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ABSTRACT

GENDERED MOVES: MOBILE SUBJECTS IN ATLANTIC RIM LITERATURE AND FILM

By

Kristina Banister Quynn

Gendered Moves examines figures of mobility and gendered subjectivity in women's writing and film from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Canada, Iceland and the Anglophone-Caribbean. Focusing on literary productions of women who relocate themselves and situate their work in multiple national sites throughout the Atlantic Rim, this study begins with the observation that the crisis of representation affecting nation-oriented literatures and models of identity is a product of a proliferation of differences that becomes an aesthetic strategy in mobile women's fiction and theory. This project draws on an equally wide-range of critical discourses—including Postcolonial, Irish, and Sex/Gender Studies—to account for the various ways Atlantic Rim women artists use mobility to challenge narrative conventions and socio-political orders. Alongside the rise of transnational and transatlantic studies, analyses of travel figures have gained critical currency. Feminist scholars interested in mobility and transnationalism have generally attended to the socio-historical conditions informing notions of migrancy and exile as well as to the gendering of transnational experience in literature. My project, rather than charting a subject's movement across historical and material landscapes, investigates the gendered and politicized landscapes of narrative. Broadly, this study incorporates theories of narrativity, psychoanalytic feminism, and postcolonialism to examine the figuration and enactment of mobility as it redefines what it means to write and locate the self

simultaneously. Expanding upon (post)modernist experimentations with form to enact new kinds of subjectivities and narratives of self, mobile women writers and filmmakers utilize formal experimentation to perform feminine subjectivity as mobile and elsewhere to a masculine social imaginary.

For Spencer and Sydney, the most inspiring mobile subjects

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INTRODUCTORY MOVES

This dissertation is an exercise in perversity in so far as the seemingly descriptive, linchpin terms that signal what this study is "about" may be considered a misdirection, may be bones for contention, or may be—as Ash in Ali Smith's novel *Like* labels her own writing—simply a "lie." For, this is not a dissertation about *Women* or female authors who travel; and yet, it provides analyses of literary and filmic texts by women who often live outside of the nation of their birth and who are invested in (re)configuring and/or self-reflexively (re)presenting *woman*. In taking its direction from the work of such mobile writers and theorists as Emma Donoghue, Kristjana Gunnars, Hélène Cixous, and Rosi Braidotti, this study questions the representational terrains that supply the figure and category *woman* with any meaning at all. Yet, it is very much a study of the literary methods and self-reflexive narrative strategies that write *woman* as a subject-in-process, as a *self* negotiation through gendered language, and as a disruption or perversion of a masculine social imaginary, an imaginary that *real*izes itself through the binaries of sexual difference and essential notions of woman.

Similarly, what follows in these chapters is not a sustained argument to establish a new metaphor or cultural category for postmodernity or postmodern subjectivity out of the transatlantic migrations of women from postcolonial sites. In this way, the *Atlantic Rim* does not function like Paul Gilroy's "Black Atlantic," which is a complex metaphor for and thick description of raced identity and cultural exchange in modernity. And, yet, this is an analysis that recognizes key (post)colonial sites and literary histories—Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Iceland, the Caribbean—to mark the anti-patriarchal, anti-national, and anti-imperialist, gestures within literary productions that, like their authors, move through

these sites. Perhaps an alternate imposition of historical and literary era signaling the later-twentieth and early-twenty-first century publication dates for the texts analyzed could direct a reader's attention to a reliable terrain of historicity or to what this dissertation is "about." And, yet, the broad literary categories for contemporary literature—*post-1945* or, more aptly, *post-1968*—signals instead that this study picks up on the era of proliferating "posts" in literary studies, wherein poststructuralism, postmodernism, postcolonialism, postfeminism, postgender (the list goes on) call into question the structures and politics of representation so that "master narratives" have become suspect and linguistic meaning uncertain, including the very stories and categories of "post."

With all of its perversity and categorical uncertainty, this is a critical project that takes as its *subject* matter the figures of travel commonly used in (post)modern literature and psychoanalysis as metaphors for self and/or the dynamic processes relevant to subjectivity: doubles; exile; stranger/foreigner; and nomad. If, as many scholars of mobility and gender note that symbolic and social conventions dictate that men travel but women stay home, the representation of woman as a mobile subject is already a transgressive act and reconfiguration of *woman*. Reading literary and filmic texts of women whose work question the function of sexual difference in self-representation and narrative structures, this project asks: In what ways do figurations of mobile women transgress, resist, and/or alter conventional narratives of nation and social belonging? How do representations of mobile subjects reconfigure the binary notions of sex/gender difference upon which the narratives of patriarchy and nation rely? In what ways do metaphors for self as a traveler rely on a repression of the feminine to produce a mobile

male subject? And, to what extent does feminine mobility alter or fit all too well the primary characteristics of literary doubles, exiles, strangers and foreigners, and nomads?

This study contributes to current discussions of gendered subjectivity and sexual/racial/national identities in "contemporary" literary and cultural studies. Instead of attending to socio-historical and material conditions that effect women in narratives about international migration and travel, I analyze the representational matrices and literary stylistics that imagine women as mobile subjects, regardless of whether such subjects—author or character—literally leave their home/home-country or not. Current transnational and/or global approaches to gender and subjectivity often reinforce literal representations of both *woman* and a nationally or culturally dislocated subject, even as the operations of representation may be read as politically suspect and/or resistant to unifying narratives of nation and identity. For instance, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan in the introduction to their edited collection *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practice*, respond to what might be described as the new and improved patriarchy and imperialist capitalism of Western globalization with an image of feminist resistance(s) grounded in diverse and localized networks of women who work to counter the "scattered hegemonies" of postmodernity. As with their other writings on "global identities," transnational women play a crucial role in Grewal and Kaplan's feminist vision, which promotes "a more interdisciplinary and transnational approach [to] address [socio-economic and political] inequalities as well as...the nature of sexual identities" ("Global" 663). Such sex/ual/ized identity, including that of the new transnational feminist, is, however, understood to be as much a product of her social and material conditions as it is grounded in a seductively authentic image of woman. I should

also note that by engaging travel as a figure rather than pretext for mobility, this is not a study of women's post-1968 "travel literature," a genre that also tends to make representational assumptions about the literalness or authenticity of such categories of difference as sex/gender, race and culture. Rather this is a study of a writing practice that engages mobility as a method and gendered configuration to offer alternative reflections and configurations of *woman*.

The multiple dis(re)locations of mobile feminine subjects calls into question nation as interlocutor, with all of its masculinist imperatives to claim, locate, identify, and speak for women. If the migrant as seen in Salman Rushdie's imaginary homelands is "gripped by the conviction that [he], too, had a city and a history to reclaim" (10), the transgressive and perversely mobile woman has too many cities or too many histories to which she may claim—if she can "claim" at all. Through this multiplication of the homelands, any investment in a single nation's story, a single narrative of a collective past, becomes "scattered," to usurp Grewal and Kaplan's term. Charting a kind of (post)national travel of a feminine subject becomes not simply a question of which nation she was born in or writes/speaks from, but a question of which nations are in-relationship. For the *she* under discussion here is more a nomadic figure who, in resisting patriarchal and national (b)orders, has either no passport or too many of them, as Rosi Braidotti notes. Therefore, when discussing "nation," I have preferred to engage the locations provided in the narrative rather than the author's multiple national affiliations: Ireland-United States-England in Anne Enright's novel *What Are You Like?*, Unnamed Caribbean Island-Canada in Dionne Brand's novel *In Another Place, Not Here,* Iceland-Denmark-

America in Kristjana Gunnar's novel *The Prowler*, and so forth.[1] However, the (b)order transgressing mobile subject may just as likely not travel from "home" at all as in Svava Jakobsdottir's novella *The Lodger* and Marina Carr's play *Low in the Dark.* In these latter instances, the "nation" remains unaccounted for or tangentially necessary to setting, character, and theme so that any search for nation becomes the resistant reading as the nation is already unhinged from its grounding in the fantasy of sexual difference.

To mark the distance in feminine configurations of historically masculine tropes for the subject, the chapter titles and analyses within work to approach the traveling figure as a method, a process, and, therefore, a modifier for the movements of "subject-in-process," to use Julia Kristeva's term. In this same vein, the authorial biographies are minimal, if discussed at all. (I initially attempted to use an author's name exclusively in its possessive form as a modifier for her texts. But given that one can only write versions of "So-And-So's novel" or worse "So-And-So's narrative" so many times and in so many ways before the possessive form reads as bizarre or conceptually problematic, I eventually gave up rigidly marking the distance between author and text in many instances.) My attempt to engage author as textual modifier evokes a poststructuralist pronouncement (Barthes, Derrida, Foucault) that *the author is dead* while still offering traces of the "scriptor's" self- or author-narratives that may have gendered resonations within her writing or theoretical practice. Thus, in the chapters that follow, authorial biography when included is presumed to be as much a narrative for analysis as the work these mobile authors and filmmakers produce. It may well be that a woman writer who relocates across national borders will incorporate such experiences in her writing, but to

[1] I should note that there may be, and often is, a correspondence between the author's biography and narrative settings.

use biography as ballast to stabilize my analyses of narratives that work explicitly to interrogate discourses and notions of essential difference, as well as its more subtle companion "authenticity," would seem to me to have missed the point of much of their work.

In contrast to charting a subject's movement across physical and material landscapes, Continental Feminism with its emphasis on linguistic experimentation critiques and alters masculinist literary, linguistic and/or symbolic structures to configure *woman* elsewhere and has contributed significantly to my study.[2] If the shifts and movements of a subject are bound to language and the interior space of subjectivity, Helene Cixous' assertion that "writing is the very possibility of change" speaks then of the politicized and personal experience of the gendered subject as it moves through and is constructed by language. Theoretical projects such as Cixous' shaping of a feminine imaginary, Julia Kristeva's interrogation of the Semiotic and cultural systems of meaning, and Rosi Braidotti's philosophy of nomadic subjectivity adopt complex literary figurations of gendered subjects capable of subverting and destabilizing patriarchal codes and structures while simultaneously resisting the re-essentializing of the subject based on binary structures. The theoretical operations of Continental Feminist literary practices resonate particularly and often singularly with the myriad and varied figures presented in the own work of mobile women writers and filmmakers. Cixous' exile without arrival, Kristeva's undocumented and exorbitant stranger, Braidotti's politically active nomad,

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[2] "Continental Feminism" is not only a term/title that broadens the category of "French Feminism" as frequently used in the American academy to refer to a specifically linguistic and psychoanalytic approach to gender politics and a reconfiguring of the masculine social imaginary to include the theoretical work of Rosi Braidotti but also a term/title that suits the text's (emphasis) on British or (post)colonial Anglophone perspectives.

each resonates not entirely but sporadically and significantly with women's post-1968 Atlantic Rim literary and filmic projects.

The term "Atlantic Rim" as previously mentioned is not a metaphor for a new kind of feminine identity or marker of unified transatlantic culture, but, rather, it is a gesture toward a fluid space of representation and continuous, perhaps repeated and circuitous, movements of mobile female subjects. There are then currents of psychoanalysis (or even anti-psychoanalysis as in the case of Deleuze and Guattari) that move through this dissertation, contributing to a kind of cresting and wave-effect through which the thinking of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan might be glimpsed—most often through Continental Feminist resistances to and reworkings of Freudian and Lacanian theories of language and narrative in relation to the development of the psyche/subject. Luce Irigrary's essay "The Mechanics of Fluids" models and argues for a similar kind of fluidity. Taking issue with Lacan's distancing of the Phallus—the master signifier of Symbolic order—from the penis (a solid), Irigaray both relegates Lacan to the footnotes in a kind of theoretical nod or wave and asserts the necessity of a new kind of stylistic and feminine theoretical study based on fluidity. If in a Lacanian model selfhood begins in mirror-stage with an imaginary body and the self is *solid*ified as it enters the Symbolic order (system of language that must be entered to create subject and coherent social identity), sexual difference is both produced by a fantasy relationship to the phallus (not determined by genitalia/biology) and seemingly fixed within an unchanging Symbolic (phallic signifying order). Reading a repressed feminine out of Lacan's model (a kind of oil in a masculine psycho-linguistic machinery), Irigaray argues that language is also flexible and fluid, and, thus, may be torqued to recognize "awoman" (note that Irigaray's

language play is not to represent "a woman" i.e., the solid or mirror against which the masculine sights itself) according to metonymic flows of desire, pleasure, and proximity instead of phallic/masculine/male metaphors of visibility (114).

I have brought together literary and filmic productions by mobile women that may be classified as "experimental" in the self-reflexive approaches to characterizing and writing *woman* and (re)negotiating sexual difference. In many ways the mobile feminine of these works appears to extend the imperatives of *l'écriture féminine* (*feminine writing* or literally *writing gendered feminine*) that is most often associated with the feminism and writings of Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous emerging in the 1970s. While not synonymous, Irigaray's and Cixous' promotion of *l'écriture féminine* broadly called for experimentations with language and narrative to write woman otherwise to a masculine imaginary or the phallologocentric (privileging of the phallus/masculine to make meaning). This writing otherwise in its various forms is a common strategy to the texts analyzed in this dissertation, and it also what makes the work of Anne Enright, Ali Smith, Emma Donoghue, Dionne Brand, Kristjana Gunnars, Shani Mootoo, Menna Gallie, Svava Jakobsdóttir, Vivienne Dick, and even Marina Carr fit uneasily within the more common nation and diaspora oriented categories of literary study. This is not to say that the literary and filmic productions of such artists are models or strict expressions of *l'écriture féminine*, but, rather, to suggest that the transgressive imperatives of such a gendered writing practice are what make such texts resistant to broader disciplinary orders of classification. For instance, if Anne Enright's novel What Are You Like? is evocative of Irigaray's broader theoretical concerns in *Speculum of the Other Woman* and

This Sex Which is Not One, it also gestures toward the impossibilities and psychic risks for women if they pursue feminine, fluid strategies of/for feminine signification.

With the exception of the discussion of elsewhere and diaspora in Dionne Brand's novel *In Another Place, Not Here*, the chapters of this dissertation analyze at least two and up to four literary/theoretical texts, generally placed alongside one another to address the particular gendered moves of each text in relation to tropings of travel and subjectivity. In Chapter 1, "Like Moves: Neo-Doubling and Proliferation," Anne Enright's *What Are You Like?* (2000) story of twins and Ali Smith's bifurcated novel of two friends, *Like* (1997), serve to introduce the kinds of resistant representational moves and tensions that will crest throughout the dissertation. While in a psychoanalytic tradition the "double" suggests an internal, psychic splitting or multiplication, this chapter exposes the textual shift that takes place when women reject masculinist mirroring and oedipal formations for recognizing their *self* as multiple, double, split. If both novels extend psychoanalytic notions woman as double—double voiced, doubly othered—into contemporary, transnational settings, neither text clarifies or essentializes the nature of *woman*. Enright's style is similar to flipping through channels on a television never quite sticking to one signal, and Smith's two-part novel eccentrically disperses images of woman via a lesbian desire rather than locating *her* according to normative orders of sexual and national difference. Chapter1, Again or Deuce, "Like Moves: How to Do Things With Maps, Lists, and Mirrors" moves further into the resistant summaries provided in the first chapter on Enright's and Smith's novels to take up common tropes and methods for locating self and linguistic meaning—maps, lists, and mirrors. By shifting the conventional representational work of the Father's cartography

and masculine mirroring of (him)self, these novels produce reflections of *woman* that do not quite track or reflect a coherent feminine subject and, therefore, require that we read them eccentrically and as elsewhere.

Chapter 3, "Diasporic Moves: Elsewhere *In Another Place*" extends the notion of the representation of *woman* as elsewhere through a masculine imaginary. It also continues to read the effects of woman-oriented or lesbian desire as a kind of representational mobility through Dionne Brand's novel *In Another Place, Not Here* (1996). Engaging specific discursive and disciplinary categories of diasporic identity and the politics of exile, this chapter highlights the ways that Brand's novel reshapes an anti-patriarchy, anti-nation, anti-racist politic through the erotic relationships between women.

Addressing specifically the ways in which "exile," whether framed as diasporic or not, is a precondition for representing *woman* in a masculine imaginary, Chapter 4, "Exilic Moves: Living at Home in Language," includes readings of Emma Donoghue's short story "Going Home" (1993), Edna O'Brien's *Mother Ireland* (1976) and Hélène Cixous' *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (1998). In each of these texts, the figure of *woman* is already marked as a figure of exile within the home/motherland; therefore, a woman's travel away from "home" suggests either a doubling or literalizing of her symbolic exile. Thus exile does not carry the same innervating experience for self-reflective, writing women as it did for James Joyce. And yet, Joyce's literary exile and stylistics suggest a method for feminine writing as traveling elsewhere to the [m]otherland.

The final two chapters of this dissertation focus more specifically on perverse and transgressive figurations of female subjects. Chapter 5, "Strange Moves: Foreign Desires and Displacements" arranges Menna Gallie's novel *In These Promiscuous Parts* (1986)

with Svava Jakobsdóttir's "The Lodger" (1969), Shani Mootoo's poetry and a short story from her collection (1993) and Julia Kristeva's remunerations on the "foreigner within." This chapter notes the ways in which "woman" might be a politically charged figure of transgressive and erotic/pleasurable foreignness. This is a chapter that explores specifically oedipal and psychoanalytic framings of transgressive desires while the final chapter of this dissertation will analyze spaces of transgression as an expression of feminist nomadism. Chapter 6, "Nomadic Moves: Too Many Passports" takes up notions of nomadism and migrancy in Kristjana Gunnars' novel *The Prowler* (1989), Vivienne Dick's experimental films *Visibility Moderate: A Tourist Film* (1981) and Marina Carr's play *Low in the Dark* (1990). This chapter places the work of literary and film artists alongside Rosi Braidotti's theorization of nomadic subjectivity as a reenergized feminism attuned to contemporary manifestations and operations of patriarchy. The aesthetic practices and a politics of the "anti" in Gunnars' and Carr's writing as well as Dick's filmmaking produce a multiple rather than binary process of literary construction capable of affecting local as well as global modes of resistance and subversion. Approaching the nomad as process and method rather than figuration, this chapter works to deconstruct the more common metaphorization of the nomad in current academic debates concerning the vestiges of Western imperialist discourse in literary studies of migrancy and mobility.

None of the words analyzed in each chapter are exclusive to the figurative moes discussed in that chapter. In this way, there is an underlying resistance and potential nomadism attendant with the organization of this dissertation overall. Neither are the figures of double, exile, stranger/foreigner, or nomad discrete categories of typographies, for each often overflows into the descriptions and figurative moves of another. Thus, the

final piece of this dissertation, more an afterward than a chapter, "Anywhere: In Lieu of Concl....." playfully arranges the fluidness of each of the prior chapters' textual moves. Reminiscent of Nicole Brossard's *Picture Theory* and a fluid imagining of *woman* as hologram, this piece takes up the possibility of figuring the feminine not only as elsewhere, but perhaps also more threateningly, anywhere to a masculine socio-linguistic imaginary.

CHAPTER 1

LIKE MOVES: NEO-DOUBLING AND PROLIFERATION

Anne Enright's *What Are You Like?* (2000) and Ali Smith's *Like* (1997) are contemporary novels that double main plots and female protagonists. Enright's Irish twins and Smith's British (English and Scottish) obsessive friends search for self-reflection through narratives that parody established literary conventions of the psychological double, and through which the protagonists' encounters with mirrors, maps, and lists consistently call into question the efficacy of such objects and tropes for self-reflection. Mirrors fail to reflect the "woman" who seeks reflection; maps do not reveal the entirety of her location—geographic or socio-cultural; and lists do not adequately itemize her essential characteristics or personality. In as much as Enright's novel draws on motifs of the Irish family and Smith's novel on the double as the epitome character of Scottish literature,[3] these texts work to transgress familial and doubling conventions and instead configure intermittent images of mobile postnational feminine subjects. Rather than reclaiming family, nation or culture to render a woman's voice, experience and perspective, these texts make use of the rhetorical strategies that constitute sexual and cultural identity categories to figure *woman* as slipping and evading such signification. Like the shoreline of Ireland described in *What Are You Like?* where tides and dock projects continually alter Ireland's landscape by obscuring the edges between land and

[3] Working from Hugh MacDiarmid's turn-of-the-twentieth formulation of Scotland's contribution to British literature as a kind of doubled-literature, Gregory Smith claims that the defining "characteristic of Scottish writing was its bipolarity—its tendency to swing, sometimes manically between realism and fantasy." According to MacDiarmid, Scottish literature's "single most important identifying feature was its doubleness—the 'two moods' or 'polar twins.'" See: *Beyond Scotland: New Contexts for Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature*, 2004: 15.

sea, the female protagonists of both works are simultaneously dynamic and obscure, and they tend to disappear at the moment of their apprehension.

This doubled chapter (Chapter 1 and Chapter 1, Again or Deuce) analyzes the representational terrains and gendered politics of Enright's and Smith's novels in which the literary double as well as tropes of self-recognition and knowledge are (re)configured to speak of a generative and profuse subject.[4] This first chapter is an extensive (re)visiting of each novels' structures and motifs of mobility that produce what I call "postnational mobile feminine subjects." The second chapter, "Deuce," provides an analysis of how Maps, Lists and Mirrors, when used to trope self-apprehension and location, can produce a gendered self adjusted to a politic of non-recognition and not-knowing to counter a masculine discourse of knowledge or a masculine social imaginary. In both novels, geo-cultural maps are associated with the father's knowledge systems—a Cartesian formulation of cognition that might read "I map; therefore, I think." The daughter-protagonists, however, explicitly reject their fathers' methods of cartographic reason, and as an alternative, the novels endorse prolific, non-binary listing as a kind of self-articulation practice that resists phallocentric self-location, "circumnavigating," although perhaps not entirely, the essentializing binary-return that has troubled feminist discourses of the "post."[5] Consequently, the literary doublings evoked in these novels

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[4] The use of the term "terrain" in my discussion plays upon both the spatializing of knowledge and the gendering of such modes of knowing. Much of the work on the psychological double is premised on a mapping of double motifs and themes as an expression of an already mapped psyche and/or vise versa. This underlying impetus to mark scholarly discussion, debate and conversation via figurations of "terrain" is not unlike the impetus to associate landscape and what is conceptually unsettled/unknown as feminine. The "feminine" or yet-to-be-known, claimed, settled and so forth via imperial and masculine projects resonates through notions of subjectivity, wholeness and authorized knowledge.

[5] I must acknowledge the fraught debates over the terminologies of the "post," which includes postnational. In this context, I am using the term to allude to a political position/characterization of a gendered subject, not to a specific historical or social context demarcating a collective move beyond or elimination of "nation." In this sense, I find Arjun Appadurai's evocations of "postnational" useful, if not his

are complex, producing a new kind of double attuned to the rhetorical moves and (re)structuring(s) of poststructuralist feminism.

Literary doubling according to Robert Rogers in his taxonomic study, *A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature* (1970), is produced as either a splitting of identity or a multiplication of figuration. Implicit fragmentation, splitting or multiple personalities such as Dr. Jekyll suggest a mathematical division into duality or multiple selves. Whereas decomposition (composite characterization) produces multiple figures as part of a whole, such as Hamlet's multiple father figures. While Roger's taxonomy is extensive, none of the doubles or doubling processes he describes suits the figurations in Enright and Smith's novels. Something else is going on, which can be accounted for, if not mathematically, by the literary and symbolic mechanisms that produce notions of wholeness and a dominant, conscious and authentic self. Since Enright's and Smith's double figurations are produced both by dividing and multiplying self, they suggests a logic of "both/and, and, and..," a proliferation of likenesses that dissipates the conventional double's signaling of an underlying whole and unified self-characterization thrown into conflict.

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anthropological approach: "[N]o idiom has yet emerged to capture the collective interests of many groups in translocal solidarities, cross-border mobilizations, and postnational identities. Such interests are many and vocal, but they are still entrapped in the linguistic imaginary of the territorial state. This incapacity of many deterritorialized groups to think their way out the imaginary of the nation-state is itself the cause of much global violence because many movements of emancipation and identity are forced, in their struggles against existing nation-states, to embrace the very imaginary they seek to escape. Postnational or nonnational movements are forced by the very logic of actually existing nation-state to become antinational or antistate and thus to inspire the very state power that forces them to respond in the language of counternationalism. This vicious circle can only be escaped when a language is found to capture complex, nonterritorial, postnational forms of allegiance" (166).

LIKE/LIKE Resisting Summary

Even as *What Are You Like?*(*WAYL?*) revels in complexity of character and the confusions of self, the plot is simple enough. Anna Delahunty dies from brain cancer shortly before her twin daughters are surgically removed from her body. Her husband, Berts, unable to cope with raising two daughters without a wife, puts one up for adoption. Maria is raised in Dublin by Berts and his hastily acquired new wife, Evelyn; and Rose (christened Marie) is raised in London by the Cotters (a medical doctor and his wife). After a period of self-searching as young adults—Rose while at university studying music and Maria during a brief emigratory jaunt in New York—the sisters are reunited when Rose travels to Dublin to track down her birth mother. A simpler book teaser might read something like: "Twins! Separated at birth and reunited twenty-two years later!" And yet, in tracking major characters, familial orders and major events, this summary of events remaps the story and underrates the interior lives of characters and the novel's raucous sequencing of events. The plot as recounted here appears to be inevitably driven by conventional double themes of reunification or a return pre-birth wholeness—when twins might have been as one—a remarkable misdirection of the novel's insistence on partial knowledge and the comforts of self-misrecognition.

The narrative structure of *WAYL?* works productively against the unfolding of this neat plot-line or story map. Spanning two decades, 1965-1987, *WAYL?* zigzags through time, intersperses six character perspectives, and alternates between metropolitan settings in Ireland, England and the United States. The novel opens in 1965 with Berts grieving and unable to comprehend single-fatherhood, and it closes in 1987 with Dr. Cotter's pleasure in discovering that his adopted daughter has a twin. The events and voices

between these father-oriented bookends, however, are so varied and seemingly haphazard that the reader must work hard not to succumb to the confusion that continually assails Berts. Even with what might appear to be an aid for locating characters, for instance, the city names and years that accompany most of the 36 chapter titles, these locators seem more a juggling act than a logical ordering of events—"Dublin, 1965," "New York, 1985," "Dublin, 1971," New York, 1985," "Dublin-Donegal, 1976" (subheadings of the first five chapters). For as these geo-chronological points of the novel's opening chapters suggest, each subheading serves to as much to "locate" the characters of a given chapter as to assert the novel's non-linearity, enacting something akin to the temporal disorientations typical of Berts, Anna, Maria and Rose.

To extract a chronological plotting from this temporal juggle, the reader must continually mark and remark the rhetorical territory traveled, drawing and redrawing a mental map of the novel. The novel often complicates what has come before so that effects often precede causes, if causes are acknowledged at all, and events often repeat with alternating and conflicting expressions. For instance, Maria's brief affair with Anton in New York appears numerous times with slightly altered but equally valid conclusions. She fell in love. She was never in love. She was obsessed. In addition, Berts and Maria pose as the primary characters in the first third of the novel, only to have their story interrupted by the musings of a hospital nun, Sr Misericordæ, who discloses Anna's birthing of twins. These revelations tend to retroactively resignify Berts' guilt and complicate Maria's interest in her own reflection and search for her likeness by introducing another protagonist, Rose.

In this way, the nonlinear, fragmented and multi-perspective structure of *WAYL?* sets up a complex exploration of how meaning and sense are made through the maps, lists, mirrors and the "like" against which and through which characters are drawn. Maria is never the same woman who looks back from mirrors, shop-windows or photographs. Her reflection returns to her from someplace mobile and often unrecognizable. Similarly, the reader's remapping of the text to track character and event reflects a story no longer recognizable as its parts and instead reflects a story, from someplace else, from the conventions of linear order and how readers attempt to 'make sense.' Thus, remapping the storyline risks reconfiguring character and story according to realist and masculinist conventions of linearity, imposing false causality (the main protagonists search for self because they somehow know they are twins) as well as presuming and reasserting the very binary gender classifications the novel disrupts (that twins must see and identify each other through a masculinist ordering of the gaze, knowledge).

With its non-linear and multiple, competing perspectives, the story makes thematic sense through the repetitions and variations accorded the modern literary double such as the duality or conflict of self as well as the recognition of the other as self. While conventional double themes tend to resolve subject instability through familiar devises of death, reunion, a return to singularity, wholeness and/or sanity, *WAYL?* instead plays with convention and makes familiar the processes of irresolution, of not-knowing, and proximity without reunion. For example, at the very moment that Maria and Rose cross paths, their mother's autobiographical musings from beyond the grave interrupt the expected depiction of sibling reunion, displacing the return wholeness as family reunited. This interruption, which defers the climactic moment of twins reuniting, proffers instead

a kind of outburst of re-connections and re-configurations that suggests a different logic of representation at work with the Delahunty daughters. Through Anna's chapter, Maria's preference for maps and Rose's predilection for list-making merge as Anna's ghost speaks of her spatial lists or memory maps and her desire to grow words. Since Anna has been dead from the novel's opening and brain cancer has rendered her insane in her husband's memory, her voice at this point in the novel forestalls a trustworthy return to the past or to her body that might constitute a kind of "return to wholeness." An alternative mode of thinking and narrative is at work here.

The only chapter with a first-person narrator in the novel, Anna's chapter is jarring not only for its location and spectral voice but also for its redefinition of her character, which was previously described via Berts' memories. According to Berts, Anna's oddities could initially be explained by assertions of sexual difference: "Women have their own rules. Why not turn the world inside out—bake a chicken in stuffing, wrap a sheet around the washing machine?..." and so forth (5). Yet from her grave, Anna speaks of literal misunderstandings, of her failures to make "meaning grow" and of being imprisoned by her gendered roles—daughter, sister, wife. "I am not dead," she claims, "I am in hell. And I blame the feet that walk over me" (248). She states that as a school-girl she could record in her journal only "the things she did not notice" and as an adult she began burying words in the yard as if these linguistic seeds might finally yield meanings commensurate to her life. Babies grow in Anna's belly, tumors grow in her head, but her words fail to grow in soil. What she tells is by design suspect, an undoing narrative, and perhaps capturing only that which is, as she points out, not really important or not really worth noticing after all.

Anna's chapter also suggests the importance of spatial listing as it was passed down matrilineally in a place and time (1950s Irish countryside) where and when paper was dear. "My mother's lists," Anna says, "were things that she shifted around the kitchen...the cat's saucer upside down beside the door when we needed polish for our Sunday shoes" (234). This manipulation of domestic space to create a spatial list provocatively pulls together images of illiteracy and woman/mother. The mother's lists spoke of keeping family order and of duties befitting a woman absorbed in her roles of wife and mother even as they suggest that that *woman* cannot "read" and must signify the household's "needs" differently than the husband who can read and write. Anna, however, does read and write and her lists are a combination of written and spatial methods. Her lists, rather than ordering the household, tend to take over the house, often refuse explanation—turnips in the wardrobe, salt in tea cups—and depict a woman whose "needs" exceed her systems of listing and household duties.

The husband/father, Berts, seeks order, clarity, and a stable family-image—dreams that at least seem achievable before Anna's brain tumor. As a surveyor for Dublin City, Berts works with street markings and mapping customs belonging to the discourse of cartography, nation, and aligned with a masculine social imaginary. The discourses of cartography and nation supply him with the metaphors to imagine his relationship to others and his purpose. For example, after impregnating Anna, he imagines his excess sperm as "his map on the sheet" in which he can see "a whole country congealing in the cold" (5). It is a strange description of the post-coital moment, suggesting a self-satisfied coherence (map and whole country) and sense of loss for wasted sperm, the excess (in the cold). Excess is suggestive of that which is outside of

order—woman, death, absence—and excess consistently disturbs Berts. When Anna is diagnosed with brain cancer shortly after becoming pregnant, her excess-iveness signifies something may not be working in his fantasies of order. It is the diagnosis and not her death that shakes Berts' world-view and sends him reeling in confusion. For if his perception of womanly logic and rules of family order are not a manifestation of a natural order guaranteed as sexual difference but are another kind of order defined by and manifesting as cancer, what exactly is the order that *nature* secures? Unable to sort through the complexity of "Anna"—Is she cancer or is she woman?—Berts relegates "her" to a conceptual and unthinkable terrain reserved for death. If Berts' map of his life as well as the contours of Ireland, "the whole country," had once been traceable and trustworthy, after Anna's death the order is all "wrong" and Berts' footholds less sure.

Following his wife's death, Berts becomes a man incapable of addressing his own "need to understand," never mind the needs of an infant daughter who appears to him an inquisitive "monster" (3). Maria's "gravity of look, pulling everything into her," her ability to eat everything with her eyes, seems to Berts unfathomable and foreign. Returning to the comforts of nation and cartography, Berts compartmentalizes her as "another country that was all" (4). While Maria's genitalia automatically locate her on the other side of the sexual divide where "women" used to have "their own rules," her monstrosity is tangled with Berts' anxiety about his wife's simultaneous death and birthing. "What kind of child comes out of a dead mother?" he looks upon Maria and muses (15).

Berts is a fairly static and highly perplexed (but not perplexing) character. He is "the father" who has lost his masculine/patriarchal footing. In an effort to (re)ground

himself after Anna's death, Berts acts on a "need to go away." He travels nightly in his imagination around the edge of Ireland: "It would be important, he thought, to keep to the very rim of the land, his journey shorter when the tide came in, the sea hungering for him, then slipping away, over and over..." (10). His compulsive nightly walk marks the edges of the island, a coastline for which he has some experiential knowledge and for the rest he relies on his imaginary map, calculating the distance of his journey and the details of geography with a red string. If his length of red wool marks geographic contours and gauges distances, it fails to report the exactness of his path. It may mark the generalities of his road traveled, so to speak, but it fails to track his exact movements or to guarantee his future steps. For instance, Berts becomes "worried about piers. Should he travel the length of them, going up the near side and coming back by the far?" or "When does the coast become a river bank? At the change of water, from fresh to sea salt. It was a shining line of salt then, that he was tracing around the country, he saw it glittering and lacy in his mind" (10-11).

Berts' nightly journey is riddled with his anxieties concerning keeping order and distancing himself from death. As a man whose profession relies on maps of Dublin to locate potholes and cracks for repair, Berts clings to the value of the map as reproduction of a known territory. In the same way, his imaginary map of Ireland is a true reproduction of the coast Berts travels, keeping him to the land, and securing the island for the living. The sea is dangerous, and it is not surprising that Berts associates the sea with Anna and death, excessive and feminine in its moribund fluidity and unpredictability. To avoid danger, Berts deliberates on which direction he should turn first, north or south,

to walk the coast; he decides south would be the safest as his wife slept "to the left" and she should be kept on the side of the sea (11).

While Berts remains in Dublin stagnating and repeating his fantasy of wholeness and safety, his daughters are mobile characters, seeking new and alternative understandings of their place and self. Each has her own preferred method for making sense of who she is—Maria maps, Rose lists. These strategies work as markers of character difference between the twins and as a meta-narrative technique to structure the story according to the very systems Berts, Anna, Maria and Rose employ to locate themselves and make sense of their circumstances. For each twin, conventional notions of maps and lists become suspect when their maps and lists cannot reflect and represent their strange, lost, or broken sense of self. In recognizing that their sense of self exceeds and misaligns with their own maps and lists, Maria and Rose work to escape and eventually to reconfigure the ways they account for and chart themselves.

Maria, the monstrous infant, who repeatedly perceives herself as a "wrong person," finds comfort in her reflection most often when it reveals a stranger or a foreigner. A highly educated woman, she nonetheless drops out of an engineering program at university and immigrates to New York to work as a housecleaner—a relocation that makes her literally the foreigner. There in what she calls the "Country of the Lost," Maria has multiple casual sexual encounters with other immigrants, Irish and non-Irish, as well as with her Manhattan employers. Most of these career and love relationships serve to confirm her sense of wrongness. Her most intense and longest lasting relationship (three weeks) with a Czechoslovakian from England, Anton, sparks her rebellion against "wrongness," and she begins looking for the stranger who more

aptly reflects her sense of self. Part of Anton's appeal was his knack for describing her, for telling her "what she is like." In addition, he carries in his wallet a decade-old photo of himself with a girl who looks exactly as Maria did at the same age. The girl (Rose) wears Maria's smile and the clothes Maria never had but wished her family could have afforded. This image that is both her and not her makes a kind of strange but inexplicable sense to Maria. The not-her image soothes her and offers her kind of an escape from Anton's descriptions of her personality and "Buster Keaton eyes" that had gradually provided only imprisoning images. Perhaps, she is not really the woman he is sleeping with and describing. If she is not the woman whom Anton describes, however, who might Maria be? And what is that woman like?

The "country of the lost" initially suits Maria who, like Berts, tends to think in terms of the cartographic. New York "was a parallel world. It was just over the other side" (57). But in operating by the same logics that ordered the world in Ireland, Maria finds herself increasingly anxious that she will fail to find a "way out" (57). It is not clear whether Maria desires a means for leaving New York, or a "way out" of her relationship with Anton and others, or something else, or perhaps all require escaping. Her method for coping with this lack of clarity and ambiguously directed desire for escape is initially a kind of parallel cartographic method to Berts'. During the day, she prefers to walk to her destinations, exploring the city and observing people; but, at night, she mind-travels the tourist and business routes of the city until she loses her way. Reaching the limit of her memory map of New York and unable to find a "way out," she dislodges herself from the fantasy, turns on the lamp and picks up the metro-area map

from the bedside table. On the map, she notes her imaginative location and then plots her route back to the apartment, each night expanding her knowledge of New York's streets.

These night-time wanderings, a version of her father's nightly walk through Dublin and around the coastline of Ireland, signal a key philosophical and psychic difference between Maria and her New York friends (other immigrants) and work colleagues. "No one in this town lived straight. Outside were the streets of Manhattan, numbered and cut, but everyone was still looking for the map. Even her boss Cassie, who was from Galway, was getting involved in cosmic convergence and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*" (109). Maria recognizes that the maps, whether of geography, religion, philosophy or sex and gender, are already drawn, already exist, ready to be pulled from the nightstand and the lamp turned on. Unlike her peers, she is seldom lost, and unlike her father, she begins to distrust maps and their capacity to "locate" people geographically, metaphysically and socially. She begins to distrust the denotative function of maps, which similar to Anton's descriptions and her own reflections in mirrors and shop windows, seem to imprison and contain only her "wrongness," revealing only where she has been and none of the present strangeness that seems to suit her.

Maria will eventually "wipe herself off the map," an act that can be likened to a perceptual system-reboot that allows her to load an alternative operating system of sexual difference, one that no longer positions her as the site of difference—"wrong," "monstrous," and "woman"—but one that operates according to what she understands as a "sea of difference." Maria's wiping herself from the map suggests a kind of madness, a loss of the sex/gendered order that had previously provided her with sense of self and

determined her place in the world. Off the map, she both attempts suicide and returns to Dublin and begins "waiting for herself to walk through the door" (202). After a period of hospitalization in Dublin, she takes a job in a Grafton Street shop monitoring the dressing rooms. According to her stepmother, Evelyn, Maria has discarded a perfectly good career and future, genuflecting to some sort of mental breakdown to wallow in the meager opportunities afforded the working-class. From Maria's perspective, class has little to do with her decisions, for her job provides her with multiple mirrors and reflections so that she might watch and wait for herself.

If Berts and Maria prefer map(ping) to imagine a self, Rose prefers list-making, as did her birth-mother, Anna. Marie (renamed Rose by her adoptive parents) is raised in Leatherhead, Surrey alongside a succession of children Dr. and Mrs. Cotter foster. Privileged as their only legally adopted child, Rose knows her biological parents are elsewhere and that she is not the same as the foster children who stay with them temporarily, who likewise eat Mrs. Cotter's home-cooked meals and listen to Dr. Cotter's sage advice. For in the Cotter family, Rose is neither biological daughter nor foster child. She fits but does not fit, simultaneously discarded and claimed. She is a paradox. Rose's awareness of her special status in the household translates as a difference for which she cannot fully account but which she subconsciously believes her birth mother can.

Rose knows her family is split/double, and unlike Maria, part of her search for self includes locating her other family, specifically her birth mother. Just as Maria wanders New York, Rose wanders the streets and shops of London ostensibly looking for items to lift, but driven by a desire to find what she thinks might be "the answer" to "the

question she asked of faces on the street, the question she had been asking all her life…the simplest one of all. 'Are you my mother?'" (148).

Similar to Maria's initial perception of wrongness and investments in mapping her to locate her*self*, Rose's perception of her fundamental difference insinuates a disconnection from her adoptive family that she is compelled to understand through lists, attempting to describe herself to herself. Her listing practices are varied, ranging from the more common itemization of personality quirks and preferences to the more unusual collection of shop-lifted items that signify both something and nothing about her simultaneously. But, the lists, like many of the clothes she shoplifts, never quite fit. Her self-inventory lists, "the things she was," are inevitably contingent, creating only "lies" no matter how detailed and accurate her attempt (140).

> She was twenty-one years old. (Probably)
> She was studying music. (More or less)
> She was a woman (?)…
> She was in bed with William/Will/Bill.
> She was too full of things.
> She was born with a hole in her head, a hole in her life.
> Everything fell into it
>
> She started again.
>
> She was Irish.
> Her favourite colour was blue.
> Her favourite colour was actually a deep yellow, but she couldn't live with it.
> She was English…
> She was tidy. She was polite. She hated Margaret Thatcher.
> She was a mess.
> She was someone who gave things up.
> She was someone who tried to give things up and failed all the time. (140)

Each characteristic—age, interest, sex, and so on—exceeds its own description, and her parenthetical qualifiers, while contributing an element of honesty or perhaps accuracy, do not qualify so much as to throw each of her self-identifiers into question.

So, too, do her shoplifting and musical studies, which, like her itemized lists, capture and undo her *self*-image simultaneously. Through supermarket and department stores, Rose's hands play upon items selecting and thieving in plain sight. She emerges simultaneously visible and invisible to other shoppers and store security: "It was like escaping and being locked up, both at the same time" (123). The value of her thievery resides not in the material value or even the materiality of the collection itself, Enright takes care to write Rose's desire as mimicking but something other than a fetishistic enterprise or an aspiration for erotic pleasure. Instead, the value and goal of thieving for Rose is to suspend her self location according to seemingly fixed and known categories, particularly those emerging out of binary order.

Rose's piano playing suggests a similar desire for self suspension, and when she plays she longs to experience "[b]liss. Something so big, you got it and forgot it all at the same time" (119). But the equivalent attempt at accuracy that undoes the capacity of a list to reflect and contain "Rose" strangles her musical expression. She plays with mechanical precision and often pauses so as to not falter and play the wrong note. She may have mastered musical convention yet she fails to find convention or rightness pleasurable. The descriptions of Rose's musicianship as a search for self parallel Roland Barthes' theorization of relationship between readerly/writerly texts and the reading subject. He notes that the text of pleasure tends to comfort and reassure through familiar cultural expressions and conventions; however the text of bliss "imposes a state of loss,"

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unsettling "historical, cultural, psychological assumptions..." (20). In her quest for bliss, Rose ultimately desires something other than the readerly text of musical convention, something aligned with *jouissance* and a suspension of self, which she will access through improvising and imprecision.

Shortly after adoption services informs Rose of her Irish parentage and of Anna's death prior to birthing, Rose wanders away from the musical compositions she worked so hard to master and into a space of momentary improvisation. Akin to Maria's move off the map, she begins a kind of conceptual rebooting that begins with shutting down or shutting out her former life. She quits school and becomes a social worker, tracking at-risk youth for the state. If Maria's New York friends are still looking for "the map" to explain themselves to themselves, Rose is "still looking for the key," in part, through a career change and breaking up with her long-time boyfriend, William (185). Overall, her itemizations, shoplifting, musical precision, career change, and break up indicate a complex negotiation of her environment intended to strike the perfect key, upon which "the tumblers would roll into place, and the damaged child [would] spill out into the room" (185). And while the confirmation of her birth mother's name and location seems to settle her compulsions to find what "fits" so that she no longer shop-lifts, Rose's Irish "origins" and English upbringing provide an additional series of differences for which she does not know how to account.

Rose's trip to Dublin to meet her birth father and to visit her mother's grave is her attempt to understand how biological and cultural differences compose who she is. For instance, did she pick at her food in restaurants because she was a woman? Or because she was Irish? Or because she was English or a Capricorn? Her underlying driving

question shifts from "Are you my mother?" to "What does it mean that my mother was Irish?" Her questions are concerned with notions of self and a subject's relationship not only to (m)others but also to categories of identity; it is the latter that expose thematic questions of family and Irishness that the novel poses yet refuses to answer or close down. In the end, Rose picks at her food because...well, she picks at her food. The cause is made absent and following the logic of the novel adopts a tautological return.

From the novel's opening, Anna's death unsettles the sacrificial figurations of Irish motherhood—the Virgin Mary, Mother Ireland and the like—that for much of the twentieth-century configured and limited women within Ireland's religious and national patriarchal order. Commensurate with other claims of symbolic death that reorder conceptions of the world—Nietzsche's death of God, Barthes-Derrida-Foucault's death of the Author—Enright's novel declares the death of the Irish Mother. It is thus significant that Anna dies from cancer, not childbirth, so that her death cannot be read as a sacrifice of self to ensure the life of the next generation. In this manner, the dead mother destabilizes the modes of social, cultural and subject reproduction, such as maps, mirrors and even lists in a similar fashion. None of these locators can reflect a known territory of place or self reliant on the Mother as first object and organizer of desire. This destabilization of subject-organizing schemes generates themes, akin to the novel's title, that are best approached as questions rather than as statements of gendered or cultural topics: How do the Delahuntys track where and who they are? How do they make "sense" of sexual and gender differences? What constitutes family? Add to these, the persistent question of Irish literature and cultural studies: What is Irishness? Or perhaps more aptly, Where exactly are the geo-cultural borders of Ireland?

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Only Like a Summary

Mirroring the representational investments and identity queries of Enright's novel, Ali Smith's *Like* proliferates self-sightings via a discourse of association—*the like*: The novel's protagonists, Amy Shone and Ash (Aisling) McCarthy, are mobile women, characterized both by a refusal to stay put geographically as well as a rhetorical emphasis on association, rather than oppositions or comparisons, to generate a sense of self. If *WAYL?* utilizes doubling to expose how making sense owes much to sex/gender difference and how conventional definitions and categories fail to locate the female subject, *Like*'s doubling of narrative form and character explores how woman might be read and what a politics of liberation might look like. "Maybe it would be better to hang on to what we don't know, maybe there's a better kind of power in that," Ash in her diary, "What we know is compared to it is like, well, I don't know. A leaf, compared to a whole forest full of unknown plants and uncharted trees ..." (321). Ash extends this description into a comparative list, continuing with nature references, sands and mountains, drops and oceans, known and unknown, until finally she declares that the entirety of "what is known" is like..."A cliché."

Like is a suturing of novella and fictional memoir, telling of Amy Shone and Ash (Aisling) McCarthy, of their friendship and asynchronous desires for each other. Perhaps the desire for a sexual relationship or greater intimacy is not mutual, although the narrative is not clear about the mutuality of their sexual desires. Either way, their timing is clearly off. Neither woman can 'read' the other, an impediment echoed in the

narrative's temporal disjunctions and disparate narrative voices, particularly in the unaccounted for time gaps and dual-narrative structure. The first part, titled *Amy*, is a third-person-limited narration about Amy Shone and her precocious eight-year-old daughter Kate, their life in a Scottish caravan park, and their impromptu trip to Italy. The second part, *Ash,* is a first-person exploration of Ash's past, a journal-like text focused primarily on her sexual relationships with women and her obsession with Amy. Coupling these narratives together reinforces the asynchronousity of the two women as the reader who is acclimated to *Amy* and the narrative voice of Amy's present (1994) must shift gears partway through the novel to Ash's writing of the past (1962-1988) in her present (1988) which is actually in Amy's past.

Although less of a temporal juggle than the action of Enright's novel, *Like*'s plotting is no less susceptible to synoptic revisionism, and readers must extract chronological order by inverting the novel—pulling first from Ash's memoir and then Amy's story. According to Ash's record, Amy Shone and Ash McCarthy meet as teenagers while she and her parents are on holiday in Inverness, Scotland. An unusual friendship between these young-women develops when Ash acts as the Shone family's impromptu tour-guide, sharing her knowledge of local entertainments, tourist sites and historic battles against the English. And while Ash finds herself drawn to Amy's self-containment and wide-ranging knowledge of myth and literature, Amy appears little affected by Ash. However, a couple of years later, when Amy mails Ash a list of definitions and literary quotations about the meaning of "ash," Ash interest turns to infatuation. She quits school and travels to what is most likely Cambridge to find Amy. Hungry and homeless for three days before finding a map in a bookstore that directs her

to Amy's door, she can think of nothing but clichés to announce her arrival. Preferring absence to cliché she slides a blank sheet of paper under Amy's door. Over the next few years, Ash works as a library clerk to maintain proximity to Amy. In the meantime, Amy completes her doctorate in literary studies and becomes an engaging and sought-after lecturer at the college. Ash obtains a series of disposable stand-by lovers, who substitute for Amy and who can be easily replaced the moment Amy returns Ash's desire for more than affectionate conversation. Amy, however, never does reciprocate. And Ash in desperation plays her role as self-proclaimed "barbaric Scot" and sets Amy's apartment on fire, reducing to 'ash' Amy's private, intellectual sanctuary.

Thematically, if *WAYL?* works to reset self-apprehension away from models based on binary sexual difference, *Like* disallows such difference from its outset, instead coordinating its thematic order via lesbian desire and motifs of disappearance and absence. As Monique Wittig notes, women-oriented or lesbian desire cannot be read through masculinist lens of binary sexuality since the lesbian appears as "not-woman." , *Like* works to perform prolific disappearance as an alternative means to articulating the mobility of the female subject. As with Enright's novel, there is no clear cause and effect, but, perhaps, Ash's burning of Amy's apartment propels each to embrace her own disappearance. Following the burning, Ash becomes an actress, traveling the world and Amy becomes a mother, traveling the United Kingdom before inexplicably disappearing from the public eye. During the time that Ash cuts a relatively well-known figure, particularly in film and feminist circles, Amy disappears from public radar into the transitory service class. She works low-level and temporary jobs around England and Scotland—hotel maid, caravan park attendant—jobs that include housing as part of the

pay and require no reading for her to perform her duties. For mysteriously, Dr. Amy Shone, lecturer and author of *The Pain and Pleasure of the Text*, can no longer read.

Story, however, remains important to Amy. She tells her daughter rich bed-time tales of adventurous and flawed women, and she is a wealth of information, even as books serve a crudely utilitarian purpose in their home—support for a short table leg, torn apart for wrapping breakables when they move, starting a campfire, and such. Then one night as Kate reads to Amy from a book on the wonders of the world, Amy recognizes the word "Vesuvius," and in response, she immediately packs their bags for Pompeii in what transpires to be a healing quest for reading. They stop briefly at Amy's stately childhood home in England to request money and her parents' help in attaining a passport for Kate; it is the first time her parents meet Kate. Amy and Kate then spend a fortnight in Pompeii, visiting Vesuvius' crater and Roman archeological sites. By the time they return to Scotland, Amy's ability to read is restored and their whereabouts are known. Amy receives a call from a reporter asking for information on Ash and receives packages from or forwarded by her mother. The parcel contains Amy's journals that Ash removed from the apartment before setting it ablaze as well as one additional journal, Ash's diary, included perhaps as a gift and explanation. Amy and Kate take an apartment in town and their story closes with mother and daughter on the beach enjoying the warmth of a "Christmas fire" built of Amy's journal. Ash's diary, however, remains tucked away in their most recent home.

Similar to the summary provided for *WAYL?*, this plotting performs a textual mapping that cannot mimic or account for the dialogue between Ash's memoir and Amy's story. The reader must continually return from Ash's disclosures of what came

before, revisiting and revising Amy's character and to make sense of both women's stories as a single novel. And yet, summary tends to give shape to "what we know" and in the context of *Like* the story turns into a bit of a cliché, emphasizing unrequited love and the bad timing of seemingly star-crossed lovers. What then stands out in this plotting are the absences and disappearances—the mysteriousness of Amy's illiteracy, the sudden appearance of Kate without a father, and both women's unaccounted for disappearance from the limelight. Similarly, the maps alluded to in *Like* are lures, leading only to an absence. Ash's college map may lead to Amy's door but not to the desired Amy. And in a myth Amy reads to Kate about royal siblings fighting over their father's land, a beautiful map of the territory is one brother's promised gift to the other, the lure into a cave, a trap so that one brother might kill the other for his property.[6] The beautiful map never existed at all. By the same logic, the reader must consider that Ash's diary, a kind of mapping of Amy and Ash as young adults, might lead only to the textual absence of Amy and the disappearance of Ash.

Rather than looking for reflected images of her *self*, Amy creates tests that are related to methods of mobility. Her portion of the novel, which also includes her daughter Kate's interjections and observations, is set in Scotland, England and Italy. The novel opens with Amy standing on the local train platform "testing" her footing, her resolve to not fall from the edge, reminding herself that what she loves most about this industrial village on Scotland's shoreline is its smallness. Contrary to what appears to be a suicidal desire, Amy does not seem to desire death but, rather, to test the limits of her will. Trains rarely stop or even slow down, often creating a "wake" capable of snatching

[6] This figuration of map as lure to property, person and/or knowledge, parallels Judith Roof's discussion of the lesbian as a figurative "lure to knowledge."

the unwary or those with unstable footing off of the platform. Much like the possible slipping of the unwary, there is precariousness to Amy and her narrative and the reader gradually encounters bits of Amy's character, but never the whole picture, whole image of a woman. We must read through discrete, impartial descriptions to create our own understanding of Amy as a mother, former Oxford professor of women's literature, Professor and Mrs. Shone's respectable daughter, and as reader herself and of her-*self.* Akin to her self-testing on the platform at the novel's opening, Amy's story is one of a series of tests and timings.

If in *WAYL?* Maria desires to wipe herself off the map with all of its social and psychic implications, Amy figures a woman already off the map, a condition that turns and returns though questions about the connection between reading and self apprehension. Initially not locatable on family and professional registers of her past life, Amy is mobile and lives with "different ambitions now" (73), which include rejecting the roles of daughter, professor, friend and at times even mother. To refuse identity labels and connection to family and friends corresponds with and is heightened by Amy's inability to read so that her emotions, desires and motivations remain hidden, both from the reader and from Amy. An aphasic character, she often finds herself "doing aimless things" (11) such as "testing" herself on the edges of train platforms and high-rise car parks or abandoning Kate in public places, returning hours later to collect her. Each test is done for a reason Amy cannot understand and the third-person narrator cannot supply. Her impromptu trip to Italy, however, marks a shift in character and motive—to connect the "word," Vesuvius, "with the thing it means" (96). Her quest for reading clarifies a desire for a secure relationship between signifier and signified previously absent from

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much of Amy's characterization. Along their journey south, Amy gets flashes of sentences and then whole paragraphs until eventually her ability to read has been restored. Yet when she and Kate climb "Vesuvius," the mountain fails to be a mountain and instead offers Amy only a "path around a chasm" (96). As her ability to read has been restored, it now gestures toward a (post)structural exploration of the gap between signifier and signified and the play of meaning.

Eight-year-old Kate, on the other hand, directs our attention to the play of language and desire to make sense out of words. A young reader, Kate's narration often imitates her sounding out of long or difficult words and accentuates her linguistic confusions and her love of riddles and puns as an imaginative play with language. For instance, Kate "wonders what the word liability means, if it's anything to do with being able to tell lies" (36) and she tells jokes, frequently about ghosts: Q: "What job did the ghost get on the aeroplane?" A: "Airghostess" If Amy's aphasia might be understood as a kind of system-reboot to read texts and self anew, Kate's reading suggests a space where language is simultaneously full of play, pleasure, excitement (an embrace of the chasm) and just as full of rules, borders and eventual comprehension (trying to connect word and thing). According to the latter, she is distressed to have missed the border between Scotland and England on their train trip, upset that she has been looking upon England as if it were Scotland.

While the reader has access to Amy's life "off the map," Ash's disappearance from family, profession, and fan magazines is a mystery, which serves both to absentee answers and woman in a narrative that is, nonetheless, imbued with possibility and to heighten Amy's excitement at the thought that Ash "could be anywhere" (136). The

most self-reflexive narrator in the novel, Ash remains an elusive character to the reader. Her diary, affectionately nicknamed her "liary," is a loose chronology of her coming of age, coming out, and coming to accept that her own fixation on Amy was a Frankensteinesque fixation on herself, an attempt to make her-*self* present, real, and alive. Ash's attempt to capture and fix Amy manifests not only as a "hoovering of memory" through writing but also in a structure common to Rose as listmaking. Ash makes lists of the things Amy once told her, lists of descriptors that made Amy compelling. Each list is incomplete and exceeds what Ash's head can contain, similar to the lists she, as a Catholic teenager, compiled of the dead in need of prayer—each list eventually becomes too long and overwhelming to remember.

Like is a text sutured but not split, a fine-line distinction, but one worth making. Splitting suggests a wholeness broken as if either Amy-Ash were once united or they are presently incomplete or damaged and at some future time might be reunited into a whole. Such is the underlying fantasy and thematic organization of most heteronormative and romance narratives, which read something like *Jerry McGuire*'s "you complete me." It is also the same logic underpinning the conventional double—a splitting or fracturing that when pieces are brought together makes an entirety. On the other hand, the suturing of *Like*, allows for two parts—Amy and Ash (narrative structure and character)—to interact dynamically, requiring that neither be whole or broken, but simply interactive, associative. It is as though the text of Amy and the text of Ash are akin to mirrors set parallel to one another—offering an infinite series of reflections without either woman functioning as the object in the center. This textual suturing or paralleling of mirrors shapes a compulsion driven by each woman's unconscious desire to understand her-self as

something other than "object." This non-object desire manifests as their disappearance from the public-eye, Amy's illiteracy and interest in the edges of thing as well as Ash's dreams in which she has no reflection.

Like produces a series of questions similar to those found in *WAYL?*: How do Amy and Ash make sense of their geo-cultural locations, their desires and selves? How does "I" see and speak self? What are the potential manifestations of family and friendship? And what might it mean to be Scottish, English and/or British at the turn-of-the-twenty-first-century? The novel plays upon these questions through a complex and asymmetrical doubling of narratives and characters as well as through Amy and Ash's attentiveness to reading and to knowledge-making strategies. For instance, Ash's memoir provides a personalized history and background to Amy's story, but it does not fill in significant gaps in conventional plotting and characterization: Kate's paternity and perhaps even maternity remain unconfirmed. The events leading to Amy's illiteracy and to both women's disappearance from the public-eye remain uncertain. The sexual orientation of both women remains undetermined, and so on. This emphasis on what will remain unconfirmed, unexplained, undescribed as origins, absolutes and orientations revels in the prolific manifestations of the unknowable.

Generated through themes of a new kind of doubling and alternative modes of reflection, the novel's self-reflexive qualities call attention to the social and political terrains of female sexuality and representation. But Smith's novel specifically evokes the symbolic otherness of "woman" and then simultaneously undercuts the categorical imperative of feminine representation. This is in part because desire and sexuality are not oriented through the masculine. Ash's descriptions of her first sexual experiences with a

schoolmate, Donna, and her subsequent relationships with women indicate a same-sex orientation and a version of lesbian subjectivity. And while Amy remains the constant object of Ash's desire, Ash does participate in romantic and sexual relationships with men, which precludes an exclusively woman-oriented desire. Although part of her non-exclusivity comes from a camouflaging of desire in the late-1970s "small-town" Inverness, which is not yet ready for homosexual revolution, Ash's rise to movie fame in the late 1980s was advanced by her sexual ambiguity and her ability to portray characters who could seduce both men and women.

While framed differently, Amy's sexual-orientation is also uncertain. Introduced as an atypical mother whose daughter calls her by her given name (i.e., Amy is not-*mother*), Amy's sexuality is contingently heterosexual. Yet the absence of references to previous lovers or fantasies about future romance with men or women marks Amy as seemingly sexually indifferent. Only a news reporter's questions posed to Amy about Ash seem to elicit a kind of excitement and internal euphoria aligned with sexual desire. Each woman's sexuality thus slips and exceeds easy classification, and additional identity categories such as ethnicity or nationality—where Amy might be English and Ash might be Scottish—emerge equally slippery and complex.

If read narrowly as representations of socio-cultural or national difference, the narratives, *Amy* and *Ash*, proffer a series of contrasts seemingly built for comparative analysis: Amy was born in England to a well-known historian father and a celebrity chef mother. She is highly educated, a former lecturer of literature and literary theory at Cambridge. She is an only child and is a single mother. She is intriguingly disinterested in sex and is fascinated with the edges of things and concepts. She eventually quits her

job, loses the ability to read, and lives a quiet, unrecognizable life for nearly a decade while raising Kate. On the other hand, Ash was born in Scotland to an Irish-American mother (who died when Ash was a toddler) and a cabinet salesman father. She has an active fantasy and sex life and is/was infatuated with Amy. An avid reader and highly intelligent, although not highly educated, Ash often works low-level jobs and eventually becomes an actress and famous as a film icon of uncertain sexual orientation. She apparently disappears from the public-eye shortly after writing her diary. In a comparative frame, each seems the other of the other—with the exception of their sex.

While the novel's dual parts *Amy/Ash* might superficially encourage comparative readings as if national origin, socio-cultural difference and sexual orientation might account for their disparate stories. Such comparisons and contrasts, however, take us only so far in understanding *Like*. They do not account for each woman's refusal to be fixed in place, a refusal manifested in part through their predilection for moving and disappearing. By emphasizing narrative and character difference, a comparative approach imposes a loose set of binaries inevitably misaligned with their story since those categories of *what we do know* consistently fail to account for either the novel's conflict or the orientation of their desires: *Amy/Ash*, novella/memoir, English/Scottish, upper-middle-class/working-class, theoretically-sexual/physically-sexual, presumed-heterosexual/lesbian. Overall, the narrative undermines each of these binaries, which become fantasies of duality, of seemingly containable identity characteristics. Those who attempt to impose their fantasy of oppositional difference on either Amy or Ash find their preconceptions do not fit. For instance, Amy's caravan boss, Angus, fantasizes that his beautiful, single-mother employee is on the run from a suave but abusive English

husband from whom only Angus might protect her. Rebuffing his advances, Amy finally tells Angus, "You've got it all wrong. I was never going to seduce you, or fuck you, or even touch you. I'm just not like that" (149-50).

What Amy is "like" sexually remains unqualified and undecided, as it is the rhetorical force of "like" that organizes the structure and themes of the novel. Classifiable in seven of the eight parts of speech categories, "like" cannot, however, function as a pronoun. It cannot be gendered, and yet its conveyance of preference, pleasure, desire, commonality and so on make it a formidable and productive term for organizing and describing two women, their desires, and relationship. It is thus fitting that the novel ends following a five-page listing of extended similes through which Ash attempts simply to describe the feeling of reclining on a nineteenth-century Inverness woman's grave. Approximating stream-of-consciousness, the listing of what her experience is "like" ranges from imagined stories and places to Ash's memories and childhood relationships—proliferating and expanding but never capturing. In the end, her listing embraces cryptic blankness, a return to her inability to describe the sound of Amy's beating heart as they lie together on a grassy bank:

> It's like, like—I said, and I stopped, I couldn't think what it was like, it was Amy's heart, it wasn't like anything else. But she misunderstood me; that's good, she said, like, that's a good word, and she looked so pleased I didn't want to spoil it so I didn't...(342).

"Like, like" marks a cognitive gap, the limit of knowledge as well as the pleasure and beauty in misunderstanding. It is also the narrative strategy and perhaps self-dislocation strategy that Ash pursues at the close of her "liary" and, thus, the novel. This multiplication of similes that serves as the novel's closure gestures to a feminine subjectivity that cannot be contained by a single "like," a single metaphor, a single

category. In this manner, *Like* is a novel of asymmetry and false othering, challenging heteronormative narrative structures that attempt to resolve conflict via marriage, birth, death, victory or the recognition of a new knowledge or understanding.[7]

Prolific Feminine: Mobile Feminine Subjects

Enright's and Smith's novels expand upon a feminist literary practice of interrogating and reconfiguring the representations of women and their familial relationships. In *WAYL?,* the Irish family opens up to include an upper-middle class English couple, and *Like* redraws the lines of home and family so as to privilege the fatherless child and "single-mother." Staid domestic roles for women and reproductive imperatives for family and nation belong to a mythology already critiqued by the previous generation of British writers and critics. For instance, in such second-wave feminist polemics as Betty Freidan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970), the economic, social and sexual oppressions of "women" were shown to be inextricably bound to the representations of ideal womanhood which had supported patriarchal order. Yet, freeing "women" from the economic and spatial confines of the domestic corresponds with social liberation projects that also historically rely on a reassertion of binary sexual difference to maintain, however contentiously, *woman* as a relative stable, universal notion. The feminism at stake in these novels is marked by a shift at the site of sexual difference between a generation of mothers and daughters who are equally invested in notions of escape and "liberation." Enright's and Smith's novels pick up on the imagery of the liberated

[7] See: Judith Roof's *Come as You Are* (6).

woman and take as their subject matter the various discourses of reflection and knowledge by which the images of woman, family and nation have been imagined, charted and defined in a masculine imaginary. Accordingly, the female protagonists of these narratives desire to escape from the very site of "woman" or from the still dominant heteronormative and patriarchal structures that manufacture woman's image of self.

The liberation of *woman* from economic and psychic dependence on a dominant male figure (first/second-wave feminist models) often takes for granted sexual difference and retains biological or natural imperatives, effectively restricting demythologizing feminist strategies to a binary playing field. Of the female characters in the novels, Patricia Shone, Amy's mother, best depicts the limitations of the socially liberated woman upon which the characters of Amy and Ash unfurl. Celebrity chef and author of numerous easy-step, quick-meal cookbooks, Patricia is career-minded, prosperous, and to her viewing and reading audience, the epitome of the independent woman's version of domestic perfection and culinary know-how. Symbolic of her independence from her husband, Patricia has divided their expansive eighteenth-century home equally into "his" and "hers" sections, walling up corridors and doorways to secure this division and assuring others that she and her husband "prefer it this way" (69). Dr. Shone's half of the house, however, is falling into disrepair. Lined floor to ceiling with books—tomes of knowledge—no longer read, his half shelters a broken patriarch who paces anxiously throughout the night and remains sleepless during the day.

Patricia's half, however, is no less anxious for all of its order, fresh flowers and television respectability. Repeatedly she fantasizes of methodically and cheerfully blending a blood-hued concoction of fruit and vegetables, then with a flourish and a smile

she lifts the blender's top to spray her kitchen and camera crew, sparing none from her faux blood. This transgressive fantasy recalls an event from her childhood in which Patricia's favorite of her grandfather's farmhands splattered his brains across the inside of the barn with a single gun shot after having been caught having sex with another man. Maturity, career success and marital independence aside, Patricia is still very much "a small girl standing by a door behind which the world has changed, beyond which there is something she is not supposed to know, something she is never going to be allowed to understand" (67). She may have sequestered her husband, but the figures of her father and grandfather still bar her entry to the barn. According to this formulation, the transformed heteronormativity in which the potentially economically and socially liberated woman lives remains limited in its sight and understanding and repeats the prized representational structures of patriarchy.

Of a generation, Enright's and Smith's paired protagonists are born in the early- to mid-1960s and seek alternatives to feminist visions of the socially liberated woman and reassertions of sexual difference to reflect a feminine self. Yet while these novels are working a similar generational terrain of gender and its relation to subjectivity, their disruptions of the site of woman differ. Maria and Rose's desire to lose sight of themselves by seeking new representational systems retains a connection to the feminine/other since their self-sighting in the novel is associated with and extends the mother's desires. However, Amy's and Ash's desires take on terminology of disappearance, a rhetoric aligned with their love of literature as well as Amy's poststructuralist studies and embrace of signification as a "ghostly" process. Amy's excitation at the thought that "She [Ash] could be anywhere" and Ash's inability to

contact Amy to give her a box of journals gesture to a fundamental evacuation of self/other signification, which is shaped in part by the direction of their sexual desires. Aligned with Monique Wittig's articulation of the lesbian as a figuration of "non-woman," neither Amy nor Ash register as "economically, politically or ideologically" in relation to a man (20). Theirs is a privileging of the absence of *woman* rather than of her material or essential presence that reflects back from a masculine counter-part, and their stories are often less about the seeing of themselves as women anew and more about the representation and reading of a desirous self that races ahead, just out of vision. In these ways, both texts produce parodic binary gender expressions that misalign with a masculine imaginary.

Kate, born in 1989, figures a subsequent generation of female subjects, a generation one-step removed from paternity (the law of the father) as well as from maternal certainty. Kate's paternal-line is a non-issue; however, in contrast to patriarchal social order and Lacanian symbolic, Kate's maternal-line is uncertain. In the same manner that the events "causing" Amy's illiteracy remain tenuous and unconfirmed, the story of Kate's birth and parentage remain in play: Kate was not "born" claims Amy. She found Kate under a "bush" or "under a bed." Just as likely Kate was "fished out of a loch" or brought by a "big white bird" (53) or more likely, Kate was stolen—"Let's say you took a child" (95). But from her biological father or mother, stolen away from a relationship with her grandparents or metaphorically from a conventional childhood and notions of heteronormative stability, the text is not clear. Given the volatility of Amy and Ash's relationship and that Ash describes having sex with multiple men, it is even plausible that Kate is Ash's biological child and that stealing Kate is Amy's revenge for

her burnt apartment. Regardless, the security of maternity and symbolic of knowing are made suspect. What does become apparent is that Kate's origins, like the causes of Amy's inability to read are an unrecoverable site, unnecessary to either Kate or Amy's travels and lives. "Whose child are you?" asks Amy at bedtime. "'Yours,' Kate replies" (136-7).

There is something joyfully improper about Kate. New to a small, coastal community, living in a caravan, and being raised by a single-mother, Kate does not seem to recognize or care that she and Amy do not quite fit in with the rest of the residents. Smart, an avid reader, and able to build and maintain most friendships, Kate seems socially well-adjusted. However, her attempt to comfort a classmate who denies his father's recent death in a boating accident with a casual, "It doesn't matter about not having a father," disturbs the boy and his mother so deeply they bar her from their home (24). Their attachment to "father" ensures that the dead father is the one who matters most. Kate cannot understand her punishment or the value of the father in a heteronormative economy, and it is her difference from the community that exposes the novel's critique of a subjectivity located in the apparatuses of patriarchy and Western logocentrism with the dual insistence on "origin" and documentation.

If paternity or maternity do not secure Kate's origins, neither does the nation-state. Having no birth certificate since Amy claims she "didn't feel like recording" Kate's birth, they have somehow "always gotten around it" and "lived quite happily" without official records (74). The trip to Italy poses a problem, however, in that Kate will need a passport for international travel. In a narrative adamantly throwing Kate's origins into question, a passport would suggest a bottom-line, a sovereign claim and determination of England as

national progenitor, the seeming ubiquity of nation to organize and stamp an official identity on its citizenry.

Kate's passport, however, functions as but the embrace of lie, of a transgression as a means to an end, which recalls Hélène Cixous' association of her French passport with a lie that produces both fear and anxiety in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts*: "I cannot look at it without trembling for fear of being unmasked, because it is a fake, always has been. Lie, forgery, use of forgery, in spite of myself and with my consent" (206). For Cixous, to accept the "legal fiction" and claim "I am French" is at once a denial of her Jewish background and Algerian birth. While to claim otherwise, "I am not French" seems a "breach of courtesy" in particular to the "infinite hospitality of the [French] language" in which she has found herself "home" (207). Significantly, the English language has yet to afford Amy a semblance of home—her literary acumen was more a "power tool" to identify her as somehow different and superior to others as well as a means to gain the attention of a father who loved his books but only tolerated his daughter. Kate's passport finagled via illicit contacts is not only a "legal fiction" of a national claim but also an illegal document, manufactured to serve a woman's desire to travel abroad with her child. In this way, *Like* sidesteps the pitfall of sovereign claims and the end-point of national identity and instead offers a lie to the executors of state power (border officers). Revealing passports to be a prosthetic of state apparatus, Kate's illegitimate passport is a transgression a doubled-substitution, exposing the artificiality and porosity of national borders.

The protagonists of both Enright's and Smith's novels disassociate instances of international travel from notions of national belonging so that belonging emerges from

the personal relationships between sisters, mothers and daughters, and female friends. This emphasis on the particularity of a female experience makes it is difficult to sight a larger politic or model for a feminist or woman-ordered community. If we read the traveling figures of these novels as feminine, we must recognize that such femininity emanates largely through the resistance to patriarchy (father-figures) and the perversion of conventional gender roles that associate women with a domestic space. These undeclared "feminine" or, perhaps, "feminist" characters cross national borders while male characters, particularly fathers, remain within the homeland and often within the domestic space of "home." For instance, Berts preserves his Dublin home exactly as his dead wife had decorated, spending much of his time sitting in his armchair and staring confusedly out the window. Amy's father, Dr. Shore, remains housebound in England, a retired academic trapped in his library, chain smoking and surrounded by the debris of his career. Ash's father is similarly tied to Scotland and his life as a widower. Inverting the equation of home with domestic space for the woman, this generation of men, these fathers, figure a version of masculinity that is incapable of exploring and ordering the world, trapped in the very locations they relied on their wives to arrange. In contrast, their daughters travel—Rose from England to Ireland and back; Maria from Ireland to the United States and back; Ash from Scotland to England and then across the Atlantic to the States and Canada; and Amy zigzagging between England to Scotland and, finally, Italy and back. Even when they return to the country of their birth, they do not claim "home." For example, "Maria said she wasn't actually home. She wanted to work in an airport, she said, and this was the next best thing [working in dress shop with mirrors]" (63). These women do not seek to know or to order the world but, rather, to transgress, to

escape conventional, patriarchal orders and knowledge. Through their mobility they test borders and edges, finding, as Ash puts it that "she did not exist" (253).

These are not stories of collective movements or mass dislocations as recognized in narratives and studies of female migrants, refugees. They are in many ways a continuation of modernist writing projects—for instance those of Joyce and Conrad—where dislocation appears to happen in what Caren Kaplan calls the "singular." In *Questions of Travel* (1996) Kaplan notes that High Modernism's subject "dislocations are expressed in singular rather than collective terms, as purely psychological or aesthetic situations rather than as a result of historical circumstances" (4). And, yet, "singular" as a moniker of the modernist auteur works only if we assume Amy, Ash, Maria, Rose express a locatable, albeit alienated, self akin to Leopold Bloom and Marlow whose psychic terrains remain concomitant with Dublin's and Africa's geography respectively. Accordingly, singularity forcefully delimits Bloom and Marlow marking their locational point, as if on a map, upon which socio-historical forces act and might be easily read though their effects.

To read the movements of these female characters away from homelands and their eventual return as a locating of identity is to exclude their resistance to the denotative processes of sexual difference that play out in such recognizable locales as London, New York, and Inverness but that have little cartographic detail to mark a relationship to "home." In particular, each character returns "home" but the depiction refuses incorporation within prevailing imaginings of nation of birth as either "fatherland" or "motherland," the place where a subject manifests into a symbolic order via a particular cultural and mode of national exceptionalism. Images of the protagonists' fathers as

broken men easily detour readings of homeland as commensurate with locational prowess of "fatherland," and yet, images of mothers are trickier to read and their prolific qualities risk being simply recuperated into a symbolic "mother" to orient each character's relationship to the place of her birth. In so far as Maria and Rose "reunite" in Dublin and their meeting circumnavigates through the mother—Anna interrupts for a reason—she seeks self-articulation not national nurturing. She does not speak for Ireland nor do her desires to "represent" reinforce a broader cultural desire for self-representation prior to English rule. The twins' reunion , however, might easily be (mis)read as a return to Ireland, to the Irish family with the valences of "motherland." As Robert Karron in his review states, "one is led to believe, [they are] becoming whole again, the way they were before their mother died, when they knew who they were, what they were 'like.'" This certainly appears to be the impulse behind Irish modernism's excavation of Gaelic folklore and interest in the west of Ireland as an "authentic" reservoir of Irishness. There is, however, no returning to the mother before death in Enright's novel. Anna is dead at the twins' birth and speaks either as a ghost or through Berts' recollections, and while cancer offers a particular model of proliferation (uncontrollable cellular growth) in Berts' masculine imaginary, Anna's cancer prefaces the composite doubling of mother figures throughout the narrative. Rather than an idealized or contained image of a mother supporting a patriarchal, national order, "mother" becomes diffuse, proliferating the novel as Anna, Evelyn, Mrs. Cotter, Sister Maura Misericordia/Misericordiæ—the Magnificat who split her *a* and an *e* to name twin girls after the Virgin Mother (Maria/Marie).

Twinning and textual iteration in *WAYL?* produces a symmetrical proliferation of the feminine, which at first glance seems to align broadly with a post-1970s (third-wave feminism) insistence on the multiplicity within the category of *woman*, the irreducible differences among *women*, and the proliferation of feminism into feminisms. Certainly, Maria's and Rose's experiences as gendered subjects manifest within opposing national and cultural frameworks, Irish/English, so that even two women sharing of the same womb can be reduced to a homogenous female experience. While engaging some of the central themes and debates within feminism in the era of the "post," the novel sidesteps the reiteration of culturally determined womanly experience and masculinist knowledge structures by employing travel to dislocate each sister's search for self from a particular socio-cultural locale. Likewise, their parallel search for self-reflection cannot be explained as a production of identical genitalia—as if their genes or nature predisposed them to a kind of obsessive self-searching. Their self-searching brings to the reader what she expects—a reunion of sorts—but not of characters who, by the time of their encounter, have lost sight of the symbolic order organizing their respective searches. Maria is "off the map" and Rose cannot play music, and in the end, we understand their femininity according to their resistance to patriarchal Irish family, but the articulation of their femininity and its relation to self-recognition remains a closing gesture rather than definition or articulation.

Neither Enright's nor Smith's novel offers a clear prescription or utopian vision for a collective socio-political movement rooted in an image of some new kind of essential *woman* who escapes social and symbolic terms of a "woman's place" or her location in a masculine imaginary. Rather, both novels give play to "*like*," with its

associative and pleasurable connotations of incongruity and proximity. "Like" is an emphasis on the inevitable gaps in meaning, making explicit the moves of language—metaphor and metonymy—that in bringing signs together creates a dynamic where the meaning and, consequently, gender is not fixed, rather glimpsed as associative and generative. Commensurate with these profuse, associative projects, each novel doubles back, repeating events and (re)associating character experiences without filling in chronological or narrative holes for the reader. In *WAYL?* narrative perspectives shift rapidly from character to character—father, sister(s), nun, stepmother, dead mother—keeping only the barest hint of a chronology. As the title indicates, the novel explores reflections and terrains of the internal other, as stranger or the *you* that splits the "I," through nominally prolific female characters, An/na, Misericord*a/e*—Mari*a*/Mari*e*, who are each differently intrigued with reflective and locational surfaces such as mirrors, photographs, maps and lists. By the close of the novel, Maria has returned to Ireland from a brief work excursion in New York and Rose has traveled from London to Dublin where they unintentionally encounter one another in a dress shop changing room. Standing before the floor to ceiling mirror, Maria observerves, "there were four of them" (253). With this image, the novel works both with the proliferating capacity of the literary double while reshaping it to something more akin to Luce Irigaray's description of the feminine as a site of curved and multiplying reflections and proximity in *The Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974/1985). If offering a version of reunion, Maria and Rose's stories evade the narrative resolution and image of unity that tends to close tales based on conventional literary doubles (Dostoevksy's *The Double*; Poe's "William Wilson;" Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Hyde*; and the list goes on); for,

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death, madness, and/or both have already occurred and still the sister's story continues—"One" plus "One" equals more than two.

The list of modifiers "postnational," "mobile," and "female" here are intended to resist delimiting or effectively categorizing an emergent subjectivity, but rather like Rosi Braidotti's nomadism, this hyper-qualifying carries an excess of descriptive and locational modifiers to align with contemporary poststructuralist feminisms. In particular, the prefix of the "post," fraught as it is with the connotations of its suffix, allows for a definitional ambivalence that I think suits the protagonists' ambivalences about the country of their birth and childhood. In this way, the site of the national is not expunged from their stories, but as it is inevitably entangled with the representational orders and practices of fathers and the heteronormative, it is another site of rejection. Theirs is not a desire for inclusion within or strictly an opposition to the patriarchal and phallocentrism, but rather Enright's and Smith's protagonists negotiate multiple reflections and/or significations of self within the terrains of an already fluid and dynamic feminist discursive scene.

CHAPTER 1, AGAIN or DEUCE

LIKE MOVES: HOW TO DO THINGS WITH MAPS, LISTS, AND MIRRORS

First, Wipe Yourself from the Map

> *Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: A hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory—precession of simulacra—that engenders the territory.*
>
> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*

> *Boundaries are drawn by mapping practices; 'objects' do not pre-exist as such. Objects are boundary projects. But boundaries shift from within; boundaries are very tricky. What boundaries provisionally contain remains generative, productive of meanings and bodies. Siting (sighting) boundaries is a risky practice.*[8]
>
> Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges"

> *The rhizome is altogether different,* a map and not a tracing. *Make a map, not a tracing.... What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real.*
>
> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

Maps and mapping practices—as Jean Baudrillard, Donna Haraway, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari demonstrate—stand in for a plethora of conceptual approaches and projects that may "sight boundaries," that may undermine or assert versions/territories of the "real," and/or may generate radical relationships between ideas,

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[8] Often included in and sited in anthologies on feminist geography or spatial studies, Haraway's "Situated Knowledge" argues for a way of thinking that includes both science and feminism so that "science," broadly scientific discourse and study, does not have to be conceived as the domain of the masculine, either excluding or assimilating feminist thought. To get past the impasse of oppositional feminism, what Haraway terms the "polarity" that reinforces the exclusion of woman from both the sciences and notions of objectivity and knowledge, she proposes a necessary recuperation of "objectivity" as an intersection between "biological research and writing." The world or "real" in this intersection becomes a coyote or trickster figure, suggestive of a shifting and impartial "knowledge" that is always situated within a socio-historical context.

depending on the map(ing)'s context. In *WAYL?* maps and a cartographic practice, however, occur initially as part of the self-obsession(s) and rituals of the father, more aligned with a Cartesian knowledge and subject formulation, which does not work for the daughter, Maria (and which Baurdrillard, Haraway, and Deleuze and Guattari critique). Maps and cartographic representation, as Baudrillard and Haraway specifically remind us, carries with it the weight of Western scientific knowledge and a privileging of the visual;[9] maps actually *produce* the very object or territory of study that they portend to represent. The driving desire of Enright's and Smith's protagonists for alternative modes for self-recognition tends to reject Cartesian imbued "maps" outright as part of knowledge system that fails to generate their self image. While Maria, in particular, overtly rejects the mapping practices of her father, the narrative structure in both novels recalls Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic map, working as a dynamic break with convention via artistic experimentation. The prolific femininity and the dislocation of protagonists from a national/cultural identity to supply the base terms of/for self-articulation suggests, if nothing else, a cautionary engagement of discourses and tropes of the cartographic when mapping female subjectivity and mobility so that we do not simply retrace the masculine to produce the fantasy of a "real," localized "woman."

In so far as Enright's narrative affects feminine mobility as dislocation from essentializing representations of "woman," it does so in large part by rejecting the representational heft of visual cognition and a masculine imaginary that mapping carries. This critical gesture could be read as a precursor to Smith's *Like* wherein we encounter

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[9] John Pickles in *History of Spaces* asserts that Western "Reason," with its emphasis on visual cognition, is highly or principally cartographic in its structure and operation. Significantly, Pickles tracks multiple crises of representation associated with Cartographic (Cartesian) Reason from the seventeenth century onward. The return to cartographic discourse as a means to securing knowledge and representation, according to Pickles, occurs at moments when representation is questioned and destabilized.

protagonists who are already "off the map" of social, familial and professional registers and who resist the expectations of gender, such as conventional sex roles, no matter where their story is set. Unlike Maria and Rose(Marie) whose geographic location epigraphically opens each chapter, Amy and Ash's geographic movements in relation to each other are often not provided—but geography has little bearing on who they are or what they desire. Maps, which suggest a negotiation of a territory, fail in *Like* to pin-point the object of desire. And in this way, in Smith's novel maps are lures, promising to lead one woman to the other, but instead lead her and even the reader to *her* absence, the place we know either Amy or Ash could be but is not. Enright's novel allots the map and mapping practices considerable textual space, enacting a "crisis of representation" to gesture to a kind of "elsewhere" of representation that is featured in Smith's writing. This is not to suggest a chronological advancement or progressive evolution of feminist practice from Enright's to Smith's figurations of female subjects and mapping practices, for neither novel delimits or essentializes the *elsewhere* (off the map) but, rather, to suggest that the crisis of representation each novel takes up plays up on a specific socio-political representational terrain of gender and self. For, Enright's narrative picks up on questions of representing Ireland and Irishness; and Smith's story, the reading of lesbian or woman-oriented subjectivity and desire.

Sometimes a Map is Just a Cigar

> *But perhaps it [the circle] didn't stop at Dublin Bay. Shouldn't he walk back on the other side of the street, so the circle would close at his own front door? Or would it close inside the house?...Or would he cross it [his wife's side] first, as he set out? But as he rolled over the hollow she had left in the mattress, he might catch the edge of her absence like an elastic*

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band on his foot, he might drag it with him around the entire country, until his wife's death had filled the map, emptied the map. (11)

Berts, the father, models the fantasy of self-location against which we can glimpse Maria's rebellion and the undoing of the formulaic *woman* and, even, Irishman. The novel opens with descriptions of Berts' attempts to represent himself to himself as complete with "the circle around his life" that protects him from the incomprehensible—*woman* and *death* (11). Berts is a bit of a caricature of the patriarchal, nation-oriented expressions of Irishness that have dominated modern Irish literature but which by the close of the twentieth century have become less sturdy, absorbed into anxiety and confusion about representational (im)potence. A husband without a wife and father to half of his daughters, he turns to his beloved Ireland and its borders to repair his position as the patriarch of a broken Irish family. Berts' fantasy mapping gestures to what appears to be a stable representational structure capable of mirroring Ireland, and consequently his place in it, as something natural, solid and real at a time when little about his life makes sense.

Berts repeatedly imagines walking the shoreline of Ireland, a border he knows intimately not from experience but from a map he keeps safe from the elements, rolled and stowed in his pants pocket. Though this imaginative journey of wandering and map-checking he attempts to "inscribe his life," stabilizing the identity from which his "life" emanates. His repetitive self-rendering suggests an inscriptive failure. Each night, over and over, he imagines how he might move from his bed, through the streets of Dublin, along the docks, and by keeping to "the very rim of the land" how he might replicate the map's neat boundaries of Ireland for/as himself. "He took an imaginary piece of red wool and wove it around an imaginary map, curling into coves and wriggling round

headlands, then stretching it out along a ruler for miles per inch" (10). Berts' attempt to measure and authenticate Ireland in his imagination parallel characteristics of the wandering Irishman, such as Yeats' Oisin or Synge's Christy Mahon, whose journeys led to a confirmation of Irish community and Ireland as "home," fraught as that home may be. More aptly, Enright's imaginative and psychological approach to the wandering figure recalls Joyce's Leopold Bloom whose journey through the streets of Dublin constitutes a restorative measure against his grief over his dead son and wife's infidelities.[10] However, unlike Joyce's *Ulysses*, which excessively renders Dublin as a kind of alienated terrain commensurate, perhaps thus soothing, to the alienated modern subject, *WAYL?* renders city and landscape strictly through imagination. In the context of Berts' fantasy-journey, Ireland, not just Dublin, becomes quite small—walkable in a night—and vague, a series of names without characterizing details. If for Bloom, an examination of a world map elicits flights of imagination beyond Ireland's geographic, cultural and political borders, Berts' map organizes a literal setting, defining the general shape of the land as well as his place within its borders.

Mistaking the map for the territory, the word for the thing, Berts is very much the figure of a man in crisis, paralleling what Shaun Richards and Luke Gibbons note is a "crisis of representation" that affects the contemporary thematologies Irish literature, drama and criticism. Berts mistook the signs of Anna's brain tumor to be the

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[10] Possibly the pinnacle modernist cartographic literature, *Ulysses*, remains in critical and popular lore a narrative map of Dublin. As Jon Hegglund notes, Joyce himself is in part responsible for the interest Joyceans have in plotting the novels geographics, in debating the postcolonial and nationalist implications of rendering Dublin pre-revolution, and just perhaps in desiring to pick up a map from the Irish Tourist Center and retrace the steps of Leopold Bloom. Not only did Joyce rely on extensive and detailed maps of Dublin to write *Ulysses*, but he is also quoted as saying "I want...to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book." For Hegglund's reading of Joycean cartography and what he links to Deluezean lines of flight. See: Jon Hegglund. "*Ulysses* and the Rhetoric of Cartography," (2003).

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idiosyncratic signs belonging to "women," and he cannot solve the paradoxes associated with his wife's cancer and her birthing of twins post-death. "He hardly knew what it [Anna's cancer] was—a place with no proper map and no way home" (7). For Berts, the natural divisions creating social order no longer stand. Cancer manifests as woman, and the dead reproduce. Berts' response is simply to transfer his professional cartographic methods as a fix for his personal crisis. His maps represent definitive city and nationscapes, known to be true through a correlation between sign and thing, a correlation that also depends on underlying oppositions between whole/broken, stable/instable, present/absent, live/dead. Berts' palliative fantasy of the map then requires he set his feet down in the space of the privileged sign of difference, which brings forth additional oppositions: land/sea, home/foreign, south/north, Republic/Ulster, right/left, man/woman. Each oppositional pair, each neat division, however, is a geometric impossibility as soon as he returns to his bed, which forces him to cross over Anna's absence to complete his circle. Adjusting his course, he repeats his journey, trying to accomplish the impossible—to define an Irish-man purged of woman and death.

Berts' cartography of Ireland and the Irishman is a story that works in ways other than Berts intends, illustrating the failure of the map to guarantee self-representation when sexual difference has been destabilized. Recalling Cixous' assertion that "man" in a masculine imaginary suggests stability precisely because "death and the feminine sex" are "unrepresentable things," Anna's absence functions simultaneously as the image of woman as the "other to man" and something other than the other—a cancer read as woman, complicating the binaries of sexual difference Berts relied on for his sense of self-presence and meaning ("Laugh" 885). The map upon which he traces Ireland

ultimately fails to resolve his narrative-fantasy of redefinition and self-actualization. Thus his character corresponds with a failed imagination that, while invested in wholeness, fails to guarantee a universal male subject or unified Ireland because "he" cannot maintain binary orders of difference.

Berts' faith in the map consonant with the Republic of Ireland's and nationalist socio-political projects agendas to create "one island—one nation," is an overt rejection of Ireland's political partitioning. Berts' nearly pathological insistence on marking an entirely insular, pure location for *the man himself* likewise calls to mind the most stringent expressions of patriarchy which exclude women from political rule and economic power. In this way, his project of self-location resembles the 1937 Irish Constitution's enclosure of women in a domestic space, making explicit the order of sexual difference sustaining Ireland's governance. For example, Article 41.2 of the Constitution, the "State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved" and that "mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home."[11] In addition, Berts' conceptual crisis resonates with the Constitution's implicit mapping of Ireland, which until the 1998 Peace Agreement, included Ulster's six counties as contained within and subject to the Republic. The republican fantasy of a united Ireland, a whole island jurisdictionally sovereign and,

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[11] Article 41.2 of the Irish Constitution states:

> 1° In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.
> 2° The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.
> (http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/attached_files/Pdf%20files/Constitution%20of%20IrelandNov2004.pdf)

therefore, liberated from English rule, suggests an extended historicity for a particularly Irish representational crisis.

Published in 1999, *WAYL?* tilts Berts' crisis of self-representation into discussions of the "crisis of representation" in later-twentieth-century Irish literature and studies. Attributed largely to the remythologizing and revisionary work of such Irish women writers of the 1970s and 1980s as Eavan Boland, Anne Devlin, Edna O'Brien, and Julia O'Faolain, the "The New Territory," to use Boland's language, became an Irish literature revised to include images of woman as immigrants, laborers, imperfect mothers and rancorous political activists. In a counter-oedipal move, their feminist revision of Ireland's cultural self-definition called for the death of the iconic mother figure whose womb secured Ireland's cultural and political reproduction. From this perspective, the "crisis of representation" is a misnomer and a diversion from the more apt phraseology of Irish literature's "crisis of masculinity." Anna is quite literally the dead mother whose act of reproduction produces neither son nor nation but rather two daughters. Resonating feminist iconography, the dead mother in Enright's novel nourishes a feminine recognition of self rather than the revision and new mythmaking of earlier Irish feminism. In doing so Maria's desire to "wipe herself from the map" curves into the ways a representational crisis may affect articulations and recognitions of self. Maria's desires for self-recognition do not parallel her father's desire for fixity and definition of location but rather are incongruent, moving toward loss of reflection, producing lines of desire that may intersect with but do not reproduce her father's footsteps.

Incongruence and the Fantasy of Location

> *Maria pushed herself up off the sidewalk and went on. She passed a sad-looking woman who ignored her, and recognised, too late, her own reflection. Even she did not know what she looked like any more.*
> *Finally.*
> *She had wiped herself off the map.*
> Enright, *What Are You Like?*

While Berts traces edges and encircles, Maria crisscrosses New York City via streets, subways, trains and ferries. Always pushing to the limit of what she knows, Maria's nightly fantasy mimics her father's but is fueled by a very different desire—to be lost, to be somewhere unrecognizable, to be what she likes best..."nothing" (83, 111, 202). She pushes the limits of self-location just past the cityscape of memory until her geographic location is not-secure and she is spatially disoriented and dislocated. Her reliance on the metro map for re-orientation and the safe return home, however, recalls Berts' own map-checking along route. Maria's haphazard routes twisting through the city and inscribing multiple, misshapen circles make a decidedly different and more rhizomatic path compared to Bert's neat border-tracing, to return to Deleuze and Guattari's terminology. However, each night as Maria checks her map to locate herself, she returns to the very system of her father where a map is presumed to represent a whole terrain of sexual difference, and Maria returns to the site of the "monstrous," of the foreignness of "another country" (4, 9). She returns to a symbolic space of (in)difference where, as Irigaray and Teresa de Lauretis note, "woman" can be sighted in her relation to or as the object of masculine desire.[12]

[12] See de Lauretis' reading of Irigaray's *This Sex...* suggestion of female sexuality as sexual indifference (female desire cannot be recognized) to move Irigaray's formulation into figuration on of lesbian desire as (in)difference: "Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation" (1988).

I should note that maps are common features in travel literature, wherein the anthropologics construct a traveling subject and mark the traveler's growth through descriptions of cultural difference. The "I" narrator/traveler sights who s/he is in relation to others encountered in-route with differences geographically and culturally measured and charted. In addition to the structural reliance on binary difference, travel narratives calibrate the subject according to "home" (country/culture/family), the site of departure and return that signal growth and change of character. Akin to travel narratives, the characters' nightly wanderings chronicle a journey guided by desire, mounting conflict and resolved with the suggestion of quiescence (the return home). Their night-time fantasies then counter the novel's overt (dis)ordering of chronology, cause/effect and narrative perspective to convey history and self-knowledge as a fragmented and disorderly experience. Any notion of what is "real" and what is known according to conventions of realist representation in travel writing is upended and rendered as fantasy. While Maria's ability to return home safely, Berts' return is laden with anxiety and confusion about crossing the space of the dead wife, suggesting that Maria "knows her place" all too well. Map reading in their fantasy travels is less about their respective mastery of geographic space but actually about their mastery over their own narratives, the stories that make up their sense of self.

Berts' fatal flaw lies in his mistaking the map as a mirrored image of a geographic territory, mistaking the simulacrum as real. To Berts, Ireland appears to be something real, reflected purely and immune to the slipperiness of representation. What Berts cannot understand is how it might be that Ireland appears "real" because Ireland is a map. Trapped by a representational logic through which he believes he holds a true and

accurate map of his home and country, Berts struggles to maintain the congruency of the map to the land so that Ireland might be real, natural, life-securing.

Just as the dead Anna refused (if a brain tumor can be a sort of refusal) to stay in her maternal place, Maria often unwittingly escapes the ideal daughter and young woman. "Sometimes [Evelyn] thought the child was unnatural. Sometimes just the sight of her, half in the country and half out of it, put Evelyn in a rage" (68). Even without knowledge of Rose, Evelyn doubles Marie, splits her, places her between geo-political and psychic borders, and, thus, Marie becomes in this figuration something "unnatural," and something other than her father's image of "monstrous" feminine. Maria's tomboy antics, unladylike bruised knees, pissing out of Christ upon her confirmation, and general lack of direction/location elicits the repeated query of "What are you like?" (an idiomatic, rhetorical question for "what is your problem" or "what is wrong with you") from both her family and Anton. Maria, however, approaches their question of likeness quite literally, a further indication of her having missed the point and of her consistent misalignment with family expectations and conventions. While Berts' cartographic imagination, similar to his wife's, calls forth notions of representational congruency and natural order, Maria's desire to be lost and strange marks her incongruency to her father's desires.

Maria's maps, like her routes, are multiple and varied, and they expand to include socio-cultural topographies such as myth, religion, philosophy, and even psychoanalysis, which she quips are not "much good if you don't have a dick" (116). Such textual cartographies, as Maria understands them, reflect a real or authentic territory, traced and interpreted by expert mapmakers and passed down via her father and his fantasy of order.

In transferring her father's comparatively simplistic perception of the map and its mirroring function, she observes the blatant search for religious, national and sexual identity among her friends in New York and cannot understand their desire to locate themselves via the edges of the mapped and known. "In those days, everyone had a fantasy on their skin, a way of showing what they knew" (143). Eion's tattooed right nipple, August's dogless dog chain, Leanne's bulging belly filled with a baby suggested a fantasy performance of their identity as something authentic, as some kind of indelible ethnic and gendered, albeit counter-cultural, bodies marked to express a sense of self and belonging. Similar to Berts' map, their ornamented bodies smack of all too recognizable signs meaningful within a racially and nationally diverse immigrant New York community, reflecting their desire to be "real" and "authentic." Similar to the strangers Maria passes on the street, she cannot tell if they "are they lying or telling the truth about themselves," and their bodies read to Maria like the Statue of Liberty as symbol of America—"a postcard hallucination in the sea of haze" (142). Within this Baudrillardian haze of hyperreal, her friends' opposition to mainstream expressions positions them simply as "other," a space of supplementarity. In this way, supplementary space and simulacra (re)production work in conjunction to figure Maria's fundamental difference differently—according to her desire to escape "maps"—and recognize her *self* is neither already traced nor likely to be. Rather her desires suggest a consistent incongruency with her both her family and peers. Hers is, of course, an ironic inconruency, generated through a motif of repetition and the fantasy of the sameness of twins, who evoke "the copy" but like the simulacra have no original image or single map as their source.

While Berts' fantasy of a life encircled reveals an anxiety about masculinity and the (in)stability of patriarchal order, Maria's fantasy reveals an anxiety equal to her father's but incongruent with the geographic and cultural maps locating her father and her New York companions. Maria's repetitive wanderings suggest an anxiety related to "home" and a life too contained. Her journey is too neat, too predictable and easy. She knows all too well her place in relation to her father and male lovers—She is strange, monstrous, other, Irish, and immigrant. Her bedside map actually works, reconfirming her location so that she might return safely to her side of the bed each night. Maria's "problem" is she *can locate* her *self* and, therefore she appears too fixed, trapped in a representational dynamic that cannot reflect her desires even as she has yet to produce or articulate them. And while a desire to respond to the question, "What are you like," fuels the actions of not only Maria but of all of the novel's primary characters, the narrative refuses to clarify Maria's desires or provide a definitive answer—for in as much as she may be "like" Rose, she is equally not-like. What we do know is that her nighttime fantasies reveal desires to be "lost" and "nothing" and that during her daytime wandering of New York City she realizes that she longs "to see herself, her old self, or a different self, passing her by and escaping down the street" (144).

The narrative externalizes the other of Maria as Other, doubling the stranger within as Maria repeatedly glimpses her strangeness in other women. Maria's move toward being simultaneously the viewing subject and the viewed object is to escape reflective topographies that identify and locate her according to binary orders of the Other—whether woman or Irish. Rather than expanding the maps, the narratives that organize her gender, ethnic, and national difference as a representative story—a

conceptual move similar to social justice models of gender, class and racial/ethnic inclusivity—Maria "wipes herself from the map," an act of liberation that obliterates her internal sense of location in relation to others. In doing so, she must modify the representational systems that produce her sense of self and her relationship to place. The novel then shifts from terrains of "identity" and the father to notions of "self" and an as yet-to-be-defined Maria.

Drawn to the spaces and people of sub-culture, Maria's desire to inhabit her strangeness, to speak and see from otherness, exceeds the self-expressions of her family in Ireland and her immigrant community in New York. Only when Maria encounters a space of incongruency by way of a metal trailer outlined in neon that appears "tacked on to the side of fifties highrise" does she stop looking to men to reflect what she is like (144). Omitted from her metropolitan map, the diner appears unreal and geometrically misaligned with the adjacent building's clean lines and squared angles. A space of the feminine, curvy, and specializing in—what else?—egg breakfasts, the diner is simultaneously absent from representation (unmapped desire) and supplementary, securing definition for its adjacent building. Standing outside the diner, Maria finds herself suddenly famished but upon entering cannot remember how she likes her eggs cooked. "An egg wasn't just an egg, it was a state of mind," she thinks as she watches passersby, perceiving each man and woman as an egg, cooked to his or her preference, living and walking in "happy in a sort of senseless difference" (144). Without phallic orientation, desire and consequently thought itself, becomes senseless, slipping out of binary clarity. Sexual difference—male/female—still seems to operate but the difference that organizes the male as desiring subject, female as reflective object of man's desire is

no longer sustainable. And in this context, "senseless difference" suggests both the cataclysmic shift in Maria's thinking away from the maps from which the world and people make sense as well as the possibility that binary difference itself is nonsensical and ultimately pointless in stories of self-searching.[13] The diner's excessiveness of options and desires in the space of the woman, however, overwhelms Maria, and she runs out of the diner onto the streets, racing along unknown sidewalks until she overtakes herself. Finally accessing a senseless order and becoming lost, strange to herself, the sad, unknown woman reflected in shop windows is "her own reflection."

In positioning Maria "off the map," the narrative returns to familiar figurations of women such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Yellow Wallpaper* and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* whose female protagonists' unconventional thinking mark them as perceptibly or socially mad but ultimately astute commentators on the very discursive economy that produces their self-expressions as madness. Maria's "off the map" location produces a similar narrative instability, a slipping from the space of the known and a move into the unrepresentable site of woman. Maria's misrecognition of her own reflection reveals a disjunction between an impossible-to-comprehend feminine self and a remaining woman looking for an alternative representational order to produce an alternative "Maria." The lag between Maria seeing the "sad-looking woman who ignored her" and her re-cognition of an image that is simultaneously her/not-her, becomes Maria's extended condition—a period of "waiting"—until she encounters Rose and a

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13 There is a resemblance between Enright's depictions of mirroring and sexual difference and those of Luce Irigaray. In the diner, Maria accesses an effusive difference which recalls Irigaray's mapping of feminine pleasure: "But *woman has sex organs more or less everywhere*. She finds pleasure almost anywhere. Even if we refrain from invoking the hystericization of her entire body, the geography of her pleasure is far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is commonly imagined—in an imaginary rather too narrowly focused on sameness" (*This Sex* 28).

proliferation of reflections of self. Similar to Gilman and Rhys' complex figurations of women trapped in a masculine symbolic economy, Enright's novel resists libratory and celebratory imaginings of a woman coming into a feminine imaginary, layering darkness and the ambiguities of Maria's suicide attempts, hospitalization, and rejection of her familial obligations and social roles. Not a naïve celebration of "woman writing woman," *WAYL?* distills the pain, confusions, and psychic dislocations of a "woman" striving to understand herself through the "elsewhere" of representation.

In the chapters describing her return to Ireland and hospitalization, Maria cannot catch up with herself. She is continuously the self who escaped "down the street" no longer able to track or account for her "different self" since her relationship to self/other shifts radically and "she"/Maria moves into a space of psychic dislocation. Rejecting the reflections returning from the masculine to track her images of self, Maria's "I" becomes mobile and supplementary, registering from someplace else. Accordingly, during her hospitalization in Dublin she cannot track her location in relation to her therapist who methodically moves from one seat to another, testing Maria's capacity to know where she is in relation to others. "As Maria talked, she found her eyes kept returning to the place where the woman should have been but was not...Maria talked on, but it did not matter. Talking wasn't the test, and she had already failed" (161-2). Within the maps of a medical/psychological praxis that privileges a patient's ability to identify her*self*, to know herself in relation to others, Maria's inability to locate her therapist positions her as unstable and without identity.

The novel's emphasis on self rather than identity shifts the terrain of gender away from the mappables of ethnic production (identity expressions) and national reproduction

(cultural and population) toward the more slippery and dynamic discourse of same-sex, non-heteroreproductive narrativity. Woman-directed desire must be written incongruently. For, the function of "woman" in a masculine economy is to reflect male desire back to the masculine subject, relegating womanly desire to expressions of passivity and negation as both Luce Iriagary and Teresa de Lauretis suggest in their sighting of "woman" as occupying a place of symbolic in-difference. As Enright's novel suggests, the process of woman looking to woman for a reflection of self, of a woman-ordered desire that is not an inversion the masculine imagination already in play, requires a leaving behind of old mirrors, maps and representational modes to find new configurations and ways of reflecting "sisterhood" and the self. Yet, Ali Smith's *Like* opens with characters already off the map. Amy has lost the ability to read and is no longer in contact (locatable) within the personal and professional communities of her pre-motherhood life. This off the map quality is in large part given the short-circuiting that happens in narratives of lesbian desire, where the phallus is displaced or in the case of *Like* absented in favor of a reflective apparatus that suggests a subject's movement of the away from the reflective surface just at the moment of apprehension. A bit like a photograph's blurred edges in which the subject quickly slipped from frame as the shutter snapped. The map in these contexts suggests a lure in relation to the object of desire, whether that be a woman as in *Like* or a stable image of self as in *WAYL?*. In this way maps direct our attention to a gender politic via aesthetic practice that absentees *woman* as the bodily and discursive site upon which resistance might be framed.[14]

[14] The notion of lure in configuring lesbian desire comes from Roof's theorization of lesbian sexuality and desire in *A Lure of Knowledge*.

Second, Try Listing

List/Mirror Her

> *I believe that all women, but especially housewives, tend to think in lists; I have always believed, against all opposition, that women think in logical sequence...I realized how thoroughly the housekeeping mind falls into the list pattern.*
>
> Shirley Jackson, *Life Among the Savages*

> *My colleague Mary Armstrong...suggested that list making is indeed a feminist practice. Feminism, she observed, is constantly in the process of thinking of, and consistently and repeatedly fighting for recognition of, its own history and the history of women. Feminism envisions the future with an ongoing consciousness. In short, the work of feminism is the work of always having the master lists in mind. The millennium may help us acknowledge the very special consciousness we try to cultivate and maintain as feminists.*
>
> Jean F. O'Barr, "My Master List for the Millennium"

According to Shirley Jackson and Jean F. O'Barr, lists are a process of thinking and a practice particular to women, and, therefore, list-making might be cultivated as a "very special consciousness" and channeled into a particularly feminist agenda/politic. Given the prominence of lists in Enright's and Smith's novels, I find Jackson's and O'Barr's propositions wonderfully intriguing and, yet, equally troubling, as their formulation of listing as a particularly feminine rhetorical structure relies on a strict formulation of binary sexual difference to uphold lists as a prerogative of the woman and seem to require female genitalia—what might be read to be under the skirt of O'Barr's *woman*—for a feminist practice. In a manner similar to the function of maps in a Cartesian formulation, lists can be construed as reflective structures or a kind of mirror to the contents of a naturalized or "real" terrain—as in the detailed documentations and catalogues of wildlife and flora found in such self-conscious writings as Henry David

Thoreau's *On Walden*.[15] If maps in *WAYL?* and *Like* function as tropes of a particularly gendered representational practice as part of a masculine economy for knowledge production, listing suggests a counter strategy and narrative order. And while the practice of listing is necessary to the characterization of Rose and Ash, their lists consistently fail to produce a naturalized order or to outline these characters as "women," but, rather, because of this failure, produce something that does engage a gendered politic relevant to feminism. Each novel contains a variety of lists—some are offset from prose as recognizable itemizations; some blend into and either become or are the prose.

Employing lists for self-reflection, Rose in *WAYL?* makes mental lists of the "things" that define her, which pop out of the narrative with their verticality and line-line-by line descriptors. Lying in bed at night Rose itemizes the things that identify her and that when taken as a whole (a list) might reflect some sort of cohesive or clear self image. She initially resists dispersion, compiling "a list of the things she was—things she could not forget, even if she tried" (140). This is a common listing practice of gathering similar characteristics (all about Rose) to create a taxonomic category or, in Rose's case, an attempt to create a coherent identity based on taxonomic listing methods. The singular, ultimate "LIST," however, consistently fails to reflect Rose back to Rose, and each self descriptor or "thing" exceeds its own category—"She was too full of things." She only partially fits her categories—"Her favourite colour was blue./Her favourite colour was actually a deep yellow, but she couldn't live with it." And eventually she recognizes the failure of claims to a whole self—"It was all lies" (140).

[15] See Robert Belknap's *The List: The Uses and Pleasures of Cataloguing* (2004).

Rose's repetition of taxonomic listing brings to mind Dennis Hall's correlation between the proliferation of lists in contemporary popular culture and the uncertainty of meaning in postmodernity. In his essay "Listomania: The List as Popular Icon," Hall observes, "Lists...are a kind of intellectual comfort food. We enjoy lists because we associate them with agents of direction and environmental control, authority, definition, clear value....Lists tend to oversimplify likeness and difference in an interesting way. Lists emphasize likeness and overlook difference within their own boundaries, and tend to overlook likeness and emphasize difference outside their boundaries....Lists appear to fix the flux...(56-7). In appearing to fix flux, lists work within a symbolic system that maintains binary difference (on the list/ off the list; same/different), including sexual difference. But, lists can also become, according to Hall, "fragmented and contingent, pointing less to structures of meaning...than to structure of possible meanings, to sets of contingencies, to indeterminations" (58). For Rose, her list-making initially marks an anxiety of self and a practice analogous to Berts' repetitious mapping; her listing is a repetition, however, that eventually gives way to the multiplicity and indeterminancy of a self in flux.

Her listing likewise parallels Maria's nightly travels and mappings, but unlike Maria's escape from the map (tracing), the novel does not jettison listing practices. There is no wiping oneself off of the list since the list cannot really "locate" a subject in a given terrain nor might it determine a subject—as Ash painfully discovers. Such infamous lists of location as Nixon's Enemies List or Senator Joseph McCarthy's list of Communist sympathizers in the State Department suggest the list's power resides in its allusion for containment and its ability to signify something other than its composition (it is rumored

that the piece of paper McCarthy waved during his Women's Council speech was actually blank). In so much as Rose attempts to locate herself through her lists, lists are structurally generative rather than illustrative. Perhaps more disposed to the slides of metonymy than the replacement of metaphor, Nixon's, McCarthy's, and Rose's lists do not contain enemies, communists or woman; rather, they stand in for an illusive, shifting and uncertain, but political, terrain of (not)belonging.

Rose flips the function of lists compiled to enhance or cue memory since she does not list as a reminder lest she forget, but instead compiles what she "cannot forget" about herself so that she might recognize, track her own composition. And given that she searches most avidly for her birth mother, it makes sense that her lists would reveal a desire to track her order to compile who she is. That none of her characteristics are certain—"woman (?)" or singular "I am Irish"; "I am English"—doubles the contingent and disposable nature of memory cue lists. If reminder lists, as with shopping lists, are by nature disposable and ultimately forgettable, they convey temporariness, changeability and potential absence. In this way, while the form of her "unforgettable" lists with their succession of items resemble memory lists, what she wants the list to accomplish resembles something aligned with the map, or more aptly the fused map and list structure of a "family tree." Rose's desire to track, however, does not extend beyond tracking Anna and serendipitously finding Maria. For, even the list of births and deaths on the front page of Anna Kennedy's family Bible, a sign of patriarchal naming and tracking of progeny, has been edited with names of dead or disinherited children crossed out, a metaphor for the impermanence and brokenness of a family that Anna's twin daughters will have little interest in knowing. All of which suggests the instability, temporariness

and changeability of the Irish family that is the Kennedy/Delahunty family, broken and split, like the woman christened "Marie" in Ireland but raised as "Rose" in England.

Similar to Shirley Jackson's claim that listing are the housewife's (woman's) mode of thinking, Anna associates lists with womanly thinking, but her narrative, a chapter enticingly titled "Lists," refuses to universalize and essentialize either woman or list. Instead her remembrances from beyond the grave speak of her mother's spatial lists, her childhood experimentation with word lists, and her composite lists (objects and words) as an adult. Anna's chapter is bleak and thoroughly captivating in its questioning of how she might make sense of her body, her wifely obligations and the world around her through a language that cannot account for her experiences or for the things she "notices." However, in contrast to Jackson, the womanly logic that Jackson celebrates become part a sex role "hell," a grave upon which the feet of not only Anna's father and husband walk but her mother as well (248).

Like Jackson, Anna initially speaks of list-making within the context of the feminine domesticity and motherhood, yet Anna ultimately refuses to endorse either the non-verbal lists of her mother or the language lists she learns at school. Of her mother's spatial listing, she says, "The whole room [kitchen] was a reminder to her. There was no telling, when you touched something, what it might mean. 'Who moved the sweeping brush?' she would say. 'When we haven't a sausage in the house?'" Her mother's spatial lists could be dangerous, making her "exits...full of things to trip her up." And as a child Anna worried about her mother "in the shop, looking at the shelves, with the kitchen shifting and dancing in her mind's eye" (234). Anxious about her mother's safety, a young Anna asks to translate her mother's lists in to words so that she might replace her

mother in the store and instead do the shopping with a sequence of words that could repeat through her mind as orderly signifiers to match up with signifieds on shelves. By doing so, Anna simultaneously protects her mother and escapes the dangers of the kitchen—which is her initial escape from the "location" of the mother, the primary icon of womanhood and social model of femininity for a young rural Irish girl in 1950s Ireland. Her death before birthing was her last.

Combining the spatial system of her mother with the symbolic of social order of language, Anna attempts to describe her life by making words lists of her surroundings. These descriptive word lists, however, reshape her experiences and observations to an immediate and manufactured order, composing only unremarkable and perhaps false images and memories. "I did not see my life in any way you could write down," she asserts. "When I was a child the sky was either raining or not, and the grass was just what it was . . .I could list the things I did not notice and I would remember them only as the worlds I use to describe them by: the rain, the grass, the milk in a bucket, the blood in a bowl . . ." (233). In his critical study of lists in nineteenth-century literature, *The List: The Uses and Pleasures of Cataloguing* (2004), Robert Belknap notes that certain "literary lists" (basically lists in literature) can serve both as a record of careful observations of the natural world and as and indication "that the mind has, with a spark of consciousness, registered a 'thing.'" Particularly interested in nineteenth-century American writers/listers, Belknap demonstrates how Thoreau, for instance, "registered facts [to] leave the record of his experience, his observation of particular objects of nature and particular occurrences" (198). In contrast to Belknap observation of a listing function that might suit Anna's project, her "observations" evade necessarily visual registers nor

are they a recording of memory. Her experiences and "her life" evoke the visual as a remainder of her experience, a memory reordered via language. There are a couple of choices for how we might read this record of what is "not noticed"— First, the novel proposes a naturalized, non-verbal feminine that originates with the mother and is configured spatially. In this reading, Anna's language lists will inevitably fail to capture what is innate to the spatial "woman." Or alternately, we might read the novel as proposing that the sign structures, regardless of whether represented as spatial or linguistic are equally limited. For it is not Anna's mother of the Irish countryside that the novel privileges as the return to the originary mother, but Anna with her desire for escape from the figuration of the mother that propells the narrative and offers the reader something new in thinking of and through the possibility of the feminine.

What Anna notices is neither restricted to the kitchen nor reflected in word lists, so in her post-death reminiscences, she repeats over and over her mother's list, moving the tea cozy from kitchen surface to kitchen surface. By its nature, this verbal repetition fails to perform her mother's practice (well, that, and the fact that she's dead). The distinction between spatial meaning created by the ordering and reordering of kitchen objects and linguistic meaning organized via a string of words demarcates and limits her mother's domain. More severe than the distinction between public/private, public/domestic, the mother's thinking space is restricted to the kitchen from which her womanly thinking radiates through the house and to the shop. As an adult, Anna finds language a terrifying and fraught space, full of hidden meanings that she cannot quite grasp and of words that still cannot describe the "AnnA" who is both backwards and

forwards and the body she sees in the mirror (233). Her desire is then a fraught or paradoxical desire to return to surety of the mother's space:

> Now, if I were to list the things in my life, that is the way I would like to do it; moving things from place to place and knowing what they meant, not just a string of words—the shopping list bouncing in my head, my own breath cutting it short at every step. *You move the tea cozy from the pot to the table, you move it to the side of the range, you turn the cozy inside out. I am stricken, here in my grave, by what the smallest things meant.* (emphasis mine, 234)

In this context, the return to the mother's listing practice does not celebrate the maternal (as signifying *woman*) but, rather, conveys a desire to locate some other kind of meaning commensurate with AnnA signifying *woman* via the mother's system. Her mother's feet may walk Anna's grave, complicit with her father and husband, but the mother offers a model for potential growth, the representational freedom for the something else, the woman Anna desires to understand but cannot notice.

A ghostly narrator, Anna speaks literally and figuratively between worlds, converting images from the Irish mother and an idealized but bereft iconography to the dead mother of Anna's daughter's generation when the time seems attuned for *women* to escape from a masculine socio-linguistic economy. Significantly, one of the "things" Anna notices that refuses listing is her own sexed body. She remembers as a newly married woman standing naked in front of a full-length mirror Berts had temporarily stored in the hallway. Raised in a conservative Roman Catholic family, Anna looks for the very first time at her body and genitalia, "I could not find the words for it," she says, "Pink. White. Hill. Cunt. Move. You move the tea cosy from the pot to the table, you move it to the side of the range, you turn the cosy inside out. MOVE" (247). As a character trapped in Berts' memory and Roman Catholic sexual repression/modesty, she

lacks the language to identify, to name her genitalia. Visual descriptors of color, shape, and even pejorative slang fail to supply meaning, and Anna returns to the only feminine order of her experience. The spatial listing used by her mother and a structure that requires movement, "MOVE," speaks of woman and Anna's sex is marked as mobile and "inside out," rather than as the sum of its sexual parts.

Anna's return to her mother's list suggests Anna's desire to signify and make meaning of *woman* as subject, which for Anna is an impossible return. In the end her search appears to have launched a desire for gendered self signification affecting three generations of mothers and daughters. Unlike Jackson and Anna's mother who always already figure the maternal, Anna cannot compile lists to place or locate her body or self as a woman, much less stand in for socio-cultural and familial reproductive orders.

If Maria's story is one of escape from the father's mapping practices, Rose's story is one of reworking her mother's listing practices to suit the daughter's generation (pun intended). The originary figure of the mother grounds feminist articulations and representational economies. As Judith Roof observes, "The matriarchal [goddess/mother] as a single source is parallel to feminist aesthetic theories that posit a feminine experience of the 'real,' the 'authentic,' or the material body as the source for their shape and inspiration (*A Lure* 125). It is precisely this return to the maternal that Enright's novel wants to reconfigure as Anna's voice erupts into the text and we readers (not her daughters) must list/en to her. For all of its psychoanalytic, imagery and semiotic investments, Anna's reminiscences about her own relationship with her mother seem to dead-end. By evoking mother/daughter, pre-oedipal relationship and narrative, the novel proffers an alternative to the predominantly oedipal literary terrain of twentieth-century

Irish literature, drama and film—but a dead mother is still "mother," whether sacrificial or not, and perhaps just as sought after as Rose's journey suggests.

Patriarchy haunts Anna, restricting her expressions to either the space of the mother or to the comparable invisibility of the feminine in a masculine Symbolic; and yet, it is Anna who haunts the novel resignifying what we know of her daughters' attempts to understand themselves as women. Retrospectively Maria's desire to escape maps and Rose's desire to understand herself through lists bear the traces of their mother's own desire for representational escape, recognizable only by the reader since Anna as mother does not speak about her daughters or recognize their struggles, nor do her daughters meditate on the possibility that their mother wanted for something else as well. Anna's jarring eruption into the novel at the twin's first acquaintance is an interruption that reorders how lists might be understood to clarify difference and feminine location.

At the close of the novel, the reader is offered three lists that project the sisters' future. The lists are multiple, incongruent, overtly incomplete and provide only odd bits and bobs of the sisters' life together after more than two decades apart:

> These are the things they discovered about themselves.
> They both had a best friend at school called Emily...
> They both like Euthymol toothpaste, Mozart, the colour blue.
> They were both afraid of falling....
> There were also the things that they did not discover.
> They both enjoyed putting in the bin bag the bag it came in.
> They both held their shoulders high when they were in an airplane,
> as if this might help keep it off the ground....
> Some of these became apparent to them over the years. Some did not.
> They also discovered some intriguing differences.
> ...Rose had the poorer eyesight. Maria slept around.
> Rose had a dodgy elbow, Maria's wrist was not to be discussed.
> Maria looked older. Though as the years went by, she seemed to halt a
> little, as though she were waiting for Rose to catch up.
> And, they were the astonishment of everyone who met them. Rose
> brought Maria to Leatherhead.... (255-6)

Again, for the reader of the novel, this transition to multiple listing is made logical through the diegetic intrusion of the dead-mother's voice. Anna's discussion of listing both marks a turn away from the anxious recreation of Rose's self-identifying list and alters the conventions depicting the future as a means of narrative closure; the lists refuse to map out their lives ahead. If we read these lists as envisioning a particular expression of womanhood or as describing "woman" at all, it must be drawn from Anna's search for meaning through lists, where the image of woman and her meaning is stabilized by the mother in the kitchen. In the narrative progression of listing, these closing lists of *WAYL?* acquire their feminine expression via association rather than depiction or definition. The final chapter's title, "Like, Like," signals the associative doubling to emerge in their discovery/not-discovery lists. The images we formulate of Maria and Rose(Marie) in later years are the stuff of association. In this way, the novel does seem to privilege listing as a women-oriented writing practice, signaling a relationship between sisters without descriptions of patriarchal imperatives of marriage and sexual reproduction (motherhood) and, consequently, without the myriad hallmarks of happily-ever-after reunion narratives.

The delightfully quirky, if somewhat random, listing of similarities and differences that the sisters do and do not discover falls short of the unity or definition that, for example, Barr's and Jackson's feminine listing practices. Toothpaste and music preferences, kissing Anton, and the physical differences between identical twins arrange a depiction of relationship rather than a cordoning off of ethnic or sexual difference. Humorous references to their mutual distaste for potatoes and perhaps the Britishisms of "bins" and "Euthymol" mark the expression as associated to the islands of Ireland and England, but nothing in their lists suggests that the twins claim a particular sexual

identity (universalized or heterosexual woman) or that we might read a particular Irishness or Englishness (ethnic identity) from their discoveries. Akin to the image of twins standing among dressing room mirrors where the reflection of woman returns as multiple, dynamically asymmetrical and incomplete, the lists offer us an ambiguous, and yet, poignant relationship between sisters, where some similarities and differences become "apparent to them over the years" and others not.

Listing *Ash*

In *Like*, Amy's only letter to Ash resembles an *OED* definition of "ash" followed by eleven quotations containing "ash" from canonical love poems, including passages from such clichéd sources as Shakespeare and Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

> *Ash: ash, n., a well-known timber tree (Fraxinus excelsior, or other species) of the olive family;...; quaking ash, the aspen. Aesc, eschew, askr. Ash, ash, n. the dust or remains of anything burnt; volcanic dust or a rock composed of it; plural, remains of a human body when burnt....*
>
> *That body, where against*
> *My grained ash and hundred times hath broke*
> *And scarr'd the moon with splinters. (Shakespeare)...*
> *Wait soul until thine ashen garments fall! (Elizabeth Barrett Browning)*
>
> *Ashling—a young ash sapling or tree.*
> *Aisling—a vision, dream poem.*
>
> *My grained Ash,*
> *Are you running like sparks through the rubble?* (list italicized in text 223-4)

A heady declaration of one woman's mediations on and, possibly, sexual desire for another, Amy's letter is a seductive claiming and naming—"My grained Ash"—regardless of whether we, or Ash for that matter, can read Amy's intent in collecting definitions of, allusions to "ash". The list is peppered with such erotic metaphors as

quaking trees, sparks, and over-heated, burnt bodies. The letter as an itemization is a kind of double-entendre wherein the list of definitions and examples of "Ash" suggests she is the "ash" who has been thought about extensively, possibly fantasized about, and then catalogued in Amy's *OED*-like imagination—or at least this is how Ash reads the list. In response to the letter she quits school, waves 'goodbye' to her summer lover, Miss. Carroll, and leaves Scotland in search of Amy. Ash's mistake is to presume Amy's list-letter is an invitation, signaling a lover's intimate ponderings. It does not. Or maybe it does, but Amy simply changes her mind (Amy's desires in regards to Ash are never clear).

Ash's reading of Amy's intent is, of course, skewed through Ash's own desires for what Amy seems to offer—self-recognition and definition and the pleasure in reading a list-letter that is all about the same. *Ash* contains numerous and a variety of lists, each moving further from the above list's taxonomic and definitional organization to the more loosely organized lists of "Things Amy Said," to the associative lists of Ash's own experiences and desires that eventually are no longer set apart within the narrative—so that her lists by the end of the novel become the narrative itself. This progression is, however, less about marking the differences between list and prose but more about calling attention to the interdependence of prose and list compositions (for we could go so far as to sight lists within grammatical order, a common feature to descriptive syntax, for instance, a series of adjectives to modify a noun). Aligned with Hall's understanding of lists, the lists in *Ash* are very much about producing a kind of pleasure that comes from sorting out similar items to account for the differences between two friends and sorting out the desire of one friend for another. In this way, Ash's list-writing may appear to

correspond with narrative's capacity to establish difference and heighten and resolve conflict, which is part and parcel of a pleasurable writing/reading experience. But such an interpretation would focus only on the function of lists early in Ash's story when they seem to contain, to envision, to produce some sort of image of or knowledge about Ash via Amy. *Ash*'s proliferating lists, as with Enright's novel, suggests another kind of pleasure to be gained from the impartial, effusive, and generative function of listing. In this way, as they merge with and then turn into the primary narrative structure, Ash's lists evoke desiring as process rather than substitution for, or a fetishistic object of desire.

As with Amy's list-letter, lists provide Ash with a kind of relational or relationship method that seems to keep "Amy" close. For instance, her lengthy list about "My. Friend. Amy" (the list's title) seems to afford Ash a means for not only representing but also reading her and Amy together in a way that prose alone cannot. Looking at the placement of their names on the page, Ash remarks, "The strange and the known shape of it. Me. Amy. Pressed together into one" (262). This list ostensibly identifies Amy's complex beauty and unusual charisma—that which made Amy worthy of obsession—yet it also exposes Amy to be a product of Ash's imaginative fantasies and desires:

> : just adored, she just adored a lot of things. Said a lot of things were simply exquisite
> :wore thin black wool on the coldest days of winter and the hottest days of summer, as if in disdain of something so common as mere seasonal change...
> : said her favourite colour was white
> : said I looked good in black...
> : let her friendship with me lessen in proportion to a number of things. The more important she became the less we saw each other and the more indecorous invisible, northern and androgynous I felt myself becoming....
> :whom I hadn't seen for quite some time, phoned me up in the middle of the night to get me to come over, said on the phone would I mind, she needed me for a moment.... (262-4)

The structure of this list, closer to poetry than prose, seems to both condense the emotional distance between the two friends as Amy becomes "more important" and Ash, "more invisible, northern and androgynous" as well as to establish a kind of incongruencey structuring such difference. It is a fantasy list that suggests that the comforts and pleasures to be gained from listing are not only a kind of gathering together of similarities to leave differences outside as the pleasurable lists of popular culture that Hall writes about—"10 Ten…" and "Who's Hot" lists. Ash has internalized "Amy" as a reader/critic, as the list continues to focus on a kind of detritus of Amy, who ": said a moment ago inside my head, I think you know I'm less of a cliché than you're inferring, Ash" (263).

By the close of *Like* Ash's journal, Ash has written all she can about an obsession that culminates in her setting Amy's apartment ablaze and rendering it appropriately to "ash." Significantly, she both claims and denies that her writing is a diary, saying that she is no Anne Frank and that her writing in a historical context amounts to "wanking:"

> A long slow circling self-important lot of wank. Though this was never a diary. Vile idea. And at the same time it is one, vile as it is. I'm pressing against all the written pages beneath my pen and I am wondering what it is that I'll have left out, what thing it is that I don't know and never knew. The things we so blithely forget or don't see; the whole selves that can disappear and nobody thinks to report it, nobody calls an inquest. Instead there's this blind obsession with something or someone; a decadence….I've wallowed in it, swallowed it, rolled in its musk and my own, and I still haven't made sense of it. Well, good. I wouldn't want it to lose its impact completely for me. (326-7)

This final confession and self-reflexive account of what her diary has both attempted to do and cannot be recalls Rose's consistent failure to compose a list that adequately describes her. Extending the common irritation that a crucial item has been left off a shopping list and thereby escaped its purchasing to the

philosophical and psychological ponderings of self and narrative, Ash's concern about what it is that she has "left out—what thing it is that I don't know and never knew"—suggests that autobiographical narrative may be very much like list-making and that invariably it will fail to include all that is needed, desired, and known—or not-known as the case may be. However, rather than conveying an anxiety over the unaccounted for "whole self," which would recreate each list as a repetition of the same self-accounting project (another version of the same), Ash endorses and acknowledges the pleasures of the gap, the not-knowing as necessary to the pleasure of not "making sense." Accordingly, both the content and identifiable (visible) structure of Ash's lists gradually shift from the beginning of her journal to its end becoming more and more invisible as her list overtakes, becoming narrative.

Third, Disappear

Mirror Rim/miR rorriM: Reading Disappearance

Feminist models of thought remain within the confines of the phallocentric Law insofar as the presence/absence of the phallus continues to constitute the primary organizing principle of their theories of gender...To the extent, then, that the majority of both dominant and reverse-discourses, such as feminism, take the notion of a binary, oppositional sexual difference as their starting point, lesbian invisibility is inscribed in the very coordinates of the phallocentric conceptual realm equally underlying them.

renée hoogland, *Lesbian Configurations*

The definition of a lesbian narrative, however, has always been in crisis....[W]here is the "lesbian" in the lesbian narrative? The practical questions are endless once the first question is asked. For instance, must the characters be overtly lesbian? Must the author be overtly or covertly lesbian? Must both be true at the same time? Must characters or theme be positive instead of negative...How explicit must a text be to be considered lesbian?

Marilyn R. Farwell, *Heterosexual Plots and Lesbian Narratives*

If the double-chapter(s) opened with a meta-summary of how Enright's and Smith's novels resist summary practices that tend to reduce and rewrite a story with the general-izing goal of illuminating "what a novel is *about*," these chapters close with analyses of how mobile female subjects read and are read within each novel. The doubling in *WAYL?* presents *self*-seeking female characters who resist conventional signifiers of sexual difference and alter masculinist and nation-oriented identity categories for understanding their self in relation to others (and nation). While this self-reading strategy is common to both novels, Smith's *Like* takes up the conversation of women desiring women for self-reflection as a lesbian configuration, and in doing so notes how Smith's *Like* challenges essentializing feminist and lesbian-feminist "identity" discourses in addition to those of nation. In her survey of later-twentieth-century lesbian fiction, Bonnie Zimmerman asserts that "lesbian novels are read by lesbians in order to affirm lesbian existence. Conversely, the books a woman reads are what make her a lesbian feminist, or a member of the 'lesbian community'" (15).[16] Within Zimmerman's formulation, *reading* becomes a politicized act for lesbian identity and community formation; however, as renée hoogland and Marilyn Farwell suggest, the degree to which lesbian desire and figurations can actually register in phallo-oriented language and narrative orders, if at all, remains debatable. Taking up reading as a politicized act in its characterizations and themes, Smith's novel may relay something akin to Zimmerman's reading imperative but does so in such a way that experiments with what hoogland and Farwell assert is the lesbian's symbolic absence and historic invisibility in literature. In

[16] Zimmerman proposes a specific criteria for determining a novel to be a lesbian narrative: it must have "a central, not marginal, lesbian character, one who understands herself to be a lesbian;" "love between women, including sexual passion, at the center of its story;" and be written by a self-conscious lesbian (15).

this manner, any literal travel of Amy and Ash across national borders corresponds with an already mobile figuration of an eccentric lesbian subject.

More overtly than *WAYL?*, Smith' novel incorporates the practice of reading into its characterization and themes. Amy is functionally illiterate for much of her story, a condition that seems to be the product of some past trauma about which the details are never made clear. Her quest for literacy drives much of action in the first half of the novel, a story which closes with Amy and Kate building a beach fire out of the journals that Amy kept from her childhood through her doctoral studies. She, however, reserves a single journal from the burning, which is presumably Ash's journal as the second half of the novel, *Ash*, follows this closing scene. Typical of the novel's insistence that "what we don't know" is more powerful than what we know, we, readers of the novel, do not know if Amy has read or intends to read the reserved journal. The journal simply proffers an impression of Amy's desire and the possibility of her reading anew. If Amy's quest was to restore her ability to read, the destruction of decades worth of her own writing indicates that her desire was not a return to or an unearthing of her past but was rather part of her process to *read* differently than before. In a similarly unusual quest for reading, Amy's daughter, Kate, is a school-aged child learning to read, and not always conventionally, given her relationship with Amy. Kate's word play and literal (mis)understandings in many ways resemble those of other characters, implying that regardless of acumen all are in-process of learning to read, in-process of meaning making, and in-process of interpretation as the metaphor of *reading* expands beyond the literal act of reading written texts.

Ash's part of the novel offers some of the more provocative instances of reading and its relationship to notions of self and desire. Amy and Ash's mutual love of books provides a base for their friendship. When Ash burns Amy's apartment, she specifically uses Amy's beloved hardbacks by Proust, Woolf and Duras for the initial fuel. Suggestively, they are the fire's point of origin. Yet, Ash with great care preserves Amy's journals since they might afford Ash an image of her*self* via Amy's hand. Given Ash's own experimentation with narrative form and exploration of self in her own journal, her act appears less a commentary on modernist stylistics and themes and more an eroticized reading of self, an attempt to read her own image through another woman's writing. If she cannot have Amy's hands touching her body and giving shape to its contours, then the consolation is to read her *self* out of the pages of Amy's handwritten reminiscences, fantasies and thoughts. Ash's desire reveals her initial presumptions of how text works, or more precisely how a journal is presumably a personal form of writing that exposes and explains the author's experiences, thoughts and feelings as that create something (or someone) real and true. It is in many ways what she tries to do in her own journal, and by the end she realizes the futility. But instead of seeing bits of who she is as sketched in Amy's journal, Ash finds Amy's meticulous notes on Amy's daily reading and her snide commentaries on her colleagues' flawed understandings of Derrida, Kristeva, and, frankly, their misunderstanding of poststructuralism overall. Ash is effectively invisible in Amy's writing, and perhaps fittingly, so is Amy, whom Ash must read through subject matter and tone to find the ardent scholar, the professor's dutiful daughter become professor herself.[17]

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[17] It should be noted that the objects of study in Amy's journals (written texts and conversation) are likewise only inferred or interpreted in Ash's own writing, creating a doubling of absence via the act of

Reading in *Like* is not a singular literacy nor is it taken for granted as an uncontested transference of meaning via written or spoken word, but rather reading is a plethora of metaphors, politicized actions, and complex instances of women revising myths, women interpreting other women, and women understanding self through the stories other women tell—even if that self is recognizable only by an absence of self and an inability to understand. This insistence on the methods and means of reading in a novel "about" two women and their complex relationship and desires takes up concerns common to feminist reading theory and theorizations of lesbian subjectivity in narrative. What constitutes a woman or lesbian reader? And, how might readers understand women-oriented desires which are often configured as existing somewhere else, as a site of utopian possibility, or as a members-only code, or as simply non-existent? Necessary to the self-reflexivity of *Like*'s narrative is the image "the reader," a subject that shape-shifts, who is multiple characters and even multiple voices within a character, and who is often the most detailed imagining of self that characters can access. In this way, Amy and Ash's stories reconfigure lesbian-feminist and feminist identity-oriented writing and reading paradigms to be something other than an excavation of *lesbian* and/or *woman* and toward something more radical—a transforming of the invisibility that has characterized lesbian figuration into a strategy for narrating self that resists the structures of essential difference.[18] What is resisted, revised, rewritten and reread into some image of presence

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reading. An absence performed in this summary of a summary. The contours of the "woman," Amy as academic, are then fashioned in Ash's journal which is a self-proclaimed "liary," always a suspect text. The desire that we read as indicative of subjectivity, while presumably Ash's, must be understood as a desire translated via another reader and another discourse—a return to the academic and an "I," however, not of Amy but rather that of this writer as reader.

[18] Farwell notes, "Lesbian-feminists, who argue for an essentialist definition of "lesbian," are willing and eager to see narrative as a tool for change if not for representation. The emphasize thematic and imagist readings of realistic narratives and tend to rely on a theory which casts both lesbian and narrative into relatively unproblematic waters. Both categories should, the argument goes, reflect experiential and

so that lesbian and woman might be made visible, and become the protagonists and heroes of their own stories are the very same gaps, the very same symbolic invisibility that *Like* employs to write "a new kind of politic" and model new ways for reading multiplicity and proliferation.

In so far as *Amy*/Amy is the story and character most imbued with such attributes of myth as the hero's quest and the recovery of what has been lost,[19] the self-reflexive qualities of her story continually turn upon myth to reject origins as an excavatable site for reading the feminine anew. If the narrative is siphoned through a limited-third-person narrator who switches back and forth between Amy's and Kate's perspectives, our readerly position remains relatively stable and one akin to the student who wants always to learn more. The opacity of Amy's past and motivations work on the reader's desire to know, to have the narrative make character and story apparent and knowable. And yet, the presumption that Amy's story will reveal the essence of either Amy or Kate is the very notion that is altered through the story. Rather the novel offers reading lessons that disrupt the sites of origin, of excavation that underpin any readerly ability to know. For instance, Kate's parentage is ambiguous, her passport a fraud, and toward the close of *Amy*, Kate literally toys with the impossibility of finding any origin. "You could never know," reasons Kate about the contents of the street drain where she loves to play, "you could never find out, where all the dirt and grim and grit and germs and things that have got stuck in there had come from in the first place" (141). Kate plays at the drain's edge

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political goals. Thus, lesbian is either an unproblematic, empirical category—women who are sexually attracted to other women—or more problematically and still reflective of a unified and essentialist identity, lesbian is a political metaphor for women's alliances with one another" (10).

[19] Bonnie Zimmerman observes a variety of myth narratives in lesbian fiction, but she notes that the quest for romance stories that were common to coming out narratives of the 1970s shift in the 1980s to quest formulations for psychic "recovery" to restore the lesbian protagonist's "power and integrity" (212). Amy's quest both follows this latter trend and undermines the notion of restoration of the psyche.

with her toy animals, musing and remembering bits of her recent travels. Initially, this description of Kate's solitary game appears to be a repetition of earlier descriptions of her playtime. But coming as it does at the close of *Amy*, Kate's play becomes an iteration of something else when she uncharacteristically pushes her toy kangaroo past the edge of drain and then looks into the grimy pit to confirm to the toy has disappeared, "gone." "That's for you, she tells the dead girl who lives in the drain. That kangaroo's for you to have" (141). When Kate looks into the drain, she confirms, in addition to the disappearance of her toy, the impossibility others tracing the kangaroo back to her. It is literally part of the drain's general detritus and muck. It is also a gift and, therefore, metaphorically the recognition of a feminine figure who exists at the site of uncharted origins and who is mute, invisible, and declared dead. Akin to the dead mother of *WAYL?*, the figure of the dead girl in the drain may be deserving of respect and kindness but she forestalls the return to mythological figurations that might direct our understanding of Kate's origins. Kate simply plays on the edge of the excavatable site.

Amy's journey to Vesuvius not only conveys both the opacity of Amy's character and the novel's general self-reflexivity (as discussed in Chapter 1) as well as a kind of "literary edginess" that denies originary returns to recuperate either woman or lesbian. Something else gets produced in iteration. For instance, Amy's trek to Vesuvius is a quest for reading that calls forth a Western literary tradition heavily invested in tracing its classical origins and its cultural rebirth (Renaissance) via Italy as well as a expressing a very modernist angst of looking into the abyss of meaning. As a former literature professor, Amy's quest carries the traces of her profession and the weight of the West's literary history, which is, of course, its own kind of myth of origins. Yet, akin to Kate's

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kangaroo, Amy's lost literacy does not trace back. The details of her aphasia are never revealed nor does her connection of signifier to signified elicit a sense of enlightened liberation via literacy. Instead, Amy stands at the top of Vesuvius, at the edge of its crater and contemplates how the connection between word (Vesuvius) and the thing (mountain) is like a "barbed dark between the word and the world; nothing but a rope bridge hanging by knots across a ravine, dropping loose slats as soon as you put your weight on it. A path around a chasm, that's all there is" (96). Literally the image of the "woman on the edge," Amy becomes a more a figure of poststructuralist intellectual than of the hero questing for knowledge of her reading origins, failures and triumphs. Akin to Amy's later rumination on Pompeii's historical sites that display excavated men and women who died in Vesuvius' eruption of ash and lava in 79 A.D., it is not their bodies that speak of their attempt to escape the volcanic eruption, but it is the absence of their bodies. The heat having obliterated all but their shape, only their contours, their edges remain. *Like* directs the novel reader's attention toward the absences upon which we make meaning from our reading. In the context of Amy as subject, she and Kate's play at edges also resembles the troping of a subject in process and on trial that Jean Graybeal finds so necessary in Julia Kristeva's writing. In her essay "Joying in the Truth of Self-Division," Graybeal notes that "the subject in process and on trial" is developed as "the image of the possibility of a subject *at play* in the differences. (This is still a subject playing like a child on a cliff, constantly in danger yet joying even in the danger itself.)" (139).

Not only for its titular reference but also for it evocation of travel to a site of literary origins as a feminized return to reading, Amy's Vesuvius-trek is also reminiscent

of Adrienne Rich's essay "Vesuvius at Home." Rich's essay opens with her "traveling the speed of time, along the Massachusetts Turnpike" toward Emily Dickinson's house. Rich is traveler, reader, and woman, journeying toward a new reading of Dickinson's poetry not only by way of turnpikes but by way of literary excavation, unmasking volcanic Emily, the woman and writer.[20] Reading out a figure of a woman with volcanic power behind Dickinson's child-like play with language in her poem, Rich writes that the "woman who feels herself to be Vesuvius at home has need of a mask, at least, of innocuousness and of containment" (108). Rich's essay suggests a kind of excavatory move toward *woman* that is reworked in *Like*. Amy, the former literary scholar, is in a comparable reading/searching position as Rich; however, in going to the source, Amy does not find her own Vesuvian power as *woman* or lesbian.

The *Amy* section of *Like* is a relatively linear narrative with a quest thematic that shadows the myth-making imperative that Zimmerman identifies as crucial to lesbian-feminist novels. In her extensive collection and interpretation of lesbian fiction, *The Safe Sea of Women*, Zimmerman recognizes a prevailing "expression of a collective myth of origins" to make the lesbian visible, which can be understood as expressing: the lesbian self, the lesbian couple, the lesbian community and/or difference (xv). Zimmerman's ordering of literary productions and textual politics intersects with the *Amy* story, but perhaps less as a diagnostic or interpretive category and more as the very site of Smith's critique of identity. For the mythic carries traces of the logocentric processes for founding and universalizing a subject as well as for legitimizing that subject within a

[20] See Adrienne Rich, "Vesuvius at Home," *Shakespeare's Sister: Feminist Essays on Women Poets*. ed. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979: 99-121. For a discussion of how Rich's "Vesuvius at Home" addresses a feminist reading politic located in a lesbian or a "female communal space as the source for knowledge," see Roof's *Lure of Knowledge*, 152-9.

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common or collective social order. Reshape the story and main players, and, thus, reorder heteronormative and patriarchal signifying systems. This trajectory surely marks the most revolutionary goal of lesbian-feminism's attack on patriarchy via myth-making. Remythologizing is perhaps a limited form of literary experimentation that in retracing the borders of conventional narrative orders to include the previously excluded lesbian cannot affect a radical systemic change.

Amy's position as protagonist, as a sort of hero on a quest is always ironic, slipping out of the corrective. She returns "home" to the caravan in Scotland, only to leave that home once again, and her Vesuvius trek allows her simply to voice that if she is a woman, she's "not like that" to the only man who has pursued her. In this way, I would suggest Smith's mythic experimentation maintains the "literary edge" of the minor. As Deleuze and Guattari caution in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature,* literary experimentation retains its political edge only if such experimentation remains *minor*. For instance, not only are remythologizing practices made possible by radical and politicized revision of *woman* but they risk, as renée hoogland notes, replaying patriarchy's structuring symbolic order by simply flipping the sexual binary and positioning *woman* as the privileged term, the signifier of ontological presence. Figurations of lesbian as already another kind of desiring female subject (one not looking toward the penis/phallus) complicate broader schema informing feminist mythologizing projects wherein the excavated and visible woman attains symbolic clout within such binary correctives as goddess/god, pre-oedipal mother/oedipal father, earth-mother/masculine civilization, and so forth in which the phallus still organizes desire just as the penis visibly marks sexual difference.

According to its narrative disposition, the mythic mode that Smith employs is instructional. The stories Amy tells Kate are as much lessons for the readers of the novel as they are for her daughter. We learn as she does that "all the best stories end in the middle" and that narrative does not necessarily reveal the object of desire but rather produces desire. Take for instance the story Amy tells Kate about "a photo of your mother and her friend" (81). It is presumably a picture of Amy and Ash as teenagers standing in front of a Scottish memorial when Amy and her family employed Ash as their tour guide. Kate wants to hear their story, desires to unearth bits of her mother's inaccessible past. After many unsuccessful attempts to divert Kate's attention to artsy picture-postcards of knights and ladies for what she assures Kate would make a much better story, Amy settles in to tell her daughter the story of two friends. She opens the tale with a girl sitting at the edge of a river and looking into the water. "She sees her reflection," interrupts Kate. "Yes," but according to Amy the girl looks below the surface to see a fish that she wants, and with a bit of wool string from her sweater and a berry from a bush, she catches and angles the fish onto the river bank. In the realm of myth, a fish is of course never just a fish, and once on the bank, the fish transforms into a beautiful girl. The fish/girl immediately returns the berry and string and then vanishes from the other girl's sight:

> So she [girl who looks] rolled the wet thread round her finger, tied it in a knot, and swore on the knot that she would search her whole life, if it took that long, until she found the one she'd caught again.
>
> What for? Kate says.
>
> I don't know. To take her home for dinner, I suppose, Amy says.
>
> That's not the end, Kate says. It didn't have an end! Anyway what about the statue? What about the photo? It wasn't the story I was wanting.
>
> Well it's the only story you're going to get, Amy says.... (83)

Kate, the listener/reader of Amy's tale of two friends, is of course dissatisfied with the story. Similar to Kate's critique of another of Amy's improvised myths about two girls who argue about whether the sun is rising or setting, Kate protests that the story of the photograph is incomplete, unsatisfying. "It didn't have an end!" she decries. The story is not the one desired, the fish is a girl, and the girl is somewhere else. If narrative transparency—visibility—is one of the goals of identity-affirming lesbian-feminist readers and writers, Amy's myth-like story of her relationship with another woman is not only opaque in excluding past, experiential or "real" details but also rejects transparency as necessary to narratives of the desires and relationships between *women*. Transparency, according to Amy's tale, yields something different than what is expected, a girl instead of a fish and whose transformation shifts the form and body of the object of desire. Furthermore, "she" becomes desirable precisely because she disappears. Thus, even if we read Amy's myth as an archeological narrative to excavate woman, the woman from below the mirroring surface of image, language, sign refuses to stay put, becoming instead indefinitely or in-definitionally locatable.

If in *Amy*, many of the instances about story and reading work registers associated with myth with a (post)modern twist, in *Ash* instances of reading correspond with what Zimmerman categorizes as lesbian coming out and romance stories. We read an account of Ash's outing at school—an outing that significantly takes place only via association and through Ash's defense of a famous female tennis player's recent marriage to a woman. We also read Ash's recollection of Amy interpreting Ash's dream; we read of Ash reading books, reading her self-images, reading notes from her father, pictures of her mother, and so on. Though all of these types of reading and types of texts being read, the

reader's position becomes less stable than the relative consistency, albeit an opacity, of the readerly position afforded in *Amy*. Although the suggestion of a more stable readerly position and subject is a bit of a mis-apprehension of what is going on in Ash's journal, it could be argued that in any narrative instance of a character looking to a text, another, or self-image and responding is an instance of "reading." It may be more apt to describe the reader as in the position of "becoming reader," to rework a Deleuzean expression of becoming. The reader, akin to Ash as a writing subject, is multiple, always elsewhere, and in-process of becoming a reading/subject, which draws upon similar imagery to Amy's story of two friends to craft an impression of a reader/writer/female subject as multiple and, yet, disappearing:

> I threw my book across the room and scowled at the mirror...The haunting possibilities. I shook my head. Something was beyond me. I couldn't see what it was, how to get to it. Something was slipping past, barely sensed, the vague outline of it gliding down the stairs and through the shut front door, goodbye.... The small child with the insolent eyes stared back at me. The girl swinging her legs off the top of the high wall, waiting for me to tell her to jump off, amusement on her face, scorn, of course, she'd land on her feet, what was I waiting for? The girl with her eyes over the top of that book I'd hurled against the wall, she'd been there only two minutes ago and already she was lost, fading. That one, crosslegged on the other side of the mirror, silent, frowning, waiting for me to tell her something, anything. All the likenesses. Sometimes when I was alone in the house and it was late, the other's, the ones I was really frightened of, would come and settle at the bottom the bed, the selves that didn't have faces yet or shapes, their eyes trapped and sealed shut inside the skin, small black x's where their mouths should be, like two stitches, one sewn over the other. (214)

I quote Ash's encounters with and impressions of her doubles at length because it conveys not only the specific kind of self-doubling at work in *Ash* but also Ash's multiple anxieties about her likenesses, about a self that is never present, and about her own sexuality and obsessions. Her likenesses as with "girl with her eyes over the top of that

book" consistently disappear, and in many ways her story is another sort of coming out story than the acknowledgement—either explicitly or implicitly—of her non-heteronormative sexuality. The motif of disappearance points to both the gaps and absences within signification as well as to Ash's "coming out" as a desirous self that reads as invisible, that seems to disappear into a space eccentric to a masculine, heteronormative conception of the subject (masculine).

The coming out scene distances Ash's reading and writing further from an "I," from a singular and visible subject position that seems visible in the present moment, who sits on a bed looking about at her past, future, potential, and lost selves. In addition to marking the speaking/writing/reading self as potentially elsewhere, the coming out moment draws upon a tradition of lesbian desire and sex that is written in "code." The reworking of the coded lesbian crafts the moment Ash's coming out as an associative reading of homosexuality. As her prefect colleagues' snigger and spew homophobic remarks about a female Wimbledon tennis player's marriage to another woman, Ash finds her self speaking, albeit unwittingly, against their homophobia. "...[A]nd Shirley and some other people I can't remember were all sitting round, like I was, reading—and Shona was rattling the newspaper, holding it up, saying out loud: God that's disgusting. That's one of the most revolting things I've ever read" (215). Significantly, only Shona reads the article and that her classmates extrapolate their own reading of the tennis player's relationship and marriage from Shona's speech. All of which shifts the type of reading taking place so that the news story becomes the secondary to the reading of "lesbianism."

"Ash," however, speaking as a disembodied "voice" interrupts the jocular conversation between the males who proclaim they are not "poofs" precisely because they desire to watch two women have sex and the females who retort that sexual relationships between women are simply "disgusting" (215-17, 219). "[A] small voice from somewhere inside my throat before I could stop it was saying, well, maybe, maybe, they like each other" (216-17). The voice simultaneously Ash and someone other than Ash enters the fray repeatedly to counter arguments from female classmates on the "unnatural" nature of women sexually desiring women. "No it's not, the voice said, and it was coming from me. Not unnatural, I said. Just unexpected. It's just a different kind of natural (217). Her classmates interpret the voice's counter argument as a simple equation: Ash=lesbian. If Ash's speaking position in the narrative is multiple, her classmates' voices seem grounded, if not anxiously heterosexual, and unified, including an anti-homosexual diatribe from Ash's lover, Donna. As the conversation turns from the tennis players to teasing Ash about desiring other women, Donna remains a participant, laughing when the males joke that they must watch out for their girlfriend's "fronts" (instead of backs) when around Ash. Shaking and confused, Ash leaves the prefect's lounge to sit along a wall outdoors and think about which self spoke out and why.

In this "outing" scene of multiply layered "readings," the word *lesbian* remains unspoken and is glaringly absent from the entire novel (nor, I should note, are other labels of sexual preference/identity used). The many descriptions of Ash having sex with women, of her many girlfriends, of her occasional sexual encounter with a man tend to make Ash a difficult character to fit into any sexual preference label. The refusal to

"label" is in many ways part and parcel of the larger sexual politic at work in the novel, which proposes "like"—associative meaning and desire—as a better term for sexuality. In support of "like," an unassuming and oft teased classmate, Ruth, follows Ash, sits on the wall, and says timidly, "...you were right. To say that. I mean, what you said. That people should be able to like who they want to like. I think that was right...brave." Ash's responds, "God, Ruth, isn't it a really lovely day" (220)? If we read Ash's statements as a kind of public "coming out" as her classmates clearly do, it is an outing that lacks the presumed "coming into" a defined category or identity of "lesbian." Ash's desire seems to be coded differently. But if so, why and what does Ash's assertion of the freedom to "like" who one wants and it being another kind of "natural" translate into? One possibility might be found in how we read the image of two young women sitting together but apart from their peers, "out" of the school and on a wall. I currently read it is an image of companionship and sweetness in which any clear sense of lesbian "identity" or otherwise has been intercepted by a moment of *like* as two young women sit along a wall and enjoy the warmth of the sun. As with the image of woman in *Amy*, this is not an excavation for some essential self but, rather, it suggests the pleasure of momentary alignment of the possible like-nesses between two women. Even as Ash's voice positions her in opposition to a heteronormative majority and seemingly locates her along what Rich terms the *lesbian continuum*, this scene performs the problems of both uttering and reading utterance as an expression of cohesive self or fixed sexual identity.[21] All of which, likewise, diffuses the text as a mirror through which the reader might sight his/her own "identity" clearly.

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[21] See Adrienne Rich's "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Blood, Bread, and Poetry*. Norton: New York, 1994.

Shortly before the climax of her "liary," Ash describes a dream she has been having night after night in which she cannot see her own reflection "on the surface of the water" (293). The dream's repetition appears as disquieting to Ash as its subject, or more aptly, the lack of Subject matter:

> You know, I said, I've been having this horrible dream, I've had it three times now. I can't get it out of my head. What do you dream? she said, and I told her about the reflection, the surface of the water. I look and look, I said, but I can't find it anywhere.
>
> Think of it Ash, she said. You're blessed with a reflection that has a mind of her own. Other people see themselves on the surface of things, but you're lucky. Not only can you see past the mere mirror of yourself. Even more, your reflection is free to go where she wants, do what she wants, regardless of what's expected of her. She's a reflection who is free to choose. She doesn't even have to look like you, she's so free (293).

It is a dream that recalls that dreams are a mainstay of modernist rejection of "reality" and were crucial to Sigmund Freud's early rumination on the oedipal in the development of the psyche and social subjects. Ash's recounting of the dream and Amy's interpretation provides a lesson in reading, much like Freud's dream-reading strategies in his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1902) in which the analyst (Amy) is in a position of authority in relation to both the dreamer and the dream-as-text. Ash's account, however, reverses these positions so that the dreamer controls the narrative of the dream as well as the response of the "therapist" in so far as we are reading Ash's version. Such a reversal contributes to the re-order-ing of authority commensurate with most of the "reading lessons" in the novel, making Ash's account not so much suspect, but curious.

The mirror-image is perhaps the quintessential literary trope for a subject's relationship to self. When evoked, the mirror-image directs our attention to image reversals, mis-recognitions, strange obsessions, and the textual terrains of who is

narrating and who/what is narrated. Both literary doubles and the key concepts in psychoanalysis incorporate the mirror into readings of subjectivity and its developmental phases. Dr. Jekyll's self-appraisal and confession, Freud's study of narcissism and ego development, Lacan's mirror-stage, Anna's fraught sexual identification rely on mirror tropes to articulate the processes by which the subject might be recognize, understand and value itself. The mirror is, of course, always plethora of tropes, and in the context of psychoanalytic examinations of binary sexual difference, *woman* functions symbolically as a mirror, reflecting masculinity back to "man" in a reproduction of subject/Same wherein the feminine, as Irigaray and de Lauretis note, might be sighted only in-difference to the masculine.

On the surface, so to speak, Ash's inability to locate her own reflection, suggests a version of Freudian mirror-image doubles as signaling a "morbid preoccupation of the individual with his own essence" (Rogers 18). Until Amy's reading, Ash finds her dream disquieting, anxiety-producing, horrible because it appears to lack—image, her, woman, essence. The water's surface cannot produce an image of essence or self. She fears she is no-thing, no-image, no-essence or no-self on this surface. Ash's preoccupation becomes one of horror as if the desire for self-recognition is inevitably or irrevocably denied. Freud's narcissism depicts a literalizing of "self-love," a splitting of the ego wherein the ego takes itself as the object of desire. But if the viewing "subject" is already denied subject-status by her lack of signification *woman*, any essence of self is already absent, non-existent. Ash's dream if it remains in a Freudian cosmo-typology can never reflect Ash, her femaleness becomes excluded, her reflections generating only distant Echoes and rejections.

If, however, the interpreting narrative is reconfigured, as it is through Amy's analysis, the structures informing lack, essence, and self shift into an alternative arrangement for reading a female subjectivity as mobile and "free." Amy speaks not of lack nor does she reinforce or endorse Ash's anxiety. She speaks of Ash being both lucky and blessed that her reflection "has a mind of her own" that enables her mirror-image the freedom to go wherever it/she desires and chooses. "Not only can you see past the mere mirror of yourself," says Amy. "Even more, your reflection is free to go where she wants, do what she wants, regardless of what's expected of her. She's a reflection who is free to choose. She doesn't even have to look like you, she's so free" (293). What Ash has initially perceived as a disturbing absence, a lack or even loss of self-reflection, Amy reconfigures as a kind of Braidotti-esque nomadic female subject, albeit a conscious one. The dispersal of the subject, her dislocation of the signifier from the signified in this context does not become the fragmented/decomposition or the neurotic multiple-personality typical of conventional literary doubles. The mirror-image—Ash's likeness as ego-less—appears unconfined by social conventions or expectations. As reflection, she can also transform her image through freedom of movement, desire and agency so that "she" might not even physically resemble Ash.

The ego's split and taking of itself as object of desire is, according to Freud, an erotic process capable of reorienting self-desire to external objects that resemble the subject. Amy's interpretation, however, understands Ash's traveling mirror-image as simple "free," selective but not seeking. Her reflection shape-shifts and yet remains continually a reflection of Ash, of her as "me." The nothingness on the water's surface suggests then a stability of self even as Ash's "me" has moved on. Amy's interpretation

as her own wish-fulfillment, marking her own desires of freedom not Ash's—This is where the disconnect and obsession and desire—tension between Amy and Ash accumulates. In the portion of the novel devoted to Amy and Kate's narrative, Amy travels. Her story opens with her standing on a train platform, and she continues to move through migratory spaces. She acquires a caravan on a Scottish sea-side recreation park, a temporary home for she and Kate made more transitory by her status as an illiterate, low-paid laborer. If the reader re-turns to Amy's section, the traumatic event that lead to her inability to read for at least a decade appears connected not just to Ash's burning of Amy's library and apartment sans her journals but also to her own interpretation of Ash's dream. Amy becomes the one who wanders, free to momentarily land and alight as she desires. Her story, like Ash's dream, is a series of departures and arrivals.

Fourth....

In many ways, *Like* reads as the response in a conversation for which the reader has been denied the opening statement or as a simile where an original object of reflection, or the primary source for the double, has become indistinct, inaccessible, or unreadable. In this arrangement of the indistinct, the excess of associations becomes an exploration of narrative deferral and the anxiety and potential freedom recognized in not reflecting in heteronormative structures. As the title forecasts, the novel cannot reflect either woman or her experiences; they are an approximation, an incomplete simile that gestures toward meaning and connection but that refuses to provide definition to either female protagonist.

renée hoogland notes that writing that directs woman's desire away from the phallus as the organizer of subjectivity and narrative meaning poses an alternative to the oedipal processes that establish man as man and woman as his reflective other. In so far as the phallus, as an organizer of meaning and sign of narrative mastery, may be critiqued in feminist models of writing, the alternative produces a writing that resembles the same-sex eroticism or woman-oriented imagery associated with the lesbian but which, in the case of *WAYL?*, may be devoid of the historical erasure and codings of lesbian sexuality. *Like*, however, takes up the notions of a lesbian sexuality that have been both historically absent in Western literature and encoded within ostensibly heterosexual narratives to produce a self-reflexive story of woman-oriented desire. [22]

If Enright's novel conjures a reconfiguration of Irish literature away from an oedipal standard toward a feminine self imaged as sisterhood, *Like* draws upon the historic in/visibility of lesbians and the coding of lesbian desire to configure a mobile self that is consistently disappearing. In this way, the ground of "sexual difference" upon which Smith's characters and story are organized refuses easy recuperation into a nationalized literary tradition and instead participates in/against the mythmaking strategies that Bonnie Zimmerman claims to be common to later-twentieth-century lesbian fiction. We could awkwardly squish Smith's childhood in Scotland and adult life in England or the corresponding settings in the novel into a reading of Smith's novel as nationalized literary expression. For much of the twentieth century, literary critics such as Hugh MacDiarmid and Gregory Smith promoted the double and embraced self-

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[22] hoogland notes that the "in/visibility" of the contemporary lesbian subject as an excluded or damaged figure follows a trend dating back to the seventeenth century. See: hoogland's *Lesbian Configurations* (6) and Terry Castle's *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

contradiction "to make it the basis of a revived national [essentially Scottish] art" (Carruthers 11). However, such an interpretation of Ali Smith's underlying politic and textual doubling dismisses *Like*'s attentiveness to reading as a method for making self and meaning according to the registers of sexuality rather than nation. It is thus more fitting to locate the novel's political impetus according to its evocations of the myths that shape a sense of self and its insistence that critical reading/writing alters the relationship between self and others.

Radical transformations of self necessitate not only a rewriting or re*vision* of the narrative conventions performing or depicting self but also a corresponding and commensurate method for reading that self as not-conventional. In that narrative experimentation carries a politicized imperative for literary, cultural and/or social change, experimental texts such as *WAYL?* and *Like* risk that readers will either recuperate the revisoned self into more familiar conventional discourses and orders[23] or disregard unfamiliar textual strategies as simply incomprehensible or meaningless.[24] What is at issue then is how experimentation or change in self presentation/perception might be read in discussions undertaking the intersections of sexuality and self. Often the very notion of experimentation, which marks a deviation from normative or dominant oedipal-narrative orders, can, thus, be a strategy for feminist writing and representations of non-

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[23] Recuperative readings inform most of the promotional materials and book reviews of *What Are You Like?* by presuming Maria's and Rose's self-searching is a quest for "identity," particularly for their "Irish identity." Such interpretations minimize Enright's questioning of Irishness and representations of the feminine. "Reading" in this context reflects publishing interests and reviewer's desires to contain and package the novel's complexities and more radical narrative/sexual politics into familiar notions of the "Irish woman."

[24] Cautioning against radical linguistic and narrative experimentation for feminine articulation, scholar such as Kim Worthington who are skeptical of poststructuralist feminism often criticize *l'écriture féminine* on the basis that it becomes "an unintelligible (if defiant) babble which is readily dismissed by men as meaningless" (111). See: Worthington's *Self as Narrative: Subjectivity and Community in Contemporary Fiction*, 1996.

heteronormative identity categories, such as feminist, lesbian, gay, queer and so forth. Thus, writing that deviates from convention either in its imagery or its syntax to represent or perform a non-masculine subjectivity often walks a tightrope of representational invisibility to revise (make visible) the repressed woman and the doubly repressed lesbian out from masculine representational orders.

In the context of later-twentieth-century feminist (re)writings of women's roles and symbolic placement in social and narrative structures, the critical challenge has been twofold. On the one hand, the goal has been to read women out of the silences and passivities informing traditional figurations of the feminine. On the other, the strategy has been to interpret/create new roles, placements, and understandings of and among women via writing that constructs *woman* as otherwise to the masculine or as elsewhere and, thereby, to be experienced/expressed through an alternate imaginary space. Regardless of critical goal, feminism's revisionist imperatives have oft been channeled into remythologizing narrative strategies. Accordingly, the primary means for reading *woman* has generally worked on archeological or excavatory models, through which a "true self," "originary woman," or "feminine identity" might be recovered, uncovered or disinterred from a masculine imaginary.[25] This excavated woman appears most strongly in feminist revisionist and remythologizing discourses wherein such figures as the goddess, (earth)mother and lesbian provide an anti- or pre-oedipal origin for configuring subjectivity and gendered social relations. Yet, what if woman is revised, as I have suggested in my reading of the feminine in *WAYL?* and *Like*, as a process, a proliferation, a gesture toward rather than an excavation of the feminine?

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[25] For a broader discussion of figurations of "woman" and "lesbian" that inform feminism and reading, see Marilyn Farwell's *Heterosexual Plots,* Bonnie Zimmerman's *Safe Sea of Women* and Judith Roof's "Beginning with *L*," *Lure of Knowledge.*

In different ways, both of the novels under discussion in this chapter attempt to revise excavatory feminism through configurations of twins and lesbian. In *WAYL?*, the revision is generational. The daughters who are so like their mother in their quest for self and meaning do not retrace their mother's path into marriage and childbearing, but rather find an alternative means for self reflection. A figure of failed feminine liberation, the mother, Anna, is imprisoned in the phallocentric (woman and death), a ghost looking in her husband's mirror and back to her mother's lists to recuperate a language for her self, which cannot escape the essentialist move tethering "woman" to genitalia. Her failure bequeaths the search for a feminine self to her daughters who refuse the fantasies and mirrors of the patriarchal to favor reflections among sisters. If the novel, however, depicts Anna's mode of reading/seeing as reminiscent of feminine excavation, the broader textual moves gesture to a self generated as the multiple images of sisters (feminine) but as an ultimately ambiguous relationship (indeterminate and impartial knowledge between sisters).

"Sisterhood" affords the most stable descriptor of Maria and Rose's relationship and is, likewise, evocative of Rich's *lesbian continuum* that bridges disparate and increasingly fractured feminisms, and encourages women to look to one another to reflect their desires, goals, as well as their sense of self and place in the world. In this way, even with the gesture toward prolific and mobile femininity, Enright's novel—typical of her fiction in general—is never quite rid of the return, the final discovery, which reclaims a woman to support the feminine as "gesture." And yet, with a bit of irony, Smith's novel with its explicit characterizations of Ash's obsession with another woman does not connect the dots between the desire in/among women and the image of self emerging out

of an excavated feminine. Women may desire intimacy—sexual and/or conversational—but their desires do not return a clear or concrete image of either *woman* or *lesbian*. In *Like*, the erotic relationships among women are overtly non-reflective, creating a desire for self that is targeted toward a production not to be found on the page, akin to Deleuze and Guattari's lines of flight or Braidotti's nomadism (see: Chapter 6). Rather, Smith's narrative experimentation exposes, claims and plays with the symbolic absentia of the lesbian, thereby, configuring a fleeting image of self/subjectivity that is attached to what Ash proposes as a better politic of "not-knowing."

CHAPTER 3

DIASPORIC MOVES: ELSEWHERE IN *ANOTHER PLACE*

For, if that view [a new gendered discourse] is nowhere to be seen, not given in a single text, not recognizable as a representation, it is not that we—feminists, women—have not yet succeeded in producing it. It is, rather, that what we have produced is not recognizable, precisely, as a representation. For that ***"elsewhere" is not some mythic distant past or some utopian future history: it is the elsewhere of discourse here and now, the blind spots, or the space-off, of its representations.***

Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*

Whether the national narrative is one of common origins or of gathered populations, it cannot assimilate groups that maintain important allegiances and practical connections to a homeland or a dispersed community located elsewhere. *Peoples whose sense of identity is centrally defined by collective histories of displacement and violent loss cannot be "cured" by merging into a new national community. This is especially true when they are the victims of ongoing structural prejudice. Positive articulations of diaspora identity reach outside the normative territory and temporality (myth/history) of the nation-state.*

James Clifford, "Diasporas"

Migratory subjects suggests that Black women/'s writing cannot be located and framed in terms of one specific place, but exist/s in myriad places and times, constantly eluding the terms of the discussion. It is not so much formulated as a "nomadic subject," although it shares an affinity, but as a migratory subject moving to specific places and for definite reasons. ***In the same way as diaspora assumes expansiveness and elsewhereness, migrations of the Black female subject pursue the path of movement outside the terms of dominant discourses.***

Carole Boyce Davies, *Black Women, Writing and Identity*

Critical Evocations of *Elsewhere*

The narrative and reading strategies within Anne Enright's and Ali Smith's "double" novels generate glimpses of female protagonists as mobile women and

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elsewhere in relation to a masculine discourse. Smith's *Like*, in particular, torques feminist reading practices that attempt to recuperate *woman* from the elsewheres—the suppressions and silences of women in history and myth. Her writing proffers intermittent, belated glimpses of women in a manner akin to how Teresa de Lauretis and Luce Irigaray find the Alice(s) in alternative looking-glasses and in a multiplicity of feminist articulations, actions, and activisms.[26] As de Lauretis reminds us, sighting representations of the "feminine" is not a matter of being inside/outside discourse, nor is it a matter of recuperating a past or a seemingly lost feminine discourse, nor is it a matter of waiting for a future libratory language/system to appear through social progress. Instead, representing *woman* is a matter of the *elsewhere* of discourse's "blind spots, the space off of its representations."[27] *Elsewhere*, however, is a delightfully slippery and inexact locational term that de Lauretis takes pains to ground "here and now" since in its spatial and temporal inexactness, it tends to slip into nostalgic or utopian visions and/or to become a catchall that masks our conceptual befuddlement and camouflages what may be the limit of a theoretical model. Thus, *elsewhere*'s rhetorical and theoretical power lies in its gesture rather than its capacity to denote, to specify, which makes it both

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[26] See the introduction to Teresa de Lauretis' *Alice Doesn't* (1984). In *This Sex Which is Not One* (1977/1985), Luce Irigaray reads out of "Alice" and her relationship to the looking glass more broadly to write of woman as signifying from "elsewhere": "When she returns, it is to set off again from elsewhere. From another point of pleasure, or of pain. One would have to listen with another ear, as if hearing *an "other meaning" always in the process of weaving itself, of embracing itself with words, but also of getting rid of words in order not to become fixed, congealed in them*... It is useless, then to trap women in the exact definition of what they mean, to make them repeat (themselves) so that it will be clear; they are already elsewhere in that discursive machinery where you expected to surprise them" (29).

[27] "Space off" is a cinematic term, which de Lauretis explains is "the space not visible in the frame but inferable from what the frame makes visible. In classical and commercial cinema, the space-off I, in fact, erased, or, better, recontained and sealed into the image by the cinematic rules of narrativization (first among them, the shot/reverse-shot system). But avant-garde cinema has shown the space-off to exist concurrently and alongside the represented space, has made it visible by remarking its absence in the frame or in the succession of frames, and has shown it to include not only the camera...but also the spectator (the point where the image is received, re-constructed, and re-produced in/as subjectivity)" (26).

apropos to discussions of the feminine that work to destabilize discourses of patriarchy as well as those that tend toward recursion.

In the context of diaspora theory, a predominantly race-, ethnic-, and nation-based (sub)field of Cultural/Postcolonial Studies, *elsewhere* is likely to call forth many more seemingly grounded locations and significations: a lost homeland or sense of belonging, or perhaps a migrant's new or future home, or absent, displaced family and cultural traditions. In the 1990s, James Clifford promoted "diaspora" as a figure/term for identifying radically disparate "cosmopolitan hybrid" communities of migrants and as the organizing nomenclature for a historically and socially situated field of cultural study.[28] His anthropological and race-centered approach to reading diaspora as a counter to dominant discourse (i.e, that of Euro/American nation) works another register of difference than that of de Lauretis and studies of gender; yet, his partiality to *elsewhere* as a way to characterize "diaspora" implies a similarly slippery rhetorical move. Drawing upon patterns of modern exile, the dispersed middle-passage theorized by Paul Gilroy, and studies of non-Zionist Jewish communities, Clifford traces a version of diaspora that is not quite like, but also not quite distinct from, the assimilation-oriented connotations of immigration. And, with a radical anti-nation potential, diasporic cosmopolitan communities can be "settled" (i.e., not nomadic) but excluded from and refuse to contribute to national projects and visions of their resident country (a nomadic characteristic). Diasporic allegiances and alliances simply remain literally *elsewhere*.

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[28] Etymologically "diaspora" comes from the Greek forms of dispersion/disperse and to sow or scatter. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the use of the term dispersion to describe the movement of people originates in Devarim, the fifth book of the Jewish *Torah* also known as Deuteronomy in the Christian *Old Testament*. The use of "diaspora," as a term pertaining more specifically to groups of people than the more general "dispersal," comes into favor in the late-nineteenth century to describe in particular the large-scale movement of Jews from "the East." It carries connotations *elsewhere* in the form of Moses' Promised Land.

According to Clifford, these links to an *elsewhere* (perhaps homeland, perhaps cultural, familial roots, and so forth) disrupt the myths and histories constructing the nation's imaginary community by maintaining cultural and political affiliations "outside the normative territory and temporality of the nation-state" (307). In a related conceptual move, Stuart Hall claims, "the concept of *diaspora* provides an alternative framework for thinking about 'imagined communities'." In his essay "From 'Routes' to Roots," Hall defines diaspora as that which "cuts across the traditional boundaries of the nation-state, provides linkages across the borders of national communities and highlights connections which intersect—and thus disrupt and unsettle—our hitherto settled conceptions of culture, place, and identity" (207). Thus, one of the common characteristics of *elsewhere* is its capacity to destabilize the dominant discourses and narratives of power, proposing another location to direct desires for belonging and project visions of self and community.

If Clifford and Hall embrace the hybridity and mobility associated with *diaspora* to theorize primarily African, Afro- and Indian-Caribbean (im)migrant communities in Britain, such scholars of gender and migrant literatures as Anuradha Dingwhaney Needham and Carole Boyce Davies have been more cautious, or, in Needham's sentiments, "use[s] the term 'diaspora' with some trepidation" to describe migrant women's writing to and from the metropole (England). In *Using the Master's Tools: Resistance and the Literature of the African and South Asian Diasporas* (2000), Needham focuses in part on the exclusion of women writers from postcolonial, diaspora-focused studies, and she suggests that the troubled relationship such women writers as Ama Ata Aidoo from Ghana have with "home"—whether home is "lost" or not—makes their work an uneasy fit within what she sees as the still predominantly masculine

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structured diaspora literary studies (male subjects travel; women stay home).[29] Needham and Davies suggest that if women are/have been part of the depictions of African and Caribbean diaspora(s), their experiences and writing reside "elsewhere" to the broad strokes of diasporic cultural and literary studies.[30] In *Black Women, Writing and Identity* (1994), Davies endorses the appellations of migrancy as a double-edged terminology that she uses to describe how Black women writers and their work "elude[s] the terms of discussion." "I want to pursue the understanding of the resisting subject," she states, "and apply it in different ways to the diasporic elsewheres of a radical Black *diasporic* subjectivity" (37). What makes her formulation radical is of course the inclusion of women and Continental reading practices of Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous which emphasize the mobility of subjects in language. While her critical goal is to complicate narrow, essentialist definitions of race and "Black" in American literary studies, Davies employs multiple formulations of subjectivity from psychoanalysis to postcolonialism, depending on the text she is reading in order to account for the "resisting subject," "the migrant subject," the "Black female subject" who "asserts agency as [she/it] crosses the borders, journeys, migrates and so re-claims as it re-asserts" (37).[31]

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[29] In Needham's critical study of metropolitan writers often left out of postcolonial analyses of diaspora writing, she uses Khachig Tölölyan's and James Clifford's definitions of diaspora now opened up from depicting a specific Jewish, Greek and Armenian "dispersion" to speak more broadly of the communities of immigrants, expatriates, refugees, and so forth that share within their abroad-community a "longing, memory and (dis)identification" with a homeland. But she likewise acknowledges that "diaspora" is a fraught term when uncritically employed to describe the writing of women from places of dispersion.

[30] Davies' formulation of a "migrant subjectivity" in *Black Women, Writing and Identity* is particularly nuanced and intriguing. In many ways, however, her arguments about subjectivity, mobility and generative openness of feminine writing call for a particular tension, which ties the "elsewhere" to a recuperative, excavatory feminist strategy: "Yet, this is the reality [exclusion and disenfranchisement] out of which one must reacquire the 'power to create' and re-create. Black women writers are engaged in all kinds of processes of reacquisition of the 'tongue.' And these, I assert, are movements of re-connection and, at times, of re-evaluation."

[31] Davis is invested in both using "Black" as a kind of Spivakian strategic essentialist term and expanding "Black" to include Caribbean, African, and South Asian migrant writers who are oft excluded in US

I, however, am more cautious than Davies about the power of "re" emboldened as it may be by the movement of a migrancy that moves to specific places for specific reasons. What exactly is re-claimed in Black women's re-assertions of self and from where? From the mother? From the homeland? Certainly, not from historical narratives or discourses of the diaspora. The *elsewhere* in models of diaspora patterned on exile often evokes the lost *mother*land, the place longed for but made inaccessible due to political, economic, or select idiosyncrasies related to personal temperment.[32] Unlike figurations of exile, diaspora tends to diffuse *elsewhere* so that the recuperations of origins or essential identity are complicated but ultimately desired. If "elsewhere denotes movement" as Davies claims in quoting Michael Hanchard, it may be most powerful, most resisting and disruptive when, as de Lauretis notes, elsewhere is tethered to the "here and now," spinning through discourse to reveal a feminine that exists just out of sight.

Such is the rhetorical strength and activism of Dionne Brand's poetry, novels, and films.[33] Brand's writing and filmmaking expresses and extends a social activism that is

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African-American literary canons that tend to narrowly define "Black" according to US history of slavery and Civil Rights movements.

[32] In so far as diaspora might account for communal experiences and what Clifford calls a diasporic identity, it is a descriptor somewhat at odds with the tropes of subjectivity and mobility featured in this dissertation. One could argue, as Caren Kaplan has in *Questions of Travel*, that diaspora is primarily a ramped-up revisioning of "modern exile," which if more relevant to contemporary mass migrations and the rapid technologies associated with later-twentieth-century travel and community-building, and diaspora still carries forth the modern exile's imperial proclivities and the ahistoricism of exile literary studies and cultural theorizations. I agree that "diaspora" shares with exile an attendant "longing, memory, and (dis)identification with homeland" that I will discuss in the following chapter in the context of returns to the *mother*land, but the potential dispersal of exilic home/motherland into multiple sties suits the complexities of women's writing engaging the Caribbean as theme and setting.

[33] Dionne Brand immigrated from Trinidad to Canada in the earl 1950s to pursue degrees in English and Philosophy at the University of Toronto. Most well-known as a poet, Brand's writing tends to blend literary styles of lyricism, autobiography, cultural criticism, and narrative (fiction/novel). She has been an outspoken and savvy anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-patriarchy activist, often as critical of social activist organizations and visions as she is of the broader social oppressions and programs she sees operating at the levels of national policies and of a masculine social imaginary.

complex and prolific—women-oriented, anti-patriarchal, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist. Her writing takes up Caribbean themes and settings often within the context of women's movements between the Caribbean and Canada to explore (im)migrant conditions relevant to her politics. Topics of migrancy, diaspora, and exile are prominent motifs in her writing but are less evident in her characterization of her female protagonists. For example, if migrancy can be identified according to one's movements to specific places for specific reasons as Davies and Rosi Braidotti note, the migrant subject—whether racially or psychically proscribed—is predominantly a conscious, discerning, and opportunistic traveler (*Black Women* 37, *Nomadic Subjects* 24). Migrancy, not only in the context of Anglo-Caribbean writing but in other race/ethnic literatures of dislocation and relocation, generally asserts economic reasons for a woman's movement from one country or region to another. This is the case in Brand's characterization of Caribbean mothers and families who move to North America to work as domestic laborers, and other unskilled, but occasionally skilled, workers. Her female protagonists, however, complicate such models of migrancy, if they fit the models at all. These women often do not know why they move or they move for one reason and they later realize (or the story reveals to the reader) that they traveled for reasons they were/are unaware of or cannot acknowledge.

In Another Place, Not Here

Similar to Ali Smith's *Like*, Dionne Brand's first novel, *In Another Place, Not Here* (1996), is divided into two discrete sections with two female protagonists who were once lovers. The first half of the novel is devoted to Elizete's account of falling in love with Verlia and her emigration to Canada after Verlia's death. Elizete, born and raised

on an unnamed Caribbean island, works her husband's sugar cane fields alongside other low-wage laborers this is until she meets and falls in love with Verlia. A returned emigrant and communist revolutionary, Verlia embodies for Elizete a version of life and womanhood that extends beyond the plantation that has confined Elizete's sense of place and desires (laborer and wife). "Verl was sure," Elizete remembers, "Sure of everything. And sure like that was not something in my life. I was sure that I would wake up each day, I was sure that I had to work cane, I was sure that the man they give me to was Isaiah Ferdinand...I was sure of what anybody would be sure of. Spite, hunger, rain. But Verl is sure of what she make in her own mind and what she make didn't always exist" (6-7). Elizete's surety rooted in her experience of the plantation does not extend to a broader knowledge of the island and its socio-political workings overall. Prior to Verlia and immigrant experiences in Toronto, Elizete's "politics" and world-vision are limited to what Jamaica Kincaid calls a "smallness of place" typical of Caribbean island thinking that restricts Elizete's knowledge to her immediate surroundings and to issues of daily survival. In many ways, however, Elizete's portion of the novel is the more complex narrative, both stylistically and conceptually. Through a non-linear, polytonal, and multi-dialect style, her narrative zigzags through childhood memories on the island and through her search abroad to understand Verlia. Each dialect-shift coordinates Elizet's altered sense of self with her primary relationships—lover (Verlia), absent-mother (unknown), fantasy mother (Adela), substitute-mother-caretaker (Moriah), husband (Isaiah). Overall, her story proposes an alternative narrative to Verlia's relatively linear and historicizing account of her radical activism, which in its recording suggests that the underground

militant cell Verlia joins to bring class revolution to the island is a small vision and equally, albeit differently, limited as Elizete's.

A cross-current to Elizete's narrative, Verlia's story follows Elizete's and tells of her childhood emigration to Canada and the radical, separatist activism through which she strove to embody Che Guevara's revolutionary philosophies to effect socio-political change first in Canada and finally in the Caribbean. "She bet all her life on the revolution. She had no place else to go, no other countries, no other revolution" (114). Her narrative stages the prison-like effects of her activism on her body. As her body experiences limits of revolution—manifesting as increasingly debilitating joint pain and headaches—her narrative breaks down, becoming more disconnected and eventually overtaken by other voices that speak for her and about her death. Born on the island but having emigrated with her parents as a teenager, Verlia returns to the island a grown woman to fight for social (class and racial) justice and equality. In contrast to visions of "a migrant's return" to either the motherland or a Caribbean birthplace associated with the early-twentieth-century Negritude Movement or more contemporary pan-African literature, the return home in Verlia's story does not envision a new beginning nor rejuvenate latent or nascent revolutionary anti-colonial causes.[34] In fact, the return home to enable revolution in Verlia's case parallels the trend in Anglo-Caribbean women's writing to problematize and undercut literary visions of national and political revolutions with images of politically "meaningless" self-sacrifice.

What remains meaningful in Brand's novel is the loving relationships between women who travel between the Caribbean and Canada—Elizete and Verlia, Verlia and

[34] I am thinking particularly of Aimé Césaire's poem "Catiers d'un Retours au Pays Natal" (Return to My Native Land) here, which while not of the "Anglo-Caribbean" literary tradition also suits the vision of a migrant's return to the place of his birth to spark a cultural/political revolution.

her girlfriend Adela in Toronto, and finally Adela and Elizette who meet at the end of the novel, and overtake Verlia's narrative. The erotic, signified through the relationships between these three women, models an eroticism of proximity, stressing an emotional and sensual connection to the world reminiscent of Audre Lorde's embrace of a feminine sensuality in "The Uses of the Erotic" (1978) as a method to create healthy, loving connections among daughters, mothers, sisters and lovers. Her erotic is "an assertion of the life force of women: of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and uses of which we are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing, our living, our work, our lives" (341). While Lorde often employs images of her own family in what she calls her "biomythographic" writing to maintain a connection to the Caribbean as a unifying source within a Black diasporic community abroad, Brand's novel is less celebratory, more cynical of both the value of the Caribbean as a connective tissue for communities abroad as well as the capacity of imaginative returns to offer anything more than a kind of nostalgia that keeps (im)migrants from living politically engaged lives abroad.

The return to mother/homeland in women's writing about the Anglo-Caribbean is oft marked by a female protagonist's recognition of self-hatred or trauma of woman/motherhood accompanied by expressions of dislocation. This vein in Caribbean themed literature, which includes such texts as Joan Riley's *The Unbelonging* (1985), Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (1988) and *Lucy* (1990), and Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987) generally portrays a (im)migrant woman's either imaginative or literal return to the Caribbean as the return to a site of trauma, distress,

and/or unredeemable violence.[35] Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*, follows this trend, or at least it does in part. Paralleling the plot of Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven,* one of Brand's protagonists, Verlia, returns to the Caribbean island of her birth (a fictional, unnamed island) to take part in what will eventually become a failed social revolution, one in which she will die, leaping from a cliff in a barrage of bullets shot from an American military helicopter. Cliff's strikingly similar wandering protagonist in *No Telephone*, Clare Savage, also dies in a failed uprising, shot by American military forces protecting a film crew in Jamaica. According to Cliff, Clare's death in Jamaica assures that Clare "in death has complete identification with the homeland...[becoming] indistinguishable from the ground" ("Clare Savage as a Crossroads Character" 265). It is a significantly different figuration of female mobility and a woman's relationship to home in Brand's characterization of Verlia who instead of becoming one with the island "flies away to a place less fleshy," into another place, into an elsewhere (247). Verlia's characterization, however, does draw upon themes of mother/daughter strife and self-hatred in a manner common to such Anglo-Caribbean fiction as that of Joan Riley and Jamaica Kincaid. For instance, Abena, Verlia's former lover, describes the Caribbean as the source for a tradition of undesirable and damaging relationships between generations of women. "Mothers," forced by economic hardship to migrate, says Abena, "washed our [daughters] faces in their self-hatred. Self-hatred they had learned from the white people whose toilets they had cleaned..." (231).

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[35] In as much as Clare Savage is a mobile female protagonist, she is also a fairly conventional character of exile and return to the motherland. Michelle Cliff states, "At the end of *No Telephone to Heaven*, Clare Savage has cast her lot, quietly and somewhat tentatively, but definitely. She ends her life burned into the landscape of Jamaica, literally, as one of a small band of guerrillas engaged in a symbolic act of revolution....In her death she has complete identification with the homeland; soon enough she will be indistinguishable from the ground. Her bones will turn to potash, as did her ancestors' bones" (265).

Verlia's story is only part of the novel's characterization of mobile women and their relationship to place and one another since Brand's novel is a double-narrative focused on two protagonists but also includes a range of dialects and other women's perspectives. The sutured story of Elizete and Verlia doubles female protagonists and likewise doubles the possible contexts of feminine dislocation and (re)turn to a place of belonging. In these multiplied contexts, the literalizations of the *mother/homeland* also become dispersed between an inaccessible Africa, an unnamed Caribbean island, and Canada. Just as the term *Caribbean* is a marker of heterogeneity, a *creolized* collection of islands, languages, cultures, colonial projects and histories, so too is the concept and location of motherland in Anglo-Caribbean literature. Is the motherland England as found in the writings of George Lamming and Joan Riley? Is the motherland a distant/differed Africa as in the writings of Caryl Phillips? Is *she* the multi-islanded Caribbean of Audre Lorde and Jamaica Kincaid? Is the mother/land split between two or more locations as in the writings of V.S. Naipaul and Michelle Cliff, who evoke India and Africa, respectively, to figure a character's rebirth in England, the United States, and/or the Caribbean?[36] Or is *she* somewhere else altogether? Brand's novel is intriguing precisely because it draws upon nearly all of these configurations of mother/homeland to redirect notions of belonging away from the discursive weight of masculinist representations of *home* that conflate feminine imagery (virgin, mother, spirit) with land. Brand's sutured story, however, recalibrates belonging to the space of Black women's bodies and the erotic, not necessarily maternal, relationships among women,

[36] Carole Boyce Davies notes, "...for [Audre] Lorde and [Paule] Marshall, both Afro-Caribbean/American in terms of parentage, the re-connection with home occurs in at least three levels—first, the parental home, the Caribbean homeland occupying the secondary level, and at the tertiary level the African identification. This tertiary level is one at which Cliff gets sustenance...(*Black Women* 91).

thereby, dispersing mother/homeland. In fact, in *Another Place* mother/homeland(s)—particularly Africa and the Caribbean—are sites not of loss but of misrecognition, misunderstanding (the limit of knowledge), and serve to displace disturbing and complicated desires.

The Problem of Elsewhere in Verlia's Activism

Verlia's return to the Caribbean follows a fairly conventional model diasporic/exilic desire for return to the homeland in so far as Verlia escapes from the "parched well" and speechlessness of immigrant life in Canada to fight a worthy revolution on the island of her birth (124). However, unlike images of masculine exile that revision and revitalize the mother/homeland often through bloody sacrifice and death, Verlia's death—depicted as a leap away from the island—does not alter the political landscape of the island, suggesting the failure of a returned migrant/exile either to bring about socio-political change or to produce a new social vision for racial and/or national self-determination.[37] As the title, *In Another Place, Not Here*, suggests, the novel's main themes—dislocation from self and belonging, escape from oppression, and the radical possibilities of (re)turning to a place of feminine pleasure and passion—are reconfigured away from "land" and to the more mobile and fluid tropes of air and sea. Verlia's leap, which Elizete recounts early in the novel, is a scene that repeats throughout her narrative of grieving and searching for what Verlia knew and then her death scene returns to close the novel:

[37] Some critics such as Johanna X. K. Garvey claim that the unnamed island in *Another Place* bears striking resemblance to Grenada and might be historically situated at the US invasion of Grenada in 1983. While a histo-geographical location may help make connections between historicized events and Verlia's death, it is more significant that the island remains unnamed, potentially historically ambiguous, and, thus, further dislocated from the "literal," and representations of the "real."

> She's flying out to sea and in the emerald she sees the sea, its eyes translucent, its back solid going some place so old there's no memory of it. She's leaping....Her body is cool, cool in the air. Her body has fallen away, is just a line, an electric current, the sign of lightness left after lightning, a faultless arc to the deep turquoise deep. She doesn't need air. She's in some other place already, less tortuous, less fleshy." (246-7)

This theme is crucial to the novel's figurations of mobile female protagonists and their (dis)connections from diasporic (migrant and exilic) models of belonging and self. If Verlia is dead in the first few pages and her death repeats throughout the novel, the repetition of her flight to *elsewhere* not only produces a kind of corpselessness to imagine an (im)migrant's death, but also derails the narrative potential for closure that death secures in narrative. In the context of Verlia's portion of the story, her leap suggests that she has connected with a version of the *elsewhere* that does not cause her physical and psychic pain in the same way her political activism and unwittingly masculinist notion of elsewhere invariably does.

Verlia's story is primarily an accounting of her political activism in Toronto and her work back home in the Caribbean. She is a volatile and energetic character, as passionate as she is contradictory. Her characterization does, however, grant access to a range of relationships to and longings for *elsewhere* in diasporic and women-centered representations of mobile subjects. Verlia recounts that the Black immigrant community in Toronto is a diverse community where "everyone is from someplace else"—Jamaica, Nigeria, Trinidad, South Africa, and other implied sites associated with African diaspora (181). It is very much resembles Clifford's description of cosmopolitan hybridity and his

claim that "diaspora communities are 'not here' to stay." "Diaspora cultures," continues Clifford, "thus mediate, in a lived tension, the experiences of separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/desiring another place" (311). In contrast to Clifford's version of diasporic desire and community, Verlia is a character who comes to despise the collective "nostalgia," the shared desire to be elsewhere. Instead, she recognizes that, yes, this desire for another place (Africa or Caribbean) is a response to the racism, ghettoizing, and socio-political and economic marginalization that immigrants experience: "It (Toronto) wraps them in the same skin and slides them to the side like so much meat wrapped in brown paper" (182). But even with such insight, it is a version of collective separation that she cannot endorse or abide. For Verlia, the (im)migrant nostalgia, the looking to the past, to another place appears to her a dangerous immobilizing acquiescence, a denigrating balm to make collective poverty and raced disenfranchisement palatable and even essential to a collective sense of belongingness. "All this thinking of another place. Well she was there and doesn't want to go back [to the Caribbean]. Give her the day-to-day hardness, real and here. She didn't want to be anywhere but now, nowhere but the what to do about" (183). Her resistances are, therefore, multi-edged: posing a challenge to Canada's white majority that prefers its Black immigrants to be invisible laborers in "their place" as well as rejecting the retrograde nostalgia that provides coherence to an ethnically and sexually diverse community.

In many ways, Verlia simply impersonates the voice of social justice activists calling for reformations of power structures in her call for something "real and here....now." But she is also impatient and prone to despair when she cannot control the

outcomes of activist actions or even her own desires. When her protesting and community volunteerism do not produce a visible and radical social change in Toronto, she channels her desire for change through a pan-African underground military organization called the Committee for Revolutionary Struggle. Verlia seems to miss the irony in her new political affiliation through which she will raise money to supply revolutions in Africa and the Caribbean. While she initially participates in local protests and volunteers for assistance programs with her partner Abena, the labors of "day-to-day hardness" begin to seem akin to the affects of nostalgia, a balm, a palliative and ultimately ineffective measure to take on the monolithic "white city" (183, 180).

In addition, her sexual desires complicate and seem to undermine her vision of Black social justice. For instance, while at a "Rally against the Klan," she finds herself inexplicably attracted to a demonstrator on the opposite side of the cordon, a white woman with "KKK" tattooed above her cleavage. Verlia cannot sort out her response. Is she drawn to the woman's breast? To the whiteness of her skin? Or to a symbol of white power? These latter two possibilities disturb her, suggesting a gap between her conscious desires for racial justice and a less readable desire for a version of power and belonging that are shaped through white standards and constructions of racial difference. For while she understands that such ciphers of racial difference (skin, tattoo) mark the fantasy of race and signify a white "superiority" made possible through the labor and oppression of Blacks, she is less able to read her own desire in relation to such signs. Verlia links the possibility that she might unconsciously desire the woman's whiteness rather than her breast with her understanding of her own mother's internalized racism that manifest as very "white" desires for respectability and class mobility. If Verlia's desire is

an unconscious desire for whiteness, it is one she cannot fully confront or address, and it suggests to her a new version of the self-hatred passed from Caribbean mothers to their daughters.

While the various and insidious manifestations of racism in Toronto and her potential self-hatred establish Verlia as a compelling and complex character, they do not coalesce into an overall endorsement of Verlia's brand of activism in the novel. Rather, the politic of the novel works on and ultimately endorses the logic of a gendered *elsewhere* rather than a racialized, diasporic elsewhere. In a highly contradictory move, Verlia travels back to the island of her birth, the place not exactly "here and now," part of a dispersal of her underground "cell" who gradually leave for revolutions in Zimbabwe, Guyana and "elsewhere." Verlia's (re)turn to the island is, however, a move that appears to her girlfriend, Abena, simultaneously disingenuous in that Verlia leaves to avoid confronting the "here and now," but is also completely genuine in that Verlia's goal is to put her beloved Che's teachings into action someplace where they might matter. She repeats phrases from his journals over and over—"True revolution is guided by great feelings of love"—a mantra for self-love to be made reality in what Verlia longs to believe will be class revolution in the Caribbean, a political activism that on the surface takes the issue of her disconcerting desires and potential self-hatred out of the equation (183). Her reverse-migration is, thus, a diverting of her desire to make real that which was imagined from one place to another, in particular, to alter the socio-political landscape of a former home according to the insights of the displaced diasporic subject. In this way, hers is perhaps a common exile-inflected vision/project, one that substitutes

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the liberation of a diverse, African community abroad (Canada) with the liberation of workers from state power (neo-colonialism) in the Caribbean.

This replacement ultimately fails to satisfy Verlia, however, because it does not deliver what she believes she wants and reveals itself in ways that she cannot connect to her very practical model of activism and social change. "It [island labor revolution] had begun to seem endless, useless, and she hated that feeling. Just like home again. She needed to move, feel light" (190). On the level that Verlia cannot read her desire but that we who read her story can, her return to Caribbean translates as part and parcel of a self-oriented desire to love herself, to fix that which the "mother" has broken, to heal a mind and body that feel "torn," "afraid," and constantly "hurts" (223, 224, 227). Verlia's (mis)direction of her desire does not level the necessity for political activism, and sexual-racial-class revolution; rather, it depicts a complex and illogical manifestation of politics as militant "opposition."

Verlia is a tragic character; the failures of her island revolution parallel her failure to liberate herself from both hetero-masculinist notions of the "the mother" and the, consequent, damaging mother/daughter relationships manifesting through a race-centered migratory labor economy. If Verlia is a familiar character of troubled national and sexual revolutions, her characterization undercuts exilic conventions that portend that "exile" can create or enable a new body politic for homeland or elsewhere. In *Alien-nation and Repatriation: Translating Identity in Anglophone Caribbean Literature*, Patricia Joan Saunders observes that the popularity of exile among diaspora writers promoting political change can largely be attributed to the "power of 'Elsewhere' [that] historically endowed Caribbean male writers with (canonical, political, and cultural) authority to speak on

behalf of the nation and its citizens, despite their distance from both" (93). If *elsewhere* provides an authorizing distance from the homeland—a vantage point to see political options, and a valued disinterestedness—it also paradoxically positions the homeland as authentic, as real precisely because it has become elsewhere to the site of exile. Caren Kaplan notes of modern(ist) exile and cultural authenticity: "for the exile the site of the authentic is continually displaced, located in another country" (*Questions* 64). Yet, *elsewhere* has a tendency to ping-pong back and forth between home and away, particularly in Brand's novel, depending on the (im)migrant's literal location in the here and now. While Verlia's raced and classed revolutionary vision is already formed "elsewhere," it must then, according to diaspora/exile logics of elsewhere, require an authentic site, another place, another culture to support its vision. The obvious answer would be Africa. But Brand's novel is not so obvious. While migrant Afro-Caribbean women's dislocation from Africa typically manifests in Anglo-Caribbean writing through accounts of slavery and (neo)colonialism which do play a role in Brand's characterization of Elizete, the novel avoids making any claims to an authentic or real Africa as an elsewhere that might symbolically ground an essential Blackness to fuel and unify political change.

The novel reveals an alternative and particularly female experience of exile that travels with women and is radically altered through a female erotic.[38] For if *woman* is already the in symbolic site of the exile/Other as Cixous and Irigaray propose (see chapter 4) and migrant women are doubly othered in the "host" nation as Audre Lorde recognizes, the political vision that can articulate *woman* cannot be one that re-visions

[38] See Audre Lorde's essay, "The Uses of the Erotic" (1976).

nation or woman in conventional, heteronormative imaginings of family and home. In this fashion, Verlia's misconstruing of revolutionary love and Elizete's meditations on her affair with Verlia suggest that the site of radical political change gains its vision from the love and erotic desires for/among women. The female body is, thus, repeatedly disengaged from what Verlia calls the "masculine seduction" in Toronto that regulates her body and her desires for the purposes of the national (Canadian) body. In this way, Elizete's imaginative "return" is less identifiably connected to the island, but rather to Verlia's body, and the memories of her and Verlia in bed and Verlia leaping from the edge of the cliff amidst gunfire.

The crisscrossing of the protagonists' between the Caribbean and Canada also complements the complexity of dislocated cultural belonging and suggests that the belonging associated with home for generations of black women in/of/from the Caribbean is always paradoxically defined. Belonging in the context of Brand's novel is shaped through both a series of dislocations from "home" and the pleasure of connecting with another, albeit differently, mobile woman. Such is the image toward the end of the novel when Elizete and Adela meet in an immigrant aid center in Canada and take over what had been Verlia's narrative. Significantly, their relationship becomes something more than aid-worker and struggling immigrant when their conversation focuses on their mutual love for and loss of Verlia. The novel's doubled protagonists and their geographic movements to and from an unnamed Caribbean island realign the possibilities of return and belonging to a woman's body in flight, becoming mobile and light. The "she dreaming," is an image Elizete uses to describe Verlia and her desire for political change (16). "She dreaming" does not craft a vision of political revolution for nation but

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rather a vision of a revolution of the masculine social imaginary that is performed by the "bridge" that women's bodies make to the "elsewhere" (16).

The Elsewhere of Orphans

The thwarted return, and the inability to return to a motherland, are common themes in the literature on/of diasporic exile.[39] Such Carribbean writers as George Lamming and V.S. Naipaul have built their literary careers writing about and critiquing images of the exile's fraught return. If Lamming's novels and critical writings such as *The Emigrants* (1954) and *The Pleasure of Exile* (1960) focus on the migrant's experience in the metropole (London), they do so in a manner suiting Patricia Joan Saunder's claim that exile creates authorizing visions. Lamming's emphasis is on the mother as colonizer, and England as the motherland—a racist site that both enervates Caribbean immigrant sons and reinvigorates them to redefine themselves as men. Conversely, in Naipaul's novels, the oedipal relationship between *mother* and migrant son is one of impossible desires and deferrals of meaning, and his fiction consistently portrays masculine subjects emerging out of colonized spaces (broken motherlands) never to become men. Naipaul's themes of an impaired, perhaps tragically broken, masculinity can be found in such novels *The Enigma of Arrival* (1988) and *Half A Life* (2002). In the latter, Little Willie (honestly, that is his phallo-anxious nickname) travels from India to England to Africa and, finally, to Berlin, a journey that is very much a

[39] Myriam Chancy notes: "[E]xile needs to be reviewed with an awareness of an alienation that occurs not only as a disjunction from ancestral African culture or Caribbean cultures, which are every day left behind in the search for economic or other freedoms, but as a component of everyday life for women within the islands themselves. Exile, seen in this light, is an insidious part of the marginalization of women at 'home' as well" (qtd in Garvey 487). And while Chancy is speaking specifically of the relationship between exile and home in Afro-Caribbean literature, this trend is also found in later-twentieth and early-twenty-first century(s) Atlantic Rim Women's texts.

compensatory act, a search for his father's and, hence, his own masculinity. If diasporic exile provides a model to negotiate masculinity or to mourn its loss, then the exile of women within the "motherland" would seem to offer on the one hand a tradition of "self-hatred" passed from mothers to daughters, as in Verlia's characterization and, on the other, a potential for dislocation from the mother and cultural memory as in found in Elizete.

While Verlia's story tells of mothers who internalize white racism and patriarchy as a self-hatred, Elizete's portrays mothers as absent, disinterested and spiritually, psychically empty. Her mothers—literal and figurative—are multiple. As a toddler, her biological mother (name unknown, a woman not remembered) left Elizete under the saaman tree of Moriah, an older, childless woman who if not wealthy had land, a cow, and seemingly enough to raise a child. The last of a line of generations of daughters, Moriah is a disinterested caretaker, and she talks more often to the walls of her house than she speaks to Elizete. She tells the story of their great-great-great-ma, Adela, who came to the island aboard a slave ship as labor and breed-stock for what was then a cocoa plantation (later the sugarcane plantation that Elizete will work). Adela's tale is one of grief, resistance, and retribution compiled through a series of women's voices, not always Moriah's or Elizete's, but also other unnamed narrative voices, signaled through a shift in dialect. Her voice produces an arrival without departure, for her grief and resistance manifest in a dual refusal, neither speaking of Africa nor acknowledging her enslavement and life on the island. She called the island "Nowhere" and it is thus fitting that the island remains without another, "official" name in the novel (18). As a mother figure, Adela signifies brokenness, a refusal to bridge past to present and Africa to the Caribbean

for her many daughters born into slavery or for the future generations of women. She is the ghostly trace of a someplace, an elsewhere, an Africa prior to her enslavement that cannot be accessed but that Elizete both tries to understand and eventually challenges: "I think deep about how a name Nowhere could make sense and I discover that Adela had to make her mind empty to conceive it. The place she miss must have been full and living and take every corner in she mind so when she reach, there was no more room for here" (20).

If Adela is the direct connection to Africa—the potential matriarch of slave history and memory—she signifies a lost connection, memory, and history. "Leave is all she could think so much she wasn't there" (36). In Elizete's childhood loneliness, she makes Adela her invisible friend, realigning the relationship between mothers and daughters. They carry on conversations about ants and the beauty of the island's flora and fauna, and while Elizete understands Adela's grief about the loss of her African family and home, she does not understand Adela's refusal to acknowledge the pleasures of the island or to begin again with naming, claiming it as another place and "home." Taking her imaginary Adela by the hand, so to speak, Elizete extends Adela's single act of naming (a resistance) and begins to name all that she comes across but does not know the words for—"tear up cloth flowers, stinking fruit tree, draw blood bush, monkey face flowers" (23). Her project of giving unknown/unnamed plants names suggests a kind of healing task, a making connection to place, and is, for Elizete, a means for understanding the "intention" of her place (social and geographic) on the island. "Where you see nowhere I must see everything," she tells Adela, "Where you leave all that emptiness I must fill it up. Now I calculating" (24).

This characterization of young Elizete borders on a kind of second-wave feminist imagery of the earth mother/goddess/woman, and Elizete's seemingly earthy relationship with the island is largely what makes her attractive to Verlia. "She [Verlia] needed a woman so grounded as to name all she encountered...someone who believed the world could be made over as simply as that...but more...needing it to be done and simply doing it" (202). But Elizete's seeing "everything," "calculating" and filling of "emptiness" does not create a whole new-woman-centered discourse and social order. Her project is too singular, too esoteric, and too restricted to her experiences on a small part of a small island in a much larger maelstrom of patriarchal and capitalist forces. It may create somewhere out of nowhere, but it is small, insular, and little consolation in the face of Morah's eventual selling Elizete to Isaiah to be his wife and field laborer.

Neither does Elizete's power to name extend beyond Verlia's death or assist Elizete with the hardships of immigrant life in Toronto. If Adela's transport to the island and Verlia's parents' migration to seek work in Canada are instances of dislocation and relocation undertaken for economic gain and shaped by larger economic forces (conventional migrancy model), Elizete's relocation is reasoned through her desire to understand Verlia, to know what Verlia knew about the world and resistance politics. Things already have names in Canada, and it is not easy for Elizete to recreate or to read the "intention" of Toronto: "Intention. Intention is what she could not make out. She could not get her mind to recognize this place" (66). Having left the island to search for a way to understand Verlia—her knowledge, politics, and desires for something more, Elizete finds that Toronto seems to offer little more than the kind of life she had on the plantation with Isaiah. While time is difficult to gauge in the novel, it appears that

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Elizete spends more than a decade scraping together a subsistence living as a domestic and with little time to search for "Verlia." She is doubly dislocated, unable to make sense of Toronto and unable to desire a return to the island. "She could not size it [Toronto] up...This city was imaginary that's all...Or was it she who disappeared into her other life into the descriptions that she had always known and which had followed her here?...And each time she tried to get a hold of the city she longed for another place...The thing was she had no one here" (69-70). Her longing for another place is, as she confesses to Abena at the immigrant aid center, not a longing for the island—for that is a place whose "intention" she knows all to well and longed to escape—but a place recalled in Verlia's leap and the memory of her body "opening" with Verlia's body (78).

Elizete's story and voice opens the novel with descriptions, or more aptly impressions, of cutting cane beside Verlia, of their affair, and of Verlia's leap. The memory of Verlia's death/leap that repeats in Elizete's narrative adds a traumatic repetition and logic to her narrative that shuffles dialects, voices, locations, and time. Her a jarring, disorienting narrative brilliantly jumbles through then and now, here and there, so that neither chronology nor geographic locations organize her story. Rather, the narrative structure seems loosely to follow Elizete's learning process, which is neither linear nor always clear. Descriptions of her "learning" and the repetition of Verlia's flight, akin to Adela's "Nowhere," create a motif of escape imbued with an experience of ecstasy. In this way both the narrative structure and Elizete's desire are focused on a version of *elsewhere* that resists the directives and locations of conventional diasporic model as either motherland or new homeland.

Gender, Politics, and Elsewhere/Nowhere

The privileged return in the novel is a (re)turn charged through the pleasure of seeking and desiring a woman, significantly not the "mother." Verlia, of course, returns to the island of her birth to avoid the possibility that she has internalized the mother; and Elizete is for all intents and purposes motherless. If Verlia is the tragedy of a (mis)directed female desire channeled through conventional models of political revolution, she is also the unwitting trigger for an alternative vision of mobility and returning. Verlia, for instance, teaches Elizete about pleasure and eroticism that are something other than "seduction," something other than "rescue," and more akin to "escape" (70). "Seduction is a thing between a man and woman," Verlia tells her, "There is no seduction between women. This is harder" (74). According to Verlia's instruction, the seduction of woman by woman signifies an impossibility in the discourse of sexuality, which is designed according to and reflective of a heteronormative design and the consequent power inequalities between a man (seducer/subject) and woman (seduced/object). The sexual desire of a woman for another woman invariable overflows or "escapes" the discursive structures and social norms organizing and directing female desire—which in a heteronormative structure tends to channel a woman's sexual desire via reproductive imperatives. A woman's desire, thus, signifies not as her own desire but a desire to fulfill her destiny as mother. Eccentric, Verlia and Elizete's sexual desire becomes "harder" for them to speak and reveals a discursive absence, a kind of "nowhereness" that stands-in for lesbian, women-oriented (non-penis/reproductive) desire. If nowhere stands in for the signification of lesbian, her desire is not, however, without direction. It is directed toward what de Lauretis reminds us is the blind-spot of

discourse, the *elsewhere* of the feminine. In the context of Brand's novel, the *elsewhere* of the feminine is multiple. Elsewhere is then both the process and the result; it is the crossing over, the escape, the pleasure of orgasm, the delights of another woman's body. "A woman can be a bridge...because she don't know where the bridge might lead," says Elizete, "no assurance except the arch and disappearance....A woman can be a bridge from these bodies whipping cane. A way to cross over" (16).

Elizete's narrative, in particular, suggests a usurping of the law of the father, that regulates discursive meaning and narrative logic according oedipal conflicts and resolutions. Elizete's lack of father (never mentioned) and multiple if painfully joyless and inadequate mothers suggest any story she tells are in part an effect of her own attempts to name. Her narrative's disconnection from the father's prerogative to name and claim, however, does not mean that her story or she escapes the effects of patriarchy. She is still sold to a man as wife and laborer on the island and ignored, dismissed, and raped by men in Toronto. However, her loving Verlia does free her from Isaiah when, early on in their affair, Isaiah witnesses his wife in bed with another woman and his mind snaps. In reaction to this incomprehensibility, he abandons his plantation to become a town drunk, muttering incoherently to passersby. That is what might be called an erotic female revolution.

Isaiah's incoherent thought and speech suggests the effects of an already incoherent figuration of lesbian desire in a heteronormative symbolic ordering of meaning as incoherent. *Another Place* is shaped through an absence and/or a break the lesbian protagonist's relationship to the mother. In *A Lure of Knowledge: Lesbian Sexuality and Theory*, Judith Roof notes that first object of desire—mother—provides a

point of origin and narrative logic for female desire in psychoanalytic readings (Kristeva and Chodorow) of mother/daughter figurations (108-9). Brand's novel in many ways corresponds with Roof's reading of mothers in lesbian narratives functioning as a narrative absence or unremembered figure. "If heterosexual scenarios of maternity play on illusion of maternal fulfillment," notes Roof, "many lesbian novels focus on the remainder—on desire for desire. Lesbian protagonists in a number of lesbian novels have no mother, nor are they likely to be mothers....Lack of mother means lack of origins and vice versa" (108). As with Elizete's story, the mother is configured as a site of multiple absences and silences, who as a figure of radical resistance, refuses to speak of origins, to claim only a "nowhere."

If the maternal is the organizer of desire in Lamming's writing and the crises of the paternal become the lament of Naipaul's, Brand's novel suggests that the mobile lesbian's relationship to the maternal is "nothing simple" and akin to "breaking bones." In meditating on the nature and power of her relationship with Verlia, she avoids the simplicity of calling it love—a concept so easily routed into a framework of first love, first desire of a child for his mother. "I wouldn't call nothing that we do love because love too simple. All the soft-legged oil, all the nakedness brushing, all the sup of neck and arm and breasts. All that touching. Nothing simple about it. All that opening like breaking bones" (78). This opening and breaking in the novel function as an additional acknowledges a breaking away from a particular version of Black feminism that situates the Black woman's resistance to both racism and sexism within a particularly heteronormative framework to articulate a woman's economic and social oppressions according metaphors of the home and in relation to a man, i.e., motherhood. In the

introduction to *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, seductively titled "Home," Barbara Smith asserts that "Black people who are threatened by feminism have argued that by being a black feminist (particularly if you are a lesbian) you have left the race, are no longer a part of the black community, in short, you no longer have a home" (xxii). There is a certain logic to Smith's formulation that works for Brand's protagonists who are in many ways constituted either literally or figuratively as homeless. And yet, the conflation of community with home is an impossible figuration through which to channel her protagonists' desire.

If Verlia's narrative insights reveal problems of political activism in diasporic frame, their narratives taken together do is a kind of political work in the social imaginary. Brand's poetry, filmmaking and novels are consistently and often aggressively political in their anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti-sexist characters and imagery, but her work is never blindly, rather always critically, so. The dynamic doubling of Elizete's and Verlia's stories, and their counter-migrancy movements allow for a dynamic reading experience similar to how Ali Smith's *Like* tangles with the recuperative possibilities of woman.

As I will discuss in the following chapter on exilic moves, childhood experiences signify as a narrative absence and perhaps a narrative impossibility in women's exilic writing. Elizete's connection to an African heritage marks a similar kind of absence. Verlia's relationship to Africa is one represented and siphoned through her fraught relationship with her pan-African Canadian community and her underground activism. For her, the search for origins and historical connections is less of an imperative than tackling the current effects of racism in Toronto and the Caribbean. Elizete's and Verlia's African heritages remain unspoken, literally untold. It is not that these

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"foundational" markers do not circulate within the diasporic/exilic economy of the stories, but rather their narratives absentee the heteronormative, the "originary" mother and nation—nascent or otherwise—that would logically become the interlocutor of *woman* protagonists.

In the middle of *In Another Place* resides a gap, literally a blank page; it is a space of suturing, of doubleness that refuses to allow Verlia, her relationship with her mother and to the Caribbean take over the narrative. For as Verlia's portion of the story moves toward the (dis)closure of death, Elizete's voice enters once again and Verlia's radically self-centered and overtly political narrative again becomes their story. Not only returning us to their final moments together, which were conspicuously absent in Elizete's early accounts at the beginning of the novel, but also to incorporate a series of portraits, depicting such events as the meeting of Elizete and Abena as they try to understand Verlia, absent mothers, ultimately, recreating a bridge to elsewhere. In the last few pages of the novel, Elizete and the voices of her polytonal narrative return, taking over the narrative to describe Verlia's cliff side leap to "someplace so old there's no memory of it...She doesn't need air. She's in some other place already, less tortuous, less fleshy" (246-7). Presuming that openings and conclusions tend to elevate one thematic over another or privilege particular narrative perspectives, Elizete's opening and closing of the novel suggests that her assertion that the passion between women creates a kind of bridge to some place necessary and healing serves to reorganize the logic of *elsewhere* in a narrative plotting attuned to migrancy. Elizete paints her portrait of Verlia's death as a leap to a pre-maternal, pre-colonial, pre-slavery site, and the novel draws to a close as two women begin sharing their common love for and loss of another woman who had

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struggled and fought, always searching for "the enough." Thus, Elizete and Abena come to symbolize a kind "here and now" politic possible for mobile Black women from the Caribbean and an alternative to the diasporic and exilic vision that Verlia had found never to be "enough."

CHAPTER 4

EXILIC MOVES: LIVING AT HOME IN LANGUAGE

This is serious. You [man] are not in exile: you remain in continuous relation with your first object, with your first love, with your first attachments. If you displace them, it would be according to your laws: the language, the culture that you have made.

A woman, if she cannot in one way or another recuperate her first object, i.e., the possibility of keeping her earliest libidinal attachments by displacing them, is always exiled from herself.

Luce Irigaray, "Women's Exile"

Opening Teleology

Somewhat counter-intuitively, exile,[40] in its twentieth-century literary and critical formulations, does not begin with a subject's departure from but rather with his return *home*. This return can be found in exilic expressions spanning the century from James Joyce's exact literary mapping of Dublin in *Ulysses* to Edward Said's and Salman Rushdie's emphasis on the postcolonial migrant's desire and need to reimagine his homeland.[41] At base, the literature of exile carries two primary characteristics of mobility. First, a traveling subject leaves a place of belonging for a foreign destination, either voluntarily or forcibly and in a manner that makes the return home fraught, if not

[40] In the context of post/modernist and diaspora literary studies, the exilic figure appears in one or more of a plethora of travel and psyche related guises. *Exile* can function as a metaphor for psychic difference, for modern alienation, and as an allegory for separation, it is often interchangeable with a variety of labels and tropes relevant to the increased movement of people in twentieth- and twenty-first-century post/modernities: the émigré, the expatriate, the immigrant, the foreigner, the migrant, the wanderer, the nomad, and so forth. As Edward Said reminds us in his *Reflections on Exile*, exile is perhaps the most prominent metaphor for a "nomadic, decentered, contrapuntal" human experience in a century shaped by modern warfare and imperialism (183). Yet it is also, as Patrick Ward claims in *Exile, Emigration and Irish Writing* (2001), a particularity of expression, marking a specific nostalgia or melancholy rooted in the exile's cultural and historical context. Thus, while the exile arguably extends to universalize a modern sensibility of loss, whether of psychic or national wholeness and belonging, it also can be recuperated into expressions of difference, of specific ethnic or diasporic literary traditions.

[41] See Edward Said's *Reflections on Exile* and his memoir, *Out of Place* (2000), and Salman Rushdie's essay in his collection of the same name *Imaginary Homelands*.

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impossible. Second, s/he experiences a corresponding sense of loss, homesickness, nostalgia and/or melancholy, which may either be heightened or ameliorated by the exile's act of remembering or re-imagining the lost or distant home. In each of these primary characteristics of exile, the (im)possibility and manner of return distinguishes the exile from other formulations of travelers—nomad, tourist, explorer, colonizer or other figures—whose relationship to home is more present or certain.

This movement of the exile from what we might call point A (*home*land) to point B (place of exile, which can include additional moves to C, D, and so forth) supplies a clear and common teleology within narratives of exile via the imagined or longed for return to point A. In this way, the exilic narrative is very much about points and locations, particularly A, as well as the exiled subject's often painful but sometimes invigorating experience with such dislocations. Perhaps overdetermined and certainly a metaphor for modern alienation, psychic difference, and, more broadly, an allegory for the separation of people from a homeland, the exile's narrative is compelling because of its simplicity, its consistent and familiar teleology, and its capacity to expose a kind of rawness, a vulnerability and sorrow that seem to extend beyond categories of difference into something seemingly universal and identifiable.[42]

According to this conventional configuration, the exile is a retrograde figure, a foreigner in a foreign land, looking back through memory or history to a home, an authenticity, a land, and quite often a *mother* distanced by geographic space and the passage of time. Symbolically, however, the site of exile has been reserved for figuring

[42] Malcolm Crowley's *Exile's Return* (1951), Terry Eagleton's *Exiles and Émigrés* (1970) and Michael Seidel's *Exile and the Narrative Imagination* (1986) highlighted the work of modernism's great literary men. For instance, Eagleton's *Exiles and Émigrés* expanded upon his observation that the "outstanding" twentieth-century British literature "had been on the whole, the product of the exile and the alien" (10).

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woman as Luce Irigaray notes in her 1977 interview about feminine sexuality and linguistics, "Women's Exile." Irigaray says, "According to him [Freud], as soon as she realizes her castration, the little girl turns away from the mother, because the latter does not posses the valued sex which she thought she had" (95). Marking exile as an operation of sexual difference, Irigaray continues, "for man, the first object of love is... the mother...a man always looks for his mother" (96). In this psychoanalytic arrangement of attachment to the mother, a man "remain[s] in continuous relation to [his] first object" of desire, the mother or, if he does not, his displacement is only by virtue of laws already governing a masculine imaginary. *Woman* becomes a figure radically excluded from the "laws: the language, the culture" and is, thus, already framed by her foreignness and exile, having lost the mother as her primary object of desire. In other words, she is oedipally destined to rival and must become the mother herself in order to *belong* within the homelands of subjectivity and nation, albeit if only by her otherness. By "belonging" within the very system that excludes *woman* from subjectivity and representational presence, she paradoxically belongs within the symbolic apparatus of patriarchy by virtue of her non-belongingness.

Notice what happens if we simply exchange exilic location for the libidinal object in Irigiray's formulation: *For man, the first location of love is point A...a man always looks for point A,.... and he remains in continuous relation to point A.* Such a substitution is, of course, already at work in the representations of *woman* in the masculinist discourses of nation and exile. For instance, the common deployment of exile as a redemptive motif for self-generation and celebration in narratives of nation inevitably produces feminine characters along the lines of the sacrificing mother, spirit of

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nation, and occasionally colonized fecund landscapes that stabilize the masculinist imaginary for self-representation. A woman does not travel into exile; she is already the exile.

Given its teleology, the figuration of exile in and diasporic fiction and criticism results in an endgame of masculine Sameness either celebrating women's (non)belongingness or redirecting women's writing from abroad into oedipal, nation-inflected narratives for cultural-reflection and identity formation. According to this logic, feminine expressions of conventional, teleo-logic exile are often restricted either to reinforcing masculinist configurations of women (versions of traveling domestic, spirit of nation, and the like) or doubling her "othered" conditions upon leaving the homeland, heaping upon a (sex/gendered) Symbolic location a presumably more literal—cultural, racial—exile. The apparent universality of exile, however, obscures its range of expressions as it occurs in mobile women's writing. If a particular trend in post-1968 experimental or minor women's writing employs figures of subjectivity and images of feminine mobility to narrate alternate routes for feminine writing—routes that are generative and rhizomatic (an alternative to arborescent/oedipal models)—then the quite masculinist and teleological exile becomes a less than obvious figure for noting this trend. Yet, if we begin where psychoanalytic feminism of the 1970s and 1980s claims as the site of *woman*, the *other*, the *exile*—point B, C, D…, the teleology of the conventional migrant-as-exile is already altered. Since *woman* does not move into exile, but rather by her position in a patriarchal and phallic order is always already in exile, exilic texts of/by mobile women cannot help but refigure the exile's narrative potential in writing that employs transnational movement to configure feminine subjectivity. Given that woman

is the figure of exile when at home, what Isabel Hoving calls the "zero point" (32) in her study of exile in Caribbean women's writing, exile in terms of traveling women's narratives raises a number of questions: How do the tropes of exile alter representations of women who (e)migrate and then "look back" to speak of the homeland? Is female exile simply layered with additional conditions of exile (race, political, economic) deposited upon an originary notion of exile? What is the relationship between the movement of *woman* away from *home*land and her symbolic exile? And, given that the emphasis on diaspora in literary studies of the "posts" tends to be on racial and cultural othering, is national difference the primary lens through or by which to read such exilic conventions as departure, return and loss in later-twentieth-century and early-twenty-first-century women's writing?

Departure in the context of postnational feminine writing becomes double-edged, signifying both a female subject's departure from the homeland with all of its attendant belongingness as well as her deviation from the normative, the symbolic space for woman. The configurations of female mobility in which I am most interested depart from the oedipal narratives of nation and inevitably disrupt the conventional masculinist teleology of literary exile. Emma Donoghue's short story "Going Back" (1993), much like Dionne Brand's novel *In Another Place, Not Here*, does so by engaging an explicitly lesbian desire which reshapes feminine exile through an eccentric relationship to hetero-patriarchy. Edna O'Brien's memoir *Mother Ireland* (1976) reformulates the exile's imaginative return as a feminine longing for a pre-oedipal knowledge. And, Hélène Cixous' autobiographical essays in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (1998) fashions a politicized femininity as departure into writing that rejects the arrival of conventional

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meaning. Hers is a meditation on the ways literal departures from fixed notions of home and identity might be reconfigured through a self/writing practice of *arrivance*, continual travel, continual movement of self within language.

While far from being a comprehensive study of (post)modern literary exile, this chapter approaches these questions through texts that evoke two specific diasporas—Irish and Jewish—and analyzes specific exilic literary moves in postnational women's writing that directly challenge masculine and nation-oriented exile as a coherent discourse through which to write of woman and her (un)belongingness. The texts themselves direct this exploration, and as such, it is not the complex histories of multiple diasporas or any unified, homogeneity among diasporic/exilic writings by women that have encouraged me to bring these particular texts together. Rather it is in part their common interest in James Joyce's self-imposed exile from Ireland and his literary stylistics, particularly O'Brien's and Cixous' investments, that has shaped this examination of both the iconography of literary exile (masculinist) and a reconfiguring of exile to write of *woman*. Donoghue's short-story, although not overtly Joycean, does provide an excellent starting point to begin unpacking exile as the symbolic site of woman. As Cyn, the female protagonist of her short story puts it, "Listen, I felt more of an exile for twenty years in Ireland than I ever have in the twelve I've been out of it" (160).

Points for Departure •••

Emma Donoghue's short story "Going Back" (1993) is constituted largely of a series of conversations between Cyn and Lou, two immigrants who left Ireland to live "out" in London's more sexually open and liberal clime. Cyn, a lesbian, and Lou, a gay

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man, meet at Brixton's Gay Pride Parade, where "Lou was...funking along behind the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. What made her notice him was the shamrock in relief on the back of his No. 2 shave...The most testicular of symbols, [Cyn] commented afterwards" (158). Their fast friendship, rooted in common interests and sense of humor that implies familiarity and attraction, might be explained by similar cultural backgrounds or a kind of belongingness that extends beyond "gay pride" to a particularly Irish-inflected gay pride. Accordingly, their conversations generally revolve around sexual politics, Ireland, and why Cyn refuses to "go back" home. Stylistically, the story offers all of the implied intimacy that conversation brings, which gives the reader the impression that she has been included at their table in the pub or welcomed to walk by their side as they stroll toward the tube station. This conversational intimacy is misleading, however, as it is a cover for each character's deeper, ambiguous, and questionable relationship to Ireland. What is expressed tends not to reveal. For instance, Cyn's authoritative claim to feeling the exile in Ireland is ultimately unaccompanied and unsupported by the smallest of details about her experiences there. Memories of childhood, friends, family, the juicy bits of conversation remain in the past, in Ireland and purposefully distanced from Cyn's life in England, and we get the sense that the common cultural bond between Cyn and Lou is quite tenuous, uncertain and perversely necessary.

- **The exile is a binary figure, reinforcing conventions of sexual difference**

. Ireland/England, there/here, home/foreign, belonging/outcast, straight/gay, man/woman, point A/point B-C-D...—the oppositions of exile are commensurate with the binaries producing nation-building narratives. In Donoghue's story, Lou is the

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character who embraces the possibilities, the liberations, and the rejuvenations of exile while looking back to home, longing for his home country to change. Expelled from seminary for reasons that are not made clear but that have to do with his homosexuality, Lou empathizes with Cyn's inability to live "out and proud" in a politically conservative and predominantly Roman Catholic Ireland; however, he cannot understand her steadfast refusal to return home for the occasional visit. "Closeted" in Ireland but "out" in England, he travels home once a year, incog-hetero, to celebrate Christmas with his family, but he muses that he could begin going back more often given Dublin's recent launching of its own Gay Pride. "It's a new decade," he tries to convince Cyn (160). Given the Republic of Ireland's recent modification of Age of Consent laws that decriminalized sexual acts between men,[43] Ireland's sexual landscapes suggest a kind of permissiveness, if not acceptance of gays and lesbians; and Lou suggests that Cyn's "exile" may no longer be necessary or is perhaps unhealthily self-imposed. To Lou, her refusal to go back indicates that she has somehow missed the point of departure—the experiences of sexual liberation and the immigrant's nostalgia for family and Irish community that makes the occasional return pleasurable. Lou understands his exile quite literally: exile is his incommensurability with heteronormative Ireland (that which keeps him away) and is expressed as his geographic and sexual-political distance from a homeland from which he clearly desires affirmation and acceptance.

Lou's version of exile corresponds with conventions that underscore the exile's distance from the homeland and an acute sense of cultural and symbolic loss that is both sharpened and mitigated through imaginary returns, imagined reconstructions of the

[43] Passed in 1993.

hetero-homeland. In Lou's case, his imaginary return takes place in his yearly performance of heterosexuality for his family in his literal return to Ireland:

> "Let me guess: you're not exactly out to them."
>
> "Not in so many words, and certainly not in those particular words." Lou pulled at his ear lobe. "You've forgotten what it's like back there."
>
> "I remember too well." Cyn took a deliberate sip. "So why fold yourself back into the closet once a year?"
>
> He made a face. "Because being a bit discreet is better than the ructions it would cause if I said anything. Besides, I couldn't miss the Christmas."
>
> "Missing it's easy after the first time," Cyn assured him. "I get an old friend to send me a box of Taytos every year." (160)

Ironically, Lou's complex negotiation of being "out"—out in London while out of Ireland—marks him outcast in Ireland while cast "in" the role of good, heterosexual son. Analogous to this binary negotiation of in/out, his understanding of exile is quite normative, conventional—hetero and masculinist. Lou's exile is as much about his distance from heterosexuality and the Church as it is about his geographic distance from Ireland. His attempts to convince Cyn that she must miss something more about Ireland than the pleasure of eating Taytos reveals a desire that is quite conventional, quite normative in its expression. Lou, for all of his queerness, is a familiar characterization of the outcast whose self-story preserves the exile's teleology, and accordingly he repeatedly discusses his emigration, his movement from point A to point B-C-D.... His

literal notion of exile obscures his homosexuality as a measure of his distance from home, and, thus, his character provides a necessary narrative tension against which Cyn's more eccentric relationship to Ireland can be understood. In many ways, Lou is the straight-man of Donoghue's story of sexuality to comment on Ireland's sexual politics—or is it the other way around? Either way, as the straight-man, Lou will be used by both Donoghue and Cyn to return to Ireland in the most eccentric fashion, and, taking their cue, I, too, exploit Lou's relationship to home in order to situate points of departure in women's writing on exile.

Celebratory exile reinforces hetero-norms •

In many ways, Lou is a character who recalls Ireland's historical celebration of exile that establishes its great religious and literary figures.[44] Lacking a tradition of Christian martyrs, Irish religious heroes from St. Patrick onward tended to go into exile, wandering the land or sailing away into infamy. Significantly, Ireland's female equivalent to Patrick, St. Brigid is rumored to have defied her pagan parents to enter a convent and dedicate her life to nurturing and expanding Kildare Abbey. This division between the man as a traveler and the woman as sedentary nurturer is restricted neither to saintly characterizations nor even to Irish religious/national self-representations but is common to Western patriarchal expressions and to the valorization of exile as an authorizing and invigorating experience. It is significant that Lou returns home once a

[44] Drawing an atypical connection between Edward Said's secularism, exile, and Christianity, John Barbour notes in his essay "Edward Said and the Space of Exile" that "although Edward Said was critical of the dangerous sacred space, the space of exile is in certain respects similar to religious myth in its shaping influence on his life." For Said, the representational capacity of exile "as a metaphor is in several ways analogous to the ways in which religious communities orient themselves in relation to space and time."

year for the celebration of Christ's birth—the son returns. Not so far removed from the Church's model of exile as the ultimate self-sacrifice and confirmation of holiness, Ireland's most celebrated authors of the twentieth century achieved literary greatness by leaving Ireland, although generally for artistically subversive purposes.

In *Sex and Nation: Women in Irish Culture and Politics* (1991), Gerardine Meaney points out that in the twentieth century James Joyce emerged the epitomic figure of the Irish author as cultural hero and that this exile-as-hero mythology is highly masculinist and legitimates a "particular," oedipal "view of Irish culture" (19). The literary hero is fashioned as "a 'son' escaping from the 'nets' of the 'Mother' church, 'Mother' country and, perhaps, 'Mother' tongue." "If the male Irish writer must speak from the Oedipal place of exile, what position as speaking and writing subject is available to the Irish woman?" queries Meaney (19). To address this question, Meaney turns, logically, to Hélène Cixous's profile of the feminine in Freudian developmental and symbolic schemas as the "dark continent," the site of repression, an internalized horror, and the figurative location of "woman" in the phallocentric representational economy of Irish literature writ large.[45] If exile literature may be characterized by a deep sense of loss and/or displacement from a homeland, the criticism and theory of literary exile might be characterized by its celebration of the displaced artist/intellectual. Corresponding with Meaney's connection of exile to phallocentrism (which is far from the only criticism to recognize the masculinist formulation of the exile in Irish literature or the literature of

[45] Meaney's nod to *écriture féminine* is strategic, intended to address not only the marginalization of Irish women writers in later-twentieth-century Irish literary studies but more importantly the double marginalization of Irish women in the rapidly changing socio-cultural and political landscapes of which Ireland increasingly participates. Her query into the celebration of exile as the exclusive purview of Irish men functions both as a means to address how contemporary women in Ireland continue to be shaped by and marginalized in its national culture as well as an embrace of Continental feminist theory to (re)invigorate conflicted, and perhaps nascent, feminist dialogues in Ireland and Irish Studies.

modernism broadly[46]), exile in modern and/or contemporary diaspora literatures revolves around and through the myth or cult of the literary artist. Meaney's query about the writing position of Irish women is equally, albeit differently, productive for opening up figurations of exile to an eccentric function that might be read out of Irish women's writing on exile as well as in other diasporic writing from Atlantic Rim women. Cyn's and Meaney's similar claims that *woman* is the exiled subject within a homogeneous and heteronormative formulation of Irishness reorder the teleology of exile. Of/in *l'écriture feminine,* woman has symbolic shape, meaning and comprehensibility via the renunciation of exile, a negative writing position which casts her escape into elsewhere, to someplace other than the product of a masculine imagination. If Lou wants to occupy this mythic, celebratory position, Cyn adamantly rejects the possibility that her emigration is a displacement or marker of a loss worthy of mythmaking. Her literal migration, a kind of doubling of exile (figurative and literal), however, does not recast the symbolic Irish woman from which Cyn left behind when she came out, or came into the lesbian, in Ireland.

According to Cyn, "she," unlike Lou, was "never illegal" in Ireland and her "exile" was not a product of her leaving the homeland but rather a condition of Irish womanhood that preceded her departure (168, 160). In their conversations, Cyn is more interested in sorting out what she calls the "age of consent for being Irish" than she is in the legalities of her sexual orientation: "All that cultural baggage...absolutely *foisted* upon us...And what happens if you try and refuse it or leave it behind? Everybody freaks out as if you've dumped a baby in a carrier bag at the airport" (161). Cyn's cultural

[46] See: Kaplan, *Questions of Travel* (36-39, 48, 106)

baggage is not what she carries with her in the hopes of finding its weight relieved abroad, as in Lou's yearly re-repressions, but rather baggage is the precondition to her becoming an Irish woman, whether or not she remains in Ireland.[47] If Lou speaks of his exile literally, Cyn speaks figuratively. Hers is a symbolic and oedipally inflected exile reminiscent of Freud's allegory of femininity through which the female child travels across the Oedipal complex toward feminine passivity and the satisfactions of motherhood.[48] That is a lot of baggage, perhaps too much, to dump Wildean style (as Wilde's Miss. Prism does] at a terminal. Teresa de Lauretis observes that in Freudian/Oedipal arrangement, "the end of the girl's journey, if successful, will bring her to the place where the boy will find her;" thus, her journey "is guided by a compass pointing not to reproduction as the fulfillment of *her* biological destiny, but more exactly to the fulfillment of the promise made to 'the little man,' of his social contract" (133). If for Lou exile is the fraught experience of leaving his homeland to live abroad, for Cyn exile was and perhaps always will be Ireland. Thus, we encounter in Donoghue's short story two distinct versions of exile-inflected-displacement that revolve around Ireland's patriarchal and heteronormative disposition.

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Not all departures from home are the same

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[47] Aidan Arrowsmith in his essay on exile in Irish women's writing likewise notes the reproductive imperative informing Cyn's analogy. See: "M/otherlands: Literature, Gender, Diasporic Identity," in *Ireland in Proximity* (1999): 134.

[48] I must acknowledge my debt to Isabel Hoving's discussion of exile in Jamaica Kincaid's and other Caribbean women's lives and writings, which in fact directed my attention to de Lauretis' "Desire and Narrative" in *Alice Doesn't*. However, I am less inclined to read, as does Hoving, the movement of Caribbean women writers as a literalization of their doubly exiled (sex and race) life that is generated upon leaving the Caribbean. This is a point I took up in the previous chapter and which will be addressed further in the concluding section of this chapter.

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Cyn left Ireland more than a decade before becoming friends with Lou, and we get the impression that Cyn both has avoided connecting with an "Irish community" while in London and has worked, either consciously or unconsciously, to lose her Irish accent. It seems unlikely, however, that Cyn's retoned accent signifies a desire to become English, since her life in England is purposefully marginal. She seems to have embraced London's gay scene, to enjoy Brixton's multi-ethnic milieu, and to give back to her "community" by volunteering at the local community theatre, appropriately named the Rainbow Centre, none of which suggests that she desires to disappear into mainstream Englishness. She is neither presenting herself as someone other than the English "Other" (i.e., assimilating), nor performing the Gaelic "Other" to position herself in opposition to Englishness. In fact, it takes two additional encounters with Lou following Pride for Cyn to pursue a friendship, which she adamantly (for Cyn is more often than not adamant) refuses to acknowledge has anything to do with their Irish backgrounds. To Lou's assertions that she is "one of us," a "Gay-licker" (pun on Gaelic), a "Little green fairy," she declares, "I've never felt like one of an us" (158). While as a lesbian, Cyn fits within the broader framing and alliance of "queer," she does not suit the overtly gay male imagery of "gay-licker" or "fairy" and is likewise excluded from Lou's strikingly universal notion of an "us." And yet, as with Cyn's claim to feeling the exile in Ireland, her all-or-nothing expressions of never feeling that she belonged to an "us" begins to sound as if she protests too much. Her protests certainly reveal her fraught relationship with Irish womanhood and her inability to think or speak of being Irish and a lesbian simultaneously; however, her declarations also provide cover for a deeper desire to be an Irish lesbian, to speak of Ireland and women-oriented sexuality at once.

Cyn's departure from the homeland, therefore, is very much a departure from the heteronormative reproductive imperative as her coming out in Ireland repositioned her sexually as something other than "woman as exile" in an Irish phallo-representational system. Her resistance is not just a resistance to the category of woman but a specifically Irish-accented or inflected woman. In this way, her departures from *Ireland* are perhaps more consistent than Lou's emigration as it literalizes her escape from an oedipal "social contract," repositioning her as "eccentric" to a historically and predominantly straight patriarchal Irishness.[49] An *out*spoken lesbian, Cyn's symbolic departure from Ireland suggests an alternate point of departure (point B, C, D...) that takes *her* to what Monique Wittig describes as the lesbian's symbolic position as "not-woman."[50] Wittig notes that if "woman" is a figure defined through a particular "social relation to man" that regulates her domestic, sexual and reproductive duties, this is "a relation which lesbians escape by refusing to become or to stay heterosexual." Given that lesbians are "*not* a woman, either economically, or politically, or ideologically" (20), it makes a certain kind of sense that Cyn's return, her "going back" to Ireland takes place as a symbolic return via the heteronormative—She seduces Lou. •

• The return to homeland can be shaped through the memory of the body •

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[49] In this use of the lesbian as eccentric, I am recalling Teresa de Lauretis' and Judith Roof's terminology from *The Practice of Love* and *The Lure of Knowledge*, respectively.

[50] In *Straight Mind,* Wittig details the conceptual space of the lesbian in opposition to "woman": "Lesbian is the only concept I know if which is beyond the categories of sex (woman and man), because the designated subject (lesbian) is *not* a woman, either economically, or politically, or ideologically. For what makes a woman is a specific social relation to a man, a relation that we have previously called servitude, a relation which implies personal and physical obligation as well as economic obligation ('forced residence,' domestic coree, conjugal duties, unlimited production of children, etc.), a relation which lesbians escape by refusing to become or to stay heterosexual" (20).

If one of the defining characteristics of exile is the migrant's imaginative return to the homeland, Donoghue's story recalibrates that return to the body, the sexual memories of Cyn's body, effectively blurring the division between imagination (mind) and body. It could be argued that "Going Back" is itself an imaginative return to Ireland, a series of conversations in London that recreate, remember Ireland from abroad. And yet, if Cyn and Lou's conversations revolve around their relation to Ireland's sexual politics, the details of their memories and experiences in Ireland are seductively absent. In one of the more sweet and awkward post-coital scenes I have encountered, Cyn and Lou find themselves trying to make sense of how they wound up in Cyn's bed and how having sex might affect their friendship. The charming awkwardness of their situation is drawn through their physical alignment, the not-quite-fitting of their bodies: Lou had "comforting, the weight of his hip against the small of her back, her soles against his heels." Lou ponders never having "been to bed with a woman before. Did it count if she was a lesbian? In some ways, Lou thought, stifling a giggle, it was the most logical choice" (166).

Lou's logic—a simple substitution of lesbian for woman—is accompanied by a stereotypical masculine insecurity about his performance, which, while taking on a kind of hilarity given their respective sexual orientations, seems to miss the point of their encounter. If Lou is not quite sure what to make of having had sex with Cyn, Cyn recognizes that their encounter was not about physical pleasure, intimacy or any of the number of more typical reasons friends might have sex. For Cyn, sex with Lou is a bodily return, a place of the past, and a memory of a young Irish woman's body that briefly belonged at home. Concerned that his sexual performance might not have equaled

his honed incog-hetero skills, Lou wonders if sex with him was "different." Cyn replies, "'Not different enough,'" and then explains, "'It's not you, it's me,' she said as if to a child. 'You're very different from them, you make a totally different [pause] shape. But I'm afraid I still can't quite see it'" (166). The • is not their sex act but Cyn's negotiation of exile. Cyn succumbs not to a repressed desire for her gay-best-friend but instead to a repressed longing to connect once again to and belong within Irishness. Her primary, expressed desire is a negation—a desire never to step foot in Ireland again—which is obviously fraught. Her bodily return to Ireland by having sex with an Irishman speaks for what she cannot express—her desire to become an Irish not-woman. In this way, her desires to see the sexual landscape of Ireland change are not that different from Lou's overt desires and arguments about the country's potential for change. Nonetheless, from the position of the exiled subject within the homeland, her desire marks a cataclysmic cultural shift and an inverse trajectory, altering conventional figurations of exile rather than the Republic's Constitution.

Cyn's eccentric return to Ireland via the penile penetration of her body—the reenactment of her sexual relationships with men when she lived in the Irish countryside—reconnects her to Irish womanhood, but it is a womanhood incommensurate with her sexual desires and sexual politics. Her unexpected seduction of Lou ultimately reveals an anxiety about self, tied to Cyn's understanding of her "Irishness" rather than her sexual desires. She may be comfortably "not woman" in England, but to understand herself as an Irish woman living abroad as Lou inadvertently and yet persistently reminds her requires a particular socio-sexual relationship to an Irish man, no matter how legislatively liberal their home country has become. •

Returning Elsewhere

> *The possibility of living without taking root was familiar to me. I never call that exile. Some people react to expulsion with the need to belong. For me, as for my mother, the world sufficed, I never needed a terrestrial, localized country.*
>
> Hélène Cixous, *Stigmata*

The imaginative return to a place of belonging or homeland is the defining characteristic of early twentieth-century expatriate, émigré literature and contemporary diasporic writing. This commonality of expression not only relies upon a particularly oedipal relationship to a maternally inflected *home* but also reveals the modernist underpinnings of and resonances within Atlantic Rim diasporic literatures as noted by such critics as Paul Gilroy and Simon Gikandi in their studies of African and Caribbean transnational cultural expressions.[51] A scholar of the postcolonial and a self-identified exile, Edward Said describes his own experience with (post)modern exile in his memoir *Out of Place* thus:

> Each year the late-summer return to the United States opened old wounds afresh and made me reexperience my separation from her as if for the first time—incurably sad, desperately backward-looking, disappointed and unhappy in the present....I still find myself reliving aspects of the experience today, the sense that I'd rather be somewhere else—defined as closer to her, authorized by her, enveloped in her special maternal love,

[51] See: Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* and Gikandi's *Writing in Limbo.*

> infinitely forgiving, sacrificing, giving—because being *here* was not being where I/we had wanted to be, *here* being defined as a place of exile, removal, unwilling dislocation. (234)

The mother tongue, mother country, motherland pinpoint the exile's return as a native son's memory of a past shaped and coded through a desire for his "authorizing" mother. This oedipally inflected return is easily recognized in Said's poignant and candid writing about his own longing to "return" to his mother, his desire to be "enveloped in her special maternal love, infinitely forgiving, sacrificing, giving."

In a manner similar to Cyn's symbolic, sexual and bodily return to Ireland as illustrative of her refusal to travel into Irish womanhood, commensurate images of non-arrival persist in such mobile women's post-1968 writing as Edna O'Brien's *Mother Ireland* and Cixous' critical work on literary exile and *feminine* writing. In her autobiographical writings on her early childhood and her life "elsewhere," Cixous plays within the slipperiness of language so as "to depart not to arrive from Algeria," the colonized-country of her birth (204). Negating and refusing arrival as Cyn and Cixous do consequently reshapes the diasporic traveler's relationship to "home," the figurative site of mother or in Said's language, the authorizing, enveloping "special maternal love."

Figurations of mother oft occupy spaces of silence and trauma, unable to "authorize" daughter's actions and self-vision. The mother's notable absence in Donoghue's "Going Back," in part, matches her female protagonist's refusal to return home and her search for alternative images of womanhood. However, mother figures are just as likely to be the primary focus of exile-themed, self-narratives, and just as likely to provide a figural access point to critique the operations of patriarchy and nationalism

constituting the *home*land. Having built her literary career by living elsewhere and writing of Ireland, Edna O'Brien's work tends to fall into the latter approach to mother figures. It is noteworthy that she holds the honor of having the most novels banned by the Ireland's Censorship Board for aberrant sexual content.[52] And yet, this repeated banning of her work reveals more about the Board's attempt to monitor and control female sexuality than it does about the relatively straight-forward, coming-of-age themes and formulas common to O'Brien's oeuvre. Given her interest in the feminine *bildungsroman*, her texts are generally both critical of the conventional, idealized image of mother and intrigued with alternative figurations for women who do engage in sexual relationships with men and/or opt for motherhood.

O'Brien's experimental memoir, *Mother Ireland* (1976), is a writer's literal return to a figurative mother—the sacrificing, nurturing, and the occasionally wild, irrational, and wounded spirit of Irishness. "Countries are either mothers or fathers, and engender the emotional bristle secretly reserved for either sire," her memoir opens and then continues, "Ireland has always been a woman, a womb, a cave, a cow, a Rosaleen, a sow, a bride, a harlot, and, of course, the gaunt Hag of Beare" (1).[53] Unlike more conventional Irish memoirs such as Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* and '*Tis* that offer a figurative (imaginative) return to a literal Ireland (real-in-memory/place), O'Brien's narrative resists the descriptive, realist imperatives of biography and does not actually "describe growing up in rural County Clare, from her days in a convent school to her first kiss to

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[52] "I offended the Catholic church," says O'Brien of the banning of her *Country Girls* Trilogy. "I betrayed Irish womanhood. They even used that phrase—I was a 'smear on Irish womanhood.'...I showed two Irish girls full of yearnings and desires. Wicked!" (Carlson 76).

[53] By different accounts the Hag of Beare is a pagan goddess or a pagan storyteller tamed to Christianity. She was of interest to Lady Gregory, who translated Gaelic folk tales of the hag who held great power as a once oral storyteller funneled into written folklore records.

her eventual migration to England," no matter what the dust jacket claims. Instead her narrative juggles second- and third-person points of view, deferring her experiences and opinions to the surrogates of "you" and "one"—that is until the fifth chapter when we stumble upon her life at a convent boarding-school and O'Brien's "I" begins to guide the story.

O'Brien's return to Mother Ireland is a critique, a parody, and a revisioning of the sacred site of Irish motherhood. A writer whose love of James Joyce is well-known—according to literary lore, *Portrait of the Artist* inspired her both to leave Ireland and begin writing—O'Brien may have incorporated a form of Joycean exile and even a Joycean style into her writing, but she has done so to sidestep conventional figurations of mother, both literally (her life in England) and figuratively (in her writing).[54] Her autobiography is part of Irish feminism's revisionary projects from the 1970s onward that attempt to remythologize the nation, a project that includes such generically diverse work as Eavan Boland's poetry, as Anne Devlin's plays and prose, and Anne Crilly's historically-corrective documentary film, *Mother Ireland.* This national mother, as O'Brien notes, is a composite figure of masculine fantasy—*land, womb, hag*—she is a projection of imagined wholeness drafted into an Irish Renaissance and tethered to nation-building causes. The sacredness of the mother figure, whether she is Yeats' *Cathleen* or Dedalus stifling religiosity and mystical modernism, sustains an umbilical tie for Irish*men* abroad, a means for creating something new, revolutionary. "To ourselves,

[54] An acknowledged fan of Joyce, O'Brien recently welcomed the opportunity to write his biography, which ironically received a strikingly similar mix of reviews to those of her memoir when it came out in the mid-1970s. (Edna O'Brien. *James Joyce.* New York: Penguin Lives, 1999) For instance, Allen B. Ruch suggests that her biography of Joyce plays fast and furious with historical details and her poetic prose proves a bit too much for critics looking for a "realistic" accounting of Joyce's life, which seems a great irony, given Joyce's turn against realism and O'Brien's lyrical prose style.

new paganism, omphalos," rejoices Stephen Dedalus upon his return in *Ulysses* (7). The "omphalos," that formative and archaic cultural tie that binds mother country and native sons, is, of course, negotiated differently for daughters of Ireland, who are excluded from the sacred circle until they mature and become mothers themselves. The oedipal interplay between culture, policy and subjectivity might be found as Jane Elizabeth Dougherty observes of the conflation of woman and mother in the Irish Constitution, we get the sense that only two subjectivities exist within Irish imaginary: the male child and Irish mother (60).

O'Brien's return to her past opens up the feminizing of mythic Ireland, forcing us to confront the mother's body as a pastiche, far from cohesive and circuitous rather than linear. The early chapters, for instance, are organized in a non-linear, ahistorical, and tokenistic fashion according to the hallmarks of nation—*land*, *home*, *education*, and *literature*. Each chapter incorporates Irish folklore/mythology, national history, local lore, and even tourist perspectives that challenge and undermine the proclaimed thematics of its chapter headings: "The Land Itself," "My Home Town," "The Classroom," "The Books We Read." Nonetheless, within these pages Irish history and the compelling nature of colonial rebellion suggest a kind of generative conceptual process as we find in this passage from "The Classroom" describing the power of post-Revolution Irish history lessons:

> Another world altogether sometimes prevailed—one of arms, crests, spears, Lughaidh Laeighseach, son of Laeigh, son of the renowned Conall Cearnach....These daily inculcations of history, so immediate, so heart-rending and so riveting that it was possible to conceive of Sarsfield,

> Shane O'Neill and Bold Robert Emmet, and Sarah Curran his sweetheart, as characters who might step out of the pages and into the room. All had sacrificed themselves for the Cause, and each had failed.... (55-6)

Sarah Curran stands out in this passage and in the memoir overall as one of a handful of historical women mentioned. The heart-rending and riveting immediacy of Curran's own sacrifice and failure can only be shaped, however, through legend as an eternal love for Emmet and his revolutionary mission. The subject of multiple ballads, including one by Tomas Moore, and even rating a brief mention in *Ulysses*, Curran's life is conventionally rendered a tragedy due to her loss of Emmet and the larger loss of an independent "Ireland" (via migration and fail revolution). Stories vary, but the common threads suggest that Curran's father disapproved of her falling in love with a rebellion leader; therefore, the father married her off to another, and they moved to Italy where she died of tuberculosis not long after her Emmet was executed. "Fair Sarah Curran went abroad," writes O'Brien, "married and of course died of a broken heart" (56). Curran, thus, unlike Joyce cannot be model of mobility for Irish women. The underlying "history" lesson here suggests that women who leave Ireland are invariably recuperated into the land and legend of mother Ireland. Curran's life story is subsumed as is her "sacrifice" to the confrontational relationship between the father and the "true love," Emmet.

In O'Brien's jumbling of Irish myth, history, and literature, we read the cultural/personal memory of a woman who bristles openly and refuses to enter her own story until her sexual desires and the force of her critical voice can be attributed to a

woman's body and a speaking "I." The narrating "I" is, for example, suspiciously absent from the majority of the autobiography, imaged occasionally as a "tourist" of the Irish countryside or as an immigrant having arrived in England. As a memoir, it is either bad history or bad autobiography or perhaps both, as some critics claim. What it is not, however, is a son's historicized memorial to his own art and character or an accounting of his "self" that can only be renewed (written) and recognized upon his return to the reflective mother (country). Rather, this is a daughter's "quarrel" with the country of her birth, which O'Brien claims "had warped me, and those around me, and their parents before them, all stooped by a variety of fears" (127). Like her literary antecedent, Joyce's *Portrait*, O'Brien's reflections on Ireland literalize her figurative escape; however, while modeled on a suspiciously Joycean pattern, her writing does not endeavor to produce the new literature, the new art that might save Ireland from retrograde mysticism or Roman Catholic dogmatism. Instead she expresses a desire for a new female-inflected Irishness.

If anything, O'Brien's self-narrative proves the endurance of such early-twentieth-century Irish self-representations (religious) as well as the somewhat paradoxical and coterminous celebration of Joyce as the model for Irish author's "literary-subversive-in-exile." The memoir is conceivably a haunting of/by her favorite author, James Joyce, not his exile, although perhaps that, too, as Joyce's and Stephen Dedalus' escapes are oft conflated and Sarah Curran offers a poorer model for escape. Rather, suggestive of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Dedalus self-narrative that displaces the "I," O'Brien's "I," likewise does not break into the narrative until the closing third of her memoir. If her early chapters engage a broad, character-

shaping thematic of Ireland's self-representation that subsumes a little girl's "I" to establish Irish tropings of woman as land, national spirit, and mother of savior son, the final chapters reveal the emerging sexual desires of a young woman, who now speaks an "I." This first-person narrator is unapologetic in her infatuations and flirtations with nuns, in her seeking the sensual pleasures of sweets, drink, and men in Dublin, and in rewriting Dedalus' flight to create art elsewhere as a woman's flight to write the Irish feminine from London.

The oedipal daughter, however, is not creator, as her body and reproductive potential subsume her expressions and artistic passions to the position as incubator for cultural birth. O'Brien's sexually desirous "I" takes over her story as an escapee from exile with a literary goal that subsumes Irishness to the desires of a woman, not mother. O'Brien claims her ultimate "desire" in her memoir has been to "retrace heritage" and that "trenchant childhood route...in the hope of finding some clue that will, or would, or could, make possible the leap that would restore one to one's original place and state of consciousness, to the radical innocence of the moment just before birth" (129).

In retracing and returning to the mother, she makes the doubleness of her revisionary project explicit. She returns both to challenge the figuration of Ireland as mother, which is oedipal, as well as to evoke the site of the pre-oedipal and the possibility of refiguring the connection between mother and daughter. Her latter goal imagines a version of Kristeva's *chora*, a pre-oedipal stage wherein the infant has yet to acquire language or to separate from the mother, so that an undifferentiated "self" experiences the pleasure of unity and an absence of boundaries. This unified image of daughter and mother suggests a productive tension with O'Brien's retracing of heritage through a

figurative daughter's critical lens. However, in spite of this figurative and non-realist strategy, critics of the memoir have taken her revisionism, and her memoir overall, quite literally, including the concluding passage that proclaims a desire for pre-oedipal connection to the mother. For instance, in his review, John Broderick mistakes the figurative mother for the literal and spouts:[55]

> This is an ominous threat. Not content with boring everybody with the very ordinary experience of poor little me, she is evidently now preparing to regale us with her pre-natal experiences also....In many ways this is a sad book. It is obviously a pot-boiler; and even on that level it is not good....After knocking off the history of Ireland in her not-too-elegant prose, Miss O'Brien goes on to repeat all she has told us before about the village in Clare where she was born and brought up....Then we get the boarding-school days in a convent. These were pretty awful too. And unconsciously, I imagine, Miss O'Brien presents herself as a thoroughly silly girl. (73)

When it comes to sexual awakening, it always comes down to nuns, doesn't it? Or, quite often it does in women's narratives including depictions of burgeoning sexual desire in a Roman Catholic Ireland. Broderick's representation of a sexually awakened O'Brien as a "silly girl" is such a misnomer, however, that it reads as a compensatory act though which he attempts to control and recontain the larger "threat" O'Brien's desires pose, not only for the pre-oedipal—which threatens to open up Irish self-representation to

[55] Early reviews of *Mother Ireland*, in the late-1970s, tended to be mixed if not eviscerating ly harsh, and of her writings, her memoir remains little studied or is simply read literally, a text to supply details and character to O'Brien's biography.

alternative, feminine narratives—but more importantly her erotic longings for women that exclude men, the penis, the phallus, or patriarchy to orient feminine desire.

In her analysis of desire in Irish women's memoirs, Dougherty observes that "The convent school turns out to be...a place of suppressed, though not necessarily misdirected, erotic longings" (64). O'Brien writes openly of the multiplicity of illicit desires and sins to be found in a convent, describing the convent school as a place where the stringent "rules for everything" and the proper covering of the female body commingled with the sexual awareness of teenage girls (92). It was a place where girls held hands under the table, learned to kiss, and vied to become a nun's "favorite." Winning that auspicious honor herself, in a moment of infatuation and honesty or, more aptly, honest infatuation O'Brien declared to a nun that her deepest desire was to become a nun herself. Glimpses and touches of the forbidden—the sighting of a nun's eyebrows or a lock of her hair, the accidental brush against her shoulder or slide of a finger across the back of her hand—these were both the fodder of fantasy and the sustenance of a compelling women-oriented sexual desire. In the context of the convent, it was a desire primed ultimately, however, by the denial of female sexuality. And later when O'Brien cannot explain why she both embraces and denies herself sensual pleasures, she recognizes she "would not be a nun." Instead of pursuing the delights of the convent, she proclaims, "I would be a film star..." (104). Ominous threats abound.

Surely the memoir's most ominous threats are those that spiral through a daughter's reordering of the father's stories of the motherland, and the daughter's desire to continue that project, to take it further, to mark her writing unfinished and as yet to have achieved its full effect and meaning. If exile is largely a performance of alienation

and/or distance from the mother, O'Brien's literary return to Mother Ireland and the epitomic image of Irish womanhood refuses to make nice with a disaffected self and instead proposes an alternate image of an escaping self to write the fumbling "hope of finding some clue that will, or would, or could" imagine her relationship to Ireland without fear and the exclusions of exile. In many ways, O'Brien embodies the very model of Irish authors seeking exile that Gerardine Meaney observes as being problematic for Irish women authors. O'Brien's escape, her writing out-of-Ireland inspired by Joyce traces his omphalos not to symbolic apron strings but to the imaginary of the pre-oedipal. And while writer Joseph O'Connor proclaims Joyce the greatest irrelevance for contemporary Irish writers—which ironically kills the father by sequestering him to impotent irrelevancy—for most-mid-century and many later-twentieth-century writers, Joyce retains an iconic, paternal status, modeling the Irish writer *par excellence* gone abroad to write of home. In fact, Cixous has spent much of her career writing about Joyce, both his life and writing, finding within each narrative a method and style to write other than the conventions of Jewish diaspora and feminine exile.

In Absence of Arrival

> *France was never the Promised Land. The sentence 'next year in Jerusalem' makes me flee. The desire, the necessity of arriving 'home,' I understand them and do not share them. What loss! What renunciation of the marvelous and infinite human condition.*
>
> Hélène Cixous, *Stigmata: Escaping Texts*

One of the consistencies of the exilic in post-1968 mobile women's writing that Donoghue's, O'Brien's, and even Brand's work exhibits is the return to the woman's

body, a kind of extension of *l' écriture feminine*, to write that body elsewhere, rhetorically displaced from a masculine imaginary. Compulsory heterosexuality, the figural mother, and the lover serve as bodily sites of return for a female protagonist's negotiation of the female body and its figurative capacities for self. The return to the body, as opponents of Continental feminism decry, however, carries traces of biology and an essentializing, binary sexual difference—a potential trap suggesting that the woman's body can be written and signified only in/of the masculine. In the context of exilic figurations, the question becomes: Whether texts evoking exile necessitate a return, albeit to resist and critique, to binary gender and sexuality? Exile's emphasis on the return to a place of belonging or at least birth, and a coming into female consciousness, seem to proffer an alternate arrangement or constructions that make sense, but only to one no longer in that home space, which seems to suggest that location—nation, mother, woman—offers a kind of stability or a Cixousian launching pad to generate an-other kind of writing.

Cixous is one of the Continental theorists of the feminine who has been consistently interested in configurations of exile, particularly in relation to Joyce's own exile and modernist stylistics. From her doctoral project, *The Exile of James Joyce* (1968/trans1972), to her later "autobiographical," self-inflected essays about her writing-life in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (1994), Cixous recognizes exile as a drive, a performance of desire to externalize psychic alienation. In the context of Joyce, for instance, Cixous reads his exile in relation to his fascination with Aristotle's notion of man's numerous potential selves being limited through his actions. According to Cixous, Joyce's unconscious desires and conscious measures to recognize himself as a "poet" are

simultaneously a liberating and alienating pursuit, which alienates his-poet-self from his other potential selves—"musician, painter, heretic, orator, political savior."[56] The dominant poet-self, although not unlike Joyce's other expressions of self, necessitated an externalization of his internal exile; thus, his emigration from Ireland to wander through Italy, Switzerland and France. In Cixous' formulation, he "plays the role of the Irish exile" so that he might create poetry and actualize his-*self* as a great "artist" of words (Blue 188). Similar to O'Brien, Cixous finds a model for a new writing of self, of writing itself in Joyce's autobiographical fiction and in Stephen Dedalus' epiphany, his parting from mother and father, with all of their oedipal connotations. "Away! Away!"

Although Cixous' critical interest in Joyce and her personal writings demonstrate a consistent interest in the character of "exile" as subject and condition of subjectivity, her use of the term in regards to her own *self* and *writing* is penned carefully. For instance, in *Rootprints*, she briefly refers to her school-girl experiences of exclusion in both Algeria and later in France as a form of exile related to both her femininity and race/ethnicity.[57]

> In France, what fell from me first was the obligation of the Jewish identity. On one hand, the anti-Semitism was incomparably weaker in Paris than in Algiers. On the other hand, I abruptly learned that my unacceptable truth in this world was my being a woman. Right away, it

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[56] See: Chapter 4 of *The Exile of James Joyce.*

[57] In her collection of essays, *Hélène Cixous, Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing*, Cixous claims: "In 1955, in *khāgne* at the Lycée Lakanal—that is where I felt the true torments of exile. Not before. Neither with the Germanys, nor with the Englands, nor with the Africas, I did not have such an absolute feeling of exclusion, of interdiction, of deportation. I was deported right inside the class. In Algeria I never thought I was home, nor that Algeria was my country, nor that I was French. This was part of the exercise of my life: I had to play with the question of French nationality when I was born. But no one ever took themselves for French in my family" (204).

> was war. I felt the explosion, the odour of misogyny. Up until then, living in a world of women, I had not felt it, I was a Jewess, I was Jew.
>
> From 1955 on, I adopted an imaginary nationality which is literary nationality. (204)

Cixous claims the recognition of exile for women and a Joycean departure, but one that is of literary departure that refuses to reinscribe, return to and secure the idea of a homeland. Broadly, the conception of homeland is a conceptual violence that translates into the experience of violence as borders, languages, and ethnic expressions are maintained by a sexual difference that already figures the colonized and diasporic as feminine regardless of genitalia or biologically written sexual difference.

The imaginary return, then, the imperative of exilic and diasporic writing does not have to correspond to a literal homeland, a literal nationality but can, in Cixous' formulation, return the writer to "literary nationality," a literary homeland. This renunciation of the place of one's birth is reminiscent of Joyce's/Dedalus' epiphany that to create a uniquely Irish art would require his leaving Ireland, and yet, unlike Joyce's/Dedalus'/Icarus' continual turning and returning to Ireland, Cixous has made language, predominantly the French language, the space of her continual returnings for self-articulation, self-location, self-meaning.[58]

Her essay "My Algeriance, in Other Words: To Depart Not to Arrive From Algeria" takes up her recurring theme of living at home in language and refusing a claim to any nation as homeland. "My way of thinking was born with the thought that I could have been born elsewhere, in one of the twenty countries where a living fragment of my

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[58] See Cixous' essay, "'Mamãe, disse ele,' or Joyce's Second Hand" in *Stigmata* (131-170).

maternal family had landed after it blew up on the Nazi minefield. With the thought of the chanciness, of the accidence, of the fall" (204). The elsewhereness, the chanciness, the accidence of her birth likewise mark her provisional "belonging" to any of the "national" zones through which she has subsequently passed but never belonged to. The political force of her piece emerges from her resistance to Zionism's call "home" to the Promised Land which she deems a "loss" and her call to "arrivance, movement, unfinishing" modeled as her infinitely deferred arrival after leaving Algeria (170). Concurrent with a feminist interrogation of patriarchal structures and a common thread among the literary artists included in this dissertation, national belonging for Cixous is always a "fake," a prosthetic of self-articulation and actualization.

Cixous' constant deferral of national arrival and rejection of nationalizing identities speaks not only to her feminist practice but also of her Jewish/Algerian/English/French experience that has "no single mother-father tongue" (169). Her return then shifts the focus of "home" away from geo-cultural/national language and ethnic identity formulations to perform an alternative, feminine, non-oedipal writing. The very obvious invocation of Algeria, the accidental birth place, functions not as a mother-country to be either revered or reviled but rather as a place of harsh beauty, a place of family, and a space of memories that contain a great affection between siblings (Cixous and her brother) and between her parents and her-childhood-self re-membered. The colonized, conflicted place of her birth, Algeria, surfaces as a site of the personal made political, which Cixous returns to as neither colonizer nor colonized but rather to as a dynamic subject of and in writing—Departing but not arriving from Algeria. This is a kind of nostalgic tie and connection to a place, which parodies an

exilic attachment and poignancy reminiscent of Said's refusal to let go of the mother.[59] Her primary move is a semiotic move, that lest Cixous be described as too esoteric, too abstract, disconnected or even modernist in her evocation of the exilic, it should be noted that she has been equally active and connected through her work for "social justice" movements and immigrant rights in France. Critics of celebratory exile in theoretical practice like Caren Kaplan have queried the ways in which exile becomes a special site and elite method for supporting the purview of the select to assure their difference from both the Other and the others at home (i.e., "exile" reshapes and replays colonial/imperial discourses of Eurocentrism). While often recrafting a modernist (Joycean) aesthetic to write *woman*, Cixous' theoretical practice is less attuned to an imperialistic Eurocentrism and more commensurate with a World War II Jewish intellectualism wary of twentieth-century, nationally-framed conceptions of homeland.

Along similar lines, in her introduction to the collection of Walter Benjamin's meditations on art and culture in *Illuminations* (1969), Hannah Arendt writes of migration of Jewish writers in pre-war Europe:

> What was decisive was that these men did not wish to "return" either to the ranks of the Jewish people or to Judaism, and could not desire to do so—not because they believed in "progress" and an automatic disappearance of anti-Semitism or because they were too "assimilated" and too alienated from their Jewish heritage, but because all traditions and

[59] I should note that while Said's writing on exile is often that of the nostalgic son and is quite poignant, Said is likewise careful to draw lines and declare that his expression is not displaced nor celebratory, noting that such "exile can make a fetish of exile, a practice that distances him or her from all connections and commitments" (19).

> cultures as well as all "belonging" had become equally questionable to them. (36)

In a similar manner, Cixous torques exile, seeing value in the not-belongingness of dislocation and extends it through what Arendt observes in a Benjaminian model of mobility a refusal to belong to a particular nation. Cixous suggests an alternative to the diasporic and exilic pattern of "looking back" as return to a homeland in memory; consequently, her writing alters masculine and patriarchal orders of belonging, whether ethnic or sexed. The [m]otherland cannot suffice.

The Importance of Being Alice

There is a feminine-inflected critical trend to open up male-dominated fields of diaspora studies—Irish Studies, Caribbean Studies, Postcolonial Studies—to include the work of mobile women writers. Anuradha Dingwaney Needham's provocative criticism of postcolonial women writers, Isabel Hoving's intriguing study of migration and Anglo-Caribbean women authors, and Caren Kaplan's analysis of (post)modernist travel figures in Euro-American literary theory and criticism writ large are a few examples. Yet, akin to Cixous, Donoghue, O'Brien and even Brand (from the previous chapter), I am less certain of the value of inclusion, the opening up of current theoretical trends to claim that postnational mobile women's writing belongs or should belong within these exile-affected fields. Or if their work does belong, it is only by virtue of its non-belongingness, an unstable and threatening fit.

Convention suggests that the sense of loss, so crucial to an oedipal-inflected exile, revolves around the loss of the mother as presence. Said notes that when the motherland,

the mother tongue, the mother-mirror-for-a self fashioned as "I/we" are recognized to be absent or at an unbridgeable distance, the exile's experience of such absence translates as feeling of loss that takes two common but not always mutually exclusive forms. One form of loss borders on or veers into melancholia, a kind of social and linguistic withdrawal that manifests as a crippling or silencing of the exiled subject. The other is a kind of renewal, often configured as the pleasures of exile when the migrant embraces new experiences, new customs, and new languages/writing practices. In this conventional characterization, what has been left behind—the homeland with all of its cultural baggage and nurturing comforts—manifests as something re-imagined akin to Rushdie's imaginary homeland within migrant writing. Said and Rushdie share a project of simultaneously working with conventions of exilic loss while working to disrupt a Euro-centric crafting of that lost homeland as the place of something other, exotic, authentic, if not, real.

In a century marked by the recognition of the split subject and an ever increased movement of people across geopolitical borders, the figure of the exile, more than any other trope of *self* in this dissertation, has attained a particular resonance and import in literary and cultural studies of modernity and its post(s). From psychoanalytic readings indebted to Lacan, Cixous, and Irigaray to ideological approaches rooted in Marx and Althusser to hybrid postcolonial readings evocative of Said and Spivak, "exile" it seems offer something to everyone interested in representations of a (post)modern condition and experience. Not all women's international movement and literary evocations of exile, however, are a call for inclusion, to claim a place for women within categories of high modernism or post-colonial diasporic literature. The literary and theoretical work of

women artists who are often figureheads of a variety of diaspora and border-inflected studies such as Michelle Cliff, Eavan Boland, Audre Lorde Gloria Anzaldua tend mark exile and the return home as fraught if not impossible for women, and exile in their work tends to expose the literal and social exclusion of women from the social, political and economic registers of knowledge and national representation.

It is, however, possible to read through the torqued exile or exilic moves of O'Brien, Donoghue, Cixous, and Dionne Brand a form of gendered political activism that is likewise a revised social justice activism, diverting the attempt simply to insert or include *woman*/women in an established masculine social imaginary and its attendant literary fields. Women's writing collected broadly within the disciplinary fields that are organized around figurations of diaspora, exile, and nation suggests that such new terms as *arrivance* are necessary to conceptualizing *women* who live elsewhere from the place of their birth.

CHAPTER 5

STRANGE MOVES: FOREIGN DESIRES AND DISPLACEMENTS

> *My discontent in living with the other—my strangeness, his strangeness—rests on the perturbed logic that governs this strange bundle of drive and language, of nature and symbol, constituted by the unconscious, always already shaped by the other....How could one tolerate a foreigner if one did not know one was stranger to oneself?*
>
> Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*

The stranger is a traveling figure whose very apprehension suggests a prior mobility in its dislocation from a space of origin or belonging and its eruption into a space of recognition and non-belonging. In other words, the stranger is a foreigner, an-Other who has traveled from elsewhere and is now recognizable in "our" or the *I*'s midst. In her survey of the figurations and psycho-social processes of estrangement in *Strangers to Ourselves* (1989/1991), Julia Kristeva points out that the stranger is a compelling figuration of otherness, conveying the psychic and/or social disturbances that expose the dual fantasies of a unitary subject/"identity" and collective/national identities. The arrival of a stranger signals that the borders of self and/or social orders are permeable and unfixed, yet this quality of arrival from the unconscious or distant geo-cultural space suggests a suspension of movement in the recognition and signification of an-other, if only temporarily. The stranger arrives and disturbs, disrupting fantasies of coherence and the conceptual and political border that regulate and assure sameness. Thus, formulations of strangers and estrangement can appear somewhat static in that the stranger is a figure that itself stresses arrival and re-cognition on a mobile logic similar to that of masculine exile.

In contrast to Hélène Cixous' and Emma Donoghue's rejection of exile as a viable figure and strategy for woman writing *woman*, Kristeva promotes the estrangements and alienations of exile as essential to the speaking and writing subject, although often intriguingly eliding sex/gender differences. Cixous—like Luce Irigaray and Rosi Braidotti—argues that discourses of knowledge and self (philosophy and psychoanalysis in particular) reflect a masculine imaginary in which woman is the embodiment of exile, death, and psychosis; thus, women must write themselves otherwise in order to be written as subjects at all. Kristeva, however, seeks such exilic forces as estrangement, abjection, and alienation (oft carrying forth the repressed feminine crafted as the pre-oedipal and maternal) within existing discourses and conceptual structures while seemingly side-stepping more explicitly "feminist" or gender-directed theoretical projects.[60]

Writing from Julia Kristeva, Svava Jakobsdóttir, Menna Gallie, and Shani Mootoo present the strange and foreign as a range of forms and purposes in mobile women's writing. In Kristeva's recent writing on strangers and estrangement, she tends to neither completely ignore her own status as a female writer nor assert a writing practice distinctive of/to sex/gender difference. Rather she is intrigued with how strangers, in and of language—which would include her own writing persona ("I"/self)—transgress psychic and national borders, disturb the "I" and the "us," and therefore reveal

[60] In a Kristevan context, mobility and instability are effects of language and yet crucial to the generation of the self in, through, and against language. As with Kristeva's earlier writing on the semiotic (poetic mode, transgressive and destabilizing function of language), the Symbolic language constitutes a subject that is never complete in its constitution; this Symbolic permeability is crucial to Kristeva's "transgressive" writing. In that the symbolic is the rule-governing mechanism of linguistic meaning that makes reference and therefore judgment at all possible, the element of meaning associated with the structures and rules governing grammar and syntax. The Symbolic (master ordering of language associated with Lacanian Phallic) might be invaded by the semiotic, a kind of signifying foreignness, to create alternative, revolutionary changes in social and psychic orders.

the perpetual and rhythmic "crisis" of self and belongingness. While Kristeva's investment in psychic and social disturbances may only imply the strange or foreign quality of a woman writing her*self* (not necessarily of *woman*), Svava Jakobsdóttir's short stories and novels of the 1960s draw readers into an aesthetics of the abject, suggesting that if *woman* can be written it is through significations that must terrify and paralyze the masculine imagination. On the other hand, Menna Gallie's novel *In These Promiscuous Parts* (1986) strategically estranges the reader from familiar oedipal narrative structures, playing upon the pleasures of transgressing order to suggest that narratives of community are perhaps best understood through narratives of transgression and estrangement.[61] And, finally, this chapter examines Shani Mootoo's crafting of migrancy as a perverse mode of writing the female subject. Her migrant is becoming foreign, becoming stranger to the "Other," marking mobility as crucial to representing an eccentric subject that both enjoys and exposes the fetishized authenticities of cultural otherness.

Their configurations of the stranger and performances of estrangement do not work in exactly the same way for the same purpose, but in their variety of approaches and figurations they expose how psychic, social, and linguistic estrangement is at work in representations of mobile female subjects and their writing of self. Neither comprehensive nor even a consistent survey of stranger/foreign and estrangement (Kristeva has spent her career on such work), this chapter introduces a range of investments in the aesthetics of literary estrangement and foreignness in post-1968 mobile women's writing. This partnering of writing from Kristeva, Jakobsdottir, Gallie, and Mootoo spans poststructuralism from 1960s to the early-twenty-first century and

[61] As in Chapter 1—Deuce, I am indebted to Judith Roof and her theorizing of narrative in *Come as You Are* (67-9) and the complementary work of Roland Barthes and Teresa de Lauretis, in which oedipal narratives is noted to privilege a satisfactory end and reinforces notions of masculine mastery.

evokes such questions as: What are the representational relationships between the stranger/foreigner and woman? To what extent can the evocation and processes of the strange/estrangement craft a feminine aesthetic or literary practice? (i.e., Is the stranger/foreigner just another manifestation of the Other and the symbolic site for the feminine/woman?) In what ways do the transgressive qualities of the stranger/foreigner characterize and mobilize a particularly feminine writing strategy? And, finally, how is estrangement (strangeness) a participant in other mobile configurations manifesting via alienation, loss, and repression (exile, diaspora, uncanny doubles)?

While each of the traveling configurations of self focused on in this dissertation—neo-doubles, diasporic subjects, exile, and nomad—threatens to collapse under the weight of its (over)determinations and generalities, this threat is that much more acute in examining strangers/foreigners and the narrative potential of estrangement for women writing women. For might not every encounter with an-other, an unknown text, an unknown desire provoke strangeness, in which the repeated and possibly perpetual encounter with the unknown is so common as to be a familiar condition? And, certainly, what may have once been strange and unfamiliar can become familiar through repeated encounters. Following Freud, Kristeva, in some ways, points the way through this moras of all thing strange by limiting the stranger to conditions of the abject and uncanny, to that which disturbs and estranges the subject in his/her confrontation with the strange (as repressed familiar). Thus according to Kristeva, the strange/r can only be accepted, never made familiar. And so, it is with this formulation and with Kristeva that this strange encounter continues.

Strangely Mobile

Consistently interested in the estrangements in/of language, Kristeva often writes of her personal experiences as a foreigner and female intellectual in what Anna Smith notes is the persona of the "female voyager" (8, 57). Kristeva is, however, less than obvious in marking the sex/gender of her self descriptors. Her more recent writings on subjectivity and the politics of community spin through such tropes as *stranger*, *foreigner*, *migrant*, *exile*, *wanderer*, and occasionally *nomad* to describe not only her personal experience of living elsewhere from the nation of her birth, Bulgaria, but also the processes of the psychic subject uttered in/through language. "I like to think that since humanity speaks," she muses in a 1996 interview with Ross Mitchell Guberman, "it is in a state of transit; between biology and meaning, the past and the future, pleasure and the absurd." This collection of mobile figures (in-transit metaphors) corresponds with Kristeva's strategic reworking of psycho-linguistic terminology, a consistent feature of her writing style and subject theorizations. As Anthony Elliott notes, Kristeva is known for "the deployment of neologisms or terms used differently from established usage—the semiotic, thetic, chora and so forth" that is part of a linguistic strategy indispensable to her "attempts to pioneer a post-Lacanian psychoanalytic method" (132). Her pioneering suggests only a temporary estrangement in/of language, however, since Kristeva's goals are to re-define, refine, and potentially adds to existing masculinist discourse. For some critics, this propensity toward "terminological innovations" contributes to the incomprehensibility of and/or unreliability in her writing; for others this effusiveness of "self "definition(s) and play upon mobility to write "subjects-in-process" produces model(s) of self that have revolutionary psychoanalytic and socio-political potential with

the capacity to alter how "we" understand our unconscious, our repressed desires and, consequently, our relationship with Other(s).[62]

Since the late-1980s, Kristeva's terminological innovation has played with mobility metaphors that are geared toward re(in)novating psychoanalytic discourse to address the broader issues and cultural politics of later-twentieth-century nation, revolution and globalization. Still rooted in psychoanalysis and linguistics, her later writings—particularly *Strangers to Ourselves* (1989/1991) and *Crisis of the ~~European~~ Subject* (2000)—cycle through figures of modern travel and subjectivity, suggesting that linguistic innovation is not just using terms in unfamiliar and new contexts and ways but is refusing to let one figure bear the weight of *self* representation. In these habitually self-conscious writings, Kristeva's deployment of travel figures performs a kind of catachresis that works to displace her own self-fashioned female intellectual/female voyager even as her "I" remains central to the conversation. Kristeva's "I" is, depending on the context, figured as foreigner, exile, migrant, nomad, wanderer, and stranger, although each seems more a refashioning of the "exile" as foreigner, as migrant, nomad and so forth to write her-self.

In her extensive assessment of Kristeva's interest in estrangement, *Julia Kristeva: Readings of Exile and Estrangement* (1996), Anna Smith observes, "When Kristeva speaks of her experience as a foreigner in France, it is often to stress exile as the state that causes the subject to come to pieces: 'Consequently, as you may have noticed,' she says, 'I have no "I" anymore...' (*Desire*: 161). The exile cannot claim to have a settled identity,

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[62] For additional discussions regarding Kristeva's critical receptions see: Anna Smith's introduction to *Julia Kristeva: Readings of Exile and Estrangement* (1996); Tina Chanter's and Ewa Plonowska Ziarek's introduction to *Revolt, Affect, Collectivity: The Unstable Boundaries of Kristeva's Polis* (2005). And Nancy Fraser's essay "The Uses and Abuses of French Discourse Theories for Feminist Discourse" in *boundary 2* (Summer 1990) gives a sharp critique of Kristeva's figuration of "woman."

nor can she ever be fully at home with her sex. Everything is disfigured, or escapes into hyperbole. Yet her reflections on exile, foreignness and estrangement are so frequent that one cannot fail to suspect that an autobiography is being written all the same" (55-6). If as Smith observes, Kristeva has been "inconsistent" and "surreptitious" in her writings on feminism and on the possibility that women might possess a "distinct advantage over men as exiles within the Symbolic," sexual difference is often a key elision in Kristeva's theoretical work (168). Kristeva's writing is, according to Smith, then perhaps best thought of as a refusal of the mundane, rejection of common sense, and an innovative approach to characterize psychic/linguistic instability (5, 68-9). All of which is mirrored in Kristeva's more consistent interest, return to, and incorporation of poetic and musicality of modernist aesthetics and literature as she often returns to such writing ranging from Stéphane Mallarmé to James Joyce to Samuel Beckett. However, given her consistent attention to her own experience of exile and foreignness in the autobiographical details she includes in much of her writing, her inconsistency and surreptitiousness on the function of gender in affecting a writing subject all the more curious.

The figure of Kristeva as *woman* is a flickering occurrence, which is perhaps its own, although never explicitly recognized, performance of estrangement from/of linguistic structures ordering a masculine social imaginary. For feminist critics such as Nancy Fraser, Kristeva's surreptitiousness is both intriguing for and dangerous to a feminism that takes the politics of sexual difference and the signification of woman and gender identity as necessitating sophisticated clarity and unmistakable commitment. "She [Kristeva] ends up alternating essentialist gynocentric moments with anti-

essentialist nominalistic moments," claims Fraser. "She reverses herself and recoils from her construct insisting that 'women' do not exist, that feminine identity is fictitious and that feminist movements therefore tend toward the religious and protototalitarian" (190).

As Fraser's concern points out, such "inconsistency" in the writings of a mobile female intellectual begs such questions as: Whether the exile of stranger/foreigner a process ultimately without sexual difference for Kristeva? Is her desire to sidestep the issue of sex/gender enunciation and the psychic, social and economic disparities that follow from difference—and thereby stepping into the speaking position of the universal (masculine) subject? Or is her self-definition as exile et. al. an implicit acknowledgement of woman as the symbolic side of such otherness and alienation—and thus her writing, whether overtly or provisionally gendered, performs *feminine writing*? None of this is to dismiss any transgressive quality to Kristeva's inclusion of her "I"—as exile, foreign, stranger—that, if not strictly feminist, gestures toward the impossibility of a female subject's writing from a position of Symbolic estrangement. But such questions underlying Fraser's concerns direct attention to Kristeva's persona "I" as multiple, a persona who speaks as the psychoanalyst, the clinician, and witness-to-the-foreign appears strikingly masculine in its depiction of the feminine and *woman.* While such questions are, necessary when looking to the place of sex/gender in figurations of the stranger and estrangement, they mimic Kristeva's own writings on the stranger/foreigner and seem a bit too direct, to delimiting. Answers are better sought in her proliferation of mobile figures to trope her "I," which attempt to replicate the moves of a stranger that proliferates, that moves from space to space but also tends to return the witness to a site of re-cognition, judgment, and language of the Same. All of which suggests that perhaps

the strangest figuration of all is then the female psychoanalyst. Yet, Kristeva claims, "I am very attached to the idea of the woman as irrecuperable foreigner," Kristeva claims in her Guberman interview. Speaking out of line with "American" (equity and justice) approaches to feminism in particular, Kristeva describes her desire for a "positivist notion of woman. I see the role of women a sort of vigilance, a strangeness, as always to be on guard and contestatory" (45). In this way, *woman* becomes a figure of mobility and aligned with Kristeva's writing on the psychic processes of abjection as a kind of "journey."

In Kristeva's earlier rumination on the subject, the abject marks a "perpetual loss of identity" through bodily expulsions and waste—blood, vomit, corpses, and such—that the subject experiences as horror, "drawing me [Kristeva; the subject] toward the place where meaning collapses" (*Powers* 2). The abject, neither subject nor object, in this fashion recalls a pre-oedipal, pre-entry-into-the-Symbolic (subjectivity). What was once part of "I" becomes simultaneously "not I," foreign, strange, and exiled, disrupting a subject's sense of self coherence and meaning as the borders of soma and psyche are demonstrated to be permeable. "Abjection preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be" (10).

In her essay "Bulgaria, my Suffering," Kristeva imaginatively returns to the country of her birth to articulate an ethics of being a subject of/to/in contemporary "Europe." It is a return to a country of one's birth that counters the self-conceiving moves of Cixous, whose own return to Algeria rejects masculine formulations of exile to

practice a feminine-imbued *arrivance*, Kristeva shapes the exilic through the expulsions of the abject and calls for generating:

> [N]ew beings of language and blood, rooted in no language or blood, diplomats of the dictionary, genetic negotiators, wandering Jews of Being who challenge authentic, and hence military, citizens of all kinds in favor of a nomadic humanity that is no longer willing to sit quietly....[E]xile is the only way remaining to us...And it is never found except in the seeking that knows it is seeking, or in exile exiled from its exile's certainty, its exile's insolences. In the endless mourning, in which language and the body revive in the heart beat of a grafted Friend, I examine the still warm corpse of my maternal memory. (168-9)

She argues broadly that Eastern European countries such as Bulgaria might contribute significantly as "supplements" to a Western European-dominated European Union to produce dynamic, alternate-narratives for a socio-political body that can no longer be sustained by the symbols and structuring coherencies (legal constitutions and nation-building narratives) of what she sees is a (post)modern nation-state experiencing "crisis." For Kristeva, "culture is...the very stuff of politics," notes Anthony Elliott, and in *Crisis of the ~~European~~ Subject* her overall concern "is that a sense of cultural belonging or identity has begun to stall in the face of globalizing forces.... suited to the success of the far right and a general climate of hostility to immigration, and less and less open to voices speaking up for cultural difference, moderation or reason" (128). Through her own and Bulgaria's exile, she discovers a model of otherness/foreignness/exile that disrupts the xenophobic/anti-foreigner discourses of European nations (specifically

France). Bulgaria emerges the site of the (m)Other, presumably a "supplement" to the European Father. Here the foreign and strange, in particular Bulgaria's Orthodox Catholicism, turns out to be essential in creating a kind of (un)belonging and reassessment of a European socio-political body after its historic loss of mythic/religious (pre-nation) and national organizing narratives. In one sense, it is a new image of the social, privileging an ethic of acceptance over belonging and seemingly savoring the exorbitances of the nomadic, the exiled, the migrant, and the rootless as a re(in)novated terminology for configuring socio-cultural and political change. Such exorbitance is tethered, however, to the maternal body and an imagery of origin, Bulgarian, that is suspiciously "rooted" in a sexual difference, which makes use of the symbolic mother but does not fully account for the female intellectual/voyager, who is more "foreigner" than daughter.

While Cixous rejects formulations of mother- or father-tongues as authorizing and enunciating agents of the self and, instead, privileges the image of a border-crossing polyglot to emphasize mobility, play, learning and speaking her "I" persona, Kristeva clings to a gendered troping of tongue as mother. Cixous' polyglot pitches self-representation away from the gender essentialism that fuels Fraser's issues with Kristeva, for it is difficult to read Kristeva's investment in exile as something other than an investment in a Symbolic that aligns *woman* and female desire with motherhood as well as cultural belonging and stability with patriarchy. Highly sensitive to the potential conflation of a symbolic mother and the institution of motherhood, Braidotti, like Cixous, claims, "There are no mother tongues." Kristeva on the other hand opens "Bulgaria my Suffering" by declaring, "I have not lost my mother tongue" (165). Bulgarian surfaces in

her dreams, helps her translate and speak other "alien" languages such as "Russian and English," and when she is tired, Bulgarian is the language of her common sense. Bulgarian is, according to Kristeva, her "original source," and if French has befriended her, "exile cadaverized this old body (the Bulgarian enunciated Kristeva) substituted another for it" (165). For purposes different than Cixous, Braidotti, and even Fraser, Kristeva aligns language with the body as it is a body strangely universalized through the abject image of the mother corpse.

"Nomadic humanity," however, seems to endorse through a profusion of travel metaphors and imagery, a dislocation from monolingual that "roots" the self in a seemingly female body of language. And yet, it is the figure of the "exile," not the nomadic polyglot or "wandering Jews of Being," who comes to dominate Kristeva's call for a "new beings [Europeans] of language and blood." It is an exile imbued with the abjected loss and mourning of the male subject's entrance into the Symbolic and into his own Oedipal complex that cleaves son from mother and must, as Cixous observes, pitch daughters differently. In stressing "being" rather than the processes of "becoming," Kristeva recalls her earlier work on the abject as an unstable "being" rooted the condition of exile that asserts its masculine representational framework. Kristeva's desire to play, to innovate—since one cannot escape—the Symbolic surfaces in her writing of self and mobility as a kind of a rhetorical and linguistic malfunction, a quandary that no profusion and substitution of travel metaphors can re-mobilize. For exile's moment of apprehension, for it is a (re)cognition, reflects the corpse of her mother-tongue, the Bulgarian language from which she is exiled, and the momentary suspension of meaning affecting a rhetorical presence that Kristeva consistently resists in her being apprehended

as "woman" is displaced into comforts of the foreign and the strange. There is no woman, only strange.

At times, there is, as can be noted in the above passage, an effusive quality to Kristeva's stylistics which is, in part, the effect of a succession of novel, in-transit descriptors—"new beings...rooted in no language or blood, diplomats of the dictionary, genetic negotiators, wandering Jews of Being." This profusion is both strategy of the semiotic function in language so that no single term must carry the weight of representation as well as a displacement of what seems, to me, a desire to limit the slippages and mobilities of language so that the writing and speaking subject can make meaning. Reading "Kristeva" is then akin to being on a journey, alternating between going with the beat and going with the flow often punctuated by abrupt landings into sites of exile, the alienated subject, the loss of meaning. It is this estranged exile that dominates Kristeva's writing and figurations of self, female or otherwise.

Crisis of the ~~European~~ Subject complements and expands upon her earlier writings on aesthetics, the polis, and the uncanny processes of estrangement in *Strangers to Ourselves*. While taking up the mythic and historical import of the stranger/foreigner to the framing of narratives of community, *Strangers to Ourselves* reflects on and (re)turns to her more prominent theorizations of effects of horror, love, and melancholy in speaking/uttering the self/subject. And this wide-ranging study of the stranger/foreigner replays a common tension in Kristeva's writing between a desire to evoke and promote mobility and a desire to identify, classify, and "level" the very effusiveness and differences (sexual, racial, class, and so forth) of estrangement. Her guiding questions are quite simply: "[S]hall we be, intimately and subjectively, able to

live with others, to live as others, without ostracism but also without leveling? The modification in the status of foreigners this is imperative today leads one to reflect on our ability to accept new modalities of otherness" (2). This is one of the chief struggles of/in Kristeva's writing practice—how to write of the subject-in-process, as characterized by mobility without leveling or fixing the Other and, consequently, the "I" in the moment of apprehension.

The proliferation of mobile figures in her writing suggests a range of modalities and yet they tend to get sucked into the vortices of the exile's "nomadic humanity." Kristeva rightly refuses to imagine this new living with other in her analysis, but again the underlying presumptions of acceptance of a potentially infinite selection of psychic and social differences reads bit too sound-bite. If Kristeva values "woman" as the irrecuperable foreigner, a figure of exile, she delineates between what is to be an irrecuperable, transgressive and revolutionary estrangement and what is beyond the border of acceptable otherness by reading as a psychoanalyst invested in the health—body and psyche—of the subject.

The opening essay in *Strangers to Ourselves*, "Toccata and the Fugue for the Foreigner," brings together anecdotes, personal observations and mini-readings of figurations of the strange/foreign to produce a polyphonic piece that is less cohesive argument than a collection of literary estrangements and foreigner sightings. Kristeva ultimately isolates three distinct limits to acceptable estrangement: transconsciousness ("lost consciousness"), unchecked sexual desires, and unknowing utterances. Illustrating the psychically dead subject through a reading of Albert Camus' *The Stranger*, she argues, "Meursault carries to an extreme the separateness of the uprooted person" (29). If to

accept the "stranger within" can be a corrective to what she implies as the "isms" of the nation-state (racism, sexism, classism), this is not to claim that all destabilizations and all strangers or extremes can or should be accepted. According to her reading, Meursault's indiscriminant and unrepentant killing of an Arab and his casual sex with Maria, never mind his lack of expressed grief at his mother's funeral, make him incomprehensible, perhaps undecipherable, and a "stranger" to those sitting in judgment in the court and jury at his murder trial. Siding with the jury, although for different reasons, Kristeva rejects Meursault as a potential model for the stranger who must be accepted: "One realizes then that Meursault has always lived as though he were in a state of lost consciousness, of transconsciousness as it were, and the dazzled vertigo, which, at the end, changes him into a murderer, was always there, more deceitful and more indistinct, but permanent...His [consciousness] is indifferent. Why? We shall never know" (25). Accordingly, the value of the foreigner/stranger/exile/rootless is not who might be recognized as such, as the jury, the reader, and/or Kristeva recognize Meursault, but in Meursault's "I," no matter how fractured, "seeking that knows" the I "is seeking." Meursault's failure as an ideal stranger is that he does not seek self-knowledge and does not recognize his impulses and desires (murder, promiscuity) as acts of psychic and social estrangement. This is the murky ground of the border between unconscious and conscious, drive/desire and unknowing/knowing expression that Kristeva is known for traversing. Meursault in his state of indifference likewise becomes Kristeva's undecipherable stranger, an other who represents the boundary between good estrangement and bad estrangement, knowing and unknowing. Uncannily evocative of Irigaray's location of Woman in the Symbolic as the subject in-difference, Meursault

strangeness resists the clinical reader who desires to "know" the why of Meursault's psyche.

In the context of Kristeva's larger argument, the representational relationship between the *stranger* and *woman* is not her overall concern (more an Irigaray query). Yet following her discussion of Meursault's psychic deadness, she locates another limit of estrangement in an extended metaphor of the sexually adventurous foreigner, particularly her observation of a female immigrant in France (observed sometime between 1969 and the late 1980s). Kristeva stages a kind of clinical observation of a female immigrant's sexual experimentation, a sexual desire unrestrained by either the mores of the home culture/country or the likely untranslatable/unreadable sexual mores of the new country:

> I have known a foreign student, who was a virgin and a strait-laced person when she arrived in Paris, and then threw herself headlong into the 'group sex' of the late sixties, impressing her lover with her daring. Now a few months later, after they had broken off, I met up with her again; she was in a welfare institution, suffering from lung disease. Repression hellishly well knows how to fool us! One thinks to have outsmarted it while it is moving around perfidiously, on a lower level, on the borders between soma and psyche, where the sluice gates of jouissance become snagged and unleashed eroticism is obliged to resort to new limits those of organs, which then falter. The foreigner who imagines himself to be free of borders, by the same token challenges any sexual limit. Often, but not entirely. (31)

This is no longer a display of innovative language or in-transit metaphors to characterize a subject who embraces exile. This is the clinician Kristeva writing yet seemingly without an analyst's couch or notepad. The timing of her record is off (when is this observation—1960s or 1980s?—"months later" do not help). Surely the disorientations of estrangement, as with the disturbances of the abject, fracture the signification of time as well as all spatial meaning, but for the estranged subject, not the clinician, as the skilled witness who apprehends the strange/r. Amidst the deadening potentiality of estrangement as unchecked eroticism, Kristeva levels a judgment via an anecdote of a woman's body and female sexual desire. A prudishness seeps into her writing that seems less about her own/France's sexual mores and more a literal effort to frame (categorically maintain) the libidinal drives and desires that produce foreignness via the female body minus the maternal.

To denote the third, and final category of unacceptable estrangements, Kristeva links the unknowing utterances of the foreigner to a failed re(in)ovation in/of language. Avoiding the specifics of literary models or personal observation, she sketches a foul-mouthed foreigner, a kind of caricature of the conversational language-learner who is enticed by slang and profanity, enjoying the perversity of language that s/he would likely avoid uttering in his/her mother-tongue and/or home country. This stranger's linguistic transgressions elide his/her mindful and precise selection of words to speak his/her self. "In that sense, the foreigner does not know what he is saying. His unconscious does not dwell in his thought, consequently, he is satisfied brilliantly to reproduce everything there is to learn, seldom innovating" (32). This is a logical inversion of the sexually adventurous foreigner whose repressed desires become an all too innovative expression.

Kristeva values the poetic, the musical (the semiotic) of language to alter consciously the social imaginary and political borders of nation. Still, her portrayal is curious given her own innovation of language that often plays with and mimics incoherency (although I do acknowledge that my own reading may in part be an effect of Kristeva-in-translation, but her terminological slippages are too common a signature of her writing practice to be entirely attributable to the lapses and gaps of translation). Kristeva's concern in marking this third limit is with the degree to which the language/drives of the unconscious can be read out from the utterance of the conscious subject. An indiscriminate reproduction rather than discriminate innovation of/in language muddies her own translation and, consequently, our re-cognition of what is strange (perhaps even in this case "authentic") and, thus, who can be read as the seeking, healthy, and acceptable strangers to ourselves and nation.

To reiterate Cixous and Braidotti's concerns with employing the figure of the exile to write "woman," such binary figurations—belonging/exile, subject/other, Same/Other, man/woman—tend to return us to the Symbolic and a preoccupation with Oedipal narratives of patriarchy and nation. Kristeva's more sustained writing on the stranger and estrangement ultimately regulates the category of the stranger/foreigner, et. al.—lost consciousness, botched sexual pleasure, unknowing speech—and in the process suggests that the value of strangers whether within or without is in due course about the reader/clinician/I's mastery of and in service to the health of the subject in relation to Symbolic (the Law of the Father). In other words, a "perpetual loss of identity" is transgressive and celebratory only to the degree that it does not wrest control of reading

and signifying the Conscious (Meursault), Body (immigrant woman), Knowledge (controlled utterance) from the wandering master clinician.

Strange Desires

> *For a moment she feared, was almost certain even, that someone would open from the other side and that her whole existence was being reversed: the inside was turning outwards, the outside inwards, and just as she felt she was losing herself in this ominous reversal, he stopped his pounding.*
>
> Svava Jakobsdóttir, *The Lodger*

> *Strange indeed is the encounter with the other—whom we perceive by means of sight, hearing, smell, but do not "frame" within our consciousness. The other leaves us separate, incoherent; even more so, he can make us feel that we are not in touch with our own feelings, that we reject them or, on the contrary, that we refuse to judge them—we feel "stupid," we have "been had."*
>
> Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*

At the close of Svava Jakobsdóttir's novel *The Lodger* (1969) the unnamed protagonist, a housewife, stands in the foyer of her newly-built, sea-side villa paralyzed by insecurity and literally turning to stone, as if becoming one with her home. She is trapped, caught up in the impossibility of making a decision on her own and flanked by two distinct versions of strangers—a "stateless man" who has rung the doorbell for entrance and her husband and their "lodger" who have merged into a single, grotesque version of a "man with two heads and four arms on two legs" (76, 78). She and the husband/lodger have prepared to sit down to their Christmas dinner, and she is unsure whether or not she should extend a Christmas welcome to the "stateless man" whom she has often seen wandering their beachfront. Peter, her husband, has become so enamored with and reliant upon the lodger—literally now his other half—that he can no longer dictate how she should respond to the stranger at the door. Lessons of Christianity and

rules of hospitality would suggest, yes, let him in. And, before moving to the villa, the stateless man might have simply entered as "the lodger" had done. She and her husband never locked their apartment, believing "there was no point in locking the front door because the landlord had an extra key; she was thus always conscious of a key to her home in the pocket of a stranger" (13). But those days of unlocked doors were gone. Those days were before the "the lodger" took up residence in their hallway without so much as a knock, a greeting, or a proper welcome.

The Lodger's concluding scene multiplies deviations and estrangements from what makes a home proper and civil—a crippled, two-headed man in the house; a fearful woman turning to stone at its entryway; a stateless man on the other side of the door—each possessing a peculiar otherness and potential threat to social order and the wife's psychic stability. Jakobsdóttir's story is riddled with strangers, and they manifest themselves as foreigners, exiles, feminine and racial/ethnic others—and, of course, the lodger. But not the man, the husband, Peter. In this figurative slide, the stranger refuses singularity and serves to reveal the inaccessible, repressed desires that fix a woman, symbolically and, in the end, literally in the home. This is a story very much about *woman* and female desire as foreign and estranging to a masculine imaginary.

For the wife, each encounter with strangers—the lodger, the stateless man, and eventually her monstrous husband—provokes an uncontrollable and dizzying destabilization of self in which "her whole existence was being reversed: the inside was turning outwards, the outside inwards" (15). Typical of the uncanny and abject stylistics of Jakobsdóttir's short stories, *The Lodger* reproduces familiar narrative structures but in a manner that is itself distancing, disturbing, estranging. Jakobsdóttir's story is

provocative precisely because the wife's desires are not only crafted as a "wife's" desires funneled through the husband's but also as a powerfully destabilizing eruption of otherness, of the repressed. We observe her superficial claims to desiring a beautiful house and her more private reflections on desiring "security" and comfort. But the explosive disruptions of self, her repeated experiences of disorientation and confusion express a desire that has been so repressed as to become horrifying. The psychic reversal of inwards and outwards, the destabilization of the wife's boundaries echoes Freud's depiction of the uncanny as return of the repressed and anticipates by decades Julia Kristeva's own theorization of how strangers disclose the instabilities of identity and the indeterminacy of borders between self and other.

In her own writing about women writing, Jakobsdóttir suggestively replays the basic precepts of French Feminism that demonstrate language to be masculine, claiming that "the street of literary tradition that she walks along is well trodden and paved by men. A woman writer always runs a risk of being seduced with elegant symbols and beautiful metaphors which originate in a perspective toward the subject that is totally different from hers, and which lead to a perspective that the woman writer, in the end, has only appropriated for herself but not experienced. Thus the female experience has not been conveyed'" (qtd in Kress 503). Published in 1969 on the eve of the galas of post-structuralism and Continental psychoanalytic feminisms, *The Lodger* anticipates Cixous', Irigaray's, and Kristeva's negotiations in/of Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalysis and the processes and/or impossibilities of a woman writing her place into the male Symbolic. The woman writing, according to Jakobsdóttir, may "appropriate" the perspective and language of the Symbolic, but she remains strange and foreign to the language of her

experience and subjectivity. Corresponding with this notion of "appropriation," the wife's encounters with the "stranger" signal her own absence, and her lack of purpose as a lack of reflection. For instance, looking through the peephole into the stranger's "coal-black and alien" eyes, "[s]he could not find herself in them no matter how hard she tried. She received no indication, no initiative from these eyes" (78). The resounding question in and about Jakobsdóttir's fiction tackles whether or not it is possible to write as and of woman. Her propensity toward the grotesque and abject suggests a literary strategy to destabilize, if momentarily, the seductions of the Symbolic and its "beautiful" but empty metaphors for *woman*.

The tendency among scholars of Jakobsdóttir's work, however, has been to read *The Lodger*, as Ástráđur Eysteinsson notes, as an allegory of the establishment of an American military base in Iceland post-World War II (6). Allegorically, the lodger represents the American military, and, consequently, his presence undermines Iceland's recently gained independence from Denmark (in 1944) and Iceland's (husband/wife's) attempt to build a new, distinctive nation/home.[63] His presence is financially lucrative and legitimate (sanctioned by the husband), but the lodger is also dangerously charismatic, foreign, uncouth, and hyper-masculine, stirring up talk among the neighbors and suggesting that the husband and wife cannot "make it" on their own. The husband (Peter) and the wife (unnamed), accordingly, represent the people and national spirit of Iceland, a young couple (country) caught between establishing their own comfortable routine and working to satiate their upwardly-mobile desires. The lodger is an

[63] During World War II, the United States military partnered with British armed forces and took over the British base in Iceland in 1941. US military presence was intermittent after the war, but by 1951 the US established a military base which suited both NATO and US Cold War interests in the North Atlantic as well as assuring military protection to Iceland, which has never maintained its own armed forces. The US withdrew its forces in 2006, and Iceland agreed to maintain compliance with NATO defense guidelines.

invader/foreigner/stranger who becomes less threatening to the household's order when the wife renames him "lodger." In such an allegory, the stateless man threatens the tentative community and belongingness of 'home' with his illegitimate/illegal presence and wandering ways. Shadowy and intriguingly distant he represents both that which helps define the settled borders of the home (nation) and that which signals its instability, its permeability, and heterogeneity. In this sense, he functions similarly to such postcolonial readings as Franz Fanon's correspondence of colonial Others, whether biologically male or female, as inhabiting the Symbolic space reserved for the feminine.

While Jakobsdóttir's own political career as a diplomat to Norway and her parliamentary seat convey her personal interest in Iceland's national politics, allegory is not the primary structure organizing *The Lodger*. For the wife, who sustains the focus of the story, gets lost in national allegory, subsumed her to part of a nation as couple, to the complement of the "husband." In many ways, allegory works to recontain, normalize, and stabilize the very narrative and symbolic disruptions Jakobsdóttir's story provokes. In addition, reading *The Lodger* as an allegory of nation actually manufactures a narrative of the "real" via the replacement of a significant narrative displacement or absence, i.e., Iceland. For instance, references to Iceland/nation are decidedly absent from her novel and must be read as an implication or an obverse characterization of the stateless, the foreigner, the exile. In other words, allegory's extension of the power of metaphor to substitute for the nation's absence in her story implies an authentic version of Iceland's postcolonial struggles 'outside' of her story but to an "Iceland" to which her novel may or may not be read to refer. This is the slipperiness and power of allegory. Thus, the processes of allegorical substitution maintain particular binary set of

inclusions/exclusions so that Iceland as nation might be better understood through the bizarre but seemingly instructional tale of a heterosexual couple and their domestic desires. The very title of Jakobsdóttir's novel, *The Lodger*, should be read as a caution against our all too easy embrace of metaphorical substitutions that delimit the novel's representation of strangers and estrangement to allegories of nation or otherwise.

In so far as the novel's title signals the wife's own rhetorical substitutions to quell dissolutions of self she experiences when *he* arrives and in *his* presence, her own renaming of the "stranger" and "foreigner" who enters her home uninvited with the more benign, but observably false name, "lodger" is part of the very processes that repress her desire to speak, to say "no" to his uninvited entry, to his rearranging of her furniture to his liking. It is possible to read the wife's substitution of "stranger" with "lodger" as a moral and method to embrace strangeness, or as Kristeva would have it, "accept the stranger within" (at least in the wife's home). However, her repeated experience that "she was losing herself in this ominous reversal" is the constant threat the stranger poses to the protagonist's coherence of self. For the invader/foreigner/stranger/ Lodger's determination and his decision to move in with the couple is precisely a power unknown to her and is, therefore, disruptive and disorienting.[64] Again, the feminine is significantly undermined in reading *The Lodger* allegorically. Allegory subsumes the strangeness of woman as desiring subject to the broader desires of a house of men—husband and lodger.

Known for her blending of "gross realism and fantasy" and credited with bringing feminist politics to Icelandic literary modernism,[65] Svava Jakobsdóttir (1930-2004) wrote

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[64] Given that the stranger shifts, replicates, multiplies, renaming the stranger creates only the illusion of transformation of what is made foreign via repression is only a temporary fix.

[65] Helga Kress in *A History of Icelandic Literature* locates Jakobsdóttir's writing and Jakobsdóttir the literary artist at the fore of Icelandic feminism, a revisionist and "ground-breaking" position. She translates

novels, short stories and plays that featured female protagonists and strangeness in equal measure. According to Daisy L. Neijmann, she "employed the mode of fantasy, but described it as if it were completely real, an everyday occurrence. Thus, ordinary reality for women becomes in Svava's fiction, grotesque and horrific" (59). Neijmann observes that Jakobsdottir's writing is a staging of the grotesque and horrific to access and signify women's real world experiences. Yet, like the power of a "stateless man" in allegory to reveal Iceland, signification here becomes a bit of a shell game that presumes something "completely real" resides under one of the terms in play—woman, wife, stone—and if we overturn the right term or set of terms we might find the external realities her story represents.

It is just as likely, however, that the extension of the representational economies of verisimilitude—realist style, linear sequencing, and conventional sex/gender roles—to a logical end-point exposes both the fantasy of ordinary reality and the narrative function of a masculine imaginary that manufactures the very category of "woman" upon which the fantasy of reality relies. Instead, her female characters often engage in startling, bodily acts of abjection that function in the text both metonymically and metaphorically, thereby, negating easy substitution by partitioning the female body and its disrupting realistic signification. For instance, in her short story "Give Unto Each Other," a young bride horrifies her husband-to-be when she amputates her hand to *give her hand in marriage* literally, and she in turn is stunned in the end when he accepts what she knows

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and quotes Jakobsdóttir essay on women's writing, "'Reynsla og raunveruleiki": "The street of literary tradition that she walks along is well trodden and paved by men. A woman writer always runs a risk of being seduced with elegant symbols and beautiful metaphors which originate in a perspective toward the subject that is totally different from hers, and which lead to a perspective that the woman writer, in the end, has only appropriated for herself but not experienced. Thus the female experience has not been conveyed'" (503).

to be a prosthetic to mean the return of her real hand. In "A Story for Children," a mother, whose curious children have removed her brain to see its contents as she goes about her daily chores, must eventually cut out her enlarged heart in a futile attempt to restore her own health after her children have grown and left home. Such images expand upon an already abject figuration of woman that troubles the boundaries of internal/external, real/fantastic, metaphor/metonymy, and mark woman as the site of sacrifice in heteronormative, patriarchal rites of the "real" that French Feminism, in general, associates with the pre-oedipal, the woman's body, and death.

The extension of economies of the "real" to their phantasmatic limits also feature in *The Lodger* in such moments as when the wife offers Peter her "warm bosom...a spring of security" to quell his own uncertainties in facing the stranger-cum-lodger. With an eroticism rivaling the styling of D. H. Lawrence, Peter's nursing is both a metaphorical substitution for sexual intercourse as well as a metonymic slide into significations of the feminine as "wife" blends with the literal and abject mother: "He was going to gobble her up; she whimpered as she felt his teeth. He then eased up, but without stopping his sucking which gradually became calm and rhythmical; she saw his Adam's apple go up and down as he swallowed deeply and came up again for more..." (33). Satiated with the milk from a single breast, Peter sleeps like a babe and the wife "suppressed her anger and envy, incarcerating them in the innermost recesses of her mind" and slips out of bed (33). Agitated with her own unsatisfied longing for the security Peter received in nursing, she expresses the milk from her other engorged breast alone in the dark. Her agitation and suppressed "rage" surely points toward the disparities and inequalities of the pleasures to be had in traditional sex roles, but the

expulsion and sucking of breast milk in this instance does not force a collapse of meaning either for character or reader in a Kristevan manner. Rather they direct our attention to the familiar and natural conflation of woman with mother in a masculine imaginary. In *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974) Luce Irigaray draws upon similar imagery to claim: "It must be concluded, once again, that this preeminence finds its rationality elsewhere or otherwise. In any case, the culturally, socially, economically valorized female characteristics are correlated with maternity and motherhood: with breastfeeding the child, restoring the man" (25).

If the abject imagery of Jakobsdóttir's fiction anticipates much of Kristeva's incorporation of the abject to theorize psychic estrangments from social meaning, Jakobsdóttir's writing is alternately invested in the more Irigarayian and Cixousian appeals to write feminine subjectivity and desire. It is thus telling that the closing image in *The Lodger* is one of a woman, who unable to see her reflection in a stateless man's eyes, is turning to stone. In looking into another's eyes, an Other reminiscent of the "dark continent" of woman who cannot direct her response to his expressed desire for entry (so unlike her husband and the lodger), the wife must confront her own strange desires to speak, to decide, ultimately a desire to desire. Not quite a decade after *The Lodger*'s publication, Cixous will celebrate and embrace the paralysis of *woman's* Medusa-like power and desire that is alluded to but remains beyond the borders of Jakobsdóttir's wife/woman's story. In "Laugh of the Medusa" (1976) Cixous describes a commensurate indecision, the fear, and madness of female desire: "I, too, overflow; my desires have invented new desires, my body knows unheard-of songs. Time and again I, too, have felt so full of luminous torrents that I could burst...And I, too, said nothing,

showed nothing; I didn't open my mouth....I was ashamed. I was afraid, and I swallowed my shame and my fear. I said to myself: You are mad!... Who, feeling a funny desire stirring inside her (to sing, to write, to dare to speak, in short, to bring about something new), hasn't thought she was sick?" (876).

In Jakobsdóttir's story, the eruption of the feminine as strange that "ominous reversal" of other and subject gesture toward a new kind of speaking and feminine expression. The ray of Cixousean hope in a seemingly less than optimistic ending is that the wife, in turning to stone, her indecision, her feminine lack, is not representative of that lack but rather is symptomatic of a feminine desire coming into recognition, performing the strangeness of something rather than the estrangement of nothing.

Foreign Pleasures

> *Text of pleasure: the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a* comfortable *practice of reading. Text of bliss: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language.*
>
> Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*

Nearly all the writers and filmmakers whose work is the subject matter of this dissertation reside(d) in transnational spaces of two or more countries for extended periods.[66] Obvious strangers/foreigners in the "elsewhere" of their itineraries, these artists are more aptly *strangers* to the nationalizing impetuses of authorial biography, which often recontains their foreignness by legitimizing and authenticating the artists via

[66] Marina Carr is an exception while Svava Jakobsdóttir (Iceland, United States, England, Norway), Shani Mootoo (Ireland, Trinidad, Canada, United States) and Menna Gallie are more the rule. Or, possibly, Gallie is the excess.

the nation or postcolonial region of their birth. For Kristeva, her immigration to France and her travels as a scholar play a significant role in her writing of self/subjectivity/identity through which she makes it clear that she may legally be a French citizen, but she always remain a foreigner to both France and Bulgaria. Jakobsdóttir, while born in Iceland, was educated in the United States and England, and lived in Norway as an Icelandic diplomat before returning to Iceland to hold a parliamentary post. Her biographers often credit her international travels to her bringing both literary modernism and feminist writing to Iceland. Likewise Menna Gallie's biography marks her as one of the more mobile, although less studied, Atlantic Rim authors. She may have been born and raised in Ystradgynlais, Wales, but she spent most of her adult years living in England, the United States, Italy, Northern Ireland, France, Switzerland, Austria, and the former Yugoslavia.[67] This life in multiple countries suggests a figurative promiscuity of sorts, as if one community, one home, one nation was either not enough to satisfy or not what was desired in the first place. Derived from the Latin *miscēre*, to mix, promiscuity and its adjective/adverbial form, promiscuous, connotes a provocative sense of randomness and indiscriminant, disordered groupings etymologically useful in approaching the heterogeneity and effusive qualities of mobile women's writing and figurations of estrangement (*OED*). A contrast to her life in multiple countries, Gallie's novel *In These Promiscuous Parts* (1986) is primarily set in a

[67] Gallie is most well known, at least in Welsh literary circles, for her period novels *Strike for a Kingdom* (1959) and *The Small Mine* (1962) that take up settings and themes of British colonialism in the contexts of Welsh industrialism and labor disputes. Her later novels and writings are set elsewhere such as Northern Ireland and Eastern Europe in *You're Welcome to Ulster* and *Travels with a Duchess*, respectively. Her final novel, *In These Promiscuous Parts* (1986), is a return to Welsh setting and characters in a contemporary setting. Menna Gallie left Wales to study and teach literature; she returned to Wales in the 1980s upon her husband's retirement from a professorship at Cambridge University. Her husband, W. Bryce Gallie, was a political science professor. I suspect that Menna Gallie's work will feature prominently in forthcoming revisions of the Welsh literary canon since her death in the 1990s and the archiving of her papers in 2002 at the National Library of Wales.

small-seaside Welsh village, and yet its narrative structure and characterizations recall a promiscuity that marks the novel as intriguingly strange.

Focused largely on Rosie Kendrew, an Oxford University professor of literature, who returns to her sea-side hometown in Wales to help her aging mother work on the local election, *In These Promiscuous Parts* is peppered with stories of international and local crimes and assorted gossip and lore told among the locals. Rosie is the small-town girl who made good by getting out, which positions her simultaneously as a local and a foreigner. She provides the primary narrative perspective and siphons many, but not all, of the antics and tales of the village, and her split perspective alternates between the intimate knowledge of all sorts of unlawful goings on and the naïve, limited perspectives but remarkable insights of one new to the village. For example, she is included in the gang of men who poach the river for salmon, taking the place of her father who died a few years before, but her feminine wiles and university-honed intellect sidetrack the Water Bailiff and protect the group from arrest. And while she converses easily with all, from the hippies and self-sufficient commune types to the police, she remains apart from and knows little if anything about the Welsh Nationalists who sit in the shadows of the pub. Nor is she privy to the sexual exploits that have shaped her family and local genealogy. *In These Promiscuous Parts*, as its title suggests, takes the reader into the pleasures of the heterogeneous and the transgressions of social codes and narrative structures. Unlike Gallie's earlier novel *Travels with a Duchess* (1968), which chronicles a middle-aged housewife's adventures on an Eastern European holiday filled with casual sex and much alcohol-induced ribaldry, the transgressions *In These Promiscuous Parts* are not always sexual but rather revel in the pleasures of botched narrative order.

Overall, the novel reads a bit like a colorful detective story, yet one overcrowded with crimes and containing too few detectives. There are crimes of a political nature such as the repeated vandalism of English language road signs and the poaching of salmon in a river protected by "English laws for English tourists." There are the more scintillating and profitable crimes—Antiquities stolen from Cambridge University and shifted through a network of locals, Italian immigrants, and an English art dealer; caravans of exotic, foreign prostitutes hidden away in the hills; heroin from Amsterdam moved through to an Irish ship in the bay that is also rumored to be running guns for the IRA. There are crimes of a personal and social nature—bestiality; blackmail and nepotism among politicians and police officers as well as the more mundane, but always evocative, adultery and incest. There are crimes feared but never committed, such as the potential vandalism of ancient Celtic stone circles. There are crimes committed unwittingly but later revealed—the illiterate wanderer Lance's transport of priceless, purloined books from Cambridge, and the elderly commune couple who accidentally prepare a soup made from psychedelic mushrooms for their dinner quests. And finally, there are crimes that are unrecognized by all but the reader, such as the Water Bailiff's killing of Myfanwy, Rosie's mother, whilst he peeps in her window and unknowingly scares her to death when he knocks over a potted plant as he turns to leave. In fact, mid-way through the novel, it would be easy for a reader to both lose track of how many transgressions of social and legal orders have been committed and exactly what rumors and cover-stories about those "crimes" are circulating.

What is absent is an overarching plot under which all of the sub-plots or minor crimes and antics fit. In this sense, the narrative itself is transgressive and strange and

functions differently than the proliferation of strangers represented by Jakobsdóttir's and Kristeva's work. The pleasures of reading the novel are non-oedipal in that they are not to be found in the tying up of narrative threads and the reassertion of law. Although certain crimes are solved, such as the Cambridge painting heist and heroine drug trade, in each case significant artifacts, details and criminals remain unaccounted for, which for the conventional mystery-lover might prove exceptionally frustrating. For instance, priceless books stolen from Cambridge remain on Rosie's shelves, the majority of known criminals have not been caught in the end, and a number of crimes such as the vandalism of road signs remain unsolved by the police and the perpetrators never revealed even to the reader. All of this suggests that either Gallie's novel is poorly structured or something else is going on, more likely the latter. Poorly structured stories tend to disappoint, to displease with their gaps and inconsistencies so easily filled in by an observant, skilled reader, and thus the narrative is judged to be lacking and perhaps not worth reading through to the end. Gallie's novel, however, pleases; and in the end it disturbs rather than comforts. Upon finishing the novel, for example, I was compelled to return to the beginning, to read through it once again to see what signs I had missed—For how I could not have seen that the Water Bailiff was actually Rosie's brother and that they would have sex just as the police were closing in on the antiques and drug dealers? There are signs, of course, they simply do not anticipate the narrative's ending. How strange indeed.

In *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973/1975) Barthes recognizes the satisfaction readerly texts offer in the end are an "Oedipal pleasure (to denude, to know, to learn the origin and the end). "[I]f it is true," he continues, "that every narrative (every unveiling of

the truth) is a staging of the (absent, hidden, or hypostatized) father—which would explain the solidarity of narrative forms, of family structures, and of prohibitions of nudity" (10). If as Barthes notes, the comforts to be found in fiction are the pleasures of the Oedipal, the "striptease," the gradual "reveal," the reveals in Gallie's narrative are inconsistent, and what remained hidden—while of the father—leads to Rosie's estrangement and, certainly, not to the reader's comfort. The voice of the father returns in the form of a letter that reveals the Water Bailiff to be the product of the senior Kendrew's affair with a local working-class girl when Rosie was an infant. The Water Bailiff, George, was not a particularly major or even likable character, although perhaps sympathetic in his conflicting desires to belong and remain an outsider to the community. Blodwin, Myfanwy's housekeeper, recounts George's local birth, illegitimacy, and after the death of his mother, his fostering with an abusive, adoptive father in Cardiff. He returns to the village a grown man and despised figure, representing the English government's control of Wales' rivers for corporate interests. His simultaneously local and foreign characterization might tip the reader off to his similarity to Rosie (insider/outsider). But the reader's powers of discernment are reduced and distorted by the sheer number of other crimes and broken signs so that Rosie's one-off with the Water Bailiff in the grass behind beach pub may seem gratuitous and out-of-character, yet it hardly registers as significant amidst the bigger exposés of what was behind the Irish ship and who was profiting from Cambridge's stolen art.

There is a subtle strangeness to Gallie's unconventional plotting and humorous style. The strangeness lies less in violent disruptions—although those feature as the end-point of most of her storylines—and more in the multiplicity of stories, perspectives, and

disunified logic that characterize both the people and places of her fiction. Her style, as Katie Gramich points out, often blends "tragic subject-matter with a robust comic style" that "contributes to making her novels slightly uneasy reading—there can be a modulation from the humorous to the heart-rendering within the space of one paragraph" (126) The modulation Gramich observes is just as likely to occur within a single sentence as in this sentence in the novel's opening that provides the gypsy-thief Lance's perspective of the grounds of Cambridge: "It was a crisp, spring evening, and the Cam and the meadows were bright in the lights of the Graduate Centre, a hideous, penitential, pretentious building that curdled Lance's blood" (1). Aside from the uncanny commentary on academe and the Cambridge Graduate Centre, the rapid shift from conventional registers of beauty to the grotesque jars, briefly disorients, creating not the pleasures of narrative consistency but rather the pleasures of transgressing consistency, perhaps aligned with the order of comedy but implying the seriousness of tragedy. The metaphors point us in one direction but, as with the novel's storyline(s), lead us elsewhere.

Out of this disorientation emerges one of the novel's themes pertaining to who can read and cannot read *signs*. The repeated destruction of English language road signs is part of a larger motif of signs that suggests that regardless of our literacy and critical skills not all signs (in this instance, crimes) can be read. As Lance, a gypsy-born wanderer, tells Rosie when she asks about his formal illiteracy and his nomadic lifestyle, "There are plenty of illiterate people who get passports...The real problem was getting a birth certificate, but I've got this friend I sometimes work for—he knows the ropes and got the certificate for me. It worked, genuine or not...[A]nybody who's in a foreign

country and doesn't know the lingo is as good as illiterate, in any case" (203). Working on a similar logic to Ali Smith's characterization of Kate's passport as a legal fiction and transgression of the "real" signifiers of national belonging, Lance's formal illiteracy fashions certain kinds of illiteracy as holding transgressive and political import. In the context of Gallie's novel, one's inability to read and comprehend proposes that the foreign and one's foreignness can be not only necessary but also comforting. It is significant that the two characters most at ease with illiteracy are the son of gypsies and a nomad (Lance) and an educated woman (Rosie). Their international travels and abilities to read otherwise generally serve them well. Lance, for instance, evades detection and arrest for his part on the Cambridge rare book and art thefts. And Rosie is for the most part, the foreigner at ease, transgressing and crossing intellectual and national borders.

Typical of Gallie's "politics"—which one reviewer of *You're Welcome to Ulster* describes as being so multi-perspective that the novel offers a compelling but "strange" look at the troubles in Northern Ireland—*In These Promiscuous Parts* sides with the power of the underdog against the monolith, whether that is nation-state or corporate-state. This is perhaps a reflection of the novel's timing, written in the aftermath of Wales' 1979 vote against devolution/home rule, a decision that would not be revised until after Gallie's death. But more likely the narrative of nation with its oedipal imperatives becomes a failure in Gallie's novel. *In These Promiscuous Parts* is an intriguing evocation of Welsh nationalism and English colonization since there are too many stories in circulation and the series of crimes never fit together and cannot be fully attributed to a Welsh response to colonization and yet neither are they entirely disconnected. For instance, the once powerful but now aging and annoying ruling class, the Llwynrhos

spinsters—the last of the locals to retain profits from English colonization—may still live in the big house of their childhood but it is house in decline. They live off its treasures and wealth, selling off bits and pieces which will essentially dismantle the house as the Llwynrhos line comes to an end. Similarly, the repeated reports of vandalized English road signs which the police attribute to the teachings and political actions of the Welsh Language Society (WLS) may be, according to Rosie, simply local teens looking for fun in a town with little to keep them entertained. The single act of vandalism of which we know the vandal, Handel, cannot be linked to the teachings of WLS and becomes a humorous instance of sticking it to the man. After a night of drinking in the pub, Handel tore down a sign, breaking his arm in the process. His plans are to sue the state (English Government) for damages as it can be held responsible for erecting dangerous and defective road signs. That the road signs were not structurally defective and that the danger posed to Handel is his own drinking are beside the point. All in all, the motives for Welsh national independence are difficult to read—just as fraught as the texts of Celtic/Welsh history and culture.

A skilled reader and professor of literature, Rosie is often intrigued by the indecipherable and foreign more so than the comprehensible and familiar. For instance, upon her return home, Rosie walks to the graveyard, not to visit her father's grave, but to touch "the great Standing Stone, the Maenhir, witness to the much-earlier-than Christian holiness of this place. With cold-numbed fingers she felt for the words on the stone, some in Latin, some mere Ogam cuts, she felt for the basic immemorial facts: her city fingers probed the roughness, felt the eternal security of stone, the everlasting verities. Comforted, she turned towards the Golden Oak, the pub..." (35). Rosie's finger-reading

of the stone posits an acceptance and version of Welsh history and culture that is ultimately indecipherable and foreign. She reads the Maenhir's already mixed ciphers (Latin/Celtic) at night, without illumination, and without sight, her fingers probing the ciphers that she, with all her book learning and formal education, cannot decode. Incongruously, what might be known about the history, culture and traditions of her small Welsh village do not comfort, but the "basic immemorial facts" that might that confirm her sense of belongingness remain lost. Custom and belonging are, thus, paradoxically a version of being in a foreign country while home.

Aptly, at the end of the novel the very readable letter from her father, a display of mastery of language and the social, catalyzes Rosie's estrangement from self and community. With her mother's corpse only a few feet away, Rosie reads a letter from her father that he penned shortly before his death and entrusted to the confidence of Byron and Blodwin, to be given to Rosie upon her mother's passing. The letter stages the voice of the father in the form of confession, however, does not satisfy the reader's desire to know as Barthean pleasure, for in Gallie's novel "to know" devolves rather than develops narrative closure as Rosie makes her escape in manner more akin to Barthean *jouissance*:

> "Right," she said, "now we know. I'm leaving everything in your [Blodwin and Byron] competent hands...I love you, but I must leave, because you see, well..." She turned her face away from them and said, "Well, I never had it so good."
>
> They heard the engine of her car jerk into life and Rosie was away.
>
> "Best this way," Byron said, "Poor little sod. To start now, what story will we give about her going away?" (264)

The return of the voice of the Father, the father's letter and the confession reveals what we might have known all along, if this were a different and less promiscuous narrative. The letter is a symbolic sledgehammer, laying down the law of the father and prohibition of incest which cannot recontain or control what has come before, or even Byron's future crafting and telling of events for that matter. The ineffective father who returns belatedly to prohibit incest is reflected in his ineffective son, whose job as Water Bailiff is to patrol and protect the salmon that swim the river to spawn from Welsh poachers—a job he does poorly. George is repeatedly thwarted, made a laughing stock and is soon to lose his job if rumor holds true. His ineffectiveness is both a tribute to the poacher's skills and an indication of the impossibility of the job to control sexual reproduction (the salmon's) in the interest of a law designed to maintain the advantages of an elite few (English tourists). All of which signals the broken regulatory function of the law—symbolic and Westminster—in the village.

What takes the reader by surprise in the end, the letter from the father that belatedly claims and identifies his son is that the narrative still does not cohere. With its celebration of criminal transgressions of the law and its multiple theories/stories that circulate about who has done what, there is a decided lack of narrative tension that might signal the return of the law to reestablish proper order either to the small Welsh community or the narrative. For, this was not a story of a young woman's desire to reconnect with her father who unwittingly chooses her brother as a substitute. If so, Rosie's choice to have sex with her brother, while on one level is transgressive and horrifying, might make more sense, at least to the novel's reader. It would call forth a

sense of tragic inevitability, a sense of closure, making this an-other sort of narrative about a woman's otherness.

What ultimately attracts Rosie to George is his unreadability, and like her reading of the Maenhir, she will run her fingers across the scar on his face trying to read his past as they leave the pub for the hills. Aside from having her powers of discernment undercut by a dinner of psychedelic mushroom soup, Rosie does not appear drawn to an underlying similarity between father and son but rather to the son's inscrutability. Notably, the sense that Rosie experiences pleasure in having sex with George gets blurred, in fact, the sex act is disrupted, likely incomplete and suggests a failure to reach orgasm. Their sex scene is diverted into a sequence of other pre-climaxes. The mad dash of drug mules and pursuing policemen who have lost their cars and fleeing art criminals and who join the pursuit literally trip over Rosie and George lying on the darkened hillside near the beachfront, all of which brings multiple narrative strands together, if only in setting. Sexual intercourse as a kind of (re)union, however, does not usher forth closure. For in one sense there is little to bring closure to as there is little build up of sexual tension, intrigue or desire between the (un)likely couple, Rosie (an insider who elects to become a foreigner) and George (an unacknowledged insider who becomes a foreigner but longs for to become an insider). After the dust has settled, the art theft/drug crimes are according to form haphazardly and likewise somewhat unsatisfactorily wrapped up. Only the letter from the father, which does have full textual exposure in that we readers read the contents of the letter as Rosie reads the letter, addresses what remains of our desire for narrative closure. The disclosure of the father's prior sexual release, however, produces for Rosie and reader alike a kind of Kristevan shock associated with the abject

and built on the prohibition of incest to introduce a narrative of dis-closure. This affect explains Rosie's escape to leave Byron and Blodwyn to arrange Myfanwy's funeral. It does not so easily account for Rosie's parting declaration that she had "never had it so good" (if we are to read the declaration as "readable") or for the narrative logic that necessitates she have sex with her brother in the first place.

In *Powers of Horror,* Kristeva offers another reading, another logic of abjection that does correspond. After analyzing structuralist accounts, primarily Freud's, of the social's dual founding prohibitions of incest and murder, she turns away from Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*, *Totem and Taboo,* and his abiding interest in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* (*the King*), drawing on *Oedipus at Colonus* to propose a form of abjection rooted not in radical exclusions but one that is a "transgression due to a misreading of the Law" (88). Freud's models for the patriarchal social and the subject's manifestation within that social as *subject* are accounted for by the narrative of "the archaic father...killed by the conspiring sons who, later seized with a sense of guilt...end of restoring paternal authority, no longer as an arbitrary power but as a right. [T]hey establish at one stroke the sacred, exogamy, and society" (56). It is a familiar model of social order and communal narratives, and one in which the Law is readable and in which "woman" emerges an object for exchange, a tool maintaining symbolic meaning and knowledge. The alternative narrative, *Oedipus at Colonus*, proffers Kristeva a model of abjection that is understood through not-knowing and misreading that sanctifies the subject's, no longer the sovereign's (father's) death. Oedipus now blind, in exile and "on the threshold of death...says that he des not know the Law." "*I do not know the Law, the one who solves logical enigmas does not know the Law*," thus asserts Kristeva, "a first

estrangement is introduced between knowledge and Law, one that unbalances the sovereign" (87).

This model of symbolic unbalance, of unknowingness better suits the narrative logic of Gallie's novel and writing style overall. Rosie's estrangement, based on her unknowing act of incest, cannot reestablish the sacred father any more than his letter which claims her brother and exposes her incestuous act can either reinstate or (re)inaugurate *his* order. Akin to Kristeva's reading of the symbolic import of Oedipus' second abjection as a "flaw in knowledge" that ultimately is "for the benefit of others, of foreigners," Rosie's misreading is a correlate and extension of her earlier reading to not know that likewise embraces and escapes into foreignness, producing a strangely promiscuous narrative and image of mobile female subject.

More often than not promiscuity brings to mind notions of casual sex and a corresponding indiscriminancy or lack of judgment about sexual liaisons that transgress patriarchy's regulation of sexual reproduction. While not always a rejection of patriarchal reproductive imperatives, for the clichéd sowing of oats would seem to sanction sexual promiscuity as training for men prior to marriage—if generally in a wink-wink, nudge-nudge fashion—female promiscuity specifically subverts patriarchy's regulation of women's bodies and sexuality to ensure and track the male's progeny. As with Gallie's novel, promiscuity offers a potential strategy for woman-writing-woman, a form of proliferation that puts at risk those patriarchal imperatives associated with the social and symbolic laws of the father that claims progeny and manifests in fantasies of meaning through narratives of coherence.

Perversely Foreign

All The Irish I Know

Oh Sullivan! Oh Keefe!
Oh Sharkey!
Mc Namee Siobhan
Mcguire.
Nail Erin banshee
begorrah?
Elish ni gwivnamacort,
Kavanagh!

Healy Mcliamurphy.
Dermot durcan, Healy!
Oh Sullivan, Oh Keefe,
Oh Sharkey!
Leprechaun begorrah!

All The Hindi I Know

Acha
Chalo
Aap ke naam kya hai?
Bayti bayta,
Meera naam Shani hai.

Dhadi Dhada,
Nahi
Hai

Shani Mootoo, *The Predicament of Or*

Born in Ireland, raised in Trinidad, and currently residing between New York and Toronto, Shani Mootoo once claimed in an interview that the "last thing" she wants "to be known as is an Indo-Trinidadian-Irish-Canadian-lesbian writer" (*Canadian Literature*). It is arguably less the label "writer" that Mootoo rejects—although she did start out and continues to work as a visual artist and video/filmmaker—but it is likely the hyphenated list of race/ethnic/national/sexed modifiers she disclaims since they veer toward ascribing her an "identity" rooted in or routed through the very categories of difference her writing, filmmaking, and visual art challenges.[68] This is not to say that Mootoo or her work is "label-free" but to stress that her work is concerned with how mobile characters negotiate

[68] Mootoo has been similarly reluctant to label/identify her overtly "queer" characters. For instance, she is most well-known for her novel, *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1997), which is a story of healing and love featuring a cross-dressing, perhaps "trans" and homosexual, male (although his sex/sexuality is never firmly established) narrator, Tyler, who befriends an elderly and seemingly psychically broken woman. In interviews about the Tyler's sexuality, Mootoo has been circumspect and unwilling to label Tyler as transsexual, homosexual, transvestite, and so forth, preferring instead to allow Tyler's sexuality to remain unconfined by labels and distanced from the imperatives of identity politics that produce taxonomies of non-heteronormative classification in relation to heteronormativity.

a sense of self (in)difference(s) rather than with how such characters might represent a group/self rooted in difference. Similar to the other literary artists and theorists of this dissertation, Mootoo strategically destabilizes and, as in her interview, rejects labels of cultural, national and sexual difference to identify her and/or her work. For example, one of Rosi Braidotti's own strategies has been to hyphenate herself excessively not only terms of race/ethnicity/nation/sex but also terms of political attitude and critical approaches that de-scribe her international background and mobile thinking. She then recombines and reformulates her descriptors so that they cannot become a singular, albeit hybridesque, moniker of her scholarly voice or classificatory tactic for assigning her an "identity" position. Braidotti is thus only contextually a "whitened Italo-Australian, Franco-Dutch feminist postructuralist," who speaks "Franglais," "New Yorkese Parisian patois, 'Dutch-lish" and so forth ("Difference" and *Nomadic Subjects* 10).[69] For Braidotti, parodic hybridity is a strategy of becoming; it performs nomadism, ever changing, and her label-lists affectively challenge and resist the unifying, naming, and legitimizing imperatives of patriarchy and nation.

Mootoo, however, displays a greater mistrust of the hyphenated identity list that is reminiscent of Gerry Smyth's caution in his essay "The Politics of Hybridity" that the hybrid subject (the hyphenated subject in popular formulations) is easily if not inevitably recuperated into binary structures in support of existing structures of power.[70] In other

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[69] In writing of her own experiences as a nomadic polyglot in *Nomadic Subjects*, Braidotti hybridizes language: "I subsequently [during her doctoral studies in Paris] moved in and out of Italian, French, and the English language—in its British, Australian, American, and other variations—not in straight lines, but rather by an infinitely shifting scale of degrees of hybridization. Even when I decided to settle for English as my main vehicle of expression, it only resulted in a web of hyphenated English dialects" (10).

[70] Smyth cautions that "hybridity" is a largely overdetermined and increasingly ineffective term and political project: "Functioning perhaps as 'discourse' did in the 1980s and 'ideology' in the 1970s, hybridity is all things to everyone and anyone—anyone who, either by desire or by fate, finds herself on the margins of institutionally organized power." Reading hybridity within a critical/institutional context,

words, the hybrid—what Homi Bhabha links to the "third space of enunciation" that destabilizes imperialist identity positions and power structures—slips into being simply another formulation of the multiple and incoherent Other in both popular and critical discourses. The hyphenated and hybrid subject is easily recast within the very binary imperatives and structures it ostensibly deconstructs—renaming without restructuring the binary landscape of socio-political power. Correspondent with Mootoo's evocation of identity labels to reject them in her interview, her fiction tends to formulate "otherness" and then to pitch her mobile (geo-sexual-cultural) characters as something eccentrically Other, as migrants of and strangers in language. Her fashioning of self and woman, while not far off from Braidotti's nomadism, zeros in on and retools the figure of the "migrant" from a subject who moves to a specific location for a specific purpose to one whose destination is less clear and repeatedly or, more aptly, perversely mobile.

This final section of this chapter takes up Kristeva's third limit to acceptable strangeness—the unknowing speaker of a foreign language—and pulls on additional threads of strange desire and transgressive sexuality previously addressed Jakobsdóttir's and Gallie's novels. As Mootoo's interview comment alludes, her fiction is broadly invested in recrafting representations of cultural and sexual otherness often by aligning geographic mobility to symbolic transgressions of the hetero/normative. In her collection, *The Predicament of Or* (2001), from which the epigraphic poems come, and her short story "The Upside-Downness of the World" from her *Out on Main Street* collection (1993), the perversity and modes of unknowingness that are typical of Mootoo's thematics and style do, however, create an irresolvable tension in her work that reveals

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Smyth notes that "although it is a typical tactic within colonial 'reverse discourses,' hybridity is also hegemonically recuperable, easily absorbed by those with an interest in denying the validity of a coherent discourse of resistance" (43, 54).

desires to pitch the self "outside" of heteronormative and phallic signification while invariably relying upon those same structures to speak the self in opposition. Signifying tensions represent Mootoo's crafting of the perverse to shape woman as something strangely other than Other. Teresa de Lauretis' reading of perversity and the lesbian fetish in *The Practice of Love* is appropriate to this reading of not-knowingness and cultural fetishism in Mootoo's work as it discloses a way of revealing such strange otherness to be a formation of perverse and mobile desire.

Working within Freud's theorization of sexuality, de Lauretis locates the perverse as a function, not a distortion or a "negative side," of sexuality. Reading Freud's founding theories of the human psyche back through his clinical work with psychoneuroses, she argues, "In this respect, the 'normal' is conceived only by approximation, is more a projection than an actual state of being, while perversion and neurosis (a repressed form of perversion) are the actual form and contents of sexuality" (xii). She continues, "...Freud's theory contains or implies, if by negation and ambiguity, a notion of perverse desire where perverse means not pathological but rather non-heterosexual or non-normatively heterosexual (xiii). Such perversions as fetishism, which in a Freudian scaffold is a diversion of sexual instinct away from an appropriate object (genitalia/phallus) for an appropriate sexual aim (intercourse/reproduction) to an non-reproductive object (hair, clothing, feet, etc.) might be re-read as productive sites for analyzing non-normative sexual desires as crucial to the workings of sexuality proper and the psyche in general. Elaborating a "model of perverse desire" attuned to lesbian desire and sexuality, de Lauretis draws upon Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutiot's "Fetishism and Storytelling," who read fetishism as mobilizing desire (shifting the singular primacy of

phallus-directed desire) in so far as the "son's" initial disavowal of the mother's castration (lack of penis)—essential to the fetishist's redirected desire and in a Freudian framework may "re-place" but keeps the penis/phallus as central to his desire—is also a recognition that the phallic object of desire "'was never anywhere'" to begin with and, thus, "'derange[s] his [Freud's] *system of desiring*' even as far as 'deconstructing and mobilizing the self'" (225).[71]

This configuration of fetishism/perverse desire, which acknowledges the site of woman not only as lack but more importantly as a "never anywhere" of the penis, is provocative and aligns with the absence, the "never anywhere" of the *sign*. In the context of Mootoo's writing, while as mentioned generally includes stories of non-heteronormative and migrant characters, her fiction is often preoccupied with meta-narrative thematics that align figurations of the sexuality with the socio-linguist and cultural concerns of the (im)migrant. In this way, her writing also picks up on Kristeva's differently invested commentary on fetishism and language. In *Powers of Horror*, she muses on the relationship between the "unnamable" and fear turned phobia in Freud's case-study of Little Hans:

> It is perhaps unavoidable that, when a subject confronts the factitiousness of object relation, when he stands at the place of the want that founds it, the fetish becomes a life preserver, temporary and slippery,

[71] De Lauretis's summary of fetishism in a Freudian frame is worth noting: "In the accepted or clinical view of fetishism, the perversion is related to the subject's disavowal of the mother's castration, which occurs by a splitting of the ego as a defense from the threat of castration. Disavowal implies a contradiction, a double or split belief: on the one hand the recognition that the mother does not have a penis as the father does; and yet, on the other hand, the refusal to acknowledge that absence of the penis in the mother. As a result of the disavowal, the subject's desire is metyonymically displaced, diverted onto another object or part of the body, clothing, hair, etc.—which acts as a substitute (Freud says) for the missing maternal penis" (223). According to such definition of fetishism de Lauretis notes, "women" who do not ever have the penis and thus do not fear castration cannot be fetishists.

> but nonetheless indispensable. But is not exactly language our ultimate and inseparable fetish? And language, precisely, is based on fetishist denial ('I know that, but just the same,' 'the sign is not the thing, but just the same,' etc.) and defines us in our essence as speaking beings. Because of its founding status, the fetishism of 'language; is perhaps the only one that is unanalyzable. (37)

Between de Lauretis' Freudian reading of fetish as something that is a function of the sexual—if simply outside of sexuality's norming institutions—that is itself "sign" and Kristeva's claim, while working the tensions within a Freudian framework, marks language as the ultimate fetish, Mootoo exposes the perverse desires of mobile subjects to want to craft an image of self and relationship to others eccentric to the norm.

Mootoo consistently writes about the non-heterosexual and non-dominant, her strategy to mobilize her subject characterizations, to migrate desire away from such phallic engendered notions as authenticity (cultural, ethnic, sexual-identity) and the unitary subject/text to the less secure gaps and meaning slippages of language itself. This strategy is made explicit in her poetry. In *The Predicament of Or*, the *migrant* is characterized as being at odds with the taxonomies of sex/racial/ethnic difference, a characterization manifesting through assertions of becoming foreign in/to language(s). The title, *The Predicament of Or*, indicates the collection's negotiation of binary categories of difference (the categories produced by "or")—man/woman, subject/other, us/them—through which her eccentric and mobile characters neither operate nor "position" themselves. Offering the figure of the migrant as a privileged term for self and relationship with others, Mootoo's call to migrancy (geographic, literary, self) in some

ways resembles Hélène Cixous' promotion of *arrivance*. According to Mootoo's poem "Mantra for Migrants," the migrant is "Always becoming, will never be/Always arriving, must never land" (81). If *arrivance* conveys Cixous' strategy to write herself and women elsewhere to feminine exile, migrancy offers Mootoo a perverse and resistant trope for self and writing that is not quite elsewhere but is eccentrically foreign to exile's Others. In the "Mantra for Migrants," the verbals, "becoming" and "arriving," couple with the negation of their causal end-points, "will never be" and "must never land." This, the poem's refrain, already structurally multiple (a mantra within the mantra), doubles migrant imperatives, repeating via an inter-line negation that simultaneously recuperates in order to deny the fixities of *being* and *landing*—producers of *or* binaries. Mootoo's migrant jostles through opposition, "between back home and home unfathomable, is me," and overtly challenges identity discourses and imperatives, particularly those of the nation state, reframing them to speak of a mobile subjectivity. The final stanza reads, "I pledge citizenship, unerring/ Loyalty, to this State of Migrancy" (81).

Her "All the Irish"/"Hindi I Know" poems are similarly resistant in that they are not what they purport to be. Their titles suggest each poem contains a comprehensive account, the "all" of the narrator's Irish and Hindi vocabulary and the "I's" complete knowledge of an-other language. They are suggestive of, but not quite, the voice of a school-aged child who excitedly lists his/her new "foreign" vocabulary to demonstrate a base knowledge and, thus, is an atonal misshaping of the knowing subject who makes progress in and desires to master language and self. The poems' titles instead limit and seemingly finalize the narrator's knowledge stating defiantly, *this is it; this is all I know.* Each poem's body, however, calls our attention to the strikingly improper, nonsensical

(Irish) and conversational slang (Hindi) collection of the *I*'s knowledge. Both poems' main theme of (re)naming—"Oh, Sullivan" and "Mcnamee Siobhan" are, for instance, less vocabulary and more a bastardization of surnames to craft a list of faux-apostrophes and humorous bursts of family names and stereotyped images of Irishness—leprechauns, begorrah (by God)!

The "Irish" more so than the "Hindi" poem is a readerly poem, not so much in the Barthean sense of readerly, but in its humor, its nonsensical play with names to perform a lack of knowledge that displaces the formality of the surname, the marker of patriarchy into the comic hyperbole of the apostrophe. Thus, O'Sullivan—literally Of Sullivan—becomes an apostrophic "Oh, Sullivan." Such word-play, however is one caught by the eye on the page not by the ear tuned to the word/accent, which suggests an alternative framing of dialect and orality often associated with both her fiction and the larger category of "contemporary Caribbean women's writing" into which critics and publishers tend to place her fiction.

In contrast, the "Hindi" poem appears to be a more direct listing of foreign language knowledge, containing such conversational and introductory phrases as "Aap ke naam kya hai?" (*What is your name?*) and "Meera naam Shani hai" (*My name is Shani*). While such words and phrases might be found in Hindi instructional primers, other words such as Acha (*Okay*) and Chalo (*Let's go*) are Hindi slang and less likely to be found, if at all, in formal dictionaries and instruction.[72] Mootoo's appreciation of and incorporation of slang as literary strategy of estrangement will be discussed further in the context of her short story "The Upside-Downness of the World," but in the context of her

[72] I must thank Krishna Shrestha and Rituparna Mitra for their assistance in the translation of "All the Hindi I Know" and for sharing their knowledge of formal and informal Hindi.

"Hindi" poem, the opening of "Acha" (*Okay*) and closing of "Hai" (*Is*) contour the poem's body to improper forms of Hindi and frame a list of phrases about the naming of "I" and the casual, perhaps intimate, forms for parents and grandparents as a decidedly informal relationships.

These poems in particular confront the "Irish-" and "Indo-" markers oft ascribed to Mootoo as a kind of inside joke, playing upon both Mootoo's biography and women-oriented politic. We cannot fully trust the titular claims to completeness (All) anymore than we understand "Oh, Sullivan" to be another version of "O'Sullivan" proper. It is not a version of the Same or the masculine reflecting the masculine. Mootoo's lyrical lists function as a disclaimer of this migrant's "I" having special cultural insights and language knowledge that her biography may suggest. And yet, Mootoo's writing does often employ a range of languages and in particular Caribbean-dialects or *creole* to speak migrancy. Elsewhere in Mootoo's fiction, for instance, the multilingual migrant is often made narrator/protagonist, as in "Out on Main Street," a story written primarily in an East-West-Indo-Trinidadian-working-class dialect in which a young immigrant negotiates her out(ed)ness in relation to her in-the-closet girlfriend and her own use of non-standard Hindi in a visibly and linguistically heteronormative East-Indian immigrant enclave:

> Yuh know, one time a fella from India who living up here call me a bastardized Indian because I didn't know Hindi. And now look at dis, nah! De thing is: all a we in Trinidad is cultural bastards, Janet, all a we. *Toutes bagailles!* Chinese people, Black people, White people. Syrian. Lebanese. I looking forward to de day I find out dat place inside me where I am nothing else but Trinidadian, whatever dat could turn out to be (52).

In having the narrator claim a 'bastard' status—here both a marker of cultural relationships and patriarchial discourse—Mootoo makes explicit the underlying assumption of cultural and racial purity that draws upon the same phallocentric language system and patriarchal social orders informing the name-of-the-father. And yet, the narrator's experience of cultural and sexual displacement informs the narrator's desire to "find out dat place inside me where I am nothing else but Trinidadian, whatever dat could turn out to be," suggesting a displacement of the site of meaning, a kind of mobilization of desire based in the "never anywhere" of Trinidad as sign.

Mootoo's writing indicates a fascination with what Isabel Hoving, in *In Praise of New Travelers,* notes is a range of "english(s)" spoken and written in/of the Caribbean that both contribute to a diverse, shifting *creole* characterization of place and self according to racial and class differences.[73] Mootoo's interest, however, deviates from Hoving's emphasis on Black Caribbean Creole women's writing in that Mootoo employs multiple englishes and her linguistic innovation is relevant to the function of desire and the intersections between the desire and language that speak a perverse and defiant "migrancy" rather than of the troping (un)belongingness.

Women who prefer estrangement is common thematic and mode of characterization in Mootoo's short stories of *Out on Main Street* (1993). The collection features mobile female protagonists, often lesbians, who live perversely and find solace

[73] Hoving's interest is in representations of nation, (post)coloniality, and voice in Caribbean women's literature in which Creole is a common, although not defining, feature of Caribbean writing. Hoving warns readers of conflating Caribbean writing with Creole: "let us not make the mistake of assuming that all Caribbean writing, or Caribbean migrant writing, is characterized by a Creole or an oral aesthetics. Nevertheless, all Caribbean women writers can be seen to relate to the gendered and ethnic tensions between the more Standard English and the more Creole registers in the Creole continuum, even if their works do not engage as explicitly and radically with the issues of orality and Creole as Merle Collin's' *Angel* does (156).

in foreignness. For instance in "Garden of Her Own,"[74] Vijai, an isolated wife and english-speaking Caribbean immigrant to Vancouver, occasionally seeks solace in French television programs as she sets about planting a balcony garden of her own. "Something about listening to a language that she does not understand comforts her, gives her companionship in a place where she feels like a foreigner" (23). The alienated positions of Mootoo's female characters are often multiple as in the case of Vijia (woman/wife/immigrant/english speaker) and are productive convergences of foreignness that mark the strange relationship between what one speaks, what one knows, and what others presume one should know. Alternating settings between North American cities (often Canadian) and East-West-Indian communities in the Caribbean (often Trinidad), the majority of these stories feature (im)migrants and explore issues of language and transnational mobility characteristic of the migrant subjects of her later novels and poetry. Akin to the exilic moves discussed in previous chapters, the stories' protagonists/narrators have a tendency to "look back" to acknowledge and embrace a version of sex/gendered and cultural "otherness" that warps their sense of difference away from the "authenticities" common to representations of diasporic communities and identities.

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[74] In "Garden of Her Own," Vijai is a new wife and recently-arrived Caribbean immigrant in Vancouver. Her dislocation from her Caribbean home and family only enhances her estrangement from her hard-working and emotionally catatonic husband. She longs for the kind of intimacy she imagines her parents shared and the laughter of her childhood, but instead her husband rapes rather than woos, maintains silence in the house, and leaves her money for groceries as if she was a prostitute. Recalling her mother's apparent pleasure in serving a husband, Vijai finds herself trapped by the same desires and routines, wondering, " Mama, why did you wait to eat?....Why did you show me this, Mama? I must not nag" (15). Embarrased to tell her family how different her life is from what they imagine is an exciting, rich life in Canada, she remains displaced, out of step with their imagination and yet equally out of place in Canada. Her foreignness and estrangement are rooted, however, in her role as wife so that her cultural foreignness is a supplement to the foreignness of being a woman.

While Vijia's comfort in the foreign simultaneously recalls and displaces exilic *elsewhereness*, the unnamed female narrator of Mootoo's closing story of *Out on Main Street*, "Upside-Downness of the World," remembers the power of linguistic play to spark the innovative unknowing speech of the female migrant. "The Upside-Downness of the World" could just as easily have been titled "the upside-downness of the *word*" given its a memoir-like approach to a (im)migrant's woman's relationship to language tutoring, englishes, Hindi and the perverse desires (hers and others) that surface in learning an-other language. Overall, she recounts snippets of childhood memories in which she learned the "Queen's English" in Trinidad and her more recent memories of learning of "India" in Vancouver.

Like most all of Mootoo's primary characters, "knowing" language does not necessarily comfort the narrator; rather it carries a potential danger, a trap of signification and discomforting enclosure. This is a contrast to what Kristeva notes in Freud's case-study of Little Hans, whose phobia of horses reveals a fear of the unsignified, the unnamed, and consequently a failure of the paternal (his father's) function in the household. In the context of Mootoo's story, the narrator remembers the power of language both to reinforce the racial and class differences her family and hired-help and to provide a new vocabulary for bickering among sisters. In her English etiquette and language lessons as a young girl with her sister in Trinidad, she recalls turning the language of grammar into weapons and curses wherein the two sisters humorously employ the arbitrariness of the signifier to craft verbal slings and arrows for their rivalry. Signification becomes ancillary to their speaking and play:

> Boyie [the family chauffer] never crossed the gate; he was afraid that it would close behind him, trapping him, subjecting him to synonyms, antonyms, onomatopoeia and other words he heard us hurling at each other as if they were ultimate insults.
>
> "You synonym!"
>
> "Do you want to get subjunctived?"
>
> "Onomatopoeia sme-ell, onomatopoeia sme-ell."
>
> "No they don't. You do. You smell." (107)

The sisters' linguistic "hurling" loosely replicates the potential in language, as Kristeva points out, for it to be made "new" through innovative, illogical placements and usages. In the passage above, syntactic and grammatical orders are recognizably "English," and while their logic of word (part of speech) placement is standard, the girls' spewing of the specialized terminology of the rhetorician, the science-imbued discourse of literary form and studies surfaces as an ironic version of Kristeva's cursing foreigner. Their casual "hurling" reformulates Kristeva's foreigner who speaks unwittingly and whose first recourse is to invectives, crassness, and slang rather than innovation. To read this passage as innovative, it cannot simply be read as a depiction of two young Caribbean girl's recalcitrant entry into a privileged discourse—although, it may encourage such a reading of resistance. In their improper usage of a quite proper language or, more aptly, the meta-language of the proper, the sisters instead maintain syntactic order to reveal the perverse in the proper.

The girls' desire to turn specialized terminology into labels, threats, and denotative categories for one another also mimics the very function of the subjunctive

case, the grammatical carrier of wishes and desires. Their verbal hurling, however, escapes the denotative mark and spirals as it does with the "want" the threat to make meaning hurt. Certainly, the irony of their word play lies in the unwittingly celebration of connotation and the proximity of meaning rather than the clarity of definition and denotative meaning. To be a synonym, contrary to the declarative umph of "You [are a] synonym," only approximates meaning through a relationship to a word implying the existence of other words with similar meanings. Even if we reread the implied verbage as definitional, "'*You*' [is a] synonym," the invariable absenting of a referent, of who "you" might be a synonym for performs the second-person pronoun always to be a replacement for an absence. Not unlike our *unnamed* narrator who endeavors to recall and write a word that was once too perverse to be spoken.

The structure of the story, however, with its adult narrator who reflects on her past controls the girls' speech, and in this way, we trust her to be the knowing subject, the non-foreigner who now knows what her younger self did not. She is no longer the same cursing foreigner of English proper. Her inclusion of rhetorical terms for likeness, "synonym," and the verb case for desire, "the subjunctive," and the merging of sound with concept, onomatopoeia, directs us to the narrator's principle concerns and questions: What does it mean to be like others? To what degree does she want to be what others desire her to be? What is the relationship between English and Hindi to the narrator's sense of self? And, if she sounds like an Indian will that make her into the Indian that her grandmother and her Canadian friends and family desire her to be?

Such underlying questions are focused through the narrator's record of the effects of two primary sets of relationships on her sense of belonging to and desire for the

foreign—her English tutor in the Caribbean and her "India" teachers/friends in Canada. Of the former, the narrator describes sitting down to write her story but cannot do so without first recalling/writing the trauma of once having spoken perversely. "I was just about to type the word with which I would launch into my story, but that word has a way of evoking a memory of the attack of a slender 18" x 1½ " length of wood sprung thwaaak!..against a thinly-covered row of bones, and my knuckles remember the ache...decommissioning my fingers. A simple, overused word" (106). Gradually, after writing bits and pieces of her childhood English tutorials with Mrs. Ramsay, the owner and wielder of a ruler (appropriately named Rudyard), the narrator eases into writing about her linguistic offense. "I answered some command or other with the word—are you ready for it?—with the word *okay*" (110). Mrs. Ramsay fumes that *okay* is the worst kind of slang, "an Americanism [from] that history-less upstart, a further butchering of our Oxford!....[A] meaningless utterance" (110). The tutor's abuse, however, reveals both "okay" to be anything but "meaningless," making it a fundamental marker of cultural difference as well as revealing her own fear that words, any word, may be just that—meaningless.

As additional punishment she requires that the narrator look up "slang" in the dictionary to understand *okay*'s indecency. It is a diversion of the logic through which Mrs. Ramsay directs the narrator away from looking at *okay* and redirects the narrator's gaze to the term's linguistic category, *okay*'s grammatical category—*slang*. Unfortunately for Mrs. Ramsay, her punishment fails to recontain the indecency and arbitrariness already within English. Rather than chastening or shaming the narrator, she finds the dictionary's list of synonyms captivating. They excite her with their perverse

potential, exposing the "*nonstandard...subculture...arbitrary...ephemeral...coinages... spontaneity... peculiar...raciness*" (110). This slide of signification announces a radical range and slipperiness within categories of difference such that what the girl had though was a unitary and single language of Whiteness. Of an elite Indo-Trinidadian class, she had presumed a kind of racial/ethnic/class unity among English-speaking whites, a naturalized unity between skin and language, not available to Others, regardless of class status. "White," slang announces to her, "is not all the same" (111). What was once a monolithic category of sameness and standards now includes its own difference, its own others, marked by the *arbitrary* and *ephemeral* rather than the fixed, by the *peculiar* and *racy* rather than the pure and proper. *Acha...Hai*—Okay...Is. In this way, Mrs. Ramsay's proper English becomes to the narrator akin to Ramsay's prized decorative plate commemorating the Queen's coronation, a kind of fetish. Accordingly, Mrs. Ramsay diverts her fear of the slipperiness and lack of meaning in language to what seem to be more secure icons (meanings) of Englishness, "Oxford" standards and the Queen's image.

The narrator's pleasure in the nonstandard directs her to North America instead of England. "Early in life I already displayed the trait of championing the underdog," she writes, "and so much better if the underdog were also 'Other'...North America became the 'Other' underdog for me. When it came time for me to go abroad for further education, this is where I ended up, to the veritable irritation of my parents" (111). Unlike Vijai of "A Garden of Her Own," the narrator describes her experiences in North America as pleasurable, if occasionally heart-breaking, a coming out and into a lesbian community, a new "family" with international potential (113). She is, however, not

interested in giving us the particulars of her coming out or many details of her great love affair and recent break up with Zahara—whose Zairean and Muslim background the narrator muses ironically legitimizes her purchase of North African music to carry her through the self-indulgent mourning that invariably follows breaking up. "Of course I debated questions of exoticization and exploitation by the World Beat craze, but always I assuaged my conscience with the thought that Zahara is Muslim and from Zaire, close enough to Sudan, and since I had bedded with her I had some right to this music as a balm for my sick heart. I was misguided perhaps, but those who are losers in love usually are" (112). In such descriptions of her desire for the "underdog" and her unease with and rationalizations of cultural consumption, we glimpse the narrator's own fetish—one that she cannot quite sort out as easily as those of Mrs. Ramsay.

Aside from losing at love, she is out sexually and aware politically. That she has "arrived" in Canada, and that she is "okay" generate a naturalized setting against which her desires to be something other than the "authentic Indian" that new family of women desire her to be play out. If in Trinidad she perceives Mrs. Ramsay's English fetish, in Canada she faces the upside-downness of the colonial proper, revealing ever more of her own and her friends' "taste for 'Other'" (112). "India was not Other enough for me," she remembers, "India was at home in Trinidad" (111). But in Canada, even in her preferred James Dean aesthetic of jeans, white t-shirts and cropped hair, which to her scream "lesbian" and by extension signify her belonging to an international family of women-oriented-women, she discovers she is pegged initially as "Indian," not simply "lesbian," within that very same community. In her desire for the underdog, she refused her grandmother's tutorials and went to North America ignorant of Indian cooking, language,

fashion, and all the general knowledge and customs that would help her be *synonymous* or correspond with her ethnic label. "The only Indian words I know are those on the menus in Indian restaurants and in my very own *Indian Cookery by Mrs. Balbir Singh*," she explains. "From the first day when I arrived in Canada people would say, 'Oh, great! You can teach me to cook Indian food...'. But I didn't know....Instead of disappointing people before I even got a chance to make any friends, I went out a bought that cookbook" (117). This is another version of the "All the Irish"/"Hindi I Know" poems, but one strengthened by the narrator's already supplied cultural and linguistic background, which emphasizes not only the narrator's perverse resistances to being "Indian," whatever that may be, but also the desires and assumptions of "Canadians" to turn an Trinidadian immigrant with a India-born grandmother into an "Indian."

Of the two sets of relationships that dominate the narrator's story, the second key relationship is with Meghan and Virginia, a Canadian couple who met in India and fell in love with each other and all things Indian. They speak Hindi to each other, attend temple (Hari Krishna style) attired in perfectly folded saris, and they take on the narrator as a pupil, a "cultural orphan" to teach her about "her culture" (116). As the ultimate sign of their commitment to each other and in the logic of India-love, they go so far as to move their household from Toronto to Vancouver so that they might be "even closer to India," a comical metaphor for "India's" capacity to provide a distant but common direction for their love. Their relationship with the narrator, like the narrator's relationship with Mrs. Ramsay, is based on a series of strange instructional encounters infused with all of the power dynamics of master/student, colonizer/colonized and through which the narrator consistently learns something other than the designed lesson.

In the context of Mootoo's tale, the term "Other" as with "English" and "White" houses a variety of differences but as label-made-fetish represents a desire for the authentic and true signification. Mootoo's linguistic play upon English proper and its companion Indian authenticity produces a perverse coupling that refracts her narrative through images of cultural authenticity made fetish. Like her "All the Irish"/"Hindi I Know" poems, the story can be quite wryly humorous, and analogous to a joke it closes with a punch-line in the form of a letter from the narrator's mother in Trinidad. In the letter, her mother reports Mrs. Ramsay's death and describes the narrator's family's endeavors to see that the funeral and burial were in accordance with Mrs. Ramsay's wishes. The English tutor's death, however, does not resolve the underlying tensions in and questions of the narrative. It does not wrap up the narrator's meditations on language, difference, and knowledge or her own desire for the underdog. The old guard, the protector of cultural and linguistic (English) purity and socio-economic elitism will continue on in its different variation in Megan and Valerie who desire Indianness to signify that their India and love is real. The letter of Mrs. Ramsay's death rather delivers a punch line. "After several telegrams back and froth, Papa found George [Mrs. Ramsay's nephew] living in Philadelphia, U.S.A. with his new bride, an Indian woman from East Africa...So her body was sent to him there...we sincerely hope this arrangement was okay" (122). Ironically, the dead Mrs. Ramsay becomes the migrant, the mobile subject and the only "family" to attend to her burial are her non-English neighbors who sincerely hope Mrs. Ramsay finds their efforts on her behalf "*okay*" (122). The phrase "rolling over in her grave" comes to mind.

By triangulating the desire for cultural authenticity—Ramsay's English fetish, Meghan and Valerie's Indian fetish, the narrator's underdog fetish—Mootoo's story displaces fetishism from the margins of the improper to a function of the proper and normative, proposing that fetishism as the generative force behind cultural categories of difference. As with her poetry, the narrative jostles readers between multiple sites and expressions of fetishism—from the politically correct (Meghan and Valerie) to the racist (Ramsay) to the strangely other (narrator). In this context, the strange eruptions of drive and desire that make the subject/text foreign are channeled into configuring a contemplative and confessional narrator who desires the fetish, to have something other than Other, rather than have authentic knowledge. Such a configuration positions the migrant woman narrator as eccentric to the phallic impulses of/for knowing, mastering, naming.

CHAPTER 6

NOMADIC MOVES: TOO MANY PASSPORTS

> *[N]omadic consciousness consists in not taking any kind of identity as permanent. The nomad is only passing through; s/he makes those necessarily situated connections that can help her/him to survive, but s/he never takes on fully the limits of one national, fixed identity. The nomad has no passport—or has too many of them.*
>
> Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*

> *And yet, alongside the nomadic freedom that we all dream of, we are constantly confronted with the brute facts of how territoriality affects lives—whether it takes the form of simple (or not-so-simple) border crossings, ethnic conflict land ownership disputes or the injustices suffered by refugees and migrant labourers. Our world is flooded with images showing that in the age of globalism a nomadic existence is not necessarily something to aspire to. It is a miserable plight to be a postmodern nomad, to be homeless, wandering, a refugee, following not a dream of disembodied bliss but a slim hope for survival. Indeed the mould that casts mobility so inextricably with struggles for survival...has rendered all but meaningless what was once an important conceptual tool in making sense of social forms tied to mobile production.*
>
> John K. Noyes, "Nomadism, Nomadology, Postcolonialsim"

The nomad, more so than any other figure, proliferates in the chapters of this dissertation. She is Amy and Ash's continual movement through geo-cultural spaces without laying claim to national identity; she is Cyn's and Elizete's relinquishment of a homeland for self-definition. And as textual strategy, she is Kristjana Gunnars' shape-shifting writer in/of the novel; she is Vivienne Dick's reframed documentary; and she is the metaperformance of sexual difference in Marina Carr's *Low in the Dark* that forces us to question what we thought we knew about Irish drama and about the character of gender. However, she is also a figure of controversy in the critical terrains of postcolonial, transnational, and the newly-recognized nation-inflected literary and cultural studies fields--Irish, Scottish, Caribbean and the like. Caught up in the debates over the status of

the subject, the nature of representation, and the politics of identity, the nomad tends to be, depending on the critic, either valued as metaphor for the radical rethinking of subjectivity and political activism or condemned as an extension of Western imperialism and ramped up global capitalism.

Brought to the critical fore as a revolutionary anti-state, anti-capitalist figure in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *Thousand Plateaus* (1980), the nomad proposed a savvy militant intellectualism for the *anti-*____ (fill in dominant socio-political or economic order here). Suggesting mobility and a disregard for both conceptual and political borders, nomadism garnered favor among theorists working to move beyond structuralism's interest in theorizing linguistic, cultural, and political orders toward the murky and slippery terrains of (re)signification associated with the "post." Noyes notes that Jean Baudrillard's and Jacques Derrida's poststructuralisms, Edward Said's postcolonialism, and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's postMarxism at some point incorporate the figure of the nomad to disrupt the binaries ordering their respective fields, both in relation and prior to Deleuze and Guattari's nomadology.[75] By and large, the nomad emerged the metaphor for mobile characteristics that make subjectivity and textual meaning unassimilable to national and territorial allegiances, counteractive to industrial capitalism's wage-labor forces, and a figural[76] for the shiftiness of signification

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[75] Noyes references: Jean Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault*, New York: Semiotext(e), 1977.; Geoffrey Bennington. *Legislation: The Politics of Deconstruction.* New York: Verso. 1994; Jacques Derrida, *L' écriture et la difference,* Paris: Seuil. 1967; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri *Empire* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press 2000; and Edward Said *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf 1993.

[76] Braidotti uses the term *figural* to suggest thinking and consciousness (a philosophical tool/term) that shifts the focus from the more aesthetically attuned term *figurative*. "Alternative figurations consequently are figural modes of expressing affirmative ideas, thus displacing the vision of consciousness away from the phallogocentric mode: rhizomes, becomings, lines of escape express the fundamentally Nietzschean nomadism of Deleuze. He emphasizes in particular a general becoming-minority, or becoming nomad, or becoming-molecular. The minority marks a crossing or a trajectory; nothing happens at the center, for Deleuze: the heart of being is still, like the center of a nuclear reactor. But at the periphery there roam the

and linguistic meaning. In other words, the nomad refuses to settle in one place and does not "work," either literally or metaphorically, within "the system."

Over the last decade, while the nomad as a metaphor for radical politicization of the subject and its constituting cultural systems has been largely surpassed in critical discourse by the hybrid, migrant, and border- and transnational-subjects, Rosi Braidotti returned to Deleuze's theorizations of the nomad and concepts of "becoming," particularly the "becoming woman," to reinvigorate a much maligned and faltering international, but not universal, feminism. In the decades proceeding from the second-wave of feminism and the turn toward a feminism of self-reflexivity and open acknowledgment of vast differences among women (including debates about whether or not the terms "woman" and "women" were useful, necessary or even meaningful), possibly only an anti-patriarchal agenda has remained the consistent feminist organizing principle. And yet, the *anti*— as *the* context of feminism sets itself in opposition to diverse expressions of patriarchy and phallogocentrism. For Braidotti, the work of a feminism that includes a resistance to the major categorical hierarchies of race, class, sex and gender must continue, *becoming* a shift in feminist consciousness that is shaped by mobility, flexibility and effusiveness instead of models of unity or female sameness. In this context, the figure of the nomad is less a metaphorical straightjacket denoting or reflecting a unitary woman, feminist or otherwise, than a metonym, a series of easily replaced and always excessive—although never complete—signifiers for diverse *women*. In this Deleuzean/Braidottian theorization, the *anti*—always gestures toward the anarchic and schizophrenic, for the purposes of discussing issues of subjectivity and gender, and

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youthful gangs of the new nomads: the horsemen and horsewomen of the postapocalypse" (*Nomadic Subjects,* 113).

yet, as John K. Noyes notes, this framing of nomad through an "anti" is easily cast as the negative image, an inversion, and, therefore, nomadism might be perceived as reinforcing binary representational structures when employed, deployed, and understood as a metaphor of "otherness" with mimetic or realist capacities.

At the heart of the critical debates about the value of nomad/ism as a critical approach, as Braidotti and Noyes suggest, lie questions concerning the nomad as representational matter and as a metaphor for identity.[77] One of the more vocal critics of travel metaphors in post/modern theoretical practices, Caren Kaplan explains the nomad's representational troubles thus: "Euro-American recourse to the metaphors of desert and nomad can never be innocent or separable from the dominant orientalist tropes in circulation throughout modernity" (66). For Kaplan, the strategic critical deployment of "nomad" is more often than not the extension by other means of a historic imperialism that appropriates the "other" to serve the colonizer's (postmodern masculine critic's) desires for self-reflection, a strategy that fails to acknowledge literal, perhaps "real," nomads and the material conditions that historically produced "nomad" as "other" in the first place.[78] Within her framework, the emancipatory or radically deconstructive processes (deterritorialization) affiliated with Deleuze and Guattari's nomad, whether of the text or of the subject, will always reproduce an imperialist and masculinist agenda at the moment of reconstruction (reterritorialization).

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[77] For instance, instance in 1993 *Yale French Studies* devoted two of its issues to discussions of the value of nomadism, exile and migrancy for the field of postcolonial studies. More recently, Routledge's journal *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* (2004) put together a special issue on "nomadism, nomadology and postcolonialism."

[78] I should note that Kaplan's work on nomadism is highly inconsistent and reaches back to the late-1980s when she initially embraced Deleuze and Guattari's deterritorialization to speak of lines of connection between an increasingly fragmented "feminism." See: "Deterritorializations: The Rewriting of Home and Exile in Feminist Discourse." *Cultural Critique* 6. (Spring) 1987: 187-198.

Kaplan's dual insistence that nomadism cannot subvert the binary orders of othering and that any "deterritorialization leads to reterritorialization" of the same binary vein seems to be a common critique of nomadism's rhetorical moves and supposed political bankruptcy. Or as Ikem Stanley Okoye points out in his analysis of contemporary urbanist film and architecture projects that employ nomadic imagery and (de)structuring techniques: "Things nomadic as metaphor and nomadology as an intellectual practice warring against both capital and the state serving its interests have both become absorbed, for example, into the advertising of major corporations" (181). The problem for critics such as Kaplan and Okoye centers on a politicized literality, the metaphorical capacity for the nomadic to be both recognizably literal and figurative enough to be appropriated to imperialist and capitalist causes as with the promotion of tourism. The colonizing wolf, according to Kaplan, has simply changed his clothes to hunt the same terrain, thus, "Deterritorialization is always reterritorialization, an increase of territory, an imperialization. The nomad serves as the site of this romanticized imaginary entry into the 'becoming minor' of deterritorialization" (89). Along similar lines, the utopian freedom that Noyes suggests is the ultimate feature of the nomad and what makes it particularly attractive to liberal scholars studying mobility emerges as a thinly veiled cover for a humanism already and repeatedly taken to task for its attendant racism and sexism.[79] Trapped within his own tropings of critical debate, Noyes' all encompassing "we" who "dream of disembodied bliss," however, appears something like the humorous and dismembered King of the Moon in *The Adventures of Baron*

[79] I should note that while John K. Noyes in his editorial essay on "Nomadism, Nomadology, Postcolonialism," initially focuses on the problems of using "nomadic" images and theories in postcolonial studies, he eventually asserts the viability of a modified Braidotti-kind of nomad figural—one that is understood through its specific material contexts and conditions.

Munchausen, whose head (image of Reason and stand-in for the royal "we") floats about ruling his kingdom and despairing over the irrational and base urges of his body.

This conception of the nomadic as a disembodied and imperialist figure, who is invariably masculine and universalized, differs drastically, however, from what we encounter in the kind of nomadism emerging out of the figures and narrative structures of mobile Atlantic Rim women writers who often produce literary art that takes up motifs, themes, and characterizations of mobile feminine subjects. In their work, the nomad is not a catchall for an unfettered subjectivity, free from social or linguistic constraints, nor a realistic representation of racial/ethnic/national identity. Instead, the nomad functions as a metonym of women in-process and in-transit of self-articulation and a strategic unmooring of a feminine subject from national matrices of myth, icon and realist narrative/history that perpetually inscribe and enlist *woman* in the cultural and sexual reproductive causes of patriarchy and the nation.

The nomadic moves found in such generically diverse Atlantic Rim works as Kristjana Gunnars' novel *The Prowler* (1989), Vivienne Dick's short film *Visibility Moderate* (1981), and Marina Carr's play *Low in the Dark* (1989) are metonymic expressions of a reterritorialization or reconstruction that does not necessarily, logically or progressively follow deterritorialization or deconstruction as a substitution for a lost conceptual territory a'la Kaplan. The language and narrative orders affecting feminine subjects in these texts are nomadic not by application but rather by proximity, a subject/ive generation that is about multiple relations that never fully constitute or identify the "female" protagonist. When focusing on the character of mobile female subjects, the inverse of the "deterritorialize to reterritorialize" appears more apt—

reterritorialization is the initial textual move, which lays the groundwork for the conceptual and systemic deterritorialization of/in the text. Accordingly, the adage of critics tethering poststructuralism to oppositional political causes and visions—"we deconstruct so that we might reconstruct"—might be reshaped to assert that "we (re)construct so that we might deconstruct." Since categories of sex and gender require continual reassertion and reestablishment to maintain binary difference and their very repetition exposes the unstable character of sex and gender difference, this reestablishment becomes the initial move of each text. Critical concerns often hinge on the end result or production value of deterritorialization as a textual strategy and political approach. If deterritorialization is the end result, the limit of nomadic writing, representation and thinking, then where is the new territory? Gunnars', Dick's, and Carr's work asserts, that, yes, deterritorialization is the limit, but one that is in continual process of experimentation with narrative and representation rather than in the production of a new territory—if nomads do not carry a single passport, why reiterate *the* nation?

Drawing together Gunnars' *The Prowler*, Dick's *Visibility:Moderate* and Carr's *Low in the Dark*—three texts produced in the 1980s—is in many ways an inadvertent periodization. Yet, this grouping is useful as a way to disrupt any strictly historic or progressive reading that might be made of the travel/subject figures discussed throughout this dissertation. Focusing on nomadism, therefore, cannot be read as the end-point for traveling figures/strategies in disrupting the masculine social imaginary any more than the double chapters on Enright's and Smith's turn-of-the-twenty-first-century novels in Chapter 1 & Deuce could be read as a precursor to Gunnar's novel, published more than a decade earlier. This arrangement addresses those critical discussions of mobile literary

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figurations attuned to modernist/postmodernist explorations of subjectivity (Grewal, Kaplan in particular) in which the organizing impulse is to impose a progressive, linear or historicized frame onto textual quality and aesthetics.

A focus on the increasing rapidity of movement of women post-1968 may or may not always correspond with an increased textual fragmentation or "experimentation" as Emma Donoghue's quite conventional and realist writing style points out. And, while the arrangement of my chapters on dominant figurations of self might suggest a movement from structuralism/modernism, with the double and exile, to figures more often associated with poststructuralism/postmodernism, my goal has been to draw out the figurations from the writing itself with little regard for their publication date or with little desire to assign them a place within larger critical categories. Rather, this arrangement of figures and publications works productively against historical impulses toward teleological arguments or reading, and, instead, aligns with and respects textual resistances to narrative and critical practices that have tended to exclude, marginalize women literary art/artists in the first place. Interestingly, Carr's rise as a popular representative for Irish *female* dramatists may be the exception—the "ghetto" is now golden. (We will also have to see what happens to Anne Enright's literary value and critical cache following her 2007 Booker Prize for *The Gathering*.)

The Prowler

> *In the metastory there are figurative prowlers looking for something. But there is very little for them to find...The prowler does not know he already has what is being sought.*
>
> Kristjana Gunnars, *The Prowler: A Novel* (section 110)

Kristjana Gunnars' *The Prowler: A Novel,* as its title indicates, employs the figure of a prowler as a reconstituting, reterritorializing motif to represent a woman writing about her past. This novel is a nomadic anti-story through its disruption of the cause/effect linearity that plots conventional personal narratives of memory. As a reterritorializing figure, the prowler is a masculine and composite figure that stands in for the reader and writer, a wanderer of stories who looks for "dialogue" and "threads" to make connections and piece together a whole story, a whole portrait, a whole picture (sections 74, 108, 111, 120). And while there is a subversive quality to Gunnars' prowler, who is an invader of personal spaces and private properties, the prowler relies on the rules that govern narrative and territory in order to be "the prowler." The prowler moves through places not his own and steals not goods, but rather looks about and touches another's things and perhaps places his body in another's favorite reading chair. This wandering figure suggests a perversity that is akin to that of the voyeur but without the voyeur's erotic othering. If the prowler's desire to move about in someone else's private space is criminal—breaking both capitalism's and civil law's protection of property—he is not necessarily partner to the nomad's anti-state, anti-nation, anti-narrative politics.

A complex allegorical figure, to be sure, the prowler personifies the writer/reader's desire for sedentary order, for someone else's home space to wander through as well as the perverse desire to not-belong to that order. Overtly masculine, occasionally threatening, he enters the novel through the narrator's childhood window. "My sister and I were alone, trying to sleep...Our parents had taken the train into Copenhagen for the evening. We lay in silence in the dark and heard the prowler

climbing onto the balcony. His shadow appeared on the wall, flanked by moonlight" (section 56). His dark image, his presence without being present, frightens but ultimately inspires the narrator to engage in her own prowling activities, which range from wandering through a neighbor's unoccupied home, to breaking her boarding school's rules so that she might read pilfered books in the library after hours, to piecing together puzzles and looking for "the point" in her self-portraits. Between these bodily and more intellectual activities, the narrator's prowling generates a particularly subversive notion about the nature of art, narrative and self-portraiture, "It was a long time before I understood that the point is an illusion. That portraits occur without center" (section 110).

The prowler is the stand-in for subversive writers but not the strategy; he is too necessary to the support of such regulatory orders as civil and phallic law. His subversion, a deviance rather than challenging order, reinforces the image of law's regulatory effects as necessary or, in the case of story, the desire for phallic regulatory order. As alternative to the moves of the prowler, the novel's narrative structure and representation of the feminine offers us a nomadic organization for feminine self-expression that resists narrative conventions reliant on national or ethnic identity motifs to order personal history. Akin to the list structures in *What Are You Like?* and *Like* that propose an alternative for a generative and feminine writing, *The Prowler* embraces the list as its principle narrative structure. Privileging the motility and interchangeability of sections, Gunnars' novel has no page numbers but instead contains 167 sections ranging from one sentence to a dozen or so paragraphs in length.

The self-reflexive narrator compares her history to a "deck of cards" that mimics how she remembers her past and encourages the reader to shuffle though the book and

read sections out of numeric order (section 81). The lack of page numbers assists in creating the affect of a non-progressive and writerly narrative. The novel reads as a series of epigraph-like paragraphs that both resist getting to "the point" and contain its own point, modeling the puzzle pieces of the narrator's self portrait. Gunnars' narrator offers us a puzzle-text, a version of both a decentered and excessively centered self: "[P]ortraits occur without center. In a puzzle every piece is its own center, and when compiled the work is either made up of entirely of centers or of no center at all" (section 110). A substitute for conventional narrative's reliance on plot and the logic of causality to create a story, Gunnars' list opens up to the reader, a woman's memory and meditations on writing, encouraging him/her to reorder, to exchange one passage for another, and to read a memory-based story differently.

Let's for the moment presume that our reading begins at Section 1. We wander through a personal list that begins with a description of a "him" not wanting her to "write this book" and closes with descriptions of the narrator's parents arriving in Iceland during World War II, escaping occupied Denmark. The text's wandering while ending with the arrival of the narrator's parents to a new country is not a conventional literary return to the migrant's homeland. With this historical "closing," we appear to be at a beginning, the arrival of a man and woman to a new home, a narrative return to origins that was lacking from the first. The prowler who looks for connections, the whole picture, flips this final card and returns it to the top of the deck, for this must be the start of the narrator's story of homeland. Yet, this closing, if it is a memory of a beginning, is memory of a story but not the narrator's desired story. Rather, it is a family history and

what the narrator calls a "love" that competes with the other stories the narrator and her sister tell of their origins:

> But my father was always going far away in airplanes and bringing home Toblerone chocolates. He did not tell stories of gypsies. My sister and I made up the stories. The gypsies were out on the Hungarian plains, and our father went to see them. He was in love with a gypsy. He stole our mother and brought her back, for she was a gypsy as well. (section 6)

Aligning mothers, daughters, and sisters with gypsies, the narrator revises the travels and story of the father, orienting herself with a tradition of nomadism and exotic alterity. Radical difference in this context may carry the connotation of racial difference, but common to figurations of the gypsy in Euro-American literature, the primary marker of difference is rooted in the gypsy's refusal to settle down and to work within not only a state but a realist narrative system. In her study of the gypsy in eighteenth- through twentieth-century realist fiction, Amit Yahav-Brown claims that gypsy figures, because of their nomadism, may be included in realist narratives but are actually shaped through fantastic and "nonrealist characterization" (1125).[80] In its metafictional mode and deck-o-cards structure, Gunnars' novel encourages us to confront prowlers "as if" we are the gypsy writer (not prowler) herself. Thus, the text wanders always aware of the potential of its own undoing.

Paralleling Gunnars' own movement from Iceland to the United States, and later to Canada, her writing tends to incorporate characters who move from place to place as a framework for nonlinear, non-progressive mappings of experience and momentary

[80] Yahav-Brown continues, "...British realism does not apply its realist conventions to gypsies, not because this tradition fails to recognize the gypsies' humanity, but because it recognizes the gypsies' nomadism—their refusal of the sedentary precepts underwriting the logic of the nation-state" (1143).

identifications. The reader gets flashes of nations-in-relation, pieces of other stories that highlight military actions ranging from the German occupation of Denmark and the consequent British occupation of Iceland in World War II, to the continuing presence of an American army in Iceland during and after the Cold War. While Gunnars' novel often refers to twentieth-century European, American and Icelandic colonial/national relationships and historicity, her work is neither historical nor is it strictly "Icelandic" nor is it particularly Danish, British or American in its character—whatever those labels might mean, to recall Mootoo's challenge. Such historical references are nomadic in that they are points that the narrator's story passes through; they are not, however, the point of her story. Any reader in search of the authentic Icelandic or immigrant experience finds such a desire redirected, channeled into a self-reflexivity that simultaneously includes a historically contextualized Iceland but which is not the source of the narrator's international movements. "Words are not what they signify," the narrator writes, "words are suitcases crammed with culture...imagine a story of emptied containers...To come to no destination at all" (section 52). Akin to Cixous' submission of the portmanteau as a figure for ever unfolding feminine signification and her insistence on the political necessity of *arrivance*, the value of a new kind of storytelling resides in the gaps of meaning, the non-transference of cultural inscription, the refusal of destination.

The unnamed narrator in *The Prowler* speaks of multiple or concurrent "versions" of childhood, lived in Iceland, Denmark, America as well as on ships crisscrossing the Atlantic. This multiplication of the narrator's homelands and alternate tellings of her past significantly undermines the possibility of telling the story of a single nation, family or even a cohesive "feminine" memory/identity. Her novel scatters memory and effectively

challenges the collective historical experience that is crucial for authenticating the narrator's "Icelandic" ethnicity as an expression of identity. "Locating" or reading out the nomadic in Gunnars' writing then becomes not simply a question of which nation, culture or language shapes a subject's voice, but a question of which nations are in relationship and which voices the reader tunes into. A version of the nomad, Gunnars' first-person narrator repudiates patriarchal orders, such as national belonging, and has either no passport or, as Braidotti asserts, too many of them.

The writing "she" is from the novel's opening a self-reflexive writer—an "I" who is produced by lack of signification as well as by the shuffling of stories about a woman who, in writing a story about a woman, writes about the inability of her writing to create a stable narrative (story) or narrator (self). The few lines read:

> Perhaps it is not a good book, he said, James Joyce said, *but it is the only book I am able to write.* It is not a book I would ever read from. I would never again stand in front of people, reading my own words, pretending I have something to say, humiliated. It is not writing. Not poetry, not prose. I am not a writer. Yet it is, in my throat, stomach, arms. This book that I am not able to write. There are words that insist in silence. Words that betray me. He does not want me to write this book. The words make me sleep. They keep me awake. (section 1)

While the narrator's transatlantic movements are noteworthy and lend an overtness to her nomadic character, the nomadism that characterizes both the narrator and her narrative (anti-story) surfaces from the self-reflexive account of representation. The writing narrator refuses or cannot supply direct signification to *her* sex or gender. She is,

therefore, contingently female/feminine, made so both by lack and the initial disavowal of the "book," the invocation of silence, the rebelling against a "he" who does not want" her "to write." The initial reterritorialization, the reinscription of binary gender that takes place in the novel's opening is a reterritorialization supplied in large part by the novel's readers. The criticism on *The Prowler*, for instance, consistently takes for granted the sex of the writing subject, as do I, but in doing so, we readers must initially capitulate to "her" signification as a product of being read "in relation to," as ambiguous, uncertain, and "as if" the narrator figures as woman.[81] In this way, the narrator's gender slips the mimetic presumptions of metaphor, the naming and substituting capacity that claims, denotes, assigns, identifies, and fixes *her*.

If the narrator's femininity evades direct signification so, too, does the *he* against which the narrating and reading *I* position *her*. Reading according to adjacency, the *he* might be a Stein-inflected James Joyce—"he said, James Joyce said"—a progenitor of Modernism, the oedipal-father, the writer contemporary experimental authors must surpass, kill. Perhaps. However, Joyce's speech is also channeled through another *he*, the arbiter of "good books." This *he*, who returns a number of times, seems more like a lover, imbued with phallo-authority to judge writing and who writes his own story of childhood as an autobiography, a personal history. The arbiter, the ineffectual censor father/lover, *he* is the storyteller against whose "story" the narrator's own writing must be named "book." Reading between and through the lines and sections of the narrator's writing, we encounter the contours of his story about his escaping the Russian invasion of

[81] Braidotti writes of her preference for "as if" representations of self and gender: "In a feminist perspective, I prefer to approach 'the philosophy of "as if,"' however, not as disavowal, but rather as the affirmation of fluid boundaries, a practice of the intervals, of the interfaces and of the interstices" (*Nomadic Subjects* 6).

Hungary in 1956. "Yet it is a good story, the one he tells," the narrator comments. "That he was a young boy, the family fled the country separately, one by one....Did he know when there was a border? Can borders be felt? Is there perhaps a change of air, a different climate, when you go from one country to another? That story has bearing on this book only insofar as one is contained in the things one loves" (section 60). This "story, the one he tells," implies that the linear narrative orders, of autobiography, of hi*story* and a belief in realist representation as "good." By contrast, the narrator's feminine and self-reflexive narrative suggests another order, another desire or "love."

Like the novel's multiplicity of national settings, the text plays upon multiple genres: novel, poetry, autobiography, literary criticism, postmodern philosophy, and the list goes on. The text, titled in full *The Prowler: A Novel*, inscribes its genre within the title, a bone of contention for such critics as Janice Kulyk Keefer who feel duped and betrayed by generic categories that attempt to define or *pre*scribe Gunnars' writing. Preferring the categories "book" or "map," Keefer queries:

> Why the compulsion to ascribe genre, to behead the book, serving it up on a platter to readers who haven't yet turned a page? Text, memoir, autobiography, theory, detective story, novel. *The Prowler* is all and thus none of the above. I want to call it what it is, in its sheer materiality—a book, a map the reader draws in the process of turning pages, a composite map of a place that resembles that archetypal image of ambiguous perception.... (90-1)

It is not clear whether the title's generic qualifier was an author's or publisher's decision, all of which is somewhat beside the point here.[82] What is much more interesting is the tracing of a representational tension that has much to do with how we read Gunnars' text and the site of feminine subjectivity as an authorizing agent. Privileging the novel's own insistence that the narrator cannot write a story of herself or of Iceland that would complement "his" story, Keefer wants the title to be more *true* to the narrative, the narrator's terminology and desires to call her writing, "writing," and her book, "book." In their simplicity and evocation of the physicality of reading and writing, such terms seem to ground *The Prowler*'s complex narrative structure and oft theoretical style in the materiality of its physical composition. The Barthean pleasure of the text feels corporeal and thus less fraught with the anticipations and assumptions that follow in the wake of genre. Keefer's essay is in many ways a tribute-reading, replaying *The Prowler*'s elliptical, poetic style to express the affect of the text on readers. I, too, share Keefer's love of *The Prowler*, and I find myself sympathetic to Keefer's desire to remain true to the one we love even as I read the titular qualifier, *A Novel*, is indispensable to the nomadic politic of the text. On the one hand, to assign a single genre category to Gunnars' writing seems an exercise in inadequacy since no genre can measure up to the jarring smartness and compelling starkness of prose that opens itself up and invites the reader to travel around between passages that "turns out" "consciousness wherever it desires to settle" (Gunnars section 98). On the other hand, the paratextual label short-circuits the reader's temptation to grab hold of the "author" to ground textual meaning in

[82] The promotional genre labels of the publishing world are easily understood to be either a necessary evil dictated by "market" and formula writing practice or a bane to those writers who work against genre categories. And while Gunnars's writing consistently falls into the latter, she also often relies on and reaffirms such categories in the interviews about her work.

The Prowler as if autobiography and the expression of an authentic minority, ethnic woman's identity. Meaning must be made in ways other than the cause and effect of linear narratives, of personal histories that account for a girl's progress into womanhood, and as such, it is not that Keefer's criticism is anti-label, anti-classification, which I think would suit the nomadic and anti-settlement structure of the text, but rather Keefer's response marks a desire for a materiality that is all too easily recuperated into a play for the "identity" of the author to ground the narrative.

Minus the tagline, a first-person, unnamed narrator, "I," who writes of childhood experiences and of the *meta* that is her *story*, is all too easily conflated with the other tagline on the cover, "Kristjana Gunnars." Following in the wake of the "death of the author" and the death of the novel, *The Prowler* asserts its genre ironically, falsely if Barthes is to be believed, and in doing so, it deters the easy resuscitation of the author as a real figure (or as something other than fantasy).[83] A generic label, as with any signifier, is always contingent, flexible and a place holder for a reader's approach. In the case of *The Prowler*, the qualification of the text introduces a broader narrative strategy for disrupting "identity" categories that tend to limit the text's representational and political potentials to the sex/race/nation and so forth of the author. Significantly, Gunnars has rejected attempts on the part of the literary establishment to label her according to ethnicity or gender as "ethnic-Canadian," "immigrant-Canadian," "Icelandic-Canadian," "Canadian woman writer."

It is one thing for a novel's character to exhibit the nomadic qualities that divest nation as the locator and interlocutor of her story and sense of belonging; it is quite

[83] Roland Barthes, "The Novel is a Death; it transforms life into destiny, a memory into a useful act, duration into an oriented and meaningful time" (39).

another to shift critical discourse and analyses to accommodate a nomadic authorial character. The custom of categorizing an author according to national origins or his/her foreign/migrant status is part and parcel of twin fantasies of national belonging and narrative verisimilitude. Akin to Shani Mootoo, Gunnars has been relatively consistent in her rejection of identity labels regarding them as a form of "artistic straightjacket" (Verduyn 172). Intermittently described as a writer of such fiction as Icelandic, ethnic Canadian, immigrant, or just plain Canadian, scholars find it tempting to reinscribe ethnic or an Icelandic origin to her writing via diasporic models of ethnic and racial belonging, a particularly strong temptation when looking at writers born in post/colonial sites. For instance, in addressing Gunnars' resistance to identity markers, Christl Verduyn somewhat paradoxically asserts in her essay "Culture and Gender in Kristjana Gunnars's Writing," "It is important to note, though, that this rejection [of identity labels] does not involve denying the past or throwing the baby out with the bathwater" (176). Extending Verduyn's cliché, the baby at risk reads suspiciously like a return of the essentialism and a small, but real, identity born in nationally framed stories and realist narrative strategies—the very aesthetics Gunnars' writing works to displace, or throw out as the case may be.

Expressing a similar predicament, Salman Rushdie has claimed that the most common questions readers ask about his novels pertain to their "autobiographical" nature, which is something that has become a bit of an inside joke for Rushdie fans. The film version of Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones' Diary* (2001) plays this up and provides a humorous example author/novel/ethnic identity conflation. At a book launch, Bridget's female competition and rival for Mark Darcy asks Rushdie, "So, how autobiographical

are your books?" Rushdie appears genuinely intrigued by the question and responds, "You know, no one has ever asked me that before." Suffice it to say, the rival does not get the man, nor does she get the joke. In this context, Rushdie's "authenticity" becomes clearly a performance of genuine interest more than a performance of an Indian, immigrant, ethnic-British, and so forth, experience to be channeled into his writing. Given that the majority of his novels might be subcategorized as magical realism, the desire to read "Rushdie," the author, man, Indian emigrant, British immigrant, and similar identity labels out of Saleem Sinai's incredible nose in *Midnight's Children* reveals both a readerly anxiety about the dislocation of the "real" from representation and the desire to fix meaning via an authentic authorial experience. Certainly a vestige of biographical criticism and a privileging of authorial intent, this connecting between narrative and authorial/authorizing experience appears less prevalent, however, among those writers perceived as non-mobile and non-ethnic/raced. Who, for instance, is asking Julian Barnes, "How autobiographical is *England, England*?" As Rushdie notes in his essay, "Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist," what is a ludicrous or moot question for one author who pushes the boundaries of genre and plays with representational forms is less so for the "other." Again, the predominant tendency among critics interpreting the work of mobile artists is to read the text as an authenticating expression of the "other," and, consequently, the author emerges a representative voice for a larger and "foreign" community or country. It the process of othering by which we control the representational capacities of travel tropings of subject and mobile aesthetics, preserving the site of the "other" as a site of the authentic and restricting its "minor" disruptions to reflecting the dominant, the imperial.

As I return to the pages of Gunnars' book, flipping through its sections and looking for connections that will help me explain the subversive quality of her writing, I find myself in the position of the prowler turned thief, looking for threads, connections, and ways to pull my own prose together so that this writing "about" *The Prowler* might ultimately say something of the representational moves and narrative strategies of the novel in the form of conclusion. This is of course the desire to master the text, the narrator, her story, and, perhaps even Gunnars, so that they might reflect the nomadic and justify my(self) reading. How un-nomadic! I flip and I travel, jumping forward and backward through sections on the Barthean love of the text, images of a sister hospitalized for anorexia, multiple parental figures in Iceland, Denmark and the United States. By chance, I flip to the epigraph, a quotation from Marguerite Duras' *The Lover*. Unnumbered, does it count as a playing card or perhaps as the Joker? "The story of my life doesn't exist. Does not exist. There's never any center to it." And I smile, comforted; no longer prowling but acting on the invitation to travel gypsy-style the fantasy of destination.

Visibility Moderate: A Tourist Film

> *In some respects,* Visibility: Moderate *seems to be her most personal work, but, unlike her earlier feminist films, the political stance here is hard to find. There are various references to the "troubles," but they're so perfunctory you have to wonder if Dick's point is that sectarian violence is an indelible aspect of the Irish condition, and that she's as sick of the H-Block as she is of the Blarney Stone.*
>
> Jim Hoberman—"Partly Cloudy," *Village Voice* (1983)

Part parody of pre-video family vacation movies and part documentary/docu-drama, Vivienne Dick's *Visibility: Moderate* [aka *Visibility Moderate: A Tourist Film*]

(1981) takes as its subject matter an Irish-American woman's vacation in Ireland. Like all good tourists to the Emerald Isle, the protagonist, played by Margaret Ann Irinsky, visits the major tourist spots and frolics through the countryside: she kisses the Blarney Stone, dances in fairy rings, stands in green fields to point at plump Irish cows, and visits distant family members. Eventually, she ventures to urban Ireland, Dublin and then Belfast. During this second part, the 48-minute film shifts modes from travelogue to include the more distanced techniques of cultural documentary and drama with scenes of the tourist in casual conversation with a Dublin man, a staged sequence set in a sparse apartment in which an unidentified male speaks of his IRA politics, and "an interview with the former political prisoner Maureen Gibson. It is filmed straight to the camera, in the manner of a press conference" (Connolly, "From No Wave" 70). However, by the end of the film, the "tourist" is no longer the main focus or narrative guide, becoming increasingly absent from the action caught on camera.

While a contrast to Dick's earlier "punk" and overtly feminist films, such as *Guerillere Talks* (1978) and *Liberty's Booty* (1980), Jim Hoberman's confusion of the unclear "politics" of the film feminist and nationalist is both understandable and intriguing. A long-time supporter of Dick's films in his *Village Voice* film reviews, Hoberman's tepid response hinges on what he reads as "perfunctory" references to Irish nationalism and its ambiguous feminism. If, however, we read the politics of the film as not-of-nationalism and not-of-1970's-American-"feminism," in short, if we embrace what Hoberman claims to be "perfunctory," *Visibility: Moderate*'s politics surface through a representational ambiguity that corresponds with a mobile feminist politic via the film's refusal to objectify and package woman and/or Irishness. In this way, the film

projects a nomadic space, a space Deleuze and Guattari describe as comprised of a "set of relations" and "not points and objects" (*Thousand Plateaus* 382). It is a space of the minor and rhizomatic connections. In this regard, Dick has noted that the title of her film came from a radio weather report captured in the background while filming in New York, which corresponds with the film's focus on the minor, the background, or, in de Lauretis' terminology, the elsewhere. "Visibility moderate" also uncannily recalls Deleuze and Guattari's own assertions that "visibility is limited" in the space of the minor, the nomadic, where movement focuses attention on the next resting place (not on nation-building). Overall, the "politics" of the film that so concern Hoberman are sideswiped by the representation of traveling woman, a "tourist" who refuses to remain in a conventional (masculinist, capitalist) framing. Rather *she* is in-process of becoming, becoming nomad (not-tourist).

As Braidotti reminds us, "Nomadism is a form of intransitive becoming: it marks a set of transformations without end product....Hence, the importance of 'visiting' not in the bourgeois mode, but rather as the attempt at sharing the same embedded location. This kind of 'visiting' is the opposite of the consumeristic mode of apprehension of the 'other' in the tourist subject position. The 'visit' is an exchange that calls for both accountability and care" ("Difference"). Both in its aesthetic and its narrative of travel/vacation, *Visibility: Moderate* proffers a version of nomadic "visiting." The audience, as with Margaret Ann Irinsky's character, seems to share a generative location, one in which a woman who resists objectification and othering, but who initially gains pleasure from objectifying and othering, moves off screen. In this way, the film evokes

the sense of a strange intimacy with the traveler and Ireland, without offering any clear political vision.

Shot on Super-8 (8mm), a film gauge typical of home movies and American No Wave Cinema filmmaking in the late-1970s and early-1980s, *Visibility: Moderate* proffers a strange kind of intimacy with its subject matter—woman as traveler and Ireland as destination. The home movie aesthetic contributes greatly to the sense that the camera is being operated by someone who knows the 'tourist' all too well so that the standard introductions to character in documentary and realist film are absent and instead we encounter a jarring sense of intimacy.[84] This intimacy, found particularly in the first sections, works productively against the increasingly fragmented random interruptions of background noise and the gradual distancing of the tourist from her own film as the camera focuses on her travels less and less and her story becomes something of staged encounters and the documentation of city streets and political prisoners. In this way, Dicks film recalls that the politics of representation may be personal but that that personal is easily shackled to oppositional, binary and broader nationalist and capitalist modes of image production. Offering an alternative political terrain, the ambiguity of the film's position on post-1968 Irish Troubles and the lack of sustained focus on the tourist's travels denies the audience a clear sense of character growth via political enlightenment. In other words, we do not know exactly what the tourist has learned and, consequently, we do not know what we are to take from the film or how to position ourselves in relation

[84] Maeve Connolly is perhaps the most active scholar currently working on Vivienne Dick's films and the intersection between avant-garde filmmaking and Irish cinema. Her historicizing of Dick's work has contributed greatly to my understanding of the film movements and critical terrains affecting readings of Dick's filmmaking. Of 8mm filmmaking, Connolly notes, "Super-8 appealed to the No Wave filmmakers [late 1970s to early 1980s New York avant-garde punk filmmakers] and its long association with home movies. In the mid-1970s it also became possible to record sync sound and the 'anti-aesthetic' of Super-8 became associated with Punk."

to the residual effects of Ireland's partitioning and a continued British occupation of Northern Ireland. This "perfunctory" political treatment of the "real" (travels and troubles), thus, functions as the reterritorialization of feminine representation and avant-garde film practices, which *Visibility: Moderate* redirects to comment on the cultural packaging and consumption of Ireland, whether of green rolling hills or political prisoners.

Visibility: Moderate indicates a cautious reliance on feminist avant-garde practices intent on constituting subjects of vision. For although these films evoke avant-garde forms such as non-linear narrative, pastiche and parody, the incorporation of a punk, do-it-yourself aesthetic and themes of mobility produce something more akin to a neo-avant-garde feminism. In contrast to such feminist avant-garde films of the 1970s as Laura Mulvey's *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977), Yvonne Rainer's *Film About a Woman Who...* (1974) and *Kristina Taking Pictures* (1976) which deconstruct the gaze and reorient the cinematic apparatus to document feminine experience, Dick's *Visibility: Moderate* conveys a skepticism about the libratory capacities of documentation and gynocenteric filmmaking. The tourist may well be the focus of the first two-thirds of the film, but the mending of her consumptive and neo-imperialist ways is never quite certain nor can we assume that she, or we, has understood the national(ist) politics that constitute and affect female political prisoners in Ireland.

What we can see or know is that *Visibility: Moderate* appropriates feminine and cultural iconography while unmooring such images as a woman's body and rural Ireland (often a feminized landscape) from conventions of masculinist and nationalist narratives and framings. From the film's opening sequence onward, we find that we cannot read

woman or landscape according to convention—neither woman nor setting is easily coded as the object of the cinematic or male gaze. *Visibility: Moderate* opens in a New York parking garage with the tourist seemingly dancing with, but not for, the camera. In this scene, the female subject, not the camera, controls the visual content. She moves playfully in and just out of reach from the camera's frame, as if the camera must work to keep track of the dance and woman. She both exceeds the camera's frame and denies the voyeuristic pleasure associated with the female-made-object. This disruption of being looked at, a common feature of 1970s avant-garde feminist filmmaking, is not, however, the point of the film but rather the basis for further disruptions. In a most Deleuzean-Braidottiesque manner, the mobile woman becomes part of a representational configuration and/or territory scheduled for deterritorialization. This scene in New York parking garage, however, shifts abruptly, and the camera moves away from the dance and focuses on a pineapple lying on concrete. With demonstrable pleasure, the woman begins to slice the prickly fruit with a large knife. Prefacing an underlying anti-capitalist and anti-narrative commentary, the pineapple suggests colonialism and the consumable, the exotic product, positioning the soon-to-be-tourist and perhaps audience as consumer(s).

The pineapple also evokes the processes of cinematic objectification and links together an arrangement of significations ranging from the more familiar exotic and consumable aspects of cultural tourism to the perhaps less well known partitioned status of Ireland. On one level, the tourist wields the phallic knife that cuts through the products of elsewhere in order to consume. On another, Ireland is akin to the pineapple, which is parted and parceled for both political purposes and for purchasable,

romanticized picture postcard images. The landscape imagery that follows the pineapple's slicing, however, cannot be contained by travelogue and documentary narratives—the vacationer's story refuses to be "the pineapple." Always a parody of cinematic form, the film disrupts the audience's consumption of an idealized, eroticized and packaged Ireland. For the very Super-8 stylistics that suggest a kind of intimacy or personal relationship between camera, subject and audience include interruptions from the culturally banal—television commercials, radio weather reports—which disrupt a cohesive, realist or naturalist narrative of traveling Ireland and expose the market forces that shackle cultural representations to a tourist industry manufacturing image and narrative for profit. We do not know the woman who travels beyond the camera's frame; she is neither family nor friend for all her friendliness with the camera. If the "real life" connections upon which the family vacation film in part rely for the audience to identify with the subject being filmed are absent, so too are the connections to the slick packaging and Ireland's landscapes associated with tourist industry advertisements. Maeve Connolly suggests that "despite an initial focus on tourism and performative ethnicity, *Visibility: Moderate* is ultimately concerned with the politics of representations, both in relation to the 'troubles' and the experience of women" ("From No Wave" 70).

For the most part the discussion of mobility, representation and the feminine in this dissertation have not engaged the character and conventions of tourism. The tourist-as-cultural-consumer proves an unlikely fit given the rejection of unified subjectivity that shape the aesthetic politic of Atlantic Rim women's novels, stories and films. Generally, the tourist travels to consume, to feed his/her base pleasures by "getting away," by escaping the drudgery of the daily grind—an escape that supports conventional orders of

self-location rather than offering semiotic disruption. Visual records of a tourist's adventures abroad, such as home movies, for instance, are akin to souvenirs and serve as artifacts to reflect self and location, a consumptive practice that veils the mechanisms of cultural construction with fabrics of authenticity, of nature, of the "real." Along this line, Paul Willemen notes that "the tourist sees in the landscape only mirrors or projections of his/her own phantasms"[85] (qtd. in Connolly, "Sighting an Irish" 256). Landscapes, historical sites, and local people (racial/ethnic other) become objects that mollify the modern subject's anxieties and alienations, reflecting and reassuring the traveling subject. In one of the more vivid anti-tourist diatribes of the 1980s, Jamaica Kincaid characterizes the tourist/reader, "you," in her Antiguan essays, *A Small Place* (1988), as a privileged European or American who moves from being "nice blob just sitting like a boob in [an] amniotic sac of the modern experience to being a person lying on some faraway beach...marveling at the harmony...and the union these other people...have with nature" (16). In general, the tourist is an easy target of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist criticism. More a figure for embracing signification and capitalist structures, the tourist makes an unlikely protagonist for postnational, mobile feminist literary artists.

If travelogues attempt to document or to imagine locales for viewing subjects to travel—either as a retrospective self-narrative or as a projection of future experience commonly part of the desire-producing narratives of the tourist industry—*Visibility: Moderate* undermines the assertions of the "real" that support the travelogue as narrative. As a kind of anti-travelogue, the film often demonstrates the banality of everyday conversations and train travel, filmed so that neither the tourist nor the camera seems to

[85] Connolly quotes Paul Willemen's essay "An Avant-Garde for the Eighties." *Framework* 24. 1984: 53-73.

find much of interest in the passing landscape. Without clueing the audience into the effect of such banalities on the woman who travels, the camera distances the viewer from identifying with and making a personal connection to the traveler's experience. Television commercials and the general background sounds of modern Ireland create a detritus of noise that undercuts any idealized, romantic images of a simpler and quainter place. In addition, the romantic and feminized imagery that commonly supports representations of Irish landscapes in film becomes overtly satirized through such fantasy sequences as the tourist dancing as a Celtic goddess across green rolling hills at the Ring of Kerry. Her dance in Ireland feels just as contrived and out-of-place as the images of her dancing in a parking garage earlier. Thus detritus and satiric fantasy thwart the tourist's and, consequently, the viewer's, cinematic pathway to a simpler time, a way back to Irish roots, and to a charm and quaintness that might soothe the alienated tourist's soul. Shuffling scenes that emphasize both marginalia and fantasy in traveling Ireland, the film lives up to its title; cultural and political visibility becomes moderate.[86] The historical, cultural and political narratives that provide long-range vision and coherence to national, ethnic and sex/gendered identity emerge as a site of critique and fail to unify into a cohesive, oppositional vision for a new, alternative politic. In this manner, the deterritorialization of tourism's consumption and complicity with ethnographic narratives becomes the limit of the film's politic.

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[86] Dick noted in an interview with Scott MacDonald that the title of the film came from a weather report picked up in the background of a scene. "It's like a little comment of my own on the film, which I felt was really a surface thing; it was the best I could do under the circumstances, moneywise and with the pressures on me. While I was doing it, and as I was finishing it, I met all these other people; it could have been quite different. I was just getting into living in Ireland again. I want to make more films there, better films" (qtd. in Connolly, "From No Wave")

Unlike Gunnars, whose international movement and (im)migrancy have bled into a critical desire to authenticate her fiction as expressions of an Icelandic or immigrant experience, Vivienne Dick's biography and her Irish background has, until recently, had relatively little influence on the critical reception and interpretation of her films. This difference may in part be explained by a difference in media and the distance often afforded directors from the content of their films, particularly if the film's subject matter and form either refuse to make claims about "identity" or to capitulate to Hollywood genre conventions and formulas. Questions about identity, self, and representation are often made moot or invisible within mainstream narratives and their seemingly transparent representational mechanics. There are of course exceptions to and complex negotiations of the cultural authenticity of a director's "identity" and cinematic vision; for instance, Neil Jordan's Irish background tends to be of greater critical interest and import in reviews of his films with identifiably Irish themes and characters such as *The Crying Game* (1992) and *Michael Collins* (1996) than in reviews of his Hollywood films *Interview with a Vampire* (1994) and *In Dreams* (1999). However, a more compelling explanation for this elision of Dick's Irish birth in the reviews of her earlier work lies in the types of films Dick made early in her career. Dick's films are generally small productions, with a limited crew and with Dick having a hand at every level of production from the preproduction writing, to the cinematography, to postproduction editing.

Often overtly feminist in content and drawing on experimental techniques, Dick's films tend to be shorter than feature-length productions and to highlight the place where

she is living at the time of filmmaking—New York, London and the west of Ireland.[87] Alongside other No Wave filmmakers such as Beth and Scott B in New York, her early films include parody, pastiche and punk, "do-it-yourself" aesthetics to focus on social policies and representational politics affecting women. For instance, *Guerillere Talks* (1978) is a parody of documentary news journalism that featured young punk artist Lydia Lunch; *She Had Her Gun Already* (1978), a "trash melodrama," features Pat Place and Lunch as "an androgynous voyeur and a nihilistic femme fatal;" and *Liberty's Booty* (1980) is a fragmentary exploration of prostitution in a rapidly globalizing commercial landscapes. These films expand upon avant-garde feminist filmmaking of the 1970s[88] and feature strong female leads and storylines that expose both social margins and the mechanisms of representing contemporary women all with anti-Hollywood, anti-woman-as-object. While these films drew directly or indirectly upon such feminist texts as Monique Wittig's *Les Guérillères* (1969), Dick notes that most of her own work happened "outside the feminist thing," in the margins of the margins, the minor of the minor (Zalcock). Although Dick's later films employ Irish settings and cultural iconography, they do so with a characteristic self-reflexivity that challenges the audience to think of Irish landscapes and culture as manufactured, crafted, and "as if" Irish.

Only within the last couple of decades, when Irish Studies turned to embrace a history of diaspora and an internationally inflected Irishness, have Dick's 1980s New

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[87] Her film *New York Conversations*, which was made after her move to London, is both an exception to Dick's general use of "locale" and a reinforcement of the dynamism and diversity of "arts communities."

[88] In an interview with Bev Zalcock, Dick spoke candidly about feeling isolated within gatherings of avant-garde feminist filmmakers. Reflecting on a showing of *She Had Her Gun All Ready* in Betty Gordon's loft, Dick says: "Nobody spoke to me....so I felt estranged. Betty was the person I knew the most in that group and her friend Karen Kay wrote about the film in one of the magazines connected to 'The Collective' which was a downtown alternative cinema at the time. Amy Taubin also wrote about the work. I think the film really upset Yvonne Rainer."

York films been drawn into the margins of Irish cinema and cultural studies. In this regard, Maeve Connolly's scholarship walks a tightrope between the projects and paradigms of an Irish cinema studies preoccupied by motifs of nation and oedipal themes and a more mobile version of feminism that threatens to dislocate Dick's cinematic roots from an Irish artistic tradition. Connolly's tightrope balance-bar, however, is Dick's self-proclaimed sense of feeling the *outsider* and the outsider status of avant-garde filmmaking in cinema studies.[89] Dick has been quite candid in interviews about her "outsider" status; speaking with Bev Zalcock, she reveals:

> I've always felt a kind of an outsider in Ireland anyway. I feel that everywhere I am. And I've decided that's just how it is...I identify with being Irish because I grew up there and have an understanding. But I think no matter where I go - it seems that I'll always feel somewhat of an outsider, 'cos it's just sort of the way it is. And maybe it's not a bad thing either because it detaches you a little from stuff. Maybe that's why I'm making films even. Always trying to figure things out. And making films is like trying to make sense of something - trying to understand something. If everything was all easy and I slotted in to somewhere, I'd just be doing that wouldn't I!

The "anti___" moves of nomadism (corresponding beautifully with the internationalism and politics of "punk") serve as a better trope for Dick's *Visibility: Moderate* and film work in general than the trope of outsider. Given the overt inclusion of and attention to

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[89] Connolly notes that "Dick's work contributes to this wider critical project [postmodernist challenge to modernism], through its exploration of American society and popular culture from the perspective of the immigrant *outsider*, and through its exploration of the particular place of Hollywood iconography within the Irish imaginary" ("Sighting" 265).

figures and production of popular culture in her films—particularly her early works—her film aesthetic and anti-consumerist, anti-Hollywood, feminist politic relies upon a strategic appropriation of conventional markers of ethnicity, identity and culture, which feels intimate, familiar, and less of the outsider looking in than of an insider, a constituted subject refusing to reproduce or create the conventional narrative.

Visibility: Moderate's deployment of transatlantic tourist industry and pop-culture iconography in what Connolly aptly describes as "iconic John Hinde postcards and, most obviously, the romantic landscape of John Ford's *The Quiet Man* (1952)" ("From No Wave" 69) produces a sophisticated familiarity with and usurpation of cultural productions rather than the psychic and cultural distance characteristic of the foreigner or the exile. Her mobility and work gesture toward a migratory practice, one extending beyond Dick's movements from and to Ireland, the United States and England (those stereotypical sites of the Irish diaspora).[90] Incorporating mobility as both method and content, Dick appropriates pop-culture to subvert conventional narratives that inform that very same pop imagery so that they literally "make sense." She has produced films within metropolitan arts communities using both sides of the Atlantic and makes use of "local" spaces that are already transitory, already migrant, foreigner saturated, and unconventionally communal.[91]

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[90] In a 1980 *East Village Magazine* interview, Barth plays up Dick's wanderings through Europe and North America to add depth to her character and vision as a filmmaker: "Vivienne herself has done a lot of changing in her own life. She left her original country, Ireland ("as soon as I could") in the early 70's & went to France, teaching English to Armenians there. Then she went to Germany for a year, took "the hippie trail to India" where she met nothing but Western smugglers & fake gurus, came to the U.S. for a few months, made it down to Mexico, there met an American and went to live a "few dismal years with him" for another stay in France. In 1975 she came to N.Y. & has been here ever since." (10)

[91] See: *London Suite* and *New York Conversations.*

The anti-Hollywood or anti-genre, anti-consumerist, and anti-masculinist politics, which provide a connective tissue throughout her oeuvre, nomadically resist easy recuperation into nationalized cinematic traditions and expressions. Perhaps the most critically recognized filmic "tendency" in Dick's films corresponds with "punk" aesthetic and expression (No Wave), which Nicholas Rombes observes overlaps with nomadic politics and minor aesthetics:

> Unlike the Cinema of Transgression or the New American Cinema, new punk cinema is not really a formal movement, but rather a tendency and an approach to filmmaking that share certain key gestures and approaches with punk. Like punk itself, it is not confined to one city, nor one nation and it carries an almost romantic notion that anyone can create something that matters, a troubled desire for and yet a suspicion of authenticity and the Real. (11-12)

One of the pleasures and hallmarks of punk performance emerges from its live, underground venues and non-mainstream environments that channel overt revulsion and rage about mainstream values and art forms. In that such revulsion includes or is directed at the audience, punk proposes an (in)authenticity, an undermining of conventional realist narratives, that both includes the audience in and challenges the audience to be co-creators of something that matters.[92]

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[92] Opening up the notion of artistic creation to those who don't identify themselves as "artists" is a common refrain in Dick's interviews and a belief that compliments her film co-operative work in the United States and England as well as her profession as a film professor at colleges in Dublin and Galway, Ireland. In her 1980 interview with Stephen Barth, Dick critiqued the formula and stories of TV news media and then opened up options, beyond complaint to East Village readers: "And it's precisely because of this situation that most people feel helpless[sic] that they can't do anything about it, which isn't true at all. That's what people have to get into their heads: that they *can* produce better ideas and use them to start organizing their lives" (10).

Refusing to work within a single, recognizable cinematic and cultural system, her films consistently challenge her audiences to become co-creators of meaning. Even her later films set in Ireland—become dislocated from such authenticating registers as nation-of-origin, (im)migrant identity, product consumption and essential notions of *woman*. In other words, the themes and stylistics of Dick's films work to disrupt authenticating and essential notions of subjectivity that inform the cinematic representational practice common to her film's cultural and geographic setting so that identifying, labeling, and categorizing her work within a specific terms of politicized artistic or social liberation movements is inevitably an uncomfortable fit. While Dick's early films made in New York have classified her as an American *No Wave* filmmaker, her later films drawing on English and Irish settings and themes display a continual wariness of narratives that reinforce mainstream imaginary and economic orders well as a continual questioning of representation and the nature of the real overall. Accordingly, that same resistance to national narratives contributes to the difficulty of identifying and classifying her work.

At the risk of appearing to miss the point of academic discourse and the necessity of critical claims, I cannot locate or classify Dick's films as either American No Wave feminism or as an Irish avant-garde; rather my final approach is more fluid, perhaps wishy, but not washy. With this in mind, I understand Dick's films to be expressions of post-national mobile feminism that intersect with the nomadic and employ iconography of Dick's shifting locales.

Dick's filmmaking rejects the narrative conventions of the "real" intent on projecting unified female subjects. Avant-garde filmmaking of the 1960s and 1970s attempts to represent women's experiences as an alternative aesthetic. In this way, her

feminist vision reflects what Teresa de Lauretis calls "a gesture of both community and defiance," as much a reaction against Hollywood narratives and cinematic conventions as a questioning of avant-garde feminist practice that often promoted documentary making for "purposes of political activism, consciousness raising, self expression, positive images of women" (128). Her punk-inflected, often described as a "do-it-yourself aesthetic," likewise resists the formalism of the feminist avant-garde even as her work is most easily aligned with what de Lauretis describes as the feminist avant-garde's goal to disrupt and "disengage the ideological codes embedded in representation" (128). Vivienne Dick has said that her goal with filmmaking is to "choreograph images and sounds that breathe"—a project that surely draws upon the women dancers and feminist filmmaking of Maya Deren and Yvonne Rainer while expanding to a filmmaking practice that is less politically certain, more nomadic. However, rarely Dick's films question sexual difference—for her work does not question whether *woman* exists but the representational apparatuses that make woman possible. In this sense, a nomadic feminist aesthetic becomes possible regardless if there is woman or a dick behind the camera.

Low in the Dark

> *At other times, there could be many different stories being told at the same time with no reference to each other. These parts were most intense when Curtains was present. We would all have our individual lines which had no relation to the other actor's lines. Each one's lines had a logical throughline of their own but not to anyone else's. Whilst concentrating on your own throughline, you also had to watch out for the rapid rhythm that the scene was firing along on and not miss your cue.*
>
> Sarahjane Scaife "Mutual Beginnings: Marina Carr's *Low in the Dark*"

Unlike Kristjana Gunnars and Vivienne Dick, Marina Carr has spent the majority of her life living and writing in Ireland, and while Carr lived and taught in New York briefly, she returned after a year, not especially liking that year abroad. Recently she has become a major representative of a contemporary Irish drama that still draws heavily on themes of "nation" for self-definition but that has expanded to include themes of sexuality, gender and immigration, (to Ireland not away from). However, reading the nomadic, as I have already noted, is not explicitly about reading the author's mobility or identity through her writing. Nor does it, as in the case of *Low in the Dark*, require that characters cross multiple national borders or summon the nation explicitly in order to resist the cultural politics, narrative conventions, and subject positions attendant to "nation" and its imperatives. *Low in the Dark* stages sexual difference rather than national difference, and in doing so it disengages the sexed body from gender conventions, effectively unhinging the staged body and sexual reproduction from national coding. If at the beginning of the play, "women" make babies and "men" build walls, by the end of the play the men are heavily pregnant and the story of men and women is becoming something other than convention dictates. To appropriate Scaife's terminology, the play lacks a "throughline," a kind of Stanislavskian or realist logic to clarify character motivation and carry the play's narrative from point A to point B.

While being the first of her plays to be staged and while often glossed within studies of Carr's oeuvre, *Low in the Dark*, has not garnered the same critical attention afforded her later dramas, particularly *The Mai* (1994), *Portia Coughlan* (1996), and *By the Bog of the Cats...* (1998).[93] The critical marginalization of Carr's early plays seems

[93] The most extensive analyses of *Low in the Dark* are Sarajane Scaife's autobiographical meditation on her role as Binder in the initial Crooked Sixpence production in *The Theatre of Marina Carr: 'before rules*

to have little to do, however, with the fact that they are "experimental" or that in the timeline of Irish drama they were crafted by a minor figure, a woman. For experimentation worked well to establish Samuel Beckett as a major figure in Irish literary studies, and Carr's sex has been similarly instrumental in establishing her reputation as a contemporary Irish, albeit *woman*, playwright. The critical short-shrifting of her early work does seem, however, to have something to do with the influence of Beckett's absurdist drama and narrative techniques. When read through a Beckettian lens, *Low in the Dark* appears to many critics derivative and seems to suggest, as Carole-Anne Upton claims in her biography of Carr, that Carr had yet to "discover her own voice" ("Marina Carr"). Pointing to Carr's three-year absence from Ireland's theatre scene following her Beckett-period, Upton recounts that Carr moved to rural Ireland, steeped herself in classical drama, and then returned to the Dublin theatre scene with a fresh, distinctive style and Irish perspective. "The laconic humor of the absurd" of her earlier, Beckettian plays had been "replaced with the emotional depth of the mythic" ("Marina Carr").

Upton implies that drawing inspiration, style and character from Greek tragedies produces less derivative writing than if drawn from twentieth-century experimental theatre, and she constructs a familiar Synge-like biography for Carr, where the West of Ireland still serves as a site of authentic Irishness to inspire another generation of "Irish" playwrights. Even as the majority of Carr's later dramas are rich and suggest a dark, rendition of rural Ireland, Upton's line of reasoning misses Carr's overt denial of mimetic, realist representation, a'la Beckett, in *Low In the Dark*, which performs a kind of

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was made' (2003) and Bernadette Sweeney's socio-historical reading of the play as "pioneering" new directions for Irish Theatre writ large in the later-twentieth-century in *Performing the Body in Irish Theatre* (2008).

deterritorialization of sexual difference, Irishness, and even authorship that is equally, albeit differently, rich dramatic terrain. For instance, Carr's authorial ownership of *Low in the Dark*, as Scaife points out, is problematically assigned since many of the ideas and much of the dialogue came out of improv sessions with the actors, making the writing as well as the production overall a collective and community process. It would seem that something other than derivation was at work here. Even the evocation of "Carr" in this analysis must be acknowledged a fabrication of sorts, an imitation of single authorship. *Low in the Dark*'s imitative quality will also continue to be at issue in my discussion of the play, but less in the context of Carr's incorporation of Beckettian characterization and narrative experimentation and more in the context of a theatricalization of sex/gender difference that produces a series of shifting and changing sex(self)portraits without center, to recall Gunnars and Duras. In this way, Curtains, a contingently feminine character, who is shrouded from head to toe in curtains and who orates a myth of man and woman, becomes not an organizing center of the play's action but rather a further, nomadic disruption of binary difference.

While Beckett's go-to thematic and dramatic structure often revolved around querying "who/what is the speaking subject?," expressed in such works as *Not I* (1972), *Play* (1963) and his novel trilogy (1951-3), Carr's *Low in the Dark* attunes a Beckettian aesthetic and thematic to query "how is the speaking subject gendered?" Accordingly, *Low in the Dark*'s Beckettian qualities consider the conventions, typographies, and utterances of that constitute sex and gender difference. That a subject speaks is taken for granted in Carr's play, but that a subject's speech is gendered and constitutive of that subject, however momentary and uncertain, becomes its very focus.

Low in the Dark splits the stage into two gender-specific spaces that seemingly position and divide the "male" from the "female" characters, all of whom cross-dress and role-play. A disheveled, "bizarre" bathroom assigns one side of the stage as the space for women, and a partially-built wall with "tyres, rims...and blocks strewn about" assigns the other to men (5). Even as the audience might easily recognize the troping of gender/sexual difference via minimalist depictions of women's and men's spaces, the incomplete and odd arrangement of each space challenges conventional representations of a familiar theatrical setting of the domestic. Replacing the kitchen with a bath and presenting the building site as impartial and incomplete, Carr's stage breaks with the characteristic settings of Irish realism. In his scholarship on Irish drama and the prominence of naturalist representation on the stage, Nicholas Grene notes, "The country-cottage kitchen, by the 1950s, had become synonymous with the stereotypical realism of the traditional Abbey Theatre play" (214). In so far as a bathroom and part of a wall can produce recognizable, gender-specific domains, Carr's stage deconstructs dramatic convention, attuning it to meta-theatrical representations of sexual difference that are, akin to Baxter and Bone's wall building project, never complete. As such, the audience is exposed to a spatial version of sexual difference that is always an incomplete and deconstructed rendering of that difference.

Low in the Dark is in many ways the staging of the unstable character of sex/gender difference. A comedy focused on the relationships of men and women, it incorporates clichéd, stereotyped conversations and cross-dressing, approaching sex/gender difference, desire and longing in a metatheatrical parody of difference. It features three "female" characters and two "male": Bender, a mother in her fifties, and

her daughter Binder, who is in her twenties, spend much of their time in a bathroom where Bender births babies that number into the millions and Binder attempts to usurp her mother's claim to the tub (birthing space). Their conversations often involve Bender offering Binder womanly advice or Binder putting on "hat and tails," performing Bender's long-gone lover(s) and/or father of the children. But as Bender is consistently giving birth through Act I without "having" sexual intercourse, the "father," and consequently his penis, become an image "beside the point" of reproduction and something else seems to be at work. In a similar parodic vein, Baxter and Bone, the contextually male characters, spend much of their time at a building site rehearsing past romances and future romantic fantasies, alternating who is the "woman" in their relationship at any given moment.

The third female character, Curtains, offers an alternative figuration of the feminine and an alternative telling of the relationship between men and women. Curtains does not "play" conventional roles nor does she dress to perform binary gender. According to stage directions, *she* is to be "covered from head to toe in heavy, brocaded curtains and rail. Not an inch of her face or body is seen through the play" (5). She is gendered "woman" primarily through a feminine voice and her friendship with Bender/Binder, but she is always only tenuously feminine. Her sexual liaison with Baxter, for instance, which leaves him heavily pregnant at the close of the play, farcically seems to position her as "woman" alongside Binder (who impregnated Bone, but who is also pregnant with Bone's baby). It is a rollickingly fun "play" on sex/gender difference through which Curtains' wanders through the spaces assigned to "difference," often occupying the gap between and the space designated as off stage. Curtains, akin to the

wandering of disembodied wombs and penises, stages a kind of nomadic feminism. According to Braidotti, nomadic feminism is neither the utopian disavowal of "woman" nor the recuperation of an essential woman (history, genitalia) but is constituted by a strategic, thoughtful search for new identifications and subjectivities. Curtains' movements enact what Braidotti describes as the mobile in-between of nomadic feminism, a feminism that does not disavow sexual difference or the category of *woman* but works to strategically unmoor *woman* from a masculine social imaginary. "I think," writes Braidotti in *Nomadic Subjects*, "that there cannot be social change without he construction of new kinds of desiring subjects as molecular, nomadic, and multiple. One must start by leaving open spaces of experimentation, of search, of transition: becoming nomads" (171). In a suggestively nomadic manner, Carr's staging of the sexed body and the character sexual difference as performed "roles" mobilizes desire and makes explicit the function of fantasy in both mobilizing desire and representing/maintaining sexual difference.

In *Low in the Dark*'s perverse universe, biological sex is never clarified or stable—Baxter's pregnancy, for instance, will manifest on his shoulder—and binary gender difference is never entirely represented or staged. Curtains' sex is, of course, most ambiguous and her costuming is neither masculine nor feminine, but rather a performance of something attuned to the theatre apparatus—curtains. Fantasy, however, is essential to the pleasure and articulation of difference. Bender/Binder's and Baxter/Bone's performances of romantic relationships for each other becomes a fantasy of a sex/gender. For instance, Binder often plays the man to Bender's woman in scenes that apparently re-member conversations and romantic moments of Bender's past. In

these scenes, the transgressive or subversive power of Binder's cross-dressing comes not from the performance of masculinity but from the scene's apparent repetition of a romantic fantasy, a part Binder has held in her mother's memory play at least "a hundred times" (35):

> Bender: Do you remember?
>
> Binder (puts on the hat and tails, bad humour) Yes, I remember!
>
> Bender: Let me finish!...The first time we heard that song?
>
> Binder: (impatient) Yes, I remember!

The scene continues with Bender and her lover (Binder) describing their "memories" of the first night they made love and then went for a moonlit stroll through the woods. This cliché as memory closes:

> Binder: I love you.
>
> Bender: Have you said it to others?
>
> Binder: Hundreds, and I'll go on saying it. I'll say it a million times. I'll say it even when I don't mean it. I'll yell it to the spaces between the branches, I'll whisper it as they nail the lid on.
>
> Bender: That's exactly how he said it.
>
> Binder: (taking off hat) Must've been a rare tulip.
>
> Bender: None rarer, none rarer. (37-8)

In as much as cross-dressing in *Low in the Dark* spotlights and destabilizes gender as the signifier of a natural sex, the subversion of gender as a real, mimetic performance of sexual difference relies not on drag but on the destabilization of memory and conventions

of realist drama.[94] Bender/Binder's evocation of memory, of a time and place not present on the stage, suggests a site of lived experience, a real time, place and series of events that dramatic performance might recall in the present and represent with a kind of accuracy. Bender's first line in the scenario, "do you remember," is, however, so ambiguous that Binder easily misunderstands and misses her cue. Is Bender a theatrical director asking the actress if she remembers her lines? Or is Bender acting as Bender in her own memory-play asking her lover, played by Binder, if he remembers a night of romance and passion? Although Binder quickly catches on that the memory-play has already begun, she ultimately reveals that she is playing a part with specific lines written by her mother.

Binder's cross-dressing more than dislocating masculine signifiers, a man's clothing and speech from a male body, effectively calls into question the "men" who might exist somewhere outside their bathroom "play." Occasionally Bender and Binder jockey for the attention of a man who catches their eye out the bathroom window on the street below or who telephone to request payment for overdue utilities. Such men are always staged through Bender and Binder's conversations, and we, the audience, know of their existence only through Bender and Binder's longing to speak with them. Like their

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[94] All of this play on and with sex/gender difference without doubt recalls Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1989/1999), albeit strangely. In Butler's formulation gender produces gender through performance which can only ever be the performance of the fantasy of a biologically sexed or natural (real) body (xii). Drag then serves as the ultimate exemplar of gender's performative nature, yet drag cannot be, Butler cautions, a "paradigm of subversive action" or a "model for political agency" (xxii). It is subversive only to the extent that the viewing subject recognizes the drag as a transgression of normative gender expression. In other words, drag, in order to be drag, relies on the audience recognizing gender as an existing parody, clarifying what is clearly false (gender expression) by what is surely underneath (genitalia). Butler expands upon this notion to address the pleasure of drag: "*In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency.* Indeed, part of the pleasure, the giddiness of the performance is in the recognition of a radical contingency in the relation between sex and gender in the face of cultural configurations of causal unities that are regularly assumed to be natural and necessary" (175).

memory performances, they produce "man" via a projected fantasy of that man as complimenting the drama already occurring in their bathroom. Their "man" as a category of sexual difference is thus repeatedly staged as an absence and it is up to the audience if they believe that the "men" of the play exist somewhere other than in their fantasy. Thus, the mimetic representation of sex/gender that is often taken for granted in realist and naturalist drama can not be represented as real or predetermined by norms (religious, national, oedipal narrative) outside the theatrical staging taking place in the bathroom and perhaps even the theatre itself. Instead, sexual desire becomes its own production, suggesting that the men Bender and Binder long to attract are a product of theatricality, which the audience cannot take as fact or as grounded in a lived experience outside of their performance of difference. In this sense, rather than longing for the "man" they long for a fantasy of the man that consistently fails to satisfy as it, like Binder, misses its cued entrance.

On the opposite side of the stage, the place of men likewise does not produce the *male*. Baxter and Bone, who engage in similar fantasy "play," are consistently dissatisfied with their performances. Baxter enters the stage in Act I already playing the role of woman, arm linked with Bone who is eventually revealed to be the director of this particular fantasy:

> Baxter: (woman's voice) You're marvelous, darling you really are.
>
> Bone: (pointing to the wall) So you like it?
>
> Baxter: (examining the wall) It's exactly what we needed...exactly. (16)

Just as Binder misses her cue, Baxter alternates between ignoring his cues and speaking out of character—as Baxter, not woman. This scenario, like their other role-playing

sessions, dissembles into a hilarious parody of an argument between a presumed husband/wife about tea and buns, lack of money, and how the woman hardly sees her man anymore. Disagreements about how women do and should speak further interrupt their scenario:

> Baxter: (taking off women's clothes and shoes) Women don't talk like that!
>
> Bone: That one did! (unsure) How do women talk?
>
> Baxter: (putting on his own shoes) I don't know! They just talk, they never stop and there's no sense in anything they say, ever! Anyway I'm off!
>
> Bone: You're always leaving me here.
>
> Baxter: You could go somewhere yourself you know.
>
> Bone: Where?
>
> Baxter: Anywhere...just move around, I suppose.
>
> Bone: Here?
>
> Baxter: Here's as good as anywhere, it's just matter in motion, place is unimportant.
>
> Bone: Well, will we have some tea and buns before you head off?
>
> Baxter: Alright...but just tea for me. (19)

The pleasure Baxter and Bone experience in acting either the man or woman is heightened only to the extent that gender can be theatrically clarified in their scenario. Their production thus seems less like a performance and more like a rehearsal that has as its goal an eventual performance and opening night. Initially Baxter's slippages in character and interruptions that critique Bone's theatrical vision appear to be the eruption of an irrepressible masculine authority and knowledge to critique an inauthentic

production—"women don't talk like that"—and the reassertion of the phallic order that organizes gender and determines its signification and meaning. But when their play disintegrates and Baxter removes his feminine costume, the thematic conflicts of their play continue in a conversation among dramatists who are never fixed firmly as men. Similar to their conversations prior to and following the staged fantasies, Baxter and Bone each dis*play* suspiciously feminine longings for pregnancy and insecurities about being left behind, about their baking, and about their love for each other being recognized. All of which begs the questions: Who really "wears the pants" in their relationship? And what do pants really signify anyway?

Without the cause/effect or oedipal plotting of conventional drama, *Low in the Dark*, as one critic complains, dissolves into a staging of sex/gender stereotypes that either do not cohere or do not tackle stereotypes in any worthwhile or "meaningful" way. Which is precisely the line of reasoning at work in the play. Gerry Coglan, for instance, in his review for the *Irish Times* criticizes that "[t]here is little more than an accumulation of jokes. The pace had already begun to flag by the start of the second act, which disintegrated into forced farce, with bits of dance thrown in, up to a meaningless ending" (qtd in Sweeney 173). The lack of coherence, the "meaningless" quality Coglan finds so un-dramatic not only signals another representational system at work but also gestures toward a meaning that refuses to stay fixed, to conclude, to fully satisfy. In expressing his desire for drama to *mean*, Coglan becomes trapped in the very same fantasy of difference that characterizes Bender/Bender and Baxter/Bone, desiring that the staging of gender accumulate into something coherent and polished by the time the curtains close.

The theatricalization of sex/gender difference in Carr's play draws attention to the pretense of binary sex/gender difference as real, essential, and authenticating. If Bender/Binder's and Baxter/Bone's performances subvert the mechanisms of memory and authenticity that constitute sexual difference as binary, Curtains' covering "from head to toe" literally in curtains suggests that she does not operate within the same representational system as the other characters. Akin to the nomad, Curtains does not literally or metaphorically work in a binary, phallocentric system. This may in part explain Sarahjane Scaife's comment that Curtains' presence on stage intensified the already disconnected and fragmented dialogue between characters so that actors had to work hard to "not miss their cue." In a play in which a character's lines may or may not intersect with, connect to, or address another character's lines, as Scaife notes, a character's speech and expression of desire is not necessarily functioning on a logic of lack. Rather, Curtains' attire of curtains creates a conceptual log-jam of metaphoric meaning. Literalizing the connection between signifier and the signified—curtains as Curtains—"she" cannot be read either by her companions or by the audience according to conventional gender codes. Her covering and the presumably female body beneath are a source of repeated intrigue for the other characters. "Why does she never open her curtains? Even an inch!" complains Binder. Her mother concurs, "I'd love to rip them offer her! There's a life to be lived I'd say as I'd rip them off...it's not every woman can say that she's been loved" (7)!

Curtains, however, is not obsessed with being loved but rather with two things: curtain-like coverings of all kinds and telling the story of man and woman. Bender and Binder's window blinds hold a particular fascination for her, as does their shower curtain

which she attempts to abscond with at one point. And, in a strangely erotic moment of revealing what might lie beneath, Curtains proudly hands Bender and Binder a bit of her lingerie, a "slip" consisting of "strings of beaded wood, Indian-style curtains;" meanwhile, she adamantly refuses let them, and us, see how it shapes and/or sexily reveals her body (31). Curtains literally denies the pleasure of viewing woman as the object and product of a masculine gaze. This includes the theatrical audience as well as Bender and Binder, who preen and jockey for male attention, complying with patriarchal imperatives and conventions of feminine beauty. More artifact than woman, Curtains reframes how the feminine can be represented as an embodied subject. In this way, Curtains' self-chosen clothing, more so than the cross-dressing of Bender/Binder and Baxter/Bone, emerges a transgressive act, subverting the mechanisms of gender that rely on visual registers to locate the masculine in relation to a recognizable and, hence, authentic the feminine.

Curtains' lack of conventional gender signification is heightened by her lack of designated stage space, her lack of home. If for the other characters their designated "masculine" and "feminine" spaces are necessary for staging their memories and romantic fantasies, Curtains neither participates in their role-play nor belongs to their gendered arenas. Instead, Curtains wanders in between and through their spaces, always on the move, never settling down, represented in both her transgressing of stage space and her story. Curtain's mobility in many ways anticipates Braidotti's description of the nomad as "literally a "space" traveler, successively constructing and demolishing her/his living spaces before moving on. S/he functions in a pattern of repetitions which is not without order,

though it has no ultimate destination. The opposite of the tourist, the antithesis of the migrant, the nomadic traveler is uniquely bent upon the act of going, the passing through. Nomadism is form of intransitive becoming: it marks a set of transformations without end product" ("Difference"). Even after impregnating Baxter, Curtains does not heed the reproductive imperative to settle down, to reproduce again. She continues to move about in the between, behind and around the bathroom and wall, telling bits of a story about the unbridgeable distance between the sexes.[95]

Curtains' second obsession is a story of "a man and woman" who "before they ever met...had a dream" that they met (7). It is a story of fantasy, travel, and quest—the stuff of myth and legend—about two universal figures, "man" and "woman," who roam the earth together, sleeping in ditches, hitting old women, and arguing about nothing in particular. Although at times, they argue about crucial but hilarious particularities: "'Babies are for women,' the man said to the woman. 'I think we have a crisis on our hands,' the woman said..." (52). Even as Curtains' story opens and closes the play, recalling the Greek chorus, her story is never complete, unified, whole. Other characters repeatedly interrupt her telling or contribute their own notions of what happened next, all of which consistently sidetracks or stalls its telling. As a narrative, Curtain's story is far from cohesive; it has multiple beginnings, multiple middles, and multiple endings; and,

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[95] We encounter ripples of this gesture in Carr's later suicide plays, *The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan*, and *By the Bog of Cats...*, in which the characterization of female protagonists hinges on their being emotionally tethered to a particular place. The Mai, Portia, and Hester are women who have been left behind and await a loved one's return. The Mai waits for her husband, Hester for her mother, and Portia for her brother, each with tragic consequences. In *Low in the Dark,* the traveling or lost lover generates desire or, in Bender's case, quite literally fertilizes woman, and the lover's staged absence and traveling organizes action of what happens in a little changed bathroom and building site. However, what heightens elements of the absurd in *Low in the Dark* is Bender/Binder and Baxter/Bone's dedication to their place becomes an insurmountable obstacle in the later plays. Bender/Binder and Baxter/Bone maintain their separate spaces, just as Mai is tied to home, Hester to the bog, and Portia to the Belmont River.

akin to the communal writing of Carr's *Low in the Dark*, Bender, Binder, Baxter and Bone will each contribute bits and pieces of memory and innovative criticism to the story of man/woman.

That Curtains' story opens and closes the play, however, produces an illusion of coherence to the seemingly random actions and interactions of the characters. Upton notes, "In the absence of plot the action is held together by Curtains" ("Marina Carr"). I am less certain that Curtains' narrative works to "hold together" the action of the play, but rather, it seems more a more focused or correspondent dispersal of a sex/gender difference already dispersed from registers of convention and oedipal order. In other words, just as Curtains' dress seems to correspond to her name, her visible mobility on stage seems to correspond to the mobility characterizing the story of man/woman: "[T]he man and woman became like two people anywhere, walking low in the dark through a dead universe. There seemed no reason to go on. There seemed no reason to stop" (59).

Reminiscent of Beckett's closing lines of the speaking "I" in *The Unnamable*, "I can't go on. I'll go on," Curtains' story of a man and woman who meet but never meet extends experimental narrative to a staging of a feminist representation of sexual difference (414). Just as Beckett's narrative resists fatalism and extends the speaking subject into the possibility of its infinite continuation, Curtains' closing lines extend an invitation to tell stories as something other than the product of phallologocentric discourse and masculinist, oedipal narrative structures:

> One day the man looked out of his window. "It's time," he said. So he got up on his bicycle and he rode all over the earth and he cycled all over the sea. One evening as he was flying over the highways he saw the

> woman in his path. "Get out of my road," he yelled, but she would not. "I've two choices," the man said, "I can knock her down or I can stop." He did both. "You," she said, "if you have courage get off your bicycle and come with me." (99)

Having spoken these same lines twice before in the first act, Curtain's chorus-like "conclusion" repeats and returns us to what has come before with the resignification common to Greek drama and oedipal narratives. There is no great insight, death, vindication, or unifying summary to unify what Coglan bemoans as absent—meaning. Yet, neither is this closing meaningless. It invites and encourages a new kind of travel and gestures toward the possibility of resignifying and restaging drama and the story of sexed roles and the feminine aligned with a kind of nomadic "becoming" of a Deluezean "non-Oedipal woman, who refuses to function in the procreative socio-symbolic contract of phallocentrism." As Braidotti notes, "the non-Oedipal woman remains stubbornly and proudly polymorphous and therefore opposed to sexual difference as a metaphysically constituted polarity. In so far as the 'becoming woman' requires this rebellion against Oedipalized sexuality,...women, too, must undergo the process of deterritorialization or of "becoming" ("Nomadism with a Difference" 308).

If taken to be a literalizing of subjectivity, the nomadic coincides with the geographic mobility of a character and/or author; however, the representational capacity of nomadism is not inevitably restricted to a character's movements as I have addressed in the readings of anti-story and self-reflexivity in *The Prowler,*

anti-docu-tourism in *Visibility: Moderate* and what might be called, "theatrical sex," curtains, in *Low in the Dark.* The nomadic may have nothing to do with a subject's physical movement, but rather according to Braidotti, "it is the subversion of set conventions that defines the nomadic state, not the literal act of traveling" (5).

Structurally, the nomadic text and/or the nomadism of a text is quoted or parsed with difficulty, the "points" are less apparent as they are subordinated to the movement of the narrative. In this way, an academic discourse or project, including this dissertation, may restrict a nomadic narrative strategy that privileges pathways and the flow of ideas by marking and clarifying nomadic characteristics as a metaphor or allegory for Atlantic Rim women's writing. Relying in part on evidentiary models and point-based narrative orders—claim (point) and textual evidence (quotation)—critical writing lends itself to phallic order and imperatives of knowledge production and mastery. In my discussion of Atlantic Rim women's literature and film, the nomadic suits innovative and "experimental" writing and textual practices that resist coherence and unity, and instead create lines of flight, to evoke Deleuze and Guattari's terminology. These works privilege a kind of passing (with all of its mobile and performative connotations) along intersecting pathways informing the feminine and self rather than an insistence on the locations, points, and destinations of a cohesive, embodied feminine subject. It is not that points do not exist in nomadic thought, but as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, "points" are never a goal to be reached since they structure "sedentary" or conventional and statist models of knowledge and mastery. Instead, the point in nomadic writing becomes a relay, a site to be left behind and then returned to when trajectory allows.

ANYWHERE

In Lieu of Concl...

In the café of the Hilton, the speaker from Belfast says: Being a woman is a nationality I carry around with me.[96] She pauses, cradling the cup of coffee toward her lips and Woolf traveling her memory. Maeve Sweeney adores Virginia and gazes into the mirror behind the barista into another woman's eyes. Here, among morethancolleagues, conversation repeats, returns on the imag(e)ining of *woman.* Placing her cup on the table, Claire Dérive, full of thinking on whether writing that quotes was a repetition to be born or prohibited, slides the backs of her fingers along her neck feeling the vibrations of her response. If "woman is to be occupied and owned," a sighting of masculine imagination, a vision by lack, an image of a vesselized organ that also births a nation, I say none of us are to be a woman. Amy smiles, and with fingers and eye, she traces the steam of her tea, retracing the conversation back and further along since *woman has sex organs more or less everywhere.* She finds pleasure almost anywhere.[97] The café is crowded—Cyn observes we are surrounded by tourists, satchels of paper and laptops at our feet. Here in the Hilton a location is a location is a location that (dis)organizes our conference and not for the first time I notice Ash skipped the gathering.

I (who am not the writer Nicole Brossard or the filmmaker Nicola Bruce) remember us looking to Dublin for images of women who did not turn to stone, frozen on

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[96] From Pat Murphy's and John Davies' 1982 film *Maeve*, which is often credited in Irish Cinema studies as being the first "feminist" feature-length film (see: Martin McLoone and Kevin Rockett/Luke Gibbons)
[97] From *Maeve* and Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, 28.

the screen and resurrecting the eternal mother.[98] We spoke around the failures and through our fantasies of reclamation, the (re)claiming of an originary woman to ground our conversation and direct our (future) vision. Desires and dis/agreements bouncing as points light so that after tea, we walked to the beach, speaking out of our satchels and embracing other escapees. It was at the sea we spend the evening; many drinking wine and some swimming, and I lounge, gazing senselessly until the conversation turns once more to women and myth and Dublin and glimpses of ash on the horizon. The mention of Joyce at the conference, observes Elizete, all too easily hijacks discussion into the obsessions of fathers and sons and the night, the conversation trundles along as real. Voice: Is moving through the sea that much different than a city if seeking the feminine as if down in the depths? Either way, I have found maps an impossible metaphor offers Maria Delahunty, the geography of her pleasure more diversified, more multiple in its difference than is commonly imagined in an imaginary rather too narrowly focused on *reproducing* sameness.[99] Pouring the last of a bottle, a lover of Claire Dérive's rises to trace the sea through her toes and laughingly quotes: Studious girls, we will divert the course of fiction, dragging with us words turn in and turn about, igneous spiral, picture theory, an existence in these terms while the crepuscular bodies, we walk in the direction of the boat surrounded by tourists.[100]

Earlier, in line at the theatre, I write on the painted concrete with a pen from my satchel. Ash stands so close I can feel her breath upon my cheek, her hand moving with mine, calligraphy at the side of a building. **We need both political strategies and**

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[98] In reference to Nicole Brossard's experimental novel *Picture Theory* (1982/2006) and Nicola Bruce's memory film on Irish immigration to England *I Could Read the Sky* (1999).
[99] See Anne Enright's *What Are You Like?* and Irigaray's *This Sex*, 28.
[100] Brossard, *Picture Theory*, 100.

imaginary figurations that are adequate to our historicity, and I know we have read that somewhere before but it might have been anywhere.[101] *If I Could Read the Sky* proclaims the marquee, light escaping around the borders of black plastic letters—hung—and waiting to be rearranged. Now, there is an imperative the lover whispers and I tilt my head to the side and smile since her context is always multiple. A hologram another mobile figure of imagination, a future novel, a fiction of science. A visioning of light and mobility to be gazed through, read from potentially infinite number of angles, her text adjusts, iterates a touch of my hand. I watch from my seat located in the light from the screen as Bruce's returned Irish immigrant mourns his father's memory that was always partial, missing a whole story, a whole memory of the life of an immigrant, as unreadable as if written upon a sky-line. Amy says, "good," and I wonder if I will cry.

Hours before the theatre's last showing, Maeve Sweeney lounges naked on a cliché of a bedspread at the Hilton. She looks to herself in the mirror and her direction challenges us to see her other than as a man sees a woman. She is a figure(ative) seduction and her performance stirs us to think otherwise even as she apologizes for the seating she has arranged for us upon her suitcases. She speaks lecture-style as is her wont, and our conversation begins to swirl, returning over the words of the sea, rocky pathways, and back alleys of Belfast, Dublin, London, Toronto, and the place of our island convention center. Our location becoming ruse and fantasy.

I remember that Claire Dérive speaks, impressing each of us with her surety for response and I strain to detect her desire to control my e/motions. She places her cup on the table and turns to rummage through her bag for pen and paper. At the source of each

[101] From Rosi Braidotti's essay "Difference, Diversity and Nomadic Subjectivity."

emotion, she or another writes (there is an abstraction whose effect is the emotion but whose consequences derive from the fixity of the gaze and ideas. Each abstraction is a potential form in mental space. And when the abstraction takes shape, it inscribes itself radically as enigma and affirmation. Resorting to abstraction is a necessity for the woman who, tempted by existence, invents the project of going beyond routine daily anecdotes and the memories of Utopia she meets each time she uses language).[102] And I respond that my memory confuses time, is multiple and in forgetting this I too often anxiously move to seek. If becoming becomes seeking, it's missed the boat quips Cyn—always a lover of the cliché for its nothingness.

The elevator is at the center of the hotel and it carries us up and down from our entrance to the floors above and below. It is a strange and often empty heart, pumping along a cable and containing numerous safety features lest it move too fast or get out of line. I ride with Claire, Rosie, Cyn and the numerous others and the writing I's in a dimly lit interior—hung—waiting for the doors to open. A limited form of transport sighs Elizete who fantasizes the doors may open between floors, affording a leap to elsewhere. Gravity beckons. I reach into my satchel for the typewritten, the handwritten, the anxiously written and I toss them mid-destination into the air, they hang, folding around and amongst themselves. Language is feverish I remember reading not just anywhere but potentially from anywhere.[103] And finally, we move about into the city or wander along the beach paths as is our want. Light refracts off the text of our skin, altering the shape of the air brushing our bodies and I reach toward what I will write next.

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[102] Brossard, *Picture Theory*, 77.
[103] Brossard, 167.

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