

work, and it is the experience of this movement as a learning site that has largely shaped my questions and comments here. The women's peace movement (I include in my definition the women's global movement for peace, equality and development) is well described in thousands of articles, books, and audiovisuals. For example, I have attempted to describe and provide access to its resources in several published articles, and special issues of *History and Social Science Teacher* (Summer 1985) and *Atlantis* (Fall 1986). Important new books have come out by Betty Reardon of Teachers College, Columbia University, and Birgit Brock-Utne of the Institute for Educational Research at the University of Oslo.

One of the strongest feminist critiques of traditional knowledge and inquiry — sometimes called mainstream knowledge — is that they are decontextualized, and the chopped off limbs of the whole creature are analyzed as if they were discrete entities. If we uproot a plant from the soil in which it grows, and by this I mean, for example, if we decontextualize the personal from the political in our attempt to gain knowledge about social transformation, we end up with a dead plant, not a viable organic system from which we can learn.

Returning to my original not-just-rhetorical questions, I think that the kind of learning we are after cannot concentrate on intrapsychic interpersonal issues without focussing also on the political and community context in which these issues are expressed and confronted. We need to work on critical theory, conceptual re-visioning, transformative political praxis and personal practice, and a respect for our own and others' accountability and competence, seeing these as part of a whole.

We rightly are concerned with facilitating changes in the consciousness and behaviour of individuals. But unless people's *experience* can be changed — and by that I mean the possibilities for experience, the cultural settings, the sites of experience — we cannot expect new consciousness and behaviour to be very well rooted because they will be dissonant with the setting and its rules and processes. And finally, I suggest we would do well to avoid the trap of what Jean Bethke Elshtain calls the "therapeutic class-

room," and the lure of focussing on powerful processes and approaches such as Joanna Macy's and Interhelp's despair and empowerment work, or visioning a peaceful world, or other attractive and to a large extent well founded and effective methods, to the *exclusion* of developing as part of the same learning task a critical understanding of the situated reality of our lives and consciousness.

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*Interhelp Canada*: see Joanne Oldring Sydraha and Joanne Blythe, "The Despair and Empowerment Model: Its Definition and How It Relates to Women." *Atlantis*, 12.2 (Spring 1987), 108-112. *Interhelp Canada* can be reached at: Women and Peace Inc., sub 1-810 Broadway Avenue, Saskatoon, Sask. S7N 1B0; (306-382-0489). or: Infopsych Communications, Stephanie Merrin, 133 Fulton Ave., Toronto, Ontario M4K 1X9; (416-461-1992).

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### LORINDA PETERSON

#### The Bath

Today we broke the ice, and watched it drift out from between us like the softened water trickles off your breasts, and faceless generations take place in dingy albums, waiting there to be recalled. We spoke of other loves and past lives till our tongues mistook the cracking ice for surface lines in photographs and slowly felt their way around the edges; every sound a wet splash or a cold fish laid across our fattened bellies; every breath acute and turned to bubble. In the old enamel tub, our toes grew withered, practised moving to avoid the floes we tossed from tongue to tongue, and churned the water, warm around our bodies.