



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Notice - Avis

Notice - Avis

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

THE WOMAN'S VOICE:
THE POST-REALIST FICTION
OF MARGARET ATWOOD, MAVIS GALLANT
AND ALICE MUNRO

by

Melanie Sexton

Thesis submitted to
the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Ph.D. degree in English Literature

University of Ottawa

© Melanie Sexton, Ottawa, Canada, 1993



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Yeni bir kopya

Un tiré - Nouvelle édition

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-315-83839-6

Canada



UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

ABSTRACT

Since Margaret Atwood, Mavis Gallant, and Alice Munro do not frequently employ experimental or overtly metafictional forms, they are often read as realist writers in contradistinction to postmodernists. In fact, the assumptions upon which their work rests have little in common with the assumptions underlying realism, and they are as resoundingly post-realist as their postmodern counterparts.

One of the key characteristics of realism is an assumption that language can be a neutral, transparent medium in which life can be rendered without distortion. Yet in the work of Atwood, Munro, and Gallant language is never transparent. Language creates reality, and this creation is always connected to power. The three writers share anxieties about the paradoxical nature of women's relationship to language: women must use language in order to assert their existence in the world, yet language exerts disturbing control, especially over women. This control is insistently depicted as a form of violence.

Realism, to use Bakhtin's terms, is essentially monologic--its narrative strategy depends on a single unifying view, which the reader is encouraged to share. These writers, by contrast, parody the monologic view offered by society's master narratives--often depicted as largely male discourses--and expose it as absurdly limited. They explore the heteroglossia of the contemporary world and insistently expose the ways in which discourses exert power, especially over women. Many of their texts are mis-read as closed realist texts when in fact they remain unresolved and dialogic.

Realism encourages a view of character as coherent and unitary, capable of undergoing development and reaching maturity. These writers depict the female self as lacking coherence. Often the boundaries between self and others, especially other women, are confused. Emphasis is placed on the importance of how the self is constructed in the eyes of others rather than on any sense of internal development. For these writers the female self is not a stable entity but a construction.

Atwood, Gallant, and Munro do not construct fictions that attempt to mirror life--they recognize the power of voice to construct the world. They are therefore not the naive or conservative "realists" they are sometimes read as. In fact, their work, like that of the postmodernists, challenges and deconstructs the assumptions of realism. However, whereas language for the postmodernists has become little more than a play of empty signifiers, for these women writers it is still vitally allied to power.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I cannot sufficiently acknowledge the unflagging support, encouragement, and patience of my supervisor, David Staines, who has given generously of his time and expertise from the initial conception of this thesis to its final stages. I also wish to thank others at the University of Ottawa, especially April London and Keith Wilson, who gave me so much valuable assistance and support throughout the Graduate Program.

I also gratefully thank the Social Sciences and Research Council for the SSHRC grant that partially funded this thesis and the University of Ottawa for providing teaching scholarships. I also wish to thank Vocational Rehabilitation Services who provided special equipment which allowed me to teach, despite my deafness, and the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities who provided funding for note-takers.

I especially wish to thank those whose assistance has been less tangible but no less valuable. Betty Schellenberg offered unfailing support, especially through the most difficult stages of writing and research. My friends at the Canadian Deafened Persons Association, especially Joyce Martin, Bena Shuster, Frank Fusca, and Brian Nichol, helped me solve a variety of the logistical problems involved in teaching and have supported me through many challenges. My husband Richard has borne with me loyally through the most challenging aspects of producing a thesis. His patience has been tried, but his faith has never wavered.

Finally, very special thanks to my students in ENG2400, Summer 1990 whose stimulating ideas and energetic conversations contributed so much to my thinking. Their vitality and enthusiasm were inspirational and the value of their encouragement incalculable.

CONTENTS

Introduction.....i

SECTION ONE

A Violence That We Do: Language and Power

Introduction.....1
Bodily Harm.....14
Home Truths.....46
Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You.....86
Conclusion to Section One.....132
Notes to Section One.....142

SECTION TWO

Voices from the Margins: Dialogism

Introduction.....144
Lady Oracle.....154
A Fairly Good Time.....191
Lives of Girls and Women.....229
Conclusion to Section Two.....269
Notes to Section Two.....277

SECTION THREE

Eye Problems: Constructions of Female
Subjectivity

Introduction.....278
Cat's Eye.....289
"Its Image on the Mirror" and
"Linnet Muir".....316
Who Do You Think You Are?.....346
Conclusion to Section Three.....380
Notes to Section Three.....387

CONCLUSION

Hearing the Voice.....388

Sources of Epigraphs.....401
List of Works Cited.....403
Bibliography.....418

For ENG 2400 Summer 1990

*THE WOMAN'S VOICE:
THE POST-REALIST FICTION OF
MARGARET ATWOOD, MAVIS GALLANT,
AND ALICE MUNRO*

INTRODUCTION

The literary dangers to patriarchal wholeness
. . . originate in the woman's voice.

-Joanna S. Frye

And even if I know it will be as hard as it
must be for those who wake from a coma with
only the tiniest parts of the self intact, and
all the other relatives bent on their getting
well, on their being whole again, standing
around telling them stories to assist in the
recovery of language, of memory, still I love
their voices getting louder and louder.

-Sarah Murphy

English Canadian fiction resonates with women's voices. So insistent are these voices that in the realm of contemporary fiction, women hold at least equal place with men. Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, and Alice Munro hold a secure place in the canon, and scores of other women win literary acclaim for their fiction. Barbara Godard notes, "it would be unthinkable to teach a course in Canadian or Québec writing without including women writers, although their omission is the general rule for American literature courses" (122). Women writers, though, are rarely counted among the ranks of the postmodernists. A few are occasionally classified as such (Margaret Atwood, Daphne Marlatt, Audrey Thomas, Susan Swan, Aritha van Herk, for example) but only inconsistently and uneasily and usually without detailed justification. The work of English Canadian women writers is usually perceived as "traditional," a judgement consolidated by contrast with the often flamboyantly experimental forms of many women writers in Québec and further supported by the fact that critics, even feminist critics, often treat their work as such.

Several contemporary critics and writers argue that English Canadian literature as a whole is dominated by traditional realist works and deficient in postmodernist works. Matt Cohen, for example, notes that "In Canada, the novelistic technique most practised by writers, and most accepted by readers, critics, and academics, has been from the beginning and still remains the conventional realistic narrative" (65). Similarly, Geoff Hancock remarks that "for many readers and writers the mainstream of

Canadian fiction is the realistic impulse" (7). This claim is often phrased in the form of a lament. George Bowering, for example, complains of the predominance of realism: "our critical, pedagogical, & popular awards have been reserved for authors who seek to reproduce in words the lives of real Canadians in real Canadian settings" (77). Among the writers who garner these awards are Alice Munro, Margaret Laurence, and Margaret Atwood. More subtly, but working from similar assumptions, in "The Plots of Life: The Realism of Alice Munro" George Woodcock offers an implicit criticism of Munro for maintaining her realist stance and failing to broaden her scope with formal experiments.

The opposition between postmodernist and realist texts is also perpetuated by feminist critics. In her essay "Listen to the Voice," for example, Sherrill Grace discusses the differences between monologic texts and polyphonic texts--a distinction that corresponds roughly to the postmodernist/realist opposition. Although she places writers such as Atwood and Munro closer to the polyphonic pole than many other critics would do, she places at the extreme of the polyphonic pole the works of Malcolm Lowry and Robert Zend's "brilliant 'NEOVEL'" Oāb (127). She notes regretfully that "our literary tradition is dominated by monologic works, and it is these texts that mould our sense of the literary canon" (132). Similarly, in a Tessera discussion, Godard sets the "self-reflexive tradition" (6) ("language-centred writing" [8]), taking place largely in Québec, against the "anglophone tradition" where, apparently, "what one is doing is

transcribing reality, translating a reality which is total and exists out there and one can mirror it in language" (18). In all such comments, the suggestion is that the writing of most of Canada's anglophone women writers is uncompromisingly "realist."

It is certainly true that few English Canadian women writers have employed overtly postmodernist forms. Indeed, it has been suggested that this tendency extends to anglophone women writers in general. Patricia Waugh notes:

the extreme formal fragmentation, dispersal of subjectivity, and splitting of narrative modes which dominates mainstream postmodernist writing has been, on the whole, significantly absent from much contemporary fiction by women. Consequently women have, in the main, been excluded from the postmodernist debate. (68-69)

Her comment is accurate only in pointing to the under-representation of women using extreme postmodernist techniques as opposed to the many who incorporate muted techniques. Nevertheless, it remains true that postmodernism as it is generally conceived is dominated by men. Not only are most postmodernist writers men but also their subject-matter is often predominantly masculine, frequently incorporating phallic imagery and parodying plots that have traditionally been available only to men. So insistent is the absence of women from the discourses of postmodernism that one critic has been led to suspect that "postmodernism may be another masculine invention engineered to exclude women" (Owens, 61).

The problem, though, is not that English Canadian women writers have seen fit, on the whole, to reject overtly postmodernist forms. There may be very sound reasons for this rejection. The problem is the damaging contention that writers who do not adopt postmodernist forms are realists by default. This contention is the more insidious because it comes from precisely the strand of criticism--what we might loosely term anti-conservative criticism--that seems most to support the claims of feminism. Although the relationship between postmodernism and feminism has been characterized in widely diverging ways, there is no dispute that both postmodernism and feminism apparently perform similar functions: giving voice to the marginal, toppling the traditional centres of power. Barbara Creed argues:

both feminism and postmodernism endorse Lyotard's argument that there is a crisis in the legitimating function of narrative, that the grands récits or Great Narratives of the West have lost credibility . . . both present a critique of representation, that 'system of power that authorizes certain representations while blocking, prohibiting or invalidating others' . . .; both agree that the 'representational systems of the West admit only one vision--that of the constitutive male subject' . . .; both present a critique of binarism, that is, thinking by means of oppositions; (47-48)

Because of these undeniable similarities in the goals of feminism and postmodernism, the contention that works that are not postmodernist are realist (and the term is almost synonymous with conservative) makes it seem as if, by refusing postmodernist

forms, women writers are also identifying against the interests of feminism.

The term realism in itself has become somewhat pejorative. The term as it is used today derives, presumably, from nineteenth-century realism, a fairly distinct movement in art and literature, centred in France but extending throughout Europe. This movement, partly a reaction to the more worn out aspects of Romanticism, called for new subject matter in art and literature and, especially, for new techniques. Realist writers demanded that literature deal with ordinary people leading ordinary lives. Realists did not shun the average or the insignificant; in fact they placed the emphasis on "the low, the humble and the common place, the socially dispossessed or marginal" (Nochlin, 34). Further, bringing scientific methodology to writing, realist fiction was to be the product of the close observation of real life. So extreme was the emphasis on authenticity of representation and faithfulness to real life of realism at its height that, notes Becker, "from a strictly realist point of view an invented proletarian would be as nauseous as an invented fairy princess" (24).

Nineteenth-century realism was confined to a few decades in the mid-to-late century. Certainly the movement left an important legacy to all subsequent literature, even postmodernism. The realist insistence on the ordinary facilitated not only postmodernism's emphasis on the ordinary person, but also its frequent involvement with the baser of human concerns. Yet

realism in its strictest sense did not survive except in a few relatively isolated instances. The term (often qualified by the adjective modern or even modernist), however, has survived and is still in currency today. It is used loosely to include any literature that does not employ fantasy or overtly experimental forms. It is such a broad term that, as several critics have noted, in some senses all writers are inevitably realists. The value of such an inclusive term is questionable at best. The major problem, though, is that the term remains tied to a certain set of assumptions that rightly belong only to nineteenth century realism.

The identification of realism with these assumptions has occurred largely because of the work of post-structuralist critics, who have often chosen classic realism as the focus for the exposure of the ideological nature of even the most apparently neutral style. Catherine Belsey, for example, argues that classic realism, in its presentation of certain assumptions, is a powerful tool of liberal humanism:

The ideology of liberal humanism assumes a world of non-contradictory (and therefore fundamentally unalterable) individuals whose unfettered consciousness is the origin of meaning, knowledge, and action. It is in the interests of this ideology above all to suppress the role of language in the construction of the subject, and its own role in the interpellation of the subject, and to present the individual as a free, unified, autonomous subjectivity. (67)

Realism thus does not simply reflect a given reality in words, but invisibly constructs myths of the authority of the subject and the neutrality of language which disguise its imposition on reality.

Belsey identifies three key assumptions upon which realism is founded. The most significant--because it underlies the others--is the assumption that language is a neutral medium. One of the key images associated with realism is Stendhal's notion of the novel as a mirror walking down the street. This pretence of reflecting the world presupposes a reality that exists prior to language, but post-Saussurian linguistics has demonstrated, Belsey argues, that the world is constituted in language and cannot therefore reflect it. As she observes, "language is not an imitation of thought, but its condition" (22).

Second, Belsey argues that classic realism establishes a "hierarchy of discourses." She employs Benveniste's distinction between history and discourse:

History narrates events apparently without the intervention of the speaker. In history there is no mention of 'you' and 'I'; 'the events seem to narrate themselves.' Discourse on the other hand, assumes a speaker and a hearer, the 'you' and 'I' of discourse. (71)

In the classic realist text, "discourses are placed for the reader by a privileged, historic narration which is the source of the coherence of the story as a whole" (71-72). The narrative voice thus attains authority, precisely by "its effacement of its

own status as discourse" (72). Yet all texts, however apparently neutral, are discourses and embody ideological messages.

Third, Belsey argues that classic realism depends on "the assumption that character, unified and coherent, is the source of action" (73). The concept of the character possessing coherence, autonomy, and the capacity for personal development perpetuates the individual subject at the heart of liberal humanism. The realist text may seem to offer disruption of subjectivity by incorporating tests of identity. Ultimately, though, the movement is always toward closure, toward "the reinstatement of order, sometimes a new order, sometimes the old restored, but always intelligible because always familiar" (75). Subjectivity, though, is a much more problematic concept than realist texts would have us believe.

Belsey's critique of classic realism is compelling, and postmodernist texts have also exposed the naivety of these assumptions and parodied and deconstructed them. Postmodernism clearly overturns the coherent subject, resists closure, embraces the polyphonic, and, above all, acknowledges no reality but language. Yet, for all the force of postmodernism's own attack on realism, there are other ways of responding to the assumptions of realism that overturn them just as fully, if not as flamboyantly. There are writers who do not employ overtly postmodernist forms and yet do not endorse the assumptions of realism.

Many of Canada's so-called realist writers do not adhere to these assumptions of the transparency of language, the neutrality

of narrative voice, and the coherence of character. In fact, Margaret Atwood, Mavis Gallant, and Alice Munro, the three representative women writers in this study, react against and overturn these assumptions just as firmly as Postmodernist writers. None treats language as a transparent medium; all are acutely aware that reality is created in words and that the word is the world. All three perceive the world as a realm of discourses contending for mastery and acknowledge the power structure that privileges some discourses over others. All subtly, but effectively, parody the meta-narratives of the western world: truth, reason, religion, and politics and explore the female voices that are so often lost in the face of the more insistent male discourses. All break down the concept of the coherent, fully independent, and autonomous subject, and in doing so break down the notion of closure. All, in fact, perform reversals of realist assumptions just as surely as postmodernists do.

By some definitions of postmodernism these writers could readily be classified as such. For example, Linda Hutcheon's account of "The Canadian Postmodern" in her book of that title could accommodate many more women writers than she in fact includes. She defines postmodernism according to its assumptions rather than its form. Postmodernists, she argues, perform "those contradictory acts of establishing and then undercutting prevailing values and conventions in order to provoke a questioning, a challenging of 'what goes without saying' in our

culture" (3). Postmodernists are, she says, agents provocateurs, "taking pot-shots at the culture of which they are unavoidably a part but that they still wish to criticize" (3). The challenges Hutcheon defines are all equally present in the work of many women writers, including Atwood, Gallant, and Munro, yet Hutcheon considers only Atwood in any detail. If postmodernism is best defined--as Hutcheon's approach suggests--in terms of its basic assumptions rather than radical form, the canon of postmodernism is certainly in need of revision.

Yet, despite the general similarity in their intentions, there are some important differences between the postmodernists and these women writers which suggest that a distinction should be maintained. Postmodernists dwell on the failure of representation. Language, they believe, is the only reality. And, since language is an arbitrary system of signs, all that remains beyond the illusion of the transcendental signified is language without referent and an endless play of meaning. Similarly, for these women writers language does not reflect the world, it is the world. The crucial difference is that for postmodernists the sign is arbitrary, whereas for women the sign is vitally connected to power.

Women's experience of language as power consistently manifested in their writing might help explain why it is that they have not often turned to postmodernism. Craig Owens argues that postmodernism is usually treated as "a crisis of cultural authority" (57). It articulates a reaction to a loss of mastery.

Women have not experienced this mastery to the same degree--in fact they have often been subject to it. Therefore, the crisis is likely either to be irrelevant to them or to affect them very differently. In Labyrinths of Voice, Robert Kroetsch explains why he believes that Canadian writers are "in the vanguard of where the action is" (144). Writers from other countries write from a particular ideology, even if what they write deals with the resistance to that ideology. By contrast, in Canada,

We don't have an ideology to resist, do we?--our sense of fighting capitalism is absurd, just as to accept it is absurd. We've come to another kind of silence. So I think the Canadian writer is in a very exciting predicament . . . there's a profound sense in which we have nothing to write about . . . we come back to writing. (145)

This disturbing comment suggests that postmodernism, writing about writing, is the result of the lack of oppression by a dominant ideology. Whatever the validity of this assertion for other Canadian postmodernists, Kroetsch's observation certainly does not hold true for the vast majority of women writers in Canada. Both literature and life attest that women are still entrenched in--and often dominated by--a predominantly patriarchal ideology. Postmodernism and its belief that language is empty play and refers to nothing but itself is, simply, a luxury that women cannot afford.

Many Canadian women writers, like postmodernists, frequently do write about writing. Although their work rarely assumes the extreme forms of postmodernism, it is still profoundly

metafictional. For the postmodernists, narrative is often a form of play, a game involving text and reader. Bowering suggests that whereas realism attempts to provide a functional mirror on life, postmodernism is "decorative": "If [postmodernist works] are windows they are stained-glass windows or cut glass windows that divert light waves & restructure the world outside" (25). For women, though, assuming the power inherent in language cannot be play because it is a matter of survival. Women writers recognize, like the speaker of Atwood's poem "Spelling," that "A word after a word / after a word is power." In writing about writing they display a recognition that written discourse itself has been a powerful form of oppression because it has been dominated by those with power. Their work also emphasizes that the power of discourse cannot be readily dismissed by those historically subject to it.

Canadian women writers reject the forms of postmodernism out of choice, and not because they are naively unaware or unsophisticatedly incapable of them. In fact, some of these writers seem to see postmodernism and its forms as a dead-end because it leads to silence--the most dangerous oppressor in a world where the word, though it may not be equivalent to the thing itself, is power. In her story "Loulou; or, The Domestic Life of the Language," Atwood parodies the inept poets who are obsessed with what they call with reverence "the gap"--the gap between the word and the thing signified. Women's experience of this gap is very different from the poets', as Loulou (who thinks

the gap refers to the space between her front teeth) testifies. In Bodily Harm, Rennie refers to a novel entitled Death by Washing Machine, which has nothing to do with washing machines, but has the main character fall off a cliff on page sixty-three, leaving the rest of the pages blank. This novel, fashionably avant-garde, and supposedly commenting on the restrictions women's labour imposes on their work, has fallen victim, albeit in a self-conscious way, to only one of the many strategies that silence women's voices. Women writers often perceive as deadly this silence of the blank page which postmodernists often seem to embrace. That these contemporary women sustain a voice in the contemporary world is testimony to their transcendence of the limitations of postmodernism rather than to any lamentable retrogression into naive realism.

My intention in this study, then, is to counteract the view that sees these writers as somewhat naive, if accomplished, by showing that while Atwood, Gallant and Munro are not postmodernists by the most widely accepted definitions, neither are they realists. Their work, in fact, issues subtle but compelling challenges to the central assumptions of realism--the transparency of language, the unity of narrative voice, and the coherence of character. These challenges are not as obvious as those posed by postmodernist texts but are nevertheless just as radical.

I have divided my study into three sections, each examining texts by each of the three writers in the light of one of the

assumptions of realism that Belsey identifies. Each section demonstrates that the texts in question do not blindly adhere to these assumptions, but overturn them. The first section deals with language. I am aware that the scope of this section is broader than the other two, since language underlies all the other assumptions. I am also aware that my selection of specific texts throughout is somewhat arbitrary, and this is particularly true in the first section. All fiction by these writers takes the density of language as its point of departure, though this is more evident in some texts than in others. In the first section, I have tried to select not those texts that obviously treat language as theme, but those that present the greatest complexities. Using Atwood's Bodily Harm, Gallant's Home Truths, and Munro's Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You, I show that, for these writers, the word is the world. All three are aware that language as it has traditionally been used is a powerful tool to control reality. Yet they also perceive that the act of using language can liberate women from constricting patriarchal structures and create a new female-centred reality.

My second section examines the concept of dialogism. I read Atwood's Lady Oracle, Gallant's A Fairly Good Time, and Munro's Lives of Girls and Women not as the products of a single controlling voice that lays the grounds for reading it at the same time as it tells a story, but as a gathering of diverse discourses, many of them contending for mastery. These texts often explore the sexual politics of discourse, parodying the

meta-narratives of the western world, and giving value to women's voices which have traditionally been erased, while still acknowledging the power of male discourses which are often associated with violence. There were some more obvious choices of text in this section (The Pegnitz Junction and Life Before Man for example), but I have selected those texts that seem readily to pass on the surface for monologic texts, in order to undermine more fully the association of these writers with the monologic realist narrator.

My third section examines the notion of stable and coherent character. I have selected texts which apparently employ a variation of the bildungsroman form, for it is this form that is perceived as a mainstay of realism. Yet all the texts I examine depart from it quite radically beneath the surface. In fact, whereas the traditional novel of development encourages a concept of a stable and coherent character, however complex, these texts subtly but powerfully break down that notion. The female protagonists, despite their apparently stable surfaces, all, like Cordelia in Cat's Eye, have only a tendency to exist. Cat's Eye, Who Do You Think You Are?, and Gallant's "Its Image on the Mirror" and the "Linnet Muir" stories from Home Truths depart from stable images of female selfhood. I have returned to Gallant's "Linnet Muir" not only because it is a very rare instance in Gallant's work of a consistent narrator through several stories, but because it seems to me a deliberate and

radical, though subtle, undermining of the traditional kunstleroman.

The scope of my examination of fiction is intended to be deep rather than broad. Feminist criticism habitually emphasizes theory; in the course of this, the text sometimes becomes lost. Some would argue that my approach, rooted as it is in practical criticism, is a return to methods entrenched in patriarchy. Yet my assumptions are very different from those underlying practical criticism. Just as realism has lost its innocence in the light of de Saussure, so too has criticism in the light of contemporary critical theories. Such theories have argued very cogently that how we read gives shape to what we read--we unavoidably impose on the text when we read it. Whereas traditional practical criticism pretended to be unaware of its white western male bias, the practical criticism I perform here is self-consciously feminist, working from the premise that gender inevitably shapes both the text and the reader's perception of it. I am aware that my work leaves many theoretical avenues unexplored. Yet my intention is to ensure these avenues arise from the text rather than from a theoretical framework imposed on the text; exploring them further is another study.

I have chosen the term "post realist" to describe the fiction of these writers with some reservations. Realism is a greatly overworked term as it is; as Becker remarks "it would add to ease of discourse in the future if whatever happens next should be given a new name and not be tagged by some variant or

permutation of the word 'realism'" (37). The prefatory word post does at least move us past realism in the same way that the term "postmodern" moves us past modernism. Yet postmodernism is also, of course, post-realist, and it would be preferable to have a term that identifies the important distinctions between postmodernists and these women writers. It would be useful to go a step farther and find some term more descriptive of the striking number of common traits these texts share. Yet it is not wise to do this until we have a fuller exploration of what I have labelled here post realist works. Not only do these works need to be set against the work of male Canadian writers who do not use postmodernist forms either, they also need to be set against other women writers. Although I believe Atwood, Gallant, and Munro are representative of a certain group of writers, it is clear that there are other women who are doing something quite different. Unfortunately, though, because of limitations of time and space, my study must confine itself to deconstructing the critical habit of binary opposition between realism and postmodernism.

The writing of women such as Atwood, Gallant, and Munro therefore need further exploration free from the constraining vision that sees them as either realist texts or not-quite-effective postmodernist texts before any theory can be formulated about them. One idea, though, seems to run as a common thread through all the texts: the significance of voice. Voice has its origins in oral discourse and is connected to process, rooted in

the moment, and therefore fluid. It is the intangible thing out of which stories are made. In The Pegnitz Junction, Christine acts as a kind of receiver of women's voices; the voices deliver the stories of women that would be lost without Christine's fragile but valuable powers of reception. These stories are often very different from those traditionally endorsed in literature. For example, they often deal with food or apparently trivial domestic matters or matters of the female body damaged by patriarchy and delivered by "wrecked survivors of the female life" (Lives of Girls and Women, 40). When these voices begin to be "received," it becomes evident that women have not been silent while men have dominated discourse; women's voices are as insistent as men's. The challenge is to learn to hear their unique voices with their stories so different from those entrenched in traditional male discourse and not to erase them as patriarchy has so insistently done. Women's voices assert themselves with increasing authority against silence and pose a threat to patriarchal wholeness indeed.

SECTION ONE
A VIOLENCE THAT WE DO: LANGUAGE
AND POWER

We should not imagine that the world presents us with a legible face, leaving us merely to decipher it; it does not work hand in glove with what we already know, there is no prediscursive fate disposing the world in our favour. We must conceive discourse as a violence that we do to things, or, at all events, as a practice we impose upon them.

-Michel Foucault

Belief in simple referentiality is not only unpoetic but also ultimately politically conservative, because it cannot recognize that the reality to which it appeals is a traditional ideological construction, whether one terms it phallic, or metaphysical, or bourgeois, or something else.

-Jane Gallop

The Word creates all things . . . Nothing is before it has been uttered in a clear voice.

-Barbara Walker

One of the more significant influences on twentieth-century critical thought is the concept of language that has developed out of the insights into linguistics expressed in Ferdinand de Saussure's Course in General Linguistics. Since de Saussure's insistence that "the linguistic sign is arbitrary" (67), critical thought has come to regard language as an artificial system of signs, taking meaning only from the phonological differences among them, rather than a system in which words have some "natural connection in reality" (69). This important concept of language has become the basis of most critical theories that are temporally post-structuralist. De Saussure's ideas called classic realism into question; the belief that language cannot simply and naturally reflect a given reality inevitably exposes the problematics of the concept of the novel as a mirror walking down the street.

It is sometimes implied that the classic realists naively believed in the authenticity of the relationship between the word and the world. It is doubtful, though, that they saw the relationship as one of simple equivalence. In his conversation with Kroetsch in Labyrinths of Voice, Robert Wilson notes:

It seems to me that when French critics get too carried away about the self-referential qualities of language they're accusing the history of the human race of a vast delusion and madness that it just never had. People never really believed that words were things.
(203)

The realist stance is more accurately represented as holding language relatively unproblematic, capable of creating a coherent illusion of life. Certainly, though, it is true that before Saussure writers were able to wield the word comparatively unself-consciously; after de Saussure, it became difficult to write from an innocent perspective.

The loss of innocence in respect to language has manifested itself in various ways in literature. Postmodernism takes as one of its central premises the fallacy of the referentiality of language. Bowering characterizes the difference between postmodernism and realism precisely in terms of this difference:

A realist fiction was intended to produce a window on the world. Hence the value of invisibility, or more properly of transparency. One did not so much read the novel as read through it to the world. Postmodern novels, on the other hand, are in a way decorative. If they are windows they are stained-glass windows or cut-glass windows that divert light waves & restructure the world outside. (25)

In postmodernist texts, language becomes the site of infinite regression to a lacking authority. By insisting on the lack of reference between word and thing, postmodern texts undermine the notion of stable meaning. They frequently parody the quest for the transcendental signified, which is often equated with phallic imagery. Furthermore, they take to heart the concept of the sign as arbitrary and frequently engage in exuberant and spectacular play of meaning. Although Canadian postmodernist writers are in general not as extreme as their European or American

counterparts, they also frequently articulate the fall of meaning.

Postmodernism, though, is not the only discourse generated by de Saussure's insights. The idea that the relationship between signifier and signified is not a natural one led to the revelation that the relationship could be political rather than simply arbitrary. Feminist criticism and other forms of overtly ideological criticism turn their attention to the ways in which language is marked by the ideology that has fostered it. Feminist criticism particularly has made of central importance the idea that the text is inscribed in a language which, far from being a natural and neutral medium, is ideologically marked. The seventies saw a number of studies exploring the way in which language is slanted to posit male experience as the norm and female experience as deviant. In Language and the Woman's Place, Robin Lakoff argues:

the overall effect of "women's language"--meaning both language restricted in use to women and language descriptive of women alone--is this: it submerges a woman's personal identity, by denying her the means of expressing herself strongly, on the one hand, and encouraging expressions that suggest triviality in subject matter and uncertainty about it; and, when a woman is being discussed, by treating her as an object--sexual or otherwise--but never a serious person with individual views . . .

The ultimate effect of these discrepancies is that women are systematically denied access to power. (7)

In her study Man Made Language, published in 1980, incorporating extensive analysis of men's and women's discourses, Dale Spender argues that "There is only negative semantic space for females in the English language" (21).

French feminism has developed even further this idea that women occupy negative space in language. Whereas the Anglo-American studies usually have their roots in sociology, the French take a more creative approach, producing a form that blurs the boundaries between criticism, fiction, and philosophical discourse. Working from the premise that language creates the world rather than reflects it, French feminists see the language system as wholly and inescapably male. Existing language is poison:

The women say, the language you speak poisons
your glottis tongue palate lips. They say,
the language you speak is made up of words
that are killing you. They say, the language
you speak is made up of signs that rightly
speaking designate what men have
appropriated. Whatever they have not laid
hands on, whatever they have not pounced on
like many-eyed birds of prey, does not appear
in the language you speak
(Wittig, 163)

Language thus fragments the female speaker: "Estranged from language, women are visionaries, dancers who suffer as they speak" (Kristeva, 166). Most existing texts by women, according to this view, can articulate women only through silences, fissures, slippages.

Both the Anglo-American and the French views of women's problem with language stress the idea that language is not a natural system, and, although it is arbitrary in de Saussure's sense, it is often employed in a way that is far from arbitrary. Yet the two strands have resulted in rather different discourses. For the French feminists, the only solution to the problem is écriture féminine. In order for women to become subjects in language, they must not usurp existing structures, but reinvent language: Annie Leclerc summarizes the task: "To invent a language that is not oppressive, a language that does not leave speechless but that loosens the tongue" (179). Although the theory underlying this invented language differs with its various proponents, the characteristics of the language, as Christine Mackward summarizes them, are similar:

Open, nonlinear, unfinished, fluid, exploded, fragmented, polysemic, attempting to "speak the body," i.e. the unconscious, involving silence, incorporating simultaneity of life as opposed to or clearly different from logical, nonambiguous, so-called "transparent" or functional language. (96)

Thus écriture féminine, whether conceived as something that "speaks the body," that is "translated from blackness, from darkness" (Duras, NFE, 174) or that articulates the unconscious, breaks with traditional syntactic structures and produces a radically disrupted version of language.

Outside of France, the confrontation of the problem of the power of linguistic structures to oppress women has been rather

different. "French feminism" does identify a comparatively cohesive group of feminists (though "French feminisms" points more accurately to the plurality of visions within the group). The term often set against it, "Anglo-American feminism," is, however, problematic because it refers in reality not to a homogenous group, but to several quite different strands. The two phrases--"French feminism" and "Anglo-American feminism"--are often used in binary opposition (corresponding roughly to the distinction between postmodernism and realism). According to this opposition, French feminism centres on language, Anglo-American on content; French feminism sees language as opaque, non-referential, whereas Anglo-American feminism sees it as transparent, capable of representing authentic experience; French feminism advocates separatism from the dominant discourse, whereas Anglo-American feminism attempts to appropriate the dominant discourse. Although these oppositions have their uses in revealing some general differences, they can be severely limiting when used to define contemporary Anglo-American feminist criticism. For the latter has no comparable unified theory of female narrative, and approaches to the idea of language are in reality diverse.

An example of the kind of problems generated by this dichotomy is the introduction to Tessera, a special edition of Room of One's Own, featuring a discussion with Barbara Godard, Daphne Marlatt, Kathy Mezei, and Gail Scott. These Canadian feminists focus on what they call "language-centred writing" (8).

By this they mean the discourse of many Québécoise writers such as Nicole Brossard, Louise Cotnoir, Louky Bersianik, and Madeleine Gagnon, and a few English Canadian writers such as Marlatt and Scott themselves, whose writing shares those qualities outlined by Mackward. In the discussion, Godard sets the "self-reflexive" tradition against the "anglophone tradition" where, apparently, "what one is doing is transcribing reality, translating a reality which is total and exists out there and one can mirror it in language" (18). In this discussion, the feminist critics ally themselves with the French feminists. Yet instead of confining themselves to debating the claims of this kind of writing, they go on to raise questions about the integrity of English-Canadian women writers. They argue that because of their history, Quebec women writers "became aware of power over people through language" (11). In English Canada, however, where "the most prominent writers in some ways are women," "That has not happened" (12): "In English Canada the realization still has not been made that looking at language, looking at how you name what you name, is the first revolutionary or subversive act" (11).

Their attack is aimed primarily at critics rather than writers. They claim that "The only form of Feminist criticism in English Canada so far has been images of women, you know, what kind of heroine in Laurence's novel . . . Why is blood important? and the images of mirrors" (9). Their attack on feminist pioneers is somewhat questionable, and certainly their comments, however valid they might have been in 1983, are certainly not so now. It

remains true that some feminist criticism (as well as much non-feminist criticism) treats language as if it were clearly and unambiguously representational, as if it gave access to a world of coherent experience. This kind of criticism can be as damaging as it is naive. But it must be clearly understood that this unquestioning belief in the transparency of language is a fault of the criticism only and is not automatically true of women writers.

Theorists who do not adhere to the French perspective have attempted to account for women's relationship to language in several different ways. In "Her Very Own Howl," Margaret Homans characterizes the difference between French and Anglo-American theory as the difference between separatism and appropriation. French feminists desire to sever all ties with existing discourse and create a new language, whereas Anglo-American theorists are said to argue that women can effectively and unproblematically appropriate the dominant discourse. Both theories, though, are caught in circular logic. Homans argues that Anglo-American writers do, in fact, experience a problem with language and respond to it by "Simultaneously appropriating and rejecting the dominant discourse" (205). Writers who are doubly alienated by culture as well as gender are particularly conscious of the problematics of their relationship to the dominant discourse and incorporate the ambivalences into their work thematically. Yet even "(ambiguously) non-hegemonic" women, though generally more secure, are likely to express some of the same anxiety even if it

is deeply buried. Much literature by women confronts the ambiguities of the "representation of unrepresentability" (205).

Other theorists have argued that language is not intrinsically a patriarchal institution. Only legitimate discourse is patriarchal, because women have largely been denied access to it. Women have extensively practised other discourses. Patricia Yaeger argues that "Language is not a reductively patriarchal system but a somewhat flexible institution that not only reflects but may also address existing power structures, including those conditioned by gender" (1984;955). Although it is true that women can be enslaved by language as the French feminists maintain, enslavement is not their only experience; they are also liberated by a relationship to "the happy tongue" (1988;3). Yaeger's Honey-Mad Women is an attempt to "begin to define a countertradition within women's writing, a tradition that involves the reinvention and reclamation of a body of speech women have found exclusive and alienating" (1988;2). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar similarly argue that women have created and cultivated their own linguistic space which can be employed as a tool of liberation: "at last, in spite of feminist doubt and masculinist dread, we can affirm that woman has not been sentenced to transcribe male penmanship; rather, she commands sentences which inscribe her own powerful character" (539).

These theorists have perceived the reductiveness of the so-called Anglo-American theory which sees language as wholly unproblematic and have found more accurate ways to explain

women's relationship to language as manifested in literature by women. The work of Atwood, Gallant, and Munro demonstrates the extent to which Anglo-American women's writing does perform the subversive act of "looking at how you name what you name." Although all three explore the ways in which women can be subject to language, they emphasize the role of woman as subject in language. All three demonstrate the ambivalent relationship to language suggested in the work of Homans and Yaeger. Language is always powerful, capable of reducing process to static object, fixing subjectivity in a damagingly limited mould. It is always, to use Foucault's terms, "a violence that we do to things." Often the victims of this crippling limitation are women. Yet effective as this power over women is in the work of all three writers, women are not denied access to it per se. Often, in fact, women are compulsively drawn to language, either to oral models or to writing. When they do use language, they experience a problematic relationship to the power that it invests them with to control the world by writing it. In some cases such control is a form of liberation; in other cases, it is suffused with anxiety. Certainly language is never simple and transparent: for Atwood, Gallant, and Munro, as much as for the French feminists, "language is the world."

Atwood is the most specifically "feminist" of the three writers. For her, politics is often sexual politics. She sees language as the most powerful tool that has been used by patriarchal society in order to subjugate women. Shaping human

perceptions, language turns women into objects. Bodily Harm rigorously analyzes the way language works to turn women into bodies that are objects fit for "harm" and dismemberment. In addition, Atwood suggests that the female writer must take the dominant patriarchal language and subvert its insidious definitions. Language can thus become a medium for vital political commentary. It can also begin to write women's histories, which are often--like Lora's in Bodily Harm--oral narratives of the abused female body, and to reestablish the connections between women and their own bodies that patriarchy has so brutally severed.

Gallant also sees language as a tool of dominant ideologies. For her, ideology includes race and class as much as gender, though the thrust of the particular ideology she explores most insistently--Fascism--is particularly oppressive to women. Fascism frequently seems a force not confined to war-torn Europe but alive and at work even in Canada. The spirit of Fascism works against a set of creative and nurturing forces Gallant equates--though not at all simplistically--with women. For her, everyone is a victim of language. Language enables people to live by giving shape to the world, but because it is controlled by the dominant ideology, so is everyone. Constituted by language, humans are dependent on the ideology in which they live for the quality of the language they possess. Exposure to limited language irredeemably cripples consciousness and stunts growth. Only a rich and full language capable of giving shape to vital

memories can bestow a measure of integrity on the individual. In the world of Home Truths, this integrity is denied to almost everyone. Only Linnet Muir can begin to transcend the restrictive clichés of language and begin to recover voices from the past, especially the voices of women.

In Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You, language can be a powerful tool to label and thereby control women. Individual words--usually those with sexual or excremental connotations--have the power to offer profound assaults on female subjectivity by pointing to the shameful vulnerability of the body. Further, men are often in command of a discourse that can readily render women nameless. Munro, however, like Atwood and Gallant, is also drawn to the idea of women as manipulators of language. The first story explores the disturbing implications of one of women's most readily available forms of discourse--gossip--as a means of control. In some cases the language women wield is oral and rooted in the domestic world, whereas in others it is specifically literary. Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You intersperses self-conscious stories with writer-narrators among the other stories with distanced third-person narrators, thereby throwing the concept of narration into relief. In fact, like both Bodily Harm and Home Truths, Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You offers a somewhat obscure, but nevertheless compelling, study of women as writers.

In postmodernist fiction self-consciousness is usually so obvious that it becomes the raison d'être of the text. These

writers are more subtle; their attitude to the power language possesses to do violence, more ambivalent--understandably so since, unlike most men, they have often been the primary victims of this power. So muted is their self-consciousness that they may easily be taken for realist writers who are relatively untroubled by the paradoxes of language. Close examination of their work, however, reveals that language, the process of labelling reality, both threatens and fascinates women with its power. The result is fiction which, like realist fiction, tells a story, yet which is simultaneously undermined as a representation of a given reality by the assumption that language is not a neutral medium but inextricably connected to power.

BODILY HARM

The text of Bodily Harm, Rennie Wilford's seemingly eyewitness account of her embroilment in a minor revolution in the Caribbean, is a radical narrative, a malignant¹ narrative, we might say--to transform one of the key words in the text in much the same way that the narrative itself transforms language. The text is Rennie's "statement," her "report," ostensibly of events on the twin islands of St. Antoine and St. Agathe. Yet although Rennie is in many senses an "observer" on the islands, her "report" is by no means a "neutral" eye-witness account. Neutrality, of both the observer herself and the language which she uses to report, is, Rennie learns, a myth. Language that attempts merely to record does control; however trivial its subject, it wields power over the world. Language, Rennie comes to recognize, is power, and the freedom to wield it--denied to many by means ranging from subtle suppression to brutal violence--is a "duty" not to be taken lightly. Hence her narrative uses the power of language to rebel malignantly against an ideology dominated by male authority which often manifests itself in one form or another of "bodily harm."

Bodily Harm traces Rennie's transformations from passive victim (of breast cancer and, in various ways, of men) to lucky survivor, from an object of perception, especially of sight and

touch, to one who is forced actively to perceive--to see and to touch. Her transformation involves a shedding of her tourist mentality, which has allowed her to believe herself perpetually "exempt," and brings her to an understanding of her "massive involvement" with life. Most important--because it generates the text of Bodily Harm--is the transformation in her attitude to language. The sinister events in which she becomes embroiled and for which she has no names shake her complacency, forcing her to abandon the verbal packaging of reality in which she has indulged. In the light of her experiences on the islands, Rennie must begin to name the world.

That language tends to turn process into object is one of Atwood's favourite themes, and Bodily Harm is her most sustained analysis of this phenomenon. Yet even more fundamental than the linguistic categories which divide the world are sensory perceptions. Bodily Harm is concerned with how sensory perceptions, especially sight and touch, objectify the world just as language does. Women are the primary victims of this objectification. John Berger's Ways of Seeing, from which Bodily Harm takes its epigraph, examines how women are depicted in visual images. Berger identifies a fundamental distinction between the ways in which men and women are perceived: "men act

and women appear" (47). This dichotomy between action and appearance is fundamental to Bodily Harm. To appear implies passivity, resting in the gaze of an observer. The male observer and the female who is observed and thus becomes an object are common figures in Atwood's work. In The Edible Woman, for example, Marian is an object in the sight of Peter's camera which is a metaphorical gun. Yet in Bodily Harm the implications of this objectification for both men and women are much more fully worked out than they are elsewhere, and the result is the novel's serious tone.

Rennie's narrative teems with images of women as objects. The sculpturer, Frank, whom Rennie interviews, for example, turns women into very literal--and functional--objects. The images of women in the pornography at the exhibition Rennie and Jocasta attend are always faceless. Jake's pictures depict women not only faceless and anonymous but also vulnerable to the male observer in whose gaze they rest. One picture is of three prostitutes and an old man; another is of a woman simultaneously bound up and exposed with "no expression on her face";² another, even more disturbing, is of a nude woman ("her head . . . tiny, featureless, and rounded like a doorknob" [106]) with a bull in the foreground. The predictable victims in the mystery novels

Rennie reads are "totally helpless because totally dead" (246). They are double victims of death by violence and of the sexual gratification of the aptly named "private eyes" who "finding them . . . describe each detail of the body fully, lushly, as if running their tongues over it" (246).

Even the pamphlet that advertises, apparently innocently, the islands repeats this pattern of woman as the object of the male gaze with its implicit violence:

On the front is a tanned white woman laughing on a beach, sheathed in one-piece aqua Spandex with a modesty panel across the front. A black man in a huge straw hat is sitting on the sand beside her, handing up a coconut with a couple of straws sticking out of it. Behind him is a machete propped against a tree. He's looking at her, she's looking at the camera. (68)

The inevitable association between the "Twin Islands in the Sun" and the woman's breasts is symptomatic of the tendency to see woman's body in terms of topography. The association between the islands and the breasts emphasizes the idea of severance and dismemberment of the breasts.³ Furthermore, the presence of the machete draws attention to the vulnerability of woman as object. The pattern of the game of "Clue," with victim and potential weapon, is repeated in all these incidental images which

constantly echo the initial situation where Rennie is posed in her bedroom with a coil of rope with its suggestions of voyeurism and/or violence. The "murderer" remains forever nebulous and indistinct; his "facelessness" is a result of his mystery and power. By contrast, the victim, always a woman, is "faceless" because she is a powerless object, a body to be performed upon, whether by being gazed at or touched. Such violations of women are carried out either by means which apparently conflict with (but are secretly engendered by) the rules of society, or with the full sanction of society. Daniel's medical "treatment" of Rennie, for example, echoes the same pattern of woman on the bed being performed upon by the surgeon's knife.

This pervasive objectification of woman's body has profound implications for Rennie's sense of self and, especially, for her attempts to write. Objects have only an external surface reality and no interior life. Rennie's Griswold background equates objects with both vulnerability, "they were always on the verge of breaking" (54), and silence, "The objects in the house were another form of silence" (54). As object, woman is herself something to be inscribed upon. Rennie notes that she feels like "a blank sheet of paper" for Jake to "doodle" on (105). Elsewhere Daniel exhorts her to "Think of your life as a clean page. You

can write whatever you like on it" (84). Yet what is inscribed on the "empty" page of a woman's body is too often written in blood--the scar of a mastectomy or the marks of physical violence. In order to become the subject of her own story, a woman must deconstruct the system that fixes her as an object.

Yet Bodily Harm is not so much about women as victims--despite so many examples--as it is about their own complicity in a system which makes them such. Rennie depicts herself as an observer whose gaze allows her to remain detached and passive. She is a literal and figurative tourist, and as such she is "A spectator. A voyeur" (125). The outward marks of the tourist--camera and binoculars--which she carries emphasize this function. Rennie remarks of a group of fellow tourists: "Like her they can look all they want to, they're under no obligations to see, they can take pictures of anything they wish" (185). A vital distinction is to be made between looking and seeing. To look is to be a detached observer; to see implies true perception and, more importantly, implication in what is seen.

Vision and language are closely related. In fact, vision is a metaphor for language. Looking at the world translates the world into an object and serves to interpret and control it. Taking pictures is a strategy for turning scenes--even violent

ones--into the merely "Picturesque" (146). This practice is analogous to what language can do to events. At best it turns dynamic events into "issues." At worst it labels and fixes, reducing reality to binary opposites as in the "In and Out" and "Plus and Minus" lists so popular in magazines. Such classification is a reduction and a distortion of experience. Labels are deceptive; for example, the term "multiple choice" suggests a profusion of choice, though it restricts choice by limiting the range of options to "either/or."

Like Jake, Rennie with her magazine articles is a "packager" of reality. Jake "decided how things would look and what contexts they would be placed in, which meant what people would feel about them. He knew the importance of style" (103); he packages objects and women, whereas Rennie packages ideas and concepts. In popular magazines, life can be subsumed under a set of snappy titles, and experience transformed into an object, an aptly named "piece" or "article." Rennie's articles are ostensibly about "trivia" and therefore, she thinks, neutral and innocuous. Yet popular journalism is disturbing and powerful precisely because of its ability to package daily reality.

Before her experience on the island, Rennie, believing herself "off to the side" (26) as a writer, does not believe in

the significance or the power of her writing. She begins her career in order to engage in social protest, yet she quickly falls prey to commercial rather than ideological goals. The power of magazine articles is recognized readily by her editors who manipulate her writing to subvert feminism. Her article "Burned Out," on eight women's withdrawal from the feminist movement, is viewed as courageous speaking out. Since feminist anti-pornography pieces are, according to her editor, "heavy and humourless" (207), she is asked to see pornography as a playful art form which reflects on women's fantasy lives and urged to "Keep it light" (207). Her writing has a certain power--she discovers that she can manipulate her readers:

But sometimes Rennie liked to write pieces about trends that didn't really exist, to see if she could make them exist by writing about them. Six to one she'd see at least ten women with bathplug chains looped around their necks two weeks after the piece came out.
(25)

Rennie believes that her power is only minor, but others believe she is "uncanny" (25) and possesses power to see the future. In fact, as she comes to realize, writing is a more powerful form of prophecy: it can create events by writing them into existence.

On the islands the potential power of the writer is

recognized immediately by all around her. Her identity as a writer spreads quickly, and from the first encounter with the customs official who grimly warns her to "Write it good" (38), she is treated with suspicion. Marsdon, for example, in a gesture which Rennie initially mistakes for a sexual advance, tells her, "We don't need you here . . . You stay around here, you just mess things up" (77). Both Doctor Minnow and Lora have faith in the power of her words and implore her to write their stories. The "official" who negotiates her release will do so only on the promise of silence. Only after her radical transformation does Rennie realize the power even--indeed especially--of one who writes about "lifestyles."

From her first moment on the island Rennie is immersed in a world where experience constantly defies labels. The language of the island, presented in fragments only--captions on T-shirts, political slogans, or graffiti on the walls--reflects the cultural dislocation Rennie experiences. The "Prince of Peace" T-shirt Elva wears, for example, brings Rennie into her first contact with island politics, yet she mistakes it for religious fanaticism. Captions often point, apparently incidentally, to the power politics of sexual relations. A poster advertising rum flaunts the compelling caption "THE BIONIC COCK: IT GIVES YOU

SPURS" (38), and several men on the island wear the motto "The bionic cock" on their clothing. At the beach on St. Antoine, Rennie notices two young women wearing T-shirts, one of them announcing the motto "TRY A VIRGIN (ISLAND)" (80).

Language on the island is often either absurdly literal or hopelessly obfuscated. The drugstore's conventional name becomes literal as it is revealed as a place to buy drugs. Some people on the island, Paul tells Rennie, believe that long-life milk will give them a long life. Elsewhere, vital clues about the interpretation of language seem to be missing; a family planning poster, for example, proclaims "KEEP YOUR FAMILY THE RIGHT SIZE" without offering "hints about what that might be" (70). The "Madame Marvellous" letter Rennie finds in the local newspaper confounds explication and responds to a request for information about sexual activity with concealment. The instructions to deal with thieves Rennie finds in her room offer step-by-step instructions that take no account of reality; Rennie notes, "Like everything else she's been reading, the instructions are both transparent and impenetrable" (139).

The breakdown in language's referential powers reflects the sinister events that overtake Rennie. Experience refuses to be packaged; people constantly defy appearances and cannot be pinned

down. Almost everyone might be a member of the CIA or a double agent. In the light of these confused allegiances, conversations become opaque, almost surreal. From the moment she meets Dr. Minnow, who unaccountably offers her an aspirin, Rennie is confronted everywhere with uninterpretable events. At times events seem to be controlled by a simple plot like that of a gory movie or boy's adventure story, but always the authority of the plot eventually breaks down. In her experience on the island, reality fails to be pinned down or packaged, not just for Rennie herself, but also for the reader to whom events remain unexplained as, ultimately, does the status of Rennie's narrative.

In the light of her disorienting experiences, Rennie eventually transforms herself and her writing. The transformation of writing is paralleled by a transformation of her sensory perceptions of sight and touch, and she changes from spectator to participant. Rennie initially sees the events unfolding around her on the island as events in a tacky movie, the gory parts of which are "done with ketchup" (210). The more disturbing the events, the tackier the movie seems to be and the more romantic the plot. The death of Minnow, for example, she sees as "a put-on, an elaborate joke" (249); his coffin is "like a stage prop,

an emblem out of some horrible little morality play; only they've forgotten to say what the moral is" (250). Rennie's frequent calls for someone in "authority" to intervene are often seen in visual terms: "why isn't someone covering her eyes?" (293); "O God, thinks Rennie. Somebody change the channel" (259).

Rennie is forced finally to "see" and consequently to be involved and implicated. Her first realization of the full implications of seeing come when she is herself "seen" by the prisoner who is one of several manifestations of the immanent deaf and dumb man:

The hurt man's face is on a level with Rennie's own, blood pours down it, she knows who it is, the deaf and dumb man, who has a voice but no words, he can see her, she's been exposed, it's panic, he wants her to do something, pleading, Oh please. (290)

To be "seen" as Rennie is here is to be subject to a plea for involvement, and seeing is in opposition to the "looking" that objectifies and detaches. The deaf and dumb man is a wordless victim, yet he knows the power of seeing and touching (earlier he insisted on shaking Rennie's hand to bestow luck upon her). The words "Oh please" become a plea for involvement. Rennie has heard these words before (either in reality or in her imagination) as she unwillingly overhears another couple's lovemaking. Thus the

violence the deaf and dumb man is subjected to is equated with sex. Both pervert touch--which can signify involvement and healing--and deny involvement, becoming alternative methods of turning person into object.

Finally Rennie is forced to "see" the beaten Lora's face up close and in detail. Seeing leads her to touch in what a number of critics see as a birthing scene. Yet Rennie not only touches Lora, she also names her: "'Lora,' she says. The name descends and enters the body, there's something, a movement; isn't there?" (299). Rennie finally acknowledges that "there's no such thing as a faceless stranger" (299), although, ironically, Lora is now literally "faceless." Naming, like touching and seeing, is part of a process which undoes the objectification that can be perpetrated by violence, by sex, and by language when it is used to label and classify.

Rennie, then, is eventually transformed from observer and object to participant and subject. Her initial stance as "tourist" is shown not to be idiosyncratic but to be rooted in society. She is both a representative of what Elaine Tuttle Hansen calls the "post-feminist 80s" (5) and a representative of her country. The disease from which she and other "sweet Canadians" suffer is a tourist mentality, created in part by

media which require passive consumption--television, pulp fiction, popular journalism, the plots of romance and adventure. These things show the power of Rennie's cultural background to affect her, but the narrative also probes the role of Rennie's personal background in the formation of her way of looking at the world.

Griswold, the subject of all Rennie's first-person narratives, at first seems mere satire on small-town Ontario and the fitting topic for humour. Yet it is something more than this; it both creates her tourist mentality and provides the terms by which her transformation is ultimately effected. Rennie herself makes an important distinction between background and subground. Whereas background suggests arranged and picturesque perspective, subground, "something that can't be seen but is nevertheless there" (18), suggests a shady nexus of forces that underlie Rennie. Griswold as background can be neutralized and understood in jokes and anecdotes; as subground, it is both a place of strictly enforced codes, grisly indeed in their social implications, and a place of submerged consciousness which surfaces in dreams and proves necessary to Rennie's transformation. Incarcerated in the prison on the island (where she has arrived on a boat called The Memory) Rennie is forced to

remember, to explore the depths of her subground.

Griswold--a microcosm of small-town Ontario--exerts its control almost exclusively through the language it uses to define categories to live by. Its primary distinction is between the decent and the indecent. Decency is pertinent almost exclusively to females and is connected to the body and its functions: "Decency was having your clothes on, in every way possible" (55). Indecency is "dirty laundry" in its literal and metaphorical senses; "dirty laundry"--Rennie's mother's synonym for "disreputable stories"--reveals the story of the body: "like old sheets on a line, patched and stained, revealing too many secrets, secrets about nights and sicknesses and the lack of money" (178). Rennie's desire to control her stories comes from Griswold's values: she is anxious to tell only decent stories and to keep the inside and the outside distinct.

In the final jail scene where Rennie is confronted with Lora's mutilated body, all of Rennie's Griswold values are overturned. To begin with, Lora is the embodiment of the "flashy or cheap" (55) female who represents for Griswold the opposite of the "decent." When Rennie first meets her, she notices her bitten fingernails: "She wouldn't want to touch this gnawed hand, or have it touch her. She doesn't like the sight of ravage, damage,

the edge between inside and outside blurred like that" (86). She must overcome the fear of touch when the boundaries become even more blurred as they do when she confronts Lora's pulped face. She must reverse one of Griswold's primary injunctions--"to look at things without touching them" (54)--by "seeing" and touching Lora. She must confront filth and "dirty laundry" on the most literal level. Finally, and most importantly, she must eventually militate against the rules that urge her silence ("how to be quiet," "what not to say" (54)) and tell her subversive and disreputable story.

Griswold's rules are exposed as profoundly anti-female, hiding the functions of the body that define the female self and fixing the female attitude to power through restrictions of language. Rennie has been taught, for example, that boys say "Can I," girls say "May I"? Whereas men must ask only what they are capable of, women must ask what they will be allowed to do. The rules are imposed firmly by the matriarchal figure, Rennie's grandmother, who rules through her iron control. Yet the grandfather--apparently innocuous--is the concealed source of power which has possibly been imposed through violence (stories about him "were mostly about his violent temper" (56)). His acts of "heroism" are deeply disturbing in the context of the

narrative as a whole:

In the stories my grandmother told me about him, he drove a cutter and team through blizzards to tear babies out through holes he cut in women's stomachs and then sewed up again, he amputated a man's leg with an ordinary saw, knocking the man out with his fist because no one could hold him down and there wasn't enough whisky, he risked his life by walking into a farmhouse where a man had gone crazy and was holding a shotgun on him the whole time, he'd blown the head off one of his children and was threatening to blow the heads off the other ones too. (55)

By placing her grandmother's stories in context, Rennie reveals the disturbing nature of her grandmother's "worship" of him. His heroism is in reality barbarism. Her grandmother is seen as identifying with male power and directing her energies against women--she locks Rennie in the cellar; she identifies against the woman in the story, blaming her for the man's violence, even though, ironically, she is absent. She represents one potent form of malignancy: woman's identification against women. Yet, at the same time, as the grandmother is submerged by the disorientation of age (involving a loss of control of the body), what she has suppressed begins to surface in her recurrent enactment of searching for her hands, not the lifeless ones on the ends of her arms, "those are no good any more," but "My other hands, the ones

I had before, the ones I touch things with" (57). This submerged life suggests a time "before" patriarchy when the hands were able to make contact. This submerged myth becomes a dominant one in Rennie's subground, enabling her finally to touch Lora, a gesture suggesting both contact and female-identified healing. This process of learning to touch is parallel to that of learning to name the world.

Through the interconnected metaphors of looking, touching, and naming, Bodily Harm deconstructs the pervasive and powerful plots of romance, undermining its clichés. Throughout her narrative Rennie believes in and is questing for "the touch of the hand that could transform you, change everything, magic" (195). She looks for it in the traditional plots of romance she enacts with a succession of sexual partners--Jake, Daniel and Paul. Jake is the ultimate voyeur who transforms her into an object of his own making. His touch is always violation; sex is always a form of rape. The sadism which Rennie's narrative reveals shining through his guise of complete normality is so insistently depicted that it needs little commentary. Only the transformed Rennie can realize that every detail of her relationship with Jake is significant, including the somewhat clichéd language of love:

You're so closed, Jake said once. I like that. I want to be the one you open up for.

But she never could remember afterwards what he had actually said. Perhaps he'd said, I want to be the one who opens you up. (106)

The transformed Rennie realizes that such language is charged with meaning. The terminology of opening up suggests that Jake in some ways parallels Daniel, who literally opens Rennie up. The two are deliberately equated. Jake wants to know how Rennie wants to be "treated"; it is Daniel's function--as a Doctor--to "treat" her. The concept of treatment, which stands in opposition to the notion of healing, strongly suggests woman as object to be performed upon, sexually (by Jake) or medically (by Daniel).

Daniel is not a malicious individual, but his name--Daniel Luoma--suggests his significance as representative doctor.⁴ That the name associates him with disease is not accidental, for "treatment" is itself part of the disease, and this disease is not literal cancer, which seems by the end of the novel to be a less destructive disease than the generalized metaphorical malaise underlying society, but the turning of people into objects by violence, by sex, by perception, or by language. As a doctor, Daniel is complicit in this, for he is one of "the probers, the labellers and cutters" (101), and Rennie is aware of the implications of the label "doctor": "Doctored, they say of

drinks that have been tampered with, of cats that have been castrated" (101). To "doctor," as Mary Daly points out, means, in one of its senses, "to conceal the real state or quality of by deceptive alteration (as with chemicals)" (226). Daly sees gynaecological practices as a form of castration of the female, suggested in Bodily Harm by the direct correspondence between pornography and medical practice. Jocasta notes of the pornography display "it all looked very medical to her" (209), and at the display she and Rennie watch women "having their nipples cut off by men dressed up as Nazis" (210).

Daniel's touch is not a healing touch emanating from "the loving hands of a compassionate man" (53) as Ildikó De Papp Carrington argues in "Another Symbolic Descent," but a destructive and dismembering touch that stands in opposition to true, holistic healing. His function, on the one hand, is representative of the profession of gynaecology, which has served to institutionalize violence against the female body. On the other hand, he represents one manifestation of the "rescuer" Rennie is questing for. Whereas medicine objectifies women, romantic love is the most powerful tool by which women themselves serve their own objectification. Rennie "falls in love" with Daniel, perpetrating the commonest clichés of pulp romance. She

attempts to cast Daniel as hero and rescuer (like her grandfather) at the expense of her own integrity (she is "behaving like a goose" [33]) and even of her health: "She longed to be sick again so that Daniel would have to take care of her" (83). She casts him in the role of approving father, encouraging his paternalism, "being a good child" (237) and seeking a "gold star" (238) for her obedience: "she thought of Daniel watching her and approving. Good, he would say. You can do up buttons now? You can brush your own hair?" (83). Placing Daniel in this role robs her of her volition and increases her vulnerability; falling in love "made you visible, soft, penetrable; it made you ludicrous" (102). Once again Rennie is seen as an object, but here she creates her own objectification through the concept of romantic love which covertly depends absolutely on male paternalism.

Rennie's relationship with Paul eventually leads her to her understanding of the true nature of both romance and adventure. Again indulging in a clichéd relationship--"the biggest cliché in the book, a no-hooks, no-strings vacation romance with a mysterious stranger" (222), Rennie once more casts a man as rescuer. Paul is "mysterious" because of his uncertain identity--uncertain, but definitely shady and violent. He convinces Rennie

of her exemption: "You're a tourist, you're exempt" (78), words she later echoes. Yet Rennie is uninvolved only because Paul requires her exemption for his plot.

Paul is, for Rennie, one of the figures of authority on the island. Yet she sees him in terms that associate him with a boy; he cleans and cooks fish, and Rennie is reminded of "Boy Scouts" (242); she finds Paul's involvement in the increasingly disturbing events on the island "romantic" and his telling her about it "showing off" (244); "Boys playing with guns that's all it is" (244). A little later she observes him carrying his machine gun "like a lunch pail" (255). As Paul warms to danger, Rennie realizes why Paul is involved: "He loves it, thinks Rennie. That's why we get into these messes: because they love it" (256). Her insight reveals that male authority is as arbitrary and reckless as boys playing games. The romance myth and women's role in it are finally exploded: "The truth about knights comes suddenly clear: the maidens were only an excuse. The dragon was the real business" (258).

In retrospect, many of the instances of male authority take on a new dimension. Authority is frequently represented by policemen, usually in pairs. There are the policemen in the opening scene who themselves intrude in Rennie's apartment, the

policemen at the airport who look like soldiers, the policemen in the bar selling tickets to the dance, the policemen beating the deaf and dumb man, the policeman at the pornography exhibit, the policeman who arrest Rennie, the policemen in the cell who beat Lora. On the island policemen often overtly wield authority through sex and violence (Lora's experience in the cell is paradigmatic), yet even in Canada their power is bound up inextricably with sexual power. It is also, interestingly, power of language. Lora notes that their power comes from the fact that they can name you: "That's where it begins. . .Where they can use your first name and you can't use theirs" (93). In retrospect, the often careful observation about the apparent ages of the policemen is significant--their apparent youth associates them with Paul. Prince, the leader of the revolution on the island is similarly equated with youth. Rennie thinks that "he sounds about nineteen" (258), and when he announces the success of the revolution he does so "with the placid confidence of a child reciting a lesson" (259). Male authority is given an especially terrifying dimension when such authority is revealed as young boys playing adventure games.

Yet if Rennie is confirmed in her feeling that the revolution on the island is "juvenile delinquency" (253), she has

to assimilate the final lesson about power. The exercise of power is the more terrifying because it is "play"; after seeing the man beaten, she names the terror of male authority: "She's afraid of men and it's simple, it's rational, she's afraid of men because men are frightening" (290). Rennie, who initially feared being categorized as a "man-hater" (40) or "the sort of woman who was afraid of men" (40), who felt that her fear of the man with the rope was really her "own fear of death" (40), and who has taken to heart lessons about "Alien reaction paranoia" (76), finally penetrates these labels to acknowledge the simple and tautological reality which can be so effectively obscured by such labels. Part of Rennie's transformation involves the recognition that what could easily be dismissed as mere tautology can contain a vital insight into the nature of power.

Paul, then, unwittingly leads Rennie to this insight. Some critics argue that he has in a sense rescued Rennie--he restores her to her body. Carrington, for example, argues "Paul's tender touch gives 'her back her body'. . . in a love scene more mystical than sexual, 'a moment of . . . incarnation' in which she re-enters the surgically mutilated body from which she had felt separated" (53). Similarly, Roberta Rubenstein notes, "In contrast to Jake, who wanted to force the 'box' of Rennie's

sexuality, Paul enables her to give herself willingly" (130). Yet the terms used to describe the experience suggest the language of observer and object. Paul "watches" Rennie as she undresses: "she's open now, she's been opened" and "he's touching her, she can still be touched" (204). The novel stresses the significance of even the most apparently casual form of expression. The passive voice suggests that Rennie is still not yet a subject who can herself touch and name others. It is her experience in the cell with Lora that completes her transformation from object to subject.

In the course of this transformation, the terminology of cancer alters. "Terminal," the "bad word" in the language of cancer, has meant the place where you get off--both death and the end of relationships. Now she recognizes that the terminal is "Also where you can get on, to go somewhere else" (299). The term "malignant" no longer refers to diseased tissue inside Rennie. Malignancy is external, serving as a metaphor for both proliferating male violence and, equally significantly, woman's identification against woman:

The two policemen come forward. The Englishwoman looks at her, a look Rennie remembers from somewhere, from a long time ago, from a bad dream. It's a look of pure enjoyment. Malignant. (262).

"Massive involvement" again refers not to diseased flesh or to superficial involvement with men, but to responsibility for life and the connections that join people.

The concept of hope undergoes the most powerful transformation. In the hands of doctors like Daniel, hope keeps the patient dependent on the idea of a cure or remission. Lora's mother is trapped all her life by her relationship with "hope" or "luck." Believing the cliché "where there's life there's hope," she engages in a series of schemes suggested on the back pages of magazines. Although the schemes never bring her what she desires, they pacify her, enabling her to live her oppressed life. This form of hope is a female legacy of the Pandora myth. Hope is supposed to be the one positive emotion Pandora introduced. Yet it can be an insipid substitute for other passions. Hope is transformed for Rennie into "luck"--a more dynamic force than hope. Luck alone keeps Rennie alive, and acknowledging this removes her dependence on other figures.

Not only is the politics of naming her disease transformed for Rennie, so is the very notion of writing and its function. After her experiences (whether they be real or imagined), Rennie becomes radicalized. She now apparently defers to authority (she promises the official not to write her story); she sheds her

false honesty for duplicity and becomes "a subversive": "She will pick her time; then she will report" (301). Significantly, "For the first time in her life, she can't think of a title" (301). Reporting no longer involves controlling and containing reality, labelling it with a snappy title. Instead it is a process that carries political responsibilities.

The function of the writer is close to that of the politician--at least of the true politician as opposed to the actor in an adventure game. Dr. Minnow has tried to make Rennie see her role as writer; he asks her to write about "what you see": "Look with your eyes open and you will see the truth of the matter. Since you are a reporter, it is your duty to report" (134). When Rennie argues that she reports only "lifestyles," he replies that lifestyles are the concern of the politician too: "what the people eat, what they wear" (136). What Rennie has been taking as trivia, peripheral to political events, actually constitutes politics. Later Dr. Minnow indirectly equates politics with writing when Rennie asks him why he bothers trying to effect change:

"I agree with you that it seems illogical and futile for me to do so," he says. "But this is why you do it. You do it because everyone tell you it is not possible. They cannot imagine things being different. It is my duty

to imagine, and they know that for even one person to imagine is very dangerous to them, my friend." (229)

The "duty" of both politician and writer is to "imagine," as emphasized in the final scene of the narrative where Jake's "joke" about planes being kept in the air by faith is turned into a key image. Rennie finds her faith: "You can fly, she says to no one, to herself" (301). Flying is a metaphor for writing, which involves both faith and luck: "she is lucky, suddenly, finally, she's overflowing with luck, it's this luck holding her up" (301).

Thus by the end of the narrative, Rennie is transformed into a subversive writer; the text of Bodily Harm to that point, it is implied, is her radical narrative. As such it is a subtle but incisive commentary on the forces in society that led her both to be objectified and to objectify others. It is also a comment on her own naiveté--specifically Canadian perhaps--and the culpability of that position. Its main function is to demolish the male plots of romance and adventure, and it does so largely by employing those plots and parodying them. Yet it also suggests that authentic female narratives are bound by certain features.

Rennie is repelled by the oral story Lora offers proudly as "the story of my life" (270). Lora has had a life of contact with

the brutality and violence Rennie has been screened from and, until the transformation of her consciousness, believes she is "exempt" from. Lora has been abused by her stepfather whose sexual interest in her manifests itself as beating, and she has been raped at knife-point. Rennie expresses her distaste for such "female" stories; she remembers the narratives of a woman who was trapped with her in a bus station:

it goes on and on, triplets, polio, car crashes, operations for dropsy, for burst appendixes, sudden death, men leaving their wives, aunts, cousins, sisters, crippling accidents, a web of blood relationships no one could possibly untangle, a litany at the same time mournful and filled with curious energy, glee almost, as if the woman is childishly delighted with herself for being able to endure and remember so much pointless disaster. True Confessions. (273)

The woman's narrative is plotless, web-like, "pointless," and as such is not the kind of "story" Rennie finds attractive, yet it is an authentic report of her experiences as woman and, as even Rennie notes, impelled by the energy of the narrative process. When Rennie is forced to listen to Lora's stories, she realizes that the "pointless disaster" they too detail is an authentic record of the history of the female body: "Lora has better stories" (271).

Female stories are generally oral and frequently prison narratives, told in confinement either actual or metaphorical. Based on a conversational model rather than a narrative model, they are open-ended and directionless. Yet while women are confined within the metaphorical "cage" of patriarchy, their stories--at their most authentic--will be stories of victimization within patriarchy. Bodily Harm suggests only very remotely the possible nature of female consciousness outside patriarchy. In such a realm perception--sight and touch--leads to involvement and healing rather than alienation. The body is holistic and disease is not "treated" with paternalistic medical practices which include dismemberment, cutting up the female breasts like pie. Dream and submerged consciousness come to the surface. Throughout Bodily Harm only women acknowledge their dreams. Jake refuses to tell Rennie his dreams (denigrating her question as a typically female one when she asks). Paul, under persuasion, says he dreams of "a hole in the ground" (248). Lora, by contrast, readily reveals her dreams which are female in content: "Being on a boat. My mother. Sometimes I dream about having a baby" (281). Rennie has many dreams, especially of her grandmother and her quest for her hands. Whereas men dream themselves into holes, women can utilize their dreams and

nightmares to gesture towards escape from the "cage" that surrounds them. Yet such escape is too remote, and ultimately the narrative focuses on its deconstruction of patriarchal power rather than a reconstruction of female-orientated power.

The open-ended form of Bodily Harm is one of its more compelling features and argues most cogently for the power of language. Critics have been unable to decide the status of Rennie's narrative. Roberta Rubenstein takes for granted that the story is about Rennie's incarceration on the island and reads the two passages in the future tense that deal with Rennie's escape from the island as granting the reader assurance that Rennie will escape; others see the story of incarceration as metaphorical. Lorna Irvine ingeniously submits that incarceration is a metaphor for cancer and that the narrative is written in hospital; she notes that "small spaces and moments of time punctuate the novel like clockwork, suggesting the painful physical problems that accompany composition" (89) and draws attention to the disturbing dates in the dedication, "For Jennifer Rankin, 1941-1979." The lack of narrative determination about what "really" happens to Rennie is deliberate. It shifts the onus of narrative authority from the writer to the reader and thus emphasizes the idea of reading as a process that involves the complicity of the

reader rather than the more traditional idea of reading as passive consumption. The many references to detective fiction and pulp romance and to film and television remind the reader of the pervasiveness of such consumption. The reader is forced to read metaphorically, being made aware of the multiple dimensions of language.

Thus the power of Rennie's narrative has little to do with its ability to refer to any "real" series of events. Its power derives from its ability to expose society as patriarchal, governed by sex and violence, and to show women's complicity in this patriarchy. Writing about the world becomes a way of assuming political responsibility and "imagining" a better world--a subversive and dangerous act. Yet the deeply disturbing quality of Bodily Harm arises from its challenge to the reader to assume responsibility for the act of reading which, like the act of writing, is politicized by the text.

HOME TRUTHS

Whereas Atwood sometimes uses her work to make political statements, Mavis Gallant seems at first glance to be committed only to the finely-crafted story. Yet, by her own avowal "extremely interested in politics,"⁵ she is acutely aware that a story, no matter how polished an artifact it is, has political significance. The "Linnet Muir" sequence, the final section of Home Truths, continually makes reference to the force that art and literature--both popular and high--exert in the world. The painting "The Doctor," for example, has affected "two full generations" who "were raised with the monochrome promise that existence is insoluble, tragedy static, poverty endearing, and heavenly justice a total mystery."⁶ Similarly, children's books of the stern variety that Linnet acquires from Dr. Chaucard attempt to enforce their "European social fiddle-faddle" (300) disguised as morality. Linnet illustrates the pervasive fear she feels around her of the potentially subversive power of literature in her anecdote about the offer of a certain American philanthropic organization to establish a library on the condition that its contents not be censored: the offer was turned down. The most telling comment on the connection between literature and politics is Linnet's remark--devastating in context--about the CBC: "I shall forget everything about the war

except that at the worst point of it I was asked to read Dear Octopus" (251).

Art and literature exert a powerful force that shapes consciousness, often working obliquely rather than directly. Literalist readers are parodied on several occasions in Home Truths. Linnet remarks, for example, that certain educators object to the children's story "Pip and Squeak": "It was argued that millions of children had grown up believing that if a dog made advances to a female penguin she would produce a rabbit" (253). The real power of "Pip and Squeak" is much more subtle. The potentially powerful revolutionary figure appears as a comic character, "Bolshie," who "went around carrying one of those round black bombs with a sputtering fuse" (252). The label "Bolshie" becomes an example of the way in which language works to control and neutralize concepts, to turn the potentially powerful into the comic and harmless. Literal readers, like the Reeves in "In the Tunnel," who respond to the title of Sarah's thesis about the "Less Privileged in British Columbia" (82) by taking reassurance from the word "British," are apt to miss the power of language to work in this way.

The title of the collection might itself be something of a joke on Canadian readers who, Gallant notes, are "very literal

readers, especially when they read something about Canada" (IGH,52). The title suggests a set of aphoristic insights into Canada, and the reader who searches for them will turn up a few well worn clichés ("That's the strength of Canada, that it hasn't been a melting pot" [178]; "the father was more reticent than the mother; perhaps more Canadian" [135], "in Canada you have to keep saying what you are" [21]) as well as a few comic reflections ("their being Canadian, and suddenly left together, was a sexual damper" [116]). The stories in the collection undercut the possibility of any simple truths. The writer may deal with a form of truth, but it is not that literal truth "With a Capital T" which, in the final story, is shown to work counter to creativity and is identified strongly with men. Truth resides between the lines; the writer is "un mensonge qui dit la vérité" (xxii). "Home Truths" is one of those stock phrases that pervade the book. Such phrases take on a power of their own and serve to limit and contain, not to liberate, truth.

Linnet Muir's narrative, for example, repeatedly illustrates the tendency to use language to contain and control. Bertie Knox tells incessantly of the hardships of his working life. His voice, the tone of which Linnet captures exactly, suggests his pride in these hardships. His stories always wind up with "And

none the worse for it" (241). The stock phrase is a powerful tool of institutions and serves to keep people subjugated within a set of clichés. Bertie Knox and the other men in the office where Linnet works inhabit a world of radically curtailed desire so that its vestiges are echoed only in a few stock phrases: "'I often thought I wanted . . . ' 'Something I wouldn't have minded having . . . '" (247). Such language belongs to the extremely limited world, the "invisible square" (246), each seems to inhabit. The men believe that "Change is always for the worse" (245), keeping them firmly entrenched in their narrow world. Many other maxims that circulate in the office are aimed particularly at controlling the perception of women. For example, although the men implicitly see Linnet's destiny as inevitable marriage, they believe that "once a girl had caught (their word) a husband she became a whiner, a snooper, a killjoy, a wet blanket, a grouch, and a bully" (259).

Linnet herself uses language in a similar way. Early in her life she creates a category of people she labels "they." It serves to encompass all those with ideas alien to her own. "Every sort of aggression" she labels "hypocrisy" (223), thus allowing herself to neutralize her fear by mis-naming the threat. Similarly, "The man at Windsor Station" (223) becomes a label for

all sexual threats. She is as guilty as the men of summing up women. She labels married women "Red Queens" and sees them "chasing after other people and minding their business for them" (262). Other girls she labels "coolies." In choosing these labels, she identifies against other women. The young Linnet does not know (or care) why "coolies" are as they are: "I did not know if life made them bearers or if they had been born with a natural gift for giving in" (226), yet the older Linnet has learned to understand more fully the demands of "life" on women and can see her labels as inadequate and insidious.

Home Truths explores the workings of language, which is such a crucial force because it underlies memory, imagination, and even history, which critics have identified as Gallant's central themes. Language, Gallant notes in the introduction, is essential to integrity: "one needs a strong, complete language, fully understood, to anchor one's understanding" (xvii). Yet almost all of her characters lack integrity; either they are maimed because they lack a complete language--like Gérard in "Saturday"--or else the language they possess is so impoverished and limited that they seem to lead their lives by clichés--like the Reeves in "In the Tunnel" who live out their self-imposed exile on the Riviera confined within a private language of "walkies, tummy, spend-a-

penny" (25) and the catch-phrase "get to Friday," a phrase which emphasizes their entrapment in the class assumptions they are trying to escape. Gallant's stories argue that the language acquired in the early formative years can never be transcended. Only a writer like Linnet Muir--a figure unique in Gallant's work--can wield language to transform memory by finding an articulate and authentic voice.

The centrality of language to Gallant explains some of the more important features of her style. On the whole, critics tend to regard her as a "realist" writer,⁷ who creates rounded characters, although some critics cannot fully endorse this reading. Ronald Hatch, for example, notes "at first sight, Gallant's characters sometimes seem as if they ought not to deserve the reader's interest, since they are so ephemeral" (1978, 97), and "it is almost as if the characters are so fragile that a direct explanation would alter them" (1978, 99). This fragility is the result of the fact that Gallant's characters are always, and only, products of their own language and voice. Language creates and constitutes consciousness. Elsewhere, Hatch has remarked, "language provides one of the main means by which the mind controls the world, objects in flux being condensed into solid nouns" (1985, 52). As in Atwood's work, this process is

both necessary (its failure indicates an untenable madness as with Flor in Green Water, Green Sky) and dangerous because it results in a permanent and inevitably limited view of the world. In Atwood's work, women are the primary victims: they are fixed in language as static "nouns." In Gallant's, the consciousness that wields the language and is thus limited by it is the primary victim. The individual's language is part of a complex ideological institution. Individuals are thus victims of the predominant ideology, which for Gallant much more than for Atwood involves race and class as well as gender, because it shapes their minds.

The first section of Home Truths explores consciousness in the process of childhood formation. The title of this section-- "At Home"--refers to the setting of the stories in Canada. Yet the title is also deeply ironic, for none of the characters is "at home." All are displaced from the nexus of forces that could be characterized as home: family connection, love, warmth, nurturance, and the presence of a maternal figure. Home also includes the domestic work, especially the production of food, which constitutes nurturance and is closely associated, throughout Gallant's work, with women. In The Pegnitz Junction, for example, Fascism, associated with male violence, especially

rape, is set against the production of food. This notion of home is central in Gallant's work, but it works only through its absence. Home is always lacking; the "dis-ease" of Gallant's characters that Hatch notes (1985, 47) is a profound homesickness.

The first story in this section--"Thank You for the Lovely Tea"--illustrates on many levels this displacement from home. The school is itself an apt backdrop for displacement with its imported traditions: "the school had been a Bernardine abbey, transported from England to Canada stone by stone" (5). The headmistress's catchphrase, "a year of change" (4), illustrates how language works to create a powerful ideology through seemingly innocent phrases. The new world, it is implied, subscribes to a limited definition of change that is concerned only with these minor changes within the established British tradition--the death of Kipling and the substitution of one monarch for another. The new "progress-minded" (4) headmistress's similarity to the new king accentuates the closure. Yet what Ruth and the others are being guided by is not an imitative tradition, but a new and inevitably powerful tradition of distorted--because displaced--values.

The children are separated from home both literally and

metaphorically, and the separation is sanctioned in language. May, for example, separated from her twin sister, explains the separation: "'But now,' she said, echoing a parental phrase, 'we have different clothes and we go to different schools, because we have to develop separate personalities" (11). She is unwittingly caught within a "parental phrase" even as she is supposed to develop a "separate personality." Helen, "uprooted" from "her warm, rowdy, half-literate family" (11) is another victim: "In school, Helen had been told, she would learn to renounce Satan for herself and, more important, learn to be a lady" (11). In fact, she learns to judge her family in cliché-laden terms: "Their voices are so loud. And they drink, and everything" (12).

Ruth, already separated from her family by its dissolution, refuses the affection that Mrs. Holland, a potential mother figure, offers, again because of an "impression" formed almost entirely by the kind of language she has heard used about her: "Mrs. Holland was untidy--she had heard people say so. She was emotional. This, too, Ruth had overheard, always said with disapproval" (3). In school, from the coercions of the language Ruth hears, she learns the meaning of "emotional" more thoroughly than she learns how to represent proportion. She assimilates the judgements that are institutionalized by the school. In her final

gesture, she demonstrates that she has learned to shun the erratic force of "emotion": "She breathed on the window, idly drew a heart, smiled placidly, let it fade" (16).

The story "Saturday" is central in the first section in terms of its concern with language. Gérard is a character crippled by his lack of language in which to dream. His deprivation of French is a result of his mother's desire for "freedom" from the Church. Yet, as so often in Gallant's work, this freedom is bondage of another kind; there can be no freedom from the institutions of power without heavy penalty. Language is the bastion of power through which such institutions exert their control, and to reject the institution is to lose the language: "Church and language were inextricably enmeshed, and you had to leave the language if you wanted your children brought up some other way" (33). As the institution of the matriarchal family tries to usurp the power of the church, the language is greatly diminished, so that what remains is not freedom but "only tension and conversation . . . and a few corrupted qualities disguised as 'speaking your mind,' 'taking a stand,' and 'drawing the line somewhere'" (33)

Gérard's mother replaces the authority of the church with what Linnet in another context refers to as "an erratic and

alarming maternal vitality" (271). She is one of Gallant's several domineering mothers who exhibit a curious mixture of destructive censorship and--often deeply buried--energetic nurturance; far beneath the surface she is "a source of infinite love" (38). The mother controls her family, censoring her son's pornography and her children's letters and diaries. She controls the family's language and imposes her own. Her catch-phrases "nobody cares" and "hell-day," which "she said . . . so often that Gérard supposed most days were some kind of hell" (36) become self-fulfilling prophecies. Her secret "shut up," an attempt to silence her husband's verbally promiscuous outpourings, is a sign of the barricades she has erected against emotional life and is echoed in the next generation of sons-in-law whose response to "something being said about religion or something personal" is "A chorus of silent English: 'Shut up!'" (44).

The mother has managed to create her five indistinguishable daughters in her own image except diminished even farther into types. Impermeable, they see intelligence as a disease and marry interchangeable husbands. The men in the family are different. Gérard, Léopold, and their father all have the potential for intelligence, emotion, and an interior life. In Gérard, this

potential is seen going radically wrong. Having no language "fully understood," he has nothing in which to anchor his imagination, and he is pathologically incapable of distinguishing among dream, reality, and film-script--a disability accentuated by the narrative which forces a similar confusion on the reader⁸. He is consigned to live out his life and to dream in an imperfect language.

Gérard's father, still in possession of his language, has the power to "invent." Unlike Gérard, he is able to keep a clear distinction between invention and reality. After conjuring for himself a "large sloping pasture" with wild flowers, crab apples, and choke cherries, he recognizes "he was still here, on the street, and had not forgotten it for a second" (48). Léopold, closely associated with his father, also has total command of language: "French is Léopold's private language; he keeps it as he does his toys, to himself, polished, personal, a lump of crystalline rock he takes out, examines, looks through, and conceals for another day" (39). Both father and son are outcasts from the family. The father is rendered powerless and silenced; Léopold is regarded as a "little stunted, ugly thing" (40) whose intelligence is a burden, whose sisters "wish he had never been born" (40), and whose mother, in one of her shocking confessions,

says, "I never wanted him" (46). Yet hope resides in Léopold, whose language, it is suggested, can, like a camera, allow him to look at reality and turn it into a vital memory, a source of future "assurance." The story, though, is open-ended because the reader, like Léopold's father, will "never know what became of him" (48). Thus the story traces the genesis of the "distrust of imagination" (xii) Gallant speaks of in her introduction. The replacement of a full and rich language with stock phrases that fix and control and silence anything from the imaginative or emotional world is a step in the process of decay.

"Orphan's Progress" traces the process (a highly ironic progress) of separation from home, a process which is effected largely through language. The notion of home is stronger here than elsewhere in the book, although by the beginning of the story a complete separation between children and their home has already taken place. The mother of the children lives in chaotic dirt and disorder and, in the eyes of the world, is clearly mad. Yet she offers more maternal warmth than any of Gallant's other mother figures. While they lived with her, the children "loved" their mother "without knowing what the word implied, or even that it existed" (56). As social workers move in, they impose classifications, making the girls self-aware of their condition

and teaching them to see through the eyes of the judgemental world. It is by this process that they are "orphaned."

The sisters, who once slept in the same bed and were reflected in each other's eyes, move progressively apart until even their family names are different. The social world tampers with the girls' memories by changing their language. When Mildred sees a rooftop from her window, a memory surfaces in her lost language: the place is "Where Mummy lives" (60). Her "lie" is punished by a symbolic suppression of language--she is forced to carry a large pair of shears which are said to be connected to the idea of cutting out a liar's tongue, but what has been effectively severed through the metaphorical cutting out of the tongue is memory itself. Gallant comments in her introduction, "Memory is something that cannot be subsidized or ordained. It can, however, be destroyed; and it is inseparable from language" (xv). Mildred's memory is not repressed, but destroyed: after this episode, "mummy" ceases to have a meaning. Later, when Mildred is shown the house where she lived, it is evident that the destruction of the vital connection with home is complete: "She had no reason to believe she had seen it before, or would ever again" (62). What the children have lost is a rich and profoundly important memory of "home" and an unconscious sense of

connection. This loss, which for Gallant seems to define the state of all humankind in only slightly varying degrees, is inevitable and can never be recovered.

All the other stories in the first section (with the exception of the last) show children on the brink of complete separation from the world of childhood where dreams, imagination, fairy-tales, and family and racial memory can be used to anchor one's understanding. Adults are censors, imposing rules and the constraints of language on this world. In "Jorinda and Jorindel," for example, Irmgard lives her life through her dreams and the fairy-tales that blend with them. Her life is full of "pageants, dangers, near-escapes" (19), and she retains a rich private myth of "Le matin du kidnap" (19) of which her maid, Germaine, is the guardian. Her dreams and myths are not fully coherent; as in "Saturday" the reader is made to share the lack of clarity about what really happens, in this case to Freddy. But whereas Gérard's confusion is pathological, Irmgard can, through these dreams, begin to intuit things she does not know.

Yet the end of this childhood world is approaching as Irmgard nears separation from her maid and "will never be given anything even approaching Germaine's unmeasured love again" (19). Her world is eroded by the constraints of the adult world which

the approach of puberty forces her to enter. Her parents, believing that "Nothing is as dreary as a dream" (28), thrive on censorship and the imposition of rules: "Nothing cheers them up so fast as a new rule, for when it comes to making rules, they are as bad as children" (28). When Irmgard sees Freddy naked and becomes aware of sexual difference, Germaine mythologizes it for her as a "déformation" (26). Yet this interpretation will not last for long. Separated from love, from myth and its attendant language, Irmgard is destined to lose her vision and voice (the story is narrated partially from her perspective) and to enter the adult world which seems as empty as a croquet game and to become "her mother all over again" (25).

"Up North" portrays a child, Dennis, who possesses visionary power to "see" the past that constitutes his national history. He "sees" settlers and "hears" their language, even though he has no knowledge of French. As with Irmgard, Dennis's special vision is on the brink of destruction. Roy McLaughlin, a construction worker who travels on the same train and is simultaneously repelled by and fascinated with Dennis and his mother, perceives what Dennis is travelling toward: "He outdistanced his clothes; he was better than they were. But he was rushing on this train into an existence where his clothes would be too good for him" (53).

Dennis's continual assertion, "So then," finally has to be recanted in the light of his mother's coercive, "You didn't see anyone. Now shut up" (54). The boy, who will be "seeing plenty of everything now" (55) will, paradoxically, lose his visionary powers.

"The Prodigal Parent" concludes the "At Home" section by reversing the parent/child relationship. The father, revisiting his grown daughter, is the "prodigal" child. Rhoda is estranged from her father in language. His accent turns his language into apparent English nonsense: "Oxbow was a Cheswick charmer" (64). Rhoda's own life has fallen into a pattern where all her hope is focused on a man whose life closely duplicates her father's. Her father recognizes that she is living a Peter Pan script, though her childhood memories of watching Peter Pan (and being disillusioned by the actors' British accents) have been completely lost. Dialogue between father and daughter fails; all conversations are "collisions" (66). Rhoda is one of the many characters in Gallant's fiction who seems radically incomplete, fragmentary, living a set script. Whereas the young characters in all the other stories in this section are shown making the transition to the adult world, she has already undergone her birth into an incomplete language and lost a childhood mythology

that might have provided her with orientation in the adult world.

In the "At Home" stories, children are seen in the process of displacement from the last vestiges of "home." Often the separation is effected most powerfully through language--through the substitution of a rich language with a clichéd one or through the censorship of dream or mythology by the imposition of adult rules. Ironically, those characters who are caught up in this process of wrenching are the most dynamic. Those who are already "at home" in a limited language have little intellectual or emotional life, but live out the lives of types rather than of individuals. In the "Canadians Abroad" section, displacement is advanced even farther in the lives of the young adults living in voluntary exile from Canada. The geographical displacement of the protagonists in Europe is only one sign of a more radical displacement. Immersed in alien languages which reflect equally alien cultures, they drift through Europe displaced from home and the emotional forces connected with the concept. Vestigial memories remain, but usually in a form too incoherent to provide a sense of emotional connection. Emotionally adrift, they are all "impaled on a foreign language" (98), rendered especially alien by the ravages of war which have created huge disconnections in time and history as well as geography.

All four stories in the "Canadians Abroad" section deal on some level with language. Of the protagonists of the stories, one stands out because--unattractive though she is in many ways--she possesses the germ of an articulate self. Agnes Brusen in "The Ice Wagon Going Down the Street" roots her life in her one coherent memory of "the ice wagon going down the street" when she stood in possession of the day. Both Peter and Sheilah attempt to escape their roots by drifting through Europe looking for representatives of a nebulous power to direct their lives and drop opportunities in their paths. Sheilah denies her "rat poor" (113) Liverpool background. Peter lives off only the vestiges of experience; he and his family "were left the rinds of income, of notions, and the memories of ideas rather than the ideas intact" (114). Apparently a "united couple" (124), Peter and Sheilah are wholly unable to understand each other's backgrounds, a significant lack of understanding signalled by apparently trivial but actually important details. Peter, for example, thinks "butty" "means bread and cheese" (113). Similarly, Sheilah is unable to understand things important to Peter:

She was born in an ugly city, and so was Peter, but they have this difference: she does not know the importance of the first snow--the first clean thing in a dirty year. He would have told her then that this storm,

which was wetting her feet and destroying her hair, was like the first day of the English spring, but she made a frightened gesture, trying to shield her head. (124)

Peter's meeting with Agnes offers a possible alternative to his radically adrift life. Agnes, unlike Sheilah and Peter, does not deny her roots: "I'm from Saskatchewan . . . I'm not from any other place" (123). Peter at first has her labelled as a type, a product of a family of "white-hot Protestants" who "live with a load of work and debt and obligation" (115), yet he comes to recognize her humanity. Agnes is one of very few characters--not only in Home Truths but in all Gallant's fiction--to retain intact a coherent childhood memory. The memory of "the ice wagon going down the street" is a memory of almost mythic power and independence:

You get up early in the morning in the summer and it's you, you, once in your life alone in the universe. You think you know everything that can happen . . . Nothing is ever like that again. (132)

Agnes and Peter are drawn together--despite their convincingly depicted lack of romantic attraction--by their deep understanding of each other's background. They are able for a brief time to communicate as "old friends":

They talked about dying, about being ambitious, about being religious, about different kinds of love . . . They were both Canadians, so they had this much together-- the knowledge of the little you dare admit. Death, near-death, the best thing, the wrong thing--God knows what they were telling each other. (133)

Yet despite the intimate communication which can take place between them, "nothing happened" (133). Peter misses the opportunity for emotional life and something which, although far from glamorous, is more nearly like love than any other possibility. What Agnes offers is her sense of connection with her past contained in her articulate, complete, and coherent memory. Peter returns, though, to his superficially glamorous relationship, the underlying sterility of which is brought out in the image of the peacocks. Peter and Sheilah are seen initially as "rather splendid" peacocks. Just after meeting Agnes, Peter looks out of the window to see the real peacocks: "the peacocks love no one. They wander about the parked cars looking elderly, bad-tempered, mournful, and lost" (117). The time-structure of the story adds an extra irony; the "splendid" peacocks rest upon an illusion which has already been destroyed many years before. After his relationship with Agnes, Peter returns to his sterile life and his paradoxical relationship to time in which the lost

past becomes conflated with the hopeful future. The story recounts how "Peter lost Agnes" and, at the beginning of the story, Peter has long been "lost" in several senses. The story ends with this perception articulated by the voice of Agnes.

"Bonaventure" is the story that explores most fully the relation between language, art, and gender. Douglas Ramsay, "a musical genius" (135), is characterized by his extreme horror of nature. The chalet where he is temporarily immersed in nature and in an almost exclusively female world is itself "like an animal, a bison, or a bear" (136); birds "shriek" all around him; he feels "pure horror" (146) at the touch of a moth on his face; spring water is "typhoid fever, conjunctivitis, amoebic dysentery, blood poisoning, and boils" (153). Nature is everywhere savage and cannibalistic, its language incomprehensible. Ramsay's horror of external nature extends to a horror of his own biological origins. He is "besieged . . . invaded, by his mother's account of the day he was conceived" (135). The story of his conception places him not only in nature with its web of interconnectedness, which he perceives as "a tent of gray, a hideous veil" (140), but also in time and history--both personal and national which are functions of the natural world.

The connection between nature and history is illustrated when Katharine, holding up a specimen of "The first plant life on earth," serves to remind Ramsay, though "For a reason he could not immediately interpret" (138), of his parents and their personal history: "the words, and the sight of the plant in Katharine's hand, rushed him back to his mother screaming, and the wartime photograph of his father, which, of course, was mute" (138). His parents' story roots him in time, explaining his origins in the history--biological, personal, and national--which he is anxious to deny. Their account of history, the central importance of which is suggested by the fact that the title of the story refers to it, is incoherent to him: his father is "mute," his mother's voice is a scream. This familial memory, of which his mother is the guardian, defines his existence and offers a potential anchor in time, yet he refuses to explore it or render it coherent.

The natural world Ramsay so energetically rejects is closely associated with women. Katharine Moser is a detailed observer of nature, able to classify and name the natural phenomena around her. She lives in close relationship to nature, having a reciprocal relationship with its language: she understands its sounds, and in turn tells "everything" to her bees (142). She

understands--and to Ramsay's horror accepts--the "nature" of animals and their often savage struggle for survival. She has tried to root Moser in nature and time, printing "Death Waits For Life" over his door, and she attempts a similar initiation into nature for Moser's protégé, Ramsay.

The initiation fails because Ramsay's attitude contradicts the Romantic attitude that nature is necessary to art. Whereas Katharine believes that "Nothing can be divorced from nature and survive" (152), Ramsay argues that art comes not from nature but from other art: "'Painters learn to paint by looking at pictures, not at hills and valleys, and musicians listen to music, not the wind in the trees. Everything Moser said and wrote was unnatural. It was unnatural because he was sophisticated'" (152). He believes that Moser was exiled in nature by Katharine, interpreting his collections as signs of exile: "They are all things you use in cities--pieces of metal, paper clips" (161).

Such "sophisticated" art as Moser's not only entails the rejection of the natural world, it also seems to imply the rejection of women. The story abounds with victimized women. For example, Peggy, who has been the victim of Moser's pawings, recounts the story of "that English lady who was waylaid and killed on a lonely road in Switzerland" (154) and of "that other

one, a younger one . . . knocked down and bashed about" (154-55). Anne remarks that "Men do attack girls" (155), and she later becomes the victim, if a consenting one, of Ramsay's "vivisectionist" (163) gaze. Even Sabine, who exists in Ramsay's one coherent memory (though there significantly she exists out of time), is vulnerable, as her name, which links her to the Sabine women, suggests.

Other women, like Katharine or Ramsay's mother, are transformed into "hospital nurse[s]" (143) who are necessary for the nurturance of artists; as Nanette observes, "Musicians live between their mothers and their confessors" (161). Others, like Nanette herself, whose Jewish origins suggest a different kind of victimization, turn disillusioned and ineffectual. Even more tellingly, women are transformed by notions of "sophisticated" art into headless statues like the one Ramsay sees in the exhibition of French sculpture and painting: "Ramsay found himself sitting and looking at the headless statue of an adolescent girl. He looked at the small breasts, slightly down-pointed. The hips were wider than the chest, the legs columns" (164). Later, returning to Montreaux, Ramsay finds in a drawer one of the vital "signs of life and work" (169). It is "a drawing of a naked and faceless woman wearing a pearl necklace" (169).

Art, it seems, turns women into objects, erasing their faces.

Thus the dichotomy between art and nature serves to victimize women. Ramsay's rejection of nature is also a rejection of language and memory. In the story as elsewhere in Gallant's work, women are the primary guardians of language and memory. Katharine is a censor of language, reading both her daughter's letters and Ramsay's. In this she duplicates Ramsay's mother, "a wastebasket hunter, letter filcher, telephone spy" who "thought [Ramsay's] father's pocket diary was written in code" (147). Women are the relentless interpreters of language; as Ramsay's father observes, "You can't leave a thing around. They uncrumple everything" (156). Women do more than censor and interpret: they also use language to preserve memory. Ramsay's father is "mute"; after his return from war he forgets his name and is "in a sense never seen or heard of again" (149). It is Ramsay's mother who preserves the story of Bonaventure, constantly reminding the reluctant Ramsay of it in her letters.

Ramsay does not understand the significance of the memory his mother preserves. He believes that memory itself is redundant. Of his father's experiences in the war he believes "there are still too many people alive who remember all that" (136). Yet even incompletely developed memories, "silent,

flickering areas of light, surrounded by buildings that no longer exist" (135), can serve to root the individual in the temporal world. Living in the timeless world of art as does Ramsay, who desires "life without its past" (138), is deeply dangerous. The consequences of such attempts include the rejection of women and of the forces of "home" which include love with its power to redeem. The story develops a context for Ramsay's father's one articulate thought, which is his belief, contrasting with Ramsay's, that "The greatest denial of death is to love" (147).

Ramsay's view of art and its implications creates a hellish world divorced from nature, full of self-consuming cities:

[Cities] were the same to him, whether their ruins were dark and soft, abandoned to pigeons and wavy pieces of sky, or created and destroyed by one process, like the machine that consumes itself. The air he had breathed was filled with particles of brick dust. He accepted faces, not one of which he would put a name to, and knew the smell and touch of wet raincoats worn by people he would never meet. (137-38)

One of the more significant features of this hell, in fact, is Ramsay's inability to name humanity. His lack of facility with language is brought out humorously toward the end of the story when he translates the notice about the first raspberries: "Les premières framboises mûrissent sur la rive droite de la vallée"

(169). Mûrissent, which means "have ripened," he translates "have exploded," thus substituting the natural growth with man-made destruction.

The consequences of his view are brought out even more fully through other references. When Ramsay hears the sounds of nature (which Katharine has connected to time and marriage),

He saw the notes--not as notes of music but as a new kind of shorthand. He did not know enough of the shorthand to read the notes, or enough of the new language to reply. He dreamed that everyone was skeletal, while he had got enormously fat. (167-68)

The final image here, echoing Ramsay's greedy consumption of sweet foods, is disturbingly reminiscent of concentration camp images. Similar imagery is employed again when Nanette tells Ramsay of her Jewish origins. Ramsay, unable to see language as anything but an arbitrary label, sees Nanette "wearing a tag" (161), an image again evoking concentration camps. Thus the rejection of language is connected subtly but powerfully with the impulse of Fascism.

Thus the world split between Ramsay's and Katharine's views is a kind of hell. This division between the natural and the man-made world is not handled simplistically. Katharine's world is unattractive and not just because we have only Ramsay's point of

view. Certainly it is a world where women identify against each other and censor others' perceptions. Yet the rejection of Katharine's world--especially the rejection of language--is seen as deathly, perhaps connected with Fascism. Art, the story suggests, exists at great cost. The ending of the story does suggest that Ramsay realizes "he might be mistaken" about his immunity to the "inherited blight" (172) of mortality. This reflection implies that his attitude changes to one of greater insight, yet the tone of the story suggests more strongly that he learns he is mistaken only when the signs of mortality overcome him as they did Moser and as they inevitably must.

The stories that frame the section, "In the Tunnel" and "Virus X," function, in some ways, as a pair, examining similar ideas from different perspectives and providing thematic preparation for the "Linnet Muir" stories. Both stories use the language of sociology as a metaphor for the power of language to classify and destroy. Both also depict a failure of a writer's voice, though in "Virus X" the failure is more dramatic because Lottie's potential as a writer is much more developed than Sarah's which is only very slight.

"In the Tunnel" opens with Sarah apparently hovering between two opposing possibilities--subjectivity with its passionate

response to the world and objectivity embodied in the language of sociology. Sociology--or "psychosociology"--attempts to "place" people in a "walk of life," not only in the sense of performing empty classification, but also in a more insidious way: labelling people is a means of controlling and reducing them, as Sarah's father demonstrates with his love of labelling people and situations which is really only a displaced form of violence. Both Roy and Lisbet seem to embody the "psychosociological" attitude that Sarah has "kept meaning" to adopt. From this perspective, life becomes quasi-objective, a "tribal village" through which the observer can "stalk soft-footed and disguised" (72). Yet Roy and Lisbet's objectivity is associated with an insidious sadism; Roy believes that "Flawed people, born rotten" "are better out of the way" (98). Roy "liked executions," while Lisbet "broke people before they had a chance to break themselves" (98).

Roy's initial advances towards Sarah are characterized by his controlling touch. He seems, at first, to be allied with the reassuring forces of law and order: "there were policemen everywhere--polite, old-fashioned, and wearing white, just like Roy Cooper" (74). Yet his true nature gradually begins to emerge. His distaste for anything maimed or damaged, not completely clean

or whole, is symptomatic. Believing blemishes are a sign of those "flawed people, born rotten," he rejects Sarah when she injures her ankle. Sarah recognizes what he is really rejecting: "Of course, it was ugly; but it was part of a living body, not a corpse, and it hurt Sarah, not Roy" (98). Roy rejects the flawed but living body along with potential love and nurturance (represented comically by Sarah's compulsive hoarding of food) and deals in corpses. Sarah notes, "he was cruel, lunatic, Fascist--No, not even that. Nothing was wrong except that he did not love her. That was all" (101). Yet Roy's failure of love, Gallant suggests here and elsewhere, is connected with Fascism.

The Reeves seem, on the one hand, perfect types of a certain kind of British expatriate. Trapped in their own limited language and equally limited assumptions, they seem to be almost corpses themselves--in fact Meg continually treats Tim as if he were about to die. Yet ironically it is she who is closer to death. Sarah notices the scar on her face which looks like a "poisoned bite" (103). It is, Meg tells her, "only a small malignant thing" (103). This scar, like Sarah's swollen ankle and the hypothetical snake bite she warns Lisbet of, ironically marks her humanity, her possession of a "living body." She finally offers Sarah--albeit in a perverse and ironic way--a form of companionship. For

the reader, as for Sarah, she momentarily defies her type and, showing the vestiges of humanity, becomes a "living body," if a somewhat grotesque and nominal one.

Sarah rejects sociology to develop her talent as an amoureuse. The story suggests, though, that this is not an alternative to the language of sociology, but only another form of it. Tim declares that Sarah will "bury all of us" (103), suggesting that her life will also deal in corpses, and Sarah herself recognizes that "some summer or other [she] would always be walking on her grave" (106). When she sends the postcard of Judas to a man she is trying to attract, she echoes Roy: "This person must have eaten my cooking. Others have risked it so please come to dinner on Friday, Sarah" (105-106). The picture of Judas, which has become a kind of personal talisman, indicates the cycle of betrayals in which she is perpetually trapped. The disrupted body of Judas, its "guts spilling" (105), is an image of the body "impaled" by destructive assumptions, yet it also signals ironically the vestiges of humanity. The end of the story sees Sarah escaping Roy's tunnel, only to be drawn into what seems likely to be an endless series of new ones. Sarah's occupation as amoureuse runs counter to the idea of writing and narrative because it requires a kind of transparency. She

discovers that "In love she had to show her own face, and speak in a true voice, and she was visible from all directions" (72). Having told Roy "all her life" (76), she has nothing left to tell; the "true voice" is not a writer's voice.

"Virus X" deals with an embryonic female writer who ultimately chooses not to develop her emerging voice. Lottie Benz, another aspiring sociologist, develops, under the influence of post-war Europe and "Virus X," a disease that seems symptomatic of Europe's problems, insights and imagination which show her promise as a writer. As in "In the Tunnel" the language of sociology can fix the world into a reduced reality, yet in this story the integrity of the language of sociology gradually breaks down as Lottie is increasingly exposed to the opaque reality of the sociological phenomena she has so glibly studied. Finally Lottie believes "there is no such thing as sociology" (199). Instead, she begins to move to a discourse, taking the form of imaginary letters, that turns from the dangerous pretence that language can classify the world in simple terms without distorting it and begins to construct an imaginative reality.

This development is brought about by her immersion in a dislocated Europe and her relationship to Vera whom she dislikes but whose persistence shows Lottie the true politics of immigrant

experience and their divergence from the glib assumptions of sociology. Initially she takes mental notes for "future letters" (175) to Dr.Keller and Kevin. As she sheds by stages Dr.Keller's language, her mental letters to Kevin become more prolific and she begins to develop a voice of her own. As this voice develops, so does her disorientation in the world of post-war Europe. In Strasbourg she lives next to a madman and across the street from a "shack full of Arabs" (198). Like the clock that is perpetually inaccurate, she is "dislocated, perhaps forever" (204). In this dislocation from time, reason, and history, Lottie's imagination begins to bud. When the mad old man asks her, "In which city is there a street called Saint-Jean-Louis?" (202), she "remembers" Quebec:

She recalled crooked streets, and one street where the houses were frozen and old; over the top of a stone wall had bloomed a cold spring tree But I was never in Quebec, she remembered next. (202)

For a fleeting moment, imagination, more powerful even than memory, shows itself in the "cold spring tree."

When Kevin arrives, Lottie is poised in a moment of choice, though it is the narrator rather than Lottie herself who perceives it as such:

They had never been as alone as at this moment and might never be again. They were almost dangerously on the side of friendship. If she began explaining everything that had taken place, from the moment she saw the holly in Paris and filled out her first police questionnaire, then they might become very good friends indeed, but would probably never marry. (213)

Lottie chooses marriage rather than friendship and the beginning of a narrative account which, she believes, could make "no sense" (216). Marriage to Kevin and return to Canada represent escape from the "labyrinth" of post-war Europe, yet they also entail silence, and, by implication, an adherence to the bland rational values represented by Kevin. Lottie's decision not to continue her narratives is "the first of many changes" (216), which move her backwards into rationality and silence.

Lottie's failure to develop her voice parallels another failure: her failure to confront her racial memories. Moving through Europe she unintentionally moves towards Germany (though, like Al, by erratic "stages and halts" [201]). In Strasbourg she begins to speak German:

When the first words of German crossed her lips, she thought they would remain, engraven, to condemn her. Speaking the secret language, she spoke in the name of unknown Grandmother Benz, whom she was said to resemble. (189)

Finally, in the third section, she crosses the border into Germany. The village she enters is "totally gray" (204) and is populated by war orphans. In facing Germany, she must also face the source of the metaphorical disease that seems to be affecting Europe. Yet she does not go on to explore Germany. She and Vera are wandering aimlessly, "just walking. Vera was not even leading the way" (214). It is Kevin who announces the end of the wandering: "he marched them to the bombed station, and onto a train" (215). Lottie feels "she had not crossed a frontier but come up to another limit" (215).

Thus Lottie fails to confront her memories, fails to enter a realm of dislocation in order to develop her voice as a writer. When she spits blood, it is not the mark of talent the hypochondriac Lottie might believe, but only the rupture of "a small blood vessel" (200). Whereas Katherine Mansfield, Lottie's favourite writer until she specialized and left literature behind, matured as a writer before her death from consumption, Lottie is only a parody of the consumptive writer. She perceives frontiers as limits, and her "cold spring tree" can never bloom into a more fertile landscape.

The figure of Lottie Benz, the potential female writer whose voice amounts to nothing, prepares the way for Linnet Muir,

Gallant's only female writer to sustain a voice. The six "Linnet Muir" stories trace the development of Linnet's concept of writing. Initially Linnet is interested in male plots and is seeking the ending to her father's story. By the end of the sequence, she turns her attention to the recovery of voice, especially of the women in her past. She also comes to see the ironies of her initial stance of fierce independence and perceives the value--indeed the necessity--of connection. In addition to this struggle within herself, she must also struggle with the powerful language wielded by men, a struggle dramatized in the final story, "With a Capital T."

The young Linnet, seeking a job with The Lantern, believes confidently that she need not be relegated to the traditionally female realm. She will work on the paper, "But not the women's pages. Nothing like that" (317). Yet evidence that she cannot escape gender is presented to her everywhere. Men control Linnet's world and her writing. They dictate her style, giving instructions about "spelling, caution, libel, brevity, and something called 'the ground rules'" (320), a set of instructions ruling out the "seditious, obscene, obscure, ironic, intellectual, and impulsive" (319) and leaving a crippling literalness as the only course. The "umpires of ground rules,"

"nervous and watchful" and afraid of "female mischief," guard against the feminizing of their world, for "Women, having no inborn sense of history, are known to invent absurd stories" (321). The umpires label Linnet's work "No Damned Good," which quickly becomes internalized as "No Bloody Future" (322). Linnet learns that the "Truth" is simply the literal truth, and results, for example, in her petty, meaningless captions for the newspaper pictures. The notion of "Truth," which has been at the centre of Western philosophy for centuries, with its institutions such as The Lantern--a name which suggests the propagation of the light of truth--is deconstructed and shown as absurdly literal and exclusively male. The final part of the story suggests--though it does not develop--the possibility of a different kind of narrative than that produced by the crippling literalism of "Truth." When Linnet goes to interview her godmother, she is aware of the separation between them: "A deserted continent stretched between us, cracked and fissured with bottomless pits" (327). Georgie herself perpetuates this gap in her denial of Linnet: "All my godchildren were boys" (328). This gap is all the young Linnet can perceive; it seems, she says, there is "no way to connect" (325). Yet the older Linnet is able to "hear the past" (329). This process entails recalling not only a memory of

the past, but the actual physical voice with its tone and timbre. By the end of the story (and of the sequence as a whole) Linnet is aware of the need to listen to the past and to begin to reconstruct the fragile voices so susceptible to being lost in snow. She is aware too that the legacies of female predecessors are often not the traditional ones of property or power that male legatees are exclusively interested in.

In the course of the sequence Linnet turns her interest in male plots, which are obsessively concerned with exile and endings, to an attempt to begin to preserve and reconstruct voices from her past. In the sequence the energy of truly creative writing is, as Lorna Irvine has pointed out,⁹ implicitly equated with "a mother's vitality," which is necessary to "create ectoplasm, to make the ghost offspring visible" (271). Certainly Gallant's work as a whole stresses the vital power of the creative imagination, what Neil Besner has identified as the "light of imagination." To Gallant this light is profoundly female and counters the "light" of traditional philosophy. Yet the focus of her writing is not a development of this association between women and imagination--powerfully implicit as this is--but a subtle yet radical deconstruction and exposure of male institutions with their crippling dead-ends and weak "ghost

stories." She places special emphasis on the role of language. It is the substance of memory and of history--both personal and national--which makes up an individual's integrity. Without a full and rich language, the individual lives a crippled and restricted existence as do almost all of Gallant's characters. They are all, like Sarah in "In the Tunnel," prisoners "impaled on a foreign language" (98). Their alien and impoverished language does not simply control them, but constitutes them. They are thus impaled rather than merely imprisoned, incapable of escaping without destroying themselves in the process. The writer's task is to counteract this deadening force of language and anchor memory, both personal and national, in language, finding for it a resonating voice.

SOMETHING I'VE BEEN MEANING
TO TELL YOU

Of the three writers, Alice Munro would seem the most alive to the poetic qualities of language. She frequently has her narrators luxuriate in words themselves. The pleasures of language are sensuous in a special sense: they seem to be connected to the physical sensations of the body. For example, in Lives of Girls and Women Del relishes the word "pleasure": "it seemed explosive, the two vowels in the first syllable spurting up like fireworks, ending on the plateau of the last syllable, its dreamy purr" (218). Her satisfaction with the word is clearly connected to the rhythms of sex. Yet the female body for Munro is not always the source of jouissance; in fact, even in its pleasures, the body is always inextricably connected with a powerful sense of shame. Thus, if Munro's work can be said to "write the body,"¹⁰ it speaks much more eloquently of the body's shame than the body's pleasure.

In Controlling The Uncontrollable, Ildikó de Papp Carrington has identified "humiliation" as one of Munro's more significant concepts. Certainly almost every story in Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You deals with some kind of humiliation, whether that of exposure or of watching others expose themselves. Individual words, most often those which refer to the functions of the body or which have sexual connotations, are powerful

because they remind us as they remind Helena in "Executioners" that "we are shamefully made"¹¹ and emphasize the female body's "vulnerability which is in itself a shame" (143). But it is narrative itself which carries the most potent form of shame. It is not that narrative is self-exposure, for, as several of the stories stress (most notably "Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You" and "Marrakesh"), narrative works by its constant attempt to conceal rather than to reveal. Rather, it is that narrative is a powerful mode of control that can expose others. As Carrington has noted, the voyeur is a pervasive figure in Something and he or she is closely linked to the figure of the writer, suggesting that writing and watching are necessarily ways of imposing structures on the world. Narrative as control carries disturbing moral implications for all the writer figures in Something. Yet ultimately, as the final story in the collection suggests, narrative cannot adequately control, "mark . . . off . . . describe . . . get rid of" the lives of women.

The title and opening story explores the possibilities and implications of female control. Char and Et, sisters who, like so many of the female characters in the book, are separated by a deep gulf, employ different strategies of control with different results. Char attempts to contain and control her body, signified

metaphorically by her violent purging. She has wished always to detach herself from the domestic world: "she hated washday, the heat and steam and flapping sheets" (6). When she swallows laundry blueing, she does so ostensibly to escape this everyday life: "I'm sick of this town and all the stupid people in it and Mother and her dropsy and keeping house and washing sheets every day" (12). Domestic life is intimately in touch with the life of the body. The sheets are a sign Et later interprets when she sees Char hang out "sheets for two beds" (16).

Char cultivates her unmoved and "peaceful" surface. In doing so she attempts to make herself into an object. She is "like a lady in a magazine" (19) and like a fictional character--"a heroine out of Shakespeare," (17) or Guinevere, or an Agatha Christie victim. Most tellingly, she is Galatea whom she once played in a school production:

In one play Et never forgot, she was a statue. Or rather, she played a girl who had to pretend to be a statue, so that a young man fell in love with her and later discovered, to his confusion and perhaps disappointment, that she was only human. Char had to stand for eight minutes perfectly still on stage, draped in white crepe and showing the audience her fine indifferent profile. Everybody marveled at how she did it. (15)

Sculpted from stone, Galatea is free from the burden of flesh; in addition, she exists solely as the creation of others. The many references to Char's association with the colour white reinforce her association with Galatea, the "White Goddess."

Char allows herself to be sculpted by both Arthur and Et, who "kept Char beautifully dressed" (19). Arthur believes her to be an object of contemplation who is "above, outside, all ordinary considerations--a marvel, a mystery. No one could hope to solve her, they were lucky just being allowed to contemplate her" (17). Protected from disillusion by Et's silence, he sees her only as Galatea (it is the picture of her in the play that he keeps after her death), never discovering the disappointment of finding her "only human." Char's marble surface is, indeed, illusory. Her body occasionally violently ruptures the calm surface: she vomits after taking blueing, she has a miscarriage, she is caught in a cycle of bingeing and purging.

By contrast with Char, Et lives in daily contact with the world of the body--she cooks and works with her hands. Her knowledge of the body is gleaned from an "ugly old book where she had read long ago about childbirth and signs of death" (12) and also from her perspective as a dressmaker. In her room "Ladies who looked quite firm and powerful, outside, were here

immobilized, apologetic, exposing such trembly, meek-looking thighs squeezed together by corsets, such long sad breast creases, bellies blown up and torn by children and operations" (18-19). An image of the people on the excursion boat is associated with whiteness like Char's, but Et is able to see deeper:

So much white it hurt your eyes, the ladies' dresses and parasols and the men's summer suits and Panama hats, not to speak of the sun dazzling on the water and the band playing. But looking closely at those ladies, Et found fault. Coarse skin or fat behind or chicken necks or dull nests of hair, probably ratted. (6-7)

Beneath the white surface are the realities of the female body.

Yet although Et understands the body and the domestic world connected with it, she seeks, like Char, to avoid immersion in that world. The strategy she employs is more successful than her sister's. In her glimpse of Char and Blaikie with their distorted faces she sees a connection between sex and death by drowning-- both involve a loss of power: "Sandy drowned, with green stuff clogging his nostrils, couldn't look more lost than that" (11). Et is able to avoid the powerlessness the body bestows by attaining a position of control. She becomes a voyeur who is detached from what she sees, and she divorces herself from the

implications of sexual relationship by cementing her position as spinster. She also employs a form of mockery which is performative and verbal. She refutes her brother's death by performance: "She could be seen at twilight, in her gym bloomers, turning cartwheels on the lawn of the stricken house" (7). At school she develops a "sharp tongue," mocking "the teacher reading 'The Burial of Sir John Moore'" (5) and the flustered Arthur.

Et's "sharp tongue" becomes her most significant mode of control. In telling Char the story about Blaikie, she utilizes a strategy Blaikie himself has employed. With his bus tour, he takes everyday objects and transforms them into the mysterious. He transforms "an old monstrosity of a house built with liquor money" by fabricating the story about a woman who murdered her husband with "slow--poison"; he claims a communal authorship for his story: "This is all hearsay, all local gossip" (2). Et mimics this strategy when she tells Char the story of Blaikie's having run off to get married again. She too attributes authority for the story to gossip. Yet her story, not innocuous as Blaikie's seems to be, results, directly or indirectly, in Char's death. Et's narrative is a form of poison; it allows Et to assume a position with Arthur where she can control both his and her own

life and attain marital happiness without the threat posed by sexual connection. The maintenance of Et's control depends as much upon her shrewd silence as upon her narrative.

Et is not a perverted and sadistic spinster as some critics maintain.¹² She is, rather, a prototype of the writer. She is a voyeur, assuming a stance which lends her a necessary distance from events. She is also a manipulator of language--not of literary language as a fully developed writer might be--but of gossip. Et's control allows her to be a survivor in a way in which her sister is not, yet such control has serious moral implications. Char's death remains shrouded in mystery and silence generated by what Et withholds, the "Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You" that is the raison d'être of the narrative which is about secrets and mysteries both generated and obscured by narrative. Narrative is necessarily selective and can shape and manipulate events. Its exercise allows Et distance from the world of the body and control over others' lives as well as her own. Yet narrative and its secret silences have moral implications.

"Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You" is a third-person narrative; its extremely careful control of time and its cyclic structure (it revolves around two sets of events--those between

summer and Christmas 1918 and those between summer and labour day in the present), as well as its careful control of point of view, suggest the apparently highly distanced narrator's own control and hints at its implications. The next story, "Material," is, in dramatic contrast, a story in the process of being made. This juxtaposition of stories with very different structures is not accidental. The collection balances distanced third-person stories ("Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You," "Walking on Water," "The Found Boat," "Marrakesh," and "Memorial") against first-person narratives. Four of the first-person narratives are self-conscious stories with writer-narrators ("Material," "Tell Me Yes or No," "Winter Wind," and "The Ottawa Valley"); four others ("How I Met My Husband," "Forgiveness in Families," "Executioners," and "The Spanish Lady") are narrated by naive, or at least non-writer, narrators.¹³

Within these broad divisions are more subtle divisions. Of the third-person stories, three ("Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You," "Marrakesh," and "Memorial") explore the relationship between a pair of women and probe the possibilities and problems of female control. The remaining two--"Walking on Water" and "The Found Boat"--explore the dynamics of male control. Of the first-person stories with non-writer narrators, two, "How I Met My

Husband" and "Forgiveness in Families," feature naive narrators, and the other two, "Executioners" and, especially, "The Spanish Lady," feature narrators who could be--but are not quite--fully-fledged writers. Of the self-conscious stories, two, "Material" and "Tell Me Yes or No," take as their subject the process of turning life into fiction; the other two, "Winter Wind," and "The Ottawa Valley," balance self-consciousness with story and arrive at a structure which is poised between the "proper" story and the raw material.

Of the third-person stories, "Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You," "Marrakesh," and "Memorial" form a triad. Each focuses on one woman (Et, Dorothy, and Eileen respectively), defining her in a complex way through her relationship to and perceptions of another woman who is closely related to her. "Marrakesh," for example, explores the relationship between Dorothy and her granddaughter, Jeanette. In "Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You" Et is a generator of narrative; Dorothy, by contrast, is an interpreter. Unlike the active Et, Dorothy is associated with stasis. Indeed, she represents an anchored point in a world of flux: she is "a fixed star in many, many, shifting, changing, ongoing lives" (158). Her position as observer is established at the opening of the story when she is "sitting in a straight-

backed chair" (156), and throughout the story, while others are active, she sits on the porch. Her physical stasis accentuates her position as an observer and investigator. Although she feels an "irritable, baffled concentration" (163), she looks out on the details of the world with "strong curiosity" (162). Life seems to contain secrets: "there was in everything something to be discovered" (163).

The focus of Dorothy's curiosity is her granddaughter Jeanette. Yet her scrutiny of Jeanette is motivated not by curiosity in its most mundane sense, but by a need to reestablish a connection. So distant does Jeanette seem from Dorothy that the blood tie seems to have been erased; even the neighbours do not realize the close connection Dorothy herself feels "had either broken or gone invisible" (166). Jeanette thus presents Dorothy with "a problem to understand" (161), not just for idle curiosity, but where a sense of connection, and even continuation, seems to be at stake. The two special problems of interpretation Jeanette poses are her body and her narrative, which are shown to be inextricably connected.

The world of change and flux Dorothy observes is recorded most tangibly in the changing fashions of the times. Dorothy thus sees change reflected in Jeanette's body and clothes. Her hair,

for example, has gone through transformations, at various times "short and brown," "blonde," "puffed up in what looked like a heap of bubbles on top of her head," "long . . . either in a single braid down her back or loose, pale, and frizzy" (159). She wears brightly coloured sheath dresses, "jeans and a peasant blouse," "print dresses short as playsuits which bared her back and revealed that she was wearing no brassiere" (159). Although her clothes sometimes reveal her flesh, they disguise her age. Indeed, even Jeanette's facial expressions seem a perpetual disguise, sometimes making her seem very young, at others times showing her age. The mystery of Jeanette's body is summed up when Dorothy sees her bikini-clad figure: "Dorothy looked down for some time from her bedroom window at her granddaughter's spare brown body, as if it were a hieroglyph on her grass" (166). It is not Jeanette's body itself that is the "sacred symbol" (Walker, 117) but the pattern made between her flesh and the clothing that conceals it. Jeanette's body, with its changing patterns of revelation and concealment, is a text to be deciphered.

It is, in fact, Jeanette's narratives that present Dorothy with her most important interpretive challenge. Dorothy sets up a situation to encourage Jeanette to reveal herself to Blair in the

hope that "she herself listening to this talk could get a better idea of what Jeanette was like" (167-68), and she sits "concentrating" on their voices. Jeanette's narratives are closely related to her body, for, if Jeanette's body is a text, her texts (the stories she tells Blair) are stories of the body dealing with "one's baser needs," "food and drink and illness and medicine" (168), and, covertly, desire. Her first story is about "a strange doctor in Crete who assumed . . . that all foreign women who consulted him had come for an abortion" (168). The doctor thus sees all women's stories (and bodies) as texts concealing one meaning.

The central narrative is Jeanette's story of Marrakesh. The story itself deals with the difficulty of interpreting appearance and gesture. Jeanette at first misreads the appearance of the Arabs, mistaking them for boys, and she relies on the superficial codes of appearance, feeling "inclined to trust the one talking to me, because he had blue eyes" (170). The men's gestures are even harder to interpret than their appearance. Desire and violence are continually confused. When Jeanette relates how one of the Arabs said he would take her to meet his mother, Viola--a literal reader throughout--believes it a "nice" gesture. Blair recognizes its concealed meaning, yet this interpretation is

again subverted when it appears the Arab really might have intended the introduction. In Jeanette's narrative the "reality" of intention is confused so that even the most violent gesture--the knife at her throat--seems unreal, "like a play" (171). Dorothy recognizes that the story conceals a secret: "What is there here that is not being told? thought Dorothy. She had had a great deal of experience listening to the voices of children who were leaving things out" (171). Because of its concealments and complex codes, Jeanette's narrative presents a challenge in hermeneutics.

Yet the "meaning" Dorothy appears to have found by the end of the story is revealed not through the narrative itself but through her glimpse of Blair and Jeanette literally illumined in the lighted porch. In their lovemaking they are finally without disguise: "they had put their clothes, and what looks and movements she knew of them--all they could give her to know--aside" (173). Stripped of disguise they are, paradoxically, unable to give clues about themselves. Both clothing and narrative are forms of protection against the vulnerability of the body and its involvement in process. Dorothy gains her insight by arresting the movement Blair and Jeanette are caught up in in their love-making. Her mental image of "the two welded

figures, solid and bright, like those chalked-in drawings she used to put on the blackboard--surprising herself--for festive occasions" (174) is associated with festivity and is a cause for something like gratitude. Yet Dorothy's act of interpreting depends upon imposing structure and stasis upon flux and is therefore slightly insidious at the same time that it is celebratory.

"Memorial," like "Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You," explores the relationship between two sisters while focusing on the point of view of one. June and Eileen have adopted different strategies in life for their common problem, trying "to get round the problem of their mother" (213), a woman whose life embodies unpredictability and craziness. June attempts (apparently successfully) to "get round" the problem by studying psychology and adopting its language and way of perceiving life. Eileen attempts it (apparently less successfully) by her humanistic study of literature. Yet it seems by the end of the story that her own "habit of analysis" (224), which allows her to "explain and arrange" (224) life, ultimately performs a similar function to her sister's obsession with order.

According to Eileen's perspective, the sisters are radically different. The important differences between them are reflected

in the state of their houses, especially their kitchens. June's kitchen is arranged in a complex, "logical, though unexpected" (210) order; Eileen's is "bursting with chaos" (210). This opposition extends to their ways of living their lives. Eileen, "spendthrift, slipshod, content" (210), lives "irresponsibly" (209)--her experiences are haphazard and her life is constantly changing, taking shape "any way at all, blown apart by crises, deflected by pleasures" (214). June's life, by contrast, is "built, planned, lived deliberately, filled" (214).

Attitude to the material world seems to affect perceptions of life. June and Ewart live in the material world and feel a sense of responsibility to objects. Objects, in fact, are their politics, so that "People who did not read Consumer Reports probably seemed the same to them as people who did not bother to vote" (210). Even traumatic experience is turned into an object to be "accepted, chewed and altered, assimilated, destroyed" (216). June's language of sociology has allowed her to turn experience into "things" that can be "worked through." Eileen not only does not accept that "things" can be "worked through" in this way, she "[does] not believe things are there to be worked through" (221). For her, life is apparently process, not object.

June's response to the world is a mode of control. Eileen

initially believes that because of the death of Douglas, "June's body might have loosened, in her grief, that her voice might have grown uncertain, or been silenced" (208). Yet both June's body and her voice keep their "lively insistence on control" (209). In contrast, Eileen finds language ineffectual in the world of "illness and accidents" (221) which has suddenly shown itself in Douglas' freakish death. Words themselves seem to be connected to the vulnerability of the body in this world: "Words are all shameful. They ought to crumble in shame" (221); words cannot control the erratic world. Yet the problem lies not in the words themselves, but in the act of using them: "No fraud in the words but what fraud now in saying them. Silence the only possible thing" (221). Only silence can represent authentically the world of process.

Yet although the elliptical phrasing of "Silence the only possible thing" suggests a movement into silence, Eileen does not herself ultimately embrace it. She is, in her way, as much a user of language to control as June is. Away from June she has, in the past, "made it into funny stories for friends" (220). Her "habit of analysis," not so different from June's, allows her to "explain and arrange" experience. June's "habit" turns the world into object, but Eileen's has serious shortcomings too. Eileen,

yielding to process when she yields to Ewart, finds herself literally "Pinned down not too comfortably on a car seat--one leg crooked and held against the back of the seat in danger of getting a cramp" (224). From that static position, "Women have to wonder"; they "will . . . look for clues, and store things up in a hurry to be considered later. They have to believe that more is going on than seems to be going on; that is part of the trouble" (224). Momentarily "pinned down," Eileen is forced to analyze; from a distance she organizes the events and invests them with meaning, but "Not knowing, never knowing, if that is not all literary, fanciful" (224).

Thus June and Eileen emerge as similar after all. Both are crippled like their mother. Men, it seems, hold an easy balance of power which is shown subtly through their use of language in sex. "Before and during the act" they name the female body, "they seem to invest this body with certain individual powers, they will say its name in a way that indicates something particular, something unique, that is sought for" (225). Afterwards, "they have changed their minds, they wish it understood that such bodies are interchangeable" (225); the individually named "woman's body" becomes simply one among many indistinguishable "women's bodies." Both Eileen and June are victims of this easy

power, men's equation of women with "bodies."

Eileen consistently characterizes herself as the "opposite" of June. Munro herself has noted a "kind of smugness about the point of view of the narrator" ("The Real Material" [24]); the ending helps counteract this by reversing positions. June breaks out of her control to relate the details of her son's death which, by their freakish nature, belong doubly in the world of accidents. Eileen, instead of responding, "wanted mostly to get away" (226). Her own face reflects her control, "surprising her with its wonderfully appropriate look of tactfulness and concern" (226). Eileen controls experience as effectively as June does, and perhaps with more problematic moral implications. She is like both Et and Dorothy in their manipulation of events through perspective. Et uses narrative to shape life; Dorothy and Eileen use analysis in the same way. In each case such manipulation carries a wealth of moral implications.

These three stories form a group of third-person stories with a complex set of similarities and departures. The two other third-person stories take up related themes but approach them from different angles. "Walking on Water" explores--somewhat ironically--the idea of control present in the other stories, this time from a male perspective. Eugene is a paradigm (and

parody) of control of the body: "he could do all these contortions, twist and stretch his body into the most distressing-looking positions" (69). He believes that "There's nothing you can't control if you set out to" (68). His faith in control of reality is impressive:

"The world that we accept--you know, external reality," Eugene was saying comfortably, "is nothing like so fixed as we have been led to believe. It responds to more methods of control than we are conditioned to accept"

(75).

Even after his unsuccessful attempt to walk on water, he retains his faith. His belief in control and in the possibility of escape from the body signify insanity to some but spiritual fervour to others. Eugene remarks, "I have never been able to leave this body" (77), yet his disappearance (and probable death) at the end is an ironic fulfilment of his desire. Eugene's confidence is not ultimately to be read as spiritual certainty but as an absurdly overconfident belief that the body can be left. As such, it is a parody of spiritual experience.

Yet the story is at least as much about Mr. Lougheed as it is about Eugene. Like Dorothy in "Marrakesh," he is baffled by the younger generation observed from a position as watcher (and

voyeur). Yet, whereas Dorothy struggles to understand and interpret, he is more reluctant, preferring "to give people what they thought they wanted, and continue, himself, solitary and unmolested" (67). He is tempted to "stop noticing" (83). Yet his mind forces him to live in a complex relation to reality, for, though he is not a conscious and willing analyst, he is a dreamer.

The recurring subject of his dream is Frank McArter, who, if Eugene is a paradigm of control, is a paradigm of loss of control: he murders his mother and his father. Mr. Lougheed's dream is analogous in several ways to narrative. For example, it "contained but did not reveal [the facts]" (82). His dream creates his family, presences with "solidity, complexity, reality":

It almost seemed to him there must be a place where they moved with independence, undiminished authority, outside his own mind; it was hard to believe he had authored them himself. (83)

The world of his dream seems more real than the reality: "The dream had brought him in touch with a world of which the world he lived in now seemed the most casual imitation--in texture, you might say, in sharpness, in authority" (83). Mr. Lougheed is a

reluctant "author," only half understanding how his dream creates a world of imaginative authority. At the end of "Marrakesh" there is a suggestion that Dorothy has gained some important insight; at the end of "Walking on Water" is a suggestion that Mr. Lougheed's powers, which are inextricably connected with his ageing physical body, are waning.

"The Found Boat" deals most directly with the power-struggle between men and women implicit in some of the other stories. This power-struggle--located in this story in childhood--is waged through language. The uneasy relationship between boys and girls is reflected in their use of language. The boys mock by echoing the girls "in a sour whine, the way boys imitated girls although it was nothing like the way girls talked" (125). The boys call the girls "fat-assed ducks" and "Fat-assed fucks" (126). When the girls attempt to use language in this way, its power is easily negated:

"Hey, you sucks!" she yelled at them.
"You'd be scared to come out here, this water
is ten feet deep!"
"Liar," they answered without interest, and
she was. (126)

Similarly, the "joke" the girls attempt to play on the boys misfires when the boys take the boat seriously: "They did not

show a moment's disappointment, but seemed as pleased at the discovery as if the boat had been whole and new" (127).

Whereas the girls, riding on the log, use their imagination to create a Viking boat which "had miles of clear sea beneath them, then a spired city, intact as a jewel irretrievable on the ocean floor" (126), the boys become bricoleurs, using whatever resources are at hand to transform the boat. They do, in fact, in a literal way, much as the narrator of "Material" suggests that both Gabriel and Hugo do--they "make whatever arrangements they can make" (44) to make the boat "whole and new". For both boys and girls there is an equation between the girls and the boat. Eva transforms herself into the carving on the front of a Viking boat; Frank "began referring to the boat as she" (128). The girls attempt to name the boat, but the boys reject language: they "could not imagine that it needed any name to keep it separate from the other boats in the world" (132). The act of rebuilding the boat rather than the act of naming grants the boys ownership.

The events of the boat trip seem to mark a turning point in the world of the children. In the station, whose walls are covered with words and phrases that stress the functions of the body in the adolescent world, they unselfconsciously play "Truth or Dare." Taking off their clothes, they are immersed in a

wordless world:

They thought of each other now hardly as names or people, but as echoing shrieks, reflections, all bold and white and loud and scandalous, and as fast as arrows. They went running without a break into the cold water and when it came almost to the tops of their legs they fell on it and swam. It stopped their noise. Silence, amazement, came over them in a rush. They dipped and floated and separated, sleek as mink. (135).

At the climax of this silence, Eva exposes her body to Clayton, who responds by shooting water at her breasts and hooting--"a loud self-conscious sound" (136). Eva retreats into the bushes to hide her body; self-consciousness thus enters Eden. The boys leave, talking inaudibly. When Carol expresses her fear, "What if they tell?" Eva realizes the potential power of denial: "We'll say it's all a lie" (136). Denial, the manipulation of language, will be their only strategy in the adult world they have symbolically entered. It is a world where their bodies are vulnerable, and they are as "helpless" as they are in their concluding fit of laughter which is close to pain.

All the third-person stories explore, in some way or other, issues of language and narrative control. The first-person stories frequently do so more directly--in four of them the narrator is a writer. In the other four, though, the narrator is

not a writer by profession; these stories form a progression from the extremely naive perspective of the narrator of "How I Met My Husband," related in an oral mode, to the prototypic writer narrator of "The Spanish Lady," who is by profession a translator. In all four of these stories, the act of articulating the story comes from a feeling of having been betrayed by a man. "How I Met My Husband" deals with betrayal in a minor key, whereas "The Spanish Lady" vents the narrator's ferocious "bare feelings" at her husband's betrayal. In between these extremes, both "Forgiveness in Families" and "Executioners" connect narrative with sadistic fantasies of revenge for treatment at the hands of men, muted in the former, more explicit in the latter.

The narrator of "How I Met My Husband," a woman of perhaps questionable literacy, narrates the story as if orally; she is passive in relation to written language (she waits for a letter from Chris). The story sets her country values and perspective (strongly equated with domesticity) against the more sophisticated (and treacherous) values of the wider world. W.R.Martin has read this story as "a naive country girl's account of a brush with religious experience" (92), yet if it is, it is surely only ironically so. The story depends for its effect on the poignancy of the gap between Edie's perceptions of Chris and

the reality. If there is an equation between Chris and Christ as Martin suggests, it is created only by Edie, and his significance is in the world of profane love rather than sacred. Whereas Edie touchingly believes the sincerity of his word, the reader recognizes that he is a feckless and faithless man who, as a pilot, can endlessly escape the demands of the women he leaves behind him. Unlike Alice Kelling, Edie is able to draw on her experience to gain a productive insight: "it came to me one day there were women doing this with their lives, all over. There were women just waiting and waiting by mailboxes for one letter or another" (65). She is thus able to turn from a world whose treacherous values threaten to destroy her and to embrace a limited but stable domestic world. Her narrative places her story as a semi-humorous anecdote, yet the reader is compelled to recognize her naivety and the limitation it imposes upon her narrative.

"Forgiveness in Families" is also essentially oral in nature, and the narrator's life, like Edie's, is rooted in the domestic world. Whereas "How I Met My Husband" is an anecdote, though, this is closer to confession. The narrator uses her apparently casual story to vent her frustrations with her brother who is able to move so effortlessly from experience to

experience, even spiritual experience. The onus of maintaining life--preparing food, caring for children, shopping, and nursing--falls on women, leaving men free to seek their spiritual satisfaction in religions which are themselves often founded on a desire to escape the domestic world. The narrator realizes that she has covertly desired her mother's death in order to punish her brother. Her narrative is thus a way of working out both her anger and her guilt. Narrative thus often tells other stories beneath its surface story.

"Executioners" and "The Spanish Lady" have narrators more sophisticated than the narrators of the stories just discussed, but they are still not fully developed writers. The narrator of "Executioners" is "a widow, a civil servant" (154), who moves beyond passive consumption of books and television so far as to "sit in the dark, drinking whiskey and water, thinking uselessly and helplessly, almost comfortably" (155) about the past and her role in it. Her narrative, like "Forgiveness in Families," is a form of confession, but her desire to punish erupts more explicitly through the surface. As in both "Forgiveness in Families" and "How I Met My Husband," her anger is generated by men. Howard Troy, with his shaming sexual taunts, is the obvious cause of her anger and desire for revenge. Her shame is displaced

into her sadistic fantasies:

I thought of myself walking on Howard Troy's eyes. Driving spikes into his eyes. The spikes would be on the soles of my shoes, they would be long and sharp. His eyeballs would bulge out, unprotected, as big as overturned basins, and I would walk on them, puncturing, flattening, bloodying, at a calm pace. (149)

The fire is the fulfilment of Helena's fantasy, filling the house "the way blood fills a boil" (149). Yet the story probes deeper. The title of her story acknowledges her understanding, never explicitly formulated, that Jimmy and Duval, whose sexual attention seems attractive, are the executioners of stump Troy, although they escape with undiminished authority. Helen's narrative suggests a complex pattern of her own shame for her complicity in the execution and, as in the two previous stories, suggests anger at the men who have caused her shame.

The narrator of "The Spanish Lady" is perhaps closer than the narrator of "Executioners" to transforming her story into fiction, although, paradoxically, this story contains the rawest statement of feelings of all four stories. The story contains "raw material" in the form of letters as the first two self-conscious stories do. It places the idea of "bare feelings"--akin to Helena's in their sadistic tendencies--against the idea of

"story." For example, the narrator says of the Rosicrucian, "I can't think what to do with this man except to make him into a story for Hugh, a curiosity, a joke for Hugh. Hugh wants life seen that way, he cherishes a dry tone. Bare feelings he must pass over, like bare flesh" (186-87). Even on a literal level, Hugh ignores "bare flesh"; the narrator notes that "Men have left marks on me which I did not have to worry about hiding from Hugh, since there are parts of my body at which he has never looked" (182-83). He wants emotion translated into story and thus divested of its association with nakedness.

The narrator imagines punishment for Hugh that involves a literal kind of exposure:

I go into the bedroom and without a word pick up everything I can find--a vase, a bottle of lotion, a picture off the wall, shoes, clothes, Hugh's tape recorder--and hurl these things at the bed, the window, the walls; then grab and tear the bedclothes and kick the mattress and scream and slap their faces and beat their bare bodies with the hairbrush. (180)

Her own "bare feelings" render her inarticulate: she "howls." Yet she is able to compose the story of the Rosicrucian, and there is even a suggestion that she has invented him. She thus seems on the verge of being a writer. Yet, by the end of the story, she

has not quite found faith: "This is a message; I really believe it is; but I don't see how I can deliver it" (191). She remains a translator rather than a writer.

"Material," the first of the four stories with a writer-narrator, suggests the differences between male and female writing by contrasting the writing of Hugo--the narrator's ex-husband--with the writing of the narrator herself, which is the story. Hugo is an accomplished and successful writer whose work is published in glossy paperbacks. The story opens with the contrast between the life of academics and everyday life closely associated with women. Academics are "vain quarrelsome men...Bloated, opinionated, untidy men" (24). Their wives, absent from the intellectual scene, are the ones who keep their husbands going by living lives concerned with "food and mess" (24). They nurture them "because their husbands are such brilliant, such talented incapable men, who must be looked after for the sake of the words that will come from them" (25). The men are further encouraged by the other women who fall in love with them because they "imagine there is power in them" (24). The story depicts the struggle between life and art. Hugo feels the quotidian world is trying to swamp him: "the world was hostile to his writing" (35). He also believes that the measure for experience comes from Art

not from life, perceiving the eccentric behaviour of Dottie as "life imitating art" (33).

The battle between life and art takes on disturbing moral dimensions in the story. At one point Hugo refuses to say whether he would save the narrator or his work from fire. He is apparently not interested in life, especially in the life of Dotty which the narrator finds so fascinating: "I told him about her husbands and her womb and her collection of souvenir spoons, and he said I was welcome to look at them all by myself. He was writing a verse play" (32-33). Indeed, he favours the life of art over the life of people: "I am at a crucial point, I am at the point where this play lives or dies. If I go down there I'm afraid I might strangle her" (34). His indifference to Dotty extends again to a lack of concern for her welfare when he turns off the pump so that her rooms will be flooded.

The narrator's current husband is apparently dissimilar to Hugo. He is an engineer, who, unlike the tortured Hugo, enjoys life: "He is not curious. He is able to take pleasure and give off smiles and caresses and say softly, 'why do you worry about that'" (26). He is not interested in language, having apparently forgotten the language of his childhood. He also lacks a stance as an observer: "He does not watch himself"; the result is, the

narrator says, "He will never write a poem" (22).

When the narrator reads Hugo's story, she is forced to admire it and revise her earlier opinion that "He did not have the authority I thought a writer should have" (35). Despite the shabbiness of the life he and other academics lead, the insidiousness of his neurotic behaviour, and the bombastic nature of his self-glorifying fictions, he does have a convincing authority. His story is about Dotty whom the narrator thought he had ignored: "There is Dotty lifted out of life and held in light, suspended in the marvelous clear jelly that Hugo has spent all his life learning how to make" (43). She sees such writing as "an act of magic . . . of a special, unsparing, unsentimental love. A fine and lucky benevolence" (43). Dotty has "passed into Art" (43). Yet the narrator knows the reality of his treatment of Dotty that underlies the polish of his story and is unable to write the letter she intends, "a few graceful, a few grateful, phrases" (43). She realises that Hugo and her husband are not so different after all:

Both of them have managed something. Both of them have decided what to do about everything they run across in this world, what attitude to take, how to ignore or use things. In their limited and precarious ways they both have authority. They are not at the mercy. Or think they are not. (44)

Men can almost universally make use of their experience, turn what for the narrator is "useless baggage" into something "ripe and usable, a paying investment" (43). As she sits down to write her letter, she begins to write "short jabbing sentences" (44). Such sentences are not material for a letter, "That is not an argument to send through the mail" (44), nor are they the language of fiction. Yet, ironically, they become material for this narrator's fiction, which is not about life suspended in clear jelly but about the cost of exploiting others as material and the moral implication of such suspension. The narrator's fiction is ultimately very different from Hugo's rendition of "life suspended in clear jelly" because it must deal with her anger and frustration and her futile attempt to make him share her very different vision: "I would claw his head open to pour my vision into it, my notion of what had to be understood" (42). Men's authority seems to her to be precarious, yet she recognizes that it is extremely powerful and dominates the authoritative worlds of art and academic discourse.

"Tell Me Yes or No" is also about turning life into fiction, with a focus even more sharply on writing as process. The extent to which the events of the story are fictional to the narrator is made slightly obscure. The narrator "imagines" someone dead, but

not until the end is it fully clear that the character's life and her relationship with him are also imaginary. There are clues throughout; at one point, for example, the narrator notes:

Dodie Charles who is always baking something has brought a cherry pound cake. (The thing we old pros know about, in these fantasies, is the importance of detail, solidity; yes, a cherry pound cake.) (109)

In retrospect, this reflection seems to be a comment on the craft of writing. Paradoxically, a writer must use "solid detail" in order to create "fantasies." The narrator's interest in newspapers, magazines, letters, books, maps, phonebooks, and overheard conversations, suggests a search for "material." She frequently affirms her choice of details, drawing attention to them as fictions: "Tears stood in our eyes. Undeniably. Yes" (113).

The story dramatizes the process by which reality becomes fiction. Leaving the reality blurred serves to stress that the two are interdependent; fiction is not a simple rendering of "real" experience. The use of the present tense and the simple past and the constant reiteration of "you" (as if testing rather than telling a story) suggest the ongoing energy of the process of writing. The imaginary or invented relationship between the

narrator and her journalist lover is apparently the subject of the story. Yet this story is seen as only one version of an archetypal story which underlies the stories or "case histories" of numerous women (Martha T., Emily R., Patricia, "Barbara"). The narrator's slavery to love is only hypothetical; her story is about writing itself, about undoing such slavery through writing. The absent (male) lover becomes a muse who inspires the narrator's writing, thus turning possible slavery into liberation. Patricia, whose undistinguished letters illustrate the progress of slavery from happiness to madness, is, by contrast, consumed and silenced by love.

If the story of female love, which from a male perspective is "something going on at a distance; a strange, not even pitiable, expenditure; unintelligible ceremony in an unknown faith" (100), is a subject for fiction, it is also dangerous because it tends to turn into "case history" rather than dynamic fiction. The narrator notes:

And how often talking to both men and women I hear myself in witty and rueful pursuit of this theme--how women build their castles on foundations hardly strong enough to support a night's shelter; how women deceive themselves and uselessly suffer, being exploitable because of the emptiness of their lives and some deep--but indefinable, and not final!--flaw in themselves. And further and further

along this line which everybody is learning these days like an easy song. Meanwhile my heart is cracked, also like the heart in a song, it is dry and cracked like a bare bit of landscape marked with gullies. (117)

Her "witty and rueful" account of women's oppression is not a true analysis, but an "easy song." This term suggests the way in which life becomes deadened by turning it into magazine story, hopeful or fantastic books, popular song. Women look to these for identification and comfort, but such stories sap their integrity and further incarcerate them in their role by ignoring process.

There is another way to still pain:

Once a friend of mine--a woman, of course--said to me that since pain was only possible if you looked backward to the past or forward to the future she had eliminated the whole problem by living every moment by itself; every moment, she said, was filled with absolute silence. (117)

Living in the present moment creates "absolute silence"; the narrator's comment is committed to tense "I have tried this, I will try anything, but I don't understand how it works" (117). The expression of her lack of understanding suggests she has found an alternative to silence through writing. Significantly she writes in the present tense which makes the parallel clear.

Like silence, writing has traps the narrator does not

understand: "I have my tricks and my trap doors, too. I don't understand their workings at the present moment, but I have to be careful, I won't speak against them" (124). There is a complex paradox here. "I won't speak against them," the last line of the story, suggests the dangers of not speaking, of not writing, of lapsing into silence. Writing seems a fragile process, requiring faith in tricks and trap doors. The narrator invokes her lover-figure as muse: "how are we to understand you?" (124), but realizes that ultimately how we understand him does not matter. The answer to the question, "Tell Me Yes or No," is not, in the world of fiction, important; what is important is the imaginative creation of a context for this question and the energy to render the imaginative world in "solid detail."

"Winter Wind" and "The Ottawa Valley," like "Material" and "Tell Me Yes or No," have a writer-narrator. Yet whereas in the latter two stories the narrators are highly self-conscious and the stories are primarily about writing as process, in the former two, the process of writing is de-emphasized. The narrators of these stories do not attempt a polished or "proper" story (as the narrator of "The Ottawa Valley" calls it). Instead, the stories are quasi-autobiographical. The two stories are closely linked by the presence in each of the figure of a mother with Parkinson's

disease. Yet the possible continuity of the narrator is left ambivalent. In both cases, though, the narrator is disturbed by her authority as a writer.

"Winter Wind" makes domestic order and disorder signs of internal states. In the house of the narrator's grandmother and Aunt Madge, with its "hallway . . . all wood, polished, fragrant, smooth, cozy as the inside of a nutshell" (193), everything is ordered, clean, decent. In the mother's house, "Dirt and chaos threatened all the time" (193). In the grandmother's house, emphasis is on practical domestic labour; in the mother's it is, albeit grotesquely, on the decorative: "My mother was painting our cupboards yellow and on each of the drawers and doors she was painting some decoration; flowers or fish or a sailboat or even a flag" (196). The mother's attempts at decoration are desperate; her paintings have a "crude and glaring" (196) quality and seem connected with her physical disease.

The relative states of the houses are intimately connected to what takes place inside them. The order in the grandmother's house is associated with a community where narratives dealing with emotional life are not revealed: "it is usually thought much better to leave such things unsaid" (199). Here stories are silenced. The grandmother, for example, is silent about her story

of lost love; the narrator imagines her most articulate comment--
"We must never speak of this again" (200). The details can only
be guessed at, authored by others (notably the narrator's mother
and the narrator herself). Only in the episode that concludes the
story does the grandmother "lose control" and express "plain hurt
or anger" (204). Her silence is equated with power and
"traditional authority" (204); her loss of control is an
"abdication" of power. Thus the ordered domestic world is
characterized by its repression and silence, particularly about
female lives. It is thus a world rich in possibilities for the
generation of stories.

In the grandmother's house even books "could not quite get
out. Some atmosphere of the place pushed them back, contained
them, dimmed them. There was not room" (203). In the mother's
disordered house, by contrast, "there was room for everything"
(203). The narrator notes her freedom to assume her "loud
argumentative scandalous" role there (202). Here stories are made
out of that other world; the narrator's mother "loved stories,"
particularly those with a certain kind of plot, "full of tragedy
and renunciation and queer turns of fate" (200). Yet her disease
renders her literally inarticulate, affecting as it does her
vocal cords. Ironically "the worse her voice gets, the more she

wants to talk" (195). The mother's voice seems intimately connected to her physical body over which she is losing control. The narrator acts as her interpreter, a job, she notes, "that made me wild with shame" (195).

The narrator's "shame" at interpreting extends farther. Storytelling itself or, rather, the act of turning life into fiction, carries with it a kind of shame. It calls for the "use" of people and control of them: "I have tricked them out and altered them and shaped them any way at all, to suit my purposes" (201). Even when she is especially "careful," she feels "compunction." On one level, in her disclosure of "facts," she is only making public the story generated by others in a community where, despite its repression, "stories were being made" though they are not told: "People carried their stories around with them" (201). Yet it is the task of interpretation which burdens the narrator:

I have said that my grandmother would choose a certain kind of love. I have implied that she would be stubbornly, secretly, destructively romantic. Nothing she ever said to me, or in my hearing, would bear this out. Yet I have not invented it, I really believe it. Without any proof I believe it, and so I must believe that we get messages another way, that we have connections that cannot be investigated, but have to be relied on.
(201)

Writing, especially about women and their silent emotional lives, involves making tenuous connections. The making of these connections is an act of faith that "we get messages another way" which has to be "relied" on. When faith in the authenticity of the relation between emotion felt and emotion interpreted wavers, the result is, at best, "compunction," otherwise guilt, shame, or even silence. The narrator of this story, though, is able to keep writing past her wavering faith.

The final story, "The Ottawa Valley," depicts a similar crisis of faith in writing, this time not quite as readily resolved. Like "Winter Wind," the story deals with the lives of female characters, centring on the narrator's mother and Aunt Dodie. Aunt Dodie contrasts with the grandmother and Aunt Madge in "Winter Wind." She lives a sparse rather than an ordered domestic life. She displays an exuberant freedom of language, and she dresses like a gypsy, her clothes "many-layered and -colored and ragged and flopping like the clothes a beggarwoman might wear in a school play" (229). Her story is "tragic," (she has been "jilted"), yet she turns it into a jaunty story and comic song. The narrator's mother's version is different: "I used to wake up and hear her crying in the night. Night after night" (230).

The story juxtaposes various narratives which are linked by

their common theme of exposure and shame. In one highly comic story Dodie tells of a trick she and the narrator's mother played on Allen Durrand, then a farmhand but now a politically powerful "big Holstein man" (233). Making use of the resources available to her in the domestic world, Aunt Dodie turned her labour subversive and sewed up his fly, completing the joke by plying him with lemonade. By her trick he is literally exposed; when his "clawin' and yankin'" (235) failed, he "gave up and ripped down his overalls altogether and let 'er fly" (236). Dodie's narration brings about a different kind of exposure. The narrator's mother, who normally "will never listen to smut" (189), is roused to something close to laughter which is, significantly, "helplessness": "She just looked as if there was a point at which she might give up" (236).

Immediately following this comic narrative is a terse extract from a medical encyclopedia, cataloguing the symptoms of Parkinson's disease which involves a literal helplessness and loss of control. In the time-frame of the story the mother is at the onset of the disease. The detached medical extract thus serves poignantly to bring the future into the story. When the narrator lapses into silence at the end of the story, all that remains is a sense of the mother's progressive degeneration. A

further narrative of Aunt Dodie's takes up this idea of loss of bodily control ending in death. She describes taking care of her own mother: "She was all swollen up; what she had was dropsy. They came one time and took it out of her by the pailful" (243). In her revelation of these secrets of the body she appears to the narrator as a source of power: "She had a scarf around her head that day and looked like a gypsy woman, flashing malice and kindness at me, threatening to let out more secrets than I could stand" (243). Her narratives, which are, she insists, about "Life," have the vulnerability of the body as their source.

The aunt's story of her own mother's grotesque subservience to the body interrupts yet another narrative that deals with a similar idea. The young narrator's panties have "bust" on the way into church. She is horrified at the idea of such exposure: "I couldn't imagine walking into church in a blue taffeta dress and no pants. Rising to sing the hymns, sitting down, in no pants. The smooth cool boards of the pew and no pants" (240). By a gesture the narrator is too young to appreciate, the mother exposes her own underclothes in order to save her daughter's pride. Although the tale is comic, the narrator's situation is suggestively linked to her mother's own highly disturbing loss of control. The insistent theme of humiliation suggests that all

narratives are in some way connected to such loss of control. Narrative itself is, in fact, a form of humiliation because it necessarily involves interpretation.

The narrator observes that she would have ended the story with her mother's physical withdrawal from her, "If I had been making a proper story out of this" (246). But instead she has chosen a more open (and potentially endless) structure, stringing on a further episode in an attempt to "find out more, remember more" (246). She draws an analogy between writing and photography. Yet, while others come out "clear enough," the mother remains a problem:

And she is the one of course that I am trying to get; it is to reach her that this whole journey has been undertaken. With what purpose? To mark her off, to describe, to illumine, to celebrate, to get rid, of her; and it did not work, for she looms too close, just as she always did. She is heavy as always, she weighs everything down, and yet she is indistinct, her edges melt and flow. Which means she has stuck to me as close as ever and refused to fall away, and I could go on, and on, applying what skills I have, using what tricks I know, and it would always be the same. (246)

Writing ("this whole journey" seems to suggest more than just this story) is an attempt to "mark off" the mother, to separate her from the narrator's self, to fix her. Yet the mother, just as

she loses control of her body, refuses to be subject to control. The story (which potentially could go on forever if the mother is the source of energy behind writing) ends in a disturbing silence which is all the more disturbing because this story concludes the collection.

Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You is, as its title suggests, about articulating and narrating. Narrative is seen as a way of controlling life through what it withholds more than through what it reveals. Narrative can be a covert form of confession of sadistic and destructive fantasies, generated by constricting patriarchal structures. When women such as the narrators of "Material" and "Tell Me Yes or No" write, these feelings often break through to produce the "short jabbing sentences" that make women's writing so different from men's clear jelly. Yet even when women transcend their anger at patriarchy to write about the lives of women, their enterprise is still fraught with complex problems because the control that writing implies has moral dimensions. In the title story narrative results in one character's death; in "Winter Wind" it is a source of "compunction" because of the way it distorts reality; in the final story, narrative appears to be a futile as well as a shameful exercise.

The shame so insistently associated with language arises from a complex paradox. On the one hand, narrative imposes upon life and, especially, upon the lives of women. It thus fixes it into patterns and forces interpretations that may not be authentic and certainly can never reflect life as process. Yet, on the other hand, narrative is incapable of finally fixing the lives of women, especially of the narrator's mother. Where language does apparently control, the results, like the mother's paintings, are distorted, even grotesque. Parkinson's disease becomes in some ways an effective metaphor for writing with its inevitable failure of control and attendant shame at exposure.

Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You explores the concept of gender as it affects the ability to wield language. Male writers like Hugo can suspend life in clear jelly; other men, while they may not write, can live their lives unencumbered by the "useless paying baggage" that attends women. This difference is a source of a current of anger that runs through the collection. Women writers must confront the anger that often penetrates their attempts to tell stories and must always wrestle with the tormenting process of fixing life in narrative. Yet for women, writing is a crucial rejoinder to the silence that threatens to engulf women and erase their lives. Writing proves

to be an act of faith that must be maintained if women are to learn to write past the anger at patriarchy that hinders them and find a way of celebrating the lives of women.

SECTION ONE: CONCLUSION

Both postmodernism and feminism have departed radically from realism's assumption that language is a neutral medium. Whereas postmodernism has leaned toward interpreting language as truly arbitrary, however, feminism has emphasized the link between the ability to name the world and power. Thus, in addition to the dichotomy between realism and postmodernism, one has also arisen between realism and feminism. The main contribution to this dichotomy has come from the French feminists, whose work shares similarities, largely confined to form, with that of the postmodernists. The concern with language and power in the work of Atwood, Gallant, and Munro demonstrates that, while they are neither postmodernists nor feminists in the French tradition, they are certainly not realists.

French feminists argue that language is an inescapable prison house for women, and only a radical overthrow of existing linguistic structures can begin a process of liberation. None of the writers in this study performs such an overthrow in their fiction; all use apparently traditional linguistic structures. Yet, at the same time, these writers are highly conscious of language; so much so, in fact, that it is often covertly the central topic of their writing. Bodily Harm, Home Truths, and Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You are all dominated by the

concept of language, and the linguistic density of their titles suggests this. The title Bodily Harm, for example, suggests the police label for violence, yet the book forces an appraisal of all such labels and shows how the label can create the reality. "Home Truths" is one of the stock phrases that the book reveals as the prime limiters and controllers of experience. The title Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You points to the concepts of articulation and concealment so important in the stories in the collection. French feminists, and often Quebec women writers in their wake, offer overt challenges to the reader to perceive language as a medium. The women writers in this study do the same more subtly and examine language as both prison house and the means by which limiting patriarchal structures can be overturned.

Another obvious point of departure from the French feminists is the place of the female body in writing. To French feminists, the body generates a liberating language. Yet these writers are themselves also concerned with the female body much more insistently than is usually suggested.¹⁴ In the work of Atwood, Gallant, and Munro, language and the body are indeed inextricably connected, but emphasis is on what patriarchal language does to the female body. In Bodily Harm language itself, analogous to the violating touch and the dismembering male gaze, can be a most

insidious form of violence. The writer must transform vocabulary in order to re-member the female body. In Home Truths, the "living body" carries scars or ruptures that mark its humanity. Impalement on language, crucially damaging as it is, is also a sign that at least the body is a living body and not a corpse. In Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You, marks on the female body are analogous to the patterns of revelation and concealment of narrative. Narrative is a doomed attempt to "mark off" to "get rid of" the process of the female body. The body's loss of control in Parkinson's disease becomes a compelling metaphor for the body's resistance to the fixity of narrative patterns. That the body's incontinence wins out paradoxically offers reassurance that process cannot ever be contained or got rid of. The struggle between the interpreting, controlling narrator, and process that refuses to be pinned down gives perpetual tension to writing.

Thus, beneath the surface differences, some similarities of concern do underlie the glaring divergence in form between the French feminists and these apparently traditional women writers. Yet, whatever the similarities, it is certain that the writers in this study place their emphasis very differently from the French Feminists. One important aspect of the prison house of language for these writers is the power of language to limit and contain

experience. Bodily Harm is the most sustained and focused study of this power. Reality and its processes are packaged and reduced by labels. Popular journalism assists this perfunctory and damaging classification and thus serves patriarchal ideology. The process is analogous to violence imposed on women's bodies, both the overt violence of rape or beating and more subtle forms of violence such as gynaecological practices. Language that controls is generated through patriarchy and its institutions such as medicine, politics, religion, and the romance plot. Women, though, are themselves complicit in this practice of labelling.

In Home Truths language is similarly generated and informed by the power of certain institutions. Language labels, and it can thereby neutralize powerful forces and reduce reality to limited experience through clichés and stock phrases. In Bodily Harm women are the primary victims. In Home Truths women are similarly susceptible, but the consciousness that wields the language is the chief victim because limited language shatters the potential for integrity. In Home Truths children are effectively orphaned emotionally through the coercions of language. Language can do violence, impaling those who use it.

In Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You individual words can possess almost mystical power, especially sexual power over

women, for words with sexual implications are often a reflection of the vulnerability of the female body. Whereas men can use words apparently unproblematically, women's use of language is almost always connected to a profound sense of shame. This shame arises in part from the inevitable power of language to classify and contain the world. As Eileen in "Memorial" observes, language turns dynamic process into object. Yet interpretation of events such as Eileen herself performs turns out to be as insidious as the use of an apparently spurious language. The process of analysis grants a vital distance from process which, if succumbed to, drowns the individual. Women who narrate and thereby interpret are, therefore, analogous to voyeurs; their distance grants them a valuable perspective, yet their stance is fraught with shame.

For all three writers, the power of language as a tool of patriarchy is not the only--or even the most important--aspect of language for women. All three writers are interested in women as users of language. Language always has power, no matter who wields it: "a word after a word / after a word is power" as the speaker of Atwood's poem "Spelling" notes. The greatest challenge to women is to accept and live with that power. All three books studied here self-consciously examine the process of writing by

depicting women writers in formation.

In Bodily Harm Rennie must assume responsibility for her writing. Even her magazine articles are powerful because they affect reality. Through writing she can become a subversive and record the stories of others. Lora's story of domination in patriarchy would remain untold and unread if not for Rennie. Writing is an act of "imagining" a better world, and such acts of imagining, the novel implies, are extremely powerful. Rennie's writing turns away from packaging and closure towards subversive writing, a challenging of traditional patriarchal definitions, and an exposure of the underlying politics of even the most apparently casual discourses.

In Home Truths, as Lottie Benz begins to write, she too turns from closure. Like Rennie, Lottie begins writing when she is immersed in an alien culture with experiences that defy ready-made labels. Sociology, a metaphor for any limiting classifying system, breaks down. Lottie's experiments with writing parallel her movement toward an exploration of both personal and national history. Yet for Lottie the movement toward writing is abortive. Linnet, by contrast, becomes a writer. Her own narrative shows her consciousness of the dangers of using language to label experience. In the course of the sequence she comes to understand

that classification is insidious, and neat plots are dead-ends. She begins to recover voices, especially of women. The writer's task is thus, in part, to preserve the voices of women.

Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You evokes the most disturbing sense of narrative power. Early in the opening story, narrative, or, more precisely, gossip, is extremely powerful. It has the power to shape Et's life and even to cause Char's death. Narrators, no matter how casual they seem, always do more than tell a story. They frequently release their own "bare feelings" and interpret, sometimes disturbingly, the lives of other women. Narrative, far from being a transparent medium, always contains tricks and trap doors. Women's survival depends upon narrative, yet women must always live with the consequences of the control that it endows them with.

Thus these three works of fiction show that, in fact, contrary to the ideas of some theorists, women's narrative is as powerful as men's. Women, however, have trouble assuming the power because of its implications. All three works depict men who are able to use language with confidence and with no reservations. Hugo in Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You, for example, is free to render life in beautiful "clear jelly," whereas women are at the mercy of the power of language. In

Bodily Harm, Jake, Daniel, and Paul are all unshaken by the problems of control that taunt Rennie, and in Home Truths the men Linnet works with can remain blind to their own literalism and its crippling effects.

Realist writing is characterized by a lack of self-consciousness about its medium. These three writers all subtly incorporate self-consciousness. All produce fiction that is open-ended in form. Bodily Harm is so open-ended that the reader is forced to decide the "reality" of the ending for him or herself. The novel compels the reader to experience imagination as liberation. Short story collections are, by nature, less closed than novels. Home Truths and Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You are particularly open in form. They encourage the reader to juxtapose stories and to think about the process of writing. Home Truths builds to a climax with its examination of writing. The final section about Linnet Muir puts the rest of the stories into perspective as constructs. Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You emphasizes the role of the narrator to reveal and to conceal and points out the insidious implications of narrative concealment. Some of the stories in the collection seem to be stories in the process of being made. Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You does not present its stories as suspensions in clear

jelly, but as a process experienced by a narrator who is often a tangible presence in the story.

For all three writers, writing is an act of giving a literary voice to women. Women are not perceived in these fictions as silenced or even silent; in fact they are frequently depicted as having a close relationship to language. In Bodily Harm, for example, Lora is addicted to telling stories, and her stories, like those of other women, often recount what from one perspective is "pointless disaster" but what from another is a coherent history of women in patriarchal society. Rennie records, giving context and permanent voice to Lora's stories and using them as a springboard for recounting her own stories. In Home Truths women are often the guardians of language, using it to preserve memory and articulate history. Linnet as a writer is eventually a recorder, a preserver of women's voices. Similarly, in Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You, the writer narrators record oral stories--of the aunts, for example. Such women as Lora, Georgie, Mrs. Ireland, and Aunt Dodie do not always tell attractive or easily understood stories; their voices, however, are insistent and their stories authentic. Giving voice to these women is crucial; it provides a record of women in patriarchy that would otherwise be erased, for women's voices are more

fragile than men's. Yet the task of giving voice, solidifying process, is always charged with power and fraught with dangers.

NOTES

1. The Oxford English Dictionary gives the first meaning of "malignant" as "Disposed to rebel against God or against constituted authority."

2. Margaret Atwood, Bodily Harm, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981, 105. All subsequent references to Bodily Harm are to this edition and page numbers appear parenthetically within the text.

3. St. Agathe, who lends her name to the island where Rennie is imprisoned, is, as a Christian saint, associated with the severance of the breasts. Yet, before her usurpation by Christian myth, she was once the "kindly one" whose breasts were not severed but gave nourishment. Her dual significance suggests a pattern important in Bodily Harm that underlying the severance imposed by patriarchy is a more holistic idea of the female body.

4. The suffix -oma suggests a tumour (as in carcinoma, sarcoma). The prefix strongly suggests a derivation from "lues" which, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, means "a plague or pestilence; a spreading disease, esp. syphilis."

5. Geoff Hancock, "An Interview With Mavis Gallant," Canadian Fiction Magazine, 28:33. Subsequent references to this interview appear parenthetically in the text with the abbreviation IGH.

6. Mavis Gallant, Home Truths, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1981), 295. All subsequent references to Home Truths are to this edition. References appear parenthetically in the text.

7. See, for example, Ronald Hatch, "The Three Stages of Mavis Gallant's Short Fiction" (92,96) and George Woodcock, who comments that her fiction "is not a naturalistic fiction, but it is a fiction of enhanced reality, in which life is reshaped by artifice, but not distorted" (77).

8. Neil Besner points to the revisions Gallant made to the first version of the story, published in The New Yorker (June 1968), for republication in Home Truths. The revision, he says, "dramatizes more acutely Gerard's exile from a home in language in order to prevent readers from deciding too quickly which events really 'happen' in the story as opposed to those which happen only in Gerard's mind" (120).

9. Lorna Irvine, "Maternal Vitality in Gallant's Fiction," in her Sub\Version (Toronto: ECW Press, 1986), 131-147.

10. See, for example, Smaro Kamboureli's "The body as audience and performance in the writing of Alice Munro."

11. Alice Munro, Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974), 143. All subsequent references to Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You are to this edition and page numbers appear parenthetically within the text.

12. Ildikó de Papp Carrington, for example, notes: "Because Et never marries, her corrosive jealousy turns her into a sharp-tongued, sharp-eyed woman viciously searching for everybody's Achilles heel. She enjoys catching people at a disadvantage and spends her whole life maliciously capitalizing on the opportunities to exercise the controlling power generated by these insights" (113).

13. I arrange the stories here by their form rather than their content. The stories, do, of course, fit together in a number of other ways. W.R. Martin, for example, shows the thematic relationships between the stories and explains the coherence of the order in which they appear.

14. Some critics have begun to examine apparently traditional writers in the light of the French feminists' concern with the body. See, for example, Smaro Kamboureli, "The body as audience and performance in the writing of Alice Munro."

SECTION TWO
VOICES FROM THE MARGINS:
DIALOGISM

Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward.

-Mikhail Bakhtin

The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture.

-Roland Barthes

One of the more compelling claims against realism has focused on the politics of its narrative voice. Realist texts, to use Bakhtin's terms, are not novelistic; they tend toward the monologic pole. That is, whether or not they contain on the surface a diversity of voices, they ultimately establish a hierarchy of discourses and privilege one voice. The narrative voice of a realist text typically disguises its own subjectivity, passing as a neutral, objective, scientific voice. In fact, a wealth of assumptions may be contained within the voice as studies such as Belsey's have shown. Narratives may attempt to pass themselves off as history, but in fact they are all discourses.

Responses to the controlling voice of realism have come from both feminism and postmodernism. Postmodernism has taken the realist narrative voice as one of its prime targets and systematically broken down the concept of the neutral narrator. Typically, in postmodernist accounts either the subjectivity of a narrator is stressed to the point of absurdity, or else the integrity of objectivity is broken down by positing numerous conflicting voices without establishing a hierarchy that can grant one any more authority than another. The figure of the omniscient narrator is parodied in figures such as Demeter

Proudfoot, a madman, ostensibly writing the text of The Studhorse Man from his bathtub.

Feminism has responded to the authoritative voice of realism in several different ways. French feminists, developing the subjectivity of voice to its absolute extreme, have sought to overturn the authoritative voice altogether. Believing that all traditional discourse is inescapably and destructively fragmenting to the female subject, they have endeavoured to develop a female voice that can somehow "speak the body." Models of such a voice break with traditional discourse and its linear structures, fracturing syntax and introducing semantic play. The enterprise of the French feminists is, for the most part, prescriptive; they are seeking new ways of writing that are more appropriate and less constricting for women than traditional written discourses. Anglo-American feminists have also perceived the limitations of traditional authoritative discourses for women. However, they have preferred to work within the confines of established form rather than to invent a new type of discourse. They are aware of the gender specific nature of narrative voice, yet they have attempted to usurp the voice rather than to destroy its integrity altogether.

Anglo-American feminist criticism has long challenged itself

with finding a specifically female voice. Several attempts have been made to locate this voice; the more convincing of these attempts take voice only in its broadest sense, often finding striking similarities of theme or plot in women's texts but rarely attempting to locate a unified style. Yet attempts to find a female voice are misguided, especially if they take fiction as their starting-point. By its very nature, the novel does not facilitate the privileging of one voice. Instead, according to Bakhtin, it embraces polyglossia, that is it depicts many voices, all interacting in various ways: "the novel as a whole is a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice" (261). The voices of the novel may be the voices of other literary works or genres, of popular literature and folk tale, or of stylized fictional voices and may be embedded into the text so that they appear as quotations, or, more subtly, they may be contained within a narrative voice modulated to echo other voices. The writer's own voice always appears "refracted at different angles" (300) through the voices within the text. In a truly dialogic text, no one voice ultimately carries authority over other voices, and truth resides only among the conflicting discourses. Thus the "novelistic" novel moves away from "rock bottom truths," as Bakhtin notes (300), into a dialogic mode.

Bakhtin argues that criticism of the novel rarely takes sufficient account of its nature.

Philosophy of language, linguistics and stylistics . . . have all postulated a simple and unmediated relation of speaker to his unitary and singular "own" language, and have postulated as well a simple realization of this language in the monologic utterance of the individual. Such disciplines actually know only two poles in the life of the language, between which are located all the linguistic and stylistic phenomena they know: on the one hand, the system of a unitary language, and on the other the individual speaking in this language. (269)

Although this account of the deficiencies of criticism is no doubt true of all novel criticism, it is particularly true of attempts to study those women's novels that are not apparently postmodernist or experimental in their form. A critical approach that treats the novel as if it were monologic is particularly inappropriate because many novels by women--as exemplified here by Atwood's Lady Oracle, Gallant's A Fairly Good Time, and Munro's Lives of Girls and Women--do seem to conform strikingly to the nature of the novel as defined by Bakhtin. All three writers seem to work the concept of polyglossia to the full, frequently using it as a way to investigate the relation between gender and discourse. Further, all three texts are, ultimately,

dialogic, defying a unitary notion of truth.

In his attempts to develop a theory of the novel, Bakhtin contrasts the epic with the novel. The epic, he argues, is essentially monologic. It deals with history which is firmly fixed because it is situated in an immutable past: "everything is finished, already over" (16). The world it deals with, Bakhtin notes, is the "national heroic past": "it is a world of 'beginnings' and 'peak times' in the national history, a world of fathers and of founders of families, a world of 'firsts' and 'bests'" (13). This world is depicted with reverential epic distance. The novel, by contrast, is immersed in the process of the present with its polyglossia and "in all its openendedness" (11). Although Bakhtin does not deal directly with the issue of gender, his theory suggests an explanation for women's abiding interest in the novel form. "National history" has traditionally been almost exclusively a male realm, a realm of fathers indeed. Women, by contrast, have generally lived in immediate and intimate contact with the process of the contemporary quotidian world.

Many of the extended fictions by Atwood, Gallant, and Munro are not merely situated in the process of the present, but take this process with its open-endedness and "inconclusive" nature as

their central idea. Lady Oracle, A Fairly Good Time, and Lives of Girls and Women all stress the removal of their protagonists from national history and immerse them in the contemporary multi-voiced world where they are in contact with life as process. This process is often seen as radical physical disorder, uncoordinated mess and muddle, the "cluttered fabric of the present" (Lives of Girls and Women, 74). It is also frequently associated with biological process and the figure of the mother. The protagonists have to struggle hard to survive in this process, which threatens to envelop them. Because of the association between process and their mothers, they must also enter into tense dialogical relationships with the latter.

In the epic, the self is unproblematic, Bakhtin argues, since there is coincidence between views of the self: man's "view of himself coincides completely with others' views of him" (34). In the novel, this holistic point of view disintegrates: "a crucial tension develops between the external and the internal man" (37). Joan Foster in Lady Oracle, Shirley Perrigny in A Fairly Good Time, and Del Jordan in Lives of Girls and Women have highly problematic selves. Often their "self" is constituted damagingly through others' images of them, others' words, or mirror images that reflect only the visual aspect of the self.

All experience themselves problematically as having fluid, ill-defined boundaries. This discrepancy between views of the self sometimes leads to a double--or even multiple--voice.

Bakhtin argues that the novelistic self is analogous to the hero of popular masks:

The epic and tragic hero is the hero who, by his very nature, must perish. Popular masks, on the contrary, never perish. . . . However, one frequently witnesses their fictive comic deaths (with subsequent resurrections). These are heroes of free improvisation and not heroes of tradition, heroes of life process that is imperishable and forever renewing itself, forever contemporary--these are not heroes of an absolute past. (36)

All three protagonists see themselves as performers. Frequently their identity seems to be constituted of a series of roles or masks. All three--most obviously Joan Foster--undergo "deaths" and resurrections. For all three, the self is not single and simple, but multiple and fluid, connected to the process of the present, and thus the discourse of the narrator or the protagonist cannot be unitary.

Bakhtin argues that the novel has antecedents in Mennipean satire and in carnival--a radical folk element which depends on hierarchical reversals and subversions. All three books incorporate elements of carnival. In Lady Oracle the Canadian

National Exhibition, a debased carnival, gives Joan the material for her "Fat Lady" fantasies, which temporarily overthrow normal hierarchies; she perceives herself in carnivalized images of distorted reflections. A Fairly Good Time exhibits the wonderland-like logic and disconnected discourse that are a characteristic of carnivalized literature. In Lives of Girls and Women, the Aunts perform subversive tricks, and many marginalized figures demonstrate extraordinary, god-like powers. Carnivalization is subversion of dominating power structures. It can, therefore, be a particularly useful strategy for women writers who seem always aware of the power structures--often discourses--that shape them.

The works of Atwood, Munro, and Gallant belong firmly in novelistic traditions as defined by Bakhtin. All three of the works under consideration here are obviously situated in a heteroglossic world. In Lady Oracle and A Fairly Good Time the protagonists are actually situated in alien natural languages--Joan is in Italy and Shirley in Paris. All three are surrounded by a wealth of other "languages," consisting of differing registers and vocabularies, which are often alien to them. Each work examines the literary voices that play upon and influence its protagonist and also examines extensively the importance of

popular literature and oral voices. Always these voices are in tension with the protagonist's voices, dramatizing the dialogism Bakhtin sees as central to the novel:

Within the arena of almost every utterance an intense interaction and struggle between one's own and another's word is being waged, a process in which they oppose or dialogically interanimate each other. (354)

In each case, this struggle is often an ideological one, as other more powerful voices threaten the woman's own voice. These powerful voices are the monologic master narratives of philosophy, religion, history, and art, and are consistently associated with men and with a deeply destructive authority.

All three books insistently examine the heteroglossia of the world and the relationship between certain discourses and power. This attention to heteroglossia does not in itself distinguish these fictions from realist ones. All three texts, however, are also profoundly dialogic. In realist texts, the narrator is a controlling force who subtly but compellingly guides the reader toward a certain unified truth. In dialogic texts, such a view of truth is absent. Truth resides not monologically in a certain privileged discourse, but dialogically among opposing voices. Each of the narratives examined here is often interpreted as a realist text. Yet, in fact, each one both challenges monologic

truth and replaces it with a view of narrative as a tricky and equivocal repository of conflicting voices.

LADY ORACLE

The title of Lady Oracle suggests a prophetic or "oracular" voice, which scarcely tallies with Joan's narrative, rooted as it is in the details of the secular world and wholly devoid, seemingly, of the authority of sacred prophesy. Yet there is one sense in which her narrative is oracular--like the oracles, Joan might be said to speak, at times, in riddles. Emily Jensen, in fact, has seen Lady Oracle as a series of narratives, apparently light-hearted, but actually delivering serious messages, in much the same way that parables do. Yet this concept of parable suggests that Joan's narrative contains "true" meanings which have to be deciphered. In fact, her narrative seems closer to the model of her Aunt's wisdom which contains profoundly and irresolvably ambivalent riddles. In Joan's world, voices refuse to be pure monologic repositories of meaning and are open and ambivalent. Voices continually blend and merge, entering endless dialogue with one another.

Yet Joan herself craves a pure voice, uncontaminated by the voices around her, just as she craves tidiness and neat boundaries. Early in the book she establishes an image for distinct voices. She evokes a film she saw as a child: The Whale Who Wanted to Sing at the Met. At the end of the film, the whale, thwarted in his ambitions, is harpooned, and "each of his voices

left his body in a different-colored soul and floated up towards the sun." ¹ Shortly after mentioning this, Joan notes her landlord's fondness for different-coloured pens, a penchant she also shares. Both images suggest Joan's desire for distinct voices. Yet in the real world voices always refuse this distinctness. She admits that the boundaries between different voices are always hopelessly blurred: "I used mine for lists and love letters, sometimes both at once: Have gone to pick up some coffee, XXX" (10). This conflation of love letters and shopping lists is alluded to again when Joan notes that the Royal Porcupine threatened to collect her shopping lists and sell them as love letters. It quickly becomes clear that unambiguous distinctions belong only in Walt Disney movies or, perhaps, in the lurid coloured pictures Mr. Vitroni peddles. Certainly such distinctions belong in the neat paradise Joan longs for but can never attain. Life, as the book continually emphasizes, is messy, and one of the more important symptoms of its mess is the way voices insist upon blending, blurring distinctions, and entering dialogue with one another.

One central dialogue in the book is what might be called a dialogue with the dead. The spiritualists offer--albeit parodically--a religion founded on the idea of such a dialogue.

From the beginning, the book plays insistently with the idea of the threshold between life and death. Various messages are sent from the realm of the dead, but what the dead offer is not great wisdom derived from experience in a higher realm, but banal messages about everyday objects. The status of these messages from the dead is always ambivalent. The spiritualist sessions seem purely farcical, yet Aunt Lou, who has been warned about "mats," does slip on a bath mat "either before or after" (117) her heart attack. In another dubious--and farcical--message, Joan is struck on her rump by an arrow on the day of Aunt Lou's death.

There are many instances of messages from the dead where distinctions between the living and the dead are confused. Joan's father receives "messages" from people he has brought back from the most extreme verge of death. Her mother has her spirit appear to Joan--but before she is dead. She is also, incidentally, characterized as three-headed Cerebus, guardian of the threshold between two worlds. Joan herself sends Arthur a postcard after her "death," and her whole narrative is, in fact, a kind of message from the "other side."

The dialogue of the dead thus serves to blur the boundaries between life and death. Joan herself is in an ambivalent state. Not only does she pose as dead, she also has many "dead" selves

which she is forced to recognize and which often come back to her. Further, the voices Joan has to contend with in order to write belong to the dead as well as to the living. She has to acknowledge the voices of her literary--and subliterary--antecedents. She cannot escape these voices, but must make her own writing enter dialogue with them. Her writing is thus not a single unified voice, but a collection of past voices, some belonging to others, some to past selves. As Joan's failed attempt to escape from life indicates, transcendence is not possible. Joan's self remains multiple as do her voices.

Initially the "other side," the realm of the dead, has been imagined, through the rhetoric of the Jordan Chapel, as a place of uncomplicated happiness where "loved ones were awaiting," and "blessed spirits of those who've gone before" (106) watch the safety of those left behind. Yet when Joan reaches her metaphorical other side, she discovers that it is just as confused, messy, ambivalent and labyrinthine as this side. It turns out to be a continuation of her life rather than the violent rupture she had hoped for. The other side is not the "white paradise" she has imagined, but an extension of "this other place where everything changed and shifted" (284), a world of mess, labyrinth, accident, "a snarl, a rat's nest of dangling

threads and loose ends" (293). The first sign of this is given early. Joan sees a group of people she has left behind (some are alive, some dead--another instance of those blurred boundaries between life and death). They seem to be welcoming her with love: "they smiled and waved and called to me, though of course I couldn't hear the words" (9), yet she quickly recognizes that "They were smiling and waving at each other, not at me" (9). Their interactive dialogue places them in a world of multiple and diverse voices.

Superficially, Joan's narrative appears to consist of several voices so distinct they are marked in different type. The body of her narrative appears in regular type, whereas her costume gothics and the short extracts from her "Lady Oracle" poem appear in italics. Yet from the first it is clear that the voice that constitutes Joan's central narrative is not pure, but is affected by various other voices. For example, early in the book Joan records her visions of herself "golden-brown, striding with laughing teeth into an aqua sea, carefree at last, the past discarded" (7). Her phrasing suggests the language of advertizing to which she is, by her own admission, susceptible. Advertizing produces the illusion of simple and magical transformations in which the past can be "discarded." Similarly, the notion of a

balcony draws from her the language of the romances she writes. If she could stand at "the right one . . . wearing a long white trailing gown,"

something would happen: music would sound, a shape would appear below, sinuous and dark, and climb towards me, while I leaned fearfully, hopefully, gracefully, against the wrought-iron railing and quivered. (7-8)

Again, she laments she "never learned to cry with style, silently, the pearl-shaped tears rolling down my cheeks from wide luminous eyes" (9), an image gleaned from True Love covers. Throughout her narrative, the language and attendant perceptions of romance infect her voice. Later in the book, her anti-romantic perceptions gleaned from life will infect her costume gothics.

The language of romance is particularly important to Joan, yet it is only one voice in the heteroglossia of the world where even the dead are not silent. Lady Oracle evokes a wide variety of voices from the contemporary world, oral and written, literary, sub-literary, and extra-literary. These voices, sometimes embedded, sometimes assimilated into Joan's narrative, come from a wide variety of sources including films, opera, fairy-tales, magazines, adverts, maxims, proverbs, romance fiction, and newspapers. Set alongside these voices are the

"serious" discourses of politics, religion, and art, all of which are parodied.

Lady Oracle demonstrates how the voices of popular culture embody a particular ideology. Yet it does so subtly, not to undercut that ideology entirely, but to show the voices in dialogue. For example, Aunt Lou has a repertoire of maxims (most of them, interestingly, having to do with "discretion"--voice or its suppression). She has some "invented by her" (41), yet they are not so much inventions as adaptations of existing maxims: "There's more than one cat in any bag," and "Don't count on your rabbits before they're out of the hat" (41). Her "inventions" are not entirely original, but are constructed out of existing material. Her adaptations thus enter dialogue with the voices of popular wisdom--subverting and amending it. Joan herself, in her hazy blood-poisoned state, behaves similarly, twisting a popular maxim to get "Most said soonest mended" (121), which might stand as a rationale for her narrative. The model of women's narrative presented by Aunt Lou and by Joan begins by turning on their heads traditional notions of "discretion."

Yet society's texts are not easy to re-write. Lady Oracle alludes to several texts that embody myths about women and seem to allow little possibility for reversal. One of these is the

film The Red Shoes, one of Joan's early formative influences. The film itself is already dense with layers of intertextuality. It tells the story of a ballerina--Victoria Page--who is caught between her director (her art) and an orchestra conductor (love). Unable to choose, she plunges ambiguously to her death in front of a train. The film includes an inset ballet (also called The Red Shoes) in which a girl who wants to go to a ball is given a pair of red shoes by the shoemaker. After the ball, when she tries to take off the shoes, they carry her off dancing wildly until she finally dies. The ballet is based on a Hans Christian Anderson tale of the same name, in which the girl eventually asks the public executioner to cut off her feet. Although she lives to learn piety, she dies of a full heart. The ballet and film versions are re-writings of the fairy tale, each version carrying its own ideological message. The Anderson tale sets piety against vanity, and unambiguously punishes the latter. The film changes the terms slightly, exchanging the moral message for a sociological one. Piety becomes what Joan labels "the love of a good man" and vanity becomes Art, but the result is the same: the female protagonist cannot have both and dies as a result of the conflict.

As Jensen notes, The Red Shoes allusions are connected

thematically to another Anderson tale, "The Little Mermaid," to which Joan also makes several references. In this story, the little mermaid sacrifices her beautiful voice to the sea witch to obtain legs and feet in order to attract a prince whose love would grant her the immortal soul which she lacks. Despite her extensive sacrifices (she leaves her family, gives up her voice, and must endure terrible pain from her feet), the prince remains "utterly unconscious of all" (360) and marries another. The tale ends with a heavily moralistic plea for children to be "good" to speed the mermaid's attainment of immortality through good works. Yet the main text of the story, as employed by Joan, suggests a metaphor for the condition of women in contemporary society where "the love of a good man" is seen as highly desirable, almost, in fact, a substitute for spiritual redemption. Women, metaphorically out of their element and dependent on others for their "eternal existence," sacrifice their talent, give up their voices, endure painful postures, for erratic and uncertain returns.

The two Anderson tales and the film stand as subtexts to Joan's own story in which she attempts to balance her talent and "the love of a good man." The tales are, in a sense, parables of her condition. Her version of them does not undercut them, but

shows the accuracy of their message. Deciding to dance "for no one but myself," she dances through broken glass and draws her moral:

The real red shoes, the feet punished for dancing. You could dance, or you could have the love of a good man. But you were afraid to dance, because you had this unnatural fear that if you danced they'd cut your feet off so you wouldn't be able to dance. Finally you overcame your fear and danced, and they cut your feet off. The good man went away too, because you wanted to dance. (335)

Joan thus juxtaposes the red shoes, with their symbolic associations of talent and vanity, with the reality--minced and bloody feet. Her dancing through the glass seems forced action in the novel and is symbolic rather than naturalistic. Yet her narrative does not set itself up as a plausible record of a given reality. Instead it is full of absurd coincidences and events that have been manipulated by their author. The forced nature of the action in this incident seems to stress the prescriptive nature of society's tales, the difficulty--perhaps impossibility--of escaping certain scripts.

These two fairy tales and their variants provide paradigms for the lives of many women in the world Joan inhabits. Several of the films Joan watches with Aunt Lou echo similar ideas.

Interrupted Melody, for example, is the story of an opera singer whose career is suspended by polio. Similarly, With a Song in My Heart depicts a female singer crippled in a plane crash. The price of female talent, Lady Oracle emphasizes, is, at best, a crippled body; at worst, it is death. Indeed, many women in the book are associated with crippling or fatal accidents. Joan's costume gothic heroines frequently suffer absurd accidental deaths; one, for example, trips to her death on her petticoat. Moreover, in Joan's real life her mother falls downstairs, and her Aunt slips on a bath mat. There is, in fact, a sinister suggestion that in each case the accident is scripted (as it is literally by Joan who is manipulating the narrative). Joan's heroines die because of the necessity for ridding society of women who have become redundant in romantic plots. The insistent association of women and accident suggests that "accident," which ought by nature to be aleatory, is, in fact, connected in a sinister way to the structure of society and women's role in it. Joan's mother's death, like Victoria Page's, is an ambiguous accident.²

Lady Oracle thus makes use of fairy tales and popular films as some of its most important sub-texts. Several other fairy tales are alluded to more obliquely. The tale of "Bluebeard," for

example, underlies Joan's costume gothics. Joan cannot identify with the fairy-tale woman who "keeps to the essentials: presence of mind, foresight, the telling of watertight lies" (152) and is thus able to survive Bluebeard. She identifies instead with the "stupid sisters," distracted from their purpose in order to "follow a wandering light, a fleeting voice" (152). Her narrative as a whole suggests that the telling of "watertight lies" is a possibility only to the heroines of fairy-tale fictions. Lies are the only possibility as there is no truth, but lies a ways become tangled and confused. Life for Joan can never be anything other than a series of distractions.

The final pages of Joan's gothic romance--when Felicia enters the forbidden maze and finds the cast-off wives of Redmond--constitute a re-writing of the Bluebeard tale. Momentarily, Joan/Felicia is able to see that the hero-rescuer is actually identical with the Bluebeard figure. Both keep their dead women in a secret place. Indeed, there is a suggestion that all men do the same. Redmond takes on the form of the various men who have featured in Joan's life:

Cunningly, he began his transformations, trying to lure her into his reach. His face grew a white gauze mask, then a pair of mauve-tinted spectacles, then a red beard and moustache, which faded, giving place to

burning eyes and icicle teeth. Then his cloak
vanished and he stood looking at her sadly;
he was wearing a turtle-neck sweater . . .

(342)

The rescuer who offers the words "always" and "forever" is death. The romance for which Joan longs is closely associated with deathly stasis.

Conflating her fiction with her life, Joan acts, at the end of the book, upon the insight gained from her writing. Hearing someone at the door, she "knew who it would be" (343) and acts accordingly. The resulting farce is highly ambivalent. On the one hand, it represents a gesture of liberation from the myth of romance; recognizing that the rescuer is the oppressor, Joan refuses to let him across the threshold. Yet, on the other hand, she assaults the stranger only to become enmeshed almost immediately in a new pattern of romantic rescue. She uses fairy-tales to attain insights, but remains caught, forever it seems, in their structure; she is permanently "hooked on plots" (310).

Joan identifies with female characters in fairy-tales who are not the heroines--the "stupid sisters" in the "Bluebeard" story, "Cinderella's ugly sister" (255), the ugly "toad" (238). In her experiences with Miss Flegg she understands that she can never conform to fairy-tale princess ideals. Later she perceives,

or half-perceives, that such ideals are myths that belong in the unattainable world which is equated with stasis. Her body constantly breaks out of all attempts to constrain it within this image. Her narrative thus re-writes fairy-tales from a different point of view from the usual--Joan is ugly sister, mothball, clown, cast-off evil wife--thereby subverting their usual pattern. It also reckons with the difficulties of producing this point of view. In Atwood's story "Bluebeard's Egg," the protagonist wrestles with the problem of re-writing the Bluebeard story from a different perspective--that of the egg. "How can there be a story from the egg's point of view, if the egg is so closed and unaware?" (140). Lady Oracle explores the difficulty of recording consciousnesses of those who do not conform to easily definable roles. The highly variable characterizations of Joan by critics--ranging from evil witch, femme fatale or schizophrenic to intelligent modern woman--are symptomatic of this difficulty, which extends to the problem of reading without the cues offered by traditional plots.

Lady Oracle enters dialogue with these fairy tales that are such important forces in female consciousness because they provide structures through which women learn to identify themselves. From early in her life, Joan learns to think in terms

of fairy-tale values and longs to be a princess. The fairy tales are powerful, yet they are by no means natural structures reflecting neutral myths. Zipes notes:

Almost all critics who have studied the emergence of the literary fairy tale in Europe agree that educated writers purposely appropriated the oral folk tale and converted it into a type of literary discourse about mores, values, and manners so that children would become civilized according to the social code of that time. (3).

It is women particularly who have been affected by these tales; Marcia Lieberman argues that fairy stories "serve to acculturate women to traditional social roles" (383).

Lady Oracle does not directly subvert these tales but enters into dialogue with them and re-writes them. Such re-writing does not act as a direct form of liberation. Escape from these powerful structures is impossible. Joan is in many ways an example of a consciousness clearly formed on a particular structure (the romance plot); that structure cannot be removed without the destruction of consciousness. Lady Oracle stresses, through the characterization of Joan, how powerful these structures are. Joan cannot transcend them. Her re-writing does, however, allow her to enter dialogue with the traditional plots: re-writing does not change the structures directly, but enables a

dialogue to be established.

Joan's formative influences are largely sub-literary (fairy tales and popular films). Yet one of the more important subtexts to Joan's own writing is Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott." It is made clear from the beginning of the novel that literature is not sacrosanct, not in any way subject to more respect than popular discourses. Young Joan mis-reads the poem's title as "The Lady of Small Onion" (143), unconsciously parodying it. The boys who read the poem also mis-read it when they giggle at "The curse is come upon me, cried / The Lady of Shalott" (143). Yet their parodic subversion of the poem comes close to the truth. In the poem, art is attained only by living in isolation from the real world; biological functions and worldly passions, as part of life, have to be suppressed or ignored. The poem thus deals with a similar theme to the fairy tales. Art and love are in opposition. Art is made not from life (at least not from female life) but from shadows, images in a mirror, life at a remove. Contact with life entails "The curse; the doom" (313). Joan longs for the romantic view, even though she realizes its price: "I really wanted, then, to have someone, anyone, say that I had a lovely face, even if I had to turn into a corpse in a barge-bottom first" (143). Again the romantic world is accessible only through stasis. Literature

as much as fairy tale conveys a covert message reflecting on women's fundamental conflict between love and art.

"The Lady of Shalott" is not a text removed from life, but one that participates in life. Joan's own "art" shows a similar idea from a different perspective. The "Lady Oracle" poems Joan produces seem to be an authentic voice from her unconscious. She claims, by accident, that they are authored by dead spirits. Absurd as the claim is in one sense, it is also ironically accurate. The fragments we have of "Lady Oracle" are highly derivative, taking their central informing image from "The Lady of Shalott." One line, in fact, ("singing her last song") is lifted directly from Tennyson's poem. In the light of this, the first word of the narrative Joan receives--"bow"--might perhaps be seen as derivative. One critic has read it as a significant message from her mother (Jensen, 44). Yet in retrospect it recalls the line from Tennyson's poem "A bowsprit from her bower eaves." The voice of the dead that guides her, is, perhaps, the scrambled voice of her somewhat limited literary heritage. Her poem also, of course, borrows from various other sources; Mr. Stewart's "Road of Life" speech, for example, is given a new context within her poem.

Yet the implication of the poem's derivative nature is not

that Joan's art is suspect. Notions of originality and authenticity of texts are in question, not the viability of these derivative texts as art. Joan's poem sequence is not a pure unmediated voice. Read as it might be as the voice of the female unconscious, her writing seems even less original and becomes a patchwork of overheard voices. Other texts and other voices have been transformed in Joan's consciousness to create a new text which is both personal and public. Art is necessarily derivative, necessarily plagiarized, although in a constructive way. As with almost everything in Joan's narrative, however, there is an extra layer of ambivalence. It is never clear if Joan's poem is intended seriously as a model of female voice. Some critics certainly find in it serious messages, yet one could equally claim that Joan's poems are mere food for popular consumption and perpetuate traditional structures. The book undercuts the idea of the possibility of any more radical overthrow. The status of the "Lady Oracle" poems remains ambivalent, an oracular riddle.

The consequences of the publication of Joan's poem exemplify what happens to "the word" when it is let loose in the world. The poems are seen as having some of the same force as the original Word--twice they are compared to a holy text; Mr. Sturgess

remarks, "It's like having the Bible" (225), and an interviewer quips, "I hear Lady Oracle was written by angels sort of like the Book of Mormon" (250). Yet whereas sacred texts supposedly embody unambivalent authority, Joan's poems manifestly do not. When Joan's text becomes public, it gathers a variety of responses which generate a wide chasm between Joan's intentions and the way the text is read. Arthur, for example, takes the book as a personal affront. The Royal Porcupine sees the poems as "a challenge to the male ego" (268), and at least one interviewer sees it as an angry book about marriage. Though Joan wrote "Lady Oracle" without apparent intention, its text is seen as subversively embodying messages about the female condition.

Critical responses to Joan's poems within the book form a comic dialogue. Black Widow Press remarks that the poems seem "a cross between Kahlil Gibran and Rod McKuen" (224) and therefore rejects them. Morton and Sturgess find the same similarity and identify it as a sure selling point. The Royal Porcupine also sees the poems in exactly the same terms. Thus responses echo each other verbally while expressing radically different meanings. The title chosen by the publishers is a distorted quotation from the poem which reads

She is one and three

The dark lady
the blank lady
of blood (226)

the redgold lady
oracle

The "oracle of blood" which alludes to female biology is
gentrified to become "Lady Oracle."

The publication of the poems produces several effects
unforeseen and unexpected by Joan. It alienates Arthur, who thinks
the poems are about him, and it produces responses that Joan
quickly internalizes. For example, one article asks "Lady Oracle:
Hoax or Delusion?" (250); Joan later echoes this language, "I was
inept, I was slovenly and hollow, a hoax, a delusion" (251). The
book also creates for Joan a cult following after her supposed
death. She thus joins the "ranks of those other unhappy ladies,
scores of them apparently, who'd been killed by a surfeit of
words" (313). The articles after her death repeat the morals of
the fairy tales: "you could sing and dance or you could be happy,
but not both" (313). The responses to her death, the people
"spewing out words like flowers on a coffin" (314), prevent Joan
from returning to her life. Joan is, ironically, killed more
effectively by the cult that grows up around her than she is by
her mock-death. Her own writing and the way in which it is read
have confined her effectively to "the bottom of the death barge"
(313). She learns with certainty that published words, no matter

what their intentions or relationship to an "actual" reality, are powerful and irrevocable. Released into the world, the private word becomes public property, part of the heteroglossia of the world.

The possibility of a pure voice, unaffected by interaction with other voices, is thus continually undercut. Even the voice of the unconscious is made up of other voices. This lack of originality holds true for the pulp romances Joan churns out, which are all generated from a single formula (though there are suggestions of literary antecedents too--in Paul's nurse novels, hair is important as in Milton). It also holds true, if less obviously, of art which Joan supposedly produces when she writes her "Lady Oracle" poems. Certainly it is true of Lady Oracle itself which adds yet another layer to the constant allusions to and echoes from a wealth of other texts.

It is appropriate that Joan, who hardly feels herself to be a coherently unified character, should have several voices. Her distinct identities as Joan Foster and Louisa K. Delacourt have clearly distinct voices. Yet even as Joan Foster she is not double or even triple but "multiple" (246). Her name and its history again point to layers of intertextuality. Her mother claims to have named her after Joan Crawford, though Joan puzzles

which of the actress' personalities her mother could have had in mind and notes that it was a false name anyway (Joan Crawford's real name being Lucy LaSueur). "Joan" also alludes to Joan of Arc, and Joan wonders if it was this Joan that she could have been named for after all. Joan of Arc and women like her

were roped to the stake, they gave a lovely light; a star is a blob of burning gas . . . The English cheered as Joan went up like a volcano, a rocket, like a plum pudding. (336-37)

Joan's eventual fate, presaged by the newspapers hailing her as a literary comet, suggests the connection with Joan of Arc, for, as Joan recognizes, comets are "lumps of cosmic debris with long red hair and spectacular tails, discovered by astronomers, who named them after themselves" (234). Joan wonders if her mother gave her someone else's name "because she wanted me never to have a name of my own" (42). Yet, in the world of the book, no name is original, all are derived and carry the weight of former meanings.

Joan of Arc dies, Joan believes, because she "heard voices," and "When you started hearing voices you were in trouble" (336). she herself has always heard voices too. She is a listener in several senses--as repository of the secrets of her friends and

as an eavesdropper. She is, Leda Spratt says, a "receiver," and as if to emphasize this she wears, at one point, a skirt with a large appliquéd telephone on it. She is, in fact, often in the position of eavesdropper situated just outside doors, in adjoining rooms, or with her head in the toilet listening through the pipes to her parents. She notes, "It struck me that I'd spent too much of my life crouching behind closed doors, listening to the voices on the other side" (340). At school she finds herself in the position of confidante, and after her marriage to Arthur she is "a sympathetic listener" (213).

Joan lives in a muddle of disparate voices, yet she searches for a single essential "truth." The feeling she experiences when she begins her automatic writing might almost be a metaphor for her life:

There was the sense of going along a narrow passage that led downward, the certainty that if I could only turn the next corner or the next--for these journeys became longer--I would find the thing, the truth or word or person that was mine, that was waiting for me. (221)

Joan quests the truth, just as she quests a simple life, and she looks to various sources for it. As a child, she looks to her father for the "truth" she seeks. She waits for a definitive

monologic word from him, some fundamental truth about life, but it is never forthcoming. She and her father carry out "wordless" (76) activities together, while Joan pretends that his voice is that of Milton Cross. He does not speak, but evokes voices, like a "conjurer of spirits, a shaman" (76). The voices of the opera which he "conjures" deal with events of the heart; they are about "lovers being stabbed or abandoned or betrayed, about jealousy and madness, about unending love triumphing over the grave" (76). The idea of opera appeals to Joan:

to be able to stand up there in front of everyone and shriek as loud as you could, about hatred and love and rage and despair, scream at the top of your lungs and have it come out music. That would be something.
(78)

She imagines that through the medium of opera the range of emotions which make up the process of life can be transformed into the pure voice of "art." Yet she learns that, from the perspective of the artist at least, emotions retain their link to the processes of life. Voices remain multiple and confused and refuse this transformation.

The discourses that have traditionally embodied truth-- philosophy, religion, and art--are all parodied in the text, seen as comically dialogic rather than monologic as they pretend to

be. Art, as I have suggested, is parodied as a pure voice. And, in some of the book's more humorous moments, religion is subverted in the same way. The spiritualists at the Jordan Chapel provide the book's only version of religion. Far removed from orthodox religion, their version is a parody of all spirituality and has a comic inclusiveness evident in Leda Sprott's announcement at Joan and Arthur's wedding: "I can do Jewish, Hindu, Catholic, five kinds of Protestant, Buddhist, Christian Scientist, agnostic, Supreme Being. any combination of these, or my own specialty" (202). The spiritualists' text, however, remains the same, with only minor modifications for different occasions. In a parodic version of the eternal word, Mr. Stewart, the "visiting medium," tells at Joan's marriage, just as he has at every previous meeting, the parable of the optimistic and pessimistic caterpillars and their "endless dialogue" down "The Road of Life."

Leda Sprott is another ambivalent female figure. Like Joan, she undergoes various transformations, sporadically shedding identities and taking on new ones. Her powers seem farcical, full of "mumbo jumbo" (206) and her revelations "guesswork and playacting" (206). Yet, like so much in the novel, their final status is ambivalent. Joan recognizes Leda's fraudulence at the

same time as she believes that "she could tell me about my mother" (206). Similarly, the Jordan Chapel is a parodic version of religion. Yet it offers a female-centred version of spirituality that allows for multiple selves. Leda Spratt conjures Joan's mother's "astral body," drawing attention to the important notion that Joan's mother, like Joan, has several selves. The chapel's central text is dialogic and breaks down the usual distinctions between life and death to allow for a vital dialogue between the two.

Politics and philosophy are similarly parodied. Literally bumping into Arthur at their first meeting, Joan is assisted by two men: "An antivivisectionist and a prophet of doom." She notes, "They were almost identical, saintly refined old men with pale-blue Ancient Mariner eyes" (164). The allusion to "The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" suggests the compelling power of their political rhetoric. The anti-vivisectionist's pamphlet uses an absurd rhetorical play: "Dog spelled backwards is God" (165). The other pamphlet, more conventional, plays on notions of the "pure life." The encounter is a good introduction to the absurdities of politics. Arthur's politics and those of the figures around him are contradictory and ineffectual. For example, the Indian Arthur initially lives with is apparently a radical who "understood the

evils of the class system," but, at the same time, "he couldn't get over the habit of regarding anyone who picked up a towel as a servant" (171). The political values of these ostensibly radical figures often seem as oppressive to women as those of Paul, who believes that "the mystery of man is of the mind . . . whereas that of the woman is of the body" (166) and that rape victims have "brought it upon themselves" (158). When Don hits Marlene, for example, the group cannot agree about whether or not he was justified.

The group's political activities are questionable. When Joan suggests with complete irony that they blow up the peace bridge, they heed her. Further, the ideals of the group waver. Arthur is caught in a pattern of continually shifting values. As one ideal is overthrown another comes to replace it, and he denounces his past allegiances. He is, Joan notes, a "sequence" (211) of selves, whereas Joan herself is a set of simultaneous selves. His changing selves allow for no acknowledgement of his past ones. Possessor of a rational mind trained in philosophy, he appears single and unified and his discourse appears rational. Yet his belief in the "true path" (168) of philosophy is only an illusion.

Joan herself cannot use "theories and politics in general"

(166). Her response to politics is to fictionalize political figures. For example, she gives Bertrand Russell a part in one of her books as a paternalistic gentleman who rescues one of the heroines from an assailant. She goes on to "trivialize" politicians, imagining them in their domestic life. She imagines a dialogue between Marx and his wife, and characterizes Castro as a "tiger in bed" and Mao as a kind of "inflated Jolly Green Giant" (167). Arthur inevitably sees such characterization as trivializing and reductive. The book, however, suggests that it is creative, part of a process of carnivalization which is itself a political process.

Bakhtin stresses the novel as a genre's integration of carnival methods and imagery. Lady Oracle seems to carnivalize society's master narratives. Their traditional elevated discourses are reduced, parodied, mocked, and turned into common language. This process allows Joan to qualify, modify and subvert society's master narratives, despite being in a position from which she cannot reject them. Carnivalization is itself a political process which is revealed as more effective than Arthur's ineffectual mainstream activism. Joan's own Fat Lady fantasies provide carnival images in which power is momentarily reversed and the concept of the feminine ideal is turned on its

head. These fantasies cannot overturn society's fixation with an ideal of femininity, but they do exert forces which tend towards its subversion.

Monologic truth is associated throughout the novel with stasis and death. It is also equated in various ways with men. Joan, while experiencing herself as "multiple" and caught up in the impossible muddle of emotions, sees Arthur, by contrast, as single at any given moment. She notes Arthur's view of her inner life:

noise and tumult, cheering crowds, death on the sands, wild animals growling, snarling, screams, and martyrs weeping in the wings, getting ready to be sacrificed; above all, emotion, fear, anger, laughter and tears, a performance on which the crowd feeds.

(19)

She imagines him as spectator, gauging the quality of the performance by a simple gesture "from time to time, making a slight gesture that would preserve or destroy: thumbs up or thumbs down" (19). The monologic truth she craves and Arthur is master of excludes the possibility of ambivalence; it is a simple summary gesture. On another occasion she sees her failing attempts to cook as "a performance" at which "Arthur is the audience" (210). There is a sense, she realizes, in which Arthur

enjoys her defeats. Certainly Joan believes that he has the power to judge her life and to sum her up by means of a cursory gesture.

The Royal Porcupine offers another even more disturbing image of reductiveness. His art, with its animals preserved in the poses of their deaths, is a grotesque image of process turned concrete. Joan perceives that the Royal Porcupine himself embodies this stasis; she reminds him more than once "'I'm not dead yet . . . so why are you looking at me like that?'" (267). His gaze can impose a fixity upon her similar to that imposed on the dead animals: "Each of my gestures was petrified as I performed it" (267). This form of stasis contrasts with the notion of "death" that allows for a sense of continuance through dialogue. In this dynamic death, selves "die" and are re-born and enter dialogue with each other. In the death associated with stasis, all process ceases. It becomes clear that it is the latter form of death Joan craves when she longs for simplicity, "truth," pure voices. Paradise and the romantic love that is found there are always associated with stasis. Romantic plots, the book insists, end, one way or another, with the woman face down in the barge. The only way to avoid this ending is to switch from one plot to another before the fatal ending. Joan re-writes

the plots, accumulating imaginary dead selves who meet in her costume gothic. Her survival depends on her skills as escape artist. She must continually employ shape-shifting strategies and undergo metaphorical deaths. If she is not to be caught in stasis, she is constrained to remain in the world of process, this place "where everything changed and shifted" (284), no matter how much she longs for "that impossible white paradise where love was as final as death" (284).

A narrative that derives from this contact with process rather than one of the formulaic plots of romance is problematic. The confessional mode is a dead-end since the book parodies the idea of an authentic discourse of the self. Leda Sprott urges Joan and Arthur to

Avoid deception and falsehood; treat your lives as a diary you are writing and that you know your loved one will someday read, if not here on this side, then on the other side, where all the final reconciliations will take place. (204)

Her advice is highly ironic, since her own life seems full of "deception and falsehood," including multiple identities and fraudulent claims. Later Joan gets a message in a fortune cookie telling her that "it is often best to be oneself" (231); she acknowledges the advice but asks "which one?" In the world of

the book there can be no true authentic self. Joan realizes that confession is inappropriate: "I didn't want Arthur to understand me: I went to great lengths to prevent this" (215). She discovers that concealment, lies, and alibis are a more natural mode than confession because there is never an essential experience of the self that can be employed as the basis for authentic confession.

Joan's discourse cannot be simple because of the complex nature of her self--or selves. As a woman, she has been informed by the voices and presences of two women who seem opposed in many respects--her mother and Aunt Lou. Joan identifies her mother by sight: "I could always recall what my mother looked like but not what she felt like" (89). Aunt Lou, by contrast, is identified by touch; she "was soft, billowy, woolly, befurred" (89). Joan's mother insists on tidiness and neatness in her domestic arrangements, whereas Aunt Lou lives in perpetual muddle:

The furniture was dark and large, too,
frequently dusty and always cluttered:
newspapers on the chesterfield, afghan shawls
on the floor, odd shoes or stockings under
the chairs, dishes in the sink. (82)

Joan's mother is "thin and beautiful" (88) whereas Aunt Lou is large, billowy, with undefined boundaries. The two women apparently offer contrasting models of female voice.

Aunt Lou's physical boundaries and the boundaries of the space she inhabits are not clearly defined. Similarly, her discourse lacks containment and always points to a radical ambivalence. In some respects she seems to be a figure of female wisdom. In her professional capacity she supposedly demystifies female sexuality. She authors (or rather poses as the author of) pamphlets passing on information about menstruation and the involved social code that accompanies it. She also responds to questions, "Girls wanting to know where their vagina is and things like that" (86). Her advice to a woman who believes she has been impregnated by an incubus is down to earth and replaces romantic fantasy with earthy reality. Yet despite her supposed knowledge of female secrets, she fails to provide Joan with a truth she can assimilate. All her mottoes about discretion can be interpreted in several ways. Joan notes, "the bits of wisdom she dispensed could have several meanings, when you thought hard about them" (88). Further, the message she leaves for Joan in her will is irresolvably ambivalent. Joan realizes that the terms of her legacy could mean that Joan was never acceptable, or else that her Aunt recognizes above all else the value of pragmatism.

Similarly, Aunt Lou's life and narratives are open to interpretation. Initially Joan thinks that she is unmarried, only

to discover that she once had a "tall, dark and handsome" husband, with whom she was "madly in love" (84), but he was a compulsive gambler who abandoned her. Aunt Lou is apparently reconciled to this breakdown of the romance plot in her life, though Joan notes an ambiguity about her laughter: "She liked telling jokes on herself, but sometimes it made her choke" (84). Aunt Lou's strategy in life is to dissolve into laughter. She disapproves of laughing at others, but laughs at herself, and her "favorite midway place was the one with the giant mouth on the outside, from which canned laughter issued in a never-ending stream" (90). Within this tent are distorting mirrors. Aunt Lou's mode is self-directed, self-parodying laughter.

The status of Aunt Lou's wisdom remains ambivalent throughout. She seems to offer a positive female image--perhaps the only one in the book. Certainly she seems to defy most of society's ideals of women--conforming neither in body image nor in lifestyle. In a sense she embodies process. Her voice is either laughter or open narrative which it is impossible to anchor in a single meaning. The model of narrative Aunt Lou offers in her female wisdom is possibly not compatible with a literary voice at all. All Joan can do is to usurp her identity, ironically turning radical open-endedness into the highly fixed

patterns of gothic romance.

Joan's mother, by contrast, appears to be living the neat life Joan craves, with everything "static and dustless and final" (70). Yet her image sometimes breaks down, and uncontrollable forces break out. When Joan confronts her wearing outrageous clothes, "my mother started to cry. She cried hopelessly, passively; she was leaning against the banister, her whole body slack as if she had no bones" (88). She also begins to drink, and she erupts into violence when she cuts out the heads of the photos of the men in her album and again later when she stabs Joan with the bread-knife and adds the unpredictable comment: "God will not forgive you" (124). Her life conforms only apparently to the image she attempts to portray to the world. Joan sees this dual nature in the image of her mother's "double" mouth which appears as she applies her lipstick, "the real one showing through the false one like a shadow" (68). She lives divorced from her own image; looking in the mirror, "she saw behind or within the mirror some fleeting image she was unable to capture or duplicate" (66). Joan perceives these splits in her mother and characterizes her as embodying a deeply secret identity as "a monster" (67).

As a child Joan is informed by her mother's voice. Her

mother is "easier to hear" than her father, but as a child Joan does not fully realize the significance of her narratives. Only much later does she recognize the importance of her mother's voice with its gaps and silences:

It had been she standing behind me in the mirror, she was the one who was waiting around each turn, her voice whispered the words. She had been the lady in the boat, the death barge, the tragic lady with flowing hair and stricken eyes, the lady in the tower. She couldn't stand the view from the window, life was her curse. (329-30)

The "Lady Oracle" poems are thus the fragmented voice of the woman in the death barge. Joan's mother has managed to preserve something that remains concealed behind the stasis that has almost consumed her. Yet what emerges is a difficult voice, full of silences.

In the dream, Joan's mother wants to break down the restrictions she has always imposed on touch: "she wanted me to come with her; she wanted us to be together" (329). The moment parallels that in Joan's costume gothic when the rescuer who is also the executioner tries to beckon her across the threshold. This time Joan is faced not with stasis, but with absolute process; her mother is "a vortex, a dark vacuum" (330). To go to her is to lose her identity because it is separation from her

mother that has necessarily defined her. Joan's identity, complex as it is, is constituted by a tense dialogic relationship with her mother. Her mother's fragmented female voice informs Joan's own literary voice.

Joan's narrative thus reveals that it is her mother rather than Aunt Lou who is the central figure in the creation of her complex identity and the generation of her voice. Intensely uneasy as the relationship is, it defines her. Yet, despite this revelation to the reader, it is unclear how much Joan herself understands of the implications of the importance of her mother's voice. She quickly becomes embroiled in a new fantasy. Her mother's voice cannot offer her transcendence of the various plots that, unless they are continually escaped, result in women ending up in the death barge. Joan's narrative is not merely unresolved and open-ended. Its structure shows the absolute tyranny of the romance plot. The only escape is, at best, a highly problematic voice which, as its primary strategy, parodies and undermines dominating structures and sets voices in dialogue.

A FAIRLY GOOD TIME

Like Lady Oracle, A Fairly Good Time contains a multiplicity of different voices, evoking a diverse range of literary texts, classic and popular, imaginary fictional texts (The Peep of Day), texts generated by characters in the novel--Geneviève's novel, Renata's friend's novel, Philippe's articles, Claudie's "animal story," letters between Shirley and her mother, Cat Castle's notes, messages from Shirley to Philippe, as well as a multitude of oral dialogues. Lady Oracle examines in some detail the ways in which everyday discourses embody ideology and concentrates on the effects of diverse voices on Joan's own voice. A Fairly Good Time also recognizes the power of discourses, but in this case such power is more arbitrary than in Lady Oracle. A Fairly Good Time examines the relation of gender and discourse primarily by setting up two different discourses which are in constant opposition. One of these, represented chiefly by Philippe, is the discourse of reason, order, and logic and is dominated by ideas. The other weaker discourse, made up of a variety of women's voices, stands in opposition to Philippe's, but cannot otherwise be readily defined. The book offers a sustained study of these women's voices.

The novel is structured around Shirley's dissolving marriage. The dissolution is seen to be caused by the clash

between two worlds. On the one hand is Philippe, French, rooted in his middle-class family background, committed to ideas, to logic and reason, and living a life of order (or perhaps pseudo-order). On the other is Shirley, Canadian, living an uprooted life, "comfortable in chaos" (12)³ and committed only to chance. This fundamental clash between chaos and order is comically illustrated early in the novel through a description of Shirley's system of doing laundry. The system, which involves wearing clothes until they cease to be wearable and then giving them away, allowing other items of laundry to accumulate until they outnumber clean items, and taking long taxi rides across the city so that she will not be snubbed by the taxi-drivers, "worked successfully and required only an occasional effort" (11). Philippe's system, which Shirley finds hopelessly restrictive, involves "a repetition of gestures that seemed to her lunatic but that Philippe assured her were almost the evidence of life" (12).

Philippe's discourse reflects the order of his life. He is interested in hermeneutics and believes unequivocally in final meanings. This belief is parodied mercilessly from the early pages of the book on. One of Philippe's major projects is to decipher the "prophetic" meaning of the English nursery rhyme "Goosey Gander." He has acquired a belief, passed on from his friend Geneviève's governess, Miss Thule, that the rhyme "held a

universal key. Life, love, politics, art, death, explanations of the past and insight into the dreadful future were there for the reading" (16). He collects many "remarkable" versions of the poem for his hermeneutical task. Yet Shirley uncovers the shaky authority of these versions. They have come from Geneviève and, in all probability, have been grossly distorted into their intriguing forms through a combination of "wavering attention" (16) and childish lisp. Philippe's interpretations are based on mis-hearings and carried out with absurd insensitivity to English and the rules that govern it, yet nothing shakes his faith in the quest for the "universal key." His project, the narrative implies, is as absurd as those undertaken at the meeting he attends

at which the language probably spoken by the aristocracy on lost Atlantis had been discussed, and during which someone tried to prove a link between the name Mao and the noise made by a cat. (17).

Philippe's attitude to discourse is again the subject of parody in relation to his articles for Le Miroir. The first reference to his work is to his article on infantile drunkenness, subtitled "A Silent Cry" (13). His treatment of a weighty and serious subject contrasts, in his eyes, with Shirley's apparently

utterly frivolous act of stealing a grim poster warning of the dire effects of alcoholism on the family. Indeed, all of Philippe's articles deal with "serious" topics. Yet it emerges that they all bear the same subtitle. His article on the Berlin Wall, on Toufulu Groupe, on the "Canadian Question," and, Shirley thinks, on the declining Hungarian birthrate have all been subtitled "the Silent Cry," and several begin with a variation of a standard sentence. The reduction of his articles to a common formula and a paradoxical title which evokes both silence and inarticulate scream suggests the reductiveness of his vision. Furthermore, the authority of his articles on Canada is his friend Geneviève Deschranes. Shirley defers to his account of her own country, "certain you know much more than I do" (268). Yet the narrative reveals Philippe's authority as ludicrous. Philippe's journalism is a sham; it is also sterile. Shirley notes that he is "starting to cover the same stories over and over" (152).

On the one hand, Philippe is, by his own belief, rooted in reason, logic, and order. So compelling is his own image of himself that Shirley constantly tries to measure up to his standard, and most of the characters in the book see his values as greatly superior to Shirley's, as indeed many critics have

done too. On the other hand, Philippe appears absurd. His "reason" is informed almost exclusively by Geneviève, who embodies his myth of the female spiritual soulmate. She has, Shirley imagines, all the attributes of the female spiritual guide--according to Philippe, her "strength was built on fragility" (17), and one of her attributes is an "unusually small vagina" (18) which Shirley takes to be "a sign of refinement, like having no appetite" (18). Further, Philippe's serious interest in the Paris subculture seems to mitigate against an objective sense of rationality since it involves not politics but "magic," and

tales of royal babies switched in their cradles, medieval monks who turned up reincarnated as atomic scientists, Christ sent back to earth and working hard at the hydroelectric station of Krasnoïarsky Kraï in central Siberia, continents that sank like stones, swarms of bees commuting regularly between the planets Neptune and Venus, children raised by wild beasts and revealed to be without neuroses, cancer cures suppressed by powerful interests in Berne and Washington, Shamanism among the clergy and Freemasons in charge of banks. (16-17).

Philippe's attitude to language as well as his approach to his subject-matter also reveals an alarming sterility. In his article on Toufulu Groupe, he writes provisionally:

The major problem of our generation is not a breakdown in communication, as Mr. Groupe would have us think, but that there is too bloody much of it . . . The source of present-day problems in France . . . is complete comprehension. We are at the point of no return, where a happy friendship, a cloudless sexual union, can be achieved only with someone whose language one never can and would never wish to know. (213)

His subsequent version replaces this with a vision even more nihilistic:

Groping for the shabby security of language as we have known it, we ba and ba in vain. Before us in emptiness--the inexistence of love and friendship, the vacuum of ba and ba and ba. Vertigo seizes both mind and body. We peer over the edge. Who will hold us back?
Ba. (213)

His discourse of the rational is not only spurious; it also tends towards the "vacuum" and silence.

Philippe is revealed in the course of the narrative to be absurd. This revelation often occurs despite Shirley rather than because of her, since she seems never fully to perceive the extent of Philippe's absurdity which is so obvious to the reader. Philippe's discourse is always insidiously powerful, capable of crushing Shirley's far less authoritative but actually more intelligent discourse. When Shirley breaks in on Hervé and

Philippe's conversation about "the American economic takeover in France" (248) and interrogates it with her comment, "What do you mean when you say the Americans are in here--you mean they're running for mayor?" (248), Philippe unflinchingly translates her remark for Hervé as meaning, "reading Le Monde has changed her life" (248). When Philippe composes his article on the Berlin Wall, he writes Shirley out of it so that in the final version "it was clear that Philippe had traveled alone" (38). He refuses conversation, exchange, dialogue, and conducts marriage "in a truce of privacy . . . and a white silence" (125). The white silence suggests the absence of writing as well as voice. Towards the end of the novel, this silence is equated with sterility:

She saw her short life with Philippe pulled out of the ground and left dying. The threadlike roots tried to draw strength from thin air. She thought of the permanent shadows left on walls in Japan after the explosion. She and Philippe were without shadow. They were soundless; they had dissolved. (277)

The "silence" of their marriage is prefigured in her erasure from the article. Ironically the alternative "shadow" is insidious, caused as it is by the absolute destructiveness of the atomic bomb.

By the end of the novel, Shirley finally replies to

Philippe's discourse. When she reads his article on the Algerian war, which runs "Creation is independent of reality, or, more explicitly, it finds its roots in time and events only to detach itself" (306), she hears Madame Roux's voice subverting Philippe's language, saying, "If I had a bath every day my skin would detach itself in long strips" (306). She realizes that Philippe's comment, "A series of plastic events can only flow from spontaneous exigencies. Politics and creation. . . ." (306), can equally be written backwards. She abandons Philippe's articles and finally sends a reply to Philippe's hermeneutical quest for meaning. She assents to his task but with an irony that undercuts it.

Yet if the book as a whole undermines Philippe's discourse of the rational, it does not suggest an easy solution to an alternative female discourse. The book immerses the reader in a wholly different kind of discourse, what might be designated a deaf discourse. The clash between Shirley's Canadian English and the French of the Paris where she finds herself reflects a literal culture clash. Having to translate, Shirley is frequently struggling with the opacity of a foreign language. As she herself recognizes, language differences go deeper than a difference in vocabulary. The clash serves as metaphor for all differences of

culture and perception and seems at times to suggest that culture imposes an unbreachable existential gap.

Thus dislocation is the backdrop to Shirley's discourse. Many interchanges between the characters are "deaf"--characters refuse to listen to one another or to hear accurately, or mishearings occur. For example, Karel asks Shirley, "why do you demote yourself all the time?" (221); Shirley replies, conflating demote with devote, arguing that both are equally appropriate. Renata notes that Shirley told her "Rat-face called" or, again aptly, perhaps "rat's fate" (228). Shirley names James' friend "Crystal Lily" on the basis of dubious hearing. Even written words are subject to similar slips. Madame Roux scrawls her signature so that it appears to read "Mademoiselle Curlew or Coulan" (89). Such obscurity has obvious uses. At other times, though, it is as arbitrary as the hilarious misprint in Renata's friend's appalling novel:

The poodle assumes a sinister attitude on page 102 and tells the neo-Nazi that his wife is secretly the daughter of a famous rabbi and magician. A misprint in the book made it 'rabbit' but the next page had it right.
(218)

In this world of murky meanings, the notion of authority is

interrogated, partly by analogy with literary authority. The novel is full of allusions to and extracts from a variety of written texts. There are passing allusions to literary and popular texts such as Lucky Jim, Little Women, Persuasion, The Pursuit of Love, Cold Comfort Farm, Lolly Willowes, A Propos of Dolores, Mrs. Dalloway, Anna Karenina, Confessions of Felix Krull, The Whip Angels, as well as to children's literature--Alice in Wonderland, Pinocchio, folk tales and animal stories. The novel's many references to literary texts are more obscure and eclectic than in Lady Oracle, and their influence on life, though often significant, is more arbitrary. Janice Kulyk Keefer notes, "none of these texts possesses or confers any interpretive authority--they seem to be tidbits thrown in for connoisseurs of chaos" (86). Yet Shirley does frequently integrate the authority of these texts into her life, albeit haphazardly. She uses a sustained metaphor from Giraudoux's Suzanne and the Pacific and frequently alludes to literature, integrating quotations and allusions into her conversation. In a more general sense, literature and literary structures provide a compelling and almost inescapable authority.

Shirley's relationship to literary texts, like so much else in her life, is ambivalent. Her mother, with whom she is

apparently at odds but in whose shadow she seems to live much of her life, uses literature to understand life: "Her comprehension of other lives came out of literature" (101). She looks for the confirmation of emotion in poetry, and believes, "Every variation of grief and anguish had its summing-up in Herrick, Bunyan or Pope" (101). Shirley's impulse as a child was to "resist" such impositions as "Wordsworth's disgusting 'Ode to Duty'" (101). Yet she learns to live in a similar way, though the literature that informs her is somewhat different. She frequently sees life in terms of literature, noting, for example, that with Philippe "I translated us both from the beginning into characters out of books" (267). Only she possesses the references, however, leaving Philippe estranged. For example, when she talks about Fabrice and Linda from The Pursuit of Love, Philippe thinks that they are her friends. She also attempts to neutralize life by turning it into children's folklore. When she meets James' friend, who may or may not be called Crystal Lily, in a typically absurd encounter, she imagines Crystal's head in a teapot saying, "Twinkle, Twinkle": "Only by reducing the scene to children's folklore could Shirley be rid of it" (63). Later, in her only direct exchange with Philippe in the entire book, she quotes from Cold Comfort Farm and realizes the consequences, "Once again, fatally this time,

she had reflected their life in a joke he could never share, framed with a private folklore he knew nothing about" (276). Frequently she generates private references by quoting from and alluding to literature to the bewilderment of her listeners.

References to one literary structure in particular recur in A Fairly Good Time. Shirley often thinks in acting metaphors, drawing attention to her life as an "act" with alternative endings. At her first disastrous lunch with the Maurel family, she imagines the room as a stage:

If the room had been a stage . . . the rival would have taken the armchair and she and Claudie would then have talked in alternating monologues until the audience finally grasped that the two were separated in thought, but joined in some kind of dreadful intention.
(139)

The drama evoked is not classical drama, but modern drama like Beckett's or Pinter's--or Tofulu Groupe's, perhaps--which stresses the problems of communication. Another image a little later draws a clear parallel with absurdist drama:

[Shirley] carried her notions of conversation into active life and felt as if she had been invited to act in a play without having been told the name of it. No one had ever mentioned who the author was or if the action was supposed to be sad or hilarious. She came on stage wondering whether the plot was

gently falling apart or rushing onward toward a solution. Cues went unheeded and unrecognized, and she annoyed the other players by bringing in lines from any other piece she happened to recall. (179-80)

Underlying Shirley's life, plotted by "chance and chance encounters" (83), is a sense of the lost purpose of her role.

Another sustained reference, this time to Suzanne and the Pacific, provides Shirley with another model for her life. Suzanne is "saved" by a promise "that she would one day buy trick spiders and imitation grasshoppers and exploding cigars for her children in a shop close to the Place de la Madeleine" (180). Shirley's only uncertainty was "exactly where the promise had come from. 'God' said Giraudoux carelessly, but Shirley supposed he had said that for want of vocabulary" (180). Certainly the authority of God is wholly lacking in Shirley's life as it is in the lives of all the characters in the novel. Only the extracts from The Peep of Day refer to a numinous God who, for the most part, perpetrates atrocities in the name of heavenly justice. Shirley believes that divine intention has been given up, and "we have been abandoned was all she knew about the universe" (49).

Yet the book does contain some disturbing notions of authority that have violent overtones. The model for this kind of

authority is the man at the Select choosing actors for a war movie and pretending he is carrying out the "selection" in a concentration camp: "Once he said to someone, 'God, you've got the face of an animal. You're in--saved!" (127). Such authority is violent, oppressive, associated with Fascism, and often associated with men. Certainly women are its primary victims. References are made to atrocities in Algeria where a woman has been raped with a broken bottle, and Renata has been "beaten blue by her neo-fascist lover" (123). The police are often a symbol for this kind of authority. When Shirley loses her job at the store, the man who sacked her, her "executioner," "looked like a policeman" (205). When Marie-Thérèse slaps Claudie, "In eyes gray with hatred, Shirley saw reflected the eyes of the police" (77).

Several men in the novel are associated with Fascism.

Shirley notes that Karel Brock who "appeared bold enough to knock me down and walk over my dead body" (218) and collects Nazi memorabilia is too young to have been "an officer in the Waffen-SS or fought under Rommel" (219). She observes of Claudie's boyfriend, "Marcel Proust," "She remembered where she might have seen Claudie's friend before: in the Select, choosing Germans for that war movie" (203). Philippe's friend Helmut, born on Hitler's birthday, wears a uniform for the war movie and is told not to

act but to "repeat what you know" (127). Another friend of Philippe's, Hervé, is defined by this kind of authority:

Hervé wouldn't know his own name if it weren't typed on a card and stamped by the police. He doesn't look in a mirror--he looks at an identity photo. If the police have sworn that face is Hervé; then of course it must be. If the police couldn't see him then he would either be invisible or he'd be somebody else. (52)

Even Philippe is implicated; Shirley notes, "You and Hervé were in Algeria, and you know something you will never say" (247). Authority is connected with war and violence, especially against women. It is often though not exclusively associated with men, giving a sinister overtone to Shirley's mother's comment about the war that "the men in particular enjoyed it" (6).

Only The Peep of Day, a conduct book for children which Cat Castle presents to Shirley as her sole heritage, posits God as an authority. The book abounds with images of death and destruction wrought upon life, thus associating God's authority with violent male authority. It presents a firm vision; God

will sit upon a white throne . . . and he will wear a crown upon his head, and everybody will stand round his throne. He will open some books, in which are written down all the wicked things that people have done. God has seen all the wrong things you

have done. He can see in the dark as well as in the light, and knows all your bad thoughts. He will read everything out of his book before the angels that stand around.
(306)

The book, Shirley's "true Word from home" (48), falls short as a conduct book, but it does represent her female heritage--the names of members of her female family line are inscribed in it. The authority the book represents is reduced to absurdity by the context in which it is quoted in the text. The monologic "true Word" of God is thus subverted. Yet there is a disturbing sense that the book does indeed represent the truth: not the direct voice of God, but an implicit history of women's subjugation to the moral laws derived from it.

Philippe has replaced the authority of God with the authority of reason. He has faith in logic, order, and, above all, the value of ideas. As a corollary to this, he believes that ideas are somehow connected to secrecy; he is motivated by "the quest for mystery in ideas" (17) and "he thought that secrecy of the mind was essential" (50). As a result, he protects his life from intrusion and attempts at interpretation, warning Shirley away from his papers, keeping things to himself. He is guided in all his doings by the idea of a controlling but secret truth which he attempts to reach through his interpretation of nursery

rhymes.

Philippe lives confident in the authority of his life. Yet Shirley's life seems to lack authority, guided as it is only by "Saint Joseph" who is "no one in particular" (30), and directed by chance and accidental encounters. Her contact with discourse is arbitrary; she takes a child's scrawl or a thesaurus entry as containing a prophetic message. The "authority" of Shirley's life is thus an absurdist lack of authority. She is immersed in life-as-process. Philippe fixes process by making lists, by looking at the world with sharp vision. Shirley, by contrast, remains fixless, though process continually threatens to swamp her.

Shirley lives in perpetual physical mess, and this mess is intimately connected with her discourse: "All her private dialogues were furnished with scraps of prose recited out of context, like the disparate chairs, carpets and lamps adrift in her apartment" (179). Like Joan Foster, she tries to impose order. Philippe, who, she claims, lives by plans and is "always making lists" (129), is constantly urging her to make lists and has given her "notebooks of all sizes" (214). Yet Shirley cannot make a list to contain her life. Her attempts fall widely short of Philippe's standards and, instead of persisting, she scribbles notes and commentaries on his work, scrambling his papers so that

pages from her mother's letter become irredeemably incorporated into Geneviève's interminable A Life Within A Life. Through her marginalia, she responds to Philippe's work, attempting to set up a dialogue between her own discourse and his. Yet Philippe remains impervious to her responses and wholly unamenable to dialogue with her.

Shirley seems to live in a world where fragmentary and diverse discourses surround her and inform, and at times swamp, her own production. Her room contains "a mirror framed in snapshots, notes, post-cards, out-of-date reminders to and from Philippe" (9). The story takes place against a backdrop of newspapers, in one of which authorless messages to Philippe sporadically appear. These discourses refuse to remain static like lists, where life can be contained and cancelled like a mathematical equation, and interact. To Shirley these discourses sometimes give the illusion of containing a final meaning--a clue to Philippe. Searching through the varied detritus of his life "for enlightenment" (19), she finds in "the written evidence of Philippe's daily, routine life . . . a source of unflagging interest" (18-19). Her quest incidentally produces the knowledge that he could be "mean, petty, vain, gullible and subject to pique" (19). Yet Shirley does not consider that this knowledge

constitutes the "enlightenment" she seeks. Philippe, on the one hand displaying all these characteristics, remains on the other an impenetrable mystery, never gesturing toward any explanation of the secret of his behaviour, especially his marriage to Shirley which puzzles almost everyone.

Like Philippe, Shirley quests for the truth, though she remains ever aware of the futility of the quest. She looks to her mother's letters for some form of truth, never failing both "to expect her mother's letters to contain magical solutions," and to be disappointed (45). As much as she craves the truth, she also half perceives its reductiveness: "I long for perfect truth . . . the dumb plain policeman writing 'p-r-i-m-r-o-s-e must mean primrose' in his notebook" (225). The policeman's authority is absolute, yet he is associated with an oppressive authority. His definition of truth is, of course, nothing more than an empty tautology. Shirley longs for the policeman rather than "the spy, or the tricky detective" (225), yet it is with the latter authority, the Hermes figure, that truth resides. Such truth is not simple and monologic, but tricky and dialogic.

Meaning is not generated logically through definitions, but haphazardly through casual responses, mis-hearings, associative leaps, cryptic and dislocated phrases. For example, Mrs.

Norrington's letter to Shirley with which the novel opens pretends to be a comprehensive text-book history of bluebells (on the model of the policeman's primrose). It is, however, a deliberate evasion of Shirley's disclosures about Philippe and her failing marriage, alluding constantly to the importance of strategies for maintaining privacy and secrecy. Her mother claims she cannot read Shirley's handwriting, a "model of cacography" (7) employing "an early Teutonic alphabet" (4), but Shirley recognizes this as "an excuse to say she hadn't heard my voice. Not for all the world would she have acknowledged that kind of cry" (250). Yet messages are conveyed on some level; "if she had chosen to ignore Shirley's last letter on the pretext that it was scrawled in rune, that did not mean she had failed to grasp what it might be about" (46). Shirley's exchanges with her mother are "an uninterrupted dialogue of the deaf" (45). They communicate through covert rather than explicit messages, channelled through ongoing written dialogue which, if it is "deaf," is at least a vital exchange.

According to Philippe, meaning can readily be anchored down, summed up. Yet to Shirley and her mother, meanings cannot ever be finalized but lie in the gaps between mis-hearings. To Shirley, texts are in code, but this code is as arbitrary as the child's

writing on the wall which she takes as a prophetic message that Philippe has returned. Conversation tends to evade direct communication. For example, when Claudie asks Shirley, "Do you find it difficult to be married to a Frenchman?" (145), meaning by her question to flaunt her friend's French husband rather than to elicit a response, Shirley launches into a revealing digression about tuberculosis and, incidentally, about French class values.

Shirley is unable to sustain a belief in a prophetic monologic discourse that points to an ultimate truth. Her natural discourse is of a different kind. From early on she is associated with imagination, invention, and dreaming. Her mother's letter, for example, inspires her image of "two middle-aged persons cycling steadily up an English hill" (9), which she sustains in a detailed picture until "Her parents, a lost pair, cycled off into the dark" (10). In Pons she is able to conjure a telephone to make one of several fictional calls to Philippe's family. She invents stories, sustaining the useful fiction that her husband is "traveling." She finds that "it was as easy to invent as to wear out one's memory" (254). Like Joan Foster, she continually modifies events and memories and creates fictions so insistently that the distinction between reality and fiction becomes

extremely blurred. Frequently her conversations take place only in her head, though sometimes the exclusively internal nature of her conversations becomes clear to the reader only afterwards (her letter to Philippe, for example, is revealed to be in her head only at the end when it becomes apparent that all she has in fact written down is the epigraph from Lucky Jim and the opening line). This gives a strong sense that much of the narrative energy comes from Shirley's mind, even though it is recorded by a detached third-person narrator. Her series of imagined endings to the story of her marriage with Philippe again stresses the energy of her creative imagination and her sense of her life as a "long story" (137). She makes frequent references to dreams, noting that her father tried to suppress them by charging her a quarter before he would allow her to tell them.

In addition to exercising her own powers of imagination, Shirley is also creative in another way. Through her habit of accumulating "pick-ups," she becomes a kind of conductor of other women's stories. She is, on one level, a collector of female disaster. On Saturday nights she entertains "a succession of babbling feminine strangers" (123), who tell stories of their attachment to an uncle, of their victimization at the hands of brutal men, of their intractable health problems, or their "tear-

stained love story" (124) about an interracial affair with a married man. Both Renata and Claudie burden Shirley with stories of their unwanted pregnancies. Shirley remarks, "Don't you think it is strange that I should have heard the same story twice a few weeks apart? . . . Why the same story? Why me?" (291-92). It is the "same story" because of the extremely limited number of plots in women's lives. As Shirley notes, "When men say they're in trouble it can be one of a hundred things. With women, 'trouble' means 'I am in love' or 'I am not in love' or 'I am pregnant'" (201). Women's lack of legal status in the Paris of the period (their inability to own property, the high risk of adultery, confining laws about leaving the conjugal domicile and strict laws against abortion) is frequently alluded to. Women's stories, then, are likely to be repetitive.

This is borne out by the stories of the women in the book whose lives are or have been defined by their status as wives-- Mrs. Norrington, Mrs. Higgins, Madame Maurel, and Madame Perrigny. Madame Perrigny and Madame Maurel have suffered from oppressive men. The former was deserted by her husband. The latter was initially deserted when M. Maurel, preferring the patriarchal tradition, went to live with his uncle. Madame Maurel's father bought M. Maurel back, where as the household authority, the "ear

of power" (288), he reigns by dominating the women with his foul temper. The other women have had kinder men, but in each case have clearly missed something. Mrs. Norrington poignantly notes that "marriage would have been more tolerable had we been more alike--for example, had both of us been men" (4). Mrs. Higgins is replaced after her death by another woman and Shirley believes that "The new marriage might for years have been in the maquis of his mind, and of Mrs. Higgins' life" (245). Cat Castle married to escape the prairies and the sight of grain elevators, yet "After about a year Ernie made her live in some town where the only thing in sight was a grain elevator" (162). Most of these women are resigned, yet the narrative hints at a poignant sense of loss underlying their lives.

Renata and Claudie represent a different generation of women. Both have destructive instincts. Renata has attempted suicide, albeit rather feebly; Claudie "dries her hair with her head in the oven" (273), yet both survive, often at the expense of others. Both are parodies (as are the babbling women), repellent specimens. Yet at the same time, their typecast nature is not allowed to obscure the fact that they are products of a society deeply flawed in its attitude towards and usages of women: Renata has been beaten by a lover and Claudie is very

likely a victim of incest with her father. Claudie's "animal story" is a parable of her life and, perhaps, the lives of other women: "the condemned babies, the ignorant sacrificial mother, and the father's anger creating a new fear" (294).

Shirley reveals how women's lives generate similar myths. Geneviève, Claudie, and Renata claim that they have had "only two men." Shirley exposes this as a myth generated by "Centuries of female rubbish . . . The menstruation mystique, the 'never like this' mystique, the business of 'only you' and of course those inevitable other two" (132). The myth is partly manipulative, and also partly the result of faulty memory; the woman has "forgotten" previous encounters. The myth is a communal feminine myth, and is one of the female myths which is of great appeal to men.

In addition to the common stories and myths of women, women's lives sometimes seem to be shared through a kind of ontological synaesthesia. For example, Claudie longs to live Shirley's life. She usurps details from her life and takes them for her own, translating Shirley's mother's illness into her father's and claiming Shirley's own habit of reading "anything I find lying around" (294). Renata claims that Shirley usurped her experience of her abortion:

She absorbed it for me, so that I felt nothing except cold and pain . . . The whole experience was Shirley's. She wanted it. She followed me, watched me, she soaked up everything I could have felt. (224)

Women also seem to share stories, dreams, and phrases. As a child, Claudie develops a habit of listening; she "hid and listened for years" (258) to secret conversations. She then repeats the details of the stories she overhears, casting herself as principal character. Thus the dream Claudie reports of the rotted rose bush is actually Marie-Thérèse's. Similarly, she repeats the phrase "the dark corners of a woman's life" (258) from Marie-Thérèse, though Shirley notes that the phrase could equally well have been Renata's. Marie-Thérèse notes that Claudie's taste for phrases has come from their mother, adding the possibility of another antecedent. "The dark corners of a woman's life" is a cliché, yet it also points, through its common currency, to a dim, shared female consciousness.

Towards the end of the book is a sustained account of the exchange between Shirley and Marie-Thérèse, who has hitherto shunned any intercourse with Shirley: "Marie-Thérèse seemed to dread the idea that any conversation could ever take place between them" (174). Like all exchanges between two people, in Shirley's view it is equivocal. Throughout the exchange the two

women seem always to be separated by an estrangement which fluctuates. Marie-Thérèse begins to disclose details about her life, mainly through a discourse which seems to be primarily about food. Shirley is cynical and a reluctant listener, she has "heard it before" (259). Yet when she expresses spontaneous sympathy at Marie-Thérèse's dream of herself with "ugly pointed ears," it is the latter who recoils "and seemed to fear that Shirley might touch her" (261). Shirley recognizes the exchange as a game of "confidence for confidence" (265), but reciprocates only in her head. Her brief comment about meeting Philippe is full of gaps implied by the much fuller account which is conveyed to the reader but not to Marie-Thérèse. Shirley notes during lunch that "They were not speaking in their true voices; their true voices must be lingering still on the street" (274). There has been no point, in fact, where they do seem to speak in "true" voices. Yet some form of exchange has taken place and has brought the women close together. Shirley believes that "She could have said to Marie-Thérèse, 'I love you' but that would have frightened them both" (274). Marie-Thérèse has found an antidote to her nightmare vision of herself, although this antidote in turn becomes unreal: "the summer day when she had eaten well, drunk good wine, and said what she wanted to someone who

listened, was already as unreal as the nightmare in which she saw herself sleeping with such ugly ears" (274). The exchange fades so quickly that Marie-Thérèse begins her story over again; Shirley recognizes: "Marie-Thérèse was probably so unused to speaking, so unrehearsed with her private stories, that she had to start from the beginning every time" (274).

The exchange between Marie-Thérèse and Shirley takes place against a backdrop of mirrors and reflecting surfaces. Shirley initially looks at "the light of day reflected in a mirror beyond Marie-Thérèse's head" (255), then at an image of Marie-Thérèse herself, her "profile, the sweetpeas and the light from the window" (259). When Marie-Thérèse discloses her dream of herself, however, Shirley "was looking at Marie-Thérèse, looking at her, and not at her effect on the mirror" (261). A little later she looks at herself in the mirror: "Am I all right? she asked the mirror" (262). Indeed the novel as a whole is full of reflecting surfaces. Shirley frequently looks at herself in one of several mirrors she has, Claudie wears a mirror around her neck, Geneviève's novel is riddled with references to mirrors and reflecting surfaces. Madame Roux's shop has "a wall of cracked and spotted mirrors" (197); objects with reflecting surfaces are often employed as mirrors. Many women seem to create their

identities out of their mirror images, but such identity is always distorted or problematic. At one point Shirley experiences a moment of perfect identity with another:

She was flooded with happiness, with relief, at seeing a person who knew her, who would not make mistakes with her name or ask for more than she could give. She walked toward the woman from home, unable to remember her old friend's name, but confident it would come back to her during the first words of conversation. This friend was tactful and kind. Their identities would be established at once. (204)

Yet this moment of identity is, in actuality, a drunken lurch into a large mirror.

Mirrors can offer at best only a highly solipsistic view of the world. A Fairly Good Time suggests that mirrors, which reflect only a visual image, are ineffective or dangerous ways of structuring identity. In Herself Beheld, Jenijoy La Belle documents the prevalence of mirrors in women's attempts to structure identity:

in European culture for at least the last two centuries a female self as a social, psychological, and literary phenomenon is defined, to a considerable degree, as a visual image and structured, in part, by continued acts of mirroring. (9)

A Fairly Good Time, like Lady Oracle, records this prevalence and

suggests its limitations.

Madame Roux notes that "The truth lies in the picture the woman has of herself" (94). Yet pictures obtained from mirrors seem to lead to untenable solipsism or distorted identities. Identity is not simple. As in Lady Oracle, naming demonstrates the layers that often underlie identity. Shirley's name, "that no one in Paris could spell, pronounce or appreciate" (97) cannot contain her. It is bestowed upon her in Tristram Shandy-like fashion by accident. Even her last name is fluid, vacillating between Higgins and Perrigny though never, except in Cat Castle's inscription, Norrington. Yet Cat Castle's gift is telling since it inserts Shirley into the tradition of her female forbears. Shirley contains her female ancestry. She sometimes wonders if she is speaking in her mother's voice and, when she addresses Monsieur Maurel, she realizes "he was not facing Shirley, but, unknown to him, Shirley's mother. Behind her was still another person, a tall woman who had sat in her kitchen reading to the unemployed while they spread butter over toast" (291).

An alternative to the distortion and the narcissism of mirrors is the establishment of identity through the "mirror" of conversation. The true friend "listens" and throws back a reflection which can give a more positive kind of identity. Yet

such conversations are difficult and never without ironic qualifications. Sometimes they reduce to a narcissistic tendency to seek compliments. Both Crystal Lily and James, for example, make comments to Shirley expecting them to be reciprocated in kind. Renata tells Shirley and Claudie, "You both look splendid," because she herself "now looked so much better" (184). At other times, a promising female complicity arises between women apparently separated, yet it is momentary and remains undeveloped. Shirley and Hervé's wife, for example, otherwise wholly estranged, share a momentary "secret" (249) when they see and smell a lake of bluebells. Shirley and Mrs. Higgins share one moment of closeness, "something to do with quirky female humor" (244). Such moments remain unexploited.

Shirley and Madame Roux have been true friends and enjoyed exchanges, Madame Roux having been "a listener who was not forever dancing to her own piping" (151). Shirley used this friendship to construct her life as she and Madame Roux spent time "tearing Shirley's life to confetti only to put it back together much better than before" (151). Yet this friendship is over before the novel begins. Philippe's presence in Shirley's life forces Shirley to distort herself, making herself play the role of "the hopelessly absent-minded wife of a middle-class

Frenchman" (152). Gradually Madame Roux transfers her loyalties to Philippe. The whole exchange is undercut when James tells Shirley that Madame Roux has said "the ordinary things women say about each other. . . That you were a whore who slept with anybody" (280). Friendships are difficult because of the difficulties of "listening." Further, the exchanges that do take place are always indirect, circumlocutious, and never display the "complete comprehension" Philippe finds to be corrupting life. Meanings are always heavily coded, residing between the lines, in silences and gaps.

If conversation can provide a more wholesome mirror than physical reflection, it is partly because of its oral nature. Philippe, though not obsessed with physical mirrors, writes articles for Le Miroir that throw back a reflection that, as I have suggested, tends towards emptiness and blankness. Shirley's own account is largely unwritten, reported by a third-person narrator. When she does sit down to write, she imitates Philippe: "even to his way of looking at a pen as if there were bound to be something the matter with it" (211). Writing anything other than notes and personal letters is a male tradition in which Shirley ultimately cannot insert herself--her account remains largely unwritten.

The book suggests an opposition between vision and voice. Shirley's natural state is highly myopic. Philippe has imposed clear vision upon her, brought her into a new world: "In the old world she had identified people as infants do, by their scent and their voices. In the new, she had to look at people and see what they were like" (145). Yet to Shirley, appearances mean little; it is voice which is of primary importance. This voice may be metaphoric, the voice suggested by a certain style of writing, for example, but it is also physical. Shirley is acutely sensitive to physical voice, noting exact shades of pitch. She notes the whines of the Maurels, which sound alien to her. By contrast, Cat Castle's voice can bring "tears of pleasure" (24) to her eyes, offering assurance that "There would be no problem of language and none at all of ambiguity" (25). Voice, for Shirley, is the essence of a person: "The destination of a soul was of no interest. The death of a voice--now that was real" (242).

Paradoxically, Shirley's own story and the women's dreams and narratives she collects would be wholly lost without the third-person narrative voice. The ephemeral women's texts are always ready to dissolve into silence. Yet the act of writing down carries, as I have suggested, some insidious connotations. Geneviève's grotesque novel stands as a paradigm of what happens

when women attempt to write their lives. Shirley comes to understand "why there could never be a trace of her exchange of stories with Marie-Thérèse" (277). Life tends either towards dissolution, silence, blankness or towards the permanent shadow so insidiously achieved. Thus the third-person voice is, in a sense, disturbing. It clearly controls and shapes with an authority which, in the light of the book as a whole, is insidious and associated with destruction.

A Fairly Good Time sets discourses in opposition. These discourses are not just ways of speaking or writing, but perspectives on the world. They constitute, in fact, structures that are necessary in order to live. House and house-building metaphors are used several times in the book. Philippe lives in a rigid structure, seeming frequently to "retreat into a private room and shut the door and stop his ears" (146). Shirley expects him "to build a house for her, intellectually and sentimentally, and invite her inside" (50). Instead, she ends up giving her own home over to him. Her first husband, Pete, seemed more promising. Shirley dreams that he has bought the plans to a house for them both, but the house remains out of reach, and its possibility is aborted by Pete's death. Philippe tells Shirley that her life is "like a house without doors" (110). Yet the problem is deeper

than this: her "house" is a shaky structure. Houses, Shirley recognizes, have to be built from something:

Here you built a life around other people's leavings--your family's, or people you had never seen but whose traces you might find in provincial museums. You built around a past of glass cases, shabby lighting, a foul-smelling guardian saying "It is forbidden." No one could start from scratch until every room had been bombed flat as far as the horizon; and even then a residue in the mind would never be bombed away. (154)

Philippe's friend Hervé manages to build a "new" life and self to go with it; both are utterly sterile. Philippe can always return to his mother's house while he is between women on whom he imposes his version of this structure. Yet for women it is hard to shed the baggage they have inherited and harder to use it to useful ends. Women find themselves starting "from the beginning every time" yet unable to construct effective structures in which to live. By the end of the novel, Shirley is literally homeless once again.

In the absence of God, structures define moral outlook. Philippe's authority in life is the idea. He pursues the "mystery of ideas," believes in summing-up and final meanings. Shirley's authority is behaviour, to her "the only riddle worth a mention" (17); Philippe believes "attitudes of the heart were easily

defined" (50), whereas Shirley who loathes "ideas" spends her life pondering the complexities of behaviour and the attitudes of the heart. Philippe's view fixes people in stasis: "Obsessed with the hidden meaning of ideas, he still believed people to be as they seemed--worse, that they were as they had to be" (50). Shirley, by contrast, "had no firm picture of anyone" (51). Yet although Shirley's view eliminates the destructive reductionism of Philippe's, it makes life extremely difficult to live.⁴ Yet their contrasting views have moral dimensions. Philippe's view leans towards the set of values implied by the term fascism; Shirley's towards a counteracting notion of nurturance. Yet her generosity, her "burden of constant concern for others" (107), is highly problematic, like her mother's and grandmother's before her.

The book writes off the authority of God. Shirley herself, who is always "rescuing" people, represents another way of being "saved." Shirley's nightmare suggests the problematics of this kind of redemption:

I am with one, two, three, men. All at once I notice a change in their expressions; their eyes are like dogs', then wolves'. I think that if I go on speaking I can force them to be normal again, but my words are incoherent to them and they take my voice to be a threat. They can't understand what I am

saying. They can't listen or reason. They are unpredictable and cruel. They can't help it. They can only hide or attack. In the dream I am not attacked. Are you surprised? I am the rescuer. I am a rescue party. Yes, I save someone, anyone, even you sometimes. It is summer in a city along a river. I walk in the streets with the victim, saved now, but no good to anyone. He is saved, but useless, a zombie. (217)

Women, through their voices, can potentially save men from their own violent natures. Yet the men perceive these voices as inarticulate and refuse to hear them and their coded messages. What takes place is, at best, an ambivalent form of redemption. Those who are "saved" are reduced to the state of the dead. Yet, ambivalent as it is, this redemption is the only form offered in the view of the book.

The complex world view of A Fairly Good Time suggests the sterility of the "private rooms" inhabited by men. Yet it depicts the alternative as fraught with dangers. Shirley risks physical dangers of violence and abuse and, most importantly, a life without identity. Voice that constitutes identity is always frail, always in danger of being erased and silenced. Shirley and Philippe's world views suggest differing narrative economies. He "thinks you should keep things to yourself, unless you can make them sound like sums" (37) whereas she cannot be prevented from

"giving everything away" (272). His sense of economy facilitates a firmly structured life, but tends towards silence and blankness. Her mode of living, barely tenable, tends towards the dissolution of form, a dissolution which implies the dissolution of narrative structure and the survival only of unrecorded voice, pure process.

LIVES OF GIRLS AND WOMEN

Like Lady Oracle and A Fairly Good Time, Lives of Girls and Women draws on a variety of other texts, frequently embedding fragments of song, sacred and profane, folk rhyme, and biblical text. Del's literary heritage, which includes most notably Wuthering Heights, Kristin Lavransdatter, and the poetry of Tennyson, is dealt with in some detail. Yet, important as literature is to Del, it is clear that a variety of other texts informs her voice with equal power. These include a wide diversity of oral and folk voices as well as miscellaneous written materials--newspaper and magazine articles, letters, textbooks, and sex manuals. The development the book traces is set against a backdrop dense with these fragmentary voices. Frequently Del finds among these voices a play of language which is to her a cause for delight. She learns "the richness of . . . words,"⁵ which is to be the essence of her life as a writer. Yet these voices are not always benign. Discourses exert power in the world, and Del, as a woman, must contend with this power at every turn.

The idea of the power discourse can have is parodied early in the book when Del remarks that her brother's patriotic song is one of many which "we were singing . . . every day at school, to help save England from Hitler" (26). Later, though, she feels the

force of the discourses that are trying to coerce her into entering the feminine world. Magazine articles with titles such as "Femininity--It's Making a Comeback!" and "Is Your Problem That You're Trying To Be a Boy?" (181) stress the social necessity of cultivating femininity. Like Joan, Del learns that these discourses are not trivial, but ways of setting up and institutionalizing an order which relegates to the margins those who do not conform where, as the book demonstrates, they are perceived as peripheral, eccentric, or mad. Del finds these discourses to be everywhere: "everything from advertisements to F.Scott Fitzgerald to a frightening song on the radio--the girl that I marry will have to be, as soft and pink as a nursery--was telling me I would have to, have to, learn" (180). Lives is frequently read as a novel of development. Yet, as Rae McCarthy Macdonald has pointed out, this development involves an increasingly more challenging set of limitations imposed by what she labels "the world" (210) through its coercive voices.

Lives, like Lady Oracle and, less directly, A Fairly Good Time, is structured around the search for a voice with which the "lives of girls and women" can be articulated. This voice must be a literary voice, capable of recording women's voices in written form. Del's narrative explores various potential models for

literary voice. Yet the voice she does eventually find is not a unified and coherent one. It contains within itself a dialogue between the young and the older Del. Further, it is a voice which continually wrestles with problems of representation. Even lists of objects, where the relation between language and reality would seem to be at its simplest, refuse to contain the world; as Del remarks of her early attempts to write things down, "no list could hold what I wanted" (253). The many lists in the texts of Lives--of food and objects--seem, in the light of the "Epilogue," to be symptoms of the failure of representation. Del's voice, formed eventually on a combination of several models, is always problematic.

The first story, "The Flats Road," acts as a prologue to the whole. It deals with Del in a state of grace before her social coercion begins. She and her brother are united rather than divided as they will be in all subsequent stories. Playing unself-consciously in the Wawanash River, which is later to become the scene of one of Del's most significant struggles, they seek out and victimize the "juicy adolescents" (1) among the frogs, with whose vulnerability Del does not yet identify. This world belongs, in practice if not by right of ownership, to Uncle Benny, Del's father's simple but prophetic assistant. Physically

it is a world of mess, one upon which the usual domestic order has not been, and no longer can be, imposed. In the "deep, deep, layered clutter and dirt of the place" (4) Del and Owen attempt to separate off objects by naming them. But their attempts are always unsuccessful, and the jumbled accumulations of domestic life prevail.

Uncle Benny provides Del with her earliest experiences of narrative. His literary heritage is comprised solely of tabloid newspapers. Rooted in an oral tradition--he can read but not write--he has the retentive memory of an oral storyteller. Eccentric and marginal as he is, his voice is prophetic. He seems to assume some of the authority of God himself when he declares of a rainbow, "You know what that is? That's the Lord's promise that there isn't ever going to be another flood!" (2). Del's meticulous scholarly classification system is irrelevant to his scheme, which contains only earth and "Heaven" where God is immanent. Uncle Benny "told stories, in which there was nearly always something happening that my mother would insist could not have happened" (9). He thus introduces Del to a mode of telling which, while rooted firmly in everyday details, points to some world of meanings and significance outside the rational understanding of daily life.

When Uncle Benny drives to Toronto to attempt to recover Diane from his wife, he refuses to employ maps. As a result, he travels disorientated backwards and forwards through a wholly alien landscape. His account rests on details:

as he talked a different landscape--cars, billboards, industrial buildings, roads and locked gates and high wire fences, railway tracks, steep cindery embankments, tin sheds, ditches with a little brown water in them, also tin cans, mashed cardboard cartons, all kinds of clogged or barely floating waste--all this seemed to grow up around us created by his monotonous, meticulously remembering voice. (25)

Its effect is powerful: Del remarks "we could see it" (25). Uncle Benny reveals to Del another world:

So lying alongside our world was Uncle Benny's world like a troubling distorted reflection, the same but never at all the same. In that world people could go down in quicksand, be vanquished by ghosts or terrible ordinary cities; luck and wickedness were gigantic and unpredictable; nothing was deserved, anything might happen; defeats were met with crazy satisfaction. It was his triumph, that he couldn't know about, to make us see. (25)

His world is created in an oral mode through a monotonous and meticulous accumulation of detail, but it has the effect on his listeners of the imaginative world of literature. It is a

scrupulous reflection of a world he sees by virtue of his marginal position. As such it is a world which reflects indirectly but powerfully on the world of Del's experience.

The effect of Benny's stories is to turn Madeleine herself into a fiction: "We remembered her like a story, and having nothing else to give we gave her our strange, belated, heartless applause. 'Madeleine! That madwoman!'" (27). Creating Madeleine in fiction is, above all else, a celebration of her. This process is the prototype for Del's attempts to write about those women whose lives seem to contain secrets and clashes--sometimes violent--with the established order. The first of these for Del is Marion Sherriff and later, in the text of Lives, her Aunts, Mary Agnes, Fern Dougherty, Miss Farris, and, in her most sustained attempt, her mother. When Del attempts fiction for herself, she learns that the result can often be grotesque distortion. Further, such conversions to fiction can record only one facet of a complex, dynamic, and impenetrable personality. In her own story of Madeleine, she attempts to explain her cruelty to her child. She does so not directly, but by offering an aside about the behaviour of silver foxes when threatened. It seems that to "explain" women like Madeleine not only several different stories, but several different types of narrative are required.

The first story is, in a sense, set in a prelapsarian world. In subsequent stories Del learns increasingly about power imbalances, especially those created by sexual difference. Her narrative frequently stylizes differences between men and women in order to emphasize the relevance of gender to her development as a woman and writer. The second story, "Heirs of the Living Body," for example, deliberately places side by side the discourses of Uncle Craig on the one hand and of Aunt Elspeth and Aunt Grace--known collectively as "The Aunts"--on the other. Uncle Craig is the town clerk and also an historian. History is an occupation which he believes requires, above all, a well-developed sense of chronology. He reprimands Del sternly when, prompted by her interest in people's stories, she displays what he calls her "inaccurate notions of time and history" (29). He relentlessly applies his solemn quest for accuracy to all his projects. His family tree, for example, which tabulates the only significant facts--the dates of birth, death, and marriage of his family members--involves "a stupendous amount of world-wide correspondence" (31). In some ways, though, he shows himself radical in his approach to history. Whereas traditional historians seek out momentous events and chronicle the lives of heroes, Uncle Craig is a champion of the ordinary man. He

believes his own life is relevant to national politics, and he believes, Del says, that "it was daily life that mattered" (31). As a historian, he must accurately record "daily life," a task which involves sorting out "a great accumulation of the most ordinary facts" (31) such as descriptions of the weather, lists of those present at funerals, and--life at its most dramatic--an account of a runaway horse. He is uncompromisingly intent on being comprehensive; as Del dryly remarks, "He could not leave anything out. That was why, when he died, he had only got as far as the year 1909" (32). Yet Uncle Craig, who is not hindered by Del's problematic relation to lists--which no matter how extensive refuse to contain the world--has perfect faith in the success of his task.

As the narrative shifts to an account of Del's Aunts, it becomes clear that Uncle Craig's version of "daily life" wholly excludes one aspect, which turns out to be richer and more vital than the small affairs of the town. The Aunts' "daily life" is rooted in domestic work which Del describes in a catalogue similar in style to one of Uncle Craig's lists:

The verandah was where they sat in the afternoons, having completed morning marathons of floor scrubbing, cucumber hoeing, potato digging, bean and tomato picking, canning, pickling, washing,

starching, sprinkling, ironing, waxing,
baking. They were not idle sitting there;
their laps were full of work--cherries to be
stoned, peas to be shelled, apples to be
cored. (32)

Though Uncle Craig ignores it, it is precisely women's work that grants him time and space for his all-important "abstract, intellectual pursuits" (32). The Aunts, engaged in their work, generate a different kind of discourse from Uncle Craig's: "Aunt Elspeth and Auntie Grace told stories" (33).

The energy of their narratives, which contrast strongly with Uncle Craig's flawlessly typed but leaden prose, seems to arise out of the rhythms of their work. Their stories are oral. Unlike Craig's "important work," they are told for the pleasure of their telling. If Uncle Craig's narrative is obsessively linear, theirs is web-like. Del notes that they "wove in and out" around her mother "retreating and disappearing and coming back, slippery and soft-voiced and indestructible" (36). Their stories are told communally, both voices narrating and embellishing, with no distinction made between them.

The content of the Aunts' stories stresses performance--practical joking, acting, laughter, and mockery. They often play tricks and are sometimes found jumping in the hay. Telling their stories "for their own pleasure" (33), "they laughed till fruit

spilled out of their laps" (34). Many of their stories are subversive--mocking and commentating on, though never directly threatening, male power. The Aunts tell the story of the surly Austrian farm hand whom one of them scared by masquerading as a "darky" and wielding a butcher's knife. They relentlessly mock the lawyer who comes to dinner. Their narratives can be acerbic-- "every joke might be a thrust turned inside out" (37), and they tell their stories with "nimble malice" (39). Just as their hands, Del notes, move with "almost vindictive speed" (32), so their stories move with almost vindictive energy.

The story thus deliberately contrasts two modes of discourse. One is linear, strictly factual, written, monologic, and solemn. The other is web-like, fabricated, oral, dialogic, and celebrational. These models present themselves to Del, already an aspiring writer. Yet although Uncle Craig's task is depicted with particular pathos and his style is satirized while the Aunts' stories are celebrated, it is Uncle Craig rather than the Aunts who will contribute most to a model for Del's own narrative. The Aunts' stories are products of their domestic life--a life which is almost exclusively female, not because of its intrinsic nature but because of a power structure that has effectively divided the world into male and female domains. The

Aunts' lives depend on the maintenance of that power-structure. Indeed, when Uncle Craig dies, their narratives lose their life-force, become "dried-out, brittle with use" (60). Del celebrates the Aunts' stories as effective vents for mockery and criticism of male power, while at the same time recognizing that they arise out of a power structure she hopes to escape.

The story also examines another female voice, the voice of the body. A third Aunt, Aunt Moira, completes the triad of Aunts⁶. Moira's stories, containing visions of the seamy side of Porterfield life, are darker than those of the unmarried Aunts. Her voice, Del says, "telling things at leisure, would spread out over the day, over the yard, like black oil" (41). Her stories are of the body, particularly of her own vulnerable and damaged female body:

She was a woman I would recognize now as a likely sufferer from varicose veins, hemorrhoids, a dropped womb, cysted ovaries, inflammations, discharges, lumps and stones in various places, one of those heavy, cautiously moving, wrecked survivors of the female life, with stories to tell. (40)

Some feminists, particularly those in the French tradition, see the female body as the potential source of an authentic female language. Yet this is an idea Munro rejects. For Del, as for

almost every one of Munro's female characters, the body is not the site of an unqualified jouissance, but a fleshy burden bestowing vulnerability and shame. Where pleasures do prevail, total immersion in the pleasures of the body is equated strongly with silence.

Thus the stories of the female body in Lives are always of the damaged and vulnerable body. An endlessly repetitive pattern of such bodies pervades the book: Del's friend Naomi is beaten by her father; she also becomes pregnant. As a child, Del's mother was molested in some way by her brother, and later she falls victim to a series of bodily ailments. Her mother before her has died of breast cancer. Marion Sherriff and Miss Farris drown themselves in the river. Miss Rush dies in childbirth. Aunt Moira is host to a wealth of "female problems," and her daughter is brain-damaged because Aunt Moira's husband held his wife's legs together on the way to the hospital. This daughter has been somehow "degraded" by five boys. Case histories allude to women who maim themselves or die of failed abortions. Even those initial apparently playful tabloid headlines echo the theme: "FATHER FEEDS TWIN DAUGHTERS TO HOGS . . . VIRGIN RAPED ON CROSS BY CRAZED MONKS" (5).

The story stresses the weakness of the biological body. The

central event of the story is Uncle Craig's death, which is prefigured in Del's and Mary Agnes' discovery of the dead cow. Death, which fills Del with a sense of bodily shame and a strong desire for control, is seen as connected inextricably with domestic life, especially to the production of food. The Aunts have met the appetite Aunt Moira says people bring to funerals with an abundance of food. The production and consumption of food are part of the cycle inevitably involving death. In an early linguistic confusion, Del has equated "tomb" with "womb." The house and family, the tomb/womb presided over by women, is, to Del, unbearably constricting, not merely because it is part of an oppressive power structure. Rather, in the involvement of domestic life with biological rhythms, the boundaries between self and the world that are necessary in order to write are swamped. The family Del feels pressing around her--"people pressed together, melted together like blunt old crayons, warm, acquiescent, singing" (57)--is a force that, far from stimulating her writing voice, threatens to drown it. The world of the body and the body itself, then, must somehow be transcended, at least in a culture that values writing.

Del's mother's hope for transcendence rests--as all her hope does--in scientific advancement. Attracted by the idea of the

natural cycles, which simply shift combinations of elements, she dreams, inspired by a quasi-scientific article, that one day science will allow the parts of the body--"heart . . . lungs . . . liver. Pancreas. Stomach. Brain" (47)--to be transferred from person to person as old parts wear out. This idea, with its grotesque suggestion of fragmentation running counter to the holistic natural cycle, destroys identity just as surely as death. Addie's naive hope for science abolishes technical death but not the cycle of nature which is equated with silence.

Del's strategy to transcend the flesh is to write. Writing enables her to attempt control and to pin down the ceaseless flux of biological life. Such control gives her authority over the world, though she is able to maintain it only briefly and always bears in mind its moral significance--for to write down life is to affect it. She cannot adopt the Aunts' mode but must usurp the authority of Uncle Craig's discourse. She does this symbolically when, at the end of the story, she takes his manuscript out of its box to let it rot in the basement and replaces it with her own writing which, until then, she has stored in a copy of Wuthering Heights. She thus symbolically relocates her writing in a tradition of masculine authority rather than the tradition of female writing.

Like "Heirs of the Living Body," the next story, "Princess Ida," stylizes certain discourses in order to examine them as social phenomena affected by gender. The story focuses on Del's mother Addie, whose task of selling encyclopedias to farmers epitomizes her ceaseless desire to have knowledge triumph over biology. With her thirst for knowledge on the one hand and the compulsions of her role as wife and mother on the other, she lives out an irresolvable contradiction. The two poles of this contradiction are summed up in her two contrasting--and seemingly incompatible--writing identities. On the one hand, she writes bold, strident letters to the newspaper advocating employing the advances of science to better woman's lot: "prophylactic devices should be distributed to all women on public relief in Wawanash County, to help them prevent any further increase in their families" (176). On the other hand, she writes a column under the pen name "Princess Ida"--this is flowery, effusive "feminine" writing which has for its subject nature and even aspects of motherhood: "my daughter, soon-to-be-no-longer-a-child, forgets her new-found dignity to frolic in the snow" (81). Her writing styles reflect the two poles of her life: her desire for learning and her role as mother. They remain in tension, unresolved and unresolvable except that, finally, nature begins to win out as

she gives in to a series of ailments: "a plantar's wart, an eye infection, swollen glands, ringing in the ears, nosebleeds, a mysterious scaly rash" (183).

There is another more important pair of contrasting narratives in this story. Addie tells Del stories of her own childhood. They centre on the house where she lived, but are otherwise disconnected, "liable," Del says, "to pop up any time, like lantern slides, against the cluttered fabric of the present" (74). Many episodes in her life evoke a tradition of female biography. For example, she describes how she was laughed at for her self-taught pronunciation of Latin; her only chance for a classical education was inevitably inept self-tutoring. Her stories, like those of the Aunts', are circular in structure; they go, Del notes, "round and round and down to death" (79). Del's mother's story ends abruptly not in death, but in its alternative--marriage. To Del it is a puzzling end to a story that begins like a fairy-tale:

In the beginning of her story was dark
captivity, suffering, then daring and
defiance and escape. Struggle,
disappointment, more struggle, godmothers and
villains. Now I expected as in all momentous
satisfying stories--the burst of Glory, the
Reward. Marriage to my father? I hoped this
was it. I wished she would leave me in no

doubt about it. (80)

Traditionally, women's stories end either in death--like the story of Miss Rush who dies in childbirth--or in marriage which leads equally to silence. The intertextual references to works such as Wuthering Heights, Kristin Lavransdatter, The Life of Charlotte Bronte, and, especially, Tennyson's The Princess echo this pattern.

Del is baffled by the disparity between Addie's roles as Cinderella and as Del's mother; similarly, Uncle Bill arrives in Jubilee having undergone a puzzling transformation from the "cruel fat boy" (77) who tormented Addie (the notion of torment having sexual overtones) into a "fairy godfather" (86) who brings to life Del's wildest fantasies of food. But his obsession with food is not a manifestation of his godfather-like power, but a reply to his impending death from cancer. As in "Heirs of the Living Body," death and food are closely linked. The association is made by Del who, hearing that her grandmother died "on the table," "used to imagine her stretched out dead on an ordinary table among the teacups and ketchup and jam" (77). Uncle Bill's mythic stature is undermined by his body's frailty.

At the dinner table, before his impending death is known, Uncle Bill, like so many characters in the book, tells stories.

The first is a narrative of commerce in houses about "Buying, selling, buying, building, rumours, threats, perils, safety" (88). The second, though, is his version of personal history. Whereas Addie remembers their mother as a religious fanatic, infinitely destructive in her adherence to religion, he remembers her as a suffering and patient "saint on earth" (86). He goes on to tell a story about a chrysalis which his mother, rescuing it from what in his version is his boyish playfulness, has set above the threshold of the door. A butterfly emerges from the cocoon on Easter Sunday and, although a "little spotty thing" (89) that will clearly not survive long, it is for mother and son a symbol of resurrection and promise.

Del cannot reconcile the narratives of Addie and Uncle Bill, remarking with wonder that they took place "in the same house" (89). The point is not just that brother and sister have different versions of family history, thus undermining Uncle Craig's faith in objective fact. Rather, brother and sister tell the stories generated by the house where they lived in different ways with entirely different subjects. Addie's episodic narratives are circular and arrive nowhere, ending eventually only in death or the silence of marriage; Uncle Bill's story, which he tells with some effect, suggests structured plot and

climactic and symbolic ending suggestive of rebirth. For Addie, personal history is never contained. For Uncle Bill, it is structured and meaningful. Men and women's stories, it seems, involve different notions of plot and different modes of telling.

At the end of the story, Addie is doing the crossword puzzle in the newspaper for which she writes under her two different identities. Asking for "an Egyptian God with four letters" (91), she is supplied by Del with "Isis." The momentary gender confusion recalls Isis as the original source of female creativity although often usurped under a male name. An equation between Addie and Isis has already been suggested in the course of the story. The similarity of the names Ida and Isis possibly suggests it, as does the fact that Addie, like Isis, had an evil brother. More convincingly, Del makes an equation between her mother emptying dishwater and a "priestess" and "ruler" (80). In some ways Addie is a parody of Isis and her writing style a parody of female writing, just as Nile, a confection of extravagant femininity, is a parody of the fertility goddess of the Nile whose annual flood of the river was once the source of life. Yet underlying both parodies, however remotely, is a creative energy that is profoundly female.

"Age of Faith" explores the crisis of faith frequently

depicted in the bildungsroman. In Jubilee, Del is exposed to several different religions, each having its own discourse of ritual as well as language and each having its own narratives. Del's classification of Jubilee's churches emphasizes the social nature of established religion; the distinctions among the churches are chiefly distinctions among the types of people who attend them. Del's struggle with religion is a struggle to reconcile religion as social construct with a desire for spiritual experience.

The story begins with a reflection on burglars and Del's changing attitude to them, which prefigures her changing attitude to God. As a child, Del believes that "Our world was steadfastly reflected in burglar minds" (93). Later, though, she abandons belief in their intentionality and design and believes "their relationship to us next thing to accidental" (93). Her struggle with God is more complex. She realizes that notice of his authority cannot come directly from God, and so she seeks evidence of it from the social world and believes of the other worshippers "If they are here . . . then it is probably all true" (100). She urgently desires the safety of a world of belief:

If God could be discovered, or recalled,
everything would be safe. Then you would see
things that I saw--just the dull grain of

wood in the floorboards, the windows of plain glass filled with thin branches and snowy sky--and the strange, anxious pain that just seeing things could create would be gone. It seemed plain to me that this was the only way the world could be borne, the only way it could be borne--if all those atoms, galaxies of atoms, were safe all the time, whirling away in God's mind. How could people rest, how could they even go on breathing and existing, until they were sure of this? They did go on, so they must be sure. (100)

She seeks a logic which enables her to argue from the existence of the social phenomenon to the existence of God. Her mother, though, believes that "God was made by man. Man at a lower and blood-thirstier stage of his development than he is at now" (107).

The connection Del's mother makes between religion and the lust for blood gradually becomes evident to Del. Her mother's comparison between the Aztecs cutting out live hearts and Christianity's lust for "Blood blood blood" (107) is confirmed in the images of martyrdom and bodily mutilation connected with Christianity. Christ's sufferings on the cross, which Del passionately wants to confirm God's existence, also serve to develop the connection between God and suffering. When Major is to be shot, Del describes her dreams about killing. In one, her father's meat house contains human corpses. In another,

I dreamed my father had set up an ordinary, humble block of wood on the grass outside the kitchen door, and was lining us up--Owen and my mother and me--to cut off our heads. It won't hurt, he told us, as if that was all we had to be afraid of, it'll all be over in a minute. He was kind and calm, reasonable, tiredly persuasive, explaining that it was all somehow for our own good. (114).

Through her dream, Del comes to realize that religion is a social construct which sanctions killing. The father's authority, representative of God's authority, can butcher women and children--as it has in English history, to which Del says her dream owes some of its substance. Her dream becomes reality with Major's death, which she realizes is "what was wanted--wanted, by all those adults, and managers, and executioners, with their kind implacable faces" (114). Instead of leaving Del with no vision of God, however, the experience gives her the insight she has sought, though it is more disturbing than absence of vision would be:

Could there be God not contained in the churches' net at all, not made manageable by any spells and crosses, God real, and really in the world, and alien and unacceptable as death? Could there be God amazing, indifferent, beyond faith? (115)

If God exists, it is as an indifferent power who has no authority

to help Del keep the world with its process under control and reduce the "pain that just seeing things could create" (87). Del's vision is left as a question. What is clear is that religion and its discourses and ceremonies act powerfully to control the social world and to sanction acts that by other standards are anomalous.

"Changes and Ceremonies" begins the examination of the discourse of sex which is developed extensively in subsequent stories. The story opens by evoking "boys' hate," which is expressed in crudely sexual terms. Their language is effective: "The things they said stripped away freedom to be what you wanted, reduced you to what it was they saw, and that, plainly, was enough to make them gag" (117). This hatred subsides in the neutral territory created by the school's annual operetta where, through "theatricals," the children learn the discourse of romance, which dictates their behaviour in the adult world. Underneath this veneer of behaviour, though, run the currents of that original hatred, as Del discovers later in her experiences with Mr. Chamberlain, with the men at the Gay-la dance hall, and with Jerry Storey and Garnet French.

Naomi and Del are interested in the discourse of sex for which they have several sources. Naomi informs Del with scraps of

folklore gleaned from her mother who is a nurse. Del informs Naomi by guiding her to literature. Neither discourse is direct. Naomi's mother's information comes from a shadowy world of folklore and old wives' tales. Literature is extremely circumlocutious; in Kristin Lavransdatter, for example, the sexual act is described only through having Kristin and Erland take refuge in a barn and Kristin's remark, "Was this ill thing the thing that was sung of in all the songs?" (120). The "ill thing," which Naomi calls "doing it," is always nebulous. Later Naomi and Del find that sex manuals are also indirect, concentrating on the male sexual organ. Later, even after advanced reading, Del concludes, "Books always compared it to something else, never told about it by itself" (175).

The school operetta imposes the "theatrical" script of romance. Del and Naomi write a script for Miss Farris and Mr. Boyce:

"What are we going to do about Mrs. Boyce? O my love?"

"Do not distress yourself my sweetest angel I will lock her up in a dark closet infested with cockroaches."

"But I am afraid she will get loose."

"In that case I will make her swallow arsenic and saw her up in little tiny pieces and flush them down the toilet. No I will dissolve them with lye in the bathtub. I will melt the gold fillings out of her teeth and make us a lovely wedding ring."

"O you are so romantic, O my beloved.
(126-27)

Humorous as the interchange is, it illustrates that beneath the discourse of romance is a discourse of hatred and violence, so extreme here that the images evoke concentration camps. If the previous story illustrated religion's sanction of violence, this one, like Lady Oracle, reveals a disturbing violence underlying romance.

Miss Farris is turned retrospectively into the central character of the story. Her personality as revealed through the operetta reveals no clues to her final fate. Retrospectively people's perceptions are replete with ironies. Her clothes, for example, which mark her as someone trying to catch a man, seem to give "a good deal away." (122). Her house, like a toy house, "appeared to have no secrets, no contradictions" (127). Yet the ending of the story reveals Miss Farris's life to have been far from transparent. Del cannot reconcile the images she has of Miss Farris with the final one of "Miss Farris floating face down, unprotesting, in the Wawanash river, six days before she was found . . . there is no plausible way of hanging those pictures together" (141). Miss Farris is one of those women whose ostensibly open life contains impenetrable secrets. All Del can

do is string together pictures, which, like the operetta scripts, formalize life. Even so, the "truth" remains between the pictures, suggested by the incongruity of their arrangement, not recorded in any of them.

The title story of the collection is, perhaps, the most complex in its development of the connection between gender and narrative. Whereas "Changes and Ceremonies" gives what for a bildungsroman is an obligatory account of the protagonist's reading materials, this story invokes a multitude of less traditional formative influences in the form of a wide variety of discourses, oral and written. These include sex manuals, children's rhymes, hymns, sacred songs, radio commercials, biblical parables, Latin sentences, modern novels, Tennyson's poetry, letters, prayers, and pornographic verse.

At the centre of the story is the romance--or anti-romance--between Fern Dougherty and Mr. Chamberlain. Mr. Chamberlain, the most fully developed male figure in the book, lives by his voice. Working on the local radio station he has developed characteristic "voice . . . laugh [and] stories" (162). In his celebration of the oral, his propensity to see life as "a conglomeration of stories, leading nowhere in particular" (150) and in his telling of stories for the sake of laughter, he might

seem at first glance to be a male version of the Aunts. But whereas their subject is domestic life, his is war. His stories of confused battles are disturbingly amoral and leave everyone disorientated. This side of his personality is confirmed by his abuse of Del and his desertion of Fern. Yet, despite his character, he remains carefree and unfettered. In his desertion letter to Fern he records the plot of his life: "I am taking off this evening in my trusty Pontiac and heading for points west" (171). As a man he can live the life of the careless cowboy taking off into the sunset; he is not tied to the alternatives of marriage or death.

Mr. Chamberlain's representation of himself is clichéd and not particularly difficult to interpret. The discourses that lie at the heart of Fern's life, though, are much less easily interpreted. Looking in Fern's room for Mr. Chamberlain's letters, Del finds not the letters but three bundles of paper. One contains many copies of a chain letter promising "happiness and good luck" (166) if the chain is maintained, destruction if it is broken. The second contains loose pages apparently-- according to the illustrations--from a sex manual, but actually inscribed with female case histories:

I read about a poor farmer's wife in North

Carolina throwing herself under a wagon when she discovered she was going to have her ninth child, about women dying in tenements from complications of pregnancy or childbirth or terrible failed abortions which they performed with hatpins, knitting needles, bubbles of air. I read . . . about . . . laws which had been passed in various countries for and against birth control, women who had gone to jail for advocating it. (166)

The specific quickly becomes the general, spreading out to include Del's mother, who has herself advocated contraception, in the history of female vulnerability. The third bundle contains typewritten pornographic verses. These bundles represent Fern's secret life--still impenetrable since the papers pose a challenge in hermeneutics. Yet the one similarity in the discourses is their tendency toward repetitiveness. The chain letters are an obvious example, endlessly reiterated in the hope of happiness. The case histories are all versions of one story--the story of women's vulnerability. The verses, perhaps the most promising clue to Fern's secret life, are, Del notes, contrived, rapidly becoming to Del "bewilderingly dull" (167) and, above all, "repetitive" (167). If the story of the female body is repetitive, so too is the story of escape through safe and pleasurable sex. If the content of Fern's life is secret, its pattern is inevitably circular, endlessly repetitive.

The papers stand as representative of Fern's secret life. Yet, far from offering an eloquent female voice, they are fragmentary and, as a narrative, wholly incoherent. Stories are generated about Fern; she is one of those women in Munro's work whose lives--free from the constrictions of either marriage or domesticity--invite the authorship of such stories. She is rumoured, for example, to have become pregnant, and thus she ended a promising musical career. In her own version of events, she gave up because music was too much work and she preferred the pursuit of a good time. The stories generated around Fern and characters like her have a vitality of their own, but they do not simply represent authentic female life. Del's story of Fern offers no definitive plot for her life and suggests her life is essentially unrepresentable.

"Baptizing" explores the most important and powerful of the discourses that permanently mould Del's emerging identity as woman and as writer. In the preceding story, Del expanded her sexual knowledge through her observation of the male body and her privileged view of its absurd performances. In this story, her own female body is central. An opposition is established between two men--Jerry Storey and Garnet French. Jerry Storey, with an I.Q. which "puts him in the top quarter of the top 1 per cent of

the population" (201), is rooted in the discourse of science, rationality, ideas. Garnet French, by contrast, is essentially wordless; his discourse is of the body. The opposition between body and mind implied throughout the book is explored most fully through these stylized male characters.

Alongside these key discourses are several others. Del's friend Naomi chooses a different world from the one Del inhabits, and this world too has its own discourse. The story parodies Naomi's discourse of femininity, just as "Princess Ida" parodies the model of the feminine ideal through the character of Nile. Concerned with rigid domestic economy in which virginity like "time and energy" is "my Capital; if I Squander [it], I shall get no Other" (178). The language of this "complicated feminine order" (194) is exemplified in the conversations of Naomi and the women she works with:

[Carla] and Naomi always talked about washing, either washing their sweaters or washing their underclothes or washing their hair. They would say, "I washed my cardigan!" "Did you? Did you wash it cold or lukewarm?" "Lukewarm but I think it's alright." "What did you do about the neck?" (180)

Their discourse is, to Del, an alien code, full of "subtle formalities, courtesies, proprieties" (181-82) and of

possibilities for offense through such transgressions as not cutting the crusts off sandwiches at showers. It has its shamans such as Naomi's mother and provides protection for women whose crises it guards as secrets.

To enter this world, it is necessary to learn not only its language but also the language of the men who secure entry into it. At the Gay-La dance hall, Del struggles hard to enter the order, yet the language--comprising both words and gestures--of Clive by whom she is selected is impossibly cryptic: "Everything he said was like this; I heard the words but could not figure out the meaning" (188). She listens to and watches the continual performance Clive puts on, staging fights and telling jokes, most of which are faintly hostile to women. In this world with its two sides, Del feels herself as distorted as the faces she sees in her drunken state. She believes that she cannot insert herself into this life, despite the fact that she sees "no other way" in life except the anguished passion of Charlotte Bronte.

Del's final inability to fit into this feminine order is profoundly connected to her own image of herself. She believes that the girls within this order are neat, contained, and never betrayed by their bodies, whereas her body is continually erupting:

Their cool hands did not mottle or sweat,
their hair kept its calculated shape, their
underarms were never wet--they did not know
what it was to have to keep their elbows
pinned to their sides to hide the dark,
disgraceful half-moon stains on their
dresses--and never, never would they feel
that extra little gush of blood, little bonus
that no Kotex is going to hold, that will
trickle horrifyingly down the inside of the
thighs.

(179)

Just as Del considers that her body "betrays" her with seepages,
so she considers her boundaries to be "ambiguous": she "soaked up
protective coloration wherever it might be found." (200). Looking
at herself naked in the glass, she sees "the insides of my thighs
quivered; cottage cheese in a transparent sack" (185). Like both
Joan and Shirley, she perceives herself as messy, with blurred
boundaries. Feminine women offer more discreet contained selves,
but she cannot enter their order.

Del's belief that her exclusion from this order is dangerous
is confirmed by the evidence she sees around her. Women like her
mother and Fern Dougherty--whom Naomi classifies as "a joke"--are
perceived as eccentric. Further confirming her impression, she
reads an article describing the difference between male and
female modes of thought, which differences

were easily illustrated by the thoughts of a

boy and girl, sitting on a park bench,
looking at the full moon. The boy thinks of
the universe, its immensity and mystery; the
girl thinks, "I must wash my hair." (180)

The article goes on to explain that women live in a personal realm which is ultimately solipsistic: "no idea is of any interest to her by itself, but must be translated into her own experience; in works of art she always sees her own life, or her daydreams" (181). Del perceives such divisions to be maddeningly powerful, not least because their positions are authoritative. By means of these, she is apparently excluded from the world of rational thought.

Jerry Storey is the book's representative of that world. Like both Arthur in Lady Oracle and Philippe in A Fairly Good Time, he is an unattractive figure whose cerebral nature is exaggerated and parodied. In one sense he is not threatening to Del, who perceives his powers as boring and unadmirable mental gymnastics, like circus exercises. His contempt for Del, however, is disturbing and powerful. Arguing that she has "fairly weak reasoning powers and almost no capacity for abstract thought" (196), he finds her talent for literature contemptible, dismissing it as the result of "a not unusual feminine gift for language" (196). Jerry and Del are perceived as a couple, and

their mutual contempt for each other's talents seems to balance them. Yet it is clear that in the eyes of the world Jerry is more powerful and belongs in the serious, "real" world. As Del remarks, "He was in touch with the real world, he knew how they had split the atom. The only world I was in touch with was the one I had made, with the aid of some books, to be peculiar and nourishing to myself" (198). Clearly, Jerry's discourse is the discourse of power, whereas Del's is weak, associated with women's lack of capacity for serious and scientific thought.

Several points, though, suggest the destructiveness of Jerry's--and by extension the masculine scientific world's--view. Like Mr. Chamberlain, Jerry is interested in war:

He gave me a description of the Bataan Death March, methods of torture in Japanese prison camps, the fire-bombing of Tokyo, the destruction of Dresden; he bombarded me with unbeatable atrocities, annihilating statistics. All without a flicker of protest, but with a controlled excitement, a curious insistent relish. (198)

In his exploratory encounter with her, Del suspects that he is trying to turn her into something she is not: "Did he want to turn me into some comfortable girl with lust uncomplicated by self-consciousness, a girl without sharp answers, or a large vocabulary, or any interest in the order of the universe, ready

to cuddle him down?" (204). When she agrees to undress in order that he view her body (the inverse of her encounter with Mr. Chamberlain), his mother returns unexpectedly, and he pushes Del into the cellar and locks her in the dark.

Del cannot enter Jerry's world, which is alien to her and not interesting. Moreover, she understands the difficulty of access to it, the contempt with which Jerry looks upon her mother, who tries earnestly to solicit his opinions about the more exotic side of science. Nor can she dismiss the importance of Jerry's world, despite the fact that she sees its claims as "tender, swollen, tyrannical, absurd" (197). Her only way of coping with Jerry and the world he represents is through parody and irony. She and Jerry at their best talk in mock dialect and parody sociological analysis. This is the only way that Del can enter into dialogue with Jerry's world, which otherwise remains unamenable to exchanges.

Garnet French is at the opposite pole to Jerry. Whereas the latter is constantly giving articulate explanations of science, Garnet lives in silence, replying to questions only with "a string of simple facts" (215). Garnet's mode of being is radically different from Jerry's:

any attempt to make him think in this way, to

theorize, make systems, brought a blank, very slightly offended and superior look into his face. He hated people using big words, talking about things outside of their own lives. He hated people trying to tie things together. (220)

Jerry and Garnet also contrast in their sexuality. With Jerry exchanges are repellant, whereas with Garnet, by contrast, Del experiences intensities that redefine the word "pleasure," making its syllables mimic the rhythms of sexual pleasure. This world of sexual pleasure is profoundly anti-intellectual: "words were our enemies" (221). With Garnet she experiences

the very opposite of going out with Jerry, and seeing the world dense and complicated but appallingly unsecretive; the world I saw with Garnet was something not far from what I thought animals must see, the world without names. (221)

Del's sojourn in this world is unquestionably a more valuable experience than her association with Jerry. Sexual pleasure is not to be underestimated. Yet this world is a threat to Del, at least to Del as a potential writer. When Garnet tries to "baptize" her, it is not just into religion, but into the wordless life of the body, equated with death by drowning and with a fecund vegetative existence involving the production of babies. Giving birth and dying are seen as identical, each

involving a submission of the body which mitigates against intellectual activity. Like Joan and Shirley, Del recognizes the dangers of biological process, its equation with silence. For Del it is further associated with shame, exposure, and helplessness. Only as Del wrestles with Garnet does she realize that she has always understood this equation and has never had any intention of submitting. She had hoped to keep Garnet locked forever in her perception of him.

Shedding Garnet, Del is "baptized" into a new mode of being which she believes at the time to be "without fantasies or self-deception" (242). She feels her "old devious, ironic, isolated self" (240) emerge. With this self she is able to see herself in a kind of double vision: "Without diminishment of pain I observed myself; I was amazed to think that the person suffering was me, for it was not me at all; I was watching. I was watching, I was suffering" (241). Her double perspective enables her to see life with "absolute sincerity, absolute irony" (241). The survival of this doubled ironic self is clear as Del's voice widens the gap between young and older Del, and is heard clearly in the older Del's account of her younger self's belief:

Now at last without fantasies or self-deception, cut off from the mistakes and confusion of the past, grave and simple,

carrying a small suitcase, getting on a bus,
like girls in movies leaving home, convents,
lovers, I supposed I would get started on my
real life. (242)

The text of Lives suggests the persistence of this double voice.
Del can only represent herself, and other women, by adopting a
detached and ironic, but sincere, stance.

The final section of the book, "Epilogue: The Photographer,"
adds another dimension to the idea of real life evoked at the end
of "Baptizing." Del comes to realize that what she has created in
her first novel is a fictional world which, powerful in its own
authority, lacks a relation to the real world. Her novel, which
follows a Gothic plot, is a distortion and has a destructive
power over the world similar to the power of Jerry Storey's
nihilistic science; she ponders

Jerry contemplating and welcoming a future
that would annihilate Jubilee and life in it,
and I myself planning secretly to turn it
into black fable and tie it up in my novel,
and the town, the people who really were the
town, just hooting car horns--to mock anybody
walking, not riding, on a Sunday afternoon--
and never knowing what danger they were in
from us. (248)

Her encounter with Bobby Sherriff gives her a new perspective,
though she realizes its significance only later, at some point

after the end of Lives. Bobby Sherriff is to teach her that "real life," in all its details, is the richest source of fiction. "At present," she says, "I did not look much at this town" (253). Later, though, she is to become "greedy . . . Voracious and misguided as Uncle Craig" (253). She will also, of course, realize the inadequacy of the project of lists, for herself as for Uncle Craig. But her hunger for reality points her in a new direction. From such reality alone can a fiction which does not merely offer a grotesque distortion be created. Yet neither can fiction ever be a simple mirror of real life.

Just as none of Del's accounts of women--Madeleine, Mrs. Sherriff, Miss Farris, Fern--can fully capture their lives, so no narrative, it seems, can inscribe real life. Del's search for a voice is a quest which is not, even by the end of the book, completed. Del stands as one of a new generation of women to whom the substance of "real life" is as yet unformulated. It is not necessarily the constraining domestic world of marriage. Yet Women's lives are impossible to pin down or, when pinned down, they are distortions rather than reflections. Del must live with the frustrations of this as later Munro characters must live with its moral implications. Writing is a way of attaining authority over the world, but it is never a permanent and unshakeable

authority but momentary and problematic. Men, on the other hand, seem to wield their authority with comparative ease. Yet, the book suggests, men's authority rests on shaky ground. Certainly it is allied with very disturbing notions of destruction and violence. Even more importantly, men's experience, which once seemed the only material for great literature, is dull and lifeless compared to the rich and varied world of women's lives and the amazing unfathomable world of domestic life.

SECTION TWO: CONCLUSION

"Verbal discourse," Bakhtin remarks, "is a social phenomenon" (1981:259), and all three of the books examined here depict it as such. Realism allegedly saw discourse as natural and neutral, but these texts show that discourses at large in the world have great power to shape life, and often this power is directed specifically against women. Among discourses there is a hierarchy--some voices, such as society's master narratives, are more coercive and insistent than others. Postmodernism has sometimes been defined precisely as a challenging of these master narratives. A close examination of the work of Atwood, Gallant, and Munro reveals that they issue a similar challenge. Yet for these women, much more than for postmodernists, the notion of gender is of the first importance to the politics of the challenge.

The most compelling argument for the relevance of gender is the way in which each of the narratives insistently associates authoritative discourse with men. Arthur with his journey along the "true path," Phillipe with his quest for the "universal key," Uncle Craig with his history and Jerry Storey with his science all live restfully in ordered rational worlds where they unconcernedly wield their authoritative discourses. In each instance they are mocked and parodied in the narrative. Yet the

mockery is always double-edged because their discourses are powerful and are frequently associated with violence or highly destructive reductiveness. The spectres of Fascism, violence, and the atomic bomb are all associated with monologic outlooks. The texts cannot undercut this authority; instead they must enter into dialogue with it.

The female protagonists have an ambivalent attitude to monologic truth. They long for the clarity of a unitary voice and its authority and the restful life it appears to permit. Joan desires to live in the neat white paradise, even though she perceives its connection with death. Shirley longs for "the perfect truth . . . the dumb plain policeman writing 'p-r-i-m-r-o-s-e must mean primrose' in his notebook (225), yet she recognizes that this tautology is a dead-ended and destructive one. Del passionately desires to capture Jubilee and its citizens in a list, but she realizes the dangers of this form of reductiveness are as insidious as Jerry Storey's interest in the atomic bomb. All three are prevented from adopting the masculine monologic outlooks because of their contact with the present and process. They simultaneously desire to escape process and perceive the dangers of the alternative.

Women's relationship to the dominant discourses is therefore

ambivalent. On the one hand, women desire the power that certain discourses offer. On the other hand, they perceive the destructive nature of that power, which has typically been directed against themselves. Unlike postmodernists, they cannot simply deconstruct discourses, because power cannot be so simply dispelled. However they parody or mock, they remain excluded from the discourses which persist apparently unaffected to dominate them. They therefore sustain a marginal relationship to the dominant discourses.

These texts show clearly how powerful various discourses are and how they affect women's own voices. The discourse of romance, for example, infects Joan's voice and holds her in a permanent relationship to romantic plots. Shirley is forced to measure herself against the powerful, if absurd, discourse of logic and reason. Del perceives not only the force of the discourses of history and reason but also of the feminine order which coerces her. In all three cases, the dominant discourses affect the woman's own voice. In fact, women's voices are frequently so affected by the discourses around them that the notion of authenticity is undercut altogether. Joan's "Lady Oracle" poems, for example, are so determined by other voices that Joan cannot be said to have an authentic voice. When women do find their own

voices, they are often very unlike the master narratives associated with men. In fact, women's voices are often depicted as highly ambivalent and are impossible to pin down in a single meaning. If men's narratives are associated with a notion of truth, women's voices are associated with the figure of Hermes, with the "spy, or the tricky detective" (A Fairly Good Time, 225).

Women's voices are consistently depicted as double, or even multiple, and far less susceptible to monologic meaning than men's narratives. Joan produces multiple voices and no one voice is ultimately more authentic than another. Her mother has a double mouth and ambivalent discourses issue from it, and Aunt Lou produces profoundly double meanings. Shirley believes that all exchanges between people are equivocal and her own voice is often highly ambivalent. Del produces a double voice, at once ironic and sincere. Her mother has radically diverging voices which have no point of intersection. The nebulosity of these women is documented in the difficultly critics often have in agreeing about them. In fact, critical attempts to characterize women in these texts may be misguided and result in distortions because the women take their being from nothing more than a set of voices, often conflicting.

Men's voices are perceived as powerful, even when their discourses are absurd. In the public arena, women's voices are often frail and easily silenced or taken over by the dominant discourse. Yet women's private voices, often oral rather than literary, are more insistent. Sometimes even these private voices cannot be sustained. Marie Thérèse, for example, is so little accustomed to using her voice that it is erased so she has to start from the beginning every time. Even Shirley's voice does not seem strong enough to sustain itself for long. Other voices, though, are more resilient. Joan's voices emerge in forms that assert themselves subversively, and Del sustains a voice throughout her narrative. All three texts show, in varying degrees, what happens when private female voices assert themselves in the public realm--often they are erased. Yet in the private realm women's voices persist as voices from the margins.

Women not only have to assert their voices against more powerful male discourses, but they must also often assert themselves against the voices of other women, most notably their mothers. This produces a complex dialogue. Joan, Shirley, and Del must grapple with their mothers' discourses. Joan realizes that her mother has been the dominant force behind her "automatic" writing. Shirley's voice is part of an extended "dialogue of the

deaf" with her mother. Even Lives of Girls and Women takes much of its narrative energy from Del's relationship with her mother. In each case, the mother is almost impossible to pin down in any simple sense and is associated with process. All protagonists enter into tense dialogic relationship with their mothers.

The recent interest in the intersection of dialogism and feminism suggests that dialogism may offer a particularly useful form for women.⁷ Certainly it seems to suit their marginal position. Hutcheon notes:

To be excentric, on the border or margin, inside yet outside is to have a different perspective, one that Virginia Woolf (1945,96) once called "alien and critical," one that is "always altering its focus," since it has no centering force. (67)

Parody and carnivalization appear to be appropriate techniques. Parody, Bakhtin remarks, is ambivalent. It is "the creation of a decrowning double" (1984;127). At the same time as it mocks, it uses its source, forming it anew. Yaeger has suggested that women's writing frequently employs this strategy of parody or "plagiarism":

Women's writing employs a useful form of 'plagiarism.' Women who write are not only capable of appropriating myths, genres, ideas, and images that are 'populated' with

patriarchal meaning, they are continually endowing the male mythos with their own intentions and meanings. According to this argument women write about their own lives by appropriating masculine traditions and transforming them, adapting what has been called 'phallogocentric' diction to fit the needs of 'feminocentric' expression. (955)

Women's writing thus sets up a dialogue with patriarchal traditions, subverting and amending them. Dialogic techniques can thereby liberate women from the constraints of male language and male traditions which some feminists--especially the French--perceive as radically disabling.

These women's texts, then, are not monologic; in fact they offer a robust critique of monologism. Attempts to read them as monologic realist texts result in distortions. Women's lives cannot be so simply represented. Often they have to be depicted indirectly through a variety of conflicting narratives. Representation always tends towards parody or an insidious fixity. Instead, women are represented through voice. Voice constitutes women dialogically and the women are therefore rarely coherent or even consistent, since truth resides between attempts at representations, not in them. All of the texts under examination here are truly dialogic in that they undermine all notions of authority and authenticity. Women's voices are fragile

and nebulous, yet they offer a more dynamic model than the monologic discourses of history, reason, and truth that have dominated western discourses and that tend toward reductiveness. However women may crave the unitary voice and the universal truth, they are redeemed by their complex dialogic voices.

NOTES

1. Margaret Atwood, Lady Oracle, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart: 1976, p.9. All subsequent references to Lady Oracle are to this edition and page numbers appear parenthetically within the text.

2. Joan is herself closely associated with accidents in several senses. She is the site of numerous accidents (she knocks things over in her mother's home, she is shot at the archery range, she falls off a bus and sprains her ankle). She is also called by her mother "an accident."

3. Mavis Gallant, A Fairly Good Time, New York: Random House, 1970, 12. All subsequent references to A Fairly Good Time are to this edition, and page references appear parenthetically within the text.

4. Most critics find Shirley's mode of life unpalatable, and assume that she should escape it.

5. Alice Munro, Lives of Girls and Women, Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1971. All subsequent references to Lives of Girls and Women are to this edition and page numbers appear parenthetically within the text.

6. It is perhaps not accidental that the names of two of the three Aunts evoke the triple goddess. The graces were the three aspects of the triple goddess and the Moirai were similarly the three fates embodied in the Great Moira. The allusion is to the female power that seems to underlie these women

7. Recent critical attempts have been made to debate this relationship between dialogism and feminism. Diane Price Herndl, for example, poses the question "is the novel a 'feminine' genre or is 'feminine language' novelistic?" (12). She concludes that the answer resides dialogically between the two possibilities.

SECTION THREE
EYE PROBLEMS: CONSTRUCTIONS OF
FEMALE SUBJECTIVITY

"I" must become a "fabulous opera" and not the arena of the known.

-Hélène Cixous

Whatever stable definitions the 'I' possesses are inevitably acquired from the other. Thus one cannot author oneself.

-Caryl Emerson

The post-structuralist contesting of Man [has] not necessarily led to a discovery of Woman.

-Linda Hutcheon

In a humanistic tradition in which man is the measure of all things, how does an appendage go about telling the story of her life?

-Barbara Johnson

Indeed, our fiction is often highly autobiographical. Why not? What is called "real" often appears like fiction to us, given our marginal relationship to culture, to society. The need is therefore to start naming our own real. To write ourselves.

-Gail Scott

One of the most important institutions of literary realism is the concept of character. The realist text allegedly produces "rounded" human characters whose complexity mimics that of human beings. This concept of character depends on a belief in a stable and coherent human self that responds to events in a way which, while not predictable, is at least consistent with its established character. The poststructuralist attack on realism has focused on character because the concept depends so clearly on the liberal humanist values that post-structuralist criticism takes exception to. In his essay "Character and Consciousness," John Bayley explains how character is often the primary means employed to manipulate the reader's moral response by producing a complicity between reader and author: "The most fundamental thing about characters in fiction is that by a complex process of rapport between the author and ourselves we know what to think of them" (225-26). Often this response is conservative; character can be used "as a preservative element, like the sugar in jam" (228) to preserve a particular kind of society.

Traditional realism has often used the genre of the bildungsroman to explore the concept of the self. George Bowering believes that most of Canada's women writers produce versions of this genre; writers like Atwood and Munro tell, he says, "the normal realist story of sensitive child growing up to be disillusioned but wisely maladjusted adult, the most personal proof of cause & effect" (76). Certainly women writers in Canada are particularly interested in explorations of the female self.

They frequently depict female protagonists who share striking similarities of experience and outlook. This fact, sometimes perceived as a limitation, has been used as the basis for criticism of their work. E.D. Blodgett notes of Alice Munro: "the same material is constantly being reworked. Munro can be criticized for a certain monotony in this regard" (85). The tendency to read the fiction as autobiography has also resulted in some negative criticism. Elspeth Cameron, for example, reads Cat's Eye as Atwood's "first autobiographical novel" and condemns it because the form is not "complex and challenging" (2) enough. Atwood herself comments on this compulsive tendency to read women's writing as autobiographical:

I think people do assume that women write entirely out of their own experience and that everything you read in a book by a woman is strictly autobiographical; some readers feel cheated when they find out it's not so. They want the book to be "true," they want it to be about the author, and for me that's saying women aren't capable of all those things that men are supposed to be capable of, such as craft, technique, invention, imagination and so forth. They're only supposed to be capable of writing a kind of fictionalized diary.
(152)

In fact, women's writing is no more autobiographical than that of most male writers, and there are good reasons for the writers' insistence on exploring specifically female and essentially similar selves.

One reason for women writers' insistent emphasis on exploring the female self through the medium of fiction is the

apparent novelty of the enterprise. Western literature is a history of exploration of the self; the self in question, however, is almost exclusively male. Early feminist criticism studied the consistent construction of woman as man's "Other" in texts by men. More recently, as Elaine Showalter observes in her account of the development of feminist criticism from feminist critique to gynocritics, attention has been turned to women's own writing, and one of the central questions of feminist literary criticism, Judith Kegan Gardiner notes, is now, "Who is there when a woman says, 'I am'?" (178).

The question of women's construction of themselves in written discourse is relatively new because the literary forms concerned with exploring the self, and from which most of our understanding of notions of the self in fiction have derived--autobiography and the bildungsroman--are traditionally male-dominated forms. Autobiography as a literary genre is, as several feminist critics point out, a predominantly male tradition. This is not because women have rarely attempted to represent their lives through autobiography, but because the critical evaluation of autobiography has employed criteria which favour the canonization of male works. Women now engaging in the study of autobiography by women are unanimous in claiming that traditional criticism of autobiography has been rigidly exclusive of women's contributions. In the introduction to Women's Autobiography, Estelle Jelinek points out how all the classic critical accounts of autobiography have bypassed women. This absence of women from

the tradition has arisen because of differences between the way men and women represent themselves and the privileging of men's mode of representation. Suzanne Juhasz notes that the values that define autobiography have been firmly established in critical terms as "significance, objectivity, distance" (222), which accounts by women often lack. Further, there is a predominant critical notion that to be successful, an autobiography must somehow point to something other than and greater than its subject; Schumaker, for example, declares that the subject must discover "within the life something greater than the sum-total of incidents and observations" (120). Women's autobiographies, Juhasz argues, are often immersed in what Kate Millet calls "dailiness," and their protagonists make this their subject rather than any transcendence of it. These critical criteria account for the negative reactions to works by women which are seemingly immersed in the process of daily life and do not seek transcendence. Women's autobiographies have only rarely been considered part of the canon and then only when they conform closely to the male tradition. Many representations by women of their own lives have thus been obliterated from literary history.

An autobiography must usually deal with people of significant public profile, a fact which is bound to exclude women, who have traditionally been denied access to such status. Fiction would seem less susceptible to such a requirement. Yet the fictional form that corresponds most closely to autobiography--the bildungsroman--has also been predominantly a

male domain. In Season of Youth, a definitive study of the genre, Jerome Buckley adopts Susanne Howe's definition of the bildungsroman as the "'novel of all-around development or self-culture' with 'a more or less conscious attempt on the part of the hero to integrate his powers, to cultivate himself by his experience'" (13). That the use of the masculine pronoun is not incidental is borne out in Buckley's study which includes detailed examinations of the works of Dickens, Meredith, Butler, Pater, Hardy, Wells, Laurence, and Joyce with George Eliot the only female writer considered at length. Buckley traces the origins of the hero of the bildungsroman to sources that are exclusively masculine: "to the hero of the old moral allegories, to the picaresque hero who in his travels meets all sorts and conditions of men, to the Parzival figure learning slowly through his trials, to the 'Renaissance Man' bent on exercising to the full his many talents" (13). As with autobiography, though, the male dominance in the tradition is merely the result of the way the genre has been defined critically rather than of the paucity of fiction dealing with the female self.

Traditionally, the bildungsroman has constructed the self according to a pattern in which, to use Eric Erikson's terms, the youth moves through an identity crisis to adulthood and the attainment of a mature and stable self-image. As Gardiner observes, according to Erikson's terms, "the person with a successfully achieved sense of individual identity feels unique, whole, and coherent" (179). In the bildungsroman the protagonist

achieves the goal of integration into society while preserving a unique and coherent identity. If the protagonist cannot perform this integration, death is the only alternative. The bildungsroman thus depends on a notion of a stable essential self, capable of development and defines maturity as a compromise between individual vision and the demands made on the individual by society.

This notion of essential selfhood has been challenged in postmodernist fiction, where the self is often perceived as radically fragmented, and the coherent self gives place to a set of disjointed and often unconnected selves. Frederick Jameson describes the basic thrust of postmodernism as "schizophrenia": "schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence. The schizophrenic thus does not know personal identity in our sense, since our feeling of identity depends on our sense of the persistence of the 'I' and the 'me' over time" (119). Postmodernism chooses a disrupted form to echo the disrupted and discontinuous nature of the self.

If women's experience has been as man's "Other" as Simone de Beauvoir suggests, then the notion of a fragmented and incoherent self might seem to offer a more faithful model for women than that of the essential self. Yet it is not one women writers have commonly adopted. In fact, the model of the fragmentary self is not any more appropriate than the model of coherence and development, for it still takes that notion of coherence as its

point of departure. In a way, as Patricia Waugh argues in Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern, postmodernism insidiously renders the notion of the self as coherent subject defunct before women have had an opportunity to explore their own experience as subjects. Similarly, Hutcheon observes, "If women have not yet been allowed access to (male) subjectivity, then it is very difficult for them to contest it, as the (male) poststructuralist philosophers have been doing lately" (5-6).

A number of feminist theorists have attempted to begin to draft a model of the specifically female self which is not derived from the traditional notion of an essential self. Nancy Chodorow, for example, has attempted to revise Freudian psychology to give a more accurate account of the development of the female ego than Freud's. She argues that the female sense of self is characterized "by more permeable and flexible ego boundaries" than the male self: "the basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense of self is separate" (169). Similarly, Gardiner notes that the fundamental difference between male identity as it is classically constructed and female identity is that "female identity is process, and primary identity for women is more flexible and relational than for men" (184). The postmodern split in identity is thus replaced by the idea of a merger: "male fiction often splits characters into disjunct fragments, while female characters in novels by women tend to dissolve and merge in each other" (185). Such theories have in common an emphasis on women's connections rather

than separations and on the idea of self as process rather than stable self. Although these theories mark only the beginning of an exploration of the specifically female self, their validity is borne out remarkably in the fiction of Canadian women writers.

Atwood, Gallant, and Munro insistently create the voices of female protagonists who share similarities. These similarities do not imply that the protagonists are in any way simple reflections of the authors. The work of all three writers suggests strongly that neither life nor self can be easily rendered in fiction and that even deliberate autobiography is, as Gallant phrases it, "a kind of reality necessarily transformed" (28). Fiction for these writers seems to be a fruitful way of experimenting with the construction of the specifically female self. The construction of female selves in language creates a persona, which can act as a kind of hypothesis of the self, acting out various roles in language and bearing various relations to it. Mária Minich Brewer has noted the importance of the notion of performativity to women's writing:

Women's discourse has little to do with an ineffable or unnameable essence of femininity. The form of the question 'What is women's discourse?' or 'What is feminine writing,' is, in fact, complicitous with narrative closure. The question presupposes that one necessarily ought to define the various spaces, scenes and potentialities of that discourse in the form of a description in a constative (cognitive) mode. Displace the question instead to the varied practices of performative language that characterize much women's writing today, and you realize that it is precisely such an enjoyment of performativity that is being reaffirmed.
(1159)

The insistent creation of female selves in writing emphasizes the idea that self is not reflected but created in language. That the fictional selves in works by women often seem versions of each other rather than distinct "unique" characters is not a limitation of their work. It argues compellingly that, for women writers at least, the notion of a purely fictional character completely divorced from the author is a myth; all personae bear the marks of the writer who has produced them. At the same time, the complexities of language dictate that no construction in fiction can ever be a simple reflection of the author.

Atwood's Cat's Eye, Munro's Who Do You Think You Are?, and Gallant's "Its Image on the Mirror" and the "Linnet Muir" sequence from Home Truths share an insistent concern with the idea of the female self. The writers all explore characters who are artists. Of the four protagonists, only Jean Price in "Its Image on the Mirror" is not an artist; Linnet in the "Linnet Muir" sequence is a writer, Elaine in Cat's Eye a painter, and Rose in Who Do You Think You Are? an actress. In each case the protagonists are seen constructing themselves in fiction. All have an almost obsessive concern with themselves and their personal history. National history is always muted and seen only from the perspective of women, who have not traditionally been involved in it. Jean Price, for example, is obsessively concerned with her sister; writing of her own life in 1945, she remarks, "I have forgotten if any important historical events were then taking place" (141). Elaine Risley characterizes her experience

of the way the war affects the female character: "we have long attention spans . . . we eat everything on our plates. We save string. We make do" (89). The emphasis is always on domestic life, the hitherto private realm that has become an intensely feminized world by the removal of the men.

Yet intently as these narratives focus on the private self, they are not solipsistic. All the narratives acknowledge the perils of solipsism, the dangers of mirror gazing. Women struggle to find more viable mirrors that can reflect and incorporate process. In "Its Image on the Mirror," the physical mirror reflects family connections, yet these connections are pathological; more dynamic forms of mirroring through the relationship between sisters fail. For Elaine in Cat's Eye, female friendships and art, both fraught with difficulties and potentially dangerous, are the only corrective to the mirrors that have structured female identity. In Who Do You Think You Are? acting provides the dynamic mirror that can publicly reflect society's most primitive private self. Yet, as in Cat's Eye, the hazards are many: acting can turn into empty mimicry and be profoundly damaging.

The narratives are united in their emphasis on the way in which voice constructs the self. The self seems not to exist for any of the female characters as an essential self. Instead, it is dynamic and can be worked out and constructed through narrative. As Joanna S. Frye observes, "the narrating 'I' claims selfhood not in sameness and 'coherence' but in voice, complexity, and

experiential interaction" (64). Like Cordelia in Cat's Eye, a female character continually "reinvent[s] herself" (301), "mak[es] herself up as she goes along" (301). The female sense of self is thus tied to the voice that can both articulate it and, more problematically, silence other selves contending for dominance. As such, it is more complex than the traditional male sense of self, yet it is liberating because it is so much more dynamic than the stale one-dimensional essential self many of the male characters in these narratives exhibit.

CAT'S EYE

Cat's Eye is, apparently, one of Atwood's least self-conscious creations. It lacks devices such as shifting person, multiple voices, or self-conscious concern with language that Atwood has used in other novels to draw attention to the text as a fictional construction. This may explain why it has been so insistently read by reviewers as a traditional novel of development. Yet the novel shares similarities with Elaine's painting Picoseconds, which contains elements that "By their obvious artificiality, . . . call into question the reality of landscape and figures alike." Elaine's narrative contains not-so-obvious elements that call into question the authenticity of her self as a realist construct. Elaine and Cordelia may pass initially for simple portraits of a childhood victim and her tormentor, yet in the course of the narrative the boundaries that divide them become confused, calling into question their integrity as individuals. Further, the new physics, with its emphasis on the uncertainty principle, interrogates the validity of the concept of the individual in the traditional humanist sense. Realism cannot thrive in a universe where even the most tangible substance of the real world has only a tendency to exist.

In Cat's Eye the individual is dwarfed by surrounding forces that are all moving in the direction of an end of one kind or another. These terminal forces may have their origins in violence and in the mismanagement of the earth's resources, but in the world of the novel their origins are buried and they seem as natural and inevitable as the law of entropy, which is evidenced

everywhere. Certainly, in this world, men are no longer the obvious oppressors as they were in Bodily Harm and The Handmaid's Tale. Violence is diffuse, and men are as much its victims as women, as the vulnerability of many of the male characters suggests. In this world, as Elaine recognizes, it is easier to survive in the world of men; the repressive world of women contains torments and perils unknown in the only apparently wilder world of men.

Thus Cat's Eye apparently takes as its focal point women's identification against women, the failure of sisterhood--a fact that has clearly fascinated a number of reviewers.² Elaine does ally herself with the male world, finding "brotherhood" an easier concept than sisterhood. She is also deeply suspicious of feminism, at least in its established form. In Bodily Harm, the post-feminist stance is perceived as dangerous; in Cat's Eye, though, there is a sense in which society is so far advanced in the process of domestication that has formed women that it is hard to maintain faith in the effectiveness of feminism, especially when connections between women fail at every level. In the world of the children, for example, girls viciously identify against each other, and in the world of adults, women refuse to rescue others. Mrs. Smeath and her sister not only fail to rescue Elaine from the torments the others inflict on her, they also sanction the behaviour of the girls. The older Elaine fails to help both Cordelia in her depression and Susie in her botched abortion, and her rescue of the women on the street in

contemporary Toronto is ambivalent. Even mothers and sisters are ineffectual. Elaine's mother cannot protect Elaine from the other girls, and Cordelia's mother herself, "tiny, fragile, absent-minded" (73), needs to be protected from knowledge by her daughters' "web of conspiracy" (73), and she is frequently the vessel of the invisible father's perpetual disappointment in Cordelia. Furthermore, as Cordelia's name might suggest, her two sisters also fail her.

The novel focuses on the domestic world, the traditional domain of women. As a child, Elaine experiences a brief immersion in a green world when she travels with her nomadic parents who refuse traditional roles. In this period, she claims, she was happy. She learns a technique that is later to become the source of her power when she learns to "see in the dark": "you have to stay still, in the darkness, waiting until your eyes become accustomed to no light. Then the shapes of things begin to emerge, greyish and glimmering and insubstantial, as if they're condensing from the air" (26). Yet even at this point, before the coercions of the social world are felt, there is an imbalance between Elaine and her brother. Stephen is obsessed with the idea of war. He makes guns, daggers, swords, and decorates them extensively with imitation blood. His favourite game is war, in which Elaine plays a subordinate role: "I am the infantry, which means I have to do what he says" (24). Elaine, by contrast, draws girls: "I draw them in old-fashioned clothing, with long skirts, pinafores and puffed sleeves, or in dresses like Jane's, with big

hairbows on their heads. This is the elegant, delicate picture I have in my mind, about other little girls" (29). Even in this pre-social world, social roles have been internalized to such an extent that they seem natural. Later, the innocence of Stephen's association with wars and Elaine's with little girls will break down.

Elaine's move to Toronto marks her initiation into the social world. This world requires different skills from the ones she has practised with her brother:

I don't have to keep up with anyone, run as fast, aim as well, make loud explosive noises, decode messages, die on cue. I don't have to think about whether I've done these things well, as well as a boy. All I have to do is sit on the floor and cut frying pans out of the Eaton's Catalogue with embroidery scissors, and say I've done it badly. (54)

The girls' world, apparently completely unthreatening in what it expects, contains challenges unsuspected in the more overtly competitive world of boys. Toronto as Elaine experiences it is a world that has been domesticated and feminized. The men, although still the source of "real, unspeakable power" (164), are concealed so completely that they seem to be erased from the domestic landscape altogether: "in the daily life of houses, fathers are largely invisible" (98). The novel concentrates on this disturbing feminized world.

In one of his dinner conversations, Elaine's father associates the process of domestication with a loss of power. The turkey, for example, in the process of being tamed for

consumption, has lost both its intelligence and its ability to fly. On the one hand, the domestic world is seemingly tame, containing innocuous women like Carol Campbell and her mother, possessor of twin sets and cold waves. Within this world, images of power, particularly female power, have become empty icons. The virgin Mary, for example, survives only in the bland images of Catholic iconography. The figure of the crone, the most powerful aspect of the triple goddess, survives only in women's comic constructions of themselves as witches. Elaine's mother for example, constructs herself as "The Witch of Endor" (34); Cordelia's sisters make up a witch they call "Haggis McBaggis" (72). The shrines of the goddess have become the windows of cut-rate stores, each "like a shrine, lit up from within, its goddess on display" (43). Even objects are reduced to icons; in school, "It seems to be a rule that the paper things always appear before the real ones" (60), and domestic objects have less reality than their images in the Eaton's Catalogue.

On the other hand, this apparently tame world contains its own brand of wildness that is damaging and destructive. This world contains, along with the Carol Campbells, women like Cordelia who are "wild, pure and simple" (130), and others, like Grace Smeath, who have "sneaky vestiges of wild" (130). Domestic objects are only apparently innocuous, for they contain extraordinary potential for harm. For example, as Elaine learns as a child, "women can get their hands caught in wringers, and other parts of their bodies, such as hair" (122); the lid of the

pressure cooker can "blow off like a bomb" (149); the toaster has a "red-hot grid" (119); porridge looks like "boiling mud" (119); choke cherry jelly appears "poisonous" (145). Even more disturbing are the "white gifts" Elaine takes to church. The packages appear bleached of identity and sterile, but "Inside those blank, sinister bundles of tissue paper piled up at the front of the church there could be anything" (124). This image returns to haunt Elaine, appearing again in her paintings where the white gifts are associated with Cordelia's severed head. The apparent blandness of the domestic world is in reality only a cover for a profoundly repressive--and deadly--realm.

Elaine is informed by this feminized world of deeply divisive social forces. Yet as an individual she is also pitted against cosmographic forces and the compelling movement toward cataclysmic endings. Even the most apparently individual character--Stephen--is lost to these forces. One of the book's epigraphs, from Stephen W. Hawking's A Brief History of Time, poses the question, "Why do we remember the past, and not the future?" According to Hawking, the forward arrow of time is determined by the law of entropy, which insists that the universe moves toward an increasingly disordered state. The novel's partially linear structure suggests the psychological compulsion of the forward arrow; as with the arrangement of Elaine's paintings in her retrospective, "chronology won out after all" (404). Yet the book stresses the inevitable tendency to dissolution that is the corollary of this chronological

coherence. Against the pervasive backdrop of entropy, the self is only a temporary coherence.

Images of endings pervade the novel. Elaine's father believes in ecological endings. In one of his comic scenarios, for example, the treatment of diabetics with insulin leads by an involved process of reasoning to the end of human life. The future, according to him, belongs to weeds and cockroaches, which take over when other species fail as they inevitably will. When as an adult Elaine perceives the reality of "the ruined water, the poisoned trees, species after species snuffed out like stepped-on ants" (396), she realizes that her father's theory is prophetic, not the "boring . . . adult gossip" (396) she initially mistakes it for. Yet this ending is not the only possible ending of the planet. Stephen believes in cosmic endings, the ultimate collapse of the earth as it turns Super Nova: "Sooner or later we're going to be a cinder anyway" (216-217). His own death is the result of terrorist action, but violence is also linked with cosmic endings. The concept of "war" is losing a specific reference to the Second World War and spreading out to include almost all human activity: "Somehow the war never ended after all, it just broke up into pieces and got scattered, it gets in everywhere, you can't shut it out" (314). Human aggression, so sharply depicted in Bodily Harm and equated with sexual politics, has lost its origins in the volition of men. In Cat's Eye, falling women fall through forces much more complex than man's will and, as Stephen's death demonstrates, men

fall too.

Entropy is evidenced everywhere in the incipient signs of aging of which Elaine, who minutely examines her own and others' faces, is acutely aware and in the "shedding and disorder and personal dirt" (16) that surround her. In the universe where entropy dominates, personal identity can no longer have the status it has in a more coherent and permanent universe. Life always pulls towards death, and the dead lose their identity completely and become only inchoate matter like the snow that fills up empty spaces or the water in the stream at the bottom of the ravine persistently associated with dissolved dead people. Elaine imagines the dead, "forgetting themselves atom by atom, melting away like icicles, flowing downhill into the river" (418). Entropy also threatens the living. Elaine, publicly a "person of substance" (13), feels herself to be implicated in the downward movement towards death:

I feel lighter, as if I'm shedding matter,
losing molecules, calcium from my bones,
cells from my blood; as if I'm shrinking, as
if I'm filling with cold air, or gently
falling snow.

With all this lightness I do not rise, I
descend. Or rather I am dragged downward,
into the layers of this place as into
liquefied mud. (13)

The individual, the novel stresses, must perpetually struggle to maintain even her physical sense of self against the compelling forces of the universe.

In one sense the entire domestic world has been erected as a

barricade against entropy. Women's domestic work is an attempt to hold back the biological world, but the battle cannot be won; women

wrap up the garbage in several layers of newspaper and tie it with string, and even so it drips onto the freshly waxed floor. Their clotheslines are strung with underpants, nighties, socks, a display of soiled intimacy, which they have washed and rinsed, plunging their hands into the grey curdled water. They know about toilet brushes, toilet seats, about germs. The world is dirty, no matter how much they clean, and we know they will not welcome our grubby little questions (93-94)

Similarly, women's employment of cosmetics and grooming aids is an attempt to control entropy. Woman's personal success is defined in terms of the extent to which she combats these forces and resists "letting herself go" (277). Men, by contrast, are allied with the world of biology. Boys flaunt biological functions, and men subvert the domestic world by bringing biology to the dinner table as Elaine's father does literally and Mr. Smeath does metaphorically when he recites his mildly subversive rhymes. Women's suppression of biology leads to a sense of "horror" that runs in a "long whisper . . . from child to child" (94) and "a gulf, an abyss" (93) that stretches between mothers and daughters. The suppression the domestic world depends on seems to account in part for the peculiar horrors of that world.

Gravity is another cosmographic force Elaine is hyper-conscious of. Like entropy, gravity is related to death; Elaine

sees her dead parents "sinking down through the earth, which is hard but transparent, like ice" (167). Gravity is also related to a kind of despair. Just before she cuts her wrists, Elaine feels "the pull of the earth on me, the dragging of its dark curve of gravity, the spaces between the atoms you could fall so easily through" (373). Stephen and Cordelia, fated characters both, also feel the pull of gravity, manifested in their mutual desire to dig holes. Stephen's eventual death when he is pushed from the hijacked plane and shot involves the literal pull of gravity. Elaine's painting Picoseconds connects her parents also with the fall of Icarus, an image of the pull of gravity recalling Stephen's death. Human life is a continual struggle against these forces of gravity and entropy. Elaine's rescue from the ravine involves, above all, summoning the energy to combat the law of gravity and resist the temptation to join the dead in the stream.

Thus the law of entropy is the corollary of the forward arrow of time that defines memory. Memory is traditionally an important concept in the novel of development or the autobiography. In Cat's Eye memory is tied not only to time, but also to space. Initially Elaine notes that Stephen's revelation that time is a dimension led her to conceptualize time in terms of space:

I began then to think of time as having a shape, something you could see, like a series of liquid transparencies, one laid on top of another. You don't look back along time but down through it, like water. Sometimes this comes to the surface, sometimes that, sometimes nothing. Nothing goes away. (3)

Her journey from Vancouver to Toronto initiates a process of recovery of Cordelia, a recovery that involves a re-membering of Cordelia in space rather than in time. On the streets of Toronto Elaine continually glimpses Cordelia, though her glimpses are fragments dissociated from a linear concept of time--Cordelia is apt to reappear at any age. Only at the end is Cordelia re-membered in her entirety.

Toronto itself provides a space which makes a vital contribution to Elaine's process of retrospection. Far from living up to its image of dullness, the city is blighted, "bloating itself to death," (42), a city containing "enormous gravestones of cold light" (8). Toronto is insistently associated with mud; its air is like "liquid dust" (8) and, on a literal level, the whole city seems to have arisen from a "lagoon of postwar mud" (33). Metaphorically it represents the layers of archaeological deposits Elaine explores: "I am dragged downwards, into the layers of this place as into liquefied mud" (13). In Toronto Elaine is "always lost" (14), and her return is a nightmarish return to the repressed underworld to recover Cordelia. As in the underworld of the unconscious, reality is inverted. The city acts "like a mirror that shows you only the ruined half of your face" (410). Toronto is a metaphorical black hole, a fitting background for Elaine's retrospective which itself contains disturbing discontinuities.

The novel disrupts the traditional concept of memory as the recovery of an original event. Elaine's past contains black holes

which produce change without the normal reference to cause and effect. When she is submerged in a hole by Cordelia and her friends, she experiences an absence of time and of self:

I have no image of myself in the hole; only a black square filled with nothing, a square like a door. Perhaps the square is empty; perhaps its only a marker, a time marker that separates the time before it from the time after. (107)

The "blank square of time" refuses to yield memory, "it's as if I vanish at that moment and reappear later, but different, not knowing why I have been changed" (108). Eventually a memory does surface, but "it's the wrong memory" (108), suggesting that the process of memory can be treacherous. Elaine's "wrong" memory of the nightshade berries is so deeply suppressed that it is never fully confronted in the narrative.

The past contains black holes which disrupt the notion of development. Elaine experiences her entire past as discontinuous: "like stones skipped across water, like postcards: I catch an image of myself, a dark blank, an image, a blank" (302). This absence of certain images corresponds to the form of the book, which leaves unexplained gaps in Elaine's life. The period between her discovery of her pregnancy and Sarah's childhood, for example, is unaccounted for, as is the long period between the time she leaves Jon and the present of her narrative. The discontinuity also corresponds to the way in which other's lives are perceived. Stephen's adult life, for example, is known to Elaine only through the postcards he sends announcing a selection

of the major events in his life; the gaps between these events are unknown territory. Elaine sees Cordelia on several occasions, and each time she is radically different; no sense of development is established. The novel thus confounds the normal sense of development; when characters "re-invent" themselves, cause and effect break down.

Memory, if it has validity at all, has importance only as collective memory. The novel stresses the interdependence of people in terms of their memory and perception. When Elaine encounters Stephen at his lecture, she remembers details about him that he himself has forgotten and assumes that the process is mutual:

It disturbs me that he can remember some of these things about himself, but not others; that the things he's lost or misplaced exist now only for me. If he's forgotten so much, what have I forgotten? (334)

People become vital guardians of each other's memories. Elaine's mother is the guardian of Elaine's "bad time," and her comments cause a momentary eruption in Elaine's memory: "My memory is tremulous, like water breathed on" (395). Similarly, Cordelia's comment, "I didn't really have any good friends there, except for you" (252), acts like a momentary drawing up of a blind on a lighted window and gives Elaine a brief and confused insight into her past. Physical objects can also harbour memories. Elaine begins to paint when objects surface in her mind, "suffused with anxiety" (337) that seems to belong to the objects themselves,

and many of her paintings represent memories she does not consciously perceive. Only with the help of her talismanic marble, of which her mother is the guardian, can Elaine finally recover her "life entire" (398).

Not only does Cat's Eye disrupt traditional notions of development and memory, it also seriously disrupts the idea of a unitary self. The concept of twins is important in society as is demonstrated by the predominance of icons connected with twins: twin beds, twin sets, symmetrical items, and pairs of twins who surface regularly in fairy tales and in horror comics. For Elaine, twins are often lost. She dreams, for example, that her mother has a baby, one of twins and the fate of the missing twin is unknown. At the conversat, she sees the pickled twins preserved in time. These images connect with the most potent image of the lost twin, gleaned from the new physics: the space twin. Stephen points out that if one of a pair of twins were to take a flight in space for one week, he would return to earth ten years younger than the twin who is left behind. Elaine is haunted by the sadness she feels for the twin abandoned in time. Her loss of both Cordelia and Stephen--as well as, to a lesser extent, her parents--is connected with this imagery, suggesting that the dead are lost in a complex dimension of space-time.

There are many suggestions that Cordelia and Elaine are like a pair of twins. The narrative is framed by a pair of girls and a pair of women. Initially the book evokes Elaine and Cordelia in unified conspiracies, dressed similarly, described in the plural:

"We're impervious, we scintillate, we are thirteen" (4). At the end it evokes two old ladies on the plane. The parallel between the girls and the old ladies is clear. The girls' mouths are "tough, crayon-red, shiny as nails" (4): each of the old ladies has "a desiccated mouth lipsticked bright red with bravado" (420). The old ladies are "rambunctious, they're full of beans; they're tough as thirteen, they're innocent and dirty, they don't give a hoot" (420). Elaine sees the women as representing a lost possibility: "not something that's gone, but something that will never happen" (421), thus suggesting that the loss of a possible future is more significant than the loss of the past.

The twin imagery is also connected with gothic imagery, suggesting an important moral dimension. In their study of horror comics, Elaine and Cordelia read about two sisters, "a pretty one and one who has a burn covering half her face" (211). After the burned one hangs herself in despair, she returns and takes over the body of the pretty sister. The mirror, however, continues to reflect the burned one's face. In the graveyard, Elaine claims to have a twin self who is a vampire. If she and Cordelia are twins, evil and good, it seems that boundaries can be blurred and the two co-exist in one. Elaine is secretly disturbed by the comics because of this potential for blurred boundaries:

I'm afraid I'll find out that there's someone else trapped inside my body; I'll look into the bathroom mirror and see the face of another girl, someone who looks like me but has half of her face darkened, the skin burned away. (212)

Initially Elaine and Cordelia seem unproblematically distinct as victim and oppressor. Yet it becomes clear that between them there is a complex shifting of energy. When they first meet, Cordelia creates for them a shared intimacy, "a circle of two" (72). After Elaine is immersed in the hole, she loses power, and from that point the pattern seems to be clearly that of victim and oppressor. Elaine's recovery of equilibrium after the ravine episode seems to hold the pair in balance for a while. Then, after Elaine tells Cordelia the vampire story, she is aware that "energy has passed between us, and I am stronger" (233). As Elaine gains power through her "mean mouth" (234), Cordelia seems to lose it. She descends into failure and depression. Her temporary recovery when she finds a niche as an actress is counterbalanced by a deeper descent into despair, culminating in a suicide attempt. Finally, incarcerated in a private mental hospital, Cordelia is deprived of all power over herself and her life.

Elaine and Cordelia's reversal of roles is not so straightforward as it might at first seem. The novel subtly calls into question the process of representation in a universe that "changes when you look at it, as if it resists being known" (388), and if art is not a simple reflection of life, Elaine's representation of Cordelia may be a way of suppressing her. This suppression is evident in Elaine's initial fantasies of Cordelia rendered powerless, in an oxygen tent or yoked permanently to an iron lung, "being breathed, as an accordion is played" (8). Such

manipulation of Cordelia is implicit in Elaine's entire narrative. There are many suggestions that Elaine and Cordelia are more closely linked than at first might appear. At various points after her account of her persecutions at the hands of Cordelia, Elaine represents herself as disturbed by a feeling of doubleness: "I feel blurred, as if there are two of me, one superimposed on the other, but imperfectly" (173). Her paintings similarly illustrate a confusion of boundaries. In her self-portrait, only half a face is visible; in her portrait of Cordelia, the full face is visible, but it is called Half a Face.

Drawing on the gothic imagery established through the horror comics, Elaine seems to experience a confusion of boundaries between Cordelia and herself. This confusion grows for both Elaine and the reader. In Elaine's painting of Cordelia, an attempt to capture her "defiant, almost belligerent stare" (227), she in fact produces a look that is "tentative, hesitant, reproachful. Frightened" (227). Elaine remarks, "I'm not afraid of seeing Cordelia. I'm afraid of being Cordelia. Because in some way we changed places, and I've forgotten when" (227). The confusion between them culminates in Elaine's final vision of the child in the ravine. By the logic of Elaine's initial story, the child should be herself, but in fact it is Cordelia:

There is the same shame, the sick feeling in my body, the same knowledge of my own wrongness, awkwardness, weakness; the same wish to be loved; the same loneliness; the same fear. But these are not my own emotions any more. They are Cordelia's; as they always were. (419)

By the end of the novel, the identities of Cordelia and Elaine, tormentor and victim, have become blurred.

One of the book's epigraphs suggests the full implications of the blurring of Cordelia and Elaine and the transfer of power between them: "anyone who kills receives in his body, without wanting or knowing it, the soul of his victim." Elaine and Cordelia, victim and oppressor are conflated to the extent that it is not possible to tell which was which. In retrospect, Elaine never appears only as a victim of Cordelia's torments, but is implicated much more fully in the process of torment than her "fiction" might seem to suggest. Allusions to works such as Anderson's "The Snow Queen," with its devil's mirror that inverts moral reality, and Macbeth, with its insistence that fair is foul and foul is fair, suggest the extent to which Elaine's narrative may be a distorting mirror. The subtle but insistent conflation of Elaine and Cordelia radically affects the notion of the self. Elaine, "vengeful, greedy, secretive, and sly" (153), is not clearly delineated or stable. Instead, she has powers of transformation and reinvention, the power to reinvent memory and construct fictions. This notion of the self, which defies that employed in traditional autobiography, is a permanent state of the female ego as represented by Elaine. The narrative suggests that the rift originates in the evils of the divisive domestic world that lie under its bland surface. It also suggests that the division can be healed, if only partially and with difficulty, through a process of re-membering that involves a complex concept

of vision.

Whereas several of Atwood's books focus on language, Cat's Eye is concerned, apparently almost exclusively, with physical vision. The male gaze that has traditionally dominated western culture is profoundly destructive to women. Women are the topic of art; "Painters paint women" (90), Elaine remarks. Her painting "Life Drawing" suggests that through its history from the classical period to the contemporary, women are objectified by art, "served up" (326), like meat in still lifes. That this tendency affects the way women are perceived in life is borne out by the attitudes of Josef and Jon. Josef's art is linked to his desire to "rearrange" Elaine. His dreams of "a woman wrapped up in cellophane," of a woman in a shroud, and another "face down in the bathtub" (298) suggest women either packaged for consumption or dead. Elaine observes his avoidance of direct gaze: "When he tells me these dreams, he doesn't look at me exactly; it's as if he's looking at a point several inches inside my head" (298). He touches Elaine, she says, "as if he's erasing me" (298). Jon's art, with its fondness for shatter patterns, fixes process and is "eye-damaging" (335), a serious charge in a world that stresses the vital importance of vision. His painting is linked to his skill at "doing a chain saw murder" (17) and creating "hacked-up body-part stuff" (17) and an "exploding eyeball" (264).

Atwood explores the destructive nature of the male gaze more extensively in other novels; in Cat's Eye she turns her attention to women's gaze--especially women's visual constructions of

women. Women have internalized the male gaze to such an extent that they have trouble seeing themselves without reference to it. Women must live in fear of stimulating the male gaze, making a "spectacle" of themselves and therefore must manipulate their appearance in order not to attract the wrong kind of attention. Women obsessively consider how they look. Elaine herself is constantly gazing into mirrors, obsessing with the details of her features, grey hairs, wrinkles, hairs on the upper lip. She even notes, "I eat in pink restaurants, which are better for the skin" (5). Yet mirror-gazing can give at best only a distorted view of a self that takes its meaning exclusively from the male gaze. Elaine experiences a problem with getting this self into focus: "too close to the mirror and I'm a blur, too far back and I can't see the details" (5). The influence of the male gaze so distorts women's perceptions that "whatever else women want to see, it's not themselves" (44).

Through its images of women's "eye problems" (5), the novel suggests that vision in the contemporary world is seriously awry. The images of mirrors, snow and cold, and distorted vision suggest the imagery of Anderson's "The Snow Queen," suggesting the world as a whole is suffering from blighted vision. Furthermore, as in Anderson's tale, many parallels are made between eye and heart. The heart of the turtle Elaine sees at the conversat, for example, is "like an eye" (170). The turtle's heart, kept beating after death, is "agonizingly slow," the sound of "Life . . . flowing out" (170). Society in Cat's Eye suffers

from ubiquitous heart disease. The heart's original connection with life-giving force has become weakened by representations of the heart in commercial and trivial images--Elaine's red plastic purse, the pincushion heart of the Virgin Mary, paper valentine hearts, commemoration poppies "red like valentine hearts, with a black spot and a pin through the centre" (106). Women's hearts, if they are not paper or plastic imitations, are diseased like Mrs. Smeath's "bad heart" (58), her "horrible treasure" (58), which seems to contain a splinter of the devil's glass. The human heart in the contemporary world is "a dubious object at best, blotchy and treacherous" (379). Both heart and eye are stripped of life-giving power and susceptible to disease.

The novel suggests that there is a form of vision that can act as a partial corrective to these eye problems. An eye apparently reflects what is in front of it. Actually, though, eyes have the power to organize the world. In the Van Eyck painting that fascinates Elaine, for example, is a mirror that acts "like an eye, a single eye that sees more than anyone else looking" (327). Elaine's cat's eye marble, the importance of which is suggested by the title of the novel, has several important powers. On the one hand, it shares the power of the talismanic cat's eye of the Egyptians that has the power to "make the wearer invisible in battle" (Walker, 506). On the other hand, it also allows Elaine to see the world as pure visual process and make her "alive in [her] eyes only" (141). Cat's eye vision preserves process; Elaine notes that her mother "like a cat . . .

cannot see things unless they are moving" (213). Cat's eyes, themselves unseen, can perceive things that others cannot. Further, Elaine's marble has the power to unify and contain her life; when she finds her marble, she observes, "I look into it, and I see my life entire" (398). Elaine's painting Unified Field Theory depicts the Virgin of Lost Things holding to her heart an oversize Cat's Eye marble. The painting is both a personal record of Elaine's loss and recovery and a comment on a more widespread loss of cat's eye vision in society in general.

Elaine's assimilation of the power of the cat's eye marble leads to her development as an artist, and art, in the course of the narrative, is revealed as a surviving form of cat's eye vision. Art is traditionally believed to preserve life from time by rendering it in a permanent medium. Elaine initially subscribes to this view. Her painting "The Three Muses" is, she believes, a "reward" for Mrs. Finestein, Miss Stuart, and Mr. Banerjee; she has "translate[d] them into glory" (407). Yet, as she recognizes, to believe this is to "play God" (407) by distributing justice and defying mortality. She realizes that such glory is only an illusion:

I may have thought I was preserving something from time, salvaging something; like all those painters, centuries ago, who thought they were bringing Heaven to earth, the revelations of God, the eternal stars, only to have their slabs of wood and plaster stolen, mislaid, burnt, hacked to pieces, destroyed by rot and mildew. (409)

Art is not eternal, but subject to the laws of entropy. The real

value of painting is that it has rendered people "Not as they were, to themselves" (407), but as they appeared in her perception of them. Her art thus acts as a kind of mirror, one that emphasizes the validity of others' perceptions.

Pondering her many renditions of Mrs. Smeath, Elaine realizes that her paintings are acts of vengeance. Yet they are also something more:

But these pictures are not only mockery, not only desecration. I put light into them too. Each pallid leg, each steel-rimmed eye, is there as it was, as plain as bread. I have said, Look. I have said, I see. (404)

Looking at Mrs. Smeath through the medium of her own painting, Elaine can see that her eyes are not only "self righteous . . . piggy and smug" but also "defeated . . . uncertain and melancholy, heavy with unloved duty" (405). Her art enables her to gain a new perspective on her own childhood self through "these painted eyes of Mrs. Smeath": "a frazzle-headed ragamuffin from heaven knows where, a gypsy practically, with a heathen father and a feckless mother who traipsed around in slacks and gathered weeds. I was unbaptized, a nest for demons: how could she know what germs of blasphemy and unfaith were breeding in me? And yet she took me in" (405). Elaine realizes the need for "mercy" rather than vengeance. "An eye for an eye" she realizes, "leads only to more blindness" (405); more blindness is deeply damaging in a society in which vision is blighted, and even sunlight is "old light, and there's not much of it" (421).

Art, then, can produce a remedial vision of others, especially women. The novel suggests that there are other related ways women can deconstruct the male gaze. When Elaine and Cordelia are children, Cordelia torments Elaine with a mirror. Holding it up to her face and forcing her to look, she can make Elaine construct herself as "nothing." Cordelia's reflection of Elaine is destructive, yet such destructiveness is only one of its aspects, albeit a powerful one. Thinking of Cordelia, Elaine notes:

She will have her own version. I am not the center of her story, because she herself is that. But I could give her something you can never have, except from another person: what you look like from outside. A reflection. This is the part of herself I could give back to her. (411)

Similarly, Cordelia herself carries a vital reflection of Elaine, without which Elaine is not complete. Elaine and Cordelia are "like the twins in old fables, each of whom has been given half a key" (411). The fragmented key they carry is their perception of the other. The self can, indeed, be perceived only through the "Other"; when the Other is female rather than male as it traditionally is for women, there is a possibility that the self can be constructed in a way that defies the many ravages of patriarchy. Women can thus perform the vital function of being dynamic mirrors for each other.

The novel focuses on visual art, yet it is also a narrative that itself contains many reflections of Cordelia, suggesting an

analogy between visual art and narrative. Initially Elaine creates fictions of Cordelia rendered powerless. The final section, though, suggests a narrative gesture of mercy rather than vengeance. It is structured as a completion of a cycle, the bending of time. Elaine had initially characterized herself as at the midpoint of her life, which she imagines as a place "like the middle of a river, the middle of a bridge, halfway across, halfway over" (13), and her vision of Cordelia marks that physical and temporal midway point. Re-visiting the ravine where she had her childhood vision of the Virgin, Elaine points to the paradoxical nature of her vision:

There was no voice. No one came walking on air down from the bridge, there was no lady in a dark cloak bending over me. Although she has come back to me now in absolute clarity, acute in every detail, the outline of her hooded shape against the lights from the bridge, the red of her heart from within the cloak, I know this didn't happen. There was only darkness and silence. Nobody and nothing. (418)

The idea of conjuring something from nothing suggests that the virgin is an imaginative creation ex nihilo. At this point, the narrative seems to become self-conscious; the virgin--simultaneously real and not real--has been created only in fiction. This revelation makes the ensuing vision of Cordelia seem itself to be created in fiction rather than any kind of reality. Elaine summons Cordelia:

I am the older one now, I'm the stronger. If she stays here any longer she will freeze to

death; she will be left behind, in the wrong time. It's almost too late.

I reach out my arms to her, bend down, hands open to show I have no weapon. It's all right, I say to her, You can go home now.

(419)

Elaine, still dressed in her black dress and standing on the concrete lighted bridge, thus becomes the virgin of her own childhood apparition. The two fragmentary selves of Elaine and Cordelia have thus finally merged. As an adult Elaine, by a profound act of will--the act of imaginative construction--becomes the Virgin Mary, the saviour of her own childhood self.

The final re-remembering of Cordelia is thus analogous to artistic creation. As a painter, Elaine has not only represented reality, but created meaningful visual images from "nothing." As in her painting of her mother, she can make people materialize. More obscurely, but just as suggestively, as narrator of the text of Cat's Eye, Elaine has conjured figures of women, particularly Cordelia. In reality, Cordelia has only a tendency to exist and "There is no Cordelia" (177), yet in the reality of the narrative, Cordelia exists as Elaine has created her. Narrative is constructed out of "nobody and nothing."

Artistic creation--either the rendering of visual images or the sustenance of voice--is thus a redemptive force. It is a construction from nothing, in which "the shapes of things begin to emerge . . . as if they are condensing from the air" (26), a way of "seeing in the dark." The vision it creates can be a redemptive one that heals a breach in the female psyche and

allows woman to become her own saviour. Primarily, artistic vision is important because it is a way of asserting a sense of self against pervasive entropy. Elaine is depleted by the energy transfer that takes place when she produces her paintings, and when she ceases to impose her visual constructions, the universe returns to its inchoate state "filled with whatever it is by itself when I'm not looking" (419). The female self, if it is to resist the law of entropy, must engage in continual energetic reinventions.

"ITS IMAGE ON THE MIRROR" AND "LINNET MUIR"

In comparison with Atwood and Munro, Gallant chooses less frequently to sustain a female voice through a lengthy narrative. Most of her first-person narratives are short stories, and often they emphasize the failure of voice rather than its persistence. "An Autobiography," for example, ends abortively with the image of the blank page and its associated sense of "waste." A Fairly Good Time is Gallant's most sustained examination of a single female character, although the third-person narrative voice creates a sense of distance from Shirley that obscures the ways in which Shirley constructs herself. Two first-person narratives stand out in Gallant's canon because they sustain a female voice beyond the length of a short story. "Its Image on the Mirror" is the first-person narrative of Jean Price, and it explores her construction of the self through a novella-length narrative. In the Linnet Muir stories in Home Truths, a short story sequence is employed to sustain the voice of Linnet, who seems in some ways a development of Jean Price. Certainly she is Gallant's most articulate character, and her only character to fulfil herself as a writer and to maintain her voice.

Both "Its Image on the Mirror" and the "Linnet Muir" stories explore the construction and the representation of the female self. In "Its Image on the Mirror," Jean and Isobel Price are sisters who are so diametrically opposed that they seem in some ways to be opposite aspects of a single self. The narrative depicts a struggle between the sisters which Jean resolves by manipulating the narrative voice to silence her sister. Jean's

narrative emphasizes her connections to her family, particularly her mother and sister, and these connections are perceived as damaging. Linnet Muir begins her narrative from the premise of complete independence. Apparently she has successfully severed all connections with her family and her past. Yet the sequence reveals that such independence, although a necessary stance, cannot suffice. If writing is to be more than one variety of exile, it must explore and forge tenable and coherent connections between the self and its past, especially the women in its past.

"Its Image on the Mirror" is ostensibly a casual and directionless reflection by the narrator on certain key events in her life. It is set partially during the war years, yet the war itself is muted, and the focus is on the feminized world created by the departures of men into a landscape that the women cannot conceptualize. Jean is aware that the world thus bereft of the patriarchal control that has hitherto structured it tends toward chaos--"the gradual slackening, the hysterical untidiness"¹ that begin to take over when women live together. Some women, like Jean's roommate Alma, succumb to the chaos. Others, though, like Jean herself, develop strategies for survival. In this world, relationships between women are highlighted. The story takes the family drama of the relationship between mother and sisters as its focal point. Covertly, the story depicts a struggle-- profoundly destructive--to resist connections between women and the chaos such connections might entail, and to maintain a firm, though deeply fractured, identity.

The structure of "Its Image on the Mirror" appears at first glance to be almost random, jumping as it does between certain events seemingly arranged in no particular order. Each section focuses on one central event, but moves in time both backwards and forwards from that event. The sections concentrate on two time periods, the period covering the end of the war and its aftermath, especially 1945-6, and the period ten years later when Jean's parents move from Allenton. The narrative is set in a present some ten years after this later event. The first section concerns the parents' sale of their house and move from Allenton, the second, the Labour Day visit to the lake in the same year (1955), apparently the last occasion on which Jean sees Isobel. The third and fourth sections move back to the war years, dealing with Isobel's relationship with Alec, and Jean's engagement and marriage to Tom. The fifth section concerns the death of Frank in 1946, and the sixth, a visit Frank paid to his sisters in Montreal some weeks before his death just after Christmas. The final section moves back to the three days after Frank's death, culminating in Isobel's revelation to Jean that she is pregnant.

The narrative seems to be somewhat jumbled, and to mimic the way memory can work. Certainly it is similar to both Cat's Eye and Who Do You Think You Are with its detailed highlighting of certain periods and almost complete erasure of others. Yet the apparent randomness of the narrative events is undercut by the effect of their arrangement, for the final section depicts a narrative climax, the revelation that Jean "stopped being the

stranger on the dark street and . . . moved into the bright rooms of [her] sister's life" (149). This revelation alters the story retrospectively and clarifies the point at which the power relationship between the sisters has been reversed. In fact, Jean's narrative, apparently a casual recollection, is carefully structured to conceal her own narrative unreliability.

Jean's relationship with her sister is complex and pervaded by contradictions. She is powerfully attached to Isa; when Isa almost dies, Jean's first impulse is that she too will die, and when Isa moves to Caracas, Jean observes, "I felt as though my own life drained away with her" (64). Yet, at the same time, she maintains an obsessive struggle for dominance over her sister. The struggle is partly a result of the jealousy that she reveals in the course of her narrative. She constantly hints at the mother's preference for Isa which defies the fact that Isa contradicts almost every value the mother holds, whereas Jean herself duplicates the mother's values and even her gestures. Further, Isa's attractiveness draws men to her; even Jean's husband loved Isa first.

The most powerful source of jealousy--though it is always ambivalent--is the choice of life Isa has made. During the war, Jean represents a "historically permitted, morally correct" (100) figure, whereas her sister and Alec are "sinners" (100). Jean's life follows a fixed pattern: "The shape of life was pressed on stones in the form of ferns and snails, immutable. Yesterday, tomorrow: stones had picked up the pattern and there was nothing

I could change. Isobel had broken a stone" (63). Jean herself perpetuates the family structure but is jealous of the fact that her sister has broken the seemingly "immutable" pattern of female life. To cover her envy, she attempts to construct her sister's life as a failure: "I was part of my mother and father, and my children were part of me. I had succeeded in that, and Isa had failed" (77). Yet Jean's response to her own success is always ambivalent.

Jean's obsession with Isa is not only the result of jealousy, for Isa poses a threat to Jean's identity. In her alliance with traditional family values, Jean is alien to Isa, and believes that "Isa never laid eyes on me without wishing I were someone else" (90). As Jean's sister, Isa can provide a kind of mirror to Jean, but, Jean believes, the image she reflects is distorted:

She was wrong about me, but this is what she thought: she thought I was flat-minded, emptily optimistic, and thoroughly pleased with myself. She despised my safe marriage to a man my mother liked, and my war work, and even my job. I was the pattern of life discarded, the route struck off the map, the possible future. She walled herself away from me. (91)

Jean perpetually desires to correct what she believes are Isa's impressions, feeling "the old unquietness, as if I must run after her into infinity, saying 'Wait, I am not the person you think at all'" (85). Isa's construction of Jean remains powerful, and Jean's narrative is an attempt to have the last word, to silence

and fix her sister. Death is a possible means of control: "Dead-and-buried Isobel, under a heap of snow, or a rectangle of grass, would be harmless Isobel" (62). Isa does not die, and so Jean resorts to strategies of narrative control.

From the first, the story emphasizes the idea of control. It opens with Jean's "tableau," as stylized as an allegorical religious painting, depicting people "stopped in their tracks" (57). The validity of her tableau as a representation of memory is immediately called into question by Jean's remarking that her mother contradicts this image, commenting that she could not have seen it as she claims. Nor is this the unreliability of a child's memory as it might at first appear: the memory is less than ten years distant from the present of the narrative. The narrative is full of remarks that undermine Jean's reliability. She frequently notes that she often cannot distinguish between memory and dream and admits that her depictions "may distort the remembered scene" (151). Jean is herself associated with the stance of a watcher, whose gaze fixes the process it observes. Yet the full extent of her control is revealed only retrospectively.

Jean claims she has never liked fairy tales. Yet she sets up an opposition between herself and Isa which is as stylized as any fairy tale. Isobel is untidy, unkempt, reckless, passionate, and bohemian. Jean is tidy, contained, and controlled. Long before Isobel marries Alfredo and moves to Caracas, Jean associates her with a "warmer world" and "a climate I could sense but not capture, like a secret, muddled idea I had of Greece, or the

south, or being warm" (136-7). Jean herself is associated insistently with winter and snow. These opposites become further dichotomized into moral terms, though Jean notes that by now people "have forgotten who was good and who was bad" (94), a significant confusion. Lorna Irvine argues that this dichotomy between the sisters is a political allegory too. Jean is associated with English Canada, whereas Isobel is an outsider, associated with European and French culture. Irvine notes: "The text elucidates the split consciousness that characterizes Canadian nationalism, and dramatizes the culturally charged tensions that separate the English and the French" (77). Most importantly, though, the text shows how Jean controls by creating sharp classifications in her narrative and constructing Isa as "the eternal heroine" (84).

Between Isa and Jean are a closeness and tension similar to that between Flo and Rose, and, particularly, between Elaine and Cordelia. There is a sense in which, as with Elaine and Cordelia, the two identities are confused in the mind of the one who sets down the narrative. Jean notes that when she finds their old childhood books,

I remembered, for instance, that I had once believed that planets were small and cold, and melted like ice cubes. An instant later I knew I had never thought anything of the kind, but that Isobel had. (84).

She continues: "I was always putting myself in my sister's place, adopting her credulousness, and even her memories, I saw, could

be made mine" (84). Although she does not appear to usurp Isa's experiences in the way Elaine does Cordelia's, this confusion of memories serves to underline Jean's unreliability and to blur the boundaries between the sisters.

The second section shows how successfully narrative can be used to erase Isobel, especially her voice, though its effect is more compelling in retrospect. Jean's record of Isobel at their last meeting is almost purely visual. Isobel is "straggly and unkempt" (75), "thin and sallow" (76). Jean notes of the moment Isobel approaches her, "I have forgotten what she said" (70). The events of the Labour Day dinner highlight the miserable isolation in which each of the characters lives, yet Jean feels "the closest feeling I have to happiness": "It is a sensation of contentment because everyone around me is doing the right thing. The pattern is whole" (75). This happiness becomes even more disturbing when Jean characterizes the isolation Isa is experiencing as "revenge . . . true justice, or vindication" (77). She approaches Isa and, she records, "we spoke" (77). Yet she erases the encounter wholly so that when Isobel is leaving she can claim that "Isobel was going, and had said nothing to me. She had not spoken at all" (77). Thus her narrative draws attention to the way in which it effectively and deliberately silences Isa so that Jean can make her triumphant claim, "There's only me" (64). Even more disturbing than this silencing is Jean's comment at the end. Tom, whose "memory is for dates, not for feelings," "will insist that we last saw Isobel in 1958 and not

1955, as I tell it" (154). Jean is capable, perhaps, of erasing encounters with her sister even more fully than is readily apparent here.

Jean's strategy for control effectively silences her sister's voice which, characterized as "rapid and light" (120) and "light and full of life" (147), might be a potentially effective voice. She realizes that "Even when we were young I silenced her" (85) with a "hopeful, watching, censor's eye" (85). Isa's apparent secrecy that seems to generate Jean's narrative is thus, perhaps, the result of Jean's deliberate censorship. After Isa's revelation of her pregnancy, Jean sees her expression as the look of "Someone who has lost his language" (152), and indeed Isa's confession, which should be redemptive as an exchange Jean has long desired, is the point at which Jean is able to begin her process of robbing her sister of her voice.

Isa's confession of pregnancy is the moment of intimacy Jean has longed for. It is the one place in the narrative where Isobel is allowed a voice, telling "something completely astonishing and greatly intimate" (151). Jean consciously tries not to distort the event, insisting that whatever romantic myths and "fancies" (148) she may have suggested, the sisters were, in fact, "very ordinary" (153). She perceives the need for the sisters, who sit "at opposite ends of the bed, with our childhoods between us going on to the horizon without a break" (153), to meet: "I thought that unless we could meet across the landscape we might as well die, it was useless to stay alive" (153). Yet the moment

of intimacy fails:

I moved forward, kneeling, in the most clumsy movement possible. It was dragging oneself through water against the swiftest current, in the fastest river in the world; I knelt on the bed near my sister and took her thin relaxed hand in mine. We met in a corner of the landscape and she glanced at me, then slid her hand out of mine and said, "Oh, don't." (153)

Confession alone, it seems, cannot heal the breach; touch is needed, yet ironically it is Isa, apparently less affected than Jean by the "terror of pity" (147), who refuses the touch. From this point Jean's narrative turns from quest to revenge. After the failure, Jean is concerned not with her sister's plea for her "whole attention" (152), but only with the price she is prepared to pay for it.

The price Jean extorts is high indeed. Armed with a secret about her sister, she imagines that she now holds the balance of power. The letter to Tom containing Isobel's story would be "Isobel delivered, Isobel destroyed" (154). Yet rather than telling, she chooses narrative secrecy. Having long believed her sister holds a secret of some kind, she now reverses the roles. Secrecy entails even more power than narrative: she has the power of the "final word" (154). Isobel becomes transformed into "poor Isa" (154). A power reversal has been effected:

I believed that one day she would speak, and part of my character hidden from everyone but her would be revealed. She might have spoken, but our dialogue was cut short. Our family is

open, blameless, and plain. Anything she cares to say, now, would be spiteful but harmless. (67)

Jean can now construct Isa in her narrative and silence her.

The struggle focuses on the sisters, yet the mother is a concealed source of power behind their drama. Like Jean, she is a censor concerned with silences and secrecy. With her severely repressive distrust of emotion, she censors all memories and emotional responses. She pushes her memory of Allenton, where she has lived all her married life, "over a cliff" (60). She suppresses emotional life and demonstrates the pervasive "mistrust of pity, the contempt for weakness, the fear of the open heart" (89). Her story of the cat, which she re-writes to transform the cat's cruel death into the fiction that "Julie ran away" (102), suggests that she, like Jean, can write narratives to change history. Unlike Jean, though, "full of silent answers" (112), she prefers silence to narrative, believing "the less said the better, always" (81).

Although Jean marries to escape her "mother's small shadow" (66), she duplicates the pattern of her mother's life and sees her mother's gestures in many of her own, recognizing "our voices are alike" (65). Isobel, by contrast, erases her mother: "If I had a mother I wouldn't let her read anything" (141). The image suggests that she would like to reverse her mother's role as censor. In the final section, Isa's characterization of their mother as a repressive force crystallizes:

"When we were kids we couldn't get away with a midnight talk, could we? We'd hear 'Jean-an-Isa. Isa-an-Jean. Quiet. It's late.' You know, for years I thought mother could read our minds and see through walls. (149)

It is the mother who has censored, to the point of forestalling, the dialogue between the sisters. The failure of connection between the sisters thus has its roots in the mother's apparently casual, yet deeply destructive, decrees.

Jean's narrative is a strategy of control, comparable to her mother's silences. Her narrative is unstable: she cannot anchor memory in language, but perpetually confuses remembered visual perception, memory, and dream. Irvine argues that Jean does not undergo development in the course of the narrative, but remains permanently in this unstable state. Besner, though, argues that in the course of the narrative Jean is transformed into a writer and "a realist wakened from her own romance" (29). Certainly the final section shows a deliberate attempt not to distort; Jean continually corrects her descriptions, removing the shaping of romance to reveal the sisters as "very ordinary" (153). The act of writing has the power to re-connect with vital memories. At one point in the narrative, Jean notes she has always been puzzled by her husband's remark that Isobel "always smelled of gardenias" (105); later she remembers why he might have said this. The narrative thus suggests that memory can be recovered through writing.

Yet Jean does not "Leave us there" (153) with her undistorted image of the sisters on the bed, but goes on to depict a

failed attempt to bridge the gap. Further, the book's treatment of the sequence of events, the fact that it begins at a point long after the final scene, encourages if not demands a second reading, which throws us back to the idea of narrative control as an act of revenge rather than redemption. The dominance of the negative aspects of narrative is also created partly because Jean's narrative hangs in a vacuum: there is nothing to suggest her voice, if it has developed into a writer's voice, continues beyond the end of the narrative. If the power of voice to redeem has been discovered, it has been quickly abandoned.

The story ends with an evocative image:

We woke from dreams of love remembered, a
house recovered and lost, a climate imagined,
a journey never made; we woke dreaming our
mothers had died in childbirth and heard
ourselves saying, "Then there is no one left
but me!" (155)

The idea of the mother dying in childbirth is highly ambiguous. On the one hand, the cry, "Then there is no one left but me!" is one of isolation and loss; on the other, it is a cry of triumph that the self has survived and shed its necessary connections to others to give the independence characters crave. Independence, freedom from the blighted connections that haunt Jean, indicates the possibility of freedom of memory and imagination, though such a gain has an attendant price. Yet Jean does not pursue this dream of independence, but chooses to "forget our dreams and return to life" (155); the return seems to eliminate the possibility of recovery through narrative.

"Its Image on the Mirror," itself a kind of mirror, is a compelling record of Jean's construction of herself. On the surface, she is an ordinary woman, fulfilling a traditional family role. Yet her narrative is so replete with contradictions and confusions that Jean emerges as a deeply fragmented self, so incoherent as hardly to exist as a subject of narrative. She can examine herself only in terms of connection with others, particularly her mother and sister. This connection is pathological; her family line appears as an "indelible web" (89) she sees on her face when she looks in the mirror and as a chorus of confused and nebulous ghosts in the Allenton house. The exchange between sisters, which could be a vital form of contact, is abortive: "Words are omitted, and the wrong things said" (94). Ironically, the woman's condition seems to involve the deliberate pursuit of someone to act as a wall which prevents communication, especially between sisters: "someone between you and the others, blotting out the light" (151). In her use of narrative as a means of repression, Jean cannot exploit the possibility of narrative for offering coherence to memory and imagination, and she must fail as a writer.

At first glance there would appear to be no similarities between Linnet Muir, the protagonist of the final six stories in Home Truths, and Jean Price other than a few superficial details of their lives: both work in an engineering office during the war where they encounter men who, living "small lives of their own creation,"⁴ dispense couched sexual threats

and exude a deeply pitiful sense of rot, and both marry husbands who are sent overseas only a few days later. In fact, Linnet seems to incorporate some aspects of Isobel's character too; like her, she is deeply interested in refugees, and she too embraces the passionate side of life with its "giddy risks and changes" (226). Like Isobel, she apparently separates almost totally from her mother and resists her attempts to "alter the form, the outward shape at least, of the creature she thought she was modelling" (218).

In some respects, Linnet is a conflation of the two opposing natures characterized by Jean and Isobel, and, conversely, in the light of the Linnet Muir stories, "Its Image on the Mirror" appears more surely to be using the image of the opposing sisters as a metaphor for a single but divided self. Certainly in cultural terms it is true that Linnet represents an integration of the two sisters. Linnet is both French and English Canadian and has both English and American connections. Her cultural background transcends the two exclusive "mossy little ponds labelled 'French and Catholic' or 'English and Protestant'" (305) that many people are defined--and crippled--by. At one point she notes that the Ontario city she lived in was full of "paranoid Protestants and slovenly Catholics" (223), alternatives that seem to sum up, if somewhat reductively, the alternatives represented by Jean and Isobel.

Jean's own internal divisions are reflected in her voice, which is so confused as sometimes to be almost incoherent.

Linnet, by contrast, maintains an articulate and coherent narrative voice. Unlike Jean, she can readily distinguish between memory and imagination. She recognizes, for example, that Sherbrooke Street, her "dream street . . . my Mecca, my Jerusalem" is the dull reality she finds: "It was only this" (235), and she learns to separate her "dream past" (235) of her personal mythology from the reality. Like Jean's, Linnet's narrative suggests a division in the narrative voice, but whereas Jean's division is a symptom of a psychic rift, Linnet's is a dialogue between her young self and her mature narrating self. The narrator portrays the perceptions of the younger Linnet and frequently suggests--though she rarely explains--a disparity between them.

The sequence does not attempt to account for the development between the young Linnet and the older as a bildungsroman would. Development is indicated only by the disparity in the voices of Linnet and by the suggestion of a pattern of development in Linnet's writing, though this is rendered only obliquely. The gaps in Linnet's history are great, and the phases of development that a bildungsroman would pay most attention to are referred to only in passing. Even Linnet's apprenticeship as a writer is treated only indirectly. Linnet does not exist in the way a rounded character exists in realist fiction. Nevertheless, coherence is suggested through the solidity and persistence of Linnet's voice. Through writing, the self enters into dialogue with itself, recovers memory, and, most importantly, recovers

lost voices from the past.

Many of the concerns that haunt "Its Image on the Mirror" reappear in the Linnet Muir stories in slightly different terms. For example, in the former story, the mother figure represents the censor of emotional life and language. In the sequence it is Canadian society in general that performs this repression; Linnet notes that she spent "a long spell of grief and shadow" in an Ontario city: "a place full of mean judgments and grudging minds" (223). She realizes that such suppression enables people (like Mrs. Price) to "see their sons off to war without a blink" (228), yet she also understands that it is "murder in everyday life" and that "The dead of heart and spirit litter the landscape" (228). Linnet, unlike Jean Price, transcends repression, partly because of her American background and partly because of the vitality of her mother who, in contrast to Mrs. Price, defies such repression.

Linnet's mother "made herself the central figure in loud, spectacular dramas which she played with the houselights on" (230). Linnet's education has made her "invisible to [her]self" (243), yet, drawing more than she realizes on the model offered by her mother, she learns in her fiction to transcend such deathly repression and, initially, to make herself the "central character" in her own story. The most significant difference between Linnet and Jean is linked to this concept of constructing oneself as a "central character" in a private drama. The idea of independence resonates throughout the sequence. Indeed the

epigraph to the book in which most characters sadly lack even basic integrity--"Only personal independence matters"--might be Linnet's motto. Jean's essential mode of being, worked out in her narrative, is her crippling connectedness to her family, especially to her sister, which seems stamped on her face as the "indelible web" she observes when she looks in the mirror. This connectedness is pathological, not positive. At the beginning of her story, Linnet, by contrast, has apparently shed every connection.

The opening story, ironically entitled "In Youth Is Pleasure," shows how Linnet initially constructs her notion of independence in a variety of ways. She is emancipated from her parents by her father's death and her own "indifference" to her mother; she is, she notes, "solely responsible for my economic survival and . . . no living person felt any duty toward me" (219). Yet, not content with this notion of independence, she finds a number of metaphors for it. She suggests, for example, that her independence is a return from the dead (a number of people in Montreal believe that she died as a child). In addition to the idea of re-birth, she suggests the idea of revolution:

My life was my own revolution--the tyrants deposed, the constitution wrenched from unwilling hands; I was, all by myself, the liberated crowd setting the palace on fire; I was the flags, the trees, the bannered windows, the flower-decked trains. The singing and the skyrockets of the 1848 I so trustingly believed would emerge out of the war were me, no one but me; (225-26)

Linnet's emancipation thus takes on the significance of political revolution in the context of national history.

The young Linnet is obsessively concerned with images of absolute independence and completely new beginnings, "stepping off the edge blindfolded" (226-27). Yet throughout the story, the voice of the older Linnet qualifies the younger Linnet's perceptions. She understands that her earlier myths make virtue of necessity, since she was "independent inevitably" (226). She also realizes that the young Linnet misses a possibility: "there wasn't the whisper of a voice to tell me, 'You might compromise'" (226). The story shows how Linnet's independence is continually undercut, from her very first experience with the man at Windsor Station to her father's three friends' refusal to see Linnet's "true passport, the invisible one we all carry" (232) as valid. Indeed the rest of the stories continue this trend, emphasizing her sexual vulnerability, especially in her office where she is like "A pigeon among the cats" (242).

"In Youth is Pleasure" ends with the disjunction between the two voices of Linnet--her younger self and her narrating older self:

at eighteen all that came to me was
thankfulness that I had been correct about
one thing throughout my youth, which I now
considered ended: time had been on my side,
faithfully, and unless you died you were
always bound to escape. (236-37)

The older voice perceives the paradox of being "bound to escape." Independence is thus fraught with ironies and qualifications. At

the same time, however, it is a concept that assures Linnet's survival and, most importantly, provides her with a metaphorical attachment to beginnings rather than to endings.

This concern with beginnings and origins of an independent self is especially significant in a context where so much is concerned with endings and empty plots. Irvine has argued that endings are associated with men and the dead-ends of war and Fascism. Certainly, women's stories of their fathers exercise imagination but are obsessively concerned with endings:

I know a woman whose father died, she thinks, in a concentration camp. Or was he shot in a schoolyard? Or hanged and thrown in a ditch? Were the ashes that arrived from some eastern plain his or another prisoner's? She invents different deaths. (234)

Although these endings, Linnet notes, are "sanctioned by history" (234), her own father's death has no such sanctions; it is, in fact, outlawed, socially and literally. Linnet accounts for his death by developing a concept she calls "homesickness." This concept must take in "everything" and, she realizes, "if I was to live my own life I had to let go" (235). Thus her narratives are not to be generated by an endless attempt to trace her father's ending. Instead, the complex notion of "homesickness," the disease that killed her father, becomes the central subject of her writing.

This idea is developed most fully in "Varieties of Exile," which examines somewhat self-consciously the concept of creating fiction. Linnet is fascinated by refugees; all her stories are

"about people in exile" (261). On a commuter train to Montreal, she meets Frank Cairns, whom she immediately characterizes as a "Remittance Man." She notes that "Like all superfluous and marginal persons, remittance men were characters in a plot" (266). The plot, which has six limited variations, begins and ends with the "powerful father" (266) who is only one generation removed from "the Father of us all" in England. The religious imagery is clear:

It was the father's Father, never met, never heard, who made Heaven and earth and Eve and Adam. The father in Canada seemed no more than an apostle transmitting a paternal message from the Father in England--the Father of us all. (269)

The father stands as the ultimate authority whose word, like God's, is law and provides the son with his sacred text. This plot, Linnet notes, is exclusively male: "It was . . . a male battle. No son was ever sent into exile by his mother, and no one has ever heard of a remittance woman" (267). She dismisses the plot as "a load of codswallop" (267), which turns the male line into a "ghost story" (271)--an empty plot lacking any imaginative substance.

Frank Cairns becomes the topic of Linnet's own stories, first of an early novel about "a man from somewhere, living elsewhere, confident that another world was entirely possible" (281), a novel which had, Linnet says, "shape, density, voice" (281) and then of this story. Yet "Varieties of Exile" suggests that Linnet's approach to fiction at this point is suspect too,

another variety of exile: "All this business of putting life through a sieve and then discarding it was another variety of exile; I knew that even then, but it seemed quite right and perfectly natural" (281). Writing can thus itself be a form of "exile" when it is used to discard life rather than to explore and establish connections.

In "Between Zero and One" Linnet realizes that her notebooks are full of "pages and pages of dead butterflies, wings without motion or lift" (249). She abandons poetry and turns to fiction, which she uses initially as a "way of untangling knots" (261). By the end of the "Varieties of Exile," Linnet has produced a story with "shape, density, voice," although she destroys it. The next two stories subtly suggest a further development in Linnet's writing. Instead of dealing with exiles, "Voices Lost in Snow" and "The Doctor" show Linnet reconstructing childhood memories and recovering childhood intuition which she believes is unwavering: "Unconsciously, everyone under the age of ten knows everything. Under-ten can come into a room and sense at once everything felt, kept silent, held back in the way of love, hate, and desire" (304). The sequence as a whole emphasizes the connection of memory and place--the recovery of memory is contingent on the return to place. These two stories document the recovery of the past and its landscape, and in them Linnet renders the texture of her visual memory with precision.

Yet in these stories the past is perceived not so much as a recovery of vision as it is a recovery of voices. As a child,

Linnet is besieged by adult voices which issue their unjust commands and attempt to constrict her. Anyone listening to adults speaking to children, she notes, "must hear the voice as authority muffled, a hum through snow" (282). Repressive authority can drown voices so that they are "lost in snow." This process is evidenced in many of the other stories in Home Truths. Yet Linnet differs from all the other characters in that, for her, a few clearer voices begin to emerge. One such voice records her own response to the hum of the voices of adults, who construct all interesting possibilities, particularly linguistic ones, as "nothing":

It must have been after yet another "nothing" that one summer's day I ran screaming around a garden, tore the heads off tulips, and--no, let another voice finish it; the only authentic voices I have belong to the dead: ". . . then she ate them." (283)

Linnet thus begins to recover memories of herself through "authentic voices" from the past, and this recovery, significantly, shifts the emphasis from herself as central actor to the voice of others. As with Elaine in Cat's Eye, the most valuable memories are, in a sense, other people's.

In both "Voices Lost in Snow" and "The Doctor," far from being at the centre of the story Linnet is peripheral, a pawn in somebody else's game. In "Voices Lost in Snow," for example, she is a low card "the eight of clubs" (294). In "The Doctor" she is a letter in a plot, one of two "Minor satellites floating out of orbit and out of order after the stars burned out" (315). The

shift in emphasis from Linnet herself whose perceptions dominate the first three stories, allows her to focus on other people, especially her parents, whose complex plights she depicts with considerable compassion.

Through its image of characters in social life designated only by letters, "The Doctor" suggests the plots that overtake life and destroy identity. Linnet herself is always conscious of the danger of becoming fixed in a mould as arbitrary as an alphabetical letter: "What could I have turned into in another place? Why, a librarian at Omsk or a file clerk at Tomsk" (226). Further, plots can be destructive. Even placing the self at the centre of the plot is not a solution, since it can be readily displaced, as Linnet's mother has experienced: "'poor Charlotte'--not even an X in the diary, finally--had once been the heart of the play. The plot must have taken a full turning after she left the stage" (314). Voice can reverse this tendency towards loss of identity. Linnet notes, for example, that in the story Louis tells her about Mrs. Erskine: "Mrs. Erskine is transmuted from the pale, affected statue I remember and takes on a polychrome life" (315). Linnet, then, must abandon plots like her childhood ones of "'The Insane Stepmother,' 'The Rich, Selfish Cousins,' 'The Death from Croup of Baby Sister' . . . and 'The Broken Engagement'" (312) and turn instead to a recovery of voice.

The sequence of the stories suggests a move from Linnet casting herself at the centre of her story to her discovery of the importance of the voices of others. As a child, she realizes,

she missed Dr. Chaucard's voice while she was "standing on tiptoe to reach the doorbell, calling through the letter box every way I could think of, 'I, me'" (316). The older Linnet recognizes the authenticity and value of this writer's voice. The rift in the narrative voice between the young Linnet and a more mature one is made explicit in the final story, "With a Capital T," which shows the young "independent" Linnet missing the opportunity for connection with Georgie, one of the important female figures in her past. She misses it because of her own inability to bend; she was, she realizes, "seamless, and as smooth as brass; . . . I gave her no opening" (329). She characterizes the breach between them:

Her life seemed silent and slow and choked with wrack, while mine moved all in a rush, dislodging every obstacle it encountered. Then mine slowed too; stopped flooding its banks. The noise of it abated and I could hear the past. (329)

"With A Capital T" ends not with this admission of the breach in outlook between the younger Linnet and the older Linnet, but on the subject of Georgie's legacies. After her death, her godsons "swarmed around for a while" (329) but eventually relinquished all claim.

Nobody spoke up for the one legacy the trustees would have relinquished: a dog named Minnie, who was by then the equivalent of one hundred and nineteen years old in human time, and who persisted so unreasonably in her right to outlive the rest of us that she had to be put down without mercy. (330)

The image suggests that traditional legacies of property are part of the male line. Georgie supports this line in her adoption of "the principle of the absent, endangered male" (327) and in her fiction that "All my godchildren were boys" (328). Yet Linnet concentrates on the more unusual legacies of women which often go unrecorded. In remembering Minnie and de-emphasizing herself, she forges a connection with Georgie despite the latter's staunch denial of the value of such connections.

The sequence implies the importance of connections between women, though, ironically, it does so indirectly and by highlighting only missed connections. The young Linnet sums up the women she sees around her: married women are "Red Queens" (262), and other girls are "coolies" (226). Yet the older Linnet perceives the politics of such reductiveness. In retrospect she realizes the need for women to connect. In "Between Zero and One" Mrs. Ireland initially appears so closely allied with male power that she is wholly alienated from Linnet, "Girls," she observes, "make me sick, sore, and weary" (255). Yet when Linnet is about to marry, Mrs. Ireland unconsciously reveals herself: "'Don't you girls ever know when you're well off? Now you've got no one to lie to you, to belittle you, to make a fool of you, to stab you in the back" (260). Her revealing insight into sexual politics causes Linnet to feel "the blackest kind of terror" (260). Yet Linnet cannot respond to Mrs. Ireland, because they cannot meet across their differences: "we were different--different ages, different women, two lines of a graph that could never cross"

(260). The older Linnet implicitly recognizes and laments the lost connection between women. The patriarchal world of men, represented in microcosm in the office where Linnet and Mrs. Ireland work, not only creates a world of "squares and walls and limits and numbers" (260), but also keeps women alienated from each other.

"Voices Lost in Snow" and "The Doctor" suggest similar lost connections between Linnet and her more immediate family. Both Linnet's mother and her grandmother represent the stern repression so damaging to children. Yet they are also women who have led lives crippled by the limitations of patriarchal society. Linnet's grandmother, for example, "did not care for dreams or for children" (286), yet Linnet recognizes that beyond the difficulties of understanding her is her desire to lead a life that patriarchy prevents:

It is impossible for me to enter the mind of this agnostic who taught me prayers, who had already shed every remnant of belief when she committed me at the font. I know that she married late and reluctantly; she would have preferred a life of solitude and independence, next to impossible for a woman in her time. (286)

The situation of Linnet's mother is even more complex. She too imposes her rules on Linnet, especially the empty rules of polite social conduct, and she sends Linnet away to an extremely repressive school. Linnet's mother is able to break out of repression herself and live a more emotional life than many other characters. She channels some of her energy into the construction

of imaginative plots. The scripts of her dramas, though, are concerned with endings: "She often rewrote other people's lives, providing them with suitable and harmonious endings" (287). In the course of her narrative, Linnet explains her mother's isolation, her somewhat bewildered life with a man who "spent his waking life . . . elsewhere" (285), the breakdown of her relationships with other women, especially Georgie, and her competition with Mrs. Erskine. Linnet retrospectively recognizes that her mother is another of the women with whom she can make connection only at a distance of time. The women's response to the whistle of a train unites them:

From our separate rooms my mother and I heard the unrivalled summons, the long, urgent, uniquely North American beckoning. She would follow and so would I, but separately, years and desires and destinations apart. I think that women once edged in such a manner are more steadfast than men. (289)

Mother and daughter are separated by an unbreachable gap, yet they are also connected--tenuously--by the intangible pledge that they make in their lives.

Linnet begins with a fiction of independence from her mother, but develops a better understanding of her. The text seems to harbour a couched acknowledgement of the mother's importance. Linnet is forced to relinquish her quest for her father which is, she realizes, a dead-end, "a pursuit of darkness, its terminal point a sunless underworld" (284). She apparently abandons interest in her mother, who, she notes early

on, is "at the least unpredictable and at the most a serious element of danger" (218). Yet later she notes that only maternal vitality can "save" us, and that "even an erratic and alarming maternal vitality could turn out to be better than none" (271). The narrative suggests that "maternal vitality" is the only way to salvation in a world where almost all characters are either among "the dead of heart and spirit" or suffer crippling and destructive "homesickness." More traditional methods of salvation through religious redemption are connected to empty male plots.

Thus the "Linnet Muir" sequence shows Linnet in a process of development. Unlike Jean Price, she goes on to fulfil herself as a writer. Her narrative details her apprenticeship in several senses. On the one hand, it shows her learning her craft by experimenting with a wide variety of genres: poetry, drama, diaries, notebooks, and fiction. She also reads writers as diverse as Silvia Townsend Warner, Thornton Wilder, Zinoviev and Lenin. On the other hand, her development is shown through a difference in the concerns of the stories through the sequence. Her attention shifts from a solipsistic view of the self to an emphasis on connections with others and their voices.

The Linnet Muir sequence thus develops on the theme of independence suggested at the end of "Its Image on the Mirror." Jean does not follow up her dream of independence, but remains trapped in the "reality" of crippling connections that silence a potential writer's voice. Linnet begins by adopting this dream as a reality and thus enabling herself to shed connections which

might stunt her too. Yet she comes to the realization that she has to go a step further and use her writing to re-establish connections, particularly with the women she has seen herself as so distinct from. Writing becomes a way, although never completely adequate, of reaching across the "deserted continent . . . cracked and fissured with bottomless pits" (327) and the "years and desires and destinations" (289) that separate women. Thus Linnet transcends, partially at least, the problem of connection that haunts many women writers when they attempt to represent their sense of self. Whereas Jean's "survival" implies the silencing of others, Linnet's "faithful record of the true survivor" (223) must learn to be a faithful record not of the self, but of the voices of others. Her connections are always ironically qualified; they are made only after they can be productive, yet, connected with the essential "maternal vitality," they are able to offer the only viable form of salvation.

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Far from being the fully developed protagonist of the typical bildungsroman, Rose in Who Do You Think You Are? seems from the beginning to be deliberately intangible. Blodgett remarks that Rose's connection with acting "makes one question whether Rose exists in any sense at all":

Her ability to yield to a word, an atmosphere, a situation suggests that Rose is the name for a certain shifting focus through which the story's discourse is organized, and this becomes increasingly apparent from "The Beggar Maid" on. (99)

Rose's position as actress draws attention to the concept of the self presented in Who Do You Think You Are? Acting, which can be intelligibly interpreted as a metaphor for writing without the need for the more dramatic metafictional devices Munro originally intended to incorporate into the collection,⁵ involves the creation of a public persona. As its title suggests, the book is deeply concerned with questions of identity, specifically female identity.

The form of the book partially accounts for Rose's apparent lack of substance. Rose is the central character by virtue of the fact that her presence in each of the stories links them and provides coherence in the collection. The book, however, does not present a sense of any development in Rose as a traditional bildungsroman might. Each story immerses us in one period of her life, with views backwards and forwards from that time. The stories are arranged in chronological order (with the exception of the last), but between the stories are large gaps; portions of

Rose's life remain unexplained, deliberately emphasizing discontinuity. Furthermore, the fate of both Rose and Flo is known from the end of the first story, removing any sense of the narrative building towards a climax.

Rose does not develop in the traditional sense of moving towards some greater understanding of her self and her life or attaining integration into society. The pervasive sense is that she endures, despite many experiences that might destroy her by fixing her permanently in a certain role. In "Simon's Luck" she notes, "I am getting a distinct feeling of being made of old horsehide" (171), and it is her resilience that is her strongest characteristic. The first four stories examine the contribution of her early life to the formation of her essentially performative self. They emphasize the liberating power of creating roles for the self, either in life (by acting as Flo's friend does when she imitates Frances Farmer, for example) or in fiction (by constructing the self as an invulnerable observer rather than as involved and vulnerable participant). The "Beggar Maid" is a structurally central story that initiates the idea that the self may be destroyed by adapting to someone else's conception of it. As Rose perceives, her acceding to Patrick's view of her is a pivotal point at which she loses power. It is followed by three stories in which Rose's self seems to be challenged by her unfruitful affairs with different men. Only after she rejects the possibility of a relationship with Simon is she free of this danger of constructing her self by connection

with a man. Paradoxically, in the failure of these relationships Rose seems to desire, she emerges as much an escape artist as Joan Foster, simultaneously desiring and precluding the possibility of connection. Thereafter, in the last two stories, the focus returns to Flo and Rose's early life in Hanratty. Although Rose has not undergone development, she has emerged as an enduring set of forces; as Munro herself observes in response to a comment that Rose "is never allowed to get anything," what Rose gets is "herself" (Twigg, 19). Exactly what constitutes that self remains extremely nebulous as Rose is always showing only a public self which seems not to reflect an authentic private self. Yet her instinct for self-preservation, which often shows itself in perverse ways, is the force that links the different manifestations of her self.

The form of the book is not the only reason Rose seems nebulous. Rose is an actress and there is a sense in which she is always playing a role. It is not that she is forced into certain roles, but that role-playing is a fundamental condition of her life as both girl and woman. From the beginning she uses language as "a working hypothesis for comprehending and expressing reality" (Bakhtin, 1981:61), especially the reality of herself: "Rose had a need to picture things, to pursue absurdities, that was stronger than the need to stay out of trouble."⁶ The opening narrative account of Rose's beating suggests that the beating itself arises out of something akin to narrative energy. The event is put in hypothetical terms by the use of words such as

"suppose" and "perhaps." The details are not important; the cause of the fight "does not really matter at all" (15), neither does what the female protagonists in the struggle say to each other. The narrative voice creates the beating, just as it will later create the figure of the minister out of certain narrative and poetic conventions. Emphasis is on the narrative voice as a way of creating a hypothetical situation and self. There is a sense too in which Rose herself seems to be the deliberate literary creation of the narrator. Her success as an actress, for example, is not gradually and convincingly built up as it would be in a more traditional novel that emphasizes development, but presented as a given, as if the narrator had formulated her as hypothesis.

The choice of a third-person narrative voice is crucial to this sense of the hypothetical nature of the self. Several feminist critics have pointed out the ways in which the use of a first-person voice helps to counteract the gender-determined plots of the novel.⁷ Who Do You Think You Are? claims for the third-person narrative voice considerable power. This narrative voice is associated with women: with their power to tell stories about local characters as Flo does, and with their power to engage in authoritative discourse as do the women in the maternity ward where Rose gives birth to Anna, who compulsively tell the contents of their kitchen cupboards. Words themselves have power, and narrative, the book emphasizes, is a way, perhaps the only way, to formulate and manipulate the world. Yet acquiring the power of narrative comes at considerable price: the

burden of shame Rose feels. The book emphasizes that narrative is a public rendering of the private, and stresses the anxiety that inevitably accompanies it.

Who Do You Think You Are? is deeply concerned with the intersection between public and private self. The book is full of examples of private acts (especially those involving sex, excretion, and violence) turned into public performance. Beatings and acts of copulation and excretion become spectator sports. Even television dramas and plays seem to take their substance from such topics as abortion, pregnancy, violence, and suicide. Similarly, within the community, the most private aspects of life become public narrative. Flo's stories revolve around the private details of the lives of such characters as Becky Tyde or stories of suicides; Rose's intimate decisions become the substance of her own anecdotal stories. Such translations of private into public are comparable to Flo's public announcements about the contents of the laundry basket or to the escape of bathroom noises into the public realm of the kitchen. Furthermore, the book itself makes public events and feelings that Rose herself "could never tell" (24), "What she never said to anybody, never confided" (95).

Who Do You Think You Are? traces the formation of Rose's public self. In such communities as Hanratty, establishing a self which distinguishes itself from others in the community is hazardous and always discouraged. It involves a measure of "parading around" which courts disapproval: "One of the most

derogatory things that could be said about anyone in Hanratty was that he or she was fond of parading around" (191). Any gesture towards creating a distinct self that does not wholly embody the community's collective values is met with the rebuke "who do you think you are?" On the one hand, this rhetorical question is a casual put-down; on the other, it expresses the serious threat to the identity of the self that such questions pose. The book gives many examples of the dangers of asserting a self. Milton Homer, paradoxically both marginal and powerful, is a model of the completely public self whose gestures are "theatrical" yet also poignantly authentic. At the other extreme, Flo, by the end of the book, has given up her public self and retreated into the private self. Embracing complete silence, she relinquishes language which is the link between public and private and which can give even the old woman in "Spelling" a celebratory link to public life. Within these extremes are people who are destroyed by a public image. Ralph Gillespie destroys himself as his imitations melt into reality. Women artists commit suicide. Participation in performance, in fact, is frequently linked with death or violence, especially that against women. Rose always lives in the shadow of these examples of the destructive nature of the public self.

The public self is inextricably connected with a deep sense of humiliation, partly because of the insistent association of the assertion of a public self with exposure in the sexual sense. Yet the true source of Rose's shame is not her bare breast in the

television drama she acts in. Rather, it is a profound sense of the connection between a public performance and the use that is made of the private self. Rose's anecdotal stories often use Flo as a character whose naiveté and comic manner she exposes. All her own stories, she believes, expose her most intimate decisions. In rendering private emotions public (the only way they can be recorded and thus validated), she inevitably exposes and distorts. Rose is afraid that there is "a tone, a depth, a light, that she couldn't get and wouldn't get" (205); there are moments, therefore, when acting seems at best a futile attempt to render experience. Rose is also afraid that she has been "paying attention to the wrong things, reporting antics" (205). Both acting and narrative, which amount to much the same by the end of the book, tend to turn life into antic. Further, the assertion of the self uses others in a way that is predatory.

The first two stories, "Royal Beatings" and "Privilege," establish the idea of the private act turned into public performance. "Royal Beatings" opens with Rose's transformation, in her imagination, of a private beating into a public ceremony. She imagines the beating transformed by "a crowd of formal spectators" (1). In reality, the beatings "soon got beyond anything presentable" (1) and are kept private when Flo locks the door of the shop, declaring, "we don't need the public in on this" (15). Yet the beatings are "theatrical," with each member of the family playing a self-conscious role. Rose herself at first "displays theatrical unconcern" (13) and later plays the

part of victim. Flo "becomes amazingly theatrical herself" (13), and Rose's father wears a face that is "quite out of character": "He is like a bad actor who turns a part grotesque" (16). The father is playing a role, yet, at the same time, he "means it" (16). Even the private act is a production, and this particular drama seems to stand as a symbolic drama which lies at the heart of the formation of the female self.

Rose's imaginings, like the narrative record of the beating itself, invest the beating with particular significance. It is the manifestation of a battle primarily between Rose and Flo which seems of almost primordial relevance: it "has been going on forever, like a dream that goes back and back into other dreams, over hills and through doorways, maddeningly dim and populous and familiar and elusive" (11). The issue at the heart of the battle is humiliation. Rose's verbal skills, especially her manipulation of words with sexual and excremental connotations, humiliate Flo. Yet the humiliation implicit is not in the words themselves so much as in Rose's challenge to Flo's authority. The battle calls into question Rose's self; Flo asks, "Who do you think you are?" the question that will be posed to Rose all her life. As Rose begins to emerge from the family distinct from Flo, who is a mother figure, she carries with her a sense of humiliation as fundamental as original sin. The humiliation is connected to the control offered by language as well as, more obviously, to the pleasure Rose derives from her own complicity in the beating which is described in sexual terms.

Rose's beating and her voyeuristic pleasure in narrating it are set against another beating--of Mr. Tyde by three local men. Their act is also a drama. The men who carry out the beating black their faces and intend to act out a trial, and Becky Tyde watches the beating like a spectator. In the interview that concludes the story, Hat Nettleton, one of the participants in the beating, agrees with the interviewer that in the past "You made your own entertainment" (21). Such beatings are analogous to such forms of community entertainment as television, radio, and film, which themselves are shown in the course of the book to derive their subject matter from similar themes. The two beatings are linked through Rose's retrospective thought about her own beating:

She has since wondered about murders, and murderers. Does the thing have to be carried through, in the end, partly for the effect, to prove to the audience of one--who won't be able to report, only register, the lesson--that such a thing can happen, that there is nothing that can't happen, that the most dreadful antic is justified, feelings can be found to match it? (16)

Both Rose's beating and the murder of Mr. Tyde are "antics," driven by some basic impulse that prompts violence rather than by a desire to implement justice by educating another in society's norms. This basic impulse, the book suggests, underlies human dramas and also underlies the impulse to narrate stories.

It is Flo's lurid narrative that makes public the story of Mr. Tyde's beating and adds many details, "all lies in all

probability" (7), all of which are connected to sex and violence: Becky is rumoured to have been beaten by her father, to have become pregnant by him, and to have had the baby "disposed of" (7); there is even a couched hint of cannibalism. Flo's catchphrase, "imagine," shows the transforming power of narrative; it turns the private into the public in much the same way that Rose's imagination transforms the private act into ritualized public ceremony. Flo's stories transform people and places:

Present time and past, the shady melodramatic past of Flo's stories, were quite separate, at least for Rose. Present people could not be fitted into the past. Becky herself, town oddity and public pet, harmless and malicious, could never match the butcher's prisoner, the cripple daughter, a white streak at the window: mute, beaten, impregnated. (8)

The narrative of Who Do You Think You Are? works in a similar way to turn private life into public narrative.

"Royal Beatings" contains many other instances of the private turned public. Even the subject of one of Flo's stories is a man who exposed himself to her. Rose's father lets words slip out from his private self as he is working. Listening to them, Rose finds their rhythms akin to those of poetry: "Macaroni, pepperoni, Botticelli, beans--" (4). As she listens, they become public. What they "mean" remains a puzzle. The connection between the public and private is missing for Rose:

The person who spoke these words and the person who spoke to her as her father were not the same, though they seemed to occupy

the same space. It would be the worst of taste to acknowledge the person who was not supposed to be there; it would not be forgiven. (4)

When the private self ventures into the public world, a large gap between public and private self becomes apparent. The language of Rose's father's private self gives no direct clues to the nature of that self. It is a code; language does not work in a direct way to reveal the self. This split in Rose's father is similar, the narrator notes, to the way people are split by the escape of bathroom noises into the kitchen. "The person creating the noises in the bathroom was not connected with the person who walked out" (4).

Flo is a figure akin to a narrator. She tells stories, thereby translating the private into the public, and she also shows her skills as a mimic. She mocks people who "parade around": "Monsters, she made them seem; of foolishness, and showiness, and self-approration" (10). Rose realizes later that Flo is a master of "making faces" at both herself and others. Her performance at the end of the story when she turns herself round by her feet, decorous though it is, is another act of display, though this is celebratory rather than shaming as display usually is. Her performance seems to conflate opposites. The planet Venus and the spaceship lit by ten thousand light bulbs momentarily become one. Performance has the power to bridge as well as to breach and can be celebratory.

"Privilege" deals with similar themes. In the schoolyard,

the most intensely private acts are turned into spectator sports. The nature of these acts is suggested by the setting against which they take place--the toilet. Watching these acts, Rose is "building up the first store of things she could never tell" (24). Yet ironically the narrative voice does "tell" and makes these things public. The scenes Rose witnesses include Mr. Burns in his toilet and Franny McGill and Shortie McGill having sexual relations. The former is a performance by virtue of the fact that the girls in the playground form an enthusiastic audience. Similarly, the children "gathered to look" at "Shortie McGill . . . fucking Franny McGill" (25). Flo's characterization of the sexual act as a "performance" suggests a further association between this act and drama so that Rose "used to imagine some makeshift stage, some rickety old barn stage, where members of a family got up and gave silly songs and recitations" (25). Flo's term incorporates not just sex, but any related acts:

What a performance! Flo would say in disgust, blowing out smoke, referring not to any single act but to everything along that line, past and present and future, going on anywhere in the world. People's diversions, like their pretensions, could not stop astounding her. (25)

Through such imagery, sexual acts become for Rose inextricably connected with acting. Yet as this story emphatically shows, not all the participants are willing actors. Franny is the recipient of "An act performed on [her]" (27).

The story's central event, Rose's pre-adolescent love for

Cora, is superficially of a different nature. Yet this love is itself associated insistently with excrement. Love is equated with sweetness and honey, through the candy Rose tries to give Cora as a declaration of her love, through "honey" as the term of endearment Cora uses ironically on Rose, and through the image of sexual love as "the hard white honey in the pail, waiting to melt and flow" (33). Yet honey is also a euphemism for excrement: Cora's grandfather is the local "honey-dumper," and he is a representative of, and unshakeable advocate for, the outhouse where the scenes that fascinate Rose take place. Love and its rituals are thus inextricably connected from Rose's first exposure to them with the baser side of life.

"Privilege" stresses the ways in which love can transform reality. Rose's feelings for Cora clearly idealize her, construct her as an "idol" (36) as Flo sardonically comments. Once this idealization has taken place, only one thing can satisfy Rose, and that is to become Cora. She begins by acting out Cora's gestures: "When she was by herself she would act that out, the whole scene, the boys calling, Rose being Cora" (31). Her desire to be Cora intensifies so that "she spent her time trying to walk and look like Cora, repeating every word she had ever heard her say. Trying to be her" (32). She desires to "get at" (33) Cora by assimilating details. Watching Cora pretend to be dead, she tries to "pile up details" (33), but such attempts are ineffective, however hard Rose ponders "what was her real smell? What was the statement . . . of her puckered eyebrows?"

Rose would strain over these things afterwards, when she was alone, strain to remember them, know them, get them for good. What was the use of that? When she thought of Cora she had the sense of a glowing dark spot, a melting center, a smell and taste of burnt chocolate, that she could never get at.
(33-4)

Love inspires the desire to lose the self to a performance so intense that, instead of mocking the other in some way which is the normal function of performance, it involves becoming the other.

Flo's energetic mockery of Rose's infatuation stresses the gap between the ideal and the real as it is perceived by a dispassionate observer. Flo turns Cora grotesque by her predictions: "She is going to turn out a monster of fat . . . She is going to have a mustache, too" (36). Rose believes that Flo's imitation is inaccurate, "off" (35). The narrative voice, like Flo, suggests, though more gently than Flo, a discrepancy between Rose's ideal and the real. Only time can give Rose the perspective Flo offers her. As Rose moves on in time, she is able to remember "the facts, but not the feelings" (36). Flo's story remains static, "out of date" as "she went on recalling the story and making Cora sound worse and worse--swarthy, hairy, swaggering, fat" (36).

The story introduces the "clownish" rituals of love that provide a recurring pattern in Rose's life; "The high tide; the indelible folly; the flash flood" (33) she experiences will overtake her at later stages of her life. Flo understands the

slavery love implies and tries to "warn" Rose by her mockery: "It was love she sickened at. It was the enslavement, the self-abasement, the self deception. That struck her. She saw the danger, all right; she read the flaw. Headlong hopefulness, readiness, need" (35). Love is a farcical performance, often comic to the observer, but dangerous to the participant. Whereas the young Rose can observe sex and therefore remain detached from it, she is unable to gain a perspective on the object of her love, except indirectly and at a span of time. Rose later discovers a different form of control. Later she tells stories about her past to "queen it over" (23) people in much the same way that Cora "queens it" over those in her power. Narrative can control, but in love, the story stresses, control breaks down. Even to the young Rose, romantic love represents a loss of the self that can be created in narrative. Love and narrative are, therefore, forces in perpetual tension.

The next story, "Half a Grapefruit," begins to develop the idea of the possibility of narrative control. On the one hand, Rose is vulnerable; her moments of pretension are punished by the mockery of others which endures for years. As a subject, Rose is weak. On the other hand, she now begins to take on Flo's role of telling stories, turning other people into characters. For example, in the story of the Kotex, another example of the private object turned into public trophy, Muriel becomes the vulnerable subject. Yet Rose is aware that a fine line separates her own role as "superior" player of "an onlooker's part" and the

role of subject; she is "afraid that she might be a leading candidate for ownership" (40). Similarly, she tells Flo the story of Ruby Carruthers and the joke three boys played on her. In narrating the story, she shares a role similar to that of Horse Nicholson who orchestrates the joke.

The story emphasizes the gender politics of vulnerability. As the subject-matter of the Kotex story and the accompanying story of the girls who approach the janitor demonstrate, women are particularly susceptible to mockery because of their biological functions. They are also vulnerable as sexual partners. In the course of the farce orchestrated by Horse Nicholson, Ruby is forced to question the identity of the boy she is with, asking "who the hell are you?" (41). The female self is met with the challenge to identity "who do you think you are?" The rejoinder it issues to men is "who the hell are you?" The male self is less vulnerable than the female self, as the story's postscript demonstrates. The three boys involved in the trick have respectable positions; Horse Nicholson, the leader, preaches the need for "a lot more God in the classroom and a lot less French " (54). Ruby, by contrast, loses both breasts, and later her life, to cancer. The story is about the fine line between vulnerability and invulnerability. Narration can cast the self as orchestrator and controller of events and thereby reduce vulnerability as Rose demonstrates when she becomes a confident "chronicler" (40).

Flo also continues to tell stories. Like Rose's, her stories

are about vulnerability, but, in her case, about her own vulnerability. In one, for example, she meets her stepmother in hospital and "began an overwhelming nosebleed, the first and last she ever suffered in her life. The red blood was whipping out of her, she said, like streamers" (44). The idea of the loss of blood associates the story with Rose's story of Muriel Mason. In another comic story Flo narrates as they are waiting for Rose's father to be taken to hospital, she tells how, believing she has been poisoned by the local witch, she sits waiting to die. Less comically, the story parallels the situation of Rose's father who is also waiting to die. His comment, that Flo "lived to tell the tale" (53), contrasts Flo's vitality with his own impending death. This contrast is emphasized dramatically as he is immediately overcome by a prolonged coughing fit. Flo's narrative seems to set narrative energy against death, and such a narrative seems to be a way to control the incontinences of the body.

"Wild Swans" is concerned with layers of disguise and transformations of the self, and, in a less obvious way, with control through language. Flo tells Rose stories about "White Slavers" (55) who enact a public scene in order to ensnare vulnerable young women. One of their tools is drugged candy. This technique of seduction seems to connect them with the undertaker, who is said to entice women using candy from Flo's store as a lure. The undertaker has a romantic view of women, expressed in the lines he utters: "Her brow is like the snowdrift / her throat is like the swan" (57). The stories of the undertaker and of the

white slavers seem to lead to Rose's experience with the minister/seducer she meets on the train to Toronto. The status of this minister remains confused. He is not a fake minister dressed as if he were one, but, possibly, a real minister dressed as if he were not one. More significantly, the reality of Rose's encounter with him also remains confused. Allusions to snows and swans link him so directly with Flo's narrative that he seems to have been produced by it; indeed he seems almost a fantasy Rose constructs out of available material. The suggestion is that her experience is a kind of hypothesis, like the beating of the opening story, which is generated because her desire to pursue absurdities is "stronger than the need to stay out of trouble" (1). In this story she experiences curiosity, which "will make you . . . risk almost anything, just to see what will happen. To see what will happen." (62).

The story deals with transformations. Rose longs for transformations through the disguise of cosmetics and clothes: "She had great hopes of silver bangles and powder-blue angora. She thought they could transform her, make her calm and slender and take the frizz out of her hair, dry her underarms and turn her complexion to pearl" (58). Later, Rose is attracted to a more radical form of transformation when Flo tells her the story of her friend who poses as the actress Frances Farmer:

[Rose] thought it would be an especially fine thing, to manage a transformation like that. To dare it, to get away with it; to enter on preposterous adventures in your own, but newly named, skin. (64).

Naming seems to facilitate the assumption of a role that in this case is daring, celebratory. Parallel to the idea of the transformation of person is the idea of the transformation of landscape which is physically transformed for Rose as the train moves from north to south and as Rose nears sexual climax. The narrative itself self-consciously transforms the landscape by rendering it through suggestive sexual imagery. Narrative itself, the story subtly suggests, is also a form of transformation, powerful because it can not only transform, but also conjure.

In "The Beggar Maid" Rose does not create a role for herself but assumes one scripted for her by the culture in which she lives. Patrick attempts to construct Rose according to his ideal. His concepts of ideal femininity are clichéd ones indeed, drawn from chivalrous notions of "The fair sex" and the "damsel in distress" (74) and from works of art and literature such as Burne Jones' "King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid" and Graves' White Goddess. Rose feels a barely tenable discrepancy between herself and her own image conjured by the roles of "wife" and "sweetheart" (77) or her pose as the "shy elusive virgin" (80) of Yeats' play. In fact, she finds herself little more than a bundle of contradictory impulses: "Energy, laziness, vanity, discontent, ambition" (82). Fitting into the role Patrick attributes to her involves a series of "deceits and stratagems" (81) and, in contrast to the celebratory and daring disguises of the earlier stories, her assumption of the role Patrick scripts for her is profoundly destructive: "All the time, moving and speaking, she

was destroying herself for him, yet he looked right through her, through all the distractions she was creating, and loved some obedient image that she herself could not see" (82).

Patrick stands in strong contrast to Rose. Rose is able to adapt to social situations in a way that seems almost fraudulent; as the narrator observes in "Mischief," "Rose was very adaptable, in fact deceitful" (99). With Patrick's parents she assumes "the pretense of ease and gaiety, as cheap and imitative as her clothes" (84); her voice is "full of false assurance" (84); when she meets women in Hanratty who ask about her engagement, "She dimpled and sparkled and turned herself into a fiancée with no trouble at all" (89). Patrick, by contrast, is "never a fraud" (81) but authentic and apparently vulnerable. He is horrified at the idea of a schizophrenically split self, as his reaction to Rose's suggestion that in a movie he would be both the rescuer and the "wild insatiable leg-grabber" (75) suggests. His gestures are often clumsy and clownish, though in fact they are authentic, not acts. He is unafraid of exposure or display; his family home contains so much glass it reminds Rose of Hanratty's automobile showroom. In the eyes of Rose and Dr. Henshawe he is a somewhat pathetic figure, yet in reality Patrick is not vulnerable, but wields the power to construct Rose.

The clash between Rose's background and Patrick's leaves Patrick unchanged, but leaves Rose without any ground to inhabit, both metaphorically and in a more literal sense. Houses, rich and poor, discredit each other; Rose, no longer taking Hanratty for

granted as a natural background, is forced to recognize its "crude light" and "embarrassing sad poverty" (67). Thus severed from her Hanratty background, she is left without a voice: "She didn't even have any way that she could talk, and sound natural" (86). When she attempts to characterize the difference, saying "We come from two different worlds," the comment feels inauthentic: "She felt like a character in a play, saying that" (77). Trying to explain to Patrick why she does not want to marry him, "She could not find any tone of voice, any expression of the face, that would serve her" (90).

Rose's relationship with Patrick is structured on the myth of romance. Patrick constructs her as his goddess, but Rose also accedes: "She had always thought . . . that somebody would look at her and love her totally and helplessly" (77). She recognizes that the fulfilment of this pattern of romance is both "a miracle" and "a mistake" (77): "it was what she had dreamed of; it was not what she wanted" (77). Rose's greedy consumption of sweets during her engagement suggests the real destructiveness of the romance myth which is typically associated with sweetness. It looks back to both "Privilege," in which sweetness is associated with excrement, and to "Wild Swans," in which candy is employed by the macabre undertaker as a tool of seduction. It also links her retrospectively with Milton Homer who, in the final story, is seen self-destructively gorging himself with candy.

Rose's ambivalence about Patrick is conveyed strongly. The story ends emphasizing the disparity between Rose and Patrick and

their visions. In her public narratives, Rose frequently analyzes her return to Patrick. In one explanation she returns out of economic and sociological necessity. In another, she returns to prove her power over Patrick. In another, though, she is motivated by "a vision of happiness" (95), of an ideal Rose and Patrick "radiantly kind and innocent, . . . hardly ever visible, in the shadow of their usual selves" (95). So intimate is this vision that it is one of the rare events she "never said to anybody, never confided" (95). Yet, at the moment she has this vision for the second time, Patrick has a vision of her as his "true enemy" (97). The confrontation shows only an intensification of the initial difference; Rose has faith in "civilized overtures" (97), yet Patrick bares his authentic self by "making a face": "It was a truly hateful, savagely warning, face; infantile, self-indulgent, yet calculated; it was a timed explosion of disgust and loathing" (96). Rose notes that the desire to "make a face" is fundamental; as an interviewer, she "would sense the desire in [people] to make a face. . . They were longing to sabotage themselves, to make a face, or say a dirty word" (96-97). But only Patrick, under special circumstances, can reveal this primitive authentic self which others perpetually conceal. He remains, though, with his "modish and agreeable" (96) appearance and his power deriving from both his gender and his social position, unthreatened even by such exposure of his most intimate self.

"The Beggar Maid" marks a shift in the focus of the book.

Until that story, the idea of acting has been connected with adventure and often seen in a complexly comic light. In "The Beggar Maid" Rose temporarily loses a battle for her life; "nearly mortal damage" (95) is done. In the next three stories her attempts at adventure are all abortive. In "Mischief" her attempt to consummate her adulterous relationship with Clifford leaves her deeply humiliated. The disguise to which she resorts when she visits him in Powell River serves not as a celebratory disguise but only as an advertisement for her situation as a married woman seeking sexual adventure. In "Providence" each of her three attempts to meet Tom is thwarted, seemingly by fated events. In the third story, "Simon's Luck," Rose herself runs from possible consummation. By this time, she has become an accomplished actress, "she can fit in anywhere" (152). Yet, it is Simon who plays the lead roles in his series of imitations of "The Humble Workman . . . The Old Philosopher . . . The Mad Satyr" (161). The tone of the three stories is markedly darker than that of the earlier stories. In each case, Rose is humiliated by the failure of a relationship. Yet "providence" seems to work in a more complex way than might at first be suggested. Because the relationships fail, Rose is left with a kernel of independence she would otherwise have lacked. As Munro points out, Rose does not want Clifford. What she does want, although she does not realize it, is "a way out of her marriage" (Twigg, 19), and, in fact, she gets this, though at considerable cost. Her failure to meet Tom enables her to begin a life

independent from the image of a man. Finally, her escape from a possible relationship with Simon spares her the pain of his death from cancer less than a year later. Thus all Rose's losses are also ironically escapes.

Documenting numerous examples of the ways in which women are used by men, these stories show women's apparent vulnerability to men in romantic relationships. Yet the third, "Simon's Luck," ends with a reversal of the perspective. Rose initially believes that as a man Simon is the one who holds the power over her own body:

As it was, she would have to be ashamed of, burdened by, the whole physical fact of herself, the whole outspread naked digesting putrefying fact. Her flesh could seem disastrous; thick and porous, grey and spotty. His body would not be in question, it never would be; he would be the one who condemned and forgave and how could she ever know if he would forgive her again? Come here, he could tell her, or go away. Never since Patrick had she been the free person, the one with that power; maybe she had used it all up, all that was coming to her. (169)

Yet Simon's death teaches her that she is not the only one to lack power. Simon's body is in fact vulnerable; through a fatal cancer, his body has become the "naked . . . putrefying fact" that she felt hers to be. Rose's long-held belief that only women are vulnerable is clearly mistaken.

Rose sees Simon's death as analogous to the disturbing events that are not allowed to happen in her soap opera:

People watching trusted that they would be protected from . . . those shifts of emphasis

that throw the story line open to question,
the disarrangements which demand new
judgements and solutions and throw the
windows open on inappropriate and
unforgettable scenery. (173)

Simon's dying, the narrative implies, forces Rose to make retrospective reassessments. The nature of these assessments is not detailed. There is only a radical shift in emphasis from Rose's relationships with men to her relationship to Flo in "Spelling" and to her earlier life in Hanratty in the final story "Who Do You Think You Are?"

"Spelling" shows a distinct move away from Rose's definition of herself in terms of relationship to men. Flo, almost completely eclipsed in the preceding three stories, is once more a central character. Ironically, though, her deterioration is such that she only sporadically recognizes Rose, who lost any opportunity to redeem her neglect. Rose's return to Hanratty is also a return to the solidly physical world marked by the domestic objects accumulated in Flo's house which the narrator insistently details. The previous three stories explored the way in which "love removes the world for you" (175). Rose's rejection of love affirms her commitment to the physical world which, she realizes, she desires to be there for her "thick and plain as ice cream dishes" (175). In this story Rose is reimmersed in the real world of Hanratty with its confused domestic order echoing Flo's decline.

Rose's sense of failure in relation to Flo has several dimensions. On the one hand, Rose has neglected Flo. Far more

disturbingly, though, she has also used Flo. Flo, from whom Rose seems to have learned her powers of narrative, has become the subject of Rose's anecdotes. Rose has told stories about Flo to virtual strangers. For example, she presents as a comic anecdote the story of how Flo greets Rose with an angry warning about parking on the street after Rose has travelled two hundred miles through a snowstorm to see her. Rose has become a good mimic of Flo: "She did it well; her own exhaustion and sense of virtue; Flo's bark, her waving cane, her fierce unwillingness to be the object of anybody's rescue" (179). On another occasion, she begins publicly to read Flo's letter which declares, "Shame on a bare breast" (186), a declaration that seems as ridiculous as "a protest about raising umbrellas, a warning against eating raisins" (186). Yet she cannot continue to mock Flo in this way because she realizes that Flo's protest is authentic, however absurd its terms seem to be. Her protests are "painfully, truly, meant; they were all a hard life had to offer. Shame on a bare breast" (186).

In using Flo for comic effect, Rose is sabotaging Flo's authenticity, yet she recognizes that it is "shabby . . . to be exposing and making fun of Flo" (186). Even more painfully, she realizes the "gulf" between Flo's authentic feelings and her own mockery of them. Her dream of Flo in a cage emphasizes the idea that she has been exposing Flo, putting her on display in a way that relates back to the ideas of display and performance and their association with sex and violence so firmly established in

the early stories. Flo's eventual decline into silence suggests that Rose has usurped her narrative powers.

For all her acting endeavours, Rose feels shame that derives not from the things such as the exposure of a breast, but from her use of others and her adoption of styles which seem inauthentic to her. Rose perceives her own inauthenticity of tone. Telling anecdotes, "she was frank and charming; she had a puzzled, diffident way of leading into her anecdotes, as if she was just now remembering, had not told them a hundred times already" (177). In fact, this style is a sham. The intimacy such a tone implies is not real; Rose cannot remember the names of people to whom she has told "intimate things about her life" (177).

Through the compelling figure of the old lady in the county home, the story emphasizes the power of language. The old lady spells out random words, her only connection to social life. Her connection to the words is tenuous and fragile. Yet the words act like "A parade of private visitors" (184), connecting her to life. As Rose dimly perceives when the "obscene or despairing" (183) words which come to mind are replaced by the word "Celebrate" (183) the old lady's "spelling" with its connotations of witchcraft is celebratory rather than despairing. Language is a link with the social world: the individual words and their poetic, even mystical, qualities are more important than their meaning. The act of using language is one that can forge a vital connection between the private self and the public world.

The final story revives the earlier themes that involve the self struggling to impose itself. The story details the local rituals which legitimize "parading around." Through such events as the Orange Day Parade, people get a chance "to march in public in some organized and approved affair" (191). Such legitimate parading has to conceal any enjoyment of it:

The only thing was that you must never look as if you were enjoying it; you had to give the impression of being called forth out of preferred obscurity, ready to do your duty and gravely preoccupied with whatever notions the parade celebrated. (191)

The Orange Day parade, at which Milton Homer so distinguishes himself, is linked to other ideas of parade:

The banners were all gorgeous silks and embroideries, blue and gold, orange and white, scenes of Protestant triumph, lilies and open Bibles, mottoes of godliness and honour and flaming bigotry. The ladies came beneath their sunshades, Orangemen's wives and daughters all wearing white for purity. Then the bands, the fifes and drums, and gifted step-dancers performing on a clean hay-wagon as a moveable stage. (192)

The imagery, especially the "banners," recalls the public scene of the book's opening. The "moveable stage" and the notion of performance recall the sexual performances Rose has witnessed, and these parades are legitimate versions of such performances.

Milton Homer's significance as a public figure is suggested by his names, which connect him with two shapers of epics. He is also linked at one point to a shaper of history: "He was about

the size of Napoleon" (193). Although these connections are ironic, the link they suggest with figures of power is appropriate. His key participation in all local rituals and the community's "obscure sort of pride" (193) in him attest to his importance to the community. Indeed, he even presides at births, delivering his own version of a baptismal address, evoking not God's authority, but his own. He acts as a mimic, one, Rose notes, "of ferocious gifts and terrible energy:" "He could take the step-dancers' tidy show and turn it into an idiot's prance, and still keep the beat" (192). He is sometimes mistaken for "comic relief" (193) or for "The village idiot" (193), but, in fact, he is a carnival figure who satisfies the community's desire for subversion, its desire to make public its primitive, most private self. His uninhibited performances unravel the social fabric.

This subversive force is particularly ironic since his guardians are themselves the bastions of the social fabric. From one of Milton's aunts Rose learns the importance of the social code. She realizes that she is expected to adapt herself and her talents to fit with the established social image. Reciting a poem in class without having first written it out as she was instructed, she meets with a rebuke: "You can't go thinking you are better than other people just because you can learn poems. Who do you think you are?" (196). The same question "had often struck her like a monotonous gong" (196). The "lesson" Miss Hattie tries to mete out is about the need to fit in with

society's often arbitrary conventions.

Milton is a model of the absolutely public, theatrical self. His performances are often mistaken for comic relief, his expressions are "those that drunks wear in theatrical extremity--goggling, leering, drooping looks that seemed boldly calculated, and at the same time helpless, involuntary" (194). His looks are often "theatrical," yet, paradoxically, they are completely authentic. Rose ponders what it is that makes him special:

What was missing was a sense of precaution, Rose thought now. Social inhibition, though there was no such name for it at that time. Whatever it is that ordinary people lose when they are drunk, Milton Homer never had, or might have chosen not to have--and this is what interests Rose--at some point early in life. (194)

Milton's lack of social inhibition makes him unaware of any rift between a public and private self. He is, paradoxically, the absolutely authentic actor.

Milton, then, can be seen as an archetypal actor figure, performing his mimicry as a vital social function. His presence is obviously significant in a book so deeply concerned with acting and with narrative which seems intimately linked to it and with which Milton is associated by his names. Ralph Gillespie is another actor. The model for his acting is Milton, making Milton a subject as well as an actor. Seeing Ralph transform himself from his usually subdued self into a parody of Milton, Rose recognizes the power associated with acting: "She wanted to fill up in that magical, releasing way, transform herself; she wanted

the courage and the power" (201). Yet, as Ralph's life testifies, acting is deeply dangerous. Ralph begins to lose the distinction between himself and the subject of his mimicry, so that people think his performance is just "Ralph being idiotic" (202). He "Milton Homer'd himself right out of a job" (202), as Flo observes, and eventually he destroys himself.

Rose's acting is at an even farther remove than Ralph's; she imitates "Ralph Gillespie doing Milton Homer" (191). In all her acting she is overcome by a sense of shame the cause of which crystallizes in the final story:

The thing she was ashamed of, in acting, was that she might have been paying attention to the wrong things, reporting antics, when there was always something further, a tone, a depth, a light, that she couldn't get and wouldn't get. (205)

There is a sense in which Rose's acting and anecdotes have rendered authentic actions as "antics." She has thus missed a "tone . . . depth . . . light" and turned people's authentic and elusive essences into comic parodies. This is the same process by which Flo's narratives turn figures like Cora and the feelings associated with her into "monsters" and aberrations, the same process by which television and drama turn complex situations and emotions into material for popular consumption, the same process by which art can miss something essential about life. Such failures apply to both acting and narrative.

Yet eventually Rose's meeting with Ralph leads to an

alleviation of her shame rather than an intensification of it. Her encounter teaches her that there are feelings which "could only be spoken of in translation; perhaps they could only be acted on in translation; not speaking of them and not acting on them is the right course because translation is dubious. Dangerous, as well." (206). "Translation" is dubious and dangerous; yet, at the same time, it is the only way by which complexities can be rendered. Rose's apparently inauthentic tone is a translation of her deeper unformulated and unformulatable feelings for Ralph, with whom she shares an intimacy as powerful as family connection. She recognizes that Ralph too has layers. On one level he is "boyishly shy and ingratiating": "That was his surface. Underneath he was self-sufficient, resigned to living in bafflement, perhaps proud. She wished he would speak to her from that level" (205). Yet Ralph cannot speak because the dubious process of translation is the only way to communicate from it.

Rose's shame is partially alleviated because connection is established despite the treachery of translation. After a separation of many years she and Ralph are able to feel the same intimacy: "There was the same silent joke, the same conspiracy, comfort; the same, the same" (204). This association stems from an apparently arbitrary connection, the alphabetical similarity of their names, yet it seems more enduring and more meaningful than sexual attraction. The account of Rose's relationship with Tom, with whom she will consummate the relationship that eluded her in "Providence," shows sexual relationships as elaborate

plots. Rose is released from the threat she felt earlier so that she now feels only "friendly and uncritical" (204) interest. By contrast, she feels Ralph's life "close, closer than the lives of men she'd loved, one slot over from her own" (206). Her relationship with Ralph returns her to her community despite the deep gulf that has seemed to separate her. As the story suggests, the social fabric of Hanratty is an essential aspect of who Rose is and through friendship with Ralph she is returned to this community. The ending of the story is partially ironic. Rose is "glad that there is one thing at least she wouldn't spoil by telling" (206). Yet the narrative voice does "tell."

The third-person narrative voice is apparently objective, yet the book's insistent concern with the nature of narrative control stresses the impossibility of an objective voice. That Rose can be depicted only through a third-person voice suggests she must achieve a measure of distance in order to control and create herself. A creation of the self in narrative is always fraught with ambivalence and inextricably connected to a sense of "shame" similar to that which attends the incontinences of the body, particularly the female body, which narrative seems often to take as its subject matter. The creation of the self involves a separation from others, particularly from Flo, and is always fraught with anxiety, yet is a necessary process. The narrative resists creating an essential self for Rose. She remains depicted largely as the bundle or contradictory forces she feels herself to be. Her self is a process which can be given shape only

through the act of narrative which, paradoxically, is both humiliating and celebratory, distorting and liberating.

SECTION THREE: CONCLUSION

Only a superficial reading could persist in placing Elaine Risley, Jean Price, Linnet Muir, or Rose as the rounded characters of realist fiction. They are not stable characters but frequently experience themselves as the locus of contradictory impulses, and they are often highly inconsistent. Even at their strongest, they are only temporarily coherent. Certainly none of them corresponds to the rounded characters of classic realist fiction. Yet this feature of their subjectivity has most often been translated into critical uncertainty about the character or moral identity of the protagonists rather than perceived as a deliberate strategy to amend traditional constructions of subjectivity.

One of the more important thrusts of postmodernism has been its radical challenge to the Cartesian cogito. Because these writers do not issue the challenge in the same way, they are considered conservative. Yet it may be that such a challenge is simply not relevant to women. The Cartesian cogito is, after all, predominantly a white western male one. Women may desire to overturn it, but hardly for the same reasons as the postmodernists, for in challenging it, they are challenging something external, not internal as the postmodernists are. Felski argues:

it is becoming increasingly apparent that theories of postmodernity as they are currently formulated are not necessarily appropriate for engaging with the specific positioning of women in late capitalist society, and that feminism provides a vantage point from which to argue some of the more

glib and sweeping diagnoses of contemporary culture. For women, questions of subjectivity, truth, and identity may not be outmoded fictions but concepts which still possess an important strategic relevance.
(70)

Women may need to legitimize their own experience of subjectivity in fiction rather than to deconstruct subjectivity altogether.

These works all explore the female experience of subjectivity. In doing so, they are not so much discovering and defining female subjectivity as they are bringing an established mode of subjectivity out of the private realm. For women have likely experienced themselves always as subjects in the private realm; the problem for them has been legitimizing this subjectivity which is often different from standard notions. These texts all deal with the clash between private subjectivity and the public realm. In Cat's Eye Elaine is aware of the great rift between her public stature and her private experience of herself. Both Gallant's protagonists focus on the private self. Jean Price's erasure of history in her solipsistic romance with her family drama is pathological. Linnet perceives the importance of recognizing the relationship between the public and the private, but the public world contains dimensions which threaten her and which she holds in such tight control she almost erases them. In Who Do You Think You Are? the clash between public and private becomes a source of intense anxiety, thematized in the frequent allusions to private acts rendered public. In each work private subjectivity is strong in itself, but is often threatened

by the public realm.

The result of the investigation of subjectivity is fiction that utilizes the form of the bildungsroman while at the same time making quite striking departures from the assumptions about selfhood that underlie that form. The traditional protagonist, for example, must identify himself as a distinct individual, yet must learn to integrate himself into society. In these works, the protagonists are shaped by and constituted in society at every turn and cannot remain distinct from it. They survive with something intact, but it is not a core essential self. Nor do they develop as traditional protagonists do.

For the protagonist of the traditional bildungsroman the self must identify itself as a unique entity. For these protagonists, the self is at least partially constructed by external factors, by society's codes and by the perceptions of others. This construction results in a fluidity of boundaries that makes the concept of a distinct identity hard to sustain. Elaine, Linnet, Rose, are all coerced to some degree by social discourses. They are also often constructed by the patriarchal gaze, frequently internalized as mirror-gazing, which leads to fixity. The protagonists struggle for an alternative to the male gaze. Elaine recognizes the need for a type of vision that can preserve process, the cat's eye vision of art. Jean Price barely perceives the pathology of her mirror gazing and misses the opportunity to exploit the mirror of another woman's "whole attention," but Linnet does realize, albeit late, the need to

establish the self through connections with women. Rose almost succumbs to construction in gaze of men, yet realizes the need for reforging links with her community and for constructions of self through acting to provide a dynamic mirror of the most primitive self.

Women struggle against the patriarchal gaze that has traditionally offered them their sole public identity. Yet another more intense struggle goes on between women in the private domain. The protagonists vie for dominance with other women, especially their mothers and their sisters. Narrative becomes an important way of censoring and controlling all potential threats to the dominance of the self. Elaine controls Cordelia through her narrative. Jean carefully controls and censors Isobel, and Linnet virtually writes out her mother, a potential threat. Rose is conscious that her narratives are partly ways to control Flo and erase the links between the women. Narrative is thus a powerful form of censorship of others. It helps to allow the self a space for its own identity as distinct from that of other women.

Thus, whereas traditional protagonists perceive themselves as separate entities struggling for a unique identity, women must first resolve the problem of their connections to others. All the protagonists are interested, in some cases obsessively, in their connection to others. Elaine's entire narrative explores her connection with Cordelia. The connection becomes extremely complex, and the two merge to the extent that they often seem

facets of one person. Jean Price is equally obsessed with Isobel, her sister, and, again, the boundaries between the two become pathologically blurred. Rose seems more distinct from Flo than the other two pairs of characters, yet she shares striking similarities with her, and she, like Elaine and Jean, seems to usurp in part the other woman's authority. Cordelia, Isobel, and Flo are all muted in one way or another by the narratives of the other women. Significantly, these dynamic double relationships are acted out with other women; men are silenced in all of the narratives and play much less significant roles than the female characters. Linnet Muir is the one female character who does not define herself in relation to another woman. In fact, she emphasizes her complete independence. Yet this independence is revealed as a myth which she needs to survive: her narrative establishes the need for such a myth of independence and a simultaneous recognition of the need to forge vital connections, almost exclusively with women.

In the traditional bildungsroman memory is important. All these narratives stress the importance of memory, not memory deriving from an original event, but the process of memory. Each protagonist constructs herself at least partially through memory, which seems to be the force that lends coherence to the otherwise chaotic process of life. Memory does not work in a chronological way, or even in a coherent way, but selectively represses certain periods and highlights others. This discontinuity is reflected in the form of the fiction. Although none of the books has a form as

radically disrupted as postmodernist fiction generally employs, all defy to some degree the continuity of the novel form. Who Do You Think You Are? and the "Linnet Muir" sequence employ short stories that focus on one period of time, but leave large gaps between them. "Its Image on the Mirror" and Cat's Eye use narrative segments to break down continuity. In both cases, certain periods of time are emphasized whereas others are erased. Memory is often perceived as vitally connected to place: Elaine retrieves past time by returning to Toronto, just as Linnet Muir does by returning to Montreal. Rose uses memory less directly than the others because of the third-person narrative. Yet for her too, the setting of one's early childhood is of special significance. All three characters must return to these places of significance for insight into time and their relation to it. Yet for all three, the line that demarcates the boundary between memory and imagination is blurred. All three struggle to present a coherent fiction of themselves in the face of confused memories and the blurred boundaries between themselves and others.

Narrative becomes, for each of the protagonists, a way of working out the self. Narrative does not reflect an essential self, for that self is always constituted in narrative. Creating narrative gives a concrete form to a self that is otherwise process. This concrete form is not an essential self, but a performative self, a persona. The protagonists often feel inauthentic, yet they are unable to reduce themselves to a fixed character. In fact, men are frequently depicted in reductive

terms as characters. Female subjectivity needs a more dynamic form to reflect it than the concept of character. These writers all attempt to convey the self as process. In doing so, they challenge traditional realist assumptions about the stable coherent self.

NOTES

1. Margaret Atwood, Cat's Eye, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988, 406. All subsequent references to Cat's Eye are to this edition and page numbers appear parenthetically within the text.

2. Alice McDermot, for example, traces an "undercurrent of misogyny" (35) in the novel. Robert Towers finds Elaine's criticisms of women "direct and acerbic" (51).

3. Mavis Gallant, "Its Image on the Mirror," My Heart is Broken, New York: Random House, 1964, 108. All subsequent references to "Its Image on the Mirror" are to this edition and page numbers appear parenthetically within the text.

4. Mavis Gallant, Home Truths, Toronto: Macmillan, 1981, 238. All subsequent references to the "Linnet Muir" stories are to this edition and page numbers appear parenthetically within the text.

5. Originally, the collection interspersed third-person Rose stories with first-person Janet stories and culminated in the revelation that Janet, a writer, was the creator of Rose. For a detailed account of the complex publishing history of Who Do You Think You Are? see Helen Hoy's article "Rose and Janet: Alice Munro's Metafiction."

6. Alice Munro, Who Do You Think You Are?, Toronto: Macmillan, 1978, 1. All subsequent references to Who Do You Think You Are? are to this edition and page numbers appear parenthetically within the text.

7. Joanne S. Frye, for example, argues for the "capacity of first-person narration to reshape broad novelistic conventions and thereby to represent women's lives while subverting the cultural expectations on which representation has historically been based" (70).

CONCLUSION: HEARING THE VOICE

A feminist practice of writing: Not to forget
all the things that women do--keeping the
world turning; . . . Keep my fictional other
sister so that I hear the alternate stories,
the incredible diversity of women.

Adrienne Rich:

'We must hear each other into speech.'

And into writing:

Listenlistenlistenlistenlistenlisten:

Readreadreadreadreadreadread:

Feminism, like writing, is an open colon,
a what comes now.

--Aritha van Herk

Recent Canadian criticism has been influenced by an opposition that has grown up between the experimental and the traditional. These terms have become loosely synonymous with postmodernist and realist so that a further and more powerful opposition has been generated. This opposition has no doubt developed in the wake of similar oppositions fostered by influential contemporary theories-- Barthes's distinction between readerly and writerly texts or the commonly made distinction between French feminism and Anglo-American feminism, for example. Nor is the privileging of the postmodern over the realist and the use that is often made of this structure to attack women's fiction as limited confined to Canada. John Barth, for example, notes that the work of "most of our contemporary American women writers of fiction" are "premodernist" and that their "main literary concern, for better or worse, remains the eloquent issuance of what Richard Locke has called 'secular news reports'" (66). Although postmodernism has never been widely accepted as the literature of replenishment that Barth hails it as, it has won acclaim by those who seek a radical alternative to apparently traditional, and thereby conservative, works.

This opposition has been unfortunate for several reasons. For one, it has served crudely to categorize any text not experimental as realist. Since in English Canada most women writers are not overtly experimental, the effect has been to strengthen the equation between women's writing and conservative form. The thrust of this classification has come from feminism itself as much as from other sources, especially those influenced by French feminism.

Furthermore, the opposition has forced works into a mould they do not really fit. This has been particularly true of works such as those examined in this study, which have been damagingly and inappropriately classified as realist. But it has also, no doubt, been true of some experimental works that have been classified as postmodern without clear theorizing about what actually constitutes, or should be agreed to constitute, the postmodern. In short, the compelling opposition has left critical vocabulary, and thus the critical canon itself, impoverished because significant differences among works that share only superficial similarities of form are ignored.

The opposition has not, of course, been totally unbending and there is much to suggest that it is breaking down. Critical work on Atwood can no longer ignore the way in which her recent fiction diverges from realist forms. Although Surfacing and even Cat's Eye could pass as realist novels, many of her works, such as The Handmaid's Tale and Murder in the Dark, manifestly cannot. Her clear departure from realist form has upset the opposition. Although Hutcheon categorizes her readily as a postmodernist, few other critics have read her wholeheartedly as such. Atwood's work remains testimony to the inadequacy of the opposition. Munro remains easier to continue perceiving as a realist, for the form of her stories in her later books has not significantly changed. Several critics, however, have attempted to read her work as incorporating at least some of the assumptions of postmodernism. Kamboureli and Godard have attempted interpretations of Munro's

stories that emphasize a concern with language and the feminine body. Others have performed criticism that does not lean heavily on the assumption that the texts are realist. Blodgett, for example, argues: "it is an error, I suggest, to argue that Munro is primarily a realist and to insist . . . that [h]er photographic or documentary realism is an essential aspect of her art" (6). Mavis Gallant has remained the hardest to perceive as a potential postmodernist, despite the fact that she does employ experimental forms from time to time and the difficulty of categorizing her work may account partially for the paucity of critical attention she has received. Most of the readings of all three writers that do not stress the realism of the writers have been feminist readings. The results have been variable, but feminist readings have at least begun to read their fiction in a new light. Yet despite the increasing number of attempts to read these writers in a light other than the traditional realist one, these readings remain isolated and no attempts have been made to develop any sustained theory about how these writers diverge from realism.

Several works on postmodernism have been surprisingly inclusive. Hutcheon, whose account of the Canadian postmodern is regarded as definitive, includes Timothy Findley, Audrey Thomas, Aritha van Herk, and Margaret Atwood alongside such obvious choices as Robert Kroetsch and Michael Ondaatje. The Coach House Press anthology of postmodern stories, Likely Stories, edited by Hutcheon and Bowering, breaks barriers down even further and includes stories by Munro, Carol Shields, Jane Urquhart and Sheila Watson.

Hutcheon's definitions of postmodernism certainly seem inclusive. Postmodernism, she argues in Likely Stories, "instigates a questioning of the claims of any particular set of cultural beliefs to being universal and value-free" (10). Her definition might be seen to encompass almost all contemporary writers, for there is a sense in which all writing must be post-realist unless it is extraordinarily naive. Barth endorses the Russian writer Yevgeny Zamyatin's statement that "Euclid's world is very simple, and Einstein's world is very difficult; nevertheless, it is now impossible to return to Euclid's" (70). The truth of this claim that we inevitably live in a world that has seen through the falsity of a simple equation between word and thing makes the charge against women writers all the more potent. All contemporary writers must be post-realist writers, but this does not make them identical in all other respects. In fact, there is considerable diversity in how they manifest post-realism. Thus what is needed is a careful examination of the differences among post-realist writers.

I have attempted to show that the three women writers in this study interrogate the assumptions of realism. They do not use forms that diverge startlingly from traditional ones, although, interestingly, their fiction is less traditional in form than criticism encourages us to read it as. Atwood's use of metafictional devices is the most obvious, though even in a work such as Bodily Harm it can still be overlooked by some critics. Munro's metafiction is a little less obtrusive, but it is

nevertheless a real phenomenon. Many of her stories are concerned with the process of generating meaning (usually through narrating, but sometimes through acting) at least as much with what happens in the story. The effect is not as dramatic as the metafictional devices of Kroetsch or Ondaatje, but serves still to remind the reader that the story is always a fabrication. Further, Munro has escaped the classic vessel of realism, the novel, altogether. Even Lives of Girls and Women does not fit comfortably into the pattern of the novel. The gaps between stories in collections such as Lives of Girls and Women and Who Do You Think You Are? are eloquent in typical postmodernist form. Mavis Gallant's fiction is also more metafictional than is widely recognized. The whole of Home Truths, for example, can intelligibly be read as about the process of using language. Gallant has also ventured into more experimental structures such as "From the Fifteenth District" and the novella The Pegnitz Junction. Whether the form of some or all of their fiction can be classified as postmodern or not, these writers maintain what Hutcheon would identify as a postmodern relationship to realism. On the one hand, they employ many of its formal conventions, but on the other, they challenge its underlying assumptions.

As I have demonstrated in my study of the uses of dialogism, all three writers challenge the monologic controlling voice. They parody the traditional monologic voices and study the polyphony of voices alive in contemporary society. These voices are all gendered voices. Traditional monologic voices are continually associated

with men, and many of the voices in contemporary society attempt to shape and control the voices of women. Ultimately all the works of these writers are truly dialogic--unresolved and open-ended. Somewhat ironically, the diverse interpretations that have arisen over many of them testify to this. For example, one of the critical controversies surrounding Bodily Harm is whether or not Rennie "really" escapes; critics who treat the text as realist must fix it in one reality or another, whereas the text remains unresolved, forcing the reader to take responsibility for interpretation. Similarly, many of the characters created by the writers have received widely differing interpretations. Munro's Et and Atwood's Joan Foster, for example, have been characterized in sharply diverging moral terms. The apparent closed nature of these texts comes purely from reading them as realist, not from the works themselves. Their apparent closeness to realist works makes the task of reading them actively all the more challenging.

All three writers issue a challenge to the notion of stable character. Without employing overtly fragmented selves, they suggest a female sense of self which is far from stable and coherent. Female selves tend to be fluid, contradictory, and only temporarily coherent. There is a sense in which, like the universe in the light of the new physics, they disappear when they are not being observed. This sense of self with all its contradictions does not appear particularly bothersome to its subjects; what is problematic is the way in which this sense of self clashes with established notions of the desirability of stability and coherence.

For women, it seems, the self is tied to language as radically as it is for any postmodern writer. Women take substance only from their own voices and, even more importantly, from the voices of others. The self is best understood not as an essence as it is in realist fiction but as a hypothesis in language. The self can thus continually change and reinvent itself in language.

The most complex and the greatest challenge, because it underlies all the others, is the challenge these writers offer to the concept of the transparency of language. Language is never neutral, but always connected to power. Further, language can never render the world in words but constitutes the world. Yet all three writers, especially Munro, are in a sense would-be realists. They desire a language that can render reality in words, but no language can; writing is always reality necessarily transformed. Rennie in Bodily Harm, for example, prefers her complacency not to be disrupted by events for which she has no names. Joan longs for a pure voice that can contain the truth, but reality is very different and can never be contained with such simplicity. Gallant's Shirley desires to represent her experience in a neat list, but she never can succeed and is always radically side-tracked. Almost all of Munro's narrators, most notably Del in Lives of Girls and Women, suffer anxiety because experience constantly refuses to be contained in words. Indeed, even objects in the physical world refuse such containment. The result is that language always produces a "black fable" rather than a mirror of reality.

Munro seems always striving toward the goal of realism, but has an awareness that it is a chimera. Gallant recognizes that fiction is reality necessarily transformed and that the world of fiction bears as much resemblance to real life as the young Linnet's Marigold (a city constructed of household scraps) does to a real city. Atwood is conscious of the inability of language to reflect process; everywhere it turns dynamic process into static object, often with dire consequences. Yet all three writers persist in the struggle with language, the futile attempt to render dynamic process in words. For all three, being caught in either process or stasis is deeply dangerous and equated with loss of voice. Writing is thus a deeply paradoxical activity, a matter of both survival and potential destruction as language fixes the life of both its subject and others in damaging moulds. All three write with a combination of anxiety at the responsibility of using language and of relish in the act of using it. Silence often tempts these writers. It is freedom from the perpetual anxiety of language and immersion in process. Yet it is also the absence of the subject because it is the absence of voice. Such absence is deeply threatening to women whose struggle to maintain their voices is a struggle for survival in patriarchal society.

It would be a mistake to read these writers' relationship to realism and what it implies as one of simple rejection. "Realism" may be a shopworn inadequate term that can be dismissed, but dismissing the term is not the same as throwing the link between text and "reality" out the window too. In fact, for women, one of

the most insidious dangers of postmodernism is precisely the weakening of this link. If language refers to nothing but itself, then the power inherent in language is entirely dismissed. These texts testify that language is linked to power, especially the power attendant on gender relations. In a sense, then, these texts reflect that link. If the link is broken down, the political commentary the texts offer is destroyed. In Bodily Harm Rennie realizes that the best stories contain brutally real reflections of patriarchal society, and to dismiss such stories and their meaningful link to reality is fatal. The idea of maintaining a meaningful link does not imply that the word is equivalent to the thing, only that there is a link between women's discourses and their positions in society as marginal figures in patriarchal society or as subjects in the domestic realm. There are many consistent patterns in the work of these writers, and they must be read as reflective of gender relations within society.

One of the more striking--and surprising--patterns of similarity to emerge is the way in which patriarchal society is consistently depicted as both limited and violent. Men are depicted insistently as types who inhabit invisible squares and lead "small lives of their own creation." Yet uninteresting as most men consistently are, except as curiosities exhibiting the absurdities of the monologic approach to life, they remain always powerful. It comes as no surprise to see patriarchal society depicted as violent in the work of Atwood, but it disrupts our expectations somewhat to find it is depicted in similar terms in the work of Gallant and

Munro. In all her work, Atwood exposes the many links that connect patriarchy with violence against women, and some of her fiction, including Bodily Harm, takes this exposure as its prime subject. Gallant makes an insistent equation between patriarchal power and a force associated with Fascism and its brutality, especially against women. This equation is most obvious in a work like The Pegnitz Junction where, for example, Christine realizes that all three men in the carriage are thinking simultaneously of rape. Yet even in Home Truths and A Fairly Good Time, men are associated with Fascism and various violent gestures directed against women. Even Roy in "In the Tunnel" suffers from a failure of love equated with the impulse of Fascism. In the work of Munro, violence is similarly just beneath the surface of every-day life. Lives of Girls and Women contains an astonishing number of acts of violence against women, and even the clichéd language of romance is shown to have a current of violence running just beneath its surface. It is men who are equated with this violence: Jerry Storey and Art Chamberlain, for example, are associated with war, and in her dream, Del's passive father becomes a symbol of the compulsion of history and religion toward the slaughter of women in the name of necessity.

Another pattern running through the works is the consistent depiction of the difficulty of female relationships. Everywhere women are separated from each other. The malignity of women's identification against women is as powerful in A Fairly Good Time and Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You as it is in Bodily Harm. In Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You, for example,

women, particularly sisters, identify against each other, often because of a man. A Fairly Good Time shows how women are separated by their unwillingness to listen to one another's real voices, yet women are also bound to one another by a curious ontological synaesthesia, and both "Its Image on the Mirror" and Cat's Eye demonstrate the same pattern. The dynamic of the relationship between women informs most of the works examined here. Works such as Lives of Girls and Women, Who Do You Think You Are, the "Linnet Muir" sequence, and Lady Oracle have the relationship between mother and daughter as a central drama, whether this be an overt battle as in Lady Oracle, or concealed beneath the surface as in Gallant's stories. Always the daughter must separate herself from her mother, but in the process she fixes her mother into a distorting pattern. A few of the texts, most notably Atwood's Bodily Harm and Cat's Eye, gesture towards a healing of the breach between women divided in patriarchy, but the rift is simply too great.

Another pattern is the importance of process to women. All female protagonists are caught up in, and often almost swamped by, process--the "cluttered fabric of the present," the mess and muddle of the everyday world and its domestic details. Although the women long in some degree to separate themselves from the current of process, the only alternative is deathly stasis. Hutcheon identifies as one of the major postmodern paradoxes the "concern for dynamic process (reading, writing) being unavoidably articulated in the form of static product (the thing read and

written)" (138). This paradox is demonstrated in many of the works, especially Lady Oracle, A Fairly Good Time, and Who Do You Think You Are?. There is a suggestion in many of these works that stasis is deeply destructive and men often fall victim to it. For women the problem is more intense because although they are pulled more toward process than to stasis, they cannot afford to give in to process altogether which, again and again, is equated with silence. They must therefore perpetually engage in a necessarily unresolved struggle. Women, in fact, take their being from this perpetual and deeply disquieting struggle.

In contemporary Canadian fiction women's voices are growing louder and louder. The notion of voice is more than a metaphor for their writing. Voice is a crucial concept. It stresses that all narrative is delivered by a physical voice, and is thereby tied to time and place. Voice articulates process as it is produced and is not recreatable. It brings to mind the oral nature of voice that women have historically been able to command much more readily than the narrative voice of literature. The notion of voice, so important in the fiction of these writers, thus escapes the assumptions of realism which has always been a literary phenomenon, not an oral one. The fiction studied here shows that women's voices are often very fragile and difficult to sustain. They are readily drowned out by the coherent and powerful monologues that have dominated western society. They are often overtaken by the influence of society's many voices, especially its romance plots and its limited myths about female experience. They can rarely be

sustained over a long narrative, and women must frequently tell the same stories over again and, like Marie Thérèse in A Fairly Good Time, start from the beginning every time.

SOURCES OF EPIGRAPHS

INTRODUCTION

Joanna S. Frye, Living Stories, Telling Lives, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1987) 50.

Sarah Murphy, "Putting the Great Mother together again or how the cunt lost its tongue," in A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing, ed. Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli, (Edmonton, Alta: Longspoon/NeWest, 1986) 16.

SECTION ONE

Michel Foucault, The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith, (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 229.

Jane Gallop, "Lip Service," in Thinking Through the Body, (New York: Columbia Press, 1988), 98.

Barbara G. Walker, "Logos," in The Woman's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988): 212.

SECTION TWO

Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1986), 272.

Roland Barthes, Image, Music, Text, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977): 146.

SECTION THREE

Hélèn Cixous, "The Character of 'Character,'" New Literary History, 5.2 (1974): 387

Caryl Emerson, "The Tolstoy Connection in Bakhtin," PMLA 100.1 (January 1985), 70.

Linda Hutcheon, "'Shape Shifters': Canadian Women Novelists and the Challenge to Tradition," in A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing, ed. Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli, (Edmonton, Alta: Longspoon/NeWest, 1986, 219.

Barbara Johnson, "My Monster/My Self," Diacritics, 12.2 (Summer 1982), 4.

Gail Scott, "Shaping a Vehicle for Her Use: Woman and the Short Story," in in the feminine: women and words/les femmes et les mots, conference proceedings 1983, ed. Ann Dybikowski et al., (Edmonton, Alta.: Longspoon Press, 1985): 186.

CONCLUSION

Aritha van Herk, "Of Viscera and Vital Questions," in Language in her Eye: Views on Writing and Gender by Canadian Women Writing in English, ed. Libby Scheier et al., (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1990), 278.

WORKS CITED

- Anderson, Hans Christian. Andersen's Fairy Tales. New York: Macmillan, 1966.
- Atwood, Margaret. "Sexual Bias in Reviewing." in the feminine: women and words/les femmes et les mots conference proceedings 1983. Eds. Ann Dybikowski et al. Edmonton, Alta: Longspoon Press, 1985: 151-52.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M.Bakhtin. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.
- . Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics. Ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Barth, John. "The Literature of Replenishment: Postmodernist Fiction." Atlantic. 245.1 (1980): 65-71.
- Bayley, John. "Character and Consciousness." New Literary History. 5.2 (1974): 225-235
- Becker, George, ed. Documents of Modern Literary Realism. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963.
- Belsey, Catherine. Critical Practice. London: Methuen, 1991.
- Berger, John. Ways of Seeing. London: Penguin Books, 1972.
- Besner, Neil K. The Light of Imagination: Mavis Gallant's Fiction. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988.
- Blodgett, E.D. Alice Munro. Boston: Twayne, 1988.
- Bowering, George. The Mask in Place: Essays on Fiction in North America. Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1982.
- Brewer, Mária Minich. "A Loosening of Tongues: From Narrative Economy to Women Writing." Modern Language Notes 99 (1984): 1141-61.
- Buckley, Jerome Hamilton. Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from

- Dickens to Golding. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975.
- Cameron, Elspeth. "A Disappointing Autumnal Lament: Atwood Takes Lacklustre Look at Society in Her First Autobiographical Novel." Ottawa Citizen. Oct. 8, 1988. C3.
- Carrington, Ildikó de Papp. "Another Symbolic Descent." Essays on Canadian Writing 26 (1983): 45-63.
- . Controlling The Uncontrollable: The Fiction of Alice Munro. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989.
- Chodorow, Nancy. The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender. Berkley, California: University of California Press, 1978.
- Daly, Mary. Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978.
- Duras, Margaret. "From an Interview." In New French Feminisms: An Anthology. Eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtrivon. Trans. Susan Husserl-Kapit. New York: Schocken Books, 1981: 174-176.
- Frye, Joanne S. Living Stories, Telling Lives: Women and the Novel in Contemporary Experience. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1986.
- Gardiner, Judith Kegan. "On Female Identity and Writing by Women." Writing and Sexual Difference. Ed. Elizabeth Abel. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982: 177-191.
- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. "Sexual Linguistics: Gender, Language, Sexuality." New Literary History 16 (1984-5): 515-543.
- Godard, Barbara et al. "SP\ELLE: Spelling Out the Reasons." Room of One's Own. 8.4 (1983): 4-18.
- Grace, Sherrill. "'Listen to the Voice': Dialogism and the Canadian Novel." Future Indicative: Literary Theory and Canadian Literature. Ed. John Moss. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1987: 117-136.

- Hansen, Elaine Tuttle. "Fiction and (Post) Feminism in Atwood's Bodily Harm." Novel. 19.1 (1985): 5-21.
- Hatch, Ronald. "Mavis Gallant and the Creation of Consciousness." In The Canadian Novel: A Critical Anthology, vol.4, Present Tense, ed. John Moss. Toronto: NC Press, 1985. 45-71.
- . "The Three Stages of Mavis Gallant's Fiction." Canadian Fiction Magazine. 28 (1978). 92-114.
- Homans, Margaret. "'Her Very Own Howl': The Ambiguities of Representation in Recent Women's Fiction." Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society. 9.2 (1983): 186-205.
- Hoy, Helen. "'Rose and Janet': Alice Munro's Metafiction." Canadian Literature. 121 (1989): 59-83.
- Hutcheon, Linda and George Bowering, eds. Likely Stories: A Postmodern Sampler. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1992.
- Hutcheon, Linda. The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Irvine, Lorna. Sub/Version. Toronto: ECW Press, 1986.
- . "The Here and Now of Bodily Harm." In Kathryn VanSpanckeren and Jan Garden Castro eds. Margaret Atwood: Vision and Forms. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988. 85-100.
- Jameson, Frederic. "Postmodernism and Consumer Society." The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture. Ed. Hal Foster. Seattle: Bay Press, 1983: 111-125.
- Jensen, Emily. "Margaret Atwood's Lady Oracle: A Modern Parable." ECW 33 (1986): 29-49.
- Juhasz, Suzanne. "Towards a Theory of Form in Feminist Autobiography: Kate Millet's Flying and Sita; Maxine Hong Kingston's The Woman Warrior." Women's Autobiography. Ed. Estelle C. Jellinek. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980: 221-237.

- Kamboureli, Smaro. "The body as audience and performance in the writing of Alice Munro." In A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing. Edmonton, Alta.: NeWest Longspoon, 1986. 31-38.
- Keefer, Janice Kulyk. Reading Mavis Gallant. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Kristeva, Julia. "Oscillation Between Power and Denial." In New French Feminisms: An Anthology. Eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtrivon. Trans. Marilyn A. August. New York: Schocken Books, 1981: 165-167.
- La Belle, Jenijoy. Herself Beheld. The Literature of the Looking Glass. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Lakoff, Robin. Language and Women's Place. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.
- Leclerc, Annie. Parole de Femme. Grasset: 1974.
- Lieberman, Marcia. "'Some Day My Prince Will Come': Female Acculturation Through the Fairy Tale." College English. 34 (1972) 383-395.
- Macdonald, Rae McCarthy. "Structure and Detail in Lives of Girls and Women." Studies in Canadian Literature. 3 (1978): 199-201.
- Mackward, Christine. "To Be or Not to Be . . . A Feminist Speaker." The Future of Difference: The Scholar and the Feminist. Ed. Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine. Boston: G.K Hall, 1980: 95-105.
- Marks, Elaine and Isabelle de Courtrivon, eds. New French Feminisms: An Anthology. New York: Schocken Books, 1980.
- Martin, W.R. Alice Munro: Paradox and Parallel. Edmonton, Alta.: The University of Alberta Press, 1987.
- McDermott, Alice. "What Little Girls Are Really Made Of." New York Times Book Review. 5 Feb. 1989: I35.
- Neuman, Shirley and Robert Wilson, eds. Labyrinths of Voice: Conversations with Robert Kroetch. Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1982.

- Owens, Craig. "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism." The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture. Ed. Hal Foster. Seattle: Bay Press, 1983.
- Rubenstein, Roberta. "Pandora's Box and Female Survival: Margaret Atwood's Bodily Harm." Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes. 20.1 (Spring 1985) 120-135.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de. Course in General Linguistics. Trans. Roy Harris. London: Duckworth, 1983.
- Schumaker, Wayne. English Autobiography: Its Emergence, Materials, and Form. Berkley, California: University of California Press, 1954.
- Spender, Dale. Man Made Language. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983.
- Towers, Robert. "Mystery Women." New York Review of Books. 36.7 April 1989: 50-52.
- Twigg, Alan, ed. " For Openers: Conversations with 24 Canadian Writers. Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour Publishing, 1981.
- Walker, Barbara G. The Women's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988.
- Waugh, Patricia. Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1989.
- Wittig, Monique. "Les Guérillères." In New French Feminisms: An Anthology. Eds. Elair Marks and Isabelle de Courtrivon. Trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. New York: Schocken Books, 1981: 245-264.
- Woodcock, George. "Memory, Imagination, Artifice: The Late Short Fiction of Mavis Gallant." Canadian Fiction Magazine. 28 (1978): 74-91.
- . "The Plots of Life: The Realism of Alice Munro." Queen's Quarterly. 93.2 (1986): 235-250.

Yaeger, Patricia. Honey-Mad Women: Emancipatory Strategies in Women's Writing. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

---. "'Because a Fire Was in My Head': Eudora Welty and the Dialogic Imagination." PMLA 99 (1984): 955-973.

Zipes, Jack. Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion. New York: Methuen, 1988.

PRIMARY WORKS

MARGARET ATWOOD

BOOKS

- Atwood, Margaret. Bluebeard's Egg. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1983.
- . Bodily Harm. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981.
- . Cat's Eye. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988.
- . Dancing Girls and Other Stories. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977.
- . Double Persephone. Toronto: Hawkshead Press, 1961.
- . Good Bones. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1992.
- . Interlunar. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- . Lady Oracle. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976.
- . Life Before Man. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979.
- . Murder in the Dark. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1983.
- . Power Politics. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1971.
- . Procedures for Underground. Oxford University Press, 1970.
- . Second Words: Selected Critical Prose. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1982.
- . Selected Poems: 1966-1984. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- . Selected Poems II: Poems Selected and New, 1976-1986. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- . Selected Poems. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- . Surfacing. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972.
- . Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1972.
- . The Journals of Susanna Moodie. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990.

- . The Circle Game. Toronto: Contact Press, 1966.
- . The Edible Woman. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969.
- . The Animals in that Country. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- . The Handmaid's Tale. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985.
- . True Stories. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- . Two-Headed Poems. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- . Wilderness Tips. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991.
- . You Are Happy. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1974.

UNCOLLECTED STORIES

- Atwood, Margaret. "Betty." Chatelaine. February 1978: 41+
- . "Case of the Crazy Cashier." Toronto Life. March 1990: 46-47.
 - . "A Cliché for January." Acta Victoriana. February 1959: 7-9.
 - . "Encounters with the Element Man." Impulse. Winter 1972: 24-31.
 - . "Going to Bed." Evidence. 9 (1965): 5-10.
 - . "Hack Wednesday." The New Yorker. 17 September 1990: 38-47.
 - . "Happy Endings." Ms. February 1987: 58+
 - . "In Search of the Rattlesnake Plantain." Harper's. August 1986: 68-72.
 - . "Insula Insularum." Acta Victoriana. February 1961: 6-11.
 - . "Kat." The New Yorker. 5 March 1990: 38-44.
 - . "Testament Found in a Bureau Drawer." Prism International. Autumn 1965: 58-65.
 - . "The Whirlpool Rapids." Redbook. November 1986: 51+
 - . "The Glass Slippers." Acta Victoriana. March 1958: 16-18.
 - . "The Pilgrimage." Acta Victoriana. December 1958: 34-36.

- . "The Child is Now." The Sheet. January 1960: 10-12.
- . "Three Chronicles." ThisMagazine September 1990: 38-41.
- . "Uncles." Saturday Night. July-August 1990: 52-59.
- . "Walking on Water." Chatelaine. October 1986: 121+

SELECTED INTERVIEWS

- Atwood, Margaret. "An Atlantis Interview with Margaret Atwood." Atlantis. 5.2: 202-11.
- . "Atwood in Metamorphosis: An Authentic Canadian Fairy-Tale." By Valerie Miner. In Her Own Woman: Profiles of Ten Canadian Women. Ed. Myrna Kotash. Toronto: Macmillan, 1975. 173-94.
 - . "A Conversation with Margaret Atwood." By Joyce Carol Oates. Ontario Review. 9 (Fall-Winter 1978-79): 5-18.
 - . "A Conversation with Margaret Atwood." By Mary Ellis Gibson. Chicago Review. 27.4 (Spring 1976): 105-13.
 - . "A Conversation: Margaret Atwood and Students." By Francis X. Gillen, moderator. In VanSpanckeren, Kathryn, and Jan Garden Castro eds. Margaret Atwood: Vision and Forms. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988: 233-243.
 - . "Interview with Margaret Atwood." By William Schiller. PWP 2.3 (Fall 1976): 2-15.
 - . "Interview with Margaret Atwood." By Beryl Langer. ACS 6.1 (1988): 125-136.
 - . "An Interview with Margaret Atwood." By Joyce Carol Oates. New York Times Book Review. 21 May, 1978. 15, 43-45.
 - . "An Interview with Margaret Atwood." By J.R.(Tim) Struthers. Essays on Canadian Writing. 6 (Spring 1977): 18-27.
 - . "An Interview with Margaret Atwood, 20 April 1983." By Jan Garden Castron. In VanSpanckeren, Kathryn, and Jan Garden Castro eds. Margaret Atwood: Vision and Forms. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988: 215-232.
 - . "An Interview with Margaret Atwood." By Geoff Hancock. Canadian Fiction Magazine. 58 (1986): 113-144.

- . "Interview with Margaret Atwood." By Linda Sandler. Malahat Review. 41: 7-27.
- . "An Interview with Margaret Atwood." By Sudhakar R. Jamkhandi. CNIE 1983 Jan. 2.1: 1-6
- . "Interview with Margaret Atwood." By Margaret Kaminski. Waves 4.1 (Autumn 1975): 8-13.
- . "An Interview with Margaret Atwood." By Mary Ellen Kappler and Mike Zisis. Intrinsic 7/8 (Spring 1979): 91-95.
- . "An Interview with Margaret Atwood." By Karla Hammond. American Poetry Review. 8.5 (Sept-Oct 1979): 27-29.
- . "An Interview with Margaret Atwood." By Elizabeth Meese. Black Warrior Review 12.1 (Fall 1985): 88-108.
- . "Interview with Margaret Atwood." By Christopher Levenson. Manna. 2 (1972): 46-54.
- . "Interview with Margaret Atwood." By Helen Slinger. Maclean's. 6 September 1976: 4-7.
- . "Margaret Atwood." By Graeme Gibson. In Eleven Canadian Novelists. Toronto: House of Anansi, 1973: 1-31.
- . "Margaret Atwood." By Jim Davidson. Meanjin. 37.2 (July 1978): 189-205.
- . "Margaret Atwood." By Beverley Slopen. Publisher's Weekly. 23 Aug. 1976: 6-8.
- . "A Margaret Atwood Interview." By Karla Hammond. Canadian Poetry. 12.2: 73-81.
- . "Margaret Atwood: The Woman as Poet." By Susan Swann. Communiqué. 8 (May 1975): 8-11, 45-46.
- . "Poetry Canada Review Interview with Margaret Atwood." By Clifton Whiten. Poetry Canada Review. 1.4 (Spring 1980): 8-10.
- . "Talking with Atwood." By Gail Van Varsveld. Room of One's Own. 1.2 (Summer 1975): 66-70.
- . "Using What You're Given: An Interview with Margaret Atwood." By Jo Brans. Southwestern Review (Autumn 1983) 68.4: 301-315.
- . "'Waltzing Again': A Conversation with Margaret Atwood." By Earl G. Ingersoll. Ontario Review. 32 (1990): 7-11.

- . "What's Going to Happen Is in Stars." By J.R. (Tim) Struthers. London Free Press. 30 Oct. 1978, 63.

MAVIS GALLANT

BOOKS

- Gallant, Mavis. A Fairly Good Time. New York: Random House, 1970.
- . From the Fifteenth District: a Novella and Eight Short Stories. Toronto: Macmillan, 1979.
- . Green Water, Green Sky. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959.
- . Home Truths: Selected Canadian Stories. Toronto: Macmillan, 1981.
- . In Transit. Markham, Ont.: Viking, 1988.
- . My Heart is Broken. New York: Random House, 1970.
- . Overhead in a Balloon: Stories of Paris. Toronto: Macmillan, 1985.
- . Paris Notebooks: Essays and Reviews. Toronto: Macmillan, 1986.
- . The Other Paris. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956.
- . The Fegnitz Junction: a Novella and Five Short Stories. New York: Random House, 1973.
- . The End of the World and Other Stories. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974.
- . What Is To Be Done? Dunvegan, Ont.: Quadrant, 1983.

UNCOLLECTED STORIES

- Gallant, Mavis. "Across the Bridge." The New Yorker. 18 March 1991: 38-50+
- . "The Burgundy Weekend." Tamarak Review. Winter 1979: 3-39.
- . "The Chosen Husband." The New Yorker. 15 April 1985: 40-9.
- . "The Concert Party." The New Yorker. 25 January 1988: 32-42+

- . "Déclassé." Mademoiselle. February 1987: 116+
- . "Dédé." The New Yorker. 5 January 1987: 28-34.
- . "Florida." The New Yorker. 26 August 1985: 24-7.
- . "The Flowers of Spring." Northern Review. June-July 1950: 31-9.
- . "Forain." The New Yorker. 24 June 1991: 27-35.
- . "From Cloud to Cloud." The New Yorker. 8 July 1985, 22-25.
- . "Good Morning and Goodbye." Preview. December 1944: 1-3.
- . "In a War." The New Yorker. 30 October 1989: 38-48.
- . "Kingdom Come." The New Yorker. 8 September 1986: 32-35.
- . "Leaving the Party." The New Yorker. 3 March 1986: 30-1.
- . "Let it Pass." The New Yorker. 18 May 1987: 38-50+
- . "Madeleine's Birthday." The New Yorker. 1 September 1951: 20-24.
- . "Night and Day." The New Yorker. 17 March 1962: 48-50.
- . "The Old Place." Texas Quarterly. Spring 1958: 66-80.
- . "Paola and Renata." Southern Review. Winter 1965: 199-209.
- . "The Rejection." The New Yorker. 12 April 1969: 42-4.
- . "Rose." The New Yorker. 17 December 1960: 34-37.
- . "A State of Affairs." The New Yorker. 23 December 1991: 33-40.
- . "Thieves and Rascals." Esquire. July 1956: 82-86.
- . "Three Brick Walls." Preview. December 1944: 4-6.

SELECTED INTERVIEWS

- Gallant, Mavis. "Fairly Good Times: An Interview with Mavis Gallant." By Barbara Gabriel. Canadian Forum. 66.766 (Feb.1987): 23-7.
- . "From the Other Paris: Interview with Mavis Gallant." By Karen Lawrence. Branching Out: Canadian Magazine for Women. 3.1 (Feb.-March 1976): 18-19.

- . "An Interview with Mavis Gallant." By Michel Fabre.
Commonwealth. 11.2 (1989): 95-103.
- . "An Interview with Mavis Gallant." By Debra Martens.
Rubicon. 4 (1984-85): 150-182.
- . "An Interview with Mavis Gallant." By Geoff Hancock.
Canadian Fiction Magazine. 28 (1978). 19-67.

ALICE MUNRO

BOOKS

- Munro, Alice. Dance of the Happy Shades. Toronto: Ryerson, 1968.
- . Friend of My Youth. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990.
- . Lives of Girls and Women. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1971.
- . Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974.
- . The Moons of Jupiter. Toronto: Macmillan, 1982.
- . The Progress of Love. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986.
- . Who Do You Think You Are?. Toronto: Macmillan, 1978.

UNCOLLECTED STORIES

- . "At the Other Place" Canadian Forum September 1955: 131-33.
- . "A Basket of Strawberries." Mayfair November 1943: 32+
- . "A Better Place than Home." The Newcomers: Inhabiting a New Land. Ed. Charles E. Israel. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979. 113-24.
- . "Carried Away." The New Yorker. 21 October 1991: 34+
- . "Characters." Ploughshares. 4.3 (1978): 72-82.
- . "Home." New Canadian Stories 74, eds. David Helwig and Joan Harcourt. Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1974: 133-53.
- . "How Could I Do That?" Chatelaine March 1956: 16+
- . "Pictures of the Ice." Atlantic. January 1990: 64-68.

- . "A Real Life." The New Yorker. 10 February 1992: 30-40.
- . "Secrets Between Friends." Mademoiselle. November 1985:116+
- . "Story for Sunday." Folio December 1950: 4-8.
- . "The Dimensions of a Shadow." Folio April 1950: 2-8
- . "The Dangerous One." Chatelaine. July 1957: 48+
- . "The Edge of Town." Queen's Quarterly. Autumn 1955: 368-80.
- . "The Widower." Folio April 1951: 7-11.
- . "A Wilderness Station." The New Yorker. 27 April 1992: 35-46+
- . "The Ferguson Girls Must Never Marry." Grand Street Spring 1982: 27-64.
- . "The Idyllic Summer." The Canadian Forum. September 1955: 131-33.
- . "Visitors." The Atlantic Monthly. April 1982. 90+
- . "Wood." The New Yorker. 24 November 1980: 49-54.

SELECTED INTERVIEWS

- Munro, Alice. "Alice Munro Talks with Mari Stainsby." British Columbia Library Quarterly. July 1971: 27-30.
- . "Alice Munro." Eleven Canadian Novelists Interviewed by Graeme Gibson. Toronto: House of Anansi, 1973. 237-64.
 - . "A Conversation with Alice Munro." Journal of Canadian Fiction. By John Metcalf. 1.4 (1972): 54-62.
 - . "Great Dames." MacLean's. By Barbara Frum. April 1973: 32, 38.
 - . "An Interview with Alice Munro." Canadian Fiction Magazine. By Geoff Hancock. 43 (1982): 75-114.
 - . "Interview with Alice Munro." By Harold Horwood. The Art of Alice Munro: Saying the the Unsayable. Ed. Judith Miller. Waterloo: University of Waterloo Press, 1984. 123-35.
 - . "Name: Alice Munro. Occupation: Writer." Chatelaine. By Ken Murch. August 1975: 42-43, 69-72.

- . "Real Material: An Interview with Alice Munro." By J.R. (Tim) Struthers. Probable Fictions: Alice Munro's Narrative Acts. Ed. Louis K. MacKendrick. Downsview, Ont.: ECW, 1983. 5-36.
- . "Through the Jade Curtain." Chinada: Memoirs of the Gang of Seven. By Geoff Hancock. Dunvegan, Ont.: Quadrant Editions, 1982. 51-55.
- . "A Visit By Alice Munro." Monday Magazine. By Stephen Scobie. 19-25 November 1982: 12-13.
- . "What Is: Alice Munro." For Openers: Conversations with Twenty-four Canadian Writers. By Alan Twig. Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour, 1981: 13-20.
- . "Who Do You Think You Are? Review-Interview with Alice Munro." Room of One's Own. By Carole Gerson. 4.4 (1979): 2-7.
- . "Writing's Something I Did, Like the Ironing." Toronto Globe and Mail 11 December 1982, Section 4: E1.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abel, Elizabeth, ed. Writing and Sexual Difference. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- , Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland, eds. The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development. Hanover, New Hampshire: The University Press of New England, 1983.
- Allen, Carolyn. "Failures of Word, Uses of Silence: Djuna Barnes, Adrienne Rich, and Margaret Atwood." Regionalism and the Female Imagination. 4.1 (Spring 1978): 1-8.
- Anderson, Hans Christian. Andersen's Fairy Tales. New York: Macmillan, 1966.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.
- . Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics. Ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Barth, John. "The Literature of Replenishment: Postmodernist Fiction." Atlantic. 245.1 (1980): 65-71.
- Bauer, Dale M. and S. Jaret McKinstry, eds. Feminism, Bakhtin, and the Dialogic. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1991.
- Bayley, John. "Character and Consciousness." New Literary History. 5.2 (1974): 225-235
- Becker, George, ed. Documents of Modern Literary Realism. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963.
- Belkin, Rosalyn. "The Worth of the Shadow: Maragaret Atwood's Lady Oracle." Thalia: Studies in Literary Humour. 1.3 (Winter 1978): 3-8.
- Belsey, Catherine. Critical Practice. London: Methuen, 1991.
- Berger, John. Ways of Seeing. London: Penguin Books, 1972.
- Besner, Neil. "The Corruption of Memory: Mavis Gallant's 'An Autobiography.'" Recherches Anqlaises et Nord-Americaines. 20 (1987): 35-40.
- . "A Broken Dialogue: History and Memory in Mavis Gallant's Short Fiction." Essays on Canadian Writing. 33 (Fall 1986): 89-99.

- . The Light of Imagination: Mavis Gallant's Fiction. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988.
- Bjerring, Nancy. "The Problem of Language in Margaret Atwood's Surfacing." Queen's Quarterly. 83.4 (Winter 1976): 597-612.
- Blodgett, E.D. Alice Munro. Boston: Twayne, 1988.
- Booth, Wayne. "Freedom of Interpretation: Bakhtin and the Challenge of Feminist Criticism." Critical Inquiry. 9 (Fall 1982): 45-76.
- Bowering, George. The Mask in Place: Essays on Fiction in North America. Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1982.
- Bowron, Bernard R. Jr. "Realism in America." Comparative Literature. 3.3 (Summer 1951): 268-285.
- Brewer, Mária Minich. "A Loosening of Tongues: From Narrative Economy to Women Writing." Modern Language Notes 99 (1984): 1141-61.
- Brown, Cheryl L. and Karen Olson, eds. Feminist Criticism: Essays on Theory, Poetry, and Prose. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1978.
- Brydon, Diana. "Caribbean Revolution and Literary Convention." Canadian Literature. 95 (Winter 1982): 181-185.
- Buckley, Jerome Hamilton. Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975.
- Butturf, Douglas, and Edmund L. Epstein, eds. Women's Language and Style. Akron: University of Akron Press, 1978.
- Cameron, Elspeth. "A Disappointing Autumnal Lament: Atwood Takes Lacklustre Look at Society in Her First Autobiographical Novel." Ottawa Citizen. Oct. 8, 1988. C3.
- Carrington, Ildikó de Papp. "Another Symbolic Descent." ECW 26 (1983): 45-63.
- . Controlling the Uncontrollable: The Fiction of Alice Munro. Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989.
- Chodorow, Nancy. The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender. Berkley, California: University of California Press, 1978.
- Christ, Carol P. Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest. Boston: Beacon Press, 1980.

- Clark, Meera T. "Margaret Atwood's Surfacing: Language, Logic and the Art of Fiction." Modern Language Studies. 13.3 (Summer 1983): 3-15.
- Clement, Lesley. "Mavis Gallant's Apprenticeship Stories, 1944-1950: Breaking the Frame." English Studies in Canada. 18.3 (September 1992): 317-333.
- Cohen, Matt. "Notes on Realism in Modern English-Canadian Fiction." In Canadian Writers in 1984: The 25th Anniversary Issue of Canadian Literature. Vancouver: The University of British Columbia, 1984: 65-71.
- Cotnoir, Louise. "Writing Ourselves With, In and Against Language." Room of One's Own. 8.4 (1983): 50-52.
- Cude, Wilfred. "Nobody Dunit: The Loose End as Structural Element in Lady Oracle." Journal of Canadian Studies. 15.1 (Spring 1986): 30-44.
- . "Bravo Mothball! An Essay on Lady Oracle." In The Canadian Novel: Here and Now. Ed. John Moss. Toronto: N.C. Press, 1978.
- Dahlie, Hallvard. "Unconsummated Relationships: Isolation and Rejection in Alice Munro's Stories." World Literature Written in English. 11 (April 1972): 43-48.
- Daly, Mary. Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978.
- Davey, Frank. "Surviving the Paraphrase." Canadian Literature. 70 (Autumn 1976): 5-13.
- . "Lady Oracle's Secret: Atwood's Comic Novels." Studies in Canadian Literature. 5.2 (Fall 1980): 209-221.
- . From There to Here: A Guide to English-Canadian Literature Since 1960. Erin, Ont.: Press Porcépic, 1974.
- . Margaret Atwood: A Feminist Poetics. Vancouver: Talon Books, 1984.
- Davidson, Arnold E. "Poetics of Pain in Margaret Atwood's Bodily Harm." American Review of Canadian Studies. 18.1 (Spring 1988): 1-10.
- , and Cathy N. Davidson, eds. The Art of Margaret Atwood: Essays in Criticism. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1981.

- , and Cathy N. "Margaret Atwood's Lady Oracle: The Artist as Escapist and Seer." Studies in Canadian Literature. 3.2 (Summer 1978): 166-177.
- Davidson, Cathy N. "Canadian Wry: Comic Vision in Atwood's Lady Oracle and Laurence's The Diviners." Regionalism and the Female Imagination. 3.2 (Fall 1977): 50-56.
- Davis, Robert Gorham. "The Sense of the Real in English Fiction." Comparative Literature. 3.3 (Summer 1951):200-217.
- Davis, Natalie Zemon. "Bloodshed and the Woman's Voice." In Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth Century France. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987.
- Diamond, Arlyn and Lee R. Edwards, eds. The Authority of Experience: Essays in Feminist Criticism. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1977.
- Djwa, Sandra. "Deep Caves and Kitchen Linoleum: Psychological Violence in the Fiction of Alice Munro." In Violence in the Canadian Novel Since 1960. Ed. Virginia Harger-Grinling and Terrie Goldie. St. John's: Memorial University, 1981: 177-190.
- Donovan, Josephine, ed. Feminist Literary Criticism: Explorations in Theory. Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1975.
- DuPlessis, Rachel Blau. Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth Century Women Writers. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- Duras, Margaret. "From an Interview." In New French Feminisms: An Anthology. Eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtrivon. Trans. Susan Husserl-Kapit. New York: Schocken Books, 1981: 174-176.
- Eagleton, Mary, ed. Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.
- Eisenstein, Hester and Alice Jardine, eds. The Future of Difference: The Scholar and the Feminist. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1980.
- Eldredge, L.M. "A Sense of Ending in Lives of Girls and Women." Studies in Canadian Literature. 9.1 (1984): 110-115.
- Fabre, Michael. "'Orphan's Progress,' Reader's Progress: Voice and Understatement in Mavis Gallant's Stories." In Robert Kroetsch, ed. Gaining Ground: European Critics on Canadian Literature. Edmonton: NeWest, 1985.

- Federman, Raymond, ed. Surfiction: Fiction Now . . . and Tomorrow. Chicago: Swallow Press, 1981.
- Felski, Rita. Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Fleenor, Juliann E. "Rape Fantasies as Initiation Rite: Female Imagination in Lives of Girls and Women." Room of One's Own. 4.4. (Winter 1979): 35-49.
- Fogel, Stanley. A Tale of Two Countries: Contemporary Fiction in English Canada and the United States. Toronto: ECW Press, 1984.
- Fowler, Rowena. "The Art of Alice Munro: The Beggar Maid and Lives of Girls and Women." Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction. 25.4 (1984): 189-198.
- Freibert, Lucy M. "The Artist as Picaro: The Revelation of Margaret Atwood's Lady Oracle." Canadian Literature. 92 (Spring 1982): 23-33.
- Frye, Joanne S. Living Stories, Telling Lives: Women and the Novel in Contemporary Experience. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1986.
- Frye, Marilyn. The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory. Trumansburg, N.Y.: Crossing Press, 1983.
- Gardiner, Judith. "On Female Identity and Writing by Women." Critical Inquiry. 8.2 (Winter 1981): 347-361.
- Gerstenberger, Donna. "Conceptions Literary and Otherwise: Women Writers and the Modern Imagination." Novel: A Forum on Fiction. 9.2 (Winter 1976): 141-150.
- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. "Sexual Linguistics: Gender, Language, Sexuality." New Literary History 16 (1984-5): 515-543.
- Givner, Jessie. "Mirror Images in Margaret Atwood's Lady Oracle." Studies in Canadian Literature. 14.1 (1989): 139-146.
- Godard, Barbara. "My (m)Other, My Self: Strategies for Subversion in Atwood and Hébert." Essays on Canadian Writing. 26 (Summer 1983): 13-44.
- . "Tales within Tales: Margaret Atwood's Folk Narratives." Canadian Literature. 109 (1986): 57-84.

- , et al. "SP\ELLE: Spelling Out the Reasons." Room of One's Own. 8.4 (1983): 4-18.
- . "Modalities of the Edge: Towards a Semiotics of Irony: The Case of Mavis Gallant." Essays on Canadian Writing. 42 (Winter 1990): 72-101.
- , ed. Gynocritics\La Gynocritique: Feminist Approaches to Writing by Canadian and Québécoise Women/Approches féministes à l'écriture des canadiennes et québécoise. Toronto: ECW Press, 1987.
- Gould, Karen. Writing in the Feminine: Feminism and Experimental Writing in Québec. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990.
- Grace, Sherrill. "'Listen to the Voice': Dialogism and the Canadian Novel." Future Indicative: Literary Theory and Canadian Literature. Ed. John Moss. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1987: 117-136.
- , and Lorraine Weir, eds. Margaret Atwood: Language, Text, and System. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983.
- . Violent Duality: A Study of Margaret Atwood. Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1980.
- Greene, Gayle, and Coppélia Kahn, eds. Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism. New York: Methuen, 1985.
- Griffith, Margaret. "Verbal Terrain in the Novels of Margaret Atwood." Critique. 21.3 (1980): 85-93.
- Hancock, Geoff, ed. A Special Issue on Mavis Gallant. Canadian Fiction Magazine, no. 28 (1978).
- . "Here and Now: Innovation and Change in the Canadian Short Story." Canadian Fiction Magazine. 27 (1977): 4-22.
- . "An Interview with Robert Kroetsch." Canadian Fiction Magazine. 24/25 (1977): 33-52.
- Hansen, Elaine Tuttle. "Fiction and (Post) Feminism in Atwood's Bodily Harm." Novel. 19.1 (1985): 5-21.
- Hatch, Ronald B. "Mavis Gallant: Returning Home." Atlantis. 4.1 (Fall 1978), 95-102.
- . "Mavis Gallant and the Creation of Consciousness." In The Canadian Novel: A Critical Anthology. Vol 4, Present Tense, ed. John Moss. Toronto: NC Press, 1985, 45-71.

- . "The Three Stages of Mavis Gallant's Fiction." Canadian Fiction Magazine. 28 (1978). 92-114.
- . "Mavis Gallant and the Fascism of Everyday Life." Essays on Canadian Writing. 42 (Winter 1990): 9-40.
- . "Mavis Gallant and the Expatriate Character." Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Kanada-Studien 1 (Jan. 1981): 133-42.
- Hawking, Stephen. A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes. New York: Bantam, 1990.
- Homans, Margaret. "'Her Very Own Howl': The Ambiguities of Representation in Recent Women's Fiction." Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 9.2 (Winter 1983): 186-205.
- Hoy, Helen. "Dull, Simple, Amazing, and Unfathomable: Paradox and Double Vision in Alice Munro's Fiction." Studies in Canadian Literature. 5 (Summer 1980): 100-116.
- . "'Rose and Janet': Alice Munro's Metafiction." Canadian Literature. 121 (1989): 59-83.
- Hutcheon, Linda. "Voices of Displacement." Canadian Forum. (June-July 1985): 33-46.
- . The Politics of Postmodernism. London: Routledge, 1989.
- . The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- , and George Bowering, eds. Likely Stories: A Postmodern Sampler. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1992.
- . The Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction. New York: Routledge, 1988.
- Irvine, Lorna. "Starting from the Beginning Every Time." In Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli, eds. A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing. Edmonton, Alta.: Longspoon/NeWest, 1986: 246-255.
- . Sub/Version. Toronto: ECW Press, 1986.
- . "The Here and Now of Bodily Harm." In Kathryn VanSpanckeren and Jan Garden Castro eds. Margaret Atwood: Vision and Forms. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988. 85-100.
- Jameson, Frederic. "Postmodernism and Consumer Society." The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture. Ed. Hal Foster. Seattle: Bay Press, 1983: 111-125.

- Jardine, Alice A. Gynesis: Configurations of Women and Modernity. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Jehlen, Myra. "Archimedes and the Paradox of Feminist Criticism." Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society. 6.4 (1981): 575-601.
- Jelinek, Estelle C. ed. Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980.
- Jensen, Emily. "Margaret Atwood's Lady Oracle: A Modern Parable." Essays on Canadian Writing 33 (1985): 29-49.
- Jewison, D.B. "Speaking of Mirrors: Imagery and Narration in Two Novellas by Mavis Gallant." Studies in Canadian Literature 10.1 (1985): 94-109.
- Johnston, Sue Ann. "The Daughter as Escape Artist." Atlantis. 9.2 (Spring 1984): 10-22.
- Jones, Dorothy. "'Waiting for Rescue': A Discussion of Margaret Atwood's Bodily Harm." Kunapipi. 6.3 (1984): 86-100.
- Juhasz, Suzanne. "Towards a Theory of Form in Feminist Autobiography: Kate Millet's Flying and Sita; Maxine Hong Kingston's The Woman Warrior." Women's Autobiography. Ed. Estelle C. Jelinek. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980: 221-237.
- Kamboureli, Smaro. "The body as audience and performance in the writing of Alice Munro." In A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing. Edmonton, Alta.: NeWest Longspoon, 1986. 31-38.
- Keefer, Janice Kulyk. "Mavis Gallant's World of Women: A Feminist Perspective." Atlantis. 10.2 (Spring 1985): 11-29.
- . "Strange Fashions of Forsaking: Criticism and the Fiction of Mavis Gallant." Dalhousie Review. 64.4 (Winter 1984-1985): 721-735.
- . "Mavis Gallant and the Angel of History." University of Toronto Quarterly. 55.3 (Spring 1986): 282-301.
- . Reading Mavis Gallant. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Kolodny, Annette. "A Map for Rereading: or, Gender and the Interpretation of Literary Texts." New Literary History. 11 (1980): 451-467.

- Kristeva, Julia. "Oscillation Between Power and Denial." In New French Feminisms: An Anthology. Eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtrivon. Trans. Marilyn A. August. New York: Schocken Books, 1981: 165-167.
- La Belle, Jenijoy. Herself Beheld. The Literature of the Looking Glass. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Lacombe, Michele. "The Writing on the Wall: Amputated Speech in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale." Wascana Review. 21.2 (Fall 1986): 3-20.
- Lakoff, Robin. Language and Women's Place. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.
- Lanser, Susan. "Toward a Feminist Narratology." Style. 20.3 (Fall 1986): 341-363.
- Leclerc, Annie. Parole de Femme. Grasset: 1974.
- Lee, Dennis. "Cadence, Country, Silence: Writing in Colonial Space." Boundary 2. 3.1 (1974): 151-168.
- Leger, Susan. "The Lure of Symmetry; Or, the Strange Impossibility of Feminist Criticism." Massachusetts Review. 24 (Summer 1983): 330-336.
- Leith, Linda. "Scream: Mavis Gallant's A Fairly Good Time." American Review of Canadian Studies. 18.2 (Summer 1988): 213-221.
- . "Mavis Gallant's Montreal." Montreal Review. (Spring-Summer 1979): 74-78.
- Lieberman, Marcia R. "'Some Day My Prince Will Come': Female Acculturation Through the Fairy Tale." College English. 34 (1972): 383-395.
- Lodge, David. After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Lucking, David. "In Pursuit of the Faceless Stranger: Depths and Surfaces in Margaret Atwood's Bodily Harm." Studies in Canadian Literature. 15.1 (1990): 76-93.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Macdonald, Rae McCarthy. "Structure and Detail in Lives of Girls and Women." Studies in Canadian Literature. 3 (1978): 199-201.

- . "A Madman Loose in the World: The Vision of Alice Munro." Modern Fiction Studies. 22 (Fall 1976): 365-374.
- MacKendrick, Louis K., ed. Probable Fictions: Alice Munro's Narrative Acts. Toronto: ECW Press, 1983.
- Mackward, Christine. "To Be or Not to Be . . . A Feminist Speaker." The Future of Difference: The Scholar and the Feminist. Ed. Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine. Boston: G.K Hall, 1980: 95-105.
- Maclean, Susan. "Lady Oracle: The Art of Reality and the Reality of Art." Journal of Canadian Fiction. 28-29 (1980): 179-197.
- Mansbridge, Frances. "Search for Self in the Novels of Margaret Atwood." Journal of Canadian Fiction. 22 (1978): 106-117.
- Marks, Elaine and Isabelle de Coutrivon, eds. New French Feminisms: An Anthology. New York: Schocken Books, 1980.
- Marks, Elaine. "Women and Literature in France." Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society. 3.4 (1978): 832-842.
- Martin, W.R. Alice Munro: Paradox and Parallel. Edmonton, Alta.: The University of Alberta Press, 1987.
- McCombs, Judith. "Atwood's Fictive Portraits of the Artist: From Victim to Surfer, from Oracle to Birth." Women's Studies. 12 (1986): 69-88.
- . "Contrary Re-memberings: The Creating Self and Feminism in Cat's Eye." Canadian Literature. 129 (Summer 1991): 9-23.
- McConnel-Ginnet, Sally, et al. eds. Women and Language in Literature and Society. New York: Praeger, 1980.
- McDermott, Alice. "What Little Girls Are Really Made Of." New York Times Book Review. 5 Feb. 1989: I35.
- McHale, Brian. Postmodernist Fiction. New York: Methuen, 1987.
- McLuhan, Marshall. "Canada: The Border Line Case." In The Canadian Imagination: Dimensions of a Literary Culture. Ed. David Staines. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972.
- McMullin, Stanley E. "'Adams Mad in Eden': Magic Realism as Hinterland Experience." Magic Realism and Canadian Literature: Essays and Stories. Waterloo, Ont.: University of Waterloo Press, 1986: 13-21.

- Meese, Elizabeth. Crossing the Double-Cross: The Practice of Feminist Criticism. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986.
- Mendez-Egle, Barbara, ed. Margaret Atwood: Reflection and Reality. Living Author Series, no. 6. Edinburg, Texas: Pan American University Press, 1987.
- Merler, Grazia. Mavis Gallant: Narrative Patterns and Devices. Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1978.
- Michie, Helen. The Flesh Made Word: Female Figures and Women's Bodies. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Miller, Casey and Kate Swift. Words and Women: Language and the Sexes. New York: Penguin, 1979.
- Miller, Nancy K. The Poetics of Gender. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- . "Emphasis Added: Plots and Plausibilities in Women's Fiction." PMLA. 96.1 (1981): 36-48.
- . "The Text's Heroine: A Feminist Critic and Her Fictions." Diacritics. 12 (1982): 48-53.
- Miller, Judith, ed. The Art of Alice Munro: Saying the Unsayable. Waterloo: University of Waterloo Press, 1984.
- Millett, Kate. Sexual Politics. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970.
- Moi, Toril. Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory. New York: Methuen, 1985.
- Moran, Mary Hurley. "The Fiction of Margaret Atwood: A Critique of Popular Culture." Postscript. 3 (1986): 7-12.
- Murray, Heather. "Its Image on the Mirror: Canada, Canonicity, the Uncanny." Essays on Canadian Writing. 42 (Winter 1990): 102-130.
- Myers, Walter L. The Later Realism: A Study of Characterization in the British Novel. Plairview, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1973.
- Neuman, Shirley and Smaro Kamboureli, eds. A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing. Edmonton, Alta.: Longspoon/NeWest, 1986.

- Newman, Shirley and Robert Wilson, eds. Labyrinths of Voice: Conversations with Robert Kroetch. Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1982.
- Newman, Charles. The Postmodern Aura: The Act of Fiction in an Age of Inflation. Evanston, Ill.: Northwest University Press, 1985.
- O'Rourke, David. "Exiles in Time: Gallant's My Heart is Broken." Canadian Literature. 93 (Summer 1982): 98-107.
- Olney, James, ed. Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980.
- Onley, Gloria. "Power Politics in Bluebeard's Castle." Canadian Literature. 60 (Spring 1974): 21-42.
- Owens, Craig. "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism." The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture. Ed. Hal Foster. Seattle: Bay Press, 1983.
- Pache, Walter. "'The Fiction Makes Us Real': Aspects of Postmodernism in Canada." In Gaining Ground: European Critics on Canadian Literature. Ed. Robert Kroetsch and Reingard M. Nischik. Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1985: 64-78.
- Perrakis, Phyllis Sternberg. "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl: Alice Munro's Lives of Girls and Women." Atlantis. 7.2 (Spring 1982): 61-67.
- Pfaus, B. Alice Munro. Ottawa: The Golden Dog, 1984.
- Pratt, Annis. Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981.
- Rasporich, Beverly J. Dance of the Sexes: Art and Gender in the Fiction of Alice Munro. Edmonton, Alta.: University of Alberta Press, 1990.
- Rich, Adrienne. "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision." College English. 34 (October 1972): 18-25.
- Rigney, Barbara Hill. Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel: Studies in Bronte, Woolf, Lessing and Atwood. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978.
- Robbe-Grillet, Alain. "From Realism to Reality." For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970: 157-168.
- Rosenberg, Jerome H. Margaret Atwood. Boston: Twayne, 1984.

- Rosowski, Susan J. "Margaret Atwood's Lady Oracle: Social Mythology of the Gothic Novel." Research Studies. 49.2 (June 1981): 87-98.
- Ross, Robert. "Mavis Gallant and Thea Astley on Home Truths, Home Folk." Ariel: A Review of International English Literature. 19.1 (Jan. 1988): 83-89.
- Rubenstein, Roberta. "Pandora's Box and Female Survival: Margaret Atwood's Bodily Harm." Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes. 20.1 (Spring 1985) 120-135.
- Sandler, Linda, ed. Margaret Atwood: A Symposium. (The Malahat Review, No. 41, Jan. 1977). Victoria: University of Victoria, 1977.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de. Course in General Linguistics. Trans. Roy Harris. London: Duckworth, 1983.
- Schrank, Bernice. "Celluloid Images and Social Control in Selected Short Stories by Mavis Gallant." In Jurak, Mirko, ed. Cross-Cultural Studies: American, Canadian, and European Literatures: 1945-1985. Ljubljana: English Department Filozofska Fakulteta: 1988: 229-233.
- Schumaker, Wayne. English Autobiography: Its Emergence, Materials, and Form. Berkley, California: University of California Press, 1954.
- Sciff-Zamaro, Roberta. "The Re/Membering of the Female Power in Lady Oracle." Canadian Literature. 112 (Spring 1987): 32-38.
- Sholes, Robert. Fabulation and Metafiction. Urbana: University of Illionis Press, 1979.
- Showalter, Elaine, ed. The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory. New York: Pantheon, 1985.
- . "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness." Critical Inquiry. 8 (1981): 179-205.
- Smith, Rebecca. "The Only Flying Turtle Under the Sun: The Bildungsroman in Contemporary Fiction." Atlantis. 2.2 (Spring 1977): 124-132.
- Smith, Sidone. A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Smith, Rowland. "Margaret Atwood and the City: Style and Substance in Bodily Harm and Bluebeard's Egg." World Literature Written in English. 25.2 (Autumn 1985): 252-264.

- Smythe, Karen. "Green Water, Green Sky: Gallant's Discourse of Dislocation." Studies in Canadian Literature. 14.1 (1989): 73-84.
- . "To Be (and Not to Be) Continued: Closure and Consolation in Gallant's 'Linnet Muir sequence.'" Canadian Literature. 129 (Summer 1991): 74-86.
- Spacks, Patricia Ann Mayer. The Female Imagination. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975.
- Spector, Judith, ed. Gender Studies: New Directions in Feminist Criticism. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1986.
- . "The Fatal Lady in Margaret Atwood's Lady Oracle." University of Hartford Studies in Literature: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Criticism. 17.3 (1985): 33-44.
- Spelman, Elizabeth V. "Woman as Body: Ancient and Contemporary Views." Feminist Studies. 8.1 (1982): 109-131.
- Spender, Dale. Man Made Language. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983.
- Stanton, Domna C., ed. The Female Autograph. New York: New York Literary Forum, 1984.
- Stephens, Donald. "The Recent English Short Story in Canada and its Themes." World literature Written in English. 2.1 (April 1972): 49-52.
- Stephens, Peter. "Perils of Compassion." Canadian Literature. 56 (Spring 1973): 61-70.
- Stimpson, Catherine R. "Feminism and Feminist Criticism." Massachusetts Review. 24 (Summer 1983): 272-288.
- Stovel, Nora Foster. "Reflections on Mirror Images: Doubles and Identity in the Novels of Margaret Atwood." Essays on Canadian Writing. 39 (Fall 1986): 50-67.
- Struthers, J.R. (Tim). "Some Highly Subversive Activities: A Brief Polemic and a Checklist of Works on Alice Munro." Studies in Canadian Literature. 6.1 (1981): 140-144.
- Thacker, Robert. "'So Shocking a Verdict in Real Life': Autobiography in Alice Munro's Stories." In Reflections: Autobiography and Canadian Literature. Ed. K.P. Stich. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988: 153-161.

- Thorne, Barrie, Chris Kramerae, and Nancy Henley, eds. Language, Gender and Society. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House, 1983.
- Thorne, Barrie and Nancy Henley, eds. Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House, 1975.
- Todd, Janet, ed. Gender and Literary Voice. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980.
- Towers, Robert. "Mystery Women." New York Review of Books. 36.7 27 April 1989: 50-52.
- Tregebov, Rhea, ed. Work in Progress: Building Feminist Culture. Toronto: The Women's Press, 1987.
- Twigg, Alan, ed. " For Openers: Conversations with 24 Canadian Writers. Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour Publishing, 1981.
- Van Spanckeren, Kathryn, and Jan Garden Castro, eds. Margaret Atwood: Vision and Form. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988.
- Verduyn, Cristl. "From 'The Word on Flesh' to 'The Flesh Made Word: Women's Fiction in Canada.'" The American Review of Canadian Studies. 15.4 (1985): 449-464.
- Waelti-Walters, Jennifer. "Double Read: On Margaret Atwood's Bodily Harm." Room of One's Own. 8.4 (January 1984): 116-122.
- Walker, Nancy A. Feminist Alternatives: Irony and Fantasy in the Contemporary Novel by Women. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1990.
- Walker, Barbara G. The Women's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988.
- Wandor, Michelene, ed. On Gender and Writing. London: Pandora Press, 1983.
- Warhol, Robyn R. Gendered Inventions: Narrative Discourse in the Victorian Novel. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989.
- Warwick, Susan J. "Growing Up: The Novels of Alice Munro." Essays on Canadian Writing 29 (Summer 1984): 204-225.
- Watson, Barbara Bellow. "On Power and the Literary Text." Signs 1 (Fall 1975): 111-118.

- Waugh, Patricia. Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1989.
- Wilson, Sharon. "Turning Life into Popular Art: Bodily Harm's Life-Tourist." Studies in Canadian Literature. 10.1 (1985): 136-245.
- Wittig, Monique. "Les Guérillères." In New French Feminisms: An Anthology. Eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtrivon. Trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. New York: Schocken Books, 1981: 245-264.
- Woodcock, George. "Memory, Imagination, Artifice: The Late Short Fiction of Mavis Gallant." Canadian Fiction Magazine. 28 (1978): 74-91.
- . "Margaret Atwood: Poet as Novelist." In The Canadian Novel in the Twentieth Century. Ed. George Woodcock. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975: 312-327.
- . "The Plots of Life: The Realism of Alice Munro." Queen's Quarterly. 93.2 (1986): 235-250.
- Woolford, Daniel. "Mavis Gallant's Overhead in a Balloon: Politics and Religion, Language and Art." Studies in Canadian Literature. 14.2 (1989): 27-47.
- Yaeger, Patricia. "'Because a Fire Was in My Head': Eudora Welty and the Dialogic Imagination." PMLA 99 (1984): 955-973.
- Yaeger, Patricia. Honey-Mad Women: Emancipatory Strategies in Women's Writing. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.
- York, Lorraine M. "'The Other Side of Dailiness': The Paradox of Photography in Alice Munro's Fiction." Studies in Canadian Literature. 8.1 (1983): 49-60.
- . "'Gulfs' and 'Connections': The Fiction of Alice Munro." Essays on Canadian Writing. 35 (Winter 1987): 135-146.
- . "Habits of Language: Uniform(ity), Transgression and Margaret Atwood." Canadian Literature. 126 (Autumn 1990): 6-19.
- Zipes, Jack. Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion. New York: Methuen, 1988.