

Lola Lemire Tostevin

A Minor Perversion

Karen Press

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My thesis is grudgingly dedicated to Mike Harris and Common Sense
in memory of

COACH HOUSE PRESS

Abstract

My thesis examines the work of Ontario writer Lola Lemire Tostevin: five books of poetry, *Color of Her Speech* (1982), *Gyno-Text* (1983), *Double Standards* (1985), *'sophie* (1988) and *Cartouches* (1995), and her first novel, *Frog Moon* (1994). Although she writes primarily in English, Tostevin's first language is French; I am primarily interested in how she makes use of this fact in both the form and the content of her writing. In examining this linguistic dynamic, I make some use of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. In emphasizing her linguistic and sexual difference, Tostevin "perverts" the traditionalist, male-centred, English language in which she is a "minor" writer. Reacting to painful divisiveness with a "paradigm of multiplicity," she creates a new range of possibilities able to exist within one country, person, or text.

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Chapter One

Introduction

one shred

of hearsay evidence (*Double Standards* n.p.)

Lola Lemire Tostevin defines the word "pervert" several times in her writing; her definition culminates in the infinitives "to turn from truth; to divert from a right use; to lead astray; to misinterpret designedly" (*Double Standards* n.p., *Frog Moon* 75, 178). "Language" is both her medium and her subject, and she uses it in her own "perverted" way: because she is a French-Canadian writer in the English language, a woman writer in a sexist language, and an experimental writer in a traditional language, she can invoke those points of linguistic difference to create her own language leading "astray" in new, uncharted directions. English is no longer self-evidently English; traditional, sexist discourses such as poetry and philosophy are turned on their ear. The "problem" of linguistic minorities is not new in Canada, nor is Tostevin's writing its only site; although she is one of many minority writers, however, she is remarkable in her negotiation of the space between majority and minority languages. Unavoidable linguistic divisions are not erased, but turned inside-out; by *emphasizing* her linguistic doubleness and ambiguity, Tostevin successfully diverts the unitary major language from its own

purposes, and allows multiplicity, the flip side of division, to show itself. Because she writes from this "paradigm of multiplicity instead of division" (Subject 17-18), she does not have to choose between assimilation and nostalgia; instead, the many possibilities and metamorphoses opened up by division can exist within a single person, country, or text.

In an interview, Tostevin also connects "to interpret designedly" with how "personal history [is] enacted in...writing" (Kamboureli and Tostevin 37). As a reader, I always interpret designedly, but Tostevin takes care to point out the dangers of interpreting her own "personal history"; she emphasizes the relative insignificance and inaccuracy of the small amount of autobiography in her work. There are only a few "facts" that Tostevin, in essays and interviews, consistently slips into public earshot, and they do emerge repeatedly in her "literary" writing. From a French-Canadian family in northern Ontario, Tostevin spent much of her childhood in a *pensionnat*, a Catholic convent-school, which shaped how such things as silence and ritual appear in her writing; but her linguistic background is her most important "fact." French is her first language, but she is not from Québec and has ended up living and writing mostly in English: she exists in a complex linguistic and cultural position which has guided both the form and content of her work, from her early poetry, *Color of Her Speech* (1982), *Gyno-Text* (1983), and *Double Standards* (1985), through the poems and prose sections of *'sophie* (1988), her first novel, *Frog Moon* (1994), and her book of poems and journal entries, *Cartouches* (1995).

Because she often refers to specific writers in her books, it is easier to trace links to what Tostevin has read than to what she has lived. Her reading of recent and contemporary Canadian writers, including her "mentor," bpNichol ("inventing" 272), is evident in her essays, reviews, and interviews, the subjects of which include, among others, Christopher Dewdney, Diana Hartog, and Daphne Marlatt. Also, while in Paris in the early 1970s, she began to explore the work of prominent women writers (such as those to whom she addresses a sequence in *Double Standards*—Djuna Barnes, Mina Loy, Anne Hébert, Emily Dickinson, and H.D.) and the plethora of "political, literary, feminist, philosophical and psychoanalytic ideas" (Subject 11) prominent in France at the time. A mere glance at the endnotes of her essays gives an idea of the scope and thrust of her theoretical reading: it includes both fathers and sons of post-structuralism (such as Lévi-Strauss, Derrida, and Lacan) and an even larger number of feminist scholars (such as Cixous, Irigaray, and Clément). Much critical and literary theory informs Tostevin's work, but there is still a certain ambivalence in her relationship to it as a master language. She tries to displace the authority of philosophy in her work, but also reacts against what Dewdney describes in her interview with him as

fear of intelligence based on the notion of a dichotomy between the heart and the head—as if intelligence had no heart—therefore to have heart you have to be dumb.

(Subject 162)

Tostevin's writing is of *both* the heart and the head, constantly

and implicitly referring to theoretical concepts but never becoming merely a critical essay in the form of a poem. She writes about her and others' ideas in her essays; in her "literary" writing she puts those ideas to work.

Many of Tostevin's critical works were collected in her *Subject to Criticism* in 1995, along with several personal essays about her own writing process. These, along with three interviews (with Janice Williamson and Smaro Kamboureli in 1987, with Williamson in 1989, and with Barbara Carey in 1992), rank her among her own most prolific critics—since little has been written about her work. A number of short reviews of most of her books exist; brief references occur in Sharon Thesen's, Shirley Neuman's, and Carolyn Hlus's contributions to *A Mazing Space* (ed. Kamboureli and Neuman, 1986), Stephen Scobie's *Signature Event Cantext* (1989), and Smaro Kamboureli's *On the Edge of Genre* (1990). Kamboureli also refers to her in "Theory: Beauty or Beast?" (1990) while considering the various ways in which women writers have dealt with critical theory; Glen Lowry pairs her work with Daphne Marlatt's in "Risking Perversion and Reclaiming Our Hysterical Mother" in 1991; Barbara Godard considers her along with Kamboureli and Mary di Michele in "Discourse of the Other: Canadian Literature and the Question of Ethnicity" in 1990. More recently, Lianne Moyes' 1994 dissertation "Writing Subjects" considers Tostevin along with Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes, and Nicole Brossard; out of that work comes two of the few articles devoted solely to Tostevin, published in 1994 and 1995. Earlier articles were Williamson's 1987 "'to pen a trait'" and Danny

O'Quinn's 1989 "'Restore me with apples'"; also in 1989, Susan Knutson, Kathy Mezei, Daphne Marlatt, Barbara Godard, and Gail Scott published a series of translations of and commentaries on one of Tostevin's French poems. Moyes' work along with Pauline Butling's 1995 article on *Gyno-Text* represent a small surge in attention toward Tostevin's writing.

Barbara Godard's critical approach in "Discourse of the Other" is the most important for my purposes; she examines Tostevin's early work while discussing how the "ethnic" identities of Canadian writers play out in terms of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. I will often refer to Tostevin's writing as "minor," taking my cue and a very loose framework from Deleuze and Guattari: a minor writer is not completely "at home" in the language in which he or she writes and emphasizes this lack of belonging while still working within that language—just as Tostevin emphasizes her linguistic ambiguity while working within English. Most of *Kafka*, however, cannot be applied extensively and directly to a contemporary, Canadian, woman and feminist writer: Prague then and Ontario now differ culturally and linguistically, and both Kafka's and Deleuze and Guattari's writings are male-centred. As Réda Bensmaïa points out in the foreword to *Kafka* (xiv), Deleuze and Guattari invent this new category to fit the qualities of Kafka's writing, but it has "opened up" a wider area of investigation. As Godard does in her article, I mention Deleuze and Guattari but prefer to worry more about specifically Canadian—and often specifically feminine—"minorities."

Those Canadian and feminine points of minority are foregrounded from the very beginning of Tostevin's work. In Chapter Two, "Speaking Fuckinese: *Color of her Speech*, *Gyno-Text*, and *Double Standards*," I will examine how her first three books concentrate on bilingualism—the apparent division between French and English in Canada—and feminism—in Tostevin's terms the division between "femspeak" and "menspeak." *Color of Her Speech* (1982) is primarily sparse, skeletal poetry, and establishes both her trademark "grafting" of French into her English texts and her recurring subject matter of those two apparent binaries—"apparent" because she nevertheless combines them within one text, allowing them to retain their doubleness without their divisiveness. The following year a revision of a sequence in *Color* was published separately: *Gyno-Text* bilingually describes the process of gestation and birth in language enacting the content. Her central focus on doubleness is even more forthrightly proclaimed in *Double Standards* (1985); but out of the divisiveness of her raw material, with its empty landscapes, violated mouths and bodies, and inarticulate sounds, she creates a practice wherein apparent "poles" like French and English, silence and sound, signification and non-signification, come together.

While her earlier poetry concentrates on two main dualisms, bilingualism and gender, *'sophie* (1988) and *Cartouches* (1995), which I examine in Chapter Three, "Names of Women, Titles of Books," significantly expand the "major" languages in which she forges her own creative space. In *'sophie*, the woman object of various masculine discourses, such as poetry and philosophy, works

to attain subjectivity and create a feminine practice within those discourses; she does so through the writing of the book/herself (they share the same name). In *Cartouches*, the persona explores male-centred history and mythology while inventing her own. Both of these books centre on "naming": rather than be named by master languages, the woman writes her own divergent identity within them. By not ignoring or vilifying mastertongues but instead emphasizing differences *within* them, Tostevin allows multiple possibilities for expression to thrive.

More than her other works, *Frog Moon* (1994), Tostevin's first novel, deliberately leads the reader both further astray and further into the biographical trap: its protagonist, like Tostevin, grows up in northern Ontario, goes to a convent, lives across two languages, and becomes a writer. My fourth chapter, "Sing Like a Fish: *Frog Moon*," continues to examine Tostevin's invention of personal history, identity, and language. An inter-generic work, *Frog Moon* integrates a linking story with semi-historical accounts, tall tales, and traditional French, English, and Aboriginal legends, creating its own multi-layered form. "Stories" are the centre of the novel, not only in its loosely-linked composition but also in the protagonist's invention and writing of her own story. *Frog Moon* is also the most overt of Tostevin's works in its treatment of Canadian-style bilingualism, brushing against cliché "politics" before emphasizing the importance of change and multiplicity over resting at one or another "pole."

In Tostevin's writing, division becomes multiplicity and

possibility. Her overlying theme and device is "doubleness" in many forms: speaking in two languages, existing between two places, feeling ideologically ambivalent. "Ambiguity," she writes, is "the center of my work: ambivalence, uncertainty, doublespeak, double entendre, duplicity, circumlocution, equivocation" (Letter May 12 2). In her subject matter and in her bilingual, feminist writing practice, Tostevin is a "minor" writer: she does not fully belong to the (English, masculine) language and culture in which she writes; the painful divisions that form her raw material, however, are transformed into a positive attribute lending complexity and dynamism to her writing. Faced with seemingly mutually exclusive extremes—beginning with the extremes of French and English—she forges out of them a new linguistic and literary space.

Chapter Two

Speaking Fuckinese

Color of Her Speech, Gyno-Text, and Double Standards

After title page and epigraphs in English, Lola Lemire Tostevin's first book, *Color of Her Speech (Color)*, opens in French:

tout ce qui commence

par amour

se divise

*se multiplie [.]*¹

The reader is prepared for the "foreign-language" intrusion by one of the foregoing epigraphs, a quotation about living bilingually: it's "like having two watches / / you're never sure / what time it is." The inevitable sense of alienation caused by this being-out-of-time, place, and language provides the underlying material of *Color of Her Speech* and continues to figure profoundly in Tostevin's later works, especially *Double Standards (DS)* and *Frog Moon*. When dealing directly with "bilingualism" and when not, in her first three books--*Color of Her Speech, Gyno-Text (GT)*, and *Double Standards*--Tostevin writes from a paradoxical paradigm of multiplicity fashioned out of division. By *emphasizing* her ambiguous doubleness, like Deleuze and Guattari's "minor writer"

emphasizes his deterritorialization, Tostevin perverts the division forced upon her: no longer is her split tongue a site of pain, silencing, and repression, as the majority culture would have it. Tostevin makes a new use of that split tongue and in doing so creates the devious possibilities of linguistic multiplicity and flux.

As suggested by the titles of these works, Tostevin's bilingualism is more than her use of both French and English: she also invests in it "the new meaning" of women having to speak what is always their second language, the language of patriarchy (Verduyn 60). In an interview with Janice Williamson, Tostevin places her gender and ethnicity together both as similar positionings and as her primary material:

Writing as a woman, as a French Canadian who writes mostly in English, has provided me with more material because of the recent emphasis on multiplicity. I feel I've struck a vein... (Kamboureli and Tostevin 36)

Tostevin's own "emphasis on multiplicity" is even more intense than the general one since, through the perversion of language and the foregrounding of difference, she deliberately fashions it out of still-visible division: it is not merely part of a bandwagon of "ethnicity" and "multiculturalism," but an emphasis on how that multiplicity is formed and deployed.

Of course, as Shirley Neuman points out, Canadian history, culture, and politics are too complex merely to essentialize into "(male/English) Subject and (female/French) Other" (404). Still, Tostevin (and her personae) is a French-Canadian woman from

outside of Québec and thus part of a firmly numeric minority as well as minor in many "other" ways—as a woman, as a poet in a technocracy, as a speaker of Canada's "second" language, as a speaker of "corrupted" French, as a Canadian in America. Tostevin writes (and perhaps with some bitterness),

we read over and over again how our literature as formed by Shakespeare, Waugh, Hemingway, et al is being eroded by books whose themes and language are either too foreign, too feminist, too experimental, or too regionally *Canadian*. (Subject 12)

As linguistically "foreign," as an experimenting feminist, Tostevin expresses multiple forms of alienation in many ways specific to a Canadian context. Her direct dealing with Canadian bilingualism comes to a head in a political argument between characters in *Frog Moon*, but she refers to the status of the French language in Canada right at the outset of her work: "4 words french," the second poem in *Color of Her Speech*, first invokes Michèle Lalonde's *Speak white* and then dubs the persona's speech likewise negated: "I unspeak."

Deleuze and Guattari (D + G) write in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* that the problem of living under the thumb of a major language is exemplified by the plight of immigrants and especially of their children (19), for the second-generation immigrant lives fully in the major language while still alienated from it. Such a situation is certainly not "foreign" to Canada. Tostevin and her personae, however, have an entirely different relationship to the major language. The persona's children in "at minus 40° it's a no

man's land" (*Color*) are trying to learn French while coloring pictures "in an obvious attempt to help crush the silence." Although the persona spoke an "official" language and did not immigrate anywhere, her children, just like the protagonist's children in *Frog Moon*, still must learn their "mother's tongue" from other sources. In the persona's situation there seems to be a choice of languages, if an impossible one: "never a case / of clear choice." "[C]all it what you will" in *Color* introduces the speaker's "choice" of languages:

would you sooner be
 a man or a woman
 french or english
 and if you absolutely absolutely had to choose
 would you be blind
 or deaf and dumb

 nazi or jew?

The decision put forth in wake of these daunting couplings—"The Sense-less / The Anti-Body"—thwarts the imposed binaries. Her persona's non-choice in *Color* is grimmer than the way Tostevin characterizes her own. Because she acquired several French dialects, having grown up in rural Ontario, attended a convent, and lived in France, it became "easier...to write in English, although," she writes,

it was never entirely a matter of choice: English
 eventually chose me....In spite of the fact that some
 people have, on a few occasions, suggested that I speak

"the imperialist language of the colonizer," the fact that I have claimed English as my own has been liberating. (*Subject 17*)

It is division, often forced and painful, that tempts the persona, and the reader, to make painful choices. Tostevin's writing has been described as a "two-faced Janus" (Godard 178-9).

There are two of everything:

there were two words
always
once word then another

twice removed

two cries
breaking the face

the stone

two silences[.] ("where," *Color*)

One of the most startling, and departing, poems in *Color* describes in medical-textbook detail the division and removal of the tongue, the "main objection" to which "is that the larynx / ... / [is] divided / preventing normal breathing" ("to remove the whole"). Tostevin did not write for many years because she felt "divided by [her] two languages" (Kamboureli and Tostevin 36); but when she turns that division around to her own advantage, she and her persona are able to speak and write—and "in forked tongues" (Godard 174). In *Gyno-Text* a "dismembered shape" (287) comes into

being as the

nucleus

cleaves

until

all

that's

left

is

cleft[,] (284)

but at the end of the poem the result is not a great chasm—it is the birth, itself a kind of metamorphosis, of a new person, letting out a resounding cry.

Although the poems' linguistic duplicity "carries the possibility of resisting and reversing the monologic univocal character of the dominant discourse" (Williamson 98)², it is a doubleness not of opposition but of combination; Tostevin wants "to write from a paradigm of multiplicity instead of division" (Subject 17-18), although, as with any set of opposites, one can hardly be had without the other. Lianne Moyes ("bite" 78) points out the irony of *Double Standards'* Canadian cataloguing data: it is repeated like any other bilingual label, presupposing mutual exclusivity, first as "Poems. Text in English or French," and then as "*Poèmes. Textes en français ou en anglais.*" This divided doubleness that provides the poems' material, however, becomes the multiplicity from which they gain their power; perverting the status forced upon her by Canadian culture, she transforms herself

from merely a divided individual to a dynamic one. It must be admitted here, as Moyes again points out ("bite" 77), that the multiplicity gained by including French in an English text is not the same as English within a French one: in the latter case, bilingualism is more likely to be "a manifestation of the economic and linguistic imperialism against which francophones struggle" ("bite" 77). Nevertheless, Tostevin, while not ignoring English "linguistic imperialism," does write primarily in the first category, as a minor writer in a major language.

Part of the reason that Tostevin and her persona do not make a "clear choice" between English and French is that the very existence of binary oppositions is represented as offensive. Tostevin, implicitly referring to her deconstructionist backdrop, dislikes

system[s] of opposition where the hierarchy of the binary system always reconstitutes itself by valorizing one principle over the other, ("Contradiction" 22)

binaries like "a man or a woman," "nazi or jew." In *Gyno-Text*, the unifying feature is the hyphen, "le / trait / d'union" (281) of the opening of the poem, a punctuation mark "which simultaneously separates and joins" (Butling 103) and which reappears in *Frog Moon* when the narrator describes herself as "the hyphen, the third element that provides coherence" (141) between her francophone and anglophone worlds. The hyphen device allows two apparent opposites, such as French and English, to remain distinct while still joined within one linguistic unit; Tostevin's writing constantly exists between those two languages, and while

there acts as a hyphen paradoxically joining them. In "to speak two" (*DS*), two again remain two while converging into one: the poem's two voices are a "coincidence of voice / which reads between / each other's lines." Playing with this sexual interaction of voices and languages, Tostevin half-seriously terms the state of the persona's language "fuckinese":

'french is no longer
my mother tongue' she says

'neither is english' he says

'well what is'

'fucking' he says

so when people inquired
as to her first language

she replied 'fuckinese' [.] ("french is no longer," *Color*)

Fuckinese is an untranslatable language, at once a singular entity and the mother of all *double entendres*. Writing in English about the non-choice of language, she asks, "how do you say it / in your language [?]" ("call it what you will," *Color*), and it is unclear which language "yours" is. The bilingualism with which Tostevin writes is no "official" one: instead of a literary rendition of a Canadian soup can (or publication data) with double the nutritional information, her poems undo such ingrained division and make it impossible. It is an officially unsanctioned

multiplicity where "both languages are othered" (Moyes "Writing" 262), thus meeting with resistance: unable to translate the title of Godard's film *Sauve Qui Peut (La Vie)* for a stranger, the persona is greeted with "Jesus you don't even know / the name of the film" ("standing in line," *Color*). As Moyes writes, the bilingual writer, knowing two names for everything, "troubles the self-evidence of a name" ("Writing" 251). Direct translation would ruin Tostevin's bilingual punning, such as that at the opening of *Gyno-Text*:

a
 different
 tongue
 to
 pen
 a
 trait

le
trait
d'union[.] (281)

Similar is the use of bilingual word association, such as in this excerpt of "to speak two":

will you take my word
 for it

that particular

forêt

les arbres

as arbitrary as
definite choice[.]

If at the beginning of *Color* the cold-hearted surgeons split the tongue in half, creating a language called fuckinese because it is all fucked up, by the end of the book the same language is one of ensemble and creativity: the "grafted tongue / is the seeing eye" ("grafted tongue").

Tostevin says that in being made of "the fabric of grafts," her writing is also about "living between voices" of all categories (*Subject 99*): it is not only the binary of language or even of gender ("hymen / hyphens / gender," *GT* 282) against which Tostevin works. In her early poetry, she disrupts discursive and generic divisions by including the scientific language of "to remove the whole," and by "contaminating" poetry with literary and cultural theory (Lowry 84-5); in '*sophie* she disrupts so many divisions she writes what Barbara Godard calls a poetry going in "new directions, new poetry from a different body" (Knutson et al 20). In '*sophie* she transforms the "traditional lyric," as Kamboureli writes, by confusing writing and orality, poetic lines and prose, and the identity of the "speaker" (*Edge* 74); Tostevin herself emphasizes that '*sophie* is "not lyrical" in that the "I" is not static ("inventing" 274); Moyes writes Tostevin subverts the lyric through "double voicing and unorthodox translation" ("Writing" 236). Tostevin also crosses generic lines throughout her poetry by writing "that double-voiced genre of the prose poem" (Godard 164): "for a long time I couldn't decide whether to be story / or poem one voice or many," begins *Double Standards*, a

book which continues negating generic categorization with poems such as "Not A Poem." In *Frog Moon*, itself an inter-generic work at once novel, short stories, legends, and autobiography, nearly the same material will be repeated as story; but *Double Standards* decides essentially to be a poem rather than a story—and, through linguistic ambiguity and wordplay, many voices rather than one.

In *Kafka*, Deleuze and Guattari refer to Henri Gobard's "tetralinguistic" model of the function of multiple languages in a given culture: the "mythic" being the language of heritage and religion; the "vernacular" the "at home" language, the mothertongue; the "referential" the language of majority culture and literature; and the "vehicular" the necessary language of everyday life and business (D + G 23). As they put it, "vernacular language is *here*; vehicular language is *everywhere*; referential language is *over there*; mythic language is *beyond*" (23). English, a particular scientific, male-centred, American one, is the worldwide granddaddy of vehicular language, the mastertongue of a wide variety of linguistic "minorities." Those of us born in Canada have what Deleuze and Guattari call the "misfortune" of being born in a country of a mastertongue, and it is by "setting up a minor practice of major language" that a minor or revolutionary or marginal literature comes into being (18). Tostevin happily perverts the mastertongue with what is "too foreign, too feminist, too experimental, or too regionally *Canadian*" (*Subject 12*).

Vehicular language anywhere (not to mention referential, vernacular, and mythic) is of course male-centred: "it's clear /...

/ mankind speaks / but one language," Tostevin writes in *Color* ("it's clear"). The "he" in "french is no longer" tells the persona that her mother tongue is "fucking," and then that she as an author is dead: the persona, as a woman thus denied of language and of subjecthood, is left with only "tongueless fucking in the dark." Although the concept is appropriated into "fuckinese" and the consequent development of the two-but-one multiplicity of voice in the book, the sometimes violent denial of woman's voice within patriarchal language is implicit in the sexual gesture. Later in *Color*, the poem "which part" contains a "you" reminiscent of the previous "he," who says, "let's see / how deep down your throat I can thrust." To escape the phallic silencer, women come up with what Tostevin terms "femspeak," itself, again, a "minor" tongue up against the master vehicular language of "menspeak." She names the two languages and defines femspeak's relative position in "Time Magazine art critic Robert Hughes" (*Color*):

femspeak
 jargon
 gutteral voiceless
 sound
 slang[.]

In *Double Standards*' "I tell you it's really nice sometimes," the speaker, after turning on the T.V. and finding only male-centred communication, says women are

...hardly there off screen somewhere...

.
 women whose voices are so soft it's as if they feared to

[speak

the cause of their absence afraid maybe of breaking

[the hold

on the story[.]

Without hold, without presence, without story: Tostevin writes that after she adopted English she thought she was now speaking the major, freeing, empowering language but soon found "it didn't matter what language women spoke... We all felt silenced and our muse came to imagine herself in our likeness" (*Subject 187*). For Tostevin, as both a woman and a francophone, it is not only linguistic division but also the division between men's language and her feminine experience which must be foregrounded; and that foregrounding transforms the divisive binary into an advantageous multiplicity.

For a minor writing like Tostevin's, language is not firmly rooted here, there, everywhere, or beyond; rather, it is constantly located in a question of "where / and with what words" ("where," *Color*)? The effect of not fully belonging to the major language is a feeling of, as Tostevin puts it, being "de-scripted...the impression of being erased from an original script" (*Subject 74-5*). With a sense of being out of time and place, French in Canada is fundamentally deterritorialized along with all the other minor aspects of Tostevin's language; and because she is, further, not from Québec but from English Canada, reterritorialization through regionalism is impossible (Godard 160). The only writing strategy is an accent on this deterritorialization and de-description, of this being-without-

place—Deleuze and Guattari's minor writing practice.

One of the ways through which Tostevin emphasizes her geographic-linguistic displacement is the frequent appearance of voids and empty landscapes in her writing. The "setting" of *Double Standards*, the narrator's "home town," is itself a kind of negative space. The poem "the landscape was never tender" describes the landscape as a non-place:

the landscape was never tender

there were no hills no river cutting through

no sea that stretched its flat muscular foot
over warm sand...[.]

Tostevin writes to Smaro Kamboureli that they will both be kept "to the literary margins" because of the lack of place in their work: "Readers want a firm sense of place, a sense of roots that define us, and, I suppose, them" (*Subject* 74). The geographic "point" of Tostevin's writing is that there is no place; with such deterritorialization, language takes on that responsibility and becomes place (Kamboureli and Tostevin 34). Tostevin in *Subject to Criticism* (59) and Kamboureli in "Sounding the Difference" (34) term this "geo-graphy," the writing of place. In "the landscape was never tender," the landscape simply *is not*—there is nothing in it—but the words create a whirlwind of themselves around this wasteland, pointing out and accenting the book's deterritorialization in a way that is not itself empty but full of intention. It is "*au sein du vide*" that "*autre chose s'annonce*"

("do not be deceived by appearances," *DS*). Ice and snow appear often: in *Frog Moon*, in which the same northern-Ontario setting is used as in the opening of *Double Standards*, miners, loggers, bush pilots and explorers travel through the northern wilderness; in *Color's* "langue étrangère," "la plume [est] / un glaçon par quoi / le poème se décompose." What is itself cold and blank creates the writing and thus fills what would otherwise have been another blank page.

The poems are also without place because they are full of movement. According to Deleuze and Guattari, in order to emphasize deterritorialization the minor writer must "become a nomad and an immigrant and a gypsy in relation to [his or her] own language" (19). Tostevin's poems-without-setting are themselves constantly in transit, adding to the sense of continuous change and transformation with which she links multiple possibilities together. Motion in *Cartouches* is in the touristic vein: "In a country where you can't read the signs," she writes, "you can't always measure the extent to which you are lost..." ("We've rented a room," *Cartouches* n.p.). In 'sophie she writes of the "calm constant motion" on which "there is no absolute / / relativity is the only rule" (39): it is impossible even to "be" distinctly in one place. In *Double Standards* the poem "re" boasts

...the text in transit in translation from the
[writer
 to the reader remarks in passing the sign where myth
 and place no longer meet the blank expression which
 suddenly reveals the false logos of monologic speech[.]

Such flux works against Tostevin's worst enemy, "monologic speech": instead of "the monad deme" she writes as/of "a nomad / and a dame" ("it's clear," *Color*). Opposing the masterful normalizing "menspeak" of the art critic, Tostevin calls femspeak a

language
 originating with
 nomads
 thieves
 whores
 gypsies[.]

If the persona's position as a French-speaker within English Canada causes her to refer to her childhood home as a wasteland, the physical position of femspeak must be in a tundra indeed, for it does not even have such a home. It looks and circles in only toward itself, toward language.

Even if the poem is a place that fills the blank page, it is still a place "between." The final poem of *Color*, "3 pm," features a poet who thinks somewhere in-between *The Origin of the Work of Art* and *One Life to Live*, and writes a poem

" between / / the way I speak / the way I spoke." The book ends thus between languages, between levels, between past and present. Nor is this a negative, discordant note—it is a positive action on the part of a speaker who earlier in the book felt her tongue had been excised. Here the tongue is a grafted one, but able to speak in a new language of between-ness. A similar invention of language occurs in *Double Standards*' "say yes," but

this time it is a language between a man and a woman:

between the two
 of you I invents
 a fiction native
 to her female heart[.]

In *Gyno-Text*, too, the female voice comes from a point somewhere between, just like the hyphen exists both within a unity and between two elements:

pregnant
 pause
 as
 conceptual space

interval
 between
 inner
 outer
 folds[.] (285)

In *'sophie*, Tostevin invents another ambiguous language like fuckinese: "mi-dire," which "opens wide the middle ground" "entre versions entre amours entre / philosophies" ("espaces vers," *'sophie* 57). From *Color of Her Speech* through to *Cartouches*, where the persona writes "In transit between two points. / Between breaths" ("In the lobby of the museum," *Cartouches* n.p.), Tostevin's writing is a "mi-dire," a writing which belongs to no pole or extreme, but instead exists in an ambiguous middle ground and "opens [it] wide."

Part of the lack of roots in a definite place in these poems is their suspicion of roots themselves—of origins. Tostevin writes that returning to origins is impossible (*Subject 75*); even if they make the gesture toward origins, her poems always come up empty handed, since her strategies of transformation and perversion are compatible with moving ahead and creating something new—not moving back. In *Double Standards* Tostevin uses the image of "squeezing the diamond so hard / it turns back to coal," ("mid-morning"), the opposite of what Superman does in the movie, a return to origins that is both unromantic and impossible. "Most writers yearn for that original signification," writes Tostevin, in an unromantic, even anti-idealistic stance, "yet most writers realize that it is illusive" (*Subject 198*), presumably including herself. Even when the persona speaks directly of "the people from my old home town" in *Double Standards*, the place is a non-landscape, an impossibility: "if you've ever stared at a / dazzling colorless object you'll remember the impression / it leaves on the closed eye..." ("for a long time I couldn't decide"). The poet's anti-nostalgia sometimes manifests itself violently, such as in the surgical removal of the tongue, the cold description of which is "not blunted by nostalgia " (Godard 173); in the "gouging" of something unknown, presumably the eyes, in "night setting" (*DS*), "so I can see / what I've forgotten"; and even in the opening poem of *Color* in which it is lamented "*jamais on se défait / de nos cicatrices / Majuscules.*"

Rather than abuse the major language, the minor writer uses that language in a "new way" (Bensmaïa xvi); such a strategy is

akin to Tostevin's "perversion," introduced "etymologically" in "the people from my old home town" (*DS*):

pervert from F *pervers* *per* through or by
 means of *vers* a line of writing; or L *vertere*
 to turn; n. one who has turned to error,
 especially in religion; opposed to convert;
 v.t. to turn another way; to turn from truth;
 to divert from right use; to lead astray;
 to misinterpret designedly.

Diverting through means of writing, upsetting master institutions such as "religion," "truth," and "right," and a wrong use of the major language, Tostevin's "per-version" is her writing itself. Tostevin "strips / all meaning" "to make more / sense(ssssssssssssssssssss / break the spell" ("to her heart's discontent," *DS*) and in doing so "[treats] language as material" (Lowry 91); thus the traditions of referential language, of genre, philosophy and literary devices, are also perverted, and binaries transformed into unified multiplicities. In "this afternoon Alice came for lunch" (*DS*), Alice spreads out on the table

pages that have been meticulously
 written by hand someone else's book she explains
 which she has recopied in black chinese ink
 except the letters are only partially formed
 features of letters recorded in unrecognizable
 formulations so that when through force of habit
 you try to read it the text escapes you
 escapes any purpose but its own[.]

Alice's book is both physically divergent/perverted (the letters are "only partially formed") and traditionally divergent (Alice has recopied "someone else's book" for a purpose all "its own"). Similarly, if you try to read Tostevin's book "through force of habit" as a traditional text, with all the usual full meanings of words and literary devices, your eyes will hurt. The poem continues, "robbed of its code the page sidesteps / becomes what it first refused to describe / a device which dissolves all solutions." Alice's text does not have its effect through meaning but through its other di(per)verting strategies, weakening all "solutions," disallowing anyone to "solve" it in any referential sense.

"Not A Poem" (*DS*) is an excellent example of the perversion of traditional literary structures. First, it is a "poem" as one expects a poem to look on the page, while still refusing to be one:

no poetry can contain this
 no function
 no distance
 no metaphor to transfer
 what the mind registers[.]

This (non)poem, as it itself declares, bothered Tostevin because of its extremely personal and discomfitting nature: in it, the murder of a little girl reminds the poet of the abduction of her daughter. Tostevin tells Janice Williamson that because of the power of the personal event with which the poem deals, it was impossible to use traditional "metaphors, or similes, or poetic

functions"—the "tricks of language" (Kamboureli and Tostevin 36). I stress "traditional" because Tostevin *does* continue to use metaphors here and throughout her work—but she re-invents them. Whereas Deleuze and Guattari call for the minor writer to "[kill] all metaphor" (22), Tostevin takes a different, less violent approach: true to her device of perversion, she instead deliberately "misinterprets" the function of metaphor, changing the way in which it is used; and by doing so, she opens up a wider space for expression. The traditional tricks, as Moyes writes, "overlook the lived reality of the person" on which they are based, but "Not a Poem" emphasizes "the contiguities and metonymies on which they linger" ("Inordinately" 39). In this (non)poem, Tostevin describes her daughter's physical disfigurement and combines it with the metaphor "there is a garden in her face," a putrid garden of rot and overgrowth as opposed to the metaphor's traditional value of signifying "the serenity and beauty of the Virgin, or a Virgin" (Kamboureli and Tostevin 36). "I," Tostevin says, "wanted to reverse that and use it to convey the different kind of garden present in our young women's faces after they've been attacked" (Kamboureli and Tostevin 36). Similarly in 'sophie's "songs of songs," in which the "speaker dismantles metaphors that limit the possible meaning of the term 'woman'" such as the "muse" or the "addressee," (Moyes, "Inordinately" 42), the transformed garden metaphor reappears as "weed and rain filled" (74), no longer the garden of delights from which a muse or addressee would traditionally hail:

the paradigmatic site of beginning in the Judeo-

Christian tradition...is re-appropriated as the site for a woman's process of coming to write... (Moyes, "Inordinately" 40)

In *Double Standards* Tostevin "strips / all meaning" "to make more / sense" ("to her heart's discontent"); she also strips—and replaces—traditional full meanings by often writing in the negative, about non-entities that are not there. In the sequence "do not be deceived by appearances," the speaker is continually "not a woman" until finally coming to the statement: "I am not a woman I am a woman / a space in space," a nothingness in the heart of nothingness, "*au sein du vide*," where "each word / subtracts and each silence adds," just as in "to her heart's discontent." Dis-content, de-description, not-a-poem, not-a-woman: *Double Standards* outrightly defies communication's call for meaning, and "*autre chose s'annonce*." In *Color* this non-ness is manifest in the guiding concept of "unspeaking," introduced in "4 words french." Notable also is the poem "the Unspeaking," in which the verb "*décomposer*" is repeated from the opening poem:

the Unspeaking
 the Unbinding of Umbilicals
 ba be bi bo
 "*déparler*"
décomposer
sa langue
 da de di do

.

la source renversée

the course unlaid[.]

Later, in "*langue étrangère*," "*le poème se décompose*." The language is undone, the poem is unwritten, because it places the accent on the lack of meaning, on the breaking up, the decomposing, of language into its physical elements, rather than its enrichment with bountiful tricks. "The withdrawal of a sense," Tostevin writes in *Color of Her Speech*, "sharpens all others" ("the loss of a limb"). "Torn from sense," the language of a minor practice exists through its "accenting of the word": it is "a paper cutout" (D + G 21). The use of negatives and the lack of sense is not a recourse to extremes, it is instead a combination of extremes. Emptiness allows for expression, just as division allows for multiplicity: and empty space in the major language must be cleared to allow for the expression of minoriness.

The frequent breaking up of words into syllables or etymological components (a contagious habit) also emphasizes the materiality of language over its traditional full meanings. Her wordplay, too, can be "an atomic alliteration / an-atomic-al" ("the dream is french, *Color*). *Gyno-Text* provides the best example of both the atomic and anatomical breakup of language: over thirty pages long in its book form, it is included in Sharon Thesen's *New Long Poem Anthology* even though without line breaks it can easily be written on less than a page. Almost all of the lines are one word long, including articles and conjunctions that most poets would find no reason to place consistently alone on the

line. The physical arrangement of the poem makes it a
 dismembered
 shape
 in
 soluble
 space
 so
 splendidly
 suspended[.] (287)

The "process" of the poem (which Tostevin describes in her Afterword), is created through this "suspension," this slow, crawling effect, and is further aided by both the absence of punctuation and the ambiguous syntax (such as "in / soluble / space"). It is not the impossible origin or the impossible dream, not one language or another, one place or another, which is the non-message "delivered" by the poem: "The image is this very race itself" (D + G 22). "Becoming" is a guiding-concept of Deleuze and Guattari's thinking and of minor literature as they see it; "With 'becoming' there is no past or future and certainly no present" (Jardine 52). The present is in the process and thus just as continually moving and elusive as the "realtime" present. There is no static literary present: "'Becoming is topological, geological, geographical, not historical" (Jardine 52). For Tostevin, process is important in that it allows a continuum of states to exist within a unity; thus the text or the individual can transform between various possibilities.

The sparse wording of *Gyno-Text* uses its rhythm and

materiality to "vibrate." Vibration is not only an effect of the smallness of the packaging and the empty space in which the words are situated, giving them so much room in which to reverberate; it is also deliberately gestured towards:

voice
 boxed
 in
 ears
 echo
 deeper
 pounding[.] (289)

The space is an "echo chamber" where the words are "set spinning/spiralling back" into themselves (Butling 104), and exists not only around *Gyno-Text* and its conspicuous one-word lines. The pulling apart, repeating and rearranging of words, like the aforementioned "an-atomic-al," adds to the general feeling of resonance. *Double Standards* ends on the idea of reverberation, not only of words in an echo chamber but that of the book as a whole, its indefinite repetition as it is "reread" again and again:

the
 text is set to hear the beat the beating hollow
 that allows the verb "to write" to reverberate

 ..as the re of
 desire reverses into the erotic sequence of a

[sentence
 into the consequential climax of the writer over and
 [over[.]
 ("re")

Another example is the reversal and reverberation of the lullaby into "byaliebyaliebyaliebyalie" ("the Unspeaking," *Color*). By reverberating, the language calls deliberate attention to itself, over and over again; and by doing so, it also calls attention to its difference, to its divergence from the major language and the multiplicity it opens up.

Tostevin's wordplay allows the multiple layers of language to show themselves without division. As she puts her own technique, Different languages begin to invade one another...alliterations allow polly wally to doodle all the day; borrowed text lays borrowed text in broad plagiaristic daylight; puns, repetition, rhythm, breath, wordplay, word association, paradox, neologism, new coinings that suspend... These are but a few of the multiple variables through which language converts its usual equivalence into a polyvalent weaving that looms large in the text that wants itself textured.

("Pregnant Pause" 76)

Ambiguous syntax challenges the unitary meanings of words: "*la mise au point névralgique*," "in / soluble / space" (*GT* 291, 287). Extensive punning also challenges this unity and traditionality of meaning: in "*les trois ailes de mon nom*" (*DS*) for example, it challenges the act of naming, the illusion of etymology and

origin; it participates in the search for a name by referring to it, but by punning negates such a search by problematizing unitary origin or meaning—and "*il ne faudrait / pas surtout se nourrir d'illusions*" ("*les trois ailes*"). The use of bilingual wordplay, more particularly characteristic of Tostevin, begins right from the "translation" of *déparler* as "to unspeak" in the beginning of *Color*, and continues throughout *Gyno-Text* ("*le / trait / d'union*," 281) and *Double Standards* ("the languor" / "*langue d'or*," "to her heart's discontent").

Tostevin's distinctive play of French within English and women's language within men's is the *patois* which she has found a way to write, part of the "underdevelopment...third world...desert" that the minor writer enunciates (D + G 18):

in Quebec we say

argot

argoter to cut

a dead branch

the semantic cut

cunt

woman's cant

rant

rent[.] ("*Time Magazine art critic*")

The *argot* of these books is not only a French accent and a woman's accent, "but an accenting of the word" (D + G 21). It is not an accent like those of the immigrant lumberjacks and French-Canadian parents in *Frog Moon*, not an accent you "can touch and taste /

accent aigu / accent grave" ("it isn't that," *Color*); it is more subtle, a relative emphasis—performed by her wordplay, empty spaces, and vibration—on the words themselves rather than on their signification.

Throughout these poems but notably in *Color of Her Speech*, colors are repeatedly used to describe language—a visual accent. *Color* opens with a quotation from Martin Buber's *I and Thou*, referred to again in "4 words french," in which the human being as both a "unity" and a "multiplicity" cannot be divided without compromise: "I can abstract from him the color of his hair or the color of his speech...but immediately he is no longer You." Faced with the divisiveness of two unreconciled languages, the color is drained from the speaker, whose voice becomes "faded," a "chameleon thinking grey white" ("it isn't that"). While faced with division, language is colorless, part of the wasteland of ice and snow, always black, white, or grey, like "speak white" in "4 words french," or in "it isn't that":

'and where is your colorful accent'
 they all ask
 so white
 so black

In *Double Standards*, too, language is "bled / lampblack" ("mid-morning"). In realizing the possibilities of the multiplicity caused by initial division, color creeps back into the text, notably when the children with their crayons in "at minus 40° it's a no man's land" create "*corps multicolores*," and when the prism on the speaker's desk takes the light and "[bends]

it / into new positions" ("what tames"), creating a rainbow which is at once a unity and a multiplicity like Buber's Thou and the speaker's language.

It has been pointed out that Deleuze and Guattari's "minor practices" are available only to "privileged male figures" (Polan xxvi), that to them even the process of becoming-woman "has very little to do with women" (Jardine 52). For Tostevin, women "to a certain extent" must speak and write within menspeak, but this does not exclude them from using all the possibilities of femspeak as dialect, jargon, slang, or *patois* ("Contradiction" 22-3); as Shirley Neuman puts it, women must "foreground [their] difference from the dominant discourse while speaking within that discourse" (402-3). Deleuze and Guattari's minor writing practices sound remarkably similar to this feminine one: the minor writer, like the woman, does not write within a minor language, but emphasizes his or her deterritorialization, alienation and accent *within* a major language. A by-now familiar aspect of feminine writing practices is the writing of the body, which is certainly part of Tostevin's emphasis on difference within her writing; in fact, it is "for choosing the vagina as her mark / of otherness and identity" that the "Time Magazine art critic" gives "femspeak" its name. Later in that same poem, "her mouth" equals "her sex": the body's being-spoken, perhaps becoming-spoken, is essential and inescapable. *Gyno-Text* carries this further by being a whole poem of the female body, reproduction, and the body's rhythms. The poem opens with "an announcement about writing in the feminine" (Godard 175), as "a different tongue" immediately makes itself

heard, penetration becomes pen-a-traition, and that trait itself becomes *le trait d'union*, a space between which neither tears apart violently, abstracting color, nor allows a unitary master to rule. The "fiction native / to her female heart" ("say yes") in *Double Standards* is also created in a space between, linking what would otherwise remain divided and alienated. Tostevin's feminism is neither a cliché harangue nor an inward-looking story useful only in relation to her own life. While Tostevin condemns the "political" because it, like any binary system, classifies according to "poles" (Kamboureli and Tostevin 34), she also writes that to represent the self

in its multiple possibilities not only implicates one woman, it implicates endless possibilities of self-determination, at social, political, historical levels (*Subject 75*).

The grafting of the personal and the political is what Deleuze and Guattari demand of a minor literature in its "revolutionary" aspect (17). Tostevin creates such a graft by emphasizing her linguistic and sexual position within a unified multiplicity rather than a divisive dualism: her politics are not politics of extremes. If these poems are a "revolutionary" writing challenging master discourses, they are surprisingly idealistic in their overall impression; but perhaps that is what revolutions are all about. There may not be a neat "moral" to be quoted in the end as the final word, and there may be a sense of anti-idealism in the distrust of origin, but the emphasis on a multiplicity springing from initial division is far from violent,

and even farther from nihilist. Even with the accent taken off signification and placed on the physical word, the blank page is filled. The "final words" of *Double Standards* are a ":" at the end of a musical score scrawled in half-formed letters, a reinforcement of the book and a denial of closure: "(once more?)"

Chapter Three

Names of Women, Titles of Books

'sophie and Cartouches

Color of Her Speech and *Double Standards* established

Tostevin's bilingual writing practice to the degree that it would have been redundant to reiterate it again in poetry. *Frog Moon* reworks and expands her material of bilingual experience in a narrative form, but the two books of "poetry" written on either side of *Frog Moon*, 'sophie and *Cartouches*, while still infiltrated by the French language, are less self-consciously "bilingual" than the earlier works. With the perversion of English by French intrusion taken for granted, these books are free to explore their relationships, as writing in the feminine, to a variety of mastertongues claiming to have the last word on the definition of the poem, poet, person, and persona—and the last word on their rightful positions in traditional lopsided binaries. 'sophie and *Cartouches* further widen the arena in which Tostevin, as a minor writer, stakes her deterritorial claim by emphasizing change, difference, and ambiguity, thus creating a multiplicity of possibilities and undermining the restrictive mastery of the major, masculine discourse—whether it be, among other things, philosophy, history, mythology, or poetry itself.

In *Color of Her Speech*, the emptied or otherwise violated

mouth indicates the speaker's linguistic deterritorialization. Tostevin, like Deleuze and Guattari, uses the deterritorialization of the mouth and tongue to reflect that of the minor writer; in *'sophie*, it reflects the position of the "speaker" within philosophy or capital-W Writing in general. The "speaker" of *'sophie*, who is a woman, the poet and the book itself, has a mouth "sealed... / with moss from a dead woman's skull" and both wounded and cured by a paradoxical substance—"weapon salve" (11). Later, there are

vacant mouths gaping on the shelf sallow skull
of the eastern moon minus black tongue bivalve
sunrise unhinged hollowed red tooth shell the closing
of their form postponed (it is because there are empty
spaces we are able to use them)[.] (35)

The challenge in both these examples is to make a new use of the deterritorialized mouth, since it is empty of all that has value in the mastertongue. In *Cartouches*, the speaker, with a sense of emptiness and placelessness after the deaths of her father and friends, makes a use of this emptiness by filling it with her writing: she uses "language as place" instead of firm "place" itself. Her travels in the desert turn her lips to "parchment" ("From the Aga Khan's Mausoleum"),³ emphasizing both her desert-like mouth and its potential for use as the material of writing; similarly she consults "a copy of *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, searching for spells that can unlock the jaw, open the mouth" ("In the lobby of the museum"). The speaker in both books is unable to

"speak" fully because of her geographic or philosophic dislocation, and so inscribes her minorness instead, "opening" the mouth and the major language to new possibilities.

Her poems, however, are filled with the sounds that come out of such unspeaking mouths. The "rasps" of various creatures, primitive noises that are neither silence, music, nor speech, occur repeatedly. In *Cartouches*, just as the desert turns the speaker's lips to parchment, "the camels' silty rasps belong to the page" ("From the Aga Khan's Mausoleum"). In *'sophie*, the speaker gets a "rasp" in her throat after hearing a "bitch / / howling at the moon [inventing] her own small vocabulary" (21), and the "rasp of cicada" reminds her of "the melodiously long vowels of voices" (26). The various rasps and cries that fill the wildernesses of Tostevin's poetry exist on a continuum of sounds merging into a

pure and intense sonorous material...a deterritorialized musical sound, a cry that escapes signification, composition, song, words—a sonority that ruptures in order to break away from a chain that is still all too signifying. (D + G 6).

The use of the word "ruptures" here is too strong for Tostevin's non-divisive practice, but intense and non-signifying music important to Tostevin's poetry. She revels in sounds that "simply are, like a bird's song" (*Subject 139*), such as, for example, *Gyno-Text's*

pounding

tympa

tym

panic

rhythm[.] (GT 289)

As with its bilingualism and border-crossing, Tostevin's writing exists between pure music and the import of words; as she writes in *Subject to Criticism*, "a book acquires its shape" "between this music, between the rhythm of poetry and signification" (112).

Music figures in *'sophie* perhaps only second to *la philosophie* from which it takes its title. Besides the title, the book's cover shows a striking reproduction of a female nude, reading a book, leaning on an inactive lute: the painting is *Allegory for Music*, by Hans Baldung Grien (*Subject* 105). This image illustrates the book's constant play between the sound and the silence of poetry. Tostevin objects to the binary opposition of silence and speech ("Contradiction" 22) and sees that women are "writing their silence" as well as "beyond it" (*Subject* 188). When the speaker learns to make use of her minoriness, silence is not necessarily negative; it merely leaves unsayable what is *not* sayable, as does the conspicuous lack of traditional "tricks" in "Not A Poem."

The first poem of *'sophie* introduces a woman artist working between signification and pure music: Billie Holliday singing scat. "[L]istening to Billie you forget about words" (9), even though a song must have lyrics. In the next poem Tostevin "subverts the very conditions of the lyric" (Kamboureli, *Edge* 74):

I write because I can't sing I am the book exiled

from my voice in search of a melody but like the woman
 who is blind because her eyes are filled with seeing
 and like the woman who is deaf because her ears are
 filled with hearing I am mute because my voice is filled
 with words and unlike music I can only be understood
 and not heard

.
 ...I write the letter a as my ancestral
 cry cry of the *anima* a vociferous bird from Patagonia
 whose beak is a remedy for those whose words fall out
 of their mouth too early or too late [.] (10)

This poem, particularly the excerpts I have reproduced here, is key. Tostevin refers to her childhood experience of not being allowed to sing with the blunt (but not straightforward) opening words, "I write because I can't sing." "I am the book" begins the merging of "speakers" in the text, and the speaker is "exiled," without place. The filling of the eyes and ears points to an excess of sense travelling through non-sense and culminating with neither extreme, just as the filling of the mouth with words points to the combination of silence and non-signifying speech. The book, further, is "unlike music": it will transform the traditional association of poetry and music, in which poetry is the song written down to be accompanied by the lyre, into its own accent on linguistic rhythm and pure sonority. The "ancestral cry" is another such noise. The poem invokes the *anima*, the feminine element, and the letter *a*, the first letter of the

alphabet, and thus a representative of the practice of writing, as part of this cry: writing, here particularly in the feminine, can become a resounding "cry" although it is not "heard." The same connection is made again in *Cartouches* when "someone tests a lute, or some other ancient instrument, with a hesitant A" ("In the early evening bus").

Ellen Quigley writes in her review of *'sophie* that Tostevin's use of sound and song represents a "search for the sound beyond meaning, yet beyond non-meaning as well—the half-speech ("mi-dire")" (376). Invented in "espaces vers," a sequence of French poems in *'sophie*, "mi-dire" is a hybrid language, like the grafted tongue of *Color of Her Speech*. "Mi-dire" is a "demi-pensée demi-chanson intonation d'une voix / lorsqu'elle se réduit à l'essentiel" (57). Further, as Danny O'Quinn points out (43), the "mi" of "mi-dire" puns with the musical note "mi" and the word "me," in both French and English, reminding the reader of speech's connection to music as well as of the speaker's firm rooting in language. The music in "espaces vers," furthermore, is again not a traditional lyric music, but a perversion thereof: "l'écrit creuse son centre" and "se traduit à l'infini" in order "d'avoir tapé sur le clavier comme au piano que je ne joue pas / de m'être tenue à une musique si peu articulée qu'elle forme / à peine une chanson" (60). In order to "hear" the song that is hardly a song, "oreilles neuves pour une musique / nouvelle" (53) are required.

One of the epigraphs in *'sophie* is from Louis Zukofsky: "Let a better time say / The Poet stopped singing to talk" (36). The

treatment of speech is as two-sided as the treatment of music: the speaker must fight against being silenced at the same time as there are some things that speech—or writing, as in *Double Standards*' "Not a Poem"—cannot say. As with "Not a Poem," *Cartouches*' subject matter forces the persona to speak the impossibility of speaking. Early in the book, in a section called "Small Amulets," she writes,

My father is a man of few words.
When first diagnosed he walked around
like Job, the futility of words hanging
from his lips.... ("Your father's cancer has spread
throughout")

Later, in a text about AIDS and suicide, she writes, "I dream that I am a fish: ancient Egypt's symbol of silence" ("And there are those who are ill back home"). These instances emphasize speech if only in their conspicuous denial of it, just as the persona's face becomes "inordinately conspicuous" in 'sophie's "by the smallest possible margin" when Derrida dismisses her question (47). In *Frog Moon*, the protagonist as a girl is told to mouth the words as the choir sings, but she manages to transform this silent activity to a meaningful one; in "by the smallest possible margin," the possible expressiveness of silence is contrasted to speech in a description of *Shoah*, a film about the Holocaust:

In contrast to the exhaustive interviews there are those long stretches of silence...as if only silence could carry the weight of what's been said. (48)

In the face of *silencing*, however, silence too is not expressive

enough: "when neither speaking or silence / can pass without error
listen / / to the short waka poem" (29). The spare Japanese waka,
not the traditional lyric full of metaphor, is chosen to represent
the precarious balance between silence and speech that Tostevin's
poems also maintain in their own way. The halves of the
speaking/silence binary are combined into a continuity allowing
for new forms of expression.

Silence must be dealt with warily, even if it can be
expressive, because the feminine "speaker" is constantly faced
with the threat of being "spoken for" and thus having "her
meaning...circumscribed by a masculinist discourse" (O'Quinn 39);
with her difference still shoved under the carpet, even attempting
to make use of multiple possibilities and transformations would be
impossible. Since the coining of "unspeak" in the opening of
Color of Her Speech, Tostevin is fascinated by the dynamics of
what is spoken and unspoken, what speaks and is spoken for. In
'*sophie* she writes,

in my mid-sentence you lean
brush your lips against

that space the past alive
in our own flesh the words

unspoken once again you've
sealed them with a kiss[.] (30)

In a book about asserting femspeak within the menspeaks of poetry
and philosophy, this poem shows the symbolic anti-sleeping beauty

gesture of the speaker's words being sealed inside her mouth "with a kiss," in the way that poetry and philosophy speak of/for women amorously but do not allow them to speak for themselves. The last line in the book, however, asserts the remedy: "I can love you now that I am no longer spoken for" (74). 'sophie is transformed into lover instead of only beloved, and in inventing her new type of speech (and writing), she creates an outlet available to all who would emphasize their differences—and together create a multiplicity of possibilities.

Not surprisingly, Tostevin often conflates speaking and writing; sometimes, however, she invokes a less ambiguous (but not unambiguous) capital-W Writing. In *Cartouches* she writes several passages about the Egyptian goddess and god of letters and numbers, Seshat and Thoth, whom she jokingly compares to Beauvoir and Sartre ("It's also been said"). Although he is the god of writing, Thoth is still ambiguous, a shape-shifter, and here "is daughter. Wears on his ibis head / my cusped moon" ("Thoth has as many faces as"). Thoth's monumental writing authority is here transformed into her own feminine writing practice. Seshat's writing also possesses a Tostevin-like multiplicity since it is visually, aurally, and even kinetically tangible: Seshat physically carves her hieroglyphs on a wall, and the sound of her hammering them out is "all echo and toccata" ("It's also been said"); this phenomenon also appears in "In the early evening bus" in which the letter A, representative of writing, appears both as a huge looming pyramid against a desert background and as a lone

note from a lute in the back of the bus.

Note how she chooses Thoth's bird face to adopt her own, and on the next page features Seshat carving letters that are also, because they are hieroglyphs, animals. Animals, such as those which rasp and howl and the fish that can do neither, are champions of a kind of elemental non-signification; as Deleuze and Guattari write, the challenge of the minor writer to signify everything by signifying nothing can be achieved by writing "like a dog" (26): "acts of becoming-animal...are absolute deterritorializations, at least in principle, that penetrate deep into the desert world" (18). They specify that the animal is not an animal at all but a *becoming-animal*: "an ensemble of states, each distinct from the other"—a unified multiplicity—"grafted onto the man" (36) (or in this case the woman). In *'sophie*, Tostevin invokes the chimera, a grafted-together mythical beast with a "lion's head / the body of a goat / a dragon's tail" (14). The most prominent becoming-animal in *Cartouches*, however, is that of the poet, or rather of her name:

In one of the shops I have a gold cartouche made bearing
the four hieroglyphs of my name. All this I am and want
to be: at the same time lion, dove and vulture.

Wordless, a hawk tears open its prey under clear desert
skies. ("Did the famous philosopher know")

The book's cover displays the poet's name twice: first in this cartouche of lion, dove, lion, and vulture—presumably for "Lola"—and then with the usual cover presence of "Lola Lemire Tostevin" underneath. Both the name and the poet herself "are"

these three distinct animals at once, and particularly identify with the "wordless" bird of prey in the desert background, reminiscent of 'sophie's "espaces vers" where the tongue "se trouve soudainement sans lieu tourne en rond / laisse échapper ses sons comme une bête son piège oraison du / désert" (57).

In *Cartouches* the desert setting is described as "sheer potential," where "the ancients learned to quantify what can't be readily seen or held" ("The desert is sheer potential")—and perhaps learned to say what can't be readily said. In "The brochures promise an 'Earthly Paradise,'" the speaker ventures to a supposed tourist spot which turns out to be not only desert but also practically deserted:

Halfway there, we are suddenly assailed by gusts of wind and sand as if the desert had spontaneously exploded.

Blinded by the furious configurations of a sandstorm we collide with voices shouting in German, French, Arabic, while sand invades every exposed orifice. Paralysed by a fit of giggles, all I can think of is wanting to live so I can write about this. Give form to the formless...

The desert invites the persona to "give form to the formless," to say what can't be said, understand what has no meaning, while a barrage of languages invades her ears, and the desert itself encroaches on "every available orifice," both overloading and blocking out her senses. The desert, like so many other images in Tostevin's writing, combines extremes: extreme sensation and lack of sensation, signification and non-signification. The desert, like the deterritorialization it represents, is "sheer potential"

in that it makes the combination of extremes, and thus the invention of a new unified multiplicity—and a new space of writing—possible.

One of the extremes of the desert is its emptiness. When *Cartouches'* persona visits Karnak, she says that if one tries to speak there, "the voice cracks and it, too, disintegrates. The empty space of the throat, a dusty ruin" ("Karnak, the incarnative place."). The deserted transforms the speaking body into ruin just as the desert transforms it into dry parchment. Remember this empty space is also, however, "sheer potential," another extreme, against which "anything could blossom" ("From the Aga Khan's Mausoleum"). In *sophie*, Tostevin writes that "it is because there are empty spaces we are able to use them," because as it is translated and interpreted "again and again," "l'espace...se traduit à l'infini" ("espaces vers" 60). In *'sophie* in particular, the recurring device of the apostrophe—many of the poems, taking their cue from the book's title, begin with an apostrophe—continually reinforces the idea of a space both empty and full, since an apostrophe signifies absence yet fills that space with itself. The fullness extreme is a reverberating excess of sensation or meaning. Excesses of sensation, such as the eyes and ears filling, is one such excess; excesses of language are another. In *Cartouches* the persona

[d]reams of scaffolds made of words suddenly giving way.
I dream of Edmond Laforest who tied a dictionary around
his neck and leapt to his death. Drowned under the
weight of language.

A friend writes that she can no longer bear to look at words—even bill boards from the bus window are excessive. ("And there are those who are ill back home")

Like the desert that is intense in its emptiness and empty in its intensity, language in excess becomes no language at all: but no language at all would be excessive too in its meaninglessness. So, again, Tostevin's images of spaces and echoes supply a space between extremes and thus a balance between masterful meaning and useless non-meaning.

In Tostevin's early books, the main balance achieved is between the two "extremes" of French and English, "not to establish the hierarchy of oppressor-oppressed," as Moyes writes, "but rather to generate movement between the two languages" producing "within the text a space of difference, a space that might otherwise be beyond the purview of the text" ("Writing" 262). In *'sophie*, more than in the earlier texts, this dynamic expands to include other discursive dualisms,

bringing different languages or signifying practices into contact and...parodically inhabiting specific discourses...In *'sophie*...the collision is between various discourses of truth—poetry, philosophy, and the Bible" (Moyes, "Inordinately" 25).

It is important that Tostevin indeed "inhabits" these discourses. Like she does as a minor-language writer needing to forge a new writing practice in English, Tostevin writes *within* these

"discourses of truth": rather than dismiss them, she perverts them, uses them her own way. Because they are all menspeaks, she forges a minor feminine practice within them.

Tostevin writes the inactive muse into, in her words, "the thinking muse" who is "a way of blurring the boundaries between philosophy and literature" ("inventing" 272). "To me," she says in the same interview, "philosophy is just another genre" (272). Tostevin has often mentioned her disappointment at the widespread resistance not only to theory in general but also to theory used within literature (e.g. *Subject 11-12*, 162). In 'sophie she writes of a woman who says that "she doesn't like intellect / in poetry," and when the persona tries to think of an appropriately brilliant rebuttal, her "eye wanders to the perfection of a teapot / ... / ...then the mind in the shape of a hand / follows [it] in the same relation that the eye has to touch" (17). Tostevin is not interested in opposing intellect and poetry, just as she is not interested in opposing French and English; here the mind is capable of the same sensual appreciation as the eye and hand. Tostevin makes her most obvious gesture simultaneously toward and away from theory in "by the smallest possible margin," where she "turns her Derridean strategies against Derrida" (Kamboureli, *Edge* 75). It is true that Tostevin relies on "Derridean strategies," well-known post-modern, post-structuralist emphases on the dissolution of binaries and revelation of the Almighty Other. Tostevin is unafraid to point out, however, that the problem with these strategies is that they have indeed become almighty; she is, true to her emphasis on multiplicity, interested in "employ[ing]

theory without following a prescriptive program, without solidifying theory as a singular construct" (Kamboureli, "Theory" 18). This discomfort with established authority holds true not only with Derrida's misogynist lecture in "by the smallest possible margin" but also with feminist theory. Tostevin is worried feminist theory might also come to "advocate absolute knowledge which only serves to repress" and hopes that it does not become "another ideology which defines itself in terms of opposition" (Tostevin, Untitled) and thus in terms of the painful divisions she perverts into multiplicity in her own writing.

Foregrounding differences, combining extremes and perverting mastertongues are not Tostevin's only strategies for creating multiplicity out of division. She explains another strategy, "contamination," in an article of that name: "Contamination means differences have been brought together so they make contact" ("Contamination" 13). It is often *through* contamination that her main strategies, such as perversion, are carried out, for by bringing differences into contact she transforms them into something new for which they were not meant to be used. In *'sophie* she aims to "contaminate the authority of philosophy" ("Contamination" 13). Her contaminating writing, unlike philosophy, strives for non-absolutes, for the half and in-between, evident when she re-reads and -writes Descartes and one of truth's catch-phrases: "je mi-dis donc je suis" (57). Part of her contamination of Western philosophy is tonal: in "by the smallest possible margin," to a degree, and particularly in "A Weekend at the Semiotics of Eroticism Colloquium Held at Victoria

College," she invests humour into a discourse which takes itself far too seriously: "Philosophy doesn't have a sense of humour," she says, "so I took great pleasure...in injecting a certain humour into serious concerns" ("inventing" 273)—and the result might be called "perverse." Moreover, this joking is all the more effective because she is not merely dismissive: she does take it seriously, but can still see it clearly enough to poke fun. She is part of it, makes "contact" with it, but sees it from the minor position. Even when masculine wisdom is not so ancient, as in the two prose sections, it suffers "from a Platonic hangover" which inevitably opposes "the intelligible and the sensible" and thus "has privileged mind over body, male over female," as Godard writes (Knutson et al 20). As in the teapot passage, however, Tostevin's aim is to merge the two without privileging mind over body, like philosophy, or body over mind, like the woman who does not like "intellect" in poetry. Her poetic theory or theoretical poetry is "a new type of knowledge" (Godard in Knutson et al 21), like 'sophie is a new "type" of Sophia.

In "A Weekend at the Semiotics of Eroticism Colloquium," Tostevin points out that

the great founding discourses of western philosophy, the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* are based on the amorous discourse, the erotic quest, which was far from being Platonic and didn't have anything to do with women...

(61)

In "by the smallest possible margin," she includes this Great Tradition not only through the presence of the masterful Derrida

but also through his own backward gestures and the absence of women there:

The writers Derrida refers to among many others are Spinoza, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Lessing, Scholem, Buber, and when asked by one woman why women are so conspicuously absent from his material, he says that perhaps the best way to answer that question is to suppress it. (45)

The woman proceeds to leave the class, and thus shows that the exclusion of women from philosophy is what Moyes calls "a self-fulfilling prophecy" ("Inordinately" 31). Tostevin cannot and would not want merely to force the woman to stay in the classroom or Derrida to incorporate token women sources. A whole new, hybrid, contaminated, "impure" and multiplicitous system of knowledge is required, of which Tostevin's writing, whether it is poetry or philosophy or both, itself forms a part.

In *'sophie* Tostevin refers to "all the tools necessary to the engineering of poems" (33) and their construction as a precise scientific endeavor. In one poem she says that the "laws that govern [the] fall" of bodies in a gravitational pull are "beautiful" (19), and in another that "it was for purely aesthetic reasons one philosopher wanted the earth round" (33). In her use of scientific images and themes, Tostevin often refers to the combination/contamination of the tangible and physical and the intangible and abstract: the "ancients" in *Cartouches* "quantify what can't be readily seen or held" ("The desert is sheer potential") like the "inconceivable notions of depth and height"

in 'sophie (33). This use of scientific discourse is more than just the inclusion of useful or attractive images and metaphors: science is part of the "ancient wisdom." Speaking to Christopher Dewdney, Tostevin comments,

Your language really overwhelms me at times. Scientific discourse is such a master discourse which is very intimidating....I'm not that comfortable with your master scientific narrative. (Subject 160)

Because she is not comfortable with that discourse, however, does not mean that she will refrain from referring to it. Just as she creates her own linguistic space out of English, she uses science in her own way: she writes, "I displace its [science's] authority in order to give myself voice" (Letter May 12 1). Similarly in *Color of Her Speech*, Tostevin perverted medical language by placing it in her own context and chopping it into short lines, making its coldness reverberate:

as it becomes easier
to pull the tongue
well out of the mouth
each vessel is dealt with
as soon as divided
the remaining undivided
portion of the organ
seized with forceps[.] ("to remove the whole," *Color*)

By allying the scientific with the other tongue-removing forces/discourses, she also allies it with English and menspeak as mastertongues. The language of science in Canada today is one of

the great mastertongues, an ultimate vehicular language like those of "business, commercial exchange, bureaucratic transmission, and so on" that Deleuze and Guattari list (23); if *Kafka* had been written after the rise of the personal computer, certainly they would not have overlooked science in this list.

Deleuze and Guattari do, however, make special mention of Einstein, not as part of a vehicular discourse, but as part of the forces of deterritorialization contemporary to *Kafka*. Einstein's specialty was, it seems, the "deterritorialization of the representation of the universe" (D + G 24); likewise, as Tostevin writes in 'sophie's Einstein sequence, "relativity is the only rule" (39) in her not-so-uni-verse. Here Einstein practices the contamination of the physical with the abstract and vice versa: he

...rock[s] the cradle of his son
with his left hand
while working on the electrodynamics
of moving bodies
with his right[,] (37)

and he "converts the universe / into perfect equations" (38) only to have them reconverted into the very tangible atomic bomb at the end of the sequence (41).

Tostevin is also interested in carving out a space in "history," a personal space, but also a more general feminine one. In the archaeological *Cartouches*, Tostevin lists historical figures—"Plato and Homer...Caesar and Mark Anthony...Philo Judaeus and his caliphs"—who "discuss / the embodiment of wisdom in the female

form" ("I am re-reading Durrell's *Alexandria*"). The visual embodiment of music in female form which Tostevin has chosen for the cover of *'sophie*, as O'Quinn points out, is remarkable for not being "one of the mutilated creatures in the history of painting" whose femininity or whole body has been covered, rubbed out, or otherwise suppressed (44); it is again such an appropriate cover for *'sophie* because the book reinscribes the erased and/or mutilated feminine in a variety of "histories." This theme resurfaces in the depiction of feminine historical-monumental mutilations in *Cartouches*. The Sphinx's nose, it is noted, "once served as target practice for Napoleon's / men" and her "disfiguration" is "conspicuous" ("Down the hill to the southeast"), just as "conspicuous" as the absence of women and as the persona's face in "by the smallest possible margin." When the persona in *Cartouches* visits the birth-house of Egypt's only female Pharaoh, conspicuously referred to as "Hot-Shit-Soup," she sees

reliefs that should celebrate her divine birth have been defaced. Throughout Deir el Bahari, the face and body of the only female Pharaoh, unable to contain themselves within the usual pharaonic order, have been chiselled out. Except where she is portrayed as a man, breastless and bearded.

"It probably took more time and effort to eradicate Hot-Shit-Soup from the temple walls than it did to carve her in," the guide says, and everyone laughs. ("The guide

informs us")

Again reminding us of "by the smallest possible margin," the defacement of the female pharaoh elicits laughter; again this is an example of the historical erasure of woman, or the attempt to hide her within a master discourse such as the "pharaonic order." Tostevin's drawing attention to this erasure makes the feminine difference "conspicuous," thus contaminating masculine "history" and opening new avenues out of an initial state of alienation, multiplicity out of division.

In *Cartouches*, history merges with mythology. As Kamboureli writes in "Dialogue With the Other: The Use of Myth in Canadian Women's Poetry,"

It [Myth] is the space where the cosmic dance takes place; where personal experience becomes universal; where the self joins with its other; where woman unclothes the blindness of the world and makes the world look at her through the terrifying eyes of a naked vision...Through the power they [women poets] dis-cover in myth, they demythologize those other myths, the myths of unreality, the stereotypes that perpetuate...the fear and hatred of women that disguise and suppress the feminine self. (106)

Tostevin pays attention to both these kinds of "myths." In *Color of Her Speech* she invokes, and fights, the familiar virgin/whore dichotomy repeating the Sanskrit word "kedesha" ("kedesha holy / kedesha whore") and noting that the kedesha exists in "myths and legends / as old as men" ("Blanche Neige,"

Color). In *Double Standards* she goes into details:

I tell you it would be real easy to harp all the way
back to women like Penelope waiting patiently

[weaving

unweaving Helen caught in the line of fire entre
chien et loup Mary Our Immaculate Conception fucked
in the ear by The Holy Transcendental Signifier Isis
having picked up the pieces of a dismembered Osiris is
forced to reproduce with images of burning sticks and
spears[.] ("I tell you it's really nice sometimes," DS)

Here she points out familiar female mythic figures it would be easy to "harp" on and dismiss as valueless fantasy women; but instead of merely ranting against such portrayals, she foregrounds their feminine positions by such "perverse" images as Mary being "fucked in the ear," thus both "dis-covering" and "demythologizing" at once.

Tostevin's appropriation of the Song of Songs in '*sophie* is another such double-edged appropriation. She admires this biblical passage as a rare occurrence of a feminine amorous speaker but also knows "it was probably written by a man" ("inventing" 274); furthermore, descriptors such as "blue black" at the beginning of the sequence suggest latent violence in this idealized mythological love. In the context of Tostevin's feminist text, the myth is not only reappropriated for use by a newly liberated feminine subject, but its original violence and suppression is shown so it cannot be missed. Tostevin does the same thing on a larger scale in *Frog Moon*: by placing a number of

myths and legends in the larger context of her feminist narrative, it is impossible to miss such contrasts. Suppression is not suppressed but uncovered and perverted to a new purpose.

Tostevin also finds in *Cartouches'* Egyptian focus evidence of mythological femininity that has been effaced just like it was effaced from history in the case of Hot-Shit-Soup. The example is Seshat, "Mistress of the House of Books, Lady of the Builder's Measures"—a figurehead of writing and of science—"until tonsured priests married her off to Thoth who gradually took over her functions...Same old story worn out from telling"; even today her "temple is not on the usual track of tour buses" ("It's also been said"). Seshat is the kind of myth Kamboureli sees as useful to women writers: a woman figure of power in two of the very fields, writing and science, within which women have been forced into a minor position. In her frequent reference to the power of Isis, whom "every / woman knows...by her name" ("The temple walls engraved")—not only Isis's name but every woman's name—and other feminine transformations, Tostevin tries to reinstate her own feminine mythological power. She describes Thoth, the god who eclipsed the goddess Seshat in the areas of writing and science, in much the same way as she (and Derrida) described God in "by the smallest possible margin": "hidden father of all things" ("Thoth has as many faces"). If he is hidden, how hidden Seshat must be, stuffed even further behind him; Tostevin re-invents the feminine power, and her personal power, over letters and numbers by transforming his gender and identity into those of the woman poet claiming her own functions: Thoth "[w]ears on his ibis head / *my*

cusped moon."

This extensive use of myth directly opposes Deleuze and Guattari's call for the non-signifying minor writer not to use "mythology or archetypes" (18) since they carry too much meaning. Just as Tostevin works against traditional metaphors by re-inventing instead of erasing them, her treatment of mythology is in keeping with her own strategies of forging contaminated space within master discourses. Just as she refuses to separate intellect and poetry into mutually exclusive extremes, but in incorporating them is not afraid to question their assumptions and prejudices, Tostevin cannot cast away myth because it suppresses feminine archetypes or because it carries too much masterful meaning. Rather, she is not afraid to use it, but in her own new way; she mixes and transforms those mythological images' "too full" meanings with her feminine dis-coveries, deflating and perverting those traditions like she deflates Derrida.

The title of *Cartouches* is itself an artifact of Egyptian archaeology. A cartouche is, as Tostevin explains it in the "Acknowledgements,"

an oval frame with hieroglyphic symbols depicting the name of a ruler, [which] decorated a pharaoh's temple walls and was worn on the body so the bearer wouldn't forget her name, wouldn't forget who she was.

The cartouche, she says, is what "I am and want to be" ("Did the famous philosopher know") and a "mummified me" ("a cartouche"), since, as another poem begins, "A name is as much / a part of a person / as the soul." Even monumental names like the markers

bearing the names of bpNichol and the dead father ("Last spring, in Toronto") are

[s]treet signs at each end of an out-of-the-way lane,
and a tree on a sideroad, in the names of two men who
continue to sidetrack, at least as far as two names can.

The names are pushed to out-of-the-way places, chiselled in memory to make way for the living, but the persona is still "sidetracked" by them because she, "the writing (and naming) daughter as resurrection" (Tostevin, Letter Feb. 21 2), is vitally aware of the connection between the name, the person, and the writing, how the poet as Isis can turn ghosts into letters, as she has indeed done.

The name and the process of naming is a central theme in both *Cartouches* and *'sophie*, and in *Frog Moon*, but was introduced in her earlier poetry. In the two languages of *Color of Her Speech* she asks the double double question

comment tu t'appelles? / what is your name?

comment tu t'appelles? / what is your name? ("where")

In *Frog Moon*, the protagonist is similarly divided between her French and English names; there as in *Color*, the uncertainty surrounding the name represents the persona's deterritorialization just as her placelessness and emptiness do. Likewise, Tostevin uses nominal ambiguity to her advantage: it is another way to foreground her multiplicitous identity, and another area in which something new can be invented.

The most complex use of the name in her earlier poetry is actually an anti-naming, a de-nominating: the French prose poem

"*les trois ailes de mon nom*" in *Double Standards*. Taking apart the poet's name—*Lola Lemire*—into syllables and punning on them (*l'eau, là/la, le, mire*), the poem transforms poet's signature and into something new. Stephen Scobie writes that in "*les trois ailes*,"

The proper name becomes improper, becomes a whole series of common nouns; the signature, deconstructed, scatters itself across the linguistic field. (154)

The impropriety here is not only in the "linguistic field" but in the field of gender as well; as Moyes points out, Scobie misses "the trace of the woman writer in her signature," particularly in the pun "*ailes/elles*," and thus also forgets "feminism's struggle with deconstruction between woman as an historical subject and woman as a name for writing" ("*Inordinately*" 29), a struggle Tostevin takes up more extensively in '*sophie*."

Out of nominal doubleness can be fashioned a new, but "improper" name: "the name of a frog" in *Frog Moon* (39), "lion, dove, and vulture" in *Cartouches*—or "'*sophie*." Tostevin clearly enunciates the importance of "'*sophie*" as a name in "by the smallest possible margin": "'*sophie*. Name of a woman, title of a book" (47). It is true here, as Derrida lectures, that God is "nothing but a name," for he is not a person or a soul or a real subject: he is all intangible. Although the persona in the lecture hall asks "Could woman only be a name?" and Derrida replies "Yes," (47), it is clear that we cannot trust his answer. Although the persona then admits,

Between nothing, between woman spoken, and woman

speaking in her name...The sensory figure becomes imperceptible, obliterated, her presence suspended. She is nothing but a name[,] (47)

she continues that the name of the woman and book, '*sophie*, by itself "has no meaning, which must be very uncomfortable for philosophers in search of meaning, but a title is at least a promise" (47-8). A woman is not a name in the way God is a name, for she is tangible, her name has "body" like the images of a cartouche, and as a promise her name signals her as a "potential subject of philosophy" (Moyes, "Inordinately" 32). The name of woman is absent only when not allowed to be tangible; it "lives up to its promise" when it, '*sophie*, "becomes the enunciator" (O'Quinn 39) of her own name and title—becomes the enunciator, the writing and thinking muse, of the book. In the final poem, where "the muse has learned to write" (74), Tostevin further emphasizes naming by including a deliberate signature, "Solomon's seal," the signature of the supposed author of the Song of Songs; but, as Moyes points out, it is also the name of a Canadian wildflower, transforming "his signature into a pun, a name among other names" and "[undermining] the authority of the proper name at the same time that it allows for the signature of the woman writing subject ("Inordinately" 41), echoing "*les trois ailes*" and the book's title/name that changes the proper name of Sophia into '*sophie*. What is more, Moyes elsewhere writes, the issue of the name in Tostevin's work can never be taken for granted since "the bilingual speaker...troubles the self-evidence of a name. After all, she knows at least two names for any one thing" ("Writing"

251).

In light of Tostevin's self-confessed distrust of origins, her emphasis on the name, the family, and memory, especially in *Cartouches*, seems at first odd. In *'sophie*, the emphasis is more theoretical, a musing around how a certain kind of naming can open up possibilities for the feminine in a variety of mastertongues. Because *Cartouches*, like *Frog Moon*, is apparently more personal, its use of the name and the father is a departure from her early books. There are common threads, however, that point out overriding purposes. Clearly it is less a matter of *origin* than of *memory* and the stories invented out of it, less of distant absolutes than of personal (re)construction: "The fact that some of my work contains autobiographical material (less than many people assume)," Tostevin writes, "does not mean that I retrieve origin but that I construct it" (Letter May 12 2). In "by the smallest possible margin," the account of the Holocaust survivor interviews illustrates profoundly how "everything rises to the surface through language" (Tostevin, "inventing" 279), how this "verbalized memory" shows that "words and pain always derive from the same source, always seem to lie in the other" (48). In the opening "Small Amulets" sequence of *Cartouches*, the father is "my oldest memory" wherein exists "every moment, every constellation...in words / about you; in the spaces of words, in the spaces / between words..." ("You, father, are my oldest memory, a forest"). Memory is also represented in "Small Amulets" as boxes, hidden deep within other boxes, that have the potential to reveal their contents, that give a promise like a name does, but that

need to be forced open: "dozens of boxes, / held fast by worn leather tongues, contain / dozens of boxes. Padlocks without keys" ("Clothes my son has outgrown hang in my father's"). Deep inside the boxes is found, later in the sequence, "a book whose words disappear into thin air except / for the trace of a lingering story" ("When I was seven years old I placed a doll").

This story is the continuing, "lingering" story of Tostevin's work. The story keeps changing. In *'sophie*, it is both lingering and nagging, where "desire" "is memory wanting to repeat itself / thigh nipple cock wanting to enter / their story again" (15), a story of gender and eroticism needing to be unlocked from the boxes within boxes of masculinist and absolutist discourses in order to assert that there are other possibilities. In *Cartouches*, following on the heels of the novel *Frog Moon*, the story is sung by a little frog ("This morning outside") who encapsulates many themes of both *Cartouches* and *Frog Moon*: the animalistic "song," the transformation of the religious, ritualistic, and mythological into the feminine, the need to verbalize suppressed "recollections" and re-incarnate and -inscribe them:

...a frog teeming
with recollection sang
"I am the daughter,
I am the resurrection."

Chapter Four

Sing Like a Fish

Frog Moon

The daughter frog of *Cartouches* made her first appearance in Tostevin's novel, *Frog Moon*. The protagonist is named Laura or Laure, in her primarily anglophone or francophone lives, respectively; only her childhood frog-spirit nickname, *Kaki*, is not divided in two. When she enters a convent-school she is both effectively silenced and robbed of her animal name, and it is only at the end of the book, when she figuratively turns back into a frog, that she is able to write stories in her own particular language. Those stories, which make up *Frog Moon*, while just as apparently autobiographical as *Cartouches*, are, again as in the later book, about inventing one's own multi-layered story rather than telling "accurate" history; just as it was in *Double Standards*, personal history is "misinterpreted designedly." *Frog Moon* continues referring to many of the same themes as the other books—doubleness, silence, and placelessness, for example—and continues to stress Tostevin's "paradigm of multiplicity" in its formal layering and in the sexual and linguistic transformations of the protagonist. It is, however, more obviously political in its, at times, direct treatment of Canadian linguistic division, but with such a treatment it is able to suggest a direct strategy:

create a new identity out of that division, rather than cling to nostalgic ideals that deny multiplicity..

In the Carey interview, Tostevin admits that *Double Standards* was originally meant to be a novel, and judging from the repetition of material from the beginning of *Double Standards* in *Frog Moon* (73-5), the latter may be the novel it did eventually become. Of *Double Standards* Tostevin says,

I was still caught up in experimenting with language, and the book kept forgetting it was supposed to be fiction, kept going into poetry. ("Distance" 5)

Frog Moon is not poetry, but it is still "experimenting with language," "son pouvoir de révélation et de création," as Sherry Simon writes. As such, it is not surprising that it does not follow a traditional linear format. Although Tostevin considers the book a novel (Letter May 12 2) and its cover declares it as such, reviewers struggled to assign it a genre: David Penner referred to it as both a novel and a short story collection in the same review, and Heidi Greco called it "a non-linear series of personal stories told in a kind of extended poetry." Less experimental than her poetry but not a traditional novel, *Frog Moon's* genre is another unified multiplicity, a combination of straightforward narrative and fragmentary collage, "what Françoise Lionnet calls *métissage*," Tostevin says in the Carey interview,

the different sources, history, anthropology, literature, shuffled like a pack of cards to arrive at character, human nature. *Collage*—Lévi-Strauss called it. But I didn't want it to be too fragmented either.

("Distance" 4)

In *Subject to Criticism*, Tostevin defends the inter-generic, semi-linearity of her novel by allowing traditional narrative

linearity to be one of her "many 'voices,'" in order

to reinforce the theme of living between voices, between languages, between stories, whether they be French, English, personal, social, linear, fragmentary, etc.

(99).

As elsewhere, the generic ambiguity of the book is part of its linguistic border-raiding, "[a]s if some emotions had to defy the barriers of one language [genre, discourse, etc.] in search of closer bonds" (25). The barrier between the narrator's two languages is also cultural, a barrier of "heritage," and thus of personal history, impeding her sense of individual identity. In the same early passage of the novel, Laura says that "living in a language that is not your mother tongue cuts you off from memory" (25). Thus, as in *Cartouches*, the past must be invented rather than merely retrieved.

In *Frog Moon*, the memory-constructing of *Cartouches* is combined with the self-consciously bilingual persona of *Color of her Speech*, and her linguistic between-ness plays a major role in the way she invents the past. In the fourth chapter, "Frog Moon," Laura emphasizes the importance, in her personal history, of the stories told by her mother and father. Later, in "Achilles' Heel," she begins to write her father's story herself, and asks "Is it the sudden realization that a tradition is about to end that makes us want to forge history?" (151). Her parents explain

the answer to her later: "tradition" will always change. Laura's sense of division and deterritorialization must be made into something creative by "forging" history. To Tostevin, the concept of "forging" is central to the novel, "to forge" in all its meanings: "to shape history; to imitate history falsely; to move history forward as 'forge ahead'" (Letter May 12 2). Laura's history is invented, perverted, and constantly changing. Further, she writes in "Achilles' Heel" that the stories of childhood

spin themselves into the spine of my history, each tale an acoustic mirror reflecting the different facets of my background, my geography. (151)

Her "history," itself composed of multiple "facets," exists in both time and place (or lack thereof).

The persona in *Cartouches* re-invents her own history; similarly in *Frog Moon* the "daughter's role" is

[t]he denial of a family history as simple reconstruction, each translation a facet in the endless possibilities of a story or a life; each interpretation one of the many directions a member of a family might take. The writer as alchemist, practising the arcane art of transmuting elements of reality into the shining, enduring element of fiction. The daughter practising the magical art of transfiguration. (161)

This passage is carefully constructed to allow words indicating change to reverberate: *translation, interpretation, transmutation, transfiguration*. The writer writing between languages must be continually "in-process," metamorphosing in all directions, along

a continuum of possible "facets." Writing itself is "the magic art of transfiguration" (161): Laura must be transformed into a writer, and while writing, she in turn transforms the stories, the language, and herself.

Moving from present to past, Laura's living in a second language keeps her "[c]ut off from memory" (161); from past to present, the writing and incorporation of her parents' tales into her own mutating story is an act of translation. As she writes down her father's stories, she knows

[t]here are several elements that separate his story from fact, the main one being language.... Not only do I translate his telling into writing, history into fiction, but his language into another language. (161)

This constant transformation/translation is also part of Tostevin's life: she says in the Carey interview that she did enact a double translation from her father's stories, translating them both from French to English and from the spoken to the written word ("Distance" 5). This multiple translation adds to her writing's sense of being in-process, as seen most explicitly in *Gyno-Text*; and this translation does not only occur from other people's stories, for she consistently writes, in a way that unifies but does not erase differences, across and between languages, traditions, discourses, and genres. In the novel, Laura begins this process of translation from an early age, even before she learns English. In "Gold Dust," she asks for the stories of her imaginary friend, the Chinese emperor, with "respect" and "curiosité," as she will ask for those of her father

later on; pretending to speak Chinese, she performs a perverse translation into an imaginary, indecipherable language—"her own gibberish" (35). In the following chapter, we are told "children borrow from the fiction of other bodies, word-creatures, tricksters, and make them travel their own maps" (43), maps that are as personally invented as "history."

Toward the end of the book, her parents explain to her the importance of transfiguration over static retrieval in order to reinvent her history. "'...That's all I ever think about lately, how to retrieve my language, my heritage,'" Laura tells them, but adds in her narration, "There is a mewling to my voice that irritates me" (190). That "mewling" tone, full of guilt and nostalgia, also irritates the reader, as it is supposed to. Her mother replies,

"...like everything else, language is something that's alive, so it changes. ...*l'arbre n'a pas que des racines, il faut le voir en entier. Look at the whole tree. Pis les gens ont des pieds et des jambes, they move around. We keep looking for roots that never move but that's not how life works.*" (190-1)

Change is both temporal and spatial, just as the displacement of the narrator consists of both geographic dislocation and being "cut off from memory." Like that of the Prophet of the Rand whose "ties and roots had been washed away" (90) and who travelled around the world changing his accent, Laura's linguistic-cultural affiliation would never be to one place or faction even if she were to restore her "roots."

Tostevin says that on top of her translating between French

and English,

we're always translating something that we have lived, either through another book or through experience, or through language. So to me writing is an ongoing translation process. The fact that you are forming these letters on the page is a form of translation.

("inventing" 274-5)

Laure begins this translation between types of language—silence, song, speech, and writing—in the opening of the book, where she sings in the choir. The opening and closing chapters share the same title, "The Chorus"; in the final chapter, Laura summarizes the transforming process she constantly lives and writes through. In the first "Chorus," "the young girl," Laure, is not allowed to sing in the school choir because she is tone-deaf, an image here expanded from similar references in Tostevin's poetry. The girl must instead mouth the words silently, like a fish blowing bubbles, and she transforms this silence in her mind to a prefiguration of her writing:

As she articulates each vowel and consonant against the roof of her mouth or her lip, as if reading to herself, each letter spirals into the shape of the object it is about to spell. Each letter of each word twists itself into an image like the decorated letters of medieval texts she discovered in the convent library. The letter "f" grows into fish, into flower or frog... (15-16)

The cover of *Frog Moon* portrays this very image: a big, elaborate gold "F" with a frog tucked in its tail, the unvoiced sound

morphing into highly physical, visible, even "spiralling," writing. As well, the creatures into which the words morph are worth noting: fish—symbol of silence—flower—from the garden in her face, perhaps, or the weed and rain filled garden—and, of course, frog.

In "June Lilac," Laure echoes the first chapter by longing for "the taste of words in her mouth" (178); she decides she will become an English writer, and the nuns call her writing "a perverse pastime" (178). Twice in *Frog Moon* Tostevin repeats the definition of "pervert" she used in *Double Standards*: once in "The Union," a partial repetition of *Double Standards*' opening prose segment, and again here in "June Lilac":

pervert from F *pervers* *per* through or by means of *vers* a line of writing; or L *vertere* to turn; n. one who has turned to error, especially in religion; opposed to convert; v.t. to turn another way; to turn from truth; to divert from a right use; to lead astray; to misinterpret designedly. (75, 178)

Frog Moon lives up to Tostevin's own definition of what is done "through or by means of...a line [or book] of writing": the young girl escapes from religion to misinterpret designedly both language and her own life.

Laura's final transformation occurs in the second-last chapter, "Le Baiser de Juan-les-Pins." Tostevin writes that a few publishers offered to take *Frog Moon* only if she removed this chapter:

One publisher even expressed his concern at the

"perversity" of "Baiser"... I find it interesting that he used the word "perversity" since I had taken the trouble to define that term in the book [twice!]. He walked into the ploy without realizing it. (Letter May 12 2)

Of course, the publisher probably had not written a paper on *Double Standards* to prepare him for the perversity of *Frog Moon*. Even the reader who has done so, however, might "walk into the ploy"--but hopefully would realize it, even while troubled by the confusion and ambiguity surrounding the sexual assault. Tostevin calls this pivotal event in Laura's life "[t]he ugly price kiss[ing] the princess and extract[ing] ambiguous reactions" (Letter May 12 2). This ambiguity is an aspect of her usual emphasis on doubleness, and, as Simon points out, doubleness of language is what allows Laura to turn around and write the book itself. Laura feels this linguistic ambiguity, which is only physically realized in "Baiser," constantly; and her final transformation in that chapter plays her ambiguity up rather than down, true to Tostevin's "paradigm of multiplicity," allowing her to keep her multi-faceted history and identity. This linguistic ambiguity, not only the sexual one, provides both the impetus and the material for her writing: "On comprend qui c'est le conflit originaire entre l'anglais et le français qui donnera naissance au récit lui-même" (Simon). "[L]e conflit" within Laura is itself perverted into what is no longer a conflict but a dynamic, unified, but still ambiguous, linguistic identity.

Part of Laura's ambiguous identity has to do with the

uncertainty surrounding her name, an issue that is central to *Frog Moon* just as it is to *Cartouches* and *'sophie*. In the title chapter, the early significance of the frog to Laure's life is revealed: she was nicknamed "Kaki," "the name of a frog," as an infant:

Not unusual for a French Canadian, except that my frog was Cree. Kaki. Shortened version of Oma-ka-ki, second creature born to Oma-ma-ma, earth mother who birthed all spirits of the world. (39)

This name, apparently given to her by her Algonquin nurse, marks the entrance of the book's Aboriginal element, inherent to the northern-Ontario backdrop and the reminder of another kind of deterritorialization: that of an Aboriginal people who became, in effect, foreigners without having gone anywhere. The issue surfaces again in the Aboriginal place-names of northern Ontario, and loosely in the Prophet's African references: he asks why the topographical features of that continent seemed only to be named when the English got there (91), a question which could also be applied to Canada.

When in public, it is unseemly for the young girl to be called by a Cree name, so her father is forced to ask "what's her name?" when in earshot of other families (40). This stripping of the animalistic, transfiguring name continues at the convent-school:

Kaki was not a proper name; that would be retrieved at the age of nine, when I was sent to the convent, when the time had come for me to be proper. (40)

Kaki-Laure-Laura is something like the grouping of 'sophie-Sophie-Sophia. Kaki, like 'sophie, is not a "proper" name; and just as Sophia becomes 'sophie through the writing of the book of that name, Laura becomes the frog Kaki again through the writing of *Frog Moon*. This re-invention of the woman's name begins in the chapter "Carnal Knowledge," where the young girl names parts of her body with the help of a medical book, "as if each organ, each appendage, in being named for the first time, has undergone a radical change, a metamorphosis" (134-5). The metamorphosis is completed in "Le Baiser de Juan-les-Pins," where Laura begins to write the book, and where Tostevin places her authorial signature in the brief appearance of Picasso's sister "Lola" in a museum photograph (199).

Woman and writing flowering into fish or frog, or Laura again becoming Kaki, is indeed, in the Kafkaesque term Tostevin herself uses, a metamorphosis. In the "Baiser" chapter, Laura sees a dramatization of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* before she takes the cab ride in which she is assaulted, hearkening back to the chapter of her transformation into an English writer, "June Lilac," in which her English teacher gives her copies of Kafka's book and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, "whose theme is the incessant reshaping of different forms of life," for a graduation gift (180). Laura tells us, "I was not to understand until much later the significance of those two books, to my life and to my writing" (180). Both her life and writing are, again, constantly in-process, never static and never located at any one pole, extreme, territory, or time. Metamorphosis into an animal being, the

becoming-animal as Deleuze and Guattari would say, is an important aspect of the novel, encapsulated in its title; and the becoming-animal is connected to becoming a woman, for not only must she retransform into a frog, she must become herself as a woman, signalled by her discovery of her genitals in "Carnal Knowledge" and by the fact that a sexual assault launches her into writing at the end of the book.

The "incessant shaping" of metamorphosis appears also in monster form, as the wendigo and as the *loup-garou*, "always transforming itself into a wolf or a human being so you never knew what it really was until it was too late" (160). The young girl is afraid she will turn into a *loup-garou* if she exposes her body to the moonlight (31). She also imagines being a chimera, in "The Land of the Chimeras," a monster that appears in Tostevin's poetry as well; here it is a creature not only into which the girl transforms herself to escape her daily life in the convent, but also one that represents the netherland between languages. The girl supposes that "in the Land of the Chimeras there is no difference between languages"; but this is not really true, for in French she reads it is a "*Monstre fabuleux, dont le corps tenait moitié du lion, moitié de la chèvre, et qui avait la queue d'un dragon,*" and in English "A she-monster in Greek mythology, usually with a lion's head vomiting flames" (107-8). The chimera exists in both languages, but it is not a direct translation. Perhaps this is because the young girl imagines that in the Land of the Chimeras, the young she-monsters are silent.

The most important, and more positive, animal metamorphosis

is into the frog of the title. Laure as an infant is Oma-ka-ki, the frog spirit. At the convent, this improper name taken from her, she is told that frogs come out of her mouth when she swears, and she finds frogs in the Bible as plagues and scourges; but even here she manages to pervert traditional frog-images, changing mythic heroes into frogs in her mind, "all wait[ing] for their princess kiss" (42), which comes in the form of le baiser de Juan-les-Pins to Laura herself as a princess. Frogs are also connected to women, summed up in the words of Laura's father in "Achilles' Heel":

"I remember seeing a picture of a totem pole once and thinking how my mother was like the little frog sitting at the top of the totem. The one creature able to live a double life, able to live anywhere and make it feel like home... Like your mother and her mother before her, I suppose." (156)

Tostevin thus deliberately associates frogs with two of her main themes: doubleness and nomadism, properties of amphibiousness. In the last words of the book, we are told that Kaki

liked to play grown-up with her mother's makeup... A ceremony marking the slow progression toward the day when she would transform the "Princess of the Frogs" into the teller of her own stories. (217)

In these final words, then, we are summarily reminded of how life and writing are a "slow progression," how the girl becomes a woman, how she is transformed back and forth into woman and animal, and how the whole book has been the testament to this

metamorphosis and is in fact the "own stories" that the metamorphosis allowed her to invent. As Linda Rogers writes,

The book is a canon, chapter titles reshaped, revised, as the child becomes a woman kissed by a frog (in *Le Baiser de Juan-les-Pins*), becoming a frog again.

Images such as the silent chimeras point to the constant Tostevin exploration of the conflict between and combination of silence and sound. As in her poetry, silence must be both valued for itself and broken through, as suggests one of the book's epigraphs, from George Eliot's *Middlemarch*: "If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life...we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence" (9). Silence is the rule at the convent, where Laura remembers repeating for punishment, "*J'obéirai la règle de silence*" (22). In order for the narrator to be palpably transformed into a writer, this kind of negative silencing must be established in the early parts of the book, in the convent and in the choir, where, like "the woman" with her excessive-absent senses in *'sophie*, the girl is "[d]eaf to her own voice" (15). Even here in the introductory chapter, however, the girl's imagination foreshadows her eventual transformation: "Each silent word gives way to an image" (15). Tostevin says in the Carey interview that these silences in daily convent life and in the choir are indeed from her own childhood (3). In *Subject to Criticism* she expands on the effect of this silencing on her own process of becoming a writer:

After I left the convent, and for reasons which I am only now beginning to understand, I began to eschew the

use of French, my mother tongue. In speaking and writing English I was under the impression that I was recovering what had been taken from me... (187)

I do not wish to draw too close a comparison between the author and the heroine, but in this instance the comment can be applied to both, since the silencing and the linguistic conflict in general are the same. For both Tostevin and Laura, French is first eschewed in favour of English, and then the ensuing linguistic division silences their writing for many years—until they learn to turn that division inside-out.

The mouth is the physical locus of the silence-sound ambiguity. The girl in the choir feels the absent words transforming themselves in a physical way in her mouth: "She moulds her mouth to the vowels...her tongue forges consonants" (14). The focus, here as well as when "frogs" come out of her mouth (42), is on the form of language rather than its content. It is no accident that Laura defines "abstract" art in "Baiser":

"I suppose it resides in its form and is independent of the subject of the painting. It has nothing to do with meaning or with the body painted, but with lines, colours, and surfaces. The subject can't be compared to other subjects but exists through its form." (206)

Although the subject of *Frog Moon* is very important, this reference to the abstract points to the book's formulaic departure from the straightforward traditional narrative. This movement away from content is also marked by the emptiness of mouths in this book as in her poetry, a symbolic deterritorialization of a

specific body part. In the choir, Laure moves her lips, but no singing comes out. Laura's father speaks, in a reference to 'sophie, "as if his mouth were filled with stones" (157), and Laura herself feels, living without a clearly defined language, culture, or tradition, as if her mothertongue "on a winter's morning, cut off at its source,...had simply withered in my mouth" (161). Deleuze and Guattari themselves link oral deterritorialization with the form-content conflict; specifically, when the mouth does not eat, it does not do what it was meant to, perverting its biological purpose: "To speak, and above all to write, is to fast" (20). Laure must go through a fast as well, on her road to becoming a writer; she refuses to eat for most of the chapter "Carnal Knowledge."

At the end of that chapter, Laure, who once physically shaped language in the choir, is now physically shaped by language. Laure discovers her sexuality through reading medical books, a discourse Tostevin also refers to in *Color of Her Speech* and *Gyno-Text*. The words, the netherlanguage of the nether-regions—among them "rectus, erector penis, sphincter vaginae" (132)—she thinks are like "the language of prayer" (131), a discourse on which the narrator muses earlier in the book as she describes midnight mass:

...an entire congregation gathered under one roof and chanted in a language no one understood, though it was a common language. A story located somewhere beyond speech. *Kyrie Eleison, Christie Eleison*, she sang, off key, every year around Christmas, as if each year the song emerged from some mysterious depth and released a

language she could make her own because it was not language... Familiar, alien, it released the limits of ordinary speech. (70)

This "story" in a netherlanguage is an important part of the "story" she creates as a writer. It is the "mythic" language of the four-language model, but also more than that: it possesses the same doubleness/between-ness of all the languages Tostevin has invented, such as *mi-dire* and *fuckinese*. It is both "familiar" and "alien," a language and not-a-language. It links together multiple differences by being common to all, but neither is it repressively unitary, for it "release[s] the limits of ordinary speech." It is a language, moreover, "not defined so much by the object of its message as by the way it utters its message" (Tostevin, *Subject* 138), a language of form over content, thus managing to straddle meaning and non-meaning, silence and speech. The young girl prays fervently, but her prayers are not what prayers are meant to be: they are instead a "foreign tongue...yearn[ing] for a target that is seldom God" (70).

The aboriginal place-names of the northern-Ontario setting provide another "foreign" language for the narrator, who ritualistically lists the places she and her parents drive through: "Mattagami, Gogama, Temiskaming...Lake Wanapitei or Powassan...Mattawa, Chippewa, Kanata... Maskinongé. Nipissing." (41). These names, she says, are the names of her childhood, "their sound as sharp as wild berries on the tip of the tongue. That's where they carry their history as well as my own" (41). It is on the tongue, in the language, that Laura's "history" as well

as her travels exist. Travelling from place to place figures not only in Laura's personal life but also in the stories she hears, collects, and writes: her mother travels on the train, for example, and the "DPs," the ultimate foreigners, work in her father's lumber camps. The Prophet of the Rand is another kind of traveller, an adventurer, whose "ties and roots had been washed away" (90). In the same chapter, we are told of bush pilots who flew in from "nowhere" (90), places that were non-places both in their wildness and emptiness and because they truly did not appear on the map. One of the book's epigraphs, from Italo Calvino's *The Castle of Crossed Destinies*, speaks of an ultimately empty landscape:

...the Moon is a desert... From this arid sphere every discourse and every poem sets forth; and every journey through forests, battles, treasures, banquets, bedchambers, brings us back here, to the centre of an empty horizon. (9)

Like the desert of *Cartouches* which is "sheer potential" and turns lips to parchment, the "arid sphere" of the moon is the birthplace of language, and its emptiness is the empty slate on which stories are told. This quotation points towards the significance of the "Moon" half of the title. *Frog* represents doubleness and transformation; *Moon* is the book's desert, under which Laura is born.

Like the pilots who must fly without a map, and the DPs who are by name constantly without place, Laura does not have "a country [she can] call her own," although she briefly thought she

might find one in an independent Québec. As her husband points out, however, being from Ontario, she would still have been a foreigner in such a country (145). *Frog Moon* represents Laura finding the best country she can, that of language and the telling of stories through language, where "each tale," she says, is "an acoustic mirror reflecting the different factors of my background, my geography" (151). Here again, as with the Aboriginal place names, personal history and personal "geography" are closely linked; further, we are reminded of the "different factors," how place is only one part of personal history. Language, both as the ability to tell tales and in its ambiguity within Laura, is also important to her individual history and identity. Tostevin partly conflates herself and her heroine when she says,

She's made up of more than one place. I like to think of place and locale as only a small part of the whole history. Northern Ontario is important to me, but I'm more than that. Language has become a very important place for me. (qtd. in McGoogan)

This "language as place" idea appears often, in interviews as well as in *Subject to Criticism*, there written about in conjunction with "living in a language that is not originally one's own" and how "that feeling...forces us to draw on several facets of a continually changing self" (74-5). Just as Laura continually changes locations, she continually changes herself.

Many different accents are heard in *Frog Moon*. That Laura can speak in many is clear in the "Baiser" chapter; as a foreigner in Paris, she is told by the taxi driver that she has an accent,

but he cannot place his finger on it. "I speak French in many languages," Laura replies (202). Nor does Laura have the only accent in the book: Madame Wickersham, her English teacher, speaks French "with a thick accent which she delivers as if it were her due" (171); the men in the camps all have their own accents, the origins of which the Prophet claims he can always divine. The lumber camps are particularly full of foreigners, and the narrator again ritualistically lists their many names as if those names together formed a language: "their names a hodgepodge of different backgrounds" (88), a "hodgepodge" that parallels the multiplicity of the narrator's own background. The Prophet also parallels Laura: not only is he a champion storyteller, but he also has an accent which "no longer belonged to a mother country" (90), and it is imagined that when he moved on to another country he would flaunt "his newly acquired Canadian accent" (96). The Prophet's accent, like Laura's, depends on where he is and on the "hodgepodge" of countries, languages, and backgrounds he has experienced. For Laura, too, her life is a hodgepodge of languages both within herself and around her: at Christmas with the whole family together, "Everyone is shouting over everybody else, as if each person represented a different clan speaking its own peculiar dialect" (63).

Although Laura's access to a variety of accents and "facets" allows her to be practical and adapt, she will never be fully a part of one language or one country: she will always be a part of the hodgepodge and the hodgepodge part of her. "Whatever language I've spoken has never been right," she says (146); not only is she

a stranger in every land, but she also says at the beginning of the novel,

I sometimes feel as if I don't belong to either my children or my parents. During those moments, when the mirrors of both languages crumble, I have the unsettling impression that I will always remain a stranger to myself. (26)

The end product of this inner ambiguity, however, is the same as it was in *Color and Double Standards*: out of division can be fashioned the strength of multiplicity. Here, at the beginning of the novel, before the importance of transformation and a personal "hodgepodge" of backgrounds is established, the many dialects in the "Babel Noël" chapters comes across as truly divisive. As the novel progresses, however, Laura's existence between her children and parents, English and French, is developed into a positive placement that in fact allows her to write.

In the particular Canadian context emphasized by the argument surrounding Québec nationalism, it must be admitted that Laura's between-ness is necessarily lopsided. English is the father of all vehicular languages, a fact expressed early in the book but not dwelt on—it is after all a given, since the novel is self-consciously written in English. "If it's true that on judgement day the elect will gather from the four corners of the earth," Laura narrates wryly, "I have no doubt they'll all be male and they'll all be speaking English" (26). This dominance is not only part of Laura's present practical circumstances but also a part of her hodgepodge of backgrounds, where even the DPs "speak just

enough English" (87). Another epigraph, this time to the chapter "Babel Noël (iii)," is from Robert Kroetsch's *Labyrinths of Voice*, where he comments on the Babel myth and how English tends "to eliminate the natural multiplicity of language" (137). In the ensuing chapter, Laura's father says that new immigrants to Canada "will be assimilated by the English, just like your kids" (142-3). The comparison is apt but not exact. Deleuze and Guattari claim that the challenge to make a minor literature comes with the package of being an immigrant, or, especially, an immigrant's child, but that it is a greater challenge for those born into a major language to find their own point of minority (19). In *Frog Moon*, the main characters and backdrops conform to neither extreme scenario. Laura is no immigrant or child thereof, but neither is she born into the major language; the same can be said of the northern-Ontario backdrop consisting mainly of other French-Canadians and of Aboriginal Canadians—a combination of resident minorities.

When Laura writes of her parents and children as two separate worlds it is with some irony, for they are integrated parts of the continually evolving culture of which Laura is in the middle. She calls the different "sides of the tracks" of her childhood "as different as night and day, as the English and the French" (75); she remembers, in the final chapter, a diagram of the atom in a science book, particles of opposite polarities "careful not to collide for fear she'll annihilate each other" (215). *Frog Moon* as a whole, however, asserts that the two "poles" of English and French are not mutually exclusive; when they collide within one

country, one family, or even one person, annihilation does not have to result. Instead, the poles can contaminate each other, creating a new, ambiguous identity existing at neither extreme.

"Canadian" literature can be re-invented from traditional nationalistic literatures in a variety of ways; as Godard reminds us, it is already minor because of its postcolonial status, and the complex inner linguistic dealings in *Frog Moon* and elsewhere go further by representing "minorities within a minority" (Godard 153-4). Tostevin herself points out in *Subject to Criticism* that writing can be criticized for being "too" Canadian (12). Although *Frog Moon* places Laura in France for a key sequence of events, the main action takes place within those minorities within minorities. Laura's linguistic positioning is the same as Tostevin's own, which Moyes describes as

only one example of the complex cultural and linguistic intersections lived in by minorities in Canada—intersections that are overlooked, for example, by the myth of "two nations." (Moyes, "bite" 76)

Tostevin gestures toward these other intersections with the Aboriginal backdrop and with the immigrants in the lumber camps, but it is Laura's own position that directly challenges not only "the paradigm of bilingualism and biculturalism" but "even multiculturalism" (Moyes, "bite" 76) in a way that concentrating on the various ethnicities of the DPs would not. The Aboriginal backdrop is just as complex an intersection, and it is certainly not merely for picturesqueness that Tostevin goes so far as to give her protagonist a Cree name.

Frog Moon is the most overtly "political" of Tostevin's books. The central argument over bilingualism and Québec nationalism takes place in a way startling in its clichés—it seems that every faction is represented in one microcosmic Christmas dinner. The son is studying "political science" (140) and says that he is going to join the "English-only ranks" (141); the daughter speaks only the "superior French" she learnt at school (64); the husband is a businessman who "ranted against the disastrous effect of the Parti Québécois on the province's depressed economy" (142); the father is confrontational, the mother is silent, and the protagonist is ambivalent.

However, as Tostevin herself says in the first Williamson interview,

I try to move towards a space of the imaginary that offers something that is perhaps more subtle than the political...it is wrong to think that we understand a human being by classifying her in a particular class, or at a particular pole, which is what the political does.

(Kamboureli and Tostevin 34)

It is unlikely, then, that Tostevin wants her characters merely to represent political factions, for such politics would only reinforce the division she works to transform. She brings up the model of the atom and its two opposing poles that could annihilate each other, but does so at the end of the book when such annihilation has been refuted; likewise she brings up these warring factions that could tear the family apart, but just as the two "poles" within Laura do not annihilate each other, Laura's

family is functional and dynamic. The divisive Canadian cliché ends with an emphasis on change and transformation. At the beginning of the political argument, Laura narrates,

...tradition can only be upheld if we adhere to certain rules. We avoid topics that are too controversial. We try to remain as impartial as possible if conflict does occur. And we compromise. (141)

So far their ways of coping read like a patronizing description of Canadian politics. After the controversial topics do surface, however, and after Laura confronts her ambivalent feelings about Québec nationalism, the way in which the different factors—not after all really poles—combine is told in a different way, in keeping with how Laura confronts not only her ambiguous feelings but also her constantly evolving identity. Her mother tells her,

"People trying to relive the past, fighting to keep their language, are fighting for time, and that's good. *Le langage c'est un peu comme un miroir*, so of course we would rather it didn't die. But like everything else, language is something that's alive, so it changes."
(190)

Laura's mother is extremely sensible throughout, and here is no exception. While she does not dismiss the retrieval of origin, she knows it is not always practical or even realistic.

Deleuze and Guattari agree that reterritorialization is an undesirable way of reclaiming one's own language, and they even cite French Canada as an example:

...the Canadian singer can also bring about the most

reactionary, the most Oedipal of reterritorializations,
oh mama, oh my native land, my cabin, olé, olé. (24)

For Laura it is more complicated, since she, like Tostevin, is not actually from "French Canada." "I often wished I'd spent more time in Quebec," says Tostevin, "although there I feel like a franco-ontarienne who doesn't quite belong anywhere" ("inventing" 276). Neither is her writing and living mostly in English to be considered an assimilation or a selling-out. Rather than identify herself as "French" or "English," then, Tostevin considers "two languages [to be her] culture" (Kamboureli and Tostevin 36), and even if something is lost by writing in English, a new something is gained. "[T]he fact that I have claimed English as my own has been liberating," writes Tostevin,

It has allowed me to write from a paradigm of diversity
and strength. To have done otherwise would have
relegated me to silence. (*Subject 17*)

Laura provides coherence between generations, languages, and cultures, not only by linking them together, but also by making the hodgepodge of languages understandable, more than just a jumble of dissonant non-meaning. Nor is Laura's doubleness made up of first turning one way and then the other; for her, as for Tostevin, it is not "a matter of choice" (*Subject 17; Frog Moon* 143). Correspondingly, the guilt that Laura feels surrounding her seeming abandonment of her heritage, and especially the fact that she did not pass it on to her children, cannot and does not dominate the book. In fact, it is quickly dismissed in the "mewling" passage, where her mother points out that she shouldn't

feel guilty for something inevitable: "heritage, languages" she says, "they're not lifeless; they follow the changes of peoples' lives" (190). In the summary chapter at the end of the book, Laura has come to terms with just this fact. She says she

[h]ad to concede that most of my writing will be in English, everything transformed as if to free itself from the constraints of allegiances and convent walls. I'm not proud of it, but there is no time left for guilt or remorse. (217)

Freedom from allegiances, linguistic or otherwise, is the same as freedom from poles, factions, religions, or any number of pigeonholes a writer could face. Those unfortunate Canadian tribal icons, hockey teams, might be added to this list. Twice in *Frog Moon*, Tostevin brings up the T.V. hockey games the family watches, and the game, in a somewhat skewed way, is another microcosm of Canadian cultural struggle. She describes it as a sort of nationalism: "How a group can claim an area of space and achieve mastery of concerted action defending it" (65). The actions of the players are a sort of non-verbal expression, another facet in the constant struggle between silence and speech: "a hidden impulse made visible...The eloquent expression of that barely perceptible flick" (65). The game at the end of the novel is even between the Maple Leafs and the Canadiens, and even though they are superficially English and French factions, the ritual of watching the game is cohesive even to those cheering for opposing teams:

It's the kind of alliance that's more enduring than

teams. It's the kind of alliance that will not be reduced to strategies of antagonism. (193)

A macho microcosm then, provides a particularly humorous and crafty encapsulation of the problems of the novel. With a little thought, one can picture the animalistic non-speech of the cheering crowd, the prominence of immigrants and otherwise Displaced Players, and the impossible-to-ignore Americanized menspeak of the game. What a perversion it is to reduce language to hockey, and to turn its violent "strategies of antagonism" into strategies of a multi-layered minor(-league) practice.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The two themes Tostevin introduces in *Color of her Speech*, bilingualism and gender, continue to play an important role throughout her work, not only as subject matter but also in practice—she continuously writes from a position both sexually and linguistically minor. Laura, at the end of *Frog Moon*, is a site of intersection between content and practice, bilingualism and feminism: she is able to write a book like *Frog Moon* only after facing both her sexuality and her linguistic ambiguity. Bilingualism and gender are aspects of the overriding theme/device of advantageously-used doubleness and division. Through emphases on those linguistic and sexual differences and on the physical, non-signifying word—but not at the expense of signification—division is further divided into multiple possibilities; through continuous translation-transformation, those possibilities are joined together in one continuous (but not always smooth) process. Tostevin's language is split, but, like the tongue in *Color of Her Speech*, its halves are grafted together, allowing for multiple layers of expression.

Although she belongs in no single place, Tostevin writes "language as place," thus calling attention to her linguistic deterritorialization. Her writing is an action that addresses her

themes as much as its subjects do: in *Gyno-Text* bilingual puns and ambiguities scroll out the process of the poem; in *Frog Moon* Laura's becoming a writer allows the book itself to be written, and thus the "subject matter" around language and gender to be told. While in the earlier books wordplay is key, in the later books genre-crossing becomes the important formal perversion: '*sophie* is also *philosophie*, and *Cartouches* and *Frog Moon* are perverted autobiography. Still, whether Tostevin crosses linguistic, generic, or discursive boundaries, the product is "a paradigm of multiplicity instead of division" (*Subject* 17-18).

In its experimental, "language-poetry" aspect, Tostevin's writing repeatedly points towards a relative emphasis on "form" over "content," seen in references to, for example, ritualistic language, inarticulate noise, and non-lyrical music. She deliberately calls attention to "pure" form, like Einstein's mathematical formulae in '*sophie*, the Latin Mass in *Frog Moon*, and the rhythmic music and physical hieroglyphs which Seshat pounds out in *Cartouches*. Yet given these repeated gestures toward non-signification, the blank page is always filled both physically and meaningfully: "it is because there are empty / spaces we are able to use them" ('*sophie* 35). Tostevin's writing exists between extremes, joining them like a hyphen. Form and content, silence and sound, signification and non-signification, are no more rigid binaries than menspeak and femspeak or French and English, which Tostevin more obviously combines. The barren desert is "sheer potential"; the Moon is the origin of storytelling. Words cannot

vibrate on the page without white space surrounding them.

The combination of otherwise mutually exclusive linguistic extremes is an act of two of Tostevin's pet words, "perversion" and "contamination": she turns the languages from "right" or "truth" and contaminates them with each other so their differences "make contact." "I don't believe in a pure space of language any more than I believe in a "pure race," she writes ("Contamination" 13). Writing itself, as the nuns say in *Frog Moon*, is "perverse," and Tostevin's writing in general is a perversion of major languages; her grafted neo-languages, like fuckinese and mi-dire, are more perverse yet. Writing is also "the magic art of transfiguration": as woman and writer, form and content, French and English, fade in and out of each other on a continually transforming continuum, purity is an impossibility.

Neither is there the possibility of a pure "nation," a fact Francesco Loriggio points out in "The Question of Ethnicity and Canadian Literature." Everywhere, he argues, linguistic and cultural multiplicity/division are "closer to the rule than to the exception"; in Canada, however, the divisions are more obvious (65). He even uses the hyphen to describe "ethnicity's" disruption of the national literature ideal, linking the "homogeneity" of cultures and literatures otherwise taken to be "self-evidently unitary" (56). As Godard points out in her similarly-titled article, Canadian literature in its highly visible "official" bilingualism, "break[s] the chain of literature, nation, language" (154). Godard writes of "breaking" and Loriggio of "hyphenating": bilingualism breaks up the ideal

homogeneity of a national literature, and then "ethnicity," the subject of both their articles, "hyphens" the two, or indeed the many, cultures back together. Tostevin's writing enacts that joining.

Under the paradigm of multiculturalism, however, not only do various "ethnicities" break up the possibility of a unitary nation, but they also tend to be represented nostalgically. Although Tostevin writes to Kamboureli in *Subject to Criticism* that their senses of deterritorialization (as members of ethnic minorities) are similar, she notes

how living in a language that is not originally one's own leaves one with the feeling of being "de-scripted," leaves one with the impression of being erased from an original script. (74-5)

Tostevin sometimes gestures towards this "original" script in her writing, through etymology in *Double Standards*, for example, nostalgic mewling in *Frog Moon*, or memories stashed within boxes in *Cartouches*. "Returns" to origin, however, are always thwarted, since that script has been "erased." So, just as she invents her own hybrid languages in *Color of Her Speech* and writes Sophie into a new identity as 'sophie, she points toward the past only to rearrange and reinvent it. If her persona does not have an original background, she will have a whole hodgepodge of them; if she is a nomad without roots in one place, she will "write language as place."

Although Tostevin's subject matter and bilingual technique make her an obvious candidate for a Canadian minor writer, she is

by no means the only person who must deal with linguistic ambiguity, alienation, or oppression: many writers in Canada could be studied in the framework of minor writing. There are immigrants or their children, such as Kamboureli; there are French-Canadians writing in English such as Tostevin and, among others, Clark Blaise, who carries the added distinction of being in some way French-Canadian, English-Canadian, American, and obsessed with his own deterritorialization. There are Aboriginal writers, writers of colour, women writers of course, and queer writers facing heterosexist language. In Godard's article, she considers the numerous available "difference[s] 'at home,'" in Canada: the four main Canadian minorities she points out are "women, indigenes, Québécois and immigrants" (154), and the three women writers she uses for her article are Tostevin, Kamboureli, and Mary di Michele. Godard says that French-Canadian writers in English Canada have two choices, above the possibility of writing exclusively in French for a francophone audience: write in English as if they were always anglophone, or write "bilingually," "thus emphasizing the diglossia...of their subordinate situation," (158), as Tostevin does. This last option is not necessarily literal "bilingualism," since the second language does not actually have to appear in the text; some "accent," theme, or barrenness, however, must erase the self-evidence of the English language in which the text is written. The last option is to write a minor literature.

Just as the political argument in *Frog Moon* culminates in the acceptance that nation, culture, and language evolve, it is

apparent that the very conception of Canada as a country, particularly the relationship between English and French Canada, must be allowed to change. This assumption is central to Godard's article and is echoed by Moyes; both point to the symbolic and practical perverting of traditional "Canadian-ness" in Tostevin's work. The "binary pairing anglophone/francophone," Godard writes, must be changed into a *multilingual* conception of Canadian literature, "making distinctions according to culture, history, and ideology, though dividing by languages" (153). The minor writer in French or English troubles the disjunction inherent in the "myth of 'two nations,'" (Moyes, "bite" 76)—or of any number of nations. Tostevin's writing, Moyes writes, "dramatizes on a textual level (as well as on a thematic level) cultural and linguistic differences *within* those 'two nations'" ("bite" 76), and in dramatizing those differences within supposedly unitary languages, she "thwarts the dream of a one-to-one correspondence between English and French" (78). Bringing those differences together is Tostevin's "contamination" of the myth. "[T]wo languages is my culture," she says (Kamboureli and Tostevin 36): it is not a matter of division, but of combination. Tostevin's writing is "beyond the paradigm of bilingualism and biculturalism, even multiculturalism" (Moyes "bite" 76).

A "one-to-one relation" between languages in Canada is a myth also because English is the major language on a grand scale. Tostevin complains that because of prejudice it is "a handicap to be bilingual in Canada" ("Contamination" 13); I would not go so far, but it is true when she says that the standard to which

literature is still held up is probably the great English (and American) masters (*Subject 12*). Fewer and fewer writers cannot in some way be called minor—if they take that route and do not erase their difference in either the major or their "native" language. In fact, if in 'sophie the minor spaces Tostevin forges are within various "discourses of truth," any writer should be able to forge such a space.

We are always examining more and more subtle sites of alienation; in this way, the category of minor literature does not need a deterritorialized language "proper" to function. As Godard writes,

Canadian and Québec literatures [are] minority literatures within major languages. The linguistic subgroups within each constitute minorities within a minority. This is to theorize Canadian discourse within a postcolonialist context as the site of counterdiscourses.... (153-4)

Even the "major" English-language, English-extraction literature of Canada can be theorized as minor through its relationship to, historically, Britain as a colony, and, increasingly more importantly, the United States as a satellite—and minor becomes another word for postcolonial. Even those writers left after the sweep of ethnicity, gender, and sexuality can be studied in terms of their minoriness, if only as Canadians.

Sell out, take up the major culture and language wholeheartedly, and you are trying to erase your difference; you may or may not succeed. To return to origins, to go back to your

"native" tongue trying to ignore the major culture, as Laura's mother in *Frog Moon* points out, is often not practical or realistic, and certainly limits the space in which your "message" can be understood. So become minor. As Tostevin writes,

To a certain extent, women will always have to speak like men, but many of them are realizing that the dominant discourse does not exhaust all or even most of their possibilities. ("Contradiction" 22-3)

"To a certain extent" women must write like men, French-Canadians must speak English, poets must file tax returns. To a certain extent it is inevitable, but the challenge is, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, to "steal the baby from its crib, walk the tightrope" (19). As Tostevin puts it, "Pandora trespasses the spheres thinks up alternatives" ('*sophie* 25).

Notes

¹ *Color of Her Speech*, *Gyno-Text*, and *Double Standards* are unpaginated. For *Gyno-Text* I refer to the expanded and revised version, not the original sequence in *Color of Her Speech*; I cite the page numbers in Sharon Thesen's *New Long Poem Anthology*. Most of the poems are also untitled; I refer to them by first line.

² This phrase also appears in Godard (172). I cite Williamson based solely on the earlier publication date.

³ *Cartouches* is unpaginated. I refer to its poems and prose sections by opening lines or phrases.

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