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FACULTÉ DES ÉTUDES SUPÉRIEURES
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FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND
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GRADE / DEGREE

Faculty of Education

FACULTÉ, ÉCOLE, DÉPARTEMENT / FACULTY, SCHOOL, DEPARTMENT

Setting Out for Ithaca: Young Women's Journeys into Self and
Identity Through Personal Journal Writing

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**SETTING OUT FOR ITHACA: YOUNG WOMEN'S JOURNEYS INTO SELF AND
IDENTITY THROUGH PERSONAL JOURNAL WRITING**

by

Nectaria Karagiozis

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Education

University of Ottawa

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Ottawa, Canada



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395 Wellington Street
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ISBN: 978-0-494-49367-0

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ISBN: 978-0-494-49367-0

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Acknowledgments

It is my great pleasure to express my deep sense of gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Judith P. Robertson, for her continuous guidance, constant encouragement and for her remarkable poise, expertise and commitment to the requirements of supervising such a challenging research. This thesis grew out of a series of dialogues and endless meetings with Dr. Judith Robertson. She offered generously her time to guide me and think with me about the unravelling story of these seventeen young women. Dr. Robertson provided me with a stimulating environment of freedom and endless opportunities to learn, a space to voice my presence. Sharing this journey with her has been more than inspiring.

My participants' contribution to this study is remarkable. The fact that they agreed with no hesitation to share with me their most intimate writings is of great importance for this research. I feel honored to be given the chance to read and study their personal journal entries and deep appreciation for allowing me to witness parts of their life histories and glimpse into their inner world, feelings, and thoughts.

I would like to thank my committee members Dr. Barbara Graves, Dr. Raymond Leblanc and Dr. Cynthia Morawski for their insightful feedback on my research and their invaluable contribution in the shaping of my thesis. I would like to thank my external examiner Dr. Elizabeth Yeoman for sharing her views and extending my scheme of understanding the writings of my participants.

My contact with Dr. Philip Cheifetz was also powerful. His curiosity about this study was essential fuel.

I learned a great deal from each of my professors that I worked with during my Ph.D. studies as a research or teaching assistant. Dr. Judith Robertson, who has been my role model and allowed me to grow as a teaching and research assistant. She may never truly know how much her teaching, theory and approach to learning, and kindness have meant to me. I would also like to acknowledge the important role that Dr. Lorna McLean and Dr. Tim Stanley played in encouraging me to develop my abilities as a historical researcher at the National Library and Archives in Canada for several projects. Dr. Cynthia Morawski, for offering me the opportunity to learn from her practices in organizing the teaching materials and Dr. Anne Jefferson for encouraging me to take a further step and engage in lectures and discussions with graduate students.

I also thank all of my friends and colleagues who supported me along the way. I would like to thank my colleagues Rumaisa Shaukat for offering her assistance unconditionally and Marzieh Hassantafaghodtari for her jokes and spirituality. Both had faith in me and intrigued me to kindle a spirit of optimism towards my abilities to teach. It has been a great pleasure sailing along sides with Judy King, sharing moments of frustration and agony as well as times of relaxation at Elgin's coffee place. I thank Linda Radford for helping me in editing my thesis proposal. Effie for cheering me and providing me a place to retreat and Maria for our long conversations. Indeed, I could not have wished for better collaborators and friends.

I am especially grateful to my immediate family. Dr. Achilles and Dr. Kostas, you both inspired me to earn my doctorate degree as well. Thank you Kostas for supporting me in so many ways, your meaningful phone calls, our hilarious conversations about our next steps and future plans beyond graduation. Thank you Achilles for encouraging me and pushing me to think about graduate studies, for supporting me and making arrangements to visit you and spend such a beautiful time with my so caring Silviane, my thoughtful nephews Nicholas and Theo, and my adorable little niece Lygia whose love inspires me J.R. Tolkien's quotation: "power can be held in the smallest of things".

To my brother George, I owe a lot as well. Thank you George for your invaluable support and for nurturing the fighter in me. I also thank my compassionate sisters Stela and Katerina for their humor, for my study coffee-breaks in the verandas of their homes, and for inviting me to spend beautiful and restful evenings in their cottages next to the Mediterranean Sea. My nephews Michael, Demetris and Nicholas who wouldn't hesitate to help with my participant recruitment process at any cost.

I am grateful to my niece Maria for being the inspiration of strength. A real fighter, Maria fills my life and thoughts with her beautiful smile and allows me to think positively whenever obstacles come upon my way.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to my niece Theodora for her devotion and belief in me. Thank you Theodora for sacrificing your own interests to be with me during those last couple of months before my defense, for your gifts of laughter, your support and presence when I needed it most.

My deepest gratitude for his endless patience goes to Antonis. I relied heavily on the daily telephone calls, and his continuous reminders that this task was a doable one. His love and laughter sustained me to the end. Thank you Antonis for touching my life, for assisting me well beyond the call of duty, and for making life a beautiful thing to write about.

And finally, I acknowledge with love and pride my greatest source of support, my parents, Nicholas and Theodora. I am deeply indebted to their unlimited love and encouragement throughout my doctorate studies. Thank you both for teaching me the deep meanings of persistence and endurance, for filling me up with confidence and love.

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Νικόλαος and Θεοδώρα, without whose continued support over the years this task would have been impossible to complete.

Στον μπαμπά μου και στη μαμά μου,

Νικόλαος και Θεοδώρα Καραγκιόζη.

Στον μπαμπά μου και στη μαμά μου,

Νικόλαος και Θεοδώρα Καραγκιόζη.

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the role personal expressive writing plays in aiding young women with their identity search. The focus is on the expressive and interpretive processes of refiguring identity as it occurs in the perceptions of self, mediated by the cultural milieu and shaped in journal entries. The purpose is to explore: a) young women's construction of meaning from the context of writing experiences; b) the effects of journaling as a model that allows the self to experience personal growth and discovery; c) the construction of young women's gender identity.

Issues of gender identity and self-representation are approached from the perspectives of 17 female university students who have been passionate journal writers since their early adolescence. There are four data collection strategies: a) 2 questionnaires; b) in-depth interviews; c) participants' personal journal texts; d) the researcher's journal. Three distinctive disciplines inform the theoretical framework for my research: psychoanalysis (object relations theory drawing on Winnicott), Cultural Studies, and, feminism.

Findings indicate that young women use personal journal as a Potential Space, where deeper self-understanding is attained through approaching the personal in terms of a shared experience with cultural implications. Personal journal writing is also used as a transitional phenomenon that enables the interaction with others within this inner world, an interaction that allows the transition from being merged into separate being. Additionally, participants use their personal journal writing as a defence against painful realities. By investigating one's engagements with personal writing, an awareness of dominant ideologies and the construction of the journal writer's subjectivities result. Young women use language and journaling as a tool to gain a clearer sense of self, to differentiate from others, and as an

experience of communication and personal awareness in relation to their socially constructed identities. Further pedagogical considerations and implications of personal journal writing for young adult women are explored.

CHAPTER ONE

Tragic Catharsis

Three thousand pages ... this seems a lot for a journal kept by a fifteen year old girl. I stumble on the number and a million questions swarm my mind, ranging from the most self-centered ones to those coming from a researcher's point of view. How did Dr. Cheifetz come up with this huge amount of data from a single person, while I am stuck after one whole year with just a few pages, almost nothing? What does it mean to have a diary of a girl? What are my roles and ethical responsibilities as the researcher-reader?

For a moment I have to collect my thoughts and follow Dr. Cheifetz's speech. This is the diary of a girl who has been through traumatic experiences and under his psychoanalytic care for a few years. I could identify her with a couple of participants within this inquiry. Valerie, a fourteen year old girl, has been suffering from the loss of her father who died when she was just 10 years old. In her journal she engages in fictional conversations with him and feels betrayed because he left her and their family so early. Her mother's collapse and inability to cope with the loss of her father was a strenuous burden that Valerie is left to carry on her shoulders. Alcoholism becomes an everyday reality for her mother, leaving Valerie to cope with the loss of two parents. She hates her father because he caused her mother to be absent from her life. Valerie hates herself and feels guilty because of her feelings towards her mother.

Valerie had gone through a painful miscarriage of a child a year ago, at just thirteen. This subject is central in her journal entries. She discusses her traumatic experience, and feelings of guilt and unworthiness emerge again and again. In one entry she describes her excruciating guilt as she visits anti-abortion websites that lead her to consider herself as the

killer of her child. In another entry Valerie is troubled with her mother's attitude toward her pregnancy and attributes the loss of her child to her. Feelings of hatred and matricide arise frequently. She is diagnosed as suffering from bipolar disorder. She stumbles on a document that bares the diagnosis of her as a 'psychotic with schizoid attitude'. This discovery upsets her writings and contributes to her vulnerability towards acts of self-inflicted pain. She cuts herself often, frequently losing hope and believing there is no reason after all to abstain from drugs: "What more do I have to lose? I lost so many things..."

At this point I am clueless. I ask Dr. Cheifetz to repeat his phrase. I think I have misheard him: "What I am saying is that we should be cautious when they stop writing. Writing is associated with survival. Beware when they stop. Catherine committed suicide two weeks after she stopped writing", Dr. Cheifetz repeats...

Introduction

... the painter's anxiety before putting the first line or blob of paint on to a virgin canvas; the writer's anxiety in facing the virgin page. Once the first line has been written or drawn something flawless has been infringed and it has to be made good. (Segal, 1991, p. 93)

How are written texts about the self salient in processes of identity formation and how do representations of the self help individuals define values and create social understanding? According to Maguire and Graves (2001), "Children's literate actions reflect interacting spheres of influence that are interwoven with issues of agency, access, choice, identity, power and status in the different contexts in which they find themselves" (p. 34). Investigations of individuals' engagements with journal reading and writing can contribute to knowledge about the relations between power, ideologies, desire, and identity formation (Robertson, 1998). Journal investigations can contribute to knowledge about the pedagogical conditions of student learning in relation to representations of influential ideas (Atwell, 1987).

The research presented here sets out to explore the genre of journal writing in relation to issues of gender and identity formation of young adult women. The participants of the inquiry are 17 female students attending undergraduate studies in an Eastern Canada university. Students were invited to participate in the study on the basis of their interest in the research. Data are collected from four sources: a) *two questionnaires*, designed to elicit information on participants' histories of involvement with journal forms and their interest in the genre; b) *in depth-interviews*, designed to elicit more extensive information about "what" young females are thinking and give evidence of "how" this affects their development; c)

participants' personal journal texts; and d) the *researcher's personal journal*. Of these data sources participants' personal journal texts and researcher's personal journal dominate in my presentation of findings and analysis, a point upon which I will elaborate later in the thesis.

The research attempts to assess how, within this specific group of individuals who share commonalities in age and gender, self-expression and self-understandings are facilitated. I aim to explore how young female adults use journal writing as a means to understand social pressures and how they cope with conflicting tensions while in the process of identity formation. Taking into consideration that historically there has been an accumulation of knowledge about females from sources other than women (hooks, 2000), and that there is an increasing trend to understand issues of identity and self-representation from the perspectives of the participants (Orner, 1992; Sauerbrey, 1999), I focus on issues of gender identity and self-representation approached from the perspectives of young females. The research is an attempt to give voice to young females in order to shed some light on their ways of understanding and knowing. More specifically, the purpose of the inquiry is to investigate: 1) young women's construction of meaning from the context of personal writing experiences using the genre of journals/diaries; 2) the effects of journal reading and writing as a model that allows the self to experience personal growth and discovery; and 3) the construction of young women's gender identity (i.e., their feelings, desires, fantasies, pleasure, empowerment, and resistance) while in the process of journal writing.

My interest in personal journal writing and self-expression has been enhanced through my graduate work in the field of Cultural Studies that includes studies of the construction of the 'self'. Even though I have never kept a journal, I have been in several personal situations that made me experience a sense of empowerment and relief while

engaging in self-reflection and communication with thoughts and feelings through writing. Perhaps the anxiety of having my personal journal accidentally exposed to public view and being criticized for thoughts and feelings written and kept secret there have been the major reasons preventing me from keeping one. Nevertheless, being fascinated by the content of the personal journals of various writers, I have always been interested in processes of identification in relation to cultural texts and issues of self-representation, creation, and personal discovery through any form of self-expression.

Individuals' cultural and historical formation, in relation to the specific variabilities of their interactions with the world, shapes their engagements and the expression of 'inner' lives. The cultural context that produces subjectivity and knowledge creates boundaries through which we define ourselves and also the physical and social world we live in. Feminist theorists point to emancipatory pedagogical practices by proposing "more dialectical forms of learning and knowing that take into account the historicity and, therefore, the contingency of current structures of power and culture" (Hernandez, 1997, p. 8). Issues related to the understanding of aspects of language, inner-speech, self-expression, and power relationships are of importance in my field of educational research. Critical questions about the relations between gender, language, canonicity, and self-representation propel my interest.

More specifically, my research explores and elaborates on issues related to the use of language and journaling as a tool for young women to gain a clearer sense of self, to differentiate from others, and to experience communication and personal awareness in relation to their socially constructed identities. My research addresses the following questions:

1. How do young females use journal reading and writing in relation to issues of the adolescent self?
2. What affective feelings (such as desire, fear, pleasure, fantasy, empowerment and/or resistance) do young females demonstrate through their personal journal writings, and what are the uses to the self of such expressions of affect?
3. How are gender and identity negotiated through personal journal writing?
4. How can personal journal writing be used as a vehicle to construct a sense of self in relation to social pressures and difficulties during the transition from adolescence to young adulthood?

Review of the Literature

As you set out for Ithaca
hope your road is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
Angry Poseidon – don't be afraid of them:
You'll never find things like that one on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body. (Ithaca – Constantine P. Cavafy)

Research on journal writing recognizes journals as a distinguished medium for self-thinking, ongoing self-representation, and inner speech that can be developed and expressed in symbols, words, phrases, and sentences (Hedlund, Furst, & Foley, 1989; Jones, 1995; Schwartz, 1987). Research in language learning and in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs provides evidence that students can enhance their thinking abilities, develop fluency in written language, learn to concentrate, and improve their observational and organizational skills through journaling (Anson & Beach, 1995; Applebee, 1991; Emig, 1977; Maguire & Graves, 2001). Additionally, journal writing offers opportunities for enhancing the social context of the classroom. Anson and Beach (1995) indicate that “more recent social models of writing suggest that students use writing to construct and establish social identities and relationships. Students define, establish and convey their ‘selves’, roles or persona through their writing” (p. 49). Reflective writing prior to classroom discussions

may result in more substantive talk as students can formulate their thoughts, reflect on issues of importance, and prepare to express their stances and ideas with confidence.

Journal writing has received accumulated attention in the field of education (Del Giorno, 1997; Hoffmann, 1986; McGonigal, 2000). Students who keep journals are exposed to a process of purposeful thinking about their academic as well as personal needs. Journal writing engages individuals with profound ways of searching the self that make explicit dreams, hopes, desires and disappointments, resolves and concerns. According to Eigen (1982) and Brand (1979), learning experiences gained through personal writing may result in the confrontation of emotional and hidden truths.

The therapeutic value of writing has been recognized by many researchers in the field of psychoanalysis (Bishop, 1996; Fisher, 1996). Personal writing meets specific psychological needs. Brand (1979) argues that rational self-analysis of inner problems can be attained through organized written exercises. Even in the cases of immediate trauma, written introspection can attribute to constant self-management of emotional crises. Writing may enhance the effectiveness of more conventional therapies. Brand (1979), involved in the area of self-understanding and the expressive modalities, concludes that journal writing provides the capacity to “uncover new levels of self-awareness” and through “its promise in terms of self-help offer[s] unique potential for inner human exploration” (p. 53). Journaling, as a therapeutic medium, is a field for specialized and careful exploration.

Since “personal narratives are verbal reconstructions of developmental processes, they can well serve feminist psychologists interested in exploring the links between the evolution of subjectivity, the acquisition of language, and the development of feminine identity” (Barbre et al., 1989, p. 5). In the following sections I will explore the existing

literature regarding personal journal writing and issues of language, gender, and identity formation, as well as issues around risky personal writing and an overview of the historicity of women's journal writings.

Language and Journal Writing

Journal writing is one way to convey the use of language. My stance in this research is not to position myself towards the use of journals as an appropriate tool for language learning and writing skills enhancement. Rather, my interest is on the social and psychological aspects of journal writing and, more specifically, how language communication is enhanced through in and out of school experiences of journal writing, and what effects it has on gendered modes of expression. Language plays a significant role in the development of the child as a social entity. Through language we learn to act as members of a community and in and through various sub-communities, as well as to adopt particular cultural values, modes of thinking, actions, and beliefs (Hall, 1997). Halliday (1974) argues:

It is the most everyday uses of language, with parents, brothers and sisters, neighbourhood, children, in the home, in the street and the park, in the shops and the trains and the buses, that serve to transmit, to the child, the essential qualities of society and the nature of social being. (p. 4)

Halliday emphasizes that understanding language is specific to the social context. Depending on the situation we are in, we choose to use particular forms of language and how we relate to others. Thus, Halliday claims that as members of a society we are involved in specific roles and it is through language that we are recognized as the occupants of our social roles. These culturally constructed roles get to be depicted, developed, and recreated through writing about the self.

Halliday (1974) expands his arguments by theorizing that language has three functions: the interpersonal, the textual, and the ideational. While ideational language refers to language as a means for enhancing the capability of thinking, interpersonal language refers to aspects of the social nature of communication. Textual language refers to language as a medium of expression. In formal (academic) writing, it is the textual function of language that gets valued most, devaluing and infusing the other two functions. Students' writings are evaluated by tone and style, as well as by grammatical correctness. It is Halliday's notions of interpersonal and ideational writing that interest me in this research.

In education, the use of the term 'informal' to refer to writings might be perceived as problematic because it connotes learning that is not rigorous or conscientious, of teachers treating students with increased leniency, and of students being allowed to 'take their time' and 'slack off' (Anson & Beach, 1995). Influenced by culturally constructed stereotypes, some believe that learning occurs only through formal (in-school) activities and ways of knowledge assimilation (Anson & Beach, 1995). However, is it true that we only learn through teacher-directed activities? Is it guaranteed that formally sanctioned activities have effective results in understanding and acquiring knowledge?

Journal writing possesses characteristics of 'informal' writing, but that does not devalue the intellectual processes involved in it. Individuals become engaged in profound ways while reflecting about the self; emotional states can feed richly into ideas, concerns, and resolutions. One could argue that students get so productively connected to specific material, that any other form of written response, such as tests, assignments, and other measures of accountability, might be proven to not be promising with regards to depicting individuals' understandings of their environment. In the same vein, constructivist theories of

learning claim that a person's learning of a subject results through her or his own personal interactions with the material/text and involvement in the process of knowledge construction (Anson & Beach, 1995).

Educators report that journals might be deceptive in terms of providing a true recollection of memories and experiences (Gannet, 1992). Moreover, research demonstrates that male students express low levels of enthusiasm when it comes to journal engagements (Moonilal, Cincik, & Mitchell, 1992). Whereas both writing poetry and in journals have the potential of being therapeutic for writers, male adolescents are more adept at writing poetry than journaling. This is because journaling has a more personal tone and is associated with feminine modes of social interaction (Moonilal, Cincik, & Mitchell, 1992). Such findings point to stereotypical binary oppositions related to males-females, such as the notion of rational males and emotional/personal females. I continue my review of critical issues related to gender, language, and discourse in the next section, with a focus specifically, on the politics of personal writing.

Gender and the Journal

Feminist scholars have been keen to examine the dynamic relationships that exist between language and gender, and discursive power and textual/sexual identity. Theories drawn from the interdisciplinary fields of biology, sexuality, psychology, history, and Cultural Studies have been used to examine these relationships (Gannett, 1992). Tannen (1994) proposed, "The intersection of language and gender provides a rich site for analyzing how power and solidarity are created in discourse" (p. 46). Language is the starting point for investigating issues regarding the uses of texts. As Frank and Treichler put it, "the sexist language question, seen to represent a practical agenda, is a point of entry into the broader

study of women and men as speakers, creators, and bearers of meaning within society and culture” (as cited in Gannett, 1992, p. 44). Therefore, questions pertaining to women’s positioning with both linguistic and material reality should be confronted in order to explore and change women’s place within texts. Scholars have argued that women’s problematic interaction with texts arises from their lack of access to situations that will allow them to participate in the process of generating meaning through discursive engagements (hooks, 2000; Lather, 1987). In the same line, other feminist critics posit that women have been excluded from resources of language and have been forced into silence and euphemism (Pateman, 1986; Smith, Gaskel & MacLaren., 1987).

Swindells (1989), who studied diaries of women from the nineteenth century, argues that, historically, there have been few women’s texts published and there is a general ignorance surrounding women’s personal histories. Swindells observes, “history has systemically silenced, absented, missed, failed to observe, [and] failed to credit the female voice and the female existence” (p. 28). Swindells analyzes Hannah Cullwick’s diaries, and reads them as an example of autobiographical writing which is used as an attempt to liberate “ourselves as subjects” by liberating women’s texts from silence and by depicting that “these sisters led liberated lives” (p. 24). By studying women’s history, and more specifically women’s autobiographies, feminist historians and activists have engaged in the process of recovering women’s voices. As Mitchell (1984) puts it, women’s personal writing opens a window on ‘the subject in process’. When dealing with texts and the restoration of voices, Swindells (1989) posited:

It is not the famous, powerful, unique, and professional voice but the authentic voice of Hannah Cullwick, an ordinary voice through her diaries that can claim liberation

from history. However, it is not her ordinary life depicted in her diaries that makes them interesting, but the depiction of her entrance into male fantasy, her way of internalizing it, and of becoming the subject..." (p. 35)

As readers of published women's histories, we should be attentive of the "literary production process, including the commentaries of editors (for the most part, male) and researchers, ... [that] is crucial (in its gender relations) not only to the ways in which we read texts, but also to the make-up, subjectivities, [and] personalities of authors" (Swindells, 1989, p. 37). Along these lines, Pieter (2002) examines the *(False) Portrait of the Artist as a Woman: Editorial Strategy in the Diaries of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath*. This study reveals disturbingly, how editorial strategies employed by the husbands of Woolf and Plath played a significant role in the creation of false portraits of the authors. Even though their texts were introduced as a means to disclose the 'truth' of these women's lives, the editing of the texts was done in such a way as to minimize readers' complex understanding of Woolf and Plath. Pieter concludes that women's personal writings have often been controlled by specific male heirs of the authors' literary estates. Such studies make clear that the interpretation of women's personal narratives must consider the political and institutional conditions that underlie the production and use of those narratives and written life histories (Carter, 1997).

Women's personal journal narratives are particularly illuminating of power relations and inequalities between the two sexes (Passerini, 1989). The analysis of women's narratives provides new perspectives on the problems of androcentric hegemony, the maintenance of inequality, and power domination relations through ideology and materialism. Some women's narratives function as spirited counter-narratives in how they

depict the narrators not thinking, feeling, or acting as they are expected to do (Barbre et al., 1989). Thus, through writing about their opposition to male domination, women's narratives constitute "effective sources of counterhegemonic insight because they expose the viewpoint embedded in dominant ideology as particularistic rather than universal, and because they reveal the reality of life that defies or contradicts the rules" (Barbre et al., p. 7). Passerini's (1987) research on the personal accounts of Italian working women exposes issues of marginality and the role of self-definition and cultural models in informing their life stories. Even though Passerini's participants express an apparent acceptance of social expectations, certain strategies and activities in their lives (exposed in their writings) challenged these norms. So, too, Marshall (1957), while describing her own "behind the scenes wife" life, noted that throughout her marriage she came to find her identity by asking herself the intriguing question "Who am I?". Her work interrogates how her life within the confines and norms of masculinity ended up contributing to the maintenance of the prevailing systems of gender inequalities. These powerful counter-narratives serve as rich inspiration to women's lives: "Women's lives are lived within and in tension with systems of domination. Both narratives of acceptance and narratives of rebellion are responses to the system in which they originate and thus reveal its dynamics" (Barbre et al., p. 8).

Some researchers focus on gender and its sociopolitical impact by attending to how students of both sexes approach different genres of writing. In her study of students' attitudes towards journal writing, Moonlilal-Masur (1992) argues that young girls view journal writing positively. They use their "friend", the journal, as a personal vehicle for writing, as a place to deal with emotions, concerns, stances, and recollection of everyday experiences. This emphasis on the subjective dimension of journal writing indicates that the

study participants distinguished it from the 'learning log', a narrower vehicle for reflecting on their understandings of the learning material in the classroom setting.

Studies on journal writing in school age years reveal that fewer male students express interest in journal writing as they get older. Moonilal-Masur, Cincik, and Mitchell (1992) find that "about two-thirds of the grade elevens of both sexes saw it as more of a "girl" thing to do" (p. 32). Girls seem to accept that there is an emotional need that drives them to express their thoughts and feelings and to be open to various forms of self expression. Indeed, Gannett (1992) notes that "many girls see journal keeping modeled informally by peers, sisters, mothers, grandmothers, or other female characters" (p. 190). Moonilal-Masur et al. claim that journaling is used extensively in elementary schools where the majority of the teachers are females, but less in secondary schools where most of the teachers are males. Such research points to problems of a gender bias in journal writing and highlights the need to investigate teachers' stances toward using journal writing as a medium for learning.

While examining the gendered expectations placed upon students by their teachers, Sanford (2005) claims that such gendered perspectives affect the developing self-identity and shape the literacy experiences for adolescents in the school setting. In the same vein, Cleary (1996) posits that there are gendered differences in response to teachers' positive feedback which suggest that girls tend to subjugate their own interests and inclinations in writing in order to 'please' their teacher. Teachers' stereotypes about the interests of boys and girls shape the educational "opportunities for them to explore and define alternative realities" as well as influence "the types of encouragement given to students, the types of work accepted, and the application of school rules" (306). Regarding the uses of alternative

technologies, it seems that boys tend to dominate the technological world, and generally occupy the 'public and outside spaces', whereas girls dwell in 'private and inside spaces' through engaging in writing stories and letters to friends. Such hegemonic constructions of masculinity and femininity need to be explored and students should be helped to understand how they shape and are shaped by such discourses.

Issues of gender and journal also materialize around the differences between sexes in the frequency of use of the personal pronoun "I" in written texts. Such research poses significant questions regarding engendered language use (Irigaray, 1993; Moonilal-Masur, Cincik, & Mitchell, 1992; Whitford, 1991). Female students are likely to use "I" more frequently than their male counterparts, and to be more personal. Conversely, Irigaray (1993, 2000), a psychoanalytic writer, interestingly notes that women often use objective sentences in their speech and support the meaning of their sayings with the use of extra-linguistic context. According to Irigaray, there are some literary and educated women whose writing can be characterized as impersonal and 'scientifically' constructed. Those women attempt to mimic and adopt a more "objective" and impersonal style of language expression in order to make their statements seem more "scientifically" powerful. Alternatively, men's writing reveals the use of more impassioned terms in order to express their subjective views. Such findings contradict to what is usually claimed or believed about both genders. Irigaray (2000) attempted to explain this phenomenon from both a psychoanalytic and political point of view. She argues that for men the "I" is significantly more important than "you" and "the world", while for women, the "I" often makes way for "you" and there is a greater willingness to discover and accommodate the other.

To summarize, historically women have been excluded from resources of discursive engagements with texts and enculturated into silence (hooks, 2000; Lather, 1987, Smith, 1987). Even so, research indicates that young girls view journal writing with a positive attitude (Moonlilar-Masur, 1992). As age increases fewer male students express interest in journal writing, which is viewed as more of “a girl thing to do”. Girls’ speech tends to be more personal (Irigaray, 1993) and they use journal writing as a place to recollect experiences, memories, to address their stances, and deal with emotions and personal concerns. Generally, women’s personal journal narratives attend to issues of power relations and power inequalities between the two sexes (Passerini, 1989). Therefore, the analysis of women’s journal writings can provide new perspectives in exploring power domination relations through ideology, resistance, and materialism (Barbre et al., 1989). But we may ask: what does this have to do with writing and the developing of a sense of self? In the following section, I look at issues of identity formation in relation to personal journal writing.

Identity and Journaling

Identity constitutes a huge concern in adolescence. Several studies on journal writing focus on the vicissitudes of adolescent development and the struggles this age group has in constructing identity and negotiating emotional issues. Louise Kaplan (1995) associates the teen years with times of revolutionary fervour, idealism, emotional extremes, despondency, passionate social attachments, and zealous searching. Young adolescents can use journal writing as a tool to differentiate from others, make sense of personal histories, and try to configure a clearer view of the self (Hedlund, Furst, & Foley, 1989; Heinze, 1987). Jung (1965) believes that all individuals have access to unconscious sources of

wisdom within themselves. These sources of wisdom can be tapped through journal writing (Kelsey, 1980; Progoff, 1985). Through the process of self-exploration and experimentation a firmer sense of ego identity develops (Waterman & Archer, 1979).

Bloss (1962) theorizes that expressive writing serves as a means by which individuals can experiment with various identity elements on a fantasy level first, and afterwards on a behavioural level. By engaging in the process of expressing thoughts and feelings in writing, pressure may be generated to understand the realities of the lived world and to recognize responsibility for one's involvement in the lived experience. An increased level of self-awareness is likely to result (Bloss, 1962). Such mental work helps individuals secure more promising possibilities on the behavioural level and achieve "a successful resolution to an identity crisis" (Waterman & Archer, 1979, p. 329). Stover (1999), who investigated resistance to private writing, argues that "any act of writing is entangled with shifting conceptions of identity, multiple audiences, complicated understandings of time and unexamined identifications with the genre" (p. 163).

Philosophers have also delved into the problem of why private writing serves as an exemplary medium in the quest for identity. Polkinghorne (1988) claims that narrative works as a scheme that facilitates the understanding of personal actions and experiences by helping us understand previous events and plan future actions. Ricoeur (1991) elaborates on the developmental function of the interpretation of self in the following way. Self is derived fundamentally from its narrative location. An answer to the question 'Who am I?' will not come from metaphysical truth structure but, rather, from the contingencies of the stories in which the person is located. A story is not perceived as simply a chance configuration of real events thrown together arbitrarily but, instead, it is the narrative configuration itself that

gives meaning to events and confers to the physical happenings of the very status of the 'event'. Through narrative mediation, self knowledge translates to interpretation of the self. When the self is interpreted narratively, it reveals itself to be a figured self (Ricoeur, 1991). Even though journaling consists of ideas, feelings, and thoughts that may appear chaotic, it is through the analysis of such figures as narratives that I will try to uncover how self-knowledge is symbolized by the participants and how self is interpreted and understood.

The Historicity of Women's Personal Writing

Since the 1980s, feminist scholarship has focused its inquiry on women's personal writings, autobiography, memoirs, and letters, including journal writing (Van Daele, 1990). Researchers have become interested in female personal writings, presenting excerpts of women's writings and trying to explore femininity in specific historic eras—especially between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries—mainly through the analysis of autobiographies (Christie, 1981; Cully, 1985; Franklin, 1986; Lerner, 1977; Merriam, 1987). Sauerbrey (1991) observes that most of these studies explored autobiographical texts, avoiding the investigation of diaries or journals as literary genres. Indeed, Stanton (1984), in her work, *The Female Autograph*, explores women's writings of the self with almost no reference to diary writings. In *Writing a Woman's Life*, Carolyn Heilbrun (1988) draws our attention to just how difficult it is to conjure up accurately a woman's life. Although she barely mentions the genre of diary writing, she comments that "the woman may write her life in advance of living it, unconsciously and without recognition or naming the process" (p. 11). Heilbrun's findings support those of the Personal Narrative Group (1989), who also examines issues of gender within the conditions of production of women's writing in a specific historical period.

Several studies have used and analyzed excerpts of journal texts from a historical and sociopolitical point of view. In *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, Benstock (1988) analyses how women's writings have been historically devalued and how cultural forces maintained their exclusion from traditional autobiographical texts. Again, as in the previous cases (Christie, 1981; Cully, 1985; Franklin, 1986; Lerner, 1977; Merriam, 1987), the main focus of the work was on memoirs and letters; only a few diaries from the nineteenth century are studied and they are grouped with other forms of autobiographical writing. However, recently more and more researchers have paid attention to women's diaries from a historical and sociopolitical point of view. Key (2003) studies women's diaries and examines how images of the Civil War are depicted in them, as well as how the author uses her writings to understand her role in relation to the conflict. McMichael (2002) also studies ethnicity and gender in journals from the Civil War, as did Bebee (2000), who argues that women use their diaries as a way to participate in the national conflict and to view themselves as part of the national identity.

Women's personal journal writings have also been analyzed in order to understand their subjective experiences of genocide, war atrocities, and extreme – although still difficult – practices of violence. For example, Gessler (2002) examines issues such as historiography, diary theory, women's history, farming, art and literature, poverty, and female literacy in the nineteenth century by analyzing 135 unpublished diaries from this era. Long (2002) tries to unravel gender dynamics in nineteenth century America by analyzing the diaries and letters of two geographic pioneers and religious exemplars, Narcissa Prentiss Whitman and Ida Hunt Udall. Analysis of their diaries reveals the role of women in U.S. expansionism and the rapid social change that took place through efforts to colonize and “civilize” the perceived

bare lands of West America. Serfozo (2002) analyzes German women journalists' diaries and memoirs to understand how Hitler's National Socialism had been so successful in his violent aims. The *Diary of Anne Frank*, the diary of a 13-year-old Jewish girl and her family who are forced into hiding by the Nazis during World War II, is one of the most widely analyzed diaries ever. Bishop (1998) considers issues of resistance as she explores how Anne Frank uses her diary writing as a survival strategy against Nazi-enforced incarceration. In addition to Frank's diary, Bishop explores two other diaries written in totally different contexts, but which also illustrate how women use personal written expression as a method of trying to comprehend and protect themselves against brutal societal actions and unjust expectations. According to Bishop, diaries function on two levels. First, they provide space for women to express their innermost concerns and to use language in order to articulate their most immediate needs. Secondly, Bishop argues that personal journals embody powerful testimonials of the writers' concerns.

As this literature review reveals, historically diaries have been used as ways to resist or adapt to external societal influences that challenge the sense of self. Podnieks' (1995) study adds something new to our knowledge, by focusing on the diaries of literary women, such as Elizabeth Smart, Antonia White, and Anais Nin. Podniek examines the possibilities that these forms of personal expression offer to women writers: a female space to vent thoughts, to confirm their values, and to challenge the prescribed silence expected for 'respectable feminine conduct'. Additionally, Podniek argues that this specific breed of diaries, ones written by literary women, are deliberately written with an intrinsic intention that they will be published and therefore are written with a heightened sense and

consciousness of literary form. Podniek questions the category of “true” diaries and draws our attention to the importance of aesthetic form in personal writing.

The diaries of published women writers have attracted the focus of many other researchers and feminist theorists. Virginia Woolf’s private writings have provoked various points of inquiry. Tidwell’s (2005) study on the representative nature of personal journal writing, reveals the conflict between aesthetics and politics in Woolf’s diary. The researcher argues that Woolf’s feminism and politics in her diaries contrast with her aesthetic ideals in her fiction writing. Even though Woolf’s diary is written in an aesthetically subversive narrative form, it does not undermine the real life of women. Her diary “operates as a space for conflict resolution as she develops her narrative voice and her fictional techniques” (Tidwell, p. v). Such women’s diaries function in a private sphere that promotes feminist politics and thus exert an influence on readers.

Stover (1999) engages Virginia Woolf’s diaries from a different perspective by examining the phenomenology of time and how ideas about time interfere in a positive or negative way in the writers’ ability to keep a private journal. As revealed in the study, Woolf struggles with her desires to resist and represent her thoughts, self, soul, and ideas through the medium of personal journal writing. The way in which diaries function in intersecting public and private spheres, and provide possibilities to perform social actions that are both personal and communal, has also been examined by McNeil (2005) in her study *Public Designs for a Private Genre: Community and Identity in the Diary*. McNeil looks at issues of production and reception while analyzing the diaries of writers who use their private writings in order to accomplish both professional and personal endeavours.

One of the most recent trends in the analysis of the private writings of women is the investigation of the online diary, one type of which is web logs. As defined in Wikipedia (2006), blog is a website where “entries are made in journal style and presented in reversed chronological order” (p. 1) and even though they offer commentaries of news on a particular subject, more often they function as personal online diaries. Some studies have focused on online diaries, others have examined these types of diaries as part of their general study on women’s personal expression. McNeil (2005) studies Web logs and how the private and public medium of the Internet poses challenges to stereotypes and traditional aesthetic values that govern the stories being told and the voices being heard. McNeil (2005) argues that although diary as a literary genre has been undermined and characterized as a-literary, feminine, artless, and an irrelevant form of expression, it has social, cultural, and personal implications worth taking into consideration when attempting to understand self and identity. Freeman (2004) also investigates the emerging genre of online diaries and the development of online journal communities, while at the same time looking at issues of writers’ identity production and representation, the political salience of the authors’ words, and the ethical consequences in their relationships with the readers. In the study *Towards an E-critique Feminine: Woolf, DuPlessis, Cixous, and the Emerging Discursive Tradition in Women’s Online Diaries*, Bowen (2004) examines how concepts of space, style, and medium work as the foundation for the recent discursive tradition emerging in online, personal, autobiographical writing.

In this section I have referred to the historicity of women’s personal narratives. Several studies have analysed journals from a historical and socio-political point of view (Christie, 1981; Cully, 1985; Franklin, 1986; Lerner, 1977; Merriam, 1987; Benstock, 1988)

and explored issues of life writing and the formation of ethnic identity (McMichael, 2002; Koufman, 2000). Other studies view journal writing as written expression against brutal societal actions and unjust expectations and it is argued that certain female writers use diary writing as a tool to resist societal influences that challenge the sense of self (Wink, 1996; Podniek, 1995). I have also highlighted the extensive investigation of diaries written by literary women through which they promote feminist standpoints by discussing personal, aesthetic, temporal, communal, and professional endeavours - the public and private sphere of personal writings (Tidwell, 2005; Stover, 1999). In the following section I turn to a central issue in journal research: the problem of trauma and personal reflection.

Risky Writing in Personal Journals

Jeffrey Berman (1985; 1994; 1999; 2001) has extensively examined private writing and the conditions of production and consumption by university student authors and readers. In *Diaries to an English Professor*, Berman (1994) introduces undergraduate students to psychoanalytic diaries in order to explore issues of conflict in their own lives. In *Surviving Literary Suicide* (1999), Berman introduces readers to suicidal literature. In his later work on *Risky Writing: Self-Disclosure and Self Transformation in the Classroom* (2001), college students are encouraged to disclose in personal writing themes that are personal and dangerous, such as loss of relatives and friends, problematic relationships with close ones, depressive feelings, cases of sexual abuse, drug or alcohol addiction, and racism. Berman (2001) argues that one of the central features of risky (personal) writing is shame; an emotion that discourages self expression and exists in a reciprocal relationship with self-disclosure. Even though issues of honesty and truth are involved in personal writing, Berman (1994) posits that “even when people believe that they are scrupulously telling the truth, they

are still selectively remembering and forgetting experiences, editing biography and history to make them conform to their own self-perceptions” (p. 28). Berman (2001) refrains from taking on the role of lie-detector since his focus is on helping the students write toward the goal of greater self-knowledge, an approach that is based on the belief that when people are engaged in possibilities of self-disclosure, there exists a ‘likelihood of candor’.

Berman (2001) views risky personal self writing as the “most vigorous inquiry into the origins, ambiguities, and mysteries of identity” (p. 29). What is more important in the theoretical underpinnings of his research methodologies is that teaching approaches that have students interact in personal writing activities play a therapeutic role by “affirming self-esteem and personal growth” (p. 48). However, Berman does not consider his role to exceed his teaching responsibilities. As he is not trained to offer psychoanalytical and clinical interpretations to his students, Berman posits that preserving professional boundaries is crucial. By avoiding the most common narcissistic snares, which are the aspirations to “heal all, know all, and love all” (p. 38), a teacher who introduces his students to risky writings manages to minimize the risks of such an endeavour. The healing comes not from the teacher but from students’ own writing engagements about the self. Apart from the health benefits of self-disclosure, Berman (and others) have argued that the writing cure functions at such deep levels in the psycho-synthesis of the individual, that melancholy diminishes (as Virginia Woolf declared in her 1920 diary entry). Poetry and any other forms of creative self writing offer the opportunity to authors for profound self-understanding and allow them to cope with feelings of anxiety that might otherwise be overwhelming. What is more, self disclosure in writing assists individuals to control their suicidal feelings and thus prolong their lives (Berman, 2001).

Ira Progoff, a psychologist following Carl Jung's practices in journal writing, is considered one of the pioneers in using personal reflective writing as tool for personal discovery and growth. Through his research he develops the Intensive Journal Method, an approach that engages individuals in a dynamic process of self reflection that eventually leads them to "develop more fulfilling lives" (Progoff, 2006, p. 1). Progoff's journaling program has been available to the public since the 1970s. Currently, there are over 250 workshops offered across the United States and Canada. This structured method of journal writing for emotional healing and spiritual growth has reached diverse populations, such as people in social facilities, prison, other agencies, and healthcare institutions. Progoff's theory on using personal journal writing as a method to develop oneself is based on the principle that people should be truthful and honest with themselves as they do their journal work. Reflecting and working through experiences that are painful are not easy tasks. However, the outcomes of such a procedure can counterweight the cost. By dealing with experiences that have had a negative impact on our life, we can end up viewing them from a different perspective and unveil their negativity. This process can help us acquire empowerment regarding analogous situations and thus provide us with "energy and momentum to carry [our] lives forward" (Gibson, 2003, p. 6).

Of interest in Progoff's work are the underlying concepts that his program emerged from. Through his research as a psychoanalyst Progoff (2006) realizes that individuals who engage in the process of self expressive writing appear to be better able to work through situations, both in terms of time and quality of responses. Progoff recalls examining the lives of various types of individuals, referring to people with a creative nature and neurotics, the ones attempting to develop more fulfilling lives and those living in various cultures. All of

these characters were in a state of constant motion. According to his interpretation, these people seem to be actively engaged in a “tangible project or work in which they had an intense interest. Therefore, any method that is devised to assist individuals in developing their lives must similarly focus on the underlying process rather than the contents of a person's life” (Gibson, 2003, p. 2). This could be characterized as being the stance of my research: having the focus centered on the individual’s dynamic involvement and inner stances towards personal journal writing and the creative uses of such an engagement.

As this literature review makes clear, there is a solid body of research that claims there are therapeutic benefits associated with personal writing (Brand, 1980). Freudian theory links journal writing as a means to self-analysis, and views it as a model of catharsis. But, catharsis, also a notion in Aristotle’s writings on poetry and drama, is declared as a means of moral and spiritual purification (Brand, 1979). Aristotle uses the word as a metaphor for the tragic pleasure, the feelings of being washed and cleaned that come out through the process of identification and recognition. As Brand (1979) mentions in *The Uses of Writing and Psychotherapy*, Greeks are the earliest people to grasp “the two ingredients fundamental to both poetry and therapy: language and feeling” (p. 54). Appropriating the Aristotelian theory of catharsis, Freud investigates how poetry functions as an art form and how writing can be transformed “into a distinctively therapeutic occupation” (Brand, 1980, p. 7). Freud’s enthusiasm over a girl’s diary brings his attention to the diaries of adolescents, and more specifically feminine models of expression, and recognizes that the diary is a unique medium to get access to individuals’ inner lives (Dalsimer, 1986). Freud’s radical emphasis on the potentiality of the personal journal to be used for the exploration of human

development is expressed in the following lines of Dalcimer's (1986) text, *Female*

Adolescence: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Literature:

The diary is a little gem. I really believe it has never before been possible to obtain such a clear and truthful view of the mental impulses that characterize the development of a girl in our social and cultural stratum during the years before puberty. (p. 50)

To sum up, previous research on personal writing has explored published diary works, famous journal writers' and literary women who were established as writers and theorists. Other studies have viewed diaries from historical and socio-political perspectives and examined specific kinds of journals, such as war-journals. The majority of studies focus on personal written texts of non-living writers or writers whose work has been edited and published. Studies on school age students' writings approach journal as an in-class assignment, a text produced as part of their participation in class activities. Lately, there is an increasing amount of students preoccupied in the cyberspace of online journals. All of these studies provide evidence that personal diaries serve and have served girls and women as key enablers of hope and possibility through life's odysseys.

I wish now to add to this knowledge by focusing specifically on the personal journal texts produced by female university students who have been engaging in this form of self expression since their teen years. The important element of my inquiry is that the journal excerpts analysed are the actual private texts produced by young teenage girls over extended periods of time (3-7 years). Since they are not published works (and not were they written for publication), these are unedited private written journals that open a window on issues of the developing self of those young female writers. The purpose of my inquiry is to

investigate the role that personal expressive writing plays in aiding young adult females to negotiate their identity search. This study does not focus solely on analysing the identity of young women, but looks at it in relation to personal writing and how they use it to construct meaning in relation to self from the context of their writing experiences.¹ I am focusing on the particular personal, psychological, aesthetic and social uses of personal journal writing by the young women. I approach their engagements through theoretical concepts derived from psychoanalysis, feminism, and cultural studies. The research will explore the expressive processes of refiguring identity as it occurs in the perceptions of self, mediated by the cultural milieu of the participants and shaped in the narrative traces of their personal journal writings.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Framework

Cultural Studies – Psychoanalysis – Feminism

Three distinctive disciplines inform the theoretical framework for my research. First, Cultural Studies² helps me to understand how individuals form their subjectivity through and by their interaction with cultural texts. Cultural Studies is the discipline that examines the socio-historical and cultural conditions of the production of texts and the mechanisms through which they are engaged (Johnson, 1983). Grossberg (1988) attempts to define the project of Cultural Studies as a discipline that describes and interprets the ways in which discourses are produced within, and operate in the relations between people's everyday lives, and the structures that allow themselves to reproduce in the social domain, to resist, and to transform the structures of power that exist.

Within the Cultural Studies paradigm, the self is constructed within the social formation it seeks to transform. As Stuart Hall (1990) argues, “practices of representation always implicate the positions from which we speak or write—... who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of, are never identical, never exactly in the same place” (p. 222). Even though the self is never contained in any particular moment or place, one can make it appear in certain ‘intersections’ (Probyn, 1994). These intersections can be viewed when one recognizes the material conditions of the discursive reality, or as Foucault (1973) notes, ‘the heavy and fearsome’ materiality of discourse. Winterson (1989), in her novel *Sexing the Cherry*, provides an eloquent definition of the self when she notes it is “not contained in any moment or any place, but it is only in the intersection of moment and place that the self might, for a moment, be seen vanishing through a door, which disappears at once” (p. 80).

Johnson (1983) proposes a model that systematizes the forces that are exerted on individuals to make them thinking and feeling subjects. This illustrative model of the 'circuit of culture' emphasizes the importance of exploring the conditions of textual production, the analysis of cultural texts (centrality of language), and the conditions of consumption; that is, the ways in which individuals negotiate identity, desire, knowledge, resistance, and power through the cultural texts. This model is based on the assumption that culture is dynamic. A Cultural Studies lens allows me to focus on how the genre of journal writing is produced, circulated, and meaningfully interpreted by the participants of this inquiry (Johnson, 1983). Cultural Studies treats women's writings about the self as cultural forms and studies them within specific theoretical and methodological paradigms. It focuses on language and the procedures of representation, claiming that language constructs meaning and asserting that knowledge and power are interrelated (Hall, 1997). It uses the lens of feminism to establish the centrality of gender divisions, patriarchy, and hegemony in every form of cultural analysis (Curti, 1992; Penley, 1992). A heightened attention is raised to issues of ideology, race, and class divisions, as well as perceptions of political stances in the analysis of cultural 'texts' (Payne, 1999). As Brooks (1987) and Robertson (1997) have argued, Cultural Studies³ reaches out to the terrain of psychoanalytic thought to address issues of subjectivity, fantasy, desire, and sexuality. It de-essentializes the categories of identities (gender, class, nationality, sexuality, ethnicity), "acknowledging their necessity and potency, examining their articulation and rearticulation, and seeking a better understanding of their function" (Nelson, Treichler, & Grossberg, 1992, p. 18).

Secondly, feminism provides me with a theoretical foundation to approach women's writings and self-representation issues from a critical perspective. As Barbre et al. (1989)

note, “Listening to women’s voices, studying women’s writing, and learning from women’s experiences have been crucial to the feminist reconstruction of our understanding of the world” (p. 4). My interest is focused on the production of gender that works in the journal texts and “on the processes by which their identities as female subjects are consolidated and, conversely, dispersed through the process of self-representation” (Robinson, 1991, p.12). Feminist study is concerned with issues of how hegemonic ideologies get reproduced, how voices operate in various discourse systems, and how the boundaries of gender, subjectivity, and knowledge get displayed in narrative production. Feminists have been primarily preoccupied with investigating the interrelationships between self, sexuality, and patriarchy, and the dominance of male power within gender relations (Elliot, 2001).

Robinson (1991) argues that “[subjectivity,] like gender, is a ‘doing’, rather than a being” (p. 11). Subjects are not constructed as entities once and for all, at specific historical moments of their reality. They are engaged in a continuous process of production and transformation through the interaction of subjectivity with social reality, power relations, and knowledge. Educational research on issues of gender informed by feminist theorizing turns its attention to the ways in which women get produced as subjects within the patriarchal culture of social practices that contributes to the maintenance of conditions of repression (hooks, 2000).

Subjectivities get produced through pedagogical practices (Hernandez, 1997). A transformative feminist pedagogy would be interested in how gendered subjectivities get constructed, represented, and resisted or transformed in school settings. Taking into account the multiplicity of students’ voices, educational inquiry examines the conditions that reinforce problematic sexist and racist assumptions within the construction of students’

subjectivities. Through the articulation of one's own voice, the consciousness of one's social position and the transformation of "reality" can be attained. Moreover, as scholars argue (e.g., Hall 1997; Robertson, 1997; Woodward, 1997) researchers need to attend to "the multiple social positions, multiple voices, conscious and unconscious pleasures, tensions, desires, and contradictions which are present in all subjects, in all historical contexts" (Orner, 1992, p. 79).

The process by which subjectivities get produced within specific discursive contexts refers to the construct of *self-representation*. Robinson (1991) posits that women's self-representation process is "not always linear, stable, or teleological" (p. 11). It proceeds simultaneously in two ways: a) against the social constructions of 'woman' formed under the dominance of the hegemonic discourses, and b) towards new constructions of representation that interrupt the formation of social practices. Feminist theory elucidates the particularity of women's writings and speech, produced within a context of patriarchal prohibitions. Female forms of self-representation are "always placed inside ideologies of gender" (Robinson, 1991, p. 11). Therefore, these forms of self-expression cannot be isolated from the context in which they are articulated. In chapter 5 of this thesis I return to questions of whether young adolescent girls are aware of their gendered construction of self and how they constitute selfhood through self-representation.

Feminism has embraced psychoanalysis and approached it as a vehicle to understand the construction of sexuality (Klein & Riviere, 1964; Weedon, 1987). Through the analysis of individuals' linguistic techniques, dreams, phantasies, and 'parapraxes', Freud and others (including Klein and Lacan) have developed a theory of gender acquisition that considers gender subjectivity as a means of identity formation within early relationships and language.

According to these theories, the psychic structures of sexual identity have their origin located in the first years of childhood. Freud views the passing of the Oedipus complex as essential to the process of the constitution of selfhood. In general, the psychoanalytic account talks about the notion of the split nature of subjectivity, the division between the narcissistic lures of the ego on the one hand, and the desires and fears of the unconscious on the other.

Contemporary feminists approach the psychoanalytic theory of sexual development as an interpretive strategy only on the basis that this theory is viewed as probing the emotional struggles and oppressive experiences to which women are subjected under patriarchal social conditions. Freudian theory should be treated as descriptive, not prescriptive (Mitchell, 1974). Thus, psychoanalysis represents a powerful vehicle for the examination of the sexual and emotional forces that influence gendered relationships (Benjamin, J., 1988; Flax, 1991).

Elliot (2001) argues that feminism needs to indulge in the theories of psychoanalysis “to develop a critical theory of sexualities, and to grasp the cultural and psychological dimensions involved in gender transformation and therefore the autonomy of the self” (p. 65). Feminists join hands with Cultural Studies theorists to both critique and develop psychoanalytic frameworks to understand “the psychic construction of gender identity on the basis of repression” (Weedon, 1987, p. 43). Psychoanalysis sheds light on questions pertaining to the constitution of subjectivity and the process of internalization of social norms. It offers a theory of consciousness, language operation, and meaning-making processes that facilitate the investigation of the structures of femininity.

Dreams and phantasy works in language – Segal

In this inquiry I have drawn in part from theories derived from Hanna Segal, who was trained in the British Psycho-Analytical Society and follows a Kleinian approach in her psychoanalytical practice. Segal follows on Freud's (1933) theorization and argues that the analysis of dreams plays a significant role to the understanding of the *unconscious*. In order to understand the importance of this claim, Freud defines the origins of dreams in wishes that have been repressed and seek fulfillment thereby causing unrest in our psychic life. Freud proposes that when unfulfilled, deep-seated wishes cause inner tensions. However, their fulfillment is accompanied by feelings of anxiety and guilt. This conflict arises between the unconscious wishes struggling for expression and ego performing as a repressive form towards such fulfillment. Segal presents Freud's theory on the production of dreams through 'psychic dream-work' that "aims at fulfilling the unacceptable and conflicting wishes by disguising them, and it evolves a particular mode of expression—the *dream language*" (Segal, 1991, p. 5).

Segal (1991) uses the concept of *projective identification* to understand the way in which unconscious phantasies and desires get expressed in dreams. For Segal, the dream thought is not just a simple wish, but a multifaceted mixture of wishes and defenses that progress and reach symbolic meaning. This notion of symbolizing experience is central to my analysis of my participants' journeys into gendered subjectivity through personal writing, and I return to these categories in chapters 4 and 5 of the thesis. There I draw on the ideas of Riviere (1964) and Segal (1991), who argued that each person manifests an individual style in his/her dream language through which his/her personality is depicted: "The very style of the dream, like the style of personality, reflects the broad combination of

object relationships, anxieties, and defenses that moulds one's personality" (Segal, 1991, p. 11). For psychoanalysis phantasies are active from the start of one's life. Children's lives are pre-occupied by unconscious phantasy. Instincts and impulses give rise to phantasies and at the early stages of life children's unconscious phantasy life is considered to be more dominant. Phantasies have a wish-fulfilling, as well as a defensive, aspect. Segal (1991) and Riviere (1964) argue that phantasies are defenses against memory and work as defenses against painful realities.

Segal (1991) also links unconscious phantasies to the structure of personality. The basic character of one's personality is determined by unconscious phantasy "as the matrix of our mental structure and life" (p. 25). The personality is under constant development. This growing process is related not only to physiological maturity but also to learning experience through reality. This reality learning comes along with changes in phantasy life. Through reality testing, we achieve advanced realistic perceptions of our selves in the world. Key here is the argument that all mental activity is related to the functions of our unconscious phantasy. When unconscious phantasies are repressed, conscious life is characterized as deprived (Riviere, 1964). It is an argument of this thesis, elaborated in Chapters Four and Five, that girls' journal writing opens a window on this dynamic, and complex psychic agora.

In line with Klein and Riviere's (1964) views, Segal theorizes that unconscious phantasy functions as a foundation for the expression of both impulses and defenses. The unconscious phantasy is constantly interfering with the perception process, modifying it, as well as being modified by it. As age increases and life experiences accumulate, phantasies

appear in a more complex form. Consequently, unconscious phantasies play an essential role in the formation of dreams, symptoms, perception, thought, and creativity.

The function of symbolism in language – Segal

Freud (1900) introduces the concept of unconscious *symbolism* and theorizes that repressed phantasies get expressed through symbols, whether those are symptoms, dreams, or relationships with others and everyday engagements. According to Freud, those symbols are characterized by their almost entire universality, their cultural variation, their pre-structured existence, and their derivation from an archaic past. Klein (1964) claims that symbol formation is a significant process for the development of the ego. She recognizes anxiety and guilt as the main triggers of symbol-formation and argues that paralysis of symbol formation results from the onset of those feelings in excess. Central to an argument in this thesis is the notion that when symbol formation is prevented (through an inability to represent or express mental life, as through journaling), ego development is arrested. Of interest is that the process of representing things symbolically occurs when the depressive position takes place, which is described by Segal (1991) as the experience of separateness, separation and loss. More specifically, symbols work towards helping the individual overcome the loss of the object and consequently provide protection from one's own aggressiveness. Depressive feelings such as ambivalence, guilt, and loss can be experienced and tolerated through symbolic representation.

Segal (1957) goes on to explain the significance of symbolism by stating that “symbol formation governs the capacity to communicate, since all communication is made by means of symbols” (p. 58). Apart from the role of the symbols in communication with the external world, symbols are needed for the completion of internal communication. Being

aware of one's own impulses and feelings facilitates one's communication with one's own unconscious phantasies. As Segal (1957, 1991) describes it, being 'well in touch' with ourselves means that we are aware of, and can control, the expression of underlying primitive phantasies through symbols. What is more important is that our verbal thinking is based on our capacity to communicate through the use of symbols, through *words*. Through this lens, journal writing can be viewed as a particular and highly evolved form of symbolism that takes place every time the participants engage in this form of communication with the internal world. In the context of the analytic situation, the process of evacuating mental contents occurs through verbal expression. But Segal (1991) argues that this evacuation can also be accomplished through recording the dreams in a notebook. In this inquiry I analyze the contents of my participants' writings to explore their "releasing of psychic contents", including struggles with feelings of love and hate, self-loathing, and fear in the tempests of young womanhood.

Unconscious phantasy and dreams get released in a higher level of symbolic expression through the means of art. I have been interested in the psychoanalytic view of the uses of aesthetic expression since a great part of my participants' journal contents consist of poems, drawings, song lyrics, short stories, and experiments with language. These works of art are rich in phantasy life, and in their struggles to express mental life, my study participants perform in many ways like artists. Segal (1991) proposes, "The artist seeks to locate his conflict and resolve it in his creation. He does not look for easy solutions" (p. 82). Segal argues that, as in any kind of human activity, there is wish-fulfillment in art as well. This wish-fulfillment is understood as a wish to work through a problematic situation. The artist employs herself in a profound way of self-articulation and derives her inspiration from

her unconscious phantasy life. Even though it is Freud who introduces us to the importance of psychic reality, for Segal, “the artist never departs from reality” and the “artist is after primarily the psychic truth” (p. 82). In other words, in order for the artist to express her inner reality, she should be acutely aware of her internal realities. And that awareness is only manifested when the artist is in position to differentiate internal from external reality, which is regarded as a “basic difference between creativity and delusion” (Segal, 1991, p. 96).

Art and the depressive position – Segal

Segal (1991) introduces the notion of the depressive position and its relevance to art and, more specifically, to art as writing expression. The depressive position is defined by Klein (1964) as that phase of development in which the infant recognizes her mother as a whole object and relates herself to this object (Klein, 1964). The infant comes to discover the depth of her helplessness when she realizes her complete dependence on her mother and her jealousy to other people. Failure of reparation of the constant struggle for introjection and identification with the mother leads to despair and depressive conflict and anxiety. Segal finds herself in agreement with Klein’s point that there is a link between anxiety and phantasy attacks. More specifically, and central to my analyses in this thesis, the origins of the creative impulse lie in the need for reparation. In *The Work of Hanna Segal* (1981), it is argued that artistic impulse and depressive position are interrelated. According to Segal’s theory, the artist has a deep need to create what she feels, and by doing so she recreates a world. In that sense, every creation, such as a novel, poem, painting, or piece of music, consists of a world of its own. This world represents the inner world of the artist, a lost world. Actually, the only way for an artist to recreate her own world is by finding a symbolic expression. Therefore, “art is essentially a search for symbolic expression” (Segal, 1991, p.

87). It can be argued that, through journal writing, the writer engages in a symbolic expression and representation of her inner world. Further, journal writing can be regarded as an artistic expression originating from the writer's creative impulses. Shelley's —considered to be one of the finest lyrical poets of the English language - statement in a notebook provides us with a sense of the intricacy and singularity of the journal in relation to self-formation:

If it were possible that a person should give a faithful history of his being from the earliest epochs of his recollection, a picture would be presented such as the world has never contemplated before. A mirror would be held up to all men in which they might behold their own recollections and, in dim perspective, their shadowy hopes and fears—all that they dare not, or that daring and desiring, they could not expose to the open eyes of day. But thought can with difficulty visit the intricate and winding chambers which it inhabits—Shelley 1812” (Segal, 1991, p. 84).

In her theory of aesthetics, Segal (1991) uses examples, such as great ancient Greek art, that are not characterized by perfect proportions. Certain ‘flaws’ are considered to be essential in making the work feel alive. These ‘flaws’ give art a feeling of inexhaustibility, which is considered as an essential feature for the completion of its reparative work. Art needs not be perfect, so as to provide us with endless possibilities of completion. In this research, it is the notions of interpersonal and ideational writing that interest me, and the uses of symbolizing experience to the daring and developing “artist” as a young woman. Personal journal language, in contrast to textual language, is perceived as ‘informal’. However, its usual ‘ugly’ formless capacity and lack of rhythm, which would perceivably

fail to provide it with wholeness and harmony, transform it to beauty in art, in the eyes of my study participants.

In conclusion, Segal (1991) notes, “Artistic creativity involves much pain, and the need to create is compelling” (p. 108). For an artist, abandoning her endeavour for artistic expression is translated to failure and disaster. And even though creative work entails pain and depressive position, there is always a feeling of joy derived from artistic creation. Segal comments on issues pertaining to biography writing and argues that in any form of creative work there is an “unceasing search to reconstruct ‘inevitable truths’ and to find means of symbolizing them in a way that impels us to relive and continue further that search” (p. 100). I am interested in women’s inner realities. That search for inner reality constitutes the focus of my inquiry into the personal journal writings of my participants. I am interested in how their endeavours to express inner conflicts through experimental forms of expression are of critical importance in their elaboration of internal and external reality. Journal writing may provide them with the means (like Ariadne with her thread) to reach deep into their feelings and experiences to create their own worlds.

Potential space and transitional phenomena – Winnicott

Winnicott’s (1958) theory on the uses of *potential space* has been regarded as one of the original contributions to the study of human nature (Davis & Wallbridge, 1990). His theory evolves from direct observation of the importance of first possessions adopted by the infant and since then it has branched out to, and been touched upon by, psychoanalytic theory and practice. Winnicott (1958) observes that when a child assumes rights over an external object, such as a toy or a part of a blanket, this object is approached with loving excitement and affection. Winnicott terms this object transitional phenomena. The object

becomes a vitally significant feature for the child in its need to be used for relaxation time before the child goes to sleep. The transitional object is used by the child as his first ‘not-me’ possession and “is thus a form of defense against separation from the mother” (Wright, 1998, p. 84). The child’s use of the transitional object performs as a defense mechanism against anxious feelings and, more specifically, against the depressive type of anxiety. Winnicott argues that the transitional object relation of the child takes place “in a specific period of development, of the transition from being merged with the environment to being separate from it” (Davis & Wallbridge, p. 60). Through the child’s relationship with the transitional object, she starts her engagement and relationship with the external world. Furthermore, there is a thin line between the positive and negative use of transitional objects. In relation to the argument of this thesis, it is important to observe that transitional objects can take on various forms, such as a play, a dream, an artistic expression in a journal, or a religious feeling, as well as more negative forms such a fetishism, an act of lying or stealing, the initiation or the ending of an affectionate feeling, or an addiction to substances and other rituals (Winnicott, 1951).

The transitional object is placed theoretically in the area of illusion (Davis & Wallbridge, 1990; Winnicott, 1958). It enables the child to enter the area of illusion and move from the subjective, what the child has created, to the objective, what the child has found in the environment. As Wright (1998) argues, “the capacity to play with illusion is what distinguishes this experience from the fixed delusion” (p. 84). The preoccupation with playing is regarded as a further step in the sequence of activities that the child gets involved with in this area of illusion. *Playing* is a potential space in which the self relates with the environment and the child manifests her ability to manipulate the external phenomena while

acting out dreams and feelings. It is a satisfying experience and is associated with bodily excitement. Play serves as a space to transform reality by assimilating our needs. Winnicott (1958) posits that in order for an individual to perform and live creatively she must be able to explore her inner reality through experiencing the external world in a personal way. Playing is a basis that influences the whole individual's existential experience (Winnicott, 1971).

For Winnicott (1971), creativity demands spontaneity. When individuals engage in a satisfying playing experience, both creativity and playing enable their interaction with others within their world. These experiences allow for self-enrichment and discovery of meanings in their world, the 'world of seen things'. Both children and adults engage creatively in the use of the whole personality only in the act of playing; it is through this creative expression that individuals discover the self. Winnicott's theory on potential space broadens and takes the form of personal relationships with others. Communication with others serves as an overlapping process of potential spaces. Both through this process and experience of ego-relatedness in infancy, individuals form affectionate relationships. The potentiality of potential space lies in the possibilities provided to individuals to transcend their personal existences, engage in infinite exchange with other human beings and contribute to the continuity of human race.

Furthermore, the importance of the transitional object does not rely on the fact that it is a thing. Its "thingness" is essential only because it allows the child to maintain a developing and evolving inner reality and additionally assists the child to differentiate it from the not-self world (Winnicott, 1975). Key to the analyses in this thesis, Winnicott (1975) recognizes that the concept of the transitional object could correspond closely to

works of literature and art. Towards the end of his life, through the study of Picasso's works of art, Winnicott (1975) has become increasingly interested in how culture, as well as symbols in its vocabulary, and other symbolic activities, assist the individual to explore the self. Furthermore, Winnicott's (1969) most important development in his theory of potential space and transitional object is his differentiation between 'relation with an object' and 'use of an object'. Object-relating is defined as the experience acquired by the subject, whereas object usage is associated with the nature of the object. Winnicott (1971) argues that the capacity to relate to an object is not as sophisticated as the capacity to use an object because the usage of the object implies that the subject identifies the object as part of the external reality.

Applying Winnicott's (1971) theory on the relation between the transitional object and the individual to the relation between personal journal and the writer participant, in this research I examine whether and how personal journals function as potential space and transitional phenomena. As Winnicott (1971) posits, when the subject relates to the object, she allows certain self alterations to take place and these alterations are of such importance that the object has become important for the subject. Through the analysis of participants' engagements with their journal texts, I investigate whether and how such self alterations take place throughout their explorations of the self through symbolization and "play" in personal writing. I posit that my participants treat their personal journals as transitional objects where they release frustration and anger and seek pleasure or calmness. I also examine how the personal journal becomes the potential space where participants explore the engagements of their self in relation to others. In Chapters Four and Five of the thesis I explore how others are used as transitional objects and through their relationships with those objects the

individual develops and grows. As Davis and Wallbridge (1990) put it, “a person can be used in the way that children become able to use their parents and their siblings and their homes to grow out of” (p. 72). In some instances the text functions as the potential space that eventually becomes a place of misrecognitions. Wright notes, “Negotiation of meanings takes place through illusion, where the double match of conscious orderings and unconscious experience can be tested out for the degree to which they satisfy desire” (p. 95). The objectives of authors and readers are in relation and subjected to the outcomes of this negotiation in the potential space of reading and writing.

The desire in written language – Repetition

One of the main concerns related to psychoanalysis is how desires affect language and how symbolic interaction is established. It is through language that desire is constituted and ‘subjects’ are created. But because the language of desire is masked and not openly exposed to us, the proper reading of it is not a single matter (Kelly, 1997; Wright, 1998). Desire is connected to particular images and ideas expressed through unconscious wishes that take the form of phantasies. Through the analysis and understanding of those phantasies and desires we come to know the unconscious. Wright (1998) posits that authors and readers are both subjected to the norms imposed by the unconscious and the phantasies encoded within it. Wright argues it is “precisely the shifts of energies brought by unconscious desire that allow new meanings to emerge” (p. 4). Psychoanalysis pays attention to the ways in which consciousness has an effect on the creative process, as well as to the role of ideology in the process of ‘reading’ and ‘writing’ the texts. As Wright explains, there is both a public and a private aspect in the language of desire and this makes explicit why literary and artistic work is regarded as ‘text’. Furthermore, Derrida (1978) maintains that “writing is

unthinkable without repression” (p. 226). Through writing, desire is repressed and revealed at the same time (Wright, 1998). For Derrida, the unconscious is a mesh of sheer traces and it operates in language all the time. In other words, “[the unconscious,] rather than a language, is the very condition of language” (Laplanche & Leclaire, 1972, p. 178).

Brooks (1984) discusses the desire of the text that is reached through the plot of the narrative. He proposes that one of the main characteristics through which desire is served is *repetition*. Calling on Freud (1950) Brooks draws attention to the compulsion of the human psyche to repeat traumatic events over and over again. Brooks (1984) argues that the repetition-compulsion is crucial to any narrative. According to his theory, individuals are driven to make stories through reading and writing because of their drive to find meaningful wholeness in the chaos of their lives. For Brooks (1984), repetition is mastery that serves the movement from the passive to active. In Chapters Four and Five of this thesis, the category of repetition is central to my analysis. Arguably, those themes, images, individuals and memories that stalk the pages of my participants’ journals can be evaluated for their significance in relation to the frequency and intensity of their appearance. I discuss this point extensively in my discussion chapter.

Theories of feminine subjectivity and language

The extant theoretical literature on feminine subjectivity and language is huge and impossible to accurately represent within the page limitations of this thesis. In this section I wish simply to telegraph some key theorists and ideas they have brought to understanding women’s constitution as gendered subjects in relation to language. Here, Julia Kristeva (2000, 1989, 1980) offers important insights on how women’s experience of their bodies (menstruation, maternity, breast feeding, confinement) gets incorporated in revolutionary

ways in language. For Kristeva (1984), “poetic language” belongs to women since it is considered the language that is beyond the wreckage of the paternal symbolic function. Kristeva relates women’s poetic language to the realm of “mother”. The maternal body/text (the semiotic) is relegated to “other” in scientific and rational (symbolic) discourse. Kristeva is of special interest to me because of her eloquent testimony to the meaning of love in forms of cultural expression. Her description of Narcissus configures for me some of my study participants, who (as I demonstrate in Chapters Four and Five) seem driven to despair in their journals by love. She describes Narcissus as “an exile, deprived of his psychic space, an extraterrestrial with a prehistory bearing, wanting for love. An uneasy child, all scratched up, somewhat disgusting, an alien in a world of desire and power, he longs only to reinvent love” (pp. 392-383). Kristeva’s theories are important to our understanding of how the work of love constitutes female subjectivity, and how Ariadne’s Thread wraps itself around love’s language in young women’s journals⁴.

Other feminist thinkers have also underscored the exclusion of feminine subjectivity from “rational” discourse, and women’s existential struggle to locate themselves in language. Simone de Beauvoir (1953) confesses that she hesitated to write a book on women, and bell hooks (1988) declares that telling the story of her growing up years was an act very closely connected with the “longing to kill that self I was without really having to die. I wanted to kill that self in writing. Once that self was gone— out of my life forever— I could more easily become the me of me” (p. 1036). Shoshana Felman (1994) has analysed the writings and readings of women in texts and discovers that even from the beginning women are presented as the problem and the reader is introduced in a series of questions that pertain to the female identity: woman and madness stand out as interconnected. Felman

(1994) wonders if it is symptomatic that hysteria—a Greek word for “uterus”—was “originally conceived as an exclusively female complaint, as the lot and prerogative of women” (p. 20). What is more striking in Felman’s analysis is that women are driven from their desires to please and be understood by men. This is how women’s invisibility occurs in texts, even in those texts that exist as enactments of women’s own life stories. Carol Gilligan (1990) posits that one of the main problems posed in adolescence in relation to girls coming of age in western culture is their own exclusion for the sake of others in order to comply with the notion of the patriarchal image of femininity.

The very triumph of young women articulating themselves through persistent and sustained years of private diary writing is driven home by Felman (1977) in the following: “The challenge facing the woman today is nothing less than to ‘re-invent’ language, to re-learn how to speak: to speak not only against, but outside of the specular phallogentric structure” (p. 10) and further on to create a discourse which would no longer be defined by masculine influences. And she continues: “An old saying would thereby be given new life: today more than ever, changing our minds—changing the mind—is a woman’s prerogative” (p. 10). Irigaray (1977) agrees that avoiding speaking through language is not an option. For her, silence encodes death, because without language subjectivity does not exist. In *This Sex Which is not One*, Irigaray concluded by cheering women’s participation in ‘speaking’ the language:

Speak, all the same. It’s our good fortune that your language isn’t formed of a single thread, a single strand or pattern. It comes from everywhere at once. You touch me all over at the same time. In all senses. Why only one song, one speech, one text at a time? To seduce, to satisfy, to fill one of my

‘holes’?... We are lacks, voids, awaiting sustenance, plenitude, fulfillment from the other. By our lips we are women: this does not mean that we are focused on consuming, consummation, fulfillment. (pp. 209-210)

As stated before, woman has been excluded from the production of speech and has been subordinated to the concept of masculinity and even more viewed as the opposite of the man, as his other, the negative of the opposite (Felman, 1994; Irigaray, 2004). Consequently, “women, have been deprived of the narratives, or the texts, plots of examples, by which they might assume power over—take control of—their own lives” (Heilburn, 1988, p. 17). Felman (1994) maintains that women’s oppression exists not only in the material realm of social, economic, cultural, and political structures, but also in the groundwork of logos constitution, reasoning, and verbal communication, “in the subtle linguistic procedures and in the logical processes through which meaning itself is produced” (p. 25). Felman goes on to question whether woman speaks her own language when she gets the chance, or whether her speaking represents the language of men, or the silencing of her voice. In this research, it is in the light of the theoretical challenges imposed by Cultural Studies, psychoanalysis, and feminism that I attempt to understand how my participants use their personal journals to produce meaning of their lives and, thus, to shed some light on the complexities of their personal stories.

In conjunction with theories from the disciplines of Cultural Studies and feminism, the theoretical framework of my research includes psychoanalytic theories of adolescence. When studies concern the structure of students’ subjective identities in relation to the concepts of gender and self-representation, issues of what it means to be an adolescent are also of major significance. Adolescence is considered by psychoanalysis to be one of the

most difficult periods in the human life span. It is the transitional period from childhood to adulthood, characterized by the physical and psychological onset of puberty and the initiation of sexual and romantic behaviours that help to elaborate one's sense of gender identity. Studies have extensively examined the gendered sexual complexes in young adolescents (Irvine, 1994; Kalof, 1995; Kaplan, 1995; Van Roosmalen, 2000). Sexuality is understood to occur in social realities within which power relations are embedded. A young woman's sexual identity evolves in social contexts characterized by "gendered power relations, peer group identity, sexual hierarchy, male dominance, negative attitudes, and labels of deviance" (Van Roosmalen, p. 204).

Cultural Studies, in conjunction with theories derived from feminism and psychoanalytic theory, provide me with a theoretical foundation through which I attempt to analyze young female's concerns in relation to their use of journals as cultural forms of self-expression and identity formation. Identity theorists (Brinthaupt & Lipka, 2002; Gilligan, 1990; Kaplan, 1995; Mitchell, 1992) undertake to understand issues of self and identity through attentiveness to the cognitive, social, and physical changes of adolescence. This period is associated with crisis and disruptions in the self, and it is characterized by increased self-consciousness, inner conflict, introspection, disorientation, uncertainty and stress (Gilligan, 1982; Zimmerman, 1991). Mitchell (1992) argues that adolescents' tendency for excessive egocentrism encourages self-centered ideologies and is premised on a self-enhancing process of understanding the world. Preoccupation with appearance, craving for approval, eroticization of thought, and heightened obsession with personal imperfections are some of the traits identified in adolescence. At this age stage, "the struggle for adolescent selfhood is also a struggle with narcissism" (Mitchell, 1992, p. 8). Narcissism influences

friendship patterns, interpersonal interactions with others, and romantic engagements.

Kaplan (1995) claims that narcissism eventually translates to the acquisition of an ethical sense. Self-absorption and egocentrism get extended and expressed to the external world, in the sense that love of self converts to love of species.

Adolescents both exonerate and condemn themselves and through their criticism feelings of inferiority and inadequacy can emerge. These conditions of ‘emotional vigilance’ that they experience encourage “interpersonal defensiveness and emotional hypersensitivity” (Mitchell, 1992, p. 12). Adolescents engage in an emotional battleground of uncertainties. At this time of intellectual richness and moral complexity, adolescents attempt to handle the pressures of conformism, to reconcile selfishness and overcome egocentrism, to obtain self-knowledge and master unresolved emotional needs (Kaplan, 1995).

Adolescent females go through a radical process of adjusting their engagements with the world in such a way as to align their knowledge with cultural expectations. Gilligan (1990) claims that they are consciously aware of cultural expectations and struggle between their real feelings and the feelings they believe they should have. These young women attempt to bring their cultural expectations into a linear dynamic relationship that is considered to be ‘appropriately female’. As Roberts (1999) claims, “Within their culture, they must sacrifice their strong sense of self and their own knowledge of lived experience” (p. 27). Roberts (1999) confirms that adolescent girls go through a developmental crisis while they have to challenge the crucial role of culture in assigning gender to two distinct moral voices, the male one of justice and rights, and the female one of attachment and care. Dilemmas arising from the tension between the female’s relationship to the world (selfless

attitude) and her relationship to herself (selfish attitude) has been described as the most acute challenge during adolescence.

The pageant of such human and profound conflicts and struggles in identity formation will be the focus of my research while investigating young female's voices in their writings. I have highlighted how concepts from Cultural Studies, Psychoanalysis and Feminism, provide a lens through which I attempt to understand how young adult females cope with conflicts through personal writing and self-reflection in defining themselves and the world. I end this chapter by quoting Suleiman (1987):

Feminine discourse, which is not always where one expects to find it, reminds us that when it comes to being human, we are all in a position of ravishment (call it lack, if you must); it reminds us that our brightest hope for survival—call it love—is, against all odds and through all our divisions, to keep on writing. (p. 147)

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Research Approach

Understandings of the in-depth and rich description of the meanings that the participants of the inquiry make regarding their “selves” and their “lives” by the means of personal journal writing will be attained through qualitative research methods. The strengths of this approach pertain to its exploratory and descriptive strategies within the context of my participants’ frames of reference. Qualitative methodology draws on multiple strategies that respect the humanity of the participants; it is emergent and evolving; it allows the researcher to reflect systematically on her role in the research, to be sensitive to her involvement in framing the research and to use complex reasoning that is interactive and multifaceted (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Rossman & Rallis, 1998). The research approach is compatible with Cultural Studies, Feminism, and Psychoanalytic theories of human development.

In this research I collect data from four sources: questionnaires, in-depth interviews, participants’ personal journals, and the researcher’s personal journal. Of these four sources, I find the participants’ own journals to be most useful in providing access to material to help me answer my research questions. However, before proceeding with a discussion of the research strategies employed in this research and a description of my participants, I am going to present my research journey, as well as an overview of the participant recruitment process; a process that led to some very difficult diversions from my original research methodology. In the following pages I share my journey and the obstacles I face while attempting to approach settings that initially seem appropriate for providing access to young passionate female journal writers. My recruiting attempts last for almost a year and two

months, as I engage in a long journey along six different unsuccessful routes to approach participants, with numerous long-lasting meetings with my supervisor almost every week, and constant communication with the Ethics Committee of the University of Ottawa to get approval for various changes in my methodology. One of my committee members comments that the data gathered through all the ineffective attempts to recruit participants for the inquiry is worthy of a research study itself. This comment makes me view things from a different perspective. The journey has been one of learning, a life-reconstructive experience, my Odyssey. On my journey to Ithaca I am forced to consider how local arrangements of power, fear, and convention converge around female adolescence to present formidable obstacles to knowledge.

My Odyssey

*TELL ME, O MUSE, of that ingenious hero who traveled far and wide
after he had sacked the famous town of Troy. Many cities did he visit,
and many were the nations with whose manners and customs he was
acquainted; moreover he suffered much by sea while trying to save
his own life and bring his men safely home; (Homer, The Odyssey, Book I)*

The research that I originally proposed and successfully defended underwent numerous changes once I started to try to recruit participants. These changes relate to characteristics of the prospective participants in terms of age and the context I would recruit them from. Specific changes to the data collection techniques and research strategies, which are considered critical for the implementation of the study, also occur. However, as will be discussed later, these changes do not limit the possibilities of my research. To the contrary, the participants involved and the data collected actually enhance and expand the depth of the subject under investigation: the uses and effects of personal journal engagements by young women.

Initially, I designed the research to examine how adolescent girls engage with aspects of personal journal reading and writing, and how journaling experiences assist them in giving voice to difficult, often private and un-communicated aspects of teen identity. Through my study I aimed to involve only young adolescent female students who were journal writers since I was interested in exploring issues of gender and identity and how these are mediated through the expressive and interpretive processes. I was interested in focusing my research on young adolescent women because of the social pressures and expectations that they struggle with during that decisive period of their life. According to the

literature, young adolescent females undergo a struggle between their real feelings and the feelings imposed on them by social and cultural expectations (Gilligan, 1990; Kaplan, 1995). I hoped to shed some light on how these social pressures are understood by young adolescent females. Taking into consideration that much of the knowledge about females, especially young females, comes from sources other than young women, this research was intended to fill a gap by focusing on issues of gender and identity from the perspectives of young women.

Initially, I proposed to include 8 to 12 young adolescent female students, 14 years of age and above, who attended private High School in Eastern Canada. More specifically, my intention was to conduct the research in a prestigious private co-educational school with approximately 500 registered students and an average class size of 18 students. I collected information about this specific school and other private schools in Canada through the annual magazine, *The Essential Guide to Private Education: Our Kids Go To School*, which is supported by the *Toronto Star* and provides profiles of more than 190 private schools throughout Canada.

Throughout my proposal and in all the documents submitted to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (REB) of the University of Ottawa, I indicate my sensitivity to the divergent values, traditions, and privacy issues that existed. Throughout my undergraduate and graduate studies I receive training on issues of cultural diversity, antiracist education, and psychopedagogy. I have experience working with children and young adolescents as a result of my teaching at the Heritage Language School, in the Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB), for seven consecutive years. Additionally, I have interacted with young female adolescent students involved in a pilot study conducted during

the 2003 Enrichment Mini Course Program, at the University of Ottawa, taught by my supervisor, Dr. Judith Robertson. My involvement in this pilot study provides me with the opportunity to observe those individuals while engaging in activities of personal journal reading and writing, personal expression, and identity conceptualization.

The initial plan for my research included five data collection strategies. In addition to the questionnaires, in-depth interviews, personal journal entries of the participants, and my personal research journal, there were also two discussion/writing activities, during which the participants were to be introduced to a specific thematic area of knowledge, study, and engage in reflection about personal journal writing. Each session was estimated to last between one hour and a half to two hours and all the participants were to be present as a group. In the first session, *Journal Writing as a Form of Spiritual and Political Resistance*, participants would watch excerpts from the movie, *Anne Frank Diary*. Discussion regarding issues that would have made an impression on the participants would follow. *Journaling Experiences: Personal Journal Writing, Identity and the Self*, the last session, would have involved a follow-up discussion session with the participants that would offer me the opportunity to acquire a better understanding of the girls' experiences with personal journal writing. Table 1 (Initial Research Plan- Sessions Outline, p. 335) lays out information about the sessions and their content.

And the journey begins – school A

...so the god

prevented them from ever reaching home. Tell me, too, about all

these things, O daughter of Jove, from whatsoever source you may

know them. (Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book I, paragraph 1)

The first school I choose to approach to recruit participants is a prestigious private high school with over 80 years of history and tradition that provides opportunities to over 500 students, ages 4 to 18, for academic achievement, self-discipline, and personal development. I have named this High School A. I have high expectations of this school as a setting to conduct my study since the school advertised that it “believes in creating a safe, dynamic environment that will foster each student’s creativity, growth, academic excellence and voyage of self-discovery. Values shape thoughts and actions; they help guide students to discover what is morally important, socially significant and personally fulfilling” (Researcher’s Personal Journal [RPJ], entry 1). This emphasis on the importance of the individuality of the students and the promises for opportunities that would guarantee experiences for self discovery, creativity, and growth influence me into believing there would be a positive outcome to my recruiting attempts at this school setting.

Due to the fact that September is considered to be a heavy scheduled month for schools, I start my attempts to contact the Headmistress of the school at the beginning of October. Several of my telephone calls go unanswered and my voice messages receives no response. The same fate follows for my e-mail endeavours. That absence of reply comes as a shock to me. A month later and all my attempts to contact the headmistress are still unsuccessful. Feelings of frustration give rise to all my insecurities, accusing myself of “not persuasive phone-related communicative skills”, which in addition to “my second language pronunciation and my soft voice” decrease my possibilities of creating a good impression and be taken seriously by individuals who hold the role of the gatekeepers (RPJ, 2). Yet, I realize that these are my personal assumptions and I should not allow such feelings to overwhelm me. In my personal journal, I try to work it through: “To be honest, these past

days I gave it a lot of thought and I came to the conclusion that it is unfair that Ph.D. students do not get some respect and they have to go through all these barriers in order to gain access to the school setting. That is a very solid reason why most of the graduate students in Education take on studies that are conducted away from school settings. From all my fellow colleagues, I do not know even one person who is currently conducting research in a school setting. And that is ironic. We generate knowledge in the educational discourse outside schools and we conduct studies with participants other than children and school age students” (RPJ, 2). At this point, little do I know that this is only the beginning!

In November, 2003 my supervisor, Dr. Robertson, informs me that the current headmistress of the school is in the process of retiring and another person will take on the directorship. At my request, Dr. Robertson contacts the new headmistress of the school, who replies that she is not willing to get involved with my study at this stage, but will consider it sometime the following semester. During my attempts to make an appointment to discuss my study the next semester, the headmistress responds that she has “forwarded the summary of [my] proposal to [her] English department teachers to get a sense of whether or not they think any of [their] girls would have an interest or the time” (RPJ, 14). On March 1st, 2004, the headmistress communicates that she has consulted with “three teachers who work quite intimately with students in the age group of that you have requested [and who] are all very sensitive and respected colleagues” and “all three feel uncomfortable with the proposal. As I am still very new to the school, and am not yet familiar with the culture, I don’t think it would be wise to pursue this any further. I am sorry” (RPJ, 14).

This is a formal rejection of my study at this site and I feel devastated. I sit down for a few minutes and I feel helpless. Silence. Despair. Confusion. Feelings of guilt overwhelm

my thoughts. Am I doing something wrong? I feel the need to go back and scrutinize my research design. I understand and acknowledge the nature of my study, but I would never have expected that it would receive such a response. I remember the excitement and encouragement I received from my supervisor, committee members, and colleagues whenever I would discuss my research interest. This excitement fades away now. Next day, feelings of injustice seize my mind. Injustice towards the girls who were never given the opportunity to learn about the study nor think about its possibilities for themselves. A meeting with my supervisor helps me better understand the reluctance that apparently still exists among adults to let girls speak for themselves. The gatekeepers have decided that speaking and expressing their own thoughts and ideas and feelings about personal journal writing was “uncomfortable” and rather dangerous work.

The journey continues – school B

Several months have passed since I started my attempts to contact the administration of school A to get access to participants for my research. In the meantime, with the continuous help of my supervisor, I am trying to approach other private schools that qualify for my study. Dr. Robertson suggests that I prepare a Research Manual in the form of a booklet that I could provide to the principals of the schools I approach. I create a manual that includes several chapters with information about my research; a brief proposal of my research, a letter to the principal; my communication with the REB; a letter of partial approval from the REB (the REB will only give me full approval for conducting the research once they have a letter from the principal of the school expressing consent to allow me to conduct the research at his/her school site); the material and tools, such as questionnaires, interview questions, and guidelines of discussion and writing activities to be done with the

participants; the Consent Forms for the participants and their parents; and my Curriculum Vitae. This manual looks polished and professional. It provides the principals and other administrators with a substantial overview of the study. It clarifies aspects of the study that seem problematic, especially with regards to the measures being taken to secure the privacy and confidentiality of the girls and the rights of their participation.

The principal of another private high school expresses his interest in my research around the middle of December, 2003. I have named this School B. The principal says he finds “the topic worthy and feels that he will be able to find a good sample of female respondents at his school” (RPJ, 7). A month later, a meeting is arranged at the school and I am given the opportunity to visit several classrooms, the language laboratories, the library, and the chapel. This is one of the largest private schools in Eastern Ontario with a history of over 100 years. There are over 700 students at the school, 80 of whom are international and Canadian boarding students, with more than 70 teachers. The director is very enthusiastic about the research. He informs me that due to their strong language program students are very keen to express themselves in a written form and he is positive that there will be students who would like to participate. He has already thought of discussing the nature of my inquiry with the English department teachers and have them introduce the study to the students. He is planning to distribute information via the parents’ newsletter and the official school website. As soon as he receives responses from willing and available students he will contact me to take over. Even though I would prefer to be present and talk to students about my inquiry and be able to receive their feedback, the director reassures me that this is the usual approach he follows with regards to research projects at this school setting.

Indeed a few days later, I am pleased to see my study advertised on the website:

Ph.D. Research in Journal Writing Conducted at [School B]

[School B] would like to help Ph.D. candidate Ms. Nectaria Karagiozis, in her research in the field of Education. She is looking for 10-12 female students between the ages of 14 to 16 years old who are active personal journal writers.

The time commitment will total 7 hours and will involve 6 to 7 sessions ranging from 30 to 90 minutes each. The sessions with Ms. Karagiozis will be held at School B outside class time, will begin in a few weeks, and will end in May.

Interested students should contact [the director]. (RPJ, 9)

Feeling encouraged by the acknowledgement my study receives I allow a few days to pass before contacting the director to ask about students' response and interest in the study. The director's reply is not encouraging. Indeed, I am again surprised. He informs me that "Unfortunately, no suitable candidates have come forth—the few that were, were too old. I will now ask our Department Head of English to help" (RPJ, 9). At the suggestion of my supervisor I contact the director of school B again to request a brief meeting with the students to present them the rationale of the research and have the opportunity to interact with them. I also inform the principal that I currently work with five other students from another private high school, School C, (which I will discuss in the next section) and state the importance of having students from School B participate in the inquiry as it will broaden the scope of the inquiry. Since my e-mail communication goes without any response, I call and leave a voice message to the director with the same request. My attempts at contact still remain unanswered...

School setting C – an oasis...

Once again I have to express my appreciation for my supervisor's help. She stands by me throughout my attempts to contact schools and arranges a meeting with the director of Private School C that she attends as well. My contacts with School C start about the same time as those with School B. My interactions with this school are longer and receive a totally different response. School C is a Jewish Private High School in Central/Eastern Canada with less than 80 registered students. My first meeting with the principal is one of the most encouraging experiences I have ever had with school settings. The director has a special relationship with the students. What impresses me the most is that he knows all the students by their first names and he is the one they approach to discuss even personal issues. He appears to be a trustworthy person who has developed rapport not only with teachers but also with students. A person who inspires zeal in learning, confidence, and hope and practices the school's motto which is posted on his office door: "[School C] fosters an appreciation of the richness of Jewish heritage and instils confidence and enthusiasm to attain academic excellence" (RPJ, 5).

My first meeting with students is scheduled for the next day, December 10, 2003. The director introduces me to the students and discusses the importance of the inquiry with the following phrase that indicates his closeness with the students of that age and his keen understanding of their needs and interests: "It is very important for research and studies like that to take place with people of your age, in order to understand you better, in order to know better what is happening in your lives and the reasons behind those moody days that seem to affect your relationships with others and yourselves" (RPJ, 9). In the same vein, I stress to the students the need to have individuals of their age participating in the study, and that their

participation means that they will be able to project their voices, to provide their own perspectives, ideas, feelings, and thoughts on issues pertaining to personal journal writing. I outline the requirements of the study and their rights to confidentiality and anonymity then I provide them with an information sheet so they can discuss the study with their parents. Once they agree to participate, the director of the school will provide them with the participant and parent Consent Forms and, consequently, a meeting with me will be arranged. Out of the 17 students present at the meeting, 11 express their willingness to participate in the inquiry and the rest promise to give it some thought.

“There was a positive air in my interaction with these young adolescent girls” (RPJ, 12), I write after my meeting. I am sure that my positive interaction with them is a result of the principal’s relationship with them: “Students trust him and consequently students trust me” (RPJ, 12). The principal informs me that he will call and talk to the parents about the study and he is quite convinced that I will have at least those 11 students participating in the study.

At that time of their studies, students are on exams period, so my next meeting with the girls is scheduled for January 29th, 2004. What happens on that day makes me rethink and re-evaluate the possibility of doing an inquiry of this nature with this specific age group: “I arrive at the school 15 minutes before their lunch-break. I have plenty of time to get ready. I find [the principal] and he greets me but he seems somewhat anxious and concerned. He tells me that he has to make a phone call and that he will be right back. I am taking my coat off and smile at the secretary, a very warm person. She asks me whether I want some coffee. I see some of the female students, I feel I know some of them and smile. There is a frustration in the air though and I can feel it.

[The principal] comes back and leads me to a second room where there are three students sitting at the desks. Two more arrive. I look around and I am confused because I was expecting to find at least double the number of the students present. [The principal] explains to me that he is very sorry but there are fewer potential participants. Some of them have changed their mind and others have had difficulty convincing their parents to allow them to participate. The principal says, ‘I was just talking to the father of one girl. He said that he didn’t want his daughter’s voice being recorded and he was concerned about those recordings. You know, he is a lawyer and he is sensitive about those issues’. ‘Well, my father is a lawyer too, and he did not have any problem with that’, answers one of the girls present. [The principal] expresses his disappointment that things have turned out this way and assures me that he hadn’t expected something like this to happen. I am disappointed as well, but I tell [him] that I understand and I should have expected something like that because of the nature of the research” (RPJ, 17-18).

Several other problems appear and my final number of participants decreases to two. At one point one of the participants refuses to participate and as explained to them and written in their consent forms, I respect her decision. The principal of the school talks with her and to my surprise she comes back to the group the next time I am at the school. However, this does not seem very effective since both she and two other students repeatedly cancel our meetings for the interview and consequently forget to bring their supposedly completed questionnaires. Even our group discussion session, during which we watch excerpts from *The Diary of Anne Frank* and discuss specific questions I had prepared regarding issues of personal journal writing and issues of resistance and resilience, does not have the outcome I expected. Two of the participants express their reluctance to watch the

movie because they had seen it before. One hour and a half is not sufficient to watch even some important parts of the movie, let alone discuss the issues raised. As well, only two of the participants were willing to contribute to the discussion. The others promise to respond to the questions in written form in their free time and provide me with their answers in our next meeting.

I try to think about why my interactions with those students do not work and why I have not been able to access the data I have expected to. Again, I question my credibility as a researcher. Why do the students not cooperate with me? Why do I keep going to the school setting and meeting their indirect refusal to participate in the study? Do I not inspire trust and respect? I scrutinize my manners and interaction with them. I am clueless. On the other hand, I do not feel they are passionate journal writers. I dare say that some do not keep a diary at all. Three pages of written text is not a diary. Perhaps their avoidance to be interviewed and return the questionnaires can be explained by the fact that they do not have much to say on the subject under investigation. Why did it take me four and a half months to realize this? "Frustration to get participants, the time limits, and eagerness to collect data fuel my every effort. And I keep hoping, and I keep going. And my meetings keep getting cancelled" (RPJ, 38).

Recruitment issues and changes

Although School C does not turn out to be the setting for my data collection, my interactions with the students and the school affects me in a constructive way. Apart from the inspiration, motivation, and encouragement that I receive from the principal of the school, who never ceases to acknowledge the significance of the study, I come to view my experience with the students as a pilot study. This formative experience allows me to reflect

critically on specific aspects of the inquiry (including data collection strategies) and take measures that would assist me in approaching the most appropriate participants for the study and ease their involvement in the study. By March 24 2004, after meetings and discussions with my supervisor, we decide that we should expand the horizons of the recruitment process and seek out other sources of data. Since my experience with the private sector has not guaranteed a positive outcome, we decide to approach public schools. If I am able to get a green light from the public schools' ethics committee, I should be able to find enough participants given the number of public schools and the thousands of students that attend them. By the March 20, 2004 I get approval from the University of Ottawa's REB committee to proceed with my application to the Ottawa-Carleton Advisory Committee and request access to public school board. I prepare the required documents, organize them in the form of a booklet, create a revised Research Manual, and submit my application for May 15, 2004, the next available deadline.

My experience with the students at School C allows me to think about the data collection techniques and proceed with changes, approved by my supervisor and the university REB. I decide the discussion session on *The Anne Frank Diary* movie should be eliminated because most of the students seemed to be familiar with the movie as they had either already watched the movie or read the book and were not willing to spend their time re-viewing it. Additionally, showing the movie took too much time and this did not allow enough time for discussion, let alone written reflection on the issues raised. Since the discussion sessions are not intended to be primary sources of data, I decide to proceed using only interviews, the participants' journal texts, and the questionnaires as sources of data. I also consider making the discussion session optional at the end of the data collection. I

further decide that the questionnaires can be completed during the students' spare time. Due to some parents' concerns with having their children's voices recorded during the in-depth interview session, a more detailed and organized interview guide is organized that can be completed in written form by the participants.

Alternative routes of recruitment – The flyer

Meetings and discussions about finding ways to approach adolescent females who are passionate personal journal writers continue. The possibility of accessing participants from other Private High Schools, such as Muslim Private Schools or Christian Private Schools, would change the scope of my inquiry, since issues of race, religion, ethnicity, and class would need to be taken into consideration. The possibility of doing my study in Greece, due to the fact that I was raised there and have easy access to high schools through relatives and friends, opens up endless discussions with family members. At once, everyone has a different perspective and offers me different ideas for recruiting participants. My oldest brother wants me to do my study in Tennessee and stay with his family. My 16 year old nephew in Greece promises me several journal texts when the reimbursement issue of participation comes to his attention: "I can have all my soccer friends write a diary for you" (RPJ, 29), he tries to convince me. The problems and ethical issues regarding getting access to schools and participants outside Canada are substantial and I drop the subject from any further discussion.

A more immediate way to reach out to the population that might be interested in participating in the study is by posting a flyer in public places informing young female adolescent journal writers about the possibility of participating in the study. After receiving approval from the REB at the University of Ottawa to proceed, I start posting flyers on

public boards on the main roads in Ottawa and in community centers and libraries. Within one month, by the beginning of May, 2004, 14 females have contacted indicating interest in the study. They ask me several questions regarding the interview session and especially their journal entries. Two of them, Constance and Valerie, seem very eager to participate in the study and respond to my emails. They complete the consent forms and provide me with phone numbers to contact their mothers. Both their mothers show enthusiasm and interest in the research and think that by participating in the study, their daughters have the chance to talk about something they are passionate about: "It's like someone recognizes and values her passion in writing", Valerie's mother tells me.

My communication with Constance's mother is a long one. Constance's mother "is very sensitive about issues of self expression and she says that she has taken a course in autobiography in the past but was not satisfied because the professor would only provide them with material from autobiographies of European women. She feels that there are great Canadian autobiographers who should be given some consideration. She thinks that her daughter is a very qualified person for this inquiry and is glad she is participating in it. She thinks Constance is a very emotional person and communicates her thoughts with a lot of compassion at times. She feels comfortable with having her daughter meet with me without her being around. She feels I am an honest person and her daughter is a very capable independent young woman" (RPJ, 59-60). I have to confess that my interaction with these mothers boosts my confidence and I feel that the key to success is to contact people who understand and value my interests: "There is nothing wrong with my soft voice after all" (RPJ, 60).

From my conversations with those mothers I realize that both of them share an appreciation of their daughters' infatuation with personal journal writing. And even though, as you will see in a while, both girls have been through a lot of pain and traumatic experiences in their lives, their mothers do not seem to have any hesitation regarding their daughters' participation in the study. To the contrary, they encourage them to participate in the study.

Valerie and Constance. Two young adolescents who have been through unimaginable experiences in their lives. Unimaginable to me. I grew up in an overprotective environment. At their age, my only concern was to study and excel in my school commitments. With extra-curricular activities, such as private English lessons, gymnastics, and advanced courses in ancient Greek language and Latin, my spare time was limited. All my needs were met by my parents; my mother being present and available for all of us, and we are six. There is no TV set in our home because my parents believe that we can spend our spare time engaging in more constructive activities. I am the fifth, the youngest girl, and considered and treated as if I were the youngest, since my younger brother has a strong build and he is a boy. Having a slight build, in a family where almost everyone is heavy-bodied, I assume the role of the weakest one, and consequently extra attention is provided, along with extra-protection. Given my family history and experiences, Valerie and Constance's life happenings at a young age can only be imagined by me as the content of a dramatic novel or the scene of a movie.

Valerie, a 14 year old, comes from a family with highly educated parents; her mother is a chemist, her father an engineer, and her brother is doing a degree in computer sciences and cognitive sciences. She considers herself an outsider to this intellectual group of people

and wonders “where the hell does the teenage artist fit in?” (ValeriePJ, 4). One of the traumatic experiences in her life that has stigmatized her family’s existence, has been her father’s death. She adores her father and hates him at the same time:

miss my father. i hate him, too. he left just like that. just like i want to do. he didn't even say goodbye or leave anyone any notes. he took the car and we had to buy a new one. i hate him for putting all this stress on my mother and i hate him for dying and i hate him so fucking much!

i knew he was sad because he would cry all the time whenever he saw me. maybe we made him sad. i remember one time he kept going on about how he was such a bad father. no, he wasn't a bad father at all. he was the most excellent and caring man i ever knew. he knew how to make us laugh and taught us how to stop crying. he would make funny jokes and laugh at ours. he would give hugs and remind us every day about how we were his sunshines and he loved us with all his heart. (ValeriePJ, 25)

The same applies to her relationship with the mother. Feelings of love, guilt, and hate characterize her interaction with her mother.

i walk in the door and my drunken mother just goes all out on reminding me and making sure that i don't forget what a fuck up i am, how irresponsible i am, what a whore i am, how she should put me on the pill and how i mess everything up. thanks, mom. you mean a lot to me. (ValeriePJ, 9)

i miss the fact that my mother used to adore me and now she hates me. (ValeriePJ, 10)

i've tired her out and killed her, too. She's so exhausted and i know she just wishes that this could all be over and that she could die. i know she wants it so bad and i wish i could give it to her. i wish i could kill her just so that she wouldn't have to go through her life with this nagging itch in her womb where we all came from. she's been strong but now that she's snapped i want to kill her even more. i love you, mother. really and truly i do. but you don't need to stay here like this!. (ValeriePJ, 24)

Valerie's language is strong and powerful. I read her online diary entries and I feel sympathy. Her sorrow becomes mine and as I participate in her painful life journey, I collapse in her writings about her abortion. It is not clear to me whether it was a miscarriage or an abortion. The sure thing is that Valerie has been extremely traumatized by that experience.

now i know apathy. when your ex-girlfriend can be pregnant and confused as hell and then get hit by a car and vomit blood for a good half hour then miscarry and go into labour in the middle of the night and have to deal with seeing your dead fucking baby at 3 months and all you have to say about it is 'please be okay". (ValeriePJ, 24)

sometimes 'll pace around the house holding my darling kitten and think about it. i could have had a baby, if only for a little while. but money and cuba were more important then. if i had the choice to go back in time right now, i would have. and i would have said no. and i would have stood tall and i would have fought back against my mother and put *her* in *her* place. but this is where it's at right now and unless it changes at the hands of a nearby

voodoo doctor then this is how it's going to be for a while i suppose.

(ValeriePJ, 32)

trying to suppress these memories is useless. 'm starting to hear voices again and it's really been stressing me out. mom wants me to see a doctor but i don't care what she wants right now. i'm just trying not to fall back into that mental hole. (ValeriePJ, 33)

What is more appalling in Valerie's personal journal entries is her need to cut herself and engage in self-mutilation. Her addiction to drugs seems to be a natural consequence and she seems to be surrounded by people who would easily give her access to heavily addictive substances.

i've tried cutting stuff out of me and that's why i have scars all over my legs and wrists. it doesn't make sense. (ValeriePJ, 8)

i cut myself up pretty bad like i always do when i ruin his life, but that's how it goes and that's how it's gone for a very long time now.

they won't ever go away, but i don't think i want them to. it fuels me.

it's surprising how sharp X-Actos can really be and how with just one press and a swish you can have blood pouring off of you. it's so goddamn satisfying. (ValeriePJ, 37)

eventually i got downtown. something inside was screaming for something to soothe me. i need drugs. i screamed it out loud and bought a pretty smallish joint off of some homie. smoke smoke smoke. i coughed up blood from god knows where. (ValeriePJ, 18)

another man on the bus tormented me to make love to him. he kept asking if i was his girlfriend and he reeked so heavily of alcohol that it was nearly intoxicating me. he muttered about parkdale for a very long time and asked if i wanted any heroin. i asked him how much, and he said \$40 but i had no money on me. i also don't know how much skag goes for these days but it sounds heavenly and addictive. and hell, they say that nicotine is more addictive than heroin and i'm not that much of a smoker. it couldn't hurt too terribly.

some needle marks to add to the collection. why the hell not?

Ben's scared to do LSD and shrooms. i don't know why i'm not scared. i've seen my brother on them countless times, and i've seen Matt trip out on DXM and bleed from scratching himself silly. i've seen [him] drunken and stoned and he scares me beyond belief. (ValeriePJ, 71)

Since Valerie and Constance provided me with their Internet site where they keep their online journal entries, I am one of the most passionate readers of their writings. Until one day, I read in one of Valerie's writings that she plans to use the reimbursement for participating in this research to get drug supplies. Being aware that Constance is exposed to drug usage as well, I am stunned to read this phrase. Myriads of questions come to my mind. What is my role as a researcher? What are my ethical responsibilities? Should I notify their parents about their addictive engagements? What if they indeed use the money to buy drugs and intoxicate themselves? During a meeting with my supervisor, we decide that we need to get advice from the psychoanalyst who is assigned to deal with difficult issues that might come up during my interaction with the participants.

Dr. Philip Cheifetz is the president of the Ottawa Psychoanalytic Society, a psychoanalyst with vast experience with adolescent patients. This is one of the reasons that he was recommended to be the official M.D. in my study. My supervisor and I meet with him immediately after Valerie's announcement regarding her decision to use the study's reimbursement to cover her drug expenses. In a couple of weeks I meet again with Dr. Cheifetz with further questions regarding the participants in this inquiry. Several issues are discussed during those meetings. How should I approach girls if issues of drug addiction come to the surface when I meet them? What behaviour should I expect from them? At what stage should I contact their mothers if problematic situations develop? Are these teenagers at risk for their lives? What is my role and what are the ethical implications involved in my knowledge of their abusive behaviour towards their own bodies, through self-cutting and drug usage?

Dr. Cheifetz is interested in the inquiry and considers it to be one of importance. He confirms that the girls need treatment but that it should only be provided if and when they agree by themselves. He feels that his role in my interaction with the girls should be more involved and certain changes to the consent forms should be made. He recommends a couple of texts in psychoanalysis to me that would help me get a better understanding of adolescence and mental life, how psychoanalytic treatment works on the unconscious, and how it affects current relationships and patterns of behaviours. Dr. Cheifetz helps me think about issues of adolescence from a different perspective, but what touches my senses above all is his experience with a teenage female patient who used to be a passionate journal writer.

Catherine was an avid writer. Dr. Cheifetz keeps her 3000 pages of written work in a brown folder in his office. He unfolds it while he narrates parts of her story, which do not

differ much from those of Valerie and Constance. What appals me is that Catherine committed suicide two weeks after she stopped writing in her journal. Dr. Cheifetz assures me that self expression is decisively important for these girls. It can be argued that the very act of writing in their diaries saves their lives. Avoidance to engage in journal writing should be considered highly problematic. Again, my research Odyssey has landed me on strange and difficult shores that were unthinkable to me only a short time ago.

Enrichment mini course

Yet another attempt to recruit participants is made by approaching the high school students who participate in the Enrichment Mini Courses Program offered to high school candidates during the first week of May in several universities in Eastern Ontario. After getting the approval from the REB, I again post flyers on the advertisement boards on campus. Through my supervisor's involvement I am able to meet with students who are participating in a workshop called *Exploring the Self Through Creative Writing*. After a brief overview of my study, the data collection strategies, and the participants' rights, I provide the students with the Information Sheet so they are able to discuss the study with their parents. A discussion lasting almost half an hour follows and the majority of the students appear to be involved in different forms of writing. Male students express their discomfort that this study does not allow them to participate. More than 10 students raise their hands, indicating that they will consider their participation in the study as a very possible one and that they would inform other friends who engage in journal writing about the study. But this is a dead-end street. Unfortunately, I receive no further response from the students.

Incident with detective sergeant – Further modifications

April 30, 2004. Late afternoon. I am alarmed by an e-mail I receive from the Detective Sergeant of the Sexual Assault/Child Abuse section. He informs me that the flyer I posted on the public announcement boards has “caused quite an alarm as various parents viewed this as a possible ploy used frequently by pedophiles and sexual offenders present within our community to contact young girls”. He has already communicated with the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa and been notified that there is indeed a female student who has received permission to conduct this study. He says his email is intended to “enlighten” me about the commotion caused and he asks me to be more considerate about possible effects my actions might have on the community in case I have similar plans in the future. I am panicking. I do not know what to think anymore. Where is this study taking me? I immediately contact my supervisor and she advises me to confirm the authenticity of the email, saying “it strikes me that the police would have tried to contact us in person if the message is legitimate” (RPJ, 67). I respond to his email. I apologise for causing such a commotion in the community and confirm that I am a female doctoral student working under the supervision of Dr. Robertson. I state that my study and all the associated documents, including the flyer, have received approval from the REB. I iterate that in the flyer there is a sentence stating that “If you are under the age of 18 parental consent is required for participation in the study” and I further inform him that I personally communicate with parents before I let any girls participate in the study.

There are two parts of the Detective’s reply to my response that confound me. Firstly, his persistence in believing that the flyer I had posted hadn’t received the approval of the Ethics Board: “I am sure that the study would receive the approval of the Ethics Board

but I am not sure about the flyer”. And secondly he notifies me that, “actually, one of the people who brought this flyer to my attention is a member of the Faculty of Education of the U[niversity] of O[ttawa]. I have already informed them that the study is legitimate and above board”.

This incident with the Detective Sergeant pushes my supervisor, the Ethics Board, and me to work on further modifications and changes to my research. We decide that the flyer for the study should be printed on University of Ottawa letterhead. I add in my name and contact information, as well as that of my supervisor and the Protocol Officer of the Ethics Board. Additionally, using this recruitment approach means that there is no longer a specific setting the participants can be drawn from. We therefore decide to exclude the group discussion sessions from the study. Removing the group discussion means that communication with the participants and their parents will now be conducted mainly via e-mail. Questionnaires and interview questions can therefore be answered by participants electronically during their spare time. However, as before, I decide I can still contact the participants’ parents by telephone to obtain their approval and not be content with an email response.

Public Catholic School Board⁵

My ethics application to the Research Advisory Committee of the Public School Board is submitted in the middle of May. I make minor revisions and clarifications as requested and then do not receive any feedback from the Board for two months. After unsuccessful attempts to reach them by telephone, I visit their offices where I am welcomed and assured that my study has been approved. My understanding after this meeting is that

principals from both public and Catholic schools will be contacted on my behalf to determine their interest in the study.

In the middle of November I am then informed that “the Ottawa-Carleton District School must prioritize proposals based on their estimated value to the system. The Committee decided, therefore, that you could seek the cooperation of OCCSB school principals only in conducting your research”. The initial letter sent to schools regarding my study results in zero responses. After a second letter is distributed only one school extends an invitation to me to conduct my research at their site. A meeting is scheduled with the prospective participants on November 17, 2004 but is cancelled the day of the meeting. Students Services inform me that the students are not interested in the study anymore, mostly because they are unavailable since they work and as they are financially independent the monetary incentive does not appeal to them.

In those 14 months that I am struggling in vain to recruit participants for my study I realize that getting access to the specific age/gender group is a devastating process. This can be attributed to many factors, the prominent one of which I acknowledge to be the intimate and political nature of my study. I am ending this sub-chapter, which I name my Odyssey, with a quotation from Gannett (1992):

The diary, because of its association with women’s experiences, voices, and perspectives, has been labelled a problem, a Pandora’s box. The metaphor of the journal/diary as Pandora’s box is quite instructive. According to Hellenic mythology, Pandora, a vain and silly girl, is seduced by her curiosity to open a box filled with all things good and evil; in essence, she was a “troublesome, treacherous source of human woe” (Spretnak 1984, p. 18). Using that

metaphor, it becomes easy to see diaries of journals as texts written by troublesome, vain, and silly girls who let all kinds of secrets out. This notion sees the journal as a Pandora's box, which, when opened—or written, read—releases taboo, evil, and toxins along with the good. (p. 193)

Participants of the Study

On the heels of my painful experiences, recounted above, I make a decision that will finally enable me to access and secure my participant sample: I decide to include young adult female university students in my research. My interest in this population starts a few months after my initial attempts to recruit participants. I have been discussing issues of participant recruitment and the difficulties surrounding gaining access to young groups, especially children and teens, with friends and colleagues. Parents and gatekeepers tend to 'protect' participants of a young age, especially when it is this type of research I am doing. My unsuccessful attempts to approach adolescent female journal writers for one whole year in both private and public school settings, as well as through other means, has proven that the possibilities of conducting an inquiry of this nature are limited. Most of my colleagues show a preference for working with adult groups of participants and university campuses offer fertile soil for many studies to grow.

My interest in having university students who are actual journal writers participate in my research increases by pure chance in spring 2004, when a student from the Faculty of Communication contacts me. She has seen the flyer I posted on campus to recruit high school students who are participating in the Enrichment Mini Course program. She expresses her interest in participating in the study since she has been keeping a diary since her early

teen years. I discuss the possibility of changing the age group of my participants with my supervisor and a Consent Form (Appendix I) with the relevant changes is sent for approval to the REB. Once I receive the Board's approval I provide Astrid with the two questionnaires and interview questions. Within two weeks I receive Astrid's responses. By the beginning of June 2004, Astrid has given me about 200 pages of her personal journal entries from when she was 16 to 17 years old. Astrid has no hesitation sharing her journal entries with me and is willing to give me even her recent writings. I ask her to provide me with the journal she kept in adolescence because in my mind I am still thinking that I will do a study exclusively on adolescent journal writers. At this time my study has not changed much from my initial orientation. What has changed, is that I am asking a slightly older age group to reflect on their personal journal writing and share their experiences, feelings, and thoughts that span from their adolescent years to early adulthood.

Spring and summer terms are not very promising times for recruiting university students. And since I am still involved and pre-occupied with various other activities to recruit participants, I postpone my efforts towards recruiting older journal writers until the fall semester. Early September, a year since I started my recruitment attempts, and I feel I have failed in every way. In a meeting with my supervisor the possibility of pursuing older group of participants emerges as a possibility, my last hope. Otherwise, major changes have to be made. I post flyers on various announcement boards across campus in an attempt to recruit female university students who have been engaging in personal journal writing since their teen years. I am amazed at the results. In a period of about two months 64 students express their interest in the inquiry! All of them claim to be passionate journal writers. By

November 24, 2004, I have already collected a complete set of data from 20 participants: questionnaires I and II, interviews, and personal journal entries.

The initial amount of data gathered come up to 3500 photocopied pages of journal entries, interview and questionnaires transcripts. As I progress in the analysis of my data I come to exclude 3 participants for reasons that differentiated them from the rest of the participants. Sonia, a 23 year old student in the department of Engineering, provides me with only her online excerpts of her journal text. Integrating Sonia's journal would change the scope of my inquiry since online journal becomes a public text and my understanding is that there are different dynamics at play in such texts as regards the expression of certain desires and phantasies in comparison to private journal texts. In the same vein, Thea, a third year student in the department of Psychology, states in her questionnaires' responses that she has been keeping a diary for a specific period of her life, till her 16th years of age, and she no longer engages in personal journal writing. On the other hand, the third participant excluded, Vera, has been keeping a diary for almost 25 years, but the fact that Vera is a 40 years old makes it difficult to sustain a status of age homogeneity in the group of my participants. Definitely, Sonia's, Thea's and Vera's contribution in the inquiry is appreciated. Their responses to the questionnaires and interview and their journal texts have been very informative to me as a researcher and can contribute further to research on online journaling, on issues regarding young adolescent girls' development, and life-long journal writing practices. This inquiry, however, comprises of approximately 2700 pages of typed data gathered from the journal entries, questionnaires and interview responses of 17 young adult female university students (please, see Table 2, p. 336).

The participants are 17 young adult female university students who are, and have been, passionate personal journal writers since their teenage years. They study in different fields in an Eastern Canada University and are aged between 19 and 23. This research focuses on female participants who are actual personal journal writers. They are individuals of high potential interested in journal writing. Their very act of keeping a personal journal renders them an interesting group of participants due to personal interest and curiosity. The participants of this inquiry, therefore, constitute a purposive sample, a sample of participants who are more likely to explore themselves in a manner in keeping with the purpose of the research.

Research Strategies and Data Collection Techniques

In this inquiry I collect data from four sources: 1) *questionnaires*, designed to elicit information from the participants regarding their histories of involvement with personal journal forms and their interest in the genre; 2) *in-depth interviews*, designed to elicit information that allows me to map the patterns of “what” young women are thinking about and give evidence of “how” this affects their development; 3) the *participants’ journals*; and, 4) *a researcher’s personal journal*.

Questionnaires

Questionnaire I (Appendix II) has general questions regarding personal journal writing that elicit information on journal writing, such as, when the participants started keeping their personal journal, subjects and issues they have talked about in their personal journals, what journals written by other authors they have read, and their impressions of these journals. Questionnaire II (Appendix III) deals with more specific questions about personal journal writing and self-expression, the participants’ feelings and thoughts about various aspects of

personal journal writing, their engagements with specific journal forms (i.e., film versions), and their interactions with the texts of the journals. Participants are asked to complete the questionnaires in their spare time and return them to me. Data from both questionnaires and interview transcripts have helped me as a researcher to gain a better understanding of my participants' uses of personal journal writing. I use this data to elaborate the part of the thesis that discusses the demographics of my participants in relation to their personal journal writing engagements. Please note in the chapters that follow I have organized the responses of my participants to the questionnaires in such a way as to provide the reader with the following information: name of the participant, questionnaire 1 or 2, number of question and page number of participant's response. For example, the code: (Bernice,Q1,3:1) means that "this is Bernice's response to questionnaire 1, question 3, page 1.

In-depth interviews

As mentioned before and as written in their Consent Form, participants are given the possibility to choose between two options. Participants have the opportunity to complete the interview questions during their spare time, as in the case of the questionnaires, or have a voice recorded interview session with the researcher in order to discuss in-depth personal issues regarding personal journal writing, their feelings, desires and fortifying impulses that drive their "writing about the self" habits. Fifteen of the participants choose to complete the interview questions in writing in their own time. The one-to-one interviews with the other two participants last about 50 minutes. These interviews are based on semi-structured, predetermined questions. I do my best to avoid restrictive, leading, or loaded questions. As mentioned in the previous section, data from Interviews is used in order to elaborate and complete the section of the thesis which discusses participants' demographics in relation to

their personal journal expression. Even though there is a limited use of data from their interviews in the thesis, participants' responses to their interview questions helped me gain a better understanding of my participants and their relationship to personal journal writing.

The interview questions concern the participants' insights, concerns, ideas, and responses to journal writing. Towards the end of the interview, the participants are asked to comment on the whole process of participating in the study. One of the comments articulated by few of my participants is that it "was a little bit time consuming, more so than I would thought it would be because you have think about the questions and you want to answer honestly too" (Odette, IQ, 63:13). In my conversations with the participants during our brief meetings, most of them confess that it takes them more than an hour to complete each one of the questionnaires and the interview. Other than that, the whole experience of reflecting on those questions is viewed as a positive and constructive activity. Irene claims that "this has been quite a learning experience for me" (Irene, IQ, 63:13).

In the last part of the methodology section I devote a few pages on portraying my participants and their engagements in private writing. This data comes from their responses to the interview questions and the two questionnaires. This section provides demographic information on my participants and their attitudes and feelings in relation to personal writing. I regard my participants' personal journal texts and my own researcher's journal to be the primary sources of data and this is the data that I have analysed in my findings-discussion section. The analysis of their responses to the interviews and questionnaires allowed me to create a more accurate portrayal and understanding of my young women's written engagements.

Participants' personal journals

Allport (1942) notes, "The spontaneous, intimate [journal] is the personal document par excellence" (p. 95). The very intimacy that renders personal journals so valuable keeps them out of the hands of third persons. Taking into consideration that journals capture people's moods and most intimate thoughts, I try to establish trustful relationships with the participants before requesting access to their personal journal texts. Participants are selected on their willingness to provide the researcher with access to their personal journal texts. However, in the case that participants express second thoughts about allowing the researcher to study their journals, they are assured that their right to refuse access to their private writings will be respected. The content analysis of my participants' journals focuses on exploring two main questions: a) *what* are the prominent issues discussed in the written texts, b) *how* does writing about specific issues help the participants cope with them.

Most of the participants do not have any reluctance to share their personal journal entries with me. Some of them bring me all of their journal books to copy. Only Carol and Monica ask me not to copy a couple of pages in their journals. More than 3000 pages of data from the personal journal entries of the 17 participants are collected. The journal entries cover a wide range of early teen years till their young adulthood. (Please, see Table 3, page 337). Whereas the interview responses and the questionnaire data comes from young women 19 to 24 years of age, my participants provided me with their journals that they have kept since their very early adolescence. Therefore, because of the broad temporal nature encompassed in the study, I use the terms "young women", adolescents, and female university students co-terminously.

The data are transcribed and specific themes that emerge from the data in relation to research questions are noted. Participants' journal excerpts are presented and used in the form written in their personal journals. The reason I do not intervene in any way with grammatical and syntactical corrections is that I intend to maintain participants' voice and writing style, reflecting age, personality, and other features that represent the timing and the conditions of journal writing production. Participants' responses used in the thesis present the name of the participant that this response comes from their Personal Journal, the age of the participants at the moment of writing, the page number and the paragraph number. For example, the following code response (HeidiPJ17, 18, 47) means that it is a quotation written by Heidi in her Personal Journal when she was 17 years of age, page 18, paragraph number 47.

Researcher's personal journal

Throughout the research I keep my own journal to record personal intersubjective understandings on issues of identity and journal writing. Entries in my journal are written after each session and each engagement with the participants. Reflecting upon events in my journal is designed to assist my meaning making processes in order to portray the essence of my experience and my understanding of the phenomena under investigation. The Researcher's Personal Journal proves to be very instrumental in documenting the process of recruiting the participants, which lasted approximately 14 months. In my journal I document my thoughts and feelings, the progress made, the failures, and the next plans for success.

My Researcher's Personal Journal also includes a folder containing email correspondence with the participants, from the first communication with the first director of School A to the last participant in the inquiry. It also contains a folder of my correspondence

with the Ethics Department and the decisions made regarding the changes and modifications in the methodology of the research. I also note thoughts and reflections, especially after the completion of data collection and during the transcription of the data. I use data from my personal journal in this chapter of the thesis where I explore my long journey of participants' recruitment. In the following chapter, my own writings allow me to reflect on my thoughts and perspectives on the discussion of the findings of the research.

Researcher's Role Management

As in the case of ethnographic research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996; Marshall & Rossman, 1999) that combines participant observation with many of the characteristics of non-participant observation, I try to gain a holistic picture of my participants and of the process of defining self and identity through personal journal writing. My role as a researcher entails varying degrees of participation. My initial role is to inform the students about the subject of the research, the requirements, and their rights to grant or refuse participation at anytime without penalty. I further assure the participants that their identities would be kept anonymous. I attempt to maintain good relations with them by being a patient and thoughtful listener during our interview discussions, and by respecting norms of reciprocity, which entail taking a stance and expressing my own reflections on personal journal writing in order to create an environment of trust and comfort (Thorne, 1983).

Most of my communication with the participants is completed through e-mail. I send participants the Consent Form (Appendix I) and once they agree to participate I send them the two questionnaires to complete in their spare time. Participants are also given a list of interview questions and provided with the opportunity to choose whether they want to provide written responses to the interview questions in their own time or have a face-to-face

audio-taped interview with me. I then meet with the participants so they can submit their personal journal entries and sign the Consent Form. During that meeting, I compose a Thank You card and provide reimbursement of \$30 to each participant. After each meeting I record my notes regarding my engagement with the participants in my Researcher's Personal Journal.

Data Analysis Strategies

In qualitative research, data analysis is a “messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating process” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 150). The qualitative data collected in this inquiry are analyzed by exploring the interview transcripts, questionnaire responses, and other materials accumulated (such as letters attached in their journals, cards, drawings, etc.) in order to understand, make sense of, and interpret the subject under investigation and answer the research questions:

1. How do young females use journal reading and writing in relation to issues of the adolescent self?
2. What affective feelings (such as desire, fear, pleasure, fantasy, empowerment and/or resistance) do young females demonstrate through their personal journal writings, and what are the uses to the self of such expressions of affect?
3. How are gender and identity negotiated through personal journal writing?
4. How can personal journal writing be used as a vehicle to construct a sense of self in relation to social pressures and difficulties during the transition from adolescence to young adulthood?

Due to the multiple sources of data collection, I investigate my research questions through different paths. The interviews provide data to explore the first, second, and fourth

research questions. The participants' personal journals provide data that allow me to answer the second, third, and fourth research questions. Based on Ricoeur's (1991) and Polkinghorne's (1988) claims about the importance of narrative structure and meaning, I analyze their writings to shed some light on questions such as: 1) what specific experiences do participants narrate in their personal journals, 2) what parts of the personal journals are stories, 3) how do these stories talk about the present, past, or future, and 4) how is self-knowledge structured through story form and represented in these stories.

The analysis of the secondary sources of data, questionnaires and researcher's journal, enrich my understanding of the research questions. The questionnaires shed light on the first, second, and fourth research questions. The analysis of my journal entries help me to examine my own mental and emotional responses to the encountered experience and thought processes, such as "insights, questions, speculations, hunches, [and] tentative interpretations" (Piantanida & Garman, 1999, p. 143). My role as a researcher is extremely important in planning, conducting, and making sense of the findings. While studying human behaviour in particular cultural settings, I am aware of my culturally formed consciousness and the need to not project my values on the participants. I reflect constantly on my subjective experiences of the research. Writing about the "self" and revealing personal information serve to distinguish the dynamic relationships between me and the participants, as well as to point out my authority over the implementation of the research approach, the analysis and the interpretation of the data, and the ultimate produced text of the research findings.

Following the above procedures allows me to gain familiarity with the data in intimate ways, and then be able to organize responses in such a way as to identify categories,

themes, and patterns. To those categories of meaning I apply codes. Due to the huge amount of data gathered, which exceeded 3500 pages, I deploy Atlas, a Visual Qualitative Data Analysis and Knowledge Management tool, to help me analyse the data. This software assists me in exploring the phenomena hidden in my data and more specifically, offers me tools to manage, explore, extract, compare, and reassemble meaningful parts and concepts in a systematic and accommodating way. It takes me about four months to complete the analysis of the data. Through the constant evaluation of the data for their usefulness in the process of meaning making, I search for alternative reasoning and explanations in my interpretations.

The presentation and interpretation of the findings of the study are organized in such a way that does not follow the standard way of listing first the findings and then the interpretation of them. Following rather the psychoanalytic and feminist perspective, I engage in a discussion of my findings and in many instances I introduce a topic of discussion, even discuss my arguments and support them with evidence from my data. Andy Alaszewski (2006) in his book *Using Diaries for Social Research: Introducing Qualitative Methods Series*, discusses the analysis of the content of diaries by using units of analysis (coding categories grouped into themes) and describes the presentation of findings “usually as a scientific narrative supported by extracts from texts illustrating categories and themes and some simple numerical data” (p. 107). This is the approach I attempt to follow in discussing the findings of my study as a story of patterns based on the frequency of the subjects explored in the personal journals.

In discussing the findings of this research, I have used extensively my personal journal in Chapter Three, where I explore my long journey of recruiting my participants.

Due to the wealth of the data gathered, I devote my discussion chapters on exploring the personal journal texts of my participants and I return to my own researcher's personal journal for further usage. In fact, I use relevant references to my personal writings from the researcher's journal whenever opportunity arises in order to support and enrich my discussion of the findings.

Demographics: Participants and Personal Journal Writing

There are 17 participants, aged between 19 and 24 years old. The average age of the participants is 21 years. 4 are 19 years old, 6 participants are 21 years old, 3 are 24 years old, 2 are 22 years old, 1 participant is 20, and 1 is 23 years of age (see Table 4, p. 338). The participants are studying in different fields, most ($n = 8$) are studying in Arts and 2 in Social Sciences. There is 1 female student coming from each of the following departments: Communication and Politics, Science, Education, Law, Social Sciences and Psychology, Health Sciences, and Health Sciences and Human Kinetics (see Table 5, p. 338).

Nine of the participants are the oldest siblings in the family, six are the youngest, three are only children, and one is the middle child with two other sisters. Most of the mothers of the participants seem to have higher education and the same follows for their fathers. The majority of the mothers are employed in the teaching field, three work in computer related fields, two in retail, and the rest have occupations in health, business, administration, marketing, and banking. There is one mother who is unemployed, a student, a writer, and a "disillusioned homemaker". As for the participants' fathers, four have managerial positions (some of whom own their own business), two are engineers, and others work in the military, at Bell Canada, in banking, and in the high tech sector. There is also a retired police officer, a fire fighter, and one father who is unemployed (see Table 6, p. 339).

Onset of journal writing

Ten of the participants start writing in a personal journal when they are in elementary school, around 7-9 years of age. Priscilla appears to be one of the more zealous journal writers, since she has “kept a journal pretty much all my life, since I learnt to write and express my feelings on paper that is” (Priscilla,Q1,3:1). Seven participants start expressing thoughts and feelings in a written form in their early teen years (i.e., 10-13 years old). Lorena and Nicole start their personal journal journey when they are about 15 or 16 years of age.

For most, the frequency of their personal journal entries peaks during their teen years. During this period of their life, most of the participants (n = 11) engage in that form of personal expression every day or every couple of days. Bernice explains that “as a teenager I used it frequently (sometimes 2-3 times a day) because I was depressed and felt like I couldn’t tell anyone about my problems” (Bernice,Q1,3:1). Other participants say the frequency of their personal journal writings is dependent on various things, such as whether they “need” to write as Heidi says. Nicole elaborates that “it is mostly dependent on how busy I am and whether or not I have issues that are bothering me” (Nicole,Q1,3:1). Gisella refers to the issue of time, “some years I write and contribute more, some years less... the years when I’m doing interesting stuff and spending more time alone I write maybe once or twice a week...sometimes 3 times in a day, sometimes not for a month or two” (Gisella,Q1,3:1). As participants become busier with their university studies, they spend less time in journal writing: “I used to keep one on a daily basis, but now I only seem to write in it when I am going through major events, changes, or I am stressed and have a lot on my mind” (Rachel,Q1,3:2).

Journal writing and influences

Participants respond to interview questions and write about people who have been very influential to them in terms of making decisions about engaging in personal journal writing. The majority of them respond that they have not been influenced by someone from their close environment but rather writing in their journal came naturally to them. The rest of them talk about people who have been quite influential. For example, 3 of them were influenced by their teachers. Astrid, Carol, and Priscilla had their elementary school teachers encouraging them to use journal writing to express stories, thoughts and feelings. Priscilla mentions except from her cousin, who is an influential actor and screenplay writer, her teacher, as well, who encouraged her greatly to engage in personal expression through writing. Priscilla recalls her words: “You may be short of statue, but you’re large in spirit!” Up to now, I never forgot her positive-ness and never will, because despite that I am not a tall person, I am great at communicating through my writings.” (Priscilla, IQ33:6).

Eva, Kyla and Monica were introduced to journal writing by their mothers. Eva’s mother turns to Oprah’s journal writing techniques to encourage her daughter to use this form of self expression in an organized way, even though Eva consists to “just write whatever she wants” (Eva, IQ33:4). Kyla confesses that “As I child, I kept all my emotions inside and I would become very cold towards others because I was always angry” and that was the main reason that pushed her mother to encourage her to start write “writing my thoughts down and at least that would help to get some of my emotions out of me and onto something concrete.” (Kyla, IQ33:8). Even though Monica’s mother was the first person to introduce her daughter to journal writing by writing in notebooks and on paper, her writings

were never organized or formal personal journals and it was her godmother who was the “most influential female role model in [her] life” (Monica, IQ33:7).

For Jasmine influential people in regards to journal writing have been her grandparents and uncle: “When my grandfather and uncle died, we found all of their journals and I remember being very intrigued by how their entire lives, filled those pages.” And even though she had already started keeping a journal at that time that incident “pushed me to keep writing, because I thought that once I’m gone, someone will find my journals, and gain a better understanding of me, and nothing of my life will be forgotten.” She also adds that her grandmother was an ‘avid letter-writer’, and she is also influenced by her uncle who writes a lot of letters and probably keeps a journal too. Additionally, she states that her “dad and I used to leave notes for each other in the morning, telling what we had done the day before, if he was working nights and I didn’t get to see him. So, this helped my expression in writing.” (Jasmine, InterviewQ33:4).

Interest in personal journals

According to participants’ responses, the personal journals that attract their attention most are their friends’ journals, because they are the same age and “share similar experiences” (Lorena Q1,5:1). Most participants have access to these diaries because they are online journal entries. These entries are said to be devoid of private content, lacking in interest, and are usually a recall of “their day’s events and general reflections” (Astrid,Q1,5:2). The majority of participants claim to have read fictional and literary journals.

The main factor that underlies participants’ interest towards reading other personal journals is the fact that they feel they can relate to other people’s feelings and experiences.

Bernice's identification with a Hollywood actress increases her interest in reading the actress's biography in which the writer gives a detailed account of "her struggles with her teenage children and I found it interesting that many of the problems she had with her children my parents had with me" (Bernice,Q1,6:2). Daniele explains that she likes reading stories of other people's life that relate to her own life "because it made me feel like there is someone out there going through the same things as me or feeling the same things as me" (Daniele,Q1,6:2). Being a teenager and going through several changes and experiences, which in some cases might be traumatic, makes her realize that there are other individuals working through obstacles of great importance. Jasmine confesses that she "liked the diary of the teenage boy because he had a lot of fears, and problems in his life that helped me see everyone struggles" (Jasmine,Q1,6:2).

Identifying with others' life experiences helps inspire participants through the ways of coping with problematic situations. Lorena explains, "I like journals I can relate to, such as the fictional Georgia Nicholson series of a teenage girl growing up, as well as ones I can aspire to, such as those of older women" (Lorena,Q1,6:2). For those participants who find the connection with the writer even stronger, the outcome is even stronger. Priscilla elaborates on her interest in reading other personal journals: "in friend's writings, the suicidal, depressed, and breakups over a guy appeals to me because I am learning indirectly how to deal with certain life events; I love Anne's fictional writings about everything about life since it really inspires me." She also notes that she is inspired by Suzanna Kaysen's writings because she is able to "relate a lot to some of her experiences and it gave me an open view of what it is actually like to be in a psychiatric ward; the depressing and suicidal parts attract me the most because of similar experiences" (Priscilla,Q1,6:3).

Being able to get “inside someone’s most personal and honest world”

(Rachel,Q1,6:2), the participants relish the opportunity to see things from other people’s perspectives. Daniele loves reading about people’s lives that are different from her own. Gisella explains that it is the nature of secrecy that underlies the personal writings that fascinates her the most: “I like the idea of someone expressing themselves utterly truthfully to me amidst the front they put on in real life” (Gisella,Q1,6:2). Kyla embraces the “ordinariness” of certain feelings during times of great crisis: “I have always enjoyed reading about the holocaust in relation to how certain individuals were able to cope and survive during that time frame.” She finds Anne Frank’s diary very interesting because even though she was going through a “nightmare”, she still wrote about her struggles of growing up “and experiences that she was having that had nothing to do with the war. For example, when she started to fall for the male that was living with her and the way she acted was like any teenager” (Kyla,Q1,6:2).

Irene gravitates to personal journal entries of familiar people and those related to them, such as friends and mothers. By reading friends’ journals, participants get to know them better and secure updates of their everyday life events. This helps them maintain contact with friends who have moved and are too busy to get in touch. Irene confesses that she had read her mother’s diary entries, and even though “that was rather traumatizing reading about how unhappy she is” (Irene,Q1,5:2), she is compelled to do so in order to get to understand her mother better since “she moved out about 5 years ago and I don’t see her very often, so we’ve rather grown apart” (Irene,Q1,6:2).

One feature of this genre that stands out for me is the participants’ love for humorous ways through which journal writers address issues in life. For example, Astrid refers to her

friend's diary where she writes that once, while working as a cashier, she is asked by an old man about the timeframe that her baby is due: "My friend replied that she wasn't pregnant, but the man, evidently a little deaf, continued to ask about her baby. My friend concluded that she was rethinking her policy on not beating old people" (Astrid,Q1,6:2). Carol agrees that she likes the humorous way that the travel writer Bill Bryson sees most things in his journals. Felicia adds, that she usually likes to read about experiences that are told "in a humorous way (such as *Bridget Jones' Diary*). An example that comes from my friend's diary [is] ... 'Do not attempt to iron linens alone—they don't like it and neither will you'" (Felicia,Q1,6:2).

The writing style in their personal journals

The majority of the participants describe the writing style they use in their journal as both descriptive and narrative depending on the content of their writings. For most of them, writing in their journals is informal and is not considered as a "pre-meditated" process. Monica uses the metaphor of "speaking to a best friend" to describe her journal writing style and Nicole refers to it "as writing with my flow of thought. Whatever it is that I am thinking, I simply write" (Nicole,Q1,7:2). "When I write in my journal it's pretty much freestyle, sometimes I use point-form or make lists" (Carol,Q1,7:2). Odette argues that there is not a specific style that characterizes her journal writings, which "are a mixture of narrative, poetry, analogies, descriptions and song lyrics" (Odette,Q1,7:2). In the same vein, Priscilla's writing style depends on her mood. "Sometimes it will be rich and descriptive (with fancy, elegant choice of words, diction), other times it will be straight, fact-to-fact (objective) or extremely hopeless and serious especially when dealing with hardships and downfalls in life" (Priscilla,Q1,7:2,3). The only person who polishes her journal writings is Astrid and

explains that often her entries work as “drafts for future fiction writing, so I may spend a long time describing a sunset, or an emotion as an extended metaphor. I write as though someone else is/will be reading it, so they tend to be rather polished” (Astrid,Q1,7:2).

Journal writing and risks

The most prevalent risk that the participants consider regarding personal journal writing is the invasion of their privacy and more specifically having their perceptions and feelings exposed to people belonging in their close environment, family members and even boyfriends. Some of the participants go beyond and explain why privacy violation is viewed as a high risk for keeping a record of personal thoughts and feelings by advocating that their writings might be misunderstood by some people. Gisella fears that someone who reads her journal might get the wrong impression of her self, “Of course I worry that someone might read it and misunderstand. Read only the bad stuff and think im a depressive”. What worries her mostly is being in the position to defend her writings to her boyfriend in case he reads something written at “a very bad time”. She finds it to be “terribly unjust”, to have someone read her journal and “think that having read my journal that they now understood the REAL me, and in doing so completely misunderstand me” (Gisella,Q1,11:4). Kyla fears that having her mother read her journal writings would translate to getting her being upset by their content: “I would find myself trying to defend Mom in her actions so that if she were to ever find it, she could not really get too mad at me” (Kyla,Q1,11:3). Apart from the fear of offending close friends and relatives, journal writers consider embarrassment as another risk of having their journal entries exposed to others. So Nicole talks about “the risk of a friend or boyfriend reading it, which could be embarrassing!” (Nicole,Q1,11:3) and Irene notes that

the “worse that could happen (according to me) is that someone might read it and tease me about it” (Irene,Q1,11:3).

There are a few other risks that participants express in their responses. In relation to the fear of privacy invasion, Astrid fears that being selective about what she writes in her journal entries might “create a sort of biased memory, choosing to ignore certain things and exaggerate others” (Astrid,Q1,11:3). Jasmine talks about the possible negative effects of having journal as the only way to vent thoughts and feelings and fostering a tendency to avoid any social interaction with friends and other people. “The only thing I sometimes wonder is if I open up most in my journal versus opening up to my friends” (Jasmine,Q1,11:3). In the same vein, Priscilla is getting more precise by referring to the dangers suicidal people go through when they limit their personal expression to writing and refrain from any social communication. It is important to note that Priscilla refers to the case of suicide for the third time in her responses in Questionnaire 1 so far (responses to question 4 and question 6 were the other two times she talks about suicide). She claims that since personal journal is a private space, people prone to suicidal thinking are not aware of their “unconscious motives and behaviours” and might use their journal in order to “write all your plans to kill yourself without letting anybody else know.” However, she finds that “Personal Journal Writing normally doesn’t have risks because we are free to express ourselves in any way and no one will ever look upon what we have written” (Priscilla,Q1,11:4).

Feelings related to personal journal writing

One of the most frequently reported feelings while engaging in personal journal writing is the feeling of emotional relief (Please, Table 7, p. 340). Astrid claims that she experiences “an almost cathartic feeling...a certain relief at being able to let out and express

certain things that I can't say out loud to just anyone" (Astrid, Q2, 16:7). Bernice reports that she feels calmer as she is able to express her frustrations. Jasmine states that she often feels "relieved, and re-energized after a good writing session. This is because I have allowed myself to bring up anything and everything that has been bothering me" (Jasmine, Q2, 16:7). Rachel is more descriptive in her response: "I feel like a weight is being lifted at times. It feels good to do something about the stress, even if you are really only writing to yourself. (Rachel, Q2, 16:9).

Most of the participants report that there is a range of feelings they go through while writing in their private pages. Mainly it is the feeling of happiness they experience while reflecting and releasing emotional stress. However, feelings such as anger, tension, sadness, and depression trigger them to turn to their personal journal for comfort and support. For example, Nicole responds that most of the times she writes she is under a state of "turmoil rather than when I am happy. So generally, the feelings expressed are those of confusion, sorrow, anger, or misery." And as she describes the reasons behind her personal writing, Nicole states that "I write only when I am sad because I feel the need to vent my emotions somewhere whereas when I am happy I just enjoy it and do not feel the need to document that time" (Nicole, Q2, 16: 7). In the same vein, Kyla responds that there is an entire range of emotions she experiences while writing in her journal: "I can be happy and then go right into sadness. I can start out in confusion and by the end have an answer to how I was feeling." However, most of the times she feels "tension when I start, or stress because I am carrying so much emotion inside me but then after I finish writing, I feel a sense of calmness; a sense of relief." It is after writing in her journal that she feels that the "load has finally been lifted." And she adds that at times "I even write letters to people I am upset with

just to get it out on paper. I usually never mail those letters but it helps me to see what is really going on inside me.” (Kyla, Q2, 16:9).

Through their interview questions participants are asked to reflect again on the feelings they experience while engaging in personal journal writing and as shown on Table 8 (p. 340), their responses indicate that emotional relief is the main reason that drives them to express themselves in writing (see also Table 9, p. 341-342). Such a response coincides with their reflection on another interview question, where my participants are asked to discuss the reasons, the “why” of personal journaling. As illustrated in Table 7 and more specifically in Table 8 (p. 340), my participants engage in personal journal writing in order to release emotions and frustrations. Their journal allows them to reflect on events, to remember, and to examine life. There are 6 responses articulated by my participants that refer to the enjoyment and likeness of writing in the journal. Through journal writing they manage to re-affirm themselves, understand who they are and what they want, and to even feel good about themselves. They find writing to be creative and cathartic, and very important, especially in the case that it enables them to document secrets and relate to it as a “friend”.

In the next Chapter Four of my thesis, I discuss my findings and interpretations of how my participants’ personal writings served as a significant ‘potential space’ through which to elaborate a sense of self in relation to the primary forces in their lives; mother, father and generally parents, and their own powerful capacities as young creators to attribute symbolic order in times of upheaval and crisis.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings and Discussion: Visiting the 'private agora'

Personal Journal as Potential Space

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the main themes of discussion in the personal journal writings of the young women participating in the study. Based on the analysis of their written contexts, the prominent points of return in the journals are their relationships with others, specifically their mother, and father. This chapter tries to understand my participants' relational formations with the most influential people in their close environment as they are manifested in moments of personal journal writing. It should be made clear though that there is no ready-made interpretive device that would enable us to approach these young women's writings. My intention is not to psychoanalyze my participants or their writings. Nor am I a trained psychoanalyst to offer clinical interpretations. Instead, in this Chapter Four and the next Chapter Five, concepts derived mainly from psychoanalytic and feminist inquiry assist me to direct my thinking and understanding of the uses of personal journals, how personal writings serve the young women, and how they may serve us as readers of them. A more extensive reference to Cultural Studies theory will take place in the last discussion Chapter Six.

Relationship with Mother

Even though the mother-daughter relationship ranks third in the frequency category (approximately 120 units of frequencies), I will start with the exploration of my participants' relationship with their mother for several reasons. In all of the literature dealing with female adolescent struggles with identity, the mother figures prominently. The mother is the first

person the child relates to. In the earliest diary entries my participants refer primarily to their interactions with their mother. For most, the mother has been the principal figure of parenting. She is the one who takes responsibility for the child's care, spends time with her, advises her, and sustains great emotional ties with her. The frequency the girls' mention of mother brings to mind Chodorow's claim (1978) that the mother is one of the most important figures in the lives of girls. Fairbairn (1940) claims similarly that the child's relationship with her mother is "the foundation upon which all his future relationships with love objects is based" (p. 24). Arguably, a girl's relationship with her mother lays the basis to understanding her relationships with others: the father, friends, boyfriends, mates, and partners.

Feminist critics (Elliot, 1991) turn their attention to mothering while examining issues of gender and the formation of female psyche. According to Chodorow (1978), the "reproduction of mothering occurs through social structurally induced psychological processes. It is neither a product of biology nor of intentional role-training" (p. 7). Arguably, women, through their role as mothers, produce daughters who are capable of mothering and may desire to become mothers. The mother's primary role as parent and the father's remoteness and asymmetrical involvement in the parenting of his children may provide the ground for mothering reproduction across generations.

In the following pages I present and discuss the participants' symbolizations of their relationships with their mothers, when they were teenagers and later on young women. I examine and discuss the main themes emerging through the analysis of their personal journal writings, providing evidence of the girls' use of their journals to name and try to work through issues of wanting to be cared for, yet feeling overpowered by mother love.

Eros⁶ – Longing for mother's love

Mom is always caring, understanding, love, the same as dad but more open with feelings (HeidiPJ17, 18, 47)⁷

Certain personal journal writings of my participants draw an image of the mother who possesses a special role in the growing up process of their daughters. Mothers who have caring and loving qualities and express those feelings towards them appear to occupy an important emotional space in the lives of their daughters. These young women absorb their mother's affection and are open to their advice and suggestions. I could identify a longing towards their mothers' emotional support through their writing. Eva's bad mood is characterized by her mother as an "anti" behaviour and attributed to her premenstrual symptoms. When Eva is feeling lousy her mother suggests that she try to copy things down in order to discipline her attention. She spends time and supports Eva's university life by offering her conversational skills to facilitate certain situations. In the same vein, Odette's mother is one of three people she looks up to. Odette shares everything with her mother, especially her feelings about her love life. In cases of desperation, she turns to her mother to receive constructive feedback that alleviates anguish. Gisella, too, expresses her longing for her mother's affection and care:

I often overreact, ...I'm scared cause I know I'm close to the edge.

Sometimes when I'm cold my eyes burn and I wish more than anything my mum would call, tell me to pop on home for a glass of wine, ...near the starts of the warm breezy balm air night. (GisellaPJ23, 15-54, 29)

Priscilla comes from a family with a father who abandoned them through divorce and a self-sacrificing mother who immigrated to Canada: "My mom raised us 3 by herself really,

in a country as a single parent. She is an inspiration for me. I look up to her a lot!"

(PriscillaPJ16, 67:5, 3). What is interesting in Priscilla's case is the mythologized image of her mother, an entirely devoted mother to the needs of her children. However, as is evident in her other journal excerpts, Priscilla's mother does not always fit that idealized portrait of the perfect mother. Even though Priscilla sometimes holds on to a fantasy of maternal perfection, other journal entries demonstrate a tendency to blame her mother for misfortunes in her own life. As Berman (1993) helps to explain this contradiction: "The belief that one has a wholly benevolent mother requires one to be a perfect child, thus increasing the burden of guilt when one inevitably falls short of perfection." (p. 51).

Apotheosis – "I look like my mother"

Freaky, yet interesting that I am so much like my mother in terms of her high-spirited, inspirational and life-loving personality. (PriscillaPJ21, 71-171, 845)

No matter how distinct a relationship between mother and daughter grows to be, no matter how different from her mother the daughter grows to be, it is argued that at the heart of her being the daughter appears to be breeding under the shadow of her mother's gaze. Feminist theorists argue that at all the great female psychobiological turning points, such as "menarche, parturition, menopause—there lingers an awareness of her having passed by here before us; we contemplate her ways, her manner, her voice.... At times of intense stress, it is her face we see in the mirror" (Aragno, 1998, p. 86). In the same vein, the anagnorisis of the participants' resemblance to their mothers is usually embraced in positive way. Eva, whose relationship with her mother has been illustrated as one built on the foundation of love and trust, appears to embrace her likeness with her mother in a positive way: "Seems to me that I

don't particularly look like anyone —some say like my dad, or my cousins, but the other day I saw a bit of my mum in myself. I was happy to have seen that" (EvaPJ18, 10-29, 68).

Nicole's reflection on the profound influence of her mother in her socialization process intrigues a thought-provoking realization. Nicole goes beyond recognizing the fact that she is "her mother's daughter". Through her journal entries she explores issues pertaining to the fact that intergenerational expectations are among other factors that define her. Nicole is a culturally and socially constructed entity and she unfolds her thinking in the following journal entries:

Thought #1

What is this? "I'm my mother's daughter" right?

My favourite thought of the night: tidying the bathroom and thinking "I'm my mother's daughter, keeping my place tidy..." just like how my mom would never let a cup ring disturb her wood furniture. But then I think - surely she must have gotten it from her mother... picturing grandma never having an untidy or clean house... So basically we are like this generational family thing... (AAH thought process fuck up!) (NicolePJ19, 62-91, 390-392)

Later on, as Nicole explores the ways in which her mother's attitudes in life seem to be like her grandmother's. Nicole comes to the realization that "when I turn my head shot of mother (who looks identical) I see my mom in ME" (NicolePJ19, 62-93, 399). She recognizes the ways in which her mother keeps her house tidy and replays memories that she has of her grandmother's home. Nicole sees that there are certain ties applied by her mother to her relationship with her that are rooted in her grandmother's ties to her mother. These ties do not only inform the relationship between mother-daughter but also form the symbolic

representation of mother. It strikes me that through her journal writing Nicole comes to describe a process of internalization that Siegler (1998) talks about as she explores mother-daughter relationships and the creation of daughter's character: "identification is a special case of the broader concept of internalization—the process by which aspects of the outer world and our interactions with it are taken in by us, and represented within the internal structures of mind" (pp. 31-32). Siegler argues that such a process of identification and internalization facilitates learning that is performed in both conscious and unconscious levels. It is through this process that the daughter takes over the functions which were originally performed and fulfilled by her mother.

Cathexis – Overpowering mother figure

I don't know how I will ever survive when he leaves for Statford next year...
 you know, I could have gone with him. I had a scholarship all ready for me.
 But Mum said that she'd miss me too much. So I couldn't go... (Deep
 breath). (IrenePJ15, 23-17, 53)

A mother's relationship with her daughter can be caring but overprotective. The mother tends to treat her daughter the same way when she is a child, a teenager, a university student. The daughter tends to trust her mother's judgement and allows herself to be influenced by her mother's will in certain circumstances, especially when the daughter deals with decisions regarding future plans. Priscilla, in her 20's, attends "French classes twice a week because of my mom" (PriscillaPJ20, 70-355, 1370). Priscilla, who is suffering from depression since she was 17, has ended her university studies and returned home upon failure to attend courses and pass the exams. Her mother is the main person influencing her

decision to come home and attempt to return to school at a nearby university. In the meantime, her mother pressures her to take French courses. Priscilla does not write anything else on this matter; however she makes it clear that it is not her own decision to study French. Additionally, Priscilla blames her mother's domineering presence for her own inability to have a steady boyfriend.

Sat. August 2nd, 2003, I feel so unhappy today. My mother is controlling my world too much. I plan to take a 2-week vacation away from her and from this enormous city. I was suppose to see [Owen] today but all plans failed because of my mother not going off this morning. I hope [Owen] is not mad and he will still get together with me on Monday - ? or any other day. I'll check my mail on Monday. I still have lots of stuff to do because going off to Guelph.

8:35 PM. I noticed on my aqua blue thongs blood. One reason for my moodiness is my period! Anyways, my mom is in order now. (PriscillaPJ20, 70:214, 852-857)

Priscilla expresses feelings of being smothered by the presence of her mother. The asphyxiated home life she experiences causes her nervousness, mild headaches, and a diminished sense of physical well-being. She longs to be free, wishing she had wings and could fly: "Then I could leave Ottawa for a while during my mom's asleep (these early hours) and go crazy for a while, just to let every inch of me out and get tired out". However, she acknowledges that her reality does not allow her such fantastic views and it is through her writing in the journal that she manages to come to terms with her situation: "But here I am, in quick and struggling intensively to free my mind from all this idealistic view; I need to be more realistic of my life, my present situation so I can have the future I always

dreamed" (PriscillaPJ21, 71:3, 2).

Felicia's relationship with her mother is beyond the boundaries of overprotection. As with Priscilla, Felicia's mother mediates Felicia's decisions about her career: "So both [Nina] and I are going to Ottawa. I'm glad it ended this way, I wanted to go to Junior-Intermediate but my mom wouldn't hear of it, so I signed up for Intermediate-Junior" (FeliciaPJ24, 13-64, 78). Furthermore, in her journal writings, Felicia expresses her friend's thoughts and her own frustration over her mother's constant involvement in her life. During her study breaks, Felicia returns home and is concerned about her mother's attachment to her. Felicia becomes her mother's exclusive companion and this attachment makes Felicia's time spent at home unbearable. Felicia feels smothered, but to some degree she enjoys her mother's affection. However, she ends up complaining in her journal writings about her mother's behaviour. Feelings of self-revulsion and hate overwhelm her.

this break is almost over. ... - it's so weird, in first year I came home on December 10, and I was so excited, then sad to go back. It has been so unbearable. I guess it's the feeling of being smothered by my mom. In [Nina's] words she needs a good friend. Why does she assume I would or could be that person? Man. I like to talk, but with her nothing is long enough. (FeliciaPJ24, 13-1, 3-4)

Later on Felicia states:

my mom is getting more difficult to listen to every week! I mean, I feel bad because I know she loves me and wants to spend time with me, but I wish she had a friend to talk to. (FeliciaPJ24, 13-17, 26)

Kyla also uses her journal as a space in which to configure mother love/hate, and her

journal depicts, as well, an overpowering mother figure. Kyla's mother does not only interfere in her daughter's decisions about the field of study she will follow at university; her main concern seems to be where her daughter will be and whether she will be within a reachable distance. Kyla internalizes her mother's accusations of wanting to be alone and away from her and hates herself for all the pain that she causes her mother. She feels pressured and avoids socializing with friends as an indication of her conflicting need for her mother's approval. All the pressure and control exerted by her mother urge her to thoughts of ultimate devastation.

Mom has been stressed out lately and I seem to be making it worse. I told her I thought I would like to go to University outside of Ontario but that was a wrong move! Now she thinks I just want to go away from her which is untrue. I have just always wanted to do something like that, adventure! Mom went to college [...]. I don't know anymore. She also thinks I love my friends more than her, which is also untrue. Lately I haven't talked to any friends much either. I seem to be upset with them. I am like old news for them. It is really hard on me and I wish all this would stop. Lately I have been upset with everyone and I don't like it. Somedays I wish I wasn't here or that God would take me, but I know I shouldn't think that way. I don't want to make mom upset. I also don't tell her a lot of stuff just because I don't want her to get stressed out or sicker or mad at me (KylaPJ18, 51-1, 2-3)

The theme of Kyla's mother's control over her daughter's life continues in the journal. Her mother's demands for exclusivity in their relationship appear to limit Kyla's freedom to identify with others. As I am reading through Kyla's entries, Richards' (1998)

reflection on the dangers of mothering shakes my thinking. When a mother uses her power over her child, "she is caught in a world where she feels powerless" (p. 59). Kyla uses her diary to express her struggles for power and independence. At 19 years old, Kyla falls in love but her mother will not allow her to date:

Now it is summer. [Tom] wants to do something but I am too afraid to ask...
mom told me the other night that she still doesn't want me to date. She keeps
extending it. I feel like a bad person liking him and really don't know what to
think. However I wish we could do something together. There is this pain
inside me that I just can't explain. I will try to talk to Mom but I don't know
(KylaPJ19, 52-26, 20)

Two years later Kyla reflects in her journal writings about her mother's controlling attitude towards her dating life.

It was a rule in my house that we were not allowed to date until we had
finished high school. I worked so hard to not disobey my Mom but I was
ignorant to the fact that "liking" someone comes naturally whether we want it
or not. I just tried so hard to ignore my feelings (KylaPJ21, 54-22, 38)

What is striking in this journal is not only the preoccupation with the mother-daughter relationship but also the element of symbiotic fusion. Berman (1985), who does an interesting interpretative analysis of the autobiographical writings of Sylvia Plath, talks about how parts of Sylvia's life are fused with ones of her mother's life: "The mother functions to mirror her daughter's life, to receive and give back Sylvia's reflection, to subordinate herself to and participate vicariously in Sylvia's brilliant career" (p. 121). At least 8 of my participants seem to feel smothered and controlled by their mothers. My

participants seem to not write about being controlled by their fathers to the extent they feel they are overprotected by their mothers. Their private writings reveal that there is a special connection between mother-daughter that at times reaches the boundaries of symbiotic relationship. This symbiotic relationship is characterized by a kind of psychic osmosis that can be experienced as a comforting symbiosis between mother and daughter, but it can at other times be characterized by an undesirable invasion of privacy.

What is even more remarkable in journal representations of a controlling and smothering mother is a simultaneous depiction of the failure of the daughter to enter the necessary separation and individuation stage. Aragno (1998) theorizes separation as a slow, difficult, and hurtful process through which the mother must learn to tolerate an increasing feeling of loss, betrayal, and antagonism. Adrienne Rich (1986) recognizes the 'flow of energy' between two biologically alike bodies as one of the most resonant and significant ones, since "one of which has lain in amniotic bliss inside the other, one of which has labored to give birth to the other. The materials are here for the deepest mutuality and the most painful estrangement" (pp. 225-226). Antithetical to the development of individuation are cases where mother and daughter engage in a cycle of envy and rejection. Donovan (1998) uses the Greek myth of *Demeter and Persephone* to illustrate the strength of the mother-daughter bond and the difficulties in the separation process. According to Donovan, the mother envies the daughter's possibilities of freedom and feels rejected by her daughter's attempts to engage with others. In their journal entries, we have access to visceral testimonies of daughters attempting to engage in a dialogic process of dealing with feelings of guilt and shame about their relationships with their mothers. I could sense that this shame sometimes emerges from their attempts to exceed their mother, a feeling that devastates

them. Often their personal entries reveal an outrageous reaction to, and denial of, the mother's power and a consequent resentment to the mother's authority and control.

Antithesis – Mother's views on gender issues

I want to see [Peter] again soon. I don't want him to meet my mom tho. Oh gosh no! imagine. "Hey mum, this is the guy I have casual sex with once in a while". She'll freak out. (PriscillaPJ20, 70:78, 277)

Many of the participants express frustration towards their mothers' disapproval of their relationships with men. The mothers tend to be overprotective and in some cases nonconformist with regards to their daughters' sexual encounters. They do not endorse any sexual interaction. They condemn and criticize any behaviour that would encourage their daughters' explorations as sexual entities. In the journals, sexuality enunciates through figures of shame and rebellion. "I can't talk to my mom, I have nothing to say. I feel like a whore for the way I'm heating guys" (NicolePJ19, 62:47, 221). As with Nicole's and Priscilla's mothers, sexuality is a battleground for Heidi's mother: "Begged me to go visit, and mom ranged on me again for not watching my reputation of who I hang around. Apparently I don't get where she is coming from, yet she won't let me grow up and be..." (HeidiPJ18, 18:32, 103).

In journal entries from their early teenage years, the girls deal with their mothers' conflicting views of a different nature but still pertaining to uses of the body. Boyfriends and sexual concerns are not yet on the plate of their enthrallment. Jasmine writes about her frustration with her mother's censure of her clothing choices. She feels old enough to make her clothing preferences attainable in the present time and claims that she does not have to

wait for the prom, or any longer, in order to be in charge of what she wears. As well, she feels she has reached the maturity level that will grant her the right to shave her legs.

Guess what? I am the only grade 8 that doesn't shave her legs. It really hurts to know this. But there's no use crying about it because my mom won't let me shave my legs. I shave my pits. Just not my legs. I mean I am thirteen (13) it's not like I'm 8 or something. I mean come on mom! Please...

(JasminePJ13, 31:16, 57)

In her late adolescence, Astrid copes with her mother's disapproval of her desire to control her body. Astrid, an athlete, plays contact sports by simply avoiding discussing it with her. Her mother, a first generation immigrant from China, does not consider wrestling and hockey are gender-appropriate sports for girls. Contrary to her mother's beliefs, Astrid is a highly competitive wrestler and a very energetic athlete in other fields. Her views contradict her mother's wishes and she avoids sharing her physical pain with her. She writes: "my shoulder kills and i have to hide it from my mom since she doesn't approve of girls doing contact sports. so i have to sneak out on friday to emergency and get it x-rayed while she's at work" (AstridPJ17, 1:97, 232). Astrid is familiar with her mother's disapproval of her gender inappropriate interactions and in her journal entries demonstrates her understanding. In her journal, she justifies her mother's stereotypical gender views by referring to her traditional values based on factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, age, and gender.

Dysphoria – Disappointed, hurt, angry and issues of hate

The Worst (Best) Way To Hurt Your Child

- 3/31/2002

She just told me that giving birth to me was her biggest mistake...I don't know what to do. I can't stop crying. I just want to run away... (DanielePJ19, 8:21, 79:84)

Contrary to Daniele who does not elaborate on this hurtful journal entry, most of the participants tend to expand on their feelings when referring to heartbreaking experiences and visit those incidents again and again. Carol views her mother's intimate relationship with the father of her best friend as a betrayal to her children. What seems to bother her most is her mother's disregard towards her relationship with her: "But my mom just completely disappointed our friendship...she ignored the fact that she could be ruining one of the few things I hold sacred..." (CarolPJ18, 3:51, 83). Later, Carol's disappointment towards her mother reaches a zenith when she finds out that her mother has been reading her emails and has been aware of all the secrets she might have kept hidden.

But the big news is that I found out Mom has been reading my emails for several years (she knew my password). Needless to say - I flipped out. I was SO fucking angry... words just cannot describe how pissed I was. I keep thinking of ALL the things I thought were a secret that she knew all along: weed, speed, dexadrine, my diet obsession, ... being a vegan, and so many other secrets and lies I lied to her. I called her up and cursed her off - I was so angry. I told her I never wanted to see her again and that I hated her. It was true. (CarolPJ18, 3:60, 93)

A few weeks later, being away from family, close friends, and her mother, Carol feels miserably alone. She longs to talk to her mother but she uses her personal journal to remind herself to be strong and avoid any contact with her: "I feel very alone and depressed

right now. *sigh*.. I have an aching in my heart to call or email my mom but I'm resisting it for now. Just be brave, Carol... and always get back on your horse" (CarolPJ19, 4:59, 89-103).

A child of divorced parents, Kyla deals with learning issues, feelings of inferiority, and of "being a failure". Kyla's early writings indicate that she is struggling with proper expression, orthography, and grammar articulation. It might be for this reason that her mother is so much involved in her life and studies:

Dear Diary I am in the [...] youth chorus in the Christmas I did a solo for the youth chorus. Song was called Sleep little Prince. I did good every one thought I did. My Mom says I do bad in speking if feel like she is saying I am dome and so dose grant. So now she in my room asking me for writing so she can show Mr. [Chris]. They probley think im stupid. Well I am in grade 6 well good bye for now. (Kyla12, 45:1, 2)

Kyla is the oldest child in her family. She feels pressured by her mother's expectations, but at the same time feelings of jealousy engulf her because her mother treats her unfairly in comparison to her younger siblings:

Mom said that [Julia] has a rehearsal with her music instructure guy on the day we would be leaving! ... Everything lately has been all about [Julia] and her violins. It just seems that is all they talk about and care about. I am leaving in 6 months and while, I thought that Mom would come with me even though there was a rehearsal. I shouldn't be so selfish but it makes me upset. Lately I have been getting trouble b/c I have a bad attitude. Sometimes I really don't know what it wrong with me but no matter how hard I try, I just

can't win. I want so much for Mom and I to have a good relationship to do things together as 'friends' but no matter what I do, nothing works. I just feel worth nothing b/c everyone is so involved....I can't compete! I would like to lose weight but can't seem to. I just want to make mom proud of me but I don't feel I'm doing enough. I also want to be treated as if I were a little older. (KylaPJ19, 52:2, 7)

Even at 21, Kyla struggles with feelings of inferiority and failure with regards to her mother's expectations. She addresses the following journal entry directly to her mother and wonders 'how she could make her mother love her' since when she looks into her mother's eyes she sees 'nothing she wants to see in the world'. She continues: "Did I turn to be the person you wanted me to be or do you look straight through me? Do I make you proud to be my parent or do you wish I had of been different?" (KylaPJ21, 54:1, 2). Throughout her adolescence Kyla struggles with issues of being valuable and lovable to her mother. It seems as though Kyla isn't engaged in conversations with her mother about these hurtful feelings. It is through her journal that she interacts and dialogues with her mother. It is in her written entries that she finds a place that allows her to give voice to her thoughts and emotions, to represent her pain, anger, and fears.

As in Kyla's case, Priscilla feels that her mother shows favouritism towards her oldest sister and she constantly feels she has failed to attain the expectations of her mother. She is devastated when her mother discloses issues pertaining to her own medical situation to her sister. One day she writes in her journal that she overheard her mother again telling her sister about her 'meds and her psych': "That's why I am bearing a pool of tears. I am not believ[ing] in anything - I am always "wrong" - it's not fair. My mother will never change -

over 50 well too old for that” (PriscillaPJ20, 70:384, 1485). A few paragraphs later she explains what prevented her from following her dreams and goals in life: “I didn’t go on with my passion about being a vet not all because of my serene difficulty, but because my sister always said she’ll never be that. And now my sister is happy and because she was right”. As she continues in her journal, Priscilla pours out her despair towards incidents that have marked her relationship with her mother:

My mom says I don’t deserve anything, but does she not know that’s how I feel everyday deep down inside and she just feeds it in. if I mention the slightest indication, she’ll let it go by with an excuse. An excuse for everything. You don’t have anything. When I mention my Bipolar mood to try to explain she simply cubes it off and blocks my words, my thoughts what I have to say. (PriscillaPJ20, 70:397, 1570)

In the following entries, Priscilla uses journal writings as a way to express her frustration and despair with her mother’s unfairness. At the same time, she finds arguments to back up her situation or, in some cases, she explores ways to avoid such hurtful experiences. She mentions instances where her mother criticizes her dressing code and discourages her “creative side and ability to write and dress creatively”. She comes to the conclusion: “I don’t want to turn up like my mother. I want my kids to tell me everything and I will always be listening attentively with encouragement”. (PriscillaPJ20, 70:397, 1572). In her journal entries Priscilla visits such incidents that reveal instances of her not being appreciated by her mother, and of being unfairly criticized by both her mother and sister. The fact that her mother talks with her sister ‘behind her back’ is experienced as a painful sign of maternal betrayal:

My psych told me I write really good, my mother never told me anything like that. To others yes, me nothing. I'm undervalued. I am intelligent, bright, open-minded, spontaneous, and energetic.

When I mention manic times to my mom, she says you don't have that and ignores me. When I tell her I read so much on it, instead of encouraging me, she says "you only took 1 course" you don't know about that. She says I won't do it again and she does. She tells my sister everything about me. That I take meds, go to my psych. When I reveal to my mom some stuff (private) that my psych told me, she tells my sister.

But bet the two they whisper behind my back. It makes feel degraded. Like I don't know anything. Like I'm so empty headed I wouldn't understand a vowel when spoken. It's not fair. 12:21 AM. (PriscillaPJ20, 70:397, 1571-1576)

Nicole addresses similar anger towards her mother by writing a poem. In its verses she expresses her pain and sadness resulting from being felt as a failure to her mother's expectations:

I'm never a good daughter
I can slip by unnoticed
And let the others take the blame
But when, do ONE THING wrong
You make me feel so so shamed
You are so irrational you never stop to think
You're like a television, my one way reliever

That doesn't let me talk I can only listen. (AndreaPJ18, 61:24, 82-86 & 97-99)

As indicated by the journal entries presented in this section, most of the participants use their journals writings to convey their thoughts and feelings about their mothers. In some cases they use first and second person, the way they would speak to their mothers. The diary pages give them the opportunity to voice their disappointment, pain, and anger. The personal journal offers them the space to make sense of their realities, a chance to vent their feelings and articulate their innermost sacred feelings.

Erinnys – Guilt for mother's well being

Dearest, this is really strange but I kind of want WW3 to happen. This morning I went to see the RM and I cried; my eyes filled with tears - you know I've had suicide thoughts. I don't know if my life will get better, I'm so worried. I feel like a failure to my mother. (PriscillaPJ20, 70:105, 371)

Priscilla feels like a failure to her mother. She feels guilty for all the things she has done and the troubles she has caused her mother. She feels guilty that she has proved unable to be the 'daughter her mother deserved'. She hates herself and she wants to hurt herself.

Priscilla is not the only one to reveal these feelings. Kyla's constant fights with her mother leave her with feelings of guilt, which worsen with her mother's health problems. Her mother suffers through knee surgery and as soon as she recovers "she has something wrong with her stomach. Mom and I still get into fights. Some time I feel that everything I do is bad. [...] I feel that I should run away because maby mom will get better but I wont"

(KylaPJ13, 46:5, 4-5). Kyla appears to blame herself for her mother being sick. She feels she

is the source of the bad things happening to her mother and she wants desperately to liberate her mother from her presence. She is young, though, to take action in that direction (just 13 years old). In her journal entries of later years she experiences analogous situations:

Dear Friend,

I hate myself for what I am. Why am I this way? I am always making mom mad. If I could just do one thing right. I am such a disappointment to mom.

Sometimes I just want to be somewhere else so I don't ruin things. I just need somewhere to think, I wish I could find the reason why I feel like this.

Nobody Understands. (KylaPJ17, 50:18, 13-14)

The following entry is written out of despair. Kyla, now, more than any other time, feels that she is responsible for the worse things happening to her family and especially her mother. She feels that she is 'killing her mother'. Feelings of matricide drain any positive thinking and she is willing once again to leave her family, to disappear, in order to end any further dreadful happenings in her close environment.

Dear Diary,

I am having a big problem dealing with everything. My head feels like it is ready to explode. I messed everything up again big time. My mom is really sick with her ulcers ... Everything is wrong. I am a big part of this because I am making everybody run around. ... My mom is so mad at me that I don't know how to fix it. ... I am trying hard to be a good daughter. Trying to make mom proud of me but everything I do turns out to be the opposite. I never meant any of this to happen. I think I am killing mom but I don't know how to make it right. I had a dream last night that mom was bleeding everywhere

and se couldn't get it to stop. Then she let out this awful crie and I woke up shaking. I swore the scream was real. Maybe it is a sign to me. I am so confused about everything. I seem to be having a problem. I really don't know who to talk to. If I talk to mom she will have more stress or worry about and I don't want to inflict more stress on her. ... Everyone tells me that I am just like my Dad, I am selfish, I only think of myself, and I am lying. What am I suppose to think. I just wish that I could go away and not come back but I guess I can't run away from my problems. I just wish I knew how to handle this. I hate being the oldest and going through all this first, it's awful. I don't know what to expect. I feel like I am ready to explode. Please, if anyone could help me I would more than appreciate it. I hate growing up. Everyone's against me. Please help!! (KylaPJ17, 50:20, 18-19)

In some instances, guilt seems to be connected to suicidal thinking, even though it is not always explicitly stated:

Prom was good. I was allowed to go. Mom changed her mind so many times. It was pretty bad. Dad bought me a dress, which was nice. I never suspected it/ the day before prom my mom got mad at me for going and she started to yell and passed out. I felt so awful. It felt like it was all my fault and I really didn't know what to do! It was the worst feeling ever. She went to the hospital for about 3 hours. Once again bad thoughts come into my mind, what was I to do? (KylaPJ19, 52:23, 19)

As evident from the above entries, the participants depict their relationships with their mothers in their journals in ways that betray a wide range of feelings. Some participants

focus on their feelings of deep love for their mothers, and long for their affection and love. Some use the journal to complain about their overpowering and controlling attitudes. Others cover their journal entries with notes of disappointment, feeling that they have failed to meet their mothers' expectations. What is important is that the young women represent and engage with their feelings as they interact with their mothers in their journal pages. The journal functions as a private agora for the communication of real feelings that the girls feel unable to discuss within the public agora of family life. In the following section, I explore the participants' relationships with their fathers as illustrated in their journal pages.

Relationship with Father

The analysis of the personal journal entries reveals that when the participants refer to their father (51 units of references), they reflect on two issues: first, their communication with their father, and second, their disappointment with their father's relationship with their mother. Thus, in contrast to participants' direct references to mother figure—their relationship with her and feelings towards her—when it comes to a father figure, most journals inscriptions were either specific instances of father-daughter interaction or references to their father in relation to their mother. Noteworthy as well are frequent references to the parental unit, to parental divorce and marital malfunction.

Dialogue – Communication with father

My Dad is the best father and best person I know. I love him death and hope everything good and happy goes his way. He deserves so much. I hope he

realizes how grateful I am and how much I love him. God bless.

(MonicaPJ21, 57:49, 214)

Monica's relationship with her father is one of the strongest depicted among the participants. Monica's relationship with her parents is an exception. She comes from a family of divorced parents and her father is the 'nurturer, mother and father' for her and her three younger siblings. Monica's relationship with her mother is built on her disappointment that she left them, hurt her father, and left her with all the household responsibilities and baggage of bringing up her younger siblings. Monica refers cynically to her mother's attempts to approach her and she is disturbed by her unfair behavior. Her father is a 'hero'. She adores him and feels sorry for the situation he is living through, the divorce and the responsibilities of bringing up his children. When she goes to university, she feels guilty for leaving her siblings behind, but her father continues to encourage her in every step: "My dad just phoned me. He knew tomorrow is the big day and wanted to wish me luck, gave me the best advice and told me he knew I could do it" (MonicaPJ21, 57:52, 218). Monica confides that "it was so hard to keep my cool" that she ended up crying "which I don't do much of lately, and I prayed, which I don't do enough. I am so scared for tomorrow. But I know I can do it and I will!" (MonicaPJ21, 57:52, 218).

Such idealized expressions of love and worship towards their father are often found in the journal entries of the participants when they were younger. At 13, Jasmine tries to think about and creates a 'neat' gift for her father's birthday: "For my dad's birthday I gave him a cool card. I made with balloons attached. It was neat. Also I gave him a tie I made out of cardboard. It was one of a sweet" (JasminePJ13, 31:35, 95). A year later she writes about visiting a local shopping mall with her father "to pick up a few things": "I got a McFlurry for

\$2.13. It was great. I love them. Then I went rollerblading with my dad. He's my idol. He's so smart and nice. He's great with people" (JasminePJ14, 32:37, 78). Heidi testifies, "I might not talk to my dad much, but he's always been there if I needed him, my health no exception. Support groups, ..., research, and the first thing he asks on letters" (HeidiPJ17, 17:28, 47). She reflects on happy childhood memories when her father built a house in the backyard for her and her sister. Her descriptions of the plans and works are quite detailed and her enthusiasm pours out from her writings:

I can remember when I was younger how dad used to make masks out of paper-bags. I remember when we helped him put the clothesline on, we each wrote out initials at the base. When we had huge plans for me and [Erica] to have our own house in the backyard. Gradpa came and helped dad lay the foundation. I was a little gymnast on the floor beams. We had wanted to paint it, put up curtains and window-boxes full of flowers. The one time we wanted to sleep out there, we were able to talk dad into it. Once we were out there we realized it was full of earwigs. We loved that house, but I hated having to bring our toys in and out all the time. We used to have two picnic tables, the one was small and blue, perfect for me and [Erica]. I never understood why we had to get rid of them.

The sandbox was a lot of fun too. We would make food or sometimes I would try to get flowers to grow on it. I always thought that a garden was cool to have. (HeidiPJ17, 17:9, 15-17)

Bernice maintains a good relationship with both her parents. Her love of her father is depicted clearly in the following passage that illustrates how her worry about her father's

well-being has been emotionally disturbing for her. Her father is in the military. Upon his departure to another country for a couple of weeks Bernice gets uneasy and agonized to the degree that she gets 'mad' at him. She notes that even though she acknowledges that his duty is to 'see' his men and make sure everything goes smoothly, she is still "so stressed about it because even though I know everything is going to be fine, I still can't help but get really stressed about the whole thing" (BernicePJ22, 2:14, 34). Bernice is impressed by her mother's calmness towards the whole situation and, as her boyfriend 'cannot understand how it feels', she feels like she "will be stressing for everyone". Bernice cares about her father's well being, but also enjoys putting him in uncomfortable situations, perhaps as a way of trying to keep him responsive and close to her. She humorously writes about the reaction of her father to the e-mail she sent to both her parents: "Dad's the only one that has e-mailed me back and you could totally tell that discussing whether or not I'm ovulating was not high on his priority list. His response was pretty amusing, to say the least" (BernicePJ22, 2:94, 173).

Meiosis – "He hurt me"

Plus, dad might move in with Mrs. [Kim]! I am a failure! (IrenePJ14, 22:56, 154)

At 14, Irene feels she has 'failed as a daughter' if her father moves in with another woman. Irene feels she loses her world if she loses her father to another woman. Feelings of being a failure are very hurtful for young adolescent girls. Hurtful relationships with fathers that emanate from dysfunctional relationships between parents are evident in most of the participants' personal journal entries and will be explored in more detail in a following section discussing entries related to divorce. What emerges as important when it comes to

issues of pain and disappointment in father-daughter relationships is that they are reported in connection to issues of the father's infidelity or separation from the mother.

Priscilla speculates that her father had affairs with other women while married to her mother. Even as she promises to herself that she will never write about it, she states that she has a 'twin' sister stemming from her father's affairs. As she reveals, she does not share this secret with anyone because it is a hurtful experience and she fears that she has no one to trust with such a secret:

I promised myself I will not write anything to you about spook even if its on my mind now. Noone knows. Noone understands, about the foreign creatures and V my twin sister... noone knows... but my father had an affair with "this" women (even though he was married to my mother)... they had sex, the women left.. my dad never saw her again until u.k.w. she had a baby named [Violet] who's 17, now. I never share this 'cause it hurts.. and 'cause noone will understand. (PriscillaPJ17, 68:14, 11)

Kyla, in her early twenties, makes a revealing reflection. A journal entry about her father brings her to the realization that certain conflicts in her relationship with him have been gearing her behavior towards others and certain aspects of her life. She comes to an awareness of her own self through a hurtful incident with her father, during which Kyla is reprimanded for her university fees and expenses that have put her father in debt. This is a defining moment in terms of her relationship with her father:

I also saw my Dad in a different light. I saw that his life, the major part of it was and is ruled by money. When dad saw me, I wondered if he actually saw me for who I was without the dollar sign. After we returned from air trip he

showed me his VISA bill in a complaining manner and made me believe that

I was responsible for his “money problems”. What money problems?

(KylaPJ21, 54:14, 24)

Kyla's feelings are crushed. She writes that what she feels is the worst a child can feel: “like her dad does not want her”. She writes in her journal that at that point she reaches the lowest points “on life feelings”, she felt “unwanted” and “like a burden”: “It hurts right down to my soul. After that he continued with “money” talk and I soon began to realize that there was a part of Dad that most likely did not want me” (KylaPJ21, 54:14, 25). Feelings of guilt dominate her thinking and she lacks motivation to continue her studies:

I wanted to run, I wanted to scream, but most of all I wanted to cry. I was confused and really did not know what to think. I started to feel guilty and really believed I was putting my father into debt and I did not want to be held responsible for that. I told myself “Kyla, you worked so hard to make your Dad happy he had a daughter and now look what you are doing!” Was this to be the way my life always went - putting people in the poor house. I thought about dropping out of school. (KylaPJ21, 54:14, 26)

Her following entries led her to recognize her inability to openly express her feelings towards other people and where this comes from. She realizes that she has “become quiet towards Dad ... that Dad did not know how to show me or anyone that he loved them—he was a rock and that was also my problem” (KylaPJ21, 54:14, 27). And as she can now justify her mother's claim, “Kyla you are just like your Dad”, she comes to understand certain behavior patterns in herself towards others. She confesses that she realizes that part of the reason she is unable to show her emotions to others comes from her fear of “hurting

people like my father had done". She builds a wall "with all kinds of layers to be sure no one could bring it down and the funny thing is, the person who made me build it was the person who made me start to bring it down" (KylaPJ21, 54:14, 28). Kyla ends her entry with the following realization regarding her relationship with her father: she did not want to be like her father and she regrets hurting her father and especially her mother: "I was so closed up, so afraid to love that I ended up hurting the thing I was avoiding, I saw that not loving was more hurtful than loving" (KylaPJ21, 54:14, 29).

In the diary entries of early teen years, my participants refer primarily to their interactions with their mother. For most, the mother is the principal figure of parenting. Their personal entries reflect that there is an asymmetrical involvement of the parents in the raising of the daughters. I do not know if we could characterize the portrayal of the family structure as presented in the writings of my participants as a traditional one. There is a significant number of participants (7 out of 17) who write in their journals about divorce, as a situation they have experienced, and about familial crises. These young women come from households where the father figure is usually absent due to divorce or fathers being remote from their daughters. Even though there are a few girls (only a couple) who are more connected to their fathers than their mothers, their mothers are strong independent women who work and some raise their children by themselves. I can not argue that this is the post modern reality. I could hypothesize that children who come from families that are going through some type of crisis might be more prone into engaging in journal writing.

Relationship with Parents

In psychoanalysis, the term 'inner world' refers to our personal relations that are related exclusively to the self (Riviere, 2004). Our inner world is based on our own urges and desires towards other persons and our own reactions to those persons who are the objects of our desires. As discussed in chapter Two of this thesis, object relations theorists, such as Melanie Klein (1964), Hanna Segal (1991) and Joan Riviere (2004), argue that the origins of the inner world of the self are situated at birth and follow a path of progress from that time onward, as in the case of the external world. Bodily needs, such as sucking, characterize our initial relation to both worlds, along with emotional elements such as love and hate coming from the main instincts of desire and aggression. Our initial relation to external objects, such as a breast, which is followed by the satisfying emotion of pleasure, establishes the groundwork for the phantasy-process of internalization that characterizes our mental functioning. Therefore, in its primitive form the inner world of our instinctual objects "is thus first peopled with our mother and father or the parts of them internalized at this time.... Those two persons remain as the prototypes of all our later developed reactions with other persons" (Riviere, 2004, p. 66). In the following sections I continue to discuss the young women's symbolic relationships with their parents (58 units of frequencies) as these emerge through their personal journal writings.

Apocalypse – Grateful to parents

In their late adolescence, the participants recognize the efforts made by their parents to provide them with all the amenities and opportunities in life. They appreciate everything their parents do and express gratitude to them. Astrid compares her gratefulness to her

parents to the one humans should have towards God. She declares that as “no one can size up God’s infinite greatness, no one [can] thank or praise him enough,... no child can fully repay their parents every thing he or she was given”. Even though she finds herself unable to succeed in certain aspects of life, the fact that she is willing to act upon things in order to attain her ultimate goals, works as an excuse for her failures: “what matters to God and parents is that the person tried, put in their best, and failed, like a miserable mortal, but trying. no one person will purge the world of injustice and evil” (GoriaPJ17, 1:162, 402). Her philosophical consideration concludes: “we are sands in the ocean that is the universe. we can’t change or affect a damn thing. but i can try” (GoriaPJ17, 1:162, 402). Heidi also writes about her appreciation: “I love my parents. Without them my life wouldn’t have been possible. I believe that with different parents, friends, siblings etc. none of us would be the same person we are today. They all help give us character and personality” (HeidiPJ17, 17:8, 14).

Jasmine feels guilty about not expressing her gratefulness to her parents and decides to be more open when it comes to conveying her feelings of appreciation towards them: “I feel bad right now when: my parents give me soo much money and provide me and spoil me with things and then I pay for soo much stuff and don’t even feel gratitude” (JasminePJ19, 36:40, 285-286). Jasmine uses her journal pages to declare what she can’t say in person – how thankful she is to them: “I want them to know how thankful I am for them. I want people to know how great I think they are....how much I appreciate them” (JasminePJ19, 36:40, 287-289).

Enantiosis – Fighting with parents

Earlier in this thesis the analogy was made between young adolescent females' journal writings and Pandora's Box. In Astrid's case, opening her own sacred 'box' is not comprehended, not even by her parents. In her decision to participate in a poetry contest, Astrid unearthed a poem she had written during the phase of her parents' fighting and her early stages of depression. Her parents' reaction to the poem leaves her devastated by feelings of guilt for inflicting pain on them:

i am a horrible person, however. see, i've spent the last few weeks pouring through my piles and piles of poetry trying to draw out the best four to send to the latest poetry contest. i finally got up the nerve to re-read "boxing day pizza". i wrote that over three years ago, back when my parents were fighting so much i was barely aware of my own black cloud. it's really really bitter and depressing, but unfortunately probably the best thing i've ever written. too bad it's so personal. anyway, i badly wanted to have a good chance at this contest so i planned to send boxing day pizza in. but, on a hunch, i got my mom to read it first to see if she didn't mind me sending something so personal for publication.

boy, was that whole idea a mistake. my mom just suddenly burst into tears and started sobbing. i've seen her cry tons of times, but not so, well, suddenly. she cried for a long time while my dad hugged her and read my poem for himself, while i sat in the chair feeling like the biggest, most selfish asshole in the world. way to bring up bad memories that were settled a long time ago, astrid.

needless to say, i'm not sending it in.

i'm put into a bit of a fix, in that way though. i mean, the best things i write are the most personal stuff. but then there's the whole korean family code of honor, let no outsiders know of your problems. bah, why was i made a writer? (AstridPJ17, 1:252, 661-664)

Daniele finds herself in a cyclone of yelling and shouting from her parents. She expresses her inability to bear her parents' behaviour towards her. She writes she cannot escape one day without getting yelled at by her parents and it seems as though they "have taken up a new hobby; yelling at me. I guess the new philosophy around my household now is "If something goes wrong, blame it on Daniele" I can NEVER do anything to make them happy" (DanielePJ16, 5:60, 185). When Daniele receives the news that she is accepted by a university to continue her studies, her parents do not respond to this news in the best way. Daniele later writes a letter to her parents expressing her feelings towards them and the ways in which they make her feel useless and hollow. Even though Daniele starts her letter by addressing it to her parents she ends up pouring her thoughts and feelings from another time into her personal journal writings:

Dear Mom and Dad, Thanks for the Lack of Support - 3/30/2002

The other day, I received an early offer of admission into my first choice university- [K]. I can barely express the joy that I felt at this-probably one of my greatest accomplishments. I mean, it's not like just anyone can get into university, and even fewer people get an early acceptance. Those who I told said that I had all of the bragging rights in the world, and for the first time, I actually felt like I did.

I had work that day, and my parents weren't home yet when I received the package in the mail. So, I hid it so that I could tell them the good news in person. I was so excited, my parents would be so proud of me.

I was wrong.

(I broke the news to my mom with a huge smile, and all she could say was, "Oh, it's just Y." Then she loaded on the questions on why I hadn't heard from anywhere else. My dad, who had overheard me from another room called out "That's too far away." My mom continued to drag me down by complaining about how expensive it was going to be.

No congratulations, no leaps of joy, not even a slight smile. I was crushed.

(DanielePJ19, 8:20, 59-63)

Daniele describes a personal agora of ecstasy and agony. She feels unrecognized in her potential by her parents. She goes into her room and cries. She finds that they cannot accept the fact that she has grown up and they cannot control her anymore. Questions such as "why was I never good enough?" and "why couldn't they just be happy for me?" appear in her journal pages after her parents tell her that she "was better as a child". She identifies the source of her parents' dissatisfaction with her as coming from their lack of control over her life. She also hints that intergenerational values pertaining to her ancestral status as a Korean-Canadian are at play. She is not a "lost little girl" anymore wanting to follow them around all the times "Well excuse me for growing a mind of my own. If you want something to control, get a dog. Is it so bad that I finally want to do what makes me happy and not them" (DanielePJ19, 8:20, 64-65). At the end of this entry, Daniele comes to the realization that her inability to stand up for her thoughts and rights is the main reason she

now feels devastated by her parents. Her struggle for voice and autonomy through the journal merits attention:

I guess it's my fault for being so weak against them, for letting them take me down whenever they wanted. Now when I try to get through to them, they get mad that I've changed. I've learned that not always doing what they want or sacrificing my happiness for theirs doesn't make me a bad person.

All I've really sought after was approval of my parents. Everything I have or haven't done was so that they would be happy with me. But nothing is ever enough. I'm tired of trying and getting hurt every time they don't care.

I've heard that parents are supposed to keep you grounded. I've never gotten a chance to get high in the first place. Thanks to my parents. Without their lack of support, I'd never be dragged to the ground. (DanielePJ19, 8:20, 74-76)

Eva feels similarly isolated by her parents. She has no one to talk to, even though "they

have each other" (EvaPJ17, 9:26, 53). A couple of years later she identifies the things that influence her behavior and cause her to act "like a cool, collected, poised ice-queen towards my parents". She writes that the authority figures in her life, such as parents and teachers, as well as "pretty much the rest of the world", tend to find things out by induction; that is, they tend to "find facts, then make a hypothesis, while I am into deduction - which is the opposite. So to everyone else it is absolutely horrible that I make up my mind about what I want before all else. Too bad, so sad" (EvaPJ20, 11:62, 376-377). Now, at the age of 20, Eva states in her journal that she is old enough to stand up for herself: "Do you know how much I

went through that crap when I was younger? Too often. If you add it all up, I must have gone around thinking: 'I hate my parents'. for years" (EvaPJ20, 11:62, 377).

Nicole gets very angry when she expresses her disappointment towards her parents in her journal entries. She is protective of her two siblings and articulates her aggressiveness by criticizing her parents' demeaning ways towards them. She blames her parents for the way she has been brought up: "I tell you what I think that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree and I don't care what you say - I am the way I am because of you" (NicolePJ18, 61:28, 101). Nicole feels her parents lack the ability to acknowledge the good in their children and fail repeatedly in supporting their daughters' attempts to succeed. Nicole recognizes that as children they have flaws, but also states that it is her parents that made her "who she is". She wonders angrily whether they were "full of attitude" in their own teenage years: "Weren't you self absorbed? Fuck I'm only 18, you can't expect me to be perfect, you certainly aren't. the way you talk to me makes me feel like I'm going to be alone forever" (NicolePJ18, 61:28, 104).

The following entries express the participants' anguish towards their parents' controlling behavior over their own life. Jasmine uses her journal to vent her anger about her parents' "unfair" decision to restrict her from going to a concert. Issues of peer pressure are at play as well. The fact that her parents do not perceive her as mature enough to 'take the train' makes Jasmine feel "like a loser, cause a couple of my friends get to go! That sux and it's not fair!" (JasminePJ16, 34:38, 71). Her lack of freedom to act upon her desires and needs due to parental restrictions also devastates Odette. Having been brought up as the oldest child by traditionally strict parents she describes in her journal how living under their rules and expectations has left her feeling "compressed" and asphyxiated. But also note how

the journal provides a private agora through which the respondent can represent a life that includes hope:

i'm twenty years old. i still live at home. i still feel restrained by my parents when it comes to a lot of things. i think that's what's been bugging me lately. i want to do my own thing. but i can't expand because i'm being compressed and i can't mention it to them because they don't see it that way. but that's how it is. i have to tip toe around so much about little things that shouldn't matter but to them, it's a big deal. i hate being the eldest. sometimes, i hate being the girl. ...please, let me live. ...i just want to live with the knowledge that i can go out and do things and not have anyone look down on me or make me feel guilty for making my own decisions. (OdettePJ19, 64:182, 934)

Agony – Divorce

About four or five years ago, the crisis in my family was that my parents planned to separate. That tore me apart. (DanielePJ17, 6:45, 114)

Seven of the 17 personal journals analyzed in this research have entries about divorce. The writers of these journals, either as young adolescents or young adults, find themselves implicated in their parents' fights, afflicted by heavy feelings of worthlessness, guilt, anger, and sorrow. The participants, who are part of a family experiencing the struggles of separation and loss appear in their writings as either clinically depressed, to suffer mood swings, or to be unsuccessful in interpersonal relationships. The crises that arise in conflicted marriages color the private agora of journal writing, revealing how marriage breakdown hurts the participants in one of the most decisive periods of their lives.

Astrid often writes in her personal journal about depression, which she presents metaphorically as "the black cloud". She reflects on the onset of her condition, which dates back to early childhood when her father was suffering from depression. Astrid does not want her parents to carry the burden of her own depression. However, she tends to blame them whenever things bring back 'old injustices':

I can't shake off this black cloud. it looms...it holds on like a monkey on my back. it bothers me so, to know the power of the pills can only go so far. i know that i have issues i need to work out, but i don't know how to go about fixing them. i cried again tonight, quite pathetically, because i was overwhelmed. whenever these things happen old injustices fly back. i almost always end up blaming my parents somehow. i say, i was suffering those months too when my dad was driven mad with depression, only the whole family's attention was on dad and no one could pay attention to me. i say that all of the horrible things that they put me through left scars in me. which are all true, but the black cloud was there when i was twelve, before my parents began fighting. (AstridPJ17, 1:270, 795)

Kyla also devotes many pages of her journal to her feelings about her parents' divorce, and her father leaving her mother and betraying his love to his daughter. At 14, Kyla has been through the dramatic separation of her parents, internalized her mother's insecurities, and ended up feeling guilty, lacking self-confidence, and doubting herself. She feels lost. She has no one to turn to, except for her diary:

Some days I feel lost. I always do things wrong. Nobody understands me. I try to do something good but it always turns out bad. I always get into

trouble, I don't understand why but some times I feel it has something to do with my younger childhood. When I was young all I remember is mom and dad fighting and I remember the day my dad left. Then after that my mom always took things out on me and we never got along very good. I understand her because she was mad and she needed someone to take it out on so she did to me. In a way I feel happy because I know that I was there for her when she was mad. But now I'm always mad. Some days I don't know what to do, I just feel like I could burst. I have no one to talk to. Mom always says that I can talk to her, but when I get the courage to something always tells me not to. I don't know what to do half the time. I feel if I do something it will turn out wrong. So I just keep everything to myself and try not to get into trouble. Thank you for listening to me. (KylaPJ14, 47:17, 18)

At 19, Kyla turns against her father and against all males for what they did to her mother. Self-loathing and hate overwhelm her writings. In her journal she states her father's absence feels like a painful experience. She writes that she can "understand how her mother feels" and she is still very "angry inside". She writes that she "hates herself for it" but is unable to understand and articulate what she is upset about; perhaps it is because she "always upsets everyone": "I am upset at all men for what they did to mom. I can still remember the day Dad left and the big fight they had before, I just don't know" (KylaPJ19, 52:11, 13). Kyla then realizes that she has "to do something before I do something". There is a tangible expression of anxiety and fear of loss of control in Kyla's words. We speculate that she fears what she might do. And she wonders as she continues: "I pray all the time but nothing works. What do I do now?? (KylaPJ19, 52:11, 13). Kyla's constant fights with her

mother leave her confused and hopeless. She hates herself even more when her mother identifies the resemblance she bears to her father. In this private agora of pain, her journal seems like her only friend:

Dear diary, I am so confused I don't know what to do anymore. Mom is mad at me... Everything I do anymore is wrong. I just can't understand what is wrong with me. I have been having all of these thoughts that if I ran away, everyone would be much better off without me here. I just make everyone life's miserable. But when mom always compares me to be like [John] and Dad, well where do you go from there.... I have death thoughts in my mind and it scares me. ...If mom takes away everything, I will have nothing to look forward to so I am already to the point when I want to give up. School is becoming less important... When you feel like everyone is against you..., I know that I am nothing!... I just wish someone would listen to me. I don't know who to turn to. I am afraid to tell mom anything b/c I fear that she will only get so upset at me, tell me that I don't love her...I can't win...

(KylaPJ19, 52:11, 12-13)

In her journal, Kyla confesses her relationship with her mother influences her relationship with males. This reflection is of great interest and should be taken into consideration when interpreting her journal entries on that subject. In the questionnaire, Kyla argues that one topic she avoids writing about in her journal entries is males:

The only topic that I really avoided in my journals was the opposite sex... My Mom always gave us the impression that males were 'bad'... After my parents were divorced, Mom made a promise to herself that we would never

have to go through what she went through. She became pregnant with me when she was young and had to give up schooling... We had to stay focused and males were a way to distract us. From this, I developed a very negative image of the male population.... If I did like a guy, I thought if I wrote about it and Mom found it, she would be very disappointed in me.... So I stayed away from that topic. Today, I wish that I had of wrote about what I was feeling because even now I have a hard time forming relations with males because I still feel a sense of negativity towards them. (Kyla, Q2, 14:38,39)

Odette also echoes that her parents' marriage is full of conflict that has repercussions on her family. She uses her journal to re-play "what if" scenarios. She assumes that had her parents separated it would have saved them from the worst of the sufferings they went through. Odette finally ends up realizing that this situation has been influencing the relationships she chooses to have:

rubber meets the road and the bad turns to ugly in this: my mom is sick... and my family, which is almost messed up to begin with, is slowly crumbling. there is no stability... i'm used to it... the thought that scares me the most, is that things will be the same for me when i get older. that i will make the same mistakes (because i see it happening in the "relationships" that i choose already). that i will end up with a husband who doesn't care. who says he will do things and never pulls through with his promises. who abhors his children and then expects them to obey and respect him. sometimes, if i'm honest with myself, i almost wish my parents would just divorce but then, i change my mind. stay together for the kids... it's a cruel joke. and the intensity of the

emotions i'm experiencing is enough to make me ill. it's hard. i can cope. i know i can. and i will survive. as long as i'm alive, i will face tomorrow with the hope of a brighter day. (OdettePJ19, 64:184, 938)

Although Odette has a very close relationship with her mother, whom she adores and shares her intimate secrets with, she has not been able to build strong attachments to her father. Her angry feelings towards him are unconsciously released through a 'strange disconcerting' dream in which "I stabbed my father in the shoulder with a plastic fork ... a dream in which he had angered me. It was just a dream but still. It was really weird and didn't feel natural. Not cool. Enough about that" (OdettePJ20, 65:116, 647). A few entries later Odette reveals that her family is "kind of drifting apart" and attributes this to her getting older and mature. She confesses that she "can barely live with her dad". She avoids any conversation with her father since whenever it occurs they end up arguing. Yet she finds that she is not hurt by this because she feels as though "my heart is callused to his verbal attacks. I can do no right by him. I sometimes wish I could just up and leave. I guess that's a wimpy way of looking at things but whatever" (OdettePJ20, 65:172, 842).

Priscilla, an avid journal writer, similarly dedicates a fair number of journal entries to her parents' divorce. She is so genuine in her writing, and so honest, that she seems to pour her every thought onto the blank pages of her journals with no concern as to how to make it seem nice and appropriate, no intention to make her look good and gracious. She is one of the most frank personal journal writers I have ever encountered. Growing up without a father has been confusing for Priscilla and has resulted in a lack of self confidence and self esteem, as revealed through her relationships with the other sex:

His smile, his "girl" nature mmm... I don't know why I'm like this. I don't know if it has to do with my father - something deeply hidden in my subconscious - I miss someone like [Peter] (I need a patriarchal figure) to help me feel safe and secured. My dad never provided that. I don't like when [Peter] says you can't be a Vet, and that I care too much; fuck. Freud if your theories are true I must be one screwed up girl; I'm 19 and with so many psychotic problems. (PriscillaPJ19, 69:134, 530)

Priscilla uses her journal to configure a private agora in which her whole life is characterized by her struggle to find her missing father figure through sexual relationships with males. She attempts to use Freudian theory to analyze herself and her longings as she constantly searches for the 'father figure'. She considers her sexual encounters derive from her unfulfilled needs relating to not having a father. Her journal entries demonstrate her inner need to make sense of her sexual desires and her disappointments and distress when she breaks up with a loved one in relation to her missing father. Interestingly, as Priscilla engages in such self-analysis she alters the person she addresses her thoughts to. She starts her exploration in the first person (I), she then transfers to second singular (you), then to second plural (we), and then back to first person again.

So basically what I have come to realize, in conclusion, is that I desperately crave and long that 'father figure' and find it and get it sexually from guys - again the Freud concept of sexual contact with the opposite sex lead you to that state that you never had (mother or father), in this case my father. But something has to change, if not the sexual part then add more to it. Search for what you want in that figure ie. father, what you really deserve and want and

subconsciously is not only sex - yes it's part of it but it doesn't complete it - if it did, we (i) wouldn't be as confuse every time I have sex and later I break up with the guys (how? Did that happen? But I don't understand why?).

(PriscillaPJ20, 70:151,)

In her search for a father figure, Priscilla comes upon the priest of her church whom she falls in love with. All that she looks for in her idealized absent father she finds in the priest of her church. He is gentle and kind and inspires her trust and love. She even "wants his babies" in order to have "a part of him", to have a part of her father:

Dearest, many emotions are running through my mind. Yesterday I went to church (noon) and I felt this strange closeness sensation with Father [Michael]. The way he looks at me, smiles at me; his humor, his gracefulness, his genuine nature, he's my ideal type of man; ...I love him. I told him how he makes my family complete, being the "father" figure for me; he took my head close to his and the way he kept touching my arm; then his hand grabbed /squeeze my arm lightly, and I felt a strange rush of blood flow thru my veins, he left his hand there for a while too. I kissed his neck, my mistake since he was so tall! ...He calls my mother by her first name.... What a waste! How can God be this selfish and take every part of him. ...If I could have his baby, I can have a part of him at least. Oh! Ok, well I plan to buy him a really nice gift... He's won my heart, I want to win his. Love is strong no matter what.

(PriscillaPJ20, 70:303, 1175-1177)

Reading through the participants' personal journal entries on parental divorce and incidents of parental fighting and conflict, I am startled by the number of participants who

write about such experiences and by the frequency with which they write about them. It seems that my participants utilize journal writing to articulate conflicting feelings such as hurt, sadness, anger, guilt, failure, loneliness, and despair. This pattern of preoccupation supports Berman's research (1994) that shows that divorce is one of the most stressful events for children during their growing up years. Due to the fact that there is usually a distance between at least one of the parents, usually the father, children are unable to comprehend the complexity of the situation and as such internalize the absence of this parental figure and complicate it with feelings of guilt and worthlessness. Berman argues that "children are often more overwhelmed by their parents' divorce than by a parents' death—and more confused" (p. 42). In the case of death, the separation of parents is final. However, in the case of parental separation and divorce, children cling to the fantasy that one day their parents will live together again and their absent parent will return to their lives. "It seems to me that what my participants manage through their private writings to make an absence present. Writing in their journals assists them to cancel an absence" (RPJ, p. 86).

It seems important to reiterate that, except for the case of Monica who grew up attached to her father and intentionally avoids any interaction with her absent mother, most of the participants use their journals to express closer attachments to their mothers than to their fathers. Due to the intensity of this attachment to the mother, the participants go through a phase of experiencing feelings ranging from passionate love and protectiveness to loss of autonomy and lack of independence. Such interactions with their mothers leave daughters often confused, angry, and with a guilty conscience, a situation they feel ashamed to save themselves from. In line with the viewpoint of Berman (1994) and others (Chodorow, 2002; Rich, 1979), it seems that daughters tend to consider themselves as a

continuous form of their mother. The participants' personal journal entries demonstrate that fathers are blamed for any conflicts in the relationship with their spouse. As hardships unfold after divorce or parental fighting, some of my participants identify with maternal victimization. I am reminded of Berman's similar finding: "It is striking to see how, in describing a subject as complex and problematic as divorce, the students exonerated their mothers from any responsibility for the breakup of the marriage" (Berman, p. 84).

Writing about past disappointments, and especially writing about painful issues pertaining to relationships with parents, is not an easy task. The journal entries about family disappointments reveal important truths about the writers. It could be viewed that the participants in this study use their personal journal writings not only as an opportunity for self-discovery, but also as a way to vent their emotions, as a cathartic release. For some of them, catharsis is attained by repeatedly visiting hurtful memories and verbalizing thoughts and symbolizing emotions through words and writing. Contrary to my initial obscure assumption regarding journal writing, that journal writers engage in writings about events and emotions and move on to the next subject, I was startled to read about certain subjects that re-surface and spiral again and again. Some journal writers tend to visit incidents of hurt and anger even after a prolonged period of time. Such circular patterns of preoccupation tend to challenge notions of adolescent "development" as linear or progressive. In my understanding, for these cases, time is not a panacea for healing. Through their journal texts, participants engage in a repetitive, persistent process of dealing with hurtful emotions by revisiting past events and feelings and reflecting on them again and again. It is the dynamic of repetition that seems to perform a psychic function that allows them to acquire a desired

portion of self-catharsis. Winnicott's (1958) concept of potential space illuminates the process I am attempting to describe.

I use Winnicott's (1958) concept of potential space to refer to the psychological uses of journal writing where my young women explore their engagements with primary others and their relationships with the external world. In this era of illusion the participants negate their thoughts and feelings towards mother and father. Their personal journal is the space in which the self relates with the environment. Personal journal writing seems to enable the interaction with primary others within this inner world, an interaction that allows for self discovery and understanding.

As presented in Chapter Two of the thesis, diaries and personal journals may be viewed as potential space, a term introduced by the British psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott (1958). According to him, potential space is defined as the space that exists between inner psychic reality and outer external reality, between subjectivity and objectivity, between self and world (Davis & Wallbridge, 1990). Having the form of a teddy bear, a blanket, or a soft toy, it symbolizes the child's relationship to the breast and assists the child attain the realization of "not-me" possession. Through it the child remains symbolically connected to mother and becomes a defense against depression, loss, and anxiety. Representations of experience in the personal journal pages function in such a way as to assist those writers in their transition from their inner –journal – world to the external reality. The very act of symbolization is an effort to move beyond illusion.

In the same vein, diary writers turn to the space of the private pages of their journal to express their deepest feelings, to secure thoughts and insights with the knowledge that they will not be criticized or betrayed by it. Berman (1994) reflects on the findings of his

study in which he introduced diary writing to his English classroom. Many of his students talk about how they become inseparably attached to their diaries, especially in times of crisis. They use diary writing as a method to derive comfort and security from their presence in such a way that the diary evokes the magical intimacy, uniqueness, and safety that is provided by the 'special blanket' to the child: "diary writing not only reduces anxiety and loneliness but also maintains identity and connection between self and other" (Berman, 1994, p. 234).

Arguably, through their ability to work through the potential space of growing up young women remain symbolically connected to mother and mobilize defenses against depression, loss, and anxiety. They use their personal writings in order to claim their voices and express difficult feelings of anger, hate and pain towards their parents. Writing allows them to represent and symbolize painful thoughts and frustrations through times of familial crisis. Such symbolizations often are persistent and appear in repetitive frequency, only to allow the journal writers to revisit and rework painful realities and to own their life. I will return to the issue of repetition and its psychological use in the following chapters of the thesis.

In this chapter I tried to understand my participants' uses of personal journal as a private agora to explore their relationships with their parents. In the following chapter 5, I will present how the personal journal performs as a 'transitional object' as my participants use journal writing in their quest to understand self through their interaction with friends and boyfriends.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings and Discussion: 'A fragile wreck on a storm of emotions'

Personal Journal as the Transitional Phenomena

Relationship with Friends

In this section I intend to present a discussion on the categories that emerge from the participants' journal entries regarding their relationships with friends. There are approximately 170 entries in the participants' journals that refer to friends and the participants' relationship with them. These entries are analyzed and organized into further categories that are structured and presented in three main thematic units. In the first thematic unit issues of identification are explored. The second comprises the concept of loss and, the third, issues of hostility and aggression.

In this chapter I elaborate my findings and discussion on my participants' relationships with their friends (320 units of frequencies) and boyfriends (550 units of frequencies). I find that my participants draw on their personal writings to discuss relationships with friends and boyfriends in their attempt to make sense of their own identity and psyche formation. The analysis of their relationships reveals desires, phantasies, and painful realities of hate, disappointment, jealousy, frustrations and failures. As I transcribe their journals I write in my own journal: "I am overwhelmed by the emotions my participants go through re-living their friendships in their journal writings. "The heart is a fragile thing; romanticism and sweetness gives it (the) a red glow. However now my heart is blue and cracked. It will take lots of time for it to heal." (Priscilla70, 21, 70-21.), writes Priscilla and Anathema's lyrics from my favourite song come to my mind: "a fragile wreck on a storm of emotions" (RPJ, 72).

Philia – Identification and the use of the object

According to psychoanalytic literature, "identifications are part of the process of individuation, a step prior to the separation by, and recognition of, the self as a separate, autonomous" (Cosslett, Lury, & Summerfield, 2000, p. 159). In the entries of every personal journal gathered for this research, the young women explore, in their narratives about the self, powerful identifications with others and more specifically with friends.

Melanie Klein's (1964) theory on the process of identification during adolescence and young adulthood sheds some light on understanding the strong connections between same sex friends, as witnessed in the personal journal writings of the participants. One of the interesting tendencies manifested in the writings of my participants while being adolescents (as we saw in Chapter Four of the thesis) is their conflict and aversion towards parents. In order to understand my participants' manifested tendencies, I am drawing on Klein and Riviere's theory of relationships in adolescence. According to this theory, adolescents who tend to be aggressive and unpleasant to parents are, at the same time, inclined to search for and find people they can idealize and identify with. Admired teachers and schoolmates can serve as the objects of their identifications. Most likely, feelings of admiration, love, and trust are directed towards friends they identify with. Such identifications are founded on the basis that "in the unconscious mind these feelings seem to confirm the existence of good parents and of a love relation to them, thus disproving the great hatred, anxiety and guilt which at this period of life have become so strong" (Klein, & Riviere, 1964, p. 97).

What are of importance in relationships of love and admiration are the psychological needs they serve, especially in adolescence. Adolescents and young adults tend to idealize famous actors, singers, athletes, and imaginary characters from literature and media. Such

devotion to and admiration of certain figures serves as a counterbalance to their state of hate and loveless commonly addressed towards their parents or others. Others are replaced by people who belong in the imaginary domains of literature and media, such as villain characters in films, or people distant from oneself. Hating unreal and removed people is safer than hating people closer to one's own close environment. The aggressive adolescent searches for people whom she can idealize and therefore, admiring and loving friends who are close with her and who offer possibilities of identification and ego-projection, function as a shield for preserving goodness and love. Klein (1964) argues further that the apparent division between love and hate works in such a way as to nurture the belief that loved people are kept in a secure zone and thus love can remain unspoilt. Keeping loved people intact, such as parents and friends, serves them to maintain "the image of the loved parents preserved in the unconscious mind as the most precious possession, for it guards its possessor against the pain of utter desolation" (Klein & Riviere, 1964, p. 98). The argument I am formulating here is that the private agora of the journal can withstand only so much expression of hate towards loved ones. The participants may be thought of as "fragile wrecks on a storm of emotions" who simultaneously need to symbolize others as loving and themselves as worthy of love. In the following journal entry, Astrid expresses her immense admiration of a male friend whose artistic doodles and "random stuff" leave her in awe:

i glance over at the finished piece lying in the passenger's seat. [he] has no confidence in himself, but i have been made aware of something deep and strong inside his soul that surfaces in strange ways...and one is through his doodles that he dismisses as worthless. but at least we his friends have the sense to appreciate him and the pouring out of him, at least a bit. that's why

his various versions of the moon watcher hang in my room as well as [Laura's]. that's why i listen to whatever music he thinks is good, and [Tom] enjoys his serious company and [Laura] keeps his random stuff as a computer background. i love the boy with deep respect, as a wise person, as a real being, and i wish i could look at [tom] the same way. (PJAstrid17, 1:366, 1020)

Astrid refers gratefully of her admiration towards a female friend whom she identifies with in many ways. Astrid finds this girl fascinating; one reason for this is that both of them face similar psychological situations. Astrid confesses that she enjoys the company of people whose lives are not perfectly situated, people with whom she can share lived experiences:

usually i can't stand talking to her, because she always seemed pathetically depressed and i was still riding on the blissful high of my medication. but now she's gotten some balance and i've mellowed out and now we can talk to each other without wanting to strangle each other. she amuses me greatly-we're quite similar. we both suffer attacks from the black cloud. we both write-she's had publications, i've won awards. she has her passion in fencing just as i have mine in music. we both have issues. i have a chemical imbalance, lacking of serotonin and she has a chemical imbalance, having too much testosterone. i'm on Celexa, she's on birth control. we're both abnormal asian girls that have (had) well-meaning boyfriends who feel bad for us and want to help, but can't possibly understand because their lives were too good. i like talking to people

who suffer and find their suffering amusing... whose lives aren't perfect and are falling apart like me but laugh all the while. (PJAstrid17, 1:238, 830-834)

As Astrid closes her entry on this fascinating girl whom she is thrilled to have met, she concludes that there is a mutual fondness between them that strengthens the bond of their friendship. Klein (1964) sheds light on Astrid's symbolization of friendship: "the strength of impulses and feelings, which is so characteristic of this stage of life, brings about very intense friendships between young people, mostly between members of the same sex" (p. 98). For Astrid the intense friendship realization comes with the acknowledgement that awareness of the particularity of their complicated life situations is dealt rewardingly with the uses of cynicism and jokes about their depressive tendencies and "messed up suburban lives":

i told her i usually hate girls, what with their annoying voice and boring stories, but i told her i didn't hate her quite as much. she seemed to share the same feelings about me, placidly. she even suggested we hang out... i do like her though. i want us to be cynical together, to laugh at our messed up suburban lives together. i want us to smoke weed together, or maybe drown ourselves in drink. she amuses me, and i entertain her. (PJAstrid17, 1:238, 836-837)

While traveling in Australia and New Zealand for almost a year, Carol also describes the instances she spends with friends as "happy" and writes of fond memories she experiences in a foreign country. Being away from home, she makes friends quite easily: "I met [Nadia], on the plane (even though we had been sitting near each other at the gate I didn't even notice). She's very cool, friendly and laid-back - I'm glad we decided to fly

together" (PJCarol18, 3:7, 18). In other entries Carol expresses her excitement to meet old friends and share a "great chat": "When I got to [Erica], I bumped into [Myriam]! I knew her flight left [Erica] later or so I hoped to find her later We spent almost 2 hours talking. It was sooooo great to catch up!" (PJCarol19, 4:68, 153). In the same vein, Jasmine writes: "Then this afternoon I played with [Deen] and we rollerbladed around and had a lot of fun. It's great hanging out with her. We always have fun. Even when we're just sitting and talking" (PJJasmine14, 32:34, 71).

Nicole, too, is inspired by a group of friends she makes, but her feelings include those of insecurity. She wonders if they love her as much as she loves them. So, along with issues of likeness and identification comes the concept of popularity. Previous research (Josselson, Greenberger, & McConochie, 1976) suggests that whereas young males focus on activities to gain status and prestige, young females concentrate on popularity to attain a prestigious sense of self affirmation. As with some of the other participants, Nicole thrives to belong to the popular clique of her school. After spending a day socializing with her peers, she confesses she feels "so good": "So refreshed, so... happy. I feel so privileged to experience this. I am so lucky to be able to actually spend time with these people, to know them, maybe to even say they are my friends" (PJNicole16, 59:22, 76). Issues of jealousy and even hostility arise due to her desire to be part of these "amazing people". Her inspiration and profound fondness of this group is articulated in the following entry:

I wish I knew them better, I wish they were as close to me as they are with [Kathleen]. It makes me jealous? That she so easily knows them so well. But I am truly inspired by them, each and every one of them do their own thing and I don't even know how to explain it. This, leadership, student life, it is so

incredible. I am so inspired by every thing and everyone, I really do want to be those people who have gone to Nationals, I mean yes, they do have flaws, but who doesn't? All in all, they are amazing people, I wish I could be as inspirational, as incredible as them. I am jealous." (PjNicole16, 59:22, 76)

Priscilla's idealized identification with her friends works in such an influential way that her initial communication with the closest of her friends serves as an empowering and confidence boosting energy. She describes her friend in absolute terms as "an amazing person", "sweet, genuine, and caring". She refers to an incident one day when she returns from the library and finds a "poster of a Girl Interrupted she made with quotes that we both like. I'm Susanna and she's Lisa and we have experienced wild great times. Dearest, I will miss her too much. She's so loyal to me" (PjPriscilla20, 70:120, 471:472). In another entry she acknowledges: "Juliana truly knows me and what I like, don't like, and my intense emotions" (PjPriscilla21, 71:179, 891). Priscilla grows up to be devoted to her close friend Juliana and fails to recognize signs of betrayal that develop in their friendship. As will be discussed in the following sub-chapters, devastation and despair suffocate her when she finally lets herself acknowledge the disloyalty that underlies her so 'precious' friendship with Juliana. Intense friendships bring intense feelings. As already mentioned, Klein (1964) argues that adolescents tend to form very intense friendships, mostly between members of the same sex. However, friendships in adolescent years can be unsteady due to strong sexual feelings that quite often interfere and result in their disturbance. Of note is that unlike Klein's theory that young adolescent girls' unconscious homosexual tendencies underlie their same sex friendships, in the journal writings of the participants in this research there

were no entries that clearly symbolize such phantasies and sexual desires. Of the 17 journals analyzed, only one explores overt issues of same sex friendships and engagements.

It could be argued that same sex friendships are experienced as intensified relationships and internalized as a safeguard against hatred. Additionally, desire is experienced in adolescence towards both sexes, even if it is expressed only in their emotional life. Homo-erotic libidinal fulfillment may be one of the energies very much active in the girls’ inner lives. Further, as Robertson (2006) states, it could be hypothesized that girls avoid providing “evidence of acting physically on those desires because of social prohibitions and normalizing discourses that are heteronormative in their sanctioning authority and effects” (p. 2). The strong evidence of passionate affection in the young women’s representations of the forces of same sex love and attachment that comes later in this thesis allows us to speculate how social discourses play out to normalize their expression into structures of authority.

Thesaurus – Friend the ‘savior’

The image of the ‘Friend as Savior’ is expressed frequently in the journal writings of those young women. There are at least 26 entries that portray this image and belief. The image of the suffering friend, and more specifically the notion of the shared depression, that brings together and maintains close friendships is expressed in several entries of the personal journals of the participants. The friend who is considered “wounded” and “suffering”, the identification with her psychological state of mind, and the belief of being able to save her and relieve her from suffering and pain are recurrent patterns in the participants’ writings

about their relationship with friends. As I come across these writings I keep wondering about the unconscious uses of those patterns of belief, depicted quite clearly in the following entry:

The past couple of days, I've noticed that a lot of my friends have been experiencing "Down Moods".

Depression is something that I care about very much because, I, myself have gone through it before, and even at times, still go through it now. I'm seeing what's happening to one of my good friends now. I see how she feels, what she thinks, and I know what she's going through. That last thing I mentioned is the scariest of them all. I am so afraid that she is slipping down the same downwards spiral that I slid down just a few months ago. My hope is that I can pull her up with me, while I continue my journey back up. (PJDaniele16, 5:21, 88-89)

As Robertson (1994) argues, "it is impossible to read the women's entries without hearing (and hearing again) a certain tenor of passion that persists throughout. It is the power of frankness, the power of struggle, the power of precision, the power of desire" (p. 41). This power of struggle is with the bleak realm of depression, the power of frankness of her situation, the power of desire to heal her friend from depression, and the downward spiral that characterizes Daniele's intense relationship with her friend. What defines women and their relationship with others, is their "desire to heal something", which might have the form of a wound or the feeling of betrayal or "the sighting of a world they have experienced as not safe; a trajectory of identification that shows them being mindful of their own contradictory experiences of childhood and (in particular) religious and humanistic formation" (Robertson, 1994, p. 41). It seems that women's relationships with friends are characterized by an

exchange of comfort and support that exceeds the limits of mere aid (Wylie, 1995). Carol's friends are there for her when she tosses on the storm of emotions: "OK so lets backtrack. Sunday was a bad day. I was homesick and depressed. I'm over that. There's a great friend; she was really there for me. It's a good feeling to know that I have a friend like that down here" (PJCarol18, 3:32, 63). In another entry she confides that her friend proves to be her "rock" while visiting Australia. A friend's belief in her abilities stands as strong proof of self confirmation: "[Ken] still doesn't believe that I actually edited the reference letter. I love [Mary]. She believes in me and sometimes it feels she's the only one. Without her I might not be as strong as I am" (PJCarol19, 4:62, 106).

Daniele expresses a similar gratefulness and devotion to her friends; without their support she would be a fragile wreck in a vulnerable situation: "I swear, if my friends had not been there with me, I probably would have broken down and cried of nervousness" (PJDaniele16, 5:14, 59). Daniele feels privileged to have friends who "worry about her well-being" and "wonder if anything is wrong" in her life: "I've always known that my friends are the one source of hope that I have, one of the only things that keeps me steady, and (almost) sane" (PJDaniele16, 5:30, 106). The love of friends survives the test of time. A year later, Daniele writes again: "My friends were the ones I turned to whenever I needed something: comfort, support, love, anything, you name it, I went to them for it" (PJDaniele17, 6:40, 112).

It is this capacity of the friend to provide shelter and support in times of crisis that drives Nicole to talk to her friend in her journal entries. Nicole often directs passages to her best friend, writing them in first person. This finding supports that of Wylie (1995), who argues that in her analysis of women's personal written encounters, such as letters and

diaries, women tend to pour out affection to each other in passionate terms. For Nicole, her close friend constitutes the safe band in times of desolation. Nicole uses her journal to write a personal note that serves as a letter to her best friend [Cathy]:

Dear [Cathy],

I’m having a very bad day, Trevor keeps bugging me and it feels like everyone hates me. I feel alone and so stupid. It feels like everything is falling apart. I miss you. I wish I couldn’t talk, that would be cool. Or if I was at home sleeping, that would. God know, I’m always depressed.

[Cathy], I want you to know I love you. Kindred spirits and souls.

Your love is better than ice cream. My savior. (PJNicole15, 58:30, 179-186)

A few years later, Nicole again confesses her emotional kinship to her friends. She feels so desperately the need to make friendships with people who will make her “happy” and subtract her from the state of lethargy and apathy that her depressive moods have drawn her into:

What, more than anything in the world, would make me happy at this very instant?

KNOWING THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION.

I feel restless, but at the same time exhausted. I feel like I should be going out, but at the same time I don’t want to. I want to do...anything but I don’t.

I’m lethargic but energetic. “I am walking contradiction...”

I really need a group of girlfriends to do stuff with. I need a life. I need to be not the tag-a-long person in all situations of my life. I need to have my own friend to do fun things with. Or to do not so fun things with, like going to the

chat. I NEED TO GET OUT OF HUDSON or, I need to find the people in Hudson.

I want to be friends with all the guys - I love the guys. I need to get out of BED. (PJNicole19, 62:90, 383-388)

Priscilla's identification and devotion to her best friend Juliana drives her to a relationship that proves to be functioning in several directions. Juliana becomes the ultimate soul mate for Priscilla whom she trusts unlimitedly. In facing the possibility of disappointing her friend, Priscilla considers the possibility of ending her life: "I miss her, and I know she'll be disappointed, maybe I should just end my life now. She will continue my book" (PJPriscilla20, 70:264, 1034). In a later entry, Priscilla reflects on the difficulties of her first university years: loss of friendships; failure in her university studies that had no "sense of true direction"; and success in finding what feels like her "true self", her strengths and weaknesses, through her dear relationship with her best friend. "I lost a lot of things these past 2 years dearest, including precious friendships" (PJPriscilla20, 70:361, 1377), she writes one day. She says she had no one to guide her through her university decisions, no one she could trust to talk to about her choice to study veterinary medicine. As a consequence she "let pride (fake pride mind you) take the worst of me and lose a year (first year) of studies without any sense of true direction" (PJPriscilla20, 70:361, 1378). However, Priscilla feels that fate drove her in this direction and allowed her to meet Juliana: "Maybe I was suppose to make this mistake because it opened my eyes wider. I met Juliana". Juliana appears to be her savior, the one who led her to discover her "true self, her true self and what [her] strengths/weaknesses were/are" (PJPriscilla20, 70:361, 1379).

Lysis – "The Fellowship is breaking"

My friend, Mathieu moved away today for school too. He came over to bid us farewell and it was sad. I'll miss him. (PJOdette19, 64:79, 560)

As explored in the previous sections, identification with a friend is a topic celebrated in the personal journal writings of the participants. Young women pour out their affection and love to their close friends in passionate terms. During adolescence and young adulthood, female friendships carry strong meaning in the lives of young women. Therefore, the loss of the friend is experienced with grief and distress. It is analogous to, what in psychoanalysis is called, the 'object loss'. According to Freud's *Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (1950), the definition of the term "object loss" carries the following meaning: "grief is basically the reaction specific to object loss, anxiety to the danger which this object loss entails, or, by a further displacement, to the danger of object loss itself" (p. 128). Pain and grief resulting from the loss of a friend demand recognition and are credited in the personal writings of the participants.

Carol has lost her close friends on her travels and her sorrow is expressed often in her journal entries. She made an investment in her friends and due to the lack of communication with other loved members of her family, her emotional investment to her friends grew deeper. Wylie (1995) notes, "In bereavement the chief pain of the loss comes from the loss of self" (p. 83). Melancholy and sadness accompany Carol's writings of 'lost objects', as though in the process of losing others the writer loses her self:

I'm kind of a bit "down" at the moment from my lack of close friends.

Everyone I felt close to has left the hostel. [Myriam's] hardly even around

and rarely talks to me when she is. I don't feel close to her anymore

(PJCarol18, 3:74, 120).

[Cynthia] left early that morning, and Sam and Jamie are both leaving tomorrow. So the Fellowship is breaking. ...but, unexpectedly, my heart is breaking saying good-bye to everyone (PJCarol19, 4:56, 84)

I'm incredibly depressed to have to leave Australia - Sydney especially. I found all these pics on his computer from his first visit in October - ...I remember that group - we had so much fun. The picture of Justin made me so nostalgic. But then everyone left, one by one... (PJCarol19, 4:107, 202)

As Wylie (1995) argues in her analysis of journal entries of past centuries, it is very common that journal writers tend to burst into private pages about their loss of loved ones and through this process manage to withdraw themselves from their entrusted relationships with lost friends: "Whatever the cause of the emotional wound, the recovery has to start within consciousness of the person suffering" (Wylie, p. 84). Carol ends her entries with the hope of meeting new people and forging "fulfilling and lasting friendships". She keeps reminding herself that this is a personal journey and adds: "Anyway, I expect to meet more people at other stops on my trip. Hopefully I will forge some fulfilling and lasting friendships there. For now, as with every other issue I've had down here, I'll just have to deal" (PJCarol18, 3:74, 120).

When her best friend departs town to pursue her university studies, Jasmine experiences the loss in a heartfelt way. She devotes two pages of her journal to describing every detail of "The Day She Left For BC". Denial, tears, pain, despair, fear, and hope are some of the feelings symbolized in her entry. Past childhood memories unravel, represented

as a "lump in her stomach". Scenes of future encounters and communication with her friend on the telephone ease her pain. Her journal entry functions as a way to represent and symbolize her feelings, to become conscious of her suffering, and to reassure herself that she will survive:

[Elein] left this morning.... "I will not cry... I will not cry" I slowly repeated in my head as I woke up... I chilled on the couch, finished wrapping her gift, and waited... waiting to hear her car role up to my house, for what I pray is not the last time.... We took pictures, we giggled at how packed her car was... then it began. The tears started. Like lightning they hit my cheeks, rolling down to my chin... I turned away so she wouldn't know. ...I walked over to her and tucked my wet face into her shoulder. ...Looking back now, I realize there was no exchange of words. I didn't even tell her I was happy for her... I didn't mention how proud of her I am. Hopefully the card will say all that my shaky voice couldn't... It seems almost ironic that I was standing on the same driveway that had brought me so many times of laughter, and now so much sorrow.... Like a rainbow disappearing behind the clouds she was gone. Just like that... The lump will remain in my stomach for a while I'm sure ... Because that's what happens when your best friend moves 50 hours away. (PJJasmine20, 37:24, 109-114)

Losing friends during the period of university years is common in the writings of young adult women. Lorena also misses her best friend and shares her feelings: "And also, [Sam] told me online that she misses me so much that she cries often and she's sad cos she feels like she hasn't really seen me in 3 years. I feel the same way" (PJLorena21, 55:139,

596). What is common in many of these entries is the hope, an optimistic anticipation of re-joining with past close friends and of survival. Monica misses her best friend and reassures herself that she will "cope" with that loss and "good things are gonna happen". She finds her best friend's "goodbye note" brilliant as she "provoke something so great and fun in me. I miss her sooo bad already, I don't know how I'm gonna cope and I really know good things are gonna happen. She'll be there quicker than this summer has gone" (PJMonica21, 57:46, 208).

Such journal entries offer an acknowledgement of powerful feelings of loss, as Monica struggles to cope with the detachment of close objects. She reassures herself and pulls herself out of pain. Thus, she closes the gap and reaches and heals her inner self. This healing can be done through hopes and future plans and promises, as well as through the use of other objects, including meaningful quotes, lyrics, and poems. Priscilla manages to ease her pain by remembering her best friend with the following quote: "Anyways new quote that brings me memories of Juliana: (from a song) 'Life is a mystery. I hear you call my name and it feels like a prayer', I'm going to add that as my MSN nickname" (PJPriscilla20, 70:169, 648).

When friends do not appear as loving symbols in the journals, feelings of great unhappiness ensue. For example, Kyla's relationships with her best friends do not evolve in strong, compassionate, and loving communicative exchanges. Kyla confesses that her difficulty communicating with her friends results in fighting and hostile relations. In her journal she expresses her distress and guilt as she feels responsible for the outcomes of her friendships. Her desperation in the following entry leaves Kyla with almost no tangible sources of support. She writes about her difficulty in resolving her arguments with her best

friend and complains that her friends "don't listen to her". She notes, "I always mess everything up. ... So now I am probably going to loose another best friend. I thought about calling the kids help line but I should be able to do this myself. I just don't know where to start" (PJKyla17, 50:21, 19). Nicole also expresses her devastation due to the loss of an object. Losing a friendship because of quarrelsome miscommunication leaves Nicole with feelings of guilt, hurt, and despair: "What has happened between us? Is it always going to be weird now? Did I do or say something to you to make you pull away? ...It hurts so much to think we aren't friends anymore. What Have I DONE?" (PJNicole15, 58:6, 47-50).

Genesis – Changes: self and friends

A common theme in the journal entries of the participants is the changes they have acknowledged in themselves and in relation to their close friends. Sometimes these young women use the journal over time to reflect on their selves either as a way to understand themselves or understand the evolution of their friendships. Some of them write revealing comments, having profound hindsight and criticism as they delve into the retrospective analysis of the self. Astrid attempts to understand the changes in her views and attitudes towards certain values. She compares herself to a friend of hers and reveals how they seem to have 'switched places' regarding their Cosmo theory on drug usage. Her analysis jolts her into a space of self-assessment:

we were like best friends in grade 9, but now it's like we've got nothing to share.

as we walk she asks how i've been doing. i tell her i'm tired... i feel dumb and numb, like there's a big thick cloud fogging my head and i can't push my

words and thoughts through. i tell her [Keen’s] got me started on pot, and she’s surprised and amused. i remember how i’d listen with a disapproving grown about her exploits with shrooms and weed and booze, and now here i am.... while i’ve been slacking off, lazing around, not going to afternoon classes all week, she’s been shutting herself in her room, studying, not letting herself go out. she graduates this year, and then she goes on an exchange trip for a year in germany. she asks me if i know what universities i plan to apply for. i tell her i haven’t even started looking. there is a polite pause. dully i feel as though we have switched places somehow. then i wonder if it’s really true. even as a druggie going out... she still pulled off high grades. i think i am trying to make the above statement to believe that yes, once i worked hard and did well. but no... i never have cared, and my average has always been stuck at mediocre 85. i think i’m waiting for a sign, something sharp to fall out of the sky, to hit me on the head so i wak up and started to get serious, start to care. (PJAstrid17, 1:371, 1031-1036)

Changes in relationships with friends are viewed by Rachel as a natural evolution. She borrows from the television series *Friends* to reflect on how much she and her friends ‘have grown up’ during the period of the show. Whatever changes they have gone through, their friendships have managed to remain as strong and significant through the years: “My friends and I have grown up so much during that show and watching tonight made me miss them so much.... Even though things have changed there I’ve changed too, change doesn’t have to be bad” (PJRachel24, 74:31, 67). Rachel ends her entry with the conclusion that no

matter how many changes take place, her friends "will always be there for me and I'll always be there for them".

However, the fragile self at display in the journals usually configures changes in friendships in more alarming terms. The majority of the participants' entries on the changes they identify in themselves in relation to their friends express disappointment, pain, and even anger towards the evolution of such friendships. Kyla reveals her anguish and distress when she finds it difficult to communicate with her friends: "My friends didn't really call me except for [Lorena]. I had to call them it is hard for me to talk with them b/c they have changed so much!" (PJKyla18, 51:20, 19). In the same vein, Daniele feels betrayed by her friends. She now realizes that she should not allow herself to trust the "nestled little haven" created by her friendships:

My friendships are completely turned around. Suddenly, there's a whole load of new faces, new feelings, kinda like a fresh new start. It's kinda weird though, knowing that even the nestled little haven you knew and loved can change at anytime. I had to learn how to fly away from it, since it was the best thing to do, and it was hard, but I did it. (PJDaniele17, 6:10, 31)

Priscilla, feeling betrayed by her best friend, distances herself from that friendship by recognizing how she no longer identifies herself with the main character of the film *Girl Interrupted*, an imaginary device created in conjunction with her friend. Both friends found pleasure and reassurance in phantasizing themselves in the roles of the main heroes in the film. In her journal, Priscilla states how this identification seems meaningless now that anger and hurt have disrupted her friendship. Even though her best friend is "still there", she acts remote: "Juliana is still here but a little distant". Therefore, Priscilla decides: "I'm not going

to “push” things anymore. I’m not really sure if she is “reasonable” and if Girl Interrupted is/was just a phase I am (still)/ I went thru. Girl interrupted phase could be? I’m not one any of this yet” (PJPriscilla21, 71:143, 622).

Jasmine, as well, reflects on the ways she sees herself changing throughout her school years and explains how self confidence and happiness have entered her life, even though she is not “as close” to her past best friend anymore:

Wow, it’s weird reading back through this.

I have changed sooo much, since two years ago. In grade 8 I was always getting mad (at [Jeen]) and I was always sad. Not anymore. High school has been a big turning point for me. I never felt good about myself then and I didn’t feel like I fit in anywhere. Now I do. I have a whole new group of friends... I’m still friends with [Jane]. We’re just not as close anymore.... I always used to feel like I’d have to hide things from her so that she wouldn’t get mad at me. Not now, though. we still walk to and from school and eat lunch together. But we’re with a big group of friends. So it’s better! I’m starting to feel better about myself and life is much happier now!! Actually I rarely get mad. Making my life a lot happier. I am becoming a confident person. (PJJasmine16, 34:5, 14-19)

A few years later though, Jasmine reflects again on the changes that she and her friends have gone through. Now she seems to have second thoughts about the evolution of her friendships and the changes she acknowledges in her self. She wonders about the outcome of these changes and explains how distancing herself from close friends has kept her from people who would offer her “comfort” and reassurance:

I am feeling more independent these days. Independent, and less needy of my friends back home. Although I do, I really do miss them... But honestly, last year I remember constantly feeling like I needed them there for comfort. I needed someone there to tell me that I was okay. That what I was feeling was normal. That I could achieve things, if I really wanted to. To not second guess myself... Now I am not sure if I am really doing this on my own. Or if it's just that I am finally sort of coping right now..just sort of chilling..not moving forward or backward is what it seems at the moment. Good/Bad??? I don't really know. Just sort of here....making my way through the text books, the crowds, this life. (PJJasmine20, 37:26, 128-129)

The concept of identity facilitates the understanding of the meaning of writing about the changes in the self in relation to others. Identity is portrayed as being "formed in adolescence through the resolution of conjoint biological, psychological, and social forces, fused at the interstice between simultaneously finding one's place and role within a social group and separating and individuating from the relationships and attitudes of childhood" (Aragno, 1998, p. 87). By engaging in the process of analyzing their selves and others, and the development and progress of their relationships, the young women in this study make a significant advancement towards formation of their identity. Their personal journals serve to help them to begin to represent and perhaps understand their psychosomatic transformation by examining the dynamic transitions from childhood to adolescence, and then from there to adulthood. I have discussed to this point my participants' uses of private writing to construct a potential space through which to elaborate a sense of self through relationships: with

mother, with father, with friends. Let us now turn to the issue of the uses of symbolizations of emotion, as "the fragile wreck on a storm of emotions" seeks to locate herself in language.

Antipathy – Aggression and issues of jealousy

I wish I knew them better, I wish they were as close to me as they are with [Kathleen]. It makes me jealous. That she so easily knows them so well.
(PjNicole16, 59:21, 76)

Joan Riviere (1964) theorizes jealousy and maintains that it is an affective state that can be considered 'natural' and normal. Jealousy is associated with feelings such as hate, and humility. It is defined as "a reaction of hate and aggression to a loss or threat of a loss" (Riviere, p. 41). In psychoanalysis, the jealous person, due to feelings of inferiority, feels inevitably unworthy of love, guilty, and depressed. Her depression arises from thinking that she is not lovable and thus destined to be hated. These feelings of being exposed to the danger of loss, hate, and loneliness are usually considered unendurable. Especially in their younger years, most of the participants in this study seem to be dealing with issues of jealousy, feelings of unlovableness and unworthiness in regards to their friendships. Loss of their close friends is not only projected as loss of the possessiveness of them, but also loss of them as verification of their own value to their own selves.

Nicole devotes a couple of pages to an entry where she pours out her pain and disappointment towards her best friend who seems to avoid her company. She writes as if she is addressing her thoughts and feelings directly to her best friend. She uses the first person and organizes her thoughts in a constructive way, supporting her arguments with evidence and proof:

See [Judy], here's the thing: you are asking if I want you, but the question is do you want me? ...I am wondering if you are really my friend. I mean you say that you love me and blah blah blah, but... I ALWAYS call you, you haven't called me in such a long time.... Have you really got NO time to see or talk to one of your best friends this summer? ... it REALLY REALLY hurts. ...maybe you just have a new best friend each year and this year that was me ...This year, you'll have somebody new... Where did I go wrong? No, wait, where did we go wrong? This can't have been just me... I don't know if I will ever read this to you... you would probably hate me because I am so harsh and accusing but do you know what? It's what I feel. It's who I am....I am not sorry. ...So, be mad, hate me, but [Judy], I was honest.

(PJNicole15, 58:37, 212-222)

In the words of her journal entry, Nicole expresses a sense of humiliation. She does not "know if she will ever read this entry to her friend" and suspects that once she reads it her friend will most likely be mad or think that she is "stupid". She is not confident enough to share these feelings with her friend, but she communicates her distress and hurt privately by setting it down on paper. Felicia, as well, attempts to explain the "small crisis" she has with the interference of a third party in her relationship with close friends. However, she finds it difficult to express her situation to her close friend, since inevitably her explanation entails issues of loss of the object, loss of security, inferiority, and humiliation. In her journal, Felicia writes about the crisis she had that she could not confide to her friend: "So I asked Jen if I could come over that night and talk. She was surprised. I don't know if I explained myself well, but she said I should tell [Nina]. Yeah, I haven't done that yet"

(PJFelicia24, 13:66, 3). Unable to express her feelings that night, Felicia writes in her journal that "tonight is her last chance", but she struggles as she tries to find a better way to express her disappointment about her best friend's choices: "I just don't know how to tell her "Hey, why do you like [Carla] more than me? I'm more loyal to you". (PJFelicia24, 13:66, 3).

That same sense of humiliation and jealousy is expressed in by Rachel in one of her journal entries. Even though she has been awarded a good scholarship, she sometimes feels apprehensive about her decision regarding where she is studying. It seems that her concern settles on the fact that her best friends are "moving in together" and that she feels "left out" every time they talk about it. Even though she knows that she should be happy for them she writes, "It feels like they don't even care that I'm not going to be with them next year" (PJRachel23, 73:29, 40). Rachel fears the change and she is scared "that it won't be the same when I come back or we won't have the same relationship and they'll be so close and I'll be left out. I know deep down I'm being silly but I can't help it" (PJRachel23, 73:29, 40).

"The typical situation of jealousy is of course that of rivalry in love", argues Riviere (1964, p. 41). In the following paragraphs excerpts of the participants' journals reveal a rivalry in love expressed in the relationship with their friends. These young women use their journals to express their distress due to their "lack of boyfriend". Further, when surrounded by people who do not belong in the same situation as them, the lack of love is experienced as unworthiness, hate, and guilt. At the age of 14, Irene does not have a boyfriend and this is dramatized by the fact that her best friends are "liked by guys":

...lately I have been complaining a lot about how lucky [Leah] and [Jennifer] are to be liked by guys, I have been so melancholy because lots of people

around me have boys to call their own. [Erica], [Jennifer], [Evelyn], Dad has Mrs. [Kim], and I always in the hallway, and I can never look at [Leah] or [Jennifer] kissing or hugging guys. I am kind of jealous and envious at the same time! (PJIrene14, 22:78, 217)

Jasmine envies her attractive friends who are being "hit on" by every guy while she is left unnoticed "in the shadow":

I love my friends, but I hate being surrounded by people who get hit on 90 times a day. Going to the bar with [Elein] or [Jen] is like watching magnets stick to the fridge. EVERY guy wants to fuck them. Every guy hits on them. ...Every guy finds them attractive. I stand there in the shadow (PJJasmine20, 37:31)

Priscilla, too, envies her best friend's relationship with a guy. She communicates her feelings of envy and loss explicitly in her journal entries:

Oh. This Christmas I will be with no guy and Juliana will be with a 6-month guy! I feel a bit jealous. (PJPriscilla20, 70:368, 1412).

Oh, I miss Juliana so much. She's my angel, my soul amiga. I envy her a bit too because she has a long perfect relationship with [Kevin], and she has it all with love, while I don't have someone who fulfills my intensity.

I don't mean to be jealous. (PJPriscilla21, 71:175, 877-878)

What Daniele explores in her journal entries is her jealousy of other people's belongings. Riviere (1964) explores envy and bases it on the need for more. When this need for more is strong, comparisons between ourselves and others are made. However, Daniele does not limit herself to the longing of having "what other people have". She goes beyond

that and expresses her desire of wanting to be envied. She starts one entry in her journal by accepting her jealousy towards "what other people have" and expresses her wish to have something or someone so "that people would look at me and be jealous". Daniele continues on, expressing her desire to have people "look at me and think "I wish I had that." or "I wish I was her." I know it's awful. But for once I'd like to know the feeling of being envied" (PJDaniele16, 5:53, 180-181). Almost a year after this entry, Daniele reflects on how her life has been "great" since she has finally been envied. She finds that "things are a lot different from the way they used to be" and can finally describe life as "good" and "great", since "I finally feel "envied". Not so much that people came up to me and say that they wish what I had, but I now have what other people had, what I wished I had" (PJDaniele17, 6:8, 28-29). This desire of being envied by others is experienced with great satisfaction by Odette, as well:

the irony in this retelling of my day is that while walking back through the market after our excursion, whom should we cross paths with other than [Anna] and her out-of-town friend. The expression on her face having turned from recognition to disbelief at seeing who I was with was priceless. I had no idea we would run into each other and wouldn't have believe it had anyone foretold me it would happen. I wasn't malicious about it but I sort of enjoyed watching [Anna's] jaw dropped somewhat at the sight of us (I hadn't mention to her that I had asked [Tim] in her stead to accompany me) but mostly because he's a sought after guy in our circle of friends and she, along with a dozen other girls, has taken a fancy to him. not that i can blame them, really. (PJOdette21, 66:57, 405-406)

Odette here uses her journal to express her desire of being envied. As other young women do, Odette, too, turns to her journal to express inner conflicts. And it in the private pages that this storm of emotions gets released. This is where she trusts and secures her feelings of jealousy and envy without feeling threatened of being exposed.

Nemesis – Disappointment and anger and hate

A common use of the personal journal for self development deals with issues of disappointment in relationship with friends, and more specifically, with feelings of anger and hate. Recording grief and aggressive feelings assists writers to pour out their feelings, recover from their struggles, and reassure themselves that they will survive. In the following excerpt, Jasmine expresses her anger and hate towards a friend who has disappointed her in many ways. In this entry, Jasmine is able to name her feelings, something that she would never do if she had to express them orally to her friend. Instinctively, Jasmine knows the benefits of journal writing. In her private pages she conveys her thoughts and feelings, no matter how inconsistent and irrelevant they may appear and, certainly, without fear of criticism:

I just want to write a bit about [Kate].... She's a real snob and I don't know how to deal with her except for ignoring her. She makes fun of me and [Jeen]. Also AND SHE'S A YEAR YOUNGER THAN ME and mean who does she think she is telling me that I dress weird... Last year is when she made fun of me and [Jeen] the most... she still gives those horrible and ugly dirty looks. I guess I'll just have to keep ignoring her although she still bugs me and makes me feel like a little and I hate her. Hate isn't good but I would never say that I

hate her to someone I would only write it in my diary. Where no one accept [except] for me can read it! I'm really starting to care about myself some more so I think I'll go give myself a make over. (PJJasmine13, 31:13, 58)

Jasmine realizes that her relationship with her friend constitutes a source of negative influence on her self and the ways she reacts and thinks about others. She is confused and afraid that she is turning into a "negative person" and therefore she comes up with a magical (religious) solution: to return a positive comment to any negative remark she receives from her friend. Jasmine goes further into her self-analysis and wonders whether articulating her thinking in her personal diary is an act of trying to impress, and is not derived from pure intentions:

At this point in my life I am very confused... One thing I realized is that I don't want to be friends with her because I am afraid of turning into a very negative person like her/ but I think that as long as I am very strong I can overcome that. I guess it's easy to say but hard to do. But one thing I am going to try doing... is every time I think of something negative like about a person, I will say something good about that person. But you see now that I've said that I think well is that being bad and just trying to impress a person. That's what I mean when I say I am very confused. But for now I think I will follow the 10 commandments. (PJJasmine13, 31:47, 137-139)

Disappointment from a friend's carelessness and negligence is discussed in the journal entries of Carol and Lorena. Both of them articulate their feelings of being rejected and losing faith in their friends' love: "I guess I don't mean anything to anyone...I can't believe my friends, who always say 'I love you' to me, would care so little" (PJCarol19,

4:83, 175). Lorena expresses her disappointment in the following lines: "Gotta be honest, I'm really disappointed in the birthday..., I'm a selfish prat and believe that people who have been my good friends for a decade and a half should call me maybe... or send an e-card. Or anything. But no" (PJLorena21, 55:19, 134). Priscilla is disappointed by her best friend, and her anger and frustration add to her despair: "Juliana didn't come yesterday as promised. I felt depressed and was having passive suicide thoughts" (PJPriscilla21, 71:114, 507). Feeling betrayed by her friend, Priscilla comes to the following realization: "I suppose this is true to some extent. I wasn't meeting new people because I was so worshipping Juliana and in the end she didn't value me. How hurtful it feels to have a best amiga betray you in the worst ways" (PJPriscilla21, 71:163, 781-782).

Hate and anger towards her best friend are articulated clearly in Nicole's journal pages. In one entry Nicole revisits past feelings and painful memories. Nicole confesses that she loves her friend but she "will always hate her" for a hurtful remark she made almost three years ago. Nicole's hate has been suppressed and finds a way out in her personal journal entry. She has not forgiven her friend for saying the following about her: "At least I wasn't raised by an ashtray". In her journal she addresses the following thoughts to this friend: "You do have a bad side, you can't change yourself, but please, don't say stuff like that. It hurts, more than you'll even know" (PJNicole15, 58:20, 100-101). In the following entry, Nicole articulates her grief of the hate she receives from her loved ones, her friends, in a poem. As Riviere (1964) notes, "the immediate urge is to reinstate the condition of well-being" (p. 26), the condition that promises love and worthiness in her life:

why does it seem like everybody hates me...

even if there were a thousand people,

sometimes I feel so all alone I could cry
no one seems to understand me,
not even the ones who should
I wish I could tell everyone what I think of them
If I had the courage I would
There are liars and cheaters in this world
Some are our friends we hold dear...
Why do they try to hurt me?
There is nothing they can gain
But if I am so say anything,
It would seem too strange and un-cool
So instead just smile and joke around,
And try not to show the real me, or else I'd be a fool (PJNicole15, 58:22, 110-133)

Odette writes a poem on the back of the cover of some Dentyne gum while waiting for a friend. In this entry she communicates quite eloquently her disappointment and grievance towards her friends' ignorance of the ways in which she feels mistreated and used by them. This entry is the one that Odette decided to bring up in our interview session. One of the interview questions asks the participants to share "a part of [their] most interesting journal entry [they] like to talk about" that "might refer to either a happy or sad experience in [their] life". Odette confesses that she is still friends with the person she wrote about, but acknowledges the intensity of her feelings at that time: "It's really melodrag. But it wasn't big deal. But I guess at that time. So it's kind of poetic at the same time" (IQOdette, p.11).

I am going to get stood up once again
and my disappointment in mankind
grows keener with every passing day.

I feel myself slipping closer to the
downward spiral of despair.

My hopes insane. I trust in
vain...

And I set myself up for
failure and that in itself
never fails. This is
my ailment; this is my curse:
for the rest of my days;
unable to trust and unable to feel
never knowing what is real. (PJOdette21, 66:5, 35-56)

Odette's anger towards friends who "use her" bursts out. Her gentle personality prevents her from any direct posture of anger. Her anger and hate, accompanied with feelings of sorrow, are verbalized in her personal journal: "I don't understand why I sometimes feel as though people are using me. I hate it. It gives me a pain in my chest near the location of my bleeding heart and takes my breath away. I am in non-physical pain" (PJOdette21, 66:51, 369). Even though Odette does not confront her friend's attitude towards her, the discursive practice of anger and hate vibrates and finds a way out with poetic or metaphoric rhythm in her personal journal writings.

Stigma – Peer pressure and issues of popularity

You know what I was thinking. Why can't everyone just be friends! I mean at school! It's not like everyone goes around hating each other. But, I mean.

There are different cliques. And some think they are better than others. I don't understand why can't we all be friends. (PJJasmine16, 34:12, 31)

Early adolescence is characterized by psychosocial conflicts regarding young girls' gender identity and gendered relationships (Gilligan, Brown, & Rogers, 1990). As girls pull away from their parents, their search for peer group membership becomes all-encompassing. Nicole confesses in her journal that "what I need these days is to be social and not so mono-friended". Later she elaborates: "But I do need space sometimes, maybe that's what this social thing is about - that I need to spend time with lots of different people. I can't settle on being anti-social with one friend in the world" (PJNicole17, 60:54, 348-349). Throughout their identity search, "being cut off from friends is the ultimate and most severe form of alienation" (van Roosmalen, 2000, pp. 209-210). In her struggle to fit in with her group of 'friends', the young female adolescent struggles with her system of values and ends up incorporating the patriarchal definition of femininity (Mann, 1994). Compromising themselves to meet the expectations of their peers is often important for girls in order to maintain their attachment with them. Jasmine finds herself "act[ing] as they want" her to do so, otherwise she feels "stupid" and fears that they might talk about her behind her back:

I'm in such a bad mood today! ...I don't know why I'm in such a bad mood.

Oh wait. I think I might know why. ...I try and do things for myself some times, like just sitting at home ...so that I can get things done and ...figure things out, but my friends don't understand that. When I say I don't want to

do something with them they laugh at me or are like "come on you have to come out with us". Then I feel bad for saying no. when all I wanted was a quiet Saturday night away from all of my friends. To take a break and rebuild my energy and patience. To think. But after I do that I feel stupid and I feel like they are just sitting there talking about me behind my back all night. All I want to do is impress my friends so often I just act like someone they want me to be, not act like the real me, because I'm scared and I don't want to get mad at them. (PJJasmine16, 34:26, 59)

Popularity is of great importance during adolescence. Belonging to the "cool group" of friends and being accepted by its members is one of the main concerns. When Jasmine was asked by a friend: "if I ever moved away who would you hang around with? [Jane] or the cool people?" I said the cool people" (PJJasmine13, 31-37, 104-105). As Riviere (1964) explains it, "to have friends and to be liked proves to them that they themselves are good, i.e. that the dangerousness in them is non-existent or safely disposed of" (p. 24). Through the accumulation of goodness and love around them, which they can use any time they need to, adolescents engage in the creation of the substitute of the mother's breast that can always be at hand and never fails them (Riviere, 1964). Not succeeding in incorporating themselves into the "cool group" of peers increases the danger of frustration and failure:

And the outcast girl group of: [Jane] and me Jasmine. ... Well that's what I feel like. I honestly feel like there's a window and I'm looking in. Not looking for a way to get in. just looking and watching. It hurts and I feel really depressed all the time now. I just wish that for one day just one day the cool people could live in our shoes. Then they would know how it feels to

have only one friend. You know what I don't even know if I would want to be a girl of the cool group. I would just like to be treated fairly. Like a human being with feelings. But there you have to be a miracle for that to happen.
(PJJasmine13, 31-37, 106)

Researchers studying the development of gender identity during adolescence maintain that young women are pressured by their girlfriends to make the dating experience their highest priority (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990; Pipher, 1994). It is evident from the participants' personal writings that these young women desire to fit into the "cool group" and participate in activities that help them acquire experiences they can talk about. In addition, "popular culture reinforces the ideal that girls are supposed to be boy crazy" (van Roosmalen, 2000, p. 208). Being alone is considered unnatural and, to fit in, girls need to have boyfriends and need to be girlfriends, since failure in achieving girlfriend-boyfriend status puts them in danger of losing friendship acceptability (Newman & Newman, 1991). Therefore, the search for a boyfriend can be frustrating and stress provoking. Jasmine, at the age of 16, fails to achieve her goal of "boyfriendship" and feelings of loneliness, embarrassment, and rejection overwhelm her. She feels "like a big loser, idiot" because she has not been sexually active yet. When her friends engage in discussions about their sexual experiences, Jasmine feels uncomfortable, "soooo embarrassed" and "alone", "like the only person in the school who has never had a boyfriend". She explains that she finds it unbearable to live without a boyfriend; that his presence in her life will make her feel less unwanted, less "left out", and less "like a loser": "Because right now, I don't really care that I don't have a boyfriend. Maybe I'm not ready, but I just want one. So I can say that I've had

one and people can stop making jokes that I've never had one!" (PJJasmine16, 34:44, 86).

Later, Jasmine adds:

Yes, this is going to be another story about how I feel like such a loser because I've never had a boyfriend. I was with my friend Bonnie today and she kept saying "Oh, I have got to hook you up with someone." But I kept getting like all embarrassed and stuff, because I felt so ugly. I feel like, oh I could never be set up with a guy, because they'd all believe, "No way, she's ugly" or they'd think I was weird □. I feel ugly and stupid whenever someone mentions hooking me up with a guy. How am I ever going to get a boyfriend... I guess when I get beautiful. (PJJasmine16, 34:45, 89)

Jasmine devalues herself as she fails in her struggle to attain girlfriend status. She internalizes her "failure" and ascribes it to "lack of beauty". Van Roosmalen (2000) found, "attractiveness is defined in part by pubertal maturity, in part by social acceptance (popularity), in part by whether one is culturally judged to be pretty, and in part by availability" (p. 215). Very often, the adolescent girl seems to be at risk of behaving as if she is too available in terms of sexual behaviour because of her fear that demonstrating a lack of availability will result in her achieving nothing in the 'dating market' (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990). Sexual attractiveness is based on the ability to exchange rewards that are normally expected because of her association with the other sex. Such exchanges increase the power relationships between male and female partners in which the first ones usually seems to command services and hold the power over the second one.

Some research on gender relationships claims that young women are pitted against girls in their attempts to attain and preserve relationships with the other sex (Holland &

Eisennhart, 1990; Thompson, 1994). Furthermore, there is an emphasis on competitiveness in their relationships with other female friends because of the "valued" male. Riviere (1964) sustains that popularity, social success, and sociability, "besides their many other uses and significances, are also wider and more generalized forms of similar behaviour in definitely sexual attachments, such as the tendency to have many love affairs either at once or successively" (Riviere, 1964, p. 25).

Jasmine's emotions and conflicts in relation to finding a mate are shared by other participants. However, I chose to use the journal entries of the participant whose concerns are expressed in the highest frequency in her writings. Such concerns are related to issues of sexuality and gender relationship, which will be the focus of the following section.

Relationships with friends seem to be interconnected with issues that discuss relationships with boyfriends. Many of the participants' writings about their friends and their relationships with them, cover the issue of dating. Indeed, the theme discussed in the following section is that of relationships with boyfriends.

Relationship with Boyfriend

In this section I discuss participants' journal entries regarding their relationships with boyfriends. The frequency of their entries on boyfriends and their relationship with them is the highest one in comparison to the themes of explored in their writings. In my participants' journals there are more than 450 entries devoted to discussions about the boyfriends.

Teenage girls and young women are preoccupied with the object of love and spend a large amount of their time thinking, talking and writing about him. Their entries on their relationship with the boyfriend deal with issues of their phantasies and desires, fears of being

alone, fears of rejection, their tendencies to return to lost love relationships again and again, to "wait for him" and issues of sexuality.

Euphoria – Phantasies and boyfriend

In psychoanalytic terms the state of being in love is the condition where there is space for the ego and the object. Kristeva (1984) draws on Freud when she talks about love relationships and the various ways in which they are orchestrated. Love is identified as pertaining to narcissistic investments, which are considered a necessary element "for the living being to last, to stay alive, to preserve itself" (Kristeva, 1984, p. 24). Additionally, love has the feature of idealization, which is defined as "the possibility for this living being to project the self through an ideal instance and to identify with it" (p. 24). Even though in different organizations of love relationships the emphasis may be placed on narcissism, idealization, erotic expression, or violence, there are two main components that last and endure: narcissism and idealization. In the same vein, Kaplan (1984) claims that the narcissistic quality of the love relationship infiltrates early sexual partnerships. What she describes as the main characteristics of adolescents' love relationships are some of the main themes that emerge in the narrative engagements of the participants on the issue of their relationship with the boyfriend.

Most of the first love relationships are merely narcissistic exploitations since they are labeled as self-serving. In the first state of such relationships lovers become entirely absorbed with one another, partners are idealized and adored, and they "mirror the state of absolute perfection" (Kaplan, 1984, p. 218). However, feelings of despair, hopelessness, mistrust, and betrayal follow the ecstatic first love relationship and, after a period of time,

this past gets immortalized, "perhaps not exactly as it was but as we wished it might have been" (p. 221). An image of a magical love affair is developed that cannot be matched. Both men and women tend to engage in the pursuit of magical love; "they harbor the fantasy that sooner or later they will be rescued from an everyday life that has grown dreary. Fantasy⁸ and illusion are what remodel and enrich everyday life" (Kaplan, 1984, p. 221). In this section, I will discuss some of the phantasies about the boyfriend and young women's love relationships as articulated in the journal entries.

Astrid explores her attraction to a boy of her age. What is striking in her descriptions of his physical appearance is her realization that this boy she is so attracted to does not fit in to the idealized mainstream muscular male figure. On the contrary, she is attracted to a boyish, innocent young man who bears the symbol of the "uncorrupted". What is even more interesting in her revelation is the fact that she takes pleasure in twisting her "image of him into something innocent":

i remember crouching in the snow and looking up, seeing the outline of
[Tom's] face silhouetted against the moon and the sky, curiously watching
him close his eyes and hold it in his mouth. i've been wanting this for a long
time; i take some sick pleasure in watching what is in my mind the perfect
symbol of uncorrupted, virgin little-boy innocence taking in forbidden
poisonous delight, i like to watch mind alter slowly. but he's done this much
more than me. yeah, pot is something my little boy [Tom] has much more
knowledge than me. i fool myself by twisting my image of him into
something innocent.

that's my clearest memory of the night, his face against the moonlight
exhaling smoke. (PJAstrid17, 1:201, 503-504)

In the following entry, Astrid perpetuates the phantasy that her childhood years were innocent and pure. As in other passages, where she discusses the changes she went through during adolescence, Astrid mourns her past. Astrid longs for the days of perfection that are things of the past. She bears the grief and heartache of adolescence by nostalgia, by arousing memories of the delicious past. This is what Louise Kaplan (1984) discusses in her work, *Adolescence: The farewell to childhood*: "Nostalgia softens grief. It takes the sting out of the sense of loss. Grief empties the soul. Nostalgia replenishes. Our quiet tears remind us of lost innocence. Just thinking about the goodness that was, engenders a feeling of inner worthiness" (p. 151). In my personal journal I write: "personal journal functions as a box of memories, it becomes a tangible object which is catalytic in order for my participants to have access to their experiences" (RPJ, 64). Astrid struggles between the longing of her lost perfect past and her desire to find herself through her engagements with friends, lovers, and peers:

i'm still in a blissful cloud of numb thoughts. i remember these bits but i
can't think too deeply about it. why am i doing this, i wonder? for years and
years and years i was a good little girl who never lied, never sneaked around
parents. how odd that the same time i go on medication i start doing these
things. there i go blaming the pills again-i love having a scapegoat. so why
am i doing this, and why is it suddenly in my eyes, no longer wrong? and
what is my sick obsession to watch the corruption of clean souls. I think i'm
cursed with multiple personalities or something. oppositions pull me apart

inside. there’s the extroverted bubbly girl i am at school, and the introverted quiet weirdo at home... but there’s the other side. i don’t want to be like everyone else. i don’t want to sink into this mediocrity everyone lives on. i don’t want to smoke weed to be part of a big group... i don’t want my doing this make me become like everyone else. how strange, i make no sense.

(PJAstrid17, 1:207, 522-527)

It becomes evident in her personal writings that her “fascination with the corruption of the innocent” magnetizes her thinking and analytical skills. Her return to this subject over and over again in her journal entries assists her each time to move a step forward in her analysis of self and self-understanding. She tries to scrutinize her fascination with her friend, [Tom], and finds that her attraction to him is not a sexual one, but one that emerges from what he represents to her. As she has stated previously, she acknowledges, “That i like to watch him smoke because of my sick pleasure in the corruption of little boys is only part of it” She adds, “it’s how he can be the most mature adult and at the same time the most innocent young child” (PJAstrid17, 1:216, 532). The following entry is what Astrid has copied and pasted from an online discussion she had with a friend regarding this issue. Astrid realizes that her “fascination with the corruption of the innocent” derives from the fact that she once used to be innocent. As she mourns her past of lost perfection and lost innocence, she envies other people’s innocence and takes pleasure by phantasizing that the innocents become corrupted. She confesses that she wants “to see other people fall too”:

Astrid: can you explain my fascination of corruption of the innocent?

Rob: cus you used to be innocent.

Astrid: and now i'm not, so i want to see other people fall too?

Rob: yes. (PJAstrid17, 1:281, 824:827)

The image of 'the princess marrying the prince and living happily ever after' is common in the journal writings of the young women participating in this study. The desire to find someone 'meant for her' emerges through their entries. Daniele describes the night of her prom and refers to the politeness of her "gentleman" who offered to pull out her chair and get her coat when she felt cold, and who danced with her like they were "the only two people on earth". Even more, Daniele is attracted by him singing to her lyrics that went along the lines: "all my life I prayed for someone like you" and "I'll never let you go":

The night went absolutely perfect. He acted like a complete gentleman, pulling the chair back for me, and offering to get me my coat when he knew I was cold. Who says chivalry is dead?

We danced together the whole night, and for the first time, I experienced what it was like to feel like you and the one you love are the only two people on earth. It was a great feeling. He sang into my ear, each term of endearment that was mentioned in the songs. "All, my life, I prayed for someone like you..." When the last song came on, we danced like never before, as we held each other as tight as we could. "I'll never let you go" (PJDaniele17, 6:16, 35-36)

The phantasy of endless love inspires Daniele's writings. Furthermore, Daniele elaborates on her phantasy of being Cinderella waiting for her "charming prince to rescue her". In her diary, she uses a quotation to describe how deeply he touched her that night: "They read you Cinderella, you hoped it would come true, that one day your prince charming would come rescue you". Then she writes: "He's finally come, ladies and

gentlemen, and I Love Him. I hope he understands that" (PJDaniele17, 6:18, 37-39). What is evident from these writings is what feminist theorists propose regarding the conception of gendered relationships and the expression of adolescent girls' 'boyfriend' desires: that they are based on traditional double standards and gender-developed cultural stereotypes (Kalof, 1995; Van Roosmalen, 2000; Wolf, 1997).

The desire of finding a prince to eventually marry emerges in the private writings of other participants as well. Endless love and marriage are themes identified in poems, songs, and dreams recorded in their personal journal entries. Very often, adolescents and young adult women perceive their relationship with their boyfriend as possibly leading to marriage. They often fantasize about their marriage and their future love together. Heidi "really wants" her relationship with her boyfriend to "last". Even though they are together for only a couple of months and are still young for marriage, she is preoccupied with this idea. Heidi is consciously aware of the fact that "females tend to fantasize of such things [marriage] more than males":

What is on my mind, though, is my relationship with [Andy]. I couldn't be happier with the way things are going, and have never been so deeply in love. He is so nice, sweet, considerate, cute, that I am able to (and quite happily so) picture myself marrying him. The thought brings tears to my eyes, to realize what I have found in him and in us. When I say I love him, something stirs in me which is more than infatuation or desire. I really want this to last, but I also realize that in reality we have only been seriously together for a couple of months, and we are both still young for marriage (and females tend to

fantasize of such things more than males) but I do deeply hope that is where this is heading. (PJHeidi19, 19:32, 81)

In her writing, Heidi reveals her deepest desires: she wears one of her own rings on her finger because she wants to show to others that she is in a 'serious relationship'. Popular culture and cultural expectations reinforce the image of the girl who is "boy crazy" (van Roosmalen, 2000). As the search for a boyfriend becomes a priority in adolescence, cultural expectations come to pressure the ideal of marital status as the anticipated outcome of gendered relationships. As girlfriends and close peer groups play a pivotal role in defining the dating experience, securing a marital status out of the relationship with the boyfriend appears with great heaviness in the desires as expressed in the private writings of the participants. Under this lens, Heidi's disclosure of her secret acquires a different meaning:

I always wear one of my rings on my finger to show others I am in a serious relationship, to show I am in love and even though I told [Andy] it was not a hint, it is certainly an indication of where I hope we will be in the future. I just told him about this, this weekend, and am not quite sure how to gage his reaction. I am anticipating an email and further talks. (PJHeidi19, 19:32, 82)

The function of such concealment at the psychological level is quite important. Heidi hides a desire to be recognized as being in serious relationship, as being worthy of having a husband. Priscilla, too, uses her journal to symbolize desires of being worthy of to be loved. In her entry she fantasizes her getting married and having children. She plans and gives details of the wedding place, the person who will walk her down the aisle, the maid-of-honor and the bridesmaid. I am surprised by the fact that Priscilla uses her journal pages to visit again and again this ideal of finding a soul-mate and marrying him. Even more, Priscilla gets

involved in detailed plans about her marriage and tends to find magic in coincidences and translates them as signs that reveal and maintain the truthfulness of her wishful thinking:

I need to be loved. Oh and I decided that I do want children some day and I am going to get married at “Church of our Lady”... And if my real “biological” father can’t be there to walk me down the aisle, I don’t want my brothers to (like at my sister’s wedding). I want [Father Michael] to walk me down the aisle and Juliana to be my maid-of-honor, meaning I will reveal to her everything about me to the present, and [Myrriam] will be my bridesmaid. [Father Michael] will wed us “[Peter]and me”.

Oh I forgot. Then after I saw the [Peter]-look-a-like I saw the sign of the community centre that read “ Peter Community centre” and I started thinking that’s it’s no mistake or just a simply coincidence that I met him. I met him for a reason. And I am still looking for that reason. I think he may be my soulmate; I love him. Also the fact that we have the same names and that there is so much “explosive” passion when we kiss, when we make love, when we’re together. I need him and I feel like he needs me too.

(PJPriscilla20, 70:307, 1182-1183)

The young women in this study engage in written articulations of their phantasies and desires of being worthy subjects, desires of having an important role in the life of an other, and of acquiring power through a relationship with the other. These young women are often involved in wishful thinking and ‘wishful writing’: writing that carries such value for them as it underlines narcissistic desires of worthiness and loveliness. What I find also interesting is that my participants’ personal journal functions as a vehicle to reflect on the

limitations and expectations of womanhood, as well as, the idealization of marriage and of securing gendered relationships. Such cultural expectations and pressures on teenage girls and young women will be re-visited and discussed further in the following sections of this chapter.

Phobias – Fears of being alone

In contrast to the fantasies of the young women for endless love, long-lasting relationships, and marriage, Daniele becomes less trustful of the endless love images and re-evaluates her relationships as she gets older. She is unsure of the future. She now thinks that the concept of ‘love forever’ is not something that should be taken for granted when referring to relationships. Fears of losing the love object stop her from thinking that her love will last forever:

Sometimes, I say things just because I want to see how you’ll respond to it...

I’m sorry. But this time, I don’t think I said what I did to see what you would say. It’s not that I don’t think your love is strong, or that you don’t really love me.

Sometimes I think that it’s better not to think you’ve got something forever; that it’s not such a great thing thinking or knowing what great things the future holds for us. Not because I don’t want that, but just because I don’t want to lose that... I know I’ve used this quote before...: "The way to love anything, is to realize it may be lost."- G.K. Chesterton (PJDaniele18, 7:64, 409-417)

Neither does Odette believe that her relationship with her love object will last forever. As I try to understand the numerous accounts of fear in the belief of love and lasted connectedness with a partner, I sense a fear of rejection. Riviere (1964) argues that the search for security and greater pleasure in love and sexual relationships is intertwined with the interaction of love and hate impulses, as well as with the fear of loss. The fear of losing the love object drives those women to reject and deny the potentiality of their relationship with the other object. This fear seems to work in the same way as rejection. Rejection can even be a method of loving “distorted indeed, but aiming at the preservation of something unconsciously felt to be ‘too good for me’”. Desertion then ‘saves’ the goodness thus recognized, spares it and rescues it from own worthlessness, which could ruin it” (Riviere, p. 23). Odette fears that ‘he’ will vanish from her life soon. She finds him ‘too perfect for words’ and describes him as “a perfect illusional oasis” that she has come to accept as truth: “Soon you will vanish, leaving behind no trace of your existence save for a black and white photograph taken on a day that will forever remain in my memory as cherished. And I will be alone...” (PJOdette20, 65:25, 373). In the following lyrics she has written, Odette expresses this same fear, the fear of losing the “things she holds most dear”:

The world is a vein place to be
from which one is enable to escape.
...Why bother loving for today?
When nothing even matters anyway?
....In living life, just merely here
When I wish I could just disappear
When all the things I hold most dear

Become the things that I most fear. (PJOdette21, 66:4, 17:33)

Thanatos – Rejection and grief

Through writing and self expression it becomes possible to communicate feelings of grief and pain. A personal act of communication takes place without the need for an audience, except for the one person who writes and lays out her thoughts and emotions on the page. In psychoanalytic terms grief is considered the basic reaction to object loss. Arguably, journal writers use their writing as a process to tolerate grief by withdrawing themselves from the person they had entrusted themselves to. When love is close, the emotional investment is deeper and the reparation process difficult. Adolescence is characterized by emotional depths and extremities (Gilligan, 1990). In my study the young women’s personal journals contain pages of distress over ‘break-ups’ and separations. As Klein (1964) argues, whenever a person receives love, the “feeling of security becomes an important component of the satisfaction” (p. 58). When this feeling of security is at risk and fear of loss of the love object arises, depressive and unendurable feelings of unworthiness emerge and bring along fears of loneliness and of being unlovable.

These feelings of loneliness, hurt, and distress are revealed in the journal excerpts discussed in this section. The loss of the feeling of closeness to her boyfriend, the loss of his love and affection, is experienced as devastating. Her despair touches me. What affects me most is that she feels that she has no one to turn to, except for her diary. Her diary is her Savior. This is where she ‘vents’ her frustration:

i don’t think i can deal with it. it hurts so much. i feel so unbelievably alone.

he’s grown so cold. how could it be over so quick? it has never hurt like this

before....i just feel...alone. helplessly alone. like i am bursting with emotions and things to say, and there is no one out there who'll hear me,...because i can't ensure that there is anyone in the universe that actually cares about me. oh diary, i am so sad, and it is silly. ...i can't unload this pain anywhere. ...what can i do, diary? i'm going mad. i need a distraction. i can't fall apart like this. i must...i must at least put on a strong act. no more, diary, ...complaining to my friends. only in here will i vent. no one else will know, and maybe, then, this frustration will go away. (PJAstrid17, 1:234, 597-598)

The use of the personal journal as a place to articulate feelings and represent grief and pain with words is curative and liberating. Berman (1985), who approached Sylvia Plath's personal journal from a psychoanalytic perspective, claims that her personal writings depict the horror and loneliness of her life "and yet her journals are not unrelentingly bleak. To acknowledge the depths of her rage seemed to be liberating to her, and, however painful her self-analysis was, it also provided her with relief from her suffering" (pp. 130-131). Berman's insights illuminate for me how Astrid proves her capacity to tolerate frustration through written expression, through self-communication on page, by herself with her journal.

Irene, as well, uses her personal journal to express distress and pain from being rejected. She confesses, "I never realized how much it would hurt me" and considers that these "were the worst two days of my life". She finds rescue in her friend – her journal – who helps her through it. It is this friend to whom she turns whenever feelings of despair

overwhelm her as she wishes she can preserve all the memories of her relationship with her boyfriend, however painful that might be:

Well, this is it, last night [James] said that he couldn't take the long distance relationships and that we should part ways. Well, we did. It's over. Dad says that there are plenty of fish in the sea. But I don't WANT any other fish, I want my fish.. I already packed up all the stuff I had around my room. ...I wish there was a way to pack up the memories that will hurt me later of course. I want to keep all of our happy memories. (PJIrene16, 24:14, 57)

The use of metaphors to express such intense feelings of hurt runs through the personal writings of the young women. Journal writers, as well as poets, use metaphors as a way to "describe by transference something that is, possibly, indescribable" (Wylie, 1995, p. 219). Irene feels devastated by her break-up with her boyfriend. However, she is able to create a visionary image, a metaphoric one that allows her to imagine her painful feelings and represent them. Her grief and hurt is symbolized in words and images of "a huge slash" in her heart, which has been "ripped open" and "ducked in lemon juice":

Dear Diary,

You know that huge slash in my heart that has been healing? Well I was almost healed but that wound has just ripped open. And been ducked in lemon juice. Yeap, that's how it hurts... It was so wonderful to be with him again, to kiss him and just be held but this morning I got an email from [Nick], he was forwarding an email he got from [James] saying that he wished last night never happened. That he wants to go back to Stratford and be single again. I wish Jiggles was here, but he's in Montreal. I really need to

talk to him. But you know what? I've decided to give up on men. I just don't know how to handle them properly and besides I never "like" any of the guys that crush on me. They are always geeks in the case of [Nick], good friends that I wouldn't date. And the one time that I find the right guy. It ends up falling apart in the most painful way possible. (PJ Irene 16, 24:22, 94-95)

In the last sentences of this journal entry, after she explains why she feels that the wound in her heart has been ripped open again, she engages in a process of self-understanding as a way to ease her pain. In one paragraph, I sense a passionate desire for her love object, the excruciating pain of losing him, and in the next paragraph a rejection of men and, indirectly, a denunciation of her true likeness and love of him. According to Riviere (1964), rejecting and denying our ardent desire to something we love brings along mixed feelings of hate and revenge. This depreciation of the loved person and loss of belief in goodness is a useful mechanism that enables us to bear disappointment and frustration without becoming hostile. Furthermore, "a certain degree of depreciation of any loved person or thing that has been renounced is probably inevitable, even if it be a little more than an awakening to the fact that the desired one had been too greatly idealized" (Riviere, p. 19). Feelings of frustration, 'shock', and unloveableness emerge from the next journal passage where Irene attempts to analyze her reaction to despair and unconscious jealousy. Even though she rejects the possibility that she is jealous of the new girlfriend of her ex-boyfriend, she 'is crying' as she realizes the false beliefs she created to protect herself from feelings of unworthiness:

At the beginning of summer, [James] and I broke up, but we were still really close (and still sleeping together) until mid-summer when he developed a

crush on [Erica]. Then today, I ran into him holding hands with a girl. When I got home, he called me JUST to tell me that she's his girlfriend. He didn't ask me how I was or anything, just that she was his girlfriend, that's all.

And I'm surprisingly upset. I'm actually crying right now. It's not that I'm jealous. She's a nice girl and all. I guess I just had this crazy idea that after a 4 year relationship there would be a little more of a wait until the next girl.

(PJIrene19, 27:12, 44:45)

Irene goes on to remind herself that she should not, and does not have the right to, be upset since "it's not like we're still dating". She uses her journal not only to express her feelings but, in addition, to understand her self; to reach, touch, and heal herself, to ease her frustration, and rationalize why she should distance herself from the other, the source of her grief. In the same vein, Nicole repeats again and again in her journal that she should 'get him out' of her head. She does not want to take her necklace off, because her "heart will break" and she will feel "empty" and "sad". She knows that it "will never work, but it just makes me so sad to know that. I just have to accept that [he] is a part of my past now... and get him out of my head/heart..." (PJNicole17, 60:51, 337). Irene's uses of the journal bring to mind Wylie (1995) who analyzed how women of past centuries let themselves 'break' quietly in the pages of their diaries. Wylie argues that "whatever the cause of the emotional wound, the recovery has to start within consciousness of the person suffering. When the internal pain becomes unbearable, it may burst onto the private pages of a diary" (p. 84).

We can observe the journal functioning as a transitional object for self-holding and self-healing in the writing of another study participant, Nicole. Feeling "drained and exhausted" after her break-up conversation with her boyfriend, she uses her personal journal

to initiate 'recovery'. Nicole 'talks' to her ex-boyfriend through her diary, responds to his 'imaginative' questions, and uses arguments to build up her rationale for 'moving on' and withdrawing herself from him. In her journal entry she argues that it is impossible for her to stay friends with someone she is in love with. She fears that she will never meet anybody else "because she is still attached to him".

which is the reason why I think we need to not talk so that I can separate myself from everything, be on my own, be without you and then come back when I am ok with everything. You think we would stop talking completely - I say... I don't know. I have no clue. All I know is that right now I badly want to call you. I think another part of it is just habit maybe, that I am so used to you in my life that life without you seems like something impossible. ...You say you get shit from your friends for talking to me. Try every single person in the entire world, who tut and sigh and get pissed when I mention your name. and I hate it - they have no clue who you are and are so judgemental about us. ...I am made to feel like shit for talking to you - but the point is that I do anyways. ...maybe I am trying to make myself believe that so we can still be in each other's side, when in reality it might be time to move on. (PJNicole19, 62:72, 300-302)

The journal functions as an object used for reparation also for Odette. She, too, comes to realize that recovery depends on the avoidance of interaction with the person she is trying to forget about. As she talks to her ex-boyfriend on the pages of her journals, she realizes that "this situation seems to be making [her] physically ill", and wonders whether "the pain will ever go away". Even though, sometimes, she feels "at peace in my heart, by

being able to 'place my future in God's capable hands', at other times, like the present, I feel the life being squeezed out of my body by a coldness that surpasses anything I've ever felt before. It leaves me numb" (PJOdette19, 64:128, 730). In this private entry, Odette uses words, phrases, and metaphors to symbolize calmness and frustration, denial and despair, hope and depression. As is evident in her later journal entries, Odette goes through the many stages of grief repeatedly. Wylie (1995) also finds that women use their diaries to explore several reactions to grief, such as despair, distress, fright, comfort, denial, tears, pain, hate, anger, depression, guilt, fear, pity, and hope: "A diarist can go through all the stages of grief as many times as she needs to. Grief is a staggering experience but it can be an immensely creative process, a learning, growing evolution" (Wylie, p. 84). Odette's creativity is witnessed in an entry where she articulates feelings such as apathy, excitement, despair, hope, anger, disappointment, pain, jealousy, and self-pity. In almost every sentence there is a metaphor or two. Her language is poetic, words carefully written and interconnecting with other words creating a diverse rhythmic whole:

like the last rays of sun before the sun dips behind the horizon when it sets.
spectacular. lasting for a brief moment before the fall of darkness. like my
shooting star. it's once in a lifetime. savour the moment for all it's worth
because that's just what it is. a moment signifying absolutely nothing...
unrequited love. the story of my life. he led me on. he played me and i was
blind to the game. goodness, this is killing me. it's like some cruel joke. it's
horrible... as i lay there, toying with the idea, tortured at the thought of
having been so blatantly manipulated by the one guy who had sculpted
himself a place in my heart, the phone rang... i was a mess. bad thoughts

running through my head as steadily as the stream of cascading mascara. it's all so disappointing... i'm not mad. just brutally disappointed. i'm hurting... and all this time, i believed in something... and i let myself believe it, unreservedly and wholeheartedly. i would have given anything to see him smile again but now i know i never will... and if i'm brutally honest with myself, i admit that i still consider him a part of mine... at least for now. until the coldness goes away... (PJOdette19, 64:130, 739-742)

Odette revisits past journal entries and reflects on her feelings. She goes through an awakening, re-evaluating process, a conscious attempt to understand her self, her reactions, and emotions. Once again she realizes that abstaining from memories and thoughts of her lost object is the only way out of her ordeal. What she realizes is that "it hurts" and she "can't help it"; that she is "stuck... hardcore....to this boy" and the situation. Memories from the past come alive as she ponders how accomplishments, such as the friendships she's acquired, the mistakes she has made and learned from, and those summer days, which "held good things that make me smile to think of them, of him. It might not be the best thing right now. And it hurts all over again but I can't help it. I'm stuck... hardcore... on this boy" (PJOdette20, 65:35, 422).

Her realization comes after she reads an imaginary letter she wrote to him a few months ago. In this letter-entry Odette states that she is not willing to send him this letter because she's trying very hard to forget him: "it's not working very well but maybe if i write this down, it will become more real in my mind and most importantly in my heart". She describes her bewilderment as she struggles to survive her dilemma, to accept reality or to

live a lie. Interesting is her use of imaginary related to seeing more clearly, as well as her use of the pronoun "you" to speak directly to her lost love, if only in fantasy:

... i believed in a lie and it sustained me when things seemed dim, darkened
by the cruelties only truth can bring to surface. all the trash floating around
beneath the placidity of the body of water upon which my gaze is set. beauty
is in the eye of the beholder... i got a new contact lens prescription and it's
messing up my perspective. it will take adjustment. it would be easier to just
squint my way through life without having to see the details... the words
written in fine print. but what kind of life would that be? a life lived in
ignorance... in pretense that all is well when all is not. you will most likely
never know how much your response is killing me. the way i dream of you
only to wake up empty, knowing that your affections for me have waned or
never were... ever. it breaks my heart. i don't wish that i had been the one to
cause you this pain and so i'm glad it was you who cut it short and not i. i
couldn't bear the thought of causing you this extent of ache... it takes my
breath away. and as i close this letter that you shall never read, i pray that
God will bless you and keep you. that He would make His face to shine upon
you and give you His peace... for the Lord in the midst of thee is mighty. He
will quiet you with his love. He will rejoice over you with singing. may all
joy be yours. (PJOdette20, 65:34, 417-418)

Here, the transitional object is functioning as both material of reality and also as
illusory space. What is interesting is the change in Odette's 'voice' from this letter to the one
used in entries written a few months later. There is something different. Even though there is

a sense of bitterness in her letter to him, Odette is "glad" that it is she who suffered and not him; she prays for him, to be blessed, to be shone upon by love and peace and joy. Her journal serves as a transitional space for elaborating an odyssey of learning to see and even learning to love in the face of loss.

A few months later she identifies the mistakes she made to be "stuck" with him, but her journal entries still express a working-through her chaotic feelings. She uses colorful metaphors: "if i only had an ocean to compliment the sky i'd pull it down and paint it for you and i'd never question why" (PJOdette20, 65:45, 462). She continues: "cause "red would mean you loved me" and "blue would mean you cared" but black my heart when left alone to cold and killing stairs. this is the burning of a dream" (PJOdette20, 65:45, 462). Odette tries "in vain to forget" him but her "effort is a waste of time" and she returns to self-loathing: "and I ask myself when will it be my turn? And I hate myself for being weak. And I hate myself for not being content where I am and my temporary status of a solitary life..." (PJOdette20, 65:136, 741). Resentment, antipathy, self-pity, and self-hate emerge from the later entries about him. Is this a process of self-realization? Is it a defense mechanism against the unbearable feelings of despair and frustration resulting from breaking up with him and losing her love object? Feelings get reported in the journal. An array of even contradictory feelings are acknowledged and symbolized. Journal writers engage in written expression because "it is a writing which allows the often terrifying memories, dreams, phantasies, and condensed, highly symbolic images of the unconscious mind to 'break through' to consciousness" (Yorke, 1991, p. 51). The personal journal works as a 'constant companion', as a 'friend' (transitional object), and a 'confidante' in the voyage in which "parts of the self are lost to history and time at the same time as the finding of the new self (and the bad

objects of the new self, i.e., the sexual self), get struggled over in times of acceptance”

(Robertson, 2006, p. 3).

Hysteria – Getting back with him

I discussed earlier how acquiring “boyfriend status” increases girls’ popularity within their peer groups and how important it is for their self-image and their acceptance into the group to be popular (Newman & Newman, 1991; Van Roosmalen, 2000). Girls’ attractiveness and prestige is related to the attention they receive from the other sex (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990; Mann, 1994). Van Roosmalen (2000) postulates, “the connection and acceptance that popularity represents are fundamental to girls’ understanding of where they fit into the patriarchal social order—a social order that has particular expectations and conventions of femininity for girls and women” (p. 216). In the analysis of the young women’s journal entries on their gendered relationships, many instances are apparent that reveal that adolescent girls face cultural pressure in order to adapt to idealized forms of gendered relationships and meanings of femininity that are culturally drafted (Friedman, 1994). In the previous section, I presented how female diarists deal with unbearable feelings of distress in their journals resulting from trouble in their relationships with boyfriends. In this section I discuss a tendency of denial, a propensity to ‘go back’ to the previous ‘safe’ state, to ‘get back together’, rejecting all promises to be strong and move on. There is a cycle: forming a relationship, breaking up, getting back together, breaking up, and getting back together again. There is repetition in the pattern of behavior and a repetition of the emotional states. What is evident is that the girls in this study tend, due to cultural pressures

among other things, to want to utilize the pages of their journals to replay their lost relationships and express their fear towards singleness.

For example, Astrid is single and feels 'suddenly insecure'. She misses having someone to talk to. What she longs for is that feeling that "in theory she knew there was someone there for her", even though she could not always get a hold of him. She repeats to herself that being single is "an important time where she can develop as an individual and learn to be strong". She detests the fact that she is not strong and behaves "all mopey over" him and decides one more time that "it's time to get over" him—that is, until her thought in the last sentence: "Yes, it's time to get over [Tom]. Unless, of course, he wants to get back together." (PJAstrid17, 1:255, 666-669).

She spirals around indecision: to refrain from any interaction with him or succumb if "he wants to get back together". She uses her journal as a potential space to fantasize about capitulation. Van Roosmalen (2000) agrees that female adolescents construct their understandings of sexuality and gendered relationships in terms of a "male gaze". Male culture "rewards [girls] for being passive and deferential, sensitive and tenderhearted, for tempering their opinions, for being attractive, and for putting the needs of others ahead of their own—in other words, for conforming to a patriarchal standard of femininity" (van Roosmalen, p. 223-224). In the following excerpt, what we find in Irene's voice, as she asks her diary not to punish her for getting back with her ex-boyfriend, is a guilt-ridden speculation of the rightness of her choice: "Dear Diary, Please don't kick me... I'm back with [James] again. But I have a feeling that now it's for good! I don't think I've ever been so happy!" (PJIrene16, 24:27, 100-101). Irene knows that getting back with him might not be the best for her so she asks her diary not to reprimand her. In another entry she "decides

to keep him around” and accepts his excuse, however implausible: “He told me that the reason he never invited me to parties with the guys or to any get-togethers is because he was afraid that I would like them better than him. Or that they would like me better [...] but I don’t think that will happen so everything is fine now!” (PJ Irene 18, 26:15, 32). As Currie (1999) argues, young women accept any condition in their cultural pursuit of femininity, and they rehearse this process in their journals.

Nicole, after having removed the ‘necklace’, a symbol of her love to her boyfriend, accepts to put it back on after he asks her to do so. A year later she realizes that there is a pattern of behavior in her life that is repeated again and again:

I think my whole life is just going around in circles.

Everything is a pattern:

[Tim] last summer we got together, it was great for almost 2 months, then he just disappeared... in October we got back together ...it was around

Christmas that it got serious and was great again, then we broke up on April 1st. then a month later we got back together (around May 21st ish?) and now its getting weird again like it always does? Question mark? (PJ Nicole 18, 61:21, 51-53)

The absence of security in her relationship with her boyfriend and the repeated break-ups and get-togethers dominate the journal. She does not know what to do. She realizes that it is not for her benefit that she should stay with him, but she cannot break up with him because she does not want to ‘break his heart’. Self-sacrifice directs her decision, as well as her hidden desire not to lose him, to have ‘him near by’, to retain any form of relationship with him. Her journal serves as the holding space for the expression of her turmoil:

AND THE PROS...?

I feel like I can't even think of any because my brain is so cluttered with all the negative -...It's fucked up. I don't know what I want. I think I need to be by myself. I know I do (I think?) But is so, I can't bring myself to break his heart. And if so, I don't want him completely gone - I want him near by --- just in case, which is awful - I feel so terrible about myself. (PJNicole19, 62:100, 451-454)

Nicole's journal is also the medium for self-expression. She feels terrible about herself and such feelings emerge as she watches *The Notebook*, a movie that celebrates the irresistible power of fate and the powerful strength of 'first love'. She gets confused by all the ambivalent feelings about him and the relationship they once had. In her journal writing we find her becoming more and more overwhelmed by her instinctive habit to call him, to talk to him, which she presents metaphorically as 'breathing' for her:

I just want something pure. And I shouldn't have seen the notebook because all its doing is making me think of [Tim] - and I am scared because I think he was my first love, but then I wonder what it was that we really had - because I can't remember. All I can think of now is all the politics and shit that surrounds us - its like that took over and it made me loose sight of what we were, what we had.

We spent so little time together. Now I doubt what I felt, but I don't. I don't know, I just wish I could stop thinking of him. Because when I am thinking of [Tim] my heart aches and I want to call him so bad - I want him so bad.

I need to take the summer to get over him. Obviously it will take time. I look at this as our real break up because now we won't be talking anymore... I need to get out of the habit of talking to him. Its instinct, its like breathing - I call him without even thinking of it. I wish I knew what he felt. (PJNicole19, 62:101, 417-420).

Nicole's intuition alarms her of the possibility of 'losing' him. She is in dilemma between her desire to be with him and her logic thinking that bring doubts to her initial feelings for him. Even though, she senses that avoiding him would work for her best interest, she finds it suffocating. Odette, as well, is devastated by her boyfriend's absence. Even though she finds it difficult to relive the whole experience with him, she wishes to "see him again". Even though her "beautiful boy" hasn't written to her for some time, she "still cares about him" and wishes "things could go back to the way they were when things were surreal between us but if I'm honest with myself, I wouldn't be able to live with the charade." She confesses that she somehow feels that she will see him again, but speculates that "by then, he will have done a whole lot of growing up and that we can be friends for real. This, I believe, is called being hopeful... or hopeless? perhaps both..." (PJOdette19, 64:136, 759). Odette is unable to understand her feelings and discern whether being friends with him and regaining some kind of relationship is a hopeful possibility or a hopeless one. In the entry that follows, Odette engages in a powerful metaphorical description of her feelings as she experiences, yet again, "the battle between mind and heart"; feeling once again "duped" and "foolish" and "'dumb" for wanting to believe in him again:

three weeks. three weeks of nothing. and now, out of the blue, a letter urging me to write to him because he misses me, misses hearing from me. he claims

he doesn't want to lose me. and the battle between my mind and my heart
rages on. i'd love to forgive and forget, but i can't deny the fact that he lied to
me. i'm working on my letter of response to him. my brother really can't stand
this guy. i feel so duped. i feel so incredibly foolish for wanting things to go
back to the way they were. i feel so dumb for wanting to believe him
sincere... (PJ Odette 19, 64:154, 814).

Why do Odette and other young women reenact visions of 'happily ever after'
gendered relationships? Why do they retreat to old relationships again and again? Why do
they prefer being the ones to suffer and dread the idea of being the ones that will do the heart
breaking? My participants' journals serve as a battle ground for the expression of conflicted
emotions that seem to go round and round with a dizzying intensity. It seems that the ideal of
loving connects intrinsically with their identity search, and the journal remains loyal to them
in their confusing odyssey. Klein (1964) talks about the "unconscious fear of being
incapable of loving others sufficiently or truly, and particularly of not being able to master
aggressive impulses towards others: they dread being a danger to the loved one" (pp. 62-63).
The journal serves as a space to practice believing that they can re-forge good loving
relationships with the other, thereby proving that they have the potentiality of goodness, and
that the dangerousness in them is absent or safely disposed of. According to Klein, young
women tend to create a "cardinal phantasy of an ever-bountiful never-failing" self that works
as a "defense par excellence against the possibility of feelings either of destitution of
destructiveness arising in oneself" (p. 24). Odette writes a song that celebrates the belief in
recovering from 'bad' memories of the past, trusting the 'good' ones, and anticipating a
potentially blissful future:

i can't live based on last year's memories
can't survive on the dreams of yesterday
i won't settle for yellowed souvenirs
'cause they won't entertain me
in a week from today
sometimes it feels as though
i'm living in the past
the days are rushing by
of growing up way too fast
i can't keep up
with the changes that i face
when all along, the past can't be erased
pieces of paper, tied to memories
unforgotten people and all our stories
the future's yet to be
i'm moving forward slowly
all i know is that i'll get there
eventually
fleeting moments of time
replaying in my mind
things that were once before
things that can't be ignored
fleeting moments of time

replaying in my mind

things that were once before

show up still at my door...

[pieces of paper - subject to change.] (PJOdette20, 65:146, 969-971)

Almost a year later, Odette still finds herself being tempted to 're-initiate' a past relationship. She reads their past e-mails "over again [...] and boy, did that ever bring back pent up emotions i thought i had stuffed away in the far corners of my heart. he's still as admirable as ever". Odette expresses her desire to reconnect with him again even though she does not "think that i can although it is SO something could and probably would do even though i would probably regret it afterwards. i've had to force myself not to call or email him this week. man, it's so hard" (PJOdette21, 66:55, 389). As a reader of her journal I find astounding the times that Odette engages in idealized articulations of her love object. In my researcher's personal journal I keep wondering why my participants are preoccupied with discussions that reveal a pattern of repetitions? "What is the use of the writing in the journal in terms of such repetitions? Why do my participants revisit thoughts and feelings again and again, even after they have been involved in decision making that reassures them to avoid being obsessed with such preoccupations?" (RPJ, 56).

Priscilla, as well, discusses her "ups and downs", being "sad and happy", and her realization that the source of her distress is her failure to forget about him: "I thought I would forget totally about [Peter] but I'm back at it again" (PJPriscilla20, 70:76, 274). Priscilla too, finds it difficult to refrain herself from contacting him: "Then I couldn't stop my fingers from dialing [Peter's] number!". She then remembers "doing something devilish" by telling him that she is planning to visit him soon and "spend some time together", just to

see his reaction. He "grinds" to her idea and tells her "that I was his 'special one' and that he misses me. I don't want to give him again the privilege of my entire self, soul and body. He doesn't deserve it!" (PJPriscilla20, 20:250, 979). Even though she has been disappointed by him in many ways over again, later on Priscilla admits in her journal that she loves him unconditionally: "I miss him so much. Then I realized that I do "love" him. That I love him no matter what he does or says to me" (PJPriscilla20, 70: 304, 1178).

But even though the contours of such inflated, idealized language, Priscilla uses her journal to try to analyze the significance of her repeated returns. She associates her impulse to "get back with him" with her lack of self-esteem. Riviere (1964) would argue her behavior represents her need to perpetuate images of love and goodness in her life. In the journal entries discussed here there is a desire to maintain or "rediscover goodness, as well as to separate it from hate and danger" so as to "lead to continual starts" (p. 23). The argument I am making is that the participants in this study use their personal journals as steadfast and resilient transitional object through which to engage in a process of symbolizing their grief and ambivalence. By repetitively producing impossible mystic statements, they deploy their journals as a shield of armor that will save them from absolute desolation. We have witnessed the young women writing over and over about the same heartaches. Brooks (1984) argues that desire in narratives is served through repetition. He draws on Freud (1950), who theorized 'repetition' as a process associated with trauma, where the human psyche is compelled to repeat distressing events over and over again in the process of learning their significance. I draw on these insights to argue that through repetition, the journal writer engages in the process of discharging her repressed feelings and consequently experiences the pleasure of learning their significance. I would argue that this holds even in cases where

pleasure is disguised in the form of hate, anger, and frustration. The utmost therapeutic value of repetition lies in the fact that it allows unconscious feelings to be symbolized in ways accessible to consciousness.

Hypnosis – “I am waiting for him”

There is a pattern of expectations in women’s gendered relationships with the other. In the journal writings of the participants I identified over 15 statements where the writers affirmed that they are willing to “wait for him”, “wait for his call”, wait for his response to love. Thus, Astrid waits for someone to “step into my life and care and force me to pick myself up off the ground. so i wait. i’ve always been waiting, for someone, something external to save me” (PJAstrid17, 1:386, 1060). The theme of passivity dominates her writings. Astrid, too, waits for someone to save her. And even though Daniele has been disappointed by her boyfriend and fears his reactions, she is willing to “wait for him. Time may go slow, and I may have to wait long, but it doesn't matter. After all, I do have an eternity” (PJDaniele17, 6:7, 20). Heidi feels like “a part of the waiting game!” (PJHeidi18, 18:21, 64) as she waits for his call. She hopes he “gives her a shout” when he comes back, since “so far he has kept his word when calling me back”. Heidi continues with the hope that “he doesn’t get turned off my limits I place since I didn’t allow my pants to come off. Judging by my good-bye I think I’ll be getting a shout later this week” (PJHeidi18, 18:34, 106).

Irene struggles with her conflicting feelings which, on one hand, tell her to wait for him and on the other hand urge her to “forget him”: “Cara has been teasing me about the song “Hopelessly devoted” from “Grease” but she doesn’t know how true it is... And I sit

and wait for him to ask me to dance in school dances! Also, my head is saying “fool forget him” which is true. My heart is saying don’t let go! And I can’t” (PJIrene13, 21:67, 143). In the same vein, Monica wonders why she is waiting for him: “I’m still waiting for a phone call.... Why am I waiting? Why won’t he phone?” (PJMonica21, 57:43, 202). Nicole, though, believes that it would be “total jerkilization” if he would “have it end” and hopes and wishes that “he will call and everything will be fixed and that gooey glowing feeling will be restored”. She “cannot believe that he would do something like this” and is willing to be patient and wait:

You need patience with him, which I have (although it is running short). I can be patient and wait for awhile, but I need to know what’s going on. But I have no idea how to approach it. Cause it could be nothing, or it could be something. If its nothing, he will get pissy. Not sure. But if it is nothing and I bring it up, he will get mad. Arg! I hate this. I shouldn’t be scared to. Its important to me. (PJNicole17, 60:24, 224-225).

Odette uses metaphors of rain and water to express her feelings of enduring emotional turbulence while waiting for his call:

the sound now turns to silence but i'll keep spinning around naked in the rain
of my own tears as they fall into the bucket of your apologies while closing
everyone else's eyes because your own are shut not to see the volume rise
again.

feels like i'm waiting in the last hiding place on earth haman's noose tight
round my neck but i'm saved... and for 100,000 memories been washed
ashore be swept again by forever and sailed away from you. only you could

row my boat ashore, only you could set my fears at rest, but until lack of sympathies regress, i'm still waiting for your call... (PJOdette20, 65:46, 463-464)

The image of the boy as savior is also portrayed in Odette's entry. As in the case of Astrid, Odette waits for him to save her. It could be argued that these young women articulate the culturally accepted notions of femininity that promote passivity and submissiveness in their gendered relationships with the other sex. These entries illustrate the unconscious internal negotiation and struggle they go through in order to secure the possibility of ever talking with him again. The girl-woman has to be passive and tender and patient and wait. Wait for him. By conforming to this patriarchal idealized standard of femininity, she anticipates to hear from him, to talk to him, to meet him. Priscilla describes her distress and depressive mood while waiting for him:

Dearest, it's 10:50 PM and [Peter] still hasn't called. *tears* he told me he really wanted to see me again... I got all dressed up for him - very sexy. I even curled my hair and put sparkles all over my body. I got ready a long time ago - like at 6 PM... ooh he hasn't called me. I've been listening to music and dancing in my room even since so I will not think of suicide or of harming. Myself. I'm so anxious and worried... I feel sad. I stopped studying because I felt tired and had to take a nap. When is he going to call? I'm almost desperate. I even prayed to God and Mary. I'm listening to Shakira right now. Before, I was dancing Cumbrias, and "Supremente" now I'm just on my bed worrying. I sure hope that phone will ring. I don't want to cry because I don't want to mess up my face. But I feel like crying...

I need to be stronger. My heart is so sensitive - and my soul so delicate.

[Peter] - [Peter] - where are you? Why aren't you calling? My Corazon, I've been thinking about ... I've had all day on my mind. (PJPriscilla 19, 69:108, 367-370)

It could be argued that being part of the waiting game exemplifies the power of cultural ideologies that maintain the image of female passivity. In this sense, the journal functions as a transitional object through which to practice cultural norms. Walkerdine (1984) talks about the cultural forces that produce young females' conscious and unconscious desires that "prepare for and proffer a 'happy ever after' situation in which the finding of the prince (the knight in shining armor, 'Mr Right') comes to seem like a solution to a set of overwhelming desires and problems" (p. 163). Such cultural forces are of great importance to the psychic conflicts lived out in the fantasy realms of young women. Arguably, the journal serves as a practice-space through which female role model can be adopted by these young women. At the same time we can identify their struggle resulting from the conflicts they experience in this cultural arena.

I would argue that the journals allow us entry to a collective portrait of young women in significant psychological distress. Females tend "to act out that distress in self-directed, quietly disturbed behaviors" (Harris, Blum, & Resnick, 1991, p. 129). By symbolizing their distress with the waiting process, these young women, once again, engage in the process of bringing unconscious emotions and experiences to consciousness. By discharging their repressed feelings there is a movement from passive to active that allows them to become consciously aware of their tendencies and inner desires. Furthermore, it could be argued that there is an intrinsic desire to be rescued. Robertson (2006) reflects on Priscilla's writing

(above) and argues that “the melodramatic structure of feeling in this passage replays a moral tract of heroism as a cultural ideal and feminine passivity/idealization in relation to this patriarchal idea” (p. 2). There is desire to wait for the prince who will liberate and save her. In their journal pages, the women sometimes playfully engage in this heteronormative phantasy of being the rescued princess. There is an inner hope that he will come back, that he will call, and this hope reassures them to keep on waiting for him. In their journal they keep faith through reassuring themselves. Though these thoughts might upset others if spoken, their journal will not reject them but continue to host their secretive hopes and wishes. It is a faithful transitional object on the journey to Ithaca.

Apocrypha – Sexuality

The centrality of sexuality to identity formation in the passage from adolescence to adulthood has been emphasized in the literature (Shore, 2004). Van Roosmalen (2000) claims that forces of patriarchy and capitalism have an effective role in constructing women and forming adolescent behavior of sexuality and gendered relationships. Sexuality occurs in social settings characterized “by gendered power relations, peer group identity, sexual hierarchy, male dominance, negative attitudes, and labels of deviance” (van Roosmalen, p. 204). In gendered relationships, cultural norms perpetuate the notion that girls are the ones who are accountable for acting as gatekeepers, protecting the moral inertia, and placing the limits on sexual experiences. As Herold (1984) argues, females are expected to offer sex to males as a reward. On the one hand, society encourages girls and women to behave as sex objects and, on the other one, it demands them to be asexual (Lees, 1986; Russett, 1989; van Roosmalen, 2000). Women’s voices are suppressed in terms of speaking openly about their

sexual feelings and desires (Tolman, 1994). Even though there has recently been an increasing interest in exploring female sexuality, it has been revealed that there is a resistant “silencing, denigrating and obscuring of female sexual desire” serving “androcentric notions of female sexuality” (Tolman, 1991). Furthermore, feminist theorists argue that there is an absence of writings about adolescent girls’ sexual desires in the literature on developmental psychology and in society at large (Fine, 1988; Gilligan, 1991). This missing discourse may be one of the contributors to girls’ failure to understand and know themselves as sexual subjects.

Within the dominant culture, girls’ sexual desires are silenced, which poses trouble for girls and for society. When culture discourages girls from knowing their own sexual desires and denies them any bodily experience, girls are made to face a dilemma: “In what relationship can an adolescent girl be with her sexual desire, with her own body, with her own experience?” (Tolman, 1991, p. 59). Dilemmas and questions regarding young females’ struggles with their sexual desires and the cultural prohibitions against such feelings emerge in the personal journal writings of the participants. Astrid is influenced by the stories told to her by her friends and decides to avoid having sex until she gets married. Even so, she expresses her restraint through vividly sexualized language:

i've decided i am never ever ever ever going to have sex. i have heard my friends tell too many stories. no particular stories, they're pretty much the same, girl and guy in loooooove, girl exchanges her virginity in hopes of something deeper, guy becomes a living, walking cock and dumps her ass, and moves on, suddenly an asshole as a confused and still in love girl wonders what happened and what she can do to get him back. you'd think it

just happens in movies but it doesn't. maybe i will wait until i'm married,
then the guy can't walk out on me so easily. if he does, i'll chase after him
down the street and beat him down with a frying pan. (PJAstrid17, 1:66, 74)

Astrid uses humor to approach the issues raised by the controversy between sexual desire and cultural prohibitions. She decides that she is "never ever ever ever having sex" due to disturbing messages that she receives about sexuality and gendered relationships: guys tend to "dump" girls after they have sex. What is interesting is the stereotypical assumption that adolescents hold that having sex is represented as a male goal and abstinence from sex as a female goal (Kalof, 1995; Pipher, 1994; van Roosmalen, 2000). Van Roosmalen suggests, "the underlying principle of heterosexuality in a patriarchal culture demands a sexuality organized around male desire" (p. 214). For Astrid and her peers, having sex is considered to provide pleasure to boys, therefore these girls seem to believe that by giving in to sex and male desire, they sacrifice themselves. Such views are shared by Daniele. Daniele faces the same dilemma: should she wait until she gets married to have sex or not? She questions whether sex is an expression of love. Very often, the concept of love provides the ground for emotional manipulation, since love is used to rationalize female sexual activity. Girls seem to accept the notion that they are excused to have sex only when they love someone and are loved by them. Sex can be engaged legitimately as an expression of love. Love eases their fear of being cheated.

When I was younger, I always wondered why it was so hard for people to wait until they were married to well, you know, have sex. I made a rule for myself: that I would save myself until I was married. It's no big deal right? Now, I think not. I guess that the reason I decided that I would wait is to

make sure that it was love, just so that I wouldn't "waste" it all for one brief moment of passion with someone that I didn't really love and vice versa.

But, I've recently learned that you don't have to be married to prove that it really IS love that you're in. Plus, with today's divorce and separation rates, marriage doesn't hold much of a guarantee that what you're feeling is Love.

(PJDaniele17, 6:35, 91-92)

Cultural messages are evident in Daniele's thinking. She wants to "make sure it is love" so she "won't waste" herself for a "brief moment of passion". Daniele is aware of her own sexual desires and 'now' does not agree with her earlier views regarding abstaining from sex. She raises questions against the cultural prohibition regarding her response to sexual feelings. She poses the argument that even if someone 'saves' sex for after marriage, this does not guarantee the ideal image of love. Daniele uses her personal journal to develop an interesting objection against patriarchal views on sexuality and to voice her doubts against those who want females to be silent about their own sexual desires. Later, she attempts to trace the origins of her fear of experiencing herself as a sexual being:

I think that another reason is because of this fact I came to the realization of (it sounds a little dumb, but it's true): if you're still a virgin and wish not to be, de-virginizing yourself can be done with little trouble. On the other hand, once you've lost your virginity, there's no turning back. There's no un-de-virginizing yourself.

I found myself taken a back today when my boyfriend and I were alone. We were kissing, and out of the blue, I pulled away and asked "Do you think we're going too fast?" I suddenly became really scared of what might end up

happening (maybe not today, but sometime in the near future) if I didn't ask that question.

I Love my boyfriend. I love him to death, and I hope that someday he will be the man I marry, have kids with and grow old with. So why am I so scared?

I mean what better way to show someone you love then to make love right?

Why am I so pulled back by this promise I made to myself at a young age?

(PJDaniele17, 6:35, 93-95)

The issue of virginity and the associated notion of girls' reputations are supported by society as a whole (Thompson, 1995; van Roosmalen, 2000). Even though Daniele realizes that "it sounds dumb", she faces the fear that once she loses her virginity "there's no turning back". She also fears that she might be going too fast in her sexual intimacy with her boyfriend. It seems as though she considers herself as being responsible for any sexual activity. She internalizes the role of the 'gatekeeper', the one to set the limits on sexual expression: "I suddenly became very scared of what might end up happening (maybe not today but sometime in the near future) if I didn't ask that question". If girls' journals are to be believed, adolescent males appear to be blissfully unconcerned regarding issues of their responsibility in sexual activity. Sex is considered as a reward that females offer to males. Sethna (1998), in an interesting historical study on sex education during the cold war, notes that sex education "came to be portrayed as a curricular frill incompatible with pedagogical conservatism" (Sethna, 1998, p. 57). Sethna (1998) explores how children's sexual energies were guided towards the potential of marriage and parenthood. More importantly, she shows how girls were conflicted by the contradictory forces necessitated by the curriculum, which on the one hand "geared [them] toward the necessity of 'being attractive', 'entertaining' the

opposite sex, and love" (p. 58), while on the other hand they were "routinely assigned the task of sexual gatekeeping because they were considered sexually passive" (p. 59). My study supports the findings of other researchers who argue that such cultural expectations and structures of femininity in regards to sexuality have not altered much since then (Irvine, 2003; Levine, 2002). Gilbert (2004) argues that "sex education does not stray far from the sterile presentation of facts or moralistic admonitions to say no" (p. 233).

As Tolman (1991) argues, "most girls can and will speak in the voice of culture" (p. 61). However, Daniele poses a resistant voice to those subordinate views of female sexuality and wonders "why she is so pulled back by the promise she made at a young age?" In the following paragraph, Daniele unfolds another aspect of her victimization through images provided by popular culture:

A few years ago, when I used to watch Beverly Hills 90210, I used to admire Donna, the character that Tori Spelling played. She, like me, made a promise to herself that she would wait until she was married. Even though her friends had sporadic "nights of passion", she held her ground and kept her promise to herself. Until a few years later. She decided that finally she was ready for it, and did it with someone that she thought she loved, and ended up breaking up with a few episodes later. I guess I was upset at her one for breaking her promise to herself, and second for having waited so long for nothing. She waited so long, she did an amazing job controlling her hormones, until one night, and all the waiting amounted to nothing. I don't want that to happen to me. I think that if I've lasted 17 years, that I'd like to wait another 6 or 7 years until I get married and not cheat myself out of my promise. I don't want

to get mad at myself like I got mad at Donna. I want to make sure that it's for real....and I mean REAL TRUE never ending love. But the thing is, I think that what I'm in NOW is the real thing. (PJDaniele17, 6:35, 96-97)

As discussed in the previous section, the process of identification with certain heroes, such as one of the protagonists in the TV series, *Beverly Hills 90210*, comes with feelings of admiration, idealization, and even love. Daniele, since her early adolescence, identifies with Donna, the character who wants to “wait until she gets married”. She projects all her beliefs and expectations on her. She trusts her and uses her as reassurance against her doubts and concerns. If Donna does it, she can manage to do it as well. This character becomes her rock of support and security; until she gets disappointed by her failure to keep her promise. The identification is so strong that Daniele feels Donna has failed her. She gets mad at her. She even hates her for breaking the pledge of virginity. She uses her trusted journal as the object upon which to vent her rage. “Turning away from something ardently desired and loved cannot be unmixed with hate and revenge”, Riviere (1964) argues. Daniele wants to keep her own promise, because “she does not want to get mad at herself like she got mad at Donna”. She would consider having sex only in case of real love. Why do women cover up their sexual desire with the image of “real love”? Why is there an absence of discussion about female sexual needs? According to Thompson (1990), most girls avoid speaking about their own sexual desires and prefer to refer to “the quest of romance”. Tolman (1991) suggests “Girls’ discourse of desire may be subtle, encoded in the constricted ways which the culture makes available for them to speak about an unspeakable topic” (p. 62).

Daniele is confused by the contradiction that her experience makes visible. She “thinks she knows that now is the real thing, real true never ending love” and that makes

sexual expression legitimate. But she still struggles between her desire and her vow to abstain from it. In the next paragraph she wonders: "What if it's true? That HE won't be able to wait? What if "just kissing" becomes tiresome for him and he wants more? What if I want more?" (PJDaniele17, 6:35, 98). There is both desire and resistance in her writings about sex. She won't name it. She won't elaborate on the issue. She uses just one phrase to express her own sexual desires and needs: "what if I want more?". Fine (1988) states that it is hard to hear adolescent girls speak about their desires. It is difficult to discern their discourse of desire. Furthermore, Tolman (1991) states that it is difficult to decode desire unless you have the key. Daniele struggles under the cultural pressures and is overwhelmed by the contradicting messages emerging from her inner desires and the ones posed by gender-based cultural stereotypes:

Let's say that I do wait. That my boyfriend and I decide to wait. Let's say that he IS the man I'm going to marry. Realistically speaking, we won't get married until we're AT LEAST 25. That's 8 years. Eight years of just kissing. Is that possible? Has that been done? It gets harder and harder everyday. Every time I see him I love and want him more and more. If I could I really would like to wait until I'm married. Mainly because I just want to keep that promise to myself. I really hope that I can wait. I dunno though. I'm so confused. My emotions are like running rampant on me (around and around in circles with no real destination). What do you think sweetheart? Do you think we can make it? Not only controlling our hormones, but do you think we can make it to the point of marriage? (PJDaniele17, 6:35, 99-102)

Not all of the participants in this study express themselves eloquently when they deal with issues of their sexuality. Only a few of them explore their desires, fears, and disappointments regarding their sexual desires and experiences. Even though the journal entries were written in the past, when the writers did not know that their personal writings would be read by someone else, these young women tended to limit their discussion about sexuality or use codes to refer to their desires. This pattern supports the findings of Tolman (1991), who indicates that “Girls may describe their experiences consciously in a missing discourse of desire, knowing full well that they should not name their sexual hunger” (p. 58). Even though certain concerns and frustration about sexuality are expressed implicitly by most of the participants, the following analysis and discussion focuses on the writings of participants who are more articulate about these issues.

Nicole pours out her agony in her personal journal after she has sex for the first time. Her diary is the only one she confides her secret to. She does not trust anyone else because she is afraid she will be judged. She opens her discussion on the topic and expresses her fear with the phrase: “am I a whore?”. She continues:

Am I a whore? Officially, I think this makes me a slut. I don't regret it; Mike is a great guy, it didn't hurt, it felt good, I've done it... I just wish we had used a fucking condom. I am scared that I am going to be a regret for him, that he will look back on this and be like “damn, bad move”. And I don't want that... not because I'm in love with him or anything, but because then I will really feel like a slut, like a piece of meat. Obviously he was super drunk when he did it... so therefore this meant nothing and I am a TURBO WHORE. Especially since [Mick], [Samantha] and [Dawn] were in the room

when it happened. Shit eh? I don't want to feel bad about this, in all honesty
I'm happy that I finally did it... I don't wish it was with anyone else a any
other time, because how it happened was unplanned so less stressful. I wasn't
freaked out or anything. It felt really good. I need to stop questioning it and
thinking I'm a bad person for doing this - its just shitty because I can't tell
anyone its not that I want to go around being like "guys guess what I did", but
I don't like the idea of lying to the next guy I have sex with allowing him to
think he's my first and special in some way when really [Dawn] was my
number 1. Fuck...I don't know. This is turmoil, I can't tell anyone I've pinky
sworn... and even if I wanted to, what would they say? I would be judged so
much. Fuck that. Its my body my self my decision. My secret. (PJNicole19,
62:37, 179-180)

In just one paragraph Nicole symbolizes a 'turmoil' of intense contradictory feelings.

I have underlined the phrases that appear to be negative connotations of her first sexual experience and italicized the references that are supportive of her sexual desire. There are several fears expressed in this paragraph: a) the fear of being a 'whore', a 'slut'; b) the fear of sexually transmitted diseases or a possible pregnancy because she did not use a condom; c) the fear of him regretting it and considering it a 'bad move'; d) the fear that others might have noticed/attended her sexual activity; e) the fear of not being able to talk about it; f) the fear of not being able to offer the pleasure of being her first lover to the next guy; and g) the fear of being judged by others. Even though Nicole wants to avoid being branded as a sexually active person, as a person who desires sex, she acknowledges that this was a pleasurable experience for her and she does not regret it. She admits that she should stop

questioning herself about it and feel like a “bad person”. After all, it is “her body, her self, her decision”. “Her secret”. I believe that in this same paragraph, Nicole disrupts culture’s prohibitions on girls’ discourse of desire as she acknowledges her bodily feelings. The last phrases reassure her and ease her frustration. Nicole uses her private pages to express her discourse of desire and authorize her sexual and bodily desires. But her achievement is punctuated by fear.

Nicole expresses her distress including feelings of self-denigration and guilt after she experiences sex for the first time. During the first days after her sexual experience, she has already felt the disappointment of a couple of her friends. She feels like “a whore” and she is unhappy. Even more, she cannot talk to her mother about it and she feels “so conflicted, so unsure, everything bad”. She wonders: “So what’s up? Why all this shit? Is it possible that sex might have maybe just a BIT fucked you up? You’re holding back the biggest secret of your life” (PjNicole19, 62:46, 221). Nicole continues by stating her speculations about the ways in which sex has affected her life: “That makes you alienated from everyone - having something so important to say to the important ppl of your lives and not being able to say it. You feel like a whore...” (PjNicole19, 62:46, 221). She states that she does not recognize herself anymore. She has started picking up habits, such as smoking cigarettes, and she “completely hates her friends”. She feels tortured by the contradictory feelings she experiences. While she writes “I am so happy. I feel so beautiful. I look in the mirror and feel great”, she wonders: “So why, do one minute I feel great, hot, sexy, beautiful, excited and then the next like I need a hug in the middle of the kitchen from my mom because “my life is spinning out of control” (PjNicole19, 62:46, 223). Nicole concludes that her “possible theory” regarding her suffering is “that it was sex that has fucked me up with the “sad

feelings” which is weird because in everyday state I’m happy I did it. Fuck this is nonsense”. She continues her exploration of her views regarding her relationship with the other sex. She writes that she is “obsessed with boys” and she likes them “as friends”: “Its not like I love their company way over the girls here. Aack! I wish I was a boy?! God! No! I fucking act like one though. fuck I’m so fucked up” (PJNicole19, 62:46, 225-226). Interestingly, Nicole addresses herself in the first and then second person, before returning to first person again in the conclusion. There is semantic evidence of “real disassociation, disjuncture, and trauma” taking place as she engages in such discussions. Her passionate voice comes out in those lines and provides evidence of the important uses of space in the personal journal.

In Nicole’s monologue on her turmoil of conflicting emotions, she theorizes that granting sex and expressing her own sexual desires are the cause of the “sad feelings” she has been experiencing since the first time she had sex. She is unable to realize how hegemonic cultural expectations about female sexual activity have shaped her thinking, which is contradictory to her discourse of desire. On the one hand, Nicole perceives and defines herself as “hot, sexy, beautiful and excited” and on the other as a “slut”. There is a form of harassment internalized in the words of Nicole. Mann (1994) states that one of the ways that females are victimized is through the use of the slag language, including words such as “slut” and “whore”, to objectify sexual activity, which serves to reaffirm male hierarchies. This form of harassment aims to control and constrain female behavior (Walkerdine, 1990). Women are denigrated by both males and females. Nicole denigrates herself and her friends do the same. We could argue that her denigration becomes normalized. Alternatively, are the girls adopting sexualized vocabulary of self-naming as an act of resistance and defiance? van Roosmalen (2000) takes the stance that there is a

tendency for girls “to accept the position of policing each other and themselves with the tools of their oppression – girls referring to the other girls as sluts and bitches, for example. This leads to their subordinate situation becoming further entrenched” (p. 222). But, arguably, the journal functions as an object through which both ‘policing’ and ‘play’ conjoin around discourses of desire.

When sexuality is approached as a market relationship, there is a trade of sex for the hope of attaining and preserving the girlfriend-boyfriend status (Kalof, 1995). The following of Nicoles’s journal entries reveal how she experiences being objectified to service male sexual desires:

Why am I back in this place? So depressed? I thought that I was doing something that would make me happy... see lots of guys, feel good about myself, etc. instead I feel like a whore. (PJNicole19, 62:53, 234) What is wrong with me??? Who is this person I have become? I am so depressed. So closed. So tired, so everything. Its like I want to prove myself. Why am I serial dating? (PJNicole19, 62:53, 236-238) Why are guys obsessed only with sex? ...Do they see girls in any way other than a piece of ass? ...I’m down. I just don’t want him to use me for like a one time release of some shit like that. (PJNicole19, 62:104, 422-423) I need Vanessa advice, how to make all the boys love me without having to have sex with them... (PJNicole19, 62:104, 428)

Nicole uses her journal as an object through which to try to situate herself in relation to her sexuality. Depressive feelings come along with denigrating and guilt-ridden views of her self. She wonders whether “serial dating” works as a mechanism to prove to herself the

power she can exert through her sexual expression. Being an attractive person and acquiring a sexual image builds up her self-esteem because of her appeal to the other sex. She is valued by the way she appeals to males; she becomes the object that serves the inflation of male ego, even in instances where she is not willing to express herself sexually. There is a power inequity expressed in her question “how to make all the boys love me without having to have sex with them?”. Researchers on female sexuality have noted how young women encounter problems in how they negotiate, define, and resist sexual encounters (Wood & Jewkes, 1997). “Acquiescence and adherence to the dominant ideology by adolescent girls are vital to the survival and perpetuation of both capitalism and patriarchy”, adds van Roosmalen (2000, p. 222). This issue regarding the ways in which female sexuality has been regulated, and continues to be regulated, even by institutionalized educational discourses, has been stressed by scholars and activists (Sethna, 2005).

How do the participants in this study use diary writing as they engage in the process of expressing implicitly or explicitly their struggles and distresses regarding their sexual desires? I have drawn in part on feminist studies of adolescent female development to argue that the process of becoming sexual through expressive personal writing assists my study participants to better understand and become themselves (see also Gilligan, 2002; Shore, 2004a). Journal writing plays a vital role in their process of construction of self. Reflective personal writing serves as one important vehicle for healthy psychic, physical, and sexual development. My study supports the findings of Shore (2004): “Adolescent diaries/memoirs provide an entry-point into the psychological, philosophical, moral and sexual concerns of adolescence and their identity formation, and they are excellent vehicles contemplating the range of ‘literacies’ that best serve adolescents” (p. 75). Furthermore, my study supports

Kamler’s findings (2001). She focuses on critical writing pedagogy and maintains that by locating the autobiographical in its social and cultural framework, the diarist manages to “understand the discursive practices that construct the sense of self—which in turn offer possibilities for social change” (p. 3). For Kamler, a ‘resisting writer’ is someone who uses writing to explore splits, gaps, absences, and aporias in her text and investigates the culturally mediated implications that shape her experience. Thus, deeper self-understanding is attained by approaching the personal in terms of a shared experience with cultural implications. I have demonstrated throughout Chapters Four and Five of this thesis that when in pain and feeling contradicted, my writers turn to their private pages to create meaning in their conflicted feelings about the people most important to them⁹. Young women diarists use personal journal writing not only as an attempt to symbolize their feelings of “self” in relation to their sexual encounters, but also to engage in symbolization of their development through ambivalent feelings of loss, failure, trauma, melancholia, guilt, shame, joy, and/or ecstasy.

The argument I am making is that my study participants’ diaries and personal journals may be viewed as transitional objects, a term introduced by the British psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott (1958). According to Winnicott (1958), transitional object is defined as the space that exists between inner psychic reality and outer external reality, between subjectivity and objectivity, between self and world. Having the form of a teddy bear, a blanket, or a soft toy, the transitional object symbolizes the child’s relationship to the breast and assists her in attaining the realization of “not-me” possession. What this means is that transitional object helps the child elaborate a sense of self in relation to and yet distinct from the external world around it, including (as I show in Chapter Four) mother and father;

and (in Chapter Five) friends and boyfriends. Representations of experience in the personal journal pages function in such a way as to assist young women in their transition to reality. The very act of symbolization is an effort to move beyond illusion.

Arguably, the personal journal serves as a special blanket, providing a capacity of ‘holding’ to my participants. The personal journal provides them a secure space where they feel sheltered to express heartfelt feelings that would never articulate in another realm. This capacity of ‘holding’ is characterized by Winnicott as (1969), as the basis that allows for self-experiencing processes to take place. In the same vein, diary writers turn to the space of the private pages of their journal to express their deepest feelings, to secure thoughts and insights with the knowledge that they will not be criticized or betrayed by it. Berman (1994) reflects on the findings of his study in which he introduced diary writing to his English classroom. Many of his students talk about how they become inseparably attached to their diaries, especially in times of crisis. They use diary writing as a method to derive comfort and security from their presence in such a way that the diary evokes the magical intimacy, uniqueness, and safety that is provided by the ‘special blanket’ to the child: “Like other transitional phenomena, diary writing not only reduces anxiety and loneliness but also maintains identity and connection between self and other” (Berman, 1994, p. 234).

In Chapter Five I have presented evidence of how the transitional object of personal writing can be characterized by various qualities: its distinctively personal and private nature; its consistent “thereness” to be used by the young woman writer; its ability to withstand various uses over time (years); its capacity to serve as a playground for the expression and symbolization of a diverse range of emotions whose meaning is not always clear, even to the girl-writer. The personal journal as a transitional object allows the journal

writer to initiate a relationship to the outside world, and through this process they perform their transition from being merged into separate being. In Chapter Six, I now turn to the question of how my writers use their journal pages to express difficult feelings, such as feelings of depression, loneliness and suicide and how symbolization and aesthetic and creative expression offer them possibilities of omnipotence and survival.

CHAPTER SIX

Findings and Discussion: Sketching the 'weeping willow'

*My Weeping Willow**Writing as Defense against Painful Realities*

What the manipulation of the words on the page enabled her to do was to gain some sort of access to the meaning of her life. (Steedman, 1987, p. 29)

...revision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for women more than a text from a new critical direction – is for women more than a chapter on cultural history: it is an act of survival. (Adrienne Rich, 1979, p. 35)

A story is not one, as some people think, just because it is about one person...

And Homer, just as he is distinguished in all other ways, seems to have seen this point beautifully, whether by art or by nature. (Aristotle, Chapter 8, Poetics, p. 1)

Writing in a personal journal facilitates the metamorphosis of diarist's experiences into words in the sense that it re-orders and gives shape to the chaos of these experiences and allows the analysis of subjectivity. There is a dynamic interrelationship between the construction of self and writing in the journal. As presented in the previous chapters, through their writings about their relationships with others, the participants in this study create a narrative of the self and consequently gain a sense of their self and their history. Anderson (1986) suggests that with no reference to history or culture, autobiographical narratives cannot be produced. Additionally, journal writing gives voice to uncertainties. What is important is that these young women manage to represent their suffering through creative

expression. It is the purpose of this chapter to investigate how feelings of suffering, such as depression, loneliness, and suicide, get expressed in the journal entries of these young women, as well as to explore the uses of such articulations.

The participants describe the writing style they use in their journals as both descriptive and narrative depending on the content of their writings. For most, writing in their journals is informal and not considered a "pre-meditated" process. As Laura describes it, "I just ramble and don't re-read them to fix them,..., it's pretty raw" (Laura Q1, 7:3). Monica uses the metaphor of "speaking to a best friend" to describe her journal writing style and Nicole refers to it "as writing with my flow of thought. Whatever it is that I am thinking, I simply write" (Nicole, Q1, 7:2). Carol notes, "When I write in my journal it's pretty much freestyle, sometimes I use point-form or make lists" (Carol, Q1, 7:2). Odette argues that there is not a specific style that characterizes her journal writings, which "are a mixture of narrative, poetry, analogies, descriptions and song lyrics" (Odette, Q1, 7:2). In the same vein, Priscilla's writing style depends on her mood: "Sometimes it will be rich and descriptive (with fancy, elegant choice of words, diction), other times it will be straight, fact-to-fact (objective) or extremely hopeless and serious especially when dealing with hardships and downfalls in life" (Priscilla, Q1, 7:2, 3). The only person who polishes her journal writings is Astrid. She explains that often her entries work as drafts for future fiction writing, "so I may spend a long time describing a sunset, or an emotion as an extended metaphor. I write as though someone else is/will be reading it, so they tend to be rather polished" (Astrid, Q1, 7:2).

Most of these young women engage in personal journal writing in a spontaneous manner. Their journals are the space where they report their thoughts, no matter how trivial,

embarrassing or irrational they may seem to them at a later stage of their life. Their writing patterns bear similarities to the process of free association. Kris (1982) defines free association from a psychoanalytic point of view "as a joint venture in which the patient attempts to express whatever comes to mind" (p. 3) and, more specifically, "a sequence of thoughts, feelings, wishes, sensations, and images, present or remembered, expressed from a variety of perspectives" (p. 8). What is important in this expression of one's free associations is the sequential quality of the process of free association. Furthermore, a sense of satisfaction is acquired with the completion of one's associations, while a sense of dissatisfaction is experienced with interruption or diversion (Barratt, 1993; Bucci, 1997). It is within the perspective that free associations "lead concomitantly to insight" (Kris, p. 4) that the written expression of the participants' free associations will be examined.

Analysis of the questionnaires reveals that more than half of the participants engage in poetry writing. Four participants express themselves through writing short stories, playing a music instrument—mostly guitar—or drawing and painting. Other modes of expression include writing letters, composing, going shopping, clothing, dancing, and photography (see Table 10, page 343). Analysis of the participants' personal journal entries similarly reveals that there are 95 entries referring to poems, 110 references to dreams, 115 references to lyrics and music in general, 120 entries on prayer and religious expression, and 124 references to the diary or writing.

In this section I discuss young women's engagements with uses of writings pertaining to agony and despair from the perspective of the depressive position in women's personal written expression and their feelings of loneliness and suicide in relation to journal

writing. I begin with an exploration of dreams and phantasy work as wish-fulfillment and the uses of art and aesthetic expression as defenses to painful realities.

Dreams and phantasy works

As discussed in Chapter Two, Klein (1964) views dreams and unconscious phantasies as the basis for all mental and emotional activity. Through the analysis of dreams an understanding of the unconscious can take place (Segal, 1991). According to Freud's (1900) theory, dreams emerge from wishes that have been repressed and seek fulfillment. When deep-seated wishes remain unfulfilled they cause tension in our psychic life. The struggle for expression is not an easy task to perform. Fulfillment of wishes is accompanied by distressing feelings, such as anxiety and guilt. Therefore the production of dreams is known as 'psychic-dream work', which refers to the disguising of the conflicting wishes, in order to be fulfilled, through a specific mode of expression, "dream language" (Segal, 1991). In this section I will discuss how through engaging in dream language my participants express wishes which might have been repressed and appear to be related to feelings of grief, despair, and melancholy.

In her personal journal, Astrid writes down her dreams and reflects on them. She realizes her dreams vent anger and hostility. Even though her days are "easy, slow, but full, a peaceful state of mind", her nights are full of mystery with nightmares. Her analytic skills let her discern that these dreams "are where the lost old me has found a place to go retreat. They're crammed all full of vanity, insecurity, frustration, all that rage inside of me. Yet this hidden me is different still; it's guided by a different will" (PJAstrid17, 1:20, 21). As she continues with the exploration of her 'former self', she describes herself as being "desperate,

slow, lethargic, tired, lacking hope. I was drained of energy. This former pain sucked life from me. i was sad; i wallowed in despair, and turned off friends without a care”

(PJAstrid17, 1:20, 22). Her dreams, though, are full of energy: “it sparks outrage, it rants, it screams. This me-in-dreams is-yes-angry. not tired, tender, too depressed, but loud! lusts violence! harsh! oppressed!” (PJAstrid17, 1:20, 23-24). Through her analysis she becomes more aware of how parts of her hidden self come out to play conscious in her dreams.

Astrid states that angry scenes have trademarked her dreams since the time she started taking medication for her depression. She describes one of these dreams as follows:

In one, the bathroom sink has exploded leaving a mess all over the walls and the floor and hall, and someone has to clean it up, probably me. But my father is insisting i wash the car, and some girl is telling me i have to wear some sort of safety goggles for some dumb reason. Finally I start shouting, exasperated.

“Why the heck would we wash the car when the bathroom needs to be fixed?” So I go in and start vacuuming and mopping up the mess.

(PJAstrid17, 1:59, 152-153)

Later Astrid reflects on a dream of anger that involves a scene from her life, about which she still feels ‘bitter’. She is surprised that the reaction in her dream does not mirror the reaction she would have in reality: “instead of taking it passively with an air of humiliation like I had in real life [...] this time I picked up a guitar, and with a scream smashed it across his head. Then I ran out of the room, out of the building, outside under a tree to have a smoke” (PJAstrid17, 1:60, 155-158). Then Astrid reports another scene of dream fury:

In another angry scene I was working in a parking garage for some reason, and I was just about finished and ready to go, exhausted, when I saw the full mop bucket and realized I hadn't finished mopping the stairs. Tired, I simply poured the mop bucket out over the stairs, figuring they'd be cleansed on the way down.

The man I was working with sneered at me. "Oh, give me a break," I said. "I'm sick, about to faint...I'm just seventeen years old and working my ass off." I didn't even feel seventeen. But he continued mocking me. With a cry of rage I flung the mop bucket down the steep stairs at his thin body and walked away. (PJAstrid17, 1:61, 160-163)

Writing down these dreams helps Astrid become alert to the fact that there is a connection between reality and phantasy much deeper than she could ever think of. She notes that some of the scenes in her dreams are made up whereas others arise from experiences in her real life. Astrid wonders about the significance of "all this surprising anger" and speculates that "it's as though the black cloud that had covered my life has fled to my subconscious" (PJAstrid17, 1:62, 165). What is interesting is the prevalence of images of 'explosions and mopping up'¹⁰. What is the significance of this repetitious figure that Astrid uses to map out her own psychic state? Astrid uses her journal to recount being swamped by her feelings of wanting to explode and by her conflicting desire to erase, to mop up, the evidence of these violent feelings. We are left to wonder whether Astrid's dreams and written articulations serve as portrayals of gendered conflicts that derive from cultural structures that maintain that violence is not condoned in women.

Astrid's capacity to use the private space in her journal to analyze the meaning behind her dream world allows her to become more aware of certain needs and desires finding expression through her dreams. For example, she expresses a desire to escape from reality, to find rescue in her dream world and be able to sleep. Pay attention to this next segment of Astrid's use of powerful symbols of blackness, incarceration and imprisonment:

Oh, to have one night with dreamless sleep! It is these unknown "dreams" that are the reason why we fear sleep, according to Hamlet in his soliloquy. We do not end our pain for fear of possible worse pain in a possible afterlife. So we trudge through this tiring life, eyes forced open, afraid to slip into the world of slumber from which we can't return, where we fear we may be haunted by strange dreams. Every day the Sleeper pulls at me to rest my head, whether in real sleep or real suicide. Both are an escape; i remember at the height of the black cloud's reign, i lay in bed for half the day, swearing to never get up. My bed has bars, my sheet has black and white strips. It is as though i sleep in a prison every night. The difference is, i am shutting out the world. The world does not shut me in. And i want to stay in there, my little bed which is my world; because in here i have some control. i must drag myself out of bed every single damn morning and it is like ripping out of a peaceful grave over and over and over again, to return to a place of weary living. That is why i like to sleep. That is why it is so hard and heart breaking to wake. (PJAstrid17, 1:159, 397)

In this entry Astrid engages in a discussion about the function of her dreams and their relation to her sleep. She figures that both dreams and sleep are safe escapes from the harsh

reality of her depression. Psychoanalytic theory also posits that there is a relationship between dream and sleep: "Every dream is an attempt to put aside a disturbance of sleep by means of a wish-fulfillment. The dream is thus the guardian in sleep" (Fodor & Gaynor, 1950, p. 46). When this attempt fails, the sleeping person, aroused by the dream, wakes up. Astrid likes to sleep. Her dreams seem to guard her from sleep and both dreams and sleep guard her from her suffering of melancholia.

In another case, Astrid uses a dream to make sense of her self. After she includes part of a dream in a song and sings it with her band with her "voice masked", she claims that she "finally comes to understand the meaning" of it. This dream-made song is reported in her journal as follows:

"coachman, take me away to the nearest town with a train station," I order....
 we leave the little village in silence and approaching darkness, he in the front
 and i in the back preparing to erase any memories of the little village that now
 has a strange cloud of fear drifting over it... And we go along the rough
 unpaved roads, silent. i look outside. the day is tired, and i can see the sun
 begin to sink between the trees of the forest. even the trees look tired and
 tense.... the roads seem to stretch on forever. everything looks tired. tired
 and waiting. the silence begins to grow thick. he senses it too, and turns on
 the music. "the tourist" comes on. i listen to the words, to the gorgeous
 haunting song... we drive on the never-ending twisting road into the sunset...
 we just drive on to escape something heavy in the little village. we can't see
 or hear but only feel... (PJAstrid17, 1:260, 679-688)

Astrid achieves much in this passage. She is able to reflect on those scenes written in her journal and attempt a further understanding of her self. She realizes for the first time what she does in the dream: "when evil leaks into the small village, is fear the unknown danger and flee from the place". She wonders "is this what i do, in the face of hardships? runaway? i suppose i do. look at the way i cling to these pills with my life" (PJAstrid17, 1:260, 689). Astrid's anger finds release in her dreams. Even though in her real life she would never imagine herself reacting with such a rage towards injustices and conflicts, in her dream world Astrid finds herself giving in to deep-seated inner tensions. By keeping track of her dreams and reflecting on their content, Astrid becomes aware of certain contradicting tensions between her inner and outer reality. It could be argued that her writing allows her to bring her repressed and un-fulfilled wishes to consciousness.

What is the use of the diary representation of dream and sleep? What is significant in Astrid's writings about her dream in the form of a song is that she is able to access and represent her inner world. Through her writing she is able to move from illusion to reality, from dream to song, "using the well-springs of creative life as a motor in the process" (Robertson, 2006, p. 3). There is a profound achievement in the symbolization taking place in her journal pages: the fact that her representation of her inner world is turned into an aesthetic and cultural object, a song. What is interesting is not just the dream itself, but rather the symbolization, the fact she is writing about it. Her journal space allows her to walk through her creative lines, symbolize her inner world, and use her artistic resources to represent it.

In *Freud: Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (Fodor, Gaynor, & Reik, 1950), the function of the dream is described with the remark that the sleeper has to dream, "because the nightly

relaxation of repression allows the upward thrust of the traumatic fixation to become active; but sometimes, his dream-work, which endeavors to change the memory traces of the traumatic event into a wish-fulfillment, fails to operate" (p. 44). Monica writes in her journal that her day is "very stressful and emotional". This has been affected by her dream life. One day she writes in her journal that she has been stressed about "so many things she has to do, in so little time she has at her disposal". She prays to God to "let me get through it all successfully." She then goes on writing about a "very bad and disturbing dream" she had the previous night that left her waking up crying: "I dreamt that [Laura] died and I was at her funeral. I literally woke up tears streaming down my face, it really set the tone for the day. I was on edge all day" (PJMonica21, 57:70, 239). On the contrary, Nicole reports being pleased with her dreams. In her journal, Nicole wonders why it is that her "dream life is so much better than real life?". She finds that in her dreams she is "fearless", "good with guys", and "not nervous around them [...] I go for what I want, I hug them, I kiss them, my boyfriends are always sweet, nice, perfect. I am just so much happier in my dreams than I am normally" (PJNicole15, 58:15, 82-83). Therefore, Nicole wishes, "that my dreams were predictions, like the ones with [Kent]. Dreams. Dreams can come true..." (PJNicole15, 58:15, 84). Nicole's desires and phantasies seek fulfillment in her dreams. Her desire to be lovable and popular with boys gets expressed in her dream language.

In the same vein, Odette's wishes and desires for her lost love object become the origins of her dream life: "the beautiful boy was part of the dream with his other girl... actually his only girl... and he was being all "himself" with me with his distinctive tone of voice and dictionary of choice words" (PJOdette20, 65:136, 739). Odette dreams about being the only girl for her love object, even though she feels that she needs to "get out of this

slump because the slope is increasingly acrid". She tries in vain to forget him: "you're always on my mind. i try in vain to forget you; the effort is a waste of my time. you're not leaving and despite the distance, you're still cleaving your way into my heart..." (PJOdette20, 65:136, 740).

Odette's use of her journal to symbolize her next dream could be considered as a desire to understand the tensions of her external reality as well. A few entries before, Odette remarks how she wished her parents would get a divorce. She is devastated by the family conflicts that put her in stressful situations. She then reports a "disconcerting" dream about her father: "I stabbed my father in the shoulder with a plastic fork... a dream in which he had angered me. It was just a dream but still. It was really weird and didn't feel natural. Not cool" (PJOdette20, 65-116, 647). She uses her diary repeatedly as a space through which to come to understanding. In an entry that she writes a few weeks later, she reports that her family "is kind of drifting apart". She talks about her stressful relationship with her father: "I can barely live with my dad nowadays. We don't speak because when we do, it's just arguing. And it doesn't even hurt me anymore". She feels as though her "heart is callused to his verbal attacks" and that she "can do no right by him. I sometimes wish I could just up and leave. I guess that's a wimpy way of looking at things but whatever" (PJOdette20, 65:172, 842).

It is my understanding that Odette's anger struggles for expression first, through her dream world, and second, through its re-elaboration in her journal. Segal (1991) argues that instincts give rise to phantasies which find wish-fulfillment and function as defenses against painful realities. When unconscious phantasies remain repressed, then conscious life is deprived. Writing about their dreams in their personal journals, the participants manage to

"retain communication with symbolic expressions of the unconscious" (Segal, 1991, p. 64).

Through writing in the journal verbal expression works as a process through which my participants release their feelings and thoughts. The release of psychic contents through symbolic work and dream writing in their personal pages facilitates communication between internal and external realities and brings to consciousness hidden feelings. Thus, journal writing becomes a highly evolved form of symbolism. Through art (aesthetic creation) there is a high level of symbolic release of dreams and wishes. Let us now turn to issues pertaining to unconscious conflicts and phantasies embodied in the work of art as conveyed in the participants' personal journals' space.

Aesthetic expression and poetic language

i hate when i write in rhyme. i do these things from time to time. But though
it is hard to believe, i do these things subconsciously. (PJAstrid17, 1:20, 25)

The aesthetic qualities of poetic language can help us understand the beauty of the diary, and how the diary serves as an aesthetic object useful in the development of self. The diary can be used as a form of discovery, where the young women apply their political and aesthetic views. This notion brings to mind "l'écriture féminine", a theory of writing that "advocates dislodging phallogentric thinking through disruptions of syntax and linear narrative. L'écriture féminine resists the male authority that permeates all social institutions, including language and literary form" (Tidwell, 2005, p. 96). In my study I came to admire how the participants' personal journal texts bridge the "literary" qualities of writing and aesthetic rhythms and patterns. I came to realize that through their writings, the participants manage to investigate applications of the aesthetics of poetic language, fiction in the form of

short stories, metaphors, and representing reality through art. What they represent is based on their own lives and experiences.

Because diary writing is writing about the self and one's relationship with others, aesthetic freedom is necessary when drafting the journal text. Journal writing is not formal writing. The participants in this study have been journal writers since late childhood, 7 to 9 years of age, or early adolescence, 10 to 13 years of age. Even though young journal writers seem to be more conscious when 'keeping' a diary, as age progresses they become more comfortable expressing feelings and thoughts in their journal. Most participants allow themselves to write freely with full strength and speed, using quotations, lyrics, short phrases, lyrics, poems, and dreams. It is as though the personal journal functions as a pure space where the writers explore their aesthetic instincts. Those journal writers who engage in poetry writing and are more artistic in their journal writing expression, tend to talk about all aspects of their life. It is as though they attempt to capture the moment and desire to absorb the meaning in each moment. A single event might trigger them to write a couple of lines of a poem on a piece of paper that will be included later in their journal. A fleeting feeling might remind them of some lyrics or urge them to draw. Each moment is approached as a significant one to be recreated, represented, to be given form and meaning. Therefore, every person's experience gains a political existential importance.

There are 95 poems included in the journal entries of the participants in this study. No more than 10 of them are poems written by other poets and identified as favorite ones. Nine of the 17 journal writers engage in poetry writing themselves. To analyze and comment on each of them is outside the scope of this research. This study is not about poetry, it is about journal writing. In this section I will focus on the uses of poetry writing by the

participants in their journals. More specifically, I will examine how young women use the creative process of poetry writing in times of conflict.

Daniele continually includes personal stories in her diary. She often narrates family events or engages in poetry writing. The characters she creates embody several aspects of her own life story. For example, aspects of her feelings, thoughts, and personal life are apparent in the following poem on depressive thinking, which could be categorized as a poem about suicide:

*She said that she would be brave this time,
that there was nothing to fear.
So she did it.
Slowly, it started,
and she becomes cold,
her hands, her arms, her neck,
her legs, her feet, everywhere.
"Finally" she thought "There will be no more pain"
And for the first time in a long time,
she smiles
But, for the last time,
her eyes close
BLACK*

One short pain for a lifetime of pains (PJDaniele18, 7:11, 59-99)

In her diary, Daniele confesses her depressive tendencies and anxieties that bring her to suicidal thinking. This poem articulates her inner desire to escape from pain. "There will

be no more pain" she writes and "smiles". This poem is horrific in terms of the level of intensity of the feelings of hopelessness that it releases. Daniele expresses her devastation and through writing she engages in a process of symbol formation of her inner conflicts. Klein (1964) posits that is mainly triggered by feelings of anxiety and guilt and she argues that when symbol formation is paralyzed the intensity of these difficult feelings is excessively increased. As Segal (1991) argues, my participants use their journals to symbolize and overcome loss and thus protect themselves from their own aggressiveness. Through symbolic representation, guilt, anger, and depressive feelings are expressed and perhaps, better tolerated.

Nicole articulates her feelings of loneliness in the following two poems:

<i>Why are you so cold?</i>	<i>A surprise</i>
<i>You have nothing to keep you warm</i>	<i>Will this be a</i>
<i>Why are you just sitting there?</i>	<i>Look at your demise?</i>
<i>Don't you have something to do?</i>	<i>You push them away,</i>
<i>If you tried, maybe you could be</i>	<i>You know its true</i>
<i>something</i>	<i>I know I'm right,</i>
<i>If you cared, maybe you would have</i>	<i>Just look at you.</i>
<i>someone</i>	<i>The things you want</i>
<i>But you don't, you are</i>	<i>You'll never have</i>
<i>Too cold, too scared. (PJNicole15,</i>	<i>You're so dumb</i>
<i>58:24, 146-153)</i>	<i>You can't ever have. (PJNicole15,</i>
	<i>58:25, 156-166).</i>

Alone again, what

Nicole uses the potential space of her personal journal to express feelings of absolute desolation and despair. The emptiness, loneliness and unworthiness she feels find form through the mechanism of art/poem creation. I am touched by the powerfulness of her word selection, the rhymes she creates and the uses of imagery of heat and cold. Nicole uses these aesthetic forms to symbolize difficult feelings. Melancholy and sadness numb Odette's feelings, leaving her wondering about the meaning of "this life". She communicates her distress and agony through poems:

Let the feedback numb the feeling

In my limbs while the smokes

Pollutes my veins and all is lost in

The blur of pulsation felt from the

Sole's upward. What is this life

Really all about? Can you tell me what

It means to you? (PJOdette20, 65:26, 376:382)

Odette is aware that "nothing is right anymore". Losing "the things she once most wanted in her life" leaves her in the banks of absolute despair. Though she pretends that everything is fine and masks her inner feelings and suffering with a "smiling mask", she knows that she cannot escape the "mess that is beyond repair":

nothing's right anymore.

i don't know who i am.

i know not where i'm headed.

the things i once wanted most in life

have now become those most

dreaded.

so tired of pretending,

the masquerade must cease.

<i>however, i am permanently one with</i>	<i>tranquil painted face.</i>
<i>the smiling mask i daily bear</i>	<i>pain is a traitor to the one who</i>
<i>the plaster is cracking, the painted</i>	<i>carries it.</i>
<i>face is chipped.</i>	<i>its scars cannot be hidden,</i>
<i>rivulets of rain run rampant,</i>	<i>cannot be concealed.</i>
<i>finding freedom in the cracks.</i>	<i>eventually, the plaster erodes</i>
<i>smearing colours and</i>	<i>revealing a mess that is beyond</i>
<i>wrecking havoc on a seemingly</i>	<i>repair. (PJOdette20, 65:234, 1029)</i>

What I find interesting in the plethora of metaphors and images used in this poem is the last image portrayed in the last few lines: Odette is unable to mask her “scars”; they cannot be repaired or even hidden or concealed. As a reader of Odette’s poetic lines, “I am fused by unexpected feelings and affects” and I am drawn to reflect on my researcher’s personal journal: “there is no doubt in my mind that there is a need for my participants to express themselves through art/poetry. Therefore, my participants use their journals as the transitional object through which they engage in creative writing, in art expression. This can be linked to Winnicott’s concept of transitional object: In that sense, then personal journal, or even expression through art, or even symbolization through poetry serves as a ‘defense against anxiety’ and in this case defense against Odette’s painful reality. I’ve got to ask Dr. Robertson more about this tomorrow” (RPJ, 94). Odette’s plea for escape from her suffering finds representation in the following poem:

I wish I could see OUTSIDE.
I feel confined in this small cabin
And the BLOOD vessels in my face

Are threatening to break.

My eyes are sore the most

And I'm afraid they will

be BLOODSHOT before long. (PJOdette21, 66:14, 11-118)

Priscilla articulates a poem on hope. She has written others about love, depression, and loneliness. Even in the poems where she discusses melancholy, Priscilla ends her poetry with a positive message. When feelings of despair seem to overwhelm her thoughts and writing, she almost always ends with a phrase of self-encouragement in their journal. This poem is a symbolic formation of her wish to win the battles of pain and agony:

<i>Life is time</i>	<i>to ones great treasure</i>
<i>Time passed by</i>	<i>wherever it be</i>
<i>the eyes watched the</i>	<i>the search never ends</i>
<i>traffic (cars) go bye</i>	<i>life goes on with its</i>
<i>tears laughs screams</i>	<i>battles and parties</i>
<i>exciting opportunities</i>	<i>live, grow, and learn</i>
<i>waiting to evolve</i>	<i>to let the time be worth-</i>
<i>the mind alert and</i>	<i>while (worth it.) (PJPriscilla20, 70:6,</i>
<i>the heart opened</i>	<i>23-39)</i>

The desire to escape is reflected in the following poem written by Astrid. Astrid longs that one day she will escape from the "tangled chains" and "break free". This is the wish that holds her through all her misery till then. In this poem Astrid communicates her hope for life:

ONE DAY, I SHALL BREAK FREE

FROM THESE TANGLED CHAINS

THAT IMITATE

RELIEVED ESCAPE

'TIL THEN... (PJAstrid17, 1:89, 208-213)

There is a wish-fulfillment desire in the poetic art of these journal writers, which can be understood as a longing to work through their problematic situations. As Segal (1991) argues, the artist focuses primarily on psychic truth and through her creation—in this case the poems—she attempts to trace her conflict and determine a resolution. These participants, through their poetic works, engage themselves in a profound means of self-articulation. In psychoanalytic theory, art is said to stem from deep unconscious phantasy and when this phantasy gets expressed it becomes resilient to repression. Arguably, the passages I have discussed provide us entry into the lives of women as young artists. The journal is used as a potential space of self creation through aesthetic play. Furthermore, as presented in this section, it is in the depressive position that the creative artistic impulses of the participants are alerted. Through writing poems, short stories, and engaging in other forms of self-articulation in their personal journals, the participants engage in a process of symbolic recreation of their world. And it is the power that symbolization conveys to the journal writer that drives their lust to express self in their private pages. In my request for my participants in the second questionnaire to draw an image about the personal journal and how this images reveals something of themselves, Astrid draws a girl diving in the water (please see Image A, p. 345 and explains her thoughts with the following passage:

this is a theme that i would sketch over and over again for years. the dive became to me symbolic of a controlled fall. i saw it as an act of becoming free. one is still in

the clutch of gravity but in this diving position one is not only falling gracefully but even reaching out for the end. it is almost as though to say, "life is taking me somewhere, but at least i want to go there." this is how i saw writing. by recounting the day's events and my emotions and framing them in a certain form on paper, i was in a way, somehow, controlling what was happening to me (AstridQ2, 18:5).

What I find interesting in Astrid's elaboration of her symbolization of journal writing as an act of diving, is her quest to find her voice, her will to express 'being', to mark her presence in the journey to Ithaca. And it is by recounting events, emotions and thoughts in the pages of her personal journal writing that she is able to gain control of the forces that affect the occurrences in her life.

The Depressive Position in Young Women's Personal Writings

On melancholia, loneliness, and suicide.

Throughout this thesis I work with the notion that young women's teen years are marked by sadness, struggle to let go of childhood and embrace maturity. The question I now wish to engage is how the journal serves them in this process. In psychoanalytic terms, melancholia is related to the awakening echoes of past traumas and is experienced with the realization of the lost love object. Thus, depressive feelings may mask anger toward the lost object and is triggered by the belief that loss of the object is translated as loss of self.

Depression implies what Kristeva (1989) calls, one's inability to know how to lose. When someone declares that she 'loves' her lost object, she at the same time 'hates' it as a defense mechanism to not lose it. Because of her 'hate', she perceives that part of her self is a bad self and therefore feelings of self-hate and suicide overwhelm her. Furthermore, Riviere

(1964) explains that "one great reason why loss of any kind can be so painful is that unconsciously it represents the converse idea, that we are being exposed as unworthy of good things, and so our deepest fears are realized" (p. 27). According to Kristeva, writing about melancholia acquires meaning only if the writing comes out as a result of that very melancholia. What is interesting about writings and the operation of language with regards to the expression of depressive modes of feelings is the fact that language does not function as a "reward system" but "on the contrary, [language] hyperactivates the "anxiety-punishment" pair, and thus inserts itself in the slowing down of thinking and decreases psychomotor activity characteristic in depression" (Kristeva, p. 10). In other words, when depressive feelings find expression through language there is an activity taking place in our brain that decreases those feelings of despair and melancholy.

Personal journal writing triggered by sadness, distress, or desolate loneliness arguably performs as a curative medium when depression arises. Twelve of the 17 participants have journal entries about depression. Astonishing is the sheer volume of expressions of sadness and anger: 125 personal journal entries on depression, 60 entries about loneliness, 60 about sadness, 50 about being confused, 50 about disappointment, 35 about suicide, and 30 where participants express rage. Fully one third of the participants state in their writings that they are or have been on antidepressant medication. Some write lengthy entries discussing their stressful feelings. In discussing issues surrounding depression, loneliness, and suicidal behavior that are witnessed in the writings of the participants, I now focus my analysis on the entries of those participants for whom such issues have been central in their written elaborations.

Astrid's persistent honesty and rigorous self-analysis and self-scrutiny are impressive in her journal writings. Her entries are revealing; there is a power in each of her words, an authority in her phrases, and supremacy in the metaphors she uses to represent her sadness, anger, and depression. Astrid uses the metaphor of a "black cloud" to refer to her depressive condition. She describes the onset of her depression with phrases such as "the shadow of the black cloud looms menacingly over my head" or "the black cloud tried to surface again". Segal (1991) argues that such symbolic expression refers to the perception of internal and external reality that is activated in the depressive position. There is much struggle involved in artistic creativity and it is through depressive pain that the artist attains the truth. Astrid goes through a rigorous process of self-scrutiny in the following entry where she analyses her 'old' and 'new' self; her self before starting her antidepressant medication therapy and her self now that she is in a neutral mood, where mental function is regulated by The Pill:

This pill I hold in my hand is a mystery... Maybe it's like a mask, hiding, tucking away the black cloud... cutting off all flow of bad thoughts from my conscious. Maybe it's a cage for the black cloud, or even for my brain... holding my mind in a box so i do not think bad thoughts. maybe it's like a strange pair of sunglasses, filtering the black clouds so only happy thoughts go through. Here is what it is; I cannot think unhappy thoughts. ...I have been in a neutral mood all day... The old me would have been alarmed at that. ..The new me can't see a reason... I wonder what it is, this strange drug that stops me from thinking certain thoughts.

Is this how normal people feel? ...Not being stabbed by self-loathing and self-pity every second of the day? I stare out into the cornfield cover in snow

behind my house. The old me could have filled pages about... something metaphorical... But the current me sees....a cornfield covered in snow. Right now... all i feel is immense relief... that was what I longed for so desperately... relief from this enormous pain that was drowning me slowly. I sought whatever escape I could get my hands on: booze, boys, anger, self-mutilation, cigarettes, codeine, even fantasizing about my suicide... And now it's gone and I can breathe again. (PJAstrid17, 1:1, 2-7)

Astrid's writing is compelling. She blames medication for 'drowning her slowly', for her passivity and lack of reflexes, for her inability to fill up pages through creative writings. Even though Astrid finds her writing abilities diminished, I am attracted to the writing style of hers. There is power in her words: 'self-loathing', 'self-pity', 'immense relief', 'suicide'. There is intensity in the metaphors she uses to describe her depression: medication is portrayed as "mask" or a "strange pair of sunglasses", her depression is the "black cloud", feeling like "being stabbed", and her enormous pain as "drowning her slowly". As I read Astrid's entry I find her tone "rather ironical and at times quite critical towards issues pertaining to her being intervened through medication treatment. Isn't this what writing enabled to Steedman's (1987) participants to do: to become active, attentive and frequently resentful participants in the process of their socialization?" (RPJ, 68). In Astrid's case as well I find the act of writing works as a means for her to embrace or reject culturally constructed norms of upbringing, living and being. I return to the uses of Astrid's entry in my analysis again in this chapter.

Research in the field of feminist psychopharmacology and medical literature alerts us to the fact that stereotypical diagnostic and therapeutic sexism exists in the treatment of

psychological disorders. For example, two-thirds of the prescriptions for psychoactive drugs are prescribed to women patients (Hamilton & Jensvold, 1995; Rossiter, 1983; Travis & Moore, 1988). Male psychiatrists tend to be more likely to prescribe drugs if the patient is female rather than male (37% compared to 28%, Hoppe, 1984). Social and cultural attitudes based on gender bias appear to influence pharmacological tendencies (Marsh, 1995) and due to asymmetrical power relations between doctors and patients, women (especially young women) fall unaware into the double bind (Zimmerman, 1987). In the passage explored above, Astrid, in her journal entries, raises her voice against the powerful intervention of The Pill into her being. Feminist critiques of the medical profession point to the importance of prevention rather than intervention (Shapiro-Baruch, 1995) and talk about abusive, neglective, and dismissive treatment of women.

Sethna (1992) provides insight into how patriarchal structures guide the 'therapeutic' transformation of the woman to a mentally and physically complete and improved self with the potential of masking the pain and hurt experienced in her life—from menstrual discomfort, to abortion, and even sexual abuse. Sethna's study alerts me to the critical political and ethical considerations on the issue of the institutionally sanctioned and authorized drugging of young women. Is this phenomenon (so forcefully symbolized by the participants' journal texts) yet another way to normalize female adolescents into the structures of authority? A way to discipline the body by authorized chemicals? Noel (1992) movingly describes her own traumatic experience of being sexually abused and explains how treatment with psychotropic substances facilitated her denial and dissociation from highly suspicious events. While on medication "on some internal unconscious level, shame and mortification obliterated any healthy sense of myself and my rights" (Noel & Watterson,

1992, p. 17). Astrid cogently identifies symptoms of her medical history and verbalizes her psychological/somatic condition in her journal. It seems as though Astrid uses her personal writing to reach her private landscapes of body, inner thoughts, and desires, which provide her with the potential for dealing better with her pain and distress.

Astrid describes her previously experienced depressive state as a state she has been experiencing almost forever. "Is this how normal people feel?", she wonders about her current "drugged" state of being. She no longer feels hopelessness and despair waiting for her around every corner. She no longer is tortured by self-loathing and self-pity. Words and thoughts and actions are no longer attached to emotions that overwhelm her. Astrid identifies ways she used to escape from the helplessness caused by depression: "booze, boys, anger, self-mutilation, cigarettes, codeine, even fantasizing about [her] suicide". She uses highly condensed metaphors to represent the suffering, frightened, despairing, and raging young adolescent woman inside her.

Astrid actively uses her personal journal pages in such a way as to allow past memories and symbolic images to break through to consciousness. As she revisits earlier journal entries she had written five years previously, she realizes that her "black cloud" episodes had started much earlier than she thought. She characterizes herself as an unhappy child and confesses that her writings were even more melancholic back then. She wonders whether she was more honest with her feelings or whether she was more vulnerable and worrisome. Loneliness and despair characterize her personal writings. These are the journal entries of the 12 year old Astrid:

Loneliness. A horrible feeling. The feeling that you're alone, unwanted. With no one to help you, no one to talk to. No one to listen to your troubles...I'm

crying right now. It's been a long time since I've actually just sobbed and let the tears run off my chin. I wish I had a place where I could go and hole up and just cry without worrying about people hearing or seeing me. Some secret far-away place.

I have a secret. I wish I could tell someone. I'm about to burst. I can't write it down. Sorry, Starr [the name of my diary] but I need a real person. My friends think I'm totally confident; ...I'm not. I'm so weak....All I want in the world is just one thing. God, please, just give me that someone to talk to, someone who cares, a best friend. Please. Things like crushes seem so trivial now. Things like Kids Help Phone are useless. They don't understand...God, tomorrow, give me something to really cheer me up.

Please. You never cry, I told myself, You're tough. Crying's sissy, for wussy girls. In grade five I swore that I'd never cry at school. But I couldn't help it.

The tears that I had kept back all this time overflowed.... I'm tired.

(PJAstrid17[12], 1:128, 286-296)

We witness Astrid's suffering; her feelings of loneliness and depression. We do not know what triggers her despair. We do not know why Astrid feels the need to cry and searches desperately for a place to do it without being seen. Her writings voice her need for company, her need to talk to someone. She feels hopeless and prays to God to give her someone or something that would cheer her up. Even though she reminds herself to avoid crying since "crying sissy, for wussy girls", she cannot hold back the tears anymore. Since a young age, Astrid turns to writing to pour out her emotional confessions. She identifies in another entry that she finds very weird that she is unable to recollect whether it was "just a

brain doodle; if it was meant to be converted into a poem or a fictional story, or if it was an actual diary entry”:

The wind blows hard at my window.

It can't get in here, I think grimly.

I'm going mad, slowly. In my rage I hurl things against the wall.

There's a pounding at the door. I scream. Footsteps are heard as they tiptoe away.

Another knock.

Go away!' I yell.

I look around, desperate, to find something, anything, scissors, knives, glue, whiteout...

I think I'll stay in my place forever. (PJAstrid17[12], 1:128, 298-306)

Frightened and in despair, Astrid thinks she will stay in her place forever. There is no willingness to change her situation. Apathy and desolation emerge from her writing. After copying and pasting earlier journal entries into her current journal, Astrid writes a paragraph describing how the scars of her self-mutilation have started to heal and fade. As she examines her body she realizes that her “scars have begun to fade. The cross-shaped cut on my inner thigh, the angry welt on my forearm, the jagged ring around my right breast, they have all healed into almost nothing. The others have already disappeared”. Astrid continues with the metaphoric statement: “Like things are supposed to be all right now. I suppose they are. But I still know: I will never tell anyone” (PJAstrid17[12], 1:128, 307). She is the only witness of her own suffering. She confesses her suffering in her personal journal. She will not tell anyone about the scars of past traumas in her life. This paragraph carries an

optimistic meaning of healing, of suffering that is past and disappearing. Astrid closes her journey to her past depressive memories with a positive connotation: even though she is aware of their existence, they belong in the past; they are vanishing and fading away. She often closes her entries with a positive statement. Other times she finds an excuse for her depressive feelings: "Maybe it's PMS. it is a full moon tonight, after all".

There are ambivalent and contradictory feelings that characterize the depressive state. Astrid, once recognizing the shadow of the "black cloud" looming with menace over her head, tries to ignore it, to push it away, but in vain. She is inspired by the Protestant work ethic and considers keeping herself busy, to stop her mind from pondering on "useless thing" that "have the potential to bring me down with a crash. or slip me back into the powerful grip of the black cloud" (PJAstrid17, 1:141, 334). Every attempt to keep herself busy turns out to be unsuccessful. She writes that she wants to do something, "something big and lasting. i want to work on a project, but for once, not alone. i dunno what it is-write a play, start a band, make a movie, start a business-i just want to do something productive and cool" (PJAstrid17, 1:141, 329). However, she questions her abilities of realizing her goals and dreams: "but i don't think i can. i don't have the right...networking skills? i don't got no hook-ups, yo. i think i'm meant to be alone, in these things" (PJAstrid17, 1:141, 329). What she realizes, is that even talking to friends on the Internet fails to relieve her from loneliness: "On nights like this I should be kept away, swept away, locked away. I should have some tea and head to bed early" (PJAstrid17, 1:141, 333).

Through her journal entries, Astrid sculpts herself. She identifies two states of her identity: her old self and her new self. In other entries she adds more features to these two distinctive images of herself. She confesses that lately she has started to talk to herself when

driving alone and has discovered that during these discussions she allows other “spirits”—selves—to surface: “i have many in me, it seems, but i can’t count or even identify them properly. They come in pairs, opposite like Yin and Yang, forever trying to break or keep a balance” (PJAstrid17, 1:156, 393). For example, “when there is the sulky black cloud, there is the drug”, or “when there is the question-asker, there is the answer-giver”, “when i am with Joe, there is Reason and Passion”. Astrid concludes that “forever there is a battle between the One that wants to live, and the One who wants to sleep. The Sleeper’s is a frequent battle” (PJAstrid17, 1:156, 393). These struggling forces that constitute her being are in constant competition and become the main cause of her turmoil and of being thrown “off balance”. She notes, “None have quite won so far” (PJAstrid17, 1:156, 394).

Astrid talks about her writing when being depressed. Laziness and lack of interest to engage with creative and productive interactions influence her writings. If she is asked “how she has been this week”, she “won’t know how to reply. it feels like a blur. No moods, whatsoever. Just laziness. i’ve been trying to write but it is unnatural, forced, rough, stiff, not my style at all”. As she continues her thinking she states, “mainly, I have been tamed and the drugs live for me. The black cloud tried to surface again yesterday and i felt it start to poison my mind, but i pushed it back and laughed it off” (PJAstrid17, 1:156, 391). In another entry Astrid mentions that she has “writer’s block”. She feels that “music seems to spill out of my head, but no words come”. She speculates that perhaps this is a “good thing”: “Just look at this mess of a diary entry. The heartbroken always ramble on without making sense. we like to mope and wade in our self pity” (PJAstrid17, 1:230, 570). The times she loses her passion and interest in everything, she fails to do anything productive: “i’ve written nothing, save these rambling pointless diary entries. i’ve developed plot outlines of a new

book and started a new melody for a song, but i've lost the passion to continue" (PJAstrid17, 1:327, 928).

Astrid uses her personal journal writing as a space where she attempts to analyze her melancholy, her history of struggle with depression, her desires to be happy and to lead a productive life, and the ambivalent place of authorized medical drugs in all of this. To visit and study the depths of her depression seems to be liberating for her. However painful her self-analysis might be, since it entails the process of scrutinizing painful memories, it seems to provide her with some relief from her suffering. In the following paragraphs, I present Astrid's thoughts on the reasons behind her depressive state. As she attempts to understand her condition a pattern emerges: she always ends up blaming herself.

In her journal she acknowledges that there are certain issues related to her depression that she needs to "work out". However, she does not know "how to go about fixing them". She realizes that whenever she feels overwhelmed with emotions and cries, "old injustices fly back... i almost always end up blaming my parents somehow". She remembers vividly that she "was suffering those months too when my dad was driven mad with depression, only the whole family's attention was on dad and no one could pay attention to me" (PJAstrid17, 1:270, 795). Astrid maintains that "all of the horrible things that they put me through left scars in me. which are all true, but the black cloud was there when i was twelve, before my parents began fighting" (PJAstrid17, 1:270, 795). As discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis, relationships with parents are decisive in the lives of young adolescent women. Issues such as parent's health problems, conflicts in their relationship, and divorce relate to the participants' depressive moods in their private journal writings. In Astrid's case, a sick

father, lack of attention, and an unsettling family life seem to play a role in aggravating her situation.

However, Astrid does not want to put the blame exclusively on her parents. She posits that she has been suffering from "the black cloud" since before her parents began fighting. In a later entry, Astrid criticizes herself for "screwing around with her body". She feels that the "black cloud" invades her dreams and her body and she experiences physiological side effects of its presence. She seems to "be hit constantly by invisible waves of dreadful nausea" and feels "hot and cold and tingly and periodically things I get this freaky chill that clamps on to my arms" (PJAstrid17, 1:311, 897). She wonders whether these bodily reactions come as a symptomatic response to her abuse of her body and health through pot, drugs, and smoking: "i wish i hadn't drunk that coffee. i wish i hadn't ever smoked that joint, that cigarette months. my body's messed up already, why am i adding more complications with this stupid experimenting?" (PJAstrid17, 1:311, 898). Astrid finds herself turning "exactly into those stupid loud kids i've hated on the bus" and wishes she had never started it. Later on she brings to her consciousness that she has been so addicted to substances that allow her to become "mellow" that she dreads the realization that she could easily throw herself to any pill that would promise to solve her problems:

who am i kidding? i want relief. i want some downers to put me to sleep.
 some weed to make me mellow. my beloved Celexa to chase away bad
 dreams. some codeine to get me so stoned i don't feel this strange nausea. i
 do know i have some of [Tom's] codeine stashed away in my room...
 oh dear diary, i'm not actually a druggie, just a druggie wannabe. it's because
 i read that stupid book, and tomorrow's 4/20. ironic, reading about the

downfalls and deaths of druggie teens make me want to go out and smoke some more pot. i know that i would throw myself whole-heartedly into the world of pills if i knew they'd solve all my problems, but look-i'm on medication already (medication i seem to develop allergic reactions to, mind you) and i'm still messed up as ever. (PJAstrid17, 1:311, 899-900).

Astrid's self-analysis culminates with the articulation of self-criticism. She blames herself entirely for the condition she is in: "it's entirely my fault my life sucks", she exclaims. She continues her self investigation with the question: "and how does your life suck, dear Astrid? stupid pathetic little girl, so damn melodramatic". She remembers "turning her nose up at disgust" when seeing her best friends turning to drugs without even having the excuse of suffering from depression. However, in her journal she keeps asking herself: "so what's your brilliant excuse? mental illness? how do you know that's not brought on by yourself? and how do you think it'll be solved by torturing yourself by desiring these cheap escapes?" (PJAstrid17, 1:312, 905). She then calls herself "stupid girl" and considers that she cannot be "justified in your stupid actions. you're just as bad as the kids on the bus, down the hall, in the parks. you're just as superficial" (PJAstrid17, 1:312, 905). Astrid consciously finds a tangible cause for her melancholic feelings and situation. It is her behavior that causes her to be depressed, it is drugs and pot and smoking. That implies that if she manages to control those destructive behaviors she can then control her depression, she can relieve herself from that suffering.

Additionally, Astrid uses her personal journal to try to break out of her anger and bitterness towards herself. She hates herself for what she has done to her body. She is the one who causes her suffering. Through her writing she becomes aware of her self in relation

to her suffering, and repeatedly she enmeshes herself in articulations of her pain and anguish. Riviere (1964) would argue that "suffering relieves guilt" and Astrid, even though she blames herself for her depression, unconsciously engages in elaborations of her anguish in order to acquire some relief from her guilty thoughts. Furthermore, Kristeva (1989), in her discussion on how sadness holds back hatred, claims that:

My sadness affect is the ultimate yet mute witness to my having, in spite of all, lost the archaic Thing of omnipotent ascendancy. That sadness is the final filter of aggressiveness, the narcissistic restraint of a hatred that is acknowledged not because of simple moral or superego decency, but because in sadness the self is yet joined with the other, it carries it within, it introjects its own omnipotent projection – and joys in it. Sadness would thus be the negative of omnipotence, the first and primary indication that the other is getting away from me, but the self, nevertheless, does not put up with being abandoned. (p. 64)

I find it interesting to view Astrid's writing on her sadness and depression through the filter of Kristeva's take on the affirmative affect of sadness to the feeling of omnipotence. The fact that Astrid continues to write about heartfelt feelings and thoughts in her personal journal depicts the importance of such an act. Astrid engages in depictions of the compulsive intensities and uncontrollable forces of receiving and avoiding her medication. She describes how her pill allows her to attack the "black cloud", making it retreat to "the place it hides all day", leaving her "feeling empty, numb, watching silently as these words spill from my fingers. i feel as though something else is writing through me. i've lost my cynical humor as well" (PJAstrid17, 1:340, 945). Astrid uses the image of

looking at everything “wide-eyed like a child” to represent the numb effect that her medication has on her thinking and feeling abilities. In another entry, Astrid, threatened by the shadow of the “black cloud”, is devastated to realize that she does not respond to her medication and her pills have lost their power:

yes, i am depressed, diary. on top of the nausea and headaches and aches, or maybe along with those things, i have fallen back into the holds of the black cloud. the black cloud is hell, my dear, it sucks everything from me. it drains my patience for the things i do not like, it drains the pleasure of the company of friends, it drains the passion for my hobbies, it even drains the beautiful escape of sleep. it sucks my life away, oh God, i'm rotting away inside a healthy body. it's as though the white pills have lost their power, my only protection. i don't want to do anything. (PJAstrid17, 1:331, 933)

What she realizes later on in her writings is that she should refrain from taking her medication since it is a “downer”; it calms her down, makes her mellow and want to sleep: “i thought it was all good, and then suddenly i realized, WHY THE HELL DO I NEED TO BE MADE MELLOW? i don't have anger management issues, i don't even feel rage”. At this point Astrid revisits her “diary entries pre-pill era” and realizes that her most constant thought during that period was that she wanted to be able to sleep all day and all night. She writes: “i have no energy to do anything, i have no will to do anything'[...] i was a lazy, lethargic moper who sat around on her ass all day. in short, i was already mellow, so mellow i was suicidal”. Astrid wonders, “so why the hell am i taking a downer? if anything i should be taking uppers” (PJAstrid17, 1:385, 1057). Through the self-analysis of her depressive condition Astrid becomes more aware of her bodily functions. Through her writing in the

journal she demonstrates her confused but persistent need to find different patterns of meaning in relation to drugs and her melancholia.

It could be argued that through writing, Astrid engages in the use of representations of experience and its effects on subjectification into gender and generation. There is an active use of the material space of writing and self representation in the personal journal. Looking back to old representations in earlier journals, she unearths memories, prioritizes them, and maps her emotional ups and downs through time, the peaks and troughs of her emotional states. She engages in a twofold quest, an ontological one—as she attempts to gather up the parts of the self and put them together—and an epistemological one—as she attempts to express the real and the true in herself. Robertson (2006) notes further: “The structure of feeling in this voyage is one of self-loathing, a symbolization of her hatred self, like parts of her are foreigners inhabiting her native land. How lonely and alone this worker is.” And Robertson continues with the remark that “even if the object (part of self) is hated and persecutory as she aspires to symbolize it, it is familiar to her and she is reluctant to jettison it” (p. 4). It is through this symbolization that she manages her psychic movement and survival. It seems that it is through the use of the journal that she achieves her capacity to live.

Eventually, though, Astrid repeatedly ends up blaming herself: “or maybe that’s because i smoke pot, which is an additional downer. or maybe it’s because i’m one big emotional scar tissue that can’t get over herself, and more, is too apathetic to want to improve” (PJAstrid17, 1:385, 1058). She uses the following metaphor to conclude: “like i’ve fallen into a shithole and don’t care to pull myself out and have grown accustomed to the smell. oh man, i’m such a freak” (PJAstrid17, 1:385, 1058). Of interest in this entry is her

confession that she is suffering because she “is too apathetic to want to improve”. There is an unconscious desire to retain her depressive condition and prolong her suffering expressed in this phrase. This is apparent from an entry that resulted from a conversation she had with a friend of hers who seems to be suffering from depression as well. Her friend confesses to her that “depression was that there was some lingering thought that I didn't want the sadness to go away. Just sitting there in the back of my mind” (PJAstrid17, 1:458, 1383). Astrid responds with acknowledgement that she also feels that she wants “some sadness to linger”. Astrid does not say this so she can use her depression as an excuse: “i won't do this, and i can't do that and i don't measure up to this because i'm messed up in the head”. The reason she does not want her depression to go away is that if she were a “normal person” that might change the expectations that others would have of her: “And what alibis would i have, to be not as good as everyone else? depression made me different, special, and i clung to that. i probably still do” (PJAstrid17, 1:463, 1394). Feeling happy is experienced as a “foreign feeling” and Astrid longs for PMS symptoms to see the changes that take place. Astrid articulates and brings to consciousness her inner desire to sustain her condition of suffering since it is experienced as a zone of familiarity that makes her feel comfortable. Self analysis does provide her with a measure of self awareness and as Berman (1985) argues on Sylvia Plath's self analysis in her diary, it works in such a way as to provide her “with relief of her suffering” (p. 131).

Finding someone experiencing the same condition and being able to share thoughts and feelings freely is considered to offer some relief to the suffering. Astrid shares in her journal how talking to such friends while being depressed provided her with “some kind of reassurance that things will be okay”. Being able to help friends who go through a

melancholic phase is of great importance: "maybe we kind of take turns getting depressed". However, the main reason Astrid gets sad when the other person is, is because she feels as though she is unable to help: "and I always want to make you feel better, maybe I'm not too convincing. but I have HOPE, and that's all I need right now. I just thought I'd share my feelings with you" (PJAstrid17, 1:477, 1476-1478). Being able to communicate with someone who can understand and not be judgmental towards her condition is not an easy task. Astrid has learned very quickly that being on medication for depression is a cultural taboo and she gets angry with herself when she does not "keep her mouth shut": "told [Jeen] somehow today while we were out..., that i was on medication. for my moods. i'm a dope, i can't keep my mouth shut. when you feel like you're insane, you don't TELL people. you lose all respect and credibility" (PJAstrid17, 1:311, 900). Astrid depicts in this entry how she uses her personal experiences to construct meanings about cultural views and expectations: "depressive people are insane", "you don't tell people about your condition; since you risk losing all respect and credibility". Astrid, since a young age, has internalized those messages and adapts her behavior according to the culturally accepted norms.

Not surprisingly, such stereotypes about people who suffer from depression end up keeping them secluded, isolated, and restrained from public interactions. Astrid often writes in her journal how lonely she feels and how it is so difficult for her to find someone to talk to: "i'm tired, dear Diary, tired of making plans to go out and trying to convince my parents to let me, of going to the kitchen sink to wash my hands and finding a dead squid staring steadily back at me" (PJAstrid17, 1:327, 928). Mainly she reports feeling tired "of remembering i am alone and wondering if i want to be alone, of waking up too early in the morning unable to sleep and thrashing about my bed dreamlessly, of thinking about things i

don't like" (PJAstrid17, 1:327, 928). Loneliness is a feeling that has been voiced repeatedly by the participants in their journals. Twelve participants write about feeling lonely and without friends. There are approximately 60 entries where they discuss issues pertaining to feelings of being alone or abandoned. It seems as if these young women long for companionship yearn to find someone to express their thoughts and feelings to, and they turn to their journal pages instead. This finding of my study sheds light on the solitary aspect of feminine development – a phenomenon that researchers sometimes lose sight of through their emphasis on the sociality and love of peer group in adolescence.

Daniele describes loneliness as "scariest than dark" (PJDaniele16, 5:17, 80). Daniele states that the scariest word in the English language is *alone*. She reflects in her journal that for about the past two years the feeling of loneliness "has engulfed my heart. And many times people tell me that I have so many people, that I'm so lucky. And you know what? They might be right, but that's not the way I see it" (PJDaniele17, 6:39, 111). When asked what she would wish for, Daniele replies that she would wish "for everyone, and I mean everyone in this great big world to be, know and feel that they are loved. For no one to be or feel alone. That's what I wish. And this is me. My real thoughts" (PJDaniele17, 6:68, 134-136). In another entry she symbolizes loneliness with a *weeping willow*, which she regards as her favorite tree and names it her "loneliness tree". She started to create this tree a few months ago: "every time I've ever felt lonely, I drew a branch on the tree. I can't draw very well, but it's just a way for me to keep track of those feelings" (PJDaniele17, 7:10, 47). Daniele writes that the length of the branches "describes the extent of my feelings. Luckily, I haven't drawn a branch on it for a while, and I'm thankful for that. No one knew about this tree, at least until now" (PJDaniele17, 7:10, 47).

Gisella confesses in her journal that less than satisfactory relationship with her boyfriend makes her write 'lonely' stories and draw crying mermaids: "He yells at me when I need to talk to someone" (PJGisella20, 14:17, 97). In an entry a couple of years later, Gisella recounts the following story of a lonely young woman in an abusive relationship:

Some days [Lora] felt really lost and REALLY alone, and then she felt deep and ugly guilt and self hatred. How dare she felt lost and alone when someone loved her so much, and was so kind to her? Her weakness in itself made her hate hate herself for it showed that she was ungrateful, unsubstantial and unworthy. Se was taking a gift - of love and trust and a relationship, that she didn't deserve. She was stupid and ugly and abused herself. She wanted help really. She wanted to be cured, but when she sat alone at night and tried to tunk of solutions and cries to some realities appear. She wasn't strong, clever and worthwhile enough!? She didn't deserve it. She was too gone.
(PJGisella23, 15:42, 239-240).

The character in Gisella's fictional story may be a stand-in for Gisella herself. In other entries Gisella writes how her boyfriend degrades her, makes her feel "stupid" and "ugly". She has supported him through his drinking problems for a long time and endures patiently because "she loves him". Gisella's story is an articulation of her own fears, self-loathing, and guilt. She feels unworthy of love; therefore she tolerates any grievances arising from this relationship. The fact that she has recently moved to Canada from Australia, and is isolated from her support group, especially her mother and friends, makes her more vulnerable to the controlling and manipulative behavior of her boyfriend. Gisella uses the pages of her journal to explore her feelings of aloneness in this difficult world. Words create

stories and these stories surface her uncertainties. My understanding is that Gisella finds shelter in her stories, the stories of mermaids with wings. Probably the wings represent freedom to her, ways to escape from her suffocating reality. And even though a mermaid is confined in a watery environment, Gisella's mermaid, with the help of her wings, is able to lift herself into an aerial element.

As I am trying to understand the psychological uses of writing short stories with mythic images, I discuss my thoughts with my supervisor, who pushes me to think of these stories as "the ground where they play with their desires and phantasies about men, life, themselves, etc. Under those lenses I now see the reasons why Gisella writes about "mermaids with wings" (RPJ, p. 122). Gisella's creative impulses emerge from her depressive position, Segal would argue (1991). When these impulses are expressed, symbolic expression is at play. Additionally, Segal argues that through such symbolic expression the journal writer engages in an "unceasing search to reconstruct 'inevitable truths'" (p. 100). This search for inner reality is Gisella's focus and her inner tensions and conflicts are represented through her words, sentences, stories.

Gisella reflects on her lonely state of being. She feels like she is "on [a] rollercoaster". Even though she is living with the boyfriend she loves "more than anything" she feels "so lost and alone". She experiences "a grown up isolated self realization" (PJGisella23, 15:52, 289). For Odette, loneliness "threatens to choke me to death. I cannot breathe. I need some air. I should choose freedom but I'm stuck here in this muddy pit of restraint. Sinking deeper, I feel panicked (which worsens my state of helplessness). I resign for now" (PJOdette19, 64:5, 75). As well, when Priscilla feels lonely she turns to her journal

pages: "I feel the need to write to you. I feel lonely and depressed again" (PJPriscilla17, 68:38, 50).

So, what are the uses of the journal for the developing women who feel so alone? For Priscilla, her personal journal is her best friend: "So right now I am releasing my anger out writing as you are my only real best friend who I can ALWAYS trust when I am in doubt" (PJPriscilla21, 71:74, 310). The personal journal as a transitional object serves as a constant companion, capable of tolerating bleakest of feelings, and never abandoning its writer. In answering the question "Who am I?", Priscilla responds in abject terms: "Guilty, going to hell, God never accepting me. Lonely. Fearing life and death at same time" (PJPriscilla20, 70:196, 802-803). When Priscilla feels afraid and unworthy of love it is then that her suicidal thoughts arise. Her ideas concerning suicide are confirmed in her journal, her best friend. There Priscilla confesses that she has attempted suicide three times; once by an overdose of aspirin and alcohol, and other times by cutting herself, or trying to drown herself in the bath tub. However, there are other incidents of suicidal behavior in her journal besides those three instances she refers to. After feeling rejected and abandoned by her friends during a night out socializing, she writes in her journal: "I had a miserable time, back at rez I cried and cried and thought of suicide, I was going to attempt (drowning myself in a bath full of water by falling asleep)" (PJPriscilla20, 70:36, 129). The next time, Priscilla attempts to overdose. She writes about one Sunday night when she felt she was having a "panic attack". She was feeling "severely depressed" and was tortured by thoughts of suicide. She decides to take "what was left of my Paxils (8 pills) and 3 sleeping pills, but I still couldn't go to sleep and I was having problems breathing and I couldn't stay still. It was horrible. It felt like a really bad dream" (PJPriscilla20, 70:141, 555).

In other entries, she tries to understand what causes her suicidal tendencies: "Suicide is probably a solution to unknown answers to questions. How though? I hate every inch of myself - my hair, my eyes, my voice, my skin, my big breasts, my stretch marks, my bizarre behavior". She symbolizes how feelings of unworthiness influence her feelings and thoughts: "I don't deserve the goodness/richness of this world. Sorry God, but I'm not worth it. I'm in the depths of despair... I'm crying for no reason (11:40) and I feel like harming myself" (PJPriscilla19, 69:147, 566). In yet another entry, Priscilla writes about feeling unworthy: "Oh, I feel so down and useless. Suicide thoughts invade my head because I am worthless in this world" (PJPriscilla20, 70:359, 1375). She describes her mood when she feels suicidal with images of suffocation, of being swallowed up and carried out by the tide:

These "wild" moods get so much in the way with my normal life, that I can't handle myself, I can't breathe - it's as if I'm stuck in Quick sand and I find a way to get out but the "tide" is stronger. I'm fighting but it's still overpowering me. I just want to go back to university and not have to worry on my moods imposing my life. This is driving me crazy! (PJPriscilla20, 70:309, 1189)

What I find interesting in this entry is that Priscilla configures herself as a fighting victim, active and struggling for survival. Apart from feeling worthless, being stressed out also causes her to think about suicide. With the thought of having to write an exam on chemistry the next day, Priscilla reports that she feels she hasn't studied enough and that she's not ready: "I'm not ready. I hate chemistry! I am or was feeling so down today. I'm thinking of suicide - I want to kill my self. I'm a failure. I'm not smart you know dearest" (PJPriscilla20, 70:116, 447). Losing control over a situation makes her feel like killing

herself: "I'm so nervous. I cannot control myself. I feel like killing myself... like committing suicide..." (PJPriscilla17, 68:21, 23). Another time she writes: "Having a b/f scares me - a committed serious relationship - like I am scared to have high hopes for fear that my heart will break and I will commit suicide" (PJPriscilla20, 70:265, 1026). As a reader of the previous passages I had been affected by such horrific feelings of emptiness, loneliness and suicide. "Every time I read through those entries I get into the same emotional sphere. Today, once again, my supervisor reminded me that I should avoid internalizing the feelings experienced by my participants in their journal writings. I am trying, but I do not know how I am going ever to succeed in that. I feel depressed as well. I try to remind me that I should keep myself detached from those feelings but I keep on failing." (RPJ, 72).

Why do Priscilla and some of the other participants engage in writings about depression and suicide in their personal journals? Berman (1994) presents a theory of writing as rescue. Berman's idea emanates from his study of depression in the works of Joseph Conrad and "other authors who write out of the need to exorcise the specter of self-destruction" (p. 131). He refers to creative writers' admission of the healing effects of self-expression through writing. For highly creative individuals, writing endorses psychological relief by promoting the mastery of one's feelings. As Hemingway (1940) says about his experience of emotional release through writing, "My guess is that you will get rid of all that writing about it... once you write it down it is all gone" (p. 165). From my analysis of the participants' writings on depression and feelings of loneliness and suicide, I would argue that apart from confronting and mastering feelings, writing about conflicts and grievances allows the journal writer to organize her thoughts, to impose order, and to build an understanding of the situation. The personal journal writer engages in a process of exploring

reasons and views that support self-detachment from the source of distress. Berman notes, "Writing is an act of creation, a validation of the effort to leave part of oneself to posterity...a way to memorialize loss and achieve victory of sorts over death" (p. 132). My study participants achieve some insight into aspects of their gendered subjectivity precisely through this region of aesthetic creation in journaling.

Writing about hurtful feelings and situations is not any easy task. Daniele confesses in her personal journal: "It hurt to write my feelings. It hurt to come to the realization of things that I guess I'd rather not have realized". She reports having so many feelings inside her and considers that "getting them out in the open, recording them would be good for me". However, Daniele identifies that there are certain problems. One of them is that "no matter how hard I try, no matter what fancy language I use, I can never and will never be able to capture the intricacies of my feelings well enough". The second problem arises from the fact that "writing requires thinking, like deep thinking. Me + Deep Thinking = Tears". However, the third point she mentions keeps her writing: "reading what I wrote, after I'm done, makes me look at myself in a different way, at in a good way. I keep thinking to myself, 'who am I?'" (PJDaniele17, 6:87, 192-195). Writing is not always an easy process. It comes with pain and tears.

In Freud's text *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1950) he puts forward the theory of repetition-compulsion principle. Freud's repetition-compulsion principle is based on the child's response to the temporary disappearance of his mother. By throwing and pulling back a wooden reel attached to a string, the child manages to symbolically make his mother disappear and magically appear again. This allows the child to accept and endure his mother's absence. Contemporary psychoanalysts maintain that repetition functions in such a

way as to provide the possibility to relive and master past traumas and distressful feelings of absolute despair, such as feelings of depression and suicide. I would like to argue that there is a connection between my participants' use of repetition in their journal entries and the symbolization of loneliness, depression and suicidal feelings. And as we have witnessed, my participants use their symbolizations in Chapter Four to deal with issues of communication with their parents, to acquire a sense of being, to discover the meaning of things, and to attain and secure a sense of independence. In Chapter Five, my participants engage in written symbolizations of feelings and thoughts derived from their relationships with friends and boyfriends. Through those symbolizations their relationship with the outside world has evolved and their transition from being merged into separate beings has been facilitated. In this Chapter Six we witness my participants engaging in written symbolizations of their trauma and use this voyage in their odyssey of self discovery and understanding.

My discussion of the findings of the data professes how the role of language is central in the lives of human beings. Segal (1991), by looking to the two channels of affect, the psychic and the biological, claims that when a child is able to find a symbolic representation that proves to be sufficient, he is able to receive responses to this action. These symbolic codes generate stimulation and reinforcement. Conversely, in the case where the symbolization is insufficient, the person retracts to inaction and death. More specifically, "language in its heterogeneity (primary and secondary processes, ideational and emotional carrier of desire, hatred, conflicts) is a powerful factor that, through unknown mediations, has an activating (as well as, conversely, an inhibiting) effect on neurobiological networks" (Segal, p. 37). What I find even more interesting in Segal's discussion on the functions of language is that through the hypothalamus' networks, psychic and linguistic representations

are transferred neurologically to the “physiological occurrences” of the brain. That means that hearing certain words can have a mellowing or sedative effect. In my participants’ case, writing such words, or using language through journal writing, may work as a facilitator for stimulation and reinforcement of certain feelings. Writing in their personal journal allows my participants to symbolize feelings and thoughts through words and language that facilitates certain positive processes in the brain that boosts the awakening of desirable

At this point, let us recall Dr. Cheifetz’s warning: “Writing is associated with survival. Be aware when they stop. Catherine committed suicide two weeks after she stopped writing...”. “I feel exceptionally bad right now, which is why I’m writing”, Irene writes (PJIrene18, 26:21, 46). “I wish I wrote more. When I write more, I feel more, when I live more I write more etc....”, Gisella notes (PJGisella23, 15:50, 288).

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusions and Implications: Unfolding Ariadne's thread

Keep Ithaca always in you mind

Arriving there is what you're destined for.

But don't hurry the journey at all.

Better if it last for years,

so you're old by the time you reach the island,

wealthy with all you've gained on the way,

not expecting Ithaca to make you rich. (Ithaca – Constantine P. Cavafy)

The Uses of Journal Writing

This thesis explores how young women use personal journal writing to create themselves as females and occupants of gendered identity positions. The ways in which the process of socialization and subjectivization takes place and is shaped by the written narratives of these young journal writers are examined. This process is driven and governed by feelings, desires, dreams, fears, and memories. The intensity and range of feelings experienced by these women sheds some light on their histories of depression and disappointment, histories of fears and hope, and histories of resistance and empowerment that are mediated and expressed through their written engagements in their personal journals.

As I explore the journal entries of the participants in this study there is one central question that governs my analytical thinking: what are the uses of journal writing? Why do my participants engage in the process of keeping a written diary of their self-reflections and expressions of feelings on a regular basis, and why do they agree to share these beloved objects with me, in the service of research? As discussed in Chapter Four, one of the main

uses for their personal journal is as a *Potential Space*, where deeper self-understanding is attained through approaching the personal in terms of a shared experience with cultural implications (Please, see Table 11, p. 344). Personal journal writing seems to enable the interaction with others within this inner world, an interaction that allows for self discovery and understanding. The personal journal becomes the "private agora" for their interactions with their parents. My participants' private pages become the space where communication with their parents takes place. The journal in a way comes to replace missed parents. It is the potential space in which parents can be continually symbolized, fought with, rejected, scorned, adored, remembered, missed; a go-between space like islands in their ride to Ithaca. I would argue that the journal writing experience allows the girls to hold onto missed parents in the awakening of greater self independence.

The findings in this study attest to the importance of considering the ways in which the organization of the psychic life, embodied in the dynamics of the family, interacts to place young women into positions that produce and reproduce them as females. The analysis of the participants' relationships with their mothers reveals patterns of behaviour that underlie a longing towards the mother's affective and emotional support. Most of the participants in this study hold on to a fantasy of maternal perfection, a mythologized image, a mother entirely devoted to the needs of her children. As revealed in their personal writings, the symbiotic relationship between mother and daughter, a kind of psychic osmosis, is, at times, experienced as a comforting symbiosis. At other times though, such a symbiotic relationship is described in their journal entries as an undesirable invasion of privacy. Girls use their personal journal to understand their relationship with their mother, and to discover the meaning of their relationships.

Such written engagements allow them to explore self during the most decisive phase of their life. What becomes apparent in their written explorations is their struggle to enter the necessary separation and individuation stage. Donovan (1998) uses the archetypal Greek myth of Demeter and Persephone to analyze the mother-daughter relationship in its complexity and, more specifically, to highlight the process of separation and individuation as it takes place in the lives of young girls: "It is in the nature of Greek myths to represent psychic struggles in very dramatic, primitive, graphic ways, ways that convey the power of the conflicts" (p. 138). Such conflicts are characterized by fusion as well as separation; required stages for the proper developmental sequences to occur (Fenchel, 1998). Through such conflicts, internalization leads daughters to take over the functions that were initially prescribed to mothers. Siegler (1998) explains how the need-gratifying relationships and functions provided by mothers to daughters are preserved by the daughters by making them part of their selves. According to Siegler, development in girls takes place in two synchronized realms of experience: through the interpersonal relationship between mother and daughter and through the intrapsychic representation of that relationship. And it is through their private journal pages that my participants engage in interpersonal relationships with their mother. Their personal journals function as a space for them to communicate¹¹ with their parents, and through written representations of their relationships to acquire a sense of being.

The personal journal tolerates ambiguity and uncertainty, and thereby serves as an enabler in the solidification of a more coherent sense of self, especially as the girls continue to spiral around key relationships and emotions in their symbolizations. Through their written explorations of their relationships with friends and boyfriends, we witness that my

participants use their personal journals as transitional objects (Please, see Table 10, p. 326). Their private journal pages allow young women to communicate with friends and others and thus their relationship to the outside world has begun. While the written exploration of their relationship to parents grants them a sense of self and independence, their written interactions with friends and boyfriends assist their transition from being merged into being separate beings. Robertson (2001) explains that during this time of development the adolescent needs to have transitional objects, which might have the form of social material such as books, journals, individual talismans, and relations with other individuals, to aid them in their struggle to attain autonomy. My participants use their personal journal as a transitional object in order to express (at times) feelings of their own omnipotence. This situation (feelings of grandeur) is one that generally is not culturally tolerated for women and girls in their everyday lives. But Winnicott argued that immersion in feelings of subjective omnipotence serve individual's capacities to develop creatively, because the maturing self eventually comes to see the illusory nature of her own subjective omnipotence as she comes to terms with the existence of external reality.

Additionally, I have discussed how the young woman uses this object, her personal journal, in order to vent destructive impulses. Such destructive attacks are balanced when the object, the journal, is tangible and placed in the sphere of external reality. During the process of development, my participants use their journal as a vehicle to vent rage, so that "the external environment [is] able to survive such venting for the [individual] to learn that the world really exists, and she is not omnipotent but neither is she to be destroyed by the violence of her feelings" (Robertson, 2006, p. 2). Because of its capacity to be tangible, it is observable and at times its use is hidden and controlled. The journal writer assumes rights on

it; she owns the journal. The journal is private and faithfully "there". It's "thereness" serves a holding function. And because of its potentiality to survive instinctual love and aggression, the personal journal provides to my participants assurance and the feeling of being cuddled and "held" in and around and through their written pages.

And it is this function of the personal journal that allows my participants to engage in a process of continuation and connection with their own subjective reality, a "good enough" situation for negotiation in the arena of gender prohibitions. Gender identity is created by the ways in which the individual projects emotional and fantasy simulation of cultural categories (Chodorow, 2002). Hence, each person's perception of gender is an individual creation and, at the same time, gender cannot be approached outside its cultural limitations. Therefore, "subjectivity, standpoint, and identity on the one hand are situated, contextual, and contested and on the other are actively created psychodynamically, rather than given" (Chodorow, p. 242). In the private pages of my participants' journals, we witness how practices of language, culture, and psyche play a significant role in the social construction of gender. For example, young women tend to compromise themselves to the expectations of their peers in order to maintain their attachment with them. Popularity is presented as being of great importance during adolescence. My participants' private writings reveal how belonging to the 'cool group' of friends and being accepted by its members is one of their main concerns. These young girls are pressured and expected to comply with certain cultural roles in order to be accepted. Their writings reveal how cultural practices produce "forms of thought and positions for women, the second deals with the inscription in those positions, of desire—that is, how we come to want what we want" (Walkerdine, 1984, p. 164).

Additionally, my participants' relationships with their boyfriends are influenced by culturally induced perceptions of femininity and masculinity. The image of 'the princess marrying the prince and living happily ever after' is internalized and expressed in the journal writings. Young girls tend to hold onto the phantasy of 'endless love' even after experiencing disappointment and regret when they failed to secure trust and reliance with their partners. There is a struggle between the longing for the lost perfect past and the desire to find oneself. More specifically, there is a repetition of patterns of behaviour and a repetition of emotional states. The pattern is cyclical: forming a relationship, breaking up, getting back together, breaking up, and getting back together again. Cultural pressures work on these women's desires to re-forge their lost relationships and avoid being single.

Chodorow (2002) argues that "it is culturally mandated that women be passive" (p. 255). In their journal entries, my participants illustrate the unconscious internal negotiation and struggle they go through in order to secure the possibility of ever 'seeing', 'talking', 'meeting' him again. These young women express their inner-felt desires to 'wait for him'. They 'have' to be passive and tender and patient and 'wait'. By conforming to this patriarchal standard of femininity, they anticipate his coming back into their lives. Being part of the waiting game exemplifies the power of cultural ideologies that maintain the image of female passivity. As Stein (1995) argues, the male-female contrasts are based on dominance, superiority, and privilege of the male.

With regards to issues of sexuality in relation to their relationships with males, it becomes evident from the analysis of the personal journals that cultural norms perpetuate the notion of girls being the ones accountable for acting as gatekeepers to protect the moral inertia and place the limits on sexual experience. Young women tend to limit their

discussions about sexuality or use codes to refer to their desires. The majority of the participants hesitate to explore their sexual desires in their private pages, which demonstrates the ways in which females struggle with their sexual desires and the cultural prohibitions against such feelings. Generally, my participants' personal writings reflect how cultural structures work to maintain patriarchal and heteronormative views that normalize feminine roles and stereotypes about woman.

Additionally, the personal journal works as the ground through which to understand their psychosomatic transformation by examining the dynamic transitions from childhood to adolescence and from there to adulthood. Their journal entries reflect and echo that gender is historically situated and culturally and discursively constructed. However, each participant brings her own individuality and, as psychoanalysis documents, people experience the cultural images and meanings through emotions and the work of fantasy, as well as in their own individual interpersonal contexts. Chodorow (2002) describes that there is a personal tint in each person's sense of gender:

Emotional meaning, affective tone, and unconscious fantasies that arise from within and are not experienced linguistically interact with and give individual animation and nuance to cultural categories, stories, and language (that is make them subjectively meaningful). Individuals thereby create new meanings according to their own unique biographies and histories of intrapsychic strategies and practices – meanings that extend beyond and run counter to cultural or linguistic categories. (p. 239-240)

Furthermore, my participants use their journal pages as a potential space to foster gendered subjectivity. Even though women are denied voice in public arena, in their journey to Ithaca the journal functions as their private agora, a space of agency in their struggle for

womanhood. My participants use their journal to explore, to make history, to create, to play. Their personal journal is private and faithfully there, it tolerates anger, and despair, repetition and neglect. And since it is oral in nature – having to do with words – it allows them to symbolize their frustration and anger and engage in the process of analyzing their selves and others, and reflect on the development and progress of their relationships. Through such cognitive engagements these young women make a significant advancement towards their identity formation. The journal helps to constitute the subject through its survival and, as we have witnessed, it provides these young women with the tools to voice their presence. It could be argued that one of the most important functions is that it offers the capacity to women to use their external reality to situate themselves in relation to it since the journal does not insist on necessary compliance with cultural prescriptions. We can see that this space would function extremely valuably for females in patriarchy and under the cultural prohibitions prescribed by gendered stereotypes.

The findings from this study also attest to another use of personal journal writing: *defense against painful realities*. Such a function is performed through *repetition*. By re-visiting past experiences and feelings in their journal pages the journal writer discharges her repressed feelings and consequently experiences pleasure, even in the cases that it is disguised in the form of hate, anger, and frustration. The utmost therapeutic value of repetition, though, lies in the fact that it allows unconscious experiences to be symbolized and trauma that resists consciousness to be expressed. Repetition seems to perform a psychic function that allows the individual to try to acquire a desired portion of self-catharsis. Repetition may also function as a form of defence against difficult knowledge. In psychoanalysis, 'repetition' is defined as a process initialized by traumatic experiences,

where the human psyche is characterized by the compulsion to repeat distressing events over and over again.

Writing in a personal journal facilitates the metamorphosis of a diarist's experiences into words, giving shape and re-order to the chaos of these experiences and allowing the analysis of subjectivity. Journal writing gives voice to fears and uncertainties. Suffering and agony reach language and expression. It has been uncovered that my participants use their personal journal writings not only as an opportunity for self-discovery, but also as a way to vent their emotions, as a cathartic release. For some of them, catharsis is attained by repeatedly visiting hurtful memories and verbalizing thoughts and symbolizing emotions through words and writing.

In addition, journal writing is used as a space where dreams get expressed. *Dream language* operates by expressing repressed wishes. The production of dreams is known as 'psychic-dream work', which refers to the disguising of the conflicting wishes in order to be fulfilled. Dreams work in such a way as to provide access to emotional meanings that have been dissociated. Current cognitive science maintains that "the function of emotional information processing in dreams is continuous with emotional information processing in waking life" (Bucci, 1997, p. 262). By keeping track of one's dreams and reflecting on their content, an awareness of contradicting tensions between inner and outer reality is attained. Furthermore, desires and phantasies seek fulfillment in dreams. Writing about these in their personal journals allows the writers to cope with such needs and repressed wishes. Bucci argues that dreams, as in the case of metaphors, generally represent concepts in their intricacy and depth and, apart from representing already formed meanings, writing about dreams may work to generate new meanings as well.

What is most impressive about the uses of personal journal writing uncovered in this study is the *depressive position* in women's personal written expression. More specifically, melancholia and loss are main themes that are frequently visited in the entries of my participants. *Melancholia* is usually experienced with the realization of the loss of the love object and, therefore, it is related to the awakening echoes of past traumas. Thus, depression implies the existence of aggressiveness towards the lost object and it is based on the belief that any loss is translated to the loss of one's own self. Analysis of the entries that deal with issues of depression reveals that writing about melancholia acquires meaning only if the writing comes as a result of that very melancholia. Personal journal writing triggered by sadness, distress, or desolate loneliness might be functioning as a curative medium when depressive and melancholic tendencies arise. Numerous poems written by the participants in their private pages focus on issues of pain, distress, and depression. It is revealed that there is much pain involved in artistic creativity and it is through depressive pain that the artist attains the cure. Berman (1994) refers to creative writers' statements that remark on the healing effect of self-expression through writing. Writing endorses psychological relief by promoting mastery of one's feelings.

It is revealed in this study that the role of language is central in the lives of human beings. Through the use of words a vision of subjectivity is attained in an exploratory way (Robertson, 2006). "The narrative voice and structure [...] are fragmentary, discontinuous, piecemeal, and stream of conscious" (Robertson, 2006a, p. 180). The participants' engagements in their personal writings endorse the process of visualizing, symbolizing, and representing phenomena from their inner world that can now be accessed. In psychoanalysis, verbalization plays a central role, as it brings "the power of symbol systems to bear on

emotion schemas that have become maladaptive" (Bucci, 1997, p. 217). Furthermore, the process of expressing and completing one's associations, which may have the form of thoughts, feelings, wishes, desires, images, memories, and narrative experiences, may lead to a sense of satisfaction, whereas inability to express and complete associations is considered as a component of psychopathology. Kris (1982) investigates the process of free association in psychoanalysis and explains that free association aims to "make conscious what is unconscious, to recall what is forgotten, to regain lost experience, to complete mourning, to elucidate inner conflict, to expand what is condensed, to put thought and feeling into words, to clarify confusion, and to reverse disorientation" (p. 14). The findings in the present research provide evidence that my participants engage in the process of free association as they explore their needs and desires in their written journal texts and represent their self-image symbolically.

In the following section, I will continue my discussion by further exploring reflections and considerations that I came across while conducting the present study.

Further Reflections and Considerations

As I reflect on my perceptions and assumptions prior to conducting this study and, more specifically, prior my attempts to recruit participants, I realize that I had no idea as to what I was getting into. Engaging in this research was a profound learning experience for me both as a researcher and teacher. The honor to tell someone else's story is a substantial, social practice of power, and it crystallizes for me the need to maintain a humane ethical stance as I engage in a 'dialogue' of the complexities and struggles laid out in the private pages of my participants. I would like to express my gratefulness and deep appreciation to all of the participants who allowed me to witness parts of their life histories and glimpse into their inner

world, feelings, and thoughts. The most exciting part of the study for me was when I was sitting down with a chunk of photocopied journal entries, just about to start my journey through the life-pages of a journal writer. The fact that those writings were not edited, and that sometimes they had not been read by any other person, made my engagement with the text even more valuable. I am touched by these young women's life stories. I found myself laughing, happy, sad, mad, and even crying as their experiences unroll in their private journal lines. The worst part of the experience for me was when I would find myself at the last entry of a writer's journal. It was difficult not to know the end of the story; the story remained incomplete and I was left wondering and sometimes worrying.

I acknowledge that as a qualitative researcher I am a culturally constructed individual and, through my interactions with the participants, my stances, beliefs, and attitudes have influenced my research strategies, participants' responses, my reflection on the data, and my interpretation and presentation of the findings. Besides the participants, I have a personal story that influences my reaction to certain situations, my degree of compassion. Between the participant and me, "two stories are present and out of these stories arises a relationship" (Connelly, 2006). Biases provide us with a perspective through which "we can see and possibly understand the vantage points of others" (Way, 1998, p. 14). However, the researcher's ethical obligation goes beyond gaining cultural self awareness, skills, knowledge, and sensitivity. Educational researchers are invited to reflect on their own subjective experiences (Karagiozis, 2003). Being aware of my subjective cultural identity, I have tried to reflect on my involvement in the shaping of the study.

As it has already being stated in the methodology chapter, the analysis of the data and the discussion of the findings are presented as a story of patterns. Even though having

data and findings presented as a story of individual development might have yield different perspectives and issues in the study, there are specific reasons that justify my decision to present data and findings as a story of patterns. One of the main reasons is that presenting data as a story of individual development means that there should be a detailed portrayal of my participants' life stories and issues of confidentiality and anonymity would be at risk. Due to the nature of this study, I, as the researcher, have to deal with the most intimate writings, thoughts, feelings and therefore, while treating data I have tried to be very sensitive as regards exposing my participants to the risk of being identified. Participants are still students at the university and this poses another danger as well.

Secondly, I did not start the study with the assumption that there will be any development due to engaging in personal journal writing. I started with the knowledge that there are certain individuals, and more specifically women, who express their voice through personal journal writing and I was eager to study why they engage in personal writing and to explore further the uses of personal journal. Even though I have organized data in such a way as to know the age of the participant that each statement/quotation used in the thesis comes from, I am not able to identify a development in their themes of writing, or their thinking patterns. Contrary to that, certain participants, such as Astrid, confess that as they grow up they behave less and less mature, they see themselves as less responsible and engaging in activities that could not be characterized as statements of progress. Though I have witnessed a progress in the writing and expressive abilities in terms of grammatical and syntactical usage of language (that is the reason that I have tried to not alter the written text of my participants by correcting their writings), it has been presented in my thesis that participants return again and again and explore certain issues and feelings in their personal

journals throughout this period of time I am exploring. In psychoanalytic theory there is a controversy around the tendency to romanticize about development, given overwhelming evidence in individuals, society, and history for the human capacity for failure and breakdown. The discussion regarding the issue of developmental approach of my data, made me to think and explore the literature further. I have found an interesting quotation by Kirschner (1996) that I would like to share “thus psychoanalytic theories of personality and emotional development are in large measure stories of how the self comes to forge new, higher-level forms of connection to the objects from which it has been (at once tragically, inevitably, and felicitously) disunited” (p. 181). According to Winnicott (1965, 1951) and Kohut (1977), losses and painful tensions which are inherent in development are portrayed as experiences through transitional phenomena, through the relation to objects. In the same vein, Samuels (1996) explores the relationship between object usage and transitional phenomena and describes the developmental process as not a linear one. And it is through transitional experiencing that we are reborn in a new stage of object usage (Eigen, 1981). It is also stated that the description of the psychological development through the use of the spiral is an emulation of the process of biological development.

Thirdly, this is a study of personal journal writing and young women. Personal journals are not used as a data collection strategy solely and are not treated as data through which to collect information on a specific issue other than itself. In every step throughout my analysis and interpretation of the findings I have tried to keep in mind how this specific data informs my research questions: what are the uses of journal writing and how this statement or excerpt is important and/or related to my subject under investigation. It could be very easy for me as the researcher to cross the boundaries of my research and explore the lives of these

teenagers and later on young women. However, I have tried to remain within the lines defined by the effects that journal writing has in the lives of my participants.

Thus, this research gives voice to 17 female university students through their writings in their personal journals. This inquiry may be the first to investigate the life journeys articulated by young adult female writers since their early adolescence. Whereas most extant studies are based on journal entries from edited texts, from autobiographical excerpts of well established women writers, or from self reflective activities taking place as part of academic courses, this inquiry attempts to complement and extend the knowledge base regarding the construction of female subjectivity as presented in the language practices of their actual personal journal texts. This inquiry illuminates the complexity of the struggles girls and young women go through in their search for self. Steedman (1987) talks about the importance of providing children with a language to describe their lives. As Gilbert (2004) states, it is our responsibility to give language "to those aspects of experience that are either suppressed by the forces of normalization or remain inchoate in the mess of a subjectivity searching for an identity" (p. 238). However, this proved impossible in my attempts to provide adolescent girls with possibilities to voice their own life experiences through their participation in the study. This research raises concerns about the reluctance to allow adolescents' voices to be heard that exists among adults who play the role of gatekeeper. As Gannet (1992) claims, "woman's journals have been privatized and marginalized, their discursive strategies and sense of self-as-subject tend toward the muted and the multiple, tend toward the connection and collaborative" (p. 193). And since the metaphor of Pandora's Box is easily associated with women's diaries and their private thoughts, feelings, and views of the self and others are

considered problematic and even dangerous. While conducting this study, I witnessed practices of silencing and marginalizing young girls' voices.

Such concerns are raised, as well, in the cases of young women who are engaging in online journal discussions about their eating disorders, for example, through Pro-ana websites. Pro-ana is "a movement that promotes anorexia nervosa [as] an acceptable lifestyle choice" (Wikipedia). Pro-ana websites host online interactions where self-identified people with anorexia come to seek support, justify their desire to remain thin, encourage weight loss if it leads to happiness, keep track of their daily activities and their food intake, and generally keep an online diary. On some pro-ana sites, anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa are personified as women named Ana and Bella. According to Wikipedia (2006), "Members use this to illustrate their loneliness: 'Ana' is the only friend they can rely on when everything else feels out of control. Members of pro-ana sites come together to talk about their experiences with their shared 'best friend'" (p. 3). Pro-ana has generated significant media response that reached the limits of moral panic. Pro-ana has become, as well, a highly vulnerable online community. Many of these websites have been removed by Internet Service Providers and the users, who are mainly adolescent females or young adult women, have again been forced into silence. Between 2001 and 2003 pro-ana web blogs had reached their highest popularity, and by 2005 such websites have been cut down due to censorship and mass deletions of various sites. Until recently, "no studies have looked at the real-life usage of pro-ana sites by people with eating disorders, or at the health effects that might go hand in hand with visiting such sites" (Mathis, 2006, p. 2). Such censorship raises questions about the issues of freedom of speech and the lack of support provided to people with eating disorders.

My intention here is not to engage in a conversation on the controversial issues raised by both sides. Rather, I want to focus my attention on the ways in which adults tend to patronize the speech—oral or written—and expression of young people. Given that this study supports the therapeutic effect of self expressive writing, which is also supported by theorists from the fields of cognitive science, feminism, and psychoanalysis (Berman, 1994), I wonder about the healing effect that keeping an online journal about eating disorders might have. Frank (2006) talks about healing and states that it requires finding a new balance, which is attained by gaining a sense of self in relation to the cosmos, to people and forces around us. Healing requires telling a story of your life; telling this story “requires a sense of connection between your personal story and stories that reach beyond you” (Frank, p. 1). What happens when individuals are prevented from telling their stories and from relating to the stories of others? Or when they are prevented from expressing and symbolizing their feelings and thoughts? How can we be persuasive in our claims that we understand adolescence or eating disorders when we censor and repress the narratives of experience that young women and people in need for expression create?

At the same time, however, we should consider the risks that the public telling of these stories have. Online blogs provide the space to individuals to share and express thoughts and feelings publicly and, additionally, to receive feedback from online readers. Such responses might function as a form of destructive mediation. Therefore, this area of self representation and female adolescent development warns for further investigation. Especially, when we consider statistical figures that maintain that “about 80,000 web blogs, or online diaries, are created worldwide each day” (Gordon, 2005, 1). Since online writing spaces has been a reality to female teachers, students, and writers (Blair & Takayoshi, 1999), feminist theorists are

more and more interested in exploring the development of the new e-criture feminine via the online diary (Bowen, 2004). As in the case of personal journal that allows my participants to project their voices, online diaries seem to enable the projection of female voices. However, there are certain differences that call upon the distinctiveness of this genre of private writing.

Certainly there are different forces of desire taking place in the act of symbolization and representation among personal journal writing and online diary writing. And as I am reflecting further on this issue, several questions emerge that could be topics for further consideration; such as, what are the uses of intimacy in girls' self development? What does the genre of personal writing allow the young women to access that is not provided (or it is?) by the online diary writing? And as I emerge further on my thoughts as regards the ways in which private writing differs from online public writing, I am wondering whether it is the very tenet of privacy that makes the difference between those two genres. And if that is so, why did my participants give me their personal diaries to be part of this inquiry? Does the very act of keeping a personal journal indicate a desire – conscious or not – to have this written work survive, or even have it read by someone else? Winnicott's (1965) notion that "it is a joy to be hidden and a disaster not to be found" (187) makes me speculate about the (unconscious) desires that the act of keeping a personal journal entails.

Several studies have looked at the role of expressive writing in physical and emotional recovery from life stressors and chronic illness (Davidson et al., 2002; Stanton & Danoff-Burg, 2002). Current thought has been informed by studies that complement the relation of expressive writing to biological, affective, and cognitive mechanisms of human adaptation (King, 2002). Research provides evidence that maintains the arguments that "the act of no longer inhibiting one's thoughts, feelings, or behaviors reduces disease risk" (Lepore &

Smyth, 2002, p. 9). What is even more impressive is the correlation between language, word-symbolization, and mind. Owen et al. (2006) recently measured the use of spoken sentences and the neural responses of a woman who was in a vegetative state due to severe traumatic brain injury. The study demonstrated that “aspects of human cognition, including speech perception and semantic processing, can go on in the absence of conscious awareness” (Owen et al., p. 2). When such a patient retains the ability to understand words and language commands, and interacts with others by responding through brain activity, we are left to consider more seriously the functions of language use and the work of symbolization that are taking place in young women's interactions in the private pages of their journals. Further research could investigate the effects of symbolization on the cognitive and emotional functions of the human brain, the role of repetition in the written creation of the self, and the cognitive and emotional effects of the process of free association as evidenced in the personal journal engagements of my participants.

Writing in a personal journal is connected to emotional release and enhancement of memory functions. Research examining writing about emotionally charged topics has shown that it can have a therapeutic effect, even when it is performed just for a few minutes a day (Pennebaker, 1999). Sternberg (2000) found that hormones and nerve chemicals are released from the brain and the adrenal glands when an individual writes about stressful events and this can cause a change in the function of the immune cells. More specifically, Sternberg (2006) provides an interesting description of the interrelation between personal writing and the work of memory. Memories are connected to past images, senses, and past emotions. When a memory is stored, certain emotional charge is attached to it through neural pathways. These nerve cells cement the memory by releasing different nerve chemicals; dopamine is released

for pleasure and addiction and adrenaline-like norepinephrine for fear and stress. Sternberg (2006) proposes that "Writing about a stressful event may interrupt the flow of stress hormones that harm the immune system and lead to disease" (p. 2). Such neurological explanations on how brain functions are activated through writing about stressful events may help us understand further why the participants in this study engage repetitively in melancholic writing. There is pain and suffering in the majority of their reflective narrative process and we may speculate the therapeutic value of such an engagement.

In this last section of my thesis, I will conclude my discussion with the pedagogical contributions this inquiry makes.

Pedagogical Considerations

The focus of this research is gender and personal journal writing. Throughout this research I examine personal journal writing in relation to the concepts of language, the social, and the self. The journal, as private writing, offers opportunities for personal growth and discovery, to experiment out of sight of the critical gaze. As Steedman (1987) theorizes, when we engage in the process of arranging the pieces of our life with "written words, [we] arrange them in a highly deliberate way. Using words we can, through the glass of distance and forgetfulness, half remembering our own lost childhood, ask at last what understanding of social circumstances it was that prompted the writing" (p. 31). In this chapter I discuss the writing and reading experiences produced by the personal journal. In the contexts of the classroom, personal journal writing can be used in such a way as to improve thinking and formal writing, as well as to enhance the social context of the setting. Educators are encouraged to help students identify how their own written texts of the self are salient in processes of identity formation, how they define values, and how they instil notions

regarding the formation of society. By investigating individuals' own experiences and engagements with the texts and the language used in their personal journals, an awareness of the existence of the dominant ideologies and their contribution to the construction of the journal writers' own subjectivities might result. As Graham (1990) argues, "the inquiry into the self and its history is always hedged within the limits imposed by writing and the production of the text" (p. 153).

In examining the concepts of in-school and out-of-school activities in the literature review chapter of the thesis, I discussed how teachers' gendered expectations shape and define the literacy opportunities offered to students. Even though girls tend to avoid interaction in the technological spaces, they seem to occupy the private and inside spaces by engaging in writing short stories and letters to friends (Sanford, 2005). Journal writing might not have the "status" role in the mainstream world of English studies, however it can be used as a vehicle to explore self and identity in a constructive way and thus provide advantage over those students who do not engage in that type of out-of-school literacy activities. Whereas most students engage in other ways of self expression –through sports, technological interactions, etc – individuals who engage in the intrapersonal work of writing in their private pages have the opportunity to face, confront fears, difficult feelings and realities. As a result, they gain strengths in the intrapersonal sphere. In considering girls' tendencies to please their teachers in their written works (Cleary, 1996) in expense to their own desires, "journaling could be a life line/haven in that the young women do not necessarily have this external influence on their writing, where they have to censor and shape their thoughts, expressions, etc." (Morawski, 2006, p. 1). And since journal writing

becomes more of a relationship between themselves and the topic, journal writers are more enthusiastic about the content of their writing activities.

Bringing journal writing into the world of English education requires certain implications for teachers' background expertise. Teachers should be encouraging young women to engage in writings that allows the negotiation between their own "felt sense" of topic and the own sense of audience in order for them to acquire a stronger perception of their own written competence. Since criticism, as well as appraisal, may function as fractures to girls' relationship with their own writing (Cleary, 1996), teachers should promote journaling through which journal writers have the choice and autonomy in topic selection without any external interference. In case that teachers are readers of student's journal texts, they can assist them further to develop their 'felt sense' by allowing them to maintain the integrity of their ideas and by supporting their thinking regarding their own personal interest in the private writings. Dialogue journals or response journals make available real audiences and thus give girls "voice", "feelings of self determination, and the satisfaction that feeds motivation to write again" (Cleary, 1996, p. 56). On the other hand, promoting journaling as an out-of-school literacy activity may empower young women to take a more active role in expressing feelings, thoughts and self.

Personal journal writing can be used as a useful pedagogical tool offering opportunities to students to study the connection of literature and writers. It is important for students to understand the different circumstances and intentions under which novels and diaries are produced, as well, as to grasp the context of artistic creation in the personal pages of a writer. Culley (1985) maintains that in studying a personal journal, "we may see fascinating interactions between different forms of verbal art and, indeed, between the

shaping of a text and the shaping of life itself, the ultimate text" (p. 15). Reading other people's diaries in the classroom can promote keeping a diary. Teachers can ask students to engage in personal written reflections as a way to rid them of the fear of writing. Tidwell (2005) argues that "the reciprocal nature of reading and writing results in improvement in both sets of skills" (p. 169). Students can engage in pedagogical discussions about the ways in which ordinary people can use writing about themselves to "explore their identity and their society, to conceptualize what it means to be a particular person at a particular moment" (Schilb, 1985, p. 117).

Furthermore, educators should become conscientious about issues of the self, its nature, and construction. By introducing discussions in the classroom that are related to various discourses and forms of representation, educators can create versatile conditions under which students have the chance to engage with, and understand how, ideology 'works' and 'functions', how power relationships influence their being, and how both ideology and power are related to the construction of the self and culture (Atwell, 1987). Graham (1990) argues that through autobiography and narratives of educational experience, students "become increasingly conscious of the ties that bind them to culture and society" as well as "discover valuable aspects of their 'true' selves" (p. 153). Giving students the opportunity to express themselves in written form is not a panacea for the concerns they are exposed to daily; however, based on careful research and insightful and substantive engagements with those issues through dialogue and other valuable interactions, we can shed some light on the perspectives through which individuals view themselves and the world.

However, getting students engaged in the process of journal writing should be viewed from the psychoanalytic perspectives outlined in this study. As it has been shown in

this inquiry, personal writings can serve to lessen one's sadness; as Woolf (1983) states, "melancholy diminishes as I write" (p. 72). Berman (2001) talks about 'risky writing' as he has his students involved in personal self-disclosures and discussions in classroom settings. Berman (2001) maintains writing about personal hardships is the only way to develop the skill of writing: "To write well is to be able to confront what we dare not write, what we dare not say – what we cringe even to think" (p. 257). According to Berman (1994), educators should be encouraged to allow students, to the degree that each one feels comfortable and willing to do so, to write about and discuss personal experiences, feelings, and thoughts that are forced into secrecy and silence. The process of reading the journal, apart from fostering introspection, eventually helps to "break down feelings of personal isolation" (Berman, 1994, p. 272) as it encourages identification and empathy with others. Such works challenge educators to rethink the fundamental aims of encouraging writing about the self.

While I find important convergences between the findings of my inquiry and the studies of others who maintain the importance of engaging young people to self expression through writing, I also find cause for alarm. One of the unexpected findings of my study is how writing about the self is decisive for the lives of young women. Numerous times throughout my engagement with the analysis and understanding of the data I witness the significance of Dr. Cheifetz's standpoint regarding the catastrophe emerging in cases of individuals stopping themselves from engaging in private expressive writing. On the other hand, my study provides disconcerting evidence that raise questions pertaining to the support that we provide to young women in order to engage in personal journal writing. Is the school setting a place to provide a hospitable place for self-writing? Do we as educators honour the wisdom of students' own words? Where are the borders of our involvement in students' self

writing and what are our responsibilities and ethical implications deriving from our role as teachers? How can young girls employ themselves in private exploration of the self and use personal journal writing as a support through the struggle of adolescence? Are we, as teachers, principals and educators brave enough to break the silences of young women voices? And, what supportive strategies can we develop in order to secure private writing from being policed?

Virginia Woolf uses the metaphor of 'the room of one's own' to refer to women's intellectual autonomy. For my participants the room of their own is their personal journal, the private space, which becomes even the symbol of their survival. And as Cixous claims "by writing her self, woman return[s] to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display... Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time." (1981, p. 250). Writing in the personal journal is a tool, a means of survival, the magic wand that attracts power, and even a dangerous weapon at the hands of the woman when it comes to reveal fear, angers, and the strength under oppression. Reading my participants' personal journals I migrate in the 'private agora' of their writings and I witness their struggles as they sketch their 'weeping willows' through words and symbolic representation. Those – the words - are the means for me, the reader, to unfold Ariadne's thread, their stories, their highly creative elaboration and recording of their affective states, and their fascinating and at times heartbreaking testimonies of survival. And as we keep unfolding Ariadne's thread, we witness the realities of young women journeys to Ithaca and we secure the projection of their voices. And as I keep unfolding Ariadne's thread, I write my own journey to Ithaca and Cavafy's lines echo in my ears:

Ithaca gave you the marvelous journey.

Without her you wouldn't have set out. (Ithaca – Constantine P. Cavafy)

Endnotes

¹ However, in a further study I would find the issue of identity formation as a very interesting topic to be investigated and it might yield different aspects not touched by the present thesis. For example, I would like to look at self as portrayed in the private writings of my participants: self as religious identity, as ethnic identity, as students, as writers, as sisters, as daughters, etc.

² I am referring to Cultural Studies (CS) inaugurated by the University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, in 1963-1964, led at that time by Richard Hoggart (1958) and Stuart Hall (1980). The British tradition of CS focused on the interpretations and ideologies of race, gender, class, ethnicity, and nationality in the production and consumption of cultural texts. CS was highly political and explored the potential of resistance in youth subcultures to resist the hegemonic forces of domination (Jefferson, 1976). At a later stage, CS embraced feminism, critical race theory, and gay and lesbian theory and examined the ways through which cultural texts promoted forms of oppression, as well as resistance, empowerment, and pleasures (Fiske, 1993).

³ Even though the analysis and interpretation of the findings is heavily based on psychoanalysis and feminism, I still consider that my thesis draws on Cultural Studies since I am using Johnson's (1983) model of the Circuit of production of cultural texts, according to which journal writing is viewed as a cultural text. Following Johnson's theory throughout the thesis I am engaging in discussion of the production of the texts, the reception of the journal texts and the uses of the journal by my participants and the construction of social relations as presented within the journal texts.

⁴ I wish to acknowledge Dr. Robertson's assistance in helping me to shape my thoughts here.

⁵ I would like to mention here that in the beginning of the recruitment process, with the help of my supervisor, I had made a list of possible private schools that I would approach to introduce my study. In this list, apart from Catholic and Jewish schools, Christian and Muslim schools were included. The fact that I did not end up contacting those schools was the result of barriers that I consistently encountered in my attempts to secure my participants sample from either private or public High schools. Because of these barriers I turned my attention to a university site.

⁶ The titles in the sub-chapters of the Chapters Four and Five start with a word that I find is related to each sub-chapter. I accumulated those words in the feminist and psychoanalytic texts I have studied during my Ph.D. studies and the writing of this thesis. Since these words have mainly Greek origin, I could easily relate to them and I kept writing them down in my notes till I decided to use them in my thesis. The selection of the words is subjective. I have included a Lexicon of these words at the Appendix E. To create this Lexicon I used two different online websites: 1. www.dictionary.com, mainly for the pronunciation of the words, and 2. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>, for the etymology of the words.

⁷ HeidiPJ17, 18, 47: The coding system I am using here is translated as follows: this is a segment from Heidi's Personal Journal, her age when she wrote it was 17 years old, 18 is the number of the paragraph, and 47 the page number.

⁸ There is a difference in the meaning of the words phantasy with ph- and fantasy with f-. According to Klein, phantasies come from genetic needs, instincts and drives. They are symbolized in our dreams, and plays. They reflect internal and external reality, they are influenced by feelings and projected to real or imaginary objects. Through phantasies individuals make sense of the external world and relate to it through the process of projection and introjection. Whereas. Fantasy with f- is a daydream, an imaginary vision of reality that we create. We fantasize about the ways in which we will fulfill our future needs and wishes.

⁹ I have been puzzled by those images of feminine passivity sketched out in the private pages of my participants and I have been wondering what are the uses of writings about such conflicted feelings. These findings remind me the findings of Radway Janice (1984) who did a research of women and romance reading. Even though the context of such readings (romance narratives) embodies hegemonic representations and the social practices and ideologies of patriarchy, these women's act of reading allows them to engage in a process of understanding the self. By picking up a book to read, these women attempt to satisfy needs and desires of their own pleasure, needs they have created for themselves and desires that are different from the ones of others. "Romance reading addresses needs created in them but not met by patriarchal institutions and engendering practices" (p. 211). And even though romance reading is considered as a female ritual, women engage in such readings in order "to imagine a more perfect state where all the needs they so intensely feel and accept as given would be adequately addressed" (p. 212). Additionally, Radway argues that women who search for ideal novels in order to construct visions of affective care and even tenderness, etc. "are reading not out of contentment but out of dissatisfaction, longing, and protest" (p. 215).

I would also like to refer to Carolyn Steedman's (1987) study of young girls' story writings that reproduce their parents' ambivalence towards child rearing. Steedman reads the stories as the girls' "urgent" attempts to make an understanding of the social beliefs that brought them into being. Those children's writings reveal that they are active participants in their family dramas. It is revealed that children's desires, hopes, fears, and fantasies play a central role in the process of constructing personal identities. Steedman argues how those young girls use the language, both spoken and written, and the part language plays in their growth and development. And it is through the language that my participants symbolically represent their world, "a system that they can manipulate, change and restructure in an attempt to take hold of its meaning" (Steedman, p. 14). It is through the symbolizations in their personal journals that my participants acquire the ability to "to listen and to see themselves as they are seen by others – can think about their lives, and deal in terms of change." (Steedman, 1987, p. 24).

¹⁰ I would like to acknowledge my supervisor's, Dr. Judith Robertson, input regarding the prevalence of metaphors studied here.

¹¹ The journal pages allow my participants to communicate with parents and others in the sense that it provides them with the space to explore their relationships with them. My participants use their personal journal as a space, a private agora where they meet with absent loved ones, including parents and friends to discuss feelings, thoughts and concerns. In their private pages communication is accommodated in the sense that they can address and dialogue with them about issues that would or would not do in their external reality. They talk to them, they respond to them, they symbolically engage with them.

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Table 1, Initial Research Plan- Sessions Outline

Sessions	Data Collection Techniques	Participants	Duration	Data gathered	Methodological Procedures
Session 1	Questionnaire 1	All students	30-40 minutes	• Written responses • Researcher's journal entry	Questionnaire 1
Session 2	Activity 1: The Anne Frank Diary	All students	1h&30 min – 2hrs	• Oral/written responses • Researcher's journal entry	Discussion guide Taped discussion
Session 3	In-depth interviews	Each participant interviewed separately	45 minutes	• Tape recordings • Researcher's journal entry	Interview guide questions Taped & transcribed interviews
Session 4	Questionnaire 2	All students	30-40 minutes	• Written responses • Researcher's journal entry	Questionnaire 2
Session 5	Activity 2	All students	1 h&30 min – 2 hrs	• Oral responses • Researcher's journal entry	Discussion Guide Taped Discussion

Participants - Young Adult Female University Students - Passionate Journal Writers Since Teen Years																
Names	Date of Birth	Department	Academic Year	Personal Journal Entries Data				Questionnaire I		Questionnaire II			Interview		Consent form Signed	
				Pjournal from:	To:	Pages	Typed text/ handwritten	Age/ Pjournal Entries	Typed responses/ handwritten	Pages	Typed responses / handwritten	Pages	Drawing	Typed Responses/ handwritten/ Voice Recorded		Pages / Length
1) Astrid	1985 / 19 yrs	Studies in Communication Politics	1st	24/11/2001	23/6/2002	47	typed	16-17 years old	typed and sent / email	3	typed and sent / email	5	Yes	typed and sent / email	8	June 2004
2) Bernice	1982/ 22 yrs	Arts	4th	1/6/2004	13/9/2004	55	handwritten	22 years old	typed and sent / email	3	typed and sent / email	5	No	typed and sent / email	7	15 Sept 2004
3) Carol	1985/ 19 yrs	Science	1st	1/10/2003	27/6/2004	127	handwritten	18-19 years old	typed and sent / email	3	typed and sent / email	4	No	typed and sent / email	6	15 Sept 2004
4) Daniele	1983/ 21 yrs	Social Science	3rd	10/19/1999	9/2/2002	62	typed and sent by email	16-19 years old	typed and sent / email	3	typed and sent / email	4	Yes	typed and sent / email	9	15 Sept 2004
5) Eva	1983/ 21 yrs	Arts	3rd	11/8/2001	27/6/2002	102	handwritten	18-19 years old	typed and sent / email	3	typed and sent / email	5	Yes	typed and sent / email	7	16 Sept 2004
6) Felicia	1980 / 24 yrs	Education	1st	16/12/2003	15/9/2004	47	handwritten	23-24 years old	typed and sent / email	3	typed and sent / email	6	Yes	typed and sent / email	7	17 Sept 2004
7) Gisella	1980/ 24 yrs	Law	2nd	2002	2004	93	handwritten	22-24 years old	typed and sent / email	3	typed and sent / email	5	No	typed and sent / email	7	17 Sept 2004
8) Heidi	1981/ 23 yrs	Social Sciences - Psychology	4th	30/3/1998	2004	55	handwritten / typed	17-23 years old	typed and sent / email	4	typed and sent / email	6	No / description	typed and sent / email	7	8 Oct 2004
9) Irene	1985/ 19 yrs	Arts	1st	25/12/1997	4/10/2004	260	handwritten	12-19 years old	typed and sent / email	3	typed and sent / email	7	No	typed and sent / email	13	14 Oct 2004
10) Jasmine	1984/ 20 yrs	Arts	2nd	20/09/1997 17/11/2002	23/09/2000 12/10/2004	193 43	handwritten typed/disk	13-20 years old	handwritten	3	handwritten	4	Yes	typed/disk	7	20 Oct 2004
11) Kyla	1983/ 21 yrs	Social Science	3rd	15/7/1994	25/9/2004	97	handwritten	11-20 years old	typed and sent / email	4	typed and sent / email	5	No	typed and sent / email	15	22 Oct 2004
12) Lorena	1983/ 21 yrs	Arts	3rd	10/7/2004	19/10/2004	50	handwritten	21 years old	handwritten	3	handwritten	4	Yes	handwritten	4	25 Oct 2004
13) Monica	1983/ 21 yrs	Health Sciences & Human Kinetics	2nd	12/5/2004	29/10/2004	57	handwritten	21 years old	handwritten	4	handwritten	5	Yes	handwritten	18	29 Oct 2004
14) Nicole	1985/ 19 yrs	Arts	2nd	18/4/2000	30/10/2004	212	handwritten	15-19 years old	typed and sent / email	3	typed and sent / email	5	Yes	Voice Recorded	45 minutes	8 Oct 2004
15) Odette	1982/ 22 yrs	Health Sciences	4th	06/05/2000 08/12/2002	29/10/2004 10/07/2004	189 111	handwritten	18-22 years old	handwritten	2	handwritten	5	No	Voice Recorded	50 minutes	12 Nov 2004
16) Priscilla	1983/ 21 yrs	Arts	1st	8/9/2002	25/7/2004	564	handwritten	19-21 years old	typed and sent / email	4	typed and sent / email	5	No	Typed and Voice Recorded	10 pages and 60 min	12 Nov 2004
17) Rachel	1980/ 24 yrs	Arts	6th	1/2/2002	23/11/2004	44	handwritten	22-24 years old	typed and sent / email	4	typed and sent / email	5	No	handwritten	9 pages	24 Nov 2004
				SUM:		2408			SUM:		55	SUM:		85	141 pages	

Table 2

Demographic Profiles of the Participants

Table 3. Journal texts and age of writers

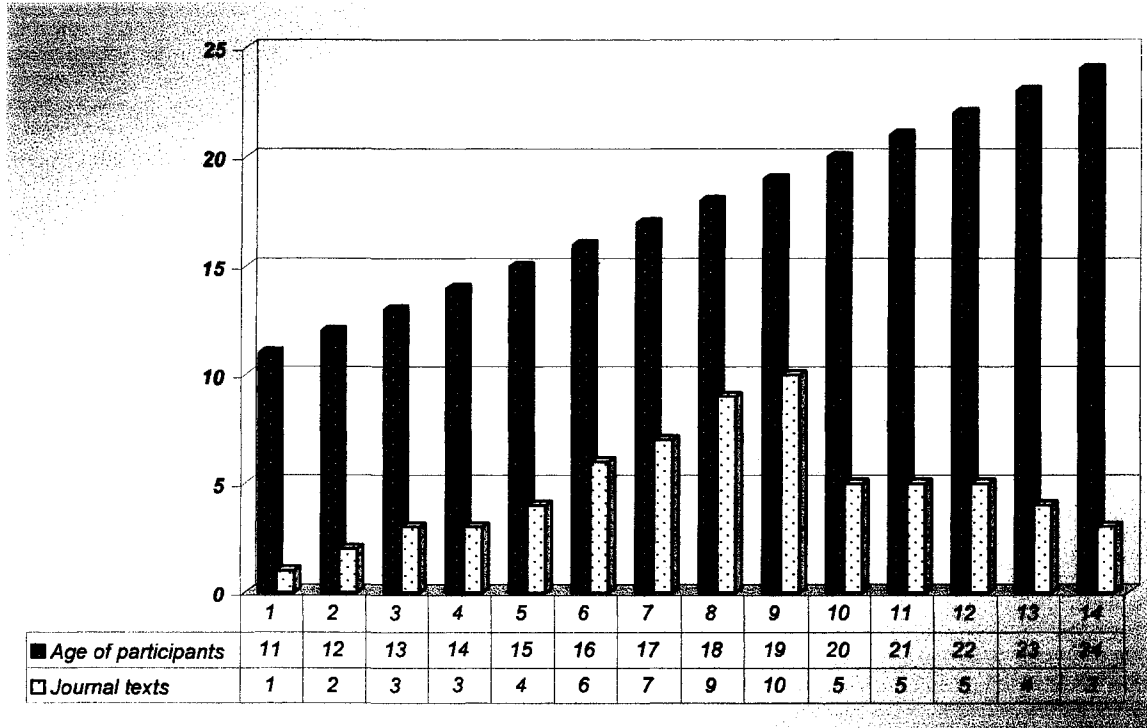


Table 4, Participants – Ages

Ages	19	20	21	22	23	24
Number of participants	4	1	6	2	1	3

Table 5 – Participants and Field of Studies

Field of Studies	Number of Students
Arts	8
Social Sciences	2
Social Sciences and Psychology	1
Education	1
Science	1
Health Sciences	1
Health Sciences and Human Kinetics	1
Law	1
Communication and Politics	1

Table 6 – Participants and Family Data

Participants	Sibling order	Sibling/s	Mother's occupation	Father's occupation
Astrid	oldest of 2	sister	Computer programmer	Manager in company
Bernice	only child	No	Back to school	In military
Carol	youngest of 2	sister	Data analyst	Unemployed
Daniele	oldest of 2	brother	Nurse manager	Shipper / receiver
Eva	only child	No	Writer	Engineer
Felicia	only child	No	Actuarial programmer analyst	Expediter
Gisella	youngest of 2	brother	Teacher	-
Heidi	oldest of 2	sister	School secretary	Bell Canada
Irene	oldest of 3	2 sisters	Customer service in bank	Owns business
Jasmine	Youngest of 3	2 brothers	Office administrator/ interior design	Fire fighter
Kyla	oldest of 3	2 sisters	Taking courses / student	TWR factory
Lorena	youngest of 2	brother	Teacher / Counsellor	Retired police officer
Monica	oldest of 4	3 brothers	Unemployed	Building inspector
Nicole	middle in 3	2 sisters	Family company /	Business / Family company
Odette	oldest of 2	brother	In retail	High technician
Priscilla	youngest of 3	sister & brother	Teacher	Engineer
Rachel	youngest of 2	brother	Cashier supervisor	Bank

Table 7. Feelings and journal writing

Feelings while engaging in personal journal writing. Questionnaire 2, question 16:	
Catharsis -Relief	8
Happiness	6
Stress	5
Anger	4
Sadness	4
Excited	3
Pensive	3
Depressive	2
Confused	2
Tearful	2
Reflective	2
Self-understanding	2
Re-energized	2
Satisfaction	1
Feeling better	1
Emotional	1
Inspired	1
Sincere	1
Fearful	1

Table 8. Reasons for keeping a personal journal

Interview Question: Why do you keep a personal journal?	
To release emotions	9
To examine life	9
To reflect on events	8
To remember	7
“I like writing”	6
To re-affirm self	5
To re-organize thoughts	5
To feel good about self	4
Writing is cathartic	3
Writing is important	3
Writing is creative	2
To document secrets	2
To sort out feelings	2
To express	1
To elevate self-esteem	1
To “talk” to a friend	1

Table 9. Topics, reasons, and feelings related to journal writing

Participants	Most frequent topics	Why keep a personal journal?	Feelings while writing in personal journal
Astrid	Mood, which fluctuates	• to examine life • to reflect on events • to remember	• relief • validation for the way she feels
Bernice	• everyday life • relationship with parents/friends/boyfriend • work related issues	• to release emotions • to writes about things she does not want to talk about to people	-
Carol	any major or significant events	• to sort out personal issues • to keep a record of self	reflective
Daniele	• about love • about growing up	• to release feelings • to remember • to have memories to look back on • she likes it • she feels it is important	• depending on feelings • mood is usually heightened
Eva	• nervous, glad, or worry about something	To leaving a record of her time on Earth.	worried
Felicia	relationships	• writing gives meaning to what she does • to not forget • she likes it • feels like talking to a friend	• depending on day • depressed, when recording something sad • happy when recording something exciting • feeling of achievement
Gisella	• about boyfriend and his alcoholic complications • other interesting things	• writing is cathartic • writing is creative	depending on what is written
Heidi	love and hate relationships	• writing is cathartic • to sort out feelings • to document life changing events • to feel peaceful • to re-affirm who she is, what she stands for, how far she has come	-
Irene	• life events • feelings about events • worries or wonderings about people or herself	• to release emotions • to not forget what it was like growing up	• jubilation, knowing she won't forget events • excuse for a good cry when writing something painful
Jasmine	• about how she wishes she had a boyfriend • wondering if there is something wrong with her • constantly analyzing herself • about aspirations	• to organize thoughts • to find the source of her problems • to figure out what is bothering her • to feel relief when she gets it out • to feel like her life is being justified • to feel good about herself	-
Kyla	• about being the	• to express feelings	• happy

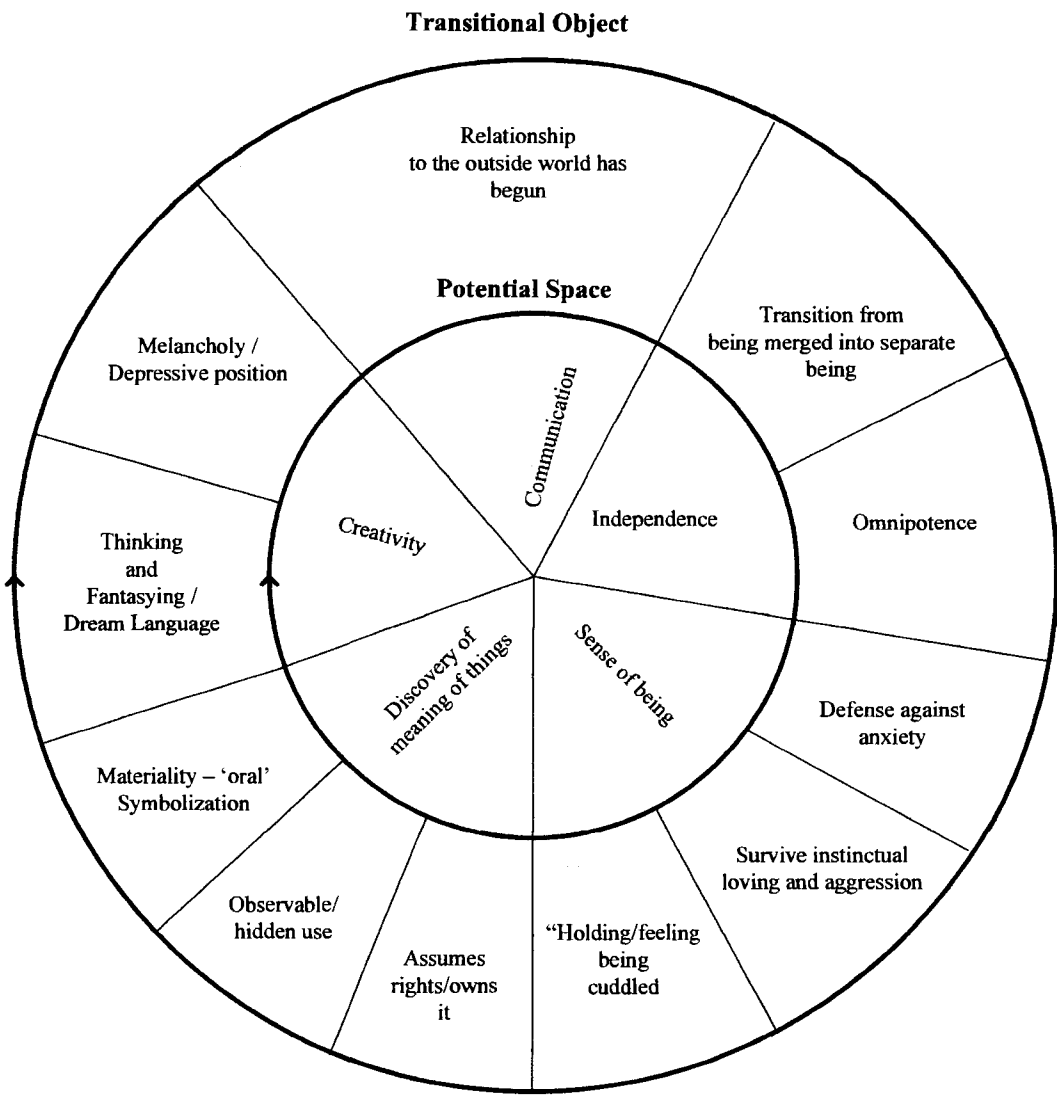
Table 9. Topics, reasons, and feelings related to journal writing

	- disappointment to people - feeling a failure - about her frustration	- to release built up tension - to think about feelings and why she feels this way - to focus on ways to mend the situation	- sad - confused - finding solution - comforting feeling - redirecting her anger in a positive way
Lorena	- everyday life - boyfriend - jobs - school	- she likes reflecting - to keep everyday memories - to organize thoughts and opinions	- happiness - anger - embarrassment
Monica	- personal battles she goes through (at home, school, work, with people) - about mother - about dreams - about goals - how she wishes to live her life - about guys	- likes to write about her life - likes to write about feelings - to feel good - to get through personal battles - to get perspective on life - to keep track of goals - enjoys looking back on her life	- excitement - happiness - joy - hope - anxiousness - fear - sadness - depression - guilt - great feeling of freedom
Nicole	- about ex boyfriend - falling in love - breaking up - getting over him	- to share her emotions - to document events/feelings - to document secrets - to read back on and see things in a different way - to get over your thinking - to figure out feelings	- angry - feeling better - releasing of emotions - upset - crying and relief - although unhappy when she writes, it's good
Odette	- faith - nature - about love - music	- enjoys writing - to look back on writings - to express oneself - writing is like art, by the use of words	-
Priscilla	- present states of mind - situations - life events - break-ups - feelings - future plans	- journal makes up the person she is, makes her unique - to explore her mind - to organize her thoughts, feelings - to get a sense of satisfaction - to get a sense of worth - to regain strength - to keep her well organized - to keep her stable in her moods, thoughts - to elevate her self esteem	freed from the corruption of many human minds and the craziness of this world
Rachel	- guys - school - friends	- to look back when she is older - to feel she is doing something good for herself - writing is cathartic	- stress - relief - confusion

Table 10, Participants' self-expression engagements

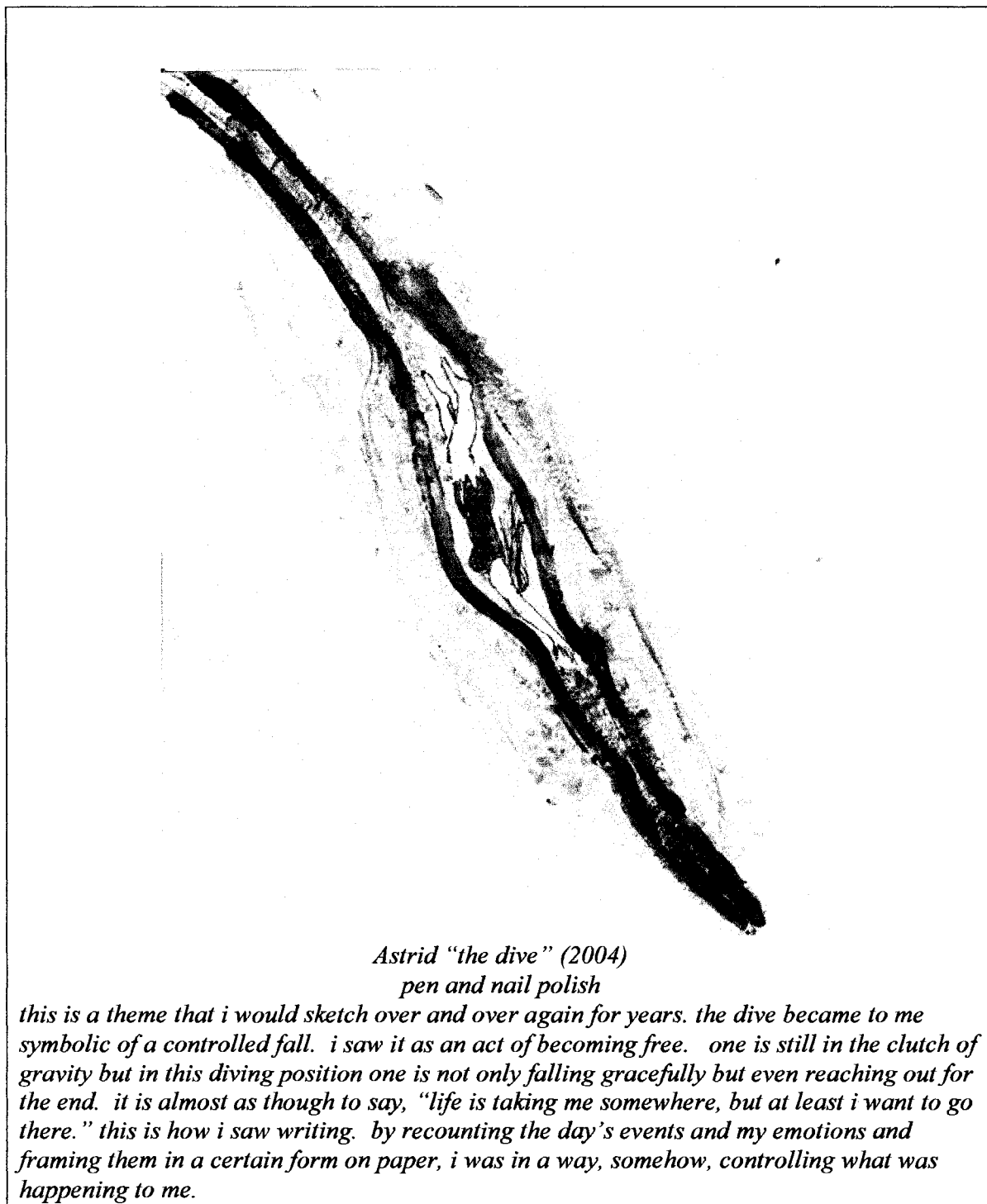
Questionnaire 1, Question 8: “How else do you express yourself?”	
Responses	Frequencies
poetry	9
Writing novels /short stories	4
playing a musical instrument	4
Painting/drawing	4
writing letters	3
clothes	2
cooking	2
doodling	2
singing	2
composing songs	2
dancing	2
photography	2
scrapbooks	1
crafting	1
discussion	1
physical activity	1
writing prayers	1
writing quotes	1
writing lists	1
writing lyrics	1
sketching	1

Table 11 – Model: Personal Journal as Potential Space and as Transitional Object



Personal Journal as Potential Space and Transitional Object

Image A – The Dive



Appendix A

University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education

Consent Form

(To be completed by participants / students)

Principle Investigator: Nectaria Karagiozis, Ph.D. Candidate, MA (Education)

Affiliation: University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education. **Telephone:** _____

For every research project that involves human participants, the participants (or representatives of the participants, for example, parents or guardians) must sign a written consent form. The University of Ottawa and agencies that fund research have made this type of agreement mandatory because they respect the participants.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how personal journal writing by young adolescent female students helps them to define their identity. In other words, this research looks at young adolescent girls' personal exploration through journal writing and how this personal writing helps them to express their thoughts and feelings.

If I agree to participate, this participation means that I will participate once in an individual interview regarding my personal journal writing experiences. The interview will last for approximately forty-five minutes. I will decide whether I want to have my interview voice-recorded, or whether I want to complete the questions of the interview on my own (as a written task). **I will also be asked to** provide written responses in the form of (2) questionnaires (30 minutes) twice during the research project as well as my personal journal texts or entries of them (journals/diaries). **I understand that the contents will be used only for this research purpose and that my confidentiality and anonymity will be respected if the researcher quotes from my writing or interviews.**

I understand that since I will have to express my ideas and feelings, there might be emotional reactions which may, at times, be negative. The researcher has **assured me** that she will take measures to minimize such reactions and that she will provide me with appropriate and necessary care referrals and support in the event that they are required.

I am free to decide if I want to withdraw from the project at any time, before or during any stage in the study. I can refuse to participate and/or refuse to answer questions without penalty.

I am assured from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential (that no one else, except for the researcher and her thesis advisor, Dr.

Judith Robertson, will have access to my written and oral responses). All data will be stored in Dr. Judith Robertson's office at the University of Ottawa in a locked filing cabinet for a period of 5 years after time of publication.

I am assured that this research has been reviewed and approved by the **Ethics Board of the University of Ottawa.**

Any information, requests, or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project may be addressed to the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 160, (613) 562-5387 or ethics@uottawa.ca. **If I have any questions,** I may contact Nectaria Karagiozis at _____ or Professor Judith P. Robertson at 562-5800, ext. 4111. **There are two copies of the consent form, one of which I may keep.**

I, _____, am interested in participating in the study of **Gender and Genre: Personal Journal Writing, Identity and the Work of Self Representation** conducted by Nectaria Karagiozis (598-6999) under the supervision of Professor Judith P. Robertson, Ph.D., of the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa (562-5800 x 4111 or 613 741-7940).

Participant's signature

Date

Researcher's signature

Date

Thesis Advisor's signature

Date

Appendix B

University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education Ph.D. Research

Thesis Advisor: **Dr. Judith Robertson**, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa
 Researcher: **Nectaria Karagiozis**, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Ottawa
 Thesis Title: **Gender and the Genre: Personal Journal Writing and the Work of Self Representation.**

Date: _____

Name of participant: _____

Date of birth: _____

Faculty: _____

Year: _____

Dear student,

To assist me in understanding more about your personal writing in the form of personal journal, please respond to the following questions. Thank you for your assistance.

Questionnaire I

1. What is a journal and what is a diary to you? Do you understand these terms as different?
If yes, in what way?

2. Do you have a name for your personal journal and what is that?

3. Since when have you kept a personal journal? And, how often?

4. What issues do you explore in your personal journal?

-
-
-
-
5. Have you read diaries/journals of other writers? If yes, please describe.

-
-
-
-
6. What subjects of those diaries/journals attracts your interest the most and why? Could you give some examples?

-
-
-
-
7. How would you describe the writing style you use in your journal? For example, is it descriptive or/and narrative?

-
-
-
-
8. How else do you express yourself? (For example, by writing poems, by drawing, etc.?)

-
-
-
-
9. If you were asked to write a paragraph at this moment in your personal journal, what would you write about?
-
-
-
-

10. Do you consider keeping a personal journal as important? If yes, why is that?

11. Do you consider that there are any risks or worries about personal journal writing?

12. Please, use the following space to add anything else which is of interest to you in keeping a personal journal.

Thank You!

Appendix C

University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education

Ph.D. Research

Thesis Advisor: **Dr. Judith Robertson**, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa
 Researcher: **Nectaria Karagiozis**, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Ottawa
 Thesis Title: **Gender and the Genre: Personal Journal Writing and the Work of Self Representation.**

Date: _____

Name of participant: _____

Date of birth: _____

Faculty: _____

Year: _____

Dear student,

To assist me in understanding more about your personal writing in the form of personal journal, please respond to the following questions. Thank you for your assistance.

Questionnaire II

1. At what age did you begin having an interest in journals/diaries?
 - a) _____ 5-10 years
 - b) _____ 11-15 years
2. What is your favorite kind of book for reading now? Number these in importance.
 - a) _____ Personal journal/diaries
 - b) _____ Biography
 - c) _____ Mysteries
 - d) _____ Fiction
 - e) _____ Science fiction
 - f) _____ Historical fiction
 - g) _____ Fantasy
 - h) _____ Comic books
 - i) _____ Romances

- j) _____ None
- k) _____ Other (please specify)
3. When you read personal journals/diaries of other authors, which of the following best describes your attitude to the way the stories in these journals are told?
- a) _____ I like the stories to be told by the heroine/hero, in first person.
- b) _____ I dislike stories which are told by the heroine/hero, in first person, but I will read them sometimes.
- c) _____ I won't read a story if it is told by the heroine/hero, in first person.
- d) _____ I have no preference whether the story in a journal is told by the heroine/hero or by a narrator.
4. How closely do you think the character's reactions and feelings in published journals/diaries resemble your own?
- a) _____ They are not like mine at all.
- b) _____ They are somewhat like mine.
- c) _____ They are very much like mine.
- d) _____ They are almost identical to mine.
5. What are your favorite journals/diaries you have read? Please give the titles:
- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
6. When you were a child, did your mother or other relative keep personal journals/diaries?
- a) _____ Yes, very often
- b) _____ Yes, but only sometimes
- c) _____ No
- d) _____ I don't remember
7. Do you write in your personal journal everyday?
- a) _____ Yes
- b) _____ No
8. Which of the following best describes your writing pattern?
- a) _____ I write mostly in the morning
- b) _____ I write mostly during lunch-time

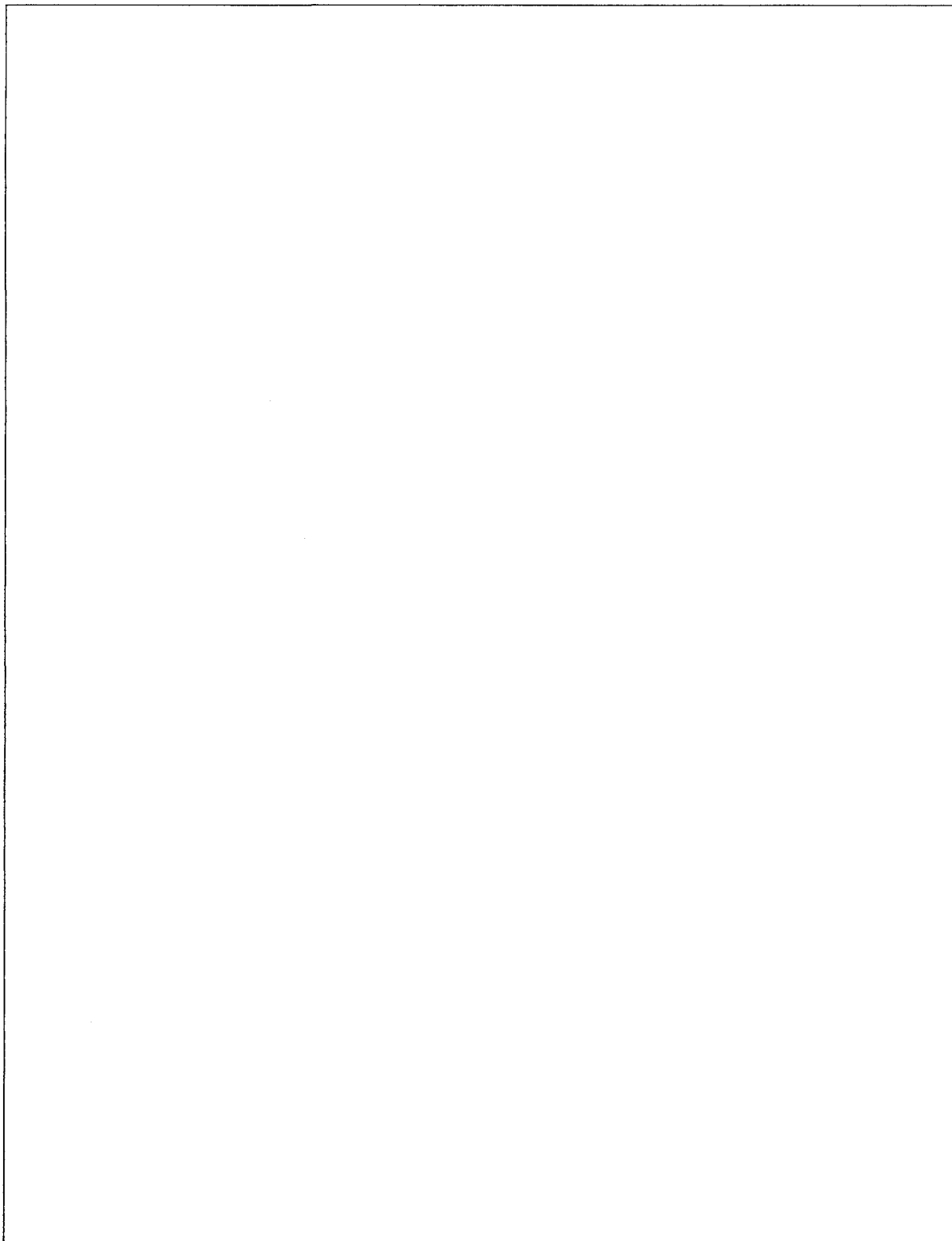
- c) _____ I write mostly in the afternoon
- d) _____ I write mostly in the evening
- e) _____ It's hard to say when I do most of my writing since I write every chance I get.
9. How often do you discuss your personal writings with others?
- a) _____ Never
- b) _____ Rarely
- c) _____ Sometimes
- d) _____ Often
10. With whom do you discuss your personal writings most often?
- a) _____ My friend
- b) _____ My sister
- c) _____ My mother
- d) _____ Other (please specify)
11. Do you re-read entries from your personal journal?
- a) _____ Yes
- b) _____ No
12. How often do you re-read entries from your personal journal?
- a) _____ Never
- b) _____ Rarely
- c) _____ Sometimes
- d) _____ Often
13. How do you feel when you revisit your past writings and when do you get the impulse to do so?
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
14. Are there specific things (such as feelings and experiences) that you avoid writing about in your personal journal? Talk about those.

15. Should personal journals be kept private? What are some of the ways you use to keep your personal journal out of reach of other people?

16. What are some of your feelings when you engage in this form of personal writing?

17. What are some rewards and pleasures of self-expression in writing form? Why make an effort to keep a personal journal?

18. In the following space use any color/s you like to draw/paint the front page of your personal journal. How would you like it to look like? What images and words would you like to use on it? What would it reveal about yourself?



Thank you!

Appendix D

Interview Questions

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Judith Robertson, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Researcher: Nectaria Karagiozis, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Ottawa

Thesis Title: Gender and the Genre: Personal Journal Writing and the Work of Self Representation.

Date: _____

Name of participant: _____

Date of birth: _____

Faculty: _____

Year: _____

Interview guide – questions:

About your self

1. Use three words to describe yourself.
2. List three words that your friends would use to describe you.
3. How would you describe yourself?
4. What are your strengths?
5. Do you have any weaknesses? If yes, which are those?
6. How do you feel about your self?
7. What does it mean to be successful as a teenager (before), as a young adult (now)?
8. What do you wish for or dream about or need at this time of your life?
9. What are your interests?
10. What do you want to be in the future?
11. What do you see yourself doing in 5 / 10 years from now?

12. What are some of your favorite activities?
13. Do you write about those in your journal?
14. Do you have a book that you love to read? Which one is that and why? Is there a specific character in this book with whom you identify?
15. What is your favorite movie? And why? Talk about it (characters, plot, scene that excites you the most).
16. What kind of music do you listen to?
17. Do you have a favorite song?
18. Would you like to share some of the lyrics you like in the songs you listen to?
19. Do you write about those things (books, movies, songs, general interests) in your journal?

About your family

20. How many members are in your family and who are they?
21. What is the occupation of your parents?
22. Do you have any siblings?
23. What is your position in your family? (Are you the oldest/middle/youngest child?)
24. What do you think your parents/family expected from you as a teenager?
25. What do they expect from you now as a university student and daughter?
26. How does that make you feel?

School experiences

27. Do you have friends there who you trust?

28. How would you define 'friendship'?
29. How easy or difficult is it for you to make friends from your school/university environment?
30. How far do you go as to sharing thoughts and feelings with your friends?
31. Do you have any close friends who keep a personal journal as you?
32. Do you share your writings in the journal with your friends?

Journal writing

33. Do you have a mother/relative/teacher in your mind who has been a role model or who has been very influential to you in terms of making decisions about self-expression through writing?
34. Has any other member in your family inspired you to keep a personal journal?
35. Does this person (or persons) use journal writing in the same way you do?
36. Do you like reading journals/diaries written by other authors and why?
37. What is your favorite journal/diary you have read?
38. How did you start writing your journal? Are there certain circumstances that trigger your urge to write in your personal journal? Which are those?
39. Try to go as back as you can and reflect on your very first entry in your journal.
40. How old were you when you started keeping your personal journal?
41. What form did your first personal writing have?
42. How often do you write in your personal journal?
43. What are some of the themes/topics you write about in your journal?
44. Do you imagine an audience when you write?

45. Do you address to someone when you write in your journal?
46. How “truly true” are you in your personal writings? Do you always write the ‘truth’ in your journal writings?
47. Do you use a specific coding system?
48. Do you share your personal writings with someone and if yes, who is that person?
49. How would you feel if someone read your personal journal without your permission? Is there someone who you wouldn’t want her/him to read your personal journal?
50. What are the most frequent topics you talk about in your journal writings?
51. Do you write about the same topics you wrote some years/months ago? Have your topics changed and if yes, how your topics have changed?
52. Why do you keep a personal journal? How does writing in the journal make you feel?
53. What are some of the feeling while engaging in this form of self expression?
54. Do you go back and re-read your earlier journal entries? How does that make you feel?
55. What do you think of your previous writings?

Write a part of your most interesting journal entry you like to talk about. (This might refer to either a happy or sad experience in your life).

56. What were the circumstances when you wrote this journal entry?
57. When and where you were when you wrote it?
58. What happened that made you write about it?
59. Why do you feel like to talk about it?
60. How do you feel about sharing it with me? Talk about your thoughts and feelings?

61. Is there something that you would rather not talk to me about it? Is there anything that you don't feel comfortable to reveal?

62. Is there something you would like to mention about journal writing that is has not been addressed?

63. What is your impression of this interview session? Do you have any suggestions that would make the whole process easier for you?

Thank you very much!

Appendix E

Lexicon

Agony	[ag-uh-nee]. Etymology: Middle English agonie, from Late Latin agonia, from Greek agonia struggle, anguish, from ‘agon’ gathering, contest for a prize, from ‘agein’ to lead, celebrate. Meaning: intense pain of mind or body, anguish, torture; a violent struggle or contest.
Antipathy	[an-tip-uh-thee]. Etymology: Latin antipathia, from Greek antipatheia, from antipathEs of opposite feelings, from anti- + pathos experience. Meaning: of opposite feelings; an instinctive contrariety or opposition in feeling.
Antithesis	[an-tith-uh-sis]. Meaning: opposition; contrast; the direct opposite (usually fol. by of or to).
Apocalypse	[uh-pok-uh-lips]. Etymology: Middle English, revelation, Revelation, from Anglo-French apocalipse, from Late Latin apocalypsis, from Greek apokalypsis, from apokalyptein to uncover, from apo- + kalyptein to cover. Meaning: revelation; something viewed as a prophetic revelation.
Apocrypha	[uh-pok-ruh-fuh]. Etymology: Medieval Latin, from Late Latin, neuter plural of apocryphus secret, not canonical, from Greek apokryphos obscure, from apokryptein to hide away, from apo- + kryptein to hide. Meaning: various religious writings of uncertain origin regarded by some as inspired, but rejected by most authorities; hidden.

Apotheosis	[uh-poth-ee-oh-sis, ap-uh-thee-uh-sis] Etymology: Late Latin, from Greek apotheOsis, from apotheoun to deify, from apo- + theos god. Meaning: 1. elevation to divine status: deification 2. the perfect example: quintessence.
Cathexis	[kuh-THEK-sis]. Meaning: investment of mental or emotional energy in a person, object, or idea.
Dialogue	[dahy-uh-lawg, -log]. Etymology: Middle English dialogue, from Anglo-French dialogue, from Latin dialogus, from Greek dialogos, from dialegesthai to converse, from dia- + legein to speak. Meaning: a conversation between two or more persons; also: a similar exchange between a person and something else (as a computer).
Dysphoria	[dis-fawr-ee-uh]. Etymology: New Latin, from Greek, from dysphoros hard to bear, from dys- + pherein to bear. Meaning: a state of feeling unwell or unhappy; an emotional state characterized by anxiety, depression, or unease.
Enantiosis	[i-nan-tee-oh-sis]. Meaning: a figure of speech in which what is meant is the opposite of what is said; irony.
Erinnys	[i-'ri-n&s, -rI-]. Etymology: Greek. Meaning: An avenging deity; one of the Furies; sometimes, conscience personified.
Eros	[eer-os, er-os]. Etymology: Greek Eros, from eros, sexual love; akin to Greek erastai to love, desire. Meaning: eros is the Greek (έρως) word (especially) romantic or sexual love.

Euphoria	[yoo-fawr-ee-uh, -fohr-]. Etymology: New Latin, from Greek, from euphoros healthy, from eu- + pherein to bear. Meaning: a feeling of happiness, confidence, elevation.
Genesis	[jen-uh-sis]. Etymology: Latin, from Greek, from gignesthai to be born -- more at <u>KIN</u> : the origin or coming into being of something. Meaning: The coming into being of something; the origin.
Hypnosis	[hip-noh-sis]. Meaning: An artificially induced altered state of consciousness, characterized by heightened suggestibility and receptivity to direction.
Hysteria	[hi-ster-ee-uh, -steer-]. Etymology: New Latin, from English hysteric, adjective, from Latin hystericus, from Greek hystericos, from hystera womb; from the Greek notion that hysteria was peculiar to women and caused by disturbances of the uterus. Meaning: behavior exhibiting overwhelming or unmanageable fear or emotional excess; a psychoneurosis marked by emotional excitability and disturbances of the psychic.
Lysis	[lahy-sis]. Etymology: New Latin, from Greek, act of loosening, dissolution, remission of fever, from lyein to loosen. Meaning: a process of disintegration or dissolution; to break, to loosen.
Meiosis	[mahy-oh-sis]. Etymology: New Latin, from Greek meiOsis diminution, from meioun to diminish, from meion less; akin to Sanskrit mIyate he diminishes. Meaning: the presentation

of a thing with under-emphasis especially in order to achieve a greater effect.

Nemesis	[nem-uh-sis]. Etymology: Latin, from Greek. Meaning: an agent or act of retribution or punishment; something that a person cannot conquer, achieve; an opponent or rival whom a person cannot best or overcome.
Philia	Etymology: New Latin, from Greek philia friendship, from philos dear. Meaning: a positive feeling of liking; friendly feeling toward.
Phobias	[fō'bē-əs]. Meaning: an exaggerated usually inexplicable and illogical fear of a particular object, class of objects, or situation.
Stigma	[stig-muh]. Etymology: Latin stigmat-, stigma mark, brand, from Greek, from stizein to tattoo. Meaning: a mark of shame or discredit.
Thanatos	[than-uh-tos, -tohs]. Meaning: an ancient Greek personification of death. In Psychoanalysis. (usually lowercase) the death instinct, esp. as expressed in violent aggression.
Thesaurus	[thi-sawr-uh s]. Etymology: New Latin, from Latin, treasure, collection, from Greek thesauro. Meaning: treasury, storehouse.