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MAKING SENSE FOR OUR LIVES: WOMEN'S COLLABORATIVE READING OF FICTION

by

Nathalie Sorensen

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Education
University of Toronto

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Nathalie Sorensen
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ABSTRACT

This inquiry examines some of the ways in which a woman reader's life choices and her sense of personal identity are changed by her reading of a novel. Each of three women, including the dissertation writer herself, wrote detailed narrative accounts of how one novel affected her life. These narratives are examined in the light of theories of reading, women's life writing, feminist theory, literature as philosophy, and feminist literary criticism.

While each narrative tells a different story of reading, all demonstrate profound changes in the reader and her life which the authors attribute to the influence of the novel. In one of the cases, the formation of a kind of "friendship" with the chief character in the novel, and with the implied author of the work, plays a part. The second turns in revulsion from the chief character and reads the work as a dire warning for her life. The third makes two very different readings of her novel as a young woman, and as a woman of mature years. All these relationships are analysed, as is the nature of the knowledge a reader can gain from fiction.

The inquiry recognizes that the influence of a novel may not be liberatory, and demonstrates that the social conditions in which a reading takes place affect the reader's understanding. In order for her reading to aid in the formation of a stronger sense of
herself, and to life choices she likes better, a reader often needs a social climate and ancillary studies which support these changes, such as those provided by Women's Studies Programs.

These findings suggest that, in addition to a study of fiction as art, readers should be encouraged to consider aspects of their lives in light of fictional characters, situations, and themes, and to incorporate these considerations into their discussions and writing about fiction. These practices are applicable in schools at all levels, as well as to informal groups, and private reading.
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Chapter 1

READING FOR OUR LIVES: INTRODUCTION

What matters is that lives do not serve as models; only stories do that. And it is a hard thing to make up stories to live by. We can only retell and live by the stories we have read or heard. We live our lives through texts.....these stories have formed us all; they are what we must use to make new fictions, new narratives.

Carolyn Heilbrun, Writing a Woman’s Life. 1988.

Carolyn Heilbrun's formulation of the big question of the relation of stories and life inspires me to seek one small answer by examining in detail how three women, I and two others, make meanings for our lives through our reading of fiction. While recognising the complex interrelationships, real or apparent, between life choices and the negotiation of meaning in reading, this study does not focus on the reading process itself, but rather on how the reading of fiction by us three women shapes our lives. It takes form as a set of narratives which tell, in specific detail, how we venture separately and together into that region where meanings for life are made from what we read, and what we do with what we find there.

Heilbrun's sentence, "we live our lives through texts" densely encapsulates both the problems and possibilities I explore in this dissertation. In what ways do texts influence lives? This is a big question, which subsumes several others: How do lives influence our reading of texts? Is there a category "woman" in this context? What is the relevance of autobiography? What part does collaboration play? I look at these issues and others as they relate to the main topic of my inquiry: how women make meaning for their lives by their reading of fiction, through the foci of theories of reading, feminisms and
poststructuralism. This is a broad program, but one which is intensely personal to me, since I am not only a lifelong bookworm, but find written texts a primary form of meaning making for my life. That I am not alone in this devotion to books is what makes this project worthwhile. As Johan Aitken aptly remarks: "Long before the expression role model was coined, girls and women aped the thoughts, speech and behaviour of the heroines of fiction" (1987, p. 12).

How we began

Between Christmas and New Year’s, 1992, during that familiar lull in the year’s activities, I took a few days' respite at our cabin by the river. For me, this year end was also an exciting new beginning, for the two women who had agreed to participate with me in my dissertation study were sharing lunch with me, and this afternoon we would begin our work together.

Eleanor, a graduate student working on her dissertation for the PhD, had come from Toronto. Alice, enrolled in the Women's Studies program at St. Lawrence College, had been a student in the Literature by Women course which I had taught in the fall just past. I had known Eleanor for a couple of years; I met Alice for the first time when she enrolled in the course. All of us are in the middle years of our lives. As Eleanor and Alice got acquainted, and I saw that they liked each other, I felt a welling of gratitude, for I had reached an important milestone in this project and the future looked bright.

Some weeks previously I had given both Eleanor and Alice copies of my dissertation proposal which they had read, so over coffee we discussed the project in detail. I asked
each of them to write a narrative about the way a novel had affected her life.¹ I would do the same. My decision to "participate" in this way in my own study was inspired by models within feminist art and criticism, such as autobiographical criticism, which is an important influence on this study and will be discussed in chapter 2. A short quotation from one such study will give the flavour. In the Introduction to their book Between Women: Biographers, Novelists, Critics, Teachers and Artists Write about their Work on Women (1984) the editors write, "our book is an attempt ...to 'put the portrait painter into the painting.' More important still is our wish to avoid the self-abnegation too common among those who celebrate and work on heroines. Only when all parties feel present, visible, and attended to will love and good will exist between women (Ascher, De Salvo, Ruddick Eds., 1984, p. xxv).² As a participant in my own study, I followed the same directions I gave them to produce a narrative. In essence these were to write, in as much detail as possible, how a novel of our choice had affected our life choices, our attitudes and values, and our sense of ourselves. This work was not to be a literary critique of the novel, but

¹ Obviously more than one novel could have been chosen; I wanted a detailed account, so asked Alice and Eleanor to choose only one novel.

² One striking example of the impulse to 'put the portrait painter into the painting' is that of Skai Fowler which I saw in the exhibition The Female Imaginary in 1995 at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University. Jan Allen writes in the exhibition catalogue:

[Skai] Fowler's work as an [artist's] model led to a personal identification with the feminine subject in historical painting, a relationship that she explored by entering the arena of selected 'masterpieces' through in-camera collage, a double exposure technique. In the large-format colour and black and white photographs that constitute the Female Nude series of 1989-92, Fowler inserts her own nude image. Like a time-traveller, Fowler engages in a dialogue with the model and with the content of the painting. Fowler's image disrupts the space of the "masterpiece," her nudity creating a visual equivalence with the nude subject. (Catalogue of the exhibition 20 November, 1994 to 12 February, 1995, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, pp. 9-10.)
rather an examination of our lives in light of the fictional work. In addition to the
narratives, I asked them (as I intended to do myself) to keep personal journals as they
wrote, which were to be logs of our activity and records of emotions called forth by the
work.3

I distinguish two aspects of my activity in the production of this dissertation. As
writer of the narrative about how Wuthering Heights has affected my life, I call myself
Celia; as dissertation writer I use my own name, Nathalie. This choice may seem arbitrary,
too fanciful by half. Nonetheless, I choose it because it helps me to keep the distinction
between my two roles in this work clearly in focus. As Celia I am a participant in my study
on the same basis as the other two participants, Eleanor and Alice; as Nathalie I am the
chief investigator and dissertation writer.

My dissertation examines these documents, the three narratives and the journals,
seeking to understand some of the ways and in what senses a work of fiction can affect a
life. This examination takes the form of analytical commentaries on each of the narratives.
In the closing section of this introduction I review these choices of how to present the
material and interrogate their implications for the meanings I found.

Over the next months I kept in touch with Alice and Eleanor as we wrote our
narratives and our journals and as we made plans to meet again for a couple of days at the
end of April to read and discuss each other's work. In the following pages I introduce the
three of us, using excerpts from our journals, then describe our days together in April.

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3 Eleanor and Alice are pseudonyms.
Alice

Alice lives on an island in the St. Lawrence river, in a house on the waterfront which used to be her grandparents' cottage. She is a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a writer, a student, a gardener, and a river watcher. When I invited her to take part in this study, she did not need a lot of persuasion. Though neither of us knew fully then why, we both knew it was what needed to happen at that time, both for the study and for ourselves. She also knew without any hesitation that Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* was the novel she would write about in her narrative. Alice read the novel for the first time in the Literature by Women course I taught in the Women's Studies Program at St. Lawrence College, and her work in class on this novel was exceptional, but I did not know the depth of its meaning for her until I heard her read her narrative in April.

Alice took her task of writing a narrative very seriously. She prepared a space, both physical and psychic for her work, and used the journal to make comments pertinent to the study which she felt she could not include in the narrative itself. I reproduce entries from her journal here as an indication of her process, and as an introduction to her as a person and a writer. These excerpts are given chronologically; omissions within entries are indicated, but not between them. The excerpts here are lengthy, but they are a fascinating story in themselves. I feel honoured by the frankness and completeness of this account. It is indicative of the type of collaboration I received, and of the importance I give to each of us telling our own stories in this study. Excerpts from primary documents (the three

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4 The complete journal is included in an Appendix, as are those of Eleanor and Celia. The journal style, sentence structure, and punctuation of all of our journals is reproduced as in the original pages.
narratives and the journals) in the dissertation text are labelled according to the scheme outlined below. The primary documents are referred to by their initials, thus:

- Alice's Journal is AJ; Alice's Narrative is AN;
- Eleanor's Journal is EJ; Eleanor's Narrative is EN;
- Celia's Journal is CJ; Celia's Narrative is CN.

Transcripts of meetings are labelled Data Tapes, DT.

The lines of text in each primary document are numbered, beginning with the first line of text on each page. The page numbers of the narratives, the Inter-texts, are given in sequence with the rest of the dissertation at the top of the page. In addition, each narrative is numbered separately, at the foot of the page, beginning with page 1. References to the narratives, in my text, are made between parentheses, first to the document, then the narrative page number, (at the foot of the page) and finally to the numbers of the lines. (AN, 2, 5-6), then, refers to Alice's Narrative, page 2, lines 5-6.

**Excerpts from Alice's Journal**

*Monday, January 4th, 1993*

_In preparation for the narrative, I'm housecleaning my desk.... After all there's a writing project happening here. I have a typewriter, lots of paper and spare ribbons, and the desire to get to it. (AJ, 1, 15-19)*

*Tuesday, January 5th*

_Afternoon. My desk is in one corner of the wide hall upstairs. If I leave the bedroom doors open, I can see the channel through the bare branches of the shore willow, white ash, dark brown green of mangy spruce. There are windows everywhere I look, so*
though I'm in a corner, I don't feel claustrophobic. Something that I realized recently is this wonderful revelation. For some reason, my desk was placed where it is in the hall, as I said. Why did I put it here? When I was a little girl, and this house was my grandparents' cottage, there was a child-sized white iron bed, with a scrolled headpiece, right here, in the hall! It was my bed as a child. I found it in a garbage dump site along the shore when we moved here, all rusted, too rusted and broken to repair. Here I am, with the typewriter sitting where my head would have been on the bed. Significant or what? (AJ,1,31- 45) The narrative will be personal. I'm very close to beginning. Feel a tad nervous and excited. (AJ,2,5-6)

January 7th

Well it's begun. I started this morning. Kind of rough stuff. The words selfish and indulgent poke through my preoccupation with the narrative. Well, my world is pretty special. Here I am on an island, in the midst of a kind of isolation other writers would covet. I can look out windows, go for long walks with the dog, play along the shoreline, ponder, reflect, contemplate. (AJ,2,7-14)

Time passes very quickly for me when I'm at the typewriter. What? "You're home! It's time to get dinner? I didn't realize it was so late. (AJ,2, 29-31) [Nathalie's query: Is this an echo of Morag, writing Spear of Innocence? (The Diviners, 1974, p. 187)]

There is form to my day after Jim leaves for work. I can't really function until I have a cup of tea.....I usually sit in the big chair in the living room after I get the fire going and listen to the CBC. Sometimes I just sip the tea while looking out various windows, getting a feel of the weather, the landscape. Of course I look at the river. How can people
begin each day without watching the river? It's like praying. (AJ, 2, 33-44) Sometimes I can be at my desk and writing by 8:30, sometimes not until 10:00. I usually spend the whole morning writing, with a couple of breaks, telephone calls, whatever. I often continue writing after lunch, but only for about an hour, then I have to take a break and go for a walk, up to get the mail.

When dinner is under control, I come up again and write until Jim gets home. If I'm not too tired, I write for a while at night, though usually I'm all written out by then. This is the time of year for me to write. I'm a SEASONAL writer. Once Spring happens, forget writing, it just doesn't happen. I'm a compulsive gardener. Seed catalogues send me into a state of nervous excitement. [Nathalie's note: Alice's garden is beautiful, the subject of paintings by a local artist.] I love Spring, Summer and Fall. And Winter, though it's a hard time in that I suffer this awful introspection. Always have. Maybe I have Seasonal Affective Disorder or something like it. Although, it seems to be a motivating factor for writing. January through March is when I do my best stuff. Winter means writing. Winter looks like writing, the landscape...like white paper. (AJ, 3, 23-40)

January 12th

It occurred to me there are probably some people who think that all this processing is unnecessary. These people are no doubt able to just sit down and write. I envy them that ability. My writing process is agonizingly slow. I have to wait for the flow of words. I exist in a state of pre-occupation and cannot read anything other than the subject at hand, cannot let other things invade the space of the project.
Wednesday, January 13

I love Margaret even more as I do this narrative. The book increases in value every day. Parallels everywhere. Throughout. You know, I want to do this project so much. There's so much to say. My ability as a writer. No. My lack of ability as a writer. My impatience with form. The discipline involved in this creation is frustrating. (AJ, 59-42)

Monday, January 18th

Last week's writing was hard work. My intention was to tidy my notes on Friday, and take a break for the weekend. However, I think because I often take THE BOOK into my bedroom at night (it's beside me on the desk as I write the narrative, then back to where it belongs, beside the bed) and re-read passages, often making notes before going to sleep, I found myself needing to linger in the space of The Diviners for the weekend.

I'm living my life over again. This must be difficult for anyone to believe. I remember my bed, and how I used to turn to the wall and think the same thoughts as Morag. Lying there in the dark, wondering about life on earth, space, the planets. How IT could possibly have evolved and what it was like before, when there was just darkness. Did I really belong in this house? Were my parents my real parents? The similarities between my life and thoughts and experiences, and Morag's is uncanny, or perhaps merely normal, human, everyone's experience. (AJ, 7, 1-14)5

Tuesday January 26th

Here is a perfect example of what happens in my life during the winter months. I made preparations to attend the Women's Studies Dinner, which included some baking.

5 Johan Aitken's remark: "So many of us feel this way about Morag. Proof positive that Margaret Laurence got it right"
Also, I made arrangements to stay at [her son and daughter-in-law's] place on Wolfe Island Saturday night, as I didn't want to cross the ice at night. Because of poor weather conditions, mostly rain, the ice has deteriorated significantly. I left Jim to care for the house and walked up the road, dragging my goodies for the party on a sleigh. The crossing was not a good one. Donald and Bill had put some sticks into the widening cracks and thin spots. I danced over that ice at top speed, getting very wet feet. The bottom of my skirt was soaked by the time I arrived on the Wolfe Island shoreline. Never mind, this is all part of island life. I thoroughly enjoyed the evening, and managed to spend some time with Nathalie and bring her up-to-date on this project. I do feel enthusiastic about it, despite the butterflies. (AJ, 9, 7-22)

Tuesday, February 2nd

Yes. A sense of change today. Who knows how to explain such happenings.

Remember when I told you that I'd been unable to read anything else but The Diviners since my decision to write the narrative? There was this kind of possession factor, or perhaps more a desire to stay inside the space and place. I really needed to dwell within the spirituality of Margaret Laurence, and didn't want anything else. I actually lived there for all these months.

Last night, I opened Gloria Steinem's Revolution From Within and read until the wee hours of the morning, couldn't sleep, couldn't settle, and when I did, my dreams were disturbing thoughts of failure as a parent. I thought I'd processed all that. Now I have an antidote: "I'm not God, and I'm not responsible for everything."

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6 Johan Aitken's remark: "Do we ever? Can fifty year old selves ever forgive thirty year old selves for not knowing then what we know now?"
Yesterday, though I worked for only part of the morning, I felt that I'd completed the narrative in very rough form. I rather think I have enough words and thoughts to fill the pages required. A great release, because I've been writing diligently, nearly every day since the beginning of January, and this is more writing than I've done for a whole year, which is an indication of healing in itself.

You know, Nathalie, I'm constantly amazed how people connect and make differences in each other's lives. It's a mystery and a wonder, perhaps a miracle the way we touch each other, and it's all there in The Diviners, and in Margaret's memoirs. Gifts that we pass along. Learning your dance, my dance, Eleanor's dance. What would have happened to me if I hadn't decided to take your course, if I hadn't been asked to read The Diviners at this particular time and place in my life? The whole experience is a validation, a testament to touching people as we pass, and it's all so simple when you get down to it, as simple as a hug, or passing along a recipe, making a garden, or asking someone to read a book. What more can I say? (AJ, 11, 1-30)

Eleanor

Eleanor is the mother of a son and a daughter, and recently the grandmother of an infant grandson. We met for the first time as colleagues at the Joint Centre for Teacher Development in the Department of Curriculum at The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education during the time I was a full time graduate student there. Eleanor had completed the course work for her doctorate in the Department of Sociology more than a decade
earlier, but for reasons she explains in a book length autobiographical account of her marriage, *M. and M.*, she was only now writing her dissertation.

*M. and M.* is a riveting account of how Eleanor's abusive marriage destroyed for a time her ability to do academic work, and of how, with fortitude, she forged new strengths and was able to resume her work. Writing this book was an important means of the metamorphosis of which Eleanor writes. Her seminar presentation of this work in the Works in Progress Series at the Joint Centre was an unforgettable experience for me and for the other members of her audience. Eleanor completed her dissertation *S. S. and S.* and received her PhD in May 1993. Both these works are important for understanding the narrative she wrote for this study and I will be quoting from them.

When Eleanor offered to write a narrative for my dissertation study, I accepted with gratitude. Like Alice, she knew exactly which novel she would write about and why: Brian Moore's *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*. Excerpts from the journal she wrote in conjunction with her narrative introduces Eleanor and some of the experience she explores in her narrative.

**Excerpts from Eleanor's Journal**

*I January, 1993*

*I have been thinking at odd moments during the day what I am going to say in this narrative for Nathalie - 20 to 30 pages seems daunting. But The Lonely Passion has*
been so important in my life that perhaps my story about it will take on a life of its own. Even now, Judith Hearne's life of quiet (and on occasion not-so-quiet) desperation holds terror for me. (EJ, 2, 1-5)

1 April, 1993

Samuel Pepys I'm not. A most infrequent diarist. I have finished describing the context in which I first read Judith Hearne and now have to write why reading it affected me so. I have been procrastinating for days about doing so. Decided I had to read J.H. for the fourth time (as I have been intending to do in any case). Realized as I began reading why I was procrastinating so: the memories are painful indeed. (EJ, 2, 1-5)

7 April, 1993

Well, I have been procrastinating for two and a half hours over returning to Judith Hearne. The task that awaits me is a painful one — to look at the ways in which I identified with or did not identify with Judith Hearne. I think I identified with her poverty -- she was on the sharp edge of destitution; her appearance -- she was plain, if not ugly; her boredom -- she had to work hard to fill her day meaningfully; her fantasies of romance; her breakdown.

I still think Judith Hearne is a remarkable book. It's a truism that heroines in novels get married, go mad, or die. But while Judith Hearne has a breakdown, she does not go mad. Her tragedy is that she does not. She recovers her mental stability, but by doing so, she uncovers in a way that she did not before, the hypocrisy and cant of parochial Irish society. In recovering, she is reborn, in William James's phrase, into a universe two storeys deep. Unfortunately for her, there is even less place in the single storey society of
Catholic Belfast than there was before she began her descent into the seventh circle of hell.

When I finished reading Judith Hearne for the fourth time, which I did yesterday, I still wanted to weep for her, and for all women like her, constrained and constricted by cultural stories they have no hope of rewriting. I must get to work. (EJ, 2,15-3,10)

15 April, 1993

Well, it's done. Thank God. Writing it was beginning to pull me into the painful past in which everything I did was wrong in some way -- hurtful to myself or others. I have been re-reading the paper I wrote for Ron Silvers. In a way, the thoughts that I expressed there were a prelude to my thesis. I talk about the power of narrative vs. the failure of objectifying sociological discourse to capture the essences of the human condition. Because Lonely Passion influenced my approach to sociology, it can be said to have had an epistemic as well as an emotional impact on my life. (EJ, 3, 11-4,18)

16 April, 1993

Looking back on reading Lonely Passion, it is clear to me how important context is in reading any text. We approach a text with our histories up to and including the moment of reading. These histories include our everyday lived experiences, and our imagined and imaginative experiences, and our experiences of other texts. If we return to the text to read it for a second time, our first reading -- text and context -- is part of the history that we bring to our reading. (EJ, 4, 1-6)
19 April, 1993

I had a terrible nightmare last night about my first father-in-law (the United Church clergyman) trying to kill me. I know it was he because he wore a black shirt and a dog collar – I think it is the first time I have ever dreamt about it. I am sure that the dream is connected to reliving through writing my first reading of *Lonely Passion*. The life I was living at the time owed much to the moralistic attitudes of my mother and of my father-in-law. (EJ, 4, 7-12)

Celia

I am a graduate student, wife, mother, grandmother, and for the past quarter century, teacher of English at St. Lawrence College in Kingston, Ontario. Reading, ever since I listened entranced to the bedtime stories read every evening by my mother and grandmother, has been very important in my life. I read steadily and with delight throughout my childhood. As a university student, reading the classics seemed like the discovery of a succession of strange and wonderful countries. Some were more captivating to me as an individual than others, but all were interesting and I never tired of the journey.

Among all those worlds, those created by the Brontë sisters, Emily in particular, held an allure which I have yet to fully understand. As I explain in my narrative, I felt drawn to *Wuthering Heights*, and then to Emily's poetry, when I came to do my thesis for the Master of Arts in English, and there was never any doubt in my mind which novel I would write about for this study.
Celia is of course Nathalie and writer of this dissertation. I feel that readers will know me all too well when they come to the end; a writer leaves her print in every choice she makes. A short bit from the journal I wrote in Haworth in connection with *Wuthering Heights* is all that is needed here.

**Excerpt from Celia's Journal**

*March 13, 1993*

*I am sitting in the sunroom of Moorfield Guest House, my bed and breakfast in Haworth. It is a beautiful sunny morning. I awaken to birdsong and the bleating of the spring lambs in the field beside our house. There are snowdrops, primroses and daffodils in bloom in the front gardens along our road, West Lane. Yesterday I walked across Haworth Moor, down to the Brontë bridge, and up again the three more miles to Top Withins. It was wonderful.*

*At this time of year Haworth is not overrun with tourists as it is in summer, when you cannot see the cobbles on the High Street for people, but the signs on the moor directing walkers to the Brontë falls, or Top Withins, the site usually proposed as the inspiration for the farmhouse, *Wuthering Heights*, are in Japanese as well as English. Haworth High Street is lined with tourist shops, and although there are some with native woollens for sale, most show the ubiquitous gifts which are to be found in any tourist centre. I could be in Provincetown, Mass. Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco, or Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario.*
How to find Emily here? Impossible. If the topic of my paper is what *Wuthering Heights* means to me and to my life, there are many obstacles. As the famous opening to the film *The Go Between* asserts, "The past is a foreign country." Emily would, I think, be amazed, maybe amused, to see how she and her family are marketed today in what has become a centre of tourism. On the moor yesterday, even on a fairly raw day in March, there were seven other visitors at Top Withins during the 45 minutes or so I was there, and I saw three other groups on the high moor during the afternoon. Thankfully, most of the time I was alone and could commune with Emily in peace.

Our meeting in April

At the end of April, 1993, we spent two days together in my home in Kingston, a Thursday and a Friday. Eleanor arrived on the Wednesday evening from Toronto, and Alice commuted daily from her home near Kingston. She brought a large bouquet of daffodils and dogwood from her garden, which made a centrepiece for all our conversation.

Our procedure was straightforward. On Thursday morning Alice read her narrative aloud, with the tape recording her voice and the comments Eleanor and I made as she read. After her reading, we discussed her narrative and this also was recorded. In the afternoon, we moved outdoors to enjoy the warm spring day while Eleanor read her narrative, followed by discussion. It was my turn on Friday morning, and we finished our discussion over lunch. We parted at about three in the afternoon.
During those two days our sharing of the narratives and other stories of our lives led to a deep bonding. There was laughter; there were tears, and over all a sense of healing. At the end of the first day, after Alice had left and Eleanor had gone to bed, I spoke these words into the tape recorder:

I had been really tired this week and very much looking forward to this day but feeling a bit low in energy. But as the day went on, my energy just rose and rose because ...these stories are such stories.... I feel deeply honoured to have been entrusted with these stories. It's been a wonderful day for me. I feel so invigorated. .....There's a lot of pain, there's a lot sadness in both these stories but they're so beautifully told and written that they carry an enormous power and I am deeply grateful. And the atmosphere as Alice left at four o'clock ..... everybody was in a deep place with the knowledge that we had in fact shared something very precious and very much of ourselves with each other. (DT 7, p. 1)

**Telling our stories in the dissertation**

Narrative is a powerful form. It makes use of a panoply of strategies, of structure and of language, to make meaning. A good narrative does not stand in need of other attendant forms, interpretations, criticism, explication, to be understood, though it may benefit from them. I believe the narratives written by the participants in this study deserve to be read through from beginning to end without interruption. They tell their stories eloquently and completely as they stand.
There are, of course -- this is an academic dissertation -- other stories, other words to be said about the narratives. These too are important. The arrangement of the chapters in this study indicates how I see the relationships of all the stories. Each of the narratives written by the participants is given as a whole and labelled an Inter-text. By this means each writer is accorded her full voice and her own place, and each speaks for herself. As dissertation writer, I comment on each of the narratives. The dissertation is composed of six chapters: a general introduction, a chapter on theoretical issues which forms a background to the study, three chapters of commentary on the three narratives, and a conclusion and commentary on the educational significance of the study as a whole.

No one, in this postmodern moment, however, will be deceived by the seeming simplicity of this program. This dissertation is being written at a time in which we are experiencing what has often been called a "crisis of representation" (Greene, 1994). I asked Eleanor and Alice to write narratives about how a novel had affected their life choices. I think they both did so with moving eloquence, but questions remain. What is the status of their narratives as research data, and how are they to be interpreted? This is a complex topic; aspects of it will be discussed at several points in this dissertation, but a few preliminary clarifications are in order here.

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8 I borrow this style of presentation from David Crownfield (Ed.) *Body/Text in Julia Kristeva: Religion, Women and Psychoanalysis* (*Albany*: State University of New York Press, 1992). This collection of essays on Kristeva's work uses an "Inter-text" at the end of each essay in order "to underscore the polyfocal, open-textured, synergetic character of [Kristeva's] work." (p. xx) See also the discussion of this style in Patti Lather, "Validity After Poststructuralism: On (Not) Writing About the Lives of Women with HIV/AIDS" (1994).

9 It goes without saying, of course, that as dissertation writer I honour absolutely the integrity of the narratives and journals, including my own. Once they were read at our April meeting, they have not been edited in any way. When I read Celia's narrative to Alice and Eleanor, it became as much an inviolable primary document as theirs.
Discussions of generalizability and validity in qualitative research are ongoing. My notions have been formed in discussions with Johan L. Aitken and others and by reading, principally Eliot Eisner's *The Enlightened Eye* (1991); Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba's *Naturalistic Inquiry* (1985); Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin's "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry" (1990) and essays in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (1994).

In his "Discussant comments" for the Symposium on "Postmodernist Approaches to Validity in Qualitative Research" (AERA, 1994) Norman Denzin writes succinctly of these questions, in a way particularly relevant to my study. He adduces four lessons educational researchers have to learn from "the recent poststructural, postmodern turn in social theory" (p. 1). These are as follows:

First, the worlds we study are created through the texts we write. We do not study lived experience, we study lived textuality. Experience is always mediated and shaped by prior textual, social and cultural understandings....

Second, the social text is a visual construction, a re-presentation of the dialogue, voice and actions of the other....

Third, there is no external authority for these textual representations. Their legitimation cannot be given by invoking a reality that lies outside the text.....

Fourth, the authority of a text rests on an experiential structure that moves in three directions at the same time. The text must reach out from the writer to the world studied. It must articulate a set of self-referential experiences that allow the writer to make sense of and understand this world in moral and
political terms. Finally, the text must speak back to the world it describes.

(pp. 1-2)

The goal is the production of an experiential text, a text that creates its own conditions of understanding. This form of verisimilitude is textual. This text rests on my version of the world I have entered and studied. It articulates the emotional, moral and political meanings this world has for me. It works outward from my biography to a body of experiences that have made a difference in my life, and hopefully in the lives of others.

Such texts move readers and writers to action. They mark and re-inscribe passing epiphanal experience and give it meaning, allowing others to vicariously share in that experience. They re-anchor the text in its historical moment and define the writer as a storyteller who has something important to say about this moment and its personal and public troubles. (pp. 2-3)

I have quoted Denzin at such length because he describes accurately the qualities and purposes of the texts we have produced in this study. Let me explain how I see this by looking at each of his points. Denzin's first point is doubly true of our narratives. As in all texts, "the worlds we study are created through the texts we write." As writers we have defined our worlds in our words and in the choice and ordering of the incidents and correspondences of which we have written, which would have been different had we chosen other words, other incidents. As Denzin notes, "there is no external authority for these textual representations." In the case of this study, moreover, the worlds we have created in our narrative texts specifically concern our own lived experience of other texts,
that is the novels whose fictional worlds have influenced that lived experience. A third layer is added in my commentaries, in which I analyse and comment upon the narrative texts. Certainly we were conscious, as we wrote our narratives about our experience of fiction, of the difference between our narratives and the fictional narratives. We were not writing fiction. This is not to say we do not recognize that fiction can convey "truths", we do. We also recognize that our narratives use structures and figures common in fiction. We have attempted, however, in our narratives to make a faithful record of our experience as we lived it.

The distinction is important for if, as students of educational experience, "we do not study lived experience, we study lived textuality", and our "experience is always mediated and shaped by prior textual, social, and cultural understandings", in this particular study the topic is, exactly, the influence of a fictional text on our lives. So, in addition to the general textual, social and cultural understandings which have formed our perceptions, we witness to and focus upon, the influence of specific novels. These novels, we aver, are central, at least in these narratives, to the "set of self-referential experiences that allow us to make sense of and understand this world in moral and political terms."

Denzin's description of the goal of the four principles he enunciates as "the production of an experiential text that creates its own conditions of understanding" also describes the goal of our narratives. They, too, "work outward from [our] biograph[ies] to a body of experiences that have made a difference in [our] li[ves], and hopefully the lives of others."
Denzin writes that "such texts move readers and writers to action. They mark and re-inscribe passing epiphanal experience and give it meaning, allowing others to vicariously share in that experience." Again these qualities are doubly true of our narrative texts, in which we have specifically sought to record how a fictional text has resonated with our lives to create an epiphany, and how that epiphany has resulted in changes in our lives. As we have vicariously shared the experience of fictional characters, and have written about our experiences, we hope others will be inspired to understand their own epiphanies and vicarious experiences of fiction in ways uniquely appropriate to themselves.

There are other considerations in the decision to structure this dissertation as a series of narratives followed by analytical commentaries; considerations which, I think, are inferred in Denzin's formulations and how I see them in relation to these texts, but which I want to foreground and clarify at the outset. These considerations have to do with questions of "voice" in the narratives and in the analytical commentaries; with questions of the "power differential" between the two writers of the narratives as participants in my study and myself as dissertation writer; and with questions of form in the narratives and the analytical commentary.

In the matter of "voice", it is crucial to this study that the experiences of the participants be heard, with all their subtleties and nuances. It seems as obvious that this will be most effectively accomplished if we are afforded the uninterrupted space to express our thoughts and experiences, letting parts of our accounts resonate with each other and enrich the whole. This richness would not be possible if I, as dissertation writer, were to dissect the narratives and anthologize aspects according to topic, as for example, fictional
characters as models, and discuss these topics as they occur in all three narratives. This would fragment the narratives, indeed destroy them as narratives, and diminish if not obliterate the individuality of each account.

This work has been from first to last a process of discovery for me. I have made it my purpose to look at the narratives as much as I could from the point of view of their writers, not as illustrations of some ideas of my own that their words could illustrate. I began with the very general set of questions I enunciate at the beginning of this introduction. I had no hypothesis, no very clear idea what I would find. My ideal is expressed by Dorothy Smith in her critique "The Ideological Practice of Sociology" (1990a) where she writes:

A theoretical account is not fixed at the outset, but evolves in the course of inquiry dialectically as the social scientist seeks to explicate the properties of organization discovered in the way people order their activities. Hence the structure of a theoretical account is constrained by the relations generated in people's practical activities.

To begin with the theoretical formulations of the discipline and to construe the actualities of people's activities as expressions of the already given is to generate ideology, not knowledge. (p. 48)

Anne Opie also has some interesting remarks in her article, "Qualitative research, appropriation of the 'other' and empowerment" (1992) about the importance of not subsuming the contradictions in the testimony of participants to the necessities of an overarching theory of the researcher. In her article she critiques analyses which can be restrictive in the sense that the data is appropriated to the researcher's interests, "so that
other significant experiential elements which challenge or partially disrupt that interpretation may ... be silenced" (p. 52). In opposition to this she cites records of interviews she has conducted "which derive their significance from the hesitation, contradictoriness and recursiveness of the spoken voice ... and ... the light they cast on the painful moving across the surfaces of remembrance/nonremembrance, presence/absence" (p.55). These qualities which Opie wants to record and honour are also highly valued in this study, and it seems clear that they will only be captured if the participant is allowed the space she needs to write her account without interruption.

Giving the participant uninterrupted space to write her impressions is giving her "voice" in this study and the power which comes with it. It would be naive to deny, however, that in the context of this study and as dissertation writer I have the greater power, and responsibility, of expression. Certainly there is no crude "appropriation" of the other, such as the "colonization", in the imperialistic sense of the word, of peoples located in "zones of dependency and peripherality" (Said, 1989, p. 207) which has been criticized in some ethnography. The participants in my study are my social, economic, and educational equals in every sense. They are friends whose friendship I value highly. Yet, after all, this is my dissertation, and I have the final word in the meanings it makes. This is my privilege and my responsibility. I share my commentaries with them first, and have their concurrence in what I say about what they have said. If I did not, I would revise what I had written until they could approve, or reproduce our dialogue about a disputed area so that readers would have both versions. It is no part of my intention to silence their interpretations or to insist on my meanings in opposition to theirs.
With all this understood, however, there are several interpretations which could be made, and I have made those which seem right to me. As Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Cohen point out "the new ethnography's move from a scientific to a more literary discourse" (Mascia-Lees et. al., 1989, p. 30) does not in fact do away with the control of the author. Citing Roland Barthes and Wayne Booth, they point out that authors who experiment with point of view, presenting a seeming jumble of perspectives and subjectivities in a variety of voices, may well be writing no more open texts than classic works in which all action is mediated by a unitary narrative voice. The literary techniques of fragmentation, metaphor, thematic and verbal echo, repetition, and juxtaposition, which the new ethnography borrows, are all devices through which an author manipulates understanding and response. They function to structure the reader's experience of the apparently discontinuous, illogical, and fragmentary text. (p. 30)

This leads us to our final questions, those of choice of form. Dissertations are usually written in expository style, yet I felt it important to ask my participants to write narratives of their experience. In this I was strongly influenced by my supervisor Johan L. Aitken (1987) and by Michael Connelly (1988) (1990) under whose tutelage I worked at the Joint Centre for Teacher Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. My own primary background and continuing passion, English literature studies, further influenced this choice.
Despite the strong support of this environment, however, no choice of form is unproblematic. Narrative is, whatever style it adopts, an artistic form with a recognizable and particular relationship to that which it communicates. Unless this relationship is to the purpose, using narrative is wrongheaded. Connelly and Clandinin (1988, 1990) show clearly how narrative works to provide a richness and comprehensiveness of detail well suited to the description of educational experience. It is also, as David Carr explains in his book *Time, Narrative and History* (1986), a form which is intimately connected with our experience of time in everyday life in ways not available to exposition. Carr's book-length argument has been a key influence in my thinking about narrative. It is subtle and should be read in its entirety but here a few main ideas will have to suffice. Carr summarizes his argument in his first chapter, in which he seeks to establish the relationship between narrative form and the structure of everyday life:

1. The events we experience, the experiences themselves, and the actions we perform consist not of "mere" sequences but of structured and contoured sequences of temporal phases. These sequences begin and end, and are thus separated from their temporal "surroundings"; and they are internally articulated in relations of suspension-resolution, departure-return, means-end, problem-solution, etc.

2. These temporal phenomena have such a structure for us in virtue of a temporal grasp which can be described as protentional-retentional at the pre-reflective level of short-term or simple experiences and actions, and as reflective and explicitly narrational at the level of more complex experiences.
and actions. In both cases temporal multiplicity is spanned, gathered, or held together; in the latter case this takes on the character of assuming a story-teller's point of view on the action performed or the experience had. The result is that in the complex actions and experiences of everyday life we are subjects or agents, narrators, and even spectators to the events we live through and the actions we undertake. (p. 64)

Carr takes a position in opposition to theories of narrative espoused by such critics as Hayden White (1973) and Louis Mink (1978). These approaches to the problem of representation, he says, reveal that stories or histories are considered alien to, separated from the real world they profess to depict because of the narrative form itself. It follows that fictional narratives cannot, for structural reasons, really be "life-like" and that historical or other non-fictional narratives, such as biography, journalism, etc., must inevitably impose upon their subject matter a form it does not possess. (p. 15)

Carr aims in his book to uncover narrative features of everyday experience and action and to show "a certain community of form between 'life' and written narratives" (p. 16). He succeeds, in my view, in showing that "historical and fictional narratives reveal themselves to be not distortions of, denials of, or escapes from reality, but extensions and configurations of its primary features," to show in fact that "full-fledged literary story-telling arises out of life" (pp. 15-16). In his own beautiful phrase, stories "are told in being lived and lived in being told" (p. 61).
Narrative is a suitable form for the expression of how our lives have been shaped by our reading of novels. For my commentaries, on the other hand, I chose exposition. This was partly to emphasize the difference between the primary data and my analysis of it. Certainly my English studies gave me a ready analogy in the counterpoint between the work of art and the piece of literary criticism in which it is analysed. More importantly, however, I think exposition is best suited for my purposes in the commentaries, which are to explicate and to analyse.

The effect of form is highlighted by Margery Wolf in her book *A Thrice-Told Tale: Feminism, Postmodernism, and Ethnographic Responsibility* (1992). Here Wolf tells a story of a woman in a remote Taiwanese village who for a brief period in 1960 exhibited signs of being a shaman, but who in the end was not accepted as such by the other villagers. At the time Wolf and her husband were graduate students doing fieldwork in Taiwan. The tale is thrice-told because Wolf publishes the same basic facts in three different ways. She begins with a fictional short story, which uses the basic facts of the situation of the shaman, then gives the field notes of the situation which were made at the time by herself and others, and finally she presents the ethnographic article she published in *American Ethnologist* (1990). In addition Wolf writes separate chapters in which she comments on each of these presentations. Her remarks about the fictional story and the ethnographic article can shed light also, I believe, on my choices of form in the succeeding chapters of this study.

Wolf is very clear that her short story is fiction, not "experimental ethnography" i.e. fact using fictional forms (p. 10). A comparison of the basic data in all three forms of the
story, however, shows that most of the fictional story is based on the facts as collected in the field notes, but Wolf did alter the end to achieve the effect she wanted. Her remarks in introduction to her story illuminate the strengths of narrative:

I present the short story as the first text in this nontextual analysis because I think (and some friends who have read the chapter in draft agree) that it gives readers who have never been to a Taiwanese village, let alone lived in one, a sense of village life that they cannot get from the fieldnotes or the article. (p. 14)

Wolf is forthright, however, in her opinion that despite these strengths of the fictional story, it does not do a quarter of the work that the [ethnographic article] does in conveying information, analysis, and understanding about gender, shamanism, and power relations in a Chinese community, but it is, to use a sadly worn word, evocative. (p. 59)

Making Meanings in this Study

I agree with Wolf in her assessment of the different strengths of the three ways she tells her story, and feel it supports my own choices of form in this study. So, in the chapters which follow, I use exposition to analyse our three non-fictional narratives, which are included as inter-texts 1, 2, and 3. Chapter 2 surveys the theoretical background of issues which underlie the questions addressed in the commentaries. It is important to note that this does not mean that I promulgate a hypothesis in chapter 2 which is illustrated or
"proved" in the details of the chapters which follow. There is of course a connection between the background outlined in chapter 2 and the other commentaries, but the word background is to be taken literally here. The commentaries take their subject entirely from the narratives, not from a theory outlined in advance. The background chapter is meant only to sketch the general areas in which the questions addressed in the commentaries are played out. Ties are made between the two, of course, but it is left to the final concluding chapter to draw the broad overall meaning of the work as a whole.

In the introduction to their book, *The Intimate Critique: Autobiographical Literary Criticism*, to which I will refer several times in this dissertation, the editors, Diane P. Freedman, Olivia Frey, and Frances Murphy Zauhar, write:

Like our contemporaries and the scores of scholars and researchers who had come before us, we had been trained in graduate school in the methods of "objective criticism." Obviously and increasingly, however, not everyone has embraced a discourse we have come to see as pseudo-objective, impersonal, and adversarial....We ourselves had long experimented with alternative forms --Diane with poetic amalgams and Olivia and Frances with personal stories in scholarly writings. Elsewhere, composition theorist William Zeiger laments that "with overpowering frequency, college composition classes today teach the writing of an essay which conforms to the scientific model of thesis and support" and urges us to adopt other forms and other ways of knowing.....Peter Elbow asks us to take a "larger view of human discourse," urging us to help our students leave behind a uniform,
"author evacuated" prose with its "rubber-gloved" quality of voice in favour of a "kind of polyphony -- an awareness of and pleasure in the various competing voices that make up our own." (1993, pp. 1-2)

Elbow's idea of discourse as a kind of polyphony accords very well with how I see the connections being made in this work. I believe that argument can be carried on in more complex and comprehensive ways than is usually seen in the old author-evacuated styles or in the scientific models of "thesis and support." The concept of polyphony is important to the substance of what I will be showing about the relationships of novels and lived lives, but it is also useful as an image of the reasoning by which these relationships are demonstrated. Patrocinio Schweickart writes of a feminine dialogic model of reading where "the problematic is defined by the drive to connect," rather than "the drive to get it right," which is the "preoccupation of the mainstream model of reading" (Schweickart, 1986, pp 54-55). Following these and other examples, I see my work here as allowing a multiplicity of voices and showing connections among them. These connections are a form of "argument" if argument is understood as showing how ideas are similar or different, how concepts are related, and how these are supported by the examples adduced. There is an overall pattern in this work. The ideas cohere into a whole, but they do so in a more complex, less linear way than the traditional structures of "thesis and support." I am drawn to the metaphor of the pieced quilt to illustrate how I see the structure of my argument.

More than one feminist critic has noted the usefulness of the art of making quilts as a metaphor for women's writing and criticism. Here is Cheryl B. Torsney:
Although the underlying impetus for the various "schools" of feminist literary criticism may be similar -- to recognize and valorize the female experience in reading, writing, and responding -- the permutations are various, making the feminist critical field resemble a pieced quilt. Behind the top is the batting, that which gives the quilt its utilitarian substance, the insulating material that each piece of the top shares in common with each other piece: the conviction that one can read, write, and interpret as a woman. The pieced top, however, is that which presents the alternatives. The blocks may vary as to pattern or fabric, in structure and texture. Not every block need be stitched by a woman, nor are contiguous blocks necessarily complementary. Yet even in its theoretical difference, each block is stitched to sister blocks. They share and make a space, creating the feminist critical quilt, offering myriad alternatives to androcentric criticism. So instead of the metaphor, for example, of the well-wrought urn in which each element reinforces the value of the single artifact, feminist criticism offers us a critical quilt of plurality, strong and varied, pieced in community. (1989, p.180)

Elaine Showalter quotes Rachel Blau DuPlessis on women's writing and quilting: 10

a pure woman's writing would be "nonhierarchic ... breaking hierarchical structures, making an even display of elements over the surface with no

10 In her article "Piecing and Writing" Elaine Showalter asks "whether the strongly marked American women's tradition of piecing, patchwork and quilting has consequences for the structures, genres, themes, and meanings of American women's writing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (1986, p. 223). My answer is yes.
climactic place or moment, having the materials organized into many centres." In the "verbal quilt" of the feminist text, there is "no subordination, no rank." (1986, pp. 226-7)

These elucidations of the metaphor of quilting are useful to me as I think about how I make meanings in this work. Each of the narratives make a number of points about how the life of the narrator has been affected by her reading of a novel. In my commentaries in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I offer analogies, links to philosophical and critical concepts, and glosses, with the aim of showing how I think the narratives may be understood. Like Cheryl Torsney, I see the key ideas of this dissertation as a broad overall pattern like a pieced quilt in which each block is stitched to a sister block. Like hers, my quilt offers many voices, many ideas stitched together, but unlike Torsney's use of the metaphor in relation to feminist literary criticism, where each block offers "[m]any alternatives to androcentric criticism," in my quilt each block is related to every other block in colour and design. There are important variations, but the quilt is unified as a whole by repetitions, complementaries, and a broad overall pattern. And like the "verbal quilt" described by DuPlessis, my quilt makes "an even display of elements over the surface with no climactic place or moment, having the materials organized into many centres."

Some of these many centres which together form the overall pattern of this study are the topics which I will discuss in the next chapter: living with a novel, in this case Wuthering Heights, feminist critiques of women reading; meaning making in reading, women writing, women's autobiography, communities of women. It is to these I turn now.
Chapter 2

THE BACKGROUND AND CONTEXTS OF THE INQUIRY

There is much talk, in his [the character Wijnnobel's] world, of language as either a crystalline, immutable structure, or as order-from-chaos, a flame-like structure that holds its changing shape in the winds of its environment. Aesthetically, Gerard Wijnnobel would like to believe in the flame, in the shifting, variable, changing form. Intellectually he believes in the crystal. Intuitively, also, he believes in the crystal.


I am a spiral learner. The journey I am taking winds round and round this inquiry. At each pass I am a little different, more informed, my perspective broadened, but my path inevitably leads me past the same questions again and again. In this chapter I relate aspects of my inquiry to the larger problems of which they are a part. Each of these aspects will be looked at again as my study progresses; here the aim is to provide a view of my questions against a broad background.

**Life with *Wuthering Heights***

Let me begin with a story of reading *Wuthering Heights*, that of Jane Urquhart's character Ann in her novel *Changing Heaven* (1990). Ann is a child when she first reads *Wuthering Heights*, and her home in Toronto is being buffeted by the beginnings of a hurricane.¹

Ann no longer cares about [her toy] bears in whose adventures she was deeply involved just three months ago..... Now what she cares about is a book, its pages

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¹ This fictional hurricane is very similar to Hurricane Hazel which devastated areas in and around Toronto in 1954.
and the landscapes created by them. She cares about the androgynous child couple, separation, an early death. She cares about millstone grit walls and casements, rifled tombs and obsessions.

The wind in her own yard is beginning to disengage branches from a variety of trees. Downstairs the radio speaks the word "hurricane." By the next morning ravines will have become lakes, cars will have been crushed by maples, electric cables filled with fiery stars will be dancing on the corners of most of Toronto's city streets, and Ann's school will be closed. But she will not care about a natural disaster too close to home to be significant. Ann is storm-driven instead by the distant winds of Wuthering Heights.

....While Catherine stands all night long, desperate in the rain looking for the vanished Heathcliff and allowing the weather to infect her with her first bout of dementia, a bridge on the outskirts of Ann's Canadian city sighs and slips quietly into the embrace of a swollen river. Six houses full of children who have never read Wuthering Heights follow the bridge's example....The next morning all schools are closed. Catherine and Heathcliff have reached adulthood. Ann can read all day. (pp. 18-19)

This account is full of resonances for me, for while I did not read Wuthering Heights until I was a student in university (CN, I, 15), I too, as a child and as an adult, read with a similar absorption, a similar oblivion of the actual world around me. For me too, the characters of fiction have always carried me away into their world. The fusion of fictional
and actual worlds as Ann reads, the play of the wind in both, which Urquhart suggests by the antiphonal descriptions of the storms in *Wuthering Heights* and in Toronto, announce also a central theme of this inquiry, how are these two worlds intertwined exactly? and how do they affect each other?

I am also like Ann, who becomes a Brontë scholar and who spends time in Haworth, in that the Brontës have been an important part of my life. As I recount in my narrative, I wrote my Master's thesis in English literature on Emily Brontë's poetry (CN, 2, 20 ff.) and I have visited Haworth twice so far. It seems I also share an impulse with her author Jane Urquhart, for although I had not read *Changing Heaven* when I wrote my narrative for this inquiry, I tell in it of an imaginary encounter with Emily Brontë on the moors (CN, 18. 16 ff.). Emily, as a ghost, or at least a posthumous figure, is an important character in *Changing Heaven*.

Reading *Wuthering Heights* for the first time as an adult made my experience of the novel different from the child Ann's in one respect. I explain this in my narrative about my life with the novel:

*I was 21, in my final year of a four year Honours English program, well before the current women's movement and the feminist critique of the English literary canon. All of us then, professors and students alike, accepted without remark the fact that almost all the literature and literary criticism we read was written by men. The very few texts by women in the canon I had read up to that time — the Countess of Winchelsea, the Duchess of Newcastle, Ann Bradstreet — did not prepare me for the four great women novelists of the nineteenth century, Jane*
Austen, George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, and Emily Brontë.²

Today the question of a woman's text, a woman's language, is part of the literary and epistemological conversation. It was not in 1955, yet my experience of these texts, and of Wuthering Heights in particular, was different from that of great novels written by men, novels which I still treasure as landmarks in my education. In those days, the time of my first degree in English literature, I had no conceptual framework for making distinctions between my experience of male and female texts, but at an unspoken level I felt myself more at home, my understandings and longings more fully articulated, my thinking and feeling self more in tune, with the narrative voice in these women's novels than I did with that of the great novels by men I was reading. This difference is part of my inquiry.

(CN, 1, 13-2, 13)

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² In A Room of One's Own, Virginia Woolf signals at once the revolutionary character of this development of women's writing and the continuity of the great nineteenth century women novelists with their forebears in the previous century. She writes: "towards the end of the eighteenth century a change came about which, if I were re-writing history, I should describe more fully and think of greater importance than the Crusades or the War of the Roses. The middle-class woman began to write. For if Pride and Prejudice matters, and Middlemarch and Villette and Wuthering Heights matter, then it matters far more than I can prove in an hour's discourse, that women generally, and not merely the lonely aristocrat shut up in her country house among her folios and her flatterers, took to writing. Without those forerunners, Jane Austen and the Brontë's and George Eliot could no more have written than Shakespeare could have written without Marlowe, or Marlowe without Chaucer, or Chaucer without those forgotten poets who paved the ways and tamed the natural savagery of the tongue" (pp. 62-63). Woolf's recognition of the importance of this development is echoed by many others. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, "Tradition and the Female Talent" in Nancy K. Miller (Ed.), The Poetics of Gender (p.186) and Patricia Yaeger, Honey-Mad Women (p. 181), for example, speak in exactly the same terms.
This sense of difference between the experiences of reading a woman's and a man's text, is difficult to explain theoretically. Nonetheless it is one of the questions I examine in this study, and to which I now turn.

Women reading: feminist critiques

In *The World, the Text and The Critic*, Edward Said writes:

Words and texts are so much of the world that their effectiveness, in some cases even their use, are matters having to do with ownership, authority, power, and the imposition of force. A formative moment in Stephen Dedalus's rebellious consciousness occurs as he converses with the English Dean of Studies:

What is that beauty which the artist struggles to express from lumps of earth, said Stephen coldly. The little word seemed to have turned a rapier point of his sensitiveness against this courteous and vigilant foe. He felt with a smart of dejection that the man to whom he was speaking was a countryman of Ben Jonson. He thought: -- the language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words *home*, *Christ*, *ale*, *master*, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always for me be an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language.
Joyce's work is a recapitulation of those political and racial separations, exclusions, prohibitions instituted ethnocentrically by the ascendant European culture throughout the nineteenth century. The situation of discourse, Stephen Dedalus knows, hardly puts equals face to face. Rather, discourse often puts one interlocutor above another.... (p. 48)

These passages, Edward Said's, and that of James Joyce which he cites, are full of meaning for me. Explaining why seems as good a way as any to begin unpacking the complexities of my relationships with male and female authored texts. Stephen Dedalus, the central figure of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is, like Joyce himself, a Dubliner at a time when Ireland was even more than today dominated culturally and politically by England. Yet Joyce wrote in English, not Irish Gaelic, and is recognized as a giant, not only of English but of European modern literature. His works evoke recognition and response from peoples of many places and cultures. Joyce's complaint (through the mouth of his character Stephen) that "His language [English] will always be for me an acquired speech" speaks for me as a woman of how I feel so often in the face of male-dominated discourses. I, too, "have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language." James Joyce, marginalized as an Irishman, speaks eloquently for me, marginalized as a woman. One of the things our situations have in common with each other and with other marginalized groups, such as writers in former British colonies who choose to write in English, is that we all sense that the English language is inextricably linked to power relations which act to separate, exclude, and prohibit us while they situate others in positions of dominance.
Joyce, as a man, is part of the male-dominated culture which excludes me as a woman. Yet, as Joyce can complain so forcefully and so eloquently in English that English is not his language, so he can write, as a man, most tellingly of my alienation as a woman from male-dominated culture. That this can be so is an indication of the convolutions of the alienation we feel which is not the less sharp for being complex and multidimensional. Exploring some of the dimensions of the problem is part of my project.3

In "Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading" (1986) Patrocinio P. Schweickart summarizes and explores some of the ways which have been articulated in recent years in which women in the United States, Canada, Britain, and other English-speaking countries have felt themselves alienated from the dominant literary culture. More recently, as we shall see, readers have articulated further aspects of the situation, but Schweickart's comments are an important analysis. The first, and perhaps most obvious, way is the androcentric nature of the literary canon. Works by women are now an important part of the curriculum in literature classes, but for a long time, certainly in my years as a student of literature, the majority of books were the works of male authors. They not only wrote from a male point of view but often assumed the male point of view in the reader. Schweickart quotes Elaine Showalter: "by the end of her freshman

Edward W. Said's positionality adds yet another layer of complexity. He was born in Jerusalem, Palestine, but he and his family were dispossessed in 1948 and, after a period in Cairo, moved to the United States where Said was educated at Princeton and Harvard. He is Parr Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. As a major literary and cultural critic writing in English from within the West, Said writes movingly of the West's misunderstanding of his Islamic and Middle Eastern background and of the troubling legacy of colonialism for both the colonized and the colonizers. Orientalism (1978); The question of Palestine (1979); Covering Islam: How the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world (1981); Blaming the victims: Spurious scholarship and the Palestinian question (1988); Culture and imperialism (1993).
year, a woman student...would be learning, in fact, how to think like a man. And so she would go on, increasingly, with male professors to guide her" (Showalter, 1971, 855).

When I reread Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in conjunction with Chinua Achebe's essay "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,*" as part of my work for Roger Simon's course at OISE, "Language, Power and Possibility" (1991), I found Achebe's argument persuasive. Achebe argues that this text, so long read as a great classic of literature, is in fact a manifestation of "the need...in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of grace will be manifest" (p.2). One example of the Eurocentric racism of this text cited by Achebe, is Conrad's two contrasting portraits of women, Kurtz's "intended" waiting for him in Brussels, and his black mistress in Africa. The black woman is described as a magnificent savage, the white woman as a passive sufferer. Achebe complains that Conrad privileges the white woman by the "bestowal of human expression on the one and the withholding of it from the other" (p.6).

I did not disagree with Achebe's charge of racism, but I did point out his failure to comment on the sexism of Conrad's text, which I saw as analogous to its racism. Not only are both these women in the text portrayed in well-worn stereotypes, but Conrad's narrator Marlow is sexist. Speaking in relation to the efforts of his aunt whose help got him the job which took him to Africa, and whose counterpart in Conrad's own life was a novelist, Marlow comments at large to his listeners, "It's queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own, and there has never been anything like it and never can be. It is too beautiful altogether, and if they were to set it up it would go to pieces
before the first sunset. Some confounded fact we men have been living contentedly with ever since the day of creation would start up and knock the whole thing over" (p. 504).

It is true that both Marlow's aunt and Kurtz's intended speak about the colonization of Africa in terms which ignore the ugly truths which Conrad reveals in *Heart of Darkness*, but Marlow generalizes from one woman and her views to "women." Marlow addresses his male listeners about women and their view of the world in a way which defines "truth" as perceptible by men and not by women. Characterizing the world as perceived by women as "beautiful" does not make it a better or higher view, as Marlow explicitly defines it as unworkable because of its ignorance of "the facts." Of course we cannot assume that Marlow's voice in the novel is the novelist Conrad's voice. Marlow is a fictional character. It is not enough to say that he appears as the storyteller in much of Conrad's fiction, and that his history, adventures, and opinions so often parallel Conrad's own. The point here is that the sexism of his comment is in no way disowned by Conrad as the creator of the fiction as a whole, but indeed is embedded in the narrative, in the same way as its racism.

Some years have passed since I wrote these words about *Heart of Darkness*. I have always regarded it as a great work by a writer who has been an important influence in my life (I read most of Conrad's works in a graduate course in English literature), but I realize now that, while I do not disown them entirely, my remarks leave out considerations which need to be acknowledged. I do not want to discuss here the metaphorical dimensions of the work, i.e. its interpretations as a journey into the depths of the human psyche (Guerard, 1958; Trilling, 1965; Crews, 1975), but to look specifically at
the charges of racism and sexism which have been made against it. 4

Patrick Brantlinger's article "Heart of Darkness: Anti-imperialism, racism or impressionism?" (1996) reviews the issues raised in his title and puts them in the contexts of Conrad's life and the period in which he wrote. He points, with convincing detail, to the many instances of anti-imperialism in the work, but he also writes of its ambiguity:

At what point is it safe to assume that Conrad/Marlow express a single point of view? And even supposing that Marlow speaks directly for Conrad, does Conrad/Marlow agree with the values expressed by the primary narrator? Whatever the answers, Heart of Darkness, I believe, offers a powerful critique of at least certain manifestations of imperialism and racism, at the same time that it presents that critique in ways that can only be characterized as both imperialist and racist. (p. 279)

Conrad knew that his story was ambiguous: he stresses that ambiguity at every opportunity, so that labeling it "anti-imperialist" is as unsatisfactory as condemning it for being "racist." (p.286)

Chinua Achebe called Conrad a "bloody racist" in his article. It seems too much in view of the anti-imperialism of Heart of Darkness. As Brantlinger points out "the fact that there are almost no other works of British fiction written before World War I that are critical of and hundreds of Conrad's achievement" (p. 296).

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4 See Nina Pelikan Strauss (1987), "For a woman reader" to "identify with Marlow" is to "court self-degradation" (p.130), in "The exclusion of the Intended from secret sharing in Conrad's Heart of Darkness." See also Bette London (1989) who writes that "gender and race" are "interlocking systems," not only in Conrad's novel but also in the patriarchal ideology in which it is grounded, in "Reading race and gender in Conrad's dark continent."
Yet I do not think we can dismiss completely Achebe's charge of racism in *Heart of Darkness*. Wayne Booth tells a story in the opening pages of *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* which may shed light on this question. It also makes a claim which is key to my inquiry. Booth writes:

Twenty-five years ago at The University of Chicago, a minor scandal shocked the members of the humanities teaching staff as they discussed the texts to be assigned to the next batch of entering students. *Huckleberry Finn* had been on the list for many years, and the general assumption was that it would be on the list once again. But suddenly the one black member of the staff, Paul Moses, an assistant professor of art committed what in that context seemed an outrage: an overt, serious, uncompromising act of ethical criticism. As his story was reported in corridors and over coffee in the lounges it went something like this:

It's hard for me to say this, but I have to say it anyway. I simply can't teach *Huckleberry Finn* again. The way Mark Twain portrays him is so offensive to me that I get angry in class, and I can't get all those liberal white kids to understand why I am angry. What's more, I don't think it's right to subject students, black or white, to the many distorted views of race on which that book is based. No, it's not the word "nigger" I'm objecting to, it's the whole range of assumptions about slavery and its consequences, and about how whites should deal with liberated slaves, and how liberated slaves should behave or will behave toward whites, good ones and bad ones. That book is just bad education, and the fact that it's so cleverly written makes it even more troublesome to me.
All of his colleagues were offended: obviously Moses was violating academic norms of objectivity. For many of us, this was the first experience with anyone inside the academy who considered a literary work so dangerous that it should not have been assigned to students. We had assumed that only "outsiders" -- those enemies of culture, the censors -- talked that way about art. I can remember lamenting the shoddy education that had left poor Paul Moses unable to recognize a great classic when he met one. Had he not even noticed that Jim is of all the characters closest to the moral center? Moses obviously could neither read properly nor think properly about what questions might be relevant to judging a novel's worth. (1988, p.3)

Booth dedicated his book to Paul Moses and wrote it to explore the issues he raised and "as an effort to discover why that still widespread response to Paul Moses's sort of complaint will not do" (p. 4). I think the idea that a novel can be widely acknowledged as great, such as Huckleberry Finn and such as Heart of Darkness, and yet in some way deserve the charge of racism is a measure both of the complexity of the issue and the necessity for readers to keep in mind as many aspects of this complexity as possible.

In relation to androcentrism in literature, I think it is not only, nor even mainly, specific instances of sexism which affect women readers, but rather, in Paul Moses's words "the whole range of assumptions" about women that we find there. I still think Marlow's comments about women and their view of the world in Heart Of Darkness are sexist. They are an instance of the androcentric bias of much of what we were reading in my undergraduate years at Queen's. We had almost no way of talking about it, but we were
learning how to be women in ways defined by and for men. Schweickart comments on this point:

Androcentric literature is all the more efficient as an instrument of sexual politics because it does not allow the woman reader to seek refuge in her difference. Instead, it draws her into a process that uses her against herself. It solicits her complicity in the elevation of female difference into otherness without reciprocity. To be sure misogyny is abundant in the literary canon...

[but] androcentricity is a sufficient condition for the process of immasculcation. 5

(1986, p.42)

The women in this study are all in their middle years, and all have learned to read through male eyes. Part of their story is how they are learning, in the words of Margaret Laurence, "to see with [their] own particular eyes" (Laurence, 1976). Each one comments on this process in her narrative and it is a major theme in this dissertation.

In recent years feminists have shifted their emphasis from the critique of male texts to the study of women's writing. As Patrocinio Schweickart notes:

An androcentric canon generates androcentric interpretive strategies, which in turn favor the canonization of androcentric texts and the marginalization of gynocentric ones. To break this circle, feminist critics must fight on two fronts: for the revision of the canon to include a significant body of works by women, and for the development of the reading strategies consonant with the concerns, experiences, and formal devices that constitute these texts. (1986, 45)

5 The word "immasculcation", meaning the process of making masculine, is to be distinguished from emasculation, the deprivation of masculinity, vigour, castration.
Schweickart discusses an essay by Adrienne Rich, "Vesuvius at Home: The Power of Emily Dickinson" in *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence* (1979), as an example of gynocriticism, the study of female texts. She concludes her analysis:

If feminist readings of male texts are motivated by the need to disrupt the process of immasculination, feminist readings of female texts are motivated by the need "to connect," to recuperate, or to formulate -- they come to the same thing -- the context, the tradition, that would link women writers to one another, to women readers and critics, and to the larger community of women.

(1986, p. 48)

The act of meaning making in reading

The questions posed by feminist models of reading, of course, are embedded in the larger issues of reading theory itself. This is a vexed and complex issue, but identifying key points as they relate to my inquiry will help me define and situate my questions in the larger ones of which they are a part, and help me define some aspects of how it is that "my soul frets in the shadow of his language."

Jerome Bruner sets the issues in a broad perspective in *Acts of Meaning* (1990), a salutary place to begin. Here he offers a critique of the Cognitive Revolution in psychology, and explores what he calls "folk psychology" and its narrative component and how people "organize their views of themselves, of others, and the world in which they live" (p. 137). Bruner begins by decrying the Cognitive Revolution in psychology for abandoning "meaning making" as its central concern (p. 137), then turns to an exploration of the role of cultural psychology in that meaning making. Bruner is convinced that the
central concept of a human psychology is meaning and the processes and transactions involved in the construction of meanings. He explains:

This conviction is based upon two connected arguments. The first is that to understand man [sic] you must understand how his experiences and his acts are shaped by his intentional states, and the second is that the form of these intentional states is realized only through participation in the symbolic systems of the culture. Indeed, the very shape of our lives -- the rough and perpetually changing draft of our autobiography that we carry in our minds -- is understandable to ourselves and to others only by virtue of those cultural systems of interpretation. But culture is also constitutive of mind. By virtue of this actualization in culture, meaning achieves a form that is public and communal rather than private and autistic. (p. 33)

My inquiry explores one way in which "the very shape of our lives ... is understandable to ourselves and others only by virtue of cultural systems of interpretation." By placing our lives next to our readings of one type of cultural artifact -- novels -- we three women find meanings for ourselves and for others. These meanings are constituted in what Bruner calls "folk psychology." Bruner explains that the term "folk psychology" was coined in derision by the new cognitive scientists for its hospitality toward such institutional states as beliefs, desires, and meanings (p. 36). Bruner, himself, on the other hand, uses the term with respect, noting that "all cultures have as a powerful

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6 See my chapter 3 for a definition of the term intentional states or intentionality. [My note]
constitutive instrument, a system by which people organize their experience in, knowledge about, and transactions with the social world" (p. 35). Moreover, says Bruner, folk psychology is narrative in nature rather than logical or categorical. "Folk psychology is about human agents doing things on the basis of the beliefs and desires, striving for goals, meeting obstacles which they best, or which best them, all of this extended over time" (pp. 42-43). Bruner's analysis of narrative in Acts of Meaning is pertinent to this study and I will refer to it again. Here I want to note Bruner's emphasis on the reciprocal nature of private and public meanings. A person's experiences and acts are shaped by his or her intentional states, and these in turn are realized only "through participation in the symbolic systems of the culture." This is my view. Referring specifically to the negotiation of meaning in reading, both the text and the reader are parties in the generation of meaning. At each reading occasion, meaning is achieved by a transaction between the reader, whose perception is the product of his or her life history, and the text, which is an artifact of the author, with his or her own life history, and the symbol systems of the society of which they are a part.

The debate among reading theorists about the relative importance of the reader and the text as collected, for example, in Suleiman and Crosman, The Reader in the Text (1980), and Tompkins, Reader-Response Criticism (1980), and reviewed by Elizabeth Freund in The Return of the Reader (1987), make fascinating reading. The key issues raised in reader-response criticism are important for this inquiry. Neither of the extreme positions are tenable; the text can neither be viewed, as in New Criticism, as unproblematically "there", open to understandings which can be shared by all, nor is
meaning totally an artifact of the reader, bounded entirely by his or her own imagination. Not only that, but it is in theory very difficult to separate the text from the reader's experience of it. Elizabeth Freund explains this dilemma well in her discussion of Stanley Fish:

What refuses to be resolved in [Stanley] Fish's project is "the proper object of analysis." When the reader's experience is the object of analysis, the integrity of the text is threatened: when the text becomes the focus, Fish's programme reverts to a closet formalism, in which the concept of the reader is only an extension of textual constraints or authorial intention. ..... The upshot of this inconclusive portrayal of the reader's role is that author, text and reader remain locked in dubious battle for the authority of meaning. (1987, p. 103)

Crudely put, the ontological dilemma of post-Kantian literary theorizing is the following: there is no "object" out there unless we extrapolate it from our "experience" of knowing; once extrapolated, the object becomes the enabling and controlling feature of our experience of knowing. This indissoluble continuity between epistemology and ontology undermines any sharp distinction between knower and known, and produces the seamless circularity which Murray Kreiger names the "metaphysical pathos" of literary theory: "we must face the need to have some common residue we can refer to as the work, even though we know how hard it is to get around ourselves to point to it." (1987, pp.50-51)
If, in theory, it is impossible to untangle the three terms, author, text, and reader, in practice we can and do. The distinction between the meaning of a text and the significance interpreters give it may have no epistemological authority, writes Jonathan Culler, but they are always being made in practice: "we employ such distinctions all the time because our stories require them" (1982, p. 77).

Certainly the stories we three women tell in our narratives require them. If the stories of our reading produced only a circularity between the reader and the text, we could not change our lives the way we think we do under the influence of our reading of novels. The narratives show, on the contrary, that we do not merely find a mirror of ourselves in our reading, but are vitally influenced by the characters and situations, and often the implied author, in these texts. One example, which illustrates a key theme of this study, will also illustrate the importance of this distinction in practice. For Alice and Celia the question of identity and how it relates to the novel is very important, as it is also for Eleanor in a different way. On this they are not alone; the relation of identity and text, especially as it relates to women's identity, as Nancy Miller notes, has been an important topic "in this second decade of feminist criticism, in which [it] has become equally (if problematically) clear that the very conventions and categories of critical discourse within which we all operate, the acts of interpretation we perform and which come to embody us, are inextricably involved with the conventions and categories of identity itself" (1986a, p. xi).

It is worth pursuing this question in more detail. This is how Judith Kegan Gardiner, puts it in her article "On Female Identity and Writing by Women":

female identity is a process, and primary identity for women is more flexible and relational than for men.... The formulation that female identity is a process stresses the fluid and flexible aspects of women's primary identities. One reflection of this fluidity is that women's writing often does not conform to the generic prescriptions of the male canon. Recent scholars conclude that autobiographies by women tend to be less linear, unified, and chronological than men's autobiographies.... Women's novels are often called autobiographical; women's autobiographies, novelistic -- like Mary McCarthy's *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* or Maxine Hong Kingston's *Memoirs of a Woman Warrior*. Because of the continual crossing of self and other, women's writing may blur the public and private and defy completion..... Many women critics tell women readers how to read women writers; and they tell women writers how to write for women readers. The implied relationship between the self and what one reads and writes is personal and intense. (1982, pp. 184-85)

That the relationship between the self and what one reads is personal and intense is amply illustrated in the narratives written for this study by Alice, Eleanor and Celia. Alice's narrative is, among other things, the story of the transformation of her sense of identity during her intense reading of *The Diviners*. Here, in view of the problematic relationship between text and reader outlined above, it is important to clarify as much as possible the relationship between text and women's identity.
This relationship between text and identity is central to the work of reading theorist Norman Holland, who writes:

all of us, as we read, use the literary work to symbolize and finally to replicate ourselves. We work out through the text our own characteristic patterns of desire and adaptation. We interact with the work, making it part of our own psychic economy and making ourselves part of the literary work -- as we interpret it. For, always, this principle prevails; identity re-creates itself. (p. 124) ....Each reader, in effect, re-creates the work in terms of his own identity theme. (1980, p. 126)

If we were to accept this view of the matter, any notion of the text changing the identity of the reader would be nonsense. If the reader "re-creates the work in terms of his own identity theme," then the movement is all one way from reader's identity to meaning in the text. While we, in this study, recognize that we read through the lens of our own experience, it is crucial to our sense of our relationships with the novels that have most influenced our lives that we can be changed by what we read. Our stories of reading in this study are, importantly, stories of how our identities have been formed, and re-formed, by what we read. Holland's position, as Elizabeth Freund points out, fails because it rests on a faulty epistemology and ontology regarding the existence of a unitary and stable self or text. "As with the notion of 'self' Holland conveniently allows himself to forget that 'identity' is not a uniform or monolithic substance but an indeterminate sign or a verbal representation, a concept which is the product of our linguistic practices rather than their cause" (Freund, 1987, p. 127).
While the terms text, interpretation, self, and identity remain in theory as difficult to distinguish as ever, in practice they are essential to describing our experience. Intuitively we grasp the dangers of letting the circularities of theory disable our understandings of our experiences of reading. A.S. Byatt puts the situation well in her essay "Still Life/Nature Morte":

I am afraid of, and fascinated by, theories of language as a self-referring system of signs, which doesn't touch the world. I am afraid of, and resistant to, artistic stances which say we explore only our own subjectivity. I was very struck by Gabriel Josipovici's use, in *The World and the Book*, of the term 'demonic analogy' (derived from Mallarmé's 'démon de l'analogie'). He says that our discovery of correspondences is not an indication 'that we inhabit a meaningful universe' -- on the contrary 'we realize with a shock of recognition ...that what we had taken to be infinitely open and out there', was in reality 'a bounded world bearing only the shape of our own imagination'. I am also resistant to the idea that the world hits us as a series of random impressions (V. Woolf) and that memory operates in a random manner.

I wanted at least to work on the assumption that order is more interesting than the idea of the random (even if our capacity to apprehend it is limited): that accuracy of description is possible and valuable. That words denote things.

*(In Passions of the Mind, 1991, p. 11)*

This is my view in this dissertation. In the complex pattern of interactions among the writer, the text, and the reader which is created and recreated in each act of reading, all
three members of the triad are essential to the meanings made. My discussion of Alice's reading of *The Diviners* in chapter 3 explores in detail some of these interactions and shows, as the emphasis shifts and plays, now from text to reader, now from writer to reader, now from text to writer, how the meanings are generated.

My discussion also considers the gender of the reader which is a central concern of feminist theories of reading. This concern, as noted, includes the charge of immasculination by androcentric texts, and a deliberate "reading the text as it was not meant to be read, in fact reading it against itself" (Schweickart, p.30), as, following Achebe, I have attempted to read *Heart of Darkness*. These theories also problematize Bruner's notion that "the very shape of our lives -- the rough and perpetually changing draft of our autobiography that we carry in our minds -- is understandable to ourselves and to others only by virtue of cultural systems of interpretation." For, as we know, cultural systems of interpretation have often acted to silence and oppress women. I will address this issue, as well as the possibly troubling consequences of the idea that our identities are "the product of our linguistic practices rather than their cause" (Freund, 1987, p. 127). Our narratives attest to both oppressive and liberatory effects of the linguistic practices we have experienced. Which linguistic practices are emancipatory to us as women, and which suppress and subvert our identities? For this inquiry it is specifically literature as a linguistic practice with which we are concerned. In her discussion of how ideology constructs people as subjects, Catherine Belsey (1980) notes that literature

as one of the most persuasive uses of language may have an important influence on the ways in which people grasp themselves and their relation
to the real relations in which they live. The interpellation\(^7\) of the reader

in the literary text could be argued to have a role in reinforcing the concepts

of the world and of subjectivity which ensure that people ‘work by themselves’

in the social formation. (pp. 66-67)

Belsey argues that, far from being fixed, the subject under the influence of

contradictory discourses is "perpetually in the process of construction" (p. 65). For instance, she writes:

Women, as a group in our society, are both produced and inhibited by

contradictory discourses. Very broadly, they participate both in the liberal

humanist discourse of freedom, self-determination and rationality and at the

same time in the specifically feminine discourse offered by society of submission,

relative inadequacy, and irrational intuition. The attempt to locate a single and

coherent subject-position within these contradictory discourses, ...can create

intolerable pressures. One way to respond ...is to become 'sick' -- more women

than men are treated for mental illness. Another is to seek a resolution of the

contradictions in the discourses of feminism. (pp. 65-66)

The influence of literature on the ways women grasp who they are in their many

variations within and without, and on the choices they make in their lives is, of course, the

key question of this inquiry. Belsey's formulation of the question is helpful in pointing out

\(^7\) Belsey explains the term interpellation as follows: "Ideology suppresses the role of

language in the construction of the subject. As a result, people 'recognize' (misrecognize) themselves in the ways in which ideology 'interpellates' them, or in other words, addresses them as subjects, calls them by their names, and in turn 'recognizes' their autonomy. As a result, they 'work by themselves' (Althusser, 1971, p. 169), they willingly adopt the subject-positions necessary to their participation in the social formation" (1980, p. 61).
both the constraints and the emancipatory possibilities of this influence. My commentary on Alice's narrative addresses the issues in the terms used by Belsey and in fact illustrates in detail how the discourses of feminism worked to resolve some of the tensions produced for Alice's subjectivity by the contradictory discourses of her time. They are discussed also in the commentaries I make on the narratives of Eleanor and Celia as they apply to the specificities of each of our stories. In the following sections I want to situate these issues in the contexts of women reading, women writing, and women's autobiography.

Women reading: where are we in the postmodern moment?

In her discussion of Adrienne Rich's reading of Emily Dickinson, Schweickart spoke of a need "to recuperate ... the context, the tradition, that would link women writers to one another, to women readers and critics, and to the larger community of women" (p. 48). This longing for a community, for a shared identity in contradistinction to the androcentricism of the literary canon, of the academy, and of society itself is felt by many women. The hope is seductive, but though problematic in several different ways, I believe not entirely illusory.

Perhaps the best known, and most effective, practice of the early days of the current women's movement in the West was consciousness raising. Women all over North America congregated in small groups and told stories of their experience as workers, as wives, as mothers, as women. The commonalities they found in these stories of experience led them to begin a critique of the androcentricity of the structures and epistemologies of their society and of the knowledge claims on which it was based which continues to be
elaborated today. These pioneers developed at once both the point of view and a primary tool of feminist discourse. These early insights elaborated the ways in which existing world views and scholarship, thought to be universal and value free, were in fact constructed from male experience and male points of view and acted to silence the voices and experiences of women.

This early practice, however, by ignoring other axes of difference, such as class, race, and sexual preference, replicated the false universalizing tendency which it had criticized in the dominant androcentric culture. Women of colour, lesbians, and working class women claimed their own positions, and refused to be subsumed in a feminism which they saw as dominated by white middle-class heterosexual women. The early sense of community among women was fractured, and along with it the sense of an identity as "woman" in male-dominated societies. This identity was recognized as illusory in the face of the differences among groups of women, to partake in fact of an essentialism which was an aspect of the false universalizing of the dominant humanist paradigm (Eisenstein, 1983; hooks, 1981; Martin, 1994).

This development within feminism is congruent in some ways with poststructuralist theories. Poststructuralism argues that "the self-contained, authentic subject conceived by humanism to be discoverable below a veneer of cultural and ideological overlay is in reality a construct of that very humanist discourse....[rather, it is argued] we are constructs -- that is, our experience of our very subjectivity is a construct mediated by and/or grounded on a social discourse beyond -- way beyond -- individual control" (Alcoff, 1988, pp.415-16).
Feminism and poststructuralist theory agree in opposing the false universality of androcentric humanism, and in recognizing the power of language in the social construction of subjectivity, but as Jane Flax notes, the abandonment of belief in a stable coherent self, and in reason which can provide an objective and reliable foundation for knowledge is problematic for women and other oppressed groups. "If there is no objective basis for distinguishing between true and false beliefs, then it seems that power alone will determine the outcome of competing truth claims. This is a frightening prospect to those who lack (or are oppressed by) the power of others" (1990, p.42). 

In her comments on Linda Alcoff's essay, cited above, "Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory" (1988), Teresa de Lauretis points out that in the dialectics Alcoff develops, both the culturalist and the poststructuralist positions, develop internal contractions. Cultural feminism, she writes, may strengthen women, but insofar as it reinforces the essentialist explanations of those attributes that are part of the traditional notion of womanhood, it may foster another form of sexist oppression. On the other hand, some forms of poststructuralism annihilate the category "woman" itself. De Lauretis summarizes Alcoff:

if the poststructuralist critique of the unified, authentic subject of humanism is more than compatible with the feminist project to "deconstruct and de-essentialize" woman... its absolute rejection of gender and its negation of biological determinism in favour of a cultural-discursive determinism result, as

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8 See below in this chapter for a look at some of Martha Nussbaum's thoughts on objectivity and relativism and how to judge competing truth claims in "Sophistry About Conventions" in Love’s Knowledge (1990).
concerns women, in a form of nominalism. If "woman" is a fiction...and there are no women as such, then the very issue of women's oppression would appear to be obsolete and feminism itself would have no reason to exist (which, it may be noted, is a corollary of poststructuralism and the stated position of those who call themselves "post-feminists"). (1989, p.11)

This is the point where this line of argument succeeds in destroying the category woman itself. Is this really the end of the story? I think not. (De Lauretis doesn't either; she turns to a consideration of feminist reading practices in Italy which I discuss below.) If feminism has rightly relinquished the idea of a universal "essential" womanhood, in favour of an identity which includes a multiple sense of selves among women and even of selves within an individual woman, there is also a recognition of a multiplicity of discourses with which they interact. It is in this multiplicity that the hope for freedom lies. Looking at one form of this interaction, reading, Chris Weedon comments, "at any particular historical moment...there is a finite number of discourses in circulation, discourses which are in competition for meaning. It is the conflict between these discourses which creates the possibility of new ways of thinking and new forms of subjectivity" (1987, p.139).

On the other hand, we can adopt too quickly the position that the category "woman" can have no meaning in philosophical discourse. In her article "Methodological Essentialism, False Difference, and Other Dangerous Traps" (1994), Jane Roland Martin acknowledges "the terrible mistake we [white academic feminists] made in assuming that all the individuals in the world called 'women' were exactly like us," but she warns of the dangers of the opposite position:
Paradoxically, though, our acts of unmasking the differences among women and reveling in them became occasions for imposing a false unity on our research. Condemning essence talk in connection with our bodies and ourselves, we came dangerously close to adopting it in relation to our methodologies. In our determination to honor diversity among women, we told one another to restrict our ambitions, limit our sights, beat a retreat from certain topics, refrain from using a rather long list of categories or concepts, and eschew generalization. I can think of no better prescription for the stunting of a field of inquiry......In other words, in trying to avoid the pitfall of false unity, we walked straight into the trap of false difference. (p. 631)

Martin provides a clear analysis of the many philosophical and methodological pitfalls of false difference, and warns that "the a priori assumption that things that go by the same name share all or even some properties is mistaken. Yet it is equally a mistake to ban categories a priori -- to deprive ourselves, in advance of inquiry, to access to conceptual frameworks and ideas that might be fruitful" (p. 638). Martin advocates a friendly approach to theories which may be incomplete, allowing time for refinement and elaboration. She condemns the treatment by many academics of Carol Gilligan's discoveries as published in *In a Different Voice* (Gilligan, 1982). Instead of pointing out that her samples were too limited to warrant her conclusions, they convicted her of essentialism and false unity (p. 652). Gilligan, however, did not abandon her research program, and produced some very interesting results. As Martin points out, "expanding her database, and developing an ever more sensitive methodology, she continued to ask the
kinds of questions and to use the categories that exercised so many feminist theorists” (p. 653).

In this study I adopt Martin’s attitude of friendliness to theories and categories which may be incomplete. As much as possible, I want to be aware of their complexities, but I do not wish to foreclose inquiry into such ideas as women’s reading, women’s writing, a woman’s text. I want to remain open to questions and categories which may not yet be fully explored. It is interesting to compare comments on race made by Toni Morrison with ideas of women’s reading and women’s language.

Now that Afro-American artistic presence has been "discovered" actually to exist, now that serious scholarship has moved from silencing the witnesses and erasing their meaningful place in and contribution to American culture, it is no longer acceptable merely to imagine us and imagine for us. We have always been imagining ourselves. We are not Isak Dinesen’s "aspects of nature," nor Conrad's unspeaking. We are the subjects of our own narrative, witnesses to and participants in our own experience, and, in no way coincidentally, in the experience of those with whom we have come in contact. We are not, in fact, "other." We are choices. And to read imaginative literature by and about us is to choose to examine centers of the self, and to have the opportunity to compare these centers with the "raceless" one with which we are, all of us, most familiar. (1989, pp. 8-9)

Without implying a false unity between Morrison’s experience and ours in this study, I think her words eloquently describe our experience as women readers. We too declare
that "to read imaginative literature by and about us is to choose to examine centers of the self." In doing so we do not underestimate, indeed we give full attention to, the complications of the formation of subjectivity by discourse.9

What are, in this climate, the possibilities for a feminist way of reading? In "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism," Susan Bordo (1990) offers both a critique of postmodernism and a way of constructing the concept "women" which avoids both the trap of false unity on the one hand and the total annihilation of the concept itself on the other. She does this by acknowledging the postmodern deconstruction of the ideal of disembodied knowledge as "a mystification and an impossibility." "There is no Archimedean viewpoint," she writes, "rather, history and culture are texts, admitting an endless proliferation of readings" (p. 142). But, she argues,

the philosopher's fantasy of transcendence has not been abandoned. The historical specifics of the modernist, Cartesian version have simply been replaced with a new postmodern configuration of detachment, a new imagination of disembodiment: a dream of being everywhere. (p. 143)

To deny the unity and stability of identity is one thing. The epistemological fantasy of becoming multiplicity -- the dream of limitless multiple embodiments, allowing one to dance from place to place and self to self -- is another. What sort of body is

In his analysis of Toni Morrison's (1989) "Unspeakable things unspoken: The Afro-American presence in American literature" from which I quote on this page, Dwight A. McBride (1993) shows that Morrison's essay "enacts a rhetorical strategy African American intellectuals often use to reclaim a racial essentialism based on experience that authorizes or legitimizes their speech in some very politically important ways" (p. 757). He does this while recognizing that, in the advent of poststructuralism, "the words race and experience are no longer assumed to be stable categories of critical discourse" (p. 756). "Speaking the unspeakable: On Toni Morrison, African American intellectuals and the uses of essentialist rhetoric."
it that is free to change its shape and location at will, that can become anyone and travel everywhere? If the body is a metaphor for our locatedness in space and time and thus for the finitude of human perception and knowledge, then the postmodern body is no body at all. (p. 145)

Donna Haraway explores the vital importance of locatedness in making knowledge claims in her influential article "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" (1988). Haraway begins by acknowledging that she and others wanted and needed a strong tool for deconstructing the historical specificity of scientific and technological constructions, "and we end up with a kind of epistemological electroshock therapy, which far from ushering us into the high stakes of the game of contesting public truths, lays us out on the table with self-induced multiple personality disorder" (p. 578). She defines "our" problem as feminists living in postmodernism as

how to have simultaneously an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing ...

our own "semiotic technologies" for making meanings, and a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a "real" world, one that can be partially shared and that is friendly to earthwide projects of finite freedom, adequate material abundance, modest meaning in suffering, and limited happiness. (p. 579)

We need the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings
and bodies that have a chance for life. (p. 580)

Haraway's suggestion is that "feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges" (p. 581), by which she means that "objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility.....only partial perspective promises objective vision..... It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see" (p. 582-3). For Haraway, situated knowledges do not fall into either of the traps of relativism or of the partial and biased views of modernist science. "Relativism," she points out, "is the perfect mirror twin of totalization in the ideologies of objectivity; both deny the stakes in location, embodiment, and partial perspective; both make it impossible to see well" (p. 584). I find Haraway's argument persuasive, and it is the position I take in this inquiry. Haraway finds a way to avoid the problems of being nowhere as in modernism and of "being everywhere" as in some formulations of postmodernism. Rather, says Haraway, "rational knowledge is a process of ongoing critical interpretation among 'fields' of interpreters and decoders.....So science becomes the paradigmatic model, not of closure, but of that which is contestable and contested" (p. 590).

In her short essay "Sophistry About Conventions" in Love's Knowledge (1990), Martha Nussbaum outlines some concepts for use when competing truth claims are contested. In this paper, first given at a conference on Philosophy of Science and Literary Theory, she takes issue with Protagorean subjectivism, which she likens to the position taken by Stanley Fish (in his paper for the same conference, Anti-Professionalism), and which she paraphrases as "there is no distinction between persuasion and force. It is all
manipulation, and the ability to manipulate can be taught" (p. 222). In an argument very similar to Susan Bordo's and Donna Haraway's, Nussbaum points out that we use two different sorts of language in relation to our beliefs and principles. On the one hand, we have the language of optionality which implies that the beliefs in question are items that we can exchange, take up, put down at will because it is advantageous to do so (p. 224). "On the other hand, we have the language of depth: there is talk of the beliefs of the community being compelling, of principles informing and shaping us" (p. 225).

Nussbaum claims that the two sorts of language do not go together. "To the extent to which it is appropriate to say of a principle or belief that it is optional for us, to that extent it is not deep in our lives. To the extent to which it is constitutive of our procedures of life and thought, to that extent it is not optional at all" (p. 225). Nussbaum thinks that among the primary jobs of philosophy is the sorting out of our beliefs and principles to see where they fall along this spectrum. She thinks that Aristotle was correct in thinking that once this painstaking task was underway, we would discover that "we get back just what the Protagorean .. want[s] to deny us, namely full-blown notions of public truth, of rational justification, of objectivity."

She shows how this works in the following example:

When we are confronted with a contradiction between two principles, we do not say, well then, since there's no uninterpreted given, it's all free play and any story has as good a claim as any other if it can be made persuasive. We try to resolve the contradiction first, of course. But if we cannot, we recall the very basic commitment we have to the Principle of Noncontradiction as necessary
for all thought and discourse. Using this, then, as a regulative principle
(refusing to assert the contradiction) we set ourselves to adjudicate between
the competing principles, asking in each case what the cost would be of giving
each up. And we opt for the one that "saves the greatest number and the most
basic," as Aristotle puts it, of our other beliefs. (p. 225)

For women, as we have seen, part of what constitutes depth, what is compelling in
the principles which inform and shape us, is our embodiment in female bodies. The women
in this study, all in middle age, write very movingly of how our knowledge has changed
and is changing as our lives go forward, and of how our sense of what our embodiment in
female bodies means and has meant in the construction of this knowledge.

Women Writing

In the passage I have noted above from A Room of One's Own, Virginia Woolf
underlined in the strongest possible terms the importance of the emergence of writing
among middle-class women of the eighteenth century. Their work was the essential
antecedent of the great novels of the nineteenth century by George Eliot, Charlotte and
Emily Brontë and Jane Austen. These novels forever changed the landscape of English
literature. In Woolf's words about George Eliot, they provided a "difference of view, a
difference of standard" (1966, p. 204). Although I think most readers assent to the fact of
this difference, its exact nature is not unproblematic and has been the subject of much
debate and analysis. (See for example, McConnell-Ginet et al, eds., 1980; Monteith, ed.
1986; Able, ed. 1982; Jacobus, ed. 1979; Miller, ed. 1986.) In an early and influential
article called "The Difference of View," Mary Jacobus (1979) examines the implications of Virginia Woolf's comment on George Eliot which provides both her opening quotation and her title. The questions she asks "call in question the very terms which constitute that difference" (p. 10).

Can women adapt traditionally male dominated modes of writing and analysis to the articulation of female oppression and desire? Or should we rather reject tools that may simply re-inscribe our marginality and deny the specificity of our experience, instead forging others of our own? (p. 14)

For some women writers the male dominance of culture and of language make it all but impossible for us to express our own experience. They point out that men and women have a different relationship to language.

Within the existing social arena the female subject does not participate in the production of the meaning which organizes her outside and gives her an inside, since she is excluded from what Foucault calls "discursive fellowships." While it is no doubt true that all subjects, male and female are structured through discourse, and are in that respect passive, men enjoy another kind of discursive association as well, which is not available to women -- an "active" or "speaking" association.

(Silverman, 1984, p. 325 , cited in Yaeger, 1988)

Some writers, such as the French feminists Hélène Cixous, Monique Wittig, and Luce Irigaray go further, claiming that their socialization as women in their cultural matrix is debilitating. In the words of Cixous, "Theory of culture, theory of society, the ensemble
of symbolic systems -- art, religion, family, language, -- everything elaborates the same system.....woman is always on the side of passivity" (Cixous, 1981, p.91). Her answer to Mary Jacobus' questions is that, no, traditional male-dominated modes of writing and analysis cannot be adapted for the expression of female subjectivity and, yes, we must reject these tools and forge others of our own.

While they celebrate the creative joy and liberatory generativity of some of the writings of Cixous and Irigaray, Mary Jacobus and Patricia Yaeger give different answers. Mary Jacobus points to the possibilities of

the transgression of literary boundaries -- moments when structures are shaken,
when language refuses to lie down meekly, or the marginal is brought into sudden focus, or intelligibility itself refused -- [which] reveal not only the conditions or possibility within which women's writing exists, but what it would be like to revolutionize them. (1979, p.16)

It is just these transgressions of literary boundaries which Patricia Yaeger explores in her book *Honey-Mad Women: Emancipatory Strategies in Women's Writing*. I find her analyses persuasive and pertinent to this study. Although her ideas as they are elaborated in her book are too long for even a quick summary here, I will quote from them as necessary to demonstrate their relevance to the key points of my argument. Yaeger touches on the theories of Bakhtin, Kristeva, Macherey, Eagleton, Jameson and Habermas in her analyses and concludes that no single theory is sufficient to account for the complex emancipatory strategies at work in women's texts (p. 31). She, successfully in my opinion,
"challenges the notion that women's lexicon has been so completely restricted by male writers, by masculine culture" (p. 29).

Yaeger examines Charlotte Brontë's bilingual heroines in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* whose use of the French language enacts "a moment in which the novel's primary language is put into process, a moment... when the writer forces her speech to break out of the old representations of the feminine and to posit something new" (p. 36). She explores other ways women writers have broken out of the old representations, such as Mary Wollstonecraft's use of dialogue with Rousseau in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, and Eudora Welty's re-writing of the dominant myths of patriarchal culture, but it is Yaeger's reading of the emancipatory possibilities of the novel which is most interesting for this study.

She describes "the nineteenth-century novel as a form with an emancipatory force: a force based on the novel's interrogatory relation to social codes and its explosive use of laughter" (p. 178). Yaeger acknowledges her indebtedness to the ideas of M.M. Bakhtin, particularly in his *The Dialogic Imagination* and *Rabelais and his World*. I will discuss some of Bakhtin's ideas in my concluding chapter because I find they have extraordinary power to reveal why the novel is both an emancipatory form and a powerful means of transformation for our lives.

In relation to women's writing, it is the novel's capacity for parody, laughter, and multivoicedness that makes it the form where the transgression of boundaries is made easier. Yaeger, who also found Virginia Woolf's comments on Eliot, Austen and the Brontës compelling, explains:
Now we can turn again to Woolf's question -- why did these nineteenth-century women write novels? -- and speculate that within the English tradition the lyric poem, for all its gorgeous attentiveness to the painful desires and limits of a culturally constructed "1," also denies its female speaker (until, let us say, the poetry of Emily Dickinson) formal access to the shifting voices, the plural perspectives, the openness to dialogue among diverse points of view that are necessarily in debate with one another in the invention of a female tradition. But the novel offers, in simple spatial terms, a place where the novelist can work with these voices over time and from a variety of angles -- not to solve them, but to problematize them, to put them into process; the novel (by virtue of its multivoicedness, its strategies of interruption, and its longwindedness) multiplies its own spaces of volatility and transformation. Thus in Wuthering Heights, Brontë's conversation with her culture is not conveyed in isolated fragments, as it is in the frame of her poem -- but projected into the voices of characters who are at war with one another -- or with the frame of the novel itself. As a place of dialogism, parody, and laughter, the novel admits a new intersection of body and text, provides another way to rupture the authoritative, the normative, the social. (p. 195)

It is this quality of the novel, then, which made the work of the great nineteenth-century women novelists such a revelation to me and to so many others of my generation. It is not only that for the first time we were reading major texts written by women, important as that was, but that these texts were novels. As Yaeger contends:
Austen, Eliot, Gaskell, and the Brontës chose the novel because it allowed them both to disrupt a dominant literary tradition and to interrogate their surroundings. As a multivoiced, multilanguaged form -- a form inviting the novelist to parody other discourses and portray a dialogic "struggle among sociolinguistic points of view" -- the novel is a genre that encourages its writers to assault the language systems of others and to admit into these language systems the disruptive ebullience of other speech and of laughter. (p. 183)

The emancipatory possibilities of the novel in relation to female subjectivities are a major theme of this study to which I will return, but now I want to discuss another form of women's writing as it relates to women's subjectivity: autobiography. When they wrote their narratives about how a novel had affected their lives, Alice, Eleanor, and Celia were of course writing parts of their autobiographies. In this review of the broad background of my study, I include some notions about autobiography as they relate to the transformative potential of life writing as well as some feminist ideas about women's autobiography.

Women's autobiography

In the humanist tradition it has been assumed that in writing an autobiography, the writer records his or her life. The life, and the self which has lived the life, are seen as more or less stable. The poststructural position puts all these terms under scrutiny, the life, the self, and the act of writing itself. These differing views of autobiography are important to my question, and I will return to them, but whatever view is taken of
autobiography, there is agreement that the writing of autobiography can be a transformative experience for the writer. Here is how the poststructuralist critic Paul de Man puts it in an influential article:

We assume that life produces the autobiography as an act produces its consequences, but can we not suggest, with equal justice, that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer does is in fact governed by the technical demands of self-portraiture and thus determined, in all its aspects, by the resources of his medium? (1979, p. 920)

A chief concern of poststructuralist critics is, of course, to examine the way an autobiography is determined by the resources of the medium. We will return to this. It seems to me that de Man here also suggests that the actual living of a life, during and after the autobiographical project, is changed by that project. Eleanor's autobiographical work M. and M. is an instance of this as will be seen in my commentary on her narrative. Certainly she is not alone in making this claim. In his review of major autobiographies of the Western tradition, another poststructuralist critic, Paul Jay, notes that, in all but his final example, Roland Barthes, the writers of the autobiographies and autobiographical novels he reviews claim that the writing was transformative, and that reforming the self was a stated aim of the work. Here is Jay on St. Augustine's Confessions:

While St. Augustine's book has been conventionally understood as the story of his life prior to the book's composition -- the story, that is of events leading up to his conversion -- it is in fact every bit as concerned with his renewal and
transformation as he writes it. From the outset, Augustine exists in his own narrative less as a subject to be remembered in language than as a subject to be transformed by language. He writes of the past in order to "heal" in the present what he calls his infirmity. One of his central purposes in writing, then, is to perform a healing kind of self-analysis. (Being in the Text, 1984, p. 23)

In his remarks on Wordsworth's The Prelude, Paul Jay comments on a similar aim, and hope:

*The Prelude* provides a unique insight into the paradoxes of literary self-representation in a period when the self was coming to be thought of less as the creation of a deity and more as the construction of humankind's own mental powers. This growing realization represents the broad philosophical context in which Wordsworth's poem was born. It sanctions both the notion that Wordsworth's own poetic language can represent being and the hope that in the very activity of representing that being he can transform it. In his pursuit of such a project we can trace a series of ideas crucial to the autobiographical efforts of those who followed him: that the writer's past contains a power to liberate him from a debilitating spiritual and literary condition; that a chronological, biographical narrative self-analysis can help perform such a liberation; and that the power of his own creative language, can, by transforming the past with which it is concerned, help transform the autobiographical protagonist who is its subject. (1984, p. 33-34)

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Jay goes on, as promised, to show that the other writers he includes in his study, James Joyce, Marcel Proust, Henry Adams, all saw their projects as personally transformative. In her claim that "in giving my story form, I gave myself form," (M. and M., p. 31) Eleanor places herself in the tradition, and Alice and Celia make similar, if less explicit, claims. Jay as poststructuralist, of course, does not leave the matter there. Both the lineage and the epistemological development he traces leads to Roland Barthes, whose autobiographical work *Roland Barthes* finds its form in fragments, reflecting Barthes's view of the nature of the self, that it is "shattered, scattered, decentred, and -- at least in a text -- always a 'fiction'" (Jay, p. 176). "Barthes's *Barthes* does not seek 'a central core' for itself or for the self who is writing it. Rather, like Valéry's vast *Cahiers*, it seeks for the self a way to *remain* dispersed by diffracting it into textual fragments" (Jay, p. 178).

Jay acknowledges that, while Barthes's and Valéry's representations of the self in the text is "in part, the repetition of an ongoing pre-occupation that surfaces in Wordsworth, Carlyle, Proust, and Adams" (p. 178), it is also clear that in their works, "we confront both epistemological and literary disjunctions that have their roots in a particular historical moment" (p. 179). As we have seen, this moment -- the poststructural and/or postmodern moment -- in which the humanist ideal of a stable unified self has been brought into question, can be problematic for women. If women, traditionally, have been socialized to put themselves always at the service of others, to think of themselves, in fact, as "selfless", it is more than ironic that, just as they are beginning to find "selves", the very concept of the autonomous "self" should be called into question.11 Fortunately feminist

11 Cf. Biddy Martin, "[This] also constitute[s] a certain danger given the institutional privileges enjoyed by those who can afford to disavow 'identity' and its 'limits' over against those for whom such disavowals reproduce their invisibility" (1988, p. 78).
theorists of female autobiography have not been content to leave the matter entirely in the hands of male theorists.

It is not only the canon of autobiography which they question (which as elucidated by Jay, for one, is entirely made from the writing of men)\textsuperscript{12} but the poetics of autobiography itself. Susan Stanford Friedman, for instance, notes that Georges Gusdorf, whom she says is often identified as the dean of autobiographical studies, identifies autobiography as "endemically Western and individualistic" (Friedman, 1988, p. 35). This is antithetical to women's sense of self, she writes:

The very sense of identification, interdependence, and community [Friedman's italics] that Gusdorf dismisses from autobiographical selves are key elements in the development of a woman's identity, according to theorists like Rowbotham and Chodorow. Their models of women's selfhood highlight the unconscious masculine bias in Gusdorf's and other individualistic paradigms. The emphasis on individualism as the necessary pre-condition for autobiography is thus a reflection of privilege, one that excludes from the canons of autobiography those writers who have been denied by history the illusion of individualism. (pp. 38, 39) [Further,] In taking the power of words, of representation into their own hands, women project onto history an identity that is not purely individualistic. Nor is it purely collective. Instead, this new identity merges the shared and the unique..... the self constructed in women's autobiographical writing is often based in, but not

\textsuperscript{12} Theorists agree that until recently there was little study of women's autobiography. See Estelle Jelinek's review in her "Introduction: Women's Autobiography and the Male Tradition" (1980) which shows the near absence of studies of women's autobiographies up to and through the 1970s (pp. 2-3).
limited to, a group consciousness -- an awareness of the meaning of the cultural
category WOMAN for the patterns of women's individual destiny.... Writing the
self shatters the cultural hall of mirrors and breaks the silence imposed by
male speech. (pp. 40-41)

Friedman's formulations are aptly illustrated by Eleanor's book-length
autobiographical narrative *M. and M.* She undertook the work not only as a way of
redefining herself, but as a way of helping other abused women. As she tells in her
narrative, Eleanor answered calls on the Assaulted Women's Helpline as a volunteer. In
*M. and M.* she writes:

Two calls in particular... made me think that someone should write a book
that told real stories of real women recovering from abuse.....I was unable to
maintain separation and detachment in the face of these two calls. They
haunted me. In thinking about them and what to do about them, I became
my sisters' keeper not just on my shift as a volunteer counsellor but in my other
mode of being as a thinker and writer. (*M. and M.* pp. 26-27)

This is very similar to the importance the presence and support of a community of
women held for Alice and for her ability to change her sense of identity in the face of
disabling socialization and personal tragedy. The fundamental importance of this sense of
community with others to women's subjectivity was recognized and written about by many
of the women autobiographers reviewed by the authors of the papers gathered by Domna

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13 Cf. Janice Williamson, "Women's life writing that exposes incest experiences makes
possible new subject positions in that it potentially liberates the woman writer or reader,
transforming her from silent victim to engaged survivor." 'I Peel Myself out of My Own
Stanton in her collection *The Female Autograph* (1984). Stanton sums it up using a metaphor also favoured by Eleanor, the web of self:

The female "I" was thus not simply a texture woven of various selves: its threads, its life-lines, came from and extended to others. By that token, the "I" represented a denial of a notion essential to the phallogocentric order: the totalized self-contained subject present-to-itself. (1984, p. 15)

This topic, the importance of women's communities, deserves further notice because it is fundamental in so many ways to understanding how women's subjectivities and lives are changed. It seems, as Adrienne Rich surmised, that women almost always need each other to do this difficult work in a culture which has been, and in many ways still is, antithetical to our efforts. In the final section of this background chapter, I look at some communities of women and how they can foster change for women.

Communities of women

One source of change, in community, for us has been our participation in women's groups and circles. Just as the consciousness-raising groups of the 1970s discovered commonalities in the experience of women of diverse backgrounds, so these groups and circles celebrate aspects of womanhood which they value and to which many different women can relate. Groups of women, gathering in small and large circles, meet across boundaries of race, class, and sexual orientation. These axes of difference, which in some contexts act to fragment women, do not do so in these circles. Some groups include
celebration of the Great Goddess. As a feminine face of the divine, she can function as a kind of "symbolic mother," or a "figure of female authorization" as I explain below in relation to a group of women in Italy described by Teresa de Lauretis.

I have belonged to a woman's circle for many years and I treasure this aspect of my life. Our group continues to evolve and over the years we have shared much joy, much sorrow, much fun. I include a description of a particular occasion in which our group participated in a Giveaway. It captures some of the qualities, I think, of what our circles mean to us as women and why they continue to sustain us as individual women and to hold us as communities.

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GIVEAWAY

In "Giveaway" each member of a women's circle brings a gift for one other person. The gift represents something which is or was important to the giver, and which she is willing to pass on. The gift is not designated for a special person ahead of time; it will be claimed by the person who recognizes intuitively that it is meant for her.

On this occasion, on a warm day in May, a group of about fifteen women are gathered at a cottage near Kingston, which is situated on the inner end of a small narrow peninsula jutting out into the lake. We women sit in a circle on the peninsula, the blue waters of the lake bordered by feathery pines surrounding us on three sides. In the middle of the circle is a vase of fresh flowers, and a cloth on which to lay the gifts.

Each woman is invited to say what her gift means to her as she lays it by the flowers. Perhaps because the day is so lovely, with soft bright sun, warm spring air, blue
water, these explanations become stories, and we sit all day listening and telling. Our
circle holds us together, and each woman is connected not only with the other woman who
finds her gift is right for her, but with all the other women and their stories. Unique as each
story is, they became variations on a theme, a theme of our lives and what is important to
us. There are triumphs and losses, longing, and sadness, and joy.

My gift is a small notebook colourfully bound in cloth in which I have written some
poems which reveal my preoccupations at this time. Another woman lays down a
beautiful ring set with a polished stone. This is claimed by a woman who had lost, as a
young girl, a ring given to her by her mother, a precious family heirloom. She feels her
mother has never really forgiven her for this loss, and now this new ring seems to heal that
grief.

Another woman lays down a simple clam shell filled with pebbles. She had lovingly
picked these up one by one on the beach in Newfoundland, the home of her family for
many generations. For her, they represent continuity with her past, especially the link
with the oceans of the east coast of Canada. Though I have no link with the east coast, I
feel very drawn to her gift, and claim it for my own.

When I get home, I place this shell with its pebbles in a casket-like metal box set
with polished stones. It seems appropriate. I take them out occasionally and meditate on
them. One day when I open the box I find the stones have been carefully wrapped in shiny
aluminum foil in a small package held together with toothpicks. The package somehow
looks like a fetish, some shaman's magic. In fact it is the work of my friend Robin, aged
six. I feel the link with the other women, formed on that warm spring day four years
earlier, now reaches out to include this child, who can recognize a sacred object and add to it his own special power.

Of course not all women are members of such circles. I am not trying to resurrect an essential womanhood, but to recognize and legitimate ways in which women, as women, can reach out to each other across boundaries of time and place, and of class, race, and sexual orientation. Women are gendered, and this fact is an important aspect of the way we experience the world. Communities of women can also be very important for shaping the way we receive texts. In her narrative Alice spells out the importance of her circle of women friends for her developing sense of herself and how she related to *The Diviners*. In chapter 3 I comment on the crucial importance of this aspect of Alice's reading and compare it to other stories of reading for which a community was essential.

Teresa de Lauretis discusses these issues in ways which relate closely to Alice's and indeed also to Eleanor's and Celia's experience when she writes in "The Essence of the Triangle..." (1989)

about the importance for women's reading of both gender and community:

As one feminist theorist who's been concurrently involved with feminism, women's studies, psychoanalytic theory, structuralism, and film theory from the beginning of my critical activity, I know that learning to be a feminist has grounded, or embodied, all of my learning and so en-gendered thinking and knowing itself. (p. 12)
De Lauretis goes on, in this article, to translate and explain some recent work by Italian feminists, notably a book titled *Non credere di avere dei diritti: la generazione della libertà femminile nell'idea e nelle vicende di un gruppo di donne*, which she translates as "Don't Think You Have Any Rights: The Engendering of Female Freedom in the Thought and Vicissitudes of a Woman's Group," which was authored by a group centred around the Milan Women's Bookstore, presumably coextensive, de Lauretis surmises, with the women's group mentioned in the title. The Introduction to *Non credere* specifies (in de Lauretis's translation):

> This book is about the necessity to give meaning, exalt, and represent in words and images the relationship of one woman to another.....What we have seen taking shape in the years and places indicated, is a genealogy of women, that is, a coming into being of women legitimated by the reference to their female origin... (p. 14)

This work illustrates one realization of the concept I am trying to understand and to articulate in this inquiry: the idea of how women reading women's texts could be a different experience for them from their reading of male texts, and could be a link between them as women. It is worth giving some details of de Lauretis' explanation.

For a while the group practised a form of consciousness raising which they called *autocoscienza*. Eventually the practice of *autocoscienza* evolved into other practices such as a relationship of entrustment, in which one woman entrusts herself symbolically to another woman who thus becomes her guide, mentor, or point of reference, and a figure of symbolic mediation between her and the world (p. 22). This entrustment is achieved not
despite, but rather because of, the recognition of disparities of age, class, level of education, between them. As de Lauretis explains:

Though their roles and symbolic functions with respect to one another may have been as different as their social and personal powers, yet each woman of each pair validates and valorizes the other within a frame of reference no longer patriarchal or male-designed, but made up of perceptions, knowledges, attitudes, values, and modes of relating historically expressed by women for women -- the frame of reference of what the book calls a female genealogy or a female symbolic.

(p. 23)

By the early 1980s, the group had begun a project of reading which is the clearest example I have found of a group of women working together across differences to discover and delineate what it is that binds them together as women. De Lauretis explains:

The group began a project of reading literary works by women, especially novels, hoping to find in their contribution to Western culture some expression of "what culture does not know about women's difference.....Their method was "experimental" from the perspective of literary criticism. Very simply, they treated the texts as they would have their own words, as parts of a puzzle to be solved by disarranging and rearranging them according to extratextual, personal associations and interpretations, and thus erasing the boundaries between literature and life.....The next step was [to recognize that] a figure of female authorization or symbolic mediation is necessary to "legitimate female difference as originary human difference". That figure ... was named "the symbolic mother" (p. 24).
As a theoretical concept, the symbolic mother is the structure that sustains or recognizes the gendered and embodied nature of women's thought, knowledge, experience, subjectivity, and desire -- their "originary difference" -- and guarantees women's claim to self-affirmative existence as subjects in the social; and existence as subjects not altogether separate from male society, yet autonomous from male definition and dominance. (p. 25)

De Lauretis concludes her account both with high praise ("a freedom that, paradoxically, demands no vindication of the rights of women, no equal rights under the law, but only a full, political and personal accountability to women is as startlingly radical a notion as any that has emerged in Western thought" [p. 26]) and with caution ("the risks involved in Non credere's effort to define female desire and subjecthood in the symbolic, without sufficient attention to the working of the imaginary\(^{14}\) in subjectivity and sexual identity, are many and great" [p. 31]).

One of the difficulties, obviously, is that these activities could well be open to the charge of essentialism and a return to the notions of cultural feminism: "the ideology of a female nature or female essence reappropriated by feminists in an effort to re-validate undervalued female attributes" (Alcoff, p. 408). In my opinion, and that of the groups of women of which I have been a part, "an effort to re-validate undervalued female attributes" does not imply that we believe that all women agree with us, either in our definition of female attributes, or in a sense of possessing them. Whatever the Non credere group

\(^{14}\) This word is used in its Lacanian sense by de Lauretis. The imaginary order has been defined as including the field of fantasies and images. It evolves out of the mirror stage, but extends into the adult subject's relationships with others. The prototype of the typical imaginary relationship is the infant before the mirror, fascinated with his image (Benvenuto and Kennedy, 1986, p. 81).
believed is part of their story, their situated knowledge. De Lauretis's account of their work (their book had not been translated into English at the time she wrote her article) inspires me as I conduct my inquiry; I compare it to my own experience, and find that I too feel more myself, in ways which are explored in following chapters, under the influence of literary works by women and under the presence of "symbolic mothers." My experience becomes part of my situated knowledge, to be interpreted and to be compared and contrasted with other situated knowledges.

In her essay "Women's Knowledge and Women's Art" (1990), Janet Wolff raises the question of "what a different culture would be like. What is the possibility, she asks, for women to write (or paint) from their own experience, no longer mediated by the culture and point of view of men?" (p. 69). This is, of course, the question Patricia Yaeger answers in the affirmative and in considerable detail in Honey-Mad Women. Wolff's answer, after a review of the ways in which the dominant culture acts to exclude and silence women is that in "a patriarchal culture it is not possible simply to declare a kind of unilateral independence." She advocates the "guerilla tactics of engaging with that regime of representation and undermining it with 'destabilizing' strategies (collage, juxtaposition, re-appropriation of the image, and so on)" (p. 82).

I agree that it is not possible to declare a unilateral independence from the dominant culture. More, I believe it is very difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle what is women's culture, or women's subjectivities from the discourses which have formed them, which are male-dominated in our society. We can often, however, recognize when male discourse speaks for us as women and when it does not. Just as women have common
experiences across axes of difference such as class and race, so often the words of men, such as the complaint of Stephen Dedalus, express commonalities across differences of gender.

Nonetheless, I agree with Wolff, with Patricia Yaeger, and with the authors of *Non credere* that it is both possible and very worthwhile for women to begin to define women's lineage and women's ways of being in the world by examining women's writing and women's art. This work is arduous and fraught with difficulty, yet answers to a sense of ourselves which many women have felt instinctively without being able to name exactly.¹⁵

Alice's narrative provides a beautiful instance of how one woman's writing has deeply affected the life of another woman who reads her text. Alice puts it simply and powerfully in the opening words of her narrative. "*Margaret Laurence, through her gift of words in The Diviners, set me free from a very dark and dangerous place. I feel we've bonded spiritually.*" Hers is, I believe, a reading very much in the style and spirit of the *non credere* group, in which Alice, too, goes a long way toward "erasing the boundaries between literature and life," and sets Margaret Laurence up as "a figure of female

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¹⁵ I think this sense of a woman's way of writing is what, for instance Georgia O'Keeffe had in mind in her letter to Mabel Luhan (1925). Her words express both the hope and the difficulty of defining what it would be for women to read and write as women about the work of women. We have come some way to understanding what this might be since 1925, but the real work is still to be done. Her words still stand as a hope and a challenge to us:

... Last summer when I read what you wrote about Katherine Cornell I told Steiglitz I wished you had seen my work -- that I thought you could write something about me that the men can't. [sic] What I want written -- I do not know -- I have no definite idea of what it should be -- but a woman who has lived many things and who sees lines and colours as an expression of living - might say something that a man can't -- I feel there is something unexplored about women that only a woman can explore. Men have done all they can about it. Does that mean anything to you or doesn't it? (*Ms. Magazine*, Nov. 1987, p. 16)
authorization or symbolic mediation ...the symbolic mother." In my commentary on Alice's narrative in chapter 3, I examine this bonding in an effort to explain the special nature of the relationship between Alice and Margaret Laurence and between Alice and Morag, the character in The Diviners.
Inter-text 1

In and Out of the Deeper Pools:

Alice’s Narrative about Reading The Diviners

When someone rescues you from a life-threatening situation, there is a natural tendency to bond with that person. Margaret Laurence, through her gift of words in The Diviners, set me free from a very dark and dangerous place. I feel we’ve bonded spiritually. Had we met a few years ago, I feel certain we would have recognized in each other the kindred spirit connection. For this reason, and for those which will become evident throughout this narrative, and with great respect, I will call Margaret Laurence by her first name, and will also call her Morag. Margaret and/or Morag, interchangeably, for I truly believe they are one.

The society described in The Diviners was my experience, so I’ve been that route before. I was there, felt it, lived it, and survived it, though it’s cost me, as Morag says, it’s damn well cost me.

Margaret allowed me to go back to my childhood and travel the road a second time with insight and understanding. This journey proved a personal retrospective, a clearing of my time and place, and as I said, provided a greater depth of understanding of the society that shaped, conditioned, weakened and blinkered me.

I keep The Diviners beside my bed within easy reach. Until recently, there were several books there to keep me company, friends, totems, markers of milestones, mindsets, values: Five Acres and Security, Harrowsmith, Organic Gardening.
Constance Beresford Howe, P.D. James, Natalie Goldberg, Alice Walker, Joy Harjo, Janine O'Leary Cobb. Now there are two, Miss Rumphius and The Diviners.

Miss Rumphius is a beautifully written and illustrated children's book by Barbara Cooney. It is the story of Alice Rumphius, who came to be known as "The Lupine Lady". Alice, after receiving a proper education which afforded her the means to work, travel and experience life around the world, devoted her senior years to living beside the sea and carrying out the lesson taught by her Grandfather, who had said, "You must do something to make the world more beautiful." And she did. Miss Rumphius took it upon herself to scatter lupine seeds, bushels of lupine seeds. Everywhere. She wandered over fields and headlands, along highways, down country lanes. She flung handfuls of them around the school house and back of the church. She tossed them into hollows and along stone walls. When she became very old, no longer able to go out, she invited children into her house. They sat on enormous pillows beside the fire, sipping tea, while Miss Rumphius told them stories of faraway places. Most importantly, she passed her Grandfather's message on to the children. "You must do something in your lifetime to make the world more beautiful."

The second book, of course, is The Diviners, which will stay beside my bed forever. I think, and is the reason for this narrative.

Books and reading have always been important to me, a fact made curious considering the absence of a nurturing reading environment in my formative years. My father read the newspaper, every page, so he could talk politics and sports with "the guys" at the service station he managed. I have to give him credit for suggesting
that I might like to read A Tale of Two Cities, the one classic book that he read in
high school, which obviously impressed him. I can’t recall my parents ever reading
library books, though they did read the odd paperback and magazines popular at that
time. Our household did not include bookcases or stacks of books on coffee tables or
beside chairs. I remember having the sense that the act of reading, even in
moderation, held a warning, implicit, that if you did too much of that sort of thing,
you’d ruin your eyes and have to wear glasses, or become a "bookworm" or a "brain."
You might just want to go on to some kind of higher education, which, in my
working-class household was out of the question. Finish high school, get a job, get
engaged, get married, and do these things before the age of twenty-two if possible. To
do this was to fulfil the expectations of my parents.

Kingston Public Library became my idea of heaven. Fascinated, awed, I
wandered, sniffing books, wood, varnish, floor polish, leather chairs with buttons of
gold, massive round tables thick, smooth, glossy. Everything seemed so big and solid.

Reading was fun, comfortable, interesting, informative. I always had a book on the go.
However, reading didn’t win praise or encouragement. It was a solitary pursuit I
chose to embrace. My fascination with books was never acknowledged by my parents,
ever approved or disapproved.

No wonder I connected with Morag. Aha! Here’s a reader, a collector of words, an
apprenticed writer even then. Imagine my envy.
Now I have to remember that this must remain a narrative and not a literary
critique. I must not do a lot of quoting from the novel, BUT this first connection with
Morag at the level of language is so terribly important in that here begins the
comparison of my life to hers, my sterile environment compared to that of Morag Gunn
who lived and breathed a veritable linguistic mosaic!

Morag at six learned: "Hang onto your shit and never let them know you are
cared." At seven she thought Christie was dumb, riding with him in the wagon when
he'd gone to pick up scrap metal at the Blacksmith's shop, then going along the street
where some of the big houses are, they are ridiculed by a gang of school children. So
humiliating and difficult, yet Morag learns important lessons from Christie that day
about people and their garbage, human nature through Christie's words, first in his
everyday words, then his preacher words, and later his lore words:

Look at it this way, all these houses along here you can see from what
their kids say, what they're saying. Some of them, because I take off
their muck for them, they think I'm muck. Well, I am muck, but so
are they. Not a father's son, not a man born of woman who is not
muck in some part of his immortal soul, girl. That's what they don't
know, the poor sods. When I carry away their refuse, I'm carrying off
part of them don't you see?"

Christie often goes into one of his "spiels". Morag is seven, and this is her
adopted father, Christie talking, and she's listening, even though she hates him and
thinks he's crazy when he's in one of his spiels. The words have been heard,
processed, stored. And what words they are!

By their garbage shall ye know them. I swear by the ridge of tears
and the valour of my ancestors. I say unto you Morag Gunn, lass,
that by their bloody goddammed fucking garbage shall ye christly well
know them.
The ones who eat only out of tins. The ones who have to wrap the rye bottles in old newspapers to try to hide the fact that there are so goddamn many of them. The ones who have fourteen thousand pill bottles the week now. The ones who will be chucking out the family albums the moment the grandmother goes to her ancestors. The ones who are afraid to flush the safes down the john, them that has flush johns, in case it plugs the plumbing and Mellrose McLaren has to come and get it unstuck and might see, as if Mel would give the hundredth part of a damn. I tell you what they throw out and I don't care a shit, but they think I do, so that's why they can't look at me. They think muck's dirty. It's no more dirty than what's in their heads. Or mine. It's Christly clean compared to some things....

Christie Logan, the social anthropologist, has just delivered a lecture on the values of the society of Manuwaka that could stand today, eloquent in its profanity.

I learned by reading Patricia Morley's book, The Long Journey Home, that language reflects values as well as class, that people swear by and at what is important to them.

I learned also about strength in the diversity of language, and the sheer excitement of it all. I would have given anything to have heard language like this at seven.

Sometimes, in the back room of my father's service station, I heard men swearing, a few Goddamns and Jesus Christ Almighty's, but I never heard the likes of Christie's spiels. Profanity aside, Canadians generally tend to be up-tight linguistic wimps, threatened and intimidated, unable to recognize value and advantage in anything beyond the everyday familiar.

My little nine-year-old heart would have been beating heavily had I been in that dirty old kitchen on the wrong side of the tracks when Christie, bolstered by bootlegged red biddy, launches into the subject he always talks about when the spirits are in him, and he's off in the language of lineage and lore:

Was I not born a highlander, in Easter Ross, one of the North Logans? An ancient clan, an ancient people. Is our motto not a fine, proud set of words then? This is the Valour of My Ancestors. The motto of the
Logans, Morag and our war cry is The Ridge of Tears, Druim-nan deur, although I'm not sure how to pronounce it not having the gaelic...

and then Morag asks Christie to tell her about Piper Gunn and His Woman, and she hears:

Now Piper Gunn had a woman, and a strapping strong woman she was, with the courage of a falcon and the beauty of a deer and the warmth of a home, and the faith of saints, and you may know her name. Her Name, it was Morag.

These are the words nine-year-old Morag took to bed with her, sounds, imagery.

lore and lineage. Contrasting Morag's thoughts in bed at night, my mind travels across the street to where Eva Winkler and her brother lie in their beds, battered and bruised in body and spirit, their chance at any kind of successful life rendered slim to non-existent, never having heard nurturing, empowering words.

I realize the importance of words that children take to bed with them and think about at night to make them feel important, and that their existence on this earth matters, that they have value. Words that will make them sigh and smile before going to sleep. Words that will help them grow and become strong and whole.

Lucky Morag. Her writing process has already begun in her head with the sound of words heard. She's gathering words, playing with them with her tongue and brain, then writing them in her scribbler. From the beginning, she has the eye, the curiosity, the desire to note, document, remember. The writer, there, then. The drawing of strength from real and imaginary role models, leaders, rich lore and lineage. Good.

Strong. Proud. Morag is exposed to good stuff in the world of life, learning hard lessons from an early age.
Through Margaret, I recognized myself at that age, a curious child, like Morag, an observer of life, people, things. Reading, thinking and watching.

Contemplating.

I've just come across a fascinating piece of information which fits perfectly here because it is a comment on the age of nine. Gloria Steinem, in Revolution From Within quotes from Carol Gilligan and her colleagues at the Harvard Graduate School of Education on girls in the pivotal years just before adolescence, "...that girls' development in adolescence may hinge on their resisting not the loss of innocence but the loss of knowledge, ...and early female strengths don't just disappear, they just go underground." She points to the number of women novelists, from Charlotte Brontë in Jane Eyre to Toni Morrison in The Bluest Eye who have used a nine-or-ten-year-old girl as their narrator, their most clear-sighted witness. This is so very important!

Women should know about this phenomenon.

Reading, as I recall, at that age, answered a lot of questions about life in general, though I never applied what I read to change my life in any way, and when I did reach the point of reading authors who caused me to ponder and reflect upon society and my role in that society, I'd accepted it all, without question, was too far gone, in too far, caught up in the structures, expectations. Until Women's Studies and The Diviners, I merely functioned, coped, adapted, accommodated, saluted and jumped, but mostly accommodated. I smiled a lot, said "Yes" "Okay" "Sure" "No Problem" "Would you
During a Feminist Counselling class, we were asked to define ourselves to the other women in the class, an exercise designed to make us aware and hopefully rid ourselves of racial and sexual prejudices. Women responded: I am Female/White/Christian/Feminist/Heterosexual/Mother/Sister or Black/American/Lesbian/Atheist/Divorced/Etc. Our facilitator pointed out that we should be prepared to include the category Able-Bodied or Disabled. What means disabled other than the commonly held view of physical or mental disabilities? Disabled, according to our teacher also means having to wear glasses, needing medication for allergies, asthma, diabetes, using a cane, obesity. Apparently our ability to function and perform as able-bodied women in the workplace includes the Abled/Disabled category.

Perhaps this process of defining ourselves by race, creed, sexual orientation, etc., is a necessary step in recognizing and correcting negative biases and attitudes. Won't it be wonderful when we're able to rise above all this labelling and defining and reach a Nirvana-like state of acceptance of each other as variations on a theme of the species, human?

The disabled category stuck in my mind after the class. Later, also in class, we were discussing the book, Between Friends, by Gillian Hanscombe, a series of letters by four women, each coming from a different place on the Feminist political spectrum.

My comment was that I felt the society of my time and place actually disabled most

1 When Alice, Eleanor and I read our narratives to each other at my home in April, 1993, we recorded the readings and the comments we made about the narratives. I include a few of these comments as appropriate. Here is one of these exchanges.

Nathalie - "Don't we recognize that? [laughter]
Eleanor - "Oh I recognize myself all the way through this.

Alice's Narrative, page 8
women by silencing and disempowering us. Societies should not disable, they should enable.

Think of the words of behaviour modification: Don’t swear/pout/sulk/talk back/worry/ cry/ stare/question/run/yell. Be quiet/ladylike/good. Behave. Just sit there and be a good girl and don’t bother anyone. Elly Danica claimed the word “Don’t” in her book, *Don’t, A Woman’s Word*, a word without meaning when she used it as a child.

Think of the attitudes of the time. Morag is delivering Pique. She corrects the nurse when referred to as Mrs. “Well, I wouldn’t advertise the fact if I were you, it’s nothing to be proud of. You’re just lucky they’re letting you have the baby here.” The attitude of the doctor when Morag insists on seeing Pique before she’s washed. The doctor sighs, sounding tired and impatient, and says, ”These conscious births.” That says a lot! Keep them silent, even then, pushing their babies into the world.

Eva Winkler, when she returns, finally, after her self-induced abortion, “walks a little stooped. Goes out to work as a hired girl. Some not-too-fussy guy will marry her someday, maybe. Or maybe not.”

The terrible stigma of out-of-wedlock pregnancy and how it affected, indeed ruined the lives of women, their families, the children born to these "fallen" women. Shame, humiliation, guilt, lies. Pregnancy for single women meant a fate worse than death, and often death by means of coat-hanger-induced hemorrhage. Our North American society did this to us. Why couldn’t it have been different? How could any society deem having a baby sinful, punishable? I weep for and because of that ignorant era, the waste, heartbreak, anguish, despair, suicide. So much needless
suffering. Disabled. Ruined by time and place. Times have changed, yet the latest
edition of Where to Turn in Kingston, a community directory, includes this listing:

Gabriel Maternity Home. Address is confidential. 24 Hour Open Line:

The language of my time and place conditioned me to racism, sexism, homophobia,
classism, all the ISMS confronted and discussed openly today. WASP was normal,
right, proper, acceptable. Others were lesser, unfit, stupid, dirty, unmentionable, and
certainly unable to speak the language. What's the matter with you, can't you speak
English? Can you believe it? If anything should be deemed sinful, it's that awful
ignorance.

There's a scene in The Diviners that continues to haunt me, particularly now, as I
write this narrative against the backdrop of the winter landscape. After the fire at the
Tonnerre's place, when Lazarus claims his own, "I'm going in, they're mine, there,
them. Dere mine dere, dem." They, the coroner, the constable and Morag leave
Lazarus standing in the snow, in the cold. Charred remains taken and charred
remains left, and then the sentence, so crisp and clear, like a shard of ice through the
heart. Morag looks over her shoulder and sees Lazarus. "He is still standing alone
there in the snow." Lazarus, a victim of his time and place.

When Morag meets Jules, after the war, she's leaving for university in Winnipeg.
Jules says he doesn't have to do anything all that much. He's not like her. To him,
she is now on the other side of the fence. They inhabit the same world no longer. "See
you around, eh. And walks away, as before, not looking back." Many years later,
Pique argues with Morag, "Do. Do. Always that. Do I have to do anything?" Defined by what we do. Oh, hello, nice to meet you. So, what do you do? That's when the value judgments begin, right? Where does value and worth begin in this list of answers? I'm a housewife, a student, a house painter, a writer, an unemployed factory worker, a mechanic, a butcher, a secretary, a librarian, a teacher, an engineer, a lawyer, a physician.

Margaret deals with so many issues, straight on, with such honesty and integrity within the story-line, believable, personalized. The Diviners includes racism, classism, child abuse, masturbation, menstruation, puberty, abortion, patriarchy, feminism, exotic dancing, explicit sex, oppression, birth control. Margaret, you are one gutsy writer! Early in the novel, Margaret states that Morag was born bloody-minded. And it cost her. She paid through the nose. As they say. Also, one might add, through the head, heart, and cunt, and this was said in the midst of looking at the photograph of the child at five beneath the spruce trees where she has made a nest for her imaginary people. Such a direct and powerful revelation. I'm sure listening.

Creatures of our time and place. I never gave it a thought at the time. It just happened. Ellen Stafford, a Kingston writer, wrote an article that appeared in The Whig Standard recently, that reminded me of the young women dancing with the soldiers based in Manawaka. Using a dance metaphor she described how "beguiled by the music, we followed some boy's clumsy footsteps, the girls moving expertly backwards, not seeing where we were going, blindly trusting some boy to pilot us. Giving ourselves to his keeping. Accepting direction. Men led, girls followed --
actually pushed backwards by the young man. Inane, stupid, vapid and charming, we were irresistible. Aching with love, looking for someone." Yes.

And so it came to pass that I finished high school, found a job, learned the vocabulary of the medical community working as a medical secretary, lived at home paying board, as was the custom of the time, went dancing (backwards), fell in love, became engaged, married and had children, thus fulfilling the expectations of my parents, myself and my society. It all seemed so straightforward. Roles were clearly defined. I married a man quite like Brooke, who brought into the marriage words given him by the same society: career, leadership, duty, university, Old Boys, success, power, military, ownership, one-upmanship, good guys vs. bad guys, black and white, no grey. My words taught me to listen to his words, thinking they would, surely, by the same marriage, protect and sustain.

That was my conditioning. I believed it. Morag didn't. She wasn't beguiled or seduced by all that hooey. Well, I guess she was for a while, seven years in fact, before the Benares brass ashtray goes through the window. Enough of being stifled, silenced, patronized and disempowered. Morag had the words and certainly didn't need or want to be coddled and critiqued by Brooke.

Dependency really stunts one's growth, doesn't it? In order to rid oneself of dependency, one needs tools, like sense of self, education, strength of conviction, determination, and will. Morag had all those qualities. Solutions are often stated with such simplicity. Well, break the dependency, you fool. Okay, but first you have to

\[2\] While reading her narrative Alice remarked: "And that was a typo that I decided to leave in "ownership."

Alice's Narrative, page 12
recognize and admit the dependency. There it was in front of me, in print, spelled out with such clarity. Morag spoke to me as a child, adolescent, young woman, wife, mother, feminist, environmentalist, humanist, historian, philosopher, humourist, sociologist; moreover, she spoke to me with caring and passion. Fifty-two years is a long time, a life-time to wait for the right words.

It's all so simple really, so beautiful in its simplicity. Give children the right words. Allow and encourage them to become whole, independent, intuitive, nurturing empowered adults with a craft, a trade, a profession. Whole men and women. Equal.

Reading The Diviners made me realize what a shallow, casual reader I'd been. It's all changed now. I came of age as a reader. Well, hey, I'm a late bloomer. Somehow I feel I've at last plugged into a global language network via my personal experiences in life, Women's Studies, Feminist Theory, Women in Literature, and realize that my voice is important, included, heard, acknowledged. This realization is SO WONDERFUL.

Margaret's words released so much emotion. Here's an example: Morag is at university in Winnipeg. She often goes to her friend Ella Gerson's house. "a small white-painted house, always full of people. Ella's father died several years ago, and Mrs. Gerson now keeps on the bakery, working there during shop hours and coming back at nights to make dinner for her three daughters. Her daughters are now her life. She considers herself blessed. She stomps out, evenings, to left-wing meetings. If she can bring up her daughters to be socialists, she will not have lived in vain."

Alice's Narrative, page 13
Morag is there in the kitchen with them, women together discussing politics, hair, God, beauty, education, boyfriends.

Morag has never known anything like this kind of house before. Its warmth is sometimes very much harder to take than any harshness could be, because it breaks her up and she considers it a disgrace to cry in front of anybody. When she finally admits this, out of necessity, the girls leave her tactfully alone. Not so Mrs Gerson. She marches into the bathroom where Morag has not thought of locking the door. So what's the disgrace, Morag? Look at me -- didn't I spend maybe half my life crying? It never meant any disgrace. It never meant I couldn't mop up, after, and blow my nose a little, and get back to work. So cry child.

Morag Gunn, nearly twenty, five-feet-eight, grown up, puts her head down on the shoulders of Ella's mother and cries as if the process had just recently been invented.

What the hell is she crying about? Because of the unreal stab of hope she felt when she looked in the mirror? Because she fears she can't carry through with the New Her, and because in some ways she doesn't even want to? Because it shouldn't all be necessary, but it is? Because she never knew until now that she missed her mother as much as her father, for most of her life? Because she thinks of Prin and feels ashamed at not wanting to see her? Because she wants her own child and doesn't believe she will ever have one? Because she wants to write a masterpiece and doesn't believe she will ever write anything which will ever see the light of day? BECAUSE LIFE IS BLOODY TERRIFYING, IS WHY.

And under the tears, much deeper, Morag sees now why she feels so close to Ella's mother. It is not only Mrs. Gerson's ability to reach out her arms and hold people, both literally and figuratively. It is also her strength. Morag doesn't know yet if she herself has the former ability. If she doesn't it will go badly for her. Because she knows she has the latter. How is it she can feel totally inadequate and yet frightened of a strength she knows she possesses?

My sisters and I comment on how much we miss our mother, who died at the age of forty-nine. We miss her arms around us when life seems bloody terrifying, and we miss her in all the ways daughters miss and need their mother. We long for her to see our children and be part of our everyday lives. We share that terrible loss of
motherlove. I related to that scene with Morag and Mrs. Gerson at a visceral level, tangible in its intensity.\(^3\)

For the past couple of years, I’ve been meeting with friends, mostly women, for what we call Full Moon Feasts, a ritual gathering, held here on the Islands, and once in Kingston. In October, the feast was held at our place. We decided to eat outside under the big oaks and maples, a protected wooded grove. My husband made a fire and set coal-oil lanterns on the table. Moonlight spilled through bare branches onto our tiny circle of celebrants.

We talked gardens, jobs, retirement. Later, I wandered into the kitchen for dessert and coffee. My friend, Kate, and her daughters, Jane and Elizabeth, were entwined, rocking back and forth, locked in the most exquisitely beautiful mother-daughter embrace. I stood watching with envy and longing.

The imagery of Kate and her daughters took me to a place in Margaret’s memoir, *Dance on Earth.*

\(^3\) While reading her narrative Alice wept. Here is our conversation:

Eleanor - "No, it’s okay."
Nathalie - "It’s okay to cry."
Eleanor - "Remember what Mrs. Gerson said."
Alice - "Funny, I read that before and it didn’t bother me..."

.....

Nathalie - I’m feeling tearful too ... we’re not mothered in our society, are we? And that’s what just came through so beautifully in your choice of that quotation from *The Diviners.*

Alice - Really, I just felt that. And you know I kept thinking about Morag. She really became the mother because she had to look after Prin. You know, and Prin just sat in a chair and was incapable of ...

Nathalie - How old were you when your mother died then?
Alice - Well I was just, actually, I was nursing Ian. So I guess twenty-three, twenty four. My sisters, you know, it would be good for my sisters to read this too because they were younger; I was the oldest. Anyway I guess I’m all right.

Alice’s Narrative, page 15
Twice not so long ago, my daughter and I danced, a stately dance, not the exuberant rhythms of my past or her present, a graceful easy dance, at a slight distance from each other, hands touching lightly, a dance with no name. A dance is life-long, and its measures are quick, slow, frenetic, quiet, worried, painful, joyous, women's dances everywhere.

I wrote a sort of song a few years ago, called "Old Women's Song" and at the end it says: I had three mothers. I have countless foremothers. I never saw my mothers dancing. But now I know their dance.

I mourn that young mother of mine still, and always will. Yet she passed on marvels to me. Humour. Music, although my music has been made with words. She danced on earth, in her way, in the time that was given to her. Danced laughter, danced youth, danced love, danced hope in a child. She passed her dance on to me.

"I love Margaret Laurence for these words. They say everything I need to hear. Indeed, they replace years of pain and loss with acceptance, uplifting, joyous."

Last weekend, I went to the Chaffey's Locks home of my friend of many years, June. We had a clothing exchange. The idea of trading clothes began quite spontaneously two years ago, when June's daughter, Mary-Lynne and friend, Corinne, said they had a couple of bags filled with clothes in the back of their car destined for the Salvation Army Store. Unemployed, clothes-starved-woman that I am, I said, "Well, bring them in and let's have a look before they go any further!" It turned out to be such a success that we decided to do it again, inviting more women friends to join us. So, there we were, seven women altogether. June and I, of Margaret's generation, were married with children by the age of twenty-two, both having worked as secretaries before marriage. June continued her education, taking university courses at night.

[As Alice read this she said "mother," not daughter.]

Alice - Did I say my mother? "My daughter and I danced a stately dance, not the exuberant rhythms of my past..."

Eleanor - But you know, that was a Freudian slip.

Alice - It sure was.

Alice's Narrative, page 16
After the death of her husband, she continued her academic studies, and is currently working on a doctoral thesis in education. Mary-Lynne has a degree in Business and Commerce, and works as Administrative Assistant to a Cabinet Minister.

Knowing June's mother, Mary, as I do, a retired school teacher, I see Mary, June and Mary-Lynne as examples of Margaret's dance of life. Mary decided to write about her experiences as a teacher just last year. At the same time, June began a thesis based on her mother as both teacher and mother. I see them dancing together.

Mary-Lynne is learning their dance.

It is interesting to note that none of the younger women at the clothing exchange chose to get married and have children in their twenties. I'll just give a short explanation of the other women, because the contrast is interesting, the societal contrast between then and now.

Corinna reminds me of Morag. From Winnipeg, she came to the University of Toronto to take a degree in Political Science. Now, she too works in the office of a Cabinet Minister, though both Mary-Lynne and Corinna feel they'd much rather be the Cabinet Minister. And why not?

Lucille, in her early thirties, a Public Health Nurse, and mother of a four-year-old daughter spoke of the importance of teaching her daughter both French and English. She was keen to discuss holistic medicine, Essiac, Echinacea.

Two Karens, one on her way to Spain to teach and travel, the other Karen, my cousin and the youngest woman in the group, is taking Civil Engineering Technology, with thoughts of specializing in environmental recycling programs.
We made a fire, cooked, discussed books, vegetarianism, Hillary Clinton, Kim Campbell, sexual abuse, clothes, hair, breast cancer, feminism. It was like Mrs. Gerson's kitchen, and I felt like Morag, undone by the warmth and strength of their forward dancing. They remind me of Miss Rumphius, independent, capable, educated, gaining experience, travelling, dancing their own special dance and passing it along. I don't have to tell them that they must do something during their lifetime to make the world more beautiful, but I do, knowing full well that by their very presence they already have.

I think of Margaret, and wish I'd known her when she was living at her cottage near Lakefield, not very far away, and I didn't know she was so close. I see her strolling barefoot through the longish grass down to a big wooden chair by the river, cigarettes in one hand, a glass of scotch in the other, to sit and contemplate. She said she woke up one morning with a thought in her mind, took a notebook out to the lawn and began to write the novel she knew even then would be called *The Diviners*. She said she felt as though she had been waiting for it and it had been waiting for her. She said she couldn't write fast enough.

If only I could have sat beside her and asked her about all the "how's" of her craft. How to write with such power and authenticity? How to extend punctuation into such an art form? Sentences marking the passage of time: "Morag sleeps. The train moves west. The Canada geese are flying south." The perfection of: "Down at the harbour, where Morag sometimes walks, hoping to understand the place, the vast ships cluster and creak, groaning and shunting, wallowing herds of ungainly sea-monsters.
Then, surprisingly, one will glide majestically from the harbour, transformed by movement, as clumsy waddling seals are transformed into eel-like liteness when they swim. The gulls scream imprecations, their tongues hoarse and obscene, but the white flash of their wings is filled with grace abounding. "Mastery of language, Margaret. I want to shout to all who make jokes about Canadians not knowing who they are, "You want Canadian Identity? Read The Diviners!"

Apparently Margaret felt that The Diviners would be her last novel, in fact, she says so through Morag, "At one point Morag is filled with the profound conviction that she will not write anything more anyway. Big Deal. Keel over with sorrow, world, as if it would matter." It matters to me. A great big Christly deal it matters to me! I think that's why she arranged for Morag and Royland to have those discussions about the gift of divining, and how it's just that, a gift, a portion of grace, finally withdrawn to be given to someone else.

And now to the river. "The wind skimmed northward along the water, and the deep currents drew the river south. Morag looked at this river flowing both ways, every day, yet it never lost its ancient power for her, and it never ceased to be new."

Like Margaret, I live beside the river, in a house my grandparents used as their cottage. As a child, I explored the river as Huck and Tom explored the Mississippi, poling a raft fashioned from a boathouse door, through a flooded portion of the property. I'd lie across the raft and drift along, peering down, under, watching the grasses bend, wave and right themselves. My place in the various boats used by my grandparents, was always either right at the bow or along side, so I could watch the

Alice's Narrative, page 19
receding shoreline, flat rock ledges, boulders, mosses, weeds, colours, shapes,
shadows, wondering about the blackness and vastness of the universe, and how I came
to be living on this planet.

I've spent many years as a river-watcher. That's where the connection with Morag
began, on the very first page of *The Diviners*. The apparent contradiction of the river
flowing both ways continues to fascinate, even after all these years. The river has
become my metaphor for life, constant, punctuating passages of people and time,
moods, energies, changing direction, carrying, steadying, feeding, refreshing,
strengthening, teaching, healing. A life force.

Margaret poses the question, "How far could anyone see into the river? Near
shore, in the shallows, the water was clear, and there were the clean and broken
clamshells of creatures now dead and the wavering of the underwater weed-forests,
and the flicker of small live fishes, and the undulating lines of gold as the sand ripples
received the sun. Only slightly further out, the water deepened and kept its life from
sight." That's where Margaret found me, further out, in the deep water, unprepared,
having spent all my life in the shallows. 5

Since the suicide death of my twenty-eight year old son, Ian, just over a year ago,
I'd become even more of a river watcher. Energies depleted, all but dysfunctional, I
could only sit and stare and mourn the loss of my son and my mother by suicide. Think

5 [Alice weeps]
Alice - I don't know. I don't know whether I ...this surprises me. I had no idea
I would behave like this ...but I think it's going to be hard for me to read
this next part.
Eleanor - Could I read it for you?
Alice - Yes. Please.
Eleanor - [reads]

Alice's Narrative, page 20
of that statement. My mother and my son by suicide. Even on paper it’s too much to bear. My physical self sat on the porch looking out at the river in some kind of trance, more like agony, more like a state of wishing to be dead, while my mind travelled way out and under. I can’t really say that I made a brave, conscious decision to explore the depths of the river, and I don’t know where I found the mental fortitude to get there. Perhaps it was instinctive, intuitive, gone underground at the age of nine.

Contemplation had always been an enjoyable indulgence. However, deep, dark, guilt-ridden introspection proved dangerous, life-threatening. I became quite lost, stuck, entangled in the debris, confused and disoriented by the dark part of the psyche, that awful place that claimed my mother and my son. I had to confront and deal with words that destroyed so many sensitive souls: disappointment, discouragement, dependency, despondency, disgust, drugs, despair, depression, addiction, abuse, poverty, oppression. I recognized those words and felt their power. They made me think that maybe life on this planet is really some horrible mistake. How could it be otherwise when it becomes something that has to be survived and endured?

Today’s children, my children, the children of Grassy Narrows, Davis Inlet, Big Cove cry their pitiful message: “Life is too painful here. Life here sucks. There is no hope. We want to die.” Hopelessness is a place that holds a yearning for death. Death offers an end to unbearable suffering. Did I want to continue living in such a place?

Filled with such anger and rage at a society unable to offer Hope, I struggled in an attempt to push all those bad words out of my way. Fortunately, by some quirk of fate, as simple as a teacher asking a student to read a book and keep a journal, a wise

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Eleanor - [hesitating, in tears.] I’m sorry.

Alice’s Narrative, page 21
facilitator named Margaret Laurence/Morag Gunn threw me a line of words that helped me find that nine-year-old self waiting patiently on a rock at the bottom of the river, still full of wonder, curiosity and ability, just waiting for the right words.

Margaret gave me the knowledge that when you're lost and struggling in a place filled with powerful bad words, that same place holds an equal portion of powerful good words, and it also holds words that enable you to get from one place to another, like anger and rage. Anger and rage, full of energy, have the ability to release you from the place that's been holding you down, and take you out into the current, a current running with Will and Determination, words that can bring about change in direction.

Margaret offered a motto of Hope. "My Hope is Constant in Thee. It sounds like a voice from the past. Whose voice though? Does it matter? It does not matter. What matters is the voice is there and I have heard these words that have been given to me. And will not deny what has been given."

Margaret offered: "I'm not God and I'm not responsible for everything." I say this often. It helps. There's a profound message of acceptance in The Diviners.

It's February, and the river is frozen to a depth that allows me, when conditions are just right, to walk to the deepest place and lie on my stomach, with my hands cupped over my eyes so that I can see straight down. My dog, Jackson, looks on quite bewildered by this strange behaviour. The water is clear. I can see right down to the bottom. A few fish, floating leaves, silty sand and rocks. Funny how I always thought it much deeper, darker, filled with weeds and junk.
Margaret not only saved me, she gave me the courage to BE what and who I really am, a collector of words, a gardener, a river-watcher. A writer.

Thank you, Margaret.

THANK YOU, NATHALIE
Chapter 3

FINDING THE SELF IN THE FACE OF THE OTHER:
NATHALIE'S COMMENTARY ON ALICE'S NARRATIVE

Time is not a line but a dimension, like the dimensions of space. If you can bend space you can bend time also, and if you knew enough and could move faster than light you could travel backwards in time and exist in two places at once.....

...I began ...to think of time as having a shape, something you could see, like a series of liquid transparencies, one laid on top of another. You don't look back along time but down through it, like water. Sometimes this comes to the surface, sometimes that, sometimes nothing. Nothing goes away.

Margaret Atwood, Cat's Eye, 1988.

With economy and clarity, Alice announces her themes in the first paragraphs of her narrative, the themes of friendships and lineages among women, literary and human, and of how they have set her free. She says she has bonded with the author of The Diviners, Margaret Laurence, because Laurence has lived a life similar in time and place to her own, and describes experiences in The Diviners which Alice feels she has also known in her life. Most importantly, Laurence has rescued her from a "very dark and dangerous place." Had she met her a few years ago, Alice writes, "I feel certain we would have recognized in each other the kindred spirit connection." For these reasons, Alice decides, with respect, to call Laurence by her first name, Margaret, and also by the name Morag, (the chief character in The Diviners,) and to use them interchangeably, because, "I truly believe they are one" (AN, 1, 4-11).

Alice is an educated and sensitive reader. She tells us that though she wishes she had met Margaret Laurence, who lived in Lakefield, Ontario, in the last years of her life, only a
short drive from Alice's home, she never did meet her. (AN, 18, 9-10) Alice is fully aware
that the author Margaret Laurence who lived in Lakefield is not identical with Margaret
Laurence the implied author, the narrative voice, of *The Diviners*, and certainly not with
Morag, Laurence's fictional character. That all three, and sometimes all three together, are her
friends is an important concept, but how is it to be understood? 1

In her book *What Can She Know* Lorraine Code critiques what she calls the received
view of subjectivity and agency implicit in analyses of ethical and epistemological issues. This
is the view that "knowledge, once acquired, is timelessly and universally true [and which]
presupposes constancy and uniformity in subjectivity across historical, cultural and other
boundaries" (Code, 1991, 71). In contradistinction to this view, Code takes a position which
is a "situated, self-critical, socially produced subjectivity," (p. 82) in which to explore the
ethical and epistemological consequences of relationship in knowing, acting, and being. This
position is similar to Donna Haraway's "Situated Knowledges" (1988) and other works noted
in the previous chapter.

Code suggests that knowing other people is a paradigmatic knowing (p. 39) as much
as the kind of knowledge claim as "The book is red," or "The door is open," which is

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1 Alice is not alone in making a friend of an author as author and through her fiction,
as opposed to as a fellow human being, and in seeing that friendship as central to her own life.
Here is Brenda Daly (1993) in "My Friend Joyce Carol Oates": "Joyce Carol Oates is my
friend: by speaking for me (when my own voice was not yet strong), her fiction has taught
me to speak for myself; by courageously developing and changing (through the past
twenty-five years), her fiction has taught me to insist on growth and change; and by
continuing to insist on the value of a woman's perspective -- despite often hostile criticism --
her fiction has also taught me to persist, despite the sometimes harsh attacks on my own
work" (p.163).

See also Kendall (1993) "Catherine Trotter Cockburn and Me: A Duography," in
which Kendall speaks of Catherine Trotter Cockburn, an 18th century writer, as friend and
exemplar (pp. 273 ff).
privileged in positivistic epistemologies (p. 36). She points out that, developmentally, an infant learns to respond *cognitively* to its caregivers *long before* it can recognize the simplest of physical objects (p. 37).

Code writes:

Knowledge of other people develops, operates and is open to interpretation at different levels; it admits of degree in ways that knowing that the book is red does not. Hence it is qualitatively different from the simple observational knowledge commonly constitutive of epistemological paradigms. (p. 37) In knowing other people, a knower's subjectivity is implicated, from its earliest developmental stages; in such knowledge her subjectivity develops and changes. (p. 38)

I find Code's ideas persuasive. If knowing a person is to be seen as a paradigmatic knowing, it provides a fresh model for knowledge, a model which seems to be rich in possibilities for human development. Knowing a person is a relationship which depends on many strands of connection, each linking the knower and known, and each affecting all the others. It can be a deeply involving knowledge, especially in the case of intimate friendship. It seems to me that Alice's knowledge of Margaret/Morag is of this type. Based on a sense of having lived through similar experiences, it develops out of multiple affinities, affinities which Alice finds nurturing, and which deeply affect her subjectivity. In the case of fictional characters and implied authors, the reciprocity typical of relationships between living people is a special case, the case of reading, in which the reader reads the text through the lens of her own particular experience. The meanings the reader makes out of the text will vary according to the urgencies of her need and will change over time. (Suleiman and Crosman, 1980)
In examining the ethical implications of her idea of knowing a person as a paradigmatic knowing, Code explores Annette Baier's concept of "second persons." According to Baier, "a person, perhaps, is best seen as one who was long enough dependent upon other persons to acquire the essential arts of personhood. Persons essentially are second persons, who grew up with other persons" (Baier, 1985, 84). Of this concept, Code writes:

Implications of this claim in several of Baier's other essays add up to a repudiation of individualism in its ethical and epistemological manifestations, which is less an explicit critique than a demonstration of the communal basis of moral and mental activity.....She shows that uniqueness, creativity, and moral accountability grow out of interdependence and continually turn back to it for affirmation and continuation.

(Code, 1991, 82)

Alice's close connection with the fictional character Morag, it seems to me, incorporates much of this quality of second personhood. She sees in Morag, not only a person whose life journey told in The Diviners had much in common with her own, but a kindred spirit, "a fellow reader, a collector of words, a ... writer." Indeed Code's reading of Baier in the lines quoted expresses with precision my sense of what all of us women in this inquiry are doing as we work together to discover and recover meanings in the novels which disrupt the dominance and domination of the male-centred culture in which we read and live. It is our sense of interdependence, of being part of a common endeavour which includes many
contemporaries with whom we communicate in print and in person, which gives us the
courage to change ourselves. It is, as well, our sense of a lineage of women, which
collectively we have had to recover again and again (Spender, 1982), and which as individuals
we have continually to create for ourselves.

Alice celebrates some of her flesh-and-blood friends in her narrative, and they are very
important in the theme she develops, but clearly Morag is a friend of a special type, both
qualitatively and in the effect she has on Alice. Morag is an artifact created of words, words
which express an existence which is recognizably human, but which nonetheless is an
abstraction, an artistic heightening and deepening, of the impression given in the world by a
living human being. As a fully realized fictional character, Morag exists in The Diviners as a
powerful presence which, Alice attests, was deeply influential at a crucial moment in her life.
As a creature of words, however, Morag exists on another plane altogether from Alice's flesh
and blood friends.

We know other people, both flesh-and-blood and fictional characters, through the lens
of our own experience, which produces impressions which vary according to our individual
life histories. In the case of fiction, these variations in how any one fictional character is
known is qualitatively different. It is both the power and the limitation of words which gives
the fictional character her ability to affect the reader in ways not possible for flesh-and-blood
friends.

Alice tells us explicitly in her narrative that it was Morag/Margaret's words which
drew her in, first and last. It is "the first connection with Morag at the level of language
which is so terribly important," (AN, 4, 1-2) and it was Margaret Laurence's "gift of words in
The Diviners [which] set her free from a very dark and dangerous place" (AN, 1, 5-6). Part of this connection at the level of words is that both Alice and Morag are writers, "collectors of words," but the most important aspect is that Alice, the reader, can connect with Morag, the fictional character, the creature of words, in ways which are different from how she connects with her flesh-and-blood friends. As a reader Alice re-creates Morag for herself, from her own perceptions and understandings. She foregrounds some qualities, leaves others in the shadows. She responds to Morag according to her own desires and needs, though this does not imply that the fictional character is merely a figment of the reader's imagination. The reader's re-creation of a fictional character is an artifact of the author, and the reader, and the language of the text itself, not any one of these alone. As I have noted in chapter 2, however difficult this idea may be to explain theoretically, in practice we all know it to be true in our experience. The act of reading is neither a transparent communication from author to reader, nor a complete submission to the discourse of the text, nor only an exploration of the reader's own subjectivity.

If she had only been exploring her own subjectivity, I do not think that Alice would have been so much affected by Margaret Laurence's words, and her character Morag. Alice is clear that she derives strength and courage from Morag, whom she views as different from herself in important ways. Morag, she feels, has been stronger, has made more venturesome decisions in her life than Alice herself has. Yet it is not only that she chose Morag as a fictional friend at this moment in her life out of all the other powerful fictional characters she could have chosen, but that she chose just what she wanted and needed out of this voluminous novel, which as she says, "includes racism, classism, child abuse, masturbation,
menstruation, puberty, abortion, patriarchy, feminism, erotic dancing, explicit sex, oppression, birth control" (AN, 11, 8-10). The Morag that Alice re-created in her mind and heart is both unique to her, and the same Morag that Celia and Eleanor and countless other readers know.

It is this quality of Morag, her triple (at least) existence as the creature of Margaret Laurence, of the language of the text, and of Alice as reader, which gives her unique power to affect Alice. As, in part, a creature of her own mind, Morag can answer Alice's needs in a more immediate, more unmediated way than is possible with her flesh-and-blood friends. Morag, as part of Alice, can and does reach deep into Alice's being. She has a passport Alice cannot give to anyone else in the same way. It is worth looking at this phenomenon more closely, because of course it applies not only to Alice but to Eleanor and Celia and all other readers.

In her discussion of the phenomenology of reading, Elizabeth Freund comments that this approach encompasses the dualism of reader and text, of act and structure in a single concept, the concept of intentionality. Intentionality here does not mean desire, or what the author meant to say, but denotes the structure of an act by which the subject imagines, or conceptualizes, or is conscious of an object, thereby bringing the object into being; but the intuition of the object simultaneously constitutes the subject as a vessel of consciousness. The subject is thus (in intending the object) paradoxically the origin of all meanings but is also the effect of consciousness. In such a structure the traditional subject/object dichotomy disintegrates. (1987, pp. 136-7)
This is the intentional state which was central to Jerome Bruner's understanding of how readers make meanings from texts. (See above, chapter 2.) Georges Poulet (1969) has written in moving terms about how intentional states work in practice. Elizabeth Freund quotes his description of the text-reader relationship: his words seem very apt as a description of Alice's relationship with Margaret Laurence's text.

This is the remarkable transformation wrought in me through the act of reading. Not only does it cause the physical objects around me to disappear, including the very book I am reading, but it replaces those external objects with a congeries of mental objects in close rapport with my own consciousness. And yet the very intimacy in which I now live with my objects is going to present me with new problems. The most curious of these is the following: I am someone who happens to have as objects of his own thought, thoughts which are part of a book I am reading, and which are therefore the cogitations of another. They are the thoughts of another, and yet it is I who am their subject. The situation is even more astonishing than the one noted above. I am thinking the thoughts of another. Of course, there would be no cause for astonishment if I were thinking it as the thought of another. But I think it as my very own....Because of the strange invasion of my person by the thoughts of another, I am a self who is granted the experience of thinking thoughts foreign to him. I am the subject of thoughts other than my own. My consciousness behaves as though it were the consciousness of another....Whatever I think is part of
my mental world. And yet here I am thinking a thought which manifestly belongs to another mental world, which is being thought in me just as though I did not exist. . .

Whenever I read, I mentally pronounce an I, and yet the I which I pronounce is not myself. . . for as soon as something is presented as thought, there has to be a thinking subject with whom, at least for the time being, I identify, forgetting myself, alienated from myself. (Quoted in Freund, 1987, p. 138)

In such intimacy it seems not only possible, but likely, that the mind of the reader will be coloured by the text. In reading The Diviners Alice thinks the thoughts of Morag, and in a strange way assumes her being. As Alice claims, this fortifies her; she sees with new eyes, and she makes different choices in her life.

This intimacy is extended in part to Margaret Laurence the implied author. Alice knows from reading Laurence's memoir Dance on Earth that there are significant correspondences between Margaret Laurence, the author, and Morag. She creates a fused being from all these personae and calls her Margaret and/or Morag interchangeably. She finds Margaret/Morag an inspiration and a unique source of strength as she struggles to remake her identity. This struggle is a central theme in the three narratives examined in this inquiry, as it is in so much women's literature. Understanding more how this works is important to understanding how women learn from fiction for their lives.

On the first page of her narrative Alice says that the society described in The Diviners was her experience, that she survived, though "it's cost me, as Morag says, it's damn well cost me" (AN, 1, 13-15). Laurence, she says, "allowed me to go back to my childhood and travel the road a second time with insight and....a greater depth of understanding of the society that
shaped, conditioned, weakened and blinkered me" (AN, 1, 15-18). Alice is eloquent on the topic of the social conditioning which weakened and blinkered her. She reports her comment, in a Women's Studies class which had been discussing the category "disabled", among others such as race, class and gender: "I felt the society of my time and place actually disabled most women by silencing and disempowering us. Societies should not disable, they should enable" (AN, 8, 20 - 9, 2). In the following pages of her narrative, Alice shows some of the ways she feels she was disabled. She was told "Don’t swear/pout/sulk/talk back/ worry/ cry/ stare/question/run/yell. Be quiet/ladylike/good. Behave. Just sit there and be a good girl and don't bother anyone" (AN, 9, 3-5). She comments on "the terrible stigma of out-of-wedlock pregnancy and how it affected, indeed ruined the lives of women, their families, the children born to these 'fallen women'" (AN, 9, 16-17). There is also, "The language of my time and place [which] "conditioned me to racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, all the ISMS confronted and discussed openly today" (AN, 10, 4-5). Of her marriage, and as if in summary, Alice writes:

and so it came to pass that I finished high school, found a job, learned the vocabulary of the medical community working as a medical secretary, lived at home paying board, as was the custom of the time, went dancing (backwards), fell in love, became engaged, married and had children, thus fulfilling the expectations of my parents, myself and my society. It all seemed so straightforward. Roles were clearly defined. I married a man quite like Brooke, who brought into the marriage words given him by the same society: career, leadership, duty, university, Old Boys, success, power, military, ownership,
one-upmanship, good guys vs. bad guys, black and white, no grey. My words taught me to listen to his words, thinking they would, surely, by the same marriage, protect and sustain. (AN, 12, 3-12)

Alice writes that Morag, after she left her marriage at least, "wasn't beguiled or seduced by all that hooey." (AN, 12,13-14) that she was possessed of the requisite qualities for independent thinking and living "like sense of self, education, strength of conviction, determination, and will" (AN, 12, 19-21). "Well, break the dependency, you fool," she tells herself, "Okay, but first you have to recognize and admit the dependency. There it was in front of me, in print, spelled out with such clarity. Morag spoke to me as a child, adolescent, young woman, wife, mother, feminist, environmentalist, humanist, historian, philosopher, humourist, sociologist; moreover, she spoke to me with caring and passion. Fifty-two years is a long time, a life-time to wait for the right words" (AN, 12, 21-13, 5).

How "the right words" can have such power is a key question for this inquiry. How can texts be liberatory for certain readers? What are the factors in the interaction between author, text and reader which result in the remaking of the sense of self in the reader? Alice tells us that books and reading have always been important to her, that Kingston Public Library became her idea of heaven (AN 3, 12 -18). Yet, it was only when she read The Diviners that she "came of age as a reader." "I'm a late bloomer," she admits (AN, 13, 10). All of us in this study, like the majority in our age group, are "late bloomers"; some of us in our generation have yet to bloom. If Alice's bonding with Margaret/Morag rescued her from a dark and dangerous place, why was Alice ready, just at this moment, after a lifetime of reading, to form this bond? Alice has interesting things to say about the "age of nine" (AN,
7,4-13), on which I will comment later. Now I want to look at what might be called the

textual aspect of social conditioning and how it can be disrupted.

Literature, for reading children and adults, is an important part of our social

conditioning, but as noted earlier, reading for women of our generation presented us with a

male-dominated world in which the position of women was clearly defined as secondary.

This reading was sometimes contradictory to other messages we were given in our culture,

but Alice's account of her social conditioning was instantly recognizable by Eleanor and me,

as it would be by many women of our generation.

In order to explore these issues further, it may be helpful to use concepts and

language from Marxist theory, as did Catherine Belsey in the passage quoted in chapter 2 in

which she introduced important aspects of the problem I am addressing. In an influential

article, "Texts, readers, subjects," David Morley critiques the "abstract text-subject

relationship" advanced by the journal Screen. Morley argues in this article for the concept of

interdiscourse. Morley explains that the discursive subject is an interdiscourse, the product of

the effect of discursive practices traversing the subject throughout its history (Morley, 1980,
p. 164). This means, as Belsey pointed out, that the subject (that is the individual

consciousness as constituted by the text) is a product, not of a single but of multiple

discourses which will not all be in agreement. If we apply this concept to our conditioning as

women who grew up before the current women's movement, this means that even before that

movement acted to disrupt the dominance of patriarchal texts and institutions, there were

other texts, other discourses, other practices, which constituted our subjectivities in ways

different from the dominant ideologies. Women's culture, made up of women's groups,
women's arts, women's political organizations, while ignored or discounted by the dominant
culture, have always existed, albeit in weak and truncated forms, and have kept alive other
ways of seeing the world for women.

In a most interesting article, "The Color Purple: Black Women as Cultural Readers,"
Jacqueline Bobo uses the concept of interdiscourse to examine why Black women found
viewing the film The Color Purple a liberatory experience. The women whom she
interviewed told her that they agreed that negative stereotypes of Blacks were used in the
film, and that they were aware that the portrayal of Black males in this film was being
vigorously denounced by Black male viewers, but that they still found that the film accurately
portrayed their experience as Black women. Bobo explains:

My aim is to examine the way in which a specific audience creates meaning from a
mainstream text and uses the reconstructed meaning to empower themselves and
their social group. This analysis will show how Black women as audience members
and cultural consumers have connected up with what has been characterized as the
'renaissance of Black women writers'. The predominant element of this movement is
the creation and maintenance of images of Black women that are based upon Black
women's constructions, history and real-life experiences. (Bobo, 1988, p. 93)

While I think some of Bobo's analysis oversimplifies matters (as I explain below), I agree with
her main idea that it is new images of women and women's constructions, history and real-life
experiences which enable the movement from inscription in sexist ideologies to the formation
of new, more liberated, identities. Bobo writes:
A viewer of a film (reader of text) comes to the moment of engagement with the work with a knowledge of the world and a knowledge of other texts, or media products. What this means is that when a person comes to view a film she/he does not leave her/his histories, whether social, cultural, economic, racial, or sexual at the door. An audience member from a marginalized group (people of colour, women, the poor, and so on) has an oppositional stance as they participate in mainstream media. The motivation for this counter-reception is that we understand that mainstream media has never rendered our segment of the population faithfully. We have as evidence our years of watching films and television programmes and reading plays and books. Out of habit, as readers of mainstream texts, we have learned to ferret out the beneficial and put up blinders against the rest.

(Bobo, 1988, p. 96)

I think this view underestimates the pervasiveness and power of male domination in texts and society prior to the current women's movement. As I have said, it is not only Alice, but all of us in this study, as well as many others, who accepted and were formed by the dominant ideologies of our time. Though our souls may have "fretted in the shadow of his language" (Joyce, 1964), we were almost always unaware of why this should be. We had no concepts or language to understand our discomfort. While I agree with Bobo that readers and audiences engage with a work with their own histories and with a knowledge of other works and other texts, this will not always result in an oppositional stance or reading against the grain. For this to happen there has to be a congruence of factors which acting together create the context in which the reader may read with new eyes and new understandings.

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One instance of such a congruence is contained in the story of how Black women novelists evolved in their attitudes faced with the conjunction of racism and sexism. It is significant that the women watching *The Color Purple* in Bobo's study are expressing their sense of their oppression as women in 1988, while their expression of their oppression as Blacks is much older. In her article "Trajectories of Self-Definition: Placing Contemporary Afro-American Women's Fiction," Barbara Christian explains that the development of Afro-American women's fiction is a mirror image of the intensity of the relationship between racism and sexism in the United States (1985, 234). Christian writes that early Black women novelists, for instance Frances Harper in the 1890s, wrote with the conscious purpose of securing justice for all Blacks. Harper's heroine in *Iola Leroy* is a version of the "lady" white Americans were expected to honour and respect. In creating this ideal heroine, Harper was not addressing Black women, or Black people, but white Americans (234). This type of heroine is found in Black women's novels through the whole period to Dorothy West's *The Living is Easy* (1948), but it created an incredible tension between the (male defined) "femininity" of these heroines and their actual behaviour. The heroines are beautiful, light skinned, dependent beings, and would be non-aggressive if racism did not exist, but they appear to believe that if they did achieve these qualities, they would lose important aspects of themselves (235). This tension has its roots, says Christian, in the fact that Afro-American women, contrary to the white norm, could not survive unless they generated some measure of independence and self-definition.

Following the civil rights movement in the U.S., Black women's fiction emphasized the importance of the black community as a means and component of self-definition. This
sense of community was for a time empowering for the whole group, but ultimately it was
destructive for women because not only did the individual heroine accept racist and sexist
definitions of herself, but the entire black community, men and women, accepted this
construct (Christian, 239). An early and important exception is Zora Neale Hurston's Their
Eyes Were Watching God (1937). This novel is a forerunner of the Black fiction of the 1970s
and 1980s (and a key influence on Alice Walker) in its vision of the self as central and its use
of language to explore the self as Black and female (Christian, 237). Afro-American women's
novels of the 1970s and 1980s also shift their focus from the whole Black community to
Black women, and look at ways in which the quality of Black women's lives is affected by the
interrelationships of sexism and racism, and pose the question concerning to what community
Black women must belong in order to understand themselves most effectively in their totality
as Blacks and women (Christian, 242). One instance of a congruence of factors with
emancipatory effects is the community of women celebrated in Alice Walker's The Color
Purple. In that novel Celie achieves her inner growth as a person and her movement away
from dire poverty and oppression as a woman through the support of Shug, Sophia, and
Nettie. The loving sexual relationship between Celie and Shug is at the centre of The Color
Purple and is presented as a natural, strengthening process through which both women, as
well as the people around them, grow (Christian, 246).

This account of the evolution of Afro-American women novelists has many points of
connection to the themes Alice develops in her narrative. Women's friendships, community,
and especially lineages are for Alice, too, a source of liberation and transformative power.
She writes:
Somehow I feel I've at last plugged into a global language network via my personal experiences in life, Women's Studies, Feminist Theory, Women in Literature, and realize that my voice is important, included, heard, acknowledged. This realization is WONDERFUL. (AN, 13, 10-14)

Throughout her narrative Alice notes and celebrates her sense of the importance of women's friendships and of belonging to a lineage of women and that it was Margaret Laurence and The Diviners that made her aware of this lineage. This theme is foregrounded in the central section in which she describes how her sense of kinship with Morag and with Margaret Laurence the implied author is intertwined with her friendships with women. "Morag, spoke to me as a child, adolescent, young woman, wife, mother, feminist, environmentalist, humanist, historian, philosopher, humourist, sociologist; moreover, she spoke to me with caring and passion" (AN, 13, 2-4). "Margaret's words released so much emotion," she writes, and describes Ella Gerson's home and quotes sections of the novel in which Morag is undone by all the warmth and liveliness of Ella's home and family (AN, 13, 14 to 14, 31).

Alice finds resonances in her own life with these scenes in The Diviners, and it is this sense of communion, shared experience, and most of all acceptance which is transformative for Alice, and which allows her to form a new stronger identity. Alice says, "It's all so simple really, so beautiful in its simplicity. Give children the right words" (AN, 13, 6-7). I think, however, that "the right words" only attain their transformative power in certain circumstances. Alice admits she is a late bloomer (AN, 13, 10), that "fifty-two years is a long time, a life-time to wait for the right words" (AN, 13, 4-5). It is not, I think, because some "right words" did not exist in print or in talk in Alice's youth or the years of her young
womanhood, that she had to wait until she was fifty-two to hear them. "Right words," though not plentiful or highly visible, did exist in Alice's younger years, but they were not powerful enough to do their work because the right congruence of circumstances did not exist for Alice as it did not exist for so many in our generation.

For Alice, as for many others, it took the current women's movement and the support of friends of like mind to create the environment which would allow her to read *The Diviners* with such effect. Margaret/Morag is such an influence on Alice because her own life history has brought her to a place where the "right words" can do their work. They have created the conditions which open her awareness to the rich source of strength and insight which influences her so deeply. Alice writes throughout her narrative about the importance of women's friendships and lineage, both in her own life and in Morag's. The long quotation from the novel she allows herself, the description of Ella Gerson's home (AN, 13, 14 to 14, 31) is central in her account of her relationship with *The Diviners* because it shows the strength and warmth which can exist in a female household headed by a strong and loving mother. Morag, orphaned as a young child, is motherless, having lost her biological mother and having been put in the care of the inadequate Prin. Yet, as Alice points out, she is given a "mother" and a sense of a strong female lineage by Christie. He invents for her Piper Gunn and his woman Morag, who had "the courage of a falcon, and the beauty of a deer and the warmth of a home, and the faith of saints" (AN, 6, 6-7). Morag as a child asks for, and is given, stories of her fabulous "ancestors" over and over again. As Alice says, they were essential to her development; she was the "symbolic mother" of which the *non credere* group spoke, as described by de Lauretis. (See above chapter 2.)
Alicels sense of how this theme of women's friendships and lineage overlaps from novel to life and back again is expressed in her quotation from Margaret Laurence's memoir *Dance on Earth*. This scene, in which Laurence writes of her dance with her daughter, and her sense of mothering and women's lineage in her own life, is linked by Alice to her celebration of her friends and their daughters. She does this both immediately, as in the scene where, after a Full Moon Feast, she comes upon her friend Kate and her daughters Jane and Elizabeth entwined in an "exquisitely beautiful mother-daughter embrace" (AN, 15, 11-12) and by extension in her description of the clothing exchange and the women, both younger and older, who take part. Alice writes:

*My sisters and I comment on how much we miss our mother, who died at the age of forty-nine. We miss her arms around us when life seems bloody terrifying, and we miss her in all the ways daughters miss and need their mother. We long for her to see our children and be part of our everyday lives. We share that terrible loss of motherlove. I related to that scene with Morag and Mrs. Gerson at a visceral level, tangible in its intensity. (AN, 14, 31 to 15, 2)*

Though Alice was in her early twenties when her mother died, like Morag, and like Margaret Laurence, she lost her mother far too soon. This loss and the longing it engenders form deep bonds between Alice and her sisters, between Alice and Morag, and between Alice and Margaret Laurence.3

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3 Cf. Melody Graulich (1993), "Somebody Must Say Those Things : An Essay For My Mother." I could not see that the story was really about the teller, my mother, about her deep, abiding attachment to my grandmother and how it affected her feelings about herself. I could not see that that attachment and the feelings and values it expresses were the richest "secret" my mother had to give me, that her story was meant to let me know -- finally -- that a woman's strengths -- nurturance, love, interdependence, vulnerability -- make her,...a "treasure." Although I am a feminist, I rendered my foremothers invisible (p.186).
In a sense all of us in male-dominated societies have lost our "mothers." While we fully acknowledge the essential difference between being a biological and a metaphorical orphan, we share much of the sense of loss and longing Alice expresses. All of us need mothers like Morag, Piper Gunn's woman, like Mrs Gerson, like Shug in *The Color Purple*, strong beautiful women alive and at work in the world, showing us how.

I think all these nurturing friendships, with flesh-and-blood women and with fictional characters, can be understood as having the quality of "second personhood" in Annette Baier's use of the term. If persons are essentially *second* persons, who grew up with other persons, (Baier, 1985, 84) then these friendships, working together, have created the condition for a "second personhood" of a particular kind. Like myself, Alice and Eleanor grew up at a time when our personhood was shaped by a male-dominated culture. We had few models of strong women on which to shape our personhood. On the contrary, the vast majority of the women in our lives and in the books we read were dependent, even sometimes subservient beings. Our first "second personhood" was formed in the virtual absence of strong female models. In my own case, I was lucky. My mother was a successful interior decorator and furniture designer who maintained her work for several years after her marriage to my father. My parents were personal friends of two of the most prominent women at Queen's during my growing up years: Dr. A.S. Douglas, professor of astronomy, and dean of women; and Jean Royce, the registrar. I took courage from their examples, but they were incomplete, as they were unmarried and childless. I wanted both meaningful work outside the home and a family.
It is only in the environment created by the current women's movement, in which new strong models of women exist in life and in fiction, that our second "second personhood" is possible. We remake ourselves through our connections with our new friends, both flesh-and-blood and characters in fiction. It is a reciprocal movement. We find stronger friends, old and new, because we are stronger ourselves. We are stronger because we can now find, and recognize, stronger friends.

It is this congruence, I think, which allows us to re-make ourselves. In the interdiscourse which is our lives, we have introduced a bright new text -- the text of strong, warm, nurturing, independent women. We can read this text because we have formed communities of women friends. Like the women watching the film The Color Purple, we can find and assert our own positions, our own subjectivities, distinct from those of our fathers, our husbands, and our brothers. We can now hear "the right words" because we have changed and we have changed not only because there are many more "right words" for us to hear, but because we know how to find them and to hear them.  

At the end of her narrative, Alice tells a story of stark terror and beauty, impossible to read without heartbreak and tears. As a mother of grown sons, I can imagine no fate worse than to lose a child by suicide. This fate Alice endured. "All but dysfunctional," she writes, "my physical self sat on the porch looking out at the river in some kind of trance, more like agony, more like a state of wishing to be dead, while my mind travelled way out and under

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4 In the psychoanalytic literature, to take one other genre, there are many stories of women who, formed in a male-dominated culture, have remade themselves in ways they find more satisfying. See, for example, Marion Woodman, Leaving My Father's House: A Journey to Conscious Femininity. Boston: Shambhala, 1992 and Janet O. Dallett, When the Spirits Come Back. Toronto: Inner City Books, 1988.
In this place Alice was all but overwhelmed. The "right words" disappeared for a time, replaced in a vile crowd, by words of despair, destruction, pain, and hopelessness. Forced by her grief to stop, to step out of her job and her daily pursuits, to sit still and take time, Alice gave herself to her grief.

She begins the final part of her narrative with the eloquent words, "And now to the river." Like Margaret," she says, "I live beside the river." and like her, "this river, flowing both ways,...never lost its ancient power for her." It is the river which gives Alice her metaphor for redemption. For her as for Morag and for Margaret Laurence, "The river has become my metaphor for life, constant, punctuating passages of people and time, moods, energies, changing direction, carrying, steadying, feeding, refreshing, strengthening, teaching, healing. A life force" (AN, 20, 6-9).

There is very little I want or need to say more. Just a little about the reference to the nine-year-old self. Alice writes that Margaret found her there, "further out, in the deep water" and threw her a line of words that helped her find "that nine year old self waiting patiently on a rock at the bottom of the river, still full of wonder, curiosity and ability" (AN, 22, 2-3). Alice had explained the reference to the nine-year-old self earlier in her narrative:

Gloria Steinem, in Revolution From Within quotes from Carol Gilligan and her colleagues at the Harvard Graduate School of Education on girls in the pivotal years just before adolescence, "...that girls' development in adolescence may hinge on their resisting not the loss of innocence but the loss of knowledge,

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5 Margaret Laurence had a cottage beside the Ottonabee River near Lakefield, Ontario. It is the source of the river imagery in The Diviners as she tells us in "Where The World Began," Heart of a Stranger, 1976.
...and early female strengths don't just disappear, they just go underground."

She points to the number of women novelists, from Charlotte Brontë in Jane Eyre to Toni Morrison in The Bluest Eye who have used a nine-or-ten-year-old girl as their narrator, their most clear-sighted witness." (AN, 7, 5 - 12)

In the Prologue to their book, Making Connections, the Relational Worlds of Adolescent Girls at Emma Willard School, from which Steinem quoted, Carol Gilligan, Nona Lyons and Trudy Hanmer write:

Perhaps adolescence is an especially critical time in women's development because it poses a problem of connection that is not easily resolved. As the river of a girl's life flows into the sea of Western culture, she is in danger of drowning or disappearing. To take on the problem of appearance, which is the problem of her development, and to connect her life with history on a cultural scale, she must enter -- and by entering disrupt -- a tradition in which "human" has for the most part meant male. Thus a struggle often breaks out in girls' lives at the edge of adolescence, and the fate of this struggle becomes key to girls' development and to Western civilization. (1990, 4)

Alice says all this and more with her powerful image of her nine-year-old self waiting patiently on a rock at the bottom of the river. Though, like so many of us, she was socialized into a society which denied essential parts of herself, and placed her in subordinate positions simply because she was a woman, those essential parts did not die; they went underwater. When the life she had built was shattered by her son's suicide, Alice was forced to give herself time. She stepped out of the busy routine of full time work combined with household management, and let herself take the plunge into the deep waters of the psyche. This plunge
was risky to the point of being life threatening, but after enduring the emotions symbolized by the words she lists -- disappointment, discouragement, dependency, despondency, disgust, drugs, despair, depression, addiction, abuse, poverty, oppression (AN, 21, 11-13), -- she was, as she says, thrown a life line of new powerful words by her friend Margaret Laurence/Morag Gunn.

With the support of these new words, Alice rediscovered that patient nine-year-old self who had been waiting so long. She found she could, in a sense, grow again, developing a new self from the core of the nine-year-old who had not been co-opted into the values and mores of a male dominated society. Alice acknowledges that she received "powerful good words" from *The Diviners*, words that offered the release of anger and rage, as well as hope and strength. With their help she was able to begin her recovery from the edge of despair. The image of the nine-year-old waiting patiently at the bottom of the river, however, carries another dimension of meaning. It tells us that the "powerful good words" of *The Diviners* not only enabled Alice to transform herself from a woman driven to despair to a woman able to face her life with hope, but in fact in rediscovering her old nine-year-old self, she found a new basis on which to base her identity. This self is the self referred to by Carol Gilligan which resists "not the loss of innocence but the loss of knowledge" (1990, p.5). This knowledge, and strength, as Steinem remarked, did not disappear but just went underground, or underwater.

If the "second persons" of Alice's first maturing failed to provide her with models of strength and independence on which to base her adult identity, by the time of her reconnection to her nine-year-old self many years later Alice was in much better company.
She was "plugged into a global language network via [her] personal experiences in life, Women's Studies, Feminist Theory, Women in Literature" (AN, 13, 11-12). She had a circle of women friends who were exploring long suppressed ways of being in the world, and, very importantly, she had Margaret/Morag. She had a community with which she could work to build her new identity and her new ways of looking at and being in the world. With this help, the interdiscourse in her life could be a force for the radical new interpretations she was making.⁶ These interpretations were, if Lorraine Code is correct, a form of paradigmatic knowledge, in which Alice's subjectivity develops and changes (Code, 1991, p. 38).

Margaret/Morag was for Alice a transformative experience.

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⁶ Here is a recent example of collaboration among women. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation video of The Diviners (1992) was written and produced by a team of women. The four women who wrote the script, according to the producer Kim Todd, were apprehensive about adapting an important work by such a revered author. The article explains: helping them overcome that fear was the fact that they were women working with other women. "There were so many critical scenes where we had what I called pyjama-party script meetings," recalled Todd. "You would say, 'Now what would Morag be feeling here?' And someone -- we'd all take our turns -- would say, 'You know, I had such and such happen to me,' and we'd feed it in." V.Dwyer, (1992) "Company of women: A largely female crew shoots a Canadian classic." MacLeans, (June 15), 51.
By recalling events in my life, I have been trying to sort out when I first read *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*. I know where I was living at the time; I know where I was working; I know what had occurred in my life just before I read *Lonely Passion*; I know why I came to read it at the moment that I did; I know what occurred in my life after I had read it; and I know to whom I talked about the book after I had read it. All of these memories help me situate my reading of *Lonely Passion*. I am therefore pretty sure that I first read *Lonely Passion* in the spring of 1968. But although in terms of the calendar, I cannot remember the exact date, in terms of the impact the novel had on my life, I can remember the moment exactly. Reading *Lonely Passion* was an epiphany.

*Lonely Passion* made such an impression on me that for a long time after, I measured the quality of my life against that of Judith Hearne in *Lonely Passion*. Whenever my life was taking another of its turns for the worse, I would ask myself, Is my life yet as bad as hers? Is the desperation of my days as total as was hers? Sometimes the answers I got were equivocal. Sometimes they were not. Desperation, I have come to realize, wears many guises. Even today, I am haunted, if not by *Lonely Passion* itself, then by the way much of my life has been too close to the story of *Lonely Passion* for comfort.

When I first read *Lonely Passion*, I was a bored, lonely, and severely depressed young woman working in an ill-paying job and looking after a young son. *Lonely Passion* shocked
me into trying to change my lot in life for the better. Trapped as I was by poverty and a child's cries, I was not able to accomplish this to my satisfaction, not in 1968, nor in 1969, nor in 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, or 1974, but I kept trying. Yet all the while, I was terrified that if I did not act, 'do something', I would end up like Judith Hearne, broken on the wheel of life. My failure to achieve a better life for myself despite all those years of struggle was, I think, not so much because of a lack of will on my part — though it might have been because of a lack of skill — but because of considerable ill will on the part of other people towards myself. Until 1972, it seemed that hindrance always eclipsed help. After 1972, hindrance and help were more in balance. Before 1972, I was, like Judith Hearne, a victim.

After 1972, unlike Judith Hearne, I started to become a survivor. Indeed, for a brief moment in 1975-1976, when I was newly married, and beginning my studies towards a doctorate in Education, it seemed to me that I had within my reach a life as unlike Judith Hearne's as it was possible to get. Social position and scholarly achievement, and with them, financial security, were going to be mine at last. Then, suddenly, late in 1976, catastrophe struck. Thereafter, the influence that Lonely Passion had on me shifted into reverse. From this time on, my memories of Judith Hearne's life of quiet desperation prompted me not to try to change my life but to accept the status quo. I feared that if I acted instead of reacted, if I 'took charge of my life' as the self-help books have it, I would bring upon myself a life even more like Judith Hearne's than the one I was experiencing.

After I read Lonely Passion in the spring of 1968, I subsequently read it three more times. The second time I read Lonely Passion was in the academic year 1975-76. I was taking a course in Sociology of Knowledge. The theme of the class was the social construction of
boredom and depression, so a study of Lonely Passion was appropriate. Judith Hearne's life was nothing if not boring and depressing. In this class, I first referred to Lonely Passion in a weekly log for which the assigned topic was a narrative of boredom and depression. From the errors of fact within the log — I describe Judith Hearne as living in Dublin, not Belfast — it is clear that at this point I had not reread Lonely Passion. But while I wrote about Lonely Passion from memory, I had a good recall of its theme. I then wrote a paper on the novelist as phenomenological sociologist, comparing Brian Moore to Irving Goffman. For this paper, I did indeed reread Lonely Passion.

When I read Lonely Passion for the second time, my circumstances, as I have suggested, had changed dramatically from those in which I read it for the first time. I was newly married to a young man of 'good' family who professed to adore me, and I was doing well in my studies. My degree would qualify me to teach university, and securely employed at last, I would no longer have to endure the penury brought on by my 'catch-as-catch-can' employment. Moreover, I thought my marriage — Kevin, my new husband, came from a Canadian Establishment family, and was both a member of the Nova Scotia Bar and an articling clerk with the Ontario Bar — would safeguard me from want. I thought I had doubly insured myself against privation — I had both the anticipation of a rewarding career and the expectation of a 'good' marriage. In 1975-1976, I truly thought "Everything's going my way." At the moment when I wrote the paper on the novelist as phenomenological sociologist, there was nothing of the fictional character of Judith Hearne in the self that I recognized as being the 'new me'. (At that point, I think I must have thought selves could be
put on or discarded like blouses. I think I must also have thought that at last I was wearing a blouse with a designer label.)

The third time I read Lonely Passion was in the early 1980s, when I was trapped in an abusive marriage. In late 1976, about six months after I had written the paper on the novelist as sociologist, Kevin's adoration had degenerated into abuse. Kevin who was by this time in the Bar Admission course at Osgoode Hall, physically attacked me when I was about three months pregnant. My life once more became like that of Judith Hearne. Actually, my life was worse than that of Judith Hearne. Stigmatized though Judith Hearne was, she never had to bear the stigma of being an abused wife. Furthermore, unlike Judith Hearne, who only had herself to care for, I had two children who were in grave danger of being sucked into the same maelstrom of despair that was pulling me under. But were I to act to save myself by leaving the marriage, I would put them in jeopardy. Kevin threatened both to leave me destitute, a condition that would adversely affect both my children, and to sue for custody of my younger child, his daughter.

In 1988, however, I left Kevin, recent reforms to the Family Law Act having making it possible to do so without fear of destitution. Since 1989, I have been writing about my life and in this way have rewritten my life. In finally completing my doctoral thesis, I have achieved the scholarly success that almost was mine in 1976. Social success doesn't matter that much any more. My pecuniary state is, however, still sufficiently desperate that I still equate financial success with financial survival. I now speak of having rewoven the web of myself, as opposed to having changed myself as from one blouse to another. I have brought this rewoven self to my fourth reading of Lonely Passion. I was, in truth, hoping to avoid
reading the novel for a fourth time, but had to reread it in order to refresh my reluctant memory of the lives of both myself and Judith Hearne.

At the time I first read Lonely Passion, I was working as an editorial assistant at Gage Educational Publishing. It was my fourth job since graduating from History of Art at the University of Toronto in 1965. As my first job, I taught art and English in a suburban Ottawa high school; as my second job, I had worked as the manager of the framing department of a commercial art gallery in Ottawa; as my third job, I had served as a producer of pilot audio-visual programs in art education for Paul Arthur of the Society of Art Publications. Only three things had been constant in my three-and-a-half years of employment prior to reading Lonely Passion: at work, I was underpaid (not so much when I was teaching, but certainly thereafter) and discontented; and at home, I was an extremely lonely and unhappy single mother of a son.

My son had been born after my third year of undergraduate studies. Because I was unmarried, a great deal of shame and blame was attached to his birth. His birth had been a typically 1960s experience of a passive mother being delivered of a child. The experience had been replete with mandatory enemas, shaving of pubic hair, routine painkillers, spinal anaesthetics, and forceps. In my case, however, the socially sanctioned passivity that I exhibited in the maternity wing of the hospital spread like a contagious disease into other places of my life.

I had not always been so passive, even about my pregnancy. I had, after all, got into the mess I was in by choosing to be sexually active in direct defiance of cultural stories that demanded that women make themselves sexually attractive but not allow themselves to be

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sexually active. With no birth control methods readily available to unmarried couples — condoms, which are now sold in supermarkets and public washrooms, were then sold only in pharmacies, behind the counter, closely guarded by sanctimonious pharmacists — the inevitable happened. I became pregnant. I kept my pregnancy secret for over four months. I was able to do this because I was living away from home at the time. Then my mother found out. She brought me home in shame.

Throughout the remainder of my pregnancy, I was a virtual prisoner in my parents' house. I was unable to go outside in case the neighbours saw me. Nonetheless, prisoner though I was, I remained in the active rather than the passive mode. First of all, I defiantly refused to marry Joseph, the baby's father. While I had liked Joseph enough to have sex with him, I didn't like him enough to want to marry him. In fact, the evening when I became pregnant, I was trying to break up with him. My perspective on premarital sex was one my Calvinist mother could neither understand nor accept. I then defiantly arranged with the Scarborough Children's Aid to give the baby up for adoption. In those days, a shot-gun marriage or discreet adoption was the only solution to unwanted pregnancy.

My mother, however, was absolutely determined to thwart my bid for autonomy. As far as she was concerned, I was going to keep the baby, and if I had to get married to do so, so be it. I have often wondered why she was so determined. I don't think the reason was, despite what she said, that I would always regret giving up the baby. Altruism was never my mother's long suit. Furthermore, both of my grandmothers had been pregnant when they got married, and both of them had been unhappy in their marriages. Why would my
mother wish a similar fate on her dear daughter? There is, I think, no single answer, but rather a web of reasons that came together in a trap for me.

My son was born October 3, 1963. After the delivery, when she realized I was still intent upon giving up the baby for adoption, my mother busied herself making sure that my plans would "gang...a-gley." In this kind of manipulation of someone else's life to suit her own ends, my mother was very much like Judith Hearne's Aunt D'Arcy, who ruined Judith Hearne's prospects for a decent career as a typist by insisting that Judith Hearne care for her after she had had a stroke. Aunt D'Arcy insisted that Judith Hearne, and Judith Hearne alone, was capable of caring for her, and that Judith Hearne was an ungrateful wretch if she did otherwise. Poor Judith Hearne, wanting to be a 'good niece', wanting to be a 'good' woman, fulfilling her duty to care, sacrificing herself for the benefit of others, didn't stand a chance. When I read Lonely Passion for the fourth time, I responded to Judith Hearne's entrapment in what I have come to call cultural stories about women's duty to care for others, even if they do so at the cost of themselves. When I read Lonely Passion for the first time, I think I must have also responded to this entrapment. But at the time of the first reading, I did not respond to Lonely Passion from the basis of a theory I have generated about the way cultural stories about women's matters serve to keep women in their place. I responded to it with my own story as I was living it.

To achieve her ends, my mother got on the phone and called the baby's father. She got on the phone and called the baby's paternal grandfather, a United Church minister of Calvinistic sternness equal to that of my mother. My mother got on the phone and had people call me and/or come to see me to beg me to keep the baby. My sister. My brother.

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My father, with whom I was estranged. She urged the baby's father to visit me. I remember him arriving in my room at the hospital with flowers - rust chrysanthemums - and a letter typed in purple ink on onionskin. Et, voilà, there was a wedding in the morning, and a bridal luncheon in the afternoon of October 12, 1963, the baby's tenth day of life. I spent my wedding night in my parent's house, in the very bedroom in which I had been a virtual prisoner for the past four and a half months. The wedding would have been sooner, but in those days, if they were in a private room rather than a ward, new mothers were kept in the hospital for a week.

The marriage did not last long. It didn't even last as long as my year off from university while my son was a baby. I lived with my new husband less than five months, after which he sent me home to mother. I interfered with his studying, or so he said. Actually, I think that I interfered with his partying. Mother didn't want me, because I had a bad habit of getting into fights with my father, but she was glad to have the baby.

I went back to university to finish my fourth year. To give credit where it is due, my mother encouraged me to do so. The marriage she had been so determined to bring about was just about over, and I was in my first full year as a single parent.

In March, 1965, when all the school boards in Ontario sent representatives to the Park Plaza hotel for a hiring spree, I applied for a teaching position with the Collegiate Board of Ottawa. I applied for a teaching position because I needed a job, not because I wanted to teach. I did not want to teach. I had hated high school with a passion, though I had loved university despite the homocentricity of its corpus of knowledge. I had hated high school for three principal reasons: one was because of the many teachers who confused teaching
with tyranny; two was because of the curriculum, which was slim on content and geared to the lowest common denominator of student (which in redneck Scarborough, where the school was situated, was very low indeed); and three was because of my role as an outsider to school culture by virtue of too many brains and not enough beauty. I was thus not only bullied and bored in school, but I was lonely. Having decided to teach out of necessity, I applied to a board outside of metropolitan Toronto because I wanted to get away from my family.

At the time I applied for a teaching job, I was living in a rooming house on Lowther Avenue near the university. My parents gave me a hand-out of twenty dollars a week. Ten dollars went on the room; ten went on everything else, such as food, toilet articles, paper for course notes and essays, bus fare. Like Judith Hearne, I was living on the slippery edge of want. For the first part of the school year, I had been living with my son in my parents' house. Then I had quarrelled with my father, as was my wont, and he had become violent, as was his wont. Hence the move to Lowther Avenue, and the twenty-dollar stipend, which would terminate upon my graduation.

For the five weekdays, my son lived with a baby-sitter. On weekends, I retrieved him from the babysitter's and stayed with my estranged in-laws. Right from the start, staying with my in-laws was stressful. Not only were they active in the temperance movement, which I thought of as the 'intemperance movement', but my father-in-law preached from his pulpit against other sins of the flesh, particularly 'fornication' — a sin of which I had been guilty, and for which it appeared I was being deservedly punished. Staying with my in-laws became even more stressful after I quarrelled with my estranged husband within earshot of

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his mother. She stopped speaking to me. Whenever I tried to say anything, she would begin
whistling a hymn. The skin started to peel from my hands. I think this happened because I
could not come to grips with my life. Or with my mother-in-law's neck, speaking
metaphorically of course. My mother-in-law said my problems stemmed from my refusal to
accept the love of God. I disagreed with her, albeit silently. Oddly enough, despite the
pressure they put on me to accept Christ as my saviour, my in-laws did not force me to go to
church. Instead, they allowed me to make Sunday dinner for them while they were at
church.

At one point in my fourth year, I had been working on Saturdays as a Ward Secretary at
the Scarborough General Hospital for ten dollars a day, but I think I left that job when I
moved out of my parents' home. I can't remember who paid for the babysitter for my son --
either my parents or my in-laws. I do know I had no money for anything but the most basic
kind of essentials, until I got a student loan, which I think I must have spent on fees and
books. I can remember, extravagant soul that I was, buying two heavy 'coffee table' art
books, which I still have, and carrying them in a suitcase on the long bus trip and then walk
to the manse that my parents-in-law occupied.

In those days, there was such a shortage of teachers that a would-be teacher didn't need
to go to the College of Education for a full year. Provided she received second-class
honours in her final year's standing, a would-be teacher was entitled to teach high school
upon the successful completion of a six-week summer teacher-certification course at the
College of Education. In the summer course that I took, I taught one — and only one —
half-hour class — a history class. I still remember the topic: Imperialism as a cause of the

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First World War. I knew very little modern history, having only studied Medieval and Renaissance history. When I was teaching the class, my hands shook so much, that afterwards, the critic teacher advised me not to hold paper in my hands when speaking in public. The fluttering paper drew attention to my trembling hands.

With such inadequate preparation to teach, it is not surprising that the year of teaching was tough. My peculiar status as a single mother who was separated rather than widowed (I could therefore blame only myself and not an act of God for my sorry state) compounded the usual tribulations of the first year of teaching. Even though I made good friends among the female teachers, I was terribly, terribly lonely. In those days, a woman had to be half of a pair to be whole. In addition, my son developed behaviour problems, the cause of which I finally realized was his babysitter, who was abusing him. A new babysitter solved the immediate problem with my son, but did not resolve my sense of inadequacy for the task of bringing up a child alone. Nor did a new babysitter help a sense of stigma so great that I used to think people were staring at me as I walked down the street. Since I had the assets of dramatic colouring — aqua eyes, pale, pale skin, and bright red hair — and a pretty figure as well as the defect of badly bowed legs, they might well have been doing so. To deal with the sense of being stigmatized, when I used to walk in public with my son, we used to take his Teddy bear for a walk, with each of us holding one of Teddy's paws. That way, I could say to myself that people were staring at the amusing picture of a Teddy bear out for his constitutional. I think I brought memories of my sense of stigma to my reading of Lonely Passion, identifying strongly with Judith Hearne, who was stigmatized first of all by her ugliness and her poverty, and then by her alcoholism. In the paper I wrote for the
Sociology of Knowledge class, I certainly show an understanding of Judith Hearne's
stigmatization that goes beyond that of objectivist and reductionist sociology.
The difficulties that I experienced in teaching, however, were not just in dealing with the
boring subject matter that I had to teach, or with the students, who were a moody,
murmuring bunch (though they were like lambs compared to today's students), or with my
lonely private life, but were in dealing with the ideology of the principal and the more
experienced teachers. I can best explain what I mean with a story. This story may seem
off-topic, but it has deep implications for the way that I first read *Lonely Passion*. The
situation that the story describes reveals one of the threads in the web of myself that I
brought to my reading of *Lonely Passion*. This thread is a very strong dislike of hypocrisy
and cant, wherever those dubious qualities manifest themselves. And poor Judith Hearne
was surely as much a victim of hypocrisy and cant as she was of loneliness, emptiness, and
despair. Furthermore, because of the way I reacted to what I perceived as hypocrisy and
cant, the situation of which I am describing precipitates the situation in which I first read
*Lonely Passion*.

The principal of the high school was a man named Mr. Glenn. I did not like Mr. Glenn.
I thought his smile a little too quick to be sincere, and his words a little too glib to be
trustworthy. But my opinion did not seem to be shared by the male teachers, who were
always slapping Mr. Glenn and each other on the back and talking about the Ottawa
Roughriders in loud voices, and it did not seem to be shared by the other female teachers,
who deferred both to Mr. Glenn and to the male teachers. I thus kept my misgivings to
myself.
At the school we had monthly staff meetings. These were long, boring affairs dominated by the older and more experienced teachers, of whom all were male, with the exception of Miss Gilhooly, the head of the English department. Miss Gilhooly was prim and fiftyish.

Mr. Glenn was considerably younger than she.

In the May staff meeting, the recommendations for the June examinations were on the agenda. Students who achieved above a certain percentage in their Christmas and Easter examinations were excused from writing the final exams, provided they had behaved themselves. The case of a boy who had 'played hooky' in the fall was up for debate. (I use the passive voice advisedly, because I and the other novice teachers had no part in either initiating or conducting the debate.) When the boy had been caught, the Vice-Principal, Mr. Labrosse, had used both a stick and a carrot to get the boy to behave. The stick was an immediate punishment of a long string of detentions and the threat of a suspension if there were any recidivism; the carrot was a promise that if for the remainder of the school year the boy attended school regularly and kept up his grades, he might still get his June recommendations. The boy had kept up his end of the bargain. He went faithfully to all his detentions, never again 'played hooky', despite the temptations there must have been to do so in that bleak suburban Ottawa high school, and he kept up his grades. But notwithstanding the boy's exemplary behaviour, Mr. Glenn had decided that he should write the June examinations. I didn't understand why then, and twenty-seven years later, I don't understand why now. But I do recall that I found Mr. Glenn's decision very upsetting.

Though I very rarely spoke out in staff meetings, whatever the issue, I spoke out in this
meeting, on what I saw as an issue about the importance of keeping promises. Mr Glenn smiled at me with all his teeth. He told me that writing the June examinations would be a "learning experience" for the boy. I thought perhaps the boy would be learning the wrong kind of thing, and said so. But as a novice teacher — and an art teacher to boot! — and a woman, I clearly didn't know what it took to make a boy into a man. When it came to the vote, all the teachers raised their hand in support of Mr. Glenn's position. The boy had to write his June examinations. That phrase, "learning experience" has stuck in my mind all these years, and I still shudder involuntarily when I hear it, even though I usually hear it being spoken in the most innocuous way, by people I quite like.

After school, I went home to my meagrely furnished apartment, stopping as always at the corner grocery for a carton of milk, and at the babysitter's to pick up my two and half-year-old son. My two-bedroom apartment was furnished with a crib, a double bed, two dressers, and a desk, which was in the kitchen, and which doubled as a kitchen table. I kept most of my books in a cupboard off the living room, though I did have an old oak glass-fronted office bookcase that had been my father's. The living room itself was empty except for a blue and green flecked foam-backed rug I had bought for $50.00 from the Simpson-Sears catalogue, and two green ceramic lamps that my mother had given me, one for Christmas and one for my birthday. The lamps sat on cartons. On the rare occasion when friends came over, they brought lawn chairs on which to sit. My friend Dianne's husband used to tease me when he and Dianne visited by saying, "Mrs. P., you got a new carton!" The living-room window looked onto an alley. On the opposite side of the alley was the rear wall of a pool hall, the windows of which looked into my bedroom and

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living-room windows. I always had to keep the wooden Venetian blinds down, but even so, I would sometimes be conscious of the pool players peering into my living room. In those days, I was so naive that I thought that pool halls were dens of iniquity, and I was therefore even more uneasy about the peeping pool players than I might otherwise have been. I had nailed a sheet to the bedroom window, over the venetian blinds, to give myself a little more privacy.

Back to this lonely, empty apartment I went, carrying my son, my briefcase, and the milk that was to be most of my son's supper. I was too chronically depressed to feed him anything but milk and eggs. Back in this lonely, empty apartment, I thought about Mr. Glenn, about his slimy sanctimony. "Learning experience" indeed! Did I want to be part of a system that gave people such learning experiences? Though I don't remember recognizing the fact at the time, that I reacted so to Mr. Glenn's statement had, I am sure, much to do with my own life. I had not so much chosen as I had thrust upon me the lonely, empty circumstances under which I was living. There was no doubt that those circumstances were proving to be a learning experience for me. But at a conscious level, I reacted to Mr. Glenn's statement not so much because of my immediate personal circumstances of loneliness and emptiness as because of my own experiences in the public education system, both in England and in Canada. My experiences had given me a fine awareness of abusive men in positions of epistemic authority.

I thought of my own experiences in high school, how I had hated the bullying teachers, the boring curriculum. I thought of my former grade-ten Latin teacher, Mr. Lambert, who had become a Vice Principal in charge of Attendance. He had been angry with me when I

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dropped Latin at the end of grade ten. I hated Latin with a passion. In an attempt to get me to change my mind about dropping Latin, Mr. Lambert told me that Latin was the language of the educated, and that I would always regret my decision. Even at fifteen, I was a headstrong young woman, and I let Latin stay dropped. I did in truth come to regret dropping Latin when my lack of grade thirteen Latin made me ineligible for the English Language and Literature program at the University of Toronto. I also regretted my lack of Latin in a second-year History of Art course in Iconography that I took. Unlike my better-educated classmates, who had endured Latin for four years, I was unable to translate the Latin captions on pictures of the saints and thereby to identify the saints with facility.

When I was in grade twelve, I also had a brief moment of regret about dropping Latin, but that regret had nothing to do with my academic aspirations and everything to do with my sense of being unfairly victimized. That year, my parents had bought a modest three-bedroom bungalow in a new subdivision in Scarborough about four miles due north of the school. There was no direct public transportation between my home and the school. The day after we moved, it had taken me a mile-long walk, three changes of buses, and one-and-a-half hours to get to school. As I had only allowed myself an hour to get to school, I got there late. I had to go to Mr. Lambert's office to get an 'Admit Slip'. I explained to Mr. Lambert why I was late. Mr Lambert said to me, "I think you deserve a detention anyway," and thereupon gave me one. But I knew at the time he was not punishing me for being late; he was punishing me for my temerity in dropping Latin two years earlier. I spent most of the rest of the day crying at the unfairness, at the injustice, of the educational system in general and of Mr. Lambert in particular. In the detention room,
however, amongst all the grade-nine 'technical' boys who were its habitués, I managed to remain dry-eyed. Mr. Lambert had given me one more reason to hate school.

Years later, when I was doing my Master's degree, I was planning a photographic and poetry essay called "Environments of Consciousness" (I was a child of the 60s). As an example of an 'environment of unconsciousness' -- one that is degrading and dehumanizing -- I thought I would have a photograph of my old high school, illustrated by a poem that began, "This was the prison of our youth." The poem was too painful to complete. I never took the photograph either. I could never seem to manage to get out to the school. Like the writing of the poem, the taking of the photograph would have triggered too many bad memories of my high school days. On those rare occasions when I would be driving past my old high school, I would have to look away as the building came into sight. Even so, remembered fear rose in an uneasy wave in my stomach.

Seven years later, this time performing the role of a teacher-guard instead of a student-prisoner in another prison of youth, I remembered those tears that Mr. Lambert had caused. There in my lonely, empty apartment, I thought about Mr. Glenn and his notion of learning experiences. No, I said to myself, no, I do not want to be part of an educational system that rewards with administrative positions the smiling men who abuse their authority. What I did not realize at the time was that in many ways school was society in microcosm, and that society was filled with smiling men who abused their authority.

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1 At that time, Ontario had three streams of secondary education: academic, for those middle-class children who might aspire to university; commercial, for those girls who by virtue of socio-economic status and/or intellectual ability could not or should not aspire to university; and technical, for those boys who by virtue of socio-economic status and/or intellectual ability could not or should not aspire to university.

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I think the things that I disliked most of all about Mr. Glenn and his cohorts were their hypocrisy and cant. Hypocrisy and cant are high on the list of (in)human qualities that I most despise. I think one of the reasons that I responded so to *Lonely Passion* is that as hypocrisy and cant had exacerbated Judith Hearne's suffering, so they had intensified my own. In *Lonely Passion*, surely Father Quigley, the parish priest who failed to hear Judith Hearne's Passion — in the sense of suffering — and who dismissed her cri de coeur by telling her to pray to the very God she thought had abandoned her, was a canting hypocrite of the first water. Other characters — the landlady Mrs. Rice, her son Bernard, her brother James Madden, the O'Neills — were not far behind. In my life, I too had had to deal with my share of hypocrites.

I also think that coming into play into my reaction to Mr. Glenn's words was the fact that Joseph, from whom I was then separated, was a product of the Ottawa school system. When Joseph was in high school, his father was the pastor of a large United Church in the Glebe district in Ottawa. Miss Gilhooly, who was my head teacher, had taught Joseph English at Glebe Collegiate. The Ottawa school system had therefore contributed to the kind of man that my son's father was (though to be fair, I remember that Miss Gilhooly did not like my son's father, and thought him a ne'er do well).

The narrow piety of the United Church, which his parents inculcated, had also contributed to the kind of man that my son's father was. When I read *Lonely Passion* I don’t think I interpreted the Irish Catholicism that set the stage for the victimization of Judith Hearne as being any more repressive, dogmatic, and judgmental than the Protestantism to which I was exposed through my parents, and Joseph and his parents, and my culture. I saw my in-laws
as being Protestant Father Quigley's. I think I saw both Catholicism and Protestantism as institutions of social control, even though at that time I knew nothing of Marx's thoughts on religion as the opiate of the people. It was therefore supremely ironic that within a year of reading *Lonely Passion* for the first time, I experienced a suspension of disbelief and briefly converted to Catholicism.

As I have said, at the point when I reacted so negatively to what I perceived to be the hypocrisy of Mr. Glenn and his cohorts, I didn't fully realize that school was a microcosm for society. I didn't understand that any problems with male authority that I had had as a student, and that I was having as a teacher, I was also going to have as an ex-teacher. I also didn't fully comprehend that while in teaching women had recently gained pay equity with men, women didn't have equity in any other field of endeavour. Not really thinking of the consequences for myself, I drafted my letter of resignation. Had I had someone to talk to, I might not have done this. But I had no one. (As I write this, I think of Jo Aitken's Section Eleven project, and reflect upon what a difference such a non-judgmental, non-competitive support system for beginning teachers might have made in my life.) Mr Glenn, who I think must have disliked me as much as I disliked him, was delighted to accept my resignation. Through resigning from teaching, I brought on myself years and years of penury, and of the despair that is fed by economic and emotional privation.

At the end of the school year, having nothing to do and no place to go, I took my young son to Kingston, Ontario, where my friend Dianne, my son, and I shared a one-bedroom apartment for the summer. Dianne was taking the second summer of the Ontario teachers' certification course. I could have gone back to Toronto to take my second summer, but...
since I had neither a teaching job nor any place to stay — apart from my parents' or my 
estranged in-laws — I didn't bother. The apartment Dianne and I shared was the second 
floor of a small house in a working-class part of Kingston. We had to pass through the 
landlord's living room to get to the stairs. The living room was decorated with souvenirs 
from tourist resorts — things like ceramic mugs sliced in two vertically, with the words 
"Half a cup of coffee" emblazoned on them, and satin cushions with "Souvenir of —" 
embroidered or stamped on them in garish colours. The landlord had a limited number of 
conversational gambits, "Is it hot enough fer yah?" being chief among them. Dianne and I 
used to laugh at this. Dianne used to go back to Ottawa on weekends to be with her 
husband, and I would walk the streets of Kingston with my son in his stroller. While I was 
in Kingston, I applied for a job as an art educator at the Agnes Etherington Art Gallery, 
but the curator who interviewed me told me he wanted a man. He had been a friend of my 
estranged husband's older sister Ann. At the time, I wondered if this had any bearing on his 
decision. I also applied for a job as a curator at Upper Canada Village at Morrisburg, but 
the woman who interviewed me was rightly worried how I would survive Morrisburg as a 
single parent with a young son and no car.

Towards the end of the summer, my sister, a nurse who lived in Shawinigan, Quebec with 
herself engineer husband and infant son, offered to look after my son for a couple of months 
until I got on my feet. At the same time, Dianne and her husband offered me a place to stay 
— their living-room couch — back in Ottawa. I accepted both offers and thus I moved back 
to Ottawa unencumbered by a child. I thereupon got a job in Robertson's Galleries as the 
manager of the framing department. Robertson's Galleries was a gallery-cum-gift boutique

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— of the Dansk and Boda crystal class — that drew its clientele from Rockcliffe Park, the home of Ottawa's great and good. The job paid less than fifty dollars a week. The Robertsons were a couple of FOOFs (Fine Old Ontario Family). She was an egregious snob who liked to tell a story of her husband going into the library to ask "Daddy" for her hand in marriage. Her world was one I could only imagine. Mrs. R. once sent me on an errand to Birk's to pick up a diamond pin she was having repaired — I remember it as having three one-carat diamonds in it. Mr. Robertson was considerably more egalitarian than his wife, and used to like to chat with me about art. He had a passion for onions, of which he always smelled, because he ate them every day. When I decided I could bear Ottawa no longer — winter was about to arrive — Mr. Robertson gave me a number of references in Toronto, one of which was the Ontario Craft Foundation, and another of which was Paul Arthur of Canadian Art and other Canadian culture endeavours. The Ontario Craft Foundation didn't hire me, but Paul Arthur of the Society for Art Publications did, thereby giving me my third job since graduation. I was living with my parents once more, under conditions of great sufferance, and my son had come back to live with me.

My job with Paul Arthur was to put together pilot programs in art education — slides of paintings combined with narration on tape. Exciting stuff for those times. The job paid a hundred dollars a week, which seemed princely after the Robertson Galleries. This job ended when the funding ran out, fortunately not before I had a week-long trip in March of 1967 to San Francisco to attend a conference of art educators. The conference was quite an experience. An acquaintance of mine, an art teacher from a Toronto high school, was
attending the conference. He was a few years older than I. He was as irreverent about the conventions of the academy as I was to become as I matured. He pointed out to me that the vast majority of participants had Ph.D.s and mid-European names. They made a point of addressing each other as "Doctor", and cited each other endlessly in their papers to conceal the fact that they had nothing original to say. (Sounds like AERA². Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose in educational research.)

When I was working for Paul Arthur, I decided that I needed psychotherapy. I was at that time so depressed that I couldn't look anybody in the face, and walked with my head hanging down and my eyes averted. At that time, I was also convinced that I was ugly, the sense I had had when I was teaching in Ottawa of having a stigma having grown rather than diminished. My conviction that I was ugly, though unfounded, not only added measurably to my depression, but gave me further reason for not looking anybody in the face. Because I knew what it was like to think oneself ugly, even if one were not, when I came to read Lonely Passion, I really identified with Judith Hearne, who not only thought but knew she was ugly.

This was the third time that I had sought psychiatric counselling. The first time had been when I had been in my third year of undergraduate studies. At the time I began therapy, I was living at home, where I was fighting with my father, and keeping company with Joseph, and fighting with him. I sought counselling at the University Health Service. I was, I think, a typically confused young woman. In keeping with the language of my recent doctoral thesis, I would now say that the source of my confusion was the split between cultural stories of women's place and epistemic metanarratives of men's knowledge. While working

² [American Educational Research Association]

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to resolve my confusion with a staff psychiatrist who was, as I recall, a doctrinaire
Freudian, I became pregnant by Joseph. My period was only a few days late when I got
into yet another fight with my father, he attacked me, and I had to leave home in a hurry.
The second time that I had sought psychiatric counselling had been when I was in my fourth
year of undergraduate studies. At this point, I was still confused. I was also still angry. In
truth, I was even angrier then than I had been two years previously. Enforced marriage
and motherhood can do that. I used to rage in a most unseemly manner at Joseph for
having left me holding the baby while he cultivated his triple role as playwright, playboy,
and pedant (he thought it was savant). It didn't seem fair to me. My rages, moreover, often
took place in public. Because women were not supposed to be angry, I thus sought
counselling for anger from the University Health Service. The psychiatrist at the Health
Service prescribed tranquillisers, which nicely suppressed my rage, and made me much
more socially acceptable. As I remember, I slept a great deal, and when I wasn't sleeping, I
was dull-witted. I also put on weight. However, to give myself some credit, despite my
drugged, dull, and dumpy state, I got through my fourth year with second class honours.
More remarkably, I got through the year of teaching without any chemical crutches
whatsoever. I think, for one thing, I was too exhausted by teaching and single-motherhood
to rage. For another, I think the anger had transformed into depression, the way that
women's anger does when it is not permitted expression.

When I decided for the third time that I needed psychotherapy, the psychiatrist who had
counsellled me in rage-suppression at the University Health Service referred me to another
psychiatrist in private practice. This psychiatrist, a woman, was to spend almost four years

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listening to my sad tales of woe and prescribing a variety of psychotropic drugs to mitigate my anxiety and depression. I had pills to get me through the day, and pills to get me through the night, and pills to counteract the side effects of the first two types of pills. My body was like the Erie Canal, full of toxic chemicals. Having read of the permanent cognitive disabilities caused by psychotropic drugs, legal and otherwise, I sometimes wonder that I have any mind left at all. To the psychiatrist's credit, however, she refused to attach diagnostic labels to the suffering human being sitting and weeping in her office.

When the funding at job number three with Paul Arthur was on the point of running out, one of the consultants on the pilot programs, who had himself worked at Gage Educational Publishing, gave me a referral there. Though I was badly dressed, badly depressed, Gage hired me as an editorial assistant, at the princely sum of six thousand dollars a year. Hence job number four, which eventually led me to read Lonely Passion one lonely, passionless weekend.

Shortly after I got the job at Gage, I moved out of my parents' house. I don't think any violence was involved this time. My father was too contemptuous of me to bother speaking to me at all. George, one of my boyfriends, remarked to me that my parents treated me as if I were a piece of garbage. He wondered what I had done to deserve such scorn. I rented an apartment across the road from Gage for myself and my son. The apartment building was new, but jerry-built, without any pretensions to being anything but working-class. The rent was manageable. I had slightly more furniture this time round, since I had gone to a second-hand store and bought a sofa-bed, which I covered with a green floral throw from Eaton's Catalogue. I had also gone to Eaton's annex, where I bought a green wool carpet
that someone had returned to the store, and to a rattan store, where I bought two rattan tables for the green ceramic lamps that my mother had given me when I lived in Ottawa, and two arm chairs with blue and green patterned cushions. I also had an old television set, a black and white console from the early 1950s, which my mother had given me, and which I painted pale pink. I replaced the fabric over the speakers with a pink and white striped fabric. The decor was pretty grim.

I had a number of men in my life at the time, and these, like the elements of my decor, were pretty grim. One of them was a snobbish young Englishman named Anthony, who had an M.A. from the University of Edinburgh, and who wrote for Canadian Business. I met Anthony at a trendy party in a downtown warehouse to celebrate Canada’s centennial. I didn’t like Anthony very much, though this did not prevent me from going to bed with him. When thereafter, I met Anthony’s friend Wayne, I developed a great lust for him, which did not please Anthony overly much. I eventually got rid of Anthony, and Wayne lost whatever fleeting interest he had had in me.

George, whom I mentioned above, was another man in my life. I met George in a pub, where I had gone with my friend Sandra. Like me, Sandra was an editorial assistant at Gage. We had started working there more or less the same time, in the summer of 1967. Sandra and I were reasonably good friends for about four years and then we lost touch. Years later, when I was trying to extricate myself from my marriage, I was reading in the Toronto Star an article on ex-psychiatric patients in Parkdale becoming proactive. Sandra’s name was mentioned. I knew I was reading about the Sandra whom I had known, and not someone else with the same name. Sandra had always been fragile. Reading her

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name in the paper, I felt so sad. It was as if she had taken my place and lived out Judith
Hearne’s lonely passion to its inexorable conclusion. As with Anthony, I didn’t like George
very much either, though, again as with Anthony, this did not prevent me from going to bed
with him. George was Greek, and the principal of an elementary school. He was swarthy,
and he was sneaky. He was married. But I did not know this at first. George was always
trying to lend or give me money, which, except for one time, I always refused. I always
suspected he had an ulterior motive: whether it was to make me feel like a prostitute or to
make me feel beholden to him, I am not sure.

Allan was another man in my life. I had met Allan while working for Paul Arthur. After I
came back from San Francisco, I got to attend a series of art teachers’ conferences in
various towns in Ontario – Sarnia, Cornwall, London. Allan was also attending them. He
was a sales representative for an artists’ supplies company. We very quickly started an
affair that turned out to have considerable duration. Allan was good in bed, though out of
it he was as dull as a plastic knife. But he was a decent man. The decency made him an
anomaly among the men I dated. George, hairy little creep that he was, was much more
typical.

The original man in my life, Joseph, the father of my son, and my newly ex-husband, was
still in my life. I neither wanted this nor liked this. But trying to get rid of Joseph was like
trying to remove road tar from a corduroy skirt. Divorce papers were not enough to do the
trick. Joseph used to send me letters with lists of obscene words on the back of the sheets of
paper on which they were written. My name would be among the obscene words. Joseph
used to call me on the phone at all hours. He used to spy on me. He had seen me with

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Anthony at the Dominion Day party, and had found out who he was and where he worked.

One time, when I refused to speak to Joseph, he got access to the apartment house, and began hammering away on my door. My mother was with me at the time, and we called the police. They came quickly because they had not realized that the problem was a 'domestic' — in those days, police ignored 'domestics'. Joseph had wanted to deliver another of his letters. In the end, while two police officers watched, he did so. At this time of my life, I was writing poetry regularly. I began — and completed — a poem about Joseph that began, "There is no escape..." And there wasn't.

Occasionally Joseph used to visit my son in my apartment. When he did, he considered it his right to be given dinner, and given it he was. He also considered it his right to criticize me, and criticize me he did. He had always criticized me. He was particularly fond of finding fault with my appearance. He once told me, before I had become pregnant by him, that he had to suppress a "twinge of pity" every time he saw me. He was referring to my large head and bow legs, and to eyes that sometimes had a slight squint. Although I got the squint corrected when I was in fourth-year university, he continued to claim he could see it. I think it was he who had the cast. Joseph also criticized my high forehead, my strong hands, my determined chin, my pale eyebrows, my pale skin, my — but you get the idea. Since my mother also criticized the way I looked — she'd say things like, "If you could only see how ridiculous you look. Do you want the whole neighbourhood laughing at you?" — it's small wonder that in those years when I was being pulled into the vortex of emotional disorder, I fixed on my appearance as the root cause of my anomie. It's small wonder, too.
that I connected so to ugly Judith Hearne, in respect to whose physical appearance onlookers truly did have to suppress a "twinge of pity."

The alleged flaws in my physical appearance notwithstanding, before I had become pregnant by Joseph, I had a number of suitors, who clearly saw me differently from the way Joseph said he did. A most ardent suitor had been John, a very wealthy, very unattractive, very pompous young Jew. John picked me up in a different Cadillac each time we went out.

I was leading something of a double life at the time, being as I was both a virgin (with John) and a whore (with Joseph). Jealousy may have been a factor in Joseph's abuse. I did not understand this at the time. Indeed, I did not understand that Joseph was abusive.

Anyway, one Sunday evening in early January 1968, I think it was, Joseph was at the apartment visiting my son. As usual, Joseph was free-loading, and as usual, he was irritating me. I wanted him to leave. He refused to go. He said he would go when he pleased, as if he had a right to be there.

When Joseph wouldn't leave, I became very upset. I started smacking my son, whom I must surely have been using as a surrogate for Joseph. (It makes me terribly sad to remember this.) Joseph intervened, and said that if I was going to be that sort of mother, he would take Andrew away from me. I said in so many words, Go ahead. I was so angry, at myself for getting pregnant, at Joseph for getting me pregnant, at my son for being born, at my mother for forcing me to marry a man whom I disliked, at my father for abusing and abandoning me, at life itself. I didn't see why Joseph should get off Scot free, when I had paid for our relationship with my hopes and my dreams. It was time, I thought, that he took some responsibility for his son. I went to pack a suitcase for my son and threw the baby out.
with the ex-husband. My son was at this time in daycare, so there wasn't a problem with his schooling. There was just a problem with his broken heart.

For the first few days, I handled the consequences of my action quite well. I went to see my psychiatrist and talked about it with her. I told her I would get on with my life, and make a career for myself at Gage. Perhaps I truly hoped I would do this. But however much I resented my lot as a single parent, my son really was the only reason I had for living. The melancholy that was always hovering around the doors and windows of my mind, began to creep into the house of myself like a poison gas.

Joseph, as perhaps befits a clergyman's son, used to throw biblical phrases at me.

"Weighed, weighed, measured, and wanting" was his absolute favourite. Guess who was wanting? I knew who. Me, that's who. Even before I got my education in the verses of the Old Testament from Joseph, my father had weighed me, measured me, and found me wanting. Now, with my son gone, it was clear I was not fit to be a mother. Weighed, weighed, measured, and wanting, indeed.

At this point in my career as an anxiety-ridden depressive, the psychiatrist had me on Valium. Four pills a day. I also used to take a sleeping pill. I used to get my prescriptions filled a hundred pills at a time. One night, shortly after I had sent my son away, I sat there with a bottle of vodka, a bottle of orange juice, and a new prescription of Valium. Just as Judith Hearne had bought whisky for the express purpose of drinking herself to oblivion, I had bought the vodka for the express purpose of overdosing myself into oblivion. I made myself a long drink of vodka and orange. I took a long draught of the vodka and orange juice and swallowed a handful of pills. Then I took another long draught and swallowed
some more pills. I can remember suppressing the urge to vomit as I waited for the pills to take effect.

Then, as the Valium and the vodka began their deadly work, I had a moment of doubt about the timing of my final solution to a life of frustration and failure. Perhaps age twenty-five was too soon to give up the struggle. When I had been in high school, that prison of my youth, my friends Judith and Ethelwyn had had such great expectations for me. They had admired me for my cleverness, my talent. They thought that one day I would be famous. Perhaps, given more time, I would be able to do something with that cleverness, that talent, and fulfill the propitious predictions of my friends. Perhaps I'd better postpone my death and give my life another try.

I was starting to pass out. But I roused myself to call George at his home. George came. I do not remember letting him into the apartment. I do not remember him carrying me to the car. I do remember waking up for a couple of seconds as he threw me over his shoulder and carried me into the Emergency of the Women's College Hospital. I remember the bright lights, and figures in white rushing towards me.

The next thing I remember is two days later. I was waking up in a hospital bed, with a headache to end all headaches. I was just closing my eyes to retreat into the painlessness of unconsciousness, when George, who was present in the room with a nurse, slapped my face to bring me around. "Alright, alright, I'm awake," I said. George had always claimed to have an I.Q. of 162. He thereafter claimed that his prodigious I.Q. had kept me out of the psychiatric ward, and got me into a general ward. He had told the admitting doctors that I was upset over the loss of my son, which was true. To prove his point, he had
indicated the silver locket that I always wore, and that contained my son’s photograph and a curl of his hair. Later, when my son started losing his milk teeth, the locket contained his baby tooth as well.

When I got out of hospital, I decided that, though George had saved my life — I remember writing him a farewell note while I was losing consciousness — I did not want him in my life. As I remember, it was Allan who indirectly enabled me to get rid of George. Allan, who, as I have said, was a decent man, decided that I needed some support to pull me through my self-inflicted crisis. At this point, he had lost his job as a sales representative, and was driving taxis for a living. One night he arrived at the apartment unexpectedly, and he held me for a long time. We made love, though this had not been Allan’s reason for coming to see me. George found out somehow — did I deliberately let it slip? — and left me to my ruin. Thereafter, Allan and I had a stable, long-term relationship of sorts, in that we forsook all others. Well, at least he forsook all others. As I recall, it took me one or two more bad affairs before I did. While he lived in Toronto, Allan and I frequently spent the weekend together. Even after he relocated to Ottawa, our relationship continued on an occasional basis. I only got through that first month after the suicide attempt because of Allan. Because I had decided to eschew drugs, I had great difficulty sleeping. The immediate present seemed stretched into eons, broken only now and then by moments of rest. Sometimes I would call Allan in the small hours of the morning, when he had come home from driving taxi, and he would talk to me until I relaxed enough to doze.

One weekend in the spring of 1968, Allan was too tired for us to get together. Caught with nothing to do and no place to go, I went to the local library and picked up two books.
One was a family-saga-type novel, set in Glasgow. I remember very little of it except a description of a public bath with a curl of pubic hair left in the tub, and a mother who was a vulgar fortune teller and medium, and an embarrassment to the socially aspirant son. The other novel was *Lonely Passion*.

I remember that I read the novel with the Glaswegian locale first. It was almost twice the length of *Lonely Passion*, and I read it all Saturday evening and into Sunday. Because it had a theme of socio-economic misery and spiritual meanness, at least as I recall it, the Glaswegian novel determined the mood with which I began to read *Lonely Passion*: I was emotionally subdued, if not depressed. I began *Lonely Passion* on the Sunday, after I had spent about forty hours all by myself in my apartment. The quiet desperation of Judith Hearne's life shocked me, shook me, scared me. I saw in her lonely, empty life my own lonely, empty life.

On the face of it, that I should find Judith Hearne to be my alter ego was odd. To the casual observer, it surely would seem that my life as a divorcée who had a young child, who worked full-time, and who, as I have told, entertained a series of entirely unsuitable and frequently unsavoury men in her bedroom was entirely different from the life of a virginal spinster who had only the most occasional employment and who entertained only the most chaste fantasies (albeit about an entirely unsuitable and somewhat unsavoury man) in her bedroom. But my promiscuity — that is a 'gendered' word if ever there was one, for though we have many terms for men who have many sex partners, 'promiscuous' is not usually one of them — was an action that came from the same deep well of loneliness and despair as did Judith Hearne's alcoholism. We both led lives of quiet desperation, punctuated by

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moments of noisy rebellion that only succeeded in exacerbating our loneliness and despair. I think that at the time of my first reading of *Lonely Passion* the differences between Judith Hearne and myself were superficial, and the similarities were deep. Today, however, because Judith was broken by her suffering whereas I have been forged by mine, the opposite is true. I am no longer Judith Hearne.

I think I started to connect with Judith Hearne from the moment she moved with her two trunks into Mrs. Rice's boarding house. As I have already told, when I had become pregnant by Joseph, I was living at my parents' house. Shortly after I became pregnant, my father attacked me physically, and I had to leave home. My father, who had habitually refused to pay for anything for my upkeep, was willing to pay to get rid of me. (My mother paid my university fees, and I dressed myself the best I could on what I earned -- eighty-two and a half cents an hour -- working part-time in Simpson's during the summer.) Joseph helped me look for a room. He or I found one in a rooming house on Admiral Road. When I moved in, all my worldly possessions were in two small suitcases and four small grocery cartons, two of which contained groceries that my mother had bought for me unbeknownst to my father. By weight, by volume, and by worth, my possessions were on a par with those of Judith Hearne. My father, true to his word, paid nineteen dollars a week into my bank account. Ten went on the room, nine went on everything else. Like Judith Hearne, I did not eat well. A year and a half later when, as I have already told, my father paid twenty dollars into my bank account, I still did not eat well.

I didn't stay at that rooming house very long. Shortly after I moved in, the landlady objected to me writing essays into the wee small hours of the night. She said the noise the

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table on which I was writing made when I used an eraser on my hand-written essays disturbed the other tenants. Again like Judith Hearne, who had disturbed the tenants with her drunken singing, I had to find another rooming house. I got one a little further south on Admiral Road.

This second rooming house was not so clean nor so well furnished as the other, but it was more hospitable. Only women lived there. While I was living there, I met a French Canadian painter, who was calling on one of the roomers. The painter was very small and delicate, like a Gallic elf, and very sweet. I was soon keeping him company both in and out of bed. When I told him I was pregnant by Joseph, he wanted to look after me while I had the baby. The relationship ended when Joseph persisted in his attentions.

Much as they were in 1968, when I gave up custody of my son in an effort to get rid of Joseph, in 1963, Joseph's attentions were as unwelcome as they were persistent. One evening, when I was about three months pregnant, Joseph pursued me all over town. I can't remember where the pursuit started, whether Joseph accosted me in the street, or whether he came to my room and I fled from my room in order to escape him. Joseph lived around the corner from me, on Lowther Avenue, which was much too close for comfort. This particular evening, he was demanding that I tell him what I planned to do with the baby. I kept telling him that I didn't know and I kept asking him to leave me alone. Finally, late at night, well past the time when all respectable young girls were indoors, I arrived back on Admiral Road with Joseph still in loud pursuit. "Leave me alone," I screamed at him one more time. I woke the street. Heads peered out of windows and irate voices called for the police, not to help me, but to arrest me for disturbing the peace.
The episode that I have just described is one that has always been near the front of my memory. I know it was so when I read *Lonely Passion*. The episode in which Judith Hearne created a scene with Jim Madden outside the church was very evocative of this and the other scenes that I had with Joseph, in which, as I mentioned earlier, I raged at him in public. (I find it significant that Moore named the character who drove poor Judith Hearne to the brink of madness, 'Madden', for madden is what he did. Joseph also maddened me, but when I wrote my autobiography, I was not so clever as to give him a name that described his effect on me. I called him Joseph Carriere. I had first called him that in a novel that I had begun in 1966, when I was teaching school. I never finished the novel. The name was a play on Joseph's real name.)

That Jim Madden was so eminently unsuitable for Judith Hearne and that she was still prepared, out of loneliness and desperation, to become involved with him also had resonances with my own life. The men who came through the revolving door of my bedroom were all eminently unsuitable — George, Anthony, Wayne, even Allan — but I was still prepared, out of loneliness and desperation, to become involved with them. This pattern continued long after I had first read *Lonely Passion*. When I met Kevin, for example, the man who was to become my abusive second husband, the same loneliness and desperation were at work. When I met Kevin, I was thirty two. He was looking for a wife, being somewhat lonely and desperate himself, and I needed to get married. When the gods want to punish us, they answer our prayers.

But I think it was Judith Hearne's ultimate breakdown that had the greatest resonance with my own life. After all, when I first read *Lonely Passion*, I was myself so freshly saved

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from death by suicide. There was an inevitability to Judith Hearne's breakdown that was mirrored in the inevitability of my own suicide attempt. As Judith Hearne's life of quiet desperation had moved inexorably towards mental collapse, so my life of quiet desperation had moved inexorably towards a spiritual crisis that expressed itself in a suicide attempt.

The Monday after I read Lonely Passion, I went into work, my head still reeling from the novel. I was working for a woman named Dorothy Chamberlin. I went into Dorothy's office and said, "My God, I read this book yesterday." Dorothy had read the book, and knew enough of my emotional state to understand the impact the book had had on me. As I remember, we talked about Thoreau's line about the mass of men leading lives of quiet desperation.¹ I also remember remarking on reading the book to the secretary of the managing editor. She had, coincidentally, read both the books that I had read over the weekend, but was much more impressed with the Glaswegian saga.

I worked for Dorothy my first year at Gage, 1967-1968. Then Dorothy went to the newly opened Seneca College as the head of the Early Childhood Education program. I then worked for a woman named Irene Richmond, who fully met the 1960s stereotype of female bosses. She was a BITCH. I did not get on well with Irene. Because of this, I found myself in the summer of 1969 unemployed once more.

Some time after the suicide attempt and my first reading of Lonely Passion, and before I left Gage, I applied to become a volunteer with CUSO. I cannot remember exactly when I did this. I do remember that Dorothy Chamberlin gave me a reference to CUSO, and that she mentioned to Irene Richmond that I had applied to CUSO. Irene told me this, and

Dorothy confirmed it. This memory suggests that Dorothy was still at Gage — that is, my application to CUSO occurred before the fall of 1968. But I also remember that the priest who baptized me in the Catholic faith gave me a reference, and I did not convert to Catholicism until after I had a breakdown in the fall of 1968. I must have been in contact with Dorothy after she left Gage. Memory does not always speak unequivocally.

I also remember that I was accepted at CUSO on condition that I leave my son behind in Canada and that I found this condition unacceptable. Having been more or less abandoned myself by my parents, I was not at that point prepared to abandon my son, though later, when I had a chance to go back to university, I was.

The breakdown that I had in the fall of 1968 was quite severe. As with Judith Hearne’s, the thoughtless conduct of a man triggered it. In the late spring of 1968, I met my best friend Dianne’s older brother John. John was an up-and-coming executive with the Ford Motor Company. He had an MBA from Western, and was tall and good-looking. I found him irresistibly attractive. Dianne did not approve, not because she thought her brother was too good for me, but because she thought I was too good for her brother. After all, she had grown up with him, and knew most if not all of his failings. One night, after we had had sex, John got up and left the apartment without saying a word. I was shattered. Within a few weeks, I was in the psychiatric ward of the Women’s College Hospital, deeply depressed. I was so heavily drugged that I was unable to pass urine, and I saw double. I was given two shock treatments. While I was in the hospital, I asked to see a priest. He was a young man, but when I told him my story, he was wise enough not to try to stop me crying and wise enough not to feed me easy platitudes. Having had a good cry, I suddenly felt
better. The next day, I told my doctor I wanted to go home. To the surprise of everybody on the ward, who had told me I was too sick to go home, she let me leave. "I have to trust you," she said. "It's part of the therapy." Thus I went home. I had been in the hospital ten days.

Shortly thereafter, I took instruction in the Catholic faith and converted. I didn't really believe in all the stories, but I found the rituals surrounding them to be enormously comforting. I went back to work at Gage, and dealt with Irene the best I could. It was not good enough, and as I have said, in the summer of 1969, I lost my job at Gage. My unemployment lasted for three months — and I had no Unemployment Insurance. I did get a freelance job that helped pay the rent, and I believe that Dianne and her husband lent me some money. I then got a job copy-editing readings in Canadian history at Copp Clark. It was mind-numbing work. Talk about boredom and depression!

In 1969, I also moved from the jerry-built working-class apartment in Scarborough to a more solidly built lower-middle-class apartment in Don Mills. I became friendly with the husband and wife who lived in the apartment below me, and much too friendly with the husband. Although the relationship was never consummated — a failure of performance on both sides — the whole business was a real mess. At one point in January of 1971, I think it was, things got so messy that I checked into the Clark Institute for a week. Looking back, it seems the more I tried not to be like Judith Hearne, the more I was like her.

In the summer of 1971, having recovered my equanimity and equilibrium, I began an affair with Trevor, the manager of the college sales department. After I was fired from Copp Clark in the fall of 1971 — I did not suffer my fool of a managing editor gladly —
Trevor assured me that, unemployed though I was, I would not be without a roof over my head. I could live with him until I got on my feet again. There were no offers of help coming from any other quarter. I cared for Trevor. I thus accepted his offer. To do so meant I had to send my son to the hell of my parents' house. I thought it would be just for a few months. I then got a contract position at the North York Board of Education doing bibliographical research in the library. It was a Winter Works job of five months' duration.

During my employ at the North York Board of Education, Trevor brought home a prospectus for the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University. I was intrigued. Trevor offered to support me while I went back to complete a Master's degree. At last, at last, at last, I had a real chance to escape from my life of quiet desperation, from a life that was, in its patterns and colours, just a little too much like that of Judith Hearne. I told my son he would have to stay at my parents' place a while longer. I was going back to school.

I went back to school in the Fall of 1972. I acquitted myself brilliantly. By my second year, my professors were telling me that critiques that I had written of books on the courses they were teaching were publishable. My thesis supervisor described my Master's thesis, which I completed at the end of my second year, as "seminal," a flattering but oddly inappropriate term for the radically feminist text that was my thesis. Meanwhile, while I was embarking on a promising academic career, my son was languishing with my parents. My parents and sister had made him believe that I was a bad woman and a worse mother who didn't love him. They told him that was why I had abandoned him. I thought as soon as I graduated, I would have him with me. But after I graduated in September 1974, I couldn't get a job, and ended up working as an office clerk filing student records in the

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faculty office. I was once more becoming desperate. At this point, I met my second husband. He was a new student in the faculty. One day he came up to me in the hall, put his arm around me, and said, "I think I’m in love with you." Opportunity had knocked indeed. In January 1975, I moved in with him. He introduced me to an old girlfriend of his, who was doing a degree at OISE. I applied to the Department of Sociology at OISE, and, in spite of never having taken a course that had the word "Sociology" in the title, was accepted into the doctoral program on condition that I complete fourteen half courses.

In 1975-1976, in my first year at OISE, I continued on the trajectory to scholarly success that I had begun in my Master’s program. It was a path that I thought was going to take me far from the lonely passion of Judith Hearne. And it would have, except that life interfered with art. When my husband assaulted me for the first of many times, the trajectory suddenly became a plumbline to the heart of darkness, the depths of despair. But this time, unlike Judith Hearne, I didn’t go mad. I just kept going, day after day after day, until it was time to go. But that is another story.

Though I can no longer draw parallels between Judith Hearne’s wanting and wasted life and my own, for now my life wants only money, her story is still one that makes me want to weep. I want to weep, too, for the young woman without hope that I was when I first read Lonely Passion, for the not-quite-so-young woman full of hope that I was when I read Lonely Passion for the second time, and for the woman in early middle age, once again without hope, that I was when I read Lonely Passion for the third time. I think I even want to weep for the woman that I am now, whose life was too hard for too long, and who, because she has a 'life-threatening illness,' may have too little time left to fulfil in a most

Eleanor's Narrative, page 40
belated manner the promise of her youth. I weep for selves lost, and regained, and then lost and regained again. *Lonely Passion* also makes me want to weep for the struggles and suffering of women like Judith Hearne — and like myself — to survive in a society that gave us — and gives us — no quarter. In truth, the memories that I had to call up to talk about the impact that the *Lonely Passion* had on my life are so painful, that throughout the writing of this piece, I have had to struggle against a powerful urge to procrastinate on, if not to abandon the project all together. But I didn't. I survived the painful writing of this story as I survived the painful living of it years ago.
Chapter 4

THE POWER OF ABJCTION: NATHALIE'S COMMENTARY ON ELEANOR'S NARRATIVE

"Such women are dangerous to the order of things"

and yes, we will be dangerous to ourselves

groping through spines of nightmare (datura tangling with a simpler herb)

because the line dividing lucidity from darkness

is yet to be marked out

Adrienne Rich

Eleanor was a graduate student about to complete the requirements for the PhD in the sociology of education when she wrote her narrative for me, "On Reading and Living The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne." This narrative is informed, in tone and structure, and to some degree, in content by her book length autobiographical reflections, M. and M., and by her doctoral dissertation, S., S. and S. Though the chief focus of my analysis in this chapter is Eleanor's narrative about her relationship with The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne, I will refer to all these works in my commentary.

Eleanor's relationship with Judith Hearne and with The Lonely Passion is at an opposite pole from that of Alice with The Diviners. Alice read The Diviners at a critical moment in her life. She bonded with the figure Margaret/Morag which she constructed in

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1 From the poem "From an Old House in America" (Rich, 1975). Eleanor used this excerpt as an epigraph to the Prologue of her doctoral dissertation S., S. and S.
her imagination from aspects of the author Margaret Laurence and her fictional character Morag, and remade her identity with the help of this "friend." In contrast, Eleanor views the character Judith Hearne as a dire warning. She read The Lonely Passion four times, three of them at times of crisis in her life, and she deliberately measured herself against the yardstick of the life of Judith Hearne as depicted in the novel. "Even today," she says, "I am haunted ... by the way much of my life has been too close to the story of Lonely Passion for comfort" (EN, 1, 18-19). She tried again and again to change her life so that it would, in her eyes, resemble less that of Judith Hearne. Yet, as we shall see, what Eleanor rejected in the life of Judith Hearne functioned not only as a warning, but as a way of defining who she wanted to be. What one refuses becomes part of the structure which bounds one's identity. By embodying what Eleanor rejected, Judith Hearne served to delineate for Eleanor the boundaries of her self, and also to show her, by opposition, what she desired.

Eleanor is explicit about this haunting of her life by that of Judith Hearne. The first reading of the novel, in the spring of 1968, when she was a lonely depressed young woman, shocked her into trying to change her life (EN, 1-21, 2-1). She tells us that she tried again and again to "change my lot for the better" in the years that followed, but that she was unsuccessful. By 1972, however, her life began to improve. She says, "for a brief moment in 1975-76, when I was newly married and beginning my studies toward a doctorate in education, it seemed to me that I had within my reach a life as unlike Judith Hearne's as it was possible to get. Social position and scholarly achievement, and with them, financial security, were going to be mine at last" (EN, 2, 10-14). Then, in 1976, catastrophe struck, and the influence of Judith Hearne's life on Eleanor's "shifted into reverse." Instead of prompting her
to change her life, it led her to accept the status quo, out of fear that any action on her part would lead to a life "even more like Judith Hearne's than the one I was experiencing" (EN, 2, 19).

Eleanor has given her life a good deal of reflection, and this reflection shows in the style of her narrative. She has achieved some hard won self-knowledge, and this gives her narrative shape and a thoughtful tone, as well as some emotional distance from the painful events she describes. Nonetheless, the struggle, sadness, and sometimes despair of her life as a young woman are not disguised. The story she tells of how it was that at the time she first read The Lonely Passion she was "underpaid and discontented at work and at home ... an extremely lonely and unhappy single mother of a son" (EN, 5, 10-12). is both particularly her own, and instantly recognizable as one of the cultural stories of her time.

As a young woman, in a bid for a measure of autonomy, Eleanor chose to disregard some of the rules for girls in her society. She chose to be sexually active at a time when girls were expected to marry young but to remain virgins until the wedding night. During this period, she says, "a shot-gun marriage or discreet adoption was the only solution to unwanted pregnancy" (EN, 6, 14-15). Though abortions were available in England, and some doctors in Canada performed them, for many women these were not options. Her rebellion against social norms was severely punished, by Eleanor's mother who manipulated her into marriage and into keeping her child against her wishes, and by the society at large which stigmatized her and refused the support she needed as a single mother when her enforced marriage broke down. Eleanor felt that the passivity which she experienced in the maternity wing of the
hospital where she gave birth "spread like a contagious disease" into other parts of her life (EN, 5, 18-19).

So, when she first read The Lonely Passion, Eleanor was struggling both at work and in her private life, with poverty, loneliness, and a pervasive sense of being trapped in a position from which there was no escape no matter how much she tried. Her sense of stigma was so great that she used to think people were staring at her as she walked down the street (EN, 11, 14). "I think," she writes, "I brought memories of my sense of stigma to my reading of Lonely Passion, identifying strongly with Judith Hearne, who was stigmatized first of all by her ugliness and her poverty, and then by her alcoholism" (EN, 11, 20-22). She also found herself in strong opposition to the culture of the school she was teaching in. She explains the situation with the story of the high school principal who broke his promise to a pupil, which she tells us "has deep implications for the way that I first read Lonely Passion. The situation that the story describes reveals one of the threads in the web of myself that I brought to my reading of Lonely Passion. The thread is a very strong dislike of hypocrisy and cant,.... And poor Judith Hearne was surely as much a victim of hypocrisy and cant as she was of loneliness, emptiness and despair" (EN, 12, 8-13).

So, for Eleanor, reading Lonely Passion was a dire warning. But it was more than that. It was also an important step in the remaking of her sense of self. In her narrative, written in 1993, Eleanor declares "Since 1989, I have been writing about my life and in this way have re-written my life..... (EN, 4, 16-17) I now speak of having re-woven the web of myself, as opposed to having changed myself as from one blouse to another" (EN 4,20-21). Reading Lonely Passion, it seems clear, was important to this re-weaving.
One way to understand how this novel functioned in Eleanor's life is by looking at Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection as she articulates it in *Powers of Horror* (1982).

Kristeva begins her essay by a poetic evocation of abjection:

> There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened it rejects. (p. 1).

But, perhaps paradoxically, that which is abjected forms an important, even essential, boundary of the self without which the human being cannot recognize, or reorganize, itself. Kristeva writes: "I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself." (p. 3) For Kristeva the abject is that which must be thrust aside in order to live, to maintain one's identity. "Refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live" (p. 3). It is ... not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity. System, order (p. 4).  

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2 It is interesting to note that Deanne Bogdan describes her sense of revulsion at the discovery of an instance of biological determinism in George Steiner's explanation for the absence of "any major woman writer" from the drama of "art" (Real Presences, 1989, p. 207) as a sense of horror, "I speak of a cathexis of negativity so repugnant that wrench and retch became simulacra of my being, my body the emblem of its defilement; my trust, of its betrayal: my bliss of its desecration" (Re-Educating the Imagination: Toward a Poetics, Politics and Pedagogy of Literary Engagement, 1992, p. 204). Bogdan invokes Kristeva here to explain how, for her, too, this revulsion has led to a new poetics. "It is at this outer limit of primal repression that Julia Kristeva offers her defense of poetry: the abject as that point of collapse between inner and outer, at the blurred borders of the ego, slain in the name of someone else's reality. For me, abjection provides the ground for a new apologetics: the poetics of ordinary existence, which would supplant the transcendence of imaginative vision with the ontology of subjectivity" (p. 206). We are defined, we define, by what we abject.
Commenting on this aspect of Kristeva's thought Elizabeth Grosz (1990) remarks:

Kristeva is fascinated by the ways in which 'proper' sociality and subjectivity are based on the expulsion or exclusion of the improper, the unclean, and the disorderly elements of its corporeal existence that must be separated from its 'clean and proper' self.... The subject must disavow part of itself in order to gain a stable self, and this form of refusal marks whatever identity it acquires as provisional, and open to breakdown and instability..... What is new about Kristeva's position is her claim that what must be expelled from the subject's corporeal functioning can never be fully obliterated but hovers at the border of the subject's identity, threatening apparent unities and stabilities with disruption and possible dissolution. Her point is that it is impossible to exclude the threatening or anti-social elements with any finality. They recur and threaten the subject not only in those events Freud described as 'the return of the repressed' -- that is, in psychical symptoms -- they are also a necessary accompaniment of sublimated and socially validated activities, such as the production of art, literature and knowledges....(p. 86-87)

This aspect of abjection is clearly part of the "unities and stabilities" of the web of self that Eleanor has created. The final sentences of her narrative attest to a pain which, while now located in her past, is still a powerful force in her present.

In truth, the memories that I had to call up to talk about the impact that the Lonely Passion had on my life are so painful, that throughout the writing of this piece, I have had to struggle against a powerful urge to procrastinate on, if not to abandon
the project altogether. But I didn't. I survived the painful writing of this story as I survived the painful living of it years ago. (EN, 41,7-8)

The warning and the power of Lonely Passion persist for Eleanor, but in radically different ways from those recounted in her narrative. Now she abjures the horror which the life of Judith Hearne represents for her. With enormous energy and determination she has recreated her identity, rewoven her web of self. It is important to know this story too if we are to understand fully her story in relation to the novel The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne. As Kristeva shows, they are two parts of the whole.

Toward the end of her narrative "On Reading and Living The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne" Eleanor writes:

In 1975-1976, in my first year at OISE, I continued on the trajectory to scholarly success that I had begun in my Master's program. It was a path that I thought was going to take me far from the lonely passion of Judith Hearne. And it would have, except that life interfered with art. When my husband assaulted me for the first of many times, the trajectory suddenly became a plumbline to the heart of darkness, the depths of despair. But this time, unlike Judith Hearne, I didn't go mad. I just kept going, day after day after day, until it was time to go. But that is another story.

(EN, 40, 8-14)

Eleanor has told the "other story". It is M. and M., an autobiographical work which recounts in detail how Eleanor "kept going, day after day, after day" and of how she not only did not go mad but how she re-made her sense of self and the outward circumstances of her life. M. and M. reads like a novel, a novel the reader does not want to put down. Many of
her fellow students at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education were deeply moved, as I was, by this work. Eleanor generously suggested I use *M. and M.* in my dissertation, and I do so because it provides the converse side, the upward movement as opposed to the downward movement, of the story of her reading of *Lonely Passion.* It is in *M. and M.* that we learn how it is she could begin the closing paragraph of her narrative about her life with *Lonely Passion* by declaring, "I can no longer draw parallels between Judith Hearne's wanting and wasted life and my own, for now my life wants only money" (EN, 40, 15-16).

Eleanor chose a quotation from Carolyn G. Heilbrun as an epigraph for *M. and M.*, "Women come to writing, I believe, simultaneously with self creation" (*Writing a Woman's Life*). Certainly this is so with *M. and M.*, as she makes explicit in her opening chapter:

> I did not realize until I began to write my story that the story itself was both the journey and the journey's end. In recovering the history of my abusive relationship with my husband, I recovered myself. In ordering the content of my past lives, I gave order to my present life and direction to my future life. In giving my story form, I gave myself form. In writing about who I was, I became who I am. (p. 31)

Eleanor used a well known metaphor, the biological stages of the metamorphosis of a butterfly, as the structuring image of her book. If the time when she so feared her life would be a replication of Judith Hearne's can be seen as the caterpillar years, these days she unabashedly celebrates her emergence as a butterfly. Her text is explicit and eloquent on the subject of how she recovered herself and how she gave herself form.

Eleanor wrote *M. and M.* not only as a way or redefining herself but to help other abused women recover from the effects of abusive relationships. She first determined to write
the book in response to a call to The Assailed Women's Help Line for which she was working as a volunteer. "To rebuild herself [the caller] needed literally to re-characterize herself in a different kind of story. I knew this not because I had read it in a handbook for counsellors of abused women but because I had needed to do it myself" (M. and M. p. 27).

When she married her second husband, Eleanor thought she was escaping from a life which she felt resembled too closely that of Judith Hearne. She was doing it in the manner most traditional for women of her time, marriage to a strong man who would give her status and security. Kevin, as she calls her husband in M. and M., was the son of a wealthy establishment family and a young lawyer with good prospects. The dream of "happily ever after" lasted a year. When her husband assaulted her, it was not only the end of happiness in marriage, but the end of her recent return to scholarly work. By enacting, literally and devastatingly, the title, "The Hidden Injuries of Sex," of her projected thesis in sociology at OISE, Kevin disabled Eleanor as a scholar, at least for a time. Eleanor's story of marriage, as well as those of the other assaulted women she speaks to on the helpline and some of whose stories she tells in M. and M., is different from most in the severity of the hurt it inflicted, but it is like so many, including the ones that would be termed successful, at that period (the late fifties and early sixties) in that she saw her salvation in terms of attachment to a man.

This view of marriage is well documented in the literature of the early years of the current women's movement. As Eleanor and Alice and countless others testify, it was a cultural story of our time. It is to be noted that the story of our time was different from that of our mothers, those who were young just after World War 1. Many women of that time chose not to marry or deferred marriage in favour of an exploration of other options. (My
own mother did not marry until she was over thirty, after developing a career in interior decoration.) Women who were young after World War II, however, often felt pressured by undefined forces to marry young. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique. (1963)* is probably the most famous account of this cultural story. She writes:

In the fifteen years after World War II, ...millions of women lived their lives in the image of those pretty pictures of the American suburban housewife kissing their husbands goodbye in front of the picture window [then spending their days in housework and childcare, they] pitied their poor frustrated mothers, who had dreamed of having a career. Their only dream was to be perfect wives and mothers; their highest ambition to have five children and a beautiful house, their only fight to get and keep their husbands. They had no thought for the unfeminine problems of the world outside the home; they wanted the men to make the major decisions.

(p. 14)

Though Friedan is obviously exaggerating somewhat here, many women who were young in the 1950s have said that this was largely true of their own attitudes and those of their time. We would find protection, our place in society, and our identity as women through marriage. This idea of a "good" marriage underlies much of the complaint of Eleanor's narrative "On Reading and Living "*The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne." The men she was dating as a young single mother, like the man Judith "dated", were unsuitable. In a world whose work was designed for men, she was adrift in a series of low paying jobs when almost all women earned less than their male counterparts. As a divorced woman with a child Eleanor had
strayed from the usual pattern of life as it was understood for women of her class and time.\textsuperscript{3}

This pattern for women like us was defined as a short (and childless) period of youth and courtship leading to a suitable marriage.\textsuperscript{4}

What happened after marriage was a story much less talked about in popular culture. Eleanor's experience was more devastating than it was for most women, but many of us have learned that the protection we sought in marriage was illusory and the cost was enormous. Eleanor's story of recovering her self after a destructive marriage is uniquely her own, but it is also the story of many of our generation, even, perhaps especially, those whose marriages were happy in a socially approved way.\textsuperscript{5}

Eleanor's marriage reached its "absolute nadir," in renewed physical assault, nine months before she ended it. Having decided to leave, she used these nine months to "prepare her escape." She and Kevin had been living for about a year in a house they had purchased in Forest Hill Village, one of the wealthiest parts of Toronto. The house had been badly and cheaply updated about fifteen years before and then had been allowed to decay by a series of

\textsuperscript{3} One woman of my acquaintance, (about fifteen years older than Eleanor) after divorcing her husband after a brief marriage during which a child had been born, gave this child to be brought up by her sister because, though she had a job and a home of her own, she felt the stigma of her situation was too great to warrant bringing up her child alone.

\textsuperscript{4} Cf. Carolyn Heilbrun, writing of her grandmother's views which strongly influenced her own upbringing: "the way to security was marriage; the dread that stood in the way of this was sexual dalliance, above all, pregnancy. ..... The male's rights were embodied in her lack of sexual experience, in the knowledge that he was the first, the owner" \textit{(Reinventing Womanhood}, 1979, p. 56). And again, "What does it mean to be unambiguously a woman? It means to put a man at the centre of one's life and to allow to occur only what honors his prime position" \textit{(Writing a Woman's Life}, 1988, p. 21).

\textsuperscript{5} Again Carolyn Heilbrun provides a useful summary of the situation, as reflected in fiction, "'The abandonment of personality' is the prelude to love, [E.M.] Forster remarked in [a] novel about marriage in 1910...he saw what woman in the contemporary novel was to discover as the price of wifehood: she must abandon herself' \textit{Reinventing Womanhood}, p. 175.
indifferent owners who rented it out (M. and M. p.50). Eleanor had been hard at work giving
it a thorough renovation since they had moved in, but now the work took on a different
character. It was driven by two compelling needs, practical and metaphorical: the necessity to
increase the market value so that her share in the equity would fund the renewal of her life as
a single mother, and by her vivid sense of the house as symbol of self -- in remaking the one
she was remaking the other. Eleanor is explicit on both these points:

I worked and worked and worked day after day after day. A need to make the
house beautiful, a need so strong it was a compulsion, drove me. And aware
that time was running out, for the marriage, for me, I was driving myself hard.
For years I had succeeded at nothing, and failed at everything. I needed to do
something wonderfully well, and the house was it. In renovating the house, I was
conscious of it being a metaphor for myself. (M. and M. p. 51)

Eleanor's house and her description of the completed project in M. and M. is full of light and
colour. Here is a sample:

I'd had an idea of a colour wheel with a grey scale in the centre, and the colours
spreading out around it. As a result, my hall was pale silver grey above the
wainscoting, and the wainscoting itself was white with a soft grey-green in the
panels. The banister rail and top of the banister post were a soft deep teal green,
a shade lighter than the front door. The light fixture had a frosted glass shade set
within a grey ring with gold lines on it. I had designed a hooked rug with a teal
border and a grey-green ground over which stylized multi-coloured fiddleheads wove,
and I had it on the walnut-stained oak floor.... Upstairs, the four bedrooms were a blue like a winter sky on a sunny day, pale orchid full of light, palest pink and aqua.

When the bedroom doors were open, one colour seemed to lead to another. The effect was quite wonderful. (*M. and M.*, p. 65)

This is indeed the other side of abjection. When Eleanor sold this house, the new owners gave her a gift of a Russian lacquered box, with a miniature painting of a figure slaying a dragon on the lid. The gift was inscribed, "Dear Eleanor, Many thanks for such a beautiful home." Eleanor saw the gift as both tribute and talisman, a recognition of victory and a promise of hope for the future (*M. and M.*, p. 69-70).

Eleanor had remade her home in the image she wanted for herself; she transformed a decrepit house with light and colour. Writing the story of this change was also an important factor in the reconstruction of her sense of self. As noted in the discussion of autobiography in chapter 2, writing a life can transform that life. As Eleanor said, "in giving my story form, I gave myself form" (*M. and M.* p. 31). In this Eleanor was like Alice and Celia and the classic writers who are discussed in the literature on autobiography. This is a key point for this inquiry. As we have seen, the aesthetics of women's autobiography extends those of male autobiography or of autobiography in general in several important ways. Eleanor's work, more clearly than that of Alice or Celia, illustrates yet another facet of women's autobiography.

In addition to the importance of communities, discussed in chapter 2, several theorists have described another key aspect of women's autobiography, the "discontinuities" (Jelinek, 1980, p. 17) of their form and content. Friedman relates this to a feature of women's
conscioussness, which she calls dual consciousness. "Not recognizing themselves in the
reflections of cultural representation, women develop a dual consciousness -- the self as
culturally defined and the self as different from cultural prescription (1988, p. 39). The "dual
consciousness" described by Friedman and others was strongly felt by Eleanor. In fact it was
so painful that it is a key theme of her dissertation S., S., and S. Here is one of her
descriptions of that split:

   My inquiry began, as all inquiries do ... with a question. Though not all generative
questions are overtly reflexive, mine was. My question brought to discourse a lifetime
of tacit knowing born of my lived experience as a woman. In my lived experience,
as I reflected upon it, I knew that ever since I had begun to acquire the credentials
of formal education, I had been pulled two ways, split between what appeared to
be two mutually exclusive realms of being, the world of men's knowledge and the
world of women's experience. I wondered why it had always been so difficult to
make a connection between man-made knowledge, even that about women, and
my own lived experience. My question was: What was it about knowledge, what
was it about my lived experience, that I should feel so split? (pp. 13-14)

Eleanor's dissertation is a thoughtful and moving exploration of her key question. It is
also an act of courage, for in it she challenges the hegemony of man-made knowledge which
leaves out so much of women's experience. In M. and M. Eleanor wrote about many aspects

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6 Cf. Domna Stanton, "Autogynography: is the Subject Different?" speaking of
"autogynographic content." "Here, too, a binary opposition recurred that associated the
female with personal and intimate concerns, the male with professional achievements -- a
replication, it seemed, of the private/public, inner/outer dichotomies that mark generic
differences in our symbolic system (1984, p. 11).
of the life of her body, of lovemaking, of pregnancy and birth, of physical assault. In her accounts she filled in the gaps which have traditionally existed in women's stories. Thus Eleanor acted to help end some of the silences.\(^7\)

Writing of women's diaries of the past, particularly the diaries of Canadian pioneers, Helen Buss notes that researchers must "decode encoded materials" in which the diarist "had personal knowledge she has not shared with us" (1993, p.23).

For example, one of the most consistent silent presences in women's accounts in the past has been caused by the absence of any language of conception, pregnancy, labour, and delivery. Babies are announced after the reader has worked through many seemingly unpregnant months with a diarist. But reading for encoding allows the researcher to mitigate the silence that male centred language imposes on women's real lives. (p.24)

The conventions which prohibited writing of conception, pregnancy, labour, and delivery are of course long in the past, but some topics, such as sexual abuse, remained taboo much longer. Personal accounts of physical and/or sexual abuse, and of recovery for abused women are helping to end the silence on these topics and the resultant isolation felt by the victims. In doing so, in writing the story from a personal point of view, the point of view of

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\(^7\) Cf. this story by Janice Williamson on her interview with Elly Danica about Danica's book *Don't: A Woman's Word*. "My questions are too elaborate to be effective.... Quietly she [Danica] considers my question for a moment, then remarks, 'You have very definite ideas of what you want,... and I'm not sure I'm answering your questions.' I feel myself resurface from my theoretical bunker and decide to spill the beans, the seed, the story. Out with it. I admit to 'framing my questions in this complex way in order to protect myself.' Danica replies with compassion: 'For too long we've been trying to fit into a male academic paradigm of what we should be saying and how we should be saying it. But [personal] engagement is very, very difficult and very painful and very risky in an academic environment.'" "'I Peel Myself out of My Own Skin': Reading *Don't: A Woman's Word*" (1992, pp. 143-144).
the abused, Eleanor was contributing to a very small body of work. Personal stories of abuse, told from the "inside" are quite different from sociological or psychological accounts told by "experts." Telling these stories, even today, requires courage. Abused women are still stigmatized in our society, and the crime of wife abuse is still underrated and underreported. In writing her personal story of abuse, Eleanor recovered from the effects of that abuse. This ability to change, to forge a new identity can lead to acts of extraordinary courage. By ending the disabling silence which surrounded her own case, she reached out to other women, and she continued, in her dissertation, to inquire how it was that a bright able student, inclined to study, could have come to such a pass. She was not content only to recover from her victimization, she took a bold step and called the academy, and by extension the construction of knowledge itself, to account.

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8 Cf. Janice Williamson on a similar topic. "At lunch with a group of feminist scholars in a prairie city, I am told that sexual abuse and incest are inappropriate topics of conversation." "I Peel Myself out of My Own Skin: Reading Don't: A Woman's Word" (1992, p. 143).

9 Eleanor recounts her decision to write M. and M. in similar terms: She had been talking to a caller on the Assaulted Women's Helpline, who had just told her that she didn't think any one could put herself back together after what she had been through. Eleanor writes, "I knew that someone could, for I had been such a someone, but I said nothing about my own experiences....I took refuge by citing what I remembered of my long-ago readings of R.D. Laing, assuring Helen that if she did fall apart, she could re-create a new stronger self. Only towards the end of the call, after Helen had repeatedly asked me how I knew that she could put herself back together, did I tell her that I knew from my own experience that it was possible..... After the call ended, I thought about my reluctance to admit to a personal story of abuse...I thought I might have served Helen's needs better had I been more self-revealing than self-concealing. It really would have been more instructive for Helen to have had before her an exemplary story of how someone had put herself back together than to have been told that a Scottish psychiatrist thought it was possible" (pp. 28-29).

10 It is interesting to note that the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, 1970, did not report wife abuse. When asked why, the Commissioner Florence Bird replied that the Commission simply did not hear about it. "People in 1970 were too ashamed and frightened to talk about it," she said. Address at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Sept. 27, 1990.
It would be unkind to Eleanor and her work, not to say stretching a point, to compare it with that of a great woman painter of the Italian Renaissance, Artemisia Gentileschi. Yet there are points in common between them, and sometimes an analogy which links quite disparate people, genres, and periods can be instructive. The earliest preserved painting (1610) of Artemisia Gentileschi is her *Susannah and the Elders*, below. Her rendition of this well known theme is dramatically different from male versions, which typically display the beauty, Susannah, for the delectation of male viewers.\footnote{Artemisia's painting "offers an unusual -- and virtually unique -- version of this theme of sexual coercion, which emphasizes the victim's anguished discomfort instead of the seducers' lascivious delight" (Garrard, 1984, p. 83). Germaine Greer writes of this painting:}

*Susannah's pelvis is not the invention of voluptuous fantasy, but something observed and understood. Her body is not displayed in Susannah's conventional posture of self-caressing, to excite the observer: she sits heavily, crumpled against the cruel stone of the coping, turning her face away from implication in the tangled drama of the two men conspiring to destroy her. (1979, p. 191)*

Both Greer and Garrard suggest that Artemisia's interpretation may be related to autobiographical facts. When she was eighteen, Artemisia was raped by Agostino Tassi, a friend of her father's whom he had engaged as art tutor to teach her perspective. Her father, who was considered to be the injured party under the law of the time, took Tassi to court and he served a short jail term. A month after the trial Artemisia married Pietro Antonio Stiattesi, who had been supportive to her during the trial. Little is known about their married life, but

\footnote{Cf. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (1972, pp. 45-64) which shows that most nudes in Western art were consciously posed by the artist for the pleasure of the male viewer.}
Artemisia worked as a painter and supported herself throughout her life (Greer, 1979, pp. 192-93; Garrard, 1984, p. 85).

_Susannah and the Elders_, 1610, Pommersfelden, Schloss Weissenstein

(Garrard, 1989, plate 2)
The pose of Susannah can certainly be seen as a reflection of attitudes born of personal experience. But Artemisia did not see herself as a victim. As Germaine Greer put it, "[She] did not choose to dwell upon her disappointment.....She developed an ideal of heroic womanhood. She lived it, she portrayed it. It was not as crassly misunderstood in her own lifetime as it has been ever since" (1979, p. 193). One of the themes which she returned to

*Judith Slaying Holofernes*, 1612-13, Naples, Museo di Capodimonte

(Garrard, 1989, Plate 4)
several times in the 1610s and 1620s was the biblical story of Judith slaying Holofernes. Mary Garrard calls it an avenue for psychic vindication (1984, p. 85). The version above, now in Naples, is particularly violent, presenting the Israelite heroine and her maidservant in the act of sawing off the head of the Assyrian general, while blood spurts everywhere. Though few were as murderous as this, Artemisia went on to portray many heroic women (Garrard, 1989). Mary Garrard writes of this aspect of Artemisia's accomplishment:

Within a vigorous painting style that is not susceptible to gender stereotyping, Artemisia conveys a generic identification with women, whose subterranean struggles against men's oppression are given lucid visual form.

In Gentileschi's paintings, women are convincing protagonists and courageous heroes, perhaps for the first time in art. (1984, p. 89)

In her art, which has close autobiographical connections, Artemisia Gentileschi illustrates in a spectacular way Susan Friedman's claim at the conclusion of her essay "Women's Autobiographical Selves": "women have shattered the distorting identities imposed by culture and left 'the sign' of their 'presence' in their autobiographical writings" (p. 56). For both Eleanor and Artemisia, the act of abjection defined a new self which not only survived but discovered a fertile source of strength which continues throughout their lives. As Deanne Bogdan explains (1992, p 178, n. 2), abjection can be, as it was for herself, the ground for a new way of thinking and being in the world. The very extremity of the hurt suffered turns into an equally strong capacity for change and creativity. For Eleanor the 'sign' of which Friedman writes is explicit, her metamorphosis as described in and accomplished through her autobiography, M. and M. This allowed her to go on in her dissertation to
conduct a lucid critique of the male bias in the construction of knowledge. She showed that she had not only survived her socialization and her abusive marriage but that she no longer saw herself as a victim, and was ready to state her case, and that of so many other women, in and to the academy.

It seems clear that life-writing, autobiography, can be liberating and transforming for women, as indeed it is for many men. It was so for Eleanor, Alice, and Celia. Eleanor wrote a book length autobiography in *M. and M.*, but the narratives all three wrote for this dissertation were autobiographical and as such were also liberatory. The act of writing itself contributed to the formation of a new sense of self, over and above the story of a reading which it told. Their experiences of the novels about which they write, however, were quite different. The connection with Margaret/Morag that Alice celebrates in her narrative was a positive force for good in her life. Eleanor turned in horror from Judith Hearne. Her transformation was in part forged in reaction to her abjection of Judith and everything she represents in Brian Moore's novel. I will end this chapter by looking at these differences, especially as they relate to Eleanor's experience.

There is much, certainly, in *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* to justify horror and abjection. It is the first of Moore's novels, written in the early 1950s during his brief sojourn in Canada (Dahlie, 1969, p. 6). It was for him also a definition of what he wished to leave behind — in his case, the narrowness and bigotry in Northern Ireland and his birthplace, Belfast. He made this plain in an interview:

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12 Cf. Melody Graulich, about a chapter by Bell Gale Chevigny in Ascher et. al. *Between Women* (1984) "As Chevigny implies, the act of reading and writing about women leads us to rediscover the bonds that allow us to rescue and repair our selves" (Freedman, Frey, Zauhar, 1993, p. 188).
I discovered in writing it what I really felt about my past. I left Ireland with the intention of not going back, but my reasons became clear only when I wrote that first novel. It was then that my bitterness against the bigotry in Northern Ireland, my feelings about the narrowness of life there, and, in a sense, my loneliness when living in exile in Canada, all focused to produce a novel about what I felt the climate of Ulster to be. (quoted in O'Donoghue, 1990. p. 16)

In *The Lonely Passion* Moore has been successful in carrying out this intention to write a novel which would express the qualities of Belfast which he was rejecting. Readers comment on the pervasive despair of the first novels. In a review published in 1966, for one example, Philip French writes: "All five [of Moore's] books deal with the same themes -- loneliness, failure, self-deception, loss of faith, the painful confrontation with reality" (p. 87). In another comment on Moore's themes, Hallvard Dahlie's choice of words highlight his recognition of the twofold quality of Moore's attitude toward his characters. A longish quotation will make this clear:

> A major premise of Moore's fiction is that society is basically composed of insignificant, lonely, and frustrated individuals, much like Arthur Miller's Willy Loman, to whom "attention must be paid" for the simple and convincing reason that they are human beings to whom "something terrible is happening," and it is to such people that Moore devotes most of his attention. "A good writer," he said on one occasion, "must feel sympathetic with even the least of his characters and it is only the second-rate writer who will make out of his flat characters mere caricatures."
To this aesthetic principle Moore has remained constant, .....Moore displays a sensitive sympathy for life's losers, and his fiction abounds in grotesques and misfits of all sorts, but he effectively distances himself from these characters to ensure their humanness and credibility; as a result of this perspective and his technique, his fiction is remarkably clear of both moralizing and sentimentality. It is just this skilful exploitation of the constituents of failure that represents one of Moore's major contributions to contemporary fiction. (1969, pp. 10-11)

Most readers would assent to Moore's claim that he shows sympathy for "even the least of his characters," but we must examine some of the implications of Dahlie's claims about the distance Moore maintains from his character. For women reading a novel about a woman who is portrayed as a failure, a loser, a self-deluded misfit, what are the implications of authorial distance for our response to the novel? Dahlie claims that Moore's authorial distance "ensures their humanness and credibility," but his choice of words to describe this perspective is troubling. What is the meaning of "exploitation" in Dahlie's phrase about Moore's "skilful exploitation of the constituents of failure?" Is it "the action of turning to account" or "the action of utilizing for selfish purposes" (O.E.D.)? Putting the question in the baldest terms, was Moore, a male author, sympathetically giving the stage to a loser, a woman, who deserved his and his readers' attention, or was he using this pathetic character to illustrate all that he found repellent in his native Belfast and from which he had recently made good his escape? Of course this stark contrast does not do justice to the complexities of the case. I will look at the issues imbedded in the question one by one because I think they are important to understanding Eleanor's response to *The Lonely Passion.*
The question of female and female authored texts is important to this inquiry, as noted in chapter 2. In this instance, does it make a significant difference that Brian Moore, a man, is writing this novel about a poor deluded loser who is a woman? Of course the question is not about men being winners and women being losers. Moore shows us men who are losers (in the case of The Lonely Passion several commentators have remarked that Jim Madden is as much a loser in his way as Judith is) and Moore has given us strong admirable women characters. Nor can we fault Moore as novelist for pursuing his art by making Judith symbolic of what he dislikes about Belfast. Good novels show such unities.

The issue is more complex. Many readers have commented, in reference to Judith Hearne, at how remarkable they find Moore's understanding, as a man, of a woman's sensibility. Dahlie is typical: "[Judith Hearne] is the most despairing of Moore's novels in terms of its implied vision of the world, yet it is one of his most powerful in total impact, and in its exploration of the feminine psyche it is perhaps surpassed only by I am Mary Dunne" (1969, p. 12). But how exactly does Moore portray Judith? He writes about Judith in the third person, yet he tells us about her by using her thoughts and her language, thus "giving the impression of a first person narrator, as if one were standing behind a character and yet at the same time seeing events through his [sic] eyes" (French, 1966, p. 90-91).

In a recent study of Moore's novels, Jo O'Donogue notes that Moore felt it was a very important commitment in his early novels to capture the voice of the chief character. He quotes Moore to this effect:

Judith Hearne...is not written in the first person, although people think it is;

that was the inspiration I had in that first novel. That while it seems a third-person
narrative it is always coloured by the words she would use, the type of thoughts
she might have and so you are not conscious of any third person or first person:
you only hear her voice. (1990, p. 38)

The actual effect of this style, of course, is not as straightforward as Moore implies.
O'Donogue calls this style free indirect speech, using a distinction elucidated by Roy Pascal in
his book *The Dual Voice*:

> While simple indirect speech tends to obliterate the characteristic personal
> idiom of the reported speaker, free indirect speech preserves some of the elements
> -- the sentence form...intonation, and the personal vocabulary -- just as it preserves
> the subjective perspective of the character. (1977, pp. 9-10)

Moore's use of this form is clearly successful in preserving Judith's voice and her
subjective perspective. Yet as the title of Pascal's book clearly states this form uses "the dual
voice." French's image of Moore's style is only partly accurate; the author is indeed "standing
behind" the character, but he is far from passive as French implies. O'Donogue states the case
well:

> there is frequently a tension set up between a character and the world she lives
> in and the people she associates with....it [the use of free indirect speech] is a
> way of sympathetically showing a character while at the same time exposing her
> faults, her misconceptions and her delusions. (1990, p. 39)

While it is accurate that the tension Moore sets up in his use of free indirect speech is
chiefly between Judith's perceptions and those of the people around her, the contrast itself of
course, is an artifact of the novel and of the author, and we know that however sympathetic
he may be to Judith, he sees himself as very different from her. In an interview in which he acknowledged the influence of James Joyce on his work, Moore described Judith Hearne as "a character as foreign to me as Bloom must have been to Joyce, but a character which, in some way, was then my lonely self" (quoted by O'Donoghue, 1990, p. 28).

This, I think, is the crux of the matter. Judith is both like and very unlike her author, as she is to many of her readers, including Eleanor. For women readers the distance Moore, as author, maintains from his character is partly a matter of unity of form which this novel has in common with all novels, i.e. Judith is seen as both a helpless product and as a manifestation of the rejected society of Belfast, and her character is of a piece with the novel as a whole. It is also, partly, a matter of gender. In a male-dominated society, Moore, as author delineating the weakness, failure and self-delusion of a woman, cannot escape entirely the charge of exploiting the weakness of his character (in the sense of "the action of utilizing for selfish purposes"). His stance toward his character can be described as a "male gaze" as that term has been defined in feminist criticism.

The term "male gaze" has been used in various contexts. In Ways of Seeing John Berger describes the effect on the woman of the male gaze. "Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another" (1972, p. 46). Laura Mulvey uses it in her article "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema." She writes:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for
strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote

_to-be-looked-at-ness._ (1993, p. 436)

Of course, in the case of Judith Hearne, the male gaze of her author does not evoke erotic pleasure, but revulsion and pity. This revulsion and pity, however, is seen as 'the other', from the outside, not the inside. If, as author, Moore admits that "at some level" he identifies with his heroine Judith, at more obvious levels, he abjects her and all she stands for. As O'Donogue comments, "the author's attitude towards the life led by Judith, Madden and most of the other characters is clear. Is it worth living like this?" (1990, p. 37).

Certainly Eleanor saw an aspect of the male gaze in her response to _The Lonely Passion_. This is what she wrote for me after we had spent some time discussing it on a December visit:

Spent the day by the fireplace while talking to Nathalie about Buddhism and my contribution to her thesis. Of the latter, she has been looking for the common thread between my reading of _Judith Hearne, M. and M._, and my thesis. We decided that, in post-modern feminist terms, in _Judith Hearne_, Brian Moore was the gazer and Judith Hearne the gazed upon -- she was object to his subject, as were all women to men then (and as are many women now). When I first read _Judith Hearne_, I identified with Judith as a fellow object who was found wanting by a male gazer. Moore, as a male writer, was superior to his female character. From

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Other uses of the term male gaze are more overtly aggressive. Cf. Elizabeth Schafer in "The male gaze in _Woyzeck_: re-presenting Marie and madness," "I want to propose a feminist reading of the play, a reading which uses the structure of the 'male gaze' for its focus, and which sees _Woyzeck_ as a text which obtrusively foregrounds the gaze as an instrument of power and aggression" (1993, p. 55); and Toril Moi in _Sexual/Textual Politics_, "Freud's own texts, particularly 'The uncanny' theorize the gaze as the phallic activity linked to the anal desire for sadistic mastery of the object" (1985, p. 134).
his position of superiority, he pitied her, but from a Buddhist point of view, he did not feel compassion\textsuperscript{14} for her. He did not want to release her from her suffering. He wanted to study it. Perhaps in those days I also felt I was, or could be, an object of men's pity, or worse, their scorn, but never of their love or compassion. Interesting.

(Personal communication, Dec. 29, 1994)

A close discussion of the text of one novel is just that -- comments on one novel -- but these analyses are congruent with a position that there is a difference for the woman reader between male and female authored texts. I think the difference between Eleanor's identification with Judith Hearne and Alice's with Morag can be explained in part because Morag's creator can see her character "from the inside" in a way that Moore, as a man cannot see his.

Except for Eleanor, all the readers of \textit{The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne} I have quoted have been men. At least one woman's reaction to the novel and the character and role of Judith herself is sufficiently different from these men that it provides a contrast which may shed some light on the question of the male gaze, and on the whole question of abjection itself. In her afterword to The New Canadian Library edition of \textit{The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne}, Janette Turner Hospital stresses what Judith has in common with her author, and by extension everyman and everywoman.

\textit{The Lonely Passion} is a novel for expatriates and travellers in circles. When he wrote it, Brian Moore was living in Montreal and re-visioning his native Ireland as

\textsuperscript{14} Eleanor's note: In the tradition of Buddhism of which I am a part, we distinguish between pity, which is a mind tainted with selfish pride that thinks itself superior to those pitied, and compassion, which is a mind marked by an absence of egoism and which we define as a wish to release others from their suffering.
the sealed envelope within which a nomadic woman lives: a displaced novelist writing about a displaced woman from behind that safest (and perhaps, therefore, most transparent?) of literary masks, a protagonist of the opposite gender.

(1988, p. 241)

In her comments Hospital does not romanticize Judith or her situation, yet she sees that Judith is in her way a heroic figure. To end I give a long quotation to show how warm is Hospital's appreciation of Judith. She writes:

It is an epic voyage of exploration and discovery that Judith Hearne makes through Belfast, touching all the great mythic ports of call. There is Mr. Madden's siren song, false and cruel as the call of the sirens always is. (It lures Judith Hearne to the very brink of self-destruction.) There are battles with demons (the whisky) and gods (at the high altar itself); there are brushes with death; there is the descent into hell, the unblinking stare into the void, the return. And the end of all the protagonist's journeying is this: to find herself at novel's end, as battle-scarred but unbroken as Ulysses, in a single room in Belfast..... The confrontation [of the Lord of Hosts at the altar] is an extraordinary scene. As it unfolds, Judith Hearne stretches into the role of her heroic namesake, the apocryphal Old Testament Judith who single handedly slew Holofernes. Judith Hearne's insistence on the rights and dignities of her self keeps pace with her personal desperation. So that at the very moment when she is most ludicrous, most pathetic, most crazy in the eyes of the world (drunk, looking rather
like a garish woman of the night in her red outfit, making a disgraceful scene in the church), at that very moment she is also most heroic in a manner that takes our breath away.

She did not genuflect...she did not make the Sign of the Cross. Show me a sign, she said. Where does a woman, so impoverished in every sense, find the stamina to hurl that challenge at a God in whom she had believed with the absolute and fearful trust of a child? (1988, p. 243)

This is indeed a different view of Judith Hearne. She too has abjected what she can no longer bear, and thereby defined a new self, one that, however scarred by her fearful encounter, is stronger and less deluded, more in touch with her reality. Is it possible that Eleanor, even while abjecting in the strongest terms the life of poverty and despair that Judith represents, was also inspired by Judith Hearne's indomitable spirit? I think so.
As I sit down today to write about my almost lifelong relationship with this novel, Wuthering Heights, I am aware of mixed feelings. I recognize at once the old romantic excitement, the sense of mystery and discovery hiding in the mist just ahead, if only my journey will take me there. I also recognize fear, a fear which makes me want to avoid these discoveries. Am I afraid of disappointment? or perhaps of discovering something I don't want to know? Although not unique in arousing these emotions in me, this novel does so to a much greater degree than any other text.

Finding out why seems important.

Although I spent a good part of my childhood reading, I did not read Wuthering Heights until I reached university and encountered it as part of a course in The English Novel. That was in 1955-56; I was 21, in my final year of a four year Honours English program, well before the current women's movement and the feminist critique of the English literary canon. All of us then, professors and students alike, accepted without remark the fact that almost all the literature and literary criticism we read was written by men. The very few texts by women in the canon I had read up to that time --
the Countess of Winchelsea, the Duchess of Newcastle, Ann Bradstreet — did not
prepare me for the four great women novelists of the nineteenth century, Jane Austen,
George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, and Emily Brontë.

Today the question of a woman's text, a woman's language, is part of the literary
and epistemological conversation. It was not in 1955, yet my experience of these texts,
and of Wuthering Heights in particular, was different from that of great novels written
by men, novels which I still treasure as landmarks in my education. In those days, the
time of my first degree in English literature, I had no conceptual framework for
making distinctions between my experience of male and female texts, but at an
unspoken level I felt myself more at home, my understandings and longings more fully
articulated, my thinking and feeling self more in tune, with the narrative voice in these
women's novels than I did with that of the great novels by men I was reading. This
difference is part of my inquiry, but my present focus is on the question of my
relationship in all its aspects with this novel. I am aware of having been shaped by
reading in many ways at many times in my life, but Wuthering Heights is the novel
which is both typical of my experience, yet more intense, more personal, in ways
(despite the prolonged attention of the present work) I will probably never fully
understand.

When, ten years after my B.A., a wife, mother of two young sons, and an English
tutor in the Dept. of Extension at Queen's, I felt ready to undertake further studies, it
was Wuthering Heights that drew me most strongly. I would do a Master's program in
English literature and I would write about Wuthering Heights as my dissertation. In
The Aims of Education Alfred North Whitehead talks about the rhythm of education, which he describes as three stages, of romance, precision, and generalization. I was in the romantic stage and in many ways I am again now. Whitehead writes:

The stage of romance is the stage of first apprehension. The subject-matter has the vividness of novelty: it holds within itself unexplored connexions with possibilities half-disclosed by glimpses and half-concealed by the wealth of material. In this stage knowledge is not dominated by systematic procedure.....Romantic emotion is essentially the excitement consequent on the transition from the bare facts to the first realizations of the import of their unexplored relationships. (1967, p. 17-18)

In the stage of precision, writes Whitehead, "width of relationship is subordinated to exactness of formulation. It is the stage of grammar, the grammar of language and the grammar of science. It proceeds by forcing on the students' acceptance a given way of analysing the facts, bit by bit. New facts are added, but they are the facts which fit into the analysis" (p. 18). The final stage of generalization "is a return to romanticism with added advantage of classified ideas and relevant technique. It is the fruition which has been the goal of the precise training" (p. 19).

Whitehead first published these ideas in 1929. Today we question the notion of universally accepted grammars, of language, or of science. Feminists certainly have a vivid sense of how only the facts which "fit into the analysis" are allowed into "science" and of how these analytic frameworks themselves are biased. Nonetheless, Whitehead's notion of a cyclic process of education, and especially his description of
the romantic stage, answers to the feeling sense of my experience of this novel. I
would, however, extend his concept of the romantic stage to include the lure of what is
unknown, not only through personal ignorance, which can be remedied by going
through the stages of precision and generalization, but of the universally unknown,
that which is perpetually and always alluring, the mystery at the heart of our
experience.

I began to read the Brontë material, all the novels by the three sisters, several
biographies, and masses of literary criticism. I am far from unusual in my devotion to
the Brontës; they have accumulated an extraordinary following, both popular and
scholarly. Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights, and Dickens's Great Expectations are
among the very few nineteenth century novels which are still read to any extent by
people for pleasure, on the same basis as contemporary works, not because they are
on reading lists required for academic credit. In the 1960s the Brontës had also
attracted more critical work than any other author in the English canon except
Shakespeare. This material proved to be fascinating, but daunting. After a while it
seemed that everything had been said about Wuthering Heights. I was stuffed with
ideas and in some ways my romantic thoughts and feelings had been transformed into
precision and generalization. Although I still found Wuthering Heights alluring, I
could not think of anything I could add to the voluminous conversation about it which
was buzzing loudly in the critical literature.
Now I have come full circle, and find myself again at the romantic stage of knowing about Wuthering Heights, but when it came time to write my Master's thesis I chose to write on Emily Brontë's poems. Much less work had been done on them by the mid-1960s and I could work without having to account for the enormous mass of prior criticism which burdened Wuthering Heights. What I discovered to my delight were poems which spoke very directly of experiences which I felt I could share. Emily's response to nature was perhaps more intense than mine, but I felt a strong affinity of kind and scope with her emotional attachment to the land and the seasonal changes she celebrated. At that time I had yet to visit Haworth and the moors, so this was not a matter of a kinship based on sharing a particular locality, but of a shared perception and shared emotions.

One set of images, those which speak of the contraries of freedom-imprisonment is very pervasive in the poetry. I am aware that at some deep level of my consciousness the image of imprisonment is also dominant. I know that exploring why this is so, and what it means for me is an important part of my work on Wuthering Heights. Toward the end of her life Emily wrote 27 of her poems, including almost all of what critics have come to value as her best work, in a notebook. The order was not chronological, yet it certainly did not seem to be arbitrary. My thesis was that this order demonstrates a mystic quest, a spiritual journey travelled by religious mystics of many faiths which follows a pattern well known in the literature. Working out the details of the correspondences was exciting work, and produced not only a satisfying thesis paper, but proved to be important for my growth as a person as well as a
Something changed in me which was noticeable and remarked on by friends and relatives.

What is clear to me now, though I certainly did not think of it during my Master's work, is that even then I was drawn by the correspondences between life and work.

Emily Brontë's poems read sequentially demonstrate her development as a person. This is not unusual; what poet's work does not? Yet at the time of my Master's work, the dominant paradigm of literary criticism was New Criticism which minimized, if it did not ignore entirely, the life of the poet. The fact that I found a way, at that time, to work in an area of the connection of the life and the work in a woman poet shows me that this is an important clue and one which I must explore. The further point, of course, is that studying Emily Brontë's transformation as it is recorded in her poems was also a transformative experience for me. That is the central theme of the exploration of this dissertation.

April, 1993

One of the most famous passages in Wuthering Heights is the one where Catherine Earnshaw describes her love for Heathcliff:

My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning, my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be;

and, if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter
changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath
—a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I am Heathcliff —
he’s always, always in my mind — not as a pleasure, any more than I am
always a pleasure to myself — but as my own being — so, don’t talk of our
separation again — it’s impracticable; and — ." (W.H., p. 64)

When I first read Wuthering Heights as a young woman of twenty, engaged to be
married, this passage and the whole ethos that goes with it profoundly affected my
notions of what married love should be. I noted the contrast drawn by Emily between
the shallowness of Catherine’s love for Edgar Linton, whom she is about to marry, and
her love for Heathcliff, and to my mind at that time the contrast was all in Heathcliff’s
favour. I read the miseries and brutalities of the novel as chiefly caused by the
mistake Catherine made in marrying the wrong man. I would not make the same
mistake. I would marry for love, and I would stick by my man.

There is little resemblance between me and Catherine Earnshaw, or between my
husband and Heathcliff. We have been married for over thirty-seven years, have
brought up three sons, have many ups and downs. We remain each other’s best
friends and are attached to each other at some deep subliminal level, but it would be
ludicrous to speak of this attachment in the terms Emily Brontë uses for the love of
Catherine and Heathcliff. And yet Wuthering Heights retains its power for me as an
analogue of my life. The devastation of human relationships chronicled in that novel
has not occurred in my life, but the central images of imprisonment, of exile, of a

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longing for a "home" which is paradoxically both here and not here, are also
dominant themes of my life, of which my marriage forms an important part.

Prompted by consideration of the economic and social realities of her time,
Catherine Earnshaw married the "wrong man" Edgar Linton. Heathcliff had been
dispossessed of his position as an adopted member of the family by Catherine's
brother Hindley, and was now a penniless servant on the farm. Catherine tells Nelly,
"I see now you think me a selfish wretch, but did it never strike you that if Heathcliff
and I married, we should be beggars? whereas, if I marry Linton, I can aid Heathcliff
to rise, and place him out of my brother's power" (WH, p. 73).

In 1955, a time when women were not as economically powerless as when
Catherine Earnshaw made her decision, around 1775, I did not make the same
mistake. I married the man I loved, with the blessings of our friends and families, and
we worked together to build our lives. My mistake was not in marrying the wrong
individual, but in seeing my love in the terms in which Catherine saw her love for
Heathcliff. Like her, I wanted to merge with my husband. I did not exactly want to be
him, but I wanted us both to lose ourselves in each other, to merge our individual
selves in one being.

It has taken me most of my life to rethink and relearn, to define boundaries and to
detach while retaining attachment.

At one level Wuthering Heights tells the story of the havoc caused by the
separation of Catherine and Heathcliff; my story is of the havoc wrought by trying to
live out, in part of my marriage at least, Catherine's idea that she is Heathcliff. When

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I married in 1955, I was certainly not alone in this formulation of the marriage relationship. The expectations of my society for the relationship of husbands and wives, while not couched in the romantic terms of *Wuthering Heights*, were in effect not too different. These expectations are well known and well documented. Wives were expected to devote themselves to their husbands and families; their experience of the wider world was to be largely vicarious. Their status, economic and social, was dependent on his. Of course there were many exceptions to this scenario but it was the norm.

In her delirium after the quarrel between Heathcliff and Edgar, Catherine laments:

*I cannot say why I felt so wildly wretched -- it must have been temporary derangement, for there is scarcely cause. But, supposing at twelve years old, I had been wrenched from the Heights, and every early association, and my all in all, as Heathcliff was at that time, and been converted at a stroke into Mrs. Linton, the lady of Thrushcross Grange, and the wife of a stranger; an exile, and outcast, thenceforth, from what had been my world. You may fancy a glimpse of the abyss where I grovelled! .....Why am I so changed? why does my blood rush into a hell of tumult at a few words? I'm sure I should be myself were I once among the heather on those hills. Open the window again wide, fasten it open! Quick, why don't you move?" *(W.H. p. 97)*

Catherine is delirious here; she expresses her feelings in the heightened language of madness. My situation, fortunately, never drove me mad. My sense of exile, of
alienation from my own life, of being imprisoned far from home, however, though it developed slowly over a period of years, was very painful. For a long time I understood my frustration and alienation as the result of my inability to persuade my husband to see the joint project of our marriage as I did. Many of our disagreements were of the sort often engendered when two people live together, but these are not what really troubled me. Some of the alienation I felt was due to the fact that my life as a young mother bore absolutely no relation to my life as a university student. These dislocations were experienced by many women of my generation and are well documented. I do not wish to minimize these aspects of my life, but they are only peripherally related to my reading of *Wuthering Heights*, and to what I understand to be the core of the pain I was suffering.

This core was my absolute failure to achieve what I had envisioned, a sort of joint self with my husband. He has, and has always had, a strong sense of what he wants for himself and what he does in his life. I did not want to change what I perceived to be his main work, but to make adjustments so that our needs as a family would be better met. This he steadfastly refused to do, and for far too long, I saw the problem as this refusal and my inability to change his mind. My model of married love was this unit, this blended being of husband and wife. I thought I could not fulfil any of my own aspirations, for my own development or that of my children, unless he changed his mind and modified his life to fit my ideas.
For a long time I remained locked in this prison. I remember one moment which expressed both the despair I felt of ever escaping, and also the first crack in the walls. I was at a weekend workshop, a personal growth experience led by a woman who used biblical narrative to help us explore our own stories both inner and outer. This weekend it was the escape of the Israelites from Babylon. We were asked to draw our own visual image of bondage. Mine was stark. I drew heavy black prison bars over the entire paper. It stood out from all the other drawings. At the time I did not know all of what these bars meant, and probably do not yet, but during that weekend I cried and cried. I was weeping because I was beginning to realize that these bars, imposed partly by my society and partly by myself, had held me prisoner for so long unnecessarily. I wept for the lost opportunities, yet only dimly perceived, that I had allowed myself to miss under misguided notions of my duties as a wife and a woman in our community.

What began that weekend was a small crack, an opening. It took a long time for the doors to open wide enough for me to pass, and longer still for me to walk out of my prison. It has been a long process of personal growth over many years to realize myself as an independent being, a person with economic and social independence and a focus centred on her own life. I took the steps one at a time. I took a full time job teaching in a community college, I embarked on a series of self explorations which strengthened my sense of who I was as an independent being, I undertook graduate work, for the Master's in English Literature, then the Master's in Education, then the PhD studies. I bought land of my own and took several trips alone or with some of my
children without my husband. I now look at my husband's work and interests as those of a dear and valued friend, but I am not involved and do not wish to be. They are his; I have mine.

In Letters to a Young Poet, Rainer Maria Rilke asks how young people who love falsely, i.e. simply surrendering themselves and giving up their solitude.....who have already flung themselves together and can no longer tell whose outlines are whose, who thus no longer possess anything of their own, how can they find a way out of themselves, out of the depths of their already buried solitude? (pp. 72-73).

It is not easy, I answer, but it can be done.

Wuthering Heights is saturated with imagery of the moors. All the characters, with the exception of the ailing Linton Heathcliff and possibly Lockwood, spend much time walking on the land, which is a principal source of their happiness. The celebrated opening of the novel in the explanation of "Wuthering" as being "a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure bracing ventilation they must have up there, at all times...." sets the tone which is followed throughout. Many commentators have pointed to the pervasiveness of the nature imagery in this novel.

A proposal to Catherine by Heathcliff to "appropriate the dairy woman's cloak, and have a scamper on the moors, under its shelter" (W.H. p. 17) is our first introduction to them as children. It is their regular form of pleasure, and escape from the oppression of Hindley. As Nelly explains, "It was one of their chief amusements to run away to the moors in the morning and remain there all day, and the

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afterpunishment grew a mere thing to laugh at" (W.H., p. 36). But nature in this novel is not merely an escape, the lives of the characters are shown to be embedded in the landscape in a way which is rare in modern life. In the scene of her delirium Cathy tears the pillow, and then "she seemed to find childish diversion in pulling the feathers from the rents she had just made, and ranging them on the sheet according to their different species: her mind had strayed to other associations."

"That's a turkey's" she murmured to herself, and this is a wild duck's; and this is a pigeon's. Ah, they put pigeon's feather's in the pillows — no wonder I couldn't die!....And here is a moor cock's and this — I should know it among a thousand — it's a lapwing's. Bonny bird; wheeling over our heads in the middle of the moor." (W.H., p. 93)

The narrative of Wuthering Heights begins in 1801, and moves backward to tell the lives of two generations. It takes place in West Yorkshire, which even during Emily Brontë's life, 1818-1848, was a remote and isolated area. I have spent my life in a small city in Ontario in the twentieth century. Like the characters in Wuthering Heights, however, I am, somewhat belatedly, a romantic. For me, as for Catherine and Heathcliff and Cathy and Hareton, walking outdoors is essential to my well being. I enjoy concerts and art exhibits, but never attend them if the choice means giving up a walk outdoors. As a couple and as a family, we have taken a long walk outdoors at least once a week all our lives. During my walks I feel, at a level far below that of conscious analysis, a sense of my being in relation to the other natural forms surrounding me. Of course the usual chatter in my head goes on, but when I notice

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this I turn away from this noise toward just being where I am. Often this happens spontaneously. All my life I have resented the company of some people, otherwise good friends, who insist on talking while walking outdoors. For me this is a contradiction. Time for visiting is one thing, but quite incompatible from the enjoyment of walks in nature.

Indeed, the fact that the company of my future husband, when we were courting, did not distract me from my immersion in the natural scene, but in fact enhanced my enjoyment, was a major reason I married him.

Of course I have been influenced by Wordsworth's nature romanticism, and feel in sympathy with his views. The relation to nature as expressed by Emily Brontë in her poems and by the two Catherines in Wuthering Heights is, however, even closer to my own. Sometimes Wordsworth, in The Prelude especially, speaks of the influence of nature in moral terms, such as the admonishment of wrongdoing in the well known passage where as a boy he was warned to mend his ways by "low breathings coming after me."² For Emily the moors are always a source of joy. In one passage in Wuthering Heights she specifically separates the enjoyment of nature from traditional moral values. When Catherine Earnshaw is telling Nelly why she will marry Edgar Linton despite her love for Heathcliff, she recounts a dream:

"If I were in heaven, Nelly, I should be extremely miserable."

"Because you are not fit to go there," I [Nelly] answered. "All sinners would be miserable in heaven." "But it is not for that. I dreamt, once, that I was

there.....I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and
I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so
angry that they flung me out, into the middle of the heath on the top of
Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing with joy. That will do to explain
my secret, as well as the other. I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton
than I have to be in heaven." (W.H. p. 62)

In March 1993, with my relationship with Wuthering Heights much on my mind I
took a trip to England and went to Haworth. I took two day-long walks on the moors.
The first was to Top Withins, a ruined farmhouse on the high moors traditionally
identified as the site of the farm Wuthering Heights, and the second to Ponden Kirk,
the original of Penistone Crag, the trysting place of Catherine and Heathcliff. My
notes of these days express, I think, how I have been influenced by Emily Brontë's view
of nature.

March 13, 1993 walk to Ponden Kirk

I set off about 1:30 p.m. after purchasing a Cornish pasty and an orange in the
village. I packed my backpack with my Cumberland knit sweater, notebook, a map
showing a circular route to Ponden Kirk, and extra film. I walked west from my bed
and breakfast, Moorfield Guest House on West Lane, toward the village of Stanbury.
I was much preoccupied with my task, to figure out what Wuthering Heights has meant
to me in my life. I had much invested in this and could not waste this precious
opportunity. As I walked just west of the boundary of Haworth on West Lane, the
Worth valley and its steep northern flanks opened to my right. The land was bathed in

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clear spring sunlight under a cloudless sky. As I began the descent into the valley, I felt a surge of pure happiness. Here I was walking in one of my favourite places in the world; it was a perfect spring day; it was irresistible. I could think and analyse later; now I just gave myself up to enjoyment. Yesterday's walk to Top Withins was wonderful, and blessed with insights. But today, today was such a gift that I could do nothing but be grateful and enjoy. I walked down the south side of the valley, then up the other to the village of Stanbury on the crest of the hill, and down again to Ponden Reservoir and Ponden Mill below. From here I left the highway at last and started up the hill to the moor on a gravel farm road by the reservoir. It was not long before I was walking between two dry stone fences bordering a farm road, past Ponden Hall, and then out onto the open moor.

The path was now just a depression in the moor grass, winding its way up the slope past a stone barn. Suddenly I was on the crest, and walking along the edge of a deep chasm. On my right was Stanbury Moor, and across the Worth valley, the fields on the other side. Soon I had left this behind, and could only see Stanbury Moor on my right and the deep valley of Ponden Beck to my left. The wind was blowing, but not too cold in the sun, and I was totally alone in the landscape. The heather was black at this height; the valley comes to a sharp point at its westerly end, where the path crosses over to the other side, and after a short decline, it regains altitude and stays high above the bottom of the valley. The beck falls steeply at this point. I crossed the beck where it narrowed slightly and continued up the other side again along the edge
of the steep chasm. At times I felt dizzy looking down from such heights, and did not want to venture too near the edge.

Then there was Ponden Kirk, jutting boldly out into the chasm, and commanding a full view of the heather clad heights, and of the green fields of the Worth valley in

the distance. I found a secure place to enjoy the view with my back to a sheepfold. As I sat and ate my cornish pasty I thought of Emily and Wuthering Heights. It was suddenly quite clear to me that what Wuthering Heights means to me now, at this stage of my life, has almost nothing to do with the notion of love as a sort of drowning in the other, as I have described, but rather with a sense of the human condition as part of the natural world. I thought of Emily's poem, which I had reread last night before going to sleep.

Riches I hold in light esteem

And Love I laugh to scorn

And lust of Fame was but a dream

That vanished with the morn.

And if I pray, the only prayer

That moves my lips for me

Is — 'Leave the heart that now I bear

And give me liberty.'
Yes, as my swift days near their goal

'Tis all that I implore —

Through life and death a chainless soul

With courage to endure. 3

It seemed to me that Emily, writing this, would not have identified with Catherine Earnshaw's idea of romantic love as the merging of one person into another. I felt as if a weight had been lifted from my mind, because I knew Wuthering Heights was still deeply important for me now, long after I had reshaped my ideas of love, and reshaped my marriage accordingly. I was not required to see it as an influence outgrown, but could retain it yet, a source of meaning for my present as well as my past.

As I rose to continue my walk, the glorious scene before me, with the heather in shades of deep rose, pink, and brown, and the bright yellow moor grass, and the green fields and blue sky beyond, filled me with joy. I sang, and even skipped occasionally, as I walked. Then this joy was joined by another. I cannot explain it, but I felt that, unbidden, but oh so welcome, I was walking with Emily herself. This sense was not present to my eyes or ears or touch, but I felt her presence in my joy, or rather we were together singing a song of praise, each with our own unique notes, but in a lovely harmony.

She was with me for about half an hour. As I regretfully began descending from the high moor, I realized the best part of my walk would be over too soon, so I

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retraced my steps a short way, and sat on a large square boulder, and let myself live completely in the moment. Emily was with me all of this time; our song together was strong and beautiful. But the time for descent did come, and with it, she left me.

At first I remembered Emily's own suffering when she mourned the loss of the mystic presence which brought such joy in her own life, and felt a small echo of it. But when I imagined that I might be able to reach her at will, through meditation, I realized not only that this would never happen, but that it could not happen. Emily was not a presence in my imagination. She had come to me unbidden, bestowed this miraculous gift of herself, and if she ever came again, it would be in the same way, when and how she chose. I have been; I am, blessed. Nothing can take that away.

Dreams

Before she tells Nelly her dream of being thrown out of heaven and landing on the top of the moors, sobbing for joy, Catherine says "I've dreamt in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever after, and changed my ideas; they've gone through me, like wine through water, and altered the colour of my mind" (W.H., p. 62). I could not find more beautiful words to describe how Emily Brontë's novel shapes my perceptions and my sensibility. Wuthering Heights has altered the colour of my mind. One of my own dreams, on a night in January, 1993, shows me how numinous natural imagery is for my dreaming mind. Here is an account of the dream.

The Beautiful Leaves

I am visiting a place "up North." There is a large industrial building with many connecting rooms. I walk into a large room where children are exercising, then
walk into another and some people are working as though tending an industrial process – then walk through another door and it seems to be a greenhouse or even outdoors. In this space there are beautiful plants lining a path. They seem like iris leaves, but much larger, coming up to our waists at least and iridescent as if lit from inside with pale blue, pale green, and silver light. I do not have a sense of artificiality as I look at them, but of an intense natural beauty.

I continue to walk through other rooms, a small candy shop, like a tuck shop in a children’s summer camp, more industrial processes, then I decide to go back to enjoy the beautiful leaves another time and this time take some pictures. I go back the way I came, but cannot find the beautiful path bordered with leaves. There are some places with a clump here and there, but I remember these from the first time and know that there is a room with a path bordered with abundant leaves. I go back and forth and cannot find them. I reach the room where the children are, and recognize the individual men working the industrial processes, and find the tuck shop again, but never the abundant beautiful leaves, and gradually even the small clumps disappear.

The day after this dream I did not feel as desolate as I might have, given the loss of the leaves. Rather my image of them became more and more luminous in my mind. Finally I made a coloured drawing of them in my dream book. It is clear that they are very important to me.
This winter I attended a dream group one evening a week during which we told dreams to each other. One dream was the focus of discussion and response each evening. I chose to tell my dream of the beautiful leaves when it was my turn and the response of the others in the group was enlightening. With their help I could see that the difficulties of my life, my having to work very hard and long hours to maintain my family, financially as well as in my role as mother, led me to a very dutiful, even puritanical attitude to work. Now that the duty of raising a family is over, this attitude which served me once is no longer necessary. I need to go to a "play school", the summer camp in the dream. I need to pay more heed to my artistic and spiritual self, which I continue to repress long after it is necessary. The warning of the dream is clear; if I do not pay attention to the leaves now, they will disappear.

My dreaming self showed me my greatest desire in the form of leaves. It is no accident, and I believe it is one of the ways I am coloured by Wuthering Heights. I don't know all of what the leaves mean for me: probably I never will, but I am heeding the message of the dream, and even as I continue my work, I spend more time on those parts of my life which are linked with them. I take it as a good sign, especially as my thoughts lately have been much preoccupied with Wuthering Heights, that leaves appeared in one of my most recent dreams. This time they were leaves and spring blossoms on trees, larger and more brilliant than any I have seen in waking life. In my dream the sun shines on these leaves and white blossoms preternaturally, making a spectacular, shining display.
As I look back on my thoughts about *Wuthering Heights* written in November, 1991, I realize that I have once again gone round the spiral. I know more now than I did then about what this novel means to me, especially my relation to Catherine Earnshaw's declaration "I am Heathcliff." I think this was the source of my fear of what I would discover in a closer examination. At present that part of my knowledge has been revealed, analysed in Whitehead's terms, at least for now. Today, I no longer feel afraid, but I know I have far from exhausted my exploration. I expect I will be reading and thinking about this novel again and again. The romantic stage of learning is coming around again, and who knows what discoveries it will bring?
Chapter 5

THE IMPORTANCE OF BOUNDARY: NATHALIE'S COMMENTARY ON CELIA'S (HER OWN) NARRATIVE

I'll walk where my own nature would be leading;
It vexes me to choose another guide;
Where the gray flocks in ferny glens are feeding;
Where the wild wind blows on the mountain side.

What have those lonely mountains worth revealing?
More glory and more grief than I can tell;
The earth that wakes one human heart to feeling
Can centre both the worlds of Heaven and Hell.

Emily Brontë, Stanzas¹

My narrative (as Celia) explores four main themes. The first section tells a story of reading *Wuthering Heights* and, by extension, a story of reading and learning from women's novels generally. In the second section I investigate the topic of marriage, in my own life and in *Wuthering Heights*, and in the third, my feeling for nature and how it relates with that of Catherine Earnshaw in *Wuthering Heights*. Finally, an account of two dreams illustrates how the novel continues to influence me in the present.

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¹ These are the final two stanzas of Emily's poem whose first line is "Often rebuked, yet always back returning" (Hatfield, (Ed) 1941, p. 256). In 1850 Charlotte Brontë published eighteen poems from Emily's manuscripts. This poem was included, but the manuscript has not been found, though the MSS for the other seventeen poems exist. This led C.W. Hatfield, the editor of her complete poems, to surmise that it was written about Emily by Charlotte. Others do not agree. Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford think the MS might have been emended somewhat, though not the lines quoted above. They write that Charlotte "was not past this sort of thing, but nothing proves that she had ever committed familiarities of quite so dark an order [as composing an entire poem and attributing it to Emily]" (Spark and Stanford, 1966, p. 230). Winifred Gerin (1971, p. 264) and Edward Chitham (1987, p.219) simply accept without comment that the entire poem is Emily's. I think it is Emily's, and have no doubt at all that the stanzas quoted are hers and express something important in her thinking and feeling.
Emily Brontë is considered a romantic writer by many critics, i.e. in the sense that her style and themes have much in common with those of the great romantic poets Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, Keats, Byron, and Shelley. In order to sort out Emily Brontë’s influence on my life I will examine some of these commonalities, as well as the ways in which her work differs from theirs. I will also use other clusters of meaning attached to the words romance and romantic as I explore the themes of my narrative: romance as commonly used to indicate a love relationship, and romance as a style of novel about love relationships. Of course these terms denote quite different things, yet they are related. As Geoffrey Hartman notes, "the desire to gain truth, finality, or revelation generates a thousand ... enchantments. Mind has its blissful islands as well as its mountains, its deeps, and its treacherous crossroads. Depicting these trials by horror and by enchantment, Romanticism is genuinely a rebirth of Romance" (1993, p. 50). Northrop Frye outlines a most useful set of categories for thinking about romanticism in his essay "The Drunken Boat: the Revolutionary Element in Romanticism" (1970, pp. 200-202). They are helpful as I try to think through in what ways Emily Brontë can be thought of as a romantic and how her romanticism influenced me. I will use Johan Aitken's succinct summary of Frye's "four centres of gravity: in history -- the period from around

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critics have attempted to define certain theories about poetry and art as 'Romantic', thus creating an aesthetic category which can be applied to a work of art from any period. In this way ... *Wuthering Heights* can be read as an essentially 'Romantic' text.... On the other hand there has been a tendency to define Romanticism in terms of a specific historical period....however these two approaches to Romanticism are inevitably interconnected because the general aesthetic category of 'Romanticism' is seen to have its intellectual roots in a distinct historical period. (1996, p. 1)
1790-1830, in the creative arts at all times but with upsurges at various points, in those specific artists belonging to the school of romanticism such as Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, and Wordsworth and, ... in sexuality (1990, p. 213). Emily Brontë (1818-1848) clearly does not belong in the historical period associated with the romantic movement, but each of the other centres of gravity outlined by Frye are part of my study. I begin with the word romance as it applies to relations between a man and a woman, then move to the romance novel, then back to romantic love again, before a consideration of her relationship to the work of one of the great romantic poets, Wordsworth, and to that of his sister Dorothy Wordsworth.

Romantic love and the romance novel

In Revolution from Within, Gloria Steinem uses the example of Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff to examine the concept of romance associated with romantic love. She quotes Heathcliff, "I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!" and Catherine, "Nelly, I am Heathcliff!". Steinem contrasts the attachment of Heathcliff and Cathy in Wuthering Heights with that of Jane Eyre and Rochester in Charlotte Brontë's novel Jane Eyre and concludes that the attachment of Heathcliff and Cathy is an example of an immature romance as opposed to the mature love between equals which is achieved by Jane and Rochester. These comments on romance as a pattern for relations with men and women are pertinent to Celia's sense that her reading of Wuthering Heights gave her an ideal of married love in her youth. Steinem writes that in romance the qualities judged to be "masculine" by society are invested in an exaggerated way in a man and the qualities judged "feminine" by society are similarly invested in a woman. The yearning to merge with the other
in romantic love then mimics the search for wholeness in the individual psyche. The trouble with this polarization, says Steinem, is that the two halves aren't really halves at all. "Male dominance means that admired qualities are called "masculine" and are more plentiful, while "feminine" ones are not only fewer but also less valued" (Steinem, 1992, p. 257). She also notes that like other forms of illness, romance tells us a lot about what is lacking in us and what we need to do to change.

Steinem speculates that in her portrayal of Cathy and Heathcliff's obsessive attachment, Emily Brontë was creating a poetic metaphor for the two sides of her own nature. "Emily Brontë was both the capricious, suffering girl who could not escape the restrictions of female life, and the dark, adventurous, rebellious outsider. Like each of our true selves, her nature was both "masculine" and "feminine" (Steinem, 1992, p. 253). This speculation recognises the enduring poetic truth of the attachment of the characters in the novel, over and above the romance with its false vision of love as the merging of selves. My own speculation is that this attachment also figures Emily's spiritual longing for union with cosmic forces, which is expressed more explicitly in many of her poems.

Steinem's definition of romance as lived out by Cathy and Heathcliff has many similarities with the qualities that the romance readers studied by Janice Radway found in the popular romance fiction they read (Radway, 1984). Radway interviewed a group of women in an American midwestern town she called Smithton who were enthusiastic readers of mass produced romance fiction such as the Harlequin Romances and Silhouette Books. She analyzed their ideas of the ideal romance as well as the books they judged to be unsuccessful.

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3 Plato's Symposium is the locus classicus of the idea of "two halves" forming a perfect union.
and studied their reasons for reading romances. Her methodology and her conclusions are precisely applicable to this study with the important difference that the books we three women found to be influential in our lives are literary, as opposed to mass produced, fiction. Radway made clear that her study was a cultural rather than a literary one:

To know [what a romance is for the woman who buys it and reads it] we must know what romance readers make of the words they find on the page; we must know, in short, how they construct the plot and interpret the characters' intentions. Such knowledge, however, cannot be derived from a self-conscious examination of what we as literary critics do with the language of romantic fiction, for we have no evidence that we even know how to read as romance readers do. We are forced, finally, by the nature of meaning itself as the construct of a reader always already situated within an interpretive context, to conduct empirical research into the identities of real readers, into the nature of the assumptions they bring to the texts, and into the character of the interpretations they produce. (Radway, 1984, p. 11)

The readers of romance studied by Radway reported that the most important reasons that they read romances were for relaxation, to learn about far away places and times, to escape daily problems, and because "reading is just for me, it is my time" (1984, p. 61). These women were responsible for the large majority of the housework and childcare in their families, whether or not they worked outside the home; they found their time largely taken up with the care of others. When Dorothy Evans first articulated to Radway the reasons the customers of her romance review service read romances, she explained that reading was
better, and certainly safer, than pills or drink, thus alerting Radway to the fact that reading a diverting story was seen as an escape for these readers.

The women had very clear ideas about what their "escape" reading would be. The ideal romance for these readers focused very exclusively on the developing relationship between one woman and one man. The heroine had to be beautiful, strong, and independent, but not stronger than the hero. The plot of the ideal romance is summarized as follows by Radway:

1. The heroine's social identity is destroyed.
2. The heroine reacts antagonistically to an aristocratic male.
3. The aristocratic male responds ambiguously to the heroine.
4. The heroine interprets the hero's behaviour as evidence of a purely sexual interest in her.
5. The heroine responds to the hero's behaviour with anger or coldness.
6. The hero retaliates by punishing the heroine.
7. The heroine and hero are physically and/or emotionally separated.
8. The hero treats the heroine tenderly.
9. The heroine responds warmly to the hero's act of tenderness.
10. The heroine reinterprets the hero's ambiguous behaviour as the product of previous hurt.
11. The hero proposes/openly declares his love for/demonstrates his unwavering commitment to the heroine with a supreme act of tenderness.
12. The heroine responds sexually and emotionally.
13. The heroine's identity is restored. (p.134) 

Radway speculates that romance readers identify with the heroine's opening state of emotional isolation and profound sense of loss; she refers to Nancy Chodorow's claim (1978) that the experience of being ignored by others is an emotional state both alien to women and difficult for them to bear (p. 135). In the romance, the heroine restores her identity by connection with a strong and emotionally nurturing hero. This is an outcome not usually experienced in the real life marriages of the readers. The central transformation of the hero, however, "perpetuates the illusion that, like water into wine, brusque indifference can be transformed into unwavering devotion." Radway sums up this point by noting that "popular romantic fiction originates in the failure of patriarchal culture to satisfy its female members" (Radway, 1984, p.151).

This is not to say that there are no possibilities for real change in the lives of the readers of romance as a result of their reading. When Radway asked the Smithton readers if romance reading ever changes women, the women immediately came up with the names of three women who had been dramatically changed. One woman who had previously been "under her husband's thumb" began her change by getting her hair cut short when her husband wanted it long and then proceeding to get a job in order to pay for her romantic novels (p. 102). For these readers one quality of a bad romance was a weak "namby pamby" heroine. These books led the readers to ask themselves, "Am I like that?" The readers

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4 It is not difficult to see in this plot a modification of the quest theme in the classic plot of romance as defined by Northrop Frye. "The romance," says Northrop Frye in Anatomy of Criticism, "is the nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfillment dream" (1957, p. 186). "The complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest [which] has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero" (p. 187).
believed that "'because women are capable of learning from what they read,' they begin 'to express what they want and sometimes refuse to be ordered around any longer'" (p. 102).

Yet, in the end, though she admits that romance reading has a liberating effect on some women, Radway concludes that romances pose no challenge to traditional patriarchal values. In her words,

Because the romance finally leaves unchallenged the male right to the public spheres of work, politics, and power, because it refurbishes the institution of marriage by suggesting how it might be viewed continuously as a courtship, because it represents real female needs within the story and then depicts their satisfaction by traditional heterosexual relations, the romance avoids questioning the institutionalized basis of patriarchal control over women even as it serves as a locus of protest against some of its emotional consequences. (p. 217)

These conclusions are shared by Linda K. Christian-Smith who studied a group of high school girls and the romances they read. (Becoming a Woman through Romance, 1990) In the case of some of these girls the very act of reading romances, which were disapproved of by their teachers, was an act of resistance to school authority. Yet the final effect of their reading was remarkably similar to that of the adult romance reading studied by Radway. The school girls also preferred strong to weak heroines, which Christian-Smith says "represents their desire to transcend gender stereotypes and imagine a more assertive femininity" (p. 134).

However, closer examination of the meaning of assertiveness reveals a bottom line of caution that stops short of confronting boys. Like Radway's adult-romance readers (1984), teenage readers read as an antidote to loneliness and experience feelings of
specialness during reading. Reading romances and the fantasies of love they set in motion represent ways of counteracting the increasing anomie and coldness of life today. Through romance reading, readers transform gender relations so that men cherish and nurture women rather than the other way around. The readers' collective rejection of a macho masculinity represents their partial overturning of one aspect of patriarchy. However, their final acceptance of romantic love and its power structure undercuts the political potential of these insights. Romance reading does not alter the girls' present and future circumstances, but rather is deeply implicated in reconciling them to their place in the world. (p. 134-35)

These studies have several points in common with my argument. They both assume that readers' lives can be influenced and even changed by their reading, they emphasize the importance of interpretive communities for meaning making, and they both take a cultural, rather than a literary critical view of this reading. Yet Wuthering Heights can never be considered a romance such as those read by Radway's or Christian-Smith's readers. The relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff, though central to the novel, develops in quite different ways from that of the central relationship of the ideal romance as summarized by Radway. The declaration they make to each other, that the one is the other, can certainly be seen a defense against existential loneliness, but it is specifically said by Catherine not to be satisfying in the way the relationship of the ideal romance is for the heroine. In the passage

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5 It is interesting, nonetheless, to note that Wuthering Heights was named, along with Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice, as a model for the hero in a sheet of hints for prospective writers of romance by the publisher of Silhouette Books, mass produced "contemporary" romances: "The hero is 8 to 12 years older than the heroine. He is self-assured, masterful, hot tempered, capable of violence, passion and tenderness. He is often mysteriously moody. Heathcliff (WUTHERING HEIGHTS) is a rougher version; Darcy (PRIDE AND PREJUDICE) a more refined one" (Silhouette Books, 1980, p. 1).
quoted in Celia's narrative (CN, p. 7, ll 3-4), Cathy says Heathcliff is always in her mind -- "not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself." The ideal romance for the Smithton readers centres on the developing relationship between the hero and heroine which culminates in a promise of lifelong tenderness and nurturance. Cathy and Heathcliff's love, after her marriage to Edgar Linton, leads to her death in the middle of the novel, and to Heathcliff's agonized descent into brutality and prolonged vengeance on the other characters which he carries on to his death near the end of the novel.

These are not the aspects of *Wuthering Heights* which influenced Celia as a young woman, but the sense that Cathy made a crucial *mistake* in marrying Linton and not Heathcliff, and that this was a mistake she would not make. Further, in her narrative she writes that her mistake was not in the choice of the individual but in the nature of her relationship with her husband which she defined in similar terms as Cathy did hers with Heathcliff, as a sort of merging of the two selves into one (CN, 8, 15-17).

As I re-read the paragraphs (CN, 9, 1-8) in which Celia describes in a few short words the long transformation from a sense of self as merged and totally dependent on her husband to the independent self she grew into, I find they ring true, yet do not convey adequately how long and how arduous this journey was. I clung to old ideas long after I could reasonably have been expected to know better. In this I was like the Smithton readers. Though *Wuthering Heights* is in no way a Harlequin romance, and indeed I have yet to read my first Harlequin romance, I count the Smithton readers as sisters in that I shared with them
for a long time this illusion that happiness is to be found in emotional dependence on a man.  

During my first year of graduate studies at The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, I took courses for which I was required to write autobiographical essays which examined my life and my education in the broadest terms. These essays covered a lot of ground, but a central theme, in the words of the title of one of them, was "Birthing My Own Life." They contain one telling of how I emerged from the illusion of love as romance, and how long and difficult the journey was. In one autobiographical narrative I wrote about my own birth and how I "relived" this in a therapeutic "rebirthing event." What I learned in this rebirthing, to my considerable surprise, was that at one point as the fetus I had to exert my own will to be born.

At one level, the idea that in order to live one must exert one's will seems so elementary as to be embarrassing to admit to learning in maturity. My autobiographical paper, however, shows me to have been energetic and self-directed in my life, as much as many, perhaps even more than most women of my generation. It is not "will" in the sense of the life force which I meant in this passage, but rather the will to question long held beliefs and to make radical changes in my life. In male-dominated societies, such as the one I grew up in, exertion of will for men requires determination and energy, but not a radical unlearning of

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6 It is interesting to note the parallel discussed by Roger Simon and Magda Lewis in their article "A Discourse Not Intended for Her": Teaching and Learning Within Patriarchy, Harvard Educational Review, Vol. 54 No. 4 (November 1986). The authors tell how a split developed between the men and the women in a class Prof. Simon was teaching and in which Dr. Lewis was a student at the time. The split developed over the men students' and the women students' differing attitudes toward the reading of romance novels while discussing Janice Radway's book Reading the Romance. The men took a superior attitude toward such reading, while the women, though not themselves readers of Harlequin romances, recognized commonalities between themselves and the Smithton readers discussed by Radway. The women readers felt themselves, by extension, treated as "other" by the men in the class.
their social conditioning. For women this unlearning is required. For me, as I have told in my narrative about my relation to *Wuthering Heights*, probably the most wrenching change was my unlearning one way to be a loving wife and my learning another very different way.

When I married, as I have said, my ideal of love was a sort of merging of myself with my husband. My husband, however, not being Heathcliff, did not share this notion. The cultural stories of our time, however, made it very easy for me to adjust my ideas. If merging was not practicable, I could still make him and his interests the centre of my life and my major aim in life to assist him in achieving his goals. It was mainly because we needed the extra income that I went to work. Like so many women then, I thought of my work as supplementary to my main tasks: to support my husband emotionally and to make a home for our family. Only very gradually did I shift the focus of my life to my own work and the further studies I undertook. During all but the last of the years when we were bringing up our three sons, I felt myself to be split in two. One part of me was the dutiful wife and mother, maintaining a sometimes large household which included members of our extended family, and the other half was a full time teacher and graduate student.

Outwardly this split was, just, manageable. I worked very hard at the two sets of tasks, as did, and do, so many women with the same double life; and our lives were fairly secure, mostly pleasant, and sometimes joyous. But inwardly there was great unease. In her paper, "A Desire of One's Own: Psychoanalytic Feminism and Intersubjective Space," Jessica Benjamin looks at important aspects of the deeper problem. She writes:

Feminist thought is caught between three tasks: to redeem what has been devalued in woman's domain, to conquer the territory that has been reserved to men, and to resolve
and transcend the opposition between these spheres by reformulating the relationship
between them. (Benjamin, 1986, p. 78)

The sense of a double self which I developed as I tried to negotiate both the career road as
defined for men and the family road as defined for stay-at-home mothers was generated
because these roads were still seen as quite separate at the time. Most women of my class
and generation chose one or the other. But I think it is far more than a matter of social
conditions. It is this deeper sense of split that I want to explore now.

The subject of her paper, writes Benjamin, is "woman's propensity toward ideal love.
Ideal love typifies the curious role of women in both criticizing and complying with the
elevation of masculine individuality and the devaluation of femininity" (p.80). With the rise of
the women's movement, Benjamin explains, "women began to reflect on the contradictory
position in which they found themselves; more skeptical about detachment, less committed to
idealizing absolute separation, women were yet ready to idealize the man who represented and
gave them vicarious access to transcendence" (p. 79). Simone de Beauvoir did much to
analyse "woman's hope that the idealized other will give her possession of herself and the
universe he represents" (Benjamin, p. 79). De Beauvoir quotes a young woman who
expresses this longing for ideal love:

All my foolish acts and all the good things I have done have the same cause; an aspiration

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7 Though so much has changed since the 1970s, this split seems to persist. A survey
published in September, 1997, by Statistics Canada indicates that "Canadians are deeply torn
about whether women ought to be at home or at work....On one hand the nation appears to
embrace the idea that women have a rightful place in the work force. A commanding majority
of Canadians even believe that women have a duty to contribute to the household income.
But on the other hand, a majority are convinced that pre-school children will suffer if both
parents are employed." Women's evolving role confuses Canadians. *The Globe and Mail*
for a perfect and ideal love in which I can give myself completely, entrust my being
to another, God, man, or woman, so superior to me that I will no longer need to think
what to do in life. (quoted in Benjamin, p. 79)

Though couched in rather excessive terms here, I think this aspiration toward ideal
love was and still is shared by many women and some men. It is certainly expressed in the
romances read by such large numbers of girls and women today. Of course feminists have
long argued that these views are outmoded. But the situation, as Benjamin and others show,
is complex. She argues, from the basis of feminist psychoanalysis, that connectedness and
relationship in fact form the basis of feminine individuality and agency. No feminist today
would argue in favour of the old marriage bargain based on a subservient "ideal love" as
defined in de Beauvoir's quotation, but I believe an understanding of the fundamental role of
relationship, what Benjamin calls intersubjective space, in the development of feminine
subjectivity can clarify the meanings of the marriage bond for women's development of self,
and show how and why "ideal love" could be at once so attractive and so dangerous for
women.

According to current developments in psychoanalytic feminism, writes Benjamin,
citing Chodorow, as did Radway,

the salient feature of male individuality is that it grows out of the repudiation of
the primary identification with and dependency on, the mother. That leads to an
individuality that stresses, as Nancy Chodorow has argued, difference as denial of
commonality, separation as denial of connection; and that is made up of a series of

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8 It is shared by D.H. Lawrence (see the quotation from *Women In Love* commented on
by A.S. Byatt in my chapter 6.)
dualisms, of mutually exclusive poles, where independence seems to exclude all dependency rather than be characterized by a balance of separation and connection.

(p. 80)

Briefly, [Benjamin continues] a critical feminist psychoanalytic theory offers the following answers. We argue that individuality is properly, ideally, a balance of separation and connectedness, of the capacities for agency and relatedness. We rely on infancy research that suggests that the self does not proceed from oneness to separateness, but evolves by simultaneously differentiating and recognizing the other, by alternating between "being with" and being distinct. (p. 82)

Benjamin relies on the infancy research of Daniel Stern and D.W. Winnicott for her idea of the importance of intersubjectivity in the formation of the individual self in children. Here is her explanation:

The desire for the heightened sense of self is the central meaning of getting pleasure with the other. Here the desire to lose the self in the other and really be known for oneself can coalesce. Receptivity, knowing or taking in the other, becomes a mode of activity in its own right. (p. 93)

Winnicott [continues Benjamin in a paragraph which is worth quoting in full] tried to grasp this set of experiences by using spatial metaphors, by describing a space that contains and a space in which we create. This space begins between mother and baby -- he calls it the holding environment -- and expands into what he calls the transitional area, the child's area of play, creativity, and fantasy. The transitional space is suffused with the mother's protection and one's own freedom to create and
imagine and discover. The central experience to which Winnicott refers is being and playing *alone* in the presence of the other; to be truly alone with oneself paradoxically requires this sense of the other's being there. Given safety without intrusion, the infant can be in a state of relaxation -- that well known inward gaze -- where its own impulses or drives are experienced as coming from within and feeling real. It is in this way, through the unobtrusive mediation of the other, that drives become one's own desire. (p. 93-94)

Here, I believe, lies an important key to understanding both why women have accepted the traditional marriage relationship for so long, and why it has served them so badly. For while there have always been sociological and economic reasons for traditional marriage patterns, as well as biological urges for mating and reproduction of the species, there are also important psychological determinants for this relationship.

It doesn't take much of a transposition to reformulate the idea of a space between mother and baby, "suffused with the mother's protection and one's own freedom to create and imagine and discover" into a space between husband and wife "suffused with the other's protection and one's own freedom to create and imagine and discover." I think something like this is the basis of the "ideal love" of the woman for her husband on which many marriages are based. Inherent in this hope is the desire not so much for economic protection but for a psychic protection which will allow the development of individuality and creativity similar to that experienced at an earlier stage with the mother. This is not to suggest that women wish to return to a state analogous to infancy; far from it, the hope is rather for continued adult growth in a state of connectedness and relationship.
How much or how little of this quality of mutual nurturance is present in any actual marriage is a matter for the individuals concerned to determine. It is clear, however, that the institution of marriage as it has existed traditionally in society, and as it still exists in large part today, has failed miserably in providing this intersubjective space for women. In the view of psychoanalytic feminism the salient feature of male individuality as it is currently developed is that it stresses difference as a denial of commonality and separation as a denial of connection. When the woman enters a relationship with a man based on "ideal love," I think she is hoping to find in this intimate connection with another an intersubjective space in which she can find herself, where in the presence of the other she can find her own desire, her own creativity, and her own agency.

All too often, however, she finds that whatever the quality of the emotional bond between herself and her husband, the structure of the institution of marriage itself reinforces the notion of male individuality as separation, and diminishes its capacity to provide the safe space she longs for and needs to nurture her own autonomous individuality. It is not only in overtly bad "traditional" marriages, where the woman's role is denigrated and where she is oppressed by her husband that the woman fails to find what she needs. For even in "good" marriages the role of thinking active autonomous individual is sharply separated from that of builder of connection and relationship. This separation is actively supported by society. Jobs and career paths, to take only one instance, are structured with the assumption that family life will either be delegated to someone else, a stay-at-home mother or other caregiver, and that it will not intrude into the workplace. The sense of dichotomy I felt as a young mother and
graduate student at Queen's University is perhaps mitigated to some degree today for others, but not, I think, in really fundamental ways.

For if a woman walks both roads in her marriage, as I did, and as so many more women are doing today, the roads are still defined as separate distinct paths. There are still many circumstances which make it difficult for a "woman qua embodied sexual female ... also [to] be a thinking/autonomous being" (Flax, 1987, p. 101). The same woman can on the one hand be fully sexual in her relationship, mother her children, love her partner, and on the other hand she can also be a thinking person active in the wider society, but the two ways of being are kept very separate. The woman who chooses to walk both roads is still often required to develop a double self in order to survive.

I think this analysis sheds light on the Smithton readers' preference for novels in which the hero becomes a tender nurturing figure before marrying the heroine. It is not really mothering they long for, but for a space, like that which a good mother provides for her child, in which to develop their own autonomy and creativity. For women, it seems, a key quality of that space is connection with at least one other caring human being.

In my autobiographical narrative, "Birthing My Own Life," I wrote about my high school years and how it was necessary for a girl to have a boyfriend to be accepted in the culture of the school. High school culture reflects the values of the larger culture in glaring and sometimes brutal clarity. In its cult of popularity, for instance, my school reinforced the ethos of couples which was strong in the society of the forties and fifties.

But my sense of "becoming real" when I found a boyfriend was not only relief at the end of social isolation, but, I think, a genuine pleasure in the personal growth which I enjoyed.
in this relationship. I became more active and more confident as a member of the school community. I think this friendship provided a glimpse of that intersubjective space which infancy research and feminist psychoanalysis tell us is necessary for the development of the autonomous self.

When I took the walk on the moors near Haworth in March 1993 of which I tell in my narrative (CN pp. 15 - 20) I understood most of what I have written here about the relationship of Cathy and Heathcliff and how this aspect of the novel influenced my decisions in my late teens and early twenties. I was worried that my relationship with the novel could only be written about in the past tense, a tale of mistakes made and lessons learned in my youth, though I sensed intuitively that this was not the whole story. I knew my feeling for nature owed much to Emily Brontë, but I had no clear idea what more I could say about the novel.

Walking the Moors

My experience of walking the moors that March, and particularly the walk to Ponden Kirk, remains a high point in my life. Like Alice, who thought of Margaret Laurence and Morag as one fused being which she called Margaret/Morag, I created a figure for myself from the author of *Wuthering Heights*. Emily Brontë has attracted many biographers, who have revealed the outlines of her life and those of her sisters and other members of her family, but she remains in many ways enigmatic. Her sister Charlotte, and many others after her, have projected qualities on Emily which cannot be verified. I know that the figure who joined me on my walk to Ponden Kirk, and who I call Emily, is a figure of my imagination. She is
informed by years of study of her poems, of *Wuthering Heights*, of several biographies, and of mountains of literary criticism. Despite all this she is still my creation, and owes as much to me and my needs as she does to history. I make out of the materials of literature a being who walks with me and with whom I experience great happiness. She creates for me the space where I can find my creativity, my truest self, and the home I long for. She is a friend like no other.  

**Emily Brontë and literary romanticism**

In my narrative I wrote that I have been much influenced by Wordsworth's nature romanticism, but that the relation to nature as expressed by Emily Brontë in her poems and in *Wuthering Heights* was even closer to my own feelings about nature (CN, 14, 9-15, 13). Whole shelves of books have been written about the place of nature in Wordsworth's and other romantic works. Fortunately it is not necessary to review it in all its complexity in order to sort out some of the issues as they apply to my relation to Emily Brontë's works. Doing so will also shed some light on the issue of men's and women's texts as considerable recent work on romanticism is concerned with gender.

Although all the great romantic poets have been important in my education, of them Wordsworth is and has been since my childhood the most important teacher. I return, as do so many, again and again to the best known poems, among them to "Tintern Abbey," to "Ode -- Intimations of Immortality," to many of the sonnets, to the Lucy poems, to parts of *The Prelude*. My ongoing sense of Wordsworth is well expressed by Matthew Arnold who judged

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9 She is also quite different from Jane Urquhart's ghostly Emily Brontë who appears in her novel *Changing Heaven* (1990). I have my Emily; Jane Urquhart has hers.
him to be the greatest English poet after Shakespeare and Milton from the time of the
Elizabethans (1913, p. 132). In the Preface to his edition of *The Poems of Wordsworth*,
(1879) Arnold wrote: "Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with
which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple
primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case
after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it" (1913, p. 153). It is
not difficult to find passages in Wordsworth where we are made to share his joy in nature. I
remember sharing such a moment of joy with my teacher at Queen's, George Whalley, in his
class on the English Romantic poets (1965) when he read Wordsworth's description of the
hares in "Resolution and Independence":

> All things that love the sun are out of doors;
> The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;
> The grass is bright with rain drops; -- on the moors
> The hare is running races in her mirth;
> And with her feet she from the plashy earth
> Raises a mist; that, glittering in the sun,
> Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run. (1937, p. 345)

Wordsworth's more central theme, however, is, in the words of the "Prospectus",

> How exquisitely the individual Mind
> (And the progressive powers perhaps no less
> Of the whole species) to the external World
> Is fitted: -- and how exquisitely, too --
Theme this but little heard of among men--

The external World is fitted to the Mind;

And the creation (by no lower name

Can it be called) which they with blended might

Accomplish:-- this is our high argument. (1937, pp. 4-5)

Recent critics have questioned Wordsworth's surmise that the minds of the whole species would relate to nature in the same or similar ways and have shown that the minds of men and women differ in important ways in this as in other respects. Some, Margaret Homans and Anne K. Mellor, for instance, point out that since Nature is usually spoken of as feminine, Mother Nature, this in itself creates a difference of approach. Homans writes that nineteenth-century women readers "must have found women's otherness reinforced [in two major ways]: her association with nature and her exclusion from a traditional identification of the speaking subject as male ¹⁰ (1980, p. 12). Anne K. Mellor writes:

The oft-described exploration of nature found in canonical Romantic poetry thus often masks a sexual politics. Nature is usually gendered feminine by these six Romantic poets who adopt the traditional cultural metaphors of Mother Earth, Dame Nature, Lady Bountiful. But by identifying nature as the external objective world which the self-conscious subject must penetrate, possess and interpret.....

¹⁰ It is not necessary to insist here on the view of women's role in relation to literature held by many in the nineteenth century, but if we need a reminder, here is Robert Southey writing to Charlotte Brontë in reply to her letter asking his opinion of some of her poems. "Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure she will have for it, even as an accomplishment and a recreation." (Barker, 1994, p. 262)
these poets often go further than previous poets in denying to Nature her own
authority. (1993, p. 21)

I think the place of nature in Emily Brontë's writing, especially in \textit{Wuthering Heights},
is significantly different from its place in that of William Wordsworth. It is important to see
how this works in detail. I will do so somewhat indirectly, by first contrasting two poems,
"The Boy of Winander" by William and "Floating Island at Hawkeshead, An Incident in the
schemes of Nature" by Dorothy Wordsworth. Emily Brontë's and Dorothy Wordsworth's
views of nature are of course not exactly similar, yet what they have in common is in my
opinion as great as or greater than what William and Dorothy Wordsworth famously have in
common as poets and recorders of nature. This contrast will illuminate as well, I hope, some
of the differences between a woman's and a man's texts. Here is William Wordsworth's
famous poem from Book V of \textit{The Prelude} (text of 1805), ll 389-422.

There was a Boy, ye knew him well, ye Cliffs

And Islands of Winander! many a time

At evening, when the stars had just begun

To move along the edges of the hills,

Rising or setting, would he stand alone

Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering Lake,

And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands

Press'd closely, palm to palm, and to his mouth

Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,

Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls
That they might answer him. -- And they would shout
Across the watery Vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud

Redoubled and redoubled; concourse wild
Of mirth and jocund din! And when it chanced
That pauses of deep silence mock'd his skill,
Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise

Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain Heaven, receiv'd

Into the bosom of the steady Lake.

This Boy was taken from his Mates, and died
In childhood, ere he was full ten years old.
-- Fair are the woods, and beauteous is the spot,
The Vale where he was born; the Churchyard hangs

Upon a Slope above the Village School,
And, there, along the bank, when I have pass'd
At evening, I believe that oftentimes
A full half-hour together I have stood
Mute -- looking at the Grave in which he lies. (1933, pp. 77-78)

This poem illustrates the celebrated power of Wordsworth, and as Paul de Man shows (see below), some of the ways in which he has been less than fully understood in the past. It also gives us a most remarkable image of the making of personal identity by responsiveness with another which is a central concern of this study.

Philip Cox is one critic who remarks on how the boy's 'mimicry' of the owls "works to confirm his own identity" (1996, p. 77). Noting that the boy here becomes a type for the poet, Cox elaborates:

the boy-poet 'incorporates' the 'speech' of the owls in order to establish a sense of self through a unifying process of 'identification'. Furthermore it should be noted how, in this passage, although the boy is seen to establish a relationship with the owls based on his own mimicry of their 'hootings', it is the boy himself who initiates the exchange: the owls are initially 'silent' and are only provoked into 'speech' through the child's own 'language'. Thus, when the owls do eventually respond to his advances, their own 'voices' ironically appear to be mimicking the boy's own mimicry and so, through an original act of mimicry, the child's own voice seems to gain a certain primacy and therefore apparent authenticity. This assertion of his own poetic 'voice' eventually leads to a process of unification where the boy's song is confirmed through its reverberation throughout the landscape as a series

"The earliest version of the poem was written throughout in the first person and was referring to Wordsworth himself as a boy" (Paul de Man, 1993, p. 62).
of 'echoes' which are 'redoubled and redoubled'. (1996, pp 70-71)

I will return to the theme of the creation of identity through reverberation of voices one with another in my concluding chapter. I allude to it here and include Cox's comment because I want to give full value to the power of this image of intimate communion with nature before moving to show how there is much in the poetry of Wordsworth which ultimately leaves us with quite a different sense of what nature means for him.

In his commentary on "The Boy of Winander" section of The Prelude, Paul de Man remarks that readers of the poem have been struck by the abruptness of the transition which leads from the first to the second part (lines 26-35), and that in a recent anthology the second part simply does not appear. Philip Cox, not the anthologist referred to by de Man, does not deal with the second part in his discussion of the poem.

De Man's analysis shows that this second part is integral to the meaning of the poem, and that it fundamentally alters the meaning of the first part. De Man points to the importance of the word 'hung' in the line "Then sometimes, in that silence, while he hung/Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise...." (ll 18-19). This word 'hung', says de Man, plays an important part in the poem. It appears in the second part (line 29) where "the Churchyard hangs/Upon a Slope above the Village School." The word, says de Man

establishes the thematic link between the two parts and names a central Wordsworthian experience. At the moment when the analogical correspondence with nature no longer asserts itself, we discover that the earth under our feet is not the stable base in which we can believe ourselves to be anchored. It is as if the solidity of earth were suddenly pulled away from under our feet and that we were
left 'hanging' from the sky instead of standing on the ground. The fundamental spatial perspective is reversed; instead of being centered on the earth, we are suddenly related to a sky that has its own movements, alien to those of earth and its creatures. The experience hits as a sudden feeling of dizziness, a falling or a threat of falling, a vertige of which there are many examples in Wordsworth. The nest robbing scene from Book I of The Prelude comes to mind, where the experience is a literal moment of absolute dizziness which disjoins the familiar perspective of the spatial relationship between heaven and earth, in which the heavens are seen as a safe dome that confirms at all times the earth's and our own centrality, the steadfastness of our orientation towards the centre which makes us creatures of earth. (pp. 60-61)

In the second part of the poem, we are told, without any embellishment or preparation, that the boy died, and we now understand that the moment of silence, when the analogical stability of a world in which the mind and nature reflect each other was shattered, was in fact a prefiguration of his death. The turning away of his mind from a responsive nature towards a nature that is not quite 'of earth' and that ultimately is called an 'uncertain Heaven' is in fact an orientation of his consciousness towards a preknowledge of his mortality. The spatial heaven of the first five lines with its orderly moving stars has become the temporal heaven of line 24, 'uncertain' and precarious since it appears in the form of a pre-consciousness of death. (1993, pp. 61-62)

In his article on Wordsworth and history, de Man includes a close analysis of one of the sonnets in The River Duddon sequence "Not hurled precipitous from steep to steep." From
both this and his analysis of "The Boy of Winander" he concludes that these "evocations of natural, childlike, or apocalyptic states of unity with nature often acquire the curiously barren, dead-obsessed emptiness of non-being" (1993 p. 65). "In the climactic passages of The Prelude, and in the main poems generally," continues de Man, "the evidence of a moving beyond nature is unmistakable" (p. 69). De Man concludes that "the key to an understanding of Wordsworth lies in the relationship between imagination and time, not in the relationship between imagination and nature" (1993, p. 72).

I had not read de Man's or other recent critical work on Wordsworth when I wrote about my sense that Emily Brontë's relation to nature was closer to my own than Wordsworth's. I now have a clearer sense of why this is so. As de Man says, quoting Geoffrey Hartman, "What characterizes Wordsworth ... is that the apocalyptic moment is not sustained; that it is experienced as too damaging to the natural order of things to be tolerated" (1993, p. 70). Even the awe-inspiring lines from "Tintern Abbey" in which Wordsworth writes of "a sense sublime/Of something far more deeply interfused, /Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, /And the round ocean and the living air, /And the blue sky. and in the mind of man" (1937, p. 176, lines 95-99) are expressly said by Coleridge not to have "'the sense or purpose' of Nature-Worship. They express 'the Divine Omnipresence' in 'the only safe and legitimate' sense, 'the presence of all things in God.'" I am far from suggesting that Nature Worship is to be preferred to a view of nature as an expression of the mind of God, but rather that even in these lines which touch me as deeply as any in English

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literature, Wordsworth is moving away from the natural forms which he evokes so powerfully
to something much more abstract, i.e. the mind of God.

K. Chandler looks at Wordsworth's political development, particularly in relation to the
French revolution, and the philosophers Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Edmund Burke. He
argues that

whereas in 1793 Wordsworth tends to resolve the problems of man and society
by appeal to "nature" (even when he calls it by another name such as "reason"),
at the later stage he resolves these problems by appeal to "second nature"
(even when he calls it, say, "nature"). I argue that Wordsworth learned the
former mode of appeal, with some important mediation, from Jean-Jacques
Rousseau, who offered his analysis of the state of nature as a starting point
for radical critique. And I argue likewise that Wordsworth learned the
latter mode from Rousseau's most formidable ideological adversary,
Edmund Burke, for whom use, custom, and habit constituted a second
nature to rival the first. Insofar as we regard Burke's thought as the epitome
of political conservatism in this period, Wordsworth's major work, his
programmatic poetry of second nature, is conservative from the start. (1984, p. xviii)

Chandler makes his case by close analysis of the poetry of Wordsworth and the
writings of Rousseau and Burke. A review of his whole argument is beyond the scope of this
chapter; what is important here is Chandler's claim, which I find persuasive, that for
Wordsworth, as for Burke, "Man, in his moral nature, becomes, in his progress through life,
...a creature of habits, and of sentiments growing out of them. These form our second nature, as inhabitants of the country and members of the society in which Providence has placed us (Burke 14 quoted in Chandler, 1984, p. 71).

The concept of second nature as defined by Edmund Burke helps us to understand more fully, I believe, the dimensions Wordsworth puts between himself and his sister Dorothy in "Tintern Abbey." The poem tells of the change in Wordsworth in the five years since he first visited the Wye valley above Tintern Abbey. He has matured and he sees in Dorothy what he was five years ago, "in thy voice I catch/The language of my former heart, and read/My former pleasures in the shooting lights/Of thy wild eyes" (lines 116-119). Arthur Beatty, writing of this difference, says Wordsworth has reached the third age, the period of thought, maturity.

In this age the immediate joy in sensation has gone; but as an "abundant recompense," come the deeper and more profound outlook on life, with 'thought' which alone satisfies. And what is the wisdom which this "thought" teaches him? That "man" is the centre of the universe, that the "mind of man" is the culminating point of the "something" which is "interfused" in the universe "and rolls through all things."

(1937, p. 372)

When Wordsworth writes "For I have learned/ To look on nature, not as in the hour/ Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes/ The still sad music of humanity (lines 88-91), humanity can be read as a Burkean "second nature" with all that this implies of Burke's conservative philosophy. This philosophy, as is well known, in preserving the habits of man,

preserved the attitudes toward women and women's place in society which have been so
thoroughly examined and critiqued by feminist scholars. Burke's philosophy in his *Reflections
on the Revolution in France* (1790) was the specific target of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A
Vindication of the Rights of Man* (1790) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792).
Of course in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* Wollstonecraft also specifically attacked
the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau as they applied to women and their education. These two
ideological giants with opposing political views were not so different in their ideas about
women.

At the end of *The Prelude* Wordsworth makes clear that second nature is quite
separate from, and superior to, first nature, that is the earth itself

what we have loved,

Others will love; and we may teach them how;

Instruct them how the mind of man becomes

A thousand times more beautiful than the earth

On which he dwells, above this Frame of things

(Which, 'mid all revolutions in the hopes

And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)

In beauty exalted, as it is itself

Of substance and of fabric more divine. (Book VIII, lines 444-452)

Anne K. Mellor remarks of this passage: "precarious indeed is this unique, unitary,
transcendental subjectivity, for Wordsworth's sublime self-assurance is rendered possible, as
many critics have observed, only by the arduous repression of the Other in all its forms:....To sustain such a divine intellect, unspeaking female earth must first be silenced" (1993, p. 149).

This is indeed a sharp contrast to Emily's sense of the earth which "can centre both the worlds of Heaven and Hell" (Stanzas, quoted as the epigraph to this chapter).

In her journals and poetry Dorothy Wordsworth presents a very different concept of self from that of her brother William's poetry. I think it is similar to Emily's. Here is Dorothy's "Floating Island at Hawkeshead, An Incident in the schemes of Nature":

Harmonious Powers with Nature work

On sky, earth, river, lake and sea:

Sunshine and storm, whirlwind and breeze

All in one duteous task agree.

Once did I see a slip of earth,

By throbbing waves long undermined,

Loosed from its hold;-- how no one knew

But all might see it float, obedient to the wind.

Might see it, from the verdant shore

Dissevered float upon the Lake,

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Mellor points to discussion of the way Wordsworth precariously represses the Other in

Float, with its crest of trees adorned
On which the warbling birds their pastime take.

Food, shelter, safety there they find
There berries ripen, flowerets bloom;
There insects live their lives—and die:
A peopled world it is; -- in size a tiny room.

And thus through many seasons' space
This little Island may survive
But Nature, though we mark her not,
Will take away -- may cease to give.

Perchance when you are wandering forth
Upon some vacant sunny day
Without an object, hope, or fear,
Thither your eyes may turn -- the isle is passed away.

Buried beneath the glittering Lake!
Its place no longer to be found,
Yet the lost fragments shall remain,
To fertilize some other ground. (quoted in Mellor, 1993, p. 155)
In her comment on Dorothy Wordsworth's poem, Anne K. Mellor reminds us that her brother William had used the floating island image pejoratively in relation to himself. He had "denounced his youthful life at Cambridge" in these terms:

Rotted as by a charm, my life became

A floating island, an amphibious thing,

Unsound, of spungy texture, yet withal,

Not wanting a fair face of water-weeds

And pleasant flowers.

(Prelude 111:339-344)

In contrast Dorothy's poem celebrates a floating island life or self that is not only in harmony with all of nature but deeply embedded in it, "all in one duteous task agree." It is not the sponginess of the island that Dorothy emphasizes, for ephemeral though its existence may be, it is fully part of nature and partakes of the nurture of trees, flowers and birds, as does the rest of the natural scene of which it is a part. Nature also takes away, but the poem does not see this as a sad ending, but as part of the natural processes of which the island partakes. For awhile the island exists, nurturing other life, then it sinks, passes away. But even then, Dorothy points out that "the lost fragments shall remain,/To fertilize some other ground." This is a self which is deeply embedded in a larger whole. Anne Mellor comments on what this poem tells us about the construction of female identity:

Significantly, it is a self that does not name itself as a self; the metaphor of the floating island as a life or self is one that has to be intertextually transferred from her brother's poem. Susan Levin has noted the degree to which Dorothy
Wordsworth's floating island self conforms to one model (among several possible models) of feminine identity, that proposed by the contemporary Self-in-Relation school of psychology derived from British object-relations theory by Nancy Chodorow, Jean Baker Miller and Carol Gilligan. Like many female autobiographers who preceded her -- like Margaret Cavendish, Margery Kempe, Julian of Norwich, and Anne Bradstreet -- Dorothy Wordsworth constructed her identity "by way of alterity" in relation to a significant other, whether a man, a woman, God, nature, or the community. (1993, pp 156-57)

I will return to the idea of constructing an identity by way of alterity in my concluding chapter. It is obviously a key idea for this study. Here it is important to note it in relation to Dorothy's sense of herself in nature as it differs from William's. Clearly a contrast of two poems, even of two poets, would not be significant if they were not typical of other works. The contrast of William and Dorothy's relation to nature has been commented on by several writers, such as Margaret Homans, in *Women Writers and Poetic Identity* (1980) and in *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing* (1986) in addition to Anne K. Mellor, and it is congruent with other analyses of what is now often called the male and female traditions of romanticism. In *Bearing the Word*, Homans emphasizes that in Dorothy Wordsworth's journals there is no order or hierarchy in her parallels between the human and the natural which "have meaning only if nature has as full a value as the human experience, and it can have that full value only if it is not portrayed as subordinate to the human" (p. 54). Commenting on a description, in Dorothy's journal, of a pair of swallows who built a nest in her window, Homans argues that they cannot justly be
seen as a symbol for Dorothy's relationships with William and his wife Mary Hutchinson, but rather that, "she [Dorothy] convinces us by her long and minute observations of their behaviour that the swallows have their own life quite apart from hers. She sympathizes with them, not they with her" (p. 55).

The differences between Dorothy Wordsworth's sense of herself in nature and Emily Brontë's are obvious. While both were domestic, choosing to keep house (Emily for her widowed father and Dorothy for her brother) in rural settings, Dorothy's poetry and her journal entries present a much gentler picture of life in nature. The fierceness of parts of Emily's vision have struck readers from the beginning. What they have in common, however, is the sense of embeddedness in nature, and of their celebration of this condition as opposed to William Wordsworth's and other writers of the masculine tradition, who separate themselves from nature and who construct a self which they see as superior to nature. "The mind of man," as described by Wordsworth is, I think, not the mind of humankind, but is specifically male. I have dwelt on William and Dorothy Wordsworth at such length because their contrasting views of nature are key for understanding some important differences between men and women in relation to nature and for understanding why I am so drawn, as a woman, to Emily's way of seeing and being in the world.

When Emily was at the Pensionnat Heger, in Brussels, learning French and other subjects, she and Charlotte wrote a series of "devoires" in French. On August 11, 1842, the sisters each submitted a piece to their teacher M. Heger, which he kept. Charlotte's is entitled "The Caterpillar" and Emily's "The Butterfly." The fact that both are on such similar topics suggests that guidance was provided by their teacher. The pieces, however, are quite
different. Charlotte's is more conventional. She compares the life of the caterpillar with that of man while on earth, the chrysalis with death and burial, and the butterfly and rebirth into a better world after death. Emily presents a stark contrast between the life of the caterpillar and that of the butterfly, with no intermediate stage. Her depiction of nature in this piece has often been remarked on. She puts a great deal of energy into her picture of a nature "red in tooth and claw."

All creation is equally mad. Behold those flies playing above the brook; the swallows and fish diminish their number every minute. These will become, in their turn, the prey of some tyrant of the air or water; and man for his amusement or his needs will kill their murderers. Nature is an inexplicable problem; it exists on a principle of destruction. Every being must be the tireless instrument of death to others, or itself must cease to live, yet nonetheless we celebrate the day of our birth, and we praise God for having entered such a world.

(Brontë and Brontë, 1996, p. 176)

Emily ends her devoir by an evocation, signalled by the flight of a "butterfly with large wings of lustrous gold and purple":

As the ugly caterpillar is the origin of the splendid butterfly, so this globe is the embryo of a new heaven and a new earth whose poorest beauty will infinitely exceed your mortal imagination. (p. 178)

These sentiments were not uncommon. As J. Hillis Miller points out, they are very like John Wesley's in his sermon "The General Deliverance" (1963, p. 164). What strikes me, however, is not the picture of a fallen world, which is Wesley's message, nor even the "energy of her
pessimism [in] the negative part of the essay" (Homans, 1980, p. 142), but rather that this is simply a picture of nature as it is. Emily, like others of her time, was describing nature in a way which has become familiar since Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859). Emily's essay, though just as biblically orthodox in its views as Charlotte's, emphasizes "a new heaven and a new earth" signalled by the butterfly, rather than life after death. It is nature itself which will be transformed. It is not "pessimism" to see nature as she does in her devoire but realism. This realism, however, also includes the beauty and grace of the butterfly in its natural form as well as its symbolic dimension. Emily's poems, like *Wuthering Heights*, are saturated with images of natural beauty which speak to the hearts of the humans who partake of it.

In her article "Repression and Sublimation of Nature in *Wuthering Heights*" (1987), Margaret Homans makes the observation that while it is a critical commonplace that *Wuthering Heights* is informed by the presence of nature, there is in fact little direct description of nature in the novel. Cathy and Heathcliff spend their childhood on the moors, yet there are no full descriptions of them there. The reader is first introduced to Catherine Earnshaw in the diary fragment discovered by Lockwood in the closet bed he is assigned at Wuthering Heights. In this fragment, as Celia noted in her narrative, Cathy records that she and Heathcliff appropriated the dairy woman's cloak and went for a scamper in the moors. Though her thoughts about the bad weather, about the strict Sabbath discipline of Hindley and Joseph, are recorded, there is no description of the scamper on the moors itself, which the novel as a whole makes abundantly clear was very important to Cathy. Homans develops the theme in her article that writing and actual experience of nature are antithetical and that direct
experience of nature is not only primary but cannot be named and still preserve its primacy.

She explains:

The omission of nature is consistent with this emphasis that nature is primary or original relative to a text and all the rest of Brontë's omissions make this point too. Both Brontë and her Cathy avoid description [sic] of nature or of events in nature because there is no way to name nature without making it secondary.

Primary nature neither needs to be nor can be referred to. (1987, p. 65)

In Homans' reading, Brontë, like Dorothy Wordsworth, sees nature as a primary experience.

Homans notes that while there is a marked lack of literal description of nature in *Wuthering Heights*, it is very much present in figurative language. Characters, places, houses, are all associated with figures of nature. Homans's claims that "these figurative uses of nature, which have always seemed to most readers to bring 'real' or unorganized nature into the book, actually provide a vehicle for abstract order" (in the contrast, achieved in part through natural metaphors, between the two houses Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, for example) (1987, p. 68). I do not share Homans' view. In fact, my reading of *Wuthering Heights* aligns itself with that of "most readers" at least in respect of the force and meaning of Brontë's use of nature in her figurative language. Here is a sample of such observations of the presence of nature in *Wuthering Heights* over the years:

The impulse which urged [Emily Brontë] to create was not her own suffering or her own injuries. She looked out upon a world cleft into gigantic disorder and felt

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within her the power to unite it in a book. That gigantic ambition is to be felt throughout the novel — a struggle, half thwarted but of superb conviction, to say something through the mouths of her characters which is not merely 'I love' or 'I hate', but 'we, the whole human race' and 'you, the eternal powers...'. the sentence remains unfinished.

*Virginia Woolf.* "*Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*" (written 1916).

In *The Common Reader* (1925).

[For Emily Brontë] the whole created cosmos, animate and inanimate, mental and physical alike, is the expression of certain living spiritual principles — on the one hand what may be called the principle of storm — of the harsh, the ruthless, the wild, the dynamic and; and on the other the principle of calm — of the gentle, the merciful, the passive and the tame. (p.23) .....She does not even see suffering, pitiful, individual man in conflict with unfeeling, impersonal, ruthless natural forces, like Hardy. Men and nature to her are equally living and in the same way. To her an angry man and an angry sky are not just metaphorically alike, they are actually alike in kind; different manifestations of a single spiritual reality. 

David Cecil (first published 1935) "*Emily Brontë and Wuthering Heights*" in Lettis

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17 Note the similarity of sentiment in Bruce McCullough (1961) "The Dramatic Novel: *Wuthering Heights*" in Richard Lettis and William E. Morris (Eds.), *A Wuthering Heights Handbook*: "There is no intention here to suggest that nature is indifferent to the sufferings of man, as Hardy might have done. The discord, in Emily's view, is not between man and nature but within nature. Nature is not always in a state of equilibrium. Man, being a part of nature, is subject to disturbance when the forces governing him are thrown out of balance" (p. 67).

The emotions of Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw function differently to other emotions in fiction. Instead of inhabiting the characters, they surround them like thunder clouds and generate the explosions that fill the novel from the moment when Lockwood dreams of the hand at the window down to the moment when Heathcliff, with the same window open is discovered dead. *Wuthering Heights* is filled with sound -- storm and rushing wind -- a sound more important than words and thoughts.

E. M. Forster (first published, 1927) *Aspects of the Novel* (1962, p. 131)

Their [Catherine and Heathcliff's] relationship is, we say, 'ontological' or 'metaphysical' because it opens out into the more-than-personal, enacts a style of being which is more than just the property of two individuals, which suggests in its impersonality something beyond a merely Romantic-individualist response to social oppression. Their relationship articulates a depth inexpressible in routine social practice, transcendent of available social languages.....and if the relationship is to remain unabsorbed by society it must therefore appear as natural rather than social, since Nature is the 'outside' of society. On the other hand, the novel cannot realize the meaning of that revolutionary refusal in social terms; the most it can do is to universalize that meaning by intimating the mysteriously
impersonal energies from which the relationship springs.


Many writers, including Terry Eagleton in the chapter cited above, emphasize that Emily Brontë was very well informed about the social and economic conditions of her time and of the previous century, including detailed knowledge of the intricacies of property law. Many writers, including Terry Eagleton in the chapter cited above, emphasize that Emily Brontë was very well informed about the social and economic conditions of her time and of the previous century, including detailed knowledge of the intricacies of property law.

The readings cited above centre on other aspects of the novel, but it is important to remember that these aspects are part of a whole which includes a realistic portrayal of economic and social conditions in Yorkshire in the late eighteenth century. The readings cited nonetheless are typical of a large and continuing group of readings which point to a sense of the novel as metaphysical, as asking the fundamental questions of life with such power and urgency that readers keep returning again and again to the novel. They all attest in remarkably similar ways, despite their disparity of views in other ways, to a sense of *Wuthering Heights* as presenting a world where people are not only embedded in nature, but in fact are parts of a whole which is governed by the same forces. These forces are not like "the mind of man" elevated by William Wordsworth, but like the large impersonal forces which govern the life of the earth itself.

Despite full acknowledgement and indeed portrayal of how fierce and crushing these forces can be, and are, Emily Brontë in my opinion also shows us that, ultimately, nature is

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18 The articles by Arnold Kettle, "Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights*," by V.S. Pritchett, "Implacable, Belligerent People of Emily Bronte's Novel," and C.P. Sanger, "The Structure of *Wuthering Heights*," reprinted in Richard Letts and William E. Morris (Eds.), (1961) *A Wuthering Heights Handbook*, to cite only a few from the same source, all carefully demonstrate the solid way Emily Brontë founded her novel on accurate details of social and economic conditions of the time.
sacred. Many of her poems describe experiences, which I was able to show in my dissertation for the Master of Arts in English literature *(Transforming Quest: The Mystic Way in the Poems of Emily Brontë)* are analogous to experiences described by classic religious mystics. In Emily's case these experiences are almost always expressed through nature imagery, even when they explicitly describe transcendent states. I will cite just one example, the opening of what is perhaps her best known poem of mystic experience. The experience itself is not described; these experiences are ineffable, but its onset is expressed through words that describe nature. These lines occur in a poem about Gondal 19 in which a woman prisoner is visited by a "Messenger of Hope."

He comes with western winds, with evening's wandering airs,

With that clear dusk of heaven that brings the thickest stars.

Winds take a pensive tone, and stars a tender fire,

And visions rise and change which kill me with desire

Desire for nothing known in my maturer years

When joy grew mad with awe at counting future tears;

When, if my spirit's sky was full of flashes warm,

I knew not whence they came, from sun or thunderstorm;

"But first a hush of peace, a soundless calm descends;

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19 Gondal is the imaginary country for which Emily and her sister Anne created a geography, history, characters and plots. They began in childhood and carried on throughout their lives.
The struggle of distress and fierce impatience ends;
Mute music soothes my breast -- unuttered harmony
That I could never dream till earth was lost to me.

"Julian M. and A.G. Rochelle," lines 69-80 (Brontë, 1941, p. 238-239)

In many other of her poems, natural scenes are permeated with the sense of the sacred. For me Wordsworth's lines about the hare in "Resolution and Independence" quoted above are similarly imbued with holiness, as her joyous bounds in the plashy earth raise a nimbus of mist which glitters in the morning sun.

The sacredness of landscape and nature is a tradition known throughout the globe. Simon Schama shows in his recent study Landscape and Memory (1995) that the cultural habits of humanity have always made room for the sacredness of nature (p. 18). In England the greenwood was seen as a place where one "found oneself" (p. 141), a sentiment brought to America by European settlers who venerated landscape and particularly forests as places of liberty worthy of veneration (p. 197). Nature mysticism, if I can use that term, is not an uncommon experience. Anthologies of accounts of mystic experiences often include a section under that title, and accounts of such experiences appear in many other contexts. Here, for instance, are Jane Goodall's thoughts at the beginning of her book Through a Window: My Thirty Years with the Chimpanzees of Gombe (1990). Jane Goodall is describing one of her observation tours at her station at Lake Tanganyika in Gombe. It is early evening and she has been with the chimpanzees since about 6:00 a.m.:

There are many windows through which we can look out into the world, searching for meaning. There are those opened up by science....Gazing through such a window I
have, over the years, learned much about chimpanzee behaviour and their place in the
nature of things.....

But there are other windows; windows that have been unshuttered by the logic of
philosophers; windows through which the mystics seek their visions of the truth;
windows from which the leaders of the great religions have peered as they searched
for purpose not only in the wondrous beauty of the world, but also in its darkness and
ugliness. Most of us, when we ponder on the mystery of our existence, peer through
but one of these windows onto the world. And even that one is often misted over by
the breath of our finite humanity. We clear a tiny peephole and stare through. No
wonder we are confused by the tiny fraction of a whole that we see. It is,
after all, like trying to comprehend the panorama of the desert or the sea through a
rolled up newspaper.

As I stood quietly in the pale sunshine, so much a part of the rain-washed forests and
the creatures that lived there, I saw for a brief moment through another window and
with another vision. It is an experience that comes, unbidden, to some of us who
spend time alone in nature. The air was filled with a feathered symphony, the
evensong of birds. I heard new frequencies in their music and, too, in the singing of
insect voices, notes so high and sweet that I was amazed. I was intensely aware of the
shape, the colour, of individual leaves, the varied pattern of the veins that made each
one unique. Scents were clear, easily identifiable -- fermenting, over ripe fruit;
water-logged earth; cold, wet bark; the damp odour of chimpanzee hair and, yes, my
own too. And the aromatic scent of young, crushed leaves was almost overpowering.
I sensed the presence of a bushbuck, then saw him, quietly browsing upwind, his spiralled horns dark with rain. And I was utterly filled with that peace "which passeth all understanding." (pp. 10-11)

Mystical experience is by definition ineffable. Jane Goodall's beautiful words convey as well as any the wonder of the world we live in, and will stand for others which could be cited. Prosaic commentary, on the other hand, cannot do anything but muddy the waters. As I noted, the subject of my dissertation for the Master of Arts in English literature was mysticism in Emily Brontë's poetry. It is still, for me, an absorbing study. When I began my work on Emily Brontë for my master's thesis, I thought I would be working on *Wuthering Heights*, and I thought the attachment of Cathy and Heathcliff was analogous to the longing for mystic union with the divine which Emily expresses in many of her poems. I still think that quality resides in the power with which their longing for each other is portrayed. For me now, however, the urgencies of youthful romance are in the past. The gift this book gives me, in the later years of my life, is its portrayal of intense pleasure in natural forms. When I walk in the woods and fields, I feel my perceptions and appreciations are informed by how Emily Brontë saw and felt. Her words, her way of seeing, have permanently shaped my own.

This is the meaning, I think, of the dream of the beautiful leaves, and why I ended my narrative by telling it. What is important for me now, it says, is the doorway nature opens to the way ahead in my life, and, maybe, if I can make myself attentive enough, to the mystery surrounding us.
Chapter 6

CONCLUSION AND EDUCATIONAL IMPORTANCE OF THE INQUIRY

Reflections

In July the river ripples alternate
violet and green, violet and green
Tree branches catch the shimmer
the whole world vibrates.
On the bank, the tall grass explodes
with the last bright sun of day,
We bathe in pure light
stroking through gold grass.

In October still water turns bare trees
upside down, reclothes them in floating leaves
Our canoe slips through the water trees,
glides among branches, paddles into clouds.

As when a window casts a pane of light against the sky,
A sudden doorway in the air,
Hushed, we wait, wait for the note
Which will call the dance
Summon the drums, the flutes, the pipes.

Nathalie Sorensen, Sept. 1986

"Most of us read books with this question in our mind: what does this say about my life?" writes Margaret Drabble in response to novels of Doris Lessing (1978, p.54). I think this is true. Eleanor, Alice, and many others, friends, acquaintances, and students informally polled over the years, attest that it is. We form a long tradition. Before Plato and his famous quarrel with them, "the poets (especially the tragic poets) were understood by most Athenians to be the central ethical teachers and thinkers of Greece, the people to whom above all, the city turned, and rightly turned, with its questions about how to live" writes Martha Nussbaum
(1990, p. 15). All of us with this view of literature disagree with the claim that to turn to literature for practical reasons is naive and insensitive to the complexities of literary form and intertextuality. This latter set of opinions of the relation of literature and life came to dominate literary discussion in the middle years of this century. Wayne Booth has an excellent discussion of why this came to be in his chapter, "Why Ethical Criticism Fell on Hard Times" in *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (1988, p. 25-46).

In his Presidential Address to the American Philosophical Society (1984) Arthur Danto presents a closely reasoned argument showing that literature is a form of philosophy.¹ He names the theory that literature does not refer to reality, but at best to other literature, The Referential Fallacy (p. 10), and shows how it does not respond to our experience. Rather, he concludes, "reference to the world works together with references to other art, when there are such references, to make a complex representation" (p. 12). "Literature," he says, "certainly in

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¹ Arthur Danto also ponders the difference between philosophy and literature, for if literature is a form of philosophy, it is not coterminous with it. Danto explains the important differences between philosophy, history, and literature and in so doing says something important about how literature relates to the reader and to her life:

Aristotle's famous suggestion of course is that "poetry is something more philosophical and of graver import than history since its statements are of the nature of universals, whereas those of history are singular." .... So there must be a way in which [literature is not quite so philosophical as philosophy itself], otherwise the problem of construing philosophy as a form of literature would be solved at the cost of so widening philosophy, since nothing could be more philosophical than it, as to compass whatever Aristotle would consider poetry. In whatever way philosophy is to be literature, if it is to be literature at all, it must respect whatever differences there may be with literature which is not philosophy, however necessarily philosophical it has to be in order to be distinguished from mere history....Literature is not universal in the sense of being about every possible world in so far as possible, as philosophy in its nonliterary dimension aspires to be, nor about what may happen to be the case in just this particular world, as history ...aspires to be but *rather about each reader who experiences it.* (emphasis mine) (1984, p. 15)
its greatest exemplars, seems to have something important to do with our lives, important enough that the study of it should form an essential part of our educational program" (p. 10).

In this concluding chapter, this final (for now) swing around the spiral of my inquiry, I want to place what I have learned in as broad a context as possible before looking once more in depth at the central findings and what they mean in terms of educational practice. Before I begin, however, a few basic clarifications are in order. By claiming that literature can be a guide to life, I do not wish to imply that reading great literature necessarily makes the reader a good person. In *A Defense of Poetry*, Shelley illuminates the relation of poetry and morality. He writes: "The great secret of morals is love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own" (1965, p. 118, written in 1821, first published 1840). This is as close as we'll get to a general description of Alice's, Eleanor's, and Celia's experience as recounted in our narratives. Shelley goes on to say that "the presence or absence of poetry in its most perfect and universal form, has been found to be connected with good and evil in conduct or habit" (p. 120-121). This connection, on the other hand, may or may not apply. After Auschwitz we cannot believe that poetry, even the greatest, necessarily improves conduct. Some guards of the Nazi extermination camps read great literature and listened to great music in the evenings, and nevertheless went to their work every day.

Neither is the guidance to be had from literature a matter of simple one on one correspondence. In *The Educated Imagination* (1963) Northrop Frye says there is an "absence of any clear lines of connexion between literature and life" (p. 38) and that "however useful literature may be in improving one's imagination or vocabulary, it would be the wildest
kind of pedantry to use it directly as a guide to life" (p. 36). If the operative word here is 
*directly*, i.e. looking for rules or strategies, then it is indeed naive to look to literature as a 
guide to life. That literature can and does, however, provide a guide to life, as good as any to 
be found, is the principal claim of this inquiry. How, once again, is it to be understood?

Martha Nussbaum's book *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* 
(1990) is a beautifully written, wide-ranging and authoritative discussion of literature as 
philosophy.² She addresses with wit and erudition some of the central issues of my study; 
reading her has been like a richly rewarding friendship with a great teacher. Nussbaum begins 
by demonstrating that "literary form is not separable from philosophical content, but is, itself, 
a part of content -- an integral part... of the search for and the statement of truth" (p.3). She 
insists "that any style makes, itself, a statement" (p. 7). She makes two important claims in this 
respect. First:

Life is never simply *presented* by a text; it is always *represented as* something.

This "as" can, and must, be seen not only in the paraphrasable content, but also 
in the style, which itself expresses choices and selections, and sets up, 
in the reader, certain activities and transactions rather than others. (p. 5) 

[and second:] 

only the style of a certain sort of narrative artist (and not, for example, the style 
associated with the abstract theoretical treatise) can adequately state certain important 
truths about the world, embodying them in its shape and setting up in the reader the 
activities that are appropriate for grasping them. (p. 6)

² I cited her chapter "Sophistry About Conventions" in my chapter 2.
Nussbaum cites two novelists to illustrate her claims, Marcel Proust and Henry James:

"Proust's hero Marcel," she writes, "holds that a certain view of what human life is like will find its appropriate verbal expression in form and stylistic choices, a certain use of terms" (p. 6). Her citation of Henry James alludes briefly to a specific example, which I will enlarge upon.

In the four years between 1905 and 1909 Henry James devoted himself to the preparation of what he regarded as his literary monument, the New York Edition of his works (Edel, 1985. p. 624). For this edition James revised his early work and wrote the famous Prefaces to each volume. Here is how he explains his process in the Preface to his novel, *The Golden Bowl*:

To revise is to see, or to look over again....the act of revision, the act of seeing it again caused whatever I looked at on any page to flower before me as into the only terms that honourably expressed it....What it would be really interesting...to go into would be the very history...of the growth of the immense array of terms, perceptional and expressional, that after the fashion I have indicated, in sentence, passage and page, simply looked over the heads of the standing terms -- or perhaps rather, like alert winged creatures, perched on those diminished summits and aspired to a clearer air. (1934, pp. 338-39)

This beautiful passage embodies what it expresses, proving the point that style is indispensable to truth telling. James says that in his revision fresher, more evocative, words appeared to him, replacing former expressions he had used in the first edition of the novels. He expresses this idea by an arresting image. The words of the first edition are likened to summits, while the
new expressions that came to his mind as he re-read the text appeared like "alert winged creatures" which perched on these "now diminished summits and aspired to a clearer air." The new words take the reader into a higher realm where his or her understanding is altogether clearer, more alert. As I have said, James's metaphor illustrates how poetic language can make a philosophical point. The metaphor of winged creatures perched on the heads of the standing terms is a wonderful way of showing how the more poetic the language is, the more accurately it reflects a finely tuned understanding of a situation. This is, of course, what the writers of "the new ethnography" are claiming, as I pointed out in my introduction. As they move from a scientific to a literary discourse, they not only seek to be more inclusive, but to convey more of what they perceive in the worlds they survey.

Nussbaum ends her book by commenting on the special properties of novels as vehicles for ethical explorations. She writes:

- novels take our common humanity for their theme, implying that what is at issue
- is not merely some idiosyncratic event that actually happened, but a possibility
- or possibilities for human life.....novels conduct a philosophical investigation into
- the good of a human being. (1990, p. 390)

Like Danto, Nussbaum points to an important quality of literature, as differentiated from history, and that is its quality as embodying universal human concerns. If, as she says, novels are particularly apt for ethical study, what is it that makes them so?

Mikhail Bakhtin, the great Soviet thinker and theoretician of literature, developed several concepts which have been taken up by some current critics and which they have found useful in talking about the novel. The most important for my purposes is his idea of dialogism.
Tzvetan Todorov describes dialogism as the intertextualism of language itself. He explains: "A single voice can make itself heard only by blending into the complex choir of other voices already in place. This is true not only of literature but of all discourse" (1984, p. x). Todorov explains that Bakhtin devoted a substantial part of his studies to the novel because this is "the genre that most favors this polyphony" (p. x). Bakhtin's reflection on the novel," says Todorov, "turns into a form of anthropology...it is the human being itself that is irreducibly heterogeneous; it is human 'being' that exists only in dialogue: within being one finds the other" (p-p x-xi). I find this very suggestive as I try to understand how a reader connects with a character or situation in fiction, in such a way as to change her life. I will turn to this question shortly, but first I want to explain more fully why I think Bakhtin's ideas about language and particularly the language of the novel are useful in understanding how the novel works as philosophy.

"Language," writes Bakhtin in The Dialogic Imagination, like the living concrete environment in which the consciousness of the verbal artist lives -- is never unitary. It is unitary only as an abstract grammatical system of normative forms, taken in isolation from the concrete, ideological conceptualizations that fill it..... Literary language -- both spoken and written -- ...is itself stratified and heteroglot in its aspect as an expressive system, that is in the forms that carry its meanings. (1981, p.288)

Bakhtin elaborates his idea in reference to the novel:

The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech
types [raznorecie] and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions. Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia [raznorecie] can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (always more or less dialogized). These distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization -- this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel.

(1981. pp 262-3)

The dialogic quality of the novel, then, not only makes it particularly effective, as I argue in the section "Women Writing," in chapter 2 as a means of disrupting a dominant literary culture and even the dominance of patriarchal language itself, but it also makes it most apt as a way of self-discovery for women. In its polyphony, its heteroglossia, the novel decentres ideology and allows for a multiplicity of interpretations. What is realized in the novel is the process of finding one's own language as it is perceived in someone else's language (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 293). This is far from straightforward. In the introduction to her edition of essays Gender and Theory: Dialogues on Feminist Criticism (1989) Linda Kauffman writes: "Dialogism is the deployment not just of an alternative argument, or logic, but an a-logic that contests the linearity, rationality, and objectivity of Western man [sic] and Western discourse. The theory of dialogism is complicated by the fact that each writer enters a pre-existing language system, which renders the concept of subjectivity linguistically as well
as psychoanalytically inflected" (p. 5-6). There is no doubt that in reading we enter a pre-existing language system which inflects our subjectivity. Language is never transparent, and the reader never without bias. It is, however, the dialogic nature of language, its heteroglossia, which allows some freedom of choice, some control for the subject as she negotiates meaning.

In addition to finding "her own language" within the heteroglossia of the novel, the reader is able to respond in the most intimate manner to characters and situations because this polyphony allows her to find what she most needs. This quality of polyphony in novels means that literary characters interact not only with other characters but with other discourses themselves -- political, religious, and historical.3

Bakhtin comments on another quality of dialogue in literature which is key to our understanding of how readers change themselves as they relate to characters in fiction. He writes:

I am conscious of myself and become myself only while revealing myself

for another, through another, and with the help of another. The most important

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3 Michael Macovski points this out in his study *Dialogue and Literature*, based largely on the ideas of Bakhtin:

It is this pluralistic, transtemporal rhetoric that defines the nature of literary dialogue. Yet to conceive of literature in this manner is also to reconsider our notion of literary meaning, our formulations of authorial intention, invention, and above all, originality. For both the production and the interpretation of aesthetic meaning become, in this context, social acts -- collaborative inventions derived from multiple viewpoints. When we speak of literary voices, then, we envision not a circumscribed text but a socially constituted event -- a convergence of vocative perspectives, rhetorics, and idioms. According to this view, literary meaning is rendered not by a single speaker, nor even by a single author, but is communally constructed and exchanged. It is not declaimed but incrementally accrued in time and space. It is neither focal nor detached but processive, accretive, and multireferential. (1994, p.4)
acts constituting self-consciousness are determined by a relationship toward
another consciousness (toward a thou). (1984, p. 287)

In his book *Dialogue and Literature*, Michael Macovski comments on this passage,
underlining what this means for the formation of the self in the face of another, including
another in literature:

What Bakhtin calls "self-consciousness" thus becomes a function of dialogue,
a form of verbal demarcation. In order to foster this impetus toward selfhood,
the romantic speaker struggles to enact a parallel "relationship toward another
consciousness." Here, too, the narrative address takes on ontological
implications, since it is the very presence of this listening consciousness that
defines the speaking self. Altery thus acts to bound and delimit the conscious
"I," which in turn develops incrementally during the process of addressing a
"Thou." ..... As a result, when these relations with the other are manifested as
dialogue, they become the rhetorical equivalent of an ontological "Boundary." In
this sense, dialogue enables the ego to emerge within a process of contrast,
differentiation, and eventual divergence. (1994, pp. 33-34)

Macovski devotes a chapter of his book to *Wuthering Heights* where he comments, as
many other critics have done, on the layering of narrative structure. Lockwood records a tale
told to him by Nelly, who in turn reports accounts of episodes as told to her by Cathy, by
Heathcliff, by Isabella, by Zillah. Thus this structure multiplies the possibilities of

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The full title of Michael Macovski's book is *Dialogue and Literature: Apostrophe, Auditors, and the Collapse of Romantic Discourse*. He writes about the canonical romantic poets and about Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and about *Wuthering Heights* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. 
interpretation and misinterpretation by each narrator, and accentuates and makes overt what Bakhtin finds implicit in all literary texts, that is their dialogism. In *Wuthering Heights* every voice, not only the characters as speakers, but all the narrative voices, have listeners. The structure of *Wuthering Heights* highlights what is present but more hidden in novels without this framing device: that is a sense that all the novel is dialogue. Recall Wordsworth's Boy of Winter discussed in chapter 5. Here the child's communion is with the owls, which echo his voice and "work to confirm his own identity." The boy's mimicry of the owls is "redoubled and redoubled" in a way analogous to the doubling and redoubling of the narrative voices of *Wuthering Heights*.

Macovski comments that "these rhetorical exposures before an other come to represent not only the separate interpretation of self and other, but also the actual fashioning of this self in terms of the other. In this sense, the listener's function is both interpretive and ontological" (1994, p. 139). This is very similar, too, as I have noted in chapter 2, to defining qualities of women's autobiography: the sense of writing a self in relation to others. This is studied specifically in Mary Mason's "The Other Voice: Autobiographies of Women Writers" (1988, 19-44). Mason writes about four early women autobiographers, and shows how each of them writes in terms of another, and establishes an aesthetic which continues today:

One element that seems more or less constant in women's life writing -- and not in men's -- is the sort of evolution and delineation of an identity by way of alterity that we have traced in the four paradigms. Relation to another autonomous being (Margaret Cavendish), relation to one single, transcendent other (Julian), relation to two others (Margery Kempe), relation to a multiple collectivity, a many-in-one
(Anne Bradstreet) -- these are four distinct possibilities, and while there are no doubt more, the number of possibilities is certainly not infinite. (p. 41)

I think this is very similar to what is happening as Alice enters a dialogic relationship with Margaret/Morag as she reads The Diviners and to Celia as she relates to Cathy Earnshaw in Wuthering Heights and to her deeply felt sense of Emily Brontë's presence on the moors. These are clearly examples of I/Thou relationships, in which Alice and Celia become more themselves in relationship with another. In chapter 3, I discussed Alice's connection with Margaret/Morag in terms of Code's paradigmatic knowing of another human being, in terms of Baier's concept of the "second person", and in terms of friendship. These are all varieties of dialogue with another, of the fashioning of a self in alterity. Bakhtin shows us that the literary text, and especially the novel, is not problematic in this regard but can actually facilitate this activity. As noted, "when these relations with the other are manifested as dialogue, they become the rhetorical equivalent of an ontological 'Boundary'" (Macovski, 1994, p. 34).

The idea of a boundary is important for Eleanor's sense of herself in relation with Judith Hearne as we saw in chapter 4. Since Judith Hearne is a "dire warning" for Eleanor, she abjects her and what she represents of poverty and powerlessness. We recognize, following Kristeva, that this abjection forms an essential boundary for the self. The same motion which abjects the self simultaneously establishes it. The idea of the boundary is key to

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5 This idea that the self is formed in relation to the other, as we noted in chapter 5, is the basis of the self-in-relation school of child development associated with the ideas of D.W. Winnicott, Daniel Stern and others. These ideas have been incorporated into theories of women's development associated with Nancy Chodorow in The Reproduction of Mothering and Carol Gilligan in In a Different Voice.
our understanding of how the self is formed in relation to another, including a character in fiction. I want to look at this idea more closely.

"Wuthering Heights is a novel preoccupied with the idea of boundary," John T. Matthews begins his deconstructive reading of the novel.

In vast variations of single-mindedness, it haunts the sites of division -- between self and other, individual and family, nature and culture, mortality and immortality. It is not surprising, then, that Emily Brontë should be drawn to a formal expression of her concern with boundaries by enclosing her 'central' story in an outlying narrative episode. As in its structure, the novel's imagery and diction are saturated to the same purpose by the rhetoric of framing (p. 54). Brontë invites us to entertain the agreements between these kinds of framing as she considers how establishing a ground for the story's figure is indistinguishable from inventing the story 'itself'. Disclosure is enclosure. (1993, p. 55)

Matthews says the pervasiveness of the figure of framing functions for the story itself and its themes very much in the same way as the "other" does in the formation of the self. I think that this is why the novel resonates for me now, and has resonated for so long with the questions of who I am and who I want to be. Matthews has a helpful comment on Cathy Earnshaw's statement to Nelly, which comes just before her declaration. "I am Heathcliff." Cathy says, "surely you and everybody have a notion that there is, or should be, an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of creation if I were entirely contained here?" (Wuthering Heights, 1990, p.63-64) Matthews comments: "Catherine wants to get at the notion that selfhood is distributed between one's contained identity and all it is not. The 'I' is also
elsewhere, not 'entirely here' (1993, p. 57). Commenting on Cathy's and Heathcliff's mutual declarations of identity: Cathy's "I am Heathcliff," (p. 64) and Heathcliff's "I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!" (p. 129), Matthews writes: "Each is the other's ground and life, being and soul; each is the other's essence experienced as external, one's core the other's frame, and that frame the first's sought centre" (p. 58).

J. Hillis Miller points out in his study of *Wuthering Heights* in *The Disappearance of God* that Cathy's sentence "I am Heathcliff,"

contains its own contradiction and denial, as do all sentences of the form "A is B."

Cathy, in order to assert that she is identified with Heathcliff, must confess to their separateness, for is there not a different word for each? Though her language seems so clear and logical, it is tangled in contradictions. (1963, p. 176)

These contradictions, according to Matthew, are central to Emily Brontë's vision in the novel and of a piece with the other oppositions she evokes, such as between the realms of nature and culture, person and family, male and female (p. 62). These are the polarities which have fascinated readers since the beginning. Matthew contends that "the current that draws together Catherine and Heathcliff runs from the arbitrary opposition of their polarity rather than from any literal circumstances dividing them" (p. 59). Paradoxically it is their separateness which holds them together and the very closeness of their bond which keeps them apart. They can only exist in this tension of opposites.

Miller says something similar when he analyses the mutual incompatibilities of Cathy's attempts to describe her relationship to Heathcliff:

Cathy's explanation of her love for Heathcliff mingles at least three different modes
of relation. She says she is Heathcliff, that their souls are the same. This is the relation of identity or fusion. She says that her love for Heathcliff is like the eternal rocks beneath. This is the relation of substance. And she says Heathcliff is that which is beyond her and yet "contains" her, as, in traditional theology, all things are contained in God. This is the relation of container and thing contained. Each of these relations has its own appropriate dialectic, and the dialectic of each is different from those of the other two. It is impossible, logically, for two things to be related in all three of these ways at once. The proliferation of incompatible explanations in Cathy's speech testifies to the fact that she is talking about something which is beyond language and can never be pinned down in logical discourse. (1963, p. 176)

This is why, I think, so many readers see Wuthering Heights as ultimately ontological, as Terry Eagleton comments (1975, p. 108). Virginia Woolf makes the same claim for the metaphysics of the novel when she says its final effect is the address of "we, the whole human race" to "you, the eternal powers...." (See above, chapter 5, for my quotations from Eagleton and Woolf on this aspect of Wuthering Heights.)

This sense of the impossibility in expressing how she is related to Heathcliff which Cathy experiences is also I think an important clue about the essential role of boundaries between the reader and the text. Arthur Danto is once again helpful. Like a mirror, he writes:

\[ \text{each work of literature shows ... an aspect we would not know were ours without benefit of that mirror: each discovers -- in the eighteenth century meaning of the term -- an unguessed dimension of the self. It is a mirror less in passively returning} \]
an image than in transforming the self-consciousness of the reader who in virtue of identifying with the image, recognizes what he [sic] is. Literature is in this sense transfigurative, and in a way which cuts across the distinction between fiction and truth. (1984, p. 16)

He is also quite aware of the inherent possibilities for harm as well as good in these transfigurations. He continues:

The great paradigm for such transfiguration must be Don Quixote, Cervantes having to be credited not only with the invention of the novel but with discovering the perversion of its philosophy. Quixote is transformed, through reading romances, into an errant knight while his world is transformed into one of knightly opportunities, wenches turning into virgins and innkeepers into kings, nags into steeds and windmills into monsters. Yet it is a perversion of the relationship between reader and romance because Quixote's own sense of his identity was so antecedently weak that he failed to retain it through the transformation, and his own sense of reality was so weak that he lost his grip on the difference between literature and life. (1984, p. 16)

Unfortunately, as must be very clear by now, we cannot dismiss this phenomenon as a product only of Don Quixote's madness and assume that any sane reader would be immune. The idea that romances are "bad for you" has a long history, beginning with Plato himself and continuing until the present. Flaubert's view of the deleterious effects of novels on Emma Bovary's character is well known. The narrator in Jane Austen's last uncompleted novel Sanditon expounds similar opinions on the relation of art and morality:
The truth was that Sir Edw: [sic] whom circumstances had confined very much to one spot had read more sentimental Novels than agreed with him. His fancy had been early caught by all the impassioned, & most exceptionable parts of Richardson's [novels]....With a perversity of Judgment, which must be attributed to his not having by Nature a very strong head, the Graces, the Spirit, the Sagacity, & the Perserverance, of the Villain of the Story outweighed all his absurdities & all his Atrocities with Sir Edward. With him, such Conduct was Genius, Fire and Feeling.

(p. 404)

If we accept, and I do, that the reader "recognizes who [she] is" and "discovers an unguessed dimension of the self" in the mirror of a literary work, we have to accept that this dimension may in fact be a capacity for sentimentality and delusion. In this regard there is no clear line of demarcation between those who are liberated by their reading and those who are ensnared by it. It is rather that a continuum exists between these poles and each of us has found herself closer to the one than the other on each reading occasion. To say that reading affects one's life choices is not to assert that this is always a good influence. I want to look more closely at Danto's statement quoted above that Don Quixote's was "a perversion of the relationship between reader and romance because Quixote's own sense of his identity was so antecedently weak that he failed to retain it through the transformation, and his own sense of reality was so weak that he lost his grip on the difference between literature and life." This is another assertion about the key importance of boundaries. Whatever else is needed for the experience of reading to be liberatory, to be indeed educational, the reader must maintain a sense of the boundary between herself and the text.
In her novel *Babel Tower* A.S. Byatt reflects upon language and literature and their relation to life. In the following passage of *Babel Tower*, Frederika, a teacher of literature in an art college, is writing her lecture notes. She ponders the ideas of Oneness and separation, as they occur in E.M. Forster's novel *Howard's End*, with its theme of "Only connect" and D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*. She reads a passage from chapter 27 of *Women in Love*:

This marriage with her was his resurrection and his life....

In the new, superfine bliss, a peace superseding knowledge, there was no I and you, there was only the third, unrealised wonder, the wonder of existing not as oneself, but in a consummation of my being and her being in a new one, a new paradisal unit regained from the duality. Nor can I say "I love you" when I have ceased to be, and you have ceased to be: we are both caught up and transcended into a new oneness where everything is silent, because there is nothing to answer, all is perfect and at one. Speech travels between the separate parts. But in the perfect One there is perfect silence of bliss.

They were married by law on the next day, and she did as he bade her, she wrote to her mother and father.\

Frederika thinks hard about these passages. There are complicated connections between literature and life. She may have chosen to lecture on love and marriage in Forster and Lawrence because she is snarled in the death of marriage and the end of love: but the marriage was partly a product of the power of these books....

Both characters, both novelists, so passionately desire connection. They want to experience an undifferentiated All, a Oneness, body and mind, self and world, male

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6 In my copy of the novel this passage occurs on p. 361. (London: Heineman, 1954)
and female. Frederika has tried to want this. Exhortations to want it have permeated her reading. (1996. p. 312)

Frederika then turns to the account she is writing about her marriage as required for her divorce. Here, too, she finds herself pondering love and oneness. She realizes that what her husband had taught her was desire and that this destroyed something in her "a separateness that was a strength" (p. 314).

She thinks: If I don't want Oneness, what is it I want?....

She remembers a day, long ago, on the Goathland moors, when a word hit her as a description of a possible way of survival. Laminations. She had been young, and greedy, and acting Princess Elizabeth, the Virgin in Alexander's play, who had had the wit to stay separate, to declare, "I will not bleed," to hang on to her autonomy. And she, Frederika, had had a vision of being able to be all the things she was: language, sex, friendship, thought, just as long as these were kept scrupulously separate, *laminated*, like geological strata, not seeping and flowing into each other like organic cells boiling to join and divide and join in a seething Oneness. (p. 314-315)

So much in these passages resonates with my study. Frederika's declaration that novels by Forster and Lawrence may have set the emotional tone in which she decided to marry, and that she may be drawn to them now because she is ending that marriage expresses well how a person is influenced by a novel. Characters in a novel create an emotional world which either by affinity or by opposition to the emotional state of the reader clarifies her choices for her.

The appeal of oneness as expressed by Cathy in *Wuthering Heights* is remarkably like that of Birkin in *Women in Love*. Our readings of this ideal of love proved delusory for both me and
for Frederika. In this context, Frederika senses that the idea of *lamination* comes to her as nothing less than a matter of survival. Learning to be separate, as I have explained in chapter 5, was nothing less than survival for me.

I think the word *laminations* is also a good description of the style of this study. I think I am placing ideas side by side, like squares in a quilt. A good quilt has a unity of colours and shapes. I like my quilts to achieve this harmony by a reverberation of similarities, not by a narrow unity based on a limited number of patterns and shades.

This passage is also, clearly, a fascinating meditation, which resonates in many places in the novel, on philosophical aspects of the theme of oneness. These ideas of oneness and of laminations provide a useful image for thinking about the reader in the face of the text. It seems to me that oneness describes the idea of interpellation, of the influence of an ideology when there is insufficient interdiscourse, insufficient opposing or contrary influences. The ideology of femininity described in Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was, as she explains in that book, very pervasive in the 1950s and early 1960s. This was the now well known, but then much more hidden, ideology of women's secondary and subservient place in the family and in the world. It was so pervasive that it interpellated many of us. It was only when a few brave voices, Friedan's among them, began to produce contrary views that many of us could see how our subjectivities had been formed by the dominant discourse. This is not to say that the ideology of femininity as defined in patriarchy is not still strong; it is, but now there are opposing discourses in feminism. *Laminations* is a good image for interdiscourse, the situation of a number of opposing points of view both among feminists and between
feminists and others. This interdiscourse is liberatory for us. Alice is eloquent of the effect of these other influences on her sense of herself:

*Somehow I feel I've at last plugged into a global language network via my personal experiences in life, Women's Studies, Feminist Theory, Women in Literature, and realize that my voice is important, included, heard, acknowledged.*

*This realization is WONDERFUL.* (AN, 14, 13-16)

Dorothy Smith's book *Texts, Facts, and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling* provides a detailed and authoritative analysis of the role of texts in producing and perpetuating femininity in our society today. She is particularly interested in the interaction of texts and everyday lived reality. She explains this interconnection:

Ideologies and doctrines of femininity are explicit, publicly spoken and written. They enunciate interpretations of the image and its embodied correlate in women's appearances. The discourse is a matrix of textually mediated relations linking ideologies of women's sexual passivity and subordination to men with the images and icons of the texts, and entered into the organization of the everyday world and its relations through the artful work of women in producing on their bodies the local expressions of the text. (1990, p. 171)

Smith explores many types of texts in her book, and shows in detail how they impinge on lived reality. "These investigations of texts," she writes, "do not constitute them as a realm of meaning separated from the world they are written and read in. Rather, texts are taken up as constituents of ongoing social relations into which our own practices of reading enter us" (p. 11). Smith does not discuss literature, i.e. novels and poems, specifically in her book. My
study of novels as they influence women's lives fits into the parameters she establishes in the sense that these texts are part of the world of textuality which forms and informs our subjectivities as women. In one of the chapters of *Texts, Facts, and Femininity*, Smith analyses the effect of the reading of a paper at a public meeting, contrasting the deictic order of the text and that of the lived social reality of the meeting. What she says about the reading of the paper, I think, also applies to our reading of novels:

The deictic order of the text of the paper as it is read enters into and organizes the local setting of its reading. It interpolates its distinctive subject-object relations, its temporal order, and the positioning of the subject it sets up. This is not exceptional. Though texts only occasionally enter into public occasions, establishing their deictic order for all those present, the effect I have been analyzing works for the reader in the library, at home, on the subway, or as she watches television in the evening. The local continuities of her setting, and the deictic practices that constitute its effective reality for her, are reordered as she enters the text as subject. She is caught up into a deictic order that sets new coordinates and points of reference. Just what are the relations between the text on the one hand and the deictic order of the setting and of the local continuities of action and enterprise on the other is a matter for research not for theorizing. (p. 84)

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Smith uses the term deixis as used by John Lyons, and quotes him: "The notion of deixis (which is merely the Greek word for 'pointing' or 'indicating' -- it has become a technical term of grammatical theory) is introduced to handle the 'orientational' features of language which are relative to the time and place of utterance" (1963, p. 275). "'Now,' 'here', 'there', 'then' as well as the pronomials, 'we' 'I', 'they', 'you' and so forth are deictic terms" (Smith, 1990, p. 56).
I think that if I substitute the word novel for the more general term 'text' in Smith's final sentence, I can say that my research provides a few answers to her question. The narratives about our three novels written by Alice, Eleanor, and Celia and the commentaries I have made on these accounts go some way toward describing the "relations between the novel on the one hand ... and the local continuities of action and enterprise on the other."

Literary criticism whose chief object of comment is the relationship between the literary work and the life of the reader is criticized by some feminist literary critics. Sara Mills calls this approach 'Authentic Realism' in *Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading* (1989) and Toril Moi calls it 'Images of Women' criticism in *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985). Both Mills and Moi point out that some feminist critics have assumed that a literary text can be judged as unproblematically 'true' or 'real'. This approach veers sometimes toward a demand for a depiction of women's lives as they 'really are' -- as opposed to a male perspective for instance, or sometimes toward a demand for strong role models in literature which will help strengthen women's self-image. Sometimes these critics become prescriptive in tone, such as Cheri Register who is quoted by Moi as writing, "It is important to note here that although female readers need literary models to emulate, characters should not be idealized beyond plausibility. The demand for authenticity supersedes all other requirements." (p. 48). Clearly a view that a text can transmit reality unmediated, or a view of language as transparent is naive and cannot be taken seriously, despite its continuing popularity among women. Yet the implication in

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9 "The majority of women use this method when reading texts for pleasure," writes Mills (p. 54).
both Mills's and Moi's accounts that this approach is unsophisticated and somehow preliminary to other approaches they discuss (such as Marxist feminism or psychoanalytic feminism) is unwarranted.

This study has shown that when a literary text influences a life it does so in the full panoply of its textuality. The influence of a text does not depend on any one literary critical view and the more the reader is aware of its constructed character the more varied are her opportunities to learn for her life. As the reader faces the text she may at any given reading connect and re-form her life and her consciousness under the influence of any aspect of the text, including all the usual categories of plot, characterization, setting, theme, figurative language, myth, structure, intertextuality and so on. As Johan L Aitken remarks in her book *Masques of Morality: Females in Fiction*, both texts and readers have ideologies, and the more the reader is aware of her own and of the text's ideology, the better. She writes, "in writer, in text, in critic, in reader reside matching and conflicting ideologies, which this book explores as masques -- the narrative about our lives and about what we call 'life' that we spin together, tell each other and repeat in a multiplicity of versions" (1987, p. 12). The same, of course, applies to other aspects of the text and the reader. Her book is an eloquent demonstration of how fictional texts may relate to lives in all the many dimensions of both.

Novels are an important way in which the women who read them make and remake their identities and the lives which flow from this sense of self. We have seen that this influence can be salutary, as in the case of Alice, but that it can also reinforce patterns of thinking and behaviour which are far from liberating, as in the case of most of the readers of romance studied by Janice Radway. I will complete this study by suggesting some of the
implications of these facts for teaching and learning, but before I do a general comment is in order.

If, as I think this study shows, the novel can be both liberating and delusory in its influence, what advice can we give to promote the one and protect against the other? This is a big question and would need another dissertation to answer fully. I think, however, some important suggestions can be drawn from what we have learned so far. One way in which the novel can influence the reader against her best interests is if it is read as just one aspect of the larger world of discourse which, for instance, interpellates her as secondary and subservient in her society. If the reader finds in the novel only what is congruent with what oppresses her in other aspects of her society, her reading is not liberatory. We have noted the importance of supporting influences such as Alice's recognition that her initiation into Women's Studies helped her to read *The Diviners* in a new way which gave her a stronger sense of self in the face of debilitating aspects of her society. If the reader forms her identity in relation to the text as 'other,' as we have seen, it is important that both parts of the duality have equal weight.

Here the idea of boundary may be useful. Just as the idea of the fusion of two human beings (Cathy's statement "I am Heathcliff") was shown to be not only linguistically impossible, but ontologically undesirable, so the reader must maintain a clear awareness of the separation of her self and the text. There is an essential difference between influence and the type of identification which blurs this essential distinction. This means that the more the reader is aware of the novel as text, in all its strangeness and alterity, in its heteroglossia, its literary forms, its place in intellectual history, the better. The more sophisticated the reader is,
the less she will be swept away unknowing under the influence of the text. I am not here denying the intimacy, even the temporary fusion of the reading consciousness with "the thoughts of another" in the text as described by Georges Poulet (quoted in chapter 3). Rather, I am signalling the importance of knowledge, thought and reflection about the text, as text, once the reading is done. Far from advocating a transparent 'authentic realism', this view wants to accord the text all of its quality as text, just as it urges on the reader autonomy, separateness, and awareness as she engages with it. Again we arrive at the edges of a paradox. The sphere created by the text can be like the "transitional space" described in their infancy research by Daniel Stern and D.W. Winnicott, "the child's area of play, creativity, and fantasy. The transitional space is suffused with the mother's protection and one's own freedom to create and imagine and discover" which I discussed in chapter 5. The key word here is of course freedom. The protection of the mother creates freedom for the child. The consciousness of the boundary between the text and the reader will help assure that when she puts herself in the sphere of the text, the transitional space of the novel, the reader will not be subsumed but will be freed to discover -- perhaps her self -- in the presence of the fictional world. Like the floating island in Dorothy Wordsworth's poem, she will be uniquely and beautifully herself while embedded in the natural world.

It is a disservice to qualitative research, which depends so much for its value on the detail of its descriptions, to summarize what has been discovered in a few pithy principles. I do not wish to attempt this sabotage here. It may be useful, however, to point out some of what I see as harmonies of pattern and colour in the verbal quilt I have been stitching together in this study. If I think of my other organizing metaphor, the spiral journey, I am now at the
small end, where the coils of the spiral are tight. This restricted space allows only short descriptions.

One of these harmonies is the idea of transaction, patterns of interaction between reader and text. As a woman reads a novel, she negotiates meaning with the text. Both she and the text are equally important. This model of reading as we saw in chapter 2 insists that neither the reader nor the text can be privileged, but both must be as fully present as possible on any given reading occasion. Further, if this dialogue is to be fruitful, it is important to be aware at all times of the boundary between the self which reads and the powerful presences evoked by the text.

For women, we have argued, this consciousness of self in the face of what she reads is nurtured by several factors. Most important is her sense of belonging to a lineage of women. Alice and Celia spoke of the importance of their membership in circles of women. This lineage can be on the grand scale, such as when "the middle class woman began to write" which Virginia Woolf, Dale Spender and others have said is of crucial importance, and which led to the great women novelists of the nineteenth century. It can be on a smaller scale such as that evoked by groups of women who try to recover what it is to be a woman as defined by women, not by the patriarchy. Examples of this are the group in Italy who produced the book *Non credere* discussed by Teresa de Lauretis (see chapter 1) and the memory work documented by the German group who produced the book *Female Sexualization* (Haug, et.
Key to this process is the group itself, which may, as in the case of those who produced *Non credere*, include "a symbolic mother" who becomes a figure of female authorization for the group.

Another important factor in this sense of a lineage is the woman's text itself. This is probably impossible to describe in such a way as to survive philosophical analysis, but it is recognized by readers. A woman's subjectivity comes through in a text as we discussed in chapter 2. It is only a small hint, but the effect of *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* on Eleanor, as I discussed in chapter 4, may be attributed in part to the fact that Judith Hearne was created by a man. I am speaking here of the subtleties of the narrative voice and positionality of Brian Moore in relation to the character of Judith Hearne, not the more overt sexism which has been amply demonstrated by feminist critiques of the male canon. The importance of Emily Brontë and of Margaret Laurence *as women* to Celia and to Alice is clear in their narratives.

If we look at the vast field of curriculum, the idea of transaction implies a whole attitude to learning, analogous to the reading process, in which the learner and what is being learned negotiate meanings. If we divide curriculum as John P. Miller does in his article

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10 *Female Sexualization* (1987) edited by Frigga Haug is an account by the members of a women's collective in Germany of their socialization as women. They pioneered a technique called *memory work*. Briefly, the women undertook to write stories about their experience of growing up as girls, focusing on "the ways in which individuals construct their identity" (p. 40). They undertook a series of projects, such as "The Hair Project," "The Slavegirl Project," "The Legs Project," in which each woman wrote a story of her socialization as a woman. In "The Hair Project," for instance, the stories concerned how the women as girls were taught what to do and what not to do with their hair. These stories are detailed, recalling specific incidents and the emotions generated by them. These stories were then read and analysed by the group collectively. This was, they write, "a particularly productive stage of our work,...in which we analysed the way in which our consciousness becomes ideologized, through noting down all the interpretive models, feelings, thoughts, snippets of popular wisdom, that we and others might bring to this story (p. 59).
"Transformation as a Aim of Education" (1987) into three positions, transmission, transaction, and transformation, it is clear that the reading we describe in this study is not a form of transmission. At its worst transmission can be a form of socialization where the socialized is not aware of what is happening and adopts ideas and attitudes which are not in her best interest. Again it is important for the learner to be as aware as possible of her own position in the face of the text, and of the boundary between them. Some transmission will occur and some will be absolutely necessary in this type of learning. The learner will need to know as much factual knowledge as possible about the text, and will want to know how others have interpreted it. These can and should be transmitted.

As Miller describes it, his idea of transformation has some qualities in common with the reading we are concerned with in this study in that it facilitates intrapersonal, interpersonal and social integration. Miller's transformation position, however, is based on certain philosophical positions such as the view that all phenomena are interconnected and part of a unified whole, (p. 134) and that there is a need for social action to relieve human suffering (p. 138). The philosophical view and the social action advocated by Miller are admirable, but in my view it is essential that each reader negotiate her own meaning from the text and that the aim of the curriculum is not to transform her in any preplanned way. Even curricula which are thought and planned to be liberatory may in fact create the opposite effect, as Elizabeth Ellsworth has memorably documented in her study of her class in Media and Anti-Racist Pedagogies in "Why Doesn't this Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy" (1989). Patti Lather also addresses this issue in Getting Smart (1991) when she shows how we may understand why some women students
enrolled in Women's Studies courses may resist feminist ideas (Staying Dumb? Student Resistance to Liberatory Curriculum). Here is how one of Patti Lather's students wrote about the feedback she was getting in her interviews of students in Women's Studies:

["Resistance" became] a word for the fear, dislike, hesitance most people have about turning their entire lives upside down and watching everything they have ever learned disintegrate into lies. "Empowerment" may be liberating, but it is also a lot of hard work and new responsibility to sort through one's life and rebuild according to one's own values and choices (Kathy Kea, Feminist Scholarship class, October, 1985). (Lather, 1991, p. 142)

In my Women In Literature class at St. Lawrence College, the students asked for and got what we called "process time." This was time, in class and in the midst of discussions, taken to work through together some of the unsettling ideas they were getting from the novels we were reading. They shared many of the feelings expressed by Patti Lather's students, but in time, like Lather's students, they absorbed and grew into new ways of knowing and new ways of being. The essential point here is that this must be accomplished if and when the student is ready. Only she can achieve her transformation, her empowerment. If it is imposed, empowerment becomes its direct opposite, enslavement.

Another reverberation in the verbal quilt of my study forms itself around the notions of self-writing, life writing, autobiography and autobiographical criticism. If, as I have shown, women, like men but in ways different from their ways, can help to form their identities by writing about their lives in relation to the novels they read, then it is important to foster this activity in schools. My study shows that it is important for the writer to foreground her own
life experiences as she writes about the art of the novel. This practice, though amply and beautifully demonstrated in the collection, *The Intimate Critique* (1993), which has been cited in this study, is not yet fully accepted for many of the reasons we have discussed. In schools the idea of writing journals in which the students apply their reading to their own experience is commonly required. This study underlines the value of the writer placing her own experience in close juxtaposition with the subject matter, in this case the text of a novel. This is another way of recognizing the complexities of the relationships between reader and text and reinforcing the importance of keeping *both* the reader and the text visibly in play. Anne Louise Brookes recognizes the importance of this in her book *Feminist Pedagogy: An Autobiographical Approach*. In relation to fiction, she writes “Because I had learned to survive through reading fictional accounts, it was important to experience classroom situations in which I could work with multi-voiced texts, including the text of self” (1992, p. 84). In her book *Re-Educating the Imagination: Toward a Poetics, Politics, and Pedagogy of Literary Engagement* (1992) from which, as from Johan Aitken's *Masques of Fiction*, I have learned so much that is important to my study, Deanne Bogdan writes, “the re-educated imagination would explicitly connect texts to readers through accepting literary response as a form of real experience in which ordinary existence is not consigned to the twilight zone of the sub-literary” (p. 240).

Deanne Bogdan's book is also a beautifully worked out analysis of the need for embodiment in reading and learning. Nothing less will do, as this study also shows. This does not mean a generalized reference to gender, as Carmen Luke writes in her critique of a critical pedagogy which fails to recognize the full embodiment of the student. Luke writes:
The critical individual (teacher and student) is radical pedagogy’s centered and neutered object of study. By its failure to address female teachers and female students in terms other than the insistent reference to “gender,” which skirts altogether the politics of gender that structure the possibilities (of critique) for women teachers and female students, the (textual) discourse of critical pedagogy constructs and addresses an androgynous and colorless subject. (1992, p. 39)

Women have learned from novels for centuries. Dale Spender contends that they invented the form for that very purpose (1986, p. 5). Most of the time this is informal learning in solitude or in discussion with friends or members of book clubs. What I have said about the educational importance of this study applies equally to informal and to formal learning in institutional settings. I want, however, to end with a description of one of my classes at St. Lawrence College of Applied Arts and Technology. It is Women in Literature. We, teacher and students, sit in a circle, a form which allows each of us to face all the others. It is a non-hierarchical form and signals the kind of collaboration in which we are engaged.

Here is a look at how some of my students have expressed themselves when they have read novels as guides to life. The students are all women, ranging in age from early twenties to over sixty, with the majority in their thirties and forties. They wrote essays and a final short article for this class, and they kept journals of their thoughts and feelings as they read the novels on the reading list. Class discussion was far ranging and included much talk about the aesthetic and specifically literary qualities of fiction. But, in addition, students were encouraged to share with the class any stories, ideas, feelings, memories from their own lives which were suggested by their readings, and to write about these in their journals. As we read
and discussed each of the novels, we would spend some time specifically relating their lives to the text. I asked them to select a short passage, two or three pages at the most, which was particularly meaningful to them in this regard, and to share with the class why this was so. This passage of text could be about a character as he or she appeared at that point in the novel, or a situation, a setting, a theme, some particularly moving language or a piece of wisdom, whatever spoke to them about their own lives. I encouraged them also to write about these insights and what they shared orally in class quite often turned up in their journals and essays.

I told these students about my research, and they gave me permission to use their written work in this dissertation. I made copies of all the writing done for this class. In re-reading the essays and journals I find, not surprisingly, that most of the writing is like that found in traditional literature classes. These students were as alive to the aesthetic as those in other literature classes, but it is their other comments, those which linked their lives to what they were reading that I will be concerned with here. Perhaps the most obvious kind of link between the fiction and the life is the recall of a memory suggested by the fiction. We got many stories of this kind, both orally and in the written journals. Here is an example of a recollection called forth by Christie Logan's stories of Morag's ancestors in The Diviners:

I had a delightful grandfather who used to "fib" to me about my past. In his den there was an oil painting of a proud old Indian warrior. When I asked Papa who this great man was he told me that it was a painting of my great-great grandfather, "Chief Sitting Bull." Being about seven years old at the time, there was no doubt in
my mind that [this was the truth]. I was absolutely delighted. I went to school the following day and announced to all my classmates that Chief Sitting Bull was an ancestor of mine. The only problem being I haven't a drop of native American blood in me. In later years when I realized Papa was just having some fun with me I felt no anger. I was just happy for the wonderful story he had told me. He had made me feel very special.

Christie Logan's fabulations in *The Diviners* are more important for Morag and for the novel than the story of Sitting Bull was for this student, and she is well aware of the differences, yet the setting of her story beside Christie's stories gives a new piquancy to her memory, a recognition that her grandfather's humour, after all, did give her a proud moment in her childhood.

Here is another such recollection inspired by a reading of Alice Walker's "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens," in which Walker both celebrates and laments the lives of artistic African American women in the post-Reconstruction South as exquisite butterflies trapped in an evil honey, toiling away their lives in an era, a century, that did not acknowledge them, except as "the mule of the world." They dreamed dreams that no one knew -- not even themselves, in any coherent fashion -- and saw visions no one could understand. (p. 232.) My student wrote this in her journal:

After reading "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens," I looked up to notice a photograph of my maternal grandparents, and realized with shame that what I knew of my grandmother could be fitted into one sentence: "Elaine ______ had ten children." This lack of knowledge sent me on a search of my own. Driven
by Alice Walker's words, I called relatives and visited with my 84-year-old aunt
seeking answers to questions that would provide me with a profile of my maternal
grandmother. The information (based on a conversation with my aunt) is so
scant that it fits a little box of print as follows:

Elaine (second name not known) was born in the village of Portsmouth
in 1877 of Irish Catholic immigrants. One of ten (or maybe 12) children, she
received little education, having to help her mother with housework. That's what
she did, housework, first in her parents' home, then outside the home, then was sent
to do housework for a family in "the States." Where in the States? This is where she
met Henry, who worked on a streetcar. They both returned to Portsmouth
and Elaine worked for a time at the knitting mill and Henry found a job at the
Penitentiary. They married, had ten children, seven boys and three girls. Elaine
Fergus died in hospital in 1941.

Tell me about Elaine, Aunt Martha, what did she look like? What did her voice sound
like?

She wasn't very big and she was a soft spoken woman.

Did she have an accent?

No.

Did she have hobbies, interests...did she knit, sew, crochet?

No. She worked all the time.

Did she have a sense of humour? Do you remember her laughter?

Well, she did have a sense of humour, but she had to get so many meals, though
she did go up to the school to play euchre the odd time and helped with the tea and coffee.

Did she get out of the house very often?

No. Except for the odd euchre game, but she sometimes had to make trips up to the Women's Prison to be a midwife. No, I just remember her working, her whole life, until she got sick with diabetes, and of course there wasn't any medicine for diabetes. She spent a lot of time on the chesterfield 'cause she couldn't go up the stairs and the doctor had to come and put a needle into her abdomen because the fluids built up and her stomach got distended and the needle went in to take the fluid out. Her feet became infected, wouldn't heal. She had to be taken to hospital. She died in hospital.

More likely she died of the disease oppression! [wrote my student] I wonder if anyone ever asked my grandmother what she would have fancied if she'd not had to work so hard? So many women died without ever having been asked, without ever knowing or realizing aspirations beyond day-to-day tasks.

Here, the student is stung into action by her reading of Alice Walker. She digs into her own past and recovers what she can of the life of her own grandmother. What she finds is so similar, despite the differences in kind and scale caused by racial oppression, that she regains not only the bare bones of her grandmother's life, but a fresh, keen sense of the narrowness and losses of that life. She has dug into the soil of her own past, and understands that past in part at least because of Alice Walker's words about the black women of the American South.
Sometimes a student finds direct moral teaching in a novel. After reading Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* in which a black child, Pecola, is oppressed by everyone in the book, partly because she is seen as ugly, one woman wrote:

Toni Morrison made me want to stop and think. Have I ever been guilty of using a Pecola Breedlove to rise above my own inadequacies? The sad answer is "yes."

They were not necessarily black, poor and ugly, but maybe a little heavier, a little dumber, a little less. I am ashamed of myself for having done this. And yet I feel that at one time or another we have all been guilty of this. Through maturity and wisdom when I catch myself using or judging someone else I try to remember a saying out of the Bible, "Let ye who is without sin cast the first stone."

More often the student writes of a sharpened awareness inspired by the reading of fiction. This line in Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*, "The things they said stripped away freedom to be what you wanted, reduced you to what it was they saw," inspired these thoughts:

Those lines speak to my whole life not only in the sexual way Alice Munro means, but also in my relationships with my family and friends. It is the sentiment that I am now trying to overcome in my present struggle to put my past to rest and discover who and what I am, independent of others in my life. I've realized that I've led my life for others and been dishonest even with myself about myself because I was afraid to look too closely at who I really am.

Another woman wrote:
It may sound foolish or eccentric to base decisions on books, or movies, or discussions with others, but I'm finding the subjects and stories covered in this course to be so relevant and openly available that not to use this information would be foolish.

In our circle of women in the classroom, as I have argued, in the good company of Martha Nussbaum, Arthur Danto, Lorraine Code, Johan Aitken, and Deanne Bogdan, we are doing moral philosophy, sharpening our moral perceptions to the extent that our attention is "finely tuned" to the novels we are reading. Our purpose is to clarify, to bring to consciousness, the subtle distinctions which can only be made by specific characters in specific situations as presented by the novelist's rich gifts of language. Such is the power of art that a fine novel can offer hope and even succour at levels which can be too deep for words.

"Poetry makes nothing happen,"

wrote W.H. Auden, memorably stating ideas current in his time. Now we are re-exploring the orthodoxies of previous centuries, rediscovering what and how and in what circumstances poetry does make things happen. In our class as we work together, week after week, placing details of our lives beside those of the fictions we are reading, we feel that our community extends not only beyond our circle to the authors of the books we are reading, but to our spiritual ancestors, the women who have for centuries turned to fiction to make meaning for their lives. Like them we perform, in the words of Anais Nin, a "personified ancient ritual, where every spiritual thought is made visible, enacted, represented" (1985, p.1694).

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APPENDIX

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Monday, January 4th, 1993

I watched the CBC production of *The Diviners* last night. My cousin, A., came to visit this morning and I asked her if she'd watched the programme. She said she did, though she found it all rather confusing with the jumping backwards and forwards, never having read the book. I realized that had I not been so familiar with the novel, I too might have had problems following the storyline. Actually, I thought it was quite well presented and enjoyed the actors, particularly Tom Jackson as Jules.

However, I'm prejudiced, and feel that the only way to experience Margaret Laurence totally, fully, is by reading her novels.

In preparation for the narrative, I'm housecleaning my desk. After all, there's a writing project happening here. I really have an advantage in that I don't have to go out to work... let me rephrase that... I chose to stay at home. I have a typewriter, lots of paper and spare ribbons, and the desire to get to it.

After having said that, I feel quite sleepy. Nights are often restless, disturbed, still, with thoughts of L [Alice's son, who died.] So many "if only's". Usually, I have to get up and go downstairs and make some Ovaltine and read for awhile. Last night I read Starhawk, the TV Guide of all things, and an article in Organic Gardening.

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1 I indicate in [ ] the pagination of the original document of Alice's journal which I used when writing my dissertation. Alice's journal was single spaced in the original.
When I was younger, I slept the sleep of innocent children. I couldn't imagine people not being able to sleep. My insomnia started when I was about 45, I guess, and continues. It's often difficult to get up bright and cheery and clear-headed, and I often have to make up a couple of hours here and there, usually in the afternoon.

Tuesday, January 5th

Afternoon. My desk is in one corner of the wide hall upstairs. If I leave the bedroom doors open, I can see the channel through the bare branches of the shore willows, white ash, dark brown-green of mangy spruce. There are windows everywhere I look, so though I'm in a corner, I don't feel claustrophobic. Something that I realized recently is this wonderful revelation. For some reason, my desk was placed where it is in the hall, as I said. Why did I put it here? When I was a little girl, and this house was my Grandparents' cottage, there was a child-sized white iron bed, with a scrolled headpiece, right here, in the hall! It was my bed as a child. I found it in a garbage dump site along the shore when we moved here, all rusted, too rusted and broken to repair. Here I am, with the typewriter sitting where my head would have been in bed. Significant or what?

[page 2] The heat from the woodstove has finally reached my feet. How will I begin the narrative? I must go to the library and get those reference books I used for my presentation in class.

The narrative will be personal. I'm very close to beginning. Feel a tad nervous and excited.

January 7th

Well, it's begun. I started this morning. Kind of rough stuff. The words selfish and indulgent poke through my preoccupation with the narrative. Well, my world is pretty special. Here I am
on an island, in the midst of a kind of isolation other writers would covet. I can look out windows, go for long walks with the dog, play along the shoreline, ponder, reflect, contemplate.

"Hi. Haven't seen you for awhile. What are you doing these days?"

"Well, I play along the shore, stare out of windows, contemplate, walk a lot."

"Okay, but what do you do?" People just don't understand.

I keep little pieces of paper inside aprons, pockets. Once a project begins, my mind throws out thoughts at random, like when I'm peeling garlic, doing the dishes, walking. If I don't get them down, they're gone, POOF.

Too bad I didn't learn some kind of self discipline about writing at an early age. My writing is full of bad habits, though sometimes it's rather fun to let the mind play freely with a whole bunch of thoughts, fragments, then either let them settle and take form, or get them down on paper in a form that might be kind of raw. It's all so exciting.

Time passes very quickly for me when I'm at the typewriter. What? You're home? It's time to get dinner? I didn't realize it was so late.

There is form to my day after J.[her husband] leaves for work. I can't really function until I have a cup of tea. May Sarton has the right idea about mornings and waking up in a civilized fashion. She says she often makes tea and doesn't do anything for about an hour, except stroke the cat or the dog... she allows them up on her bed... and she just relaxes and thinks for awhile before getting up and starting the day. Sounds good to me. I usually sit in the big chair in the living room after I get the fire going, and listen to CBC. Sometimes I just sip tea while looking out various windows, getting a feel of the weather, the landscape.
Of course I look at the river. How can people begin each day without watching the river?

It's like praying.

I like the domestic scene. It allows me space to think. I tidy up the dishes, look at the birds at the feeder, listen to the radio, Red River cereal bubbles on the burner. I plan dinner, give Jackson his treats and he's ready to go out on the back porch... he's like me... kind of slow in the morning. It wasn't always this way. This is the new me. For years and years, it was up at dawn, breakfast, lunches, the mother/wife/working routine. Up and out and off to work. Hurry Hurry, stress, make-up, clothes, mind in gear, where's this?, shirts, where's my socks?, did you iron this? the usual...

Now I feel all that's behind me, thank goodness. I like this pace better. It suits me. I don't like rushing any more. I used to get knots in my gut, tightness in my chest, terrible headaches. I think it was just all the worry and stress. I was so busy at work. Lots of deadlines, pressures. As soon as I got into the car after work, feeling like a top still spinning wobbly... is that a word? J. would say, "What's for dinner?" Then we had to take two ferries... Could I do that all over again? I don't know.

Where was I? Oh yes, I'm still in the kitchen. Well, enough of this. Before I write, I make beds, do exercises, Tai Chi, usually the phone rings.

Sometimes I can be at my desk and writing by 8:30, sometimes not until 10:00. I usually spend the whole morning writing, with a couple of breaks, telephone calls, whatever. I often continue writing after lunch, but only for about an hour, then I have to take a break and go for a walk, up to get the mail.
When dinner is under control, I come up again and write until J. gets home. If I'm not too
tired, I write for awhile at night, though usually I'm all written out by then.

This is the time of year for me to write. I'm a SEASONAL writer. Once Spring happens,
forget writing, it just doesn't happen. I'm a compulsive gardener. Seed catalogues send me
into a state of nervous excitement. I love Spring, Summer and Fall. And Winter, though it's
a hard time in that I suffer this awful introspection. Always have. Maybe I have Seasonal
Affective Disorder or something like it. Although, it seems to be a motivating factor for
writing. January through March is when I do my best stuff. Winter means writing. Winter
looks like writing, the landscape... like white paper.

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January 12th

Why didn't I do a journal entry before this? Oh yes, I had to prepare food for a Full Moon
Feast. I baked two kinds of bread, a multi-grained health food kind of bread, and then a
wonderful French bread that's so good with a feta/pesto cheese paté. I also made a rice
casserole.

So... that's why I didn't journal.

Usually I don't write on weekends. Too many interruptions. Our son and daughter-in-law
came over to be with us on Sunday. I should say that our son, Ja. and his wife, S., were
with us. It was the anniversary of L.'s [her son's] death. We wanted to be together.

When they were ready to leave, J. left with them, as the channel was starting to "slush up" as
they say over here, and the fellows who run the ferry said they didn't think the ferry would
be able to make very many more trips before freeze-up. J. thought he'd better get off
Simcoe and stay with Ja. and S. on Wolfe so he could get to school.
So... I've been on my own for a couple of days. The writer's dream come true. And, I've been working. A lot. It was my plan to spend from January 1st through to the 15th writing like a crazy fool, putting everything and anything down on paper in random fashion. This, of course, creates total confusion, a wild array of notes on various scraps of pieces of paper, crazily typed, crazily written, printed, scrawled.

It also involves going for walks and doing a lot of gazing out windows, lost in thought.

Going through the process takes time.

It occurred to me that there are probably some people who think that all this processing is unnecessary. These people are no doubt able to just sit down and write. I envy them that ability. My writing process is agonizingly low. I have to wait for the flow of words.

I exist in a state of pre-occupation and cannot read anything other than the subject at hand, cannot let other things invade the space of the project.

I wrote until I was too tired to write anything else yesterday. Then had to sleep. Nothing I wrote seemed right. Such a struggle. I'm looking for a sentence, a launching point, then everything will flow from there. This has not happened yet.

However, it's not the 15th. Also, there are a few other tasks at hand. I must answer letters, do accounts. Do the washing, ironing. Tidy the house.

Wednesday, January 13th

This is indeed a writing retreat. There's a full-blown blizzard happening. I'm stranded for a few days, the ferry having made its last trip yesterday. There's enough food to last till Spring, but only one more meal of dog food. I wonder what I should give him? S. will be able to give me a dog-food recipe high in protein. I'll call her.
Sometimes I wonder about this business of heating with wood. It's so labour intensive. An oil-fired furnace sounds like less trouble.

I've been writing so much. This is the part of the writing that is kind of hard, as I have so much to say, yet it's all still so fragmented. Like a puzzle. I'll never be able to do this. I'll have to call Nathalie and tell her that it's just not working out. I can't do it. She won't like it. None of it will sound right. Why am I putting myself through this exercise? My fingers hurt.

Jackson is getting spooked by the wind. He's barking and growling every time the wisteria vine is blown against the window. Some gusts shake the house. The wind is swooshing through the kitchen door.

I got a chill around noon. Even after hot soup I was still shaking with the cold, so I filled the hot water bottle and clutched it to my chest and sat huddled in the big chair in the living room, sipping tea and contemplating. Other people go to the office or to their place of work each day, apply their training skills for six or eight hours, go home, and get paid every two weeks for their labours. I wonder what they think of someone like me who spends a good portion of the day staring into space? Would they believe me if I told them I too was working?

Writing makes me tired. It's emotionally draining. Does anyone out there agree with this statement?

Just counted the pages. I've changed my approach this morning, as I realized that I wasn't putting enough of myself into this narrative. I rather think that I've just begun to get a feel of how the narrative should progress, which shouldn't be too surprising after writing twenty-four pages! Is this a symptom of a novice writer?
I love Margaret even more as I do this narrative. The book increases in value every day.

Parallels everywhere. Throughout. You know, I want to do this project so much. There's so much to say. My ability as a writer. No. My lack of ability as a writer. My impatience with form. The discipline involved in this creation is frustrating.

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Do I want to be anywhere else doing anything other than this? No.

So do it. But first, go down and put some wood on the fire. The fingers just don't type well when they're so cold.

Friday, January 15th

Found an article that helped. J.A. Davison, Whig Standard.

"When I seem to have struck a dead end at some stage in a piece of writing, I find it helpful to set it aside for a day or two, or even a week or several weeks. The subconscious part of my mind does not sleep while I sleep. I often can deal with a writing problem after it has simmered there for awhile. At times, at the end of my work for the day, I read aloud to myself the draft on which I am bogged down, along with the related notes. Bertrand Russell said: 'The unconscious can be led to do a lot of useful work. I have found, for example, that if I have to write upon some rather difficult topic, the best plan is to think about it with very great intensity -- the greatest intensity of which I am capable -- for a few hours or days, and at the end of that time give orders, so to speak, that the work is to proceed underground. After some months I return consciously to the topic and find that the work has been done.'...

In other words, it is often better to put off until tomorrow what you are likely to foul up today. Or, as one of my writer friends put it, articles, like whiskey, should be let mature.
Slowly, and with many fumbles, I learned how incubation works. After I have selected a theme and collected materials and developed a tentative outline, I quickly write a first draft which in most cases is merely a bundle of notes. Then I put the whole thing into a pot and let it simmer for a day or two or three, or a week or two, or even a month or more. Your subconscious can work for you while you sleep. If you put good dough, made with good ingredients in the oven before you go to sleep, you may find that you have a few good biscuits the next morning or the next weekend." End of article.

That's how I like to write. My plan is going according to schedule. I hope to have the rough draft finished by the end of January, perhaps sooner, and then I'll let it sit for a time before revising and editing. I'm feeling calmer about the whole project. Going back to the book and reading Margaret's words again fill me with good vibes and validate why I chose this woman's words. Her writing amazes and moves me.

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Monday, January 18th

Last week's writing was hard work. My intention was to tidy my notes on Friday, and take a break for the weekend. However, I think because I often take THE BOOK into the bedroom at night (it's beside me on the desk as I write the narrative, then back to where it belongs, beside the bed) and re-read passages, often making notes before going to sleep, I found myself needing to linger in the space of The Diviners for the weekend.

I'm living my life over again. This must be difficult for anyone to believe. I remember my bed, and how I used to turn to the wall and think the same thoughts as Morag. Lying there in the dark, wondering about life on earth, space, the planets. How IT could possibly have evolved and what it was like before, when there was just darkness. Did I really belong in
this house? Were my parents my real parents? The similarities between my life and thoughts and experiences, and Morag's is uncanny, or perhaps merely normal, human, everyone's experience.

A very very personal parallel is that of the names of my children, Ja. and I. and the children of McRaith in Scotland, also two sons named Ja. and I.

J. is home today with a flu-like virus and a bad back, probably from doing too much wood on the weekend. Ja. and S. came over on Saturday. We spent the afternoon outside. Ja. brought a chainsaw large enough to handle the huge diameter of the two oaks felled last Fall by I. Ja. cut several thin slabs or palettes of oak as symbolic totems, mementos. We sprinkled I.'s ashes over these oaks. They're very special trees. My cousin, John, is a woodcarver. He asked me to save a square of oak for him.

I crossed the ice for the first time this year, as I needed to get to the village to mail letters, accounts, and pick up a few groceries. Actually, it was such a lovely day, and the ice seemed fairly thick. I'll feel more confident after a few more nights of sub-zero weather.

Wednesday, January 20th

What was to have been a day-long session of writing has turned sour. Writing is so solitary. January. Ho hum. I look forward to the upcoming get-together with the Women's Studies group at the Grad Club. The thought of meeting with women who have similar feminist attitudes and stances is exciting.

J. has been home for three days. I find it hard to concentrate on my writing. Also, I rather think I might be getting the same virus, as my body feels terribly stiff, full of aches and pains.

A reality of my acceptance of Feminism, my late-blooming sense of self, is that I've become a not-so-silent partner! Marriage is difficult. [page 8] It's more than difficult. Expecting two
people to live together for thirty-three years, each growing, changing, rarely simultaneously. It's a challenge. I think a lot about the model of marriage. While I find a lot wrong with the model, I cannot come up with a better arrangement for parenting. Parenting is the most difficult task of humans, I think. The home and family is not given enough respect and support by society. It's a very complex subject, and I can't go into the intricacies here, but I feel so very strongly about the family and home and... well, another time.

I suppose most relationships are filled with compromise. Sometimes there are periods of plain old maintenance. There's also comfort and friendship if we're lucky. My world, at an age and time I assumed (never assume) would be financially, emotionally and spiritually comfortable, is fraught with concerns, questions, doubts.

Thursday, January 21st

This is the putting-it-together stage. After writing about four pages this morning, I got into a major dither about what should come first. No doubt this will happen numerous times, and it's something one has to get used to when writing. There are times when I wish I had my state-of-the-art personal computer from Clinical Trials. This typewriter of mine at home is very good, but I do so much revising and retyping. However, there's something about the clarity of black and white in front of me. When I used the computer/word processor, there was always this green glowing screen, which I found tiring, glaring, hostile. The print on paper is more to my liking, or perhaps I'm more used to it now, though I can look at it for longer periods of time without having to scrunch my eyes to find my place on the screen.

A huge chuck of what I wanted to say came to me in the kitchen during lunch. I'd worked all morning, from 8:20 until noon, with a couple of breaks. (God this is boring, Nathalie, you can't possibly want to read this stuff about the process.)
Friday, January 22nd

The weather plays such a big role in our daily lives on this island, because the highway out of here during the winter is the channel. Define channel: a watercourse between Wolfe Island and Simcoe Island, a channel approximately one-half to three-quarters of a mile in width, depending where you cross. J. had to cross after dark, because he had to stay later for a staff meeting. Rain began in the afternoon, making the ice surface très slippery. He still hadn't arrived by 7:30 and I was somewhat concerned, though it was definitely not a panic situation. When I heard Jackson bark, I knew J. was coming across. Sigh of relief. Home safely.

Nathalie. I need to check in with you! Where are YOU in this project? How about Eleanor?

Winter's landscape. I covered this earlier, didn't I?

We don't have many visitors at this time of year. A time of hibernation.

I often think of children's stories on my walks.

Tuesday, January 26th

Here is a perfect example of what happens in my life during the winter months. I made preparations to attend the Women's Studies Dinner, which included some baking. Also, I made arrangements to stay at Ja. and S.'s place on Wolfe Island Saturday night, as I didn't want to cross the ice at night. Because of poor weather conditions, mostly rain, the ice has deteriorated significantly.

I left J. to care for the house, and walked up the road, dragging my goodies for the party on a sleigh. The crossing was not a good one. Donald and Bill had put some sticks into
widening cracks and thin spots. I danced over that ice at top speed, getting very wet feet. The bottom of my skirt was soaked by the time I arrived on the Wolfe Island shoreline.

Never mind, this is all part of island life.

I thoroughly enjoyed the evening, and managed to spend some time with Nathalie and bring her up-to-date on this project. I do feel enthusiastic about it, despite the butterflies.

I didn't get back home until Monday morning, as the ice was too dangerous to cross. Rain and wind. Too much warm air for this time of year. Donald said he thought he might have to flash up the ferry again. What to do? Back to my son's place for the night. Actually, it was lovely. We made tea and talked for hours. Ja., so straight, dependable, reliable, hard-working. Maybe a bit too Conservative. Imagine me saying that! I try to get my points across to him about Feminism. He tends to see only the radical "crazies" involved in the Movement, and gets defensive. It's frustrating. S., influenced by her time and place, naturally assumes that all women should be equal, well educated, empowered, and doesn't have a SENSE of the struggle, the pioneering that has gone on before. It wasn't part of her experience. Kind of a backlash reaction from S., who is so very capable, well educated, independently-minded.

Wednesday, January 27th

- Such a struggle with sequence today. The novel is indeed an epic. So many things to cover. What to include? I don't have to cover everything in the book... stick to how it affected my life.

Lethargy strikes again. January blues. Margaret is so much in my thoughts. Where would I be and what would I have done if not for the words in this book? It must have been fate.
Just a quirk... to take the course. Still can't read anything else. To do so would disturb the effect, the mood, the power. I need to have Margaret with me, still.

How do other people create? Nathalie, how do you write? Are you able to sit down and have it flow instantly? Does teaching deplete your energies too much to allow you to do anything else? I don't know. If I had to go out and work every day, I don't think I could write. I know I couldn't write. I should be working. I am working. I should be working and earning a salary. I am working towards a certificate, maybe two certificates. Guilt.

Canadians should be rewarded for making it through January and February. The days are getting longer. There's more light.

What will all this prove? I listen to all the horror stories reported on CBC. I read the papers. Is everything falling apart? How to keep a healthy perspective? How to make/facilitate change?

Back to the narrative.

Monday, February 1st

What to do when you're stuck? Go away for the weekend! Problems are solved. I feel refreshed. Instead of giving a journal account about the weekend, I've decided to incorporate it into the narrative. Write a little, live a little. I feel so much better about the sequence now, just couldn't get from the middle to the end on Friday.

I was able to make comparisons with the then and now generational values. Perhaps it was like Mrs. Gerson, Ella's mother, listening to her daughters and Morag in the house behind the bakery in Winnipeg. Going away for the weekend provided the perfect example of what I wanted to say in the narrative.

Here's another... how we benefit from women writing of their experiences.
Remember Catharine Parr Trair? Well, I have a terrible cold, sinus and chest congestion.

I've run out of eucalyptus oil that I use in the vaporizer. No problem, just think of what CPT would have done. Right. Put on the parka and the big boots and go out to the nearest pine tree and scrape pine gum off the trunk and put that gunk in the vaporizer. When on an island, act like CPT. I wonder where I put my Susannah Moodie Award?

Tuesday, February 2nd

Yes. A sense of change today. Who knows how to explain these happenings. Remember when I told you that I'd been unable to read anything else but *The Diviners* since my decision to write the narrative? There was this kind of possession factor, or perhaps more a desire to stay inside the space and place. I really needed to dwell within the spirituality of Margaret Laurence, and didn't want to do anything else. I actually lived there for all these months.

Last night, I opened Gloria Steinem's Revolution from Within and read until the wee hours of the morning, couldn't sleep, couldn't settle, and when I did, my dreams were disturbing thoughts of failure as a parent. I thought I'd processed all that. Now I have an antidote: "I'm not God, and I'm not responsible for everything."

Yesterday, though I worked for only part of the morning, I felt that I'd completed the narrative in very rough form. I rather think I have enough words and thoughts to fill the pages required. A great release, because I've been writing diligently, nearly every day since the beginning of January, and this is more writing than I've done for a whole year, which is an indication of healing in itself.
You know, Nathalie, I'm constantly amazed how people connect and make differences in each other's lives. It's a mystery and a wonder, perhaps a miracle the way we touch each other, and it's all there in *The Diviners*, and in Margaret's memoirs. Gifts that we pass along.

Learning your dance, my dance, Eleanor's dance. What would have happened to me if I hadn't decided to take your course, if I hadn't been asked to read *The Diviners* at this particular time and place in my life? The whole experience is a validation, a testament to touching people as we pass, and it's all so simple when you get right down to it, as simple as a hug, or passing along a recipe, making a garden, or asking someone to read a book. What more can I say?

Thursday, February 4th

How can we go on with our normal every-day jobs knowing about the children of Davis Inlet? I guess we can, because we've gone on knowing about children in other places, Grassy Narrows, Big Cove, the training schools, Mission schools... it's everywhere isn't it?

At last, at last, the Church, the Almighty Church will issue an apology, beginning at the front steps of St. George's Cathedral. When I was in Thunder Bay a couple of years ago, I attended the trial of a priest who had abused choir boys for years, stalking and manipulating them, just like Gallienne. Several of his victims were in the court room. What this priest did to every boy in that room and to others who chose not to be present, was read aloud. I was sickened. The boys cried openly. The priest sat, passively, devoid of emotion. Showed no remorse. I wrote a poem about priests like him.

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The words came as I was sitting in a car outside a shopping mall in Thunder Bay.
Went for a mammogram at the Breast Screening Clinic yesterday. Women over fifty are encouraged to have mammograms every two years. The Government has spent about nine million dollars setting up these Clinics across Ontario. Unfortunately, not many women are going in for testing. After having worked at the Ontario Cancer Foundation and NCIC for so many years, and having done extensive reading on the subject, I too was reluctant to go. I'd had a mammogram about three years ago. It hurt, not just a little, a lot, and I didn't know whether I felt like having my breasts compressed in a machine like that again. Also, given the information and statistics, I really didn't want to find out whether I had a lump in my breast. If I did, it would require further testing, and what if the diagnosis was that of a malignancy? I told the nurse at the Clinic that I didn't feel I could accept any of the treatment modalities offered women with breast cancer. I could go on and on about this subject, but suffice to say, I had the mammogram, and then forgot about the whole thing.
Back to the narrative. It's going quite well. I sure hope this is what you're looking for, Nathalie, kind of experiential stuff.

Little thoughts of OTHER things are starting to creep into this little space of mine, like seed catalogues, paint for the kitchen, sitting on the porch. It's only the first week of February. The explanation must be that I've reached a point in the narrative where I'm feeling comfortable enough to allow other thoughts to filter through. I've protected this place, as you know, for months. Also, I'm feeling more comfortable with and about the narrative. I'm not finished, but I'm over the hump.

Sunday, February 7th

Did I say I thought I was nearly finished? Scrap that thought. The end is often the most difficult. It's been too cold to go outside further than to the woodpile and back. I'm sitting at the typewriter wearing a mohair poncho, big boots. My fingers are cold. Celtic gloom. J. tells me that I'm negative about everything. It could very well be that I'm too hard to live with in the winter.

I'm writing about the river now, and it's the most important part. It's the key. This will take some doing because I do so want to get it right.

Radio... CBC... have to go and listen for a bit.

Monday, February 8th

Is that sunshine I see? Yes! What a huge difference a bright blue sky makes. Our house just isn't capable of keeping us warm when it's -30C with a wind. I spent yesterday afternoon making out my seed lists. This always cheers.
Usually I don't work on the narrative on the weekends, because I find J.'s presence too distracting. However, thoughts came, and I wanted to work on the ending, which proved so emotional that I wrote with tears streaming down my face. That's when writing comes out the best, when you really write from the heart and the gut.

I'm off to spend this afternoon and evening with my grandson, D. He wants me to see his room which he calls his Jungle. It's filled with all the house plants that were struggling because of lack of light in other rooms in the house. It seems his room has the most light. I bought him a brilliantly coloured papier maché parrot, who should feel quite at home in that setting.

Thursday, February 11th

Haven't written anything on the narrative since Monday, for shame. Yesterday, a lovely, warmish day, C. L. called quite early and asked me to walk up to her cottage at the extreme end of Simcoe, the Lighthouse end, where C. has her cottage. C. wanted to gather some summer things, as she and her daughter, A. were getting ready to head for Cuba for a couple of weeks. C. was anxious to check things out at her cottage and get bathing suits, sunscreen, etc.

Long walk. Am I up to this hard trek? I said I'd meet her when she came off the ice between Wolfe and Simcoe and decide then. C.'s in very good condition, having been working out at the Nautilus Gym for the past few months. I had a hard time keeping up with her. The road was ploughed for most of the way, though we had to break trail for the last mile. We saw two owls, the first, an immature snowy, the second, a great horned, was sitting, almost waiting for us in the tree beside C.'s cottage. Fortunately she had her camera, and was able to get some really good shots before the birds flew off.
The ice sculpturing along the shoreline at the lighthouse was magnificent. There was a definite greenish black tinge to the open water further out, and along the shore, where the winds had piled the ice into ridges of shelves, bumps, rifts, drifts, far more dramatic than our somewhat protected shoreline at the foot of the island. We witnessed a frozen vortex, in that great waves came together in a straight line off one section of the beach, whipped by extremely high winds and -30C temperatures. The waves froze, as formed, instant meringues, curls, shards, opaque, translucent, aquamarine. Real aqua here in Ontario in winter! How beautiful.

We made a fire, had some lunch, coffee and talked about everything until about four, when we were finally rested enough to set out for the return walk home. C. took more photos of Queen Anne's lace, perfection, frozen in time. I had to hold the dogs, Jackson and Tessa, so they wouldn't make footprints in the landscape.

This doesn't appear to have anything to do with the narrative, but it does, really, because we discussed the narrative, and I told C. that I'd written about the time I came across C. and her daughters having a love-in in my kitchen and how I envied that scene. C. has a son who reminds in some ways of I. and of course I'm drawn to the mother-son parenting role just as strongly as the mother-daughter role. I want to know and understand what happens sometimes with sons... where they wander off to their own difficult places... Anyway, we discussed the narrative and I noticed that a lot of what C. had to say, and what I'd been reading lately, ties in with the narrative. I must be expressing views held by other women. I must be on track. In fact, I think I'll be able to get back to the narrative, give it a little manicure here and there, and it will be fine, she says with great authority.
Thursday, February 11th

The call that women don't want to receive. Hello Alice, this is Dr. H. How are you today?
Good. Well, I've just received the report of your mammogram, and it seems that you have a soft tissue mass just behind the right nipple. You'll have to have a "cone in" view done as soon as possible. Now don't worry, it's probably nothing, but..."

"Bloody Damn" was my reply. "I didn't want to go for that mammogram!" I gave my doctor my "spiel" about mammography. She said she understood, but still wanted me to go for further testing. I'll make an appointment for you. Bye...

I should have known. All morning, as I typed, the smoke alarm had been sending out little beeps, battery running low... please replace, please replace, please replace... Please replace my body, I think. Breast cancer. Fifteen thousand women in Canada are diagnosed with breast cancer every year. Fifty per cent of those women die of their disease no matter what treatment they are given. Jesus God.

Eleanor knows this. She has had to go through this turmoil, apprehension, state of being threatened. Well, join the ever-growing club, Alice. Why should you be immune? No woman is immune. It has become epidemic.

Weil, this is the time for some serious thinking. Women lose control of their bodies once they get into the medical system, with doctors, mostly male surgeons who say things like "All women should have their breasts removed at puberty. Breasts are pre-disposed to lumps, mostly cancerous. We'll just take your right breast this time, though if we find that the lymph nodes are involved, we might just have to take your left one as well, and all the nodes along both sides. Then you'll have to have a course of radiation followed by a course
of chemotherapy, during which time you will lose full range of motion in your arms, the radiation will make you weak and you'll vomit a lot. Same thing with the chemotherapy, only add hair loss and total blasting of the immune system as well, which will leave you vulnerable, bare and open to things like pneumonia, viruses...

There are choices. The first is to know about the choices, be given the information, and this info is not always given.

The first thing I'm going to do is find the most conservative breast cancer specialist in Kingston. I would agree to a lumpectomy, and maybe, just maybe a little follow-up with radiotherapy, but that's the limit. No more. Women don't realize that their chances are just as good with conservative therapy.

Maybe their chances are just as good with no therapy whatsoever. Maybe their chances are just as good with alternate forms of therapy, like holistic approaches, sparking the immune system. Certainly non-invasive methods wouldn't tend to wound and weaken the body and system like surgery, radiation and chemotherapy.

The subject is very complex. There are many factors involved in the end result of cure or death.

How can I concentrate on the narrative until I know the outcome of these tests?

Okay. I'm going in for a repeat "cone" mammogram, and when I come home, I'm going to finish the narrative in case my mind has to deal with other decisions.

I'll retype the whole thing on the weekend.

Thursday, February 18th

Dear Nathalie: I just finished the narrative. It's twenty-three pages, not the twenty-five or thirty you asked for, so I hope it will be enough for you to work with. I'm going to work
through all the journal entries tomorrow and tidy them up. Maybe I should call you and let you know where I'm at.

[page 16]

- the last page of the narrative, where I say that Margaret has given me the courage to be who and what I really am, a collector of words, a gardener, a river watcher. A writer. I've never actually come out and said I'm a writer in black and white before, probably because I've never had anything published.

Usually I write little things that come to mind, and then send copies to relatives and friends. That gives me a lot of pleasure.

Writing on course-related topics is something I really enjoy, and have been really pleased with what my teachers have said about my work. Sometimes I cry when I read their comments. One time, after taking a couple of writing courses, my teacher handed me my final marks in class. When I saw a list of A's for every project, I wept, sobbed buckets, out of control. Why did I react like that? I can't explain it, but I know that what people have to say about my writing really matters to me, and maybe I've never been given that kind of positive reinforcement before.

I've written a couple of short stories and a few poems, but have never had the courage to do anything with them, no that's not true, I did send something in to a magazine and it was REJECTED.

Since finishing the narrative, I've retrieved a story on which I was working when I died. After the funeral, I put the file away for over a year. I'm working on that story right now, and hope to have it finished before Spring.
I don't know whether having something published is my goal, though it would be kind of rewarding wouldn't it, to have something out there with my name on it.

I love writing. Like gardening, it makes me feel good. It's an artistic expression. Gardening doesn't give a sense of power, it gives joy and pleasure. The word power doesn't belong in the garden, not the kind of power I mean when I talk about the power involved with writing. This is getting mixed up.

Anyway, I want you to know that despite the fact that I've never had anything published, I know, in my heart, that I am a writer, and from now on when asked what I do, I shall respond, "I am a writer."

[page 17]

You know that I'm waiting for a call from my doctor about the latest breast test. If I haven't heard by Friday at noon, I'll call and ask for a verbal report. The waiting is too difficult. I can't stand not knowing.

I should write a bit about how I feel now that the narrative is finished. More peaceful, I think. Glad it's over. You may be expecting more volume, but I don't think I can write any more about The Diviners right now. I've taken it as far as seems and feels right at this point in time.

Now I want to go on to other things. I want to clear the in/out basket beside the typewriter. I want to start cleaning my house and doing some recreational reading. I want to start at the beginning of Norton's Anthology of Women in Literature and read right the way through, and I also want to get that book you said you planned to use for your Women and Ideas course and read it as well. I have the name in my notes somewhere.

Time for a walk.
11:30 a.m. Friday, February 19th

Haven't heard. Can't stand it. I'm going to call.

One hour later, Dr. H. called. Said the verbal report described a cystic lesion that should be confirmed by Ultrasound. No evidence of calcification or distortion.

This is good... no areas of calcification... no distortion. Good.

"Now," she said, "I think you should have an Ultrasound for confirmation of edges, just to rule out a mass of any kind, and you should go to a Breast Clinic where your breast will be palpated and perhaps the surgeon will want to do an needle biopsy..."

No. I don't want to go to the Breast Clinic, and be seen by any surgeon. Definitely not. I will, however, have an Ultrasound, which is the definitive test at this point. Ultrasound doesn't hurt, and should eliminate the necessity for any further testing.

Yes. I'll have the Ultrasound. Fine. I feel much better.

I followed that conversation up with a call to the physician who read the mammogram at the Breast Screening Clinic, whom I know from the Cancer Clinic, a woman, sensitive to my feelings about not wanting to be seen by the surgeon. She confirmed that an Ultrasound would be the best route to take at this time. She reassured, spoke intelligently, kindly, said she didn't think there was any malignancy.

The breast tissue is constantly changing, you know, I tell myself. Many women have cystic, fibrocystic changes that come and go. It's normal, cyclical.

All this because I thought I should have a mammogram.

[page 18]
Monday, February 22nd

J. took the file containing the narrative to Kingston this morning to copy. I felt uncomfortable with the act of giving it over to anyone else. Strange. It's not solely mine anymore. I'm passing it along, whatever it is.

J. read it on Saturday night. I wondered what he'd think, particularly the marriage bit. He said it was excellent, a good read.

A good read. Is that a typical male response? Does that sound like something Brooke would say? A good read.

To me, that sounds like a response to a detective novel.

Did he really read it?

The reality of the response has just hit me full on as I write.

So cold and distant. So insensitive.

A perfect example of typical male denial of feelings.

I don't know, Nathalie, I just don't know.

I have taken time, weeks and weeks to say in print for all who care to read, that I'd reached a point of wondering whether I wanted to live any longer. My husband of nearly thirty-three years comments, "Jolly good read, I'll make some copies for you."

What is wrong with this picture?

Allowing J. to take the narrative to be copied has left me feeling increasingly distressed, and fretful. Two days, three days... On the third day I asked him to bring it back and I'd copy it myself. He returned with five copies, one for Nathalie, one for Eleanor, one each for my sisters. Since saying this, I've spoken with Nathalie, and have decided that she should be the first one to read the narrative. Having said that, I realize that J. has read it, and I can't do
anything about that, though in retrospect, a woman should have read it first, just because, just because it feels and seems right. Go with the intuition, Alice.

Nathalie, I envy you your trip to England, particularly your opportunity to write your narrative at Lewes, Haworth (is that correct?). It seems perfect, doesn't it, you writing your narrative at the place, the very source that provided the impetus, the energy, the artistic force for the writer to write and the reader to read and be moved and, I see a circle or spiral here, with the energy moving and coming back to the beginning, weird and wonderful.

I am now left with the decision as to whether this should end here, or whether I should continue to make entries up until our new meeting date. Right now, I have the sense that I need to put the narrative aside and go on to other things. No doubt I'll return and re-read and correct, [page 19] 'cause I just can't see mistakes when I read my work. Other people find mistakes and comment on them, and then I feel the fool. However, I'm starting to accept that this is part of the process. Who cares if someone finds an error? An error is easily remedied. Don't sweat the small stuff. Communication is more important than spelling and tense, though one has to have a perspective, I suppose. Let it sit a spell. Do something else.

Do something else she says, still stressed out with worry about the Ultrasound report.

Call. Don't wait any longer. Okay. Call and ask for a report. Again. The secretary will think, no she won't, women understand these things...

Put in a call at 10:30 a.m. Had to wait four hours before Dr. H. was able to call me.

The Ultrasound shows absolutely nothing, no densities, no cystic lesion, nothing? Jesus Mary Joseph God
"Now you won't want to have another mammogram in a year's time, will you?" the doctor says. "Sorry to have put you through all this, but we have to follow the protocol on this. Any abnormality in the mammogram has to be checked and double-checked. Early diagnosis can make the difference..." I am not listening.

Fuck the protocol.

My breasts felt fine before the mammogram. Let's for a moment consider this point. What if whatever it was that showed up in the "cone-in" view was, in fact, a malignant tumour, with malignant cells contained, in situ? Imagine and consider what the process of having the breast scrunched to a degree of force strong enough to burst a cyst, or a malignant tumour... those malignant cells would escape, travel, no longer contained in a spot easily accessible and surgically removable. Kind of a scary prospect, eh what?

What do I do now? Make a cup of tea, of course, take a few deep breaths, cry, then call my sister, at work, 'cause she's been calling me daily, and I must put her mind at ease. Then I must call my friend, N., at Clinical Trials and let her know as well, N., who understands the panic in my voice when cancer cells are discussed, so close to home.

Friday, March 12th

Found mistakes in the narrative, so I'll have to retype some parts, and after leaving it for awhile and then coming back to it, I'm still pleased with what I said and how I said what I had to say, though there are parts that I wonder about. It's hard having to wait for feedback. I need someone to hug me and say they found it moving, or it was good or not good. Something... I'm in a kind of limbo... Waiting's hard for me, well... what was your first clue...

I talk so much about not being able to wait.

[page 20]
Nathalie... I went to hear Gloria Steinem at The Grand on Tuesday, and took notes, which I'm presently transcribing and making into a little story. You will, of course, note my HUGE AND TREMENDOUS EXCITEMENT!!! Particularly since I used that part in my narrative about the age of nine, and there I was sitting in the theatre looking at and listening to Gloria, who also gave me gifts of words.

Please God take care of women who write and pass along gifts to others.

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Please God take care of women who write and pass along gifts to others.

I was talking to my sister, M., last night. I told her about Gloria at The Grand. Gloria at The Grand. Gloriosa Daisy. Gloria in the Highest.

M. said that while she shared my excitement and enthusiasm, she is concerned that the women who need to hear Gloria's words most of all, are the women who could not, for reasons that we understand to be poverty-based, be there. That the women, who are raising sons and daughters who will turn out to be victims and victimizers, are in unreachable dark places, where Gloria's voice isn't able to penetrate... unless, of course, those who hear Gloria's words take on the responsibility of seeking out and delivering the words to those who need them most, where they will make the biggest difference, where the most significant changes will be made.

I said I thought that those very women were being reached via places like Bronwen Wallace Centre, and the North Kingston Community Health Clinic, where they can come and talk, share, be safe, rest, maybe even discover, have some space... got to start somewhere. We must reach these women, their daughters and their sons. We may even be able to reach some of the men, fathers, victims and victimizers.
I need a soapbox.

I need energy, and money and transportation, and most of all, I need some more ribbons for my typewriter!

Nathalie... do you need to hear all this, with all the papers you have to deal with... Oh... must tell you that I've heard nothing but wonderful reports from the Women and Ideas course. I sat with two of your students when I went to hear Gloria, and they told me that they were learning so much, and that the classes were stimulating, and that it was all, well, very special in many many ways.

Wish I could have been in that class. Hope it's offered in a Fall Semester sometime. Oh well, onwards.
Eleanor's Journal

1 January, 1993

I have been thinking at odd moments during the day what I am going to say in this narrative for Nathalie -- 20 to 30 pages seems daunting. But The Lonely Passion has been so important in my life that perhaps my story about it will take on a life of its own. Even now, Judith Hearne's life of quiet (and on occasion not-so-quiet) desperation holds terror for me.

I was talking after dinner with L. about Nathalie's thesis. L. thinks it sounds more interesting than the OISE run-of-the-mill empirical study of classroom practices.

3 January 1993 [page 2 of Eleanor's handwritten journal]

I was thinking today of the first time I read Lonely Passion when I was working at Gage. D--- L---'s secretary, a Scottish woman, who was living a life of quiet desperation if anyone was -- her husband was dying, and she had two young children, and was supporting all three on a secretary's salary -- had also read it, and had liked it, but much preferred another book that I had read the same weekend -- I can remember very little about this second book except that it was a family saga sort of novel set in the slums of Glasgow. The hero or heroine (probably hero) had to use the public baths since his own home was without indoor plumbing, and he described the curl of pubic hair the last bather had left in the bath. I remember the secretary as being extremely uptight (understandably, given her life) and repressed. One day she had a crying fit at her desk, and D-- L--, fine Scottish gentleman that he was, took her to lunch. He gave her his time, but what she really needed was a raise. He lived on Forest Hill Road. Ah the splits between rich managing editors and poor secretaries.

As with Alice's journal, I indicate the original pagination of Eleanor's journal in [ ].
1 April, 1993 [page 3]
Samuel Pepys I'm not. A most infrequent diarist. I have finished describing the context in which I first read Judith Hearne and now have to write why reading it affected me so. I have been procrastinating for days about doing so. Decided I had to read J.H. for the fourth time (as I have been intending to do in any case). Realized as I began reading why I was procrastinating so: the memories are painful indeed.

6 April, 1993 [page 4]
Well, I finished reading Judith Hearne this morning when I was at the family court trying to get [her divorced husband] to pay money for a while longer. God, what a depressing book it is. Even now, I find echoes of J. H.'s life in my own -- she had 58 pounds between her and destitution. I am selling the piano today because what I can get for it is what I have between me and destitution. That's exaggerating. I could sell the car, and the furniture before I'd have to be looking for a bridge to sleep under. But all my life I have been teetering on the crumbling edge of poverty. I'm sure my fear of destitution kept me in the marriage with [her husband].

7 April, 1993 [page 5]
Well, I have been procrastinating for two and a half hours over returning to Judith Hearne. The task that awaits me is a painful one -- to look at the ways in which I identified with or did not identify with Judith Hearne. I think I identified with her poverty -- she was on the sharp edge of destitution; her appearance -- she was plain, if not ugly; her boredom -- she had to work hard to fill her day meaningfully; her fantasies of romance; her breakdown.

I still think Judith Hearne is a remarkable book. It's a truism that heroines in novels get married, go mad, or die. But while Judith Hearne has a breakdown, she does not go mad.
Her tragedy is that she does not. She recovers her mental stability, but by doing so, she uncovers in a way that she did not before, the hypocrisy and cant of parochial Irish society. In recovering, she is reborn, in William James's phrase, into a universe two storey's deep. Unfortunately for her, there is even less place in the single storey society of Catholic Belfast than there was before she began her descent into the seventh circle of hell.

When I finished reading *Judith Hearne* for the fourth time, which I did yesterday, I still wanted to weep for her, and for all women like her, constrained and constricted by cultural stories they have no hope of rewriting. I must get to work.

15 April, 1993 [page 6]

Well, it's done. Thank god. Writing it was beginning to pull me into the painful past in which everything I did was wrong in some way -- hurtful to myself or others.

I have been re-reading the paper I wrote for Ron Silvers. In a way, the thoughts that I expressed there were a prelude to my thesis. I talk about the power of narrative vs the failure of objectifying sociological discourse to capture the essences of the human condition. Because *Lonely Passion* influenced my approach to sociology, it can be said to have had an epistemic as well as an emotional impact on my life.

16 April, 1993 [page 7]

Looking back on reading *Lonely Passion*, it is clear to me how important context is in reading any text. We approach a text with our histories up to and including the moment of reading. These histories include our everyday lived experiences, and our imagined and imaginative experiences, and our experiences of other texts. If we return to the text to read it for a second time, our first reading -- text and context -- is part of the history that we bring to our reading.
I had a terrible nightmare last night about my first father-in-law (the United Church
clergyman) trying to kill me. I know it was he because he wore a black shirt and a dog
collar -- I think it is the first time I have ever dreamt about it. I am sure that the dream is
connected to reliving through writing my first reading of *Lonely Passion*. The life I was
living at the time owed much to the moralistic attitudes of my mother and of my
father-in-law.
March 13, 1993

I am sitting in the sunroom of Moorfield Guest House, my bed and breakfast in Haworth. It is a beautiful sunny morning. I awaken to birdsong and the bleating of the spring lambs in the field beside our house. There are snowdrops, primroses and daffodils in bloom in the front gardens along our road, West Lane. Yesterday I walked across Haworth Moor, down to the Brontë bridge, and up again the three more miles to Top Withins. It was wonderful.

At this time of year Haworth is not overrun with tourists as it is in summer, when you cannot see the cobbles on the High Street for people, but the signs on the moor directing walkers to the Brontë falls, or Top Withins, the site usually proposed as the inspiration for the farmhouse, Wuthering Heights, are in Japanese as well as English. Haworth High Street is lined with tourist shops, and although there are some with native woollens for sale, most show the ubiquitous gifts which are to be found in any tourist centre.

I could be in Provincetown, Mass. Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco, or Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario.

How to find Emily here? Impossible. If the topic of my paper is what Wuthering Heights means to me and to my life, there are many obstacles. As the famous opening to the film The Go Between asserts, "The past is a foreign country." Emily would, I think, be amazed, maybe amused, to see how she and her family are marketed today in what has become a centre of tourism. On the moor yesterday, even on a fairly raw day in March, there were seven other visitors at Top Withins during the 45 minutes or so I was there, and I saw
three other groups on the high moor during the afternoon. Thankfully, most of the time I was alone and could commune with Emily in peace.

March 13, 1993 walk to Ponden Kirk

I set off about 1:30 p.m. after purchasing a Cornish pasty and an orange in the village. I packed my backpack with my Cumberland knit sweater, notebook, a map showing a circular route to Ponden Kirk, and extra film.

I walked west from my bed and breakfast, Moorfield Guest House, on West Lane toward the village of Stanbury. As I walked just west of the boundary of Haworth on West Lane, the Worth valley and its steep northern flanks opened to my right. The land was bathed in clear spring sunlight under a cloudless sky. As I began the descent into the valley, I felt a stage of pure happiness. Here I was walking in one of my favourite places in the world; it was a perfect spring day, and I just gave myself up to enjoyment.

Yesterday's walk to Top Withins was wonderful, and blessed with insights. But today, today was such a gift that I could do nothing but be grateful and enjoy.

I walked down the south side of the valley, then up the other to the village of Stanbury on the crest of the hill, and down again to Ponden Reservoir and Ponden Mill below. From here I left the highway at last and started up the hill to the moor on a gravel farm road by the reservoir. It was not long before I was walking between two dry stone fences bordering a farm road, past Ponden Hall, and then out onto the open moor.

The path was now just a depression in the moor grass, winding its way up the slope past a stone barn. Suddenly I was on the crest, and walking along the edge of a deep chasm. On my right was Stanbury Moor, and across the Worth valley the fields on the other side. Soon I had left this behind, and could only see Stanbury Moore on my right and the deep
valley of Ponden Beck to my left. The wind was blowing, but not too cold in the sun, and I was totally alone in the landscape. The heather was black at this height, The valley comes to a sharp point at its westerly end, where the path crosses over to the other side, after a short decline, staying high above the bottom of the valley. The beck falls steeply at this point. I crossed the beck where it narrowed slightly and continued up the other side again along the edge of the steep chasm. At times I felt dizzy looking down from such heights, and did not want to venture too near the edge.

Then there was Ponden Kirk, jutting boldly out into the chasm, and commanding a full view of the valley and the green fields of the Worth valley in the distance. I found a secure place to enjoy the view further back, with my back to the sheepfold. As I sat and ate my Cornish pasty I thought of Emily and Wuthering Heights. It was suddenly quite clear to me that what Wuthering Heights means to me has almost nothing to do with a romantic notion of love and a sort of drowning in the other, as Gloria Steinem claims, but rather with a sense of the human condition as part of the natural world.

I thought of Emily's poem

Riches I hold in light esteem
And Love I laugh to scorn
And lust of Fame was but a dream
That vanished with the morn.

And if I pray, the only prayer
That moves my lips for me
Is 'Leave the heart that now I bear
And give me liberty.'

Yes, as my swift days near their goal

'Tis all that I implore -

Through life and death a chainless soul

With courage to endure.

It seemed to me that Emily, writing this, would not write a book about romantic love seen as the merging of one person into another. I felt as if a weight had been lifted from my mind. Gloria Steinem's view leads nowhere for me.

As I rose to continue my walk, the glorious scene before me, with the heather in shades of deep rose, pink, and brown, and the bright yellow moor grass, and the green fields and blue sky beyond, filled me with joy. I sang, a even skipped occasionally as I walked.

Then this joy was joined by another. I cannot explain it, but I felt that, unbidden, but oh so welcome, I was walking with Emily herself. This sense was not present to my eyes of ears or touch, but I felt her presence in my joy, or rather we were together singing a song of praise, each with our own unique notes, but in perfect harmony.

She was with me for about half an hour. As I regretfully began descending from the high moor, I realized the best part of my walk would be over too soon, so I retraced my steps a short way, and sat on a large square boulder, and let myself live completely in the moment.

Emily was with me all of the this time; our song together was strong and beautiful. But the time for descent did come, and with it, she left me.

At first I remembered Emily's own suffering when she mourned the loss of the mystic presence which brought such joy in her own life, and felt a small echo of it. But when I imagined that I might be able to reach her at will, through meditation, I realized that this
would never happen, but that it could not happen. Emily was not a presence in my imagination. She had come to me unbidden, bestowed this miraculous gift of herself, and if she ever came again, it would be in the same way, when and how she chooses. I have been, I am, blessed. Nothing can take that away.