Self-Disclosure and the Women's Movement

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Bien qu'aujourd'hui les pédagogues nord-américains prônent l'individualisme sans trop y croire, l'école, tout comme la société, continue d'imposer des rôles et de réprimer toute manifestation d'individualité. Le mouvement de libération de la femme a relevé le défi: la recherche de sa propre identité, la volonté de s'ouvrir et de s'affirmer, la reconnaissance de la sexualité féminine et le mouvement lui-même sont des phénomènes étroitement liés entre eux. Certains livres actuels démontrent l'existence de tels rapports, notamment les ouvrages de Kate Millett et de Erica Jong respectivement intitulés *Flying* et *Fear of Flying*. Des différences importantes séparent le moi privé ("le réel") de la personne publique ("le rôle"). S'ouvrir n'est pas toujours facile mais cela peut aider les gens à mieux s'auto-confronter, à devenir davantage conscients d'eux-mêmes et à progresser dans la recherche constante de leur identité.

Among the constant themes of North American education during the twentieth century have been those of individualization and self-realization. Educational literature has been weighted with injunctions "to educate the whole child," "to respect the individual," "to foster unique talents," "to encourage personal aspirations," "to nurture individual creativity," and the like. Individualization and self-realization have been issues for the philosophers and theoreticians and they have also been concerns for the methodologists and practitioners who have produced means of implementation ranging from the Montessori materials, through i.t.a., programmed learning, counselling techniques, films, "jackdaws," small group instruction, modules, computers, and all the rest of the great panoply of pedagogic paraphenalia. In short, educators have used theory, technology, instructional modes, and administrative arrangements to permit, encourage, and help all individual children make the most of themselves.

If, in this age of mass education, the success of these attempts is dubious, at least we could take comfort in the idea that the efforts have been honest and sincere. Unfortunately, even this mild complacency is no longer possible. Current research in sociology, psychology, history, and other disciplines makes it quite clear that the educational enterprise — from kindergarten through graduate school — has really been indoctrinating fixed roles and stereotyped expectations rather than encouraging individual self-realization. Until recently our fault, perhaps, was unwitting. But now we have been challenged. Among the challengers is the women's

movement, which raises fundamental questions about much of what we have taught in the past.

The women's movement is a complex, amorphous amalgam of politics and economics, research and polemics, ideas and actions. It is an explosive mixture of personalities and programs that has had unexpected impact and multiple repercussions. It has exposed the flaws in the idealized image of women the schools have perpetuated and has begun to explore new depths and dimensions of the true nature of women. It has blown the lid off reticence. In rejecting the hidden curriculum of female role expectations, the movement has brought into focus the basic question, "Who am I?"

Obviously, this is not a question for women alone, nor is it an easy query to answer. The search for individuality has always been difficult and has been undertaken in the face of opposition. Indeed, in *The Book on the Taboo against Knowing Who You Are*, Alan Watts claims he is about to "explore an unrecognized but mighty taboo — our tacit conspiracy to ignore who or what, we really are" (1966, p. ix). Briefly, his thesis is that "the prevalent sensation of oneself as a separate ego enclosed in a bag of skin is a hallucination which accords neither with Western science nor Eastern philosophies and underlies the misuse of technology for the violent subjugation of the environment and, consequently, will lead to its eventual destruction." He believed, in 1966, "we are therefore in urgent need of a sense of our own existence which is in accord with the physical facts and which overcomes our feeling of alienation from the universe."

Watts may have sounded *avant-garde* in 1966 but, of course, none of this was new. Indeed, the issue has been engaged by countless thinkers from many disciplines — from Plato through Shakespeare to more obvious contemporaries like Buber and Tillich, Rogers and Fromm. The quest for identity is a basic and perennial part of the human condition. The search for a niche, a mate, and a satisfying job is the basic stuff of life, not only for individuals but for societies, and is at least a partial explanation for the rise of institutions such as the church and the state. And problems related to the failure to find a niche, a mate, a satisfying job are the basic stuff of drama, tragedy, and endless sociological studies on *anomie*, delinquency, urban unrest, migration, sexual deviation, bed-wetting, and all the rest. We all know that the question "Who am I?" is not just an abstruse, ontological matter — it affects us all at the daily level. The search for an answer is real, urgent, ongoing, but, paradoxically, some of one's most painful experiences can involve finding an answer, or partial answer.

We are all involved with the identity quest, but some are more obviously, overtly concerned than others. For some people it is a *raison d'être*, but others seem to ignore it, sublimating the self in the state, the church, the job, or the suicide squad, or some other organization or institution greater,

remoter, more awesome than the individual. Some people seek themselves, seek to verify their own existences, in another person or group of persons. This, typically, is the model women have followed — sublimating themselves in the person of their husbands and their children, fulfilling their potentials vicariously, projecting their aspirations in ways that are sometimes supportive, sometimes destructive.

I do not think it impossible to find oneself through the traditional modes of marriage and all the rest, but I do think it is becoming harder and harder to find oneself that way — or having found it, to keep it. Marriages don't seem to last, but even if they do, there are still identity problems especially when women find themselves alert and healthy after the children have left home and their lives have a sudden emptiness. And so the search goes on — or recommences. I suppose some women can be so wrung out by the midlife crisis that they don't have the energy to take up the search or to invent a new self, and they are stuck, purposeless — Watt's bag of skin but without the ego. But even for the others, for younger women who haven't yet had to face the midlife crisis, it is probably becoming increasingly difficult to keep a hold on who we are these days because we seem to consume experiences, ideas, emotions at a much faster rate. There is no time to savor things in the manner of Proust — this is the age of television that consumes so much copy, so many movies, so many reports, so many performances of all kinds. We of the electronic age rush from one thing to the other; we are so bombarded with entertainments, tribulations, titillations, that we hardly have time to absorb them, to synthesize and incorporate them into our personas. Our personas are in perpetual flux, which leads to more uncertainty, which leads to the temptation of seeking security in *roles* rather than in individuality.

This, of course, is a large part of what the women's movement has been all about. We have been alerted to the fact that we have been role-playing and that the roles assigned us have not always been the most appropriate ones. No casting director in his right mind would have chosen Joan Crawford or Bette Davis for a Marilyn Munroe part — but society and convention have done that sort of thing for ages and people have learned, perforce, to serve the role rather than the person. This is now widely acknowledged; for example, Christine Garside's (1972) paper, "Women and Persons" begins:

> The basic premise of women's liberation is that women have the right to self-determination. This premise involves a commitment to two further statements, namely: 1) All persons have the right to self-determination; and 2) Women have been denied the right to self-determination. [P. 192]

Many other contemporary women writers — Simone de Beauvoir, for example — have shown that we have not only hidden from history, we have been hidden from ourselves. We have been caught between physical and

emotional realities and social norms and roles. Afraid that we did not really fit, trying to find out from novels, from Ann Landers, from "True Confession" magazines whether or not we were odd, or whether other people had the same kinds of feelings and reactions, or whether we were deviant and sinful. We have spent a lot of time looking at the "other" and in trying to force ourselves into the girdles of convention, troubled as we have been between the discrepancy between appearance and reality. At least, in relatively recent years, we have had help in one area from researchers like Kinsey and Masters and Johnson who spent a lot of time assaulting the Victorian/Freudian stereotypes and establishing that women, too, are sexual beings (see also Heinman, 1975; Forum, 1975). And then, too, we have had psychotherapy, encounter groups, consciousness-raising groups, and a whole spate of confessional writing that has ranged from the publication of once private diaries to downright pornography. I am not attempting to claim that all of this has been good — it may well be that a residue of reticence is a necessary and healthy self-protection; one needs to guard and respect one's own privacy, one's personal life-space. But, on the other hand, I think there is a connection between the quest for identity, the willingness to disclose the self, the recognition of female sexuality, and the women's movement. I would like to consider self-disclosure in a couple of specific instances, but before I do, I want to return to Watts for a moment.

Watts said: "Sex is no longer a serious taboo . . . but if sex is no longer the big taboo, what is? For there is always *something* taboo, something repressed, unadmitted, or just glimpsed quickly out of the corner of one's eye because a direct look is too unsettling. Taboos lie within taboos, like the skin of an onion" (1966, p. 1). According to Watts, there are enormous historical, cultural, and intellectual pressures which prevent anyone, man or woman, from getting to the truth of who they are. Perhaps in the decade since his book was written, some of the skins have been peeled off the onion. Certainly, some women have dared to confront themselves — with the encouragement of the movement and the temper of the times.

It may be debatable whether onion peeling is a good thing. We know, of course, that it can make you cry. But it probably has to be done. In any event, it is being done. One of the marks of the current literature — some of it is more revealing than the sexiest negligée — is "frankness," and questions of the lines between "literature" and "pornography," between "taste" and "disgust" inevitably have been raised. Some of the revelations have been pretty brutal, but part of the problem may lie in the old double standard that required that women's language, women's behavior, should be *tasteful*, men's could be *salty* — though, as all we women cooks know, how anything can be tasteful without a pinch of salt is a metaphysical mystery. It is more to the point to ask: how much self-disclosure is healthy? How much is boring? How much cathartic?

I suppose every woman has her favorites among the new literature: *The Diaries* of Anias Nin, disguised autobiography like Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners,* Sylvia Plath's *The Belljar,* or Doris Lessing's *Golden Notebook* (which I don't much like), or Jane Howard's reportage, *A Different Woman* (which I do), and so on. From a pretty substantial mass and range of self-disclosing literature, I have selected two books for comment. The selection is rather arbitrary, but I think they are both deservedly much-talked about, have both extended the genre, and have similar names. I have chosen Kate Millett's *Flying* and Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying,* both published in 1974. They have lots of things in common but also many differences. I don't hold them up as archetypes, but merely as two examples of contemporary women's writing within the self-disclosure syndrome.

First, let's look at *Flying.* For those who have not read it, Elinor Langer (1974) summarized it in *MS* Magazine as follows:

> *Flying* is a record of a year of affliction in Kate Millett's life, the year following the publication of *Sexual Politics,* the year she committed the sin of doing something well and receiving recognition for it. It also reports memories from the rest of her life in the no-particular-order her subconscious fished them out for her that year, so in a sense it is autobiography as well. Briefly, the story is this. She was a Catholic from St. Paul, beset by passion, a lesbian before she knew the word. Her father disappeared from their family life. Adulthood came slowly, with it the discovery of art, sculpting, Japan, a steadying relationship with the tender, unusual Fumio. The marriage occurred to prevent his deportation. She returned to academic work, to teaching, and to the thesis, which was her book. Then: fame, a *Time* cover, the public announcement of her gayness, despair, perhaps madness. Now, *Flying.* [P. 69].

Langer goes on to criticize the book. She claims it is false. She considers it heavily pornographic and says that though the record is of Kate Millett's personal life, the literary voice is one she has heard before — in Joyce, Stein, Lawrence — and she thinks the model for *Flying* may actually be Norman Mailer's short story, "The Time of Her Time." In Langer's view, Millett has recorded all her impressions, but takes responsibility for none. Free association has supplanted thought. Millett has betrayed the friends she named and she has betrayed herself. Langer said, "I find *Flying* as pitiful as I found *Sexual Politics* brilliant: a pointless, tangled revelation as the other was a genuine intellectual achievement; a grand and wily emotional co-optation in which she has taken up the imagined charges of past and future enemies and transformed them into self-hate" (p. 70).

Flying is, indeed, an exceedingly personal revelation, complicated, masochistic, troubled. Perhaps it never should have been written — or, at least, never published. But there are many intriguing and fascinating things about it. One of these is the discrepancy between appearance and reality — one of the elements that each of us has to contend with in the quest for identity: that assessment of the world that says, "That's reality

out there, but I don't feel like that, so I can't be real – there must be something wrong with me." This book gives us a chance to see how the apparently positive, controlled, effective, successful people can be just as torn by uncertainties as the rest of us. I was especially interested in Kate Millett's own account of her visit to McGill in February 1971 and in the report given in the *McGill Daily*. Here's how the *Daily* treated it: First, there's a picture with the caption: "Kate Millett speaking to an overflow crowd in Leacock yesterday. She called for unity to overthrow patriarchy in capitalist society and said that women formed the largest revolutionary phase in the movement." Then the story, written by Mona Goldstein, is titled simply, "Millett on Sexual Politics."

"There's a spectre haunting the country these days and it's called Women's Liberation." These were Kate Millett's words as she spoke to a crammed auditorium in Leacock 132 yesterday at a lecture sponsored by the McGill Debating Union.

Millett called for total change in our society's economic, political, social, and cultural structures. She stressed the need for alignment of all groups of oppressed peoples including blacks, students, women, and even men, who must be liberated from the pressures of their status.

"Men are encouraged to strike for a superiority which they are incapable of attaining," she stated. "Great changes must be made until masculinity and femininity give way to humanity."

Recounting a brief history of the movement, Millett recalled that in the years between 1840 and 1920 women fought for and received "minimal rights which proved to be only superficial." In the fifty years before the recent revival of the movement, a "counter-revolutionary" environment prevailed which is being challenged by the modern movement.

To emphasize the very plight of women, she cited her work last summer with prostitutes who provide "the most flagrant case of oppression. They are exploited by everyone. Imposed self-hatred has become their whole life. This is the most crucial and most heart-breaking situation of women today."

Employment statistics speak for themselves in proving extreme exploitation of women. Women's average incomes are half those of men, while the educational level of women in generally higher than that of men in comparable income brackets. Miss Millett calls her perspective on liberation "Sexual Politics" which manifests itself in our society where "one group controls the lives and destinies of another." The value system has entered into the psychic structure of its victims. Men and women are two different cultures with totally different experiences. [Goldstein, 1971, pp. 1, 4]

And so it continued, with a straightforward account of what Millett said in fiery and no uncertain terms about the need for the re-ordering of the patriarchal base of society; she supported gay liberation and child-care centres, and she condemned the press for its frivolous or sensational treatment of the movement. The speaker comes across as *determined,* dynamic, sure. This is the public Kate Millett.

Her own account of her visit to McGill hardly matches that description:

Montreal has little solace to offer. Until we reach the mangy student co-op where I stay, the conversation is of repression, martial law, arrests, general

despair. A heavier version of our side of the border. . . . I have come here sick with my own hysteria. I am obsessed, compulsive: they on the other hand have transcended concentration of any kind. I cannot let them know my confusion. Got to cover the void. Put out little feelers, vague hints to the effect that I'm uncertain what work to do next, fishing for a good project. Blank stares. Panicking trying to find phrases, to elicit direction without confessing I'm in a blind alley, don't know what to do with my life or even whether to bother living it. More of the dog and the phone. Sweat, head buzzes, wanting help so badly. Every time I begin two of the four of them are absent with the phone, the dog, the kitchen.

Finally, I give up and await my ordeal in settled dread, the speech before McGill's debating society I've come here to give. There will be no way out. I hate the speech. I hate myself as an impostor, a political apostate going through an act which even in entertainment value is despicable. All I can say are platitudes more tedious with repetition, calling for a revolution vague beyond fantasy, remote beyond hope. For you see, I know we are losing, foresee our defeat. Here in the bosom of the faithful who have the goodness to speed rather than to doubt.

Proceed to a restaurant to break bread with the opposition: liberal student leaders and a journalist. Every detail is seen with the prescience of the condemned: dinner for the prizefighter preordained to lose, for the star poised with the host of those who have made the arrangements and demand the killing farce continue. How much does my futility show? Have enough vibrations escaped to create a sense of impending catastrophe, will some unlikely whim of mercy dissuade them from proceeding with the sacrifice? By no means. I am firmly conducted to do my duty. The hall is bedlam, droves of the curious out for spectacle. And here it is. Reporter wants copy of speech so he won't have to stay. Frantic stuff with mikes for those in the corridors. Crushed by bodies behind stage, one last hope I'll never reach the podium and be let off. Not a chance. Absolutely no alternative, so I go through it, mouth miraculously dry and tongue unmoving through the first four pages. As I fumble along in the timeless vacuum that comes about when one's mouth is open in public, I begin by infinitely slow degrees to mean what I am saying. Believing again. But tired. In the yawn of questions that follow one young fellow argues that my advocacy of Gay Liberation must be a biological contradiction — turns and says to the audience, "She can't be a woman." Here's sensation at last, a raw wound. Exhaustion but not escape, for it's right into the next arrangements, the final bathos of a press conference. Pretension beyond the limits of absurdity — is she supposed to announce a war? At first it is flattering when people listen to you and write it down, then it's silly, then humiliating, then a mocking torture. CBC has sent a man who knows his wife is fulfilled in serving him. The rest are either dull questions I have answered already or good ones I never will be able to. I'm a body past use now, can be shelved till tomorrow morning's television. [Millett, 1974, pp. 26-28]

Where was Kate Millett, the public figure? The mature, self-controlled, intelligent radical, the woman who saw through shams, hypocrisies, and stereotypes? Which one is real? Is she a phoney or is *Flying*? In an event, it is an interesting book — strange, tortured, intense, pornographic, cinematic — but somewhat too long, and I had difficulty finishing it.

Not so with *Fear of Flying*, though most of the other adjectives could also apply. John Updike is quoted on the cover as saying it is "the most uninhibited, delicious, erotic novel a woman ever wrote." Most of the other critics called it simply "pornographic." It has that in common with

Flying, and it also deals with essentially the same subject, a woman writer trying to find herself. It, too, is contemporary but with flashbacks, though its progression is a lot more linear than *Flying*'s.

Briefly, it is an account of Isadora Wing, a woman who has been in therapy for years and who goes with her second husband, a psychiatrist, to a congress of psychiatrists in Vienna. The book is pretty much the saga of her summer and the affair she had with an English psychiatrist. Like *Flying*, it is unusually frank, but I had no difficulty finishing it because it is funny. It is not crude humour, nor unpleasant porn. It is witty. It, too, shows a struggle by a talented woman to reconcile ideas and emotions, the quest for becoming, the women's liberation movement and convention and men. At one point her lover asks her, "What have you got to worry about?" and she, a highly intelligent, published poet, replies:

> "Everything. I'm very dependent. I fall apart regularly. I go into horrible depressions and hardly come up for air. Besides, no man wants to be stuck with a lady writer. They're liabilities. They daydream when they're supposed to be cooking. They worry about books instead of babies. They forget to clean the house...."
>
> "Jesus Christ! You're some fine feminist!"
>
> "Oh, I talk a good game, and I even *think* I believe it, but secretly, I'm like the girl in *Story of O*. I want to submit to some big brute. 'Every woman adores a fascist,' as Sylvia Plath says. I feel guilty for *everything*. You don't have to beat a woman if you can make her feel guilty. That's Isadora Wing's first principle of the war between the sexes. Women are their own worst enemies. And guilt is the main weapon of self-torture. Do you know what Teddy Roosevelt said?"
>
> "No."
>
> "Show me a woman who doesn't feel guilty and I'll show you a man."
>
> "Teddy Roosevelt never said that."
>
> "No, but I did." [Jong, 1974, p. 131]

Fear of Flying is being made into a movie. It will probably be a successful one because it will doubtless stress sex and the "war between the sexes" rather than focus on Isadora's quest for self. So it will be passed off as another frank contemporary piece, slightly kinky because it was "by a woman writ." The question may well be raised, in any event, whether it is anything more than that. Just as Elinor Langer raised the question about whether *Flying* was anything more than post-adolescent ego massage.

I leave you to judge each of these books for yourselves – perhaps you have already done so. As for me, I think that this kind of writing is an integral and inevitable part of the movement. I think it has enormous potential, not just for the individual writers, but for the release of women in general. I don't therefore believe that anything goes nor that any woman's wildest or most erotic fantasy should be rushed into print. There are serious questions of propriety to be considered. Langer (1974) has a valid point when she says:

> Confession, self-revelation, and subjectivity; all instruments of insight and development and experimentation when they occur within small groups or writing classes, or are explored in private journals, can look shabby — even indecent — when they appear on the public shelves, where both literary and moral-political judgments must be made if the public side of life is to have any integrity at all. [P. 70]

Langer goes on to point out that confession is not disciplined autobiography. In autobiography, the writer may use the self to inspect the world; in confession, the self runs rampantly through it: everything is seen as a filter of the ego. Toward the end of her review she states:

> I have no wish to prolong the torture of Kate Millett. Other people are doing what she has, and *Flying* should not have to bear the weight for the entire confessional genre. But I think it can remind us of the absence of a genuinely critical tradition in the Women's Movement. The flaw of self-congratulation runs from the most remote small groups to the cliques of the famous. [P. 71]

I agree that the movement can use all the genuine criticism it can get, all the careful thoughtful analysis, all the precise documenting — certainly there are enough enemies, critics, cynics, scoffers outside the movement that we cannot afford to coddle them within. But I still think these kinds of books — in so far as they are true accounts of what women really think and feel and do — open a new dimension. It may, indeed, be scandalous that Kate Millett is a confessed bisexual and Isadora's heterosexual exploits may be truly shocking. But to be so frank, to cast off the old ladylike roles, to acknowledge that women have such tempestuous emotions, fears, self-doubts — even successful, intelligent women with perfectly nice husbands — all this takes guts. Ego trips, yes, but helpful for others in peeling off another layer of that onion or whatever it was Watts was talking about that stops us from discovering who we are. A lot of more reticent women may reach a healthy self-confrontation from the self-disclosure of people like Millett and Jong. Perhaps that was why they published their books. It is hard to say.

Perhaps it is rather late in the day to start defining self-disclosure, but perhaps I should do it and perhaps you may not know that there is a growing body of literature in this area. One of the foremost writers on the subject has defined self-disclosure thus:

> Self-disclosure refers to an individual's explicitly communicating to one or more others some personal information that he believes these others would be unlikely to acquire unless he himself discloses it. Moreover, this information must be "personally private;" that is, it must be of such a nature that it is not something the individual would disclose to everyone who might inquire about it. [Culbert, 1967, p. 2]

It has been said that self-disclosure is a necessary but not a sufficient condition leading to real self-acceptance, and failure to self-disclose at all

makes it impossible to receive acceptance of oneself by others. But while failure to self-disclose may deny an individual important opportunities for feedback, self-disclosure runs great risks. It may make an individual very vulnerable to embarrassment, criticism, even reprisal. Why then, do people self-disclose? Throughout his work, Culbert has identified several plausible reasons why an individual may self-disclose: (1) to gain support for one's own beliefs or actions; (2) to receive censure, i.e. to expiate guilt; (3) to achieve catharsis, i.e. self-acceptance; (4) to decrease alienation from the self and others; (5) to trade (exchange) confidences, i.e. to elicit information from (specific) others; (6) to exert power; and finally (7) to establish one's own identity. Culbert notes that self-disclosure is usually performed in the service of some greater ideal (p. 15).

This is particularly clear in the case of another recent best-seller, *Portrait of A Marriage*, which, according to Nigel Nicholson's "Foreword," is "the story of two people who married for love and whose love deepened with every passing year, although each was constantly and by mutual consent unfaithful to the other. Both loved people of their own sex, but not exclusively. Their marriage not only survived infidelity, sexual incompatibility and long absences, but became stronger and finer as a result" (Nicholson, 1974, p. 1). Nicholson points out later that his mother, Vita Sackville-West, "described her nature quite frankly: she was physically attracted to women more than by men, and remained so all her life" (p. 147). The details of her loves are recounted quite explicitly in a notebook she wrote as if for publication, though it was left hidden and not published until long after her death. The reasons for her frankness are enumerated quite deliberately. Vita Sackville-West wrote in September 1920:

> I am not writing this for fun, but for several reasons I will explain (1) As I started by saying, because I want to tell the *entire* truth. (2) Because I know of no truthful record of such a connection — one that is written, I mean, with no desire to appeal to a vicious taste in any possible readers; and (3) because I hold the conviction that as centuries go on, and the sexes become more nearly merged on account of their increasing resemblances, I hold the conviction that such connections will to a very large extent cease to be regarded as merely unnatural, and will be far better understood, at least in the *intellectual* if not in their physical aspect. (Such is already the case in Russia.) I believe that then the psychology of people like myself will be a matter of interest, and I believe it will be recognized that many more people of my type do exist than under the present-day system of hypocrisy is commonly admitted. [Nicholson, 1974, p. 100]

Sackville-West's position is clear. She wrote (in Culbert's terms) "in the service of some greater ideal." What about Erica Jong's reasons for writing? I would guess that her motives were catharsis and the establishment of identity, especially identity within a framework of the women's movement – or were they simply money and fame? And why do we read these

books that seem born of embarrassments. Perhaps it is because of the humor, or the tensions, or the style, or the historic interest, or — quite likely — because we identify with them. As readers we take courage from the fact that here is someone saying what we think we were thinking or going to think. Then we can haul out our own unformulated half-thoughts, examine them, and be honest with ourselves. We can relate to the critic who said, "I am haunted by the women in [Margaret] Laurence's novels as if they were alive — and not as women I've known, but as women I've been" (Lukas, 1974, p. 100).

But what are the limits of self-disclosure and what about Kate Millett? She should have the last word. In a response to Langer, she noted:

> *Flying* . . . there is something about this book that provokes. It tells too much, reveals too much in its exploration of the self, the author's self to be sure, but that very act of communication can echo deeply and movingly for the readers, whereas for the "critics" the reaction has been outrage. *Flying* breaks all the rules. [Millett, 1975, p. 26]

Millett acknowledged that she was ashamed, "scared to death," of writing this book, that she had "sinned in telling certain truths, truths about the media and politics, about psychological and social change as they are lived, about unconventional loves and the struggle for a new ethic in life not all that unrepresentative or bizarre, a life much like those of my friends and people everywhere hacking out a new existence" (p. 28). She concluded by agreeing that there will always be prudes who "sniff pornography in passion" and people who are ready to prevent anyone from exploring new levels of consciousness. But she said:

> I think it's too late for all that. We've started and we're getting up speed. This is what *Flying* said for me as I poured myself into it and several years of my life. With characteristic charity Langer wishes the book "a speedy oblivion." All a mistake, and I a fool who should be ashamed ever to have lived or spoken? Nothing doing. No more silence. Gay or straight, women aren't there any more. We refuse. We refused quite a long while ago and we will not be cowed back into line. The shame is over. [P. 29]

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