensive ... I found myself ... speaking words I had not in advance planned to speak. All these are gifts I still give to myself. ... Instead of wondering what others would think of what I might say, and for that reason abort the saying of it, I said what I meant and let them worry about what they thought. (Koller, 1990, p. 10)

In The Stations of Solitude, Koller sketched for us how her reconstructed self unfolded and flourished after leaving Nantucket. She recounts with pride how she became single, "integrated into a unified whole" (Koller, 1990, p. 204):

I have become that third gender: a human person, the being one creates of oneself ... Sartre is surely right: persons are not born but made. The choice lies escapably within ourselves: we may let it wither away, or we may take it and run. (Koller, 1990, p. 23)

Because once you know who you are, it is impossible ever after not to know that you know. ... knowing who you are is a permanent locus you occupy, one you cannot even temporarily abandon. ... It is not a fact at all but rather the cast of mind through which you view everything ... the way you enter a room, drive a car ... It is something that happens to you through your having brought it about, and it continues happening to you because its you and you are it. (Koller, 1990, pp. 198-199)

And so, Alice tells of beginning a new life in which each thing and idea, each person and possession, each wanting and doing has to fit with who she now knows herself to be:

... each of the hundreds of details that made up my days flowed as a tiny rivulet into, and was tributary to, the rushing stream that was my personal freedom. (Koller, 1990, p. 200)

My doings follow a distinctive pattern that is composed of and by my purposes. My purposes are the things I do that matter to me above all else. They are of my own making. I commit myself to them. I make choices in accordance with

them, and my commitment to them commits me to other choices that are consonant with them, that are often the means for bringing them about. (Koller, 1990, p. xi)

In connecting every detail of her life into her self, in insisting that all of her choices and commitments speak to her own purposes, Koller has spurned compromise and negotiation. Every detail had to fit, or it was shed; every part of her life had to fit, or she would have been a person with “two heads” (Koller, 1990, pp. 216, 221)

Since she loved Logos and Ousia and then Kairos, she had to fight for the welfare of all animals; she had to become a vegetarian; she had to stop buying any object made of any part of an animal -- no more leather belts, or shoes or furniture. Since she loved Logos more than any other living being, when he died without her presence, without her understanding, she had to fight for more than a decade, spending more than \$30,000 to try to know what had been his last minutes of life. Since she wrote what she felt and what she meant, she had to fight with every editor and every publisher to retain every word and every phrase that she had set down. Since she wanted to engage in a work that was fully hers and fully absorbed her and not just to do a ‘job’, she rejected many offers of employment, many offers that were only jobs. And so, for most of her life, Alice Koller lived in solitude and in poverty.

Having come upon her self, her own “overarching purposes” that guided her days (Koller, 1990, p. 265), she felt a total commitment to that which she knew she was and was unable to compromise in any thing. And so we listen as Alice ponders:

All of us encounter unanticipated circumstances that make us consider modifying our purposes while we attempt to put them into effect. But modify how? Do you let the circumstance annihilate the purpose? Do you in the light of events try to recast it? Or do you plunge ahead because your commitment is immutable? Whichever you choose, you will be colliding: with yourself, in the first instance; probably with others, in the second; almost certainly with others, in the third. (Koller, 1990, p. 266)

And so Koller saw interactions with others in which her own purposes and theirs were not fully aligned as conflicts, collisions, in which one or the other lost. There could be no compromise, since Koller would not lose. And so, the early warnings began to be seen in the pretence and dissembling in which she engaged to protect her self and her sense of wholeness from others. Alice warns her reader:

If you know far enough in advance that your confederate will become your antagonist, that negotiating of some sort will eventually be necessary, it's worth setting up some dummy purpose that you'll then reluctantly give way on, conceding it, presenting your real purpose to your opponent as something of little value that you're willing to accept so that each of you will have won something of at least some importance. But if you make plain your real purpose from the start, not even attempting to conceal how important it is to you, you cut off the possibility of negotiating: there is nothing of lesser importance that you will accept in its stead. (Koller, 1990, p. 267)

Others Silenced

One of the tasks of women's midlife transformational crises is to learn to listen to their own voices above the voices of others. (Belenky et al., 1986; Heilbrun, 1988; Apter, 1995) On Nantucket, Alice Koller did learn to turn her ear inward to listen to her own voice. Moreover, she even understood her goal as starting "all over again to understand how to be, with myself and with other people." (Koller, 1990, p. 20) But, instead of learning to balance her own self against the power of others in her life, she effectively shut others out of her life.

While it is foundational that every person develop a strong self in order to be able to interact in an authentic way with others, nevertheless, many would suggest that the goal is not self **or** others, but rather self **and** other; that it is through a depth of self-knowledge that we are able to experience intimacy with self and with others. (Lerner, 1989; Dowrick, 1991; Apter, 1995)

At the heart of many of our difficulties is a lack of conscious understanding that each of us needs closeness with others, and also a knowledgeable, nurturing relationship with our own self. Each of us needs to find a delicate, shifting balance between dependence and independence, between being open to others and taking care of ourselves. Each of us has our own needs for solitude and for intimacy. (Dowrick, 1991, p. xxii)

As we have seen, Alice Koller was able to strengthen her self and to learn to trust and act out of that self. On Nantucket, Koller gave up her reliance on others for attention and

applause; she learned to act freely, without "planning in advance"; she learned to move in response to her "newly freed inclination"; and, she learned to do, seek, feel, like, and want, "without a prepared exterior, varnished and perfect." (Koller, 1990, p. 11) And so Alice writes:

Having divested myself of familiar ways of behaving, I had no option but to be myself, whoever that would turn out to be. I was no longer behind the scenes manipulating the doll I, before Nantucket, had tried to make everyone believe I was. No one was behind the scenes at all, neither manipulating, nor feeding lines, nor applauding. There was only me: one, undivided. (Koller, 1990, pp. 9-10)

Before Nantucket, Alice's self was fully entangled with others, especially with her mother, with authority, and with men. After Nantucket, we hear very little of her mother who had played so dominant a role in Alice's life. For she is, at last, free of her:

Long after I was able to free myself from the stranglehold she had on me, long after I had cut myself off from her so totally that she had been dead three months without my knowing it until an attorney wrote to notify me, I'd wonder in an idle moment why she had lied so often, so seemingly capriciously. But I never bothered to press the inquiry: it mattered so little. (Koller, 1990, p. 19)

After Nantucket, we hear virtually nothing of any of the voice of authority in her life. By searching out that which she personally believes to be true, she has forever silenced the power of authority, since, by the very nature of authority, much of what they say cannot be held to be true. For she is, at last, free of authority:

'True' is a term applicable to statements, not to the world. ... Reality, in this version of things, is that which true statements purport to be about. 'Purport' is crucial. ... It excludes utterances that do not purport to be true at all: commands, exclamations, rules, promises, and so on. (Koller, 1990, p. 15)

Indeed, with very few exceptions, Koller had even learned not to rely on her appearance to win attention and approval. Since Nantucket, she only wears makeup to woo important others:

I wear makeup now only when I deal with someone who is helping, who might help, with my case³³. The attorney this morning might. Anyone who will give a writing or editing assignment that will let me pay for the case might. No one else, not even I, can make me care how I look. ... Wearing makeup, I implicitly woo them, I open the way along familiar

³³ Alice is referring to her legal battle, waged over a decade, to discover why and how Logos died while in the care of a veterinarian. And, if appropriate, to sue for damages.

paths. We get to the business faster. It is the same with my clothes. ... I present myself to the eyes of others with the barest minimum of courtesy: I am clothed; the garments are clean. But there is no ornament of any kind. No jewelry [sic]. No scent. The makeup is my only concession to custom, to old habits. (Koller, 1990, pp. 283-284)

Initially, even before she chose Nantucket, Koller sensed that only in turning her back to others, that only in living a solitary life for a while, would she be able to change the direction of her life. As she considers:

I'm tired from the inside out. Tired of perpetually having to fight for everything: degree, men, jobs, money. Tired of running after things that always elude me. It has to stop.... If I could only go away somewhere. Somewhere quiet ... Somewhere where I can be really alone ... Somewhere where I don't have to do anything but think all day long. (Koller, 1981, p. 2)

I fled to Nantucket to try in that isolated place to make sense out of everything that had gone before. ... Without having gone to the near-wildness that was Nantucket in winter, I could not have done it. There I learned what the shape and texture and locus of my daily life had to be. By having removed all socially imposed regulation of my activities, I began to uncover the intimate rhythms of my being. (Koller, 1990, pp. 43-44)

In the beginning, Koller believed that such solitude was only the first of many stations at which she would stop as she travelled toward her destination: the kind of person she wished to become.

In order to begin this journey towards an authentic self, Koller believes that everyone must

recognize the extent to which you are alone: thoroughly, unremittingly, without other human beings. I call it 'being alone elementally' as an element, unconnected. It is the essential human condition. ... being alone is merely the starting point in an exhilarating process, the first step along a continuum whose end point is so far from terrifying that it is beyond price: ... the person you wish to be, the life you wish to live. ...solitude is an achievement. It is your distinctive way of embodying the purposes you have chosen for your life ... To become genuinely solitary, to be alone well, you must first have been alone elementally. ... Only be away from everything familiar: every person, every relationship, every circumstance ... if you have any of these you are not ready to undertake the interior journey that will let you confront the person you are. ... to lone (I am inventing the verb) is to become oneself and thereby to be able to spend one's time pursuing one's purposes

independently of the presence or absence of other human beings. You lone in the process of becoming able to be alone well, but also in the practice of being alone well. (Koller, 1990, pp. 3-5)

In the beginning, Koller had not intended to remain for so long in this station of solitude. But she notes:

It was not part of my plan to become solitary. In the beginning I made myself seek ways to endure it for the time (I was certain it would not be forever) because it grew out of my choices. Yet not out of these alone but also out of the decisions of others and out of chance events. In time its benisons made themselves known to me, and finally I came to love it. But I did not have in mind to become an anchorite. (Koller, 1990, p. 95)

Nonetheless, a number of factors interconnected to keep Koller living in solitude.

First of all, even as she left Nantucket, one of the three items Koller writes of being certain about is her need to live close to the sea or to wildness:

I knew I had to live in the country. I knew it that dark February evening when I drove down the ramp that the Nantucket ferry unrolled. ... Somehow, somewhere, I would transpose to new ground the pure isolation of the Nantucket beaches. ... On Nantucket I became accustomed to, learned that I require, space without barriers. (Koller, 1990, pp. 70-71)

Throughout most of the years following Nantucket, Koller chose to live in the country: allowing her to live in easy rhythm with her dogs, with nature, and with her need for silence. Living in the country, provides Koller with one of her most essential continuities:

I surround myself with silence. The silence is within me, permeates my house, reaches beyond the surfaces of the outer walls and into the bordering woods. It is one silence, continuous from within me outward in all directions ... In the silence, I listen, I watch, I sense, I attend, I observe. I require this silence. I search it out. The finely drawn treble song of a white-throated sparrow is part of it. Invasions of it by the noise of engines are torments to me. (Koller, 1990, p. 23)

But choosing to live in the country, not only brought gifts, it also requires that a price be paid:

There is a price ... And what of films? Concerts? Ah, they cost money ... Parties? They cost money ... but primarily they require knowing enough people who are more or less accessible geographically and who touch, even though it be on the periphery, one or another aspect of my life and I

of theirs. And I do not have that. I am not part of any community. (Koller, 1990, p. 39)

The peripatetic life that is the unanticipated consequence of the route I designed carries a consequence of its own: good friends are not nearby. All the persons I remain connected to are in other parts of the country, the world. Our long distance calls stave off my being far more solitary than I already am. (Koller, 1990, p. 260)

And yet, even this degree of solitude is generally not too much for Koller to bear.

During the more than two decades of my solitary life I have been at pains to point out that I am not alone in fear and trembling. I am only, have only been, without other human beings. (Koller, 1990, p. 4)

In my awakening I am not alone. I am merely without other human beings. The friends [her dogs] who greet me. What matters is only this: we are together, all of us, here, this morning and nothing could be more extraordinarily felicitous than that. (Koller, 1990, p. 32)

I was, you see, living in joy. A life of days in which my freedom was palpable, a life without other persons but also without constant longing for them. (Koller, 1990, p. 48)

A second factor conspiring to hold Koller to a solitary life is her generally futile effort to find a work that fits her.

But, apart from the two years bestowed on me by readers of *An Unknown Woman*, nearly the whole of these twenty-five years has been income-interrupted. Soon there will be another place to live, another house to find. And another. Each moving on disconnects me further, loosens me link by link, from the continuities I still seek. (Koller, 1990, p. 94)

Like other nondomestic mammals of moderate size, I forage for my living where the food supply is. (Koller, 1990, p. 69)

It took too much of my time finding the living that would let me work. Had I been stably located somewhere, there might have been a man close to me in the intimacy of man and woman, a woman close to me in the intimacy of best friend. But few hours have passed during any of the preceding two and a half decades without my [trying to] earn a living. (Koller, 1990, p. 263)

Although Koller claimed that solitude was merely a starting point, not necessarily an objective, many of her attitudes towards others, not just the accidents of geography, could have contributed to her on-going separateness from others. Alice could not seem to rid herself of the idea that in every association with others some price would be asked of her.

perhaps, as in the past, the ultimate price of self would be exacted.

For my early dealings with other people I appropriated a principle that was already a functioning part of my kip for buying the objects I was then acquiring: if I could pay the price, I could have the thing. Otherwise not. ... I'm all but convinced that connections between human beings would be nearly perfect if people were to deal with one another in accordance with this principle. It's really no more than the principle of barter, but I'm touting it for sustaining personal relationships as well as economic ones. I'm construing personal relationships as economic ones. (Koller, 1990, p. 232)

For Alice, the damage to her self and to her self-in-relation with others was so deep that she seemed unable to give up the idea that relationships with others were bought at a price and she seemed, therefore, unable to tolerate intimacy.

Moreover, Koller's high expectations of those who would be her friends stood in the way of her connecting with others.

It takes time to become friends, and more time to become a best friend. You have to wait out her staying ability when you're ill or have little money, when your expectations crash to earth. And you have to wait out learning whether you're willing to give her these things in turn. (Koller, 1990, p. 261)

With each new woman I meet, each new man, our coming to know one another raises the prospect of our becoming friends in one degree or another ... By then I have made clear a single demand: you must be willing to hear me speak to you in all candor [sic], and you must be able to speak so to me. ... I won't settle for anything less. Rather than continue the relationship on a basis I could never again trust, I'll end it. A woman ... seemed likely to become a friend. A certain matter arose that we disagreed about, and I knew we'd soon have to discuss it plainly. I wrote suggesting that we arrange a time to meet. Over the next two months the woman phoned several times, talking about many things but not about meeting. She drove a long way to attend one of my public readings, surprising me by appearing in the audience, but she did not mention our talking together. Slowly I disconnected myself from her. (Koller, 1990, pp. 158-259)

This unnamed woman seemed prepared to make some effort to maintain a connection, but if that connection could not be as open and transparent as Koller expected, when she expected it to be, she ended the relationship.

As we have seen, as Alice came to understand more about her self, her relationships with

men underwent an enormous transformation: prior to her epiphany, Alice could have been seen as being addicted to relationships with men; afterward, she resolved to distance herself from them; she resolved to establish her own terms for a relationship. Alice states:

What would it be like to say, "These are my terms. If you want me, it will have to be on this basis"? And on top of it, to go away, letting the man decide for himself. (Koller, 1981, p. 248)

As we have read in The Stations of Solitude, Alice maintained her resolve throughout the many years that intervened. And so she is able to conclude:

I am a woman. I have never thought of myself, felt myself, wanted to be a man. ... Not being married, not having a man connected to me in any of the ways women now connect with men, has nothing to do with my age. ... I have never married because the solitude I created has room at its center only for matters I cherish for their own sake: loving my work, loving Logos and Ousia and Kairos, loving the country. Loving a man and his loving me would have to be of the same sort: having no purpose beyond our loving one another. ... Wanting is an arena separate from needing, beyond needing. ... I have never married because the men I've met are still at the level of needs. (Koller, 1990, pp. 195-197)

And so, when Alice speaks of loving and of intimacy, she very rarely speaks of other human beings, very rarely of a man.

A man I see for an hour or two every five years or so connects to me and I to him as do the opposite poles of magnets. We meet in a public place.... From our first words we plunge into our most profound concerns, talking in a closeness I do not attempt with anyone else. We are fully clothed in the dully lighted café, but it is a wonder to me that we are not arrested as we sip our drinks: no barriers exist between us. ... Dusk arrives. He is expected elsewhere. Then we must part. His lips graze my cheek. I turn and walk away. Not many five-year intervals are left. (Koller, 1990, p. 258)

"All of this you've been writing about loving has concerned only dogs." Yes. Logos, Ousia, Kairos are dogs. "Is there no man?" There was a man. "Well?" Nothing. .. It came to nothing. (Koller, 1990. p. 138)

In The Stations of Solitude, it is very clear that those others closest to Alice, about whom she speaks of love and caring are her dogs -- Logos, Ousia, and Kairos:

Not marriage, not family, not a community of colleagues instituted and sustained for me a connection to living beings, but Logos. For twelve and a half years, wherever I was, he was with me. Within three years of that beginning,

Ousia touched our connections to one another, Loss' and mine, and multiplied them in ways I did not know that three can differ from two... Then came the time for Kairos. ... This twenty-five-year-long overlapping of friendships, of carings and doings, is a continuity woven as tightly and intricately as a tapestry. (Koller, 1990, pp. 68-69)

At my very last I will unstop at last all the mourning that lives in me for those I loved, still love: my father, my Logos, my Ousia. ... My mourning will end only when I end. And so as I lay dying I'll unlock all the tears that still remain in me for Andrew Koller, and for Logos. For Ousia's death that I did not let begin, I'll rip out the seal that has stopped it up... I loved for no reason other than that those I loved were who they were. And that's what I'll be doing as I die: loving them. I'll call out to them one by one, or in pairs, or all together, calling them all the names they had when they were with me ... because their lives as beloved will end with my end. Mourning, loving, Alice, Andrew, Logos, Ousia, all: all will end. "And what of Kairos?" I think there is not third way to mourn, but if I do not have the good fortune to die before Kairos, he may teach me otherwise. (Koller, 1990, pp. 351-352)

Knowing

A central accomplishment for Alice Koller on Nantucket Island was to integrate two very different ways of knowing: the reasoned knowledge she received through her years of philosophical study with her very new subjective knowledge based on her own feelings, experiences and voice. On Nantucket, she learned how to construct her own truth, by combining her own perceptions and understandings with the techniques of philosophy. She tells us:

I tore away all the beliefs and attitudes that had hobbled me up till then. After three months I left Nantucket ... knowing for the first time the difference between telling myself the truth and telling myself lies. ... By having removed all socially imposed regulation of my activities, I began to uncover the intimate rhythms of my being. ... Without my philosophical training, I could not have done it. I knew how to ask questions, and I knew what counts as an adequate answer. I know how to open my beliefs out to merciless study. I knew how to take the role of my own worst enemy attempting to refute me. (Koller, 1990, pp. 43-44)

I had to know what was true. *Had* to. ... [This] consists of criteria for choosing, guides for action, principles of

commitment. They take longer to acquire ... I accumulate a number of bits ... and then the "I" doing the piecing is caught by something common among them, reflects on them, and elicits it from them. Ways of proceeding that were habitual to other persons demanded extended periods of consideration from me. ... Thus slowly did I join some new fragment to the collection, some new guide to the already functioning system of beliefs and habits, integrating the new with everything else I had chosen, no seams showing. ... Coming to know what you mean to say and coming to know whether what you say is true both require you to ask questions ... By such ceaseless questioning, ... by making myself see and hear what there was to be seen and heard regardless of what I might want to see and hear, I had discovered the truth about myself on Nantucket. I could do no less than pursue with the same tenacity to truth of every subsequent circumstance that mattered to me.... 'Alice' derives from the Greek *alitheia*, truth: ... my occupation, my profession, my very being. The least surprising fact about me is that I am a philosopher, a person who seeks to understand. It is the prior condition for knowing what is true. (Koller, 1990, pp. 14-17)

By combining her reason with her inner self, her mind with her actions, Koller was persevering in constructing a self that was unified and integrated. Koller comes to know:

Persisting in unifying my life...is a moral and an intellectual pursuit. Moral, in being about the kind of person one is or can become. Intellectual, in being unceasingly concerned to clarify and to bring together into one consistent whole what would otherwise be the erratically joined parts of my mind and my actions...The philosopher I am is inextricably entwined with the person I am. (Koller, 1990, pp. 223-224)

After Nantucket, Koller's way of knowing was very particular to her self: she knew what was true from her own considered experiences and from her own philosophical inquiry.

I am a philosopher studying my own mind. And when I look outward at the natural world, I essay to write my seeing and hearing and touching. (Koller, 1990, p. 41)

Working

Indeed, philosophical inquiry became intimately connected with whom Alice saw herself as being. Soon after leaving Nantucket, although unsure about so much of what she would do or who she would become, Koller began to reconnect with philosophy.

Not before noon did I allow any person, any event, to trespass into the reading and thinking ... stirring up connections to the philosophy I had done in graduate school. But there I had worked under duress that was external ... Here I was able to let the problem itself direct me, rapping at doorways into the knowledge that I had acquired under those impossible circumstances, knowledge that emerged in forms I had not consciously designed and yet that seemed to be waiting for me to pluck them out, as Excalibur for Arthur, to bring them to light, to my light. (Koller, 1990, pp. 29-30)

Out of the blue I remembered my unfinished struggle five years earlier to understand one laughably small segment of a Platonic dialogue. ... I spend a maddeningly delicious two weeks with the old impasse ... An intellectual problem had been nattering at me for five years. I had to resolve it. "Reasons and Loving in *Euthyphro*" was pure philosophy. Doing it, and completing it, marked for me the turning point from which thereafter I thought of myself as a philosopher. (Koller, 1990, pp. 53-55)

Almost as though I were starting philosophy all over again, coming upon my own views by shaking off those of others that I had ingested as a graduate student. (Koller, 1990, p. 163)

Yet what's philosophy to me or me to philosophy that I should have raged for 't? It became, it was, it is, myself. (Koller, 1990, p. 195)

But even as Alice comes to regard herself as a philosopher and to "rage for 't", others around her, those within the profession, would not allow her in:

I write my thinking. I think by writing. ... I write what I mean, what I understand, what I know. This is my work. ... Several philosophers, all men, all secure in their tenured positions at major universities, tell me (indeed, they insist) that it is not philosophy, but they are the same people who let me hang in the wind. (Koller, 1990, p. 41)

These were the same men who had not ushered her into their exclusive fellowship. These were the same men who Alice felt had conspired to keep her from attaining the university appointment to which her doctorate entitled her. Yet Alice continued to love philosophy, to rage for it, to be inextricably entwined with it.

In writing her thinking, Alice finds her work:

Work is a world apart from jobs. Work is the way you occupy you mind and hand and eye and whole body when they're informed by your imagination and wit, by your keenest perception, by your most profound reflections on everything you've read and seen and heard and been part of. You may or may not be paid to do your work. ... A job is doing something other people want done, and so they have to pay someone to do it. ... People who know what their work is but haven't found a way to get paid for doing it confront a problem that pervades all aspects of their lives, a problem jobholders never encounter. ... People who work do two things, not one. Like jobholders, they have to support themselves. Unlike jobholders, they must support their work, too. (Koller, 1990, pp. 41-42)

In spite of rejection from her colleagues, Koller persisted in doing her philosophical work. But, again, it was philosophy done 'her way' The first book Alice Koller published was a government funded linguistics project, A Hornbook of Hazards for Linguists. In writing the Hornbook, Alice was able to break free of the restrictions which had constrained the writing of her dissertation. As she tells us:

The form of my dissertation followed a centuries-old pattern prescribed as much by its traditional purpose ... The form of the *Hornbook*, however, could be whatever would most effectively serve its purpose. But the purpose was mine to choose ... And ... the content too was of my choosing. The style of my dissertation was also laid down by academic custom. "We see that ..."; "We must therefore conclude that ..."; ... But their job ... is to conceal any hint of the scholars individuality. ... If your own personality were to intrude, the impartiality you're aiming for might be tainted. Your ability to persuade might be charged, not to the strength of your argument, but to the power of your big blue eyes. (Koller, 1990, pp. 56-57)

In the Hornbook, Alice Koller, the philosopher, wrote philosophy as she had never done before.

And so in the *Hornbook* I danced and sang and did somersaults and played hopscotch and hung upside down from the branches of trees. (Koller, 1990, p. 60)

In Alice's description of the Hornbook, the cautions of Aisenberg and Harrington (1988) come to life as they warned against the tendency of some women scholars to interact with their subject matter as if it were a love relation, frequently using the language of love and birth to describe their work. We hear these tones in Alice's words:

The April day I packed off the manuscript of my *Hornbook* to Washington, I was sending out into the world the creature

that had sprung from my head and my fingertips. Now separated from the nourishment and protection of my pen, my desk, my study, its life would be only as long as the eyes and minds of others, unsown to me, would find in it whatever light I had found in myself and then poured out onto each page. ... On a bright September morning the postman knocked on my door to deliver thirty copies of my first book. ... they were mine, and I was ravished by them. (Koller, 1990, p. 62)

Her first offer of an academic position, other than the one brief semester at Berkeley, came from Connecticut College, six years after earning her doctorate. But Alice was undecided. She was in the midst of writing the Hornbook and did not want to set it aside. Moreover, she was concerned that there was not enough time for her to prepare her classes to suit the way she taught. Her way of teaching was like “the midwifery of Socrates”, connecting deeply with one or two students a day. Of her way of teaching, Koller says:

That kind of teaching is almost never lecturing. It's always and only trying to find the hook within the student to which I can tie my words and ideas, to draw him or her out so that, after a little hand holding, the person will pursue his or her own path. ... Teaching that way can be a sixty-or seventy-hour week. Excluding faculty meetings and conferences with students. ... Why should I give up all those hours [instead of writing] full time? (Koller, 1990, pp. 150-152)

Nonetheless, Koller decided to investigate the opportunity more fully. After many miscommunications by phone and by mail, the offer was finally made, but the salary was nearly 20 percent lower than she had anticipated. And so Alice tells us of rejecting the offer:

In fact, his administrative incompetence was one of the reasons I decided against the job. ... If he and I were to be colleagues for half a year, I'd have to hold my tongue when knowing what I felt and saying what I meant had become one and inseparable to me. ... I need not have feared that, by sitting quietly or nodding agreeably each week for the hour or two that I'd be encountering this man, I might have reverted to my former crimes against myself. I thought that, unless I said what I meant, which in turn was the spontaneous outcome of how I felt, I might go back to my old way of lying to myself. ... I tuned down the offer ... because I wanted ... to write. (Koller, 1990, pp. 153-154)

But in addition to her degree, Alice soon had the Hornbook. And she writes that she was beginning to understand that

teaching ... was the way people who wanted to write and do research supported themselves. More: it gave their work continuity by providing a source of income that could

be relied on, that they could augment with research grants, invitations to lecture, perhaps books. (Koller, 1990, pp. 156-157)

But this realization came too late, as did the publication of the Hornbook. When Koller began to explore seriously the possibility of teaching, the doors seemed to be sealed shut. She was offered a prospect of a teaching position the following year at Yale, but not likely in her speciality, the field she had been exploring for nearly three years, philosophy of language. And so Alice protests:

"And the rank?" "Instructor." "Instructor!?" I should have kept the startle to myself. "But you're using the *Hornbook* in your course." "Yes." For a moment he had the grace to be uncomfortable. He knew, and I knew, that having published a book, even a book distributed by the federal government, but particularly a book that was being talked about and used as a text by linguists in the important universities in the country, qualifies its author to advance at least one rung on the ladder of rank. But instructor is the rank for brand-new Ph.D.'s. "What teaching have you done?" He had me there. One semester in California. ... I was trying to rid myself of a sense of oppression that was foreign to me. And yet, familiar. ... What mattered only was: had I held a teaching job immediately after receiving my degree, and had I been teaching in that place or elsewhere all this time. And the answer was "No." ... It was like being at Harvard: being on a playing field without knowing it, without anyone's having taken me in hand to tell me the rules, and then the game was over by the time I figured them out. On Nantucket I cast off their rules and I began making my own. Now they won't let me into the game, even though what I'm doing is the whole point of philosophy. (Koller, 1990, pp.157-158)

Alice applied for several more teaching positions and even spent a few months at the University of Waterloo in a new programme, Integrated Studies. But she was forced out of that position by student hostility to an American professor during the war in Vietnam. Koller also admits that she could not choose to be employed, to earn money, even if the position were not ideal:

I resigned. No other job was in sight. You see the mistake, don't you? I was treating a job as though it were my work. ... But I let them deprive me of my source of income. Couldn't I simply have gritted my teeth for the three or four hours every other day that I had to meet with students in our small tutorials, then gathered up my books and file folders and driven home? ... Well, you see, I still hadn't learned to take money when it was put into my hands. ... Forget my beliefs about what constitutes an education, my understanding of how to teach, my sense of the interpenetrating connection between writing and thinking. I

should have relegated all that to the privacy of my study. For the job, I should have done what needed doing. ... Stupid Alice. It was my last teaching appointment. (Koller, 1990, pp. 159-161)

In spite of her beliefs that she belonged at a university, that she was an excellent teacher, and that she loved and cherished philosophy, Koller had rejected, for one reason or another, each of the few teaching appointments that she had been offered. Every opportunity for an academic appointment was somehow flawed: not enough time, too low a rank, too low a salary, too far south, and so on. For Alice, having silenced her self for 37 years, there would be no compromise.

Alice Koller earned her doctorate in 1960. In March 1979, she finally gave up her search for an academic appointment. Nearly two decades spent loving philosophy, but shut out of the ranks of philosophers.

But there came a time when I understood that no philosophy department would ever again hire me to teach, and so I had to find another way to feed and shelter us, to let me continue to write and think. I solved the problem by hustling writing assignments. (Koller, December 1, 1983)

Alice was never able to earn a living in the manner to which her degree entitled her. Instead, she hustled writing assignments and lived on the edge of poverty her whole life.

During the ... twenty-five years, I have moved sixteen times.... I forage for my living where the food supply is. (Koller, 1990, p. 69)

The money I earn goes out as soon as, sooner than, it comes in. I'm pushy about having it at once because I have none, because there is no prospect (now, today) of getting more. Until I lift the phone again: "Hello. I'm a writer. Do you have any ..." ... Thus do I have a reputation for being greedy, for always grasping after money. (Koller, 1990, pp. 183-184)

Eventually,

the day came when I had thirty-five dollars in the world... To feed ...us, I sold almost every possession I had so carefully chosen or been chosen by nearly ten years earlier ... For more than six months we had no house. I boarded Logos and Ousia...and drove to and from the couches of friends and acquaintances looking for jobs... for a week we lived in my car in a state forest.... By the end of the week the writing assignment I had been hustling came through, and I moved us into a motel... We stayed for two months...but when the assignment came to an end I packed our things

into the car and we moved on. In western Massachusetts I enrolled for welfare and food stamps... (Koller, 1990, pp. 88-91)

People tell me that I'm hard to find. They have only to look for me at the moneying station. It is the station of solitude that seems to have my name on it, so lengthy are my interludes there. In twenty-five years, I have left it only twice: once for nearly four years, and once for nearly two. A total of five years, say, out of twenty-five. Only five years of having enough money to live on without constantly having to try to earn it so I could do my work. Since I consider people to be successful when their money comes only from their work, I can't at all count myself among them: I have had to give up 80 percent of my days merely to survive. (Koller, 1990, p. 184)

For Alice Koller was rarely paid to do her work; she never found the academic appointment that she had wanted. And so, in the end, she never achieved that which had the most meaning for her.

To me teaching would have been work, not a job. It would have been a seamless life.

"Are you bitter?" a man asked me over lunch. He is a philosopher, the holder of an endowed chair in the department that abdicated its responsibility to me. ...

"Enraged is closer," I replied.

He was prepared to have me say that the public response to *An Unknown Woman* wiped the slate clean. But I am not a saint: I am only a philosopher.

Yet what's philosophy to me or me to philosophy that I should have raged for 't? It became, it was, it is, myself. (Koller, 1990, p. 195)

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS SOURCE MATERIAL

Within the framework of qualitative research, autobiographical texts provide ideal source material by which we can explore a woman's reflections on her changing construction of self and meaning over her lifetime and within her specific socio-cultural and psychological contexts. Indeed, some feminist researchers have noted that such personal narratives are both central and essential to understanding women's consciousness framed within their contexts. It is important to note, however, that each autobiography is a reconstruction, a way of looking back in order to understand experiences and define meanings. It can be likened to a snapshot, taken looking back. As such, it is not reality - it is not 'the truth' - but rather a carefully framed likeness or representation. And so, Alice Koller's An Unknown Woman and The Stations of Solitude are snapshots taken to depict her understandings of her life story and of her changing self and meanings, looking back from the place she inhabited when she wrote. This project, too, is also a snapshot of my understandings of Koller's texts, crafted during one time in my life.

ALICE KOLLER'S STORY

As with many autobiographies, Alice Koller's story begins with a transforming, midlife crisis. As for so many other women, Alice's midlife marked a time when she engaged in a struggle to give birth to a new self, to discover what mattered to her, and to define her own meanings. (Apter, 1995) One morning in October 1962, Alice Koller looked at her reflection in a mirror and fell into a "looking back time", sliding down into what Apter calls a midlife transformational crisis. (Apter, 1995, p. 21)

For in midlife, when women are freed of the supposition that someone else has the answer, when they are no longer shadowed by a need to please a parent ... when the

fantasy of the ideal of who they should be is shattered by the mature reflection in the mirror ... they see how past decisions have cut them off from the potential they had wished to achieve, or how past expectations blinded them to the costs their goals incurred ... They [feel] the panic of self-responsibility ... they ... see what they [have] compromised, and what it [has] cost them ... Regret and doubt are violent feelings, and this [is] often a violent time ... it [gives] way to new skills in making assessments and choices. These women [pass] through a crisis, and come to a turning point where they could now perceive their own strength and assert their own desire. (Apter, 1995, pp. 21, 23)

Alice was suddenly aware that she had no home, no career, no man. In her panic, she fled to Nantucket Island for three months over the winter of 1962-1963. She suddenly saw, reflected back, that she was merely perched in an apartment that was not her own; she was engaged in a 'busy-work' job, not in a career to which her degree entitled her; she had had a long trail of relationships with men, but had no love; and, she could no longer conceal the signs of aging on her face. As she walked the beaches and fields of Nantucket she searched for answers to many questions: Who am I? How do I know who I am? Why are others so important to me? What do I want? How do I know what I want? Who will love me? Can I be me? In reading of the anguish of those months, we come face to face with the circumstances which had brought Alice Koller to this moment in her life.

Alice Koller's early years were spent within a family and socio-cultural environment which promoted an idealized role for women in which they were, like her mother Sarah, to stay at home and take care of their families and their homes. They were to silence their own selves and needs in order to respond more fully to the needs of others. And yet, within that same environment there were also increasing numbers of women being educated, working outside the home, and even engaging in professional careers. And so, Alice Koller matured and constructed her life story within an environment of conflicting messages about the options available to and appropriate for twentieth-century American women. Her life was, therefore, lived within that cultural tension and can be understood to manifest her attempts to 'have it all': a career, a home, and a man.

In addition to the typical, silencing, socialization processes which most American girls and women of Alice's generation experienced, Alice Koller was also born into a family system

which she characterized as being dysfunctional, full of indifference, hostility, and strife. For Alice, the foundational issue which most contributed her childhood construction of self and meanings was the fact that her mother did not love her. Koller tells us that it was out of this central fact of her life that developed her search for attention, approval, and affection from others and that resulted in her subsequent silencing of her self, her own voice, and her own way of knowing. Out of the fact that her mother did not love her, Alice developed a sense of being unwanted, unloved and unlovable. Her whole life, until her flight to Nantucket, was the story of her trying to fill the emptiness left behind, an emptiness which even her beloved father could not fill.

In the early years of her life, Alice Koller had learned a number of things which she struggled to cast off on the beaches of Nantucket. Alice had learned that she hated the life of housework, exemplified in her mother's never-ending rush to beat the clock, so she had to find another way to be in the world. As a child and adolescent, Alice had learned that she could act, she could 'be' someone else so well that others applauded. She had also learned that others thought that she was smart and that her intelligence was another way of earning the approval of others. At 13, Alice had learned that she was attractive when Stuart kissed her. For 24 more years, she sought out the attention and affection of men trying to fill the emptiness within. Most importantly, Alice Koller had learned to silence her self so much that it was as if she did not exist beneath the encrustations that were her outer shell; she learned to replace her mother's rejection by seeking attention and approval from others.

Just before her seventeenth birthday, around 1942, Alice left home to embark on an acting career, turning her back on her mother's plans for her to "become a dental assistant and marry a nice Jewish boy." (Koller, 1981, p. 200) Even though she set out for Chicago wanting to be the greatest actress of her generation, she soon abandoned this dream. For Alice also carried with her the belief that she could only be competent, she could only be worthy of others' attention and applause, when she was able to meet exactly the standard set in place by the recognized authority. And so, when she discovered that she could not learn the correct acting method, when she could not get it right, she quit.

Alice then turned to academics, since she also believed that she was smart. In 1946, at

age 21, Koller became one of many women enrolled in post-secondary education. Studies of post-war women college students tell of conflicts and tensions between working hard and getting good grades and seeming too smart, scaring off prospective suitors. And so, many of them dropped out before they even finished. In Alice's first attempt at academics, she too dropped out.

Nonetheless, if she couldn't earn applause as an actress, Alice still believed strongly enough in her intelligence that she continued to pursue her other adolescent dream:

To be taught, as men were taught, whatever there was to be learned; to speak on equal terms with any person; to read everything of value ever written; to see everything beautiful ever made; to be at home anywhere in the world.
(Koller 1981, p. 200)

And so Alice returned to university, struggling and finally succeeding in "tearing [an education] from the hands of men who ... dared us to take it." (Koller, 1981, p. 144) In earning a doctorate in Philosophy from Harvard in 1959, Alice Koller was truly an exceptional woman, one of only 1 in 100 women baccalaureates to go on to earn a doctorate in the decade 1955-1965. (Astin, 1969, p. 4)

Throughout this entire time, while persisting in her struggle to succeed in university against her own poor health and the biases of her male colleagues, Alice also persisted in giving up her own self, in silencing it, as did so many other women of her generation, in the face of authority and in relation to men. As she comes to realize that "each thing I do during the course of a day is something I've been told to do, or taught to do", (Koller, 1981, p. 21) we hear Alice's cry on Nantucket:

What's wrong with me? Am I not smart? Thoughtful of their needs? Attractive? A storyteller to amuse them? What haven't I done for them that they might not have even known they wanted done for them, in bed or out? (Koller, 1981, p. 193)

Even after completing her doctorate, Alice was still unable to fill her emptiness or to fulfill her promise. A number of factors tangled together to hold her from achieving her dream. While the research indicates that the majority of women doctorates of Koller's generation were employed in their chosen careers, Alice's career history did not reflect this pattern. (Astin, 1969; Yohalem, 1991) For, even though she never married and raised children,

her work history was one of constant under-employment and unemployment. Indeed, she found herself, from time to time, living off the generosity of friends or even living in her car, relying on welfare and food stamps to support herself and her cherished companions.

Unlike many of her peers, Alice's early environment conspired to prevent her from knowing how to take charge of her own destiny. Moreover, she did not know the rules of the game. For example, in graduate school, Alice recounted being swept up by her love of philosophy, ignoring the more mundane aspects of the profession of academia. Perhaps Alice, like other women graduate students, did not devote her energies to gaining needed credentials, but rather focused on the power of and love for ideas. She did not plan her professional career, but rather looked forward to a dream of scholarship and teaching at a university. Perhaps Alice believed that, if she proved that she was smart, others would finally applaud. And so,

A few weeks before the sweet June morning in Sanders Theatre when the ancient and honourable community of scholars welcomed me into its midst by slipping the doctoral hood over my shoulders, I asked one of my professors how I should go about getting a job. "Too late in the year," he replied. Too late forever, had I only known. ... (Koller, 1990, pp. 141-142)

That summer, after struggling for 13 years to earn her doctorate, Alice worked at Houghton Mifflin as a reader at \$1.50 an hour.

And so, we come full circle to that morning in October 1962, three years after that ceremony in Sanders Theatre, which propelled Alice Koller into a transformational crisis on Nantucket. Nantucket became a time for her to search out the origins of her silent, unknown self. It was in coming to understand the constraints of her childhood that Alice was able to break free of the expectations of others and to begin to construct a self and a voice that was truly her own. As Alice reconstructed her self, she moved away from the way of knowing that relied solely on the voices of authority. As she learned to discard her reliance on knowledge received from others, Koller learned to risk living out of her own subjective source of knowledge, out of her own feelings, wantings, and purposes, out of her own truth.

But as she crossed the water back to her life, we wondered to what extent Alice Koller

would be able to hold on to her fragile reconstructed self, her tentative voice, and her very few criteria for knowing what she wanted. As she readies to leave Nantucket Island, Koller tries to sort out what she has learned about her self

and come upon the shapes of ideas new to my repertoire
being alone, burgeoning in it, making my own decisions,
insisting on it, uncovering my own authority, reveling [sic] in
it, seeing other people as beings in their own right,
astonished by it (Koller, 1981, p. 311)

At last, at age 37, Koller believes that she is free, disburdened, “not obliged, not required, not compelled to do anything” (Koller, 1981, p. 264). And then, in The Stations of Solitude, we read the story of how Alice Koller was able to construct a way of living that allowed her to hold on to her newly reconstructed self and to hold on to her new sense of freedom and of her own authority.

In the beginning, Alice had not intended to remain for long in the station of solitude, but a number of factors interconnected to keep her living in solitude. Throughout most of the years following Nantucket, Koller chose to live in the country, allowing her to live in easy rhythm with her dogs, with nature, and with her need for silence. Although Koller claimed that solitude was merely a starting point, not necessarily an objective, many of her attitudes towards others, not just the accidents of geography, seem to have contributed to her on-going separateness from others. For example, we read that, in connecting every detail of her life into her reconstructed self, in insisting that all of her choices and commitments speak to her own purposes, Koller spurned compromise and negotiation. Every detail of her life had to fit to her reconstructed self, to her way of being, to her meanings, or it was shed. Every person who would be her friend had to meet her

single demand: you must be willing to hear me speak to
you in all candor [sic] and you must be able to speak so to
me. I won't settle for anything less. Rather than continue
the relationship on a basis I could never again trust, I'll end
it (Koller, 1990, p. 259)

Every person who would stand in the way of meeting her own purposes was deemed an enemy with whom she would collide either “in one great continuing impact or in intermittent small scuffles” (Koller, 1990, p. 265). But collide they would, since what was at issue was whether her purposes or theirs would prevail. “Not reason but only power will resolve it” (Koller, 1990, p. 266). Alice could not seem to rid herself of the idea that in

every association with others some price would be asked of her perhaps, as in the past, the ultimate price of self would be exacted For Alice, having silenced her self for 37 years, there would be no compromise And so, for most of her life after leaving Nantucket Island, Alice Koller lived in solitude

Since she wanted to engage in a work that was fully hers and fully absorbed her and not just to do a 'job', she rejected many offers of employment, many offers that were, in her mind, only 'jobs' In spite of her beliefs that she belonged at a university, that she was an excellent teacher, and that she loved and cherished philosophy, Koller rejected, for one reason or another, each of the few teaching appointments that she was offered after leaving Nantucket Every opportunity for an academic appointment was found to be somehow flawed not enough time to prepare, too low a rank, too low a salary, too far south, and so on For Alice, having silenced her self for 37 years, there would be no compromise And so, for most of her life, Alice Koller lived in poverty But she also lived her life fully her own way

But it matters not at all to me how you interpret what I do
 By the time you reach these final words, if I have not made
 clear to you the idea of doing something for its own sake,
 the fault is in me or in your understanding, not in the idea
 Even understanding the idea, you may choose not to let it
 pattern your doings Your circuit of the stations of solitude
 will thereby differ from mine Not only in detail, as is to be
 expected, but in principle as well Each station of solitude
 is a choosing, the whole circuit a collocation of choosings It
 is up to you to choose whether even to begin (Koller,
 1990, pp 363-364)

METHODOLOGY

Some transferable learnings can be gleaned from the methodological process through which I worked to reveal Koller's processes and meanings First of all, the importance of studying a woman's life within both her socio-cultural and psychological contexts is essential These two contexts and the many ways in which they interacted are the background which informed Alice's construction of self and her meanings As a result, it is

only in understanding the meanings of her psychological and social worlds that we can come to understand the narrative of her life. (Smith, Harré & Van Langenhove, 1995)

Secondly, the methodology of Renata Tesch, supplemented with some strategies from other researchers such as Sandra Kirby and Kate McKenna, gave me a framework around which I could construct my own way of coming to understand Alice Koller. As Tesch recommends, I began my project with a full immersion in Alice Koller's two texts. Before beginning any work with the data, I read and reread each text several times. As I was reading each text, I also began jotting down on any blank spaces in the text ideas, questions, key portions of text, Koller's use of metaphors, and any obvious references to her socio-cultural environment or to any psychological issues. These notes came out of the textual material and were not organized in any way. This first step gave me a feeling of 'living with' Koller's words and phrases, a feeling of understanding her self and meanings as she constructed them. This level of saturation is essential in order to ground any qualitative research of this sort in the subjective experience of the author.

Focusing first on An Unknown Woman,³⁴ I then moved on to considering Tesch's second step of attending to topics or themes and the switches or transitions from one topic to the next, making any notations in the margins. (Tesch, 1990, p. 142) This technique is commonly used in the qualitative analysis of textual material and I had hoped to follow it. It allows the researcher to 'tease' out constructs for analysis, while leaving the text itself intact and within its context. In spite of my preferences, it became obvious that I had to locate or design a more workable approach, since Koller's writing style was too complex to allow such a marginal notation system. I, therefore, divided the second step in Tesch's methodology, beginning by focusing on topics and setting aside the issue of transitions or switches. I began by devising a preliminary list of topics out of Koller's own text, a list which underwent many revisions as I read and reread each text. Each topic was inscribed on an index card and, as I read, I noted the location of each textual reference related to each topic, regardless of the content of that reference, on its card.³⁵ While this approach is very intensive, it allowed me to collect all the textual references to each topic

³⁴ I worked through the entire process first with An Unknown Woman and then with The Stations of Solitude

³⁵ The topic tells you what the piece of data is about, for example 'working' What is actually said about working is the content

regardless of content. It allowed me to note recurrent patterns of meaning, changes in meaning, as well as exceptions. In conducting this topical search, I was looking for all of the data, not rejecting certain excerpts because 'they didn't fit' my preconceptions. By its very nature, therefore, this process encourages the researcher to 'hold at bay' any assumptions or theoretical constructs and is inclusive of all the text, including exceptions. I would strongly recommend such an approach to any researcher working with complex textual material.

After having read through An Unknown Woman, diligently collecting all the references to each topic or theme in Koller's text, I then wondered, "Now what?" It was at this point that I turned to the work of Kirby and McKenna, wherein they speak of "bibbits" of data excerpted and collected. (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, pp. 135-136) Using the index cards, I typed out each section of text related to each topic or theme, producing a very lengthy series of documents: some as brief as half of a page, some as long as 10 pages, single-spaced. By typing out each item as it related to each particular theme, I often found myself, as Kirby and McKenna indicated, referencing key sections of text several times, since they related to many different themes. Again, while very time consuming, I would recommend this strategy in providing a foundation for a full understanding of a subject's own experience and meaning. Following this method, I was working to saturation with Koller's texts, collecting and juxtaposing all of her texts around a particular topic, thereby highlighting the full complexity of her meanings. In following this method, I have good confidence in the confirmability and plausibility of my constructions.

As I was reading and typing, I was not only collecting all of the references to each topic, I was also becoming more fully aware of patterns and contradictions within the content expression around each topic. By means of the very act of collecting together all the texts related to a particular topic, I was, therefore, beginning to analyze what meanings Koller ascribed to various topics at different times in her life. From the first reading of the texts to the sorting of excerpts related to each topic, I was gradually moving from topics to themes, from description towards analysis. I was gradually moving from the words and phrases of Koller's narrative to the underlying structures and meanings.

When I first undertook this project and began to read, I wondered how I would move from

description to interpretative analysis. As I worked through Tesch's proposed methodology, with support from Kirby and McKenna, the direction of my exploration rose out of the material, out of Koller's own words and phrases. In keeping with the principles of qualitative research, the theoretical issues I selected to review were embedded within Alice Koller's story: I worked from the data towards the theory in the "context of discovery" rather than in the 'context of verification'." (Giorgi, 1985, p. 14; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) In selecting the socio-cultural and psychological issues that would help inform Koller's changing construction of self, using this methodology, I took my cues directly from her narrative rather than impose my preconceived theoretical tenets onto her texts.

In conclusion, this project, by respectfully listening to the story of one woman, Alice Koller, hopes to contribute to a new feminist scholarship, which has emerged within the past 20 years or so, giving voice to the issues, experiences and stories of women. By listening to and retelling the narratives of girls and women, one story at a time, it is hoped that women will come to regain their voices, reclaim their power, strengthen their constructed selves, and validate their constructed meanings.

Just as Alice Koller claimed her power to reconstruct her self and shared that narrative with us.

CONCLUSION

This project comes to an end, having explored Alice Koller's construction of self and meaning, as presented in her two autobiographical texts, An Unknown Woman and The Stations of Solitude. This exploration was based, not only on Koller's own story, words, and meanings, but also on the socio-cultural and psychological contexts within which she was born and matured. The exploration presented herein is the story of one woman by another and, as such, is not generalizable to the larger population of women, even to those other women, of Koller's time and place, who have written autobiographies. Moreover, it is important to recall that, from the perspective of qualitative methodology, the

very "value of the case study is its uniqueness." (Janesick, 1994, p. 271)

Nonetheless, while each woman's story is unique, hopefully there are some general understandings we can draw from Alice's story about the experience of transforming self and meaning for women. Indeed, Alice's texts have been quoted by other feminist scholars in their quest to understand more fully women's development. In the 1986 work of Belenky and her associates, Women's Ways of Knowing, Alice's transformation is used as a model for women who have come to question and to move beyond the procedural way of knowing which they have been taught into a way of knowing which also listens to their own inner experiencing. For Belenky, Alice's quest typified a woman's movement towards what she has labelled a "constructed" way of knowing, wherein she searched out a way to "weave together the strands of rational and emotive thought and of integrating objective and subjective knowing." (Belenky et. al, 1986, pp. 135-136) Eventually, out of her crisis on Nantucket, Koller came to understand that she needed to find a way to bring together the two compartments of her knowledge: received knowledge and subjective knowledge. She came to realize that she could look inside herself to learn what she was feeling, to seek her own evidence, to become her own judge; and that she could use the knowledge of her past, the reasoned logic of philosophy, to help her to establish her own criteria and test her own truth.

Terri Apter has also referred to Koller's midlife transformational crisis in Secret Paths Women in the New Midlife (1995). Again, Apter focuses on the model Koller provides for other women in their middle years. In writing her narrative from the other side, Koller has looked back and drawn out a circuit for others to follow. (Koller, 1990, p. xi) In writing her narrative, Koller has told the story of the most important quest of all: for her story is of one woman's quest, against many odds, to construct her own self, her own way of knowing and being, and her own meanings. As Heilbrun has noted in Writing a Woman's Life, since girls and women "have been deprived of the narratives, or the texts, plots, or examples, by which they might assume power over -- take control of -- their own lives", [they] will starve in silence until new stories are created which confer on them the power of naming themselves." (Heilbrun, 1988, pp. 17, 33) Alice Koller has told one such story about her quest to take her power back and name her self.

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