

WRITING UP/WRITING DOWN A TEXTUAL ETHNOGRAPHY:
DOCUMENTATION PRACTICES IN A MENTAL HEALTH BOARDING HOME

BY

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"Writing Up/Writing Down" A Textual Ethnography: Documentation Practices in a Mental Health Boarding Home

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine documentary practices in a specific institution and to critically explore the consequences of documentary literacy upon the writers and readers of such texts. This thesis seeks to provide analytical frameworks to reconceptualize the implications of documentary practices in institutions and to make visible the linkages of texts to the conceptual relations of ruling.

The interest here is in a document, the "daily log", which was constructed in a community mental health boarding home. Through the textual labour of mental health workers who wrote up accounts of their daily work shifts, the log linked the boarding home to a matrix of larger social relations. This study seeks to trace through the residue of an everyday text, the means by which individuals become transformed into "textually mediated identities"; how workers become implicated in "relations of ruling" through their own literate practices; and finally, how particular forms of reading and writing may also open up possibilities of resistance, creativity and connection within institutions.

In this thesis I have re-visited the mental health boarding home both as a participant observer and as a former reader and writer of the log. Reconceptualized as a "textual field" the log is elucidated through a method of reading which consists of an oscillation between the "field" and critical frameworks. Feminist deconstruction of psychiatry, the discourse analysis and institutional ethnography of Dorothy Smith, and literary critiques of ethnography and textuality are deployed to investigate constructions of the text as "self" and "field".

The log, as a documentary text incorporates institutional, ethnographic, and narrative features. "Writing up" describes its institutional function as an instrument of control; "Writing down" examines the textual construction of everyday life. And finally, as a "living utterance", the log is re-visioned as an open narrative text which refuses closure and offers a multiplicity of voices and readings.

This thesis argues for a more informed discourse about our documentary literate practices within institutions and insists upon a measure of critical uncertainty towards documentary texts as a means of destabilizing the "conceptual relations of ruling".

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the women of the boarding home; both workers and residents whose voices and lives are documented within the log. And to Jean, who always resides at the heart of my journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Suzanne de Castell for providing the intellectual space so that this thesis could grow, and who was willing to tolerate uncertainty for such a long time. Many thanks to Celia Haig Brown for confirming that the fieldwork is never finished so it's just best to get on with the job. I would like to thank my peers, for good advice and patient ears. In particular, I am grateful to Barbara Etches and Donna Johnson, for being the good midwives that they are. And finally, very special thanks to Michael, for always believing and caring, to Gordon for letting me tell my own stories, and to Roxana and Sylvia for being there too.

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Whoever has no house now, will never have one.
Whoever is alone will stay alone,
will sit, read, write long letters through the evening,
and wander on the boulevards, up and down,
restlessly, while the dry leaves are blowing.

(Rilke, Autumn Day)

"You and I"

I am a resident. You reside.

I am admitted. You move in.

I am aggressive. You are assertive.

I have behaviour problems. You are rude.

I am noncompliant. You don't like being told what to do.

When I ask you out for dinner, it is an outing. When you ask someone out, it is a date.

I don't know how many people have read the progress note people write about me. I don't even know what is in there.

You didn't speak to your best friend for a month after they read your journal.

I made mistakes with my check-writing program. Someday I might get a bank account.

You forgot to record some withdrawals from your account. The bank called to remind you.

I wanted to talk with the nice looking person behind us at the grocery store. I was told that it was inappropriate to talk to strangers.

You met your spouse in the produce department. They couldn't find the bean sprouts.

I celebrated my birthday yesterday with 5 other residents and 2 staff members. I hope my family sends a card.

Your family threw you a surprise party. Your brother couldn't make it from out of state. It sounded wonderful.

My case manager sends a report card every month to my guardian. He says everything I did wrong and some things I did right.

You are still mad at your sister for calling your mom after you got that speeding ticket.

I am on a special diet because I am five pounds over my ideal weight. Your doctor gave up telling you.

I am learning household skills.

You hate housework.

I am learning leisure skills.

Your shirt says you are a "couch potato."

After I do my budget program tonight, I might get to go to McDonald's if I have enough money.

You were glad that the new French restaurant took your charge card.

My case manager, psychologist, R.N., occupational therapist, physical therapist, nutritionist and house staff set goals for me for the next year.

You haven't decided what you want out of life.

Someday I will be discharged, . . . maybe.

You will move onward and upward.

Elaine Popovich
Lutheran Social Services, Midland.

INTRODUCTION

In a poem entitled "You and I", Elaine Popovich writes:1

I am a resident, You reside.
 I am admitted. You move in.
 I am aggressive. You are assertive.
 I have behavior problems. You are rude.
 I am noncompliant. You don't like being told what to do.
 When I ask you out for dinner, it is an outing.
 When you ask someone out, it is a date.
 I don't know how many people have read the progress notes
 people write about me. I don't even know what is in there.
 You didn't speak to you best friend for a month after they
 read your journal.

Elaine Popovich's poem expresses the degradation and reductive experience of a human being subjected to the unidirectional gaze of institutional documentation. Her poem evokes in a few lines the metaphor of the paper cage, the textual manifestation of the conceptual practices of power as they shape her understanding of how she has become "textually mediated" as a psychiatric patient in a community boarding home. The "you" she addresses is presumably a mental health worker who "cares" for her, who writes her up in "progress notes" and whose documentation practices confirm in institutional language the portrait of deviance that will ultimately define the "I" to society and to her self.

 1 . Elaine Popovich "You and I", Lutheran Social Services, Midland.

I am learning household skills.
You hate housework.
I am learning leisure skills.
Your shirt says you are a "couch potato."
My case manager, psychologist, R.N., occupational
therapist, physical therapists, nutritionist and house
staff set goals for me for the next year.
You haven't decided what you want out of life.
Someday I will be discharged,. . . maybe.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine documentary practices in a specific institution and to critically explore the consequences of documentary literacy upon the writers and readers of such texts. This thesis seeks to provide an analytical framework to (re)-conceptualize the implications of documentary practices, a framework that will utilize two components pertaining to text and documentation. One component will examine theories of reading, textuality and "writing up". The other, a "textual ethnography", a term to be defined in due course, will trace the effects of documentary literacy through the writing of workers who wrote, read and mediated their work identities and activities through an extensive institutional document. To restate my thesis using the words of Dorothy Smith, "I am interested in making documents or texts visible as constituents of social relations" (Smith, 1990b, 210)

The document at the heart of this thesis, the log, was constructed in a community mental health boarding home that served as a residence for fifteen women ranging from 35 - 70 years of age, and a full-time workplace for another eight women. While this institution was ostensibly a voluntary, client-

centered, non-profit institution that provided care and housing for former mental patients seeking integration into the community and work force, it also manifested features which Erving Goffman has described as belonging to the "total institution" (Goffman, 1961). 2

It may be difficult to initially recognize these extreme characteristics as belonging to this particular institution that on the surface appeared to be quite informal and domestic. The residents were never "locked" in--they were able to leave the house when they wished, they were not compelled to stay at home, and many of them worked, socialized and volunteered at large in the community. However, in accordance with the tenor of Goffman's definition, residents were expected to coordinate their mealtimes and medications according to the house timetable; there was an evening curfew; at certain times during the day some parts of the house were off limits to residents; they were not permitted to make their own meals or buy and store their own food; and they were expected to obey a set of community rules

2 . A "total institution", as defined by Goffman (1961) comprises certain characteristics that work to coordinate the lives of residents such that all aspects of life (work, play and sleep) are conducted in the same place and under the same, single authority. Each phase of a member's life is carried on with a group of others. Additionally, "all phases of the day's activities are tightly scheduled" and imposed by the external rulings of a body of officials. Finally, "the various enforced activities are brought together into a single rational plan purportedly designed to fulfill the official aims of the institution." (Goffman, 1961, 6)

which provided the framework for a social contract between staff and among boarding house residents. Perhaps the most prevailing characteristic of the "total institution" was maintained in the form of a daily log where mental health workers were required to record the events of their shifts. It is toward this form of documentation that this enquiry is targeted.

Some Concerns about Documentary Literacy

Compelling critiques arising from feminism, critical pedagogy, critical ethnography and post-modernism (among others) are challenging the prerogative of a select few to define and shape the technical and cultural capabilities we call literacy. Suzanne de Castell suggests that rather than designating our society as literate on the basis of a cultural heritage preserved by an "accumulated corpus of literary texts", we should recognize that our society is one "whose organization is everywhere textually mediated" (de Castell, 1990, 74). A textually mediated society is perpetuated and camouflaged by the most inauspicious and taken for granted of texts, the documentary text. This term refers to those forms of text that tend "more often than not to function in a way that is disempowering," and where they are empowering, "they are selectively so, and function to empower the already powerful" (de Castell, 1991, 74).

I believe that continued re-examination of documentary texts and institutional documentary practices is necessary at this time. As professionals and writers, we may be able to critically

examine the facts, but we are unable to detect the means by which we uncritically construct "facts" from within the context of the institutions in which we live and work. An uncritical examination serves to increase our capacity to objectify the individuals we purport to be serving from within our institutions and decreases our ability to critique contradictory practices from within the framework of institutional knowledge making. A critical discourse about documentary literacy and documentation practices is a means of destabilizing an institution's capacity to disempower its workers, writers and subjects.

The impetus for this research stems from my work from 1985 to 1988 as a female staff member in a community mental health boarding home for middle-aged women. The house was run by a non-profit society and its purpose was to provide housing and support for former institutionally housed mental patients now living in the community. The community boarding home was designated for women and was almost entirely staffed by women, except for the occasional male on-call mental health worker or cook.

The boarding home had an exemplary reputation in the community mental health field and assisted women ranging from approximately thirty-five to seventy years of age. Some of the residents were more transient than others, having been either recently discharged from the hospital or moving into a more independent living environment. A core group of older residents were long term boarders who had lived at the house for well over a decade. Many of the women were considered chronic mental

patients, although some of the longer term boarders had other medical problems and had lived at the boarding home prior to its licensing by the mental health society.

My stint as a mental health worker would likely have remained at the level of memories, journal entries and reminiscences with former co-workers had I not been offered an opportunity to integrate the work experience with my research interests in the areas of literacy, psychiatry and feminism. Working in such an intimate and intense setting offered an opportunity to witness the complexities of administration, care-giving, and daily coping within the mental health system, and to participate in the official writing and reading through which these complexities took their shape. The daily log not only documents life within a mental health community boarding home, it also provides a textual annotation of the complexities of life and work in a documentary mediated setting.

While the writing of a daily log was mandated by the mental health licensing board, this particular log was unique for several reasons which shall be addressed more fully later. The full-time staff workers--all of whom were women--who wrote and read the log, literally voted to maintain a particular style of writing which they felt facilitated their working relationship with each other and the community mental health boarding home. In 1987 they were confronted with external pressure to change the way they wrote the log. Consequently, they split the log into two separate formats, one called the progress notes and the other

the daily log, and began a dual entry system: one, to satisfy the external authoritative structures, and the other, the narrative text of the original log, to facilitate their own needs. Thus, the women who wrote and read the log actively resisted external attempts to alter the way they communicated through the log, and reinforced their rationale for promoting and preserving a distinct kind of textuality in their working environment.

I propose that this intentional preservation of the form of documentation demonstrates an active resistance to the totalizing effects of documentary literacy, in this case, supported by a rationale of providing better care. While the log also served as an instrument that provided the means of ruling and "reading" which interpolated persons as textually mediated identities, at its heart--and I argue this is what we sought to preserve--there was an impulse to honour and responsibly care for the women residents in the group home.

I began my graduate studies with the intention of writing about the lives and experiences of the women I worked with. I felt the discourses in feminism, critical pedagogy and literacy would help me develop a critique for interrogating some of the more oppressive elements in the lives of women residing within the mental health system. I believe that the stories of these women, who occupy an extremely vulnerable position in the margins of society, are illustrative of the effects that discourses of power have upon many persons. As with many ethnographies, the

value of this investigation lies not in illuminating the differences of the exotic "Other" but in bringing into focus the similarities that resonate through "culture" and human experience.

As an on-call mental health worker I experienced many contradictions and conflicts between the purported goals of the boarding home and my role as a care-giver. These contradictions prompted a critique of the social control mechanisms that operate in daily life and are concealed in the everyday practices and procedures of the community and social institutions. Dorothy Smith has identified these control mechanisms as the social relations of ruling and claims that they are primarily activated through documentary texts (Smith, 1990b, 2). Insofar as a critical reading of a text can bring to light the relations of ruling, it is through the exploration of a documentary text that I wish to unravel some of the contradictions and control mechanisms to which Smith refers.

Exploring Documentary Text as Ethnographic Field: The Idea of a "Textual Ethnography"

In 1991 I was offered the use of the massive document that comprised the daily records of the community mental health boarding home for research. This document was referred to as the "daily log" by the staff and residents. The log records span approximately eight years (1982-1989) and represent the daily recorded observations of the mental health workers who wrote up

the important events that occurred during each work shift. The log served as an instrument for recording and communicating "what was important to know" to the other workers who were coming onto a shift and the boarding house manager 3 (PIC: person in charge) for the facility. Log entries included details about the emotional or physical condition of residents, housework duties, administrative details, information about changes in medications, and any critical events that occurred in the house and among the residents.

What is a Log Note

The document consisted of log notes extending from 1982 to 1990. They were handwritten on double-sided looseleaf pages and recorded the daily entries of every mental health worker who worked in the community boarding home over each 24 hour period. A single day would have three to four entries depending on the scheduling of the staff. All mental health workers were required by the mental health licensing board to record the events of their shift. Some log entries were no more than a few lines long. Others were descriptive and extensive, consisting of two to three pages of handwritten single spaced notes (see Figure 1).

3 . The boarding house managers were called the "P.I.C." for "person in charge", a generic title which covered an extremely "complicated" job. Briefly, the PIC ran each boarding home under them in the manner in which they saw fit, and so, although there were five boarding homes within the "fleet" of the Society, there were some differences in styles of management within each house.

THURSDAY. OCTOBER 6 DAY / CAROL

General Request to All Staff

Please be more careful and thorough about reading the log & making your log entries.

In order for us to function as a staff team — and especially when there are many different on call staff working, it's very important to pick up info from the log and to log + pass on info clearly.

If a general request or a specific-to-one-staffperson request has been made and you either get it done, get 1/2 of it done or can't get to it (which is fine!) please acknowledge in the log that you've read about it, & what you were able to do or not do — so the info gets passed onto the next shift to pick up.

- *** Please ^{write about} ~~write about~~ the morning routine as I've done in my Tues/Wed/Thurs. log — specifically noting 9:30 Check In / Coffee / Walk & comments about each.
- * Afternoon staff — please write about any activities — who attended / comments — plus what you served for snack plus what chores finished / need to be finished
- * Overnight staff — write about 3 house rounds # 1 — comments about anyone who was up / # 2 same / # 3 same — as well as chores done / comments. * SEE ROUTINE POSTED RE. Bathrooms

The better we all get at this, the easier it is for us all to do the job & function co-operatively + smoothly as a staff team — thank you.
Carol

As each shift person came into the house to work, their first duty was to read the log. If they had been absent for several days they were to read as far back as their previous shift. Thus, a longer absence required reading at least a week's worth of notes in order to be minimally acquainted with any critical issues that pertained to the well-being and care of the house residents. It took approximately an hour to read the 40 handwritten pages that could represent a week's worth of log notes.

Usually 1-2 pages were written per shift entry unless special circumstances warranted a need for more written instruction. The number of sheets of double-sided looseleaf paper representing a month of entries ranged from 60 to 87 sheets, with the average being 70, or 140 recorded pages a month.

4

The daily log was an instrumentally important document that facilitated the running of the house and served various functions within the mental health boarding home. First, it was a legal document that was mandated by the mental health licensing board and served as a record of care and procedures in the house. Second, the mental health staff had minimal overlap of shift time

4 . A total page count of 1986 yielded 834 pages over 12 months. The random months' quotas of double-sided pages ranged as follows: May 84, 70; July 84, 72; Aug. 84, 70; Aug. 86, 60; Sept. 86, 63; Oct. 86, 60; July 87, 81; Aug. 87, 74; Sept. 87, 76; Oct. 87, 87.

throughout the week with each other and so could not depend on oral exchanges to communicate important information. Third, the log provided an ongoing, cumulative record of resident life that was crucial in the programming of life skills, crisis interventions and understanding of the histories of residents. These records could be used to justify an intervention from an outside agency or the allocation of new resources within the house. Workers would be instructed to "log any unusual" events or behaviours as a means of confirming and accumulating a record for future reference.

Metaphorically, I would describe the log as the major "organ" of communication in the house. The log organized the "eyes, voice and ears" for the workers, and represented a kind of central nervous system in conjunction with the supervisor who coordinated the activities in the institution. It must be noted, however, that the log did not stand entirely alone as the sole means of communication--there were weekly staff meetings for full-time workers, and some overlap between shifts where staff and auxiliary workers shared information. However, for much of the time the log served as the most detailed, consistent source of knowledge, shift instructions and "crisis bulletins" for staff. As stated earlier, it was mandatory that a worker read the log prior to beginning her shift, even following a discussion with the departing staff person. The log was essential reading for on-call workers who did not have access to daily exchanges or staff meetings that took place in the house.

Multiple Readings of Documentary Texts

Outside of the context of the boarding home, the log notes as a form of raw data suggest many possibilities for use. Long after I resigned from my position with the community boarding home I often informally discussed with former co-workers the prospect of using the log notes as a resource for collectively painting a series of pictures, writing plays, or creating a musical revue about women in boarding homes.

When the log notes were removed from the original institutional context, we were intrigued by the possibilities of images and stories embedded within its pages. Our experiences within the house were so intense that individually, we each continued to struggle with the "meaning" of it all. I decided to use the log for my academic research and after considerable reading, came to see the log as a unique ethnographic field.

The Log as Ethnographic Field

The concept of treating the log as an ethnographic field was inspired by the scope of the log's chronological material that is expressed through the considerable layering of everyday details and the predictable patterns of description and documentation. Every shift of every day was recorded in some form in the daily log. The "field notes" of the log were authored by many people and represent a variety of "takes" from within the ethnographic field. In contrast, field notes taken by just one participant

observer could never be as consistent in their chronology. My personal familiarity with the setting made possible by my own participation as both writer and reader of the log, places me exactly in the role of the participant observer who has chosen to revisit the field through the field notes.⁵

While field notes are intentionally written for the subjective and private purposes of the researcher, these log notes were written for the public purposes of communication to other mental health workers. This places the log notes in a slightly more public framework than the idiosyncratic "fieldnote" if only for the reason that the writers and readers of the log notes were not invested in making academic reputations on the basis of their literate activities. I now revisit the "log" in a new capacity--redemptive in one sense, and exploitative in another. But as Wolfe insists, it is our responsibility as feminists/researchers to tell the stories that would not ordinarily be told, and to make explicit the limitations of the telling.

 5 . Margery Wolfe discusses this experience in A Thrice Told Tale: Feminism, Postmodernism & Ethnographic Responsibility wherein she wrote a "trptych": three accounts of the same "event" in a village in rural China told from different perspectives, time periods, and formats. Her book was based upon a short story written twenty years earlier, when she was a fieldworker/student/wife; field notes taken as an informant assistant at that time; and an ethnographic monograph worked up from the file cards written twenty years earlier, and representing a reflexive "return" to the field as an established anthropologist with a different identity (and husband).

Initially, I am tempted to claim that in terms of research purposes, the log notes seem to constitute relatively "innocent" documentation practices. However, I will reiterate as many have rightly argued: no writing/literacy/research is ever innocent. 6 Paul Atkinson states "if one recognizes that meaningful social life is produced and reproduced through the use of language, then one must also recognize that language is constitutive of how social life is represented" (Atkinson, 1992, 2). The log notes provide a substantial textual representation of the social life of a community mental health boarding home, comprised of a particular group of people, during a certain period of time. It is in this capacity that I identify the log notes as approximating the function of fieldnotes, and further, I claim that my role as a researcher has included that of the worker/reader/writer, and is now as the participant observer/feminist/ethnographer.

 6 . (Lather, 1991; Friere, 1973; Hall, 1975; Weskott, 1977; Reason and Rowan, 1981.) Cited in Lather, 1991 Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/In the Postmodern. Lather uses Friere's construction "just as there is no innocent education..." to propose the same for research. Certainly Lather is not the first to theorize the issue of "interest" in research, but she makes a contribution by making the problem an issue with so called "emancipatory" research projects.

What is a Field Note?

In her essay entitled "I am A Fieldnote",⁷ Jean E. Jackson discusses how ethnographers do not hold a uniform understanding of what "constitutes" a fieldnote. Fieldnotes vary greatly in form and method of acquisition yet, among anthropologists there is a tacit "orthodoxy" implying some professional standard to be upheld in their methodology. Despite a vast disagreement as to how they should be used, collected, destroyed (post-humously), revered, despised, or ignored, it is clear that from within the discipline the only agreement is that fieldnotes are important.

What respondents consider to be fieldnotes varies greatly. Some will include notes taken on readings or photocopied archival material; one person even showed me a fieldnote in the form of a ceramic dish for roasting sausages. Some give local assistants blank notebooks and ask them to keep fieldnotes. Others' far more narrow definitions exclude even the transcripts of taped interviews or field diaries. It is evident that how people feel about fieldnotes is crucially linked to how they define them, and one must always determine just what this definition is in order to understand what a person is saying. Clearly, what a "fieldnote" is precisely is not a part of our profession's culture, although many respondents seem to believe it is. (Jackson, 1990, 6)

There is a similar ambiguity regarding the uses and purposes of the log notes in the "field" and out of the "field". The lively discussions held with my co-workers about the possible

 7 . In response to Roger Sanjek's call for papers to discuss and share some understanding as to anthropologist's use, relationship to, and understanding of what fieldnotes are, Jackson informally surveyed some seventy practicing anthropologists. The essay's title is a reply from one correspondent.

uses and readings arising from the log suggest to me that more attention needs to be placed upon the context of documentary writing and reading. Although we had worked with the log in what we assumed was a fairly standardized manner, it became clear that outside of the context of the workplace, people had differing relationships to the log's contents, "data" and form. Where I once assumed that documentary texts tended to be read in fairly uniform ways, or so the story goes, it became evident to me that an institutional text could legitimately be read against the grain of the purposes for which it was originally constructed. Only within the institutional context is the documentary text constrained by meaning and relations of ruling. Dorothy Smith states that texts read in contexts outside and uncontrolled by "a given jurisdiction of reading and controlled schemata of interpretation" for which they were intended will not necessarily construct the "same virtual reality" (Smith, 1990a,96). As Smith repeatedly points out, the intended contexts for the reading of institutional texts constrain "proper readings", yet even fictional or literary texts are embedded in social relations:

I want to emphasize that we are not just talking about reading and writing texts, nor of how people go about constructing and interpreting different kinds of narratives. These textual "moments" are to be seen as embedded in social relations; the moment of writing or reading enters the subject as an active participant in those relations. . . . The psychiatric discourse, for example, intersects with universities, hospitals, the work of the coroner's office, private psychiatric practice, and mental hospitals, with open linkages into the general textual discourse of the intelligentsia and the mass media. (Smith, 1990a 193)

Why the Documentary Text has Implications for Ethnography

In The Ethnographic Imagination, Paul Atkinson states the authoritative text establishes its status and its relationship with an audience through textual or rhetorical devices.

It establishes a privileged stance towards the (facts) or evidence presented by its imposition of textual order-- through the selection of elements and their arrangements into lists of similar or contrasting elements into projections of cause-and-effect, or rational ends-and-means. (Atkinson, 1990, 18)

Dorothy Smith describes the ways documentary texts are ordered and written to take over the authority of telling "what really happened" and how the documentary text gains power by its organization of facts as the actual representation of reality.

Facts then are not to be equated with factual statements. Nor are they the actuality which factual statements represent. The fact is not what actually happened in its raw form. It is that actuality as it has been worked up so that it intends its own description. . . . it is important to recognize that facts are constructed in a context of telling. The organization that is created aims at this telling and aims therefore at the purpose for which it will be told. (Smith, 1974, 258)

Smith's critique of the documentary text complements Van Manen's discussion of the function of the "Realist Tale" in ethnography (Van Manen, 1988, 48). The ethnographer's authority, constructed by the absence of the ethnographer's voice and the representation of the field in detailed facts and description, seeks to impose a distanced authority by the representation of the text as an uncontested reality. As with the documentary fact becoming the same for anyone, the removal of the "I" from the

realist tale "permits the reader to assume "that whatever the fieldworker saw and heard . . . is more-or-less what any similarly well-placed and well-trained participant-observer would see and hear" (Van Manen, 46). "These categorical and conceptual procedures which name, analyze and assemble what actually happens . . . does not appear as imposing an organization upon it but rather as a discovery of how it is" (Smith, 1974).

Typically the culture being researched often has less power than the investigating culture, insofar as the researcher has assumed the privilege of representation (Van Maanen, 5). These power relations may become more visible in the social transactions that are played out in the text. The critical reader should be able to access the rules, the beliefs and the worlds that have been thus portrayed. It is in the reading that dissonance of misrecognition and resistance may be activated. Certainly estrangement, omission, and misrepresentation have been entry points for counter-hegemonic analyses of cultural texts by feminist, racial and cultural minorities in the past.

It seems that within the context of documentary reality and ethnographic research the world is indeed a textually mediated reality, where systems of social control and self/text mediation have moved us into a not necessarily benign textual universe beyond our immediate control and understanding. Electronic media have merely accelerated this process, exponentially increasing the capacity for governance via textual means which mystify the locus of control. By not recognizing the textual and social

construction of research, even the most empathic, publicly minded researcher will continue to activate relations of ruling in the ways that the research and research participants are dealt with. By "textual implications of doing research," I am referring to the technologies of language, reading and writing, in which we are captured by conceptual frameworks and social constructions of reality (Foucault, 1990).

Feminist researchers and methodologies have begun to focus the major portion of their critique at the site of language and conceptual frameworks. Kathleen Driscoll and Joan McFarland note that in the context of feminism, research is examined according to two inter-connected processes: (1) conceptual framework and (2) techniques of data collection and analysis. (1989, 186) To reiterate Lather's statement, "just as there is no education that is neutral there is no research that is neutral" (Lather, 1990, 50). Techniques of data collection analysis are not neutral: they are shaped by the conceptual framework and also shape that framework. Each technique embodies decisions concerning appropriate units of study, important characteristics of the units and the relationship between units (Driscoll and McFarland, 1989, 186). Each technique's usefulness and its limitations are structured by its underlying assumptions. Adopting a research technique means adopting its conceptual framework, adopting its language, and adopting its documentary techniques.

Situational Context as a Constraint of Meaning

All texts, even documentary texts, offer the possibility of multiple readings, but the reader's situation as she reads the text will delimit the range of interpretations available to her. In an institutional setting with documentary texts, the reader's personal understanding may be treated as a contaminant. As a reader of documentary texts she must suspend critical and personal belief and read the documentary text as if it embodied a factual account of reality. This is not to say that the factual account will so radically differ from a person's understanding that they remain incompatible versions; one is just more capable of coordinating a more authoritative version than the other (de Castell, 1991, 81).

And just as texts rhetorically construct individual reader-identity, so they rhetorically construct communities of readers. For externalizing what may have been multiple and differentially experienced raw actuality into an isolated, disambiguated and objective 'fact' creates a complementary organization of knowers. Since the fact is the same for all knowers in all situations, facts coordinate readers into communities of knowers, all of whom know "the same thing. (de Castell, 1991, 82)

And again in Smith;

The textual externalization of the object creates a complementary organization of knowers. A factual organization aims not precisely at a plurality but at an open-ended more-than-one. Although a fact may be restricted in its circulation to a specific group or status, it is the same on each occasion of its telling or reading, no matter who hears or reads it--which is, of course, the grounds for restricting in some cases who it may reach. This "sameness" is of course a product of a social organization in which knowers may treat their knowledge as that which is or could be known by anyone else (Smith, 1990a, 69).

As a mental health worker I have had a personal and professional history in the place which was documented, and contributed to the writing and reading of the log. As an insider I now have the opportunity to investigate and question the reality this unique institutional document purports to represent.

Significance of research

There is a scarcity of literature that examines the particular institution upon which this study focuses: the community mental health boarding home. Its marginality is the precise reason why such a site is worthy of academic enquiry. A local documentary analysis that is ethnographic in its nature can provide a counterbalance to the deficiency of knowledge about this increasingly common public institution.

Despite the proliferation of community mental health boarding homes in the urban landscape, they have remained invisible at best and sensationalized at worst. This is particularly intriguing, especially considering the past decade saw both the deinstitutionalization of large scale mental hospitals and a public doctrine of efficacy in community mental health become firmly established. There is little understanding of these institutions beyond the professional discourse on mental health services. Yet, many people are acquainted with, related to, or are themselves individuals who, at some point in their lives spend some time in a "transitional" setting such as a

community mental health boarding home. A 1980 Canadian Mental Health Association report on community housing support for the mentally ill states:

In light of the wide disparities throughout western countries in deinstitutionalizing mental health services, it is difficult to generalize on the overall phenomenon of community housing for psychiatric patients. But if a generalization can be made, it is that the majority of patients in the community who must rely on housing which specifically caters to them--as opposed to those who live independently or return to families--have ended up in conditions which are open to serious criticism. (1980, 4)

More importantly, for many individuals these institutions become their permanent dwelling, yet there is a persistent and obvious gap in the public imagination and understanding of the dynamics, politics, resources and living conditions that persist in such places. As with earlier studies that showed sites such as asylums, sanatoriums, work houses, or hospices to be "contaminated" (Foucault, 1965; Goffman, 1961; Chesler, 1972) the community mental health boarding home should likewise be scrutinized. As pervasive features in the landscape of contemporary community life, we must begin to gain some understanding of them so that we can begin to deconstruct the myths harboured about such places and their residents.

Unlike the sensationalist images held of mental hospitals and asylums, the community boarding home is a relatively humble and ordinary setting where emphasis is placed upon domestic routines and day-to-day activities of residents. The philosophy of community living and the psycho-social rhetoric of the anti-

psychiatry movements of the 60's and 70's have shaped the environments of some of these places so that most of the overt characteristics of total institutional life of the mental hospital are deliberately de-emphasized, and for the most part are fairly invisible. A more detailed description of the development of the non-profit society that operates these facilities will follow in the next chapter.

I believe this research may reveal some of the working and living experiences of women struggling with power relations within the mental health system. Dorothy Smith's analysis of documentary texts mandates for this writer a return to the politics of everyday life in the mental health boarding home. It is important to reclaim the "politics of everyday life", in a site where the relations of ruling are potent yet obscured in a domestic care-giving setting and in the narratives of ordinary documents.

CHAPTER ONE
 WRITING DOWN: A METHODOLOGY/
 A FEMINIST READING OF THE FIELD AS TEXT

Reality it seems is a text, subject to multiple interpretations, multiple readings, multiple uses. Accepted paradigms and language games--to borrow from Kuhn and from Wittgenstein--have been relativized and politicized. And as the saying goes, all have been "decentered." What does this mean for social research in a "postmodern age"? (Apple, 1991, vii)

I have called this research a textual ethnography and stated an intention to work from the standpoint of women. What is my method? It is simply a re-reading of texts, and claiming a formerly unarticulated space of lived experience as a starting point for critical examination. The insistence on reading (or re-reading) is a gesture--a pointing to life experiences that have been expressed textually in a document called "the daily log". My many readings express a desire to capture and reorganize a formerly lived experience into conceptual frameworks as a method to ask questions about research, feminist knowledge making, and documentary textuality. Somewhat inadequately stated, I am seeking to "read a world"--a textual representation of a world--and to claim this exploration as feminist ethnography.

This thesis deals with a lived reality thrice removed: 1 by historical time, by re-orienting context, and by textual

 1 . Margery Wolfe's excellent treatment of ethnography, A Thrice Told Tale: Feminism, Postmodernism and Ethnographic Responsibility (Stanford University Press, 1992) was brought to my attention by Celia Haig-Brown as I struggled with this particular conceptual understanding of the log. Many thanks to Wolfe for providing "proof" and to Celia for the fine "ears".

representation. By so doing, it slams directly into issues that contest the validity of these marginal methodologies. The feminist position is challenged because it claims itself as an explicitly ideological form of knowing, firmly grounded in women's experience as the entry point to political and personal knowing. Ethnography, also marginalised, declares the ethnographer as the primary instrument for social research while resisting implications that its monographs are merely expressions of a hermeneutical textual exercise. Critical discourses of ethnography struggle over whether ethnography is an explication of a culture through the medium of an ethnographer, a protracted exploration of the ethnographer's understanding in a shifting cultural context, or some still to be articulated "other" text.

Taken all together, I question how it is possible to "do research", and ask whether the feminist ethnographer's text is finally a kind of superlative ouija board, an elaborate "self-telling" disguised by theory. I had difficulty approaching the question of "doing" research without a feeling of discomfort--not only because I did not understand it, but because it seems that research has always proclaimed itself (sic) to be something outside of social construction and literacy, and immune from human interest. I had an inarticulate sense that social science research was fundamentally an estranged form of rhetoric with a lot of complicated steps thrown in to obscure its roots in literary practices.

This thesis starts from personal experience as an on-call mental health worker and establishes itself as a critique of the documentary practices of a mental health boarding home. Many of the theoretical analyses that inform the critique were generated from feminist sources, primarily those of Dorothy Smith, Patti Lather, Susan Penfold and Gillian Walker, and include a broad range of feminist critiques of research methodologies and science.²

Insofar as this thesis is generated from feminist theory, it also arises from my own experience as a mental health worker. From 1985-1989, I was (under)employed as an on-call mental health worker. It is work that is ill paid and exhausting, but through it I was introduced to a reality that challenged most of my preconceptions about mental illness, poverty, violence against women, and the value of care-giving labour in the female dominated "helping fields". My personal orientation as a reader and writer triggered my awareness of the textual power relations inherent in the practices of documentation.

The questions that direct the focus of my thesis are derived from the lived experience of women whose lives I saw depicted and

 2 . My readings in the feminist critique and analysis of research methodologies and science continually inform my own research and are too numerous to mention but those of most recent use have been: (Stanley and Wise, 1983, 1990; Fonow and Cook, 1990; Stacey, 1988; Gorelick, 1991; Smith, 1974, 1981, 1987 1990a, 1990b; Meis, 1983, 1990)

described in the setting of a mental health boarding home. In this place I began to make connections to issues of gender, power, knowledge, psychiatry and documentary literacy. My immersion into the world of mental health boarding homes was a form of 'ostranenie'³ or estrangement and an induction into what Sandra Bartky has called the double ontological shock of feminist consciousness. "To consciously adopt a woman's perspective means to see things one did not see before and also to see the familiar rather differently" (McCarl Nielsen, 1990, 20).

The project has been from the start a critical yet personal one. Many of the questions that I ask about documentary textual practices and the ways these practices dominate and generate contradictions from within the institutional context of care giving were derived from the frustrations and crises of this workplace.

As a self-identified feminist (which does not imply that all my methods of research are automatically feminist), this thesis has been determined, structured and limited by an intellectual

 3 . Ron Silliman describes "ostranenie" as the "Formalist concept of making something 'strange' (a conception with obvious parallels to such diverse poetics as Pound's "making it new" and Brecht's alienation effect) is to render the strange thing perceptible." (Silliman, 1985, 178) Estrangement has been widely deployed in a genre of writing called "new American language poetry" as an aesthetic and political methodology. See fairly recent anthologies such as Writing/Talks edited by Bob Perlman Southern University Press. 1985, and Code of Signals: Recent Writings in Poetics ed. by Michael Palmer, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley CA. 1983.

and ideological grounding in feminism. Methodologically, it has meant a deep investment in the research topic and an avoidance of certain quantitative analyses. I was equally concerned with the epistemological implications of certain methods as with the efficacy of a hermeneutical orientation towards research. I was drawn to interpretative methods found in ethnography and hermeneutics, that are reflexive and critical enough in their orientation to enable a feminist centering for theory. This thesis, then, is hardly an exemplar of objective disinterest. Rather, it claims to be "wholly partial"--its flaws and strengths are generated by an insider's re-visitation to a known site for the purpose of critical, and perhaps redemptive exploration. 4

Feminist Textual Ethnography as a method

Since feminist theory is grounded in women's lives and aims to analyze the role and meaning of gender in those lives and in society, women's personal narratives are essential primary documents for feminist research. These narratives present and interpret women's life experiences. They can take many forms, including biography, autobiography, life history--a life story told to a second person who records it--diaries, journals and letters. (Personal Narratives Group, 1989, 4)

4 . I consider redemption to be a form of re-writing, which is perhaps the impulse of most critical feminist pedagogical practice. Hindsight is a valuable tool for practitioners but it does not alleviate the guilt of atrocities and errors committed while in the trenches. My readings in feminism, research methodology and the critique of psychiatry "explained" some of the abuses and tragedies which I also witnessed and/or committed in good faith. As Dorothy Smith points out, the relations of ruling are present most poignantly at the places where they cannot be recognized, the mundane activities of everyday life.

I chose to work with an extensive, richly detailed documentary text called the "daily log" as my primary source of information and analysis. This log, which spans eight years, was almost entirely written by female workers, and as a documentary text, describes women's responses and perceptions in an institutional site that was established specifically for middle-aged women who were living under the "aegis" of the community mental health system. The log describes in considerable detail the experiences, perceptions and communications of one group of women who worked in the house about the other group of women who lived in the house. For these reasons, the textual world described and encoded in the log qualifies as and provides an entry into "women's insider's standpoint".

(W)omen's standpoint, as I and millions of other women lived and live it, locates a subject in her work with particular others, in a particular local site, her children, her partner, her neighbours, the local grocery store, and so on. It is a working consciousness addressing in daily and nightly practices precisely these particularities. (Smith, 1990b, 9)

The daily log is a text that particularizes lived material reality and an insider's perspective exemplified by both a private domestic sphere and the public institutional sphere of the mental health boarding home. Its events encapsulate the mundane gritty events of housework, grocery shopping, night shifts, flooding toilets and care-giving, along with profound experiences such as friendship, madness, suicide and recovery

from illness. In short, the log represents an encounter with a human world that has rarely been documented or regarded as being worth mentioning in the grand narratives of "man".

What is the Log?

The log book consisted of a 3-ring binder filled with looseleaf paper. The front of the book had emergency telephone numbers of hospitals, police and emergency mental health services. A house and floor plan outline was included with the names of residents in each room, along with evacuation and fire drill instructions. The log provided a general description of the residents with some documentation of special health needs and behavioral routines in the case of emergency situations. There was also information on medications and emergency procedures in the event of fire, physical injury, psychiatric crisis, or health crises such as strokes, diabetic coma, convulsions or epileptic seizures.

The workers were required to read the log book at the beginning of every shift and to write down any information considered important to communicate at the end of the shift. A critical activity for both part-time and full-time workers, the writing and reading of the log maintained the continuity of the information current and alerted staff to any problems that were arising in the house. The log writing/reading facilitated the administration of the house and permitted an almost skeletal

staff to work over a 24-hour period with little physical supervision.

The workers' bi-weekly schedule consisted of a minimum of six separate work shifts consisting of twelve and eight hour shifts during the day and including at least one overnight shift. The shift scheduling provided little overlap with other staff members especially during the evenings, weekends and holidays. Thus, some workers had little contact with each other except at staff meetings or when the next person arrived to work the next shift. The log book provided workers a crucial conduit for relaying important information about the residents and the house; medication changes or health issues; critical events in the house that required immediate attention; mundane grocery and "to-do" lists for daily chores; union or staffing issues and social events.

The writing of the log notes was compulsory. All workers had to make an entry on every shift, even if it was just to write that the house was calm and there were no unusual events to report. Initially, there were few explicit instructions on the writing of the log notes. The content had to be "factual" and to the point, or descriptive if the day's events required some detailed explanation for the behaviour of a resident and a subsequent response or intervention from the staff person.

In sum, the log was an organizing heuristic. It organized and established a framework for the protocols for mental health workers in settings where it appeared as if they were largely autonomous, self-regulating and unsupervised. The log also

supplied, through imitation and tacit textual representations, the appropriate responses by which a stream of interconnected staff persons could attend to the complex needs of the people who lived in the house.

Textual Orientation of the Mental Health Worker

Job orientation for a prospective on-call worker consisted of observing a minimum of two separate work shifts with a veteran staff person, usually a morning/day shift and an afternoon/evening shift. They would be introduced to the residents and taken on a tour of the house. Much of the orientation would be spent assisting and observing the daily routine of the mental health worker. My first entry in the boarding home log book reads:

June 21, 1985 . . . I was really surprised to find how autonomous the residents are and how the house is even. It was great meeting Marg and somehow I feel quite comfortable because of the calm atmosphere here. The house and garden is beautiful. I met the ladies and it seems quite handable (sic) - great lunch from Renee. Hope I get lots of calls. Your orientation books and information are quite straightforward - thanks very much for that. The main task will be getting familiar with the people so they are used to me and feel at ease. Kathy.

The following entry stated,

June 21, 1985. . . . Kathy's orientation took up from 10:30 - 2:30 p.m. I tried to get across as much as I could and I ticked off what I did. Kathy was comfortable and seemed relaxed and easy with the house philosophy and routines.

With this entry I entered the documentary reality of the group home and began to acquire a textual identity of my own. A

few days later another note requests for the next orientation that the staff worker:

June 25, 1985. . . please check orientation book to see where Marg left off. Main focus for tonight for her: snack time, meds. routine, 10 pm changeover. Lee will go over night and AM routine with her after 10. If she seems well oriented to you, please ask her if she'd like to do Sat. O/N shift and let me know.

A few days later, my second orientation completed, I did my first solo overnight shift in the house and my formal induction to the boarding home was complete.

Following the hands-on observation period the on-call worker was instructed to read the log book and get acquainted with the routines, schedules and guidelines of the boarding home that were usually found in a section at the front of the book. The on-call worker was provided with information on the individual residents in the form of anecdotal profiles and life histories, but my experience was that the detail of this information varied from house to house. Finally the worker was instructed to scan the month's log notes in order to get a sense of the house, to identify the "current events" that were shaping residents' lives, and to get familiar with the way the log notes were recorded.

Due to the sporadic nature of available shifts and little contact with other workers, the community boarding home's daily log book became the major lifeline that relayed important information about the house, the state of the residents, and work responsibilities for each shift. The following excerpt demonstrates an inexperienced on-call worker trying to clarify

her understanding of a house rule as she is being "challenged" by residents. She refers to "hearing" or "reading" somewhere about the use of the kitchen in the later evening. The supervisor responds in writing to the request for information--which presumably the on-call worker will find when she looks back to read. This serves as a documented clarification for other on-call workers and regular staff who might be experiencing the same confusion. The subtext seems to indicate that residents are taking advantage of a new staff person and that house rules around extra food consumption are being "inappropriately" challenged:

June 24, 1985. . . . Shirley quiet - she does like to sit in the kitchen - am I correct or is the kitchen not out-of-bounds in the evening (after 8:00) seems I heard or read that somewhere, but haven't enforced it too strenuously. But I guess I need to know for sure because immediately after snacktime, Bella came down to make an onion sandwich for she & Helga. I questioned it and she says that OK--anyway she agreed to settle for bread & butter tonite--maintained she was very hungry.

[Insert in margin] . . . the kitchen is not out of bounds after 8:00 BUT except under extraordinary circumstances, no one helps themselves to snacks - and EVERYONE is required to ask staff first if they want something to eat. Bella is out of line here and needs to be reminded firmly of this rule.

Analysis of the data

The log was immense and extremely cumbersome to deal with: the eight years of sequentially handwritten pages were organized in monthly sections, that provided its only form of organization. To access the field meant literally reading it, a time consuming and seemingly random method of "travel and communication".

Considering the bulk and concrete materiality of the log--which in many ways created a barrier to its access--I have settled for a bounded field, while knowing or suspecting that possibly there was valuable material at every point, but realizing that I had to restrict the exploration. My problems of reading are true to those of the "genuine" ethnographer who must also make restricted choices from a rich and diverse field about what to collect and what to let go.

Eventually, I selected eight four month periods on which to base my intensive reading and analysis of the log. The periods selected ranged from 1982 to 1989. 5 Some periods were randomly selected, others were intentionally selected because they documented certain critical events. I followed the entrance of new residents into the boarding home to see how textual portraits accumulated about them, and witnessed the textual socialization of new staff persons outlined in their own and others' log entries.

I intentionally read sections of the log written when I was not employed within the house (1981 - May 1985; Aug. 1988 - 1989) with the rationale that these sections would offer me a more

-
- 5 1. February to June, 1982
 2. September to December 1983
 3. July to October 1984
 4. May to September 1985
 5. December 1985, to March, 1986
 6. July to October 1986
 7. August to December, 1987.
 8. January to April, 1988.

"objective source" of information than sections written during periods while I was involved with the house. At first this material was more difficult to follow, but there was enough overlap of long-term residents and full time staff to remedy my experience of complete disorientation. I "learned" extensive histories of the residents and obtained some insight into patterns of response by the staff and residents that had formerly been somewhat obscure. I read about "legendary" events (Sherry's invisible dog for instance) and gained an appreciation for the perseverance of staff and residents in continuing to engage with one another despite the frustrating recurrences of breakdowns, psychiatric symptoms and ongoing community conflicts.

When I read through the period when I was employed, I was confronted with evidence of my own log writing that created a curious dissonance of misrecognition and embarrassment. An outsider/insider perspective allowed me to witness the limitations of my own entries and provided some mixed moments of compassion and irony as I questioned whether the motive for this research was an exercise in narcissism. I concede to an earlier point, that research is a form of elaborate self-telling, but I wonder whether the average researcher experiences the same degree of voyeuristic discomfort. The ethnographer who reads her fieldnotes may recognize the limits of her observations but they are in a form and a context that supports critique. Whereas, fieldnotes are "private" documents, log entries are public documents. At times, reading my log entries was like breaking

into a friend's house to read my old letters. Yet I appreciated more fully the good will of co-workers to tolerate my chicken scrawl penmanship and elliptical phrasing.

Reading the Field

In the process of reading these designated sections, I traversed randomly and widely throughout the log, and sometimes scanned a "year" at a time: 1982; 1988; 1987. I tried following the tendrils of certain narratives to closure and discovered that this was a futile objective. The wide ranging "longitudinal" readings of the log revealed that particular themes and narratives only ended when people quit writing about them, or when the resident left the boarding home. For this reason I value the massive scope of the log's eight year chronology because it provides access to a variety of extended cyclical patterns that I believe typify the repetitious reality of people's subjective lives.

My method of reading was not chronological. I did not start at the beginning and read to the end. Rather, the movement was recursive as I intentionally re-read certain "eras", and after a prolonged absence, "rediscovered" the sections again. Some sections permit easier access and make more compelling reading than others, though it is beyond the scope of this analysis to determine why this might be the case. I grew to anticipate the entries of certain individuals because of the descriptive quality, humour or intelligence of their writing.

Alternately, I dreaded other people's entries, usually because of the difficulty of their handwriting, clumsy expressions or personal "agendas" transmitted between the lines.⁶

Analysis of reading/Transcription

Once I had located a section I wished to analyze I would transcribe the log entry and indicate the insertion of extra comments with the use of square brackets [-] and different typefaces. The entry would begin with the date, usually followed by an ellipsis to indicate whether the entry was begun in midstream or not. I have treated these log quotes as most other quotations would be treated, except I have not included a bracketed 'source' at the end for reasons of confidentiality to workers. Each of the original entries began with the date, shift time and staff initials. The end of the entry included the petty cash total that had to be confirmed in the next entry. I have only included the date for obvious reasons. The shift time has been omitted unless it serves to clarify the context of the entry, its initial purpose being to identify the workers or on-call workers who were working during designated time periods.

6 . I found my "readerly" response to personalities of the writers particularly interesting when I was not familiar with the writer, which occurred with other on-call workers, or during periods prior to, or after I had left the employ of the boarding home. I found some people's observations of residents and the tone of their entries to be offensive -- but I also attributed certain qualities to really bad handwriting (one person's backhand scrawl, in particular, used to infuriate me).

Aug. 12, 1984 . . . I did read some from the Grooms and the Cat stories but it's difficult for the ladies to listen to. Being from British authors the words are a bit sticky and they don't get the joke. I finished off by reading an article from the New Woman's magazine (sic). I asked if the ladies would like to have a mystery from Sherlock Holmes and they thought that would be good.

I made another chart for the laundry. Does Shirley have two laundry days? [Insert from other worker. "Yes."]

. . . I got bit of a scare when Maggie came to me about an itchy scalp--wondering if it was scabies but I guess it was nothing. Shirley had her bath and did the evening dishes. She also volunteered to wash the pill cups every day (original emphasis). Annie is still quiet. So have a good shift. P.S. Petty cash is \$24.10. J.

The most prevailing method of my analysis was to tag certain key events, and to transcribe them in a file called "stories". I included annotated discussions of my understanding of the meaning of the exchange and its connection to the current bit of theory I was reading. As I oscillated between the theoretical texts and the log, certain events gained significance. I discovered that transcribing the log notes from the handwritten texts into computerized script altered some of the log's "meaning". There was a tangible sensory and tactile experience associated with the original handwritten, looseleaf pages and their intersubjective/intertextual weaving of narrative that coalesced with each person's handwriting, comments, responses and connections to the previous entries.

As a worker/writer/reader of many of these entries, I experienced both a sensory and memory "gestalt" that became stimulated by immersion in what I came to think of as a "textual field". I spent many fruitless hours looking for incidents I was

sure that I had written up, only to discover that another person had logged the incident. This kind of experience was illustrative of the joint authorship of the log--the intersubjective nature of the text--and illuminates the potency of the log as a dialectical utterance.⁷

The workers were compelled to read the log closely and to strongly identify with each other's communications. When the staff was composed of "veteran" workers who had already tacitly acquired the automatic methods and frameworks of writing and reading the log, the process of communication was extremely subtle and taken for granted. When staff changes occurred or there was a flux of new on-call workers, the entire process had to be made much more explicit and in this "ordering", the conceptual relations of ruling were made more visible:

October 6, 1988 . . . General Request to All Staff:
Please be more careful and thorough about reading the log and making your log entries. In order for us to function as a staff team -- and especially when there are many different on-call staff working, it's very important to pick up info from the log and to log and pass on info clearly. If a general request or a specific-to-one-staff person request

7 . A glossary definition of utterance reads as thus:
"In the verbal medium, in each utterance, however trivial it may be, [a] living dialectical synthesis is constantly taking place between the psyche and ideology, between the inner and outer. In each speech act, subjective experience perishes in the objective fact of the enunciated word-utterance, and the enunciated word is subjectified in the act of responsive understanding in order to generate, sooner or later, a counterstatement." (from Marxism and the Philosophy of Language cited in M.M. Bakhtin. The Dialogic Imagination [Glossary] University of Texas Press: Austin, 1981. p. 433.)

has been made and you either get it done, get 1/2 of it done or can't get to it (which is fine!) please acknowledge in the log that you've read about it and what you were able to do or not do so the information gets passed onto the next shift to pick up. . . .

The better we all get at this, the easier it is for us all to do the job and function co-operatively and smoothly as a staff team. Thanks - Sarah

Problems of Interpretation

The first sweep of "content analysis" of July/August 1984 produced about twenty-five "themes" (see figure 2). After the months of July and August 1984 were completely transcribed and coded, I discovered, as must all ethnographers, that there were endless possibilities of themes to follow if one reads "meaning" into each incident. Finally, it was necessary to pull back and re-assess the "meaning" process. I did not intend to do a taxonomy of resident events as I had decided it was not ethical to invade their lives, and turned instead, toward the workers' experiences as they wrote, read and worked from the log. These were more at the crux of the contradictions I was attempting to resolve between "documentary practice" and outcomes of care in the institutional setting. The writing/reading practices evident within the log are a demonstration of the power of documentary texts from within the institution to construct meaning for the worker, and thus, also to "construct" the worker.

FIELDNOTES AUG. 84/7

Aug. 14/84 Janet Overnight

"A very noisy night with a thousand doors opening and closing."

[THIS IS ABOUT THAT INVISIBLE ACTIVITY THAT GOES ON, WHERE THE STAFF IS AWARE OF ACTION BUT NEVER SEES THE PEOPLE WHO ARE DOING THIS, DOORS, MOVEMENTS AT NIGHT, PEOPLE IN THE BATHROOMS, TOILETS BECOMING PLUGGED. FOOD STOLEN]

Aug. 15/84 Carol DAY PIC

June has a weepy day, described by therapist as "sad, rather than her usual angry, agitated"

Resident comes into focus as "at risk"
 Annie was discussed by therapist, concern that we must continue to monitor her, as Annie is not interested in getting help and if she gets very disturbed she would have to be certified. [SIGNIFICANCE OF MONITORING SO NOW ALL BEHAVIORS BECOME IMPORTANT TO OBSERVE]

PHOTOCOPY DRAWING OF "DANCING FEET - happy reading, and baking Martha!

Aug. 15/84 Martha Afternoon

narrative - works to evoke slow news, frustration

Myrna had to be hustled to get laundry done, other residents complaining about her smell. Took two hours to make a bed, Martha writes descriptively, "putter, putter, slog, slog, slog." Everyone complaining about her smell, so I did (again!) tell her that . i.e. she's a nice person and we like her and it's not easy to be around her when she smells bad. Explicit directs on washing and using the deodorant - EVERYDAY!*

[Strange position of having to tell people your age, or age of parents to wash up and clean themselves. I remember we all used to feel fairly sensitive around this issue, but then there is the problem of "standards" of cleanliness and whose is the final standard. What comes to mind right now is the incredible amount of cleaning that was constantly going on and the standards applied to the house, because of its daily use and the "institutional" aspect were much higher than my home standards, yet I had to enforce them.]

humour, staff solidarity, frustration at shaped or constraints of residents demands. negotiating meanings.

READING/LITERACY: " Elsie, June, Gerry and Susan listened to a disastrously poor reading presented by me and for which I apologized...somewhat. A discussion followed, re their participation in choosing reading material. Consensus seems to be: no sex, no violence, no hard words, no long sentences and a story line. Janet has suggested Sherlock Holmes. If that doesn't materialize, I suggest the Reader's Digest condensed virgin - oops - version (stop laughing Carol!) of "A Tree grows in Brooklyn".)

(Figure 2. Content Analysis Aug.4, 1985)

[Fieldnote: March 6, 1992] I am detecting a movement in and out of the "text" in my analysis. One moment I am engaged in a kind of distanced estrangement meta-analysis: seeing the handwriting, trying to see how the entries affect my understandings because of wording, style, frequency of references, "facticity", effective address to audience and the like. The next is a kind of "undertow" impact of the people's lives, events, stories, narratives that evoke a response. I guess because of my familiarity with many of the "actors" and my former mental health worker status, a professional concern, I start to react as if I am on shift next. Finally the "dramatic and literary" aspect, where I would be racing through the entries to find out what "happens next!".

Perhaps there are vestiges of the reading strategies that took place as a worker using and constructing the log. We read for information, we also had to read for "significance", skilled readers could pick up on possible critical events an alert others to their significance. Also, as we were writing "what happened" the items selected were significant even if they were mundane activities.

Problems of reading will be taken up more fully in subsequent chapters. These "interpretation problems" have serious consequences when people's "mental health" is being scrutinized, and moments arose where it was impossible to "know" how to interpret and read a situation.⁸ Dorothy Smith refers to

 8 . In Dorothy Smith's essay "K is Mentally Ill: the Anatomy of a Factual Account" she explores the way 'K' becomes defined by her friends as mentally ill. She claims that the non-formal "diagnosis" work of a person's family and friends in recognizing their mental illness contributes considerably to the preliminary "paths to the mental hospital" (Smith, 1990b, 12). Random behaviour and events become "recognized" as mental illness once the concept is introduced into the "attentive reader's" conceptual schema (22). Thereafter, all their stories and explanations of that person will discover the details that will conform to the "recognition" (15).

the interchangeability of "knowing" in a case where a group of people all come to recognise that their friend "K" is mentally ill:

. . . one by one, K's friends and others connected with her come to "recognize" that she is mentally ill. The account of K's "symptoms" draws the reader into the relations in which K's mental illness is established by a fact independent of any particular subjectivity. (1990a, 69)

The problem is even more amplified when the "subject" is already burdened with the identity of mental illness. The following excerpt contains several different torques of interpretation, and demonstrates quite well the pragmatic ambivalence that the mental health worker had to sustain in her daily understanding:

Oct. 21, 1988 . . . Jessie still thick with cold and she did her coffee time stint, arranged with (can't remember who) to clean up afterwards and we took lovely stroll in the rain.

Says that one of the things she's always wanted to do is walk on the beach, in the rain, early in the morning. Such a simple romantic request. Her observations and comments are quite interesting--that lady should be painting --pointed out to me how the rain on a tarred driveway was collecting the trees and the contrast between the mirrored drive and the surrounding grass created the illusion that the drive was floating above the lawn.

I don't think this has any thing to do with illness - once she showed me, it really did look like that.

[Notes in the margin response by Sarah, the supervisor read]: Oh, oh. . . the hazards of this job!! the difference between 'hearing' this as an artist and as a mental health worker. [Fieldnote commentary: both Sarah and the staff person are trained visual artists]

(Log entry continued Oct. 21, 1988) . . . Helga OK this morning has vacuumed took PRN acetaminophen at 8 am. Turned

her radio off at 1 am, man talking about commies who'd shoot you soon as look at you. . . Just the thing. [Fieldnote: Helga is a German/Russian refugee and has regular episodes of paranoia about being called a Nazi, or that people with guns are after her] (margin notes continued) see, and we think its their delusions. (my emphasis)

Conceptual Frameworks: Textual Feminism

In many ways, the analysis of the log notes has been a literary and hermeneutical exercise. I turned to texts on feminist analysis of research, documentation, and post-modern theories of reading and writing to triangulate the stories and everyday data of the log. In effect, this research has mainly been an exercise in reading and re-reading of texts.

Much of my reading has centered on the problems of "how to read". At times, the problem was methodological, involving technical methods for accessing the log as a source of data. At other times the problem was epistemological, involving consideration of a framework in which I could situate this document. Invariably, I found myself reading the text as a field wherein women's lives and narratives were captured, and so concerned myself with the ways that the women who wrote the log came to construct their understanding and knowledge of their lives in the workplace.

By focusing on the manner in which meaning is produced from texts (interact with both authors and readers as well as with other texts) feminist critics reveal the gender bias within the use of language. Nelly Furman, for example, suggests that we study not only women as writers but also women as readers according to a process she designates 'textual feminism': textual feminism implies a recognition of the fact that we speak, read and write from a gender-marked place within our social and cultural context (Furman cited in Gunew, 1990, 20).

Textual Ethnography/Ways of Reading

Satisfied, finally, that the log represented a valid field for research, my next task was entering the textual field to analyze it. The writings of Dorothy Smith and Paul Atkinson provide the analytical frameworks to support my position, but entering the textual field meant facing another set of problems altogether.

As a former "insider" I found it difficult to entirely "deconstruct" the log and its many stories and meanings. While I was able to describe its intentions, I had difficulty keeping the normative interpretations of the mental health worker in suspension. The textual analysis thus consists of a movement between the log and other texts to ask questions about ethnographic and documentary construction. When I was seduced into the "mental health worker's schema" I turned to different "ways" of reading. If I moved too far from the richness of the ethnographic field, I returned to the log. I thus read the log as a field, as a women's text, as a narrative collection of stories, and as an oppressive documentary record of textually mediated identities.

The Field as Text

Paul Atkinson argues that while society is not a kind of text--a position put forward by Brown, 1987, he states that

"textual formats make the social world readable" (1992, 11). Atkinson suggests that we revision the ethnography as a meta-narrative or a second-order narrative which, like metaphor, serves to furnish meaning and reason to reported events. Thus, the sequential and contextual presentation of the narrative shapes the field into a readable whole. Just as Goffman's structuring metaphor of the "total institution" makes a particular world readable (Atkinson, 12-13), the narrative transforms "the field" into "the text" via narrative reconstruction. Hence, ". . . the metaphor and the narrative necessarily transform social worlds into comprehensible texts" (14).

I have declared that a written document, an immense, narrative, sequential text adequately qualifies as a "field" worthy of research, and have engaged in what I have called a "textual ethnography". From Atkinson's perspective perhaps this may be purely redundant terminology.

It is suggested that the very notion of "the field" as a site for research may be constituted through our sense of ethnographies as texts. In other words, our sense of the social world is shaped by the sense of what can be written about it. (Atkinson, 1992, 6)

Atkinson cautions when we speak of reading and writing an ethnography that we are not implying that there is a social reality--a field--that exists independently and prior to the work of the ethnographer. That is not so, he states, not only is the field not out there awaiting the discovery of the intrepid field

worker but the field is itself constituted by our writing and reading (1992, 9).

I do not mean that there are no social beings or social acts independent of our observations. Clearly there are. Rather, my view is that "the field" of fieldwork is the outcome of a series of transactions. To begin with, the field is produced (not discovered) through the social transactions engaged in by the ethnographer. (Atkinson, 1992, 9)

He describes a "triple constitution" of the field: first, how the field is constructed through the ethnographer's gaze; second, how it is reconstituted through the researcher's ability to construct a "text-of-the-field"; and third, how the finished ethnography is then reconstructed and recontextualized through the reader's work of interpretation (9). He argues that an ethnography is recognizable, not as a hybrid literary genre, but as a social science monograph mainly because of a reader's familiarity with the textual arrangement of a canon of classical and standard ethnographic genres. John Van Maanen's Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography (1988) is cited as an exemplary analysis of how ethnographic tales are rhetorically constructed and come to be organized and recognized as legitimate research genres.

When referring to ethnography and the representation of reality, Atkinson writes of the process whereby the ethnographer with the use of field notes moves from "appearance" (signifier) to what is signified (ethnographic reality) which becomes taken at face value. He states:

Throughout, however the author is engaged in a complex set of readings--of observations and inferences. These are transformed into the personal narrative of the ethnographer, who constructs this textual "reality" from the shreds and patches of appearances and verbal testimony. (1990, 61)

He then explains the two textual practices of ethnographic literate construction as "writing down" (the voluminous accumulation of field notes); and "writing up" (the secondary but major act of textual construction). Traditional ethnography gains its authority through the obfuscation of the joint coordination of "writing down/writing up" where the naturalized texts of reflection and observation are treated as data in the analytical construction process of interpretation. Atkinson takes pains to emphasize that both phases of the work involve the creation of textual materials and both are equally matters of textual construction (Atkinson, 1990, 61).

Limitations

As I read the log notes of the boarding home, I simultaneously accessed my own history as a worker who once read, wrote and relied upon the log for my "working" survival. This tacit experience was combined with my current resistant discourses as a critical reader who reads and constructs the log for new purposes. Much of the analysis has been a combination of memory recovery and meta-analysis about the processes of documentation of "writing up and writing down". Sometimes my orientation toward the log as an ethnographic field held me back

from a critical reading. Many times I was utterly pulled into the compelling vortex of half remembered narratives and events. And there were evenings, after hours of "log" reading, where I felt the need to shower off the familiar reek of "roll-yer-own" cigarettes, meat loaf and old coffee; when it seemed I had once again hiked the endless trips up and down between the three floors of the old house to dispense medications, baths, evening meals and spurious advice.

Despite my reading of the log as a potentially feminist text, or as an ethnographic field documenting women's personal narratives, it was important to keep in mind the inherent unequal power relations that structured the reading and the writing of the log. The content of the log was subject to considerable secrecy and it was not permissible for residents to discuss, read, or attempt to mediate what the mental health workers wrote up in the log. The secrecy was due partially to an institutional code of ethics that prohibited the discussion by staff of personal details of the residents, and partially to the recognition that the log contained discussions of residents in ways that were not entirely official, and was for the worker's benefit only. The log was never shared with residents and was kept in a locked closet. The only other items treated this way were medications and the petty cash. The log then, sustains contradictions in its uses and its interpretation.

. . . What, for example, are the dangers of appropriation when the discourses of the marginal are mediated by other institutionally based discursive networks? Even when recorded in oral histories, for example, the so-called voices of immediate experience are mediated (edited, translated, corrected) by "intellectuals". So it is possible to read this desire to hear the marginal, to let it speak for itself, as nothing more than an alibi to excuse intellectual elitist practices. What remains important to the context of feminism, however, is the idea that power does not necessarily reside only and always in a center. (Gunew, 1990, 22-23)

Choice of Topics for Investigation

I have "refused" to investigate many issues which arose in the course of reading the log, issues pertaining more to the culture of the mental health boarding home than to documentation practices. Among the issues not included (but considered) in this thesis are issues of poverty; medicalization; psychiatric abuse; community housing and the viability of the boarding home model in lieu of other models; sexuality and its many issues; aging of residents; the intersection of race, class with gender and the medical institution. Such are the limitations with all research and in particular with open-ended methods such as ethnography, that attempt to "capture" a cultural experience but must always live with its "partial truths".

Implications for Research

Through the log, the realms of domestic and professional, material and symbolic, social and private worlds collide. The log provided the most effective means of reinforcing the boundaries between residents and staff. Its narratives and

stories were uni-directional, only documenting those of one group. However, the lives of the residents also informed the subtext of the lives of workers/writers who also recognized the stories of poverty, abandonment, mental and physical exhaustion, battering, divorce, and recovery. The staff/resident boundaries were sometimes difficult to maintain because, as women living and working together, our life stories were similar. In reflection, our respective status as staff or residents seemed to be based more upon the caprice of luck, stamina or coping strategies than essential differences.

This ethnography then, documents the underbelly of women's everyday experiences inside the conceptual relations of ruling. That the institutional setting for the textual ethnography is situated within a mental health boarding home provides a variation on a theme, not an extraneous one. The ethnography could be read as a "cautionary" tale, but it also seeks to make explicit and reclaim the range of possible readings and writings beyond the margins of the documentary text.

The possibilities of multiple readings open up when an institutional text is removed from the stringent constraints of where it was constructed:

Knowing how to read, and reading, a given factual text is to enter a coordinated set of relations subordinating individual consciousness to its objectification; subjects subdue their particularized experience to the superordinate virtual reality of the text. (Smith, 1990b, 70)

Once outside of the institutional setting, alternate readings become available from a variety of strategies and

perspectives. Removed from the historical, socially constructed and situated context, from the audience it was intended for, the text begins to yield "against the grain", contradictory and "perverse" readings. These readings are, perhaps, even more generative, salient and meaningful than the original.

Taking control of the reading experience means reading the text as it was not meant to be read, reading it against itself. (Patricino Schweickart, 139)

Texts read in contexts outside and uncontrolled by a given jurisdiction of reading and controlled schemata of interpretations will not necessarily construct the same virtual reality. (Smith, 1990a, 96)

Finally, this investigation is an acknowledgement of the tremendous amount of textual and intellectual labour that took place within the mental health boarding home through the documentation and interpretative practices of the women who wrote/read and worked through the log. My sense is that at the time of its role in their working lives, few of my co-workers would acknowledge the daily log reading and writing as being particularly significant, except as a necessary means of communication. Yet it is their writing and meaning making that has survived and provides a kind of testimony which contributes to some understanding of the various contested personal, political, textual and gender issues that take place in an institution such as a community mental health boarding home.

A FIRST TELLING

09/15/87 3N 11-11 AG. ~~14-8~~ P.2

1:30 Gail still not in - checked the notes on ~~the~~ desk with Capt before she left. It is also possible she went to some friends (Sunday waiting) to watch the hockey game - this mentioned in notes - however, the

going ~~over~~ ^{over} at least 2 hours ago. Will wait

10:00 am. ^{a lot of} ~~called~~ ^{called} ~~mites~~ ^{mites} (many health insurance services) to ask for advice - advised to call family
- ~~1st~~ ^{1st} called ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~state~~ ^{state} - in-law, her friends, the Group - and the major hospitals - 9 in all from ~~Low~~ ^{Low} ~~General~~ ^{General} to Van ~~General~~ ^{General}. 1st ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~mail~~ ^{mail}

Put in a missing persons report, at 12:30 - at 3 am a police officer came down to tell me that Gail was dead - had been hit by a ~~skyscraper~~ ^{skyscraper} in vicinity of 99th St. station.

They asked a lot of questions - sex of her, hair, etc. - showed them a photo of ~~Gail~~ ^{Gail} - they confirmed identification - and asked to take away the paper from Gail's desk with the Gardiner St. address on it & the reference to watching the hockey game, and "take caution" - string and down in one corner a name: Eileen ~~Hacker~~ ^{Hacker} - seemingly unrelated to the rest of the note.

While I was waiting for the police (I had been told at the time that they were coming by - in retrospect, I should have suspected, I guess) I looked ~~at the~~ ^{at the} ~~hockey~~ ^{hockey} game up in the book - and Gardiner Street address in ^{the} ~~the~~ ~~book~~ ^{book}.
I called ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~times~~ ^{times} - took the book over on 8 am - no answer.

~~With~~ ^{With} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~help~~ ^{help} ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~police~~ ^{police} - a right to remember - poor
Gail - poor ~~no~~ ^{no} ~~time~~ ^{time} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~call~~ ^{call} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~times~~ ^{times} ~~on~~ ^{on} ~~8~~ ⁸ ~~am~~ ^{am} - no answer.

(Figure 3: Log entry Sept. 15, 1987)

CHAPTER TWO
Writing Up: Conceptual Relations of Ruling
and Feminist Theory

The ruling apparatuses are those institutions of administration, management, and professional authority, and of intellectual and cultural discourses, which organize, regulate, lead and direct contemporary capitalist societies. The power relations which come thus into view from the standpoint of an experience situated in the everyday world are abstracted from local and particular settings and relationships. (Smith 1990b, 2)

The Documentary Text and the Relations of Ruling

The setting for this "textual ethnography" is a mental health boarding home; a small community based institution nested within a network of larger institutional systems encompassing psychiatry, medicine, family services, and the justice system, among others. As with other locally experienced institutions such as school classrooms, court rooms, or hospital wards, the day-to-day activities that occur within these places seem fairly ordinary and mundane but are connected to powerful discourses/practices of power and social control. It is precisely in the simple activities, attitudes and appearances of everyday life that the relations of ruling are generated and perpetuated. This study seeks to trace, from the textual descriptions and experiences of workers who laboured within a rather unassuming local institution, the means by which some individuals become transformed into objects for manipulation while others become implicated in "relations of ruling" through their own literate practices.

A History of the Community Boarding Home and of the Log

The community boarding home that is textually documented in the log is part of a larger non-profit organization that operates in Greater Vancouver and whose purpose is to provide community based housing, social services and support for mental patients living in the community. Founded as a Society in 1974, the organization offers a variety of services which include five boarding homes; apartment block projects offering co-operative housing for more independent clients; life skills programs; drop-in centre; vocational (re)training programs; and a community "clubhouse" recreational facility.

The Society was started in November 1971 when a group of teachers sponsored by the B.C.T.F. organized an outreach program for former psychiatric patients living in the Greater Vancouver area. This was a period when community mental health care was becoming a reality; boarding homes were sprouting up through the city and suburbs as increasing numbers of chronic mental health patients were being discharged from hospitals with little more than prescriptions in their pockets.

Owners/operators of the home were not required to have any knowledge or training related to mental illness; neither were they required to have a genuine concern for the welfare of their boarders. These conditions contributed to a high recidivism rate to the hospital. (Society Report: A Brief History 1978 -1984, 2)

Inspired by a psycho-social model of community mental health, critiques from the anti-psychiatry movement, and an

awareness of the lack of resources available to mental patients, the outreach group began to make regular visits to the boarding homes. The goal of the group was to move toward formulating more mental health services that would improve standards within the local community. Their visits performed a variety of functions, the most important being to forge social contact with a large number of patients, monitor the living conditions of boarding homes and evaluate their impact on the residents. They served as a liaison between the operators of independently run boarding homes, Greater Vancouver Mental Health Services and the clients of those services: The Society saw its mandate as one of facilitating change within the community mental health system (2).

By 1974, through a number of grants and funds provided by the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the Provincial Health Department and the Community Care Services Society, the Society purchased one of its first apartment block properties for the exclusive housing of former mental patients. During this same period the Society opened its first community boarding home for middle-aged men. Staffed by Society members, this boarding home was founded with a similar philosophy as the apartment complexes and the "clubhouse". The boarding home saw itself as an alternative to the total institutions (Goffman, 1961, 4-7) that had warehoused many long term patients, and the chaos of the streets (representing the "community") which discharged patients had to negotiate on a daily basis. As a long term facility,

then, the community boarding home provided support for residents who could not be held in hospitals any longer, but required more daily supervision than was available in an apartment complex.

. . . the majority of people we serve are struggling with problems related to having been away from the community in hospitals, and are having to adjust to community living, as well as, to their particular psychiatric problems. . . . Our homes are not "licensed facilities" in the traditional sense of providing food, lodging and basic care. In addition to these features [The Society] community home provide a "humanistic" and "motivation" component. Each home is a community, structured to facilitate individuals taking initiative to meet their basic personal, social, vocational and avocational needs. (Society [1974] Community Homes Description Brief, 1982)

The Society developed four more boarding homes between 1972 and the mid-80's. Unlike the apartment blocks which sought to create a community comprised of a heterogeneous distribution of individuals, the five boarding homes were targeted for specific demographic groups and were generally segregated by gender and age. Two of the homes were oriented to serve younger adults approximately 19-35 years of age. Three of the houses were single-sex boarding homes: one was for males from 30-55 years of age; two of the boarding homes were developed exclusively for middle-aged and elderly women.¹ One of these boarding homes was

 1 . The age distributions in these boarding homes were increasing due to the aging of long term residents who have resided in the community since 1974. The "matching" of community age groups created some difficulty for mid-range adults (30-45) who did not have the same needs of homes oriented towards younger adults but found the so called "middle-aged" oriented homes more suitable for individuals in the "third age" (55 - upwards). Aging long term residents were faced with their own increase in physical health care issues at a time when they had to cope with an influx of "younger" residents who presented more chronic mental health problems (a feature of deinstitutionalization).

oriented toward elderly women: the other, reserved for women approximately 35 to 65 years of age, is the institution that inspired this enquiry.

The "Total Institution" and Community Mental Health

Segregation by gender is largely for the convenience of the institution, for reasons of limited facilities, space, and basic control over the social interactions between residents. As Goffman suggests, the total institution is a social hybrid--part residential community, part formal organization--that is incompatible with the mixed age and sex groupings of the family system (Goffman, 1961, 11-12). Chesler critiques the mental health system for its patriarchal characteristics that treat its residents as "eternal adolescents" such that, "celibacy is the official order of the asylum day. Patients are made to inhabit an eternal American adolescence, where sexuality and aggression are as feared, mocked and punished as they are within the Family" (Chesler, 1972, 36).

Although the mental health boarding home is presented as a voluntary alternative to total institutionalization, it still retains some of the features of the psychiatric hospital. That the formal segregation by gender/age was never fully challenged in the community boarding homes is indicative of the powerful tacit model the "asylum" has had upon models of community mental health. The presence of the "asylum" is evoked in the formal "community living" contract, where the resident agrees to respect

the house rules that include taking all prescribed medications; respecting the needs of others; observing all meals and curfews; abstaining from non-prescribed drugs and alcohol; and finally, non-expression of violence or sexuality within the house. The lack of private single rooms signifies to residents, regardless of prior domestic experiences, that they have now entered a terrain where their rights to sleep, eat, work, or play as they wish has been somewhat curtailed (Goffman, 1961, 5-6). In comparison to the mental hospital this may be a considerably improved environment, which it was for some, but it was not a "home" in the true sense of the word.

June 3, 1985 . . . Donna completed intake and filled out all necessary forms today. Went over our house rules with her, changes since [she] was last here, and gave her a copy of same. . . . She's very happy to be back and seems to be settling in well. Laundry day established.

A contradiction lies in the Society's representation of the group home environment as a transition away from institutional life, when it may have provided a more internalized model of social control. The female residents in this study were encouraged to go out and contact their friends and families, but for those who were parents, or had maintained intimate relationships, it meant juggling separate identities--belonging neither at "home" nor in the boarding home. This borderline status contributed to their stress, guilt, and sense of loss as they were not able to fully participate in the world they had once occupied, or desired to occupy, while the new environment

was a constant reminder of their failed status as adult women. Although the women were encouraged to have visitors, there was little privacy as most shared a room with at least one other person. The sitting rooms were communal and centrally located and there were no facilities for over-night guests (nor were overnight visits permitted--which was justified through Licensing Board, Fire Marshal and Health Board regulations).

This particular facility had been home to several older women who had resided there for over a decade. Some had problems that were more physical than psychiatric in nature, such as epilepsy and Parkinson's disease, and when the Society took over the management of the boarding home in 1974, they stayed on as residents and became integrated with the psychiatric-oriented residents. Perhaps the common denominator for the women who lived in this boarding home was that they were poor, dependent upon social services, and had some disability that prevented them from living independently.

On a slightly more positive note, the community boarding home was an improved alternative for some of the female residents. Some women faced living alone without support in stressful situations created by poverty, unemployment and isolation, factors that seriously compromised their recovery and increased their chances of a return to the psychiatric hospital. Women who were married and had families often found they were essentially rendered homeless once they emerged from prolonged hospitalization, either because they had been abandoned by their

families or because they could not return to a home where they had been abused. Sometimes, it was simply that husbands and families were not prepared to retain women who could or would no longer perform the functions of wife and mother (Angrist, [1961] in Chesler 50-51; Chesler 57, 296).

Feminist Critique of the Institution of Psychiatry

In this section I will discuss how the male-dominated psychiatric institution shapes and impacts upon the lives of the women in the boarding home. Given that the institution under scrutiny was for women and was almost entirely staffed by women, a feminist critique of psychiatry provides a useful context in which to re-frame the mental health boarding home. While the organization controlling this boarding home saw itself as providing resources for mental patients, it had not developed any advocacy policies for dealing with specific groups of patients. The elderly, minority, working class, or female patients were not identified as having any special social issues, although the houses were clearly demarcated along lines of age and gender.

A mental health worker was expected to observe a code of ethics that preserved confidentiality of client information; forbade all forms of exploitation and any exchange of money between workers and residents; and discouraged the imposition by the worker of any lifestyle, religious, or cultural dogma upon

the residents.² Consequently, an active and public discourse of feminism was discouraged in a site almost entirely oriented toward women. This lack of critique, I will suggest, contributes to a perspective where women residents see their mental health and social problems as symptomatic of their personal failure. Some of the mental health workers were active in the feminist movement: some had staffed transition houses while others had survived many of the same life problems as the residents--single parenting, alcoholism, divorce, battering and poverty. But they were prevented from actively integrating "feminist consciousness" within the context of the workplace.

My working experience as a mental health worker radicalized my understanding of institutional gender bias. I believed, as I still do, that many of the women living in the group home were the casualties of an androcentric medical system. However frequently "social" issues reared their heads in the everyday workings of the house, issues such as survival from child sexual abuse, violence against women, abandonment, poor economic prospects, over-medicalization of women by the psychiatric system and the like, the mental health workers were unable to integrate a feminist discourse into their "work" in the boarding home. The reasons for this are various, but for those women who were self-

2 . Code of Ethics: 1.18. Staff or volunteers will not proselytize their views or beliefs on religion, political ideology, sexual orientation or philosophical systems during their working hours. (Society [1974] "Code of Ethics", revised 1987)

identified as "feminist", the contradiction of their working "selves" and "living" selves--if they were capable of "seeing" them--presented considerable potential conflict.³

Women are good candidates for community group homes because their psychiatric problems are perceived to be non-threatening to others and are easily dealt with by psychotropic medications (Chesler, 1973, 39).

Two-thirds of psychiatric patients, or persons attending general practitioners offices, who are given psychiatric diagnosis, are women. Women are prescribed two-and-a-half to six times as many psychotropic drugs as men (Penfold and Walker, 1983, 246).

The traditionally "feminized" diagnoses of depression, suicide, neurosis or paranoia do not present risks to other patients, whereas men tend to be perceived as more anti-social and aggressive. ". . . the symptoms of men are also much more likely to reflect a destructive hostility towards others, as well as a pathological self-indulgence. . . (Phillips 1969, in Chesler, 1972, 39).

 3 . My personal experience includes seeing stereotypical sex role expectations in the form of appropriate dress codes, behaviour, vocational choices, sexuality and aspirations for a "normal" family role enforced by therapists and clinicians, and then reflected in the life skill programs and domestic standards imposed by the boarding home. The contradiction lies in the analysis provided by many feminist critics that it is precisely the effort to maintain these impossible "sex role stereotypes" that may induce/produce symptoms of mental illness for women in the first place.

Gender Bias in the Psychiatric Institution

How is it that in the women's movement we seem to get what we want, we achieve some measure of success, we appear to make some impact, yet we find that the process that advances our cause also incorporates it into the very institutions against which we struggle? Control slips away and what we get turns out not to be what we wanted after all. (Walker, 1990, 206)

Miriam Greenspan notes that the problem of "seeing" females as different, and therefore as deviant, has serious consequences for women seeking medical and therapeutic solutions for symptoms resulting from persistent social inequity. Greenspan's observations are supported by statistics that indicate that male doctors will diagnose women as neurotic or psychotic "twice as frequently as they do men with the same symptoms" (original emphasis) (Greenspan, 1983, 6).

Greenspan concurs with Smith, Penfold and Walker and many other feminist critics that the symptoms of female mental illness are for the most part the "systemically socially produced symptoms of sexual inequality" (Greenspan, 10). "The problem" states Greenspan, "is a matter of how women are seen and treated both inside the mental health system and in the surrounding society that it mirrors" (Greenspan, 6-7). In short, says Greenspan, "(W)omen are simply born patients" (10). There is a serious problem, then, of how one is "seen" and of survival in a culture where all women are at risk, whether they "present" the symptoms of their oppression or not. What seems odd, according to Greenspan, is that while it is deemed normal to be depressed

when your father dies, it is deemed pathological to be depressed if you have to "cope with the exigencies and stresses of being a woman in a society that systematically subordinates women to men" (53).

Susan Penfold and Gillian Walker (1983) state that while psychiatry sees itself as neutral and independent of the state, that along with other professional systems ". . . it can be seen to be one of the institutional forms whereby the work of organizing and administering society is accomplished" (Penfold and Walker, 1983, 44). Their feminist critique names psychiatry as a primary agent of women's oppression and a powerful force toward preserving a situation that works for the material gain of men. This is accomplished by making women's lives adjunct to male experience and standards:

Where women are concerned, most psychiatric theories and practices validate the male as prototype, legitimize women's second-class status as male property, validate dominate-subordinate relationships between men and women, reinforce the institution of Motherhood as a sacred calling, urge women to view their identity in terms of their success as wife, mother and sexual companion, and reflect descriptions and prescriptions based on archetypal images. (Penfold and Walker, 1983, 244)

A woman who arrives into the psychiatric system may discover that she has acquired an identity that prevents an easy return to a traditional role as wife, mother or healthy person; an identity that curiously facilitates an easy return to the mental health system. My interest in the socially fixed identity of the women who lived in the boarding home intersects with my

concern with how the documentation and "reading" of that identity in the daily log supports and perpetuates the "deviant portraits" of women in psychology. Whether in psychiatry, education, literature or ethnography, women have been consistently distorted by the lens of masculine defined representation. As women move more visibly from the margins toward the centre of control in society, they are met with challenges as to what constitutes "normal" behavior and roles for women: the contradictions between social construct and what individual women actually experience contribute to their depression, stress and anxiety. Psychology is always seeking new categories and definitions with which to finally confirm women's universal "abnormal" psychological condition: In recent psychological theory women have been described as passive, depressed, masochistic, narcissistic, co-dependent and schizophrenogenic with permeable ego boundaries. Further, efforts have recently been made to include premenstrual syndrome and the "battered wife" syndrome into the "Big Book" of psychiatry: the DSM-III-R 4 (Worell and

 4 . The new diagnostic categories--Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder and Masochistic Self-Defeating Personality Disorder--were strongly criticized by women's groups within the American Psychiatric Association for their blatant sexism, blame-the-victim assumptions, "minimization of environmental stressors" and lack of empirical evidence. However, while they were not placed in the main body of the DSM-III-R, they were included in the Appendix as categories that require further study, and are available for diagnostic use. Women make it into the margins one more time. Judith Worell and Pam Remer, (1992) Feminist Perspectives in Therapy: An Empowerment Model for Women. John Wiley & Sons: West Sussex.

Remer, 1992, 158).

"Traditionally," Chesler suggests, "most women performed both the rites of madness and childbirth more invisibly--at home--where, despite their tears and hostility, they were still needed". Now there is less and less use for women, and "literally no place, for them in the only place they 'belong'--within the family" (Chesler, 1972, 33). Calling them "newly useless women," Chesler suggests that women are emerging more publicly into insanity where their visibility is greater and where they embark on their "careers" within the patriarchal psychiatric system (34).

Feminist psychotherapy consistently seeks to deconstruct the fundamentally pathological traditional model of women and their "psychology". It is difficult for women to find in culture, family roles, gender socialization, education or sexuality a healthy, acceptable definition of what it means to be female. Feminist critiques of psychology have generally focused upon social control mechanisms that mandate roles for women that contribute to their eventual expressions of distress, which are then interpreted as craziness. Sex-role stereotyping and blindness to gender/power relations contributes to the maintenance of a clinical and cultural perception that all women are psychiatrically "abnormal"⁵ (Penfold and Walker, 61; Smith,

 5 . See "Sex-role Stereotypes and Clinical Judgements of Mental Health". Broverman, I.K., Broverman, D., Clarkson, F.E., Rosenkrantz, P.S., and Vogel, S.R. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 34, 1 (1970), 1-7. Reprinted in Women and Mental Health ed. Elizabeth Howell and Marjorie Bayes, 1981, Basic Books: New York. See also Broverman in Chesler, 67-68; in Penfold and Walker, 192; and in Kimball, 122-125.

1974, 6).

Miriam Greenspan discusses the over-representation of women as patients and of men as the professionals, a relationship she calls the "Man as Expert and Woman as Patient" relationship (5-7). Even the popular cultural representations of psychiatric abuse do not accurately reflect the imbalance of gender relations in psychiatry. For example, in Ken Kesey's novel and film, "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest", the "Big Nurse" is depicted as the menacing embodiment of institutional abuse. Even Erving Goffman neglects women in his analysis of "the asylum". As Chesler notes Goffman considered psychiatric hospitalization more destructive of self than criminal incarceration and she maintains that "like most people, he is primarily thinking of the debilitating effect--on men--of being treated like a woman (as helpless, dependent, sexless, unreasonable --as 'crazy') (Chesler, 35).

One way mirror and portraits of deviancy

Through the tautology of psychiatric symptomology, the diagnostician sets the terms of the "reading" of the patient, and in doing so, creates the reality he is defining.

He (sic) tells us what is symptomatic and excessive, what is normal and pathological, what is internal and external, what is neurotic and psychotic, what is real and what is not (Greenspan, 52).

Calling the recognition of a psychiatric symptom a tautology, Greenspan points out that a symptom is anything a psychiatrist or psychologist names as one. This is more or less what Rosenhan (1973) discovered in his study "Being Sane in Insane Places".⁶

The one-way mirror privilege of "seeing, reading and writing up" of individuals permits the traditional diagnostician to never take into consideration the context of the lived material and psycho/social reality of his female clients. The solution of boarding homes and the over-prescription of psychoactive drugs absolves families and the dominant culture from social responsibility to women.

Drug technology obscures social issues such as poverty, racism and inequality; society is absolved from its responsibility. . . . if women are drugged into conformity, we do not have to think about their inequality in the family system and the community. If given enough drugs, mental patients can be rendered docile and maintained with their relatives or in boarding homes in the community, thus obviating the need for expensive hospital care or for a creative, innovative approach to treatment, rehabilitation and the restoration of a sense of dignity and worth. (Penfold and Walker, 207)

As a departure from seeing the separation of women and men as being a negative situation, and on the basis of my contact

6 . 1993 marks the twenty year anniversary of Rosenhan's study in which psychiatrically normal people gained access to mental hospitals merely by claiming to hear voices and were subsequently diagnosed with a full range of symptoms while they acted as their "normal" manner, some being held for 13 or more weeks before they were released.

with the women residents and their conversations about what they liked about the group home, the single-sex environment may have provided temporary relief, at least for some women, from enforced participation with males on an everyday basis. Some of the older women had never lived with men apart from their families of origin; others had been institutionalized for most of their adult lives, were accustomed to being segregated by gender, and thus were extremely sensitive to having men in their intimate living space. Other women, because of the nature of the issues precipitating their psychiatric problems, felt safer living apart from men. Chesler's analysis of the five categories of the "female career as a psychiatric patient" (114-132) would place most of these women at "mid-career": too chronic (sic), no longer young or feminine enough to be retained by private therapists and/or the family unit; and old, recalcitrant and depressed enough to fall into the "expendability" category.⁷

Why I look at Workers and not Residents

I have found it necessary to shift my analysis of the log away from the women/residents to the women/workers in the same

7 . See the YAVIS syndrome as described by Schofield, (Schofield, W. Psychotherapy: the Purchase of Friendship, 1963) as the preferences by psychotherapists for patients (women) who are Youthful, Attractive, Verbal, Intelligent and Successful. Older women, adolescents, working-class, and minority women are seldom treated with "talking" therapy. (Penfold and Walker, 90)

setting. I may be criticized for gazing not at the "real victims" but rather those who provided the care-giving labour, and for implying that the worker's lives perhaps paralleled those of their charges. Although workers sometimes used institutional practices that oppressed the residents, they are worthy subjects for analysis of documentary and institutional "oppression".

My experience as a mental health worker prompts me to ask how it is possible for women to identify with the other women they see being oppressed in a particular situation, yet still work in such a way that disavows the situation as specifically pertaining to an "oppression of women" issue. Why are so many women "choosing" to work at minimum wages in the service oriented "helping fields"?

There are some good reasons for this. There is a need to examine the limited job opportunities for non-professional middle-age women. Many women require flexible hours and that makes them ideal candidates for low-paying service oriented "helping fields". Again, it is also an issue of "seeing":

As long as their situation is apprehended as natural, inevitable, and inescapable, women's consciousness of themselves, no matter how alive to insult and inferiority, is not yet feminist consciousness. (Bartky, 1975, 313)

Bartky describes feminist consciousness as encompassing both an untenable consciousness of victimization (314) and the possibility of transformation and change, and thus of strength. Feminist consciousness entails a divided consciousness that she describes as "double ontological shock": "first, the realization

that what is really happening is quite different from what appears to be happening; and second, the frequent inability to tell what is happening at all" (316).

As Sandra Lee Bartky, and others have suggested, if women could acknowledge the extent of violence and animosity that exists on a daily and global basis toward their gender, they would be forced to choose between revolt, insanity or the survivor's delusions. The psychiatric institution and its various facilities serve to perpetuate the oppression of subordinates: in particular, of women and racial minorities. Psychiatry is the reasonable voice that institutionalizes the terrorization of women through the medical institution and authorizes other supposedly psychiatrically normal people to police women's conformity to culturally misogynistic stereotypes of femininity.

Feminist consciousness is consciousness of victimization. To apprehend oneself as a victim is to be aware of an alien and hostile force which is responsible for the blatantly unjust treatment of women and for a stifling and oppressive system of sex-roles: it is to be aware, too, that this victimization, in no way earned or deserved, is an offense [original emphasis]. (Bartky, 314)

An ethnography situated within a mental health boarding home staffed and populated by women allows an opportunity for such "offenses" to be re-examined from within the micro-practices of everyday life.

Making the Everyday Problematic⁸

Anchored in the minutiae of going to work, grocery shopping, teaching children, providing social services to clients, in short, in living ordinary lives, we participate in and activate the "micropractices" that facilitate our subjugation within the modern state. As Michel Foucault explains, the power of the modern state over the ordinary citizen does not descend unilaterally from repressive monolithic regimes, but occurs "naturally", as if by spontaneous acts and attitudes at the most basic level of daily living (Foucault, 1984, 61). He describes modern power as being "capillary": it operates as capillaries do in the human body, circulating throughout the entire social body, even to its farthest extremities. Thus power and domination are manifested in everyday social practices regardless of the objectives and understanding of our activities (Foucault cited in Fraser, 1988, 18).

Described as the "politics of everyday life", the manifestation of the relations of ruling through these micropractices can orchestrate seemingly unresolvable contradictions between the intentions and understandings of practitioners and the outcomes of their practices in the larger

 8 . Dorothy Smith (1987) The Everyday World as Problematic : A Feminist Sociology. University of Toronto Press: Toronto. Dorothy Smith has provided the phrase and the means to analyze the "everyday as problematic" with her extensive critical scholarship over the last two decades. This thesis and its writer are entirely in her debt.

social context. An important implication of this view is that as teachers, social activists, or care-givers in various capacities, we may be nullifying our personal and political goals for social reform by conceiving of power only in terms of the larger social structures.

Sneja Gunew suggests that it may be more productive to think of power as a network that operates everywhere in conflicting ways and "therefore can be resisted strategically everywhere" (Gunew, 1990, 23). Rather than conceptualizing power in a monolithic centralized model, we can utilize Foucault's analysis to transcend the crude "us and them" model to recognize that "(P)ower is reproduced in discursive networks at every point where someone who 'knows' is instructing someone who doesn't know" (Sneja Gunew, 1990, 22).

Contradictory meanings constructed through the institutional textual practices of writing, reading and sense-making are mediated intersubjectively between the larger institutional network and the local place. These contradictions are not usually detectable at the level of everyday understandings or statements of how people live their lives (Smith 1990b, 71). This institutional intersubjectivity mediates the contradictions one experiences locally in a particular setting as institutional discourses shift to accommodate incoherence between beliefs and actions. In turn, this creates institutional explanations for interventions that might otherwise seem problematic (71). A disturbing implication of this is that through unreflexive

literate practices, the emancipatory work of caregiving, social activism or critical research can be engineered to support the status quo of the power relations which one was initially attempting to undermine (Walker, 1990).

Deconstructing Documentary Literacy and the Documentary Text

Documentary literacy is one of the chief means by which labour and knowledge become commodified within institutions (Smith, 1974, 1990a). Professionals living and working within institutions are confronted with enormous challenges to the unexamined privileges and rights of a relative minority to occupy positions and voices of authority that appropriate the resources, needs, and voices of a majority of disenfranchised "others" in order to perpetuate that authority. Kirby and McKenna describe the frequent situation whereby "experts who do research have been well trained in patterns of thinking which not only conflict with their understanding, but explain and justify a world many are actually interested in changing" (Kirby and McKenna, 1990,17). Gunew questions the role of the "so-called intellectual or theorist in all of this if power relations are reinforced whenever there is an exchange of knowledge" (Gunew, 1990, 23).

Gillian Walker states that discourses of "professionalism" teach that professionals are outside the state, "neutral, objective and self regulating", while feminism teaches that professional practices are oppressive and biased and that they arise from and operate in relation to an objectified body of

knowledge (Walker, 1990, 5). She asks that we examine the ways our activities within institutions work to facilitate and reproduce the relations of ruling, even when that is what we perceive ourselves to be working against. It becomes necessary, says Walker, that we "as feminists" take up a critical analysis of the way in which practical activities that constitute knowledge from within the state operate to undermine our emancipatory efforts in the very arena where we do our work (5). This is echoed in Gunew's strategy of rethinking the power/knowledge relations that are enacted "everywhere", and thus includes significant sites of resistance as part of that "everywhere".

Theories of documentary literacy, relations of ruling and institutional domination help to explain how it becomes possible to interact in institutions in ways that may contradict our beliefs, ethics, and even the purposes of our actions. We must ask ourselves: What features exist in institutions and in their organization that transform and obscure power relations, or how it is that power and control are made invisible in their effects and become embedded in the multiplicity of "micropractices" of daily life in the modern societies (Fraser, 1989, 18)?

As previously suggested, an integral source of contradiction lies in the documentary text. Dorothy Smith asserts that through the mediation of texts, we are controlled by the conceptual discourses of power that are both visible and

invisible in the social institutions in which we live our lives in contemporary society. Smith states:

Textual realities are not fictions or falsehoods [but] normal, integral, and indeed essential features of the relations and apparatuses of ruling--state administrative apparatuses, management, professional organizations, the discourses of social sciences and other academic discourses, the mass media and so forth. (Smith 1990a, 83)

Smith, more than most theorists, has problematized the function of text in contemporary society. More in line with Foucault's notion of a web of capillary power relations rather than an overt dominant power centre, Smith has delineated textual realities as an energy matrix that holds us in thrall in our society (Smith, 1990b). But unlike Foucault, Smith does not subscribe to a "mystical conjunction of power and knowledge" (79), rather, she sees this power manifested concretely in the social organization of facticity through the coordination of documents and people's own concerted activities and beliefs (80). Most analyses of text, even post-structuralist analyses, tend to lean toward more literary notions of text, or seem extremely distant and decontextualised from actual contact with documentary text in the daily environment. A critical reading of documentary texts aims to restore some clarity and political understanding of the knowledge produced in institutions and their texts. Suzanne de Castell offers a framework with which to deconstruct the disempowering effects of documentary literacy; Dorothy Smith offers a method of documentary interpretation that examines the

role of documentary texts in what she terms the social relations of ruling:

The investigation of texts as constituents of social relations offers access to the ontological ground of institutional processes which organize, govern, and regulate the kind of society in which we live, for these are to a significant degree forms of social action mediated by texts. (Smith, 1990b, 122)

Documentary Literacy and the Separation from Knowledge

I use the metaphor of the one-way mirror to reconceptualize institutional documentation, where documentary literacy preserves the privilege of the uni-directional gaze and focus upon the decontextualised actions of persons being studied, assisted or analyzed. This external focus serves to obscure the impact of such activities upon those who watch, write up and formulate what has been observed. A primary feature of documentation literacy, unlike the traditional literary, is that documentary texts work to support the rhetorical annihilation of the writer. There are no authors in institutional documents, there are only compilations of information. The separation between knowledge and critical practice occurs precisely at this juncture. Smith writes:

If facticity, if objective knowledge, is a form of power, it arises in the distinctive concerting of people's activities that breaks knowledge from the active experiencing of subjects and from the dialogic activity or talk that brings before us a known-in-common object. . . . Objectified knowledge, as we engage with it, subdues, discounts, and disqualifies our various interests, perspectives, angles and experience, and what we might have to say speaking from them. (1990a, 80)

Professionals make reports, summary statements, policies and facts but they are not primarily authors: they are social workers, mental health professionals, supervisors or probation officers. Their writing identity is subsumed by the activity of their work or job description. The knowledge that is constructed within the institutional context of their work reflects the reality as construed by the institution. As Smith explains, an inner coherence is achieved between the actuality thus represented and statements which can be made about it. A factual account appears as a simple representation of "what really happened/what is" without a trace of the social organization that produced it (Smith, 1990b, 79). This creates the capacity for a person to engage in a reductive, passive relationship toward the reading and writing of texts, and helps to obscure the power relations embedded in documentary text, institutional or workplace literacy, and in the everyday. The elimination of recognized authorship of documentary texts preserves the privilege of elite forms of literacy and maintains power relations in the workplace.

Documentary literacy serves to alienate workers and writers from their own knowledge and understanding and orphans writers from ownership of their "writing selves" within the institutions where they work (Harper, 1991). The norms of documentary discourse re-organize the form and content of the textual work done by people in institutions and promotes the technocratic view

of literate practices. As de Castell and Luke point out, a technocratic view of literate practice works to create an attitude towards literacy where "(l)iteracy is conceived as a set of neutral behaviors within an attendant fabricated worldview, in which little of cultural or social significance ever occurs" (de Castell and Luke, 1986, 104).

Invisibility of Documentary Text

Smith explains that the failure to recognize the documentary text as an active constituent of organization process is because we "are ourselves so habituated to its use, to its appearance before us in that simple moment of engagement" and the problems lies in mainly conceptualizing the text as a product, rather than addressing the textual process as a topic (Smith, 1990b, 122).

The text comes before us without any apparent attachments. It seems to stand on its own, to be inert without impetus or power. But in the situations of our everyday life as contrasted with our scholarly activities we find texts operative in many ways. (1990b, 122)

As Smith catalogues the numerous textual activities that shape her daily life, she reveals the particularity of textual practices in defining the representation of a person from within the relations of ruling: she describes registering for a conference, writing cheques, using credit cards, reading brochures on hotel rates and showing a driver's license (122). Another person's textual identification is shaped by filling out

a UIC claim, signing a release form for a GAIN cheque, or notarizing a declaration for a stolen welfare cheque (de Castell, 1991, 76). We become textual identities, traceable by documented events which in turn mediate our institutional and social reality in the apparatus of ruling.

Smith notes the textual event "is pervasive yet almost entirely unnoticed" (122). She extends the definition of text to encompass media such as newspapers and television, and computer print-outs. All electronic media are sophisticated versions of texts and our cultural evolution is still profoundly grounded in a literal text economy whose degree of success lies in its invisibility and chameleon-like power to shape itself, the reader, and society's ways of reading it as it evolves in implacable yet mundane ways. This is accomplished, in part, by the avalanche of mundane documents, invoices, receipts, reports and the like that form the tissue of institutional practices and paper our movements through social institutions. As we engage in the reading or writing of social documents we activate these micropractices of control whereby we may become the objects of documentation and we find the texts shaping us.

Construction of Textually Mediated Identities

Smith traces an analytic path whereby individuals become transformed into "textually mediated identities" and are thereby appropriated by the apparatuses of the relations of ruling. Foremost, Smith identifies that through the mediation of texts we

are controlled by the conceptual discourses of power, both visible and invisible, within the social institutions in which we live our lives in contemporary society. Thus, we are made "visible" by the literal avalanche of texts (records, receipts, evaluations, bank statements, transcripts, prescriptions) that "paper" our movements through these social institutions. Yet the connections these texts have to the "apparatuses of ruling" are rendered invisible in the local and everyday world until we transgress the boundaries of control that the texts represent. As a rule, we are not conscious of being a "textually mediated identity" in the world and usually experience being rather a featureless, anonymous identity in public. It is when an individual enters a kind of rupture with the "conceptual relations of ruling" that she is most likely to enter a conscious relationship to texts--that is, she becomes aware of taking on a new textually mediated identity--and this new identity makes this person "self" conscious.

Write up and Textual Mediated Identities

The objectification of knowledge as accomplished by the daily log notes occurs in several steps. First, the instrumental use of the log suppresses detection of institutional intertextuality by the writers and readers, and results in the mis-recognition of the log as a purely factual and descriptive instrument. The mis-recognition of the institutional documentation supports reading individuals for the purpose of

care and also "metaphorically" constructs them as if they were text. Finally, a decontextualisation of these processes masks the imposition of interpretative schema on living persons and captures a multi-faceted, heteroglossic individual into a flattened representation which comes to stand for them. The dyads of documentary write up--the reader/writer and the subject/object of the text--have become "textually mediated identities". The reader becomes "wholly claimed by the texts as she reads" such that "we find an active process transforming relations between particulars and the underlying schemata they intend, an active process, therefore, within the documentary method of interpretation" (Smith, 1990b, 140).

An instance of exchanging an old textual identity for a new one occurs when a woman gets married: her credit rating is altered; if she changes her name, she breaks ties with her former textual identity; if she doesn't change her name, credit card companies will sometimes insist on changing the number of her account. With her new married identity she may become automatically more eligible for loans, mortgages and higher credit limits on her cards. These new privileges and identities are not based upon individual merit or reality but upon a coordinated set of discourses about women, heterosexuality, and the economics of marriage.

Smith writes, "At the line of fault along which women's experience breaks away from the discourses mediated by texts that are integral to the relations of ruling in contemporary society,

a critical standpoint emerges" (Smith, 1990a, 11). For example, at the point where an individual identity intersects with a social institution, the textually mediated identity is actuated and she becomes re-constituted as a mental patient, young offender, a new mother, or a student under academic probation. While most of this is largely invisible as we move through social institutions in everyday life, some individuals, such as psychiatric patients, experience a more exaggerated relationship to this textual labelling. In such instances, the textually mediated identity takes over and obliterates the person's former life. S/he is forever dealt with through the perceptual screens of how they entered the textual dimension.

Do we through "fact" become the exaggerated signs for the signification of those social texts we call institutions? Institutions evoke the sanctity of personal records, and thus limit the access of most individuals to a full account of their own compiled textual and social identity across the institutional relations of ruling. This textual identity can never be erased, it can only be modified. It is important now, in the increased proliferation of institutional literacies and pervasive documentary textual practice to find a means to evoke a critical stance towards texts.

It is important to stress that the effects of these textual practices are not totalistic. They are not. But as de Castell suggests, the way we have been taught to be literate could make us complicit in our own disempowerment (de Castell, 1991, 74).

Non-literary documents are not recognized as having the status or potential for social control. Our lack of recognition of the governing capacity of documentary texts comes from the disjunction of having been educated to recognize only literary texts as carrying the potential for meaning (and by implication for altering consciousness). Documentary texts are typically understood as containers for facts when they are read as reports and textbooks (de Castell, 1991), or as instruments or agents for action, i.e., when written as forms and tickets. The discomfort of having contradictions arise from the effects or meaning of a documentary text can occur when the working reader "mis-reads" the documentary text. The contextual understanding generated by a particular workplace literacy makes "mis-reading" unlikely as it would indicate a failure of the employee to be capable of doing her job. The pervasive but invisible power of the documentary text is activated within the daily bureaucratic minutiae of work activities (Goody, 1986, 124-5). While the focus remains fixed upon the future purposes of the text's function we are unable to see the process of the active text or its effects, both of which constrain interpretation and coordinate communities of readers and knowers (Smith, 1974, 1990a, 1990b; deCastell, 1991, 12).

Documentary Text and Subjugated Knowledge

Many critical theorists urge researchers to look beyond the constraints of the dominant social institutions and discourses of

power to discover alternate perspectives on how social reality is organized. Michel Foucault suggests a method of analysis that "consists of taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point," then investigating what he terms "subjugated knowledge", or those domains of experience and understanding that are typically excluded from dominant modes of discourse. He suggests that instead of analyzing power from the "point of view of its internal rationality", i.e., from the perspective of traditional psychiatry, the justice system, or the education system, the analysis should take place through the "antagonism of strategies", i.e., from the site of the psychiatricized, the student, the incarcerated (Foucault, 1983, 211).

Theoretically, the "mental health system" does not look at social phenomena such as patriarchy, violence against women and children, misogyny and the feminization of poverty as the sources of mental illness for women. Rather, it looks to organic and cognitive deficiencies of the individual to explain their aberrations. Until recently, patriarchy could not be "seen", but through the combined textual practices of "naming" and "pointing" to bring certain features of women's experiences under critical scrutiny, "patriarchy" has come into focus as a structuring metaphor against which feminism defines itself. Patriarchy is itself a social and textual construction--a construction of the work of feminist politics and research. Discourses of psychiatry and femininity can structure women's lived experiences, making

patriarchy disappear and the mentally ill woman reappear (Penfold and Walker, 1988; Smith and David, 1975; Smith, 1990).

Research conducted from the material and everyday lives of women and children generates radically different kinds of understanding from that of the social elites who speak for the status quo. Very different forms of research, as well as political, social and economic questions, can arise from outside of the latter perspective. Dorothy Smith asks researchers to re-examine life problems, usually construed from the bases of power and dominance, from the critical standpoint of the dominated subject. To accomplish this, she suggests two major areas of exploration: first, the significance of examining the "social" from the site of women's experience; and second, an investigation into the social organization of the objectified knowledge that makes up the conceptual relations of ruling (Smith, 1990a, 1). I believe that the daily log, the document that stands as the textual field of data for the ensuing ethnography, marries these two lines of inquiry together. This ethnography takes its direction from the materialist analysis Smith has termed the "standpoint of women" and from Foucault's site of "subjugated knowledge": specifically, from the local, daily experiences of women residing and working in a community mental health boarding home where meaning is grounded by the mundane details of laundry schedules, medication, housework and meals. In this place, textually mediated identities are read, written and re-formulated on handwritten sheets of looseleaf paper, several times a day.

A SECOND TELLING

09/15/87 ON 11-11 A. G. P.C.

11:30 Gillian still not in--checked the notes on Gillian's desk, - with J.(staff) before she left,. It is also possible she went to same friends (Sunday outing) to watch the hockey game-- this mentioned in notes--however, the game's was over at least 2 hours ago. Will wait a bit longer.

(a new entry - new pen colour - with other notes in margins)

10:00 am At 12 Called Gillian's sister-in-law, her friends, the B.'s - and the major hospital -- 8 in all from Burn. General to Van. General. No Gillian (Notes over line in S.'s handwriting " first called MHES (Mental. Health Emerg. Services) to ask for advice--advised to call family, etc.)

Put in a missing persons report at 12:30--at 3:00 am two police officers arrived to tell me that Gillian was dead--had been hit by a Skytrain in vicinity of 29th St. station.

They asked a lot of questions--they confirmed identification --and asked to take away the paper from G's desk with the Pandora St. address on it & the references to watching the hockey game, and "take carton & string" and down in one corner a name: --seemingly unrelated to the rest of the note.

While I was waiting for the police (had been told at the time that they'd be coming by--in retrospect, I should have suspected, I guess) looked name up in the tel. book--and Pandora Street address is hers. Called three times, let the phone ring on & on - no answer.

Called P., reported same--she came in at about 8:25 am I'd already told the residents--it seemed like the best time because everyone was there together. . . .

Sherry was up at 5 am to tell me that Gillian hadn't come home yet. . . .

That's it--a night to remember--poor Gillian--poor us. "Why?" God. I hate that question - I'm glad P. was here to field that one - don't think I could have handled it. Shalom.

(Figure 4: Transcription of Sept. 15, 1987)

CHAPTER THREE
 WRITING UP AND THE RHETORIC
 OF MANAGEMENT

The true historical significance of writing is that it has increased our capacity to create totalistic illusions with which to have power over things or over others as if they were things. The whole ideology of representational signification is an ideology of power. To break its spell we would have to attack writing, totalistic representation and authorial authority . . . (Taylor, 1988, 131).

In this chapter of the thesis I discuss the consequences of two kinds of textual practices that are embodied within the single document, the daily log. The first form, here described as a "rhetoric of management", refers to conventions and practices of writing and reading that serve relations of power, suppress the voices and lived experience of its subjects, and create textually mediated identities for its writers, readers, and its textual subjects. Kenneth Burke has defined rhetoric as simply "speech designed to persuade", a basic definition of rhetoric sustained since Cicero (Burke, 1969, 49). The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms defines rhetoric as,

The deliberate exploitation of eloquence for the most persuasive effect in public speaking or in writing . . . Modern critics sometimes refer to the rhetorical dimension of a literary work, meaning those aspects of the work that persuade or otherwise guide the response of readers (188).

It is to the latter description that the gist of the term rhetoric refers, the "aspects of a work that persuade or . . . guide the response of readers." I shall focus on the aspects of persuasion and control dictated by the form of the writing,

rather than the content of the documentary log, and examine how the context and the situatedness of the log worked as a coordinating instrument to regulate worker and resident identity.

The other form of text, here referred to as a "poetics of care", is distinguished by the effort of its writers and readers to attend to the well-being and care of each other and the residents. As a "poetics" the narrative elements of the log can be seen to represent the garrulous content of narrative "write-up", but also to indicate an inherently political stance toward texts. Poetics in language are those aspects which intuit that there is more to the text than what is intended to be there. As Louis Zukofsky states "A poetics is informed and informs--Just informs maybe--the rest a risk" (Zukofsky, "A"-12). The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms defines poetics in this way:

The general principles of poetry or of literature in general, or the theoretical study of these principles. As a body of theory, poetry is concerned with the distinctive features of poetry (or literature as a whole) with its languages, forms, genres, and modes of composition. (172)

To distinguish between the use of "rhetoric" and "poetic" in the following discussion, it will be helpful to briefly examine Julia Kristeva's treatise on the "dialectical component in language which distinguishes two fundamental dispositions":

. . . one the thetical, nominative and propositional; the other preverbal, residual and operating through the sono-rhythmic gestures across the lines of the symbolic order. It is this latter disposition that guarantees a certain place for unconscious formations and flows within language and that commits all writing to both a biological and social programme (Julia Kristeva cited in Steve McCaffery, 1983, 220).

The rhetorical is aligned with the former component, a static model of the text; the poetic with the latter, which sees meaning as arbitrary and disruptive. The mental health staff consciously adopted a particular style of writing that they believed facilitated the care of the residents of the group home and their working relationships with each other. The "poetics of care" is more concerned with the "content" of the documentary text and reflects a tolerance for disruption (of institutional ordering) and an impulse to "read" differently "between the lines" in order to understand. A more developed discussion of the implications of a "poetics of care" will be taken up in the next chapter. For now I will juxtapose the concept of "poetics" to clarify its distinction from the "rhetoric of management".

In 1987, after a resident committed suicide, the narrative format of the log was challenged following an investigation by the Mental Health Licensing Board and the Coroner's Office. The workers were required to switch to a different model of reporting called "progress notes" which was a more standard format in the mental health field. The progress notes consist of "objective" statements about the "client", with little extraneous commentary on the part of the worker apart from state of health, activities and emotional state of the client. Following a trial period with the progress notes, the staff elected to split the log into two separate formats. They would maintain the mandated format but

also retain the former narrative style of anecdotal documentation for their own purposes.

Both kinds of texts represent aspects of documentary literacy. The "progress notes" represent the taxonomic function of the file and assist with the inventory of easily accessible information about the "ruled". The "narrative log" represents the institutional diary, which Goody identifies as a bureaucratic medium for communicating "less immediate types of information in more casual way" (Goody, 1986, 114). 1

A "rhetoric of management" as a documentation practice generally creates portraits of deviancy for residents, and restricts a more complex contextual representation of the residents' problems and responses. It supports a distanced and depersonalized interaction between the "administration" and the "client" and represents the influences of a bureaucratic literacy upon human interaction within institutions (Goody, 1990, 89).

The emergence of regulation and of rules from these formalized accounts is critical to the development of the relationship between ruler and ruled in complex literate states. The etymological link between ruler and rules emphasizes the nature of the backing one gives to the other; writing makes those rules explicit, leads to their formalization in a variety of ways and thus changes the relation between ruler and ruled. (Goody, 116)

1 . The bureaucratic diary, whether formal or informal works toward a polity of "indirect rule" which was perfected in colonization of India and Africa. Goody discusses the consequences of certain literate practices as contributing to the transformation of the notion of "economy" to shift from the government of the household "to the regulation (rule) of society." (Foucault cited in Goody, 116)

The log, as a complex form of textual documentary practice falls outside of some of the domination models of "the conceptual relations of ruling" as discussed by Dorothy Smith. Whereas Smith provides an analysis that is exclusively concerned with the way documentary practices subordinate human subjects and "daily/nightly" events to textual/institutional requirements, thus subordinating lived actualities within the relations of ruling, this thesis addresses the question of whether it is possible for anecdotal institutional texts to work, both for and against the empowerment of its workers and the persons who become the objects of the write-up.

Writing the Log: A Story

The following is a reconstruction of "how" the log was written; an emphasis on location and time is important here because factors shaped both its writing and its reading.

Near the end of an extremely physically and emotionally demanding twelve or eight hour shift, a mental health worker walks up three flights of stairs to the top of a turn-of-the-century house. On the third floor landing she is greeted by a locked office door. To her left is the reclaimed attic of the heritage home, consisting of a meeting space, a full bathroom, storage area, and sleeping space for staff. She unlocks the door, enters the office and shuts the door. The office is the smallest room in the house, "L" shaped, it nests between the eaves of a sharply slanted roof. Stifling hot in the summer and cool in the winter, it's furnished with the "PIC's" desk, a filing cabinet, dilapidated sofa, small writing desk and assorted writing paraphernalia--scraps of paper, looseleaf in the drawer and a jar of pens and pencils.

This final trek to the office is a temporary respite from housework, resident demands, and the smells of old

meals and cigarettes. For the next 30 minutes it is permissible to actually shut a door: there should be no interruptions short of earthquakes or injury of a resident. She takes a key from the writing desk drawer and opens a closet behind her. The top of the door lies flush against the slant of the ceiling and she has to duck as she approaches or she will bump her head. Inside, stored on a shelf above the medication "returns", emergency supplies of aspirin, Maalox and cigarettes, assorted bingo prizes and petty cash, is the log book. The log book is always under lock and key and like other "dangerous supplements" such as cash and drugs, it is among the more provocative objects in the closet. Strictly confidential, its contents are not to be discussed with residents nor with persons from outside the Society.

Wearied, she momentarily collects her thoughts and proceeds with the most unacknowledged, but possibly most important task of the shift. She begins a log entry, dredging up the information she believes will help co-workers understand what just occurred during the blur called a shift at the community mental health boarding home. If she is a veteran worker it's fairly straightforward as to what information is important and what isn't. She begins with "who was okay, who wasn't" that day. She lists each resident by name, scribbles a brief summary of any contact or observations she had with each person. She includes resident appointments and medication changes, and summarizes with a "temperature reading" of the house, i.e., "quiet today", "lots of tension", "Busy!". If she is not too tired she provides additional twists and turns in the current spate of house sagas. Next come the jobs to be done on the next shift; work and union related messages, house chores completed and left over. Finally, she notes which residents are out at the time of writing and when they are expected back.

She gives priority to objective reports of health or emotional crises--extra medication, calls to the crisis support teams, trips to emergency or the hospital, epileptic seizures, fights, falls, suicide threats, flus and colds, "female complaints", and AWOL residents. Subjective details of complex staff/resident interactions--a "reading" of storms or troubles on the horizon--clues to pending "mysteries" garnered from house gossip--and updates on appliance repairs fill in the gaps. All this is conveyed in one or two pages (unless something major happened during the shift) with apologies for writing "novels" if the account runs on for too long.

Brevity is a virtue, but a good accurate description of some altercation or crisis may earn kudos for "good

logging" from the supervisor, or grateful affirmations from other workers for an insightful clarification. "Helga was upset" elicits question marks; "?" the subtext for a mild rebuke and asks without words, "how was she upset, what led up to this, what was your follow up and how is she now?" Exhaustive descriptions attributing emotions, motives and past events to a resident's behaviour might receive a few notations of "!!!?", a quiet reminder that mental workers are not diagnosticians, "just give us the facts please!!"

She sums up the day's work, just as another worker enters the office ready to begin the next shift. They chat, she hastily finishes writing (fatigue is creeping on fast), she counts up the petty cash, says goodbye and leaves. The new worker sits down at the desk and carefully begins to read. A little while later she returns the log to its closet, gathers up the staff keys, opens the office door and descends to the busy house below.

Preloaded with the events and descriptions of the past few days, this institutional worker encounters a textually inscribed community; her understanding of what has occurred has been mediated by the log entries of her co-workers and by her own lived experience. She has read a text of a particular "world", now she closes the text and enters that world. Or does she enter the text? She simultaneously enters as a potential reader, a soon-to-be-writer, and a woman immersed in a mental health worker identity.

Evolution of the Log

To preface this section, the term "evolution" is somewhat of a misnomer. "Evolution of the log" suggests a progressive refinement of form, but it would be more accurate to say that the log was qualitatively transformed as the non-profit mental health service Society that owned the boarding home expanded from a

"seat-of-the-pants model of management" (Cruise, 1982) and encountered more institutionally rigid mandates. The changes in the log reflect the Society's growing accountability to governance from outside financial, legal, psychiatric and medical authorities.²

The format of the daily log developed over a number of years and was influenced primarily by Sarah, who represented the "heart" of the community mental health boarding home and was its manager for eleven years. A rural teacher, artist, community activist, and inveterate story-teller, Sarah was hired as the boarding house manager during a period when the Society actively embraced an advocacy based, psycho-social philosophy.

Founded in the 1970's, the five boarding homes owned by the Society were as much influenced by the temperaments and philosophies of their supervisors as they were by the resident personalities who dwelled there. The "PIC's" (persons in charge) formed a collective model of management, each retaining individual autonomy in their respective boarding homes, but relying on one another for the development of policy guidelines, information sharing and support.

2 . From 1974 to 1987, the Society grew "from a small group running a boarding home and an apartment block into (\$6) million operation." Ken Cruise "A Case Study: Social Work 570.004 University of British Columbia. 1982. See chapter two for a brief description of the Society's relationship to Provincial and Federal funding bodies.

The parent, non-profit Society that owned the boarding homes grew considerably from the time of its inception and consequently moved toward a more official relationship to governmental funding and adopted a more formal model of management. The Society was granted certification with CUPE in Dec. 1983 following an intense push for unionization from the Community Boarding Homes Division. By the mid 80's, the criteria for boarding home manager applicants excluded almost all but medical or psychiatric professionals. Medical and psychiatric nurses were preferred; social workers with degrees were acceptable.³ These changes, in accordance with the hiring of health care professionals, contributed to the pressure that all boarding homes adopt the "progress notes" as the primary model of documentation.

3. These policy changes came from the new association with CUPE, which was a large health care workers union. Society (1974) Annual Report 1987: Housing Report: "With the change in policy which requires Mental Health Facility Operators to be registered with a B.C. Health Care organization, i.e. R.N., R.P.N., O.T., R.S.W., the quality of care and specific care required in the homes needs to be examined and full (sic) outlined. . . . It is hoped that the process of upgrading professional skills, the skill of providing a home will not be diminished."

this must be it - Have a good shift
 Ann - sorry I'm so useless.
 #11111111 welcome back Carol - hope you
 take it easy the first bit + not
 become a maniac right away.
 ☺ = Katly

uly 27/ DAY. CAROL
 wecc its hot

subsidy for Stella's LECITHIN
 tion, so im to send a memo
 ill present it to the REGIONAL

*LEMONADE



There's a Ton of it in
 Basement Fridge Freezer.
 Its concentrated + each
 Can makes 1 gallon of it.
 Please

* serve lots a
 lemonade over the
 weekend



(Figure 5. Cartoons: Life in the Community)



thanks, Ann. I definitely need support today.

MONDAY ... ? Feb. 17? Day? Carol?



How to begin a log entry on a day like today ... ?

First - I commend you all on making it through a very "active" (Targonian understatement) weekend.

As I read the log, the tune & words "and the joint was jumpin'..." kept playing through my head...

* You can still sleep on the foam if you want!!
I plan to get rid of all but the green-covered bed in there (looks like a brotha' - or the 3 bears home ...)



HAVE A GOOD HALLOWEEN Y'ALL



(Figure 6. Cartoons: Life in the Community)

The Log reflects the Community it represents

The log under investigation retained the narrative features that Sarah believed characterized the community model she was attempting to foster among the workers and among the residents. She encouraged a "talking back and forth" style among workers and sprinkled her own entries liberally with cartoons, puns and other "visual aids", thus setting the tone that she hoped allowed the development of "voice" among workers (see Figures 5 and 6). Other group homes within the organization had managers and staff who were also caring people, but whose daily logs and textual documentation did not produce the same kind of textual product.

Sarah modeled the tone and intent of her vision of a "community of practice" (Lave and Wenger, 1991)⁴ through the log, and by doing so she expanded the potential of the log beyond the confines of the "progress notes" model. The return to a reductive form like "progress notes" frustrated workers accustomed to the more narrative text. The old format of the log was an orientation and management heuristic that helped them

4 . Mental health work and the process of becoming an experienced worker is a form of tacit apprenticeship which Lave and Wenger explore in Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation. ". . . learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move towards a full participation on the sociocultural practices of a community" (29). Unlike Lave and Wenger's model there was no gradual induction into the community of practice--mental health workers were literally "thrown" into the work situation. To this end I suggest that the daily log provided the most accessible and formal context for instruction of novice workers.

identify and organize their expectations of what they were supposed to do in their capacities as mental health workers. They were empowered to define their responsibilities and textual practices for the purpose of a "community" rather than for the purpose of surveillance. An ethic of "community" shapes and insists upon a certain kind of language and voice in the text in order to sustain and assist with this aim. In this context the daily log is a text that stands for a community of care and becomes a meeting place for care-givers.

Is it possible, then, for such a text to separate itself from its connections and obligations to the external institutional relations of ruling?

History of Changes in Log Format

The log covers the period from 1981-1989. The log's format remained somewhat constant except for a trial period during the summer of 1985 and the changes which were implemented in September 1987. In my role as an on-call worker, I had the opportunity to work in other boarding homes where I encountered various "progress notes" formats and other logging protocols within the larger organization. These formats were more standardized in boarding homes where the managers were certified health care professionals. The log notes in the four other boarding homes seemed more skeletal than "Sarah's log" in terms of actual detailing activity within the house, while more substantial resident information was maintained in separate

resident progress note files. However, in these homes, the role of the mental health worker was often more clearly demarcated as a social and life skills worker, especially in homes with younger, male and female residents.

As mentioned in chapter three, some of the boarding homes hired housekeepers, activity workers, and cooks in addition to the mental health workers. In "women only" boarding homes the job responsibilities of the mental health workers were all encompassing and the women residents were more involved with the housework as a part of the normal daily routine within the community and the house. While male mental health workers were expected to do the same work as the female workers in coed houses, male residents would not be given "TVP" jobs as domestic chores, i.e., vacuuming. Many of the women were too "chronic" to be able to work outside of the house, but were quite capable of making a contribution in domestic areas where they felt more confident. Sarah was able to convince the "MHR Rehab Officer" to provide funds so these women could be paid for their regular contribution to the housework load:

Nov. 10, 1982.. . . Meeting at 9.00 am with Joe P. the MHR "Rehab Officer" -- he initially was not at all open to putting Pearl and Hanna on the CIP Programming like Helga because he said the purpose of the programme is 1). to place people out in the community and 2). what if everyone in the house asked to be put on CIP!!? re: 1). I explain that this house is also a community and there is a basic need for some of these people to work in this community first, before they can go out and work in the outside community. . . .The upshot of this was that after 45 minutes of me not budging from my "this house is a Community" standpoint, in exasperation he pulled out two contracts, we wrote them up and Anna and Pearl are now on the CIP programme. He was

also supposed to see Alice about outside CIP work but when I said she was 72, he threw his hands over his face and said he'd have to come back another time. . . .

Sarah's insistence that the house was a "community" and her willingness to integrate the residents into the "community upkeep and routines" required more textual coordination than homes where the residents were more clearly the "cared for", and where the mental health work was not as integrated into the resident's daily life skill routines. Sarah's boarding home had fewer employees during a given shift and "more" to do with the actual maintenance of the house. It is far easier to reinforce the institutional nature of a boarding home--"do the work" and leave the "cared for" in a chronic or helpless role--than work as a team within the community where the boundaries of responsibility are more blurred and inter-subjective.

What are Progress Notes?

From July 1-18, 1985, the staff wrote the log with a "progress note" format instead of the regular log format (see figure 7). This change was in response to mounting pressure from within the organization to move toward a standard health care model of documentation. The log format was altered so each resident was represented by her own section in the binder, and on every shift, the staff person on duty was required to write an observation for each resident. This new format emphasized the "individual" structure of the resident community rather than the "relational" community itself, and was intended to provide more standardized entries and thereby build a chronology of readily accessible information profiles for each individual.

July 1 Day - Said she had felt sick over the weekend but was feeling better today. She waited until after lunch to do the bathrooms - "because then everyone would be out and the bathrooms empty."

July 2, 8-5 - Very tired this afternoon & evening - had a friendly chat with me about her life - would have gone on & on if I had not been called to the phone. She's feeling good, doing her job well, wants to be paid weekly. See bulletin board under "special routines".

July 2 She was pleasant as usual & I cut her hair today. Janet.

July 3 2-10 Mabel came to me this evening to get a 'forward' on her clearing pay - she is broke already. I told her to wait & speak to Martha tomorrow, but also suggested that if she decided chose to be paid weekly, perhaps she should stick to it. I'm not too sure on the policy, so I left it at that. Y.

July 4
No 8-10
Mabel
10/04/85

M appeared ab dinner & snacks - sits there and stews - seems preoccupied - however engaged her interests the last couple of times I've been here. There's a cigarette burn in the oil-cloth I've never noticed before - I don't know whether it happened to-day - Ann.

July 5/85 M. requested & received her pay today. She looks great in her new haircut.

the same day for M.

July 7 Mabel did her chore day very thoroughly & cheerfully. She looks brighter to me than she did a month ago. She was

(Figure 7. Progress Notes: "Mabel")

Formerly, most residents were described in a single entry with a brief comment; with the new format, they had their own section, and only those individuals with whom they were observed to have interacted would be recorded in the entry. This system of textual organization provided extremely helpful shortcuts for the uninformed worker, especially if the house routines and residents were unfamiliar. However, progress notes did not provide much of a contextual picture of the boarding house community culture for the veteran worker who needed to "read between the lines" for information. Progress notes assume that workers are interchangeable.

Analysis of Progress Notes: July 1-18, 1985

The progress notes separated the responses and activities of individual residents from the context of "community" dynamics, relationships and culture. Notations of community incidents began to disappear and in their place resident identities began to appear. As a result, it became difficult to connect a person's reactions to the background events within the house. Progress notes tended to foreground individuals as isolated and primary actors, particularly if they were "active" personalities. The residents were disconnected from the events of the house as they were de-contextualized and then re-textualized in the new log format. Further, the progress notes distanced the traces of the presence of workers so that their interference and impact upon resident dynamics were effectively removed from the record.

For example, in the old narrative log, a worker might read about a new worker on shift who had had an early morning confrontation with Helga over who was vacuuming the second floor. She might read also that later, during supper, Helga had erupted into a screaming fit "out of the blue". The experienced worker/reader would have picked up the causal linkages between events: new worker + anxiety + Helga = screaming fit. The progress notes may merely have documented Helga's non-compliance with vacuuming and an "inappropriate" screaming fit later in the evening. Helga presumably appears as a more deviant personality.

The overall volume of documentation increased by about one third over the eighteen days of writing even though fewer people were present due to hospitalization or vacation. There were some 80 single-sided pages of entries for the first 18 days, whereas under the old method the average month produced approximately 130 pages of single-sided pages.⁵

Characterizations and redundant entries

One rationale for this change concerned "quieter" residents who tended to get "neglected" in the traditional log format. By implication, there was a concern that these women were also being neglected in terms of their care. The new format was intended to

5 . See chapter one "Methodology" for summary of 1984 - 1987 averages.

correct this oversight. While the progress notes format did compile a more streamlined record of resident behaviour it did not improve the quality of entries for "quieter" residents. A "quiet" resident acquired 2 or 3 pages of mostly redundant entries.

Alma was one of the most senior residents, both in age and history of residence in the boarding home. Alma was a quietly authoritative house "matriarch" who, along with Pearl, kept close tabs on new-comers, residents and workers. The entries about Alma are embarrassingly scarce, and the only times she is mentioned as being upset is when some mishap occurs to disrupt the meal schedules. Despite her textual "absence" from the log, Alma lives a busy life in the community; she is a friend to many, and involved with Pearl's various schemes and chores. The entries for Alma may have brought her into focus but they consisted of "uninformative" statements: "seems normal, cheerful, big smile today."

Similarly, the gist of the notes for Sherry are also flat and uninformative, essentially: "seems fine; quiet day today; didn't see much of her; cheerful". The progress notes produced flat and inaccurate characterizations of these gentle, elegant women and contributed to a way of seeing them that is ultimately stereotypical and oppressive; they are older and were raised in a "gentler" era in terms of the range of expressiveness permitted for "ladies". The progress notes do not invite workers to engage with these people who seem self sufficient and perhaps boring.

Yet the log reveals that when someone does manage to get into a conversation with either Alma or Sherry, they may be treated to a warm and interesting discussion.

Portraits of Deviance

The cumulative entries of the progress notes tend to create exaggerated portraits for some of the "active" residents and empty characterizations for the quieter ones. The terms "portraits" and "characterizations" are utilized to draw attention to the textual construction of a discrete identity, rather than inter-subjective/inter-textual description of human activity. No person could be as consistently colourful "or in crisis" nor as nondescript as the "progress notes" suggest.

There was an exaggerated tendency during the "progress notes" experiment, for the more active personalities in the house to appropriate a disproportionate amount of textual time and space, more than double that of the "quiet" residents. Their entries were more descriptive and focussed concretely on appearance, outbursts, problems and conversations. I counted an average of 6 to 8 pages of vivid "incidents" for the active residents compared to 3 to 4 pages for other residents. What are the effects of more detailed documentation on these individuals? Textually, they do seem to come "alive" even in the progress notes. The increased volume of notation implies that "more is happening" with them than with other individuals, and in the

context of the mental health boarding home, "more" signals of "problems".

Some of the heavily documented residents were extremely involved in community life and work activities. They could be characterized as "higher functioning" individuals but express a greater range of emotion, including sadness and anger. They made greater demands on workers that could be misconstrued as a higher level of need than the reclusive quiet residents. For instance, in the case of Maggie, an extremely active resident, workers compiled nine pages of progress notes about her during the 18 days. They detailed doctor's appointments, mood swings, work schedules, family and resident quarrels and the like. The documentation of every tear shed, "illegally" stashed chocolate bars and pop discovered in her room, and volatile exchanges with her family made Maggie appear as a fairly erratic, irresponsible person by the end of the progress note sequence. Ironically, the side of Maggie known as the irrepressible and humorous "Scot" is almost entirely absent, as are notations of her tireless volunteer work at the St. James Society and local A.A. meetings. Instead, these aspects of her life are translated into "symptoms" of sore shoulders, exhaustion and headaches--completely detached from their human causes.

Contrasts in Textual Portraits: Sherry and Gillian

A comparison of a week of entries for Sherry and for Gillian yields interesting differences in documentation style, detail and

volume. Although the two women share a room, are approximately the same age, come from privileged family backgrounds and have advanced post-graduate degrees, they are perceived (and transcribed) quite differently. Sherry is a "quiet" resident while Gillian is characterized as a "complex" and challenging resident. As mentioned previously, the entries about Sherry are flat and redundant with virtually meaningless information. Workers will state "ditto" rather than provide a full description of the ways Sherry was "quiet, cheerful or "lovely in her new dress". Their reductive response separates Sherry's entry from any other conversations and activities within the house. The word count ratio of one "Sherry" week is about one third of a "Gillian" week : Gillian 680 / Sherry 196. Of course what "counts" is not the quantity of words so much as the "quality" of words used to describe these two women. The following excerpts are from the progress notes:

(Gillian summary 680 words: July 1-7, 1985)

July 1 day: Gillian has spent entire day dealing with organization of craft items for this upcoming fair in Burnaby--painting, touching up, digging things out of storage, asking advice--etc. she is now looking for someone to drive her to her display--judging competition on Wed. afternoon. (see note community book).

shift 2-10: was late getting back to help with supper prep. Don't know where she was. We dug out four pieces from the cupboard for the jury. I told her that it wasn't a good idea to take too much - it only confuses juries - best to take a few pieces a cross-section and have a list ready about the variations on each theme. She accepted this as reasonable and let it go -- that was really my only exchange with Gillian.

shift 10-10 ON: Seems very full of energy - watched the 11 PM news before retiring, Cheerful tho.

(Sherry summary 196 words: July 1-7, 1985)

July 1 Day: Cheerful today: lovely in a new silky dress. She went to Bino's with V. for coffee.

2-10: Ditto - stayed in this evening - watched T.V. went to her room around 8:30

July 2, 8-5: Quiet day around home, her only "home day" during the week.

6-10: Quiet evening.

10 - 10: was phoning the pension dep't at 8 am. Didn't get a chance to enquire what about. Otherwise seems fine.

July 3, 8-5- Sherry cheerful today, out to Starlite with Pearl after community meeting.

2 - 10 quiet this evening as usual. Bed early after snack.

July 4 Sherry gone to work.

8-5 Out.

Gillian's entries are "relational", the impact of her personality and relationship with staff is observable in the tone of writing. Despite Gillian's nature as a fairly reserved and aloof person, the textual entries about her suggest much more interpersonal involvement with the staff. By contrast, entries about Sherry appear to have been documented with a long distance lens. They are remote and rarely contain dialogue or suggestions of relationship. In fact, Sherry is a refined and quiet person, but she is no less social than Gillian. Her textual portrait suggests an isolated, "sleeping beauty" figure and not a real person. The progress notes appear to naturalize richer descriptions for some people and more impoverished descriptions for others, and this tendency is reinforced as the log writers take cues from previous entries.

The next excerpt traces the image or textual persona that quickly develops for Mabel as she makes her first entrance in the

house. Mabel is an eccentric and likable person who makes an immediate impact on the house. Although I have deleted much of the activity around her first days, the logging around Mabel quickly establishes her identity in the community and in the log book. She is "different", interesting and bears watching.

Aug. 3, 1984) . . . Mabel made a grand entrance at lunch time. She took the wrong cab and had no money to pay it with. . . .

Aug. 3 Mabel seems to fit the house well and seems glad to be here. . . .

Aug. 4 Mabel was much in evidence most of the day. We had some time to talk. Seems very pleased with the residence and all the young people. . . .

Aug. 5 Mabel its her chore day and she's doing a good job. Looking a bit like a Japanese War lord with her top knot and her kimono. . . but functioning well.

Aug. 6 Mabel appears to be settling in fine so far. When asked how she's doing she says OK and there isn't anything she needs. . . And yes, she does resemble a Japanese Warlord.

Aug.6 Mabel is on her last PRN. She asked for soda again tonight. The ladies are slowly accepting her. Something has to be done about that hair. . . Rollers, a Toni? Anything is better than that onion bun. . . .

Aug. 7 Mabel was sitting upstairs all alone around 7:30 in her housecoat. I invited her to come downstairs and join the others in the living room. She had thought that all the seats were occupied and that's why she stayed away. Anyway she joined and was good company. She went upstairs around 8:30. I like this lady even though she does look a bit like a Japanese War Lord. (my emphasis)

Progress Notes /Discontinued

A note in the log reads "trial system discarded July 18, 1985".

July 18, 1987. . . Today we resume old method of logging as per staff meeting discussion and decision. For particulars/comments see yellow pages, end of this section, and staff meeting minutes [no longer attached to log]. As for the residents log, i.e., resident summary, profiles, special routines etc. Lets give it some thought next few days.

July 22, 1987 . . . Good to see the log back in its original form, easy to read.

The staff quickly found the progress note format to be unhelpful and voted to return to the former narrative log format, with the provision that they would make an entry for each person even if it was just to say the resident was "OK". The rejection of the progress notes was based mainly on the amount of time required to write them and the way they fragmented the workers' overall picture of the house.

Admittedly, the trial run was short. However, the staff's consensus was that the progress notes method interfered with the workers' ability to do a good job, and while more information was produced, it was not the "kind" they required. A special section was maintained for "resident profiles" so information related to special routines, emergency instructions, or some behavioural pattern that might resurface in difficult moments could be easily accessible.

The "progress note" format lends itself to recording "negative" events rather than the everyday interactions, that in turn flatten out and appear as "non-events". Instead, "crises" become newsworthy events that enter the record as facts.

Construction of Text as Virtual Realities

The realities to which action and decision are oriented are virtual realities vested in texts and accomplished in distinctive practices of reading and

writing. We create these virtual realities through objectifying discourse; they are our own doing. Employing them, we separate what we know directly as individuals from what we come to know as trained readers of texts. (Smith, 1990a, 62)

The textual stockpile on each resident reflects the social hierarchy active within the house. Some personalities dominated and received considerably more resources, attention and interactions from the staff. Yet residents who were rarely "written up" still enjoyed a strong presence within the community life of the boarding home. The portraits constructed by the progress notes are more visibly accumulative and seem more compelling than the narrative log format, possibly because they seem to "say more". The progress note format more closely resembles the style of the documentary texts Dorothy Smith calls "virtual realities" (Smith, 1990a, 62).

Captured by Text: A Case for Invisibility in the Past Tense

In 1982, during the late Spring, Sherry seemed to come alive and began to participate more intensely in the house and in the world around her. Initially this was seen as a good sign, but gradually the staff became alarmed.

July 1, 1982 . . . Sherry's behaviour this past two weeks is of concern to me and I wanted to discuss at yesterdays meetings. Before I left for vacation she was standing at the end of the dining room tables (where she sits) and dancing to music on a radio that was on the table.--At the time, I smiled and asked her if she was in a good mood -- and she replied "yes". So I thought "well that's nice. . ." Now that I've read June 20 log entry about Sherry's incoherent conversation, another mention of Sherry's dancing and her decision to become a vegetarian, I am concerned that

she may be decompensating?! I realize these events all seem harmless enough, but the interesting point here is that we've all noticed them as being out of the ordinary for Sherry's behaviour. . . (my emphasis)

In concert between the relationship of labeling someone "insane" and seeing "madness", the two weeks of intense observations did indeed produce evidence of Sherry's "strange behaviour". The psychiatric team was notified but they found nothing unusual with Sherry's behaviour. Eventually the issue was dropped and Sherry gently faded out of the "picture".

It can be argued that for individuals like Sherry, the absence of documentation permits a wider scope of freedom within the "panopticon" gaze of mental health workers. When Sherry moves beyond her known textual "sleepwalker" motif and has a bad day, asserts an opinion, or doesn't appear in a lovely dress she may seem to be suddenly "decompensating". This contrast to her usual repressed mode can seem more alarming than an outburst by one of the volatile personalities. Though the concern may be valid, the impulse to substitute the authority of the "virtual reality" of Sherry's textual composite for the unreadable terrain of a private imagination (hers) is a violation of her personal rights. Sherry may have learned that it was more worthwhile to keep her imaginative life to herself, and thus avoid interference from outside parties.

Sherry lives in a mental health boarding home for specific reasons so the alarm and intervention of the staff on her behalf is not necessarily a negative event. Rather, it is illustrative

of the dynamics that documentation provides in bringing a "partial truth" into focus. The usual lack of presence that Sherry exhibits as a "readable" text is not necessarily evidence of her "normalcy". While Sherry may inhabit a delusional state all the time, this may not be detectable by the staff because she does not share her subjective reality with others. To contrast, the episode just recorded may represent an extreme crisis for Sherry, yet represent a mere behavioural "hiccup" for another person.

The Rhetoric of Management

In this section I am concerned with the ways that documentary texts such as the progress notes have the capacity to restrict interpretation, activate relations of ruling within their institutional settings, and in turn, organize objective forms of knowledge as a means of accomplishing social practices of control. Dorothy Smith states that these objectified forms of knowledge are integral to the organization of ruling and "claim authority as socially accomplished effects on products, independent of their making" (Smith, 1990a, 61).

When we read the text as a "virtual reality", we envision it as a container comprised of facts as opposed to interpretations. Its "facticity" becomes one of the primary mechanisms by which a text coordinates meaning and social actions of both readers and writers of institutional documents. To re-emphasize, this is largely accomplished by locating the documentation and the work

of reading and writing within the context of an institutional workplace. Mental health workers responded to the distancing format of the progress notes by writing themselves and their inter-subjective involvement with the residents, out of the documentation.

Where log notes could be criticized for the "subjective" overtones of the entries, the progress notes simulated an "objectivity" by removing direct references to the "I" writing the entry, which constructed sentences that removed most worker involvement with the residents or that implied her subjectivity could have influenced the textual mediation of reality portrayed by the document. For example, in the progress note sections each entry begins with the name of the resident, and thus constructs the person as the primary agent within the documentary text.

(Progress note July 3, 8-5 pm) Jane is still withdrawn and shaky today. Looks strained. She's hanging in - managing her chore day OK and managed to sit still for the community meeting. Took a walk with Fiona afterwards.

In the old format, the worker often set the context for the log entry: "it is a hot day"; "the house is tense"; "not too many people slept last night"; "the lunch was terrible", etc. That Jane was withdrawn and shaky may have had to do with a fight with her best friend, a bad night's sleep, the presence of a new on-call worker or the fact that June's rent was due and she owed \$442.50. Some of this information was communicated in the generic log entry on July 1 but did not get into "Jane's progress notes".

Separating context from observations inhibits workers from making the imperceptible inter-subjective/textual connections that will arise during the write up of the day. Progress note formats ignore how hard the text works when workers read each other's entries to pick up "clues" and silences the "text/talk" that furthers understanding. The connecting mechanisms in the log are essentially diminished with the progress note format.

Facticity and the Objectified Document

According to Dorothy Smith, facticity is a form of objective power that coordinates people's activities and separates their subjective knowledge from the "active experiencing of subjects and from the dialogic of activities or talk that brings before us a known-in-common subject" (Smith, 1990a, 68). The "facticity" of an institutional document consolidates the text as a form of objectified knowledge that then "stands as a product of an institutional order mediated by texts." The log, on the other hand, represents more self-consciously a social order mediated by texts and it can clearly be recognized as a text mediated by a social order. To restate, the progress note format gradually eliminates the presence of the actual community from the textual record.

The narrative log note format was liberally peppered with inter-textual references, cartoons and other workers' responses in the margins of the pages (figure 8).

→ 26-6341 was unable to reach her. she will be in on mon. July 5th G.

wise to phone Erica Fowler & check this behaviour out with her. * Gerry - would you please phone her tomorrow & outline these behaviour changes in Gerry & see if she thinks there is any cause for concern (* read Paula's log entry June 20)

* Need coverage for this Monday Day Shift

* Paula - if Heather phones tonight, would you please ask her she can't if she can do it - if this doesn't happen,

Was able to get Lianne - S. ~~she can't~~ please phone Ricki 1st thing & see if she can change her Mon. appt. & do the shift if she can't, then please head down the list looking for someone.

~~Michelle~~ - if Susan Davies calls, I need her to do Irene's ~~cooking~~ ^{shift} beginning next Wed. (as the woman who was scheduled to fill in for Irene called yesterday to say she can't do it.) Irene can't talk to Susan, as she knows dates etc. (& that I'll also need a cook for Vicki's Vacation time)

also ~~draney~~ may be able to do part of Vicki's shift. she'll call next week

** expect you will hear from Dr. Gavanski and/or Joanne at Review giving the final O.K. for Phyllis' Mon. return - will you please call her daughter, June (no. in file) & ask if she can pick Phyllis up on Mon. * Ask that Phyllis return here ~~for~~ in late aft. or early eve. to avoid the craziness that Mon. will be here)

Paula!!! - please find someone to cover the Sun. overnight, Mon. afternoon & Mon. overnight shifts

* Gerry - because you get paid for mon. as a full shift, it's best if we ~~can~~ fill these shifts with on-call folks & give you guys a break.

(Figure 8. Intertextuality in the Log)

These inter-textual features disappear in the progress notes as the text becomes a container for information about "others". The "textual community" 6 that maintained its identity through the medium of the narrative log becomes replaced by isolated observers who inscribe observations of discrete individuals in a sequential documentary text. The individualized and accumulative portraits of progress notes obscures the partiality of worker's subjective representations and understandings--and separates workers from an inter-textual community, that is a workplace where the workers can "meet" through the text.

The documentary text is geared for instrumental use, not contextual or interpretive action. Little analysis is required (and is likely discouraged) in order to understand a documentary text, since it usually requires correct "routine" reception and action. The reader of documentary texts becomes an objectified reader, the reader for which the text is intended. The text is assumed to be the same for everybody, at all times. "Objectified knowledge . . . subdues, discounts and disqualifies our various interests, perspectives, angles and experience, and what we might have to say speaking from them" (Smith, 1990a, 80). In such a

6 . In Listening for the Text Stock writes that "We can think of a textual community as a group that arises somewhere in the interstices between the imposition of the written word and the articulation of a certain type of social organization. It is an interpretive community, but it is also a social entity. (Stock, 1990, 150)

context, the reader must intentionally misread or resist the text, in order to not "know" what the text intends for "what it knows can be known in no other way" (Smith, 1990b, 121). The form of the log rhetorically works to persuade the reader/writer of its "facticity".

The log book was not an anonymous text; the writers had to sign their names to each entry, and their values, intentions and voices were recorded on the pages in a relatively personal manner:

June 28, 1986. . . . What a delightful, thoughtful person you are! I didn't think I liked surprises, particularly but--live and learn--I was kinda choked by the mini-party. Thank you so much. The P.S. is that Pearl stopped everyone from sitting down to breakfast until she announced my birthday and elicited a chorus of greetings. Then Helga, who came late to breakfast, stood in front of me and sang "Happy Birthday, solo. Really! so much attention! I am a little overwhelmed!

Rhetoric of Management in the Narrative Text

When the progress note experiment ended, the mental health workers elected to return to the previous format of the log. While this was a richer, more contextually situated form of documentation, the log notes continued to retain their coordinating function to the "conceptual relations of ruling". This may appear as a contradiction in the argument about the value of the old log as opposed to the reductive progress notes. Ironically, the workers' preference for this format enmeshed them far more firmly in the institutional relations of ruling because

they were less likely to recognize the alienating function of the text in its talkative format. The narrative text, at the very least, provides some alternative response than that "which the text intends" (Smith, 1990).

Regardless of its informal appearance and home-oriented functions, the log, in whatever form it takes, is a document which connects the external authority of the state to a local, domestic setting. The daily log can be described as an instrument of "panopticism" that Michel Foucault describes as one which permits "hierarchical surveillance, continuous registration, perpetual assessment and classification," and acts as a subtle substitute for power which "insidiously objectifies those on whom it is applied" (Foucault, 1977, 209). Such an instrument works best if it appears invisible or inconsequential because, in reality, it more effectively assembles a body of knowledge about its targeted individuals. It is subtle rather than intrusive, and disguises its direct links to the state (209).

If the purpose of an "instrument of panopticism" is primarily to create a "central point from which a permanent gaze may control prisoners and staff", then the log, despite its ragged appearance with anecdotal entries scrawled on looseleaf paper, aptly fits the criteria of such a mechanism (Foucault, 217). While it may have been obvious to the mental health workers that the log potentially represented a "cell of visibility in which the inmate [resident] will find himself (sic) caught as [in

the glass house of the Greek philosopher¹, they were not as aware of their simultaneous capture by the reflected gaze" (217). As mentioned in the introduction, "write up" is intended to be a dyadic relationship, except one side of Foucault's "carceral couple" is too engrossed in the operation of encoding to detect the process of cooption.⁷

At first glance, the one-way mirror of the log is unidirectional, continuous and accumulative and holds both staff and residents under permanent observation while preserving distinctly the hierarchical power relations between them. Although its mandated purpose is to record the daily activities of the residents, the staff are simultaneously caught in a web of "textual" coordination. As mental health workers write up the details of completed work shifts, they internalize their own surveillance and remove the necessity for external physical supervision. According to Foucault, the true genius of the panopticon lies in the internalization of its "minute disciplines" by both inmate and "warder" that is largely maintained through a system of "individualizing and permanent documentation" (Foucault, 218).

 7. As Foucault describes in "The Carceral", the mental health worker lives under the same conditions as the mental patients. They are subject "to the same coercions" as the inmates themselves" (236), insofar as they work, clean, eat and sleep in the same environment. The log writing and the dispensing of medications were the visible markers of the "warders" at the community boarding home (Foucault, "The Carceral", in Rabinow, 1984, 237).

The internalization of "minute disciplines" by mental health workers in the community boarding home is most visible during the twelve hour overnight and weekend shifts. Except for the presence of the cook during the early part of the day, the mental health worker is alone until late evening. She must single-handedly attend to the care of all fifteen residents, as well as tend to yard work, shopping, dispensing medications, administration, hygiene and "life skills" programs, and a long list of other housekeeping duties.

June 1, 1986 . . . Long but enjoyable day! The basement is done-scrubbed and tidied. Veggie garden is watered, but not grass-forgot about in between clean-up and foot doctor and snack time preparation. . . .The wainscot in the dining/living room is scrubbed from the fireplace corner to corner behind t.v. and the "stop line is obvious about 1/6 of the way along, where I was interrupted. . . . Jessie and I went out for flowers. . . (the new cook) is great but her timing is not. She was late again at dinner and lunch was pulled together by myself and her. She is not a meat eater and doesn't think about planning for cooking meat very well. . . . It made the evening really telescope because of the late dishes, the foot doctor, garden, Shirley's bath time and snack preparation.

One Way Mirror/ One Way Writing

The log writing invests the mental health worker with the power to determine the ultimate version of "what happened" that day. The residents were not invited to participate in the log writing, and their various (and valid) resentments and concerns about it were seen as "game-playing", paranoid or obstructive. The staff's negative reception to the resident's ambivalence about the log was contexted by a history dealing with situations where a resident would disclose some serious issue and then ask

that it not be recorded in the log. Since house policy ordained that not writing in the log compromised the mental health worker's role as a care-giver and placed resident's safety at risk, the issues were recorded despite the resident's wishes.

Sept. 10, 1987 . . . Gillian talks about not putting this in log/not telling the other staff etc.--the standard staff reply is: "we work as a team--all information is recorded in log" no more conversation about it.

Client disclosure of confidential information accompanied by requests not to tell can be understood simultaneously as a plea for confidentiality and as a means of testing worker loyalties. Such requests challenge the care-giver and the "employee" role mental health workers are in. The first clause in the Society's Code of Ethics states that the "member has a right to confidentiality," but qualifies this right by stating "there is an onus upon staff to share important and critical information with the working team" (Clause 1.11 Code of Ethics, 1986).

The exclusive ownership of the log by workers is problematic but an overly simplistic uni-directional analysis of the log is also not entirely useful. The residents did have some control over what they revealed to individual workers, and some residents used the log to broadcast their concerns to the larger community via statements such as "Are you going to put this in the log? Good, then say . . . such and such". At community meetings residents periodically brought up their resentment of the log and threaten to write their "own logs" about the staff.

The issue was not so much what gets written and read, as who has the power to inscribe another's words and actions and have this accepted as fact. As de Castell emphasizes, documentary texts are selectively empowering ". . . and function to empower the already powerful" (1991, 75). The residents were highly aware of both the log and that they could not enter into a direct dialogue with it. They could mediate their presence in the log by selectively interacting with workers but they could not prevent observations from being written up.

A log written by residents would have merely reinforced their "mental patient" identities. As with Rosenhan's pseudo-patients,⁸ note taking is not meaningful when the writing is perceived as being a symptom. Gillian was a resident who wrote continuously and copiously. She was intelligent and well-educated, yet her textual practices only helped to consolidate her deviant identity. The first description I have of Gillian, that I wrote in my personal journal following my orientation, was

 8 . D.L. Rosenhan (1973) "Being Sane in Insane Places" Science. Rosenham sent "psychiatrically normal" intern students into mental hospitals with the provision that once admitted they were to act as themselves and get discharged on their own recognizance. Each pseudo-patient brought notebooks and secretly wrote up patient-staff interactions until they realized that the clinicians were not interested in what they were writing, it was just perceived as an aspect of their psychiatric repertoire. (Rosenhan cited in Kimball, "Women, Sex role, Stereotypes and Mental Health: Catch 22." Women Look at Psychiatry. Press Gang:Vancouver. 1975)

that "Gillian was an obsessive letter writer". This point will be taken up in greater detail in a following section.

Problems occur with the naive realist belief in the efficacy of documentary practices in institutions to tell the whole truth about individuals. In some situations, this will endanger the welfare and safety of the inmate or client. A routine way of understanding a resident can contribute to a serious misreading of the whole person. In the following excerpt, a worker describes a violent incident that involves Shirley. In the midst of a confrontation with Meg, Shirley becomes enraged and threatens to hit Meg with her cane which seriously violates one of the community living rules. Meg's log entry is extremely detailed, but it all but overshadows the perspective of Shirley who is not normally a violent person.

At 8:30 I called Shirley into the kitchen with Maggie. Shirley had been making comments concerning the food, the staff, the house etc. . . She then said that no one asked her if Maggie could move into her room. I told her that was old news and this was new and we're talking about behaviour that isn't OK. That's when she lost it and started screaming about how she hates me, hates this house etc. and then went into her room and got her cane threatening to hit me. I called Emergency Services and they said to call Venture. I couldn't get Venture because Shirley was on the phone to them. I called them from the office 15 min. later and they knew who I was calling about before I even said anything.

The textual dialogue encoded in the log was treated as if it were a real exchange instead of a documented representation of the event. However, we can detect, as Smith states, the text comes to stand for "the actuality as it happened." As daily

events take their course and memory fades, it becomes possible that the event as logged could stand as the "real actuality", especially if a review was being conducted of Shirley's suitability to continue living at the boarding home. The next log entry by Sarah (P.I.C.) is valuable in the defense of the resident, Shirley, who could be in danger of losing the right to stay at the boarding house because of "her violent outbursts":

Mar 3, 1986 . . . Shirley's goal today is to help herself relax. She can't see the Team therapist until tomorrow. Give her some positive attention, if possible. I talked to her & (Meg) about last night's incident.

From Meg's log entry, it appeared to me that the style of intervention she chose probably pushed Shirley further, rather than helped her out. It was a difficult situation and Meg felt she was taking the appropriate action - but it did backfire. After discussing this, Meg said she understood the difference.

The mental health worker is not omniscient, her "logging" practices are selective and inter-subjective. Because of this it can be argued that the log is a flawed instrument of surveillance. Mainly, the limitations of the log reveal the partiality in workers' ability to observe, understand and communicate what they have seen. Extensive longitudinal reading of the log reveals distinct patterns of resident and worker interaction. Residents chose to interact with some workers and not with others, and they interacted differently with the various personalities of the mental health workers. Having been encouraged to be sensitive readers of persons, the mental health workers may have been able to connect a stray observation and

assign it a temporary meaning within the context of the resident's behaviour. But people are far more complex and opaque than "texts". When we conceive of persons as texts, even in the context of "best intentions", our uni-directional writing-up becomes a certain kind of annihilation of that person's rights.

Chapter Four

Gillian's Story/A Third Telling

The format of the log remained relatively constant until 1987 when a tragedy placed the format of the log under public scrutiny.¹ In September 1987 a long term resident publically committed suicide by throwing herself in front of the SkyTrain. As a part of the Canadian Mental Health Licensing Inspector's and Coroner's investigation the log was temporarily confiscated while the "external officials" (as they shall be called) attempted to piece together the "facts" of Gillian's untimely death. Although the boarding home was cleared of any blame (Entry Sept. 25, 1987) the style of the log was criticized for not being in a standard form. According to licensing board standards, the progress notes were the officially recognized form of documentation and so the boarding home was compelled to return to a format that had previously been rejected as not being adequate. Unwilling to relinquish the contextually rich reporting that had characterized the old style of the log notes, and buoyed by a belief that the old model was more conducive to their work as care-givers, the mental health workers reached a compromise. They would provide a double-entry of documentation: one serving

1 . I am deeply indebted to my friend Gillian, for embodying the human story and subtext of my enquiry - and for bringing to a head the emotional, personal and social crisis that precipitated the eventual direction of this investigation.

the more public demands of the mental health system, and one serving the domestic community life in the group home.

While this thesis is at one level intent on discussing the consequences of certain kinds of institutional and documentary literacy, in the final analysis, it must return to the issue of human experience, the loss of voice and the inscription of everyday life and death issues as exemplified by Gillian's story.

I am not suggesting that suicide and death are the natural outcomes of oppressive forms of institutional "write up"; however this thesis (to paraphrase Ivan Illich) is a plea for "research on lay literacy" 2. It insists that in order to open the conversation to certain kinds of voices, human rights and representations, it is important to also ask questions about our everyday textual practices. In order to probe the social, psychological or spiritual consequences of conducting textual relationships in institutions, we must begin to unpack the problematic of what occurs to a person reduced to a documentary profile in a psychiatric file, an anecdotal report card, or an ethnographic representation.

 2 . This phrase is borrowed from Ivan Illich's eloquent appeal for a return to investigations in the human dimensions of literacy, so the metaphor of the self as book "clerical literacy" can resist the technologization of the word/self in computer metaphors. (Illich, Ivan "A Plea for Research on Lay Literacy" In the Mirror of the Past: Lectures and Addresses 1978 - 1990. Marion Boyars: New York, 1992 163).

The Story

On September 15, 1987, I had to take an alternate bus route home as the SkyTrain was shut down for several hours. On the platform I heard the rumours, someone had died on the tracks. Later, the 11 o'clock news reported a death but no names were released. The following morning on the regular bus, (the SkyTrain was still not running) I scanned the newspaper looking for more information on the accident. A small detail disturbed me in the account, the victim's metal rimmed glasses had to be pried out from between the rails. That afternoon as I sat in a dental chair, my partner called to say that it was Gillian who had died on those tracks. She "fell", or threw herself from the 29th Street Platform in front of an oncoming SkyTrain. He was concerned I would hear her name on the news on the way home. In death, as well as in life, the documentary text and its conceptual practices of power had superseded the human ability to heal, communicate and connect. The log entry dated Sept. 16, 1987 reads:

I have spoken with Dr. Duffy at the West Side Team /& Gave Paul Connors a full report for the "audit" they do in these situations.--Also the Coroner's office, Arlene at GVMLP, the B.'s, several (main office) staff, all (of our) staff--except M. who I haven't been able to reach--& finally CKVU showed up here with a camera crew requesting info & an on camera interview. I told the reporter ////[cross out] no/that I/ felt very uncomfortable about this & thought it was inappropriate, that it's my job to safeguard the rights of the other residents ////[cross out] we are all grieving right now.

The report of Gillian's death has been termed an "audit". The irony is not lost on the writer of the entry, and she puts

the word in quotation marks. Her response is shaped by forms imposed by external authorities who will change the context and meaning of the "facts" that lead to Gillian's death. Her responsibility is to construct a humane "account" of the loss to the community which loved and cared for Gillian. Her story must counter the version being worked up by the news media who want to sensationalize the grisly death of a "former mental patient". Her report is a double-edged sword: the "evidence" found in the log should exonerate the workers and the mental health boarding home from any negligence, yet the log's "text" and the lives of the residents will now be scrutinized by the police. The flaws of the text are laid open. Can the facts speak the truth? As Flynn and Schweickart query--can the external male dominated order "read" the clues that emanate from the shadow side of women's lives and forms? Judith Fetterley's essay "Reading about Reading" is deployed to make this point:

Two women, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters, are able to read the text--a disorderly kitchen, evidence of hastily abandoned tasks, crooked stitching in a quilt in progress, shabby clothes, an inadequate stove, a broken cage, a dead bird--that the men could/would not see. From the outset, Martha Hale has no trouble sensing the story written in the artifacts in Minnie's Kitchen. But what qualifies her as a reader, finally, is her concern for the woman whose fate depends on a responsible reading of her story (Schweickart and Flynn, "Introduction", 1986, xx).

Ten days later, Sarah the "PIC" writes:

Staff: Everyone has handled this difficult time since Gillian's death with courage and integrity. Please be gentle with yourselves for the next while--it has been

stressful and the aftermath of grief will continue-- and it's a prime time for getting sick. So--take it easy & take care of yourselves.

Also in the realm of the practical -- make sure you read J. & A's logging on Tues. Sept. 15, when they were dealing with Gillian. They both dealt with the situation and their role very well--near perfect. They took all the appropriate action. Both the City Licensing Inspector and the Coroner's Investigator were satisfied with the action taken by staff.--Thank GOD. (my emphasis)

The following entries document the events leading up to, and directly from Gillian's death. Commentary and relevant analyses are spliced between the entries. This creates a fragmentary text, but in doing so, models the other side of the immaculate one-way mirror of documentary reality. The log tells many stories, as do the various medical reports and forensic reports of this tragic event, documents that I do not have access to. Gillian's death did not begin nor end within the framework of the institutionally sanctioned resolution: i.e., "she may have committed suicide" (Sept. 17, 1987).³

Sept. 15, 1987 . . . 11:30 Gillian still not in -- checked the notes on Gillian's desk with Janet before she left. It is also possible she went to same friends (Sunday outing) to watch the hockey game--this mentioned in notes --

 3 Dorothy Smith in "No One Commits Suicide" contrasts the phrases "she committed suicide" and "she killed herself," as exemplifying differences between a human event subsumed by the relations of ruling which include an institutional discourse of "motives, reasons, clinically identifiable states of mind," and "responsibility", and the "disjuncture between how that death has been experienced by those involved" (Smith, 1990a, 142). I read Smith's essay several years after Gillian's death and found the parallel between the "event" and her text to be both macabre and extremely helpful.

however, the game was over at least 2 hours ago. Will wait a bit longer.

[a new entry - new pen colour - with other notes in margins First called MHES Mental Health Emergency Services) to ask for advice - advised to call family, etc.]

10:00 am At 12 Called Gillian's sister-in-law, her friends, the B.'s --and the major hospitals--eight in all from Burnaby General to Vancouver General. No Gillian.

Put in a missing persons report at 12:30--at 3 am two police officers arrived to tell me that Gillian was dead--had been hit by a SkyTrain in vicinity of 29th St. station. They asked a lot of questions--they confirmed identification --and asked to take away the paper from G's desk with the Pandora St. address on it and the references to watching the hockey game, and [a note which read] "take carton & string" and down in one corner someone's name: seemingly unrelated to the rest of the note. While I was waiting for the police (had been told at the time that they'd be coming by--in retrospect, I should have suspected, I guess) I looked up the name in the telephone book--and Pandora Street address is hers. Called three times let the phone ring on and on--no answer.

When Gillian was killed by a fall in front of the SkyTrain, several events transpired to change the relationship the staff had with the log book and the way that log was read and written. First, the police took the paper and scraps of notes that had been on Gillian's writing desk. There was more interest in the scribbled scraps of documentation than with the human beings who lived and worked with Gillian. No residents were interviewed, presumably because they were "mental patients". Later, in the following weeks the log book was retrieved by forensic investigators. Texts and documents were seen as providing concrete evidence as to the "reality" of the incident. Apart from the statement provided by the staff person on duty, and whatever communications transpired between the other health care professionals who were responsible for Gillian, no other staff

persons at the boarding home were interviewed regarding the events leading up to and surrounding Gillian's death. Gradually, documentary reality supplanted the human telling of the event.

We will explore the contrasts here as a relation between the ideological practices of the social relations of ruling and the everyday forms of talk in which events are told in primary narrative form hugging an experienced reality. (Smith, 1990a, 142)

A few days later a police officer came to look at the medication records. He took a list of the pills, the amounts and times for dispensing:

Sept. 17, 1987 . . . He wanted to know if she would have had any access to the drugs, how they were dispensed and if she could have stockpiled any. I showed him our procedure sheet and how we gave them out. He is with accident investigations and gave his card and tel no. On the back of the card is the name of the coroner who is handling the case. He states that it appears to be a suicide.

When the constable stated that it looked as if Gillian had committed suicide he provided an official "naming" for this terrible event. Despite considerable logging over previous weeks that Gillian was expressing suicidal feelings, we had been unable to "officially" name this death other than an accident until the police officer made his statement. We all were nagged by the fear that Gillian hadn't actually meant to kill herself, that she may have accidentally fallen in front of the train, but the video recording from the station camera and the coroner's report were beginning to fill in the "facts". States Smith:

[the phrase] "she committed suicide" arises and belongs in an institutional form of ruling mediated by documentary

forms of knowledge. "She committed suicide" is a form of factual statement provided for by the apparatus of governing, administering, and managing. (144)

Fri. Sept. 4, 1987 . . . Gillian is anguishing about her wasted life and talked at length about how she went away to School of London etc. and ended up hospitalized. . . . I feel she is despondent enough to be setting up for a real bad depression unless she can get redirected. She admitted her frenetic pace is self created to keep these feelings/memories away. She feels that she destroyed her mind as a young person. She is seeing all of her family as successes and herself as a failure. I feel she bears watching for suicidal feelings.

When Gillian first utters her feelings of despair about a "wasted life" the house staff is alerted and instructed to begin to log their observations of Gillian. Some uncertainty is expressed about the validity of Gillian being suicidal, as the "chronic suicide risk" doesn't appear to be too different from "the everyday" person. Staff struggle to balance a textual reality with their own "knowing" about Gillian.

Sept. 5 1987 . . . showered & shampooed & is glowing with/ good health; Sept. 12, 1987 . . . Haven't noticed anything like this before re: Fri. log . . . she also appears to be fine--last night's conversation was much like old times.

A week later Gillian is picked up for a minor shoplifting incident. She has now enacted a well documented pattern: there are two previous suicide attempts following shoplifting incidents (1981, 1984). Gillian is officially labeled a "chronic suicide risk".⁴ At age 56, Gillian decides that her life is not worth

4 . This description of Gillian was frequently evoked by therapists and psychologists for several years prior to this event and is recorded in the daily log going back as far as 1982. The label in this circumstance was virtually meaningless as "chronic suicide risk" implied she 'might' take her life, and thus was within the

living and on a drizzly September night jumps the traces of more predictable patterns. Anticipating a drug overdose attempt the staff take necessary precautions by locking up keys and the medications cupboard.

Sept. 10, 1987)*****(Large print) GILLIAN IS CONSIDERED BY THE TEAM TO BE A CHRONIC SUICIDE RISK. SO BE ALERT AND EXTRA CAREFUL OVER THE WEEKEND. 1. -with keys - don't lay them down for a minute! & I've moved the spare keys to the top drawer, staff file cab. (back of) because I think Gillian might know where they are. 2) with the med cupboard - don't leave it unattended, even if you're in same room, as Gillian moves very quickly.**

The entire house is put on alert and a number of interventions and plans are put in place to watch over Gillian's safety. These plans include making sure the keys to the medication cabinet are never laid down "for a minute"; alerting medical doctors, therapist and West Side Mental Health Team; and providing appropriate channels of information to the police who arrested Gillian. Much discussion is centered around how to respond to Gillian as she is very agitated and ashamed. Staff become aware of Gillian "hovering at their elbow, particularly whenever they are in the kitchen, near the locked medication cupboard". Gillian requests that the shoplifting incident not be recorded in the log, which is not permitted.

Sept. 10, 1987 . . . Gillian talks about not putting this in log/not telling the other staff etc.--the standard staff reply is: "we work as a team--all information is

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historical pattern.

recorded in log. no more conversation about it." . . . She is agitated , remorseful , frightened. . . . [Long entry on how to assist Gillian] Tell her she is to discuss her concerns with P. & Dr. D. at the Team. The role of the Team in this situation is to support her & help her sort out how to deal with the situation & her feelings. The role of the staff is to acknowledge her concern and redirect her to home-oriented tasks/activities.

The workers make a concerted effort to read Gillian carefully. Is she at risk? What is "normal" behaviour for this complex person? Gillian's medical history has labeled her a "chronic suicide risk", yet no preventative action has been taken by those in control of her safety (i.e., hospitalization). The "external authorities" require a certain amount of accumulated evidence before any action can take place, a fine line between preserving a life and protecting her human rights. The staff knew Gillian well and were forced to raise their "antennae" in order to detect what constituted a "real" threat or what was an ongoing expression of Gillian's "normal" level of despair. They tuned into her appearance and domestic activities for answers:

Sept. 11/12, 1987 ON [an entry mainly directed at on-call staff] Please keep your eye on Gillian. She's been eying the med cupboard according to A. last night. She's been caught for shoplifting and may be suicidal. Please read through latest pages of log. So, hope your shift is fine.

Sept. 12 . . . Gillian in and out today; gone for a walk this evening and a coffee. Said she isn't doing very well, feeling quite anxious since the incident. She spent lots of time in her room at her desk today; bought a rose for her friend's birthday. Hasn't requested any P.R.N.'s [prescription upon request] so far. Has had a shower and washed her hair. (took PRN).

Sept. 12/13 O/N . . . Thanks for logging Gillian and the med cupboard business. May be just my paranoia, but she seemed to be right there, every time I opened the door, including twice when I gave out P.R.N.'s, to get herself a drink of water.

Sept. 13 O/N . . . Gillian is sleeping soundly to avoid life. Woke her twice to do room check. She is very upset that Sarah isn't in today to resolve everything before noon. I've explained that sometimes these things take several weeks, which horrified her. Anything Gillian wants to run on about, should be discouraged. I've told her that the care team will be handling the whole thing and they will contact her. She seems O.K. however, not too intense.

Sept. 14, 1987 . . . Gillian went out after supper to get cardboard boxes to put away her summer clothes. She was quiet in her room most of the evening. And I did notice that almost every time I opened the med. cupboard she was at my elbow.

Sept. 14/15 . . . Gillian up and dressed (all in blue this morning) for breakfast--unusual. Then she disappeared --meant to talk with her re: those boxes. Extremely subdued at breakfast.

The relative powerlessness of the staff to keep this woman physically safe from harm was intensified by the strict private - public boundaries enforced by the professional health care team who had legal and medical jurisdiction over Gillian's "case". The role of the mental health workers was emphasized as being confined to the domestic support available to Gillian within her home environment. The staff were instructed thus:

Sept. 15, 1987. . . Gillian will work out the situation between the arresting officer (no charges are being laid) and the Mental Health Team. We are not (staff) ongoing participant's ////(cross out) only in helping Gillian within her home environment to be as healthy/safe as she possibly can be (meaning we would be supporting whatever action the Team deems appropriate & best for Gillian) .

Gillian's suicide shattered the lives of many people living and working in the house. For her friends who dwelt with Gillian in the community boarding home, vestiges of their responses are captured in the pages of the log that documented the daily rhythms of life. Gillian's death may have served as a

counterpoint to their own stories of despair, endurance and courage, but those thoughts and stories do not enter the pages of the mental health log book. Within the month, a new person was ensconced in her room. It was a long time before her bedroom space was not referred to as "Gillian's room".

Sept. 17, 1987 . . . In morning - midst of crisis -- I interviewed potential resident from Riverview in the pm -- all things considered, interview went O.K. . . . Practical things: I pulled Gillian's meds & chart & brought them up to 3rd Floor/ I erased all info about her from chart by my desk. . . . There is an unreality about this - which I'm sure will change as we deal with her belongings and go to the service.

To re-trace the events that "caused" or led up to Gillian's decision to kill herself, one can read many tendrils of stories but these are not the stories that are legitimate or recognized. Each worker reproached herself for all the "signs" that were missed: the last few conversations, dress and appearance, the build-up of crises--all these stood vividly out in each person's mind. Unlike a story or novel, we cannot trace the point in the "text" where she turned the corner and resolved to finish her life. We searched our memories for a motive or an explanation; the external authorities searched the text for theirs:

A . . . general conclusion is that the process of investigating sudden deaths involves the coroner in a process of explanation. If the clues available allow him to construct an explanatory model which seems to fit a particular type of death, then the verdict will categorize that death accordingly. Thus, if he cannot adequately explain why a person should have committed suicide, then another verdict will be recorded. (J. Maxwell Atkinson [1978] Discovering Suicide: Studies in the social organization of sudden death. In Smith, 1990a, 146)

As care-workers familiar with the fragments of Gillian's subjective and domestic life, we were faced with a revision in the context of her death. Dorothy Smith explains,

In the context of an actual self-killing, the presuppositions of people's relations are called into question. The problem of whether it was indeed as I saw it, of the disparities between how it was experienced and how it comes to be represented, has a sharpness deriving from the power of the experience itself. (Smith, 143)

What did we really know about this person Gillian? Despite the abundance of officially documented information recorded in medical files or read in the daily log, very little was known about her beyond the identity of "chronic non-specified psychiatric condition" (Medical record description).

What was known was that she had been highly educated and began a promising career with the United Nations. She was artistic, the crafts, art and photographs that filled the house were testimony to that; some fragment of a note referred to by a family member suggested she may have once been a gifted musician. She may have been married as she had a different name from her brother, but she never discussed her past relationships with men.

The person we did know played an integral role within the community life of the boarding home where she dwelled for over a decade. Gillian was the unofficial resident photographer, historian, ceremonial cake baker and card artist. She volunteered as a librarian for the Shaughnessy Hospital Veterans and produced a multitude of artifacts for Craft Fairs. She was

complex, with a good sense of humour and often presented a "challenge". She frequently started new projects that could snowball into gargantuan proportions. A casual suggestion by an unwary staff person (probably on-call or newly arrived) for Gillian to investigate woodwork for a craft project prompted a huge delivery of lumber, paints, power tools and a drafting table a week later. I heard the amazing story of how the staff and residents gaped as a large truck laden with wood backed into the driveway and Gillian filled the entire basement and third floor of the house with her "project".

Officially designated as a "chronic suicide risk", Gillian's portrait was irrevocably fixed. For a time, her death was more significant than her life, an illustration of the dynamics that occur when an individual ruptures the "conceptual relations of ruling" and takes on a new textually mediated identity. The social institutions that had succeeded in scribbling copious notations and accounts of Gillian's health, state of mind, program of medication and personal habits, had in the final analysis, utterly failed to "capture" the living person. Although, as Dorothy Smith might state, as a "textually mediated identity" Gillian was fully captured by the paper cage of the conceptual relations of ruling.⁵

5 . The image of the paper cage was suggested by Barb Etches which clarifies the metaphor of "textually mediated identities" so fully.

Memory was exceedingly important to Gillian. She was deeply disturbed about the "destruction of her mind" as she called it. To remedy her loss, she wrote "obsessively" (as we called it in the parlance of mental health workers). She was determined to reconstruct her past and memory and did so through writing. She refused to relinquish any event--small or large--without some form of documentation. Her letter writing and note taking were legendary, so much so, that we were often instructed to monitor the degree of Gillian's "obsessiveness", to try and re-direct her toward more productive activities. One of the first things that I was told about Gillian was "she easily becomes compulsive about a subject, letter writing" [Personal journal entry: June 18, 1985] She was known to sit by the mailbox in order to catch the mail carrier so she could retrieve a letter she felt was not "quite right". In 1986, she made herself ill attempting to fully document the events of Expo after one of the managing editors of The Vancouver Sun had innocently suggested to Gillian that she produce a photo essay about the event. He probably saw an intent woman with a camera and guidebook, furiously scribbling in a note pad, and asked how she liked the event. A few months later she came to the staff and "confessed"--it had all gotten too out of hand. To "save" her, they reamed out her room of the hoarded brochures, postcards, notes and promotional materials and filled the Smithrite container in the driveway. That summer she took two cans of pop, broke into the medication cupboard, and methodically chewed

through two racks of pills. That's the way things were with Gillian--no writing was innocent (Lather, 1988).

My most common memory was "catching" Gillian sitting at her desk, usually past midnight, lamp burning; the writing interrupted by my entry into the room; the reluctant halt and putting away of papers and pens to get ready for bed. Gillian's writing was considered pathological and provided evidence of her obsessive and compulsive personality. When the forensic team confiscated the last scraps of letters and notes scattered upon her desk, they were conferring a validity to her writing that had been absent during the final phase of her life.

Gillian's documentation practices worked to consolidate her identity as a mentally ill person. In a different context she may have been valued as a prolific correspondent, diarist or social watchdog. Gillian's story is one that illustrates the power relations inherent in institutional literacies, in the account of whose reality is valid and whose is not.

Such "realities" and issues obviously impact upon all aspects of textual documentation, from social science research to the educationalist's report card. It is in the illustration of psychiatric atrocities that the consequences of documentary literacy may find their most sensational expression, but the power relations of "write up" are present in all instances of institutional documentary practices.

. . . .

In the end, we did all that was possible - and in Gillian's memory, planted a yellow climbing rose against the stone wall that flanked her room by the western side of the house.

CHAPTER FIVE
 WRITING DOWN/FROM RHETORIC OF MANAGEMENT
 TO POETICS OF CARE

Several times during the history of the community boarding home, the mental health staff consciously elected to maintain a style of writing which they believed facilitated the care of the residents of the group home and their working relationships with each other. Thus the log, despite its documentary function, was also a by-product of a particular set of social and material conditions and personal values embodied by a group of "writing selves": the subjectivity, collectivity and agency of the women who collaboratively wrote and read the log (Harper, 1991). For this reason, the documentary analysis provided by Dorothy Smith cannot entirely account for this unique and contradictory text. For this analysis it seemed both necessary and productive to extend and supplement Smith's analysis with a broadly literary elucidation of its form and function. To show why this is so will be the chief concern of this chapter.

After a resident committed suicide, the narrative format of the log was rejected by legal and medical authorities, and the workers were required by the Greater Vancouver Licensing Board¹ to switch to a medical model of reporting called "progress

 1 . I will refer to these as "external authorities" as they represent the external regulating body of authority above and beyond the boarding home, whose presence is evoked in certain rules and buffered by the front line work of the mental health staff.

notes". This event uncovered the textual politics of the log and changed the way that the log was read and written. As a worker, and later as a researcher, I came to believe that this experience altered the previously transparent relationship the staff had with the log book and their own textual practices. With this realization came a series of questions:

Is a certain style of documentation conducive to caring relationships within an institution and another not? Why would an external authority refuse to acknowledge the values the workers themselves insisted were embodied by a narrative text? What does their rejection of the newly prescribed log signify? Why did this group of writers not relinquish the delinquent format of their textual practices?

"Poetics"

When I speak of a "poetics" I refer to the features of experience carried by language that evoke response and meaning beyond the propositional intent of the utterance. Poetics are tacit yet suasive, and encompass the capacity of language and events to influence and shape imagination and understanding beyond reason. The current vogue of the term "poetics" suggests a dimension of meaning that replaces literary definitions with a "social imaginary".² Richard Kearney states that the broad sense

 2 . In Deanne Bogdan's current book Re-educating the Imagination: Towards a Poetics, Politics, and Pedagogy of Literary Engagement she reclaims the value of the "poetic" as a potent means of re-investing the imagination with a literary literacy for purposes of empowerment and dialectical pedagogy. She develops the notions of a poetics of need (140-147); the poetics of pluralism (136-145); the poetics of total form (55-57); the poetics of refusal (165); and the poetics of

of the term "poetics" used in an "affirmative hermeneutic stance" comprises an "exploration of the human imagination to make (poiesis) a world in which we may poetically dwell" (Kearney, 1991, 9). 3

Poetics are the meta-organizational principles behind a metaphorical gestalt which refuses taxonomic description; no amount of correct rule following will produce poetic understanding. Although the poetic is considered to be a component of rhetorical persuasion, the rhetorical is "subservient" to the poetic imagination, as the poetic informs "reason" to direct the will:

Rhetoric is subservient to the imagination, as logic is to the understanding; and the duty and office of rhetoric . . . is no other than to apply and recommend the dictates of reason to imagination, in order to excite the appetite and will (Bacon cited in Burke, 1969, 81).

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ordinary existence and pure utterance (206-11, 261-268). I am not able to do justice to her complex weaving of ideas here, but I was struck by her reclamation of a poetics beyond semantic understanding, as a kind of "action" in the world.

3 . Kearny refers also to Linda Hutcheon's definition of a post-modern poetics as an "open, ever-changing theoretical structure by which to order both our cultural knowledge and our critical procedures. This would not be a poetics in the structuralist sense of the word, but would go beyond the study of literary discourse to the study of cultural practice and theory", from (Hutcheon, Linda. A Poetics of Postmodernism. London: Routledge, 1988), p.14 Hutcheon cited in Kearney, 1991, 11)

Poetics conjure up notions of genius while rhetoric must ultimately appeal through logic. Rhetoric convinces through its mastery of the rational, while the poetic could impel the independent individual to throw off the strictures of indoctrination (Bogdan, 1992, 16). Kenneth Burke states that imagination and logic are often treated as if they were antithetical" . . . until finally we come to the proportion: imagination is to poetry as ideology is to rhetoric" (88).

Deanne Bogdan wishes to reclaim the poetic as a means to re-educate the imagination:

If texts read readers as much as readers read texts, then rhetorical devices which traditionally could be counted on to insulate against verbal manipulation have now been co-opted. . . . The educated imagination needs re-educating in part because it has been colonized by its own sophistication. (Bogdan, 1992, 6)

What are the Poetics of Care

The "poetics of care" are embedded within the "rhetoric of management". They are, after all, dualistic aspects of one another: rhetoric provides the logic of reasonable action but poetics provide the kinetics of human agency, "moving" people to act, in turn usurping the forms of overt control of the rationalizing text. So seen, the log, due to the variability of its form and stories, becomes a "poetic" text open to a wider range of interpretation.

The poetics of care both impel and actuate understanding and meaning, while the rhetoric of management must rationally convince the reader of the rightness of action. Poetics are not

democratic: they seduce and powerfully overthrow understanding to an extent even greater than do the arguments of rhetoric. The power relations expressed by the poetics of the log remain far less readily detectable as an ideological construction. It may be that the refusal of the forensic and licensing board officials to read the log or to permit its continued use is a response of the State to the potential anarchy of poetic form. It is here the contradiction of the log is most problematic for the purposes of care because it is possible to "disguise" the dominating aspects of poetic suasion, whereas the dictates of the documentary text may be more readily recognized. Goody states that within literate bureaucracies it is less easy to evade an order that has been committed to writing and carries an authoritative signature (Goody, 1986, 124). However, as military tribunals have demonstrated, it may be more possible to evade personal responsibility for an action if one has been compelled to act by direct order than if one has been persuaded to act on the basis of interpretation.

The workers who responded to the "poetics of care" dimension in their log writing recognized that the dimension of active communication was embodied in the narrative language of the daily log. The subtext of the log's pages which constituted the "radar. . . . [that] is unspoken [and] is always so fine and clear here" (Log Entry, Sept. 11, 87) embodies the "real" source of intelligence in the log writing. The "rhetoric of management", which requires only the standardized documentary

records of resident behaviour, cannot provide the engaged "intelligence" that the workers felt they needed to provide a level and kind of care capable of keeping the residents "safe". From this standpoint, then, "poetics" refers to those features which escape the literal coordinating intent of documentation, but which profoundly communicate the human experience of attentive response.

The textual practices that fall under the aegis of a "poetics of care" are distinguished by the effort of their practitioners to attend to the well-being and care of each other and the residents. As a "poetics", the narrative elements of the log can be seen to represent the emotional, intuitive and empathetic knowledge that informs the pragmatic activities of care-giving. "Poetics" comprise the basic "intelligence" of all veteran practitioners who skillfully navigate the complexities of human experience amidst the details of daily experience. This section of the thesis will attempt to argue against the totalizing vision of the log as a dominating text--and will argue for the value of the location of the poetic in insider's writing as an antidote against the "conceptional relations of ruling".

Despite the fully explicated descriptions of resident activities and events that were possible in the documentary text, the mental health workers voiced their beliefs that "progress notes" could not adequately assist them in doing their job.

The Rejection of the Log

The refusal of the external authorities to "read the log" can be read as a rejection of a particular life world--the "lebeswelt" of women's lives in a community mental health boarding home, a reality not normally present in the great tradition of "human" narrative. The narrative log is an unwanted text as it uncovers the uncertainty of documentary form and reveals the inability of literate practices to ascertain "truths" in human action and intent.

How does this textual "field", the log, despite its coordinating function, work to open up possibilities of resistance, creativity and connection among mental health workers that would not have been possible through some other form? How does the log become a field for possibilities through its poetics as well as a field for containment through its functional limitations? I would like to return to the log and re-read it for new poetic possibilities, to read it as "A very noisy night with a thousand doors opening and closing" (Log entry August 14, 1984).

"A very noisy night with a thousand doors opening and closing."

This quote vividly recaptures my sense of working in the group home. I had a peripheral awareness of ceaseless activity just beyond my grasp: I could detect doors opening and closing,

but no matter how I strained to see the whole picture, I was always "in the dark".

The following question has helped to mediate much of my ambivalence about the function of the log: "Would I prefer to be a woman in need of care within this community boarding home rather than in another?" My answer has always been an unequivocal "Yes!" As I read through years of the log, I consistently "heard" the refrain of workers referring to the special qualities of sensitivity, collegiality and caring that they experienced working in the boarding home. Much of this was communicated through the log writing, as most workers worked alone during their shifts.

"A Very Noisy Night"

My mental health worker identity was constructed on the job, in the community of practice of the mental health boarding home. My "situated learning"⁴ occurred within the context of high level personal engagement with the residents, mainly involving the

 4 . Lave and Wenger discuss the construction of expert identities in non-formal education settings, that occur as the apprentice is literally thrown into the activities of their craft. ". . . learning as increasing participation in communities of practice concerns the whole person acting in the world. Conceiving of learning in terms of participation focuses attention on ways in which it is an evolving, continuously renewed set of relations; this is, of course, consistent with a relational view, of persons, their actions, and the world, typical of a theory of social practice" (Lave and Wenger, 1992, 51).

frenetic pace of domestic activities within the house. The textual practices of writing and reading the log occurred at the periphery of this intense engagement, and constituted some of the only private moments of the work shift. During the reading and writing of the log, workers were able to extricate themselves from the intense physical and emotional demands which characterize their job.⁵ It was under these conditions that mental health worker identity was constructed and where the implicit differences among workers and residents were reinforced.

The staff took pride in the quality of their work and efforts to attend to the house as a whole. Although "care" sometimes seemed to be expressed in compulsive cleanliness and perfectionism, the workers' focus largely remained centred on the creation of a comfortable home environment for the fifteen women who lived there. While the group home acquired a reputation as "Dreary Chores" among some on-call workers not used to the level of commitment to work, it was a desired workplace and an exemplar in the mental health community:

5. Mental health work resembles other low paying "feminized" non-skilled occupations such as mother-work; care of the very young or the elderly; secretarial and waitressing. A typical mental health shift could include doing laundry, cooking, cleaning floors and bathrooms, vacuuming, decorating, gardening or grocery shopping; administrative responsibilities such as filling work schedules, meetings with health care professionals, or ordering medications; and resident oriented activities such as crisis intervention, life skills, companionship, recreational activities, monitoring of resident hygiene, or sometimes just "hanging out".

March 17, 1987. . . So Sarah Congratulations again on sticking it out this long, Its nice to know that you've made it into a home that's got a good name according to the system. Have a good nite. J.

[Insert in margins] Thanks, J. again, I really appreciate this acknowledgement--six years does feel like a while--but I can't take all the credit for our good name. I share the credit equally with all the staff--who have cared enough and worked hard to make it what it is. Along this line--I forgot to tell you all that John Russell the Big Cheese from Greater Vancouver Mental Health, toured here a while ago and was very pleased--made the comment that there is a warmth and ambience here that doesn't exist in most Boarding Homes. I thanked him and told him its because we have a good staff. [my emphasis]

What other purposes did the Log serve?

The log was a kind of a meeting place: it maintained lines of communications with other workers that were not entirely work related and facilitated social contact with the women who otherwise would not have any contact with each other beyond staff meetings. Many entries exhibited a kind of "talking" style that addressed a well known audience of readers who were mutually dependent upon each other. Conventional documentary forms disguise the inter-textual contributions of writers other than the "designated" writer. As Janis Harper points out in her study of the "findings"⁶ genre at the Workers' Compensation Board,

 6. Harper calls "findings" a form of forensic writing that have a basis in the law (12). "Findings are legal documents composed collaboratively by three Workers' Compensation Board members who form a panel. They decide the outcome of a worker's appeal to the (WCB) based on a formal hearing or a "read and review" of the worker's case file" (13). The three members hear the appeals, meet, discuss and weigh the evidence, but only one member drafts the finding and circulates it among the others for revision and editing. "When the finding meets the satisfaction of the panel members, all three sign the final draft" (Harper, 1991, 13).

institutions often fail to recognize the impact of collaboration on textual production (Harper, 1991, 103). While the log is not of the same order of production of text as the finding, the log's production of understanding is collaborative and mutually constructed.

Oct 13, 1987 . . . Staff Please Comment: What do you think of offering Wanda and/or Tannis- Mabel's bed? maybe give Tannis Maggie's room and Wanda, Mabel's bed. J.

Of the two - think Tannis would be best in Mabel's spot. A.G.

Why? MFR

- Inext remark is a response to query "Why?" Not fair MFR - need an opinion as well as your query.

-OK - Tannis and Shirley get along well so why upset that? Wanda would have 3 roomies to suspect instead of just one. That room is so pleasant - hate to put disruptive energy in there However -- are there big probs. I didn't know about rooms 1 & 4? MFR

C'mon ma chere, tell the truth : you just don't want Wanda in your room right!!? CC

Ironically, while this style of writing contrasts sharply with Smith's depiction of the capacity of facts to eliminate individual subjectivities and replace them with forms of objectified knowledge it could be argued that the intimacy sustained in the log writing prevented this community of normally alert writers and readers from detecting and resisting their coordination into the relations of ruling that are present in all exchanges of institutional knowledge (Gunew, 1990, 23).

The informal presentation of the log book--with its three ring binder, looseleaf paper, and handwritten shift entries--helped to consolidate the "nonprofessional" identity of the mental health worker. Moreover, this informal documentary form

also helped to conceal the log's primary function as a control mechanism. Its purpose remained to coordinate a community of workers, and by implication, a community of readers and writers (de Castell, 1991, 82 after Smith). Yet this same format did provide a forum for the individual voices of the workers and did support a multi-purpose discourse that resisted appropriation by the medical models that were infiltrating other areas of the organization.

Janis Harper suggests that although a community of writers may find their individuality constrained and their "writing selves" shaped ideologically to serve the function of their workplace, "never-the-less the community is comprised of individual people whose lives include far more than their profession and who dwell in a number of discourse communities simultaneously" (Harper, 1991, 119). Some of the workers were involved with other discourse communities outside mental health work, which presumably "entered" the house during the daily work shifts. The worker's outside/inside interests included grassroots and academic feminism, traditional story-telling, the Vancouver Transition House, post-modern literary criticism, various arts and literary organizations, foster parenting, Al-Anon, WAVAW, and so on. The "other lives" of the worker's informed the sub-text in the readings of residents and the log alike, and informed the care-giving antennae of the workers. The log can be seen to embody the description of Bakhtin's "living

utterance" as it "is born out of and through the symbolic interchange of many" (Harper, 108). In Bakhtin's words:

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogical threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. (Bakhtin, 276)

The log can be seen to embody this living utterance by the multiplicity of its writers, the worlds they bring into the house with them, and the range of topics generated from within the daily business of the daily log that arise from the residents' lives. It is difficult to point to a specific exemplary excerpt, as the log is itself a "complex". The log taken as a whole is a form; the act of "logging" ties the institutional document to the conceptual relations of ruling; and the daily entries of the log are its units of meaning much like sentences in the "ordinary" text. As Ricoeur suggests:

A text is more than a linear succession of sentences. It is a cumulative, holistic process. This specific structure of the text cannot be derived from that of the sentence. Therefore the kind of plurivocity that belongs to texts as texts is something other than the polysemy of individual words in ordinary language and the ambiguity of individual sentences. This plurivocity is typical of the text considered as a whole, open to several readings and to several constructions. (Ricoeur, 1990, 159)

While this is not a comparative study, it was my experience as a "nomadic" on-call worker that "our" log was set apart from the logs kept in other boarding homes, by the difference in the tenor of reading and writing strategies deployed by the mental

health workers. These strategies helped to sustain different relationships: on one hand to the women residents; on the other, among the workers themselves as a collaborative team.

The descriptive entries also had the capacity to impart fuller portraits of individuals who might, under different circumstances, have been relegated to the reductive "psychiatric" labels that dogged their medical files. Some workers utilized the log to provide "extra" commentary about residents that transcended the required shorthand of institutional observation. The following excerpt could have read: "Had a talk with residents in the smoke-pit," but the writer took the time to develop a scene, dialogue and context of the "talk" as a way of showing her appreciation of a rare exchange. Those who were familiar with the "characters" would immediately understand its significance.

Helga, who is featured in the following entry, was often written up as an angry, paranoid individual who resorted to screaming fits when she felt threatened. Bella was often portrayed as a hard-boiled, manipulative person. Here, the recounting of a rare moment of vulnerability radically alters the reader's understanding of these "stock" characteristics. Helga's "paranoia" can be re-read as a genuine expression of despair for the loss of innocence, and Bella's tough exterior as protection for a survivor who still dares to hope. Mabel, a former bag-lady who resided in Riverview for almost 30 years, becomes a kind of mystical catalyst for the imaginings of her companions:

Sept. 3, 1984 . . . Interesting talk with Mabel, Bella and Helga in "smoke-pit". Mabel related a story where a man got gangrene and lost his lower leg from praying beside bed every night for 50 years. Bella said she likes to say her prayers because it gives her some sort of hope. When the others drifted away Helga began talking of the importance of having an inner sense of security vis a vis a conversation about the difficulties kids having to grow up in today's world. She seemed to be particularly clear thinking, soft in demeanor and she looked directly at me when she talked and often had a small smile on her face - she does take in a lot of what happens around her (not always to her benefit, I guess).

The workers maintained a more active literate relationship and ownership toward the writing of their log than did other mental health workers who worked in different boarding houses within the same organization. They consciously decided to remain with a writing format that worked for them, and frequently made references to writing the log, which suggests an ownership of "authoring". By definition, a documentary text is an "unauthored" text; in Foucault's description of texts "deprived of an author function" (Foucault, 1979,107), the log should have functioned purely as a form of institutional discourse but it didn't.

For example, a staff person writes: [Log entry] "August 11, 1984. . . Ahhh. A nice clean page, all for me." Workers developed a good eye for a well-turned phrase; puns were often spliced between the work-a-day descriptions of shifts and events; and some writing was openly appreciated. The descriptive ability of some individuals was taken as evidence of their sensitivity, good humour or regard for residents.

Reading/Writing/Caring

The staff used the log to care, not just for the residents, but also for each other. An example of meaningful interpersonal dynamics can be seen in the following excerpt. A worker has skillfully compressed the "dialogic" strands of the boarding house "environment" and uses it to thank her friends. Her entry is a comment on the value of inclusive rituals such as Friday afternoon "Tea":

Sept. 11/87. . . Tea was lovely today. Strawberry short cake got inhaled in second. Many thanks Renee (cook), for everything today. . . . Thanks for the "Scottish" place mats and thank you all for the support. What is unspoken is always so fine and clear here, with such sensitive people. I guess working here fine tunes the radar. Renee, I'll enjoy the beautiful roses. Have told most of the ladies, the grapevine will do the rest. Pearl, hands clasped on chest, expressed her sympathy, then took me aside later to ask what a miscarriage was. I explained more or less. . . Shirley had Tylenol for a pain in the neck. Unfortunately, she still complained all nite. [Insert by Sarah] "Maybe staff should have the same PRN!!" 7

Laurel's entry is a distilled portrait of the lived world of the boarding home. She refers to the "unspoken" that is "always so fine and clear here". She envisions the caring as a form of "radar", silent yet all encompassing. The roses and the "Scottish" motif of the gifts are symbolic gestures of sympathy. They acknowledge the loss of her baby, yet allude to her own

7 . Some residents such as Shirley had a huge array of PRN's ranging from Tylenol to tranquilizers. Worker's understood her need for many medications (some were placebos) as a request for attention and control.

flair for delight and creation of beauty. The "resident grapevine" suggests her awareness of the rapid transfer of communication outside of the "visible" realm which the mental health worker occupies. Her brief sketch of Pearl poignantly evokes the presence of one whom I saw as the house matriarch. Pearl is a funny, crotchety and merciless house "Royal" whose life experience as a sheltered "spinster" has remained outside of most women's reality.

Despite the physical or emotional difficulty Laurel may have been experiencing during the shift, she brackets her concerns and gets on with the care of others. "Shirley had Tylenol. . . she still complained all nite." The unintentional pun about using a "PRN" (prescription upon request) for a "pain in the neck" for a resident who "complained all night" is picked up inter-textually by Sarah, who responds in the margins "maybe staff should have the same PRN", implying it might get rid of the residents when they are being pesky. This final sequence works to attune the intimacy between workers and consolidate their solidarity in the midst of difficult times.

This entry exemplifies the inter-textual layering that characterizes the activity of "logging", and much like a "response log" in the creative writing classroom, invites comment and expects to be read by others. Thus log entries address a community of readers and writers who are always "present" at the moment of writing, as well as the intertextual dimension referred to by Todorov as consisting of:

. . . daily conversation, law; religion; the human sciences, (it will be recalled that their distinctive features lie in their having to do with texts, with which they enter into dialogue); rhetorical genres, such as political discourse; and so on (Todorov cited in Harper, 109).

Reconciling Conflict: To Log or not to Log?

At this point it is important to stress that the workers were not naively oblivious to the power relations activated by log writing. There were moments when the choice of "what to write, what not to write" constituted a conflict between their sense of obligation to the privacy of the residents and their institutional responsibilities as mental health workers. Their first obligation was to take care of the community. This meant at times (and I am speaking from personal experience here) there were violations of resident trust when it seemed that the decision "not to write" meant an abdication of responsibility. As discussed in the previous chapter, "not writing" was considered as potentially endangering the welfare of residents, whereas writing by residents is seen as endangering the self.

The following excerpt is a very clear statement from the boarding house manager (P.I.C.) who situates and rationalizes the use of the log even when it seems to violate the contract of care within the boarding home. She realistically pays attention to the contradictions that create discomfort for newer workers, those who were more likely to be "tested" by residents on what they were or were not putting in the log. She acknowledges that the power relations embodied by the log are a compromise in terms of its real function--to provide care for the fifteen women who rely upon the staff (and the log) for their well-being.

May 29, 1987 . . . The house remains a bit unstable. Staff need to use house routine as focus and be with residents in an easy and relaxed grounded way. Redirect any ongoing negative talking to lighter positive activity.

The log; exists because we are staff in a Mental Health Care Facility who are responsible for ensuring the safety and well being of 15 women during our shifts. It's very important for us to have a means of communication with each other and a way of recording information. Yes, this is the resident's home and some of them, are understandably uncomfortable with the existence of a book "where we write things down about them". However to deny what we are here, or to talk or behave with resident's as though there is something wrong or bad about this book does serious damage: it denies our responsibility as a staff person, undermines the staff team and gives the impression of something wrong or bad is going on here. The most appropriate way to handle queries about the log is to be straightforward and matter of fact, in a warm and friendly way--about what we are here and why we need the log (my first sentence). In my experience, (6 years) residents are reassured with this answer and let go of it. However, some people need to hang on and play games about it with staff--and the worst thing a staff can do is buy into this game-playing. It is not appropriate to discuss what been written in the log with residents. If this is a problem for them, then direct them to me with it.

Re: residents having their own log. No one has ever denied them or stopped them from doing this. They are free to go ahead. However, it is not appropriate for staff to set it up for them.

- * Menu Plan for next week is made up + ~~also~~ clipped up.
- * Please continue to serve varied juices for brekky...

hope you can have a relaxing, enjoying the garden —
 ?? Croquet ?? Kind of weekend everyone

Jamie Susan Darnell

AM



Lets have a garden party → Salmon + Steak BBQ / Good-bye to Vicki / hello Fall → sometime in 1st 2 weeks of Sept...
 YES!

★ ANN GIBSON ★

Thank You for all your hard work, talent,

& dedication with the gardens. They are beautiful —
 (We should be hiring the yard out for group wedding Pictures ...) They are a great source of comfort + beauty and I want you to know how much they're appreciated.

for the accolades
 for the hard work
 for the joy

Thursday Aug 25 3-11 aft. Judy and YES! again!

(Figure 9. Talking Back and Forth)

The log as a Documentary Failure

Unlike summaries, reports or progress notes, the log does not proclaim itself capable of "knowing": it is a fallible document; its fragmentary form displays the constant probability of error. Its most useful "voice" is that of the uncertainty that arises from an inter-textual sharing in the labour of decoding and encoding of the text. The log records the willingness of its workers to engage with the inter-subjective and inter-textual references of others' "take" on just "what is happening down there". Despite its physical distance--being kept on the third floor of the house--the log is entirely enmeshed in the "underground" of the residents' lives. Thus it ultimately fails as a documentary text because it is forced to acknowledge the limits of its ability to successfully objectify and objectively "know" the truth. Through their apprenticeship as mental health workers, the writers discovered that it was more responsible to say "I don't know"--in this context the log is essentially (on occasion) a doubting text; here the writers were permitted to describe, engage in dialogue and wait for the next set of revelations.

Many of the "stories" of the residents' lives refuse the solutions of rational intervention; they constantly repeat themselves no matter how much "life skill" strategies are imposed upon them. Maggie is always stashing food in her room and feeling guilty; Helga continues to scream out her existential pain; Lucia's heart always hurts for the loss of her married life and children; and Shirley uses requests for Dioval, stories of murder or

complaints of boredom to keep an attentive vanguard of care about her. I do not mean here to fetishize "women's madness", nor am I attempting to inscribe the mystical upon the activities of a handful of unfortunate persons. The stories I read in the log often fall outside the rational, and from this standpoint, the mental health worker becomes a "diviner"--she attempts to understand human activity, or to divine meaning from textual inscriptions of human action when meaning cannot be absolutely ascertained.

The log traces how human activity and meaning constantly resist the formulaic; documentary resolutions do not equate with human solutions. The flaws in the premise of the purpose of any log writing (records for understanding) uncovers the partiality of institutional documentary practice. The perception of the log as a "failed document" problematizes the easy decoding of persons when they are visualized as text fragments that can be understood by objective documentation. I have called many of the excerpts from the log "stories" but they are only fragments of a life experience. We can never fully capture the meaning of a person in a narrative. The misguided belief that one can, and the attempt to do so, does violence to the documented subject.

The retreat from fully "knowing" and the surrender to uncertainty seems, after all, a very humane and sane act. I detect a gentle acceptance of uncertainty in the documentation of the log--an acceptance of the difficulties, distress and despair caused by mental illness by residents who had no choice but to face the ongoing burden of their psychological "disability". The readers and

writers of the log have attempted to capture this uncertainty as a valid form, and they have at least simulated the sensation of understanding. They have not refused to document the richness of confusion, and have inscribed confusion in the hopes of ultimately generating understanding through its sharing.

Sat. Mar.14, 1987 . . . Very busy, very "up" day. Started off with : Mabel: who said her sheets spoke to her in a terrible nightmare, warning her that she must return them to the linen closet immediately because they belong to the house and if she slept on them one more night she'd die. All very serious. Feeling somewhat playful/patient I spent 15 minutes trying to get Mabel to the request behind the fairy tale, reminding her frequently that sheets don't talk and "what do you really want Mabel?" She never did get there. I finally said, "Well Mabel, it seems to me that what you want is your flannelette fitted sheet back again. Is that it? "Yes," she said. "Why didn't you just say so," I said. "Oh," she said. "When can I have it then?"

This little exchange put me in an excellent mood for the rest of the shift. Mabel too.

At the same time there are voices in the log that clearly want to implement a controlling measure toward the log and the residents, but they are not the dominant force. I believe in the final analysis, that there was a general impulse to honour and respect the integrity of the women who lived in the group home: that the best policy was one of non-interference. Certain kinds of "crazy talk" were not entirely rejected, and when necessary, the meanings beneath the words were listened to.

The next excerpt is a very rich example of the poetics of care provided by a worker. Laurel once again focuses almost exclusively on the inter-personal dynamics of the residents and takes pains to detail the context, setting and emotion of each.

A typical entry could have read, "The house is really shaky today, lots of tears from Gillian and Donna, and Pearl was telling all her bad stories again". Instead, Laurel chose to tell these particular stories as a means of valuing the women who spoke with her. She empathizes with their sorrows and intentionally creates a space in which to bring their stories to the rest of the staff:

June 28, 1986. . . Donna is really exhausted. We talked today. She slept a lot and had a dream about her daughter. This brought on tears, as she doesn't feel that she'll ever see her again. Apparently, she has been going over to her mother's every day after work and running errands for her. I suggested she cut the work back to three days, instead of five. She says she'll stop going to her mothers', but wants to work all five days . . . [2 page gap]

Pearl insisted on telling me every bad thing that's ever happened to her. I'd get her away from it only to have her remember yet another. Finally, I told her to have a rest.

Then Gillian came to me, just stood in front of me with her eyes brimming and mouth trembling. She'd just spent about 45 minutes on the phone with her sister, whom she says she hasn't spoken to for two years. We sat in the kitchen and I rubbed her shoulders and held her while she cried. The tears lasted about 15 minutes and she fought every one of them. We then talked a lot about holding things back and "working to avoid thinking", I told her that tears are for the healing and to let them happen. Lots of talk about her brother of course, but not in bad way. I think it may have helped. She's weak from release of tension! I haven't heard anyone cry like that for a long time and I'm so grounded (must be all the gardening work) I'm amazed.

Donna is revealed not as a disabled dependent woman, but as a conscientious, responsible person who has taken on the burden of care for her family despite a high level of exhaustion and personal problems. Pearl's bad stories are expressing a need to situate her personal history as an "outcast", perhaps to justify

why she lives in a group home. Finally, Gillian's difficult episode shows the intensity of her emotional life, the loneliness of her isolation from an indifferent family. Her surrender to tears is celebrated not as a sign of decompensation, but as a victory of sorts.

The Value of Uncertainty

The refusal by the mental health and legal authorities to honour the narrativity of the log only accentuates the very real powerlessness of mental health workers to effect change within the hierarchy of the psychiatric and medical system. The log was rejected because it was a text that insisted that motives and meanings are contingent; it drew attention to the uncomfortable truth that a singular reading is deficient and imposes violence upon the "subjects" of the text. The log pointed the way to multiple readings of life's complexities; this was not a reading that could easily be subsumed within the "conceptual relations of ruling".

The log's stories are insistent and inescapable: they were not written to be subtle. The weaving of intersubjective narratives is evident, as in almost every entry the threads of a new theme start up or run out, only to be picked up and returned to later. The narrativity of the log mirrors the way issues, problems and crises in people's lives are never fully resolved. The longitudinal scope of the log makes it possible to follow an individual's "theme" as a continuum of variations. The log, if

one prolongs its reading, becomes a document which challenges the notion that there is such a thing as denouement: our lives are not "plots". Resolution is a literary convention, to relieve tension and provide narrative topography, the human "problem" is such that the "content" of our personal narratives remain resolutely intact, it never goes away.

As Ricoeur suggests, all texts may be construed in more than one way, but ultimately, the text is a "limited field of possible constructions" (Ricoeur, 1992, 160):

What seems to legitimate this extension from guessing the meaning of a text to guessing the meaning of an action is that in arguing about the meaning of an action I put my wants and my beliefs at a distance and submit them to a concrete dialectic of confrontation with opposite points of view. This way of putting my action at a distance in order to make sense of my own motives paves the way for the kind of distanciation which occurs with what we called the social inscription of human action and to which we applied the metaphor of the "record." The same actions that may be put into "records" and henceforth "recorded" may also be explained in different ways according to the plurivocity of the arguments applied to their motivational background. (Ricoeur, 1990, 161)

The log is a textual documentation of human activity and also a limited field of possible constructions--human activity also comprises a "specific plurivocity"--providing a range of meanings that challenge the restrictive, chauvinistic intent of documentary texts. Ricoeur proposes a theory of motive to explain the logic or interpretation of action on the basis of "wants and beliefs", that he calls desirability characters. It is through the "reading" of such desires and wants that it becomes possible to argue about interpretations of actions:

. . . it becomes possible to argue about the meaning of an action, to argue for or against this or that interpretation. In this way the account of motives already foreshadows a logic of argumentation procedures. Could we not say that what can be (and must be) construed in human action is the motivational basis of this action, that is, the set of desirability-characters that may explain it? (161)

I have elected to read this log against the grain of its institutional meaning, and the "desirability" of my motives are various: to reclaim the value of mental health work; to investigate the range of meaning available from the log; to "re-write" the "documentary" and my own complicity in the textual production of the "relations of ruling".

In order for documentary texts to organize and reduce the representation of an event to a record of "facts", the contextual ground of human motives and desires has to be split off from the account of the "virtual reality" which the document is purporting to make visible (Smith, 1990a, 62). I propose that the construction of documentary meaning is also a hermeneutic activity and that by interjecting the possibilities of new readings of documentary text, the inherent plurivocity of the text will undermine the domination impulse of the conceptual relations of ruling.

In the context of one woman's suicide, the reading of the log as a record of the "plurivocity" of human action renders an absolute juridical or medical judgment virtually impossible. In such an instance the institution finds itself open to possible blame. Ricoeur suggests that even in front of the courts "the

plurivocity common to texts and to actions is exhibited in the form of a conflict of interpretations" (162). He emphasizes that it is only in the case of a tribunal that a singular "reading" be enforced. "Neither in literary criticism, nor in the social sciences, is there such a last word. Or if there is any, we call that violence" (162).

The institutional grounds for the existence of a document such as a log is to restrict and standardize the range of meaning available about residents. As Elaine Popovich's poem illustrates, the representation of residents' lives in the "progress notes" format provides the textual justification for their continued incarceration within the mental health system: a system where they will always "reside", "go for outings", "act out", and fine tune their "life skills". The mental health client has no recourse to "appeal", and the symbolic violence of "write up" is revealed only with the shattering of the one-way mirror of the text. The rejection of the plurivocity of the log banishes any belief in the neutrality of the documentary text. To restate de Castell's assertion, documentary texts work to protect the institutions from the people they are supposed to be serving (de Castell, 1990, 74). Any victimization which arises due to documentary literacy will no doubt be directed toward the subject (in fact the "objects") of the discourse. Bureaucratic institutions seek to deal with human subjects as textually mediated identities, not as complex, unique and variable individuals.

Such limits as these are reached when we mistake externalized textual artifacts we ourselves have manufactured for the things they are intended to codify or represent: when, for example, we mistake the letter of the law for its spirit, or the ethical principle for the moral action, or the texts we write for the understanding and experience they always only more or less incompletely encode. (de Castell, 76)

Gillian had to be textually constructed as a mental patient with a history as a "chronic suicide risk" in order for the Mental Health Licensing Board and Coroner's investigators to read meaning into her actions; in short, they did violence to the meaning of her actions in order to supply an institutional rationale for her suicide. The relations of ruling, as exemplified by the investigating authorities, did not permit any examination of the years of enforced psychiatrization, poverty, isolation from family, or denial of meaningful labour for a well-educated woman. They did not investigate the traumatic loss of memory probably caused by shock treatment, psychotropic drugs or insulin therapy. They did not query her family or intimates, nor consider the meaning of her loss of face when her volunteer job ended just as she was caught in a petty crime. Instead, they scavenged a few scraps of paper from Gillian's writing desk, read the files from the "Mental Health Team", and rejected the daily log that held multiple strands of events that contributed to Gillian's final decision that her life was an utter waste.

"Progress notes" are more clearly a form that delimit interpretation and rhetorically work as a method of accountability within institutions. It is only the bureaucratic

imagination that invents closure in such textual forms as summaries, reports and progress notes. Bureaucracy requires the convenience of closure in order to take action, but many events are never fully resolved; their causal after effects continue to resonate long after the "event" has passed. The log demonstrates such influences. How far back did the coroner's team read the log to understand Gillian: a week? A month? If they had read back a few years, they could have seen a multiplicity of events which ultimately contributed to her final life choice. The log as the workers wanted it written was a text that would not permit the illusion of closure, except as a clearly arbitrary gesture--i.e., the shift ended or the writer stopped writing--but the workers were confident that the story would continue to be recycled in the next encounter or in someone else's entry.

The correspondence between guessing the meaning of a text and guessing the meaning of an action occurs, suggests Ricoeur, when one puts one's desires and wants at a distance and "submit[s] them to a concrete dialectic of confrontation with opposite points of view," an impossibility when the documentary text is ordered as a "virtual reality". Ricoeur challenges the rigidity of interpretation of the "record" and supplements Smith's uni-directional analysis of the documentary text. Smith has already assumed the interpolation of objectified human action into the "worked-up" documentary product; the log challenges the

totality of her reading as it always remains in the "drafting" stage of the writing process.⁸

The documentary text, in its situating context and use within the institution, may not permit this "plurivocity" to be applied, as motivation is not generally a concern to the kind of factual knowing that the document is supposed to provide. The purpose of a documentary text is to avoid a return to Ricoeur's discussion of the juridical, which permits a reading of the text/human action as "an open work": "That means that, like a text, human action is an open work, the meaning of which is (in suspense)" (155). Bureaucracy cannot function "in suspense" and so disbelief is suspended and "right action" is declared through its forms and documentary procedures.

Through the use of the language, procedures and forms used to work up an account of Gillian's death, the institutional authorities were not able to place any blame upon the mental health boarding home or its workers for her suicide. The log,

 8 . Ironically, the act of transcribing the handwritten entries of the log has given more "stability" to the virtual reality of the documentary text. In its original form, as a working text, the worker /reader/writer was dependent upon the dialogic nature of the log in order to work. Later, when it was outside of the institution, it remained a heteroglossic text for those who experienced the visual, physical, literary, social impact of its pages. Now, as a researcher, when I bring fragmentary excerpts of the log into the medium of "type" it becomes necessary to declare that the log is an open text even as I fix it upon the page.

when read as a documentary text, was used as a distanciation record of Gillian's motive to kill herself.

Explicit references to concerns that Gillian was at risk for suicide begin on Sept. 4, and are renewed intensely by Sept. 10, 1987 after Gillian is caught shoplifting. Sarah, as the supervisor, carefully records all conversations and actions with Gillian's therapist, arresting officer and the mental health team who are mediating between the law on Gillian's behalf. It is these "external authorities" who assert their ultimate jurisdiction over Gillian's well-being and safety. She is declared a "chronic suicide risk" on Sept. 10, 1987. A series of log entries detail that the role of the boarding home is to supply only non-interfering domestic care to Gillian, with the stern instructions that the workers are not to engage with her at all regarding the legal implications of the "crime".

I believe that it is in the context of writing for the purpose of care that the log is transformed from a potentially oppressive uni-directional text into a heteroglossic, interpretative and even potentially "humane" text. The serious respons(a)bility⁹ of workers to the residents changes the way the

 9 .The term "respons(a)bility" was suggested by Celia Haig Brown as a means of illustrating the dynamics of care involved in the mental health work. The staff were not "paid to love" (as declared by a resident in Nov. 1982). Rather, they were "enabled" to be responsive to the residents and to the log in a particular way. Respons(a)bility is thus a privilege, an obligation and a response.

log becomes read and written and the manner in which information is encoded. After reading the log, we would open a door and step literally into a world--now mediated by the text-- but also a world from which the text was composed.

The log is ultimately an unfinished document, not subject to closure, with many new readers and writers and events, and the potential exists for many re-interpretations of previous entries. In other ways, however, the log is a closed text in that in its "everyday life", it is rarely subject to re-writing or re-reading, and is considered to be "finished" at every entry. Consequently, while there is potentially a constant reshaping and layering of meanings within a single narrative, in actuality, judgments are typically made on the basis of partial information. It was only during moments of crisis or conflict that the "plurivocity" of the record of action or of the text was ever called into question. Until these particular moments of rupture arose, the log was essentially perceived to be transparent and the situation did not, ethically or otherwise, permit a wide range of interpretations, although, as I have tried to argue and to show in the present work, those meanings were available.

The restriction of interpretation creates a double-bind for staff, who must, at times, find a means of "distancing" to recheck impressions of a situation with each other. It could be said that the force of textual description may eliminate argument if one perspective can be taken as more valid than another on the strength of the writer's ability to persuade through her writing.

The double-bind is further enhanced when the staff person must respond to the log solely on the basis of interpretation in the belief that she understands the text to mean a certain thing, and then later must defend her actions if there has been an error in judgment. This becomes less problematic with experience, but generally, it makes "wrong action" indefensible on some level and leaves the staff person vulnerable and defenseless against charges of wrongdoing.

This is what is entailed by accepting the limits of our own knowledge (see Ellesworth, 1989) Instead of asking what knowledge is needed to "free a man's conduct from wrong" (Hirst, 89), let us ask, instead, how we can go on living in the full knowledge of our own complicity in evil, what . . . might . . . address the tragic inescapability of unethical conduct." (de Castell, 1991)

The fact is . . . that writing can no longer designate an operation of recording, notation, representation, 'depiction' (as the Classics would say); rather, it designates exactly what linguists, referring to Oxford philosophy, call a performative, a rare verbal form (exclusively given in the first person and in the present tense) in which the enunciation has not other content (containing no other proposition) than the act by which it is uttered. . . (Barthes, 1977, 146-7)

. . . .

What, finally, is the meaning of "I write you"?

. . . .

Conclusion

There is something ultimately awkward about representing-- as I would like to do--lay mental health workers as people who are members of an "oppressed" group when they are the front line workers in an institution that systematically produces, defines and incarcerates mental patients. The intention of the previous analysis has been to produce neither another "victimology", nor indeed a "demonology", but instead to identify how intermediaries --teachers, feminist transition house workers, mental health workers--are "always already" embedded in social power relations that create identities for them, as well as for the objects (sic) --students, battered women and the mentally ill--of their profession.¹⁰

Further, the conceptual practices of power that define and impact upon their work also commits them to a contradictory relationship characterized by both co-option and resistance to identifiably oppressive elements of the larger institution. Institutional workers' employment and cooperation within the system, their codes of ethics, job descriptions and professional or situational identities all work to perpetuate these dualities of purpose. They find the textual practices of their work

 10 . See Michael Apple (1988) Teachers and Texts: A Political Economy of Class and Gender Relations in Education; and Gillian Walker's discussion of the contradictions experienced by feminist transition house workers in Family Violence and the Women's Movement, 1992.

activities serve to educate, empower, or care for a particular group (sometimes with the deliberate intent to disrupt the larger power structures) but simultaneously, this same work ensures that the group remains contained by the separation of the care-giver/cared-for dichotomy. This means identifying with the discourse of the larger institution, for the naming of oppositional experience must dovetail with the social definition of the "problem".

The pragmatic purpose of the log was to rhetorically construct the situating function of the boarding home. As well, the text/log provided a matrix of contradictory textualities. It was a text that worked on unworking itself, unraveling the ordering narrative and ordering the inarticulate narrative. The log proved itself over and over again to be a "living utterance", yet it simultaneously constructed rigid textual identities for its subjects and, if less obviously, for its writers.

The refusal or rejection of the narrative poetics constituted in the subtext of the log hearkens back to what Kenneth Burke describes as the "sources of mystery beyond rhetoric":

. . . These can be rooted in the secrecy of plans during gestation. . . . Or there is mystery in the infancy of the "unconscious", nonverbal, postverbal, and superverbals. By nonverbal we mean the visceral; by postverbal the unutterable complexities to which the implications of words themselves give rise. (Maybe the word should be "coverbal") (Burke, 1969, 180).

The refusal by the forensic and licensing board authorities, to "read" the log and its poetics of care was a rejection of the

heteroglossic, resisting and non-linear narrative, the intertextual narrative that churned under the skin of the institutional text. Their refusal, understandably, was a gesture to resist the pull into the undertow of the stories that construct the "gothic" of the boarding home "genre": homeless women, madness, poverty and loss; the absence of men, family and children; the insistent stories of damage from, and resistance to patriarchal order. All of this gets constructed in the records of domestic life of the log, and it is at this intersection where the log cannot be integrated into the rational sense-making order of a conventional documentary text.

The poetics of care are not necessarily "better" or "more just" than the rhetoric of management: poetics are not necessarily "good"; they surely have an equal capacity for "evil". The rhetoric of management as embodied in progress notes is essentially an accounting system, and due to the unlovely and utilitarian form of progress notes, cannot seduce the reader to identify with the "subjects" of the documentary text. The narrative log, which supports an active identification with the residents, is an aspect of the dangerous essence of the poetic Plato sought to banish from his Republic.

In the log I locate a language event given to me by Mabel:

(Journal Entry Mabel Jan. 1987)-- "Say, did I ever tell you about the time the laundry room in Riverview expired and turned into Reptile World? It was just lovely the way they all sunned themselves on those hills, not the big hill, it was that little hill between the laundry and the tuck shop. My goodness how they glistened on those green hills, I can still see it now."

This evocative statement exemplifies for me all the contradictions that I experienced as a worker within the boarding house culture: it is funny, mysterious and specific; its meaning is mutually constructed from the interchange between this marvelous person, Mabel, and myself, at that moment and this one. I will never really "know" what she meant by it, but I have cherished what meaning it does transmit. I can "deconstruct" its logic, and I trust that in Mabel's mind it makes perfect sense. Such is the log, a sense-making instrument that imperfectly transmits the complexities of human exchange within an institution, complexities that can only partially and imperfectly be understood, so long as it is written and read--and as I've offered here: investigated--only as a "documentary" text.

As educators, readers, writers, and care-givers in our various capacities, we must become proficient in the interception of textually constructed partial identities lest the real human life and voice become lost in the textual profiles that in the end serve no one except the "state, the bureau and the file" (Goody, 1986 87-126). Textual representations are ultimately distorted and limited. Should we not question literate practices that subordinate human relationship and connection to portraits of disempowerment and deviancy?

To summarize, the purpose of this present work has been to examine the impact of textual documentation upon the lives of the workers who constructed and wrote the log, where, by shifting focus on the purpose to process, we find that it is the log/text

"writing them". To date, the emphasis of analysis on institutional documentation has been mainly upon the subject or client being described: little (if any) attention has been directed toward the writers and readers of such documents. Accordingly, an important part of my analysis has been devoted to an exploration of how texts create identities for the "writers" as well as the "subjects" of the document, and of the power of construction concealed in the everyday practices of documentation.

Surely there is some reciprocal transformation in the technologies of documentation: perhaps "write up" is a dyadic relationship--except that one side of the dyad remains obscured by the intent of the write up. This conjecture might point to future directions for enquiry in other institutions, such as education, where documentation is crucial but largely taken for granted.

Fourth Telling

I "Write" You.

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