EMBODYING HISTORY: THE MEMOIRS OF CANADIAN FEMALE POLITICAL TRAILBLAZERS

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to show how Canadian women's political memoirs form a subgenre of their own, distinct from Canadian men's political memoirs and that these memoirs operate according to certain strict narrative conventions because of the limited ways in which women politicians can express themselves and act within male-dominated institutions like parliaments. The distinctive aspects of women's political memoirs are illustrated by the narrative anecdotes, descriptions, and commentary that are present within their 'trailblazing narratives' and the mechanisms through which the subgenre of political memoir functions (i.e. through anecdotes, narrative description, and other narrative strategies).

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Introduction - 'You Can’t Go in There Miss': The Subgenre of Canadian Women’s Political Memoirs

"Over the years, [Agnes] MacPhail found her time in Ottawa deeply alienating, an early foreshadowing of Kim Campbell’s ‘unspeakable loneliness.’ ‘The misery of being under observation and being unduly criticized is what I remember most’ she wrote years later. ‘Visitors in the gallery couldn’t help seeing one woman among so many men, but they made no effort to disguise the fact that I was a curiosity and stared at me whenever I could be seen.’ MacPhail felt the hostility of a harshly impenetrable system. ‘I couldn’t open my mouth to say the simplest thing without appearing in the paper. I was a curiosity, a freak. And you know the way the world treats freaks.’ Treatment by male MPs was little better. ‘I was intensely unhappy,’ she wrote. ‘Some members resented my intrusion, others jeered at me, while a very few were genuinely glad to see a woman in the House. Most of the members made me painfully conscious of my sex” - Sydney Sharpe, Gilded Ghetto

"Why do we so easily forget that the first person of autobiography is truly plural in its origins and subsequent formation?” –Paul J. Eakin, How Our Lives Become Stories

As Canada’s first female Member of Parliament, Agnes MacPhail encountered discrimination from the very moment she arrived in Ottawa. According to Jane Arscott and Linda Trimble in Still Counting: Women in Politics Across Canada, “when Canada’s first female MP, Agnes MacPhail, tried to enter the House of Commons in 1921, an employee blocked her way. ‘You can’t go in there, Miss!’ she was told” (104). It is just this sort of sex-based interdiction that many politicians and political commentators claim has sidelined and discouraged women in Canadian politics from MacPhail’s time to the present (Sharpe 1994; Tremblay 1998; Trimble 2003; Sawer 2006; Edwards 2008). Indeed, according to Sydney Sharpe in Gilded Ghetto: Women and Political Power in Canada, *ask Canada’s women politicians a few simple questions – ‘What’s your life like?’ or ‘Is it harder for you?’ – and the result is a remarkable torrent of anger, resentment, satisfaction, regret, shrewd perception, and guerrilla humour. [...] Their conclusions are virtually unanimous: yes, political life was harder for them, and it is still difficult for women today” (xiii-xiv).

But one need not necessarily ask Canada’s women politicians these questions in order to explore how Canadian women politicians contextualize and understand their experiences in Canadian politics. Some female Canadian politicians have already written autobiographies or memoirs that address these
very issues. The story of Canadian women politicians' progress or, more accurately, the story of how these women's progress has been repeatedly impeded and stymied, has been narrated in political memoirs written by many of the key female political figures of the last century including Nellie McClung (a member of the Famous Five and an Albertan MLA) who wrote *A Clearing in the West* (1935) and *The Stream Runs Fast* (1945), Judy LaMarsh (the first female Secretary of State) who wrote *Memoirs of a Bird in a Gilded Cage* (1969), Thérèse Casgrain (the first female party leader) and the author of *A Woman in a Man's World* (1972), and Ellen Fairclough (Canada's first female federal cabinet minister), who called her memoir *Saturday's Child* (1995). The texts written by these women contribute immensely to the greater historical narrative of Canadian women by documenting the experiences and advancements of women within the field of politics, by recording how these women helped advance women's causes while in power, by tracing the opposition to women's political emancipation, and by exploring the ways in which female politicians came to understand and narrate their experiences. In fact, Canadian women politicians have written approximately a dozen memoirs and autobiographies over the years that work to create an alternative history that emphasizes female perspectives, constructs a female narrative tradition, and reveals the paucity of women in Canadian halls of power.

These texts vary greatly in scope from traditional memoirs of women's time in political life, to more encompassing autobiographies of female politicians' lives. According to academic William Zinsser in *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*: “memoir was defined as some portion of a life. Unlike autobiography, which moves in a dutiful line from birth to fame, omitting nothing, memoir assumes the life and ignores most of it. [...] By narrowing the lens, the writer achieves a focus that's not possible in autobiography. Memoir is a window into a life” (11). For the purpose of this study, I intend to refer to both the memoirs and autobiographical texts written by female politicians as political memoirs, as it is primarily the political aspects of the works that I am interested in. While I will be calling the texts memoirs, I will also
be utilizing autobiography and life writing criticism to analyze them under the understanding that this criticism is part of the larger life writing genre and therefore applicable to memoirs as well.

While the tradition of Canadian women politicians writing memoirs began with Nellie McClung and continued through the works of LaMarsh, Casgrain, and Fairclough, I have chosen to concentrate my study on Canadian women’s political memoirs from one particular historical period (the mid-1980s to the present) in order to analyze the particularities of the genre and to investigate how historically specific institutions of parliament shape their narratives. The decision to focus on one historical period made it necessary for me to concentrate on more contemporary memoirs since there was not a repository of memoirs from earlier periods, and because, prior to the 1980s, there were not a significant number of women who were in politics at the same time. This does not preclude me from utilizing the texts of Canadian women politicians from other historical time periods as examples of the continuity and rigidity of the subgenre of women’s political memoirs; however the texts that I will be principally analyzing were all written during the last 25 years and explore the experiences of women who have been in politics during this period. In my study, I include analysis of Being Brown: A Very Public Life (1989) by Rosemary Brown, Time and Chance (1996) by Kim Campbell, Trade Secrets (2000) by Pat Carney, Worth Fighting For (2004) and Nobody’s Baby (1986) by Sheila Copps, Never Retreat, Never Explain, Never Apologize (2004) by Deborah Gray, A Woman’s Place (1992) by Audrey McLaughlin and No Laughing Matter (2008) by Margaret Mitchell.

These texts feature a common and defining theme: each of the women who has written her political memoir has in some way been the ‘first woman’ in her arena or role. It is for this reason that I call the memoirs of these Canadian politicians ‘trailblazing narratives,’ a term that I explore in greater detail in Chapter Two. The literal definition of trailblazing means to mark a path through the woods with blazes or markers so that others may follow, while the more commonly used and metaphorical definition of trailblazer
means "an innovative leader in a field; a pioneer" ('Trailblazer'). This definition of the word is often used with reference to women who are among the first in their field of endeavour to succeed and is also often used in the context of political life. The trailblazer is therefore a metaphor through which we come to understand women politicians' experiences and texts. The association of the trailblazer with the pioneer is both inevitable and intentional within this study because the term trailblazer seeks to invoke the mythos of the pioneer figure. Indeed, the term pioneer has "been popularly used to describe those who are the first to do a particular job" ('Pioneers'). As we shall see in greater detail in Chapter Two, the metaphor of the trailblazer/pioneer is used in the texts of women politicians in order to emphasize the stories of "isolation, loneliness [...] and unbearably hard work" common to pioneer narratives ('Pioneers'). The fact that these female authors were the first women in one or more of the political positions they occupied is significant for the content and structure of their texts. The women often identify themselves as trailblazers and therefore structure their stories around elements that are common features of what I call 'trailblazing plots.'

'Trailblazing plots' principally feature attempts to create or to discover a heritage of other trailblazers (in this case, a search for political foremothers), descriptions of discrimination against a trailblazer, elaborations of a desire to unite with other trailblazers, and evidence of a consciousness of or a desire to produce a political heritage or lineage (in this case, a desire for political 'daughters'). Trailblazing plots also convey the memoirists' hope that their lives and their texts will work to create change for women and continue the process of political emancipation for women. This activist purpose is an interesting aspect of Canadian political memoirs by women.¹ Activist desires are largely absent from the memoirs of male politicians who tend to contextualize their lives in terms of more individualistic life scripts and who write their memoirs without an activist teleology, as we will see in Chapter One.
The opposition that I draw between the memoirs of male politicians and female politicians and the emphasis that I sometimes place on the similarities among women's memoirs make it imperative that I state what I am not trying to do in this study and to explain what I am trying to do in a nuanced manner. I am not trying, not to accomplish a detailed exploration of political memoirs in Canada, but rather to identify what I have come to believe is a sub-genre of women's political memoirs. This is not to say that there are no similarities between the memoirs of male and female politicians in Canada (a claim which would be both absurd to make and impossible to prove) but rather to suggest that the plot structure and the themes of women's memoirs are different from those of memoirs written by male politicians and to suggest some possible reasons for those differences. In reading Canadian women's political memoirs, I was struck by the similarities between some of the stories told and the sentiments expressed and I believe that those similarities make productive material for the analysis of how women's memoirs are constructed and how women's political memoirs in particular function to resist sexism within political institutions. This analysis is therefore not designed to take autobiographical and life writing criticism back to the era in which the 'essential feminine' was deemed the source of women's textual difference, but rather to employ autobiographical and life writing concepts and theory to look at how social and institutional constructions of gender shape the way memoirs are constructed.

Indeed, due to the gender imbalance in Canadian parliaments (Appendix A) and the way these institutions treat women politicians, women politicians' narratives order themselves around their gendered experiences of political life. While all of the women memoirists write individuated stories about their lives that reflect their different geographical, racial, temporal, and class positionalities, their stories are structured around certain plot and narrative touchstones that are common to female political memoirs. I am not arguing that the narratives of women politicians remain static, nor am I saying that they are identical, but rather I am suggesting that what women politicians talk about in their memoirs (specifically in regards to
sexism in political institutions) is remarkably similar even though the ways in which they talk about it may be different and may evolve over time. I believe these narratives to be constructed through a variety of complex and interconnected factors including experience, memory, institutions, language, form, and personal agency.

Of course, I do not suggest that women's narrativized experiences of their political lives necessarily cohere with a 'reality' or a 'truth' of their experience. By using the word 'experience' I wish to refer to an understanding of experiences developed by Joan Wallach Scott. According to Scott in her essay 'Experiences,' "it is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience. Experience in this definition then becomes not the origin of our explanation, not the authoritative (because seen or felt) evidence that grounds what is known, but rather that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced" (60). Thus, in this conception of the term, experience is something that creates individuals. Therefore, the memoir, in its attempt to convey the author's identity and life, is necessarily connected to experience in both direct and indirect ways. In this context, the experiences of women in politics construct the women as individuals and then those women attempt to understand and convey both themselves and this experience by revisiting them through narrative, wherein their selves and their narratives are continually constructed in the process. As a result, the process of transferring experience into narrative is never a direct or uncomplicated endeavour, and I am in no way suggesting in my analysis that it is.

Indeed, I do not believe the political memoirs are direct representations of the memoirists' realities. I believe as Leigh Gilmore does that we must distrust the common "notion that autobiography is somehow closer to real life than any other kind of writing" (79) since "autobiography demonstrates that we can never recover the past, only represent it" (86). Because autobiography must mediate 'truth' or 'experience'
through language, memoir is always a problematic representation of reality. This is further complicated by what Mikhail Bakhtin describes as the social dimension of narrative (or, as Bakhtin calls it, discourse): “discourse is a social phenomenon – social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning” (259). Therefore, narrative is also constructed by social expectations and through a dialectic with other discourses, including the memoirs of other women politicians.

The polyphony or heteroglossia of the narratives is also complicated by the positionality of the writer and her audience. As poet Stephen Spender suggests, “an autobiographer is really writing the story of two lives: his life as it appears to himself [...] and his life as it appears from the outside in the minds of others; a view which tends to become in part his own view of himself” (as qtd by Egan 2). Thus, as the political memoirists narrate their lives, they also position their lives for the reader. But the nature of memory also affects how the narrative is told, thus further complicating direct relationships between the narrative and ‘reality’ or ‘experience.’ According to Smith and Watson in Reading Autobiography, “narrated memory is an interpretation of a past that can never be fully recovered” (16). Thus, there are no easy parallels to be drawn between the experiences of women politicians and their texts. The relationship is instead like the relationship between a map (the memoir) to the land itself (the experience of the women politicians). The map is only tangentially related and representative of the actual land. Thus, the memoirs of women politicians are useful as maps to their experiences but should not be confused with direct representations.

There is also a tendency for the autobiographical form to construct the ways in which one’s life story is told. Indeed, as Leigh Gilmore contends in Autobiographics, “the autobiographical subject is produced not by experience but by autobiography” (25). I therefore acknowledge that the writing of a memoir is a construction of a narrative that is ideologically expected to tell the ‘truth’ about the reality of an
experience, but that this construction takes place with no direct access to the 'real' and therefore is another process or technology that works to invent the subject. While Gilmore sees this strategy in opposition to experience, I see experience and form working together to negotiate the subject and the text. In my analysis of the memoirs of Canadian political figures, I attempt to refrain from collapsing the difference between narrative and experience, or between memoir and the 'real,' but I also believe it is important to theorize the source of the similarities and differences within women's political memoirs by looking at the extra-textual situation of women in politics in Canada. I believe that such an analysis is in line with the activist purpose that the women memoirists identify in their texts, insofar as they claim to be explicitly using their texts as a way to change political institutions by recounting their experiences within those institutions. Thus, what has happened outside their textual accounts is important to an understanding and analysis of what happens within their textual accounts. In other words, these texts do not exist in a political and discursive vacuum but are the products of a confluence of forces that work upon female political memoirists and account for many of the similarities within their narratives.

I work throughout this study from the position that our acceptance of a particular narrative as the truth has "less to do with that text's presumed accuracy about what really happened than with its apprehended fit into culturally prevalent discourses of truth and identity" (Gilmore 1). But despite this understanding that narrative positionalities are, in many ways, prefigured by how narratives are constructed, my analysis will privilege the idea that the writer also has a degree of agency as the "agent in autobiographical production" (Gilmore 25). This agency is eloquently described by Annie Dillard as an authorial decision: "the writer of any first-person work must decide two obvious questions: what to put in and what to leave out" (as qtd in Gunn 13). Therefore, narrative choice is important in reflecting both the identity and the experiences of the memoirists and this choice accounts for many of the divergences between the narratives of women politicians, as well as for the similarities. For example, in Chapter Two,
consider the personal and political reasons Deborah Grey does not address whether or not she is a feminist, whereas most of the other women do.

While the pressures exerted upon the writer to conform to various cultural and institutional norms are extreme, the political memoirist also has her own authorial imperatives. How the story is told will obviously be affected by the image that the political figure would like to put forth and the person that the political figure has become. All memoirists give in to what is often called 'the original sin of autobiography' which historian George Egerton describes as "the tendency to retroject perspectives and motives, to rationalize behaviour, to attribute present-minded meaning to past experience" (Egerton, Political 347). This tendency to mediate the past self through the present self is also complicated by a desire to create meaning out of past events or, as Egerton says, "to neaten things up,' to exaggerate intentionality in treating past success, to rationalize failures, and particularly to find a unity and pattern in the disorder of past political strife" (Egerton, Political 347). All of these narratological 'sins' are autobiographical traps that foreground the inability of the memoirist to present even an objective account of her own subjective experience in politics, let alone any mediation on the 'reality' of Canadian political institutions. I will thus focus on investigating why women might write the narratives they do, what they seem to desire those narratives to accomplish, and what the narratives seem to actually accomplish.

It must also be stated that it is significant that the texts that I have chosen to study are Canadian women's political memoirs and not merely women's political memoirs in general or North American political memoirs in particular. The decision to group my study of women's political memoirs around a country of origin was made because of the relative uniformity of institutions of parliament and political parties in Canada at both the federal and provincial levels. 2 Only one other study has been done of female political memoirs, Raylene Ramsay's French Women in Politics: Writing Power, Paternal Legitimation and Maternal
Legacies. The anecdotes and experiences recounted in French political women’s memoirs, while sometimes similar to the anecdotes and experiences recounted in Canadian women’s political memoirs were also often different. While there are many themes that run throughout female political memoirs in general (for example, the tendency to disapprove of what Ramsay calls the “ego-flashing and antler-crashing” of politics), there are also many differences relative to place, cultural context, and the ways in which the political system operates (for example, many French female politicians have to negotiate their feelings about the fact that they were often appointed to cabinet by an elected male politician without first being elected) (9). Many factors create the differences between the stories of Canadian women politicians’ experiences and those of French women politicians, including different institutional structures and different national media cultures. What remains the same, however, is the shocking similarity in the way texts were structured by female politicians who had experienced life in politics within the same institutional and cultural structures. But it is because of the similarities between the texts that I use Ramsay’s study of French women’s political memoirs to help read Canadian women’s political memoirs. My thesis will thus only attempt to outline a subgenre or a theory of women’s political memoir contextualized within Canadian women’s political memoirs. Although I find connections between the uniformity of Canadian women’s experiences in politics and the uniformity of other national groups of women in politics, these connections arise from and must be seen as part of historically, institutionally, and culturally specific circumstances that construct women within these contexts in the same ways, instead of based on an essentialism ascribed to politics, institutions, culture, or women.

My thesis is divided into four parts: two chapters and an introduction and a conclusion. The first chapter, ‘Strictly Female: Women Politicians’ Embodied Narratives,’ explores how the body mediates and shapes the identities of political women within both politics and political memoir by using concepts formulated by feminist academic Elisabeth Grosz. In this section, Grosz’s notion that “bodies become
emblems, heralds, badges, theatres, tableaus of social laws and rights" is especially useful (118). I intend to show how female politicians' bodies become differentiated 'emblems' within the undifferentiated mass of male politicians' bodies, something which Audrey McLaughlin foregrounds: "when you stand up in the House to speak, you look out over a sea of blue and grey - the men in their club uniform, the business suit. Here and there will be a splash of colour: the women. When you walk into your first committee meeting, chances are you'll be the only woman" (26). Women's bodies are, therefore, foregrounded in political institutions both for others and for themselves. This then leads women to write their memoirs from a position strongly identified as female. I suggest that the way female politicians experience and contextualize political life within their memoirs is fundamentally 'embodied' because their biological sex becomes a primary ordering mechanism of their political lives and because the narratives they construct from those experiences are also fundamentally embodied. Although men also experience some of this embodied gender scrutiny, the intensity of the scrutiny applied to the bodies of female politicians is far more extreme (as shown, for example, by reporters' obsession with Sheila Copps' weight, Kim Campbell's clothes, or Audrey McLaughlin's voice) and is then translated into how women contextualize and organize their experiences in narrative form.

In this chapter, I will explore how the texts of Canadian women's political memoirs follow certain conventions observed in women's writing and women's autobiographies: conventions that are elaborated by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, Paul Eakin, and Raylene Ramsay. I will suggest that these conventions are followed because of the ways in which women's bodies are treated within political institutions. I will look at how these conventions are markedly different from those found in men's political autobiographies from the same period, such as those written by Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin, and Brian Mulroney and how this difference might be connected to the naturalization and privileging of male sex and gender characteristics within the political sphere. This analysis is inspired by observations made by Estelle
C. Jelinek regarding how men "aggrandize themselves in autobiographies" while women "seek to authenticate themselves" (as qtd in Smith and Watson, Women 9). I explore how women's political autobiographies, despite their differences, form a subgenre of their own, separate from the subgenre of men's political memoirs (which is often simply termed the subgenre of 'political memoirs' by critics), which operates according to certain strict narrative conventions because of the limited ways in which women can express themselves and act within male-dominated institutions like parliaments.

In the second chapter, 'I Fight for Women: Women Politicians' Trailblazing Narratives,' I begin by focusing on key differences within the autobiographies of the female politicians whose works I will be studying. Factors such as party affiliation, geographical location, and socioeconomic status are suggested as potential reasons for the differences being analyzed. I also touch briefly on how a woman's race becomes foregrounded in politics and political autobiography through Susan Friedman's and Gillian Whitlock's analysis of how race intersects with gender which I apply to the memoir of African Canadian Rosemary Brown. These differences within the memoirs are illustrated by the narrative anecdotes, descriptions, and commentary that are present within 'trailblazing narratives' and the mechanisms through which the subgenre of political memoir functions. In particular, I examine the similar anecdotes the women tell and how these anecdotes are deployed within the texts.

Among the similar anecdotes featured in these narratives that resist and indict the 'Old Boys Club' and the gendered institutions of parliament, are the descriptions of the lack of washrooms for female politicians (a situation mentioned by Copps, Campbell, Brown, Carney, McLaughlin, and Grey), and the struggle to be heard and respected as female politicians (a struggle identified by Copps, Campbell, McLaughlin and Grey). The purpose of my exploration of the subgenre's similar analysis of sexism in parliament is to look at how these authors/politicians construct their lives and texts in relation to the
stereotypical narratives that they have inherited. Part of this study will entail looking at how all of these female figures spend a significant portion of their memoirs addressing the gendered comments society and the media have made about them and reshaping their legacies and identities in a consciously gendered way that is different from the narratives of male political autobiographers. In contrast, the memoirs of their political contemporaries, Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin, and Brian Mulroney, although marked by gender, are not consciously gendered in the same way. Finally, in the conclusion, 'Worth Fighting For: Women's Political Memoirs as Activist Texts,' I will explore the activist nature of women's memoirs and how their texts are specifically organized in order to create change and construct a political climate in which women are better appreciated and included.

The purpose of this study is to provide a textual analysis of a group of important historical texts that have largely been neglected in academic circles. This study is also an attempt to demonstrate how discriminatory institutions force women memoirists to construct their narratives around the bodies and the genders through which these institutions define them. My study will investigate how women's textual identities are constructed and how women are forced to engage with the sexist dialogues of identity prevalent in Canadian parliamentary institutions.
Chapter 1: ‘Strictly Female’: Women Politicians’ Embodied Narratives

My intention is not to produce a weighty, comprehensive account of the ‘Chrétien years.’ I’ll leave that task to scholars and historians. Instead, I want to write an informative and highly personal recollection of my decade as prime minister – to tell it as I saw it. - Jean Chrétien, My Years as Prime Minister.

This book, however, is not a definitive autobiography: it is a political memoir – my story of how ‘a nice girl like me wound up in a place like that.’ – Kim Campbell, Time and Chance

To begin to outline a genre of Canadian women’s political memoirs, one need necessarily look at political memoirs in general. However, any attempt to do this is complicated by the unfortunate lack of academic attention given to political memoirs. Political memoirs are often popularist texts, read by a public eager to hear the backroom gossip of its powerful few, and they are texts that are not often engaged by critics. One theory for this is the fact that the form is difficult to categorize: “political memoir represents [...] a complex and predatory polygenre. [...] It is perhaps this very unconventionality and polymorphous composition which contributes most to memoir’s multi-faceted popular appeal while troubling its critics” (Egerton xiii-xiv). Indeed, it is not always obvious exactly which scholarly perspective would be best suited to an analysis of political memoirs. Because women’s political memoirs recount historical events in political life, the memoirs have an interdisciplinary appeal that could interest those in political science, history, or literature. But according to historian George Egerton in Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory, the political memoir’s “severest critics would dismiss any such claim, asserting that writings by politicians justifying their careers are inherently flawed and seldom likely to produce accurate history, convincing political analysis, or literature of enduring merit. Moreover, the parameters marking political memoir off from other genres or types of writing often appear indistinct” (Egerton xii).

While it might be true that the sub-genre of political memoirs is difficult to categorize and the texts are often inherently flawed, this does not necessarily foreclose on the possibility or negate the importance
of their analysis. In the context of literary studies, political memoirs are interesting because they engage with a number of the theoretical issues that the field of life writing probes. Political memoirs complicate representations of public and private lives, problematize the links between narrative and experience, and question conceptions of how narratives function and how they can be told. Women's political memoirs, in particular, explore how the ways in which women experience institutions specifically as women impact how they then contextualize and speak about those institutions and experiences within narratives and texts. Therefore, in this chapter, I will examine how discourses about female bodies within society, the media, and political institutions structure women politicians’ identities and experiences and lead women to react and respond to these discourses within their memoirs. Indeed, as we will see, women's political memoirs are written explicitly as embodied texts because their biological sex, and the way in which their sexed bodies are treated, suffuse their experiences, and consequentially, their narratives about those experiences. I will also explore how the texts of Canadian women's political memoirs follow certain conventions observed in women's writing and women's autobiographies as well as certain conventions specific to women's political 'trailblazing narratives.' I will look at how these conventions are markedly different from those found in men's political memoirs from the same period, such as those written by Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin, and Brian Mulroney, and how this difference might be connected to the naturalization and privileging of male sex and gender characteristics within the political sphere. Finally, I will spotlight these differences by doing a close reading of this chapter's opening quotes which showcase the differences between Campbell's and Chrétien's reasons for and philosophies towards writing their memoirs.

Female bodies function in a myriad of different ways within the texts of women's political memoirs. Women are read and read themselves as female actors and bodies within these realms and therefore it is not surprising that they also explicitly write themselves as female actors and bodies. The institutions themselves, and the people and powers that construct those institutions, shape how women politicians'
lives and narratives are told. The forces that shape women's discourses into female embodied narratives are complex and multifarious but can be categorized into three main processes: the discriminatory discourses and beliefs of society in general, the beliefs and discourses perpetuated by the media, and the discrimination of colleagues and the institutions of parliament themselves. These processes function in a feedback loop in which each supports and encourages the other (i.e. society's perception of women politicians influences how the media reports on them, which in turn influences how the institutions treat women, and so on).

Canadian female politicians often recount eerily similar experiences and discourses of discrimination at the hands of a society influenced by stereotypical and traditional conceptions of women. One salient example is what I will call the 'narrative of misrecognition' that Audrey McLaughlin, Rosemary Brown, and Deborah Grey tell about people who are unable to believe that they were legislators. McLaughlin, upon first arriving in Ottawa, went to get her identification pin and was confronted by a perplexed secretary who couldn't find her name. When McLaughlin suggested that it might be because she was just elected in a by-election the secretary replied: "oh, dear [...] I thought you were a spouse. I've been looking at the wrong list!" (McLaughlin 26). Similarly, Deborah Grey once encountered a man on a plane whom she informed that she was a member of parliament and whom then asked her which one she worked for. Upon realizing his mistake, the man told her: "oh, I am so sorry. I heard the words 'Member of Parliament' and could quite clearly see that you were a woman. I assumed you were just a secretary" (Grey 102). In Brown's version of the story, she is dancing with a man at an event who asks her: "who are you? [...] How is it that our paths have never crossed before?" 'I'm Rosemary Brown,' I replied. He was convulsed with laughter. / 'Don't be silly! You couldn't be that man-hating battle axe – you are wonderful'" (Brown 230).

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This inability to recognize the female politician as a politician highlights how natural people believe it is for men to be in positions of political power and how abnormal they think it is for women to be in positions of political power. In each of these cases, it does not occur to these men and women that the women they are talking to could be politicians or, in Brown’s case, that someone as attractive and genial as she was could be that dreadful creature: the ‘female politician.’ The genders and bodies of these women take precedence in the eyes of the perceivers and the politicians are circumscribed in the perceivers’ minds into stereotypical female roles while the possibility that they could have political power is deemed ridiculous. These anecdotes of misrecognition are important because they display the ways in which gender and sex determine how female politicians are perceived and treated within institutions of parliament and in society at large. But these anecdotes are also interesting because of the way they are used within the memoirs of women politicians. In Deborah Grey’s memoir, her anecdote is then followed by her response, which was to tell the man that she does have a secretary and his name is Robert (102). She tells this anecdote both to narrate an experience where she questioned “how far we have come in terms of true equality” (Grey 101), as well as to laugh at the gentleman whom she calls a “poor sucker” (Grey 102). Similarly, in Brown’s memoir the gentleman comes off as a sexist whom the reader is invited to laugh at as he “twirls [Brown] around the room, laughing about [Brown] having tried to put one over him” (230). McLaughlin sees less levity in the situation, and instead believes it is indicative of a greater culture of male dominance in parliament, something which she gestures towards by including the anecdote near the beginning of a chapter called ‘The Men’s Club.’ McLaughlin says that “at the time, I thought the incident was funny, but it proved to be a portent that I had entered an alien world” (26). Thus, this anecdote often has two functions: to recount the discrimination that women politicians face and to call out or mock that discrimination and those who perpetuate it. Therefore, the memoirists/politicians naturalize women in political power, while denaturalizing those who oppose women in political power by circulating different
discourses and critiquing the discriminatory discourses about women in power that currently exist. These actions constitute a concerted effort on the part of the women memoirists to 'write back' to the discrimination they experience.

The memoirists’ resistance to this discrimination, and their attempts to cope with working in an environment that is often hostile to their very gender by circulating new discourses about women in politics, creates a situation where the narratives of their experiences as women politicians structure themselves around certain events deemed 'metonymic' of their experience, which they recount as representative anecdotes within their texts. As we will see in Chapter Two, women’s political memoirs utilize a type of narrative metonymy, which Raymond Gibbs calls "a fundamental part of our conceptual system," to recount their experiences of discrimination (320). This process allows people to take "one well understood or easily perceived aspect of something to represent or stand for the thing as a whole" (Gibbs 320). These metonymic anecdotes are crucial to their attempt to write back to and contest the treatment that they experienced in politics and cause women to often tell similar stories like these 'narratives of misrecognition' in order to gesture towards the constitutive experiences of women’s political life.

Part of the discriminatory treatment that women politicians receive comes from how the media covers them. According to political scientists Linda Trimble and Jane Arscott in Still Counting, to the political media "women are anomalies; they are not men; they do not fit in" (98). While this is also true for women in other male-dominated spheres, it is particularly amplified in the political realm because of the public nature of politics. Discriminatory attitudes about women and their bodies in politics get played out in the media, thus perpetuating and reinforcing attitudes about women’s bodies within a wider societal context. According to Elizabeth Grosz in Volatile Bodies: "Women have been objectified and alienated as social subjects partly through the denigration and containment of the female body" (xiv). The extreme
attention paid to Canadian women politicians' bodies by the media, and the ways in which the bodies of Canadian women politicians become central organizing features of the lives of these women and of their memoirs, shows how the bodies of women politicians are used to marginalize them.

Indeed, gendered attitudes about where women belong and how women should behave get played out within media coverage of political institutions. According to Trimble and Arscott, "the mass media persist in judging women leaders according to a gendered yardstick and, not surprisingly, tend to suggest that women just do not measure up" (Counting 98). Within this context, the private or personal aspects of women are emphasized over the public aspects of their politics: "journalists domesticate female party leaders by highlighting their femininity, looks, clothing, relationships, and the tone of their voices — anything but their political skills and policy acumen" (Arscott 98). This tendency reinforces discourses that have circumscribed women's bodies to the domestic and private realm and denied them access to the male-dominated public realm. By being women and having women's bodies within political institutions, the women memoirists are contravening societal codes that deem women's bodies to be at the service of men. As Catherine MacKinnon puts it, "The private is everything women have been equated with and defined in terms of men's ability to have" (as quoted in Boyd 91). Thus, by becoming politicians and entering the public sphere, women are subverting the public-private dichotomy that places men in positions of prominence and casts women as either their wives or their secretaries, as the 'misrecognition anecdote' suggests.

Indeed, when women's bodies become 'public,' the media is intensely interested in how women look. Writes Anne Edwards:

Matters of appearance and manner are kept strictly to females. As Sydney Sharpe wrote in The Gilded Ghetto, "The urge to justify physical appearance simply never occurs to male politicians because their sexuality is not an issue." Ida Chong observed that the media,
when writing about a male, describes “his actions, even about a decision that he made.” But when journalists write about women, “they usually write about how old they’re looking now, how much weight they’ve gained since they got into politics, or something that has nothing to do with their abilities or their minds.”

(78)

The tendency for the media to cover female politicians in ways that foreground their gendered appearance and body is exemplified in the following excerpt from an article about Kim Campbell in The Montreal Gazette: “her face was most feminine: exceptionally mobile and expressive, with the shadowed blue eyes widening and narrowing, the eyebrows rising and falling, the forehead wrinkling, the lips pursing, parting, often breaking into a sudden smile” (as qtd in Sharpe 13). It is clear in this excerpt that the coverage of women politicians often exaggerates the feminine aspects of female politicians to the point that gender sometimes eclipses politics. Women are covered by the media in this manner because they are judged first and foremost on their appearance. By contrast, “perfect or flawed, handsome or plain, [male politicians] are judged first as politicians” (Sharpe 16). None of the male politicians’ memoirs that I have read deals with responses to the media’s attacks on their appearance, because attacking male politicians on their appearance rarely happens.5

This is not to say that the bodies of male politicians have no significance or are ignored within the political realm. After all, during the height of ‘Trudeaumania,’ Pierre Trudeau’s good looks were fetishized and the media acknowledged that Stephen Harper had gained weight when he posed in fatigues during a March 2006 trip to Afghanistan. Despite these instances in which men’s bodies are discussed or desired, generally women’s and men’s bodies are treated very differently in politics. While women’s bodies stand out in the political realm because there are so few of them, men’s bodies blend in. Generally, the media covers men as universal subjects and women as gendered subjects. As Audrey McLaughlin asks, “how often have you read a newspaper report about a male politician that began like this? ‘Brian Mulroney,
wearing a dark blue suit tailored by Armani, a cream coloured shirt by Dior and a silk tie from Pierre Cardin, visited Calgary today.' That sort of coverage is common for women in public life" (McLaughlin 92).

Also, even when men's bodies do take center stage, over and above their politics, they are not dismissed because of it as women are. Indeed, Trudeau's good looks were a boon to his political career in a way that former MP Belinda Stronach's looks never were to her. Also, Harper's admission of his weight problems was actually seen by some as a shrewd political move: "Ottawa image consultant Bernie Gauthier says Harper's candid admission was the right way to reach out to Canadians [...] 'I think in a way now a lot of Canadians can identify with him in a way they couldn't before, so this is a positive for him'" (CTV).

Women's bodies are thus constructed by many different processes, as we have seen, but they are constructed particularly by the institutions of parliament themselves and those who occupy those institutions. These parties or houses of parliament exert power over women's bodies in a variety of ways and through a variety of discriminatory discourses. Take, for example, the response to Sheila Copps' introduction to the Ontario legislature which saw a government minister respond to her by saying: "the only thing I would say to the member for Hamilton Center is she is better looking than the former member for St. George." The minister was comparing me to outgoing Liberal member Margaret Campbell, who retired from politics at age 68. A government backbencher added insult to injury by shouting, 'Go back to the kitchen'" (Copp, Nobody's 25). Through this emphasis on her appearance and domesticity, Copps is put back into 'her place' as a woman. Here power functions to attempt to intimidate Copps and in reaction to the encroaching presence of women into a male dominated sphere. In institutions mostly controlled by men, how power functions, how power is wielded, and who wields that power is important because power is integral to how the body and identity is produced. According to Grosz, "power produces the body as a
determinate type, with particular features, skills, and attributes. Power is the internal condition for the
constitution and activity attributed to a body-subject. It is power which produces a 'soul' or interiority as a
result of a certain type of etching of the subject's body" (149). In Copps' case, the power exerted upon her
female body is attempting to intimidate her and remind her, and other women, of their place within a
patriarchal society. Copps' interiority and her narrative are thus constructed in reaction to this gendered
construction of identity. She not only sees herself as female because she is constantly being reminded of
her 'aberrant' or 'erotic' female body, but she also responds to these discourses from her position as a
woman.

It is not surprising that the most difficult thing for male colleagues, the public, and the media to accept
is the sexual aspects of women politicians' bodies. This was deemed particularly problematic for Kim
Campbell. According to Sharpe, "politically, the country was ready for a woman prime minister in 1993, but
psychologically we were still in need of mass therapy. Suddenly, we had not only a woman prime minister,
but an attractive one — a blonde, no less — someone who might still, on a good day, stir desire in the male
populace" (13-14). Women politicians are often dismissed because of their appearance whether by being
deemed a bimbo for being too attractive (like Belinda Stronach) or because they are not seen to be
attractive enough: "women as able as Copps are often dismissed on the grounds of being old maids, ugly,
or lesbian" (Sharpe 47). Rosemary Brown comments on the struggles women have in moderating their
sexuality and appearance in the political realm,

For women in power, sexuality presents a dilemma concerning dress and behaviour. The struggle is to be true to one's wishes to be attractive and charming without being perceived to be seductive. Some women unconsciously place a layer of fat between themselves and this world, as an unspoken message that they are to be seen simply as powerful persons, rather than as women, as an attempt to hide their femaleness and blend into the grey anonymity of the male world.

(Brown 230)
The very fact that a politician should be dismissed because of her personal appearance seems absurd, but this absurdity only highlights the fact that women in this context are not being seen as politicians but as women within a particular stereotypical narrative, where women are seen to be valuable only as ornaments for men. Indeed, in certain cases, women politicians are quite explicitly ornamental as they are often seated strategically in parliaments and during party events around male party leaders to give the visual impression that their party is inclusive of women in news reports or parliamentary broadcasts.

Elizabeth Grosz attempts to understand why women’s bodies are particularly marginalized by examining the long history of women’s oppression. “Patriarchal oppression, in other words, justifies itself, at least in part, by connecting women much more closely than men to the body. [...] The coding of femininity with the corporeal in effect leaves men free to inhabit what they falsely believe is a purely conceptual order” (14). Therefore, according to Grosz, women are constructed in ways that associate them with the body so that men can be free to think of themselves as universal. This difference helps to explain the disparities between men’s and women’s political memoirs that will be identified later in this chapter. Men’s memoirs could be said to be far less ‘embodied’ than the memoirs of women because their gender does not take the same central role as it does in women’s narratives since men do not have to experience life in politics explicitly as male politicians, but rather as politicians. Masculine gender characteristics are implicit within the definition of the politician.

Thus, power and the discourses that are privileged by power, affect the constitution of the subject via the body and help produce an interiority that is related to the subject’s body and the discourses that surround that subject’s body. As we will see in greater detail in Chapter Two, this does not necessarily mean that the female politicians believe or co-opt the discourses that discriminate against their bodies; however, they must engage with these discourses, negotiate them, or resist them in real life and in their
memoirs. In real life, women politicians may try to alter their voices so that they can be taken more seriously, or no longer wear bright colours, but they might refuse to stop being ‘aggressive’. When writing their memoirs, politicians choose to challenge certain gender stereotypes and accept others. Certain discourses are interpolated into their subjectivity and their memoirs, while others are rejected.

Because their bodies are the fundamental ordering mechanisms that define women politicians’ experience, it is important to look at how their memoirs are primarily female embodied texts by examining examples of how women respond in their memoirs to the way sexist media, society, and colleagues treat them. It is also crucial to look at which strategies women use to critique narratives about women. As Grosz argues, women write embodied texts partly because the body is itself a text and a narrative:

Bodies are fictionalized, that is, positioned by various cultural narratives and discourses, which are themselves embodiments of culturally established canons, norms, and representational forms, so that they can be seen as living narratives, narratives not always or even usually transparent to themselves.

(118)

Thus, flesh itself has a narrative. These embodied narratives lead the memoirist to write stories that feature the body. For example, Kim Campbell spends a portion of her memoir talking about the difficulty of choosing clothing and packing as the first Canadian female Prime Minister:

Clothing is another issue. Packing: this is done by PM staff, but the PM still needs to make decisions about what to take and that requires forward knowledge of what events, locations and climate are going to be. [...] With men, presumably this is not an issue – three suits, four shirts, and four ties, socks and two pairs of shoes do one for all occasions. Women’s clothing requires more planning and coordination.

(Campbell 362)

The risks inherent in different outfits are more extreme in the case of women’s bodies. Thus, Campbell’s seemingly politically insignificant meditation on the subject of packing in her memoir, is actually quite politically significant. When the media and public reaction to her political self depends partly on what she
wears, what she wears becomes a political choice. Because of this, packing, and clothing in general, are part of Campbell’s political narrative and her memoir cannot adequately address her experience if she does not talk about it. In contrast, because what male politicians wear is neither as politically or socially charged as what female politicians wear, clothing is not mentioned in contemporary Canadian men’s memoirs.

Another reason why women’s texts are embodied is because their bodies have often been spotlighted in institutions of politics and they are forced to be consciously embodied as political women. Sheila Copps spends an entire chapter repeating the most heinous anecdotes about how her body was puriently highlighted by colleagues during her time in politics: “a messenger arrived at my desk with a note. Curious about its contents, I opened it and found the following question: ‘We are running bets on how much you weigh. Please advise. B.B.R’ (Boys in the Back Row)” (Copps, Nobody’s 26). Another time, a member of the house came up to her and gave her an envelope: “I opened the envelope and found a colour photograph from the front page of the Toronto Sun [...] of the Toronto Bikini Beach Pageant. [...] The member had circled the chest of one of the women and written over it ‘Sheila,’ presumably as a comment on my anatomy” (Copps, Nobody’s 27). In this example of an embodied texts, Copps was never allowed to be ‘disembodied’ from her gender and her sex, because while in politics she was constantly reminded that she had the body of a woman and was thus both an anomaly within politics and an object of desire or revulsion. Her narrative of her experience in politics cannot be disembodied either. In order to tell the story of her time in politics, her female body and discrimination targeting that body must figure in and organize the telling.

Here we see how the outside forces work upon women politicians and result in embodied narratives. Women write their memoirs as women because they want to set the record straight. The sexist media coverage that they have to endure influences, not only their own perceptions of themselves, but also
the perceptions of their colleagues and the public about their abilities as politicians. Canadian women politicians therefore spend a significant portion of their memoirs trying to write back to the media’s discriminatory coverage. Copps articulates the reason why sexism within the media is so endemic: “in the beginning, I was absolutely appalled by the level of stereotyping in the media, but through the years I came to understand that the preponderance of white, male faces in the Gallery did not encourage diversity of opinion. To make matters worse, they did not see any sexism” (Copps, Worth 12). This sexism that Copps identifies translates into sexist assumptions in the articles journalists write: “one of the first articles on my appointment set out to show that I wasn’t really a DPM, I was just a skirt put there to fulfill gender expectations. The article, if you can believe it, was all about the size (I guess in politics size matters) of my office and its location” (Copps, Worth 120).

The absurd nature of many of the articles shows how ingrained very archaic notions of gender and politics are within the media. Part of the ‘writing back’ that women politicians engage in includes contesting the limited conception of women portrayed within newspapers, especially when they emphasize women’s appearance. Writes McLaughlin,

My favourite example of this nonsense was the recent occasion when two Tory women cabinet ministers showed up at the same function wearing the same outfit. This event caused a minor sensation in the media. Whatever for? The papers could as easily have run the following headline: ‘Two hundred and fifty male MPs Appear in Commons Wearing Same Dark Blue Suit!’

(92)

The way women are covered by the media is definitely not to their advantage and is often a traumatic experience. Copps, who had to endure a plethora of bad press, explains why:

I know that some of the worst moments in my political life had to do with hurtful untruths written about me that had nothing to do with public policy and everything to do with portraying me as an unfeeling bitch who would even lock her poor dog in the car, or toss a handicapped person from a plane, or have what was supposedly her vagina paraded all over Hustler magazine. When untruths were written about me, I sued, and got retractions. But the deep hurt felt by my family members took more than a lawsuit to heal.

(Copps, Worth 57-58)
Copps thus uses her memoir to write back against this treatment and to stress how unfair it is that women are covered in sexist ways by the media: "as a woman, it seems that I am even more vulnerable to the loaded adjectives attached to the ‘fairer’ sex – words like ‘emotional,’ ‘aggressive,’ ‘pushy.’ Ask yourself why an ‘aggressive Sheila Copps’ produces a certain negative image, while an ‘aggressive Stephen Harper’ is seen as signalling a positive turn in his political fortunes" (Copps, Worth 58).

In addition, the women memoirists whom I have studied often tell anecdotes about how their gender was something deemed aberrant that needed to be ‘fixed’ or managed and that their bodies were interpreted as objects to be manipulated by members of their parties. McLaughlin writes about how people within her party were trying to ‘fix’ her appearance:

My eyebrows were too dark. Some people wanted me to change my hair. A lot of people didn’t like my clothes – all those bright colours I enjoy wearing. And many people wanted me to change my speaking style. I began to joke that if I acted on all the advice I heard I might as well go on to change my party, my gender and my job. [...] Supposedly I’d been elected leader because of who I was; now I was being told to be someone else.

(McLaughlin 91)

McLaughlin’s contention that she would have to change everything about herself, including her gender, in order to fulfill all the recommendations being made to ‘improve’ her, is particularly insightful. There are definitely gendered motivations and undertones to each of the suggestions that she was given. This gendered aspect is apparent in the intense focus on her appearance, as well as in the focus on stereotypically female issues like her speaking style, her hair, and her bright clothes. Her advisors wanted to neutralize everything that might be seen as too feminine and to make her seem more masculine or, at least, to make her conform to an accepted idea of what a powerful feminine political woman might look and sound like. But these requests are ultimately impossible to meet because they often fundamentally take issue with her female body and person, which they see as aberrant and problematic. Audrey McLaughlin, in
writing this in her memoir, is both calling out and resisting the scripts which attempt to limit and modify female political leaders. She is deconstructing the notion that women leaders cannot succeed by being who they are since, as McLaughlin herself points out, she was elected leader of the NDP for being exactly who she is.

There are many different strategies that the women memoirists’ utilize to question their public identities and to rewrite the discourses that circulate about them. These strategies utilize tactics like irony and strategic essentialism to reconstitute and rewrite the female body and the memoirists’ personal identity, as well as the political memoir. These attempts to dismantle common conceptions of female politicians are also sometimes a reaction to the narratives that exclude women. Audrey McLaughlin writes about how the very title of her book A Woman’s Place plays on the saying ‘a woman’s place is in the home.’ McLaughlin explains why her book title seeks to invoke the struggle she waged against people who discriminated against women: “during my life I have ventured into many areas where women were once prohibited – and are still admitted with reluctance. [...] But I am proud to have earned the privilege and responsibility to show that a woman’s place is not only in the House of Commons, or at the head of the cabinet table, but wherever she chooses to be” (xii). Indeed, as McLaughlin shows, cultural narratives and self-representations suffuse the memoirs but these narratives are often deployed in order to subvert them.

This reorientation of identities and public selves against institutionalized political discourses that stigmatize women because of their female bodies produces the type of narrative in which, as Eakin suggests, the speaker “is truly plural in its origins and subsequent formation” (43). Indeed, it is the similar nature of women’s narratives within specific institutions that result in Canadian female politicians telling the same anecdotes to communicate their experiences. An example of this narrative is the endlessly repeated
anecdote about the lack of accessible women's washrooms in parliamentary buildings, an anecdote that prominently features women's bodies and their bodies' functions.  

Indeed, the form of the memoir itself works with the institutional structure to produce a coercive effect because, as Smith and Watson suggest, "autobiographical narratives are part of a frame-up. When we interact with these institutions we engage with their already provided narratives of identity, their already mapped-out subject positions" (*Life* 11). The speaking subject in the texts, in so much as that subject assumes the identity category of 'Canadian women politician' and speaks to the experiences of Canadian women politicians, is a subject that is multiple, and often one that acknowledges and celebrates its multiplicity. Indeed, suggests Ramsay, when women talk about their experiences in politics,  

Despite the personal character of [...] the experiences recounted, what is most striking is the similarity of many of the opinions offered and of the discourse in circulation. Conventionally and intertextuality mark these [texts] as if certain contemporary concerns and ideas [...] are being recycled, constituting something like a shared women politicians' discourse.  

(Ramsay xv)

This shared discourse is recycled amongst the texts of political women and creates a complex intertextuality that is determined by the positionality that their gender affords them. The texts that they engage with as memoirists are almost exclusively the texts of other political women. These discourses constitute an identity that is both multiple and unique, says Ramsay; the texts of female politicians "work to constitute and legitimate a rethinking and a 'rewriting' of traditional political history and help to construct the unique and yet multiple identity of the political woman" (Ramsay xiv). Indeed, as Ramsay suggests, women's political identity is multiple or perhaps more accurately intersubjective, especially when a gendered person enters institutions of parliament. The experience is intersubjective because it is experienced by many women similarly and therefore the personal account of that experience is not necessarily a unique narrative. While each of the memoirists might write a narrative in relation to her own
experiences, she is also constituted by the identity category of 'political woman.' This archetypal character is embodied by each of the women memoirists who speaks her own narrative through the collective identity of the 'political woman' character.

This multiplicity is not characteristic of the narratives and identities of Canadian male politicians, who focus on individual identities and produce individualistic stories. Indeed, the identity of the Canadian woman politician is one that specifically identifies with other Canadian political women and often features these women within her own story, even if they belong to opposing political parties. For example, Audrey McLaughlin quotes extensively from Rosemary Brown's memoir and both Grey and Copps talk about Agnes MacPhail's legacy by alluding to the bust of MacPhail that is on display in the House of Commons. The decision to tell the stories of other women within their own story is indicative of how these Canadian political women often live a shared reality that in their memoirs produces a slippage between their distinct identities and their identities as Canadian women politicians, as we will see in Chapter Two. Indeed, this tendency seems to suggest that these women believe that the stories of other women in Canadian politics can metonymically tell their own stories. Such a conception would seem to prove Eakin’s understanding of how identity scripts are constructed and narrated, but the narratives of women politicians are more complex. These narratives often invoke their perceived sameness in order to emphasize their actual difference. In other words, they speak about the common experiences of the 'Canadian female political figure' in order to tell their own stories and deconstruct that figure. In some ways, one might say that they are employing a type of strategic essentialism, identifying with the identity category of women in order to strategically work to further the causes of women, while maintaining and emphasizing their own unique identity.
However, this construction of essential unity is not always necessarily strategic. Part of this unity might also be related to some of the memoirists having very limiting conceptions of what it means to be a man or a woman. This can be seen when the women memoirists attempt to explain why they went into politics and why they desire power. Says Mitchell: "I am often asked why I became a politician, and I have no ready answer. Unlike many male colleagues, for me, going into politics was not a long-time ambition or an ego trip. I was not seeking power or publicity" (101). Mitchell is thus suggesting that all men are ambitious and egotistical, a problematic contention. McLaughlin also says something similar about women and political power:

Given the different styles of women and men in positions of leadership, it's hardly surprising that they have very different ways of thinking about power. The traditional male definition of power is in terms of coercion, power over: now that I have power, I can get my way; I can get people to do things my way. Women tend to think of power in terms of responsibility. [...] When I won the NDP leadership, I was above all conscious of the responsibility I'd accepted — to my party, to my campaign team, to the many women outside the party who would be rooting for me to do well. This didn't make me particularly noble — it was a typical female response.

(198)

These conceptions of male and female politicians make certain problematic generalizations. Although women can sometimes be similar in their leadership styles, suggesting that their leadership style is the same can lead to an oversimplification of both men and women and ignore the fact that women politicians like Margaret Thatcher do not fit this category of woman's leadership. Still, one might potentially assume that the adoption of these discourses of sameness by the memoirists is strategic. These discourses help provide authorization and normalization to women's traditional leadership styles and to women politicians.

The memoirists' use of representations of the female body in order to question conceptions of the body is significant. Elizabeth Grosz analyzes how the social meanings of bodies are constructed and also how they can be taken apart by looking at how bodies are not just constituted by discourses but often inscribed
by narratives or 'written on.' She argues that "the body is in no sense naturally or innately psychical, sexual, or sexed. It is indeterminate and indeterminable outside its social constitution as a body of a particular type. This implies that the body which it presumes and helps to explain is an open ended, pliable set of significations, capable of being rewritten, reconstituted" (Grosz 60). This rewriting of significations happens in part when women politicians write memoirs — they reframe the terms of their representation, as can be seen through Sheila Copps' commentary on how women MPs should be criticized: "when a Member of Parliament is put down because she happens to be a woman, the insult applies to all women. I can take insults as well as I can dish them out, but the insults should be based on my ability, or lack of it, and not my gender" (Copps, Nobody's 170). Copps is rewriting the ways in which women can be seen within the public realm and explicitly deeming gendered insults out of bounds. By reminding readers that gendered insults are ways to insult and degrade all women, Copps is insisting that those who wish to criticize her do so based on her ability. Copps is thus insisting that people see her and address her as an individual, instead of as a gendered body or as a 'woman politician.'

Reconstituting the female body is important because it allows for more female-friendly constitutions of sexed identity. As Grosz suggests that "rewriting the female body [...] entails two related concerns: reorganizing and reframing the terms by which the body has been socially represented [...] and challenging the discourses which claim to analyze and explain the body and subject scientifically — biology, psychology, sociology — to develop different perspectives that may be able to better represent women's interests" (61). Thus, by destabilizing the traditional conception of women, the memoirists are attempting to manipulate the constitution of the bodies of women politicians by mediating the discourses that circulate about women politicians' bodies and by implication women politicians. Audrey McLaughlin explains how the process of dismantling stereotypes is liberating when she says that "most successful women I know have had to overcome internal psychological obstacles as well as external barriers. They have relied greatly on other
women for support and have sought strong female role models to balance the persistent images of women as weak, childish, irrational, not serious" (McLaughlin 199). According to McLaughlin, women’s success is often connected to their ability to ignore the discriminatory and stereotypical discourses that circulate about women and to find and celebrate other discourses. It is therefore important that these women memoirists challenge these discourses within their texts.

However, the challenges to gender discourses that arise within women’s memoirs restructure the way in which political memoirs operate and create a sub-genre of women’s political memoirs (a sub-genre of a sub-genre, as political memoirs are already a sub-genre of memoirs). Political memoirs have a long history: “from the ancients to the moderns, those engaged in political leadership have endeavoured to leave some sign or record of their deeds, res gestae, that would make future ages remember their names and accomplishments” (Egerton xi). This historical legacy of political leaders writing about their achievements is necessarily a gendered one because the overwhelming majority of political leaders have been men. Therefore, many of the traditional conventions of Western political memoirists’ narratives were created long before women were ever accorded political power. There are many ways in which traditional conceptions of political memoirs ignore gendered experiences and take men’s universal subjecthood for granted. Indeed, Egerton’s definition of political memoirs is particularly indicative of gender bias. According to George Egerton,

The term ‘political memoir’ denotes the endeavour by a retired politician to recount the important political engagements of his or her career, to explain and interpret the choices made and forces encountered, to portray the relationships experienced in the course of political activity while assessing the qualities of cohorts and perhaps to offer some precepts or wisdom to assist political successors.

(Auto, 222)

Although Egerton’s description appears gender neutral, it is not. While some of the contours that he delineates apply to women’s political memoirs, Egerton leaves out their central organizing features as
'trailblazing narratives.' His description does not address the fundamental issues of identity and discrimination that politicians who are not white and male address in their memoirs and which often become constitutive parts of their narratives. This might be partly because Egerton defined political memoirs in the early 1990s, before there were many women who had written them.

Egerton's suggestion that political memoirs are about recounting politicians' 'accomplishments' is demonstrative of the difference between men's political memoirs and women's political memoirs. The memoirs of women politicians are more specifically focused on their 'experiences' and particularly the discrimination they have experienced within politics. This is not to suggest that women were not just as likely to have accomplished great deeds in politics (although discrimination against female candidates does play a role in keeping women out of top political positions), but that they found that the story of the opposition to their attempts to accomplish great deeds in politics was far more interesting than the accomplishment of those deeds. Many of the women politicians spend large sections of their memoirs recounting similar experiences to those outlined by Rosemary Brown: "many male politicians still view the entry of women into politics as an unwelcome intrusion and invasion of their privacy. [...] they are threatened by having their prejudice and distorted beliefs about women challenged by female colleagues" (Brown 142).

Most Canadian men's political memoirs follow the form loosely set out by Egerton: they recount important political involvements, explain or justify the choices they've made and sometimes offer some wisdom for those interested in politics. The main difference between men's political memoirs and women's political memoirs is that male politicians do not seem to write their narratives consciously or explicitly as men. Their identities and genders are taken for granted and do not figure as major thematic or plot points within their narratives. They are also much more preoccupied with an individualistic account of their
experiences in politics, one that does not seek to tell the stories of political forefathers (unlike women’s political memoirs which are preoccupied with political foremothers), or one that does not have the same degree of anticipation or hope that future generations of men will involve themselves in politics and will be inspired by their stories. While most women end their memoirs speaking about how they hope more women will become involved in politics, male politicians do not express such hopes. Perhaps they simply assume that they will be followed by younger men or perhaps, because their gender has not been foregrounded and marginalized within the political institutions they participate in, they feel no need to see their marginalization redressed. These male political memoirists possibly see themselves as universal human subjects, instead of gendered subjects.

There are many who contend that men and women, in writing about their lives, reproduce different gendered life scripts. Smith and Watson suggest that “at the level of life scripts, men aggrandize themselves in [memoirs] that idealize their lives or cast them into heroic moulds to project their universal import” (Women 14-15). While men create elaborate political memoirs which glorify their deeds, academe Estelle C. Jelinek suggests that “women by contrast, seek to authenticate themselves in stories that reveal ‘a self-consciousness and a need to sift through their lives for explanation and understanding”’ (as qtd in Smith and Watson, Women 9). This need for legitimation is definitely evident in women’s political memoirs in Canada, particularly in how women often spend an inordinate amount of time defending their decisions and fighting against public and institutional conceptions that women do not belong in politics.

This concept of gendered life scripts is echoed by autobiography theorist Jill Ker Conway who says that:

It soon becomes apparent that there are archetypal life scripts for men and for women [that] show remarkable persistence, over time. For men, the overarching pattern for life comes from adaptations of the story of the epic hero in classical antiquity. Life is an odyssey, a
journey through many trials and tests, which the hero must surmount alone through courage, 
endurance, cunning and moral strength.

(Conway 7)

This epic narrative is greatly contrasted by the narratives that women construct. According to Raylene 
Ramsay, a woman constructs a narrative "of how she came to find authorization to enter the political arena 
and the difficulties experienced, as a woman, in finding the strength, motivation and justifications to survive 
in an unfamiliar world. This narrative is often accompanied by the creation of a feminine genealogy, 
incorporating the history of other political women" (Ramsay 134). Audrey McLaughlin expresses this 
tendency to valorize other political women in describing her first day as an MP: "the day I arrived on 
Parliament Hill, I walked alone [...] up the steps. [...] I was thinking about some of the people who had 
walked up the steps before me: pioneer women in politics such as Agnes Macphail, Grace MacInnis, and 
Judy LaMarsh. [...] Suddenly the responsibility I'd taken on seemed even greater" (25).

In contrast, the ending of Paul Martin's memoir, Hell or High Water, is a clear example of how male 
politicians usually sum up the stories of their lives in the heroic narrative vein. This is invariably done in very 
personal and individualistic ways:

As I look at my life today, I cannot say for sure whether my aspirations for an African 
common market will come to fruition, whether my ideas and plans for Aboriginal education, 
mentoring and entrepreneurship will be as successful as I hope, or whether the G8 will 
expand in the way it should [...] I imagine there are going to be some surprises along the 
way, some disappointments, and some unanticipated joys. I am looking forward to it.

(Martin 470)

In this passage, Martin emphasizes his personal desires and aspirations and even takes proprietary 
ownership of movements to expand the G8 and educate the Aboriginal population. Martin seems to 
specifically be setting up his historical legacy with this passage. Martin's purpose for writing his memoir is in 
stark contrast to the purposes women politicians claim to have because women do not explicitly attempt to
construct a personal legacy, but instead try to create a heritage of women politicians, as we will see in Chapter Two.

While the narratives of male politicians mostly seem to take their gender for granted, there are certain aspects of their texts that seek to create or reinforce male politicians' position as the alpha male. Indeed, in his memoir, Brian Mulroney mentions and describes every woman he ever dated and tells the reader who each woman eventually married. For example, he writes: "one year, while trying to get close to Judy Laidlaw [...] I signed up for the typing class she took, figuring that propinquity would be at least half the battle. As it turned out, Judy, while impressed by my determination, soon thereafter married fellow student Roy Hines" (Mulroney 35). Mulroney's delineations of his putative conquests are peculiar even within men's political memoirs and represent a narrative decision that seems to have been made to reinforce for the reader Mulroney's facility and success with women and to construct him as some sort of Don Juan of Canadian politics.

Similarly, Jean Chrétien's memoir is often preoccupied with detailing the depth of his lust for power, an obsession that he is not shy of admitting: "to be frank, politics is about wanting power, getting it, exercising it, and keeping it. Helping people comes with it naturally, because you'll never be elected if you treat people badly. But no one will ever convince me, with all the experience that I've had, that the motivations are strictly altruistic" (Chrétien 2). This preoccupation with status or power is perhaps connected with conceptions of masculinity. According to Harry Brod in Theorizing Masculinities, "there are many things men do to have the type of power we associate with masculinity, we've got to perform and stay in control. We've got to conquer, be on top of things, and call the shots. We've got to tough it out, provide and achieve. Meanwhile we learn to beat back our feelings, hide our emotions and suppress our needs" (Brod 148). These gendered characteristics are prominently featured in the memoirs of Canadian male
politicians. For example, both Chrétien and Martin resist writing about their personal feelings about each other in their memoirs and each of the men describes his achievements in great detail. While men's political memoirs might be said to be implicitly gendered and embodied, they are not explicitly gendered in the same way women's political memoirs are.

This need for male politicians to assert their masculinity in their memoirs is telling. Although BC MLA Sue Hammell once said "I cannot imagine a woman coming out of an assembly unscathed [...] that's true of men, too, but they come out with different scars" (as qtd in Edwards 66), one wouldn't be able to attest to the scars men have by reading political men's memoirs. Indeed, even the bitterest feuds are made light of by male politicians in their memoirs, with Martin even saying about Chrétien, "I thought he was a nice guy" (83). The collegiality that male politicians portray, despite their past political conflicts is contrasted by the visible personal and political scars that women describe in their memoirs and which are evident in the degree to which women focus on the discrimination that they experienced.

Interestingly, many of the men, even those who would eventually become political enemies, (i.e. Jean Chrétien and Brian Mulroney, and Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin) write about meeting their future opponents in some social context prior to going into politics or prior to their time in positions of great political power. For example, Mulroney writes about meeting both Martin and Chrétien while still working in the business world: "Paul Martin Jr. And I once spent a sunny day together [...] fishing, chatting and speculating about the political future. [...] That night, back at the main camp, we joined Prime Minister Trudeau, his two sons, Justin and Sasha, Jean Chrétien, Marc Lalonde, Simon Reisman, Paul Volker, Jim Burns and John Rae for drinks, dinner and high level political gossip" (Mulroney 189). Such a grouping of all male political minds in a social atmosphere only serves to strengthen the idea that politics is an Old Boy's network that excludes women. This network, which is reflected in men's political memoirs, is part of a
cultural narrative that sees men as inherently suited for political and public life but depicts women as anomalies in the public sphere. Women, who are by societal norms supposed to be more closely connected to the home, to the private, and to the maternal must engage with and challenge cultural scripts in a way that is not necessary for male politicians.

Women describe feelings of guilt at being away from their children but such guilt is not echoed in the works of male politicians who are fathers. Rosemary Brown remembers a conversation she had with her children about how they would be under greater scrutiny because their mother was a public figure: “I threatened that, if they embarrassed me, although I would continue to love them, I would be angry, and disappointed because I too was searching for answers, I too needed to know whether it was possible for me to be faithful to feminist ideals and be successful as a mother” (Brown 233). Men do not talk about having such conversations with their children in their memoirs; after all, they are not wondering whether men can combine fatherhood with politics; it has been done successfully for millennia because child and home care responsibilities rest with their wives.

In great contrast to men’s political memoirs, women concentrate in their memoirs on how women are treated differently than men, something which male memoirists do not mention. According to Copps, “the concentration of coverage on Belinda Stronach’s bid to become the Leader of her party focused on how she dressed and the fact that she was, as one newspaper put it in their front page, ‘Blonde ambition.’ Stephen Harper is blonde as well, but nobody would dare refer to him by his hair colour” (Copps, Worth 12). It is important to note that these observations were made by Copps prior to Belinda Stronach’s crossing of the floor from the Conservatives to the Liberals. Therefore, Copps is remarking on the discrimination that a female politician from an opposing party experienced. Copps routinely makes these types of observations in her two memoirs and, because of this explicit identification as a woman, it is not
surprising that she also very explicitly claims that being a woman is an identity important to her as a politician, claiming women are her constituency: "I take pride, too, in representing my constituency – not only the riding which sent me to Parliament, but my larger constituency, the women of Canada" (Copps, Nodody’s 89).

But while Canadian female politicians seem to structure their texts in a way that coheres with their experience of Canada’s often discriminatory parliamentary institutions and political parties, I also believe their narratives reflect the public expectation that they describe their experience of being a trailblazer in politics. By looking at the business of publishing political memoirs, one can ascertain that women who have written autobiographies are without exception female trailblazers, but are not necessarily involved in prominent positions or in important historical events or changes in any other significant ways that would necessitate that they write a memoir to historicize their experiences. In addition, with the exception of the position of prime minister (who historically is expected to write a memoir), men who have achieved the same political positions as the women who have written these trailblazer narratives have almost uniformly not written memoirs or had their memoirs published.

In many cases, the reason why these women were given book deals is partly because of the perceived interest in women’s experiences as trailblazers, a fact which is often reflected in the marketing materials of the memoirs. Examples of this tendency to emphasize women’s political memoirs can be seen in the marketing materials from Kim Campbell’s and Margaret Mitchell’s memoirs:

From her first election to her historic rise to prime minister, Kim Campbell forged her own way in the rough and tumble world of Canadian politics. How did this hard-working, intensely shy woman become a political phenomenon breaking ground for a generation of women? Find out in Time and Chance: The Political Memoirs of Canada’s First Woman Prime Minister. This powerful autobiography takes and important look at a remarkable career, the unique experience of one woman in the political arena, the price she paid, and the rewards she reaped for her principles, determination and achievements.
The woman who first brought the issue of spousal abuse to the forefront in Canada presents her memoirs in this interesting, informative, entertaining and often humourous book. Margaret Mitchell, a social activist who pioneered community development in Vancouver, was a courageous feminist MP for Vancouver East, and an international adventuress. Her book is a testament to the struggles and achievements of women MPs, and chronicles her life's adventures and work. As an NDP Member of Parliament, Margaret Mitchell inspired generations of women with her public stand against 'wife beating' with her vocal support for women's equality. She spent 14 years in the House of Commons advocating for affordable housing, multiculturalism, and the rights of poor people.

These marketing materials emphasize the fact that the authors are female politicians. The words 'first,' 'breaking ground,' and 'unique experience' emphasize that these women are trailblazers. There is also an emphasis on the historical importance of political women's narratives: "her book is a testament to the struggles and achievements of women MPs" (Mitchell). Thus, there is a sense in which the texts are marketed both as trailblazing narratives and also as narratives representative of women's political experiences.

The perceived historical and public significance of these texts is thus particularly invested in the fact that these women were the 'first' and were thus seen to be 'exceptional' female political figures with unique stories to tell. The difference between the stories they do tell and men's political memoirs is demarcated by the authors' different narrative choices and the way they emphasize that they were trailblazers. One example of the self-conscious utilization of a trailblazing anecdote is Deborah Grey's story of becoming the first woman leader of the opposition:

The day I moved down the hall to the leader's office I was escorted by a host of media. This was an exciting event by all accounts. After all, never in Canadian history had a woman occupied the role of leader of the Opposition. For fun, I said to the gathered reporters and cameramen, 'Okay, folks. I am going to do something that has never been done in this office before.' Then I got out my lipstick and put it on in front of all the cameras.
By including this anecdote, Grey is specifically emphasizing and reinforcing the fact that she was the first woman to hold this position. Thus, her actions within the office, especially her act of putting on lipstick are symbolic of her female gender identity and female body, and becomes historic and worth writing about by the virtue of the fact that she is a woman.

The difference in how men and women authors of these memoirs conceptualize the purpose and significance of writing their memoirs, and how they contextualize themselves within Canadian history, is also significant in demonstrating how women and men in politics write and live their political lives differently. This can be seen quite explicitly in the quotations with which I chose to begin this chapter. These passages, taken from the memoirs of Jean Chrétien and Kim Campbell respectively, appear in the memoirs of these former Canadian Prime Ministers when they explain the purpose or intention of their memoirs. The way in which each politician articulates why and how he or she is writing his or her memoir reveals a great deal about where they position themselves in relation to the political position that they once held, the institutions of parliament that they once occupied, and their significance within Canadian history. Chrétien takes for granted that his story is one of great importance and that "scholars and historians" will later go on both to study and to produce "weighty, comprehensive accounts" of his time in office (2). He even goes so far as to appropriate the period that he was PM by naming it the “Chrétien years" (Chrétien 2). In clarifying his intentions regarding his memoir, Chrétien is also asserting his comfort and confidence with being a historic and important figure. Indeed, there is almost a sense of arrogance in how Chrétien articulates what he will not include in his memoir (i.e. a weighty and comprehensive account of his time in office).

Campbell’s purposes for writing her memoir are very different. In contrast to Chrétien’s egotistical justifications, she demonstrates no arrogance about her own historical place and significance. While Chrétien’s arrogance might partially be due to his belief that his long tenure in politics makes him an
important historical figure, Campbell can also claim her place in history as the first female prime minister, however short her tenure. Campbell suggests a gendered aspect to the story right from the beginning by saying that her memoir will be about how "a nice girl like me wound up in a place like that" (2). This invocation of gender is significant because it shows how important addressing issues of gender is for women political memoirists. By putting her justification for writing her memoir in quotation marks, she is repeating a phrase that she has most likely often heard and also adding an ironic twist to her narrative's purpose.

I assume that this is Campbell's way of 'writing back' to the kinds of dismissive questions that have circulated around her as a politician wherein she has been asked why a nice girl like her would get into politics. The infantilizing suggestion that grown women are simply 'nice girls' is obviously both problematic and infuriating to women in power. By inserting this terminology here, Campbell is bringing into her discussion, from the very start, the alienation that women often feel or experience within politics because of the suggestion that there is something unnatural in women who want to go into politics, and that there is also something about politics that isn't appropriate for 'nice girls.' This also seems to emphasize Campbell's position as the first woman to be Prime Minister. Her need to justify why she went into politics and sought political leadership is especially onerous since no other woman has done or accomplished it before. In fact, there is also a sense that Campbell perhaps does not believe or does not feel like she can assert that she deserved to become prime minister, something suggested by both the passive construction of 'wound up' and the title of her memoir Time and Chance, with 'chance' suggesting that her achievements have less to do with her worthiness or ability and more to do with luck. In fact, there is a sense of self-infantilization in Campbell's description of her time in politics and her life that may or may not be intended ironically. This bewilderment at one's success is shared by other female memoirists, including Audrey McLaughlin who expressed her incredulity at her own success: "'Audrey McLaughlin, member of parliament.' Now there's an
unlikely story. It's unlikely because a woman like me – in fact, any woman – seldom gets far in politics" (McLaughlin 2). The disbelief both Campbell and McLaughlin express is common in women's memoirs.

Indeed, women structure these narratives in radically different ways that deviate from the structure of male politicians' memoirs. Many of the differences between men's and women's political memoirs, which Egerton does not include in his definition of political memoirs, are connected to the different way in which women experience political life because they are marked out by political institutions as 'others.' By not addressing how the political memoirs of those the political institutions deem 'others' must engage with the discourses of identity inherent within institutions of parliament, Egerton ignored key issues of race, gender, and sexuality and created a definition of political memoirs that is primarily white and male. Indeed, Egerton's political memoirist sees himself as an autonomous individual, a subject position which usually only white men can achieve. After all, "a white man has the luxury of forgetting his skin color and sex. He can think of himself as an 'individual.' Women and minorities, reminded at every turn in the great cultural hall of mirrors of their sex and color, have no such luxury" (Friedman 75). Thus, women cannot write political memoirs like men do and their memoirs create a new sub-genre of political memoir.

In the next chapter, I will be looking at how Canadian women politicians' tell their stories and how anecdotes work to construct what I call 'trailblazing plots.' While the narratives of any trailblazing group may adhere to the 'trailblazing plot' rubric that I outlined in the introduction, in the second chapter I will look at how Canadian women's political memoirs specifically function within that rubric and how the anecdotes used to portray certain realities within political institutions are often eerily similar.
Chapter 2 - ‘I Fight for Women’: Women Politicians’ Trailblazing Narratives

*Although Marion Dewar and I were welcomed warmly into the NDP caucus, we both observed how quickly Jack Harris, who had won the by-election in St. John’s East, was accepted as ‘one of the boys’ while we, and the other women, remained in some ways very much apart. Within days, it seemed, Jack was off to have a drink with the Speaker or with the caucus Whip or out on the town with a group of male MPs.*

– Audrey McLaughlin, A Woman’s Place

Audrey McLaughlin uses the above anecdote in her memoir to communicate the experiences faced by women in Canadian politics by discussing specific ways in which women were excluded. Canadian female political memoirists primarily use anecdote to construct a metonymic narrative of their lives but they also deploy description, and other forms of explanation or exposition, to construct their ‘trailblazing narratives.’ Because the memoirists cannot possibly represent everything that they experienced in their political lives, they select representative examples of their experiences in order to gesture at the greater ‘whole’ of their experiences. These metonymic anecdotal and descriptive units come together in an attempt to represent the memoirists’ experiences and to sustain and develop the extended metaphor of the trailblazing narrative that permeates the texts. In this chapter, I will begin by exploring the ways in which the memoirs of women politicians, despite being quite similar in focus and scope, are necessarily different because of their intersecting positionalities (i.e. race, geographical positionalities, party affiliation and so on). I will then analyze how anecdotes are used to narrate women’s experiences before exploring aspects of their ‘trailblazing plots’ in greater detail. As we will see, because of the way in which anecdotes function within memoirs, by relating a specific moment meant to stand metonymically for a greater whole the type of stories chosen to represent experiences of discrimination in Canada are necessarily similar.

While my study is primarily an analysis of the similarities in theme and tone of anecdotes and plot structures within Canadian women’s political memoirs, I am not suggesting that these women are all the same or that they tell their stories in exactly the same way. Indeed, each individual woman enters into
parliamentary institutions inhabiting a number of different and sometimes intersecting positionalities. These include differences of race, class, sexuality, geography, party affiliation, and religion. In regards to race, it is important to note that only one of the women memoirists in this study, Rosemary Brown, is a woman of colour. This is indicative of a paucity of women of colour writing political memoirs in Canada, which is connected to the fact that only a small number of women of colour are politicians in high positions within their parties.

The tensions within the differences in women’s experiences are evident in their memoirs, such as the differences in race. This can be seen in the distinction between Rosemary Brown’s memoir, which foregrounds an awareness of her racialization, and the memoirs of the other Canadian women politicians. A consciousness of skin colour is not evident in the memoirs of white women politicians. This is perhaps because, like male politicians who take their gender for granted, white women take their skin colour for granted. Gillian Whitlock addresses the lack of racial consciousness in the writings of white women in her work *The Intimate Empire*: “white women are rarely represented to themselves as white. Nor is there widespread awareness of how whiteness shapes the theory and practice of their [...] work. White women are rarely made to feel uncomfortable in their skins” (172). Indeed, none of the white women memoirists mention or delineate the privileges and advantages they have experienced because they are caucasian.

Rosemary Brown chronicles her experience in Canadian politics in ways that are different from her white female peers because she is conscious of her blackness. Indeed, Brown chronicles her identity and self differently, analyzing in detail how she addressed the disjunction between her different positionalities as a person who is both ‘black’ and a ‘woman’: “as a Black person, I believed that every criticism they levelled at the women’s movement was correct. [...] Yet as a woman, I knew that much of my exploitation and oppression would continue even if the colour of my skin turned white, so long as I remained a woman”
As a committed feminist, Brown had to fight for women of colour's representation and concerns within a mostly white feminist movement, and she also had to fight for the recognition of women within the civil rights movement. Brown's alienation and marginalization occurred on multiple fronts, and in her narrative she recounts how racism affected her throughout her early life by telling anecdotes about racism from various different periods. For example, Brown recounts a period during her late twenties in which she could not find a job in Vancouver: "I was determined to find the one person in the whole city of Vancouver who would look beyond the colour of my skin and would hire me solely on the basis of my competence as a typist and my Bachelor of Arts degree from McGill" (46). The experience of women of colour in political institutions is thus one in which they are doubly othered, as women and then as people of colour. The intersecting discriminations within Canadian political institutions create narratives that must order themselves around multiple identity discourses.

Despite the fact that Canadian women's political memoirs and the memoirists who write them seem somewhat homogeneous, they are not. While the memoirists are all heterosexual university-educated women from middle-class backgrounds, there are also many differences that surface within the women's life stories and narratives which cause these women to use and deploy their narratives in different ways. For example, the women are distributed across Canada (with greater representation in Western Canada) and their narratives reflect their geographical positions. Of the women who have written memoirs during this period, four are from BC (Carney, Brown, Mitchell, Campbell), one is from Alberta (Grey), one is from the Yukon (McLaughlin), and one is from Ontario (Copps). Their geographic positionalities inflect the character of their narratives. For example, Campbell often sees herself as an outsider because she is from British Columbia, outside what she sees as the Ottawa-Toronto-Quebec nexus of political power. Campbell evokes a BC spirit within her memoir when she remarks that "I think British Columbians in general tend to be visionary, forward-looking, energetic, enthusiastic, very entrepreneurial. [...] But we also have a sense
that from time to time the government of Canada doesn't serve us well, that it doesn't understand us because we are so far away" (265).

While Campbell tries to represent the Western alienation experienced in BC, Grey explores a similar alienation experienced in Alberta. Grey also identifies with her Alberta community, going so far as to call herself 'Miss Beaver River' (after her constituency's name) and relating a number of experiences in her text that are characteristic of Albertan rural life such as her stories about the cold winters and the tight knit small communities. While each of the memoirists represents her province and community within her texts, the ethnic and geographical natures of her constituency are sometimes more constitutive of the content of her narrative. As elected representatives, these memoirists often work diligently in public life to fix problems that plague their constituencies. British Columbia MP Margaret Mitchell, for example, spends a whole chapter of her memoir relating her attempts to gain redress for the discriminatory Chinese Head Tax. This was an issue that was particularly important to her Vancouver East constituency because a high percentage of her constituents were Chinese Canadians.

There are also differences in party affiliations that define the narratives of the politicians and determine what kind of stories the women will tell in their memoirs. Three of the women were in the NDP (Brown, Mitchell, and McLaughlin), one of them was a Liberal (Copps), two were Progressive Conservatives (Campbell and Carney), and one woman was a member of the Reform Party (Grey). It is difficult to discover trends based on party affiliation that extend beyond the political issues that party affiliation ideologically makes one partial to. Each of the politicians speaks about different political developments, such as the Meech Lake Accord, Free Trade, and the Charlottetown Accord from different ideological positions based on which party she comes from. The women from the NDP have a tendency to identify more strongly with each other by referring to experiences that other NDP female politicians have
experienced. NDP members also have a tendency to identify more forcefully with feminism and to devote space in their memoirs to the discussion of social issues. On the other side of the political spectrum, members of the right (Campbell, Carney, and Grey) are less enthusiastic about their identifications with feminism and spends less space writing about it. While Campbell has some caveats attached to her identification with feminism (as we will see later in this chapter), Grey is the only politician who does not talk about her personal relation to feminism, although she does often talk about female political role models. In addition, women on the right are more likely to discuss financial issues within their texts, like the North American Free Trade Agreement, or to write about justice issues. Copps, the sole Liberal, is more balanced in the topics that she discusses and spends an equal amount of time writing about social and financial issues while also firmly identifying as a feminist.

Another impact that party affiliation has on the nature of the memoirs is whether the party of the memoirist was in government during her tenure in politics. While the majority of the women memoirists recount their experience in high ministerial positions of sitting governments, women like Mitchell, McLaughlin and Grey were never involved in parties that held power. Also, although Brown was an MLA during the BC NDP’s tenure in power, she was not appointed a minister, something that she discusses at length in her memoir. Thus, party affiliation is indeed an important factor in shaping how memoirs are constituted and what types of topics these women write about. However, despite the differences in party affiliation, each of the women recount harrowing tales of discrimination at the hands of both the opposition as well as her own party. As you will see, the parties are not fundamentally different in their treatment of women candidates and politicians.

The different positionalities that can potentially intersect within the identity category of ‘women’ are indicative of some of the problems of using women as an identity category and of writing from the
positionality of 'woman,' as many of the female political memoirists do. According to life-writing theorist Nancy K. Miller:

> gender, race and class cannot provide the basis for belief in 'essential' unity. There is nothing about being 'female' that naturally binds women. [...] Which identities are available to ground such a potent political myth called 'us' and what could motivate enlistment in this collectivity? Painful fragmentation among feminists (not to mention among women) along with every possible fault line has made the concept of women elusive, an excuse for the matrix of women's dominations of each other.

(76)

Thus, identity categories like 'women' often exclude a number of people and marginalize others who are not, as Miller says, “white, professional, middle class, female, radical, North American, mid-adult” (76). Such conceptions of 'women' would exclude people like Rosemary Brown. But while Miller identifies the problems of speaking definitively about 'women,' there remains a desire to evoke the category of 'women,' as demonstrated by the female political memoirists who are constantly evoking 'women' within their texts. These women's memoirs try to narrate those female identities but those identities are also often dismantled through the texts themselves because of the ways in which those identities cannot be fully adopted by the women. The intersections of positionalities underscore how women are not simply women but often also women of colour or queer women or women from the North or many other combinations of positionalities.

Within the context of women's political memoirs, although there are many other ways of relaying their stories, anecdotes are most often used to relate an experience of discrimination and to stand in metonymically for an entire political culture that is hostile to women politicians. According to Jane Gallop in her work *Anecdotal Theory,* "an anecdote is the account of a single incident, a single moment" (85). Although anecdotes are seen as singular incidents, when used within narratives Gallop cautions that anecdotes have a tendency to expand for the writer:
anecdote may also tend to elicit an urge to embed the incident in a larger story. Such an urge would lead us away from contact with the singular moment into all-too-familiar directions - conventional narrative arcs, standard plots. This contradiction between capturing the singular moment and a drive to insert the moment within a familiar plot may be not just a problem for this particular story but a tension intrinsic to the anecdote.

Thus, the anecdote is an intrinsic part of the creation of the conventional plots structures that make up women's political memoirs. The anecdotal story functions, as we will see later in this chapter, to refer to thematic consistencies within the narratives of women politicians in Canada. A productive theory of how these anecdotes function within the texts and why they are particularly productive ways to attempt to represent the experiences of women political memoirists is found in rhetorician Kenneth Burke's concept of representation. Burke delineates representation as taking place through the representative anecdote:

Men seek for vocabularies that will be faithful reflections of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that are selections of reality. And any selection of reality must, in certain circumstances function as a deflection of reality [...] It involves the search for a representative anecdote, to be used as a form in conformity with which the vocabulary is constructed.

According to Paul Alpers, Burke is using the term 'representative' in two senses: “an anecdote is representative in that 1) it is a typical instance of an aspect of reality and 2) by being typical, it serves to generate specific depictions, or representations of that reality” (13-14). While Burke's, albeit problematic, concept of the representative anecdote was originally developed to explain how theoretical frameworks are constituted and understood, there has been a great deal of what James Jasinski in the Sourcebook on Rhetoric calls 'creative misreading' by rhetoricians who have used the concept to refer to a discursive anecdotal form present in most texts. These rhetoricians see the value of anecdotal analysis in "it's ability to aid the critic in disclosing the emotives embedded in a text" (Jasinski 493). Anecdotes play a key part in the analysis of such texts, because how anecdotes are told within a text functions to constitute and refer to a larger extratextual experience or the 'emotives' connected to that experience. These anecdotes function
metonymically and provide the reader with a conception of what that 'whole' might be. As Burke’s theoretical conception of representation acknowledges, both the microcosm of the anecdote and the macrosom of the 'whole' are being reduced, constructed, and deflected through the process of textualization. Within the discourse of representation, the complexity of Burke’s conception of the anecdote is necessary to understand what is occurring when women politicians use representative anecdotes to symbolize the greater scope of their experiences within their narratives.

Representation for the women memoirists is accomplished by the metonymic way these anecdotes represent the memoirists’ greater experiences. Although their narratives are connected to their experiences through a complex 'reflective' process, the authorial 'selections' that the memoirists make construct their textual narratives of those experiences and 'deflect' all the other narratives and stories that they might have written. Regardless, there is still something important to be gained from the process of analyzing the narrative purpose of these anecdotes and the constructed 'realities' that these anecdotes refer to. In my analysis of the anecdotes of discrimination that female politicians tell in their memoirs, I see these anecdotes as a very problematic reference to the total context of these women’s experiences of discrimination within politics and I will also demonstrate that these anecdotes are essential narrative strategies within their texts. As I argue in the conclusion, women’s political memoirs are activist texts that attempt to create change within political spheres, and therefore the intentions behind the telling of particular anecdotes is connected to their activist narratological purpose, usually to expose and ridicule discriminatory discourses and those who perpetuate them. This does not mean that the memoirists only use anecdotes to convey their experiences. Indeed, some of the textual examples I will be using in this study feature description or analysis. Whether anecdotal or descriptive, the metaphor of trailblazing permeates all the writings of the memorists and creates trailblazing narratives that are constructed through the deployment of ‘trailblazing plots.’
The ‘trailblazing plots’ in women’s political memoirs principally feature attempts to create or to
discover a heritage of other trailblazers (in this case, political foremothers), enumeration of strong
identifications as female or feminist, elaborations of a desire to unite with other trailblazers, enumerations of
discrimination in politics, and evidence of a consciousness of or a desire to produce a political heritage or
lineage (in this case, a desire for political ‘daughters’). These plots are elaborated through the telling of
representative anecdotes, the divulging of confessions, or the writing of descriptions which the memoirists
use to stress key experiences and narratives of political life. These plots are not always organized linearly
within the texts of women political trailblazers. While many tell their life stories chronologically, others also
organize their memoirs into themed chapters. Regardless, there is a remarkable consistency with which
these aspects of political life are mentioned which demonstrates how these plot components are key or
definitive experiences for female politicians that affect how these women understand and orient themselves
and their texts.

In some ways, these trailblazing plots must be seen as attempts by political women to mark out the
paths that they have taken, not only so that they can retrace their own journeys and tell the stories of their
lives, but also so that they can allow others to follow. The texts are therefore maps of their journeys through
political institutions. But how these political landscapes are laid out determine which events are seen as
significant and which landmarks make it into their memoirs. Because these women confront the same
political landscapes women often hit on the same touchstones within their texts. However, this does not
mean that each woman takes the same path or engages with these touchstones in the same way. Over
time, the landscapes of parliamentary institutions change and this is reflected in the narratives of the
memoirists. The stories that the women tell are thus differently situated and written, and dramatize the slow
progress of women within institutions of parliament. The physicality of this evolution can particularly be
seen in the ‘Agnes MacPhail anecdote’ told by Sheila Copps and Deborah Grey, in which Copps and Grey
Comment on the location of an Agnes MacPhail bust during the early 1980s and the late 1980s respectively. Copps presents the anecdote like this:

Imagine my surprise when on my way to the women's washroom one day, I saw the bust of a woman's head identified as Agnes MacPhail, the first woman to enter the House of Commons. And there she was, appropriately positioned in an obscure, dark corner of the second floor, inaccessible to the public, outside the women's washroom. When I had the chance, I approached the then Speaker, John Fraser, about giving Agnes MacPhail the prominence she deserved. I asked that her bust be moved to a position of honour in front of the Chamber she so proudly served. Without hesitation, he ordered the bust moved to a more visible location, where she is now a regular part of school tours seen by thousands of children who know that their Parliament included at least one woman.

(Copps, *Worth* 21)

Deborah Grey comments on the same bust, only her perspective of the bust has, unbeknownst to her, been affected by the change that Sheila Copps had previously made in the placement of the bust:

I sat there thinking about how many people had gone before me in these Chambers. This was the very place that my forerunner and mentor Agnes MacPhail sat in. I could only imagine how she felt in the House; the very first woman in Parliament! [...] I was thrilled to see a bust of her in the foyer at the entrance to the Oppositions Members' lobby. The first time I saw her I felt a strong connection and gave her a pat on the head to say 'Hello' and 'Thank you for what you have done for Parliament, for women and for me.' I have done that every time I entered the lobby for my entire parliamentary career.

(Grey 100-101)

I believe that these anecdotes are particularly salient in highlighting the slow evolution that occurs within Canadian women's political memoirs and how certain touchstones of women's experience within these political institutions get addressed in different ways. While Copps' anecdote is about the disappointment and subsequent action she took because of this symbolic sidelining of women within political institutions, Grey's anecdote depicts her excitement at having a woman prominently displayed within that same institution. Copps' anecdote also shows how having women in politics can effect small changes to political
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institutions because, had Copps not spoken up, there is a good chance that the bust would still be hidden and then Grey would be the one bemoaning its placement in her memoir.

But despite these differences, the anecdotes of discrimination in the texts of the memoirs are also similar. When elaborating experiences of discrimination, the women adopt a tone of resistance or defiance. This resistance is articulated in several of the titles of the memoirs. The title of *Nobody's Baby* by Sheila Copps originates from a confrontation that occurred during Question Period when Tory MP John Crosbie told her to “just quieten down, baby” and Copps replied by saying “I am 32 years old, I am an elected member of Parliament from Hamilton East and I’m nobody’s baby” (Copps, *Nobody’s* 169). The title of Margaret Mitchell’s *No Laughing Matter* comes from the time when she spoke up in parliament about wife beating and was laughed at by male politicians to which she famously replied, “Madam Speaker, I do not think this is a laughing matter” (Mitchell xii). These two titles directly address both Copps’ and Mitchell’s central anecdotes of discrimination. Audrey McLaughlin’s *A Woman’s Place* is also an attempt to challenge discriminatory conceptions of women’s position in society.

As noted, a central part of trailblazing narratives is women’s attempts to construct a history of women’s political emancipation. This process is so important that Deborah Grey even calls her memoir *Never Retreat, Never Explain, Never Apologize*, which is a direct quotation from Nellie McClung’s famous injunction: “never retreat, never explain, never apologize; get the thing done and let them howl.” This attempt to invoke female foremothers seeks to identify a common political struggle for Canadian women political trailblazer figures (i.e. like Nellie McClung, Agnes MacPhail, and Ellen Fairclough) and to create a historical continuum of Canadian women in power. By invoking the narratives and the names of the women who have gone into politics before them, they are seeking authorization for their own presence within politics and invoking a history of women trailblazers of which they are now a part.
Female political role models also serve to contextualize the memoirist's experiences in terms of a broader narrative of discrimination against women politicians. Kim Campbell contextualizes her experiences with discrimination within a greater narrative of discrimination against women politicians in her memoir by invoking both recent and past experiences of women politicians in Canada:

Sitting in the House, I thought of what it must have been like for women like Agnes Macphail, Ellen Fairclough and Flora MacDonald, all of whom were, in their time, lone women MPs. When Pat Carney went to Ottawa in 1980 and began challenging the rule that would have paid the travel costs of a 'spousal equivalent' but would not allow her as a single parent to use that allowance for a child, she was told she should be grateful that women MPs were now paid the same as men!

(Campbell 122)

Campbell invokes the experiences and accomplishments of women politicians in an attempt to create a continuum of women's narratives within politics. This is also evidenced in the Agnes MacPhail anecdote told by Grey and Copps. As MacPhail's bust represents women, the invocation of the bust is an attempt on Copps' part to show in her memoir how women have been marginalized in very physical and material ways in their narratives. Thus, narratives or representations of other women figures within these texts often indicate a slippage between the physical and the metaphorical. The stories of female foremothers are often told by the memoirists as elaborations of their own origin narratives. By taking up the words of their predecessors and by identifying with their symbolic representations, they are acknowledging that their own narratives are not exclusively their own but rather part of a greater narrative or genealogy of women's political emancipation that began before they were born with their political foremothers and will continue after they are dead with their political daughters.

The narratives also features stories about the frequent discrimination and hardship that female politicians experience. According to Copps, "those women who have shown that they could hold their own – people like Judy LaMarsh, Monique Bégin, or Agnes MacPhail – have been regarded as oddities. Their
toughness was seen as an anomaly in some way; a denial of their proper femininity” (Copps, Nobody’s 83).

Pat Carney also touches on the discrimination that these women parliamentarians faced:

Many women who have served at the highest level of political power in Canada, the federal cabinet, are bitter about their experience. The history of women in Canadian politics, from the first woman cabinet minister, Ellen Fairclough, to Kim Campbell, reveals that they have been underestimated, ignored, ridiculed, or usurped by their male colleagues.

(309)

By referring to other women politicians, both Carney and Copps are attempting to position themselves within a common historical narrative of women politicians. This is something that Campbell also engages in, especially in the context of her own historic election to the head of the PC party:

Flora Macdonald gave me her support on the first day of the convention. [...] It was so moving to me to be endorsed by the first woman in our party to seek the leadership. Ellen Fairclough, the first woman cabinet minister in Canada, was also a supporter. In the rally, I acknowledged how much we all stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before, and I said that I hoped my shoulders would also support women to come.

(298-299)

Thus, though memoirists emphasize their own stories of being trailblazers in political life, they are oddly preoccupied with acknowledging those women who fought for emancipation before they did. Their trailblazing plots and narratives do not contextualize themselves as singular pioneers within politics, but instead as part of a ‘family’ of trailblazers, namely a family of women, related only through their involvement in Canadian politics and their gender.

Each of the memoirists identifies herself, and writes, not just as a woman, but also as a feminist (with the exception of Deborah Grey). While each might arguably define feminism differently, and few explicitly define what feminism means to them, most had direct ties to the feminist movement of their time. These women memoirists make explicit feminist identifications in order to categorize themselves as women working for the rights of other women. In these statements, they often refer to women by using words like ‘us’ or ‘we.’ As Copps writes:
I am not ashamed of saying I am a feminist, that I fight for women. I make no apologies, just as a farmer would never dream of apologizing for fighting for farmers, nor would a businessman apologize for promoting the interests of his group. Women make up an absolute majority in this country. Why should our interests be considered trivial? Why should we leave it to others to represent us, and to fight our battles? Who should make decisions on health care during pregnancy or on contraception? A man, no matter how good a father he may be, can't carry and bear children. It's up to us, the women of Canada, to look out for ourselves and our own.

(Nobody's 56)

Audrey McLaughlin clarifies her feminist position by saying:

One reason I insist on using the word 'feminist,' apart from the fact that I am one, is that I believe we must restore the positive meaning of the word. We have to take back the language that's been stolen from us by those who would like to undermine the legitimacy of women's struggle for equality.

(213)

Kim Campbell identifies herself as a feminist, though she does take issue with certain positions the feminist movement takes and has some concerns about whether 'feminist' is the proper word to express her position:

One of the first fifty-cent words I can remember being taught was 'misogynist.' (I should say that what I call 'feminism' reflects the usage of an earlier time. To me, it means a commitment to equality for women. It has unfortunately taken on a connotation of hostility to men in the minds of some people. For that reason, many young women don't like to identify themselves with feminism today. I continue to use the term because I have yet to find an adequate alternative).

(12)

The conventions of women politicians articulating whether or not they are feminists within their memoirs and referring to women in the first-person plural, are linked to the way the political institutions treat women politicians. Each of the women memoirists, with the exception of Grey (who doesn't mention feminism but sets up a female genealogy), seem to be using this avowal of being a feminist to state her position regarding women's rights and equality. While Grey does not identity as a feminist for either personal or professional reasons, or because the thought does not occur to her to address it, she does set
up a female genealogy and celebrate the success of women in politics. In doing so, they all firmly identify as women and see their individual struggle connected to the struggles of other women. By referring to women as 'us', as Copps and McLaughlin do, the memoirists are constituting themselves as 'women' within their memoirs. It is also interesting that the majority of the memoirists feel that it is necessary to articulate how they feel about feminism. Their need to assert their positions vis-a-vis feminism, and the defensive ways in which they assert those positions, are indicative of the type of resistance they have experienced against feminism and feminists within Canadian politics and society. McLaughlin recounts one telling experience of this resistance:

I sometimes recount an incident that occurred on a radio phone-in show in Edmonton soon after I became leader. The host, a man [...] asked me if I was a feminist. I don't think I've ever been asked this question in an interview when it wasn't issued as a kind of challenge - as in 'Lady, if you say yes, you'd better be ready to justify yourself.' In response I don't make a big thing out of it, I just answer simply and directly. I said, 'Yes, as a matter of fact, I am.' 'Okay,' he went on, 'but you're not like a hard core feminist.' Images of legions of bra burners marching on Parliament Hill were by now raging through listeners' heads. 'Yes,' I replied, 'I'm a feminist.' Still he wasn't satisfied. 'Well, I guess what I'm saying is you're not an out-and-out feminist are you?' I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. So I said it again, 'Yes, I am an out-and-out feminist.'

(212-213)

While the women do position themselves slightly differently in relation to feminism (as demonstrated by Campbell's somewhat reluctant identification with feminism, in contrast to Copps' enthusiastic identification), they still feel that the conventions of the sub-genre of women's political memoirs requires them to address both feminism and their identities as women.

This identification as a woman is politically significant because many of the women found out in their leadership bid, that when other women supported them politically it was sometimes because they were women. Campbell recounts the experience of becoming the first female prime minister of Canada: "women of all ages were jubilant, many of them crying at this historic moment. A woman was going to be prime minister of Canada and I was that woman. I put aside all my fears about what was to come, and just
Although Rosemary Brown didn’t win her bid for leadership of the federal NDP, she recounts her experience of having women support her:

Conservative and Liberal women turned up at my meetings just to wish me luck and to make financial donations to the campaign. [...] The campaign touched and excited women everywhere in Canada. [...] Many two-dollar bills were received from seniors, some of whom identified themselves as old suffragists. [...] There were never any strings attached, just a confession of excitement at the prospect of a woman leader and a desire to lend support. (168-69)

There is also a hesitancy that women politicians write about other women having regarding how women leaders will react emotionally in the public spotlight, particularly because when women take part in leadership races, the hopes of many women are invested in one woman. It is thought by some members of the public and the media that if women appear too emotional, they will leave the impression that women are not suited to politics. According to Audrey McLaughlin,

after the convention, a woman friend in the Yukon said to me, ‘I was so glad you didn’t cry when you won.’ Other women have subsequently echoed her remark. [...] We are still not used to women as winners in politics. [...] We expect to see them [...] break down and weep.

So for all the women who will seek, or have ever sought, political office, I’m very glad I didn’t cry. But I look forward to the day when it won’t matter one way or the other. (75)

Copps repeats this same anecdote about her own fear of crying while she was in the spotlight of the leadership race.

In my heart, I knew the writing was on the wall. But I had to keep my chin up to show that women don’t break down at the least disappointment. In fact, another candidate, John Sweeney, was moved to tears. [...] But I couldn’t afford to weep because that would mark me — and other women — as a cry baby, unable to take the strain. I kept my chin up, kept campaigning, even though I knew the next ballot would end it. (Worth 48)

These two anecdotes (i.e. the anecdotes about the support of women for women political leaders, as well as the anecdote about the unease that women have with the actions of women political leaders and their
fear that they will do something that will ruin the chances of other women) are told in order to underline the fragility of women's political leadership and the lack of acceptance of women leaders in general. These anecdotes are also indicative of how the women who are running for leadership of their parties often do not just run for themselves, but actually conceptualize their campaign as a campaign for leadership in order to advance the interests of women in politics in general. This narrative is one conferred on them by the women who identify with them and support them as women during their run, by their own conception of the important role they are playing as trailblazers within Canadian political history, and perhaps even partly out of political strategy. Their run is thus tied to the experiences of women politicians in the past, and to their appreciation for the trails that these historical women blazed for them, as well as to the experiences of women in the future who might be more successful in their leadership bids because of the trails that these politicians are blazing for them. Thus, these women write about explicitly running as women during their leadership bids and explicitly attempting to make history.

Women memoirists also have a tendency to identify with other women in their parties and women outside their parties on the basis that they undergo similar experiences as politicians within institutions of parliament. These identifications are catalogued in their texts. They seem to believe that the stories of other women politicians also help to tell their stories or that each women's story is metonymic for some whole of women's experiences in Canadian parliamentary institutions. Not only does this tendency toward identification with other women mean that the narratives of women politicians are organized around their experiences as women, sometimes over and above their experiences as members of particular parties, but it also means that women across the political spectrum contextualize their experience of similar things in parliament. The slippage that occurs between the stories of different women politicians is important. It shows that the way in which they are interpolated into female subjectivities and take up narratives within the political institutions is similar.
In the introduction to former MLA Anne Edward’s Seeking Balance, former colleague Diane Mazari addresses the inconsequentiality of party affiliation when talking about women in politics. According to Mazari, “Anne rarely mentions party affiliation in her narrative. She doesn’t need to. The similarities in our combined experience are remarkable. What is important here is that all of them – all of us, across the board – felt the chill as we entered the job and found we had another job to do in dealing with that fact” (Edwards 11). Women’s identification goes so far as leading women memoirists to identify with other women workers in parliament. Pat Carney explains her outrage at the discrimination against women that she perceived in the federal bureaucracy. “Often I was the only woman in the room when I met with my senior officials. If another woman was present, she was often in an ‘acting’ capacity, even though her expertise was superior to her male colleagues” (310). Part of this tendency to identify with other women is because they experienced the same sexism from the same people. According to Pat Carney,

John Crosbie, famous for his sexist attack on Liberal MP Sheila Copps – “Pass the tequila, Sheila, roll over and love me again” – did not spare his colleagues. In demand as a speaker, he once told a full-house audience: “I notice that we have with us tonight Minister Pat Carney and her friend, famous columnist Allan Fotheringham. The issue is whether Fotheringham has had carnal knowledge of Carney.”

(322)

The experiences of being discriminated against by their mutual colleagues and having their plans foiled by discrimination often left women with a collective feeling of powerlessness. This is an experience that Brown also describes:

The fact that my efforts resulted in failure many more times than they did in success reinforced my sense of powerlessness. I felt cheated; somehow the power that seemed to be promised by the position of ‘legislator’ was denied me. [...] Conversations with other women politicians have helped me see that this too is a shared experience, rather than a personal one.

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This experience of sexism is in contrast to what women perceive male politicians to have experienced within political institutions. As Brown recalls,
Throughout my time in office, I was able to observe the ease with which the men twisted each other's arms, to see that even when they opposed each other's views there was an underlying respect, a feeling of family, between them. My approach, on the other hand, even to those members I considered friends, was met with wariness.

Indeed, the only woman who claimed not to have experienced this bonding with other women politicians over their common struggle was Kim Campbell: "one of the downsides of going into cabinet right away was that I didn't often have an opportunity to interact with the women in the opposition. Private members meet regularly across party lines in the work of parliamentary committees. I didn't sit on these committees"(122). The fact that she did not experience this bonding, however, does not mean that she didn't identify with other women politicians. Obviously, the fact that she mentions not being able to bond with other women with regret means that she wishes that she had.

Women politicians write about these identifications with other women politicians in their memoirs in order to show the collective nature of their experience and to show how they identify with other women because they are identified with those other women by institutions of political life. What they articulate is a schism between women and men in politics that is perpetuated across party lines. This narrative of identifying with other women is a continuation of the genealogical narrative that women politicians deploy in their narratives. If the women of the past are their mothers and the women of the future their daughters, then their female contemporaries must be their sisters. They are thus united through a familial historical lineage that links women within politics through their gender. While men often implicitly identify with other men, they do not do so explicitly within their memoirs and do not seem to get the same sort of authorization that women appear to get from creating genealogical narratives. It is also significant that while paternal filiation within politics might produce privilege and power, maternal filiation does not produce the same privilege or power. Indeed, women are writing about maternal filiation in an attempt to shore up its power
and to encourage other women to become involved in politics so as to increase that power, because within the institutions women's voices do not have the same influence as men's.

This identification with women and as women often causes female politicians to be particularly strong advocates for women's issues. The women write about their need to speak for women within parliamentary institutions and about the different perspectives they bring to parliamentary institutions. Often male politicians are depicted as not understanding these issues. Mitchell particularly articulates this situation by telling her memoir's titular story: "'one in ten Canadian husbands beat their wives regularly,' I began. Before I could continue, an uproar of male shouts and laughter erupted, making it impossible for me to be heard. A nearby Tory joked, 'I don't beat my wife. Do you George?' / When the Speaker finally got order, I rose again in fury. 'Madam Speaker, I do not think this is a laughing matter" (Xii). Mitchell experienced this uproar because she had taken on the issue of wife beating, something that her male colleagues definitely did not see as important. In the memoirs, women's issues are often thought to be articulated best by women. Sheila Copps explains why women's voices are necessary in politics:

One only had to examine the political agenda for the 1980s to realize that women's issues are overriding questions that face each and every Canadian family. 'Women's issues' is a misnomer, since most issues concerning children and the family concern men as well as women. For example, why is daycare considered a women's issue? It concerns the whole family. Are schools a women's issue?

These are not women's issues, but issues of equality. Since women tend to be the losers in the area of economic and social equality, these concerns are lumped together under a trivializing heading, perhaps in the hopes that they might go away.

(Copps, Nobody's 115)

Women politicians often identify with other women and work with and for them in order to create policies and programs that are women-friendly. In addition, the memoirists write about their mediation on women's issues in part because they seem to feel the need to justify why women should be in politics. By suggesting that there is something at which women are particularly good (i.e. representing women who are
the majority of the Canadian electorate) they make a case for why women need to be politically involved and for why political institutions need to embrace women. They are also attempting to articulate the ways in which they feel they have created change within political institutions.

Anecdotes of discrimination play an important role within the memoirs. Each woman relates her own anecdote about how she experienced sexist opposition and also how she confronted it. Pat Carney talks about how she was made President of the Treasury Board but couldn't get the Government Operations and Estimates Committee (Ops) to tell her when their meetings were so she could attend:

The Boys like the all-male atmosphere of Ops and planned to keep it that way. The language was rough and the atmosphere abrasive; deals were cut and no woman was welcome.

I was in the same 'no win' position faced by women executives in Calgary's oil patch when they were barred from memberships in the all-important Petroleum Club where land deals were made and exploration rights negotiated. As President of the Treasury Board, I held the responsibility for government spending, but my exclusion from Ops meant I couldn't exercise it.

Carney, of course, ordered 'The Boys' to include her and asserted her authority over the committee. As the first woman President of the Treasury Board, Carney had to venture into places that women had never been before. Pat Carney also sheds light on how women experience that discrimination: "It took many of us a long time to understand that our problems were cultural, not personal, and that we, as Sharpe writes, 'are travelers in a strange and alien culture that was created by and for men' (Carney 310). Carney asserts that it is important to understand that women are writing these narratives about their time in an alien culture that wasn't created by them and that treats them, not as individuals, but as members of a foreign race, as 'others.' Carney explains how she dealt with this alien culture: "one way that women politicians fought the corporate culture was our refusal to give speeches and hold meetings in men-only clubs" (324). Women politicians who banded together against men-only clubs often got some of the rules changed at those clubs or, at the very least, discouraged the practice of holding meetings or speeches at such places. By telling
both the story of her discrimination and how she confronted it, Carney is trying to point out the problems within the institutions and show how women politicians challenge these discriminatory practices.

Sheila Copps tells multiple anecdotes about how she experienced discrimination during her long political career. Some of her anecdotes are particularly troubling. For example, she tells us that she was once serving on a travelling committee on child abuse. [...] As I returned to my hotel room, I was followed by another member who invited me to his room for a drink. I refused politely, whereupon he grabbed me and started to kiss me passionately. I wanted to scream but I couldn’t, so I pushed him away and fled to my own room.

(Copps, Nobody’s 29)

Just as Carney negotiated how she coped with her experiences of discrimination, Copps too has her own strategy:

How do you cope? As a newcomer, I was seen as the sweet young thing, the token woman from Hamilton Centre. It was only when the men began to realize that I would dish it out as well as take it that they began to see me in a different light. They began to understand that the boys’ club atmosphere was being overtaken by the times.

(Copps, Nobody’s 29)

In her memoir, Mitchell explains how she was able to deal with this discrimination by gaining strength from how her spirited response to it inspired other women. Indeed, Mitchell’s claim that spousal abuse was ‘no laughing matter’ actually defined her as a politician: “for years afterward women confided that my spirited response to the men’s ridicule gave them the support they needed to leave an abusive situation. It might very well have been, as one woman put it twenty years later, ‘a turning point in feminism in Canada.’ It certainly became my claim to fame” (154).

Deborah Grey, although she claims to have experienced very little discrimination while in politics, must still address the issue of discrimination in her memoir because it is so prevalent. I was told when I arrived on the Hill that I would be discriminated against because I was a woman. I have often been asked over the years, ‘How is it being a woman parliamentarian?’ I always answer, ‘I don’t know, because I have never been anything else.’ I have always felt equal, but perhaps I have been fortunate because I am a substantial size and I have a deep
voice; consequently I have never been mocked for being shrill. Unfortunately, 'shrillness' somehow seems to decrease credibility.

(101)

Interestingly, Grey realizes that, even though her experiences have not been consistent with the idea of how women are treated in parliament, this is not necessarily the experience of all women. Grey even recognizes that her characteristics might be deemed more 'masculine' and, therefore, may have saved her from being a target of the sexist discrimination directed at those who are 'feminine.'

The women memoirists tell these stories in order to properly contextualize their experiences within politics and in order to show how they attempted, if only in small ways, to resist the discourses that excluded them because they were women. These stories are also attempts to expose the discrimination that they have experienced at the hands of the parliamentary system, and the male politicians, and to comment on this discrimination. The instances of discrimination that are narrated represent specific circumstances, but they function as metonyms for the plethora of experiences of discrimination that women experience as politicians in Canadian parliamentary institutions. Indeed, these women often claim that the anecdotes they tell are indicative of a greater problem, and they usually state that these experiences of discrimination are experienced by all women in politics.

One prevalent anecdote of discrimination is the story of how women's party nominations were opposed. Women who experience such resistance often narrate this struggle by telling anecdotes showcasing this resistance in order to expose it. Rosemary Brown tells a story about open resistance to her nomination:

I received phone calls suggesting that a decision to run in Vancouver-Burrard would be divisive, that Ray Parkinson had 'paid his dues' and deserved the right to the nomination [...] that Burrard was a swing seat that had been lost to the party in the last election and could be lost again unless the 'right' candidates were nominated. Some of the same party people who had telephoned to encourage me to run now telephoned to exhort me not to run. Emery Barnes, the other black hopeful in the party, phoned to offer me his place on the ballot in
Vancouver Centre. Gary Lauk, his running mate, phoned to withdraw the offer on the grounds that 'a woman' could not win that riding.

Like Brown, women often face opposition from the 'backroom boys' within their parties who try to run the party based on a system of entitlements that often privileges men and sees men as the more capable and 'winnable' candidates. By writing about this, Brown is exposing these 'backroom' manipulations that often target women. Audrey McLaughlin experienced this same resistance when she became involved in politics: "this was an election the party thought it could win - with the right candidate. But few within the party at that time were thinking the right candidate might be a woman" (6). Women politicians articulate anecdotes of these experiences because they are indicative of how their entrance into politics is greeted with opposition. They also try to engage with the specific challenges women experience in entering politics. Like many of the anecdotes that women political memoirists relate, these anecdotes seems to have a telos of changing the current treatment of women candidates by pointing out the injustice of their treatment.

One of the anecdotes that Canadian women politicians almost uniformly tell in order to underscore the fact that the institutions of parliament are not receptive to or appreciative of women politicians is the story of the lack of washrooms for women politicians in houses of parliament. It seems somewhat absurd that powerful women politicians choose to concentrate on washrooms in their political memoirs, but the washroom story functions as a metonym for the way space and power are apportioned within these institutions. Mitchell remarks on the washroom situation stating: "washrooms for women were not as available as those for men" (149). In contrast, Kim Campbell states that when she was in parliament they finally fixed the washroom situation: "there were now convenient washrooms for women MPs" but the fact that she remarks upon it is significant (122). Rosemary Brown suggested that this was also a problem for MLAs in BC, and Brown's comment on washrooms is quoted by Audrey McLaughlin in her memoir:

All the washrooms in the building meant for the use of elected members had been built with urinals in them. In the particular washroom being used by female politicians and staff, the
urinal had been concealed behind a temporary box-like wood structure – a clear indication that our legislative forefathers had not conceived the possibility of women one day serving as elected members in that building, and that our presence there is still accompanied by the hope that our sojourn will be temporary.

(Brown 142)

Brown identifies why the state of women's washrooms is so troubling to political memoirists. Indeed, rhetorically and metonymically 'washrooms' represent more than just physical space; they represent the ways in which the political realm was not constructed with women in mind and how women are currently marginalized within political institutions. According to Susan J. Drucker in Voices in the Street, "a place is a space with 'psychological or symbolic meaning.' Thus, space refers to the abstract geographical qualities of environment, which become transformed into meaningful places as people use, modify or attribute symbolic value to specific settings" (Drucker 2). Washrooms represent the way architectural and political space is apportioned and privileged. The fact women's washrooms were not renovated is indicative of the resistance to changing the way the institutions work in order to accommodate women politicians. Former MLA Anne Edwards in Seeking Balance, her exploration of BC women in politics, explains that women interpret this resistance to taking out the urinals as "don't get too comfortable, girls, you may not be here for long" (266).

Anecdotes about washrooms have a long history of being told in women's political memoirs in Canada. In her memoir Saturday's Child (1995), Canada's first women cabinet minister, Ellen Fairclough, commented on the situation of washrooms during her tenure in politics from 1950-1963.

'For the record,' I should describe the sorts of incidents often put forward to show the degree of discrimination faced by a woman in the 'men's world' of politics. It is true that I often had to go long distances in the Parliament Buildings to find a women's washroom. There are accounts of valiant colleagues standing guard outside the men's washroom just outside the cabinet room door, while I used the 'facilities'.

(158)
Thus, even though many years passed between when Fairclough was a politician and when the women whose memoirs I'm studying were in politics, the problems, in many ways, remained unchanged and the anecdote about washrooms remained a productive metonym for describing these problems.

Another popular anecdote is the one the memoirists tell about opposition to women in leadership contests. While I have already mentioned the advantages women gained as female candidates, it is important to also address the disadvantages they experience. Women who attempted to become leaders of their parties report stiff opposition within their parties and the anecdotes that the women memoirists tell of their experiences running for leadership are quite similar in theme. Their experiences are very explicitly gendered and their narratives of those experiences capture the gendered nature of running for political leadership. The near uniformity of the anecdotes used to record these experiences suggests that the opposition to women's leadership within political parties in Canada is widespread. Rosemary Brown remembers asking someone who virulently opposed her leadership campaign why he was so passionate in his opposition to her: "'Why did you work so hard to defeat my bid for the leadership?' I asked David Lewis. / 'Because you're a genuinely dangerous threat to the party,' he replied" (147). This opposition came, not just because she was a woman candidate, but also because she was a feminist candidate. Says Brown, "it was the cause of women that seemed to engender the most hostility to my candidacy. The decision to place a feminist candidate with a feminist agenda in the leadership exercise was seen as divisive" (149). Indeed, Brown chronicles the intense opposition to her campaign in her memoir:

The passion of their opposition to my attempt to win the party leadership was intense and forceful; and as the campaign progressed and my strength grew, their efforts seemed to take on panic proportions. Because this was so contrary to what was happening in the party as a whole, where my support was growing, it confused and puzzled me. I knew that the fact that I had never served as a Member of Parliament was a serious deficiency, that my lack of bilingualism was a handicap, and I recognized that not everybody in the party agreed with my views on every issue. However, I could not see that these shortcomings, important as they were, warranted the fervour with which the party establishment opposed my candidacy.

(147-148)
While there are many men who have run for leadership with little or no parliamentary experience (particularly Brian Mulroney who had not held public office prior to his leadership bid within the PC party), their runs were never greeted with the same opposition as Brown’s leadership campaign was. Brown’s race also made a difference in how she was perceived as her candidacy was closely followed by the media whom she believed hoped she would win so that they could “conduct endless research on ‘the impact of a Black female immigrant socialist on the political landscape of Canada’” and also so that they could write catchy headlines like “White Canadian Party Elects Black Leader,” “One of the World’s Largest White Countries Led by Radical Black Feminist Socialist,” ‘Shocked Canadians Appeal to World for Help After Black Leader Elected,’ ‘White No More,’ ‘Brown is Beautiful says Black Leader to White Country,’ ‘Country Falls to Feminist’” (Brown 172).

The illusion of equality within political parties was often destroyed through the process of women running for leadership. Kim Campbell recounts the experience of having supposed feminist allies like Maureen McTeer (the wife of Joe Clark who is famous for refusing to change her last name when she married) turn against her.

[Maureen claimed] that my lack of children meant I didn’t have a sufficient stake in the future. Aside from being a slap in the face to every woman who had been unable to bear a child, the comment was incredibly sexist and ahistorical, given our country’s long tradition of being governed by childless men. Would she have made the same objection about John Diefenbaker?

(295)

Sheila Copps similarly recounts the outright hostility she experienced during her leadership bid:

“anonymous notes circulated, accusing me of lesbian tendencies. One MPP suggested that I wasn’t psychologically strong enough to handle the pressure of leadership. Several senior caucus members
suggested privately that they would resign if I were chosen leader. Saturday night was the beginning of the ABS (Anyone But Sheila) move" (Copps, Nobody's 45).

Audrey McLaughlin, in evaluating her own experiences as a woman running for leadership, tries to explain why people react as they do: "as Sylvia Bashevkin notes in *Toeing the Lines*, her study of women in Canadian politics, these and other failed attempts by women to win party leadership at the provincial level reflected 'a fundamental unease with the prospect of a female party leader'" (63). Sometimes, the women memoirists who ran for party leadership tell of their experiences with discrimination because they are still angry about them. There seems to be a general feeling that they have been unjustly treated within their leadership races, and that they have been isolated from the other candidates and attacked because of their gender. The women memoirists tell these anecdotes to show how real the discrimination against women truly is and how sexist narratives actually destroyed, or tried to destroy their campaign and their chances of being elected leader. The anecdotes are so similar because the resistance to women political leaders is something experienced in all parties.

While these anecdotes of discrimination are similar, so are the narratives of hope that the women memoirists articulate. As you will see in the conclusion, despite these women's attempts to demonstrate what is wrong with politics, they also attempt to articulate how to change politics and show a great deal of hope that political change can occur. An integral part of this change takes place within an imagined future in which women politicians are treated equally. This part of the 'trailblazing narrative' emphasizes the genealogical continuum that we have discussed in this chapter. As we will see in the conclusion, it is the hope of the authors of these texts that their political daughters will someday reap the rewards of the arduous trailblazing work that they have done and create a more just Canada.
"The attempt to share the reality of women's political difference with other women has led women politicians to write their stories. [There are] shared preoccupations present in the recent wave of published [memoirs] by women in politics, all of which point to the existence of a distinctively feminine form of political [memoirs]."
Raylene Ramsay, French Women in Politics

In French Women in Politics: Writing Power, Paternal Legitimation and Maternal Legacies, Raylene Ramsay analyzes the memoirs of French women politicians and determines that the texts that they write constitute a distinct form of political memoir. Although they do feature some differences from the memoirs of French women politicians, Canadian women's political memoirs also make up their own distinct subgenre within the larger subgenre of political memoir. Despite these differences, Ramsay's analysis of French women's political memoirs and my analysis of Canadian women's political memoirs suggest that the marginalization and discrimination of women within political institutions create similarities in the narratives of women within the same national context who have had to contend with the same political institutions. Whether or not this is universally true in institutions around the world is impossible to determine, because there still remain very few women in politics today and even fewer women who have written memoirs about their time in politics.

The one thing we do know from the memoirs of French and Canadian women politicians is that this discrimination exists and greatly influences how women represent their experiences in narrative form. When women enter and take part in institutions from which they have heretofore been excluded, such as political institutions, they can often expect to experience very similar forms of institutional discrimination directed at them because they are women. Indeed, the narratives of Canadian women in politics, from Nellie McClung to Kim Campbell, are often remarkably similar because of the relentless discrimination directed at them that suggests that women should not be in politics or are somehow unsuited for political
life. Though my study of Canadian women’s political memoirs was limited to analyzing the memoirs of women from the 1980s to the present, many of the narratives written prior to this period have told similar anecdotes and orient themselves around a similar theme of writing back to discrimination. Thérèse Casgrain wrote her memoir *A woman in a man’s world* in 1972 and recounts that “the editor of *Le Bien Public*, in Trois-Rivières, picked up my remarks in his issue of the 26th of March and suggested that I return forthwith to my pots and pans: ‘let her cook, sew, embroider, read, card wool, play bridge – anything rather than persist in her dangerous role of issuer of directives’” (106-107). Similarly, Judy LaMarsh commented in her memoir (1969) on what she saw as her innate ability to get bad press:

> Wherever and whenever I say something, my words, coming from the mouth of a woman, suddenly look larger than life, sound harsher and less reasonable, too colourful, too partisan. Maybe the trouble is that the reports of me filter through male reporters with their layers of unacknowledged prejudice that a woman doesn’t talk like that, she doesn’t fight like that, she doesn’t act like that! Maybe a lady no, but a woman, why not? I don’t know whether I act like other women. I suspect I do, but no one is watching them as closely.

(37)

The stories of discrimination that are told about these earlier periods in Canadian history are disturbingly open about sexism. According to Sharpe, male politicians had no respect for their female colleagues. In her book *Gilded Ghetto*, Sharpe recounts what a male Conservative once said about Flora MacDonald: “Flora was well liked. She was a drinking buddy, but she was, well, a secretary. We didn’t think of her as a politician” (103). Sharpe also writes about how one of LaMarsh’s colleagues commented on her toughness: “a male colleague dealt LaMarsh the deadliest insult: ‘Well, can you imagine going to bed with that?’” (81). Unfortunately, these narratives which are used to denigrate powerful women are not historical anachronisms but are still deployed within Canadian political institutions today, although perhaps not as openly.

As we have seen, the memoirs that I have studied and which I call ‘trailblazing narratives,’ follow a particular conventional ‘trailblazing plot’ in order to tell of similar experiences of women’s involvement in
politics in Canada. These narratives chronicle women's experiences in politics as they blaze a trail for other women by venturing down paths or into political circles where women have never been before. These narratives try to construct a historical genealogy that connects them with other Canadian women politicians, and to write back to a culture of discrimination within political institutions and the media. They also seek to record the memoirists' historical involvements in politics as women, and to change the way women and women's bodies are seen within the political sphere in order to create change within political institutions, public perception, and social conceptions of women.

The memoirs of women are often written strategically in other ways as well. The desire to change political institutions in Canada by refiguring women's bodies and including more women within the political realm is a particularly activist goal for women's political memoirists to have and one that is directly opposed to the type of individualistic narratological focus that male politicians have in writing their memoirs. Indeed, the desire to get more women involved in politics is present in each of the women's memoirs, and often the very memoirs themselves are organized around it as we discovered with Sheila Copps' memoir in Chapter One. Ramsay also recognized this desire in the memoirs of French women politicians: "I did not find one political woman who was not working, in her own way, toward equal representation for her gender" (xv). Because gender and bodies are conflated so closely within political institutions, having more women means having more explicitly female bodies. Although women memoirists suggest that having more women in politics will result in more feminist policies, the women also recognize that having more women's bodies in politics will normalize women's participation within those institutions and allow greater opportunities and equality for women politicians. This is what political scientists Linda Trimble and Jane Arscott in their book Still Counting call the 'Deb Effect,' named after MP and memoirist Deborah Grey (149). They ask whether it is

better to elect women, any women, or only the right sort of women? Some argue that 'only one kind of elected woman has a chance to do any good — a firm feminist who makes it her
business to enact legislation that eradicates inequality. [...] We disagree; in our capacity as feminists, women, citizens, and political scientists we support the election of diverse individuals regardless of their party stripe. If successful, the Deb Effect will produce beneficial outcomes for all women.

(Arscott 151)

In fact, Trimble and Arscott believe that “all women politicians make a difference for women regardless of their support for feminism, their varying desire to advocate on behalf of the women’s movement, or their party affiliation and ideology” (Still Counting 155). This means that having more women’s bodies within politics is crucially important for the advancement of women, according to Trimble and Arscott.

Although there might be some problems with the Deb Effect, getting more women involved in politics is deemed by the memoirists to be crucial to women’s political emancipation. This is derived partly from the belief of the political memoirists that women can create change. McLaughlin attempts to express this:

Women in politics can begin to change the image of what it means to have power, by exercising the characteristics I’ve described and insisting on respect for doing so. Someone once asked me if I thought more women in politics would help the cause of women in general. I replied that I thought so, but that without any question it would improve the practice of politics. Perhaps women can begin to change the accepted concept of leadership. And maybe we can modify the cynicism about politicians that threatens to undermine the democratic process.

(200-201)

While it is problematic to think that adding more women to the political process will necessarily be the salve that fixes a broken system, the desire to get more women into politics is understandable and becomes the solution the memoirists advocate for many of the problems women politicians experience. The memoirists, however rightly or wrongly, conflate the need to get women involved in politics with a need to create change within political institutions and society in general, something which they see happening through the transfer of power to women leaders who they see as more in tune with women’s issues. This change will also occur through the Deb Effect, where more women’s bodies in politics will change the way people perceive women politicians by normalizing their
presence in politics. Rosemary Brown indicates how important this ‘change’ is by dedicating her memoir “to women everywhere who strive to change their world.” Copps is more specific about what kind of change is necessary and emphasizes the need for women to get involved in politics. “As long as we are content to sit on the sidelines and serve the coffee while our men run the country,” writes Copps, “we will be left out when it comes to positive social change. I’m talking about power. Not power for the sake of self-aggrandizement, but power that can shape priorities for women, for families, for the real future of our country” (Copps, Worth 10). Copps further elaborates on why women need to get involved in politics in her other memoir: “Whatever the party, the interests of women and minorities will remain on the back burner as long as the people in power are primarily male. That’s why women must not only work for the candidate of their choice, but also commit themselves to seeking public office” (Copps, Nobody’s 173).

Thus, the narratives of women politicians primarily have a social agenda: to change the way women are represented and treated and to resignify the female body within the political arena. This process is one even the memoirists admit will be filled with struggle:

I have some feelings of guilt about this pursuit, knowing the hurt that could await these women; nonetheless because I see the political arena as one of the important theatres in which the struggle against our inequality takes place. I persevere in the task of enlisting women to seek public office. I attempt to assuage my guilt by drawing an honest picture for these women of life in the political lane, even as I endeavour to be as persuasive as possible in encouraging them to take up the challenge.

(Brown 141)

Despite Brown’s concerns, she continues to prioritize women’s political emancipation

“Electoral politics touches our lives,” I tell them, “in a sufficient number of profound ways that no matter what the cost, it cries out for the presence and involvements of women.” Because both the hierarchical structure and the patriarchal history and nature of politics make it a hostile profession for women, it has for too long been the private and exclusive domain of men. They presume and try to convince us that they make and administer laws that are in the best interest of all people including women.

(Brown 141)
circulate and oppress women in politics. These counter-discourses do have power and help create an
ambitious vision for what Canadian democracy might someday look like. In the closing words of her memoir
Worth Fighting For Sheila Copps says:

I’m for a Canada of real equality, where each region, each person feels included. A Canada
where linguistic and cultural diversity is celebrated. A Canada where every girl and boy,
Singh, Smith, Chan, or Copps has an equal chance in life. I hope you can share these
beliefs, and my belief that the principles I have discussed in this book are indeed worth
fighting for.

(212)

In their books, the authors of Canadian women’s political memoirs seem to concur with Copps and choose
to fight for the future that they would like to see, while exposing the deficiencies of the present predicament.
As activist texts, women’s political memoirs depict a vision of political equality that is indeed worth fighting
for.
Endnotes

1 I use the term 'activist narratives' to denote how women politicians hope that their narratives will create change within political institutions, work to encourage more women to get involved in politics and also draw attention to the fact that the women writing these narratives were often feminist political activists (in that they were agitating for greater representation of women in politics both within their own parties and within government as a whole). The activist purpose of these narratives can be seen in Sheila Copps' assertion that, "if there is one message that women in politics must send, it is that there simply aren't enough of us in the fray to make our voices heard. If this book prompts one fence-sitter to get involved, if it encourages one woman to become a candidate, then it will have been a success" (Copps, Nobody's 9). While the purpose of women's memoirs is often activist in nature, the memoirs also often describe events wherein the women politicians have been activists. Here, the structure of the narratives greatly resembles the 'activist narratives' that Leslie Petty identifies in Romancing the Vote: Feminist Activism in American Fiction, as I will explore in greater detail in Chapter Two.

Petty's analysis focuses on how a particular sub-genre of American literature played a role "in creating and sustaining the first wave of feminist activism in America," delineating characteristics of activist fiction as "an unequivocal belief in the rightness of their cause and its potential for changing the world, and [gaining] strength from belonging to a community of like-minded reformers" (189). According to Petty, the authors of these narratives "believe that storytelling plays a pivotal role in bringing about these changes and contributing to such a community; telling stories both attracts new members and nourishes those already involved in the movement" (189). Similarly, these women's political memoirs play an important role in women's political emancipation.

2 By 'institutions of parliament' I wish to refer to all the processes, institutions, people, medias, and practices that constitute both the parliament itself and also the political parties and systems that either function within it or through it.

3 While engaging with the discourses about women's autobiographies and women's writing, I intend to be careful not to suggest that women's writing is the product of essentialism, but rather the product of the experiences of the gendered woman. As Gilmore cautions, "useful as more monolithic claims about 'men's' and 'women's autobiography have been to feminists...generalization about gender and genre in autobiography naturalize how men, women and the activity of writing an autobiography are bound together within the changing philosophies of the self and history" (Gilmore 183). Indeed, Gilmore herself acknowledges the importance of lived experience in shaping the gendered autobiography: "Feminist critics of autobiography have agreed there is a lived reality that differs for men and women and accounts for much of the difference between men's and women's autobiography" (Gilmore x).

4 According to Smith and Watson, Estelle C. Jelinek suggests that, "At the level of life scripts, men aggrandize themselves in autobiographies that 'idealize their lives or cast them into heroic molds to project their universal import.' Women by contrast, seek to authenticate themselves in stories that reveal 'a self-consciousness and a need to sift through their lives for explanation and understanding,' employing understatement to mask their feelings and play down public aspects of their lives" (as qtd in Smith and Watson, Women 9).

5 Studies have shown that male politicians' appearances are significantly less remarked upon by the media and less important to potential voters. According to an article by Nicholas Kristof in the New York Times, women's appearances are more likely to be remarked upon "Professor Kanter added that a pioneer in a man's world, like Hillary Rodham Clinton, also faces scrutiny on many more dimensions than a man — witness the public debate about...
Mrs. Clinton’s allegedly ‘thick ankles,’ or the headlines last year about cleavage. Clothing and appearance generally matter more for women than for men, research shows" (Kristof).

In addition, men’s appearances matter less to voters. According to a study by J.Y. Chiao,

For both men and women, female political candidates needed to be seen as attractive as well as competent to get their votes. Even female voters seemed to tap into the cultural expectation that women who are attractive as well as competent are more worthy of high status roles. […] While gender bias related to a female candidate’s attractiveness was consistent across both male and female voters, good looks was almost all that mattered in predicting men’s votes for female candidates. And, true to prevailing stereotypes, competence was almost all that mattered in predicting men’s votes for male candidates.

(Chiao)

6 Women’s washrooms are mentioned in the memoirs of Audrey McLaughlin, Rosemary Brown and Margaret Mitchell. Prior to the 1980s, the lack of women’s washrooms was extensively discussed in the memoirs of Judy Lamarsh and Ellen Fairclough.

7 It is important to delineate precisely what I mean when I speak of race. In using the term ‘race,’ I understand that there is no such biological category that coheres with our cultural construction of race. I see race in the same terms as Alan R. Templeton who states that "Race is a real cultural, political and economic concept in society, but it is not a biological concept, and that unfortunately is what many people wrongfully consider to be the essence of race in humans – genetic differences" (Templeton 632). When I speak about race, I refer to the cultural, political and economic concepts related to the social construction of race.

8 Although former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson published her memoir Heart Matters in 2006, I decided to exclude this text from the study. This decision was made because Clarkson, during her years in the appointed office of Governor General, did not have to contend with the same political institutions (i.e. political parties and institutions of parliament) that formed the identities and subsequently the narratives of the other Canadian female politicians in this study. Not surprisingly, unlike the memoirs of other Canadian female politicians her memoir’s narrative did not follow the sub-genre’s characteristic theme of ‘trailblazing plots.’
**Bibliography:**

**Primary Texts:**


**Theoretical Texts:**


Mifflin.

**Canadian Women and Politics:**


**Other Canadian Political Autobiographies:**


Other Women’s Political Autobiographies:


Appendix A

Table 1 - Women in the Canadian House of Commons Since 1984

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of Seats</th>
<th>Seats Held by Women</th>
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Table 2 - Current Provincial Representation of Women

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<td>18/57</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Ontario</td>
<td>29/107</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEI</td>
<td>7/27</td>
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<td>Quebec</td>
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<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland</td>
<td>10/48</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td>Elected Women/Total Seats</td>
<td>% Elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>9/52</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>13/83</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>7/55</td>
<td>12.7</td>
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