"THE PERSON YOU CALL 'I':"

CONFIGURATIONS OF IDENTITY IN THE POETRY OF P.K. PAGE

by

DIANE STILES

B.Sc., McGill University, 1983
M.A., The University of British Columbia, 1992

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Department of [English]

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Many of P.K. Page's poems configure identity in terms of encounters between the self and an "other" sometimes internal and sometimes external to the self. Ego-psychology and relational psychoanalysis suggest some fundamental principles describing the dynamics of these encounters. Although the self in Page's poetry apparently evolves from objectifying the other to identifying with it, this overt tendency towards identification is counterbalanced by less obvious tendencies towards objectification of the other.

Some of her earliest speakers objectify and criticize the "feminine" behaviour of office workers. Her representations of female subjects become increasingly sympathetic, until in "After Rain" (1956), the speaker tries to integrate a sense of femininity into her own identity. She achieves this, however, by aligning masculinity with a lower socio-economic class than her own. Speakers in other early poems progress from objectifying to identifying with conflicts represented along Freudian lines. In the early 1940s, third-person speakers describe conflicts between other people. In later poems these conflicts are progressively internalized, until in "Melanie's Nite-Book" (1976) the speaker acknowledges the connections between her internal psychic conflicts and her relationship with her father. At the same time, however, this speaker objectifies her mother.

In Page's mid-career poetry, her speakers progressively acknowledge other psychological conflicts, configured in Jungian
terms. Whereas her early speakers recoil in horror from the subconscious elements of their subjects’ minds, the later "Preparation" (1971) negotiates an uneasy truce between the conscious and unconscious elements of the speaker’s own mind. Page’s later "transcendent" poetry is influenced by Sufism. Her speakers’ progressive acceptance of the internal other, however, depends on the absence of a true external other who could challenge these later visions of unity.

A few of Page’s early poems suggest that paradoxically, we arrive at our fullest experience of the self through encountering an other we cannot control through either objectification or identification. Page’s oeuvre offers a fragmented but remarkably comprehensive impression of a self as it evolves through adult life. At the same time, examining her various configurations of identity reveals dimensions of the poetry that no other critical approach has illuminated.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................. ii  
Table of Contents ....................................................... iv  
Acknowledgements ..................................................... v  
Biographical Note on Page .......................................... vi  

Chapter 1  
Kaleidoscope: The Self and the Other in Page’s Poetry .......... 1  

Chapter 2  
The Ego-less Other in the Early Poetry .......................... 50  

Chapter 3  
The Ego of the Other in the Early Poetry ....................... 93  

Chapter 4  
The Ego of the Self in the Mid-Career Poetry ................. 136  

Chapter 5  
The Later Poetry: Beyond the Ego? ............................ 189  

Chapter 6  
Towards the Centre .................................................. 231  

Works Cited ............................................................ 264
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Patricia Kathleen Page was born in 1916 in England. After World War I her family emigrated to Canada, where her father was an army major based in Winnipeg and Calgary. On completing high school, Page spent 1935 in London visiting art galleries and attending cultural events. She then rejoined her family in New Brunswick where she wrote her only novel, *The Sun and the Moon*. At this stage of her life she was reading Georgian poetry and writing what she has since called "cliché-ridden" and "appallingly romantic stuff" (quoted in Djwa 37). In 1941 she moved to Montreal and met the Preview group, including F.R. Scott and Patrick Anderson, who introduced her to socialist politics and modernist aesthetics. She began publishing poetry and short fiction, her first collection of poems appearing in 1942 in the anthology *Unit of Five*. In 1946 she began writing scripts for the National Film Board in Ottawa and published her first solo poetry collection, *As Ten As Twenty*. In 1950 she married Arthur Irwin, then Commissioner of the Film Board, and accompanied him to his posting as High Commissioner to Australia from 1953-56. *The Metal and the Flower* was published in 1954, winning her a Governor General's Award.

Irwin was Ambassador to Brazil from 1956-59, during which time Page stopped writing poetry and turned instead to the visual arts. For the next ten years she created drawings and paintings which are now housed in galleries across Canada, including the National Art Gallery. From 1960-64, Irwin was Ambassador to Mexico and

Page is celebrated in the Canadian media as an important member of "the generation that moved Canadian poetry away from British verse and transplanted it in the modernist tradition" (Fetherling E17). Rosemary Sullivan praises Page’s ability to "compose the most rigorous poetic forms," and yet still write "with a completely natural voice." She places Page with Al Purdy at "the pinnacle of Canadian poetry" (quoted in Martin R1).
CHAPTER 1

KALEIDOSCOPE: THE SELF AND THE OTHER IN PAGE’S POETRY

Nothing is what it seems.
Through this glass eye
each single thing is other--
all-ways joined
to every other thing. . . .
And this kaleidoscope uniting all . . .
is magic. Through it--see
(who dares?)
the perfect, all-inclusive metaphor.

--"Kaleidoscope" (my ellipses)

P.K. Page has said that her writing is "an instrument for self-discovery" (Pollock 136), that she is on a journey for which she has "a destination but no maps," the destination being some "unseen centre" inside her ("Traveller" 36). Of all of the poems she has written, she finds most "interesting" those which are part of that "journey of discovery," those which "uncover new psychological ground" (Pollock 136). Page may not have had a map to guide her on this journey, but over five decades she has charted for others many routes toward an understanding of the self, in the form of poems that describe at different periods of her life encounters between the self and an "other" located sometimes within
her speakers and sometimes external to them. These poems suggest that the self usually responds to the other by trying to control it through a variety of methods ranging from objectification to identification, but that, paradoxically, we arrive at our fullest experiences of the self through encountering an other we cannot control.

In *Labyrinth of Desire*, Rosemary Sullivan maps out one particular route toward the experience of an other that cannot be either separated from or incorporated into the self. She outlines the various stages and facets of romantic obsession, drawing from her own experience and those of other artists such as Elizabeth Smart and Simone de Beauvoir, from novels such as *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, and from films such as *Casablanca* and *Doctor Zhivago*. Although romantic obsession feels like love, she argues that it is actually a process in which the "lover" uses the "beloved" as a mirror to perceive aspects of herself that previously were hidden to her.¹ We are drawn to the beloved who "not only listens but echoes, not only mirrors but enlarges" (84), because these reflections and echoes appear as an illusory shortcut to self-knowledge, a route that bypasses the discipline and suffering required to achieve actual self-knowledge.

The inevitable disintegration of the romantic illusion leads directly to the required suffering, to the realization of needs that when "unclaimed and projected onto others" are "the crude basis for the world's murderousness" (162). The pain caused by

¹ Although Sullivan acknowledges that men also experience romantic obsession, she emphasizes women's experience of it because she believes that cultural forces make women particularly susceptible to the illusory attractions of romance.
experiencing these previously unacknowledged needs can only be survived through the discipline required to become "a chastened scholar of [one's] own consuming drama" (Jackson D26). Therein lies the value of romantic obsession. Sullivan does not suggest that understanding how this process works can substitute for the experience itself. Rather, if we understand the process we will not allow it to result in "self-pity, shutting down the self, [or] settling for safety" (175). We will instead achieve through the process a more complete perception of the self, as well as a new appreciation of the other, which opens the potential for a love that is "more real and durable" (176).

Page's early speakers often attempt to control through objectification their encounters with the other in its various forms, while her later speakers attempt to incorporate the other into the self through identification. These attempts at control require the suffering and discipline Sullivan describes as necessary to learning the lessons of romantic obsession, but Page's poetry suggests that suffering and discipline alone will not lead to a full experience of the self. A few early poems, however, do represent an experience of the self that approaches a sense of completeness. In each of these encounters the self fails to control the other, and the binary they form becomes unstable, as it does in the experience of romantic obsession described by Sullivan.

In "Stories of Snow" (I 53),² for example, this process occurs within a dream. In the first stanza, the speaker acknowledges the

² Although editor Stan Dragland chose not to order them chronologically, the two volumes of The Hidden Room include all of Page's published poetry until 1997. I will therefore refer readers to this collection, by volume and page numbers.
existence of an unconscious "behind the eyes," in one location the conscious mind cannot perceive. Through the long middle section of the poem she dreams of hunters pursuing swans in a wintry landscape. The killing of the swan transforms the dichotomy between hunter and prey into an allegorical representation of a three-way dynamic, among the hunter, aligned with the conscious mind, the swan, aligned with external reality, and the snowy landscape. By the end of the middle section of the poem all boundaries dividing these three dissolve, and the snow that was only a background for the conscious hunter of the dream is revealed as the unconscious for which the conscious dreamer was "hunting." In the final stanza the conscious speaker describes her simultaneous fear of, and desire for, this dreamed experience of unity. Page here employs the language and imagery of the hunt, but I think she is describing an experience analogous to the romantic obsession analyzed in Sullivan's book. In both scenarios, an intense encounter with an element of external reality leads the self to a new awareness of the inner unknown. Page's hunter "lost in the white circle" parallels Sullivan's lover who is disoriented in the "world of mirrors" created by romantic obsession, in which we can "[look] in astonishment at the multiple selves that occupy our inner world" (100). As Suniti Namjoshi observes, the central project in Page's poetry is the mediation between internal and external experience (21).³

After first reading "Stories of Snow," I searched through Page's poetry for similarly clear and powerful descriptions of this

³ See page 37 for a discussion of the parallels between Namjoshi's work and Page's.
experience of wholeness, and found instead a scattering of poems that offer views of less complete selves. In each of these poems a self encounters various aspects of the feared and desired unknown, both within and without. These encounters occur in a wide variety of contexts, sometimes social, sometimes psychological, and sometimes spiritual. In some poems they are described overtly as processes undergone consciously by the speakers, while in other poems they are implied, concealed within other themes and motifs, or projected onto other people. The result is that these moments appear in fragments disconnected from each other, often even in stark contradiction to each other, as if, to borrow Page's "perfect metaphor," she has been examining the concept of the self through a slowly rotating kaleidoscope. The disconnectedness among these individual glimpses of the self paradoxically allows the emergence through Page's oeuvre of a remarkably comprehensive portrait of a whole self in its complexity.

On a recent radio show, the journalist played Page a tape of a statement she had made during an interview in the 1970s. The younger Page asserts that the novel is a form for young people because it is about "personality, a juvenile interest," implying that she regards it as inferior to poetry, which can transcend individual personality. The present-day Page expresses astonishment at this pronouncement of her younger self, and confesses somewhat ruefully that she would love to be able to write a novel, but that she lacks the ability to "sustain such a large work" (Rogers). What Page describes as a limitation, however, is I think inseparable from her extraordinary ability to inhabit a particular moment and draw her readers into it. The form of the
lyric poem invites this intensive inquiry into a particular state of mind, as do visual art forms such as painting, another form important to Page. The closest parallel I can think of to the range of experience of the self represented in Page's oeuvre, in fact, would be the series of self-images painted by Frieda Kahlo.

In tracing through Page's poetic career her representations of the self's encounters with the unknown, I have two goals, one of which is literary. I want to explore the thematic and formal methods that Page uses to explore the concept of identity, and then to outline what some of her more opaque individual poems might be saying on the subject, and how they say it. This project will thus be useful to readers who find Page's poetry difficult to understand and analyze. The few critics who have published on Page often comment on the difficulty of her poetry. George Woodcock, for example, calls it "dense with intent," and says it "needs dwelling on to extract the quality and meaning that lie deeper than its considerable immediate attractiveness" (883). A.J.M. Smith does not consider Page's poetry intellectually demanding (in the way, for example, that Ezra Pound's poetry is difficult), but finds it "requires a sensibility that must be developed from reading the poems themselves" ("Poetry" 18). In this observation he summarizes more succinctly than any other critic the difficulty I found in the course of my study of Page's oeuvre. Any existing theoretical framework I tried to apply to it illuminated only a few poems, often ones from a particular time period. Only by employing an approach derived from studying over and over the poems themselves have I been able to address the wide variety in content and form that characterizes the entire oeuvre. As of August 2001 there are
no published book-length studies and no doctoral theses on Page, although critics since Smith, such as John Orange ("Page," ECW 234) and Anjali Bhelande (134), have continued to call for more study of her work. The critics who do write about her have ignored many of her more difficult poems, such as the frequently anthologized "The Glass Air" (discussed in Chapter 6), and disagreed over other challenging poems such as "Arras" (discussed in Chapter 4), also frequently anthologized. They have also imposed selective readings on some poems, for example in trying to establish Page’s poetry as feminist (discussed in Chapter 2).

My other goal in tracing through Page’s career her various representations of the self is to understand what these representations might have to tell us about our own lives. Earle Birney says Page "has an x-ray trick of penetrating beyond surfaces, either of substance or of manner, into the matrix of her theme" (44). It seems to me that Page’s configurations of the self might be central to Birney’s assessment of her poetry. Configurations such as these could be perceived as the skeleton of a life, shaping and controlling more overt beliefs and actions. As Sullivan seeks to establish parallels between fictional love stories and those from real life, so understanding the evolving sense of identity in Page’s poetry may lead her readers to a fuller understanding of their own encounters with external or internal others.

I see my interests in the literary and psychological aspects of Page’s poetry as complementary, reflecting Smith’s assessment of her work as a "fusion of psychological insight and poetic imagination" ("The Poetry" 18). Considering the configurations of
identity in Page's poetry can reveal aspects of it that no other
critical approaches have so far brought to light, while the poetry
itself can offer to anyone interested in personality function
unusually nuanced representations of the subjective experience of
profoundly felt psychological events.

Negotiating these two different goals means operating between
two frames of reference, which could intensify the question of
subjectivity that pervades any analysis of literature. Reader-
response theories such as those developed by Wolfgang Iser and
Stanley Fish focus on the effects of this subjectivity on
interpretation, emphasizing that a literary work lies between "the
text created by the author" and "the realization accomplished by
the reader" (Iser 212). Many of my readings of particular poems
depend on this perspective. In my discussion of the often
contradictory critical responses to "Arras," for example, I apply
the same approach Fish applies to the criticism of Milton's
Varorium, namely examining interpretive assumptions to find within
critical disputes over a work "a base of agreement of which the
disputants were unaware" (311).

Because I am not only interested in aesthetic analysis,
however, but also in the arguably more objective task of discerning
the basic psychological motifs underlying Page's poetry, in the
main I will try to keep in mind some fairly clear guidelines that,
as literary critic Elizabeth Wright says (1998), constitute a
"traditional view of reader competence" (51) that remains useful
today. Working from a New Critical point of view, Ernst Kris
suggests three paradigms for determining subjectivity in literary
analysis. The first involves "standards of correspondence,"
meaning knowledge of communal symbols used by the artist; the
second refers to "standards of intent," meaning knowledge of the
artist's sources and intentions; and the third describes "standards
of coherence," meaning recognition of the structural unity of an
individual work (260-1). These paradigms can help to identify the
main sources of the difficulties readers find in Page's poetry, and
more specifically the reasons for the disconnection among her
various representations of the self.

Especially in her early work, Page frequently makes use of
images that are associated with readily recognizable communal
values, but only occasionally do her images conform to these
values. More often, there is a tension between the ideas and
feelings commonly associated with the symbol and the ideas and
feelings it evokes within a particular poem. Smith characterizes
her poetry as rich in "psychological symbolism," but emphasizes
that it must be understood on its own terms: "the critic who is to
get the maximum comprehension [of it]. . . [must be] educated by the
poems themselves as he reads and re-reads them" ("Poetry" 17-19).
This is partly because her symbols and images tend to recur in
different contexts, acquiring new layers of complexity as these
contexts accumulate. Many artists revisit favourite symbols and
themes, of course, and Page's interests are not as exclusively
focused as, for example, Kahlo's work in self-portraiture. Still,
several critics have commented on this feature of Page's poetry.

Smith notes the recurrence "over and over" of the subjects of
childhood, love, and dream, and of images such as snow, glass,
flowers, gardens, birds, and fish ("Poetry" 17-19). Namjoshi also
comments on Page's recycling of themes and images, warning however
that "it would be a mistake to look for any consistency in [these representations]: in different poems a snowscape, for example, can appear variously as "an idealized landscape, a childhood scene, a harsh reality, a blank canvas, or an internal dream," while the "inner world" appears as "a nightmare, a wishful dream, a pleasant memory, an artificial reality, or a genuine perception" (25). Orange says that these recurring images "seem to search backward and forward for what could be called (metaphorically) 'home'" ("Page" 221).

Page's continual destabilization of the relationships between individual images and their poetic contexts mirrors her destabilization of the relationships between individual poems and her entire oeuvre. From her various arrangements of her poems we can infer something about her intent, as suggested by Kris's second paradigm. Douglas Freake lists the many "masks" behind which Page has presented herself to others. As a child she was "Patsy," and then "Pat," signing her first poems "P.K." (94) in order to conceal her creative activity from her high-school classmates (Keeler 33). She has since retained the initials for her poetry and children's writing, while publishing the first edition of The Sun and the Moon under the name Judith Cape and signing her drawings and paintings as P.K. Irwin. This intentional fragmentation (or multiplication, depending on one's perspective) of her public identity is reflected in what Freake terms the process of "self-definition and redefinition" underlying the history of publication of her writing (99). Her body of published poems is small and select; in 1989 Orange counted 240 as compared to 600 unpublished ones in the National Archives ("Page" 236). Many poems, however, appeared
first in journals and magazines and then in as many as five different volumes, including three "selected and new" volumes and the *Collected Poems of 1997*. In each volume the individual poems are arranged in new sequences and groupings, sometimes by Page and sometimes by her editors (Margaret Atwood in 1974, Richard Teleky in 1985, and Stan Dragland in 1997).

Cynthia Messenger has detailed the shortcomings of the earlier volumes, including the lack of dates and the chronological errors even in the general groupings of the two *Glass Air* volumes ("Selecting" 116). More recently, Joseph Miller has objected to Stan Dragland’s arrangement of *The Hidden Room* collection, which Miller describes as a "missed opportunity" (11) for clarifying the existing chronological confusion. The result of all of this combining and recombining of the oeuvre is that encountering Page’s poetry as a whole resembles the experience of reading many of the more opaque individual poems: one catches disconnected glimpses of a poetic sensibility, which fragment into new patterns even as the reader attempts to integrate them. At the same time, however, as Orange notes, Page’s grouping and regrouping of her own poems indicates her sense that they "interlock on all sides to form an enclosed world of their own" ("Page" 235).  

The instability of the values Page assigns to her poetic images, together with her frequent regrouping of the poems, indicate a continual revisioning on her part that discourages speculation about authorial intention in her work. These instabilities at the microscopic and macroscopic levels also

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4 For detailed information on Page’s publication history, see Orange’s 1985 *Annotated Bibliography*. 
complicate any examination of what might be termed the middle ground, namely the structural unity in individual poems, Kris's third paradigm. In his study The Montreal Forties: Modernist Poetry in Transition, Brian Trehearne argues that the fundamental tension in English-language poetry of the 1940s, in Canada as well as internationally, arose from the attempt of modernist poets to represent cultural fragmentation within poems that were themselves aesthetically unified. This tension generated the quest Trehearne sees as peculiar to the 1940s, the attempt to reflect the complexities of modern life by creating more random and disjunctive styles, and on the other hand to control this complexity by creating "ever more subtle though powerful forces for the poem's structural stability" (63-66).

Trehearne borrows James Joyce's concept of "integritas" (Portrait 212) the idea that readings of a poem must reflect its origin within a single governing consciousness (68). Trehearne says that experimental poetry in the 1940s pushed back the cultural boundaries of what a single mind could evoke and still communicate to a reader (69). More specifically, he says Page's poems from the 1940s achieve aesthetic unity through prosodic effects including "assonance, alteration of line length, echoing effects, and mimetic effects of rhythm." She also employs thematic effects such as "[verbal] portraits, narratives, and emotional qualities" (85). Still, says Trehearne, for Page and many of her contemporaries, the poetic quest of the 1940s led to a dead end by the mid-1950s. He reads "After Rain" (1956) as Page's description of this impasse, and notes that her decade of poetic silence following "After Rain" roughly coincides with the poetic silences of A.M. Klein, Patrick
Anderson, John Sutherland, Louis Dudek, and Irving Layton. Although the personal circumstances of these poets varied (Klein was incapacitated by mental illness during this time), Trehearne believes that all of them fell silent in response to arriving at the limitations of their abilities to unify aesthetically their perceptions of a fragmenting reality (44-5).

A more general conceptualization of integritas in Page's poems throughout her career must address not only her poetry of the 1940s, but also the very different poems she wrote after her period of silence in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It must also operate at a deep enough level to accommodate the instabilities in Page's use of images and in her groupings of her poems. Psychoanalytic theory offers some psychological and aesthetic terms and concepts that are fundamental enough to describe patterns underlying the various levels of instability in Page's work.

PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

Classical id-psychology focuses on instinctual drives and private fantasy that are disguised from the conscious mind in dreams and in art through what Freud calls the "primary process." According to id-psychology, aesthetic pleasure derives from the covert fulfilment of repressed infantile desires (General Intro. 328). In Psychoanalytical Criticism: A Reappraisal, Wright argues that literary criticism grounded in this approach does one of two things. It either reveals the infantile fantasies of a character, for example as Freud does with Oedipus Rex, or else it deciphers aesthetic works in order to reveal the artist's underlying fantasies, for example as Marie Bonaparte finds in Edgar Allen
Poe’s writing suggestions of necrophilia in the author himself (Wright 34). Id-psychology serves as the foundation of more recent movements in psychoanalysis, such as ego-psychology and relational theory.\(^5\)

As early as 1923, Freud calls for more research on ego

\(^5\) Jacques Lacan’s work also includes some ideas that intersect with Page’s poetry and with this study. His conceptualization of "the self’s radical ex-centricity to itself," for example, involves two degrees of otherness: "the second [Other] mediates between me and the double of myself [the first other], as it were my neighbour" ("Insistence" 101-2). This triad structure aligns with similar triads in Page’s representations of relations between self and other(s) in Evening Dance of the Grey Flies, discussed in Chapter 5. More generally, his "mirror stage" of early childhood ("The Freudian Thing" 1-3), as well as his definition of psychoanalysis as "the science of the mirages that appear within [the field of the analytic situation]" ("Freudian" 119), parallel some of the concepts I employ from contemporary relational theory.

However, Lacanian theory also clashes in at least one fundamental way with Page’s poetic explorations of the self. He asserts that "language and its structure exist prior to the moment at which each individual at a certain point in his mental development makes his entry into it" ("Insistence" 82). Page consistently assumes the opposite, namely that language overlays our most central experiences of the self. Describing the disorientation she experienced in Brazil before she began to learn Portuguese, for example, she asks "Where could wordlessness lead?" ("Questions" 212) Her later poems (for example "Stefan") often address this question, and her extensive work in drawing and painting imply it.

Lacan elsewhere asserts, however, that "the unconscious is structured like a language, not by a language" ("Feminine Sexuality" 48, emphasis his), so that an argument could doubtless be made that the contrast I established in the previous paragraph is too hasty and does not account for the complexity of Lacan’s theory. Lacan’s purpose is to highlight such difficulties in assigning meaning: "... you are not obliged to understand my writings. If you don’t understand them, so much the better—that will give you the opportunity to explain them" ("Feminine" 34). His writing therefore parallels the effects in much of Page’s writing, but with the important difference that Page always communicates as clearly as she can. Whereas Lacan consistently challenges his readers to catch up with him, Page invites her readers to accompany her. Because Lacan’s theory only at certain points offers insight into Page’s poetry, then, and because these points of contact are developed in much more systematic ways by relational theorists, I will rely on the latter in my analysis of Page’s work.
functioning (Ego 9), and both Wright (49) and Steven Mitchell (48) point out that Freud's own teachings evolve from an initial emphasis on the id to a later emphasis on the ego. Ego-psychologists focus not on private fantasies, but on the ego's efforts to manage these fantasies in maintaining a sense of identity that takes into account external and socially shared reality (Wright 49). For the purposes of this study of Page's poetry, we can define identity as these negotiations by the ego with forces both external and internal. Ego-psychology opposes the assumption of classical id-psychology that art springs from neurotic infantile desires, which must be deciphered and progressively conquered by the ego in order for an individual to achieve socialization and acceptance of the reality principle (Ego 56). From the point of view of ego-psychology, artistic pleasure derives from the ego's bringing the primary process into play for its own purposes (Wright 49). Kris, for example, maintains that creativity is a relaxation, or controlled regression, of ego functions (253).

Wright argues that although ego-psychology describes the ego's negotiation between external and internal forces, it tends to accept the ego as a given entity that is reinforced by social influences. The ego-psychologist therefore focuses on the limitations the ego imposes on the id in response to external reality (49). Wright juxtaposes this perspective with that of some contemporary relational theorists who focus on the interactions between the self and the external world (71). Relational theory derives from the work of Melanie Klein, who directed her attention away from the toddler's relationship with the father, assumed by
Freudians to be the foundation of personality, and onto the infant's earlier relationship with the mother (Benjamin Shadow xv, Wright 71). Klein sees the infant's relationship with the breast as the model for the later working out of the oedipal complex, and for all future relationships. She conceptualizes the relationship between self and external other in terms of introjection and projection; the infant tries to get rid of all undesirable impulses from itself and to incorporate desirable features of external objects in order to create an ideal object. Klein says that these infantile tendencies persist in our later attempts to apprehend the world in terms of self-favouring images, which means that from infancy on one must work for the perception of external reality (219-22).

I see five psychoanalytical principles underlying the complex patterns in Page's poetic representations of identity. The first three are fundamental to ego-psychology, while the fourth and fifth, according to Wright (71), may be more closely associated with relational psychology. The first principle, common to all the major psychoanalytic schools, is that the self is split, and that some of its functions are unconscious. The second is Freud's conceptualization of the ego as mediating between demands from the external world and internal demands from unconscious elements of the psyche (Ego 46). The third principle, also Freud's, is that when the conflict between these two sets of demands becomes too extreme, the ego responds by refusing to acknowledge some aspect of the body or of mental life, thereby relieving the pressure on the ego, but also creating a schism between what the ego recognizes as the self and what it designates as "other" (Civilization 13). The
fourth principle is based on Adrian Stokes’s extension of Klein’s model of relations between the self and the other. Stokes says that introjection and projection are both forms of identification, and that the self’s relationships with the other actually range from identification to objectification, meaning the recognition of the other as autonomous and separate from the self (III 152). The fifth psychoanalytic principle central to an understanding of Page’s representations of identity is Anton Ehrenzweig’s idea that an art object reflects both the conscious and unconscious perceptions of the artist, and that in modern art these perceptions work in opposition to each other (81-2). These five principles are fundamental enough to structure discussions of Page’s poetry through the various psychoanalytical frameworks I see as helpful in identifying her representations of identity, frameworks from Freudian theory, feminist psychoanalysis, Jungian psychology, and relational theory.

The split between conscious and unconscious functions, for example, has been configured along various conceptual planes. According to Freud’s first topography, one kind of unconscious thought, located in the pre-conscious, is "latent," meaning it was once conscious. A second kind of unconscious thought has never been conscious, the prototype of this second category being repressed material. In The Ego and the Id (1923), Freud identifies some theoretical problems with his earlier topography, for example, the part of the ego that is unconscious is not latent, and so he says it would have to be a third kind of unconscious. At this point, Freud himself gives up on these distinctions as too complex to be useful (5-8). In his second topography, only the id falls on
one side of the line dividing conscious from unconscious functions. The unconscious defences are part of the ego (7), and although the superego develops from the ego as the ego develops out of the id, the superego is less connected with conscious functions than is the ego (18).

Whereas Freud resists reducing psychological dynamics to conscious versus unconscious functions (7), Jung takes this dichotomy as his starting point (Undiscovered 62). He subdivides the conscious into the ego, meaning the dominant personality (Analytical Psychology 10), and the persona, meaning a mask that conceals from other people some aspects of the self that the ego perceives as negative (Psychological Types 590). The unconscious contains but is not limited to the "shadow" side of the personality (Undiscovered 84), and like the conscious mind it is subdivided, into both personal and collective material (Analytical xv). The collective unconscious includes but is not limited to the anima or animus, responsible for irrational behaviour in men and women respectively (Analytical 99-100). Unlike Freud, Jung does not attempt to establish a structural topography clarifying the relationships between these various components of the self. He regards them rather as functional concepts, employing them as they are useful in explaining particular phenomena (Analytical 69). He says the unconscious cannot be described (Analytical 6), and the line between conscious and unconscious material is difficult to establish when neurosis is present (Analytical 188). In psychogenic diseases such as hysteria or somnambulism, as well as in schizophrenia, unconscious material actually invades the conscious mind (Analytical 34).
Besides offering different views on how the psyche is organized, theorists also differ on the question of how these various components of the self interact both internally and with the external world. Freud often characterizes psychological dynamics as conflicts; for example the id is governed by the pleasure principle, while the ego tries to impose upon it the reality principle (Ego 15). Jung often describes the relationship between conscious and unconscious impulses as self-regulating, like many physiological functions (Modern 20). Individuation therefore does not mean a progressive conquering of the id, but rather finding an equilibrium between it and the conscious mind (Modern 83).

Jungians and ego-psychologists say that art can facilitate the ego’s negotiations between internal and external demands. For Jung, art can help open up communications between the conscious and the unconscious (Modern 80-2, 191-5). Simon Lesser, an ego-psychologist, says that far from simply serving as a censor protecting the conscious mind from threatening material emerging from the id, the artistic process allows the id the pleasure of expressing desires, while relieving the guilt experienced by the superego for allowing this pleasure. It is the tension between id and superego that distracts the ego from external reality, and by decreasing this tension, art therefore facilitates the ego’s perception of reality (Lesser 125).

Stokes says the ego’s perception of external reality falls along a spectrum ranging from identification to objectification. He discusses the relationship between self and other in the context of the relationship between artist and art, and emphasizes the
ethical value of objectification, arguing that the quality and duration of an aesthetic experience depend on the extent to which the "otherness" of the object has been allowed for (III 151-2). Jessica Benjamin, a psychoanalytic feminist, discusses the relationship between self and other in a different context, that of learned gender-specific behaviour. She sees objectification as a negative tendency in Western culture as a whole, and emphasizes the ethical necessity for identification, for example in her assertion that both boys and girls need to be able to identify with both mother and father ("Desire" 85).

Also in the context of early psychological development, Juliet Mitchell offers a statement that can serve to unify the opposing emphases of Stokes and Benjamin:

The dynamics of the oedipal situation plus the constitutional bisexuality of early childhood open up four possible dynamics, as both daughters and sons need to both identify with and objectify both parents. (70)

According to Steven Mitchell, many relational psychoanalysts also define a healthy relationship between self and other as one that includes the potential for both identification and objectification. Optimally, the self would have the ability to oscillate between subjective and objective views of reality (S. Mitchell 189-195).

When the ego cannot attain one of these perspectives, it may split the perspective off from conscious recognition. Ehrenzweig says aesthetic products record this splitting in two interpretive layers: one the "conscious surface gestalt" reflecting the conscious intentions of the artist, and the other a hidden substructure not under the artist’s conscious control (81-2). This
split within individual works of art parallels Freud’s division of dreams into the "manifest" content remembered by the dreamer and the "latent" content that is threatening to the ego (General Intro. 134), a parallel explored by Kris and other psychoanalytic critics who consider art and dreams as somewhat analogous (245-59). Wright goes a step further, describing rhetorical strategies in general as partly analogous to psychological processes (5).

Despite its general usefulness, I encounter some difficulties in applying Ehrenzweig’s principle to Page’s poetry. Even when I can clearly see opposed perspectives in her poems, especially in her early work, I often find it difficult and unnecessary to designate them as "conscious" or "unconscious," terms which would assume that I knew Page’s original intentions. I therefore generally use the terms "overt" and "underlying," but other readers with different interpretive approaches than my own might well assign these terms to different aspects of the poems than the ones I choose. Furthermore, for Ehrenzweig the "surface gestalt" of modern poetry is fragmented, whereas the underlying purpose provides coherence, but this alignment also seems unstable in Page’s poetry. It seems true in some of Page’s early poems, particularly those about girls and women, but in many of her early poetic portraits of individuals the opposite seems true: the overt impression of unity in these poems is undermined by an underlying disunity. Even more problematically, in many of Page’s poems that are about splitting within the psyche, I find it difficult or impossible to designate any of the dualities she explores as either "overt" or "underlying." This difficulty is in itself useful, however, in accounting for some of the aesthetic effects in these
poems. With regard to Page's poetry, then, Ehrenzweig's model is useful when I can apply it, and also when I can not.

In analyzing Page's representations of identity in terms of fundamental principles taken from ego-psychology and relational psychoanalysis, I am placing this study within certain limitations. Wright says that ego-psychology is more "respectable" than id-psychology, which she says is limited by its reductive tendencies and its assumption that art distracts the ego from "reality." Ego-psychology searches for meaning not in private fantasy but in public, mutually shareable encodings of the private (52). Initially, ego-psychology was naturally allied with New Criticism, in treating the ego/text as autonomous and public, separable from the artist's private experiences. As an interpretive framework, ego-psychology shares some of the limitations of New Criticism. As Wright points out, this kind of analysis assumes what she calls an "institutionalized reader" who can conform to Kris's standards (52), but whose perceptions of the text could appear very limited to other contemporary readers who are interested in the political and cultural contexts of art. Wright sees this ethical limitation in conjunction with an intellectual limitation. She sees ego-psychology as fundamentally an attempt to "desexualize" psychoanalysis, which on the one hand results in its "respectability." On the other hand, however, this desexualization robs it of the "full explanatory force" that psychoanalysis can offer (4) when it includes id-psychology's account of the "subversive nature of desire in language" (51).

Wright does not similarly criticize relational theories as ethically or intellectually limited, but in general the framework
I am proposing for this study does not emphasize either broader socio-political context or private, individual experience as influences on personality function. Its strength, however, is first of all that it employs relatively basic terms and concepts that can be applied not only to the variety of psychological constructions of identity I see in Page's poetry, but also to those social constructions that do appear in her early poetry, and to the spiritual constructions that appear at various stages of her career. The second important advantage of my approach is that its focus coincides with the focus of Page's own representations of her identity, both through her published writing and through her public statements.

In her 1940s poetry, Page consciously espouses the modernist concept of impersonality. Even after she rejects this aesthetic in favour of what many critics have called the more personal mode of her later poetry, she still largely excludes both social context and private experience from the poetry that most closely engages with representations of the self. Given my interest in understanding what Page has to say about the nature of the self as it evolves through adult life, it seems reasonable to approach these representations at least initially on their own terms. I am interested not only in the literary aspects of Page's representations of the self, however, but also in what these representations tell us about actual psychological experience. Therefore, when it seems necessary to clarify some point that the poetry itself leaves unresolved or opaque, I draw on any of the biographical information Page has made freely available to the public, through her published poetry, fiction, journals, essays,
interviews, and visual art, as well as in film and radio appearances and local public readings.

Not only does Page avoid revealing personal experience in her writing, she also actively protects her privacy. Recently, she has been "sorting, pruning, and organizing" her papers in an effort to control what information will be available after her death, saying "it isn't my wish to have people reading about me." Page says she only agreed to cooperate with Sandra Djwa in the research for an upcoming biography when Djwa suggested she would this way have more "input." "Frankly," says Page, "I hope the thing comes out after I am dead" (quoted in Martin R3). In limiting myself to biographical information Page has made freely available, I am aiming for a compromise between respecting her privacy and providing the fullest possible readings of the poems. I have not, for example, looked at her papers in the National Archives of Canada, as these can be cited only with her permission (Trehearne 53, Messenger "Ekphrasis" 112), and I did not want my readings of her work to be influenced by information I might not be able to discuss.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Most critics broadly designate as "early" the poetry Page published up until the mid-1950s, the beginning of her decade of poetic silence. From 1935-1941 she wrote poetry that she has since described as "appallingly romantic" (Djwa 37). These poems are personal in a formal sense, in that most have first-person speakers, but thematically, as Page herself observes, they tend to be "cliché-ridden" (Djwa 37). Following her induction into the
Preview group in April 1942 she adopted the modernist mode of speaking impersonally about topics not conventionally regarded as "poetic." As the poetry she wrote prior to 1942 is not anthologized or referred to much by critics, the early poetry I will discuss is that written after 1942.

As Trehearne notes, Page did not speak publicly about her poetry until after the late 1960s, after her break from writing. He speculates that, like other modernist artists, she wanted to keep the artist separate from the art (98). Because even her later statements about her early writing are guarded and vague, however, I suspect her early reticence arose from her awareness on some level of discrepancies between the conscious and unconscious intentions driving her writing at that time. Page now characterizes her early poems as mostly "doors closing," and her later ones as "forward-pointed rather than backward-pointed" (Pearce 37-8). Most critics similarly observe major changes in her poetry after she had returned to Canada and resumed publishing, most centrally that her later poetry abandons the impersonal mode of high modernism and becomes more personal.

Maud Ellmann lists the various "personalities" extinguished by Eliot’s concept of impersonality: the theological soul, the philosophical subject, psychological consciousness, the legal individual, and the first-person speaker (4). According to Trehearne, Canadian poets of the 1940s concerned themselves only with the last, assuming the others would follow (71). The evolution through Page’s career from the impersonal to personal mode certainly registers on this surface level, as her early poetry is mostly written in the third person, whereas her late poetry
often employs a first-person speaking voice. But this evolution is equally noticeable in her speakers' changing perspectives on psychological experience. As the titles of my chapters indicate, in her 1940s poetry, her third-person speakers usually project feared experiences onto their objectified characters. In her mid-career poetry, from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, her speakers progressively identify with the other, describing their own encounters with it. In the later poetry of Evening Dance of the Grey Flies and Hologram, the speakers characteristically describe their experiences of transcending the schism between self and other, of achieving complete identification.

In Chapter 2, I trace a progression in Page's early poetry, from speakers who objectify the behaviour of other women to speakers who integrate a concept of femininity into their own identity. In several mid-1940s poems, such as "The Stenographers," detached speakers describe the plight of other women trapped in low-paying office jobs. Some of these poems, such as "Prediction Without Crystal," express a revulsion at the passivity of these women and their willingness to accept what the speakers see as their extremely limited lives. In the slightly later poems about girls, such as "Young Girls," the speakers' attitudes toward their subjects are more sympathetic, in that these younger subjects are portrayed as less complicit in their own fates than are the adult office workers. In "After Rain," published in 1956, the speaker tentatively embraces aspects of herself that she regards as feminine.

Chapter 3 examines another progression in the early poetry, also one from objectification to identification. In these poems
the subject is not a quality, such as femininity, but rather an experience, that of being trapped in a dominant-submissive relationship. In "Portrait of Marina" and "Only Child," published in the mid-1940s, this relationship is between a parent and a child, and coincides with basic Freudian ideas about how parent-child relationships work. In other early poems, such as "Round Trip" and "Reflections in a Train Window," the dominant-submissive relationship is progressively internalized, until it becomes a conflict within the psyche of a still-objectified single subject. In the later "Melanie's Nite-Book," first published in 1976, the first-person speaker describes her own experience of these dominant-submissive struggles, in poems that conflate and confuse relationships between family members with relationships between different aspects of her own psyche.

In Page's mid-career, by which I mean the years before and after her ten-year break from writing poetry during the late 1950s and early 1960s, her speakers also progress from objectifying to identifying with other kinds of psychological conflicts, which are configured in Jungian rather than Freudian terms. I trace this progression in Chapter 4, beginning with the early poem "If It Were You," in which the speaker describes with horror the process of a conscious mind being destroyed by its own unconscious, as she imagines this process happening in another person. In "Nightmare," published in 1952, the speaker acknowledges the conflict between the conscious and unconscious components of her own mind, and

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6 Most critics use her ten-year period of silence to divide her oeuvre into two periods, whereas I wish to examine the special qualities of the poetry closely preceding and following this decade.
arrives at a tentative identification with her own internal "other." "Preparation," published in 1971, explores the nature of this uneasy truce between conscious and unconscious. The subject of these three poems is the relationship between the self and the internal other, but during this same mid-career period, Page wrote other poems that explore the relationship between the self and the external other. In "Arras," "Another Space," and "Difficult," the speakers try but fail to arrive at a truce with the external other similar to the internal truce described in "Preparation." Identification with the external other, however, is never fully realized in Page's poetry.

This tendency to represent as separate the ego's negotiations with the internal other and those with the external other persists in the later poetry, discussed in Chapter 5. Many critics have called the poems of Even Dance of the Grey Flies "transcendent," but the high degree of identification between speaker and other, in poems such as "Dwelling Place" and "Finches Feeding," depends on the relative absence in these poems of a true external other, one that resists introjection into the ego. Hologram represents a similar degree of identification, this time between the self of Page's speakers and the external other, the poets on whose quatrains these glosas are based. Poems such as "Hologram" and "Love's Pavilion," however, depend like the poems in Evening Dance on the absence of a true external other, one capable of challenging the speakers' visions of unity and love.

Ehrenzweig might designate this general evolution through Page's career, from speakers who objectify the other to those who identify with the other, as the overt gestalt in her poetry. But
at every point in her career, other patterns and motifs counteract this general evolution, either within the individual poems, or among different poems, as in the later separation of representations of internal and external others into different poems. Underlying and counterbalancing the apparent objectification in the early poetry are strong patterns of identification, while the apparent identification in the later poetry is generally achieved through underlying patterns of objectification.

Page’s poetic representations of identity demonstrate a wide variety of relationships between self and other, ranging from objectification to identification. They also suggest that a given relationship will include both of these perspectives, one of which may be more consciously recognized than the other. I think Page’s poetry offers evidence to support the validity of Juliet Mitchell’s and Steven Mitchell’s belief that neither objectification nor identification, even were they achievable in isolation, is an ideal. This might seem like a commonplace observation, but I was surprised to find, in the course of this project, how much easier it was for me to recognize objectification, and the negative aspects of it, than it was to analyze Page’s representations of identification. This perspective is shared by many critics of Page’s poetry, which may suggest that Page’s own evolving tendency to idealize identification attracts readers with the same tendency. My analysis of Page’s poetry, however, suggests that any attempt by the self to fix into a particular pattern a relationship with an other will create within that relationship the potential for an opposing pattern.
In this study I am trying to isolate a few specific developments that contribute to the overt pattern in Page’s poetic oeuvre, from objectification of the other to identification with the other. A potential flaw in this process is that I order the poems according to their first dates of publication. The publication dates do not necessarily reflect the dates of composition, and any attempt to establish precisely when each poem was composed would be complicated by the fact that Page works on some poems for a long time, occasionally republishing them with alterations. Given that she tends to publish new poems in journals before they appear in collections, however, I am assuming that the dates of first publication coincide roughly with the time when each poem was most indicative of a particular stage in Page’s view of identity. For the purposes of my study, I think the latter is the soundest basis for my ordering of them anyway.

The specific developments I identify in Page’s configurations of identity are not neatly discrete, but overlap in time and interconnect with each other thematically. In disentangling them from each other I have unavoidably reduced their complexities. I hope, however, that rather than closing down interpretive possibilities, my analysis will raise questions that intrigue readers who are interested in the dynamics of identity, leading them farther into the complexities of the poetry. This study is also subjective, to the extent that it arises from my own experiences and interests. Other developmental sequences could certainly be detected in Page’s representations of identity, for example using post-colonial or Marxist models of negotiations between the self and the other. These analyses would not necessarily contradict my own, but would
add layers of complexity to the sequences I identify.

CRITICAL CONTEXT

Each of my two purposes in undertaking this study of Page’s work raises an immediate question. First of all, to what extent is Page’s voyage of self-discovery unique to her personality, and to what extent is it likely to parallel or otherwise resonate with other people’s lives? The second question is: have other critics conducted similar investigations into the work of other poets, and what bearing do these investigations have on my own? In an attempt to address both of these questions I want to align my discussion of Page’s poetry with critical assessments of representations of the self in the work of five other modernist poets: T.S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop, and Dorothy Livesay.

Although I found few direct references in the critical discussions of these poets to their representations of the self’s negotiations with the other, many critics have implicitly assessed these poets’ representations of the self, by analyzing their uses of poetic voice. We can align the modernist types of poetic voice along Stokes’s spectrum of relationships between the self and the other, from objectification to identification. The impersonal would be at one end, aligned with objectification; the confessional would be at the other, aligned with identification; and the personal would be somewhere in the middle. I see my study of negotiations between self and other as a delving into the common practice of assessing modernist uses of poetic voice, an inquiry into the specific relationships between these voices and the
constructions of identity they imply. By relating my study of Page to studies of voice in other modernist poets, I can also characterize Page’s sense of identity as dynamic and closer to the "norm" of at least this small group than are the more consistently extreme uses of voice characteristic of, for example, the impersonal poetry of Wallace Stevens and Marianne Moore.

I have already alluded to the difficulty of identifying relationships between self and other in Page’s poetry, in which dominant patterns of identification are often undermined by less obvious patterns of objectification, and vice versa. In his discussion of Elizabeth Bishop’s use of the impersonal voice, Harold Bloom complicates these terms even further, by suggesting that the concepts of personal and impersonal poetry are themselves misleading. He locates Bishop in a tradition of American poetry beginning with Emerson and Dickinson and continuing with Stevens and Moore, one marked by "firm rhetorical control, overt moral authority, and sometimes by a fairly strict economy of means." Bloom, however, challenges what he sees as the overly simplistic common assumptions about the nature of the impersonal and confessional modes. He characterizes the Emersonian poetic tradition as one of "deep subjectivity," as in the poetry of Wordsworth, and distinguishes it from the tradition of "confessional" poetry, that of Coleridge and such contemporaries of Bishop as Robert Lowell, Theodore Roethke, and John Berryman. The paradox in this contrast, he says, is that he finds in "impersonal" poetry by Stevens or Bishop "the overwhelming self-revelation of a profoundly subjective consciousness," while in the more personal voice of confessional poetry he "confront[s] finally an opacity,
for that is all the confessional mode can yield." In Bishop's tradition is a "clarity [that is] more than a surface phenomenon. Such strength is cognitive, even analytical, and surpasses philosophy and psychoanalysis in its power to expose human truth." This tradition "confronts the truth, which is that what is most worth seeing is impossible to see, at least with open eyes" (ix-x).

Although some agree with Bloom, in general critics of modern poetry seem to find the distinction between impersonal and personal voices a useful one, regardless of the value they assign to each type of voice. Contemporary critical approaches such as feminism, post-colonialism and Marxism have asserted that what can be seen with open eyes is also important, and attacked the socio-political biases underlying Bloom's New Critical perspective, including its privileging of the intellectual over the emotional. Other critics admire the impersonal mode as does Bloom, but without challenging as he does the usual meaning of the term. Penelope Laurans, for example, describes it as using form to control emotional content. In Bishop's representations of such potentially threatening themes as "loss, isolation, and the quest for union with something outside the self," the forms and impersonal tone of the poetry restrain the powerful emotions generated by the subject matter to "prevent sentimentality" and produce an "elegantly muted, modernist quality" (76). Here Laurans applauds the privileging of the intellectual and the aesthetic over the emotional without arguing that the emotional is paradoxically better represented through this mode than through the confessional.

I am considering my study of Page in the context of studies of five other modernists whose poetry is often analyzed in terms of
impersonal, personal, and confessional voices, and whose work exhibits a range of attitudes towards the impersonal ideal of high modernism. Wallace Stevens and Marianne Moore each observe more consistently than T.S. Eliot himself his early call for the "extinction of personality" ("Tradition" 478) in modernist poetry, whereas Eliot and Elizabeth Bishop, like Page, both struggle with this dictum. As a politically active poet, Dorothy Livesay differs from these other modernists in consistently rebelling against the impersonal mode, explicitly aiming to represent a self that is personal, acknowledging both private and socio-political influences.

I am not directly comparing the work of these five particular poets with that of Page, although Page herself frequently expresses her admiration for Eliot and Stevens (see the introduction to Hologram, for example), and various critics have connected her work with that of Moore, Bishop, and Livesay, as I will discuss in Chapter 2. If my purpose had been to compare Page's poetry directly with the poetry of other modernists, I might have chosen to include various other poets, especially Canadian women. Smith says Page shares the metaphysical inclinations of Margaret Avison and Phyllis Webb (Canadian Poetry 30), for example, and Livesay says Page is part of the first recognizable grouping of Canadian female modernists, also including Miriam Waddington, Anne Wilkinson, Anne Marriott, Margaret Avison, and Phyllis Webb (Right 19).

Critics have also linked Page's work with that of Anne Hébert. Hébert's Le Tombeau des Rois (1953) shares the intense visual imagery and the recurrence of key symbols that Namjoshi observes in
Page’s early poetry (25). Hands, kings, water, treasure, castles, and flowers appear and reappear in Hébert’s poetry, which "risks being hermetic" (Poulin 157), as Smith ("Poetry" 17-9) and Orange ("Page" 235) describe Page’s poetry. Clément Moisan explores the parallel emphases of these two poets on dream, solitude, and death, and pairs them as poets of "clandestinity," noting the images of "enclosed space, sealed-up houses, and prisons" (49) that barricade both poets from "an inaccessible world" (63-4).

The fragmented nature of Page’s perspectives on identity connects her work as well with that of one of her critics, the much younger Namjoshi, who often intersperses lyric poems with short prose pieces that employ or allude to a wide variety of sub-genres of poetry and prose. Saint Suniti and the Dragon, for example, includes either references to or examples of epic poetry such as Beowulf, myths of angels and goddesses from western and eastern traditions, legends of saints, excerpts from news stories and nature writing, animal fables, and fairy tales. Each short piece examines particular facets of Namjoshi’s identity, for example as a woman, lesbian, Indo-Canadian, friend, and writer. Each of these identities depends upon a particular relationship, as Page’s poems define the self of her speakers in terms of the others they confront.

I have chosen to ground my study of Page in criticism on the work of Eliot, Stevens, Moore, Bishop, and Livesay because criticism on these modernists frequently focuses on their use of poetic voice. I also expect that the work of these five poets is familiar enough to readers of Anglo-Canadian poetry that I can discuss criticism on their work with minimal references to the
poetry itself. I wish to lead my own readers from critical approaches they will readily recognize into the particular critical approach that Page's poetry has led me to adopt.

T.S. Eliot

Eliot outlined his early and widely influential ideas about personality in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," advocating that the artist separate his private, individual self from his creative self. In Stokes's terms he advises the objectification not only of the external other, but also of the private, inner self by the public self. Eliot argued that "the progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice," comparing the role of the ideal artist in the creative process to the role of a catalyst in a chemical reaction ("Tradition" 479). Later in life, however, he issued a very different pronouncement on personality. In "The Metaphysical Poets" he argues that the Civil War in England caused a "dissociation of sensibility" through which "feeling and emotion [became] particular, whereas thought . . . [remained] general" (23). As Alan Weinblatt points out, this dissociation is for the mature Eliot an unmitigated catastrophe which leaves artists "divided not only in internal function but in their skewed and diminished apprehension of reality" (9). Critical assessments of Eliot's various views on personality range from Allan Mowbray's insistence that they are "unified and coherent" (10) to Brian Lee's assertion that they are "mainly consistent in their inconsistency" (17). Without addressing the specifics of these readings, I suggest that Eliot's early and later pronouncements reflect at the least a change in perspective on the relationship between the self
and the internal and external others.

The early "Tradition" advocates an internal schism in the artist, between the "man who suffers and the mind which creates" (480), while "Metaphysical Poets" mourns the onset of a culturally induced schism in artists, between "feeling" and "thought." The terms "suffers" and "feeling" roughly align, as do the terms "mind" and "thought." The later statement seems indirectly to contradict the earlier, and Eliot's intervening change in attitude is reflected in changes in his poetic representations of the self, signalled at the most obvious level through his replacement of the ironic personae in his earlier poetry by the more personal speaking voices in the later. Brian Trehearne observes this change in the oeuvres of many other modernist poets. He argues, in fact, that their degree of willingness to move beyond their early ideal of impersonality largely shaped the artistic careers not only of Page but also of many of the other Montreal poets of the 1940s (45-6).

Critics generally trace through Eliot's poetic career definite developments in his representations of identity. Most critics see in his early poetry a severely dissociated impersonal voice, and in the later a relatively integrated personal voice, the same development most readers also find in Page's poetry. Some critics of each poet characterize this transition as a transcending of the dichotomy between subject and object. Gary Geddes, for example, says Eliot "has made a spiritual pilgrimage from alienation and solitude in The Waste Land and 'The Hollow Men' to liberation and community in Ash Wednesday, and finally to a vision of God realized through self-knowledge in Four Quartets" (623). John Orange argues similarly that Eliot's poetry develops from early "pessimistic"
symbolism to later "transcendental" symbolism, and he perceives the same development in Page's poetry (227). Douglas Freake also sees Page's late poetry as "transcendent," that is, as manifestations of a "centred" and "fulfilled" consciousness (112).

No critic has so far challenged this view of Page's later poetry as transcending the dichotomy between subject and object. I suspect this is because of the difficulty I already alluded to of finding a critical approach useful to the very different poetry Page wrote at various stages of her career. Some assessments of Eliot's poetic representations of the self, by contrast, trace a shifting but ultimately unresolved relationship between fragmentation and unity. Grover Smith, for example, sees the first two Quartets as the climax of Eliot's work, demonstrations of a "unified sensibility." For Smith, however, this unity disintegrates again in "East Coker," in which thought dominates feeling (88).

David Spurr's analysis of "the evolution of Eliot's embattled sensibility" (xviii) most closely parallels my own view of the changing representations of identity in Page's poetry. Spurr traces two distinct phases in what he sees as the central struggle in Eliot's poetry, between the intellectual and the imaginative (xi-xii). In "Prufrock" and "Gerontion," the intellectualizing persona fails to order the chaos of experience and escapes into "images of purity, flight, and intimacy" produced by the imagination, but the dramatic monologues provide through the use of irony a safe distance between poet and speaker. In the later The Waste Land the persona that opens the poem "disintegrates," and the intellect in self-defense "sabotages" the imagination by
fragmenting its visions. The second phase of Eliot's struggle with the problem of identity begins three years later with "The Hollow Men" and progresses through Ash-Wednesday. In these poems a set of external values that have been internalized now performs the protective function of the earlier personae; Christianity now defends the intellect against "an imagination that threatens to engulf [it]." Spurr reads Four Quartets as a post-Christian poem in which Eliot tries unsuccessfully to "assimilate the forces of the imagination to a larger conceptual framework involving notions of time," to "formulate a worldly meaning for his mystical vision." In spite of the formal order of the Four Quartets, they "reveal as much internal divisiveness as does The Waste Land" (Spurr xvi-vii).

According to this reading, then, in the first phase of Eliot's career the ironic persona disintegrates, and in the second phase the Christian persona disintegrates (xix). Page's early poetry (after 1942), like Eliot's, employs the impersonal mode, not through the use of ironic personae who speak in the first person, but through avoidance of the first-person voice. Page begins to employ the first-person voice in mid-career poems in which her speakers openly acknowledge the splits within their own psyches, a condition Eliot represents less directly in The Waste Land by fragmenting the persona's voice into various speaking voices. In Page's later poems, as in Eliot's, the speaker adopts a new strategy for negotiating contradictory demands, in Page's case by separating the internal demands of the id on the ego from the external demands of social life, and representing each negotiation in different poems, so they do not come into direct conflict.
Whereas Eliot in his early career advocates the psychological splitting inherent in the impersonal voice and in his later years regrets the psychological splitting inherent in "dissociation of sensibility," Stevens maintains throughout his career an affinity for the impersonal, maintaining as does Bloom that the psychological splitting in the impersonal mode is necessarily if paradoxically linked with the project of representing the psyche as unified. While the poet should not make himself the subject of his poetry, "the poems will disclose their author none the less." He never publicly wavers in this view: poetry is a "process of the personality of the poet," reflecting "the physical and mental factors that condition him as an individual" (*Necessary Angel* 48).

Probably because of his adherence to the impersonal mode, the critical conversation about changes in Stevens's poetic representations of the self generally takes place on a more abstract and philosophical level than similar discussions of the poetry of either Eliot or Page, and the criticism on Stevens includes a more diverse range of opinions about developments in these representations. The one point on which Stevens's critics agree is the difficulty of their subject. Eugene Nassar describes the common impression that Stevens's poetry presents a "bizarre and seemingly impenetrable" surface undercut by "conscious" and "consistent" irony (13), and Joseph Riddell reports that readers commonly complain Stevens is difficult because he is "disengaged from reality," and even "irresponsible" in his desire to "escape" from it (257).

Critics who detect patterns of change through Stevens's poetic
oeuvre tend to fall into one of three categories. Some, as Riddel observes, see changes they regard as negative; they "prefer the [early] poet to the [late] philosopher" (263), terms which suggest a development from the relatively more personal to the impersonal. Another group contends there is no important pattern of change at all through the poetry, although these tend to undercut their own assertions by adding qualifying statements suggesting that while the content does not change, the form does. J. Hillis Miller, for example, says "at the beginning Stevens is as far as he ever goes," but adds that the early poems are more "finished" and "unified" than the later "open-ended improvisations" (146). Similarly, while Roy Harvey Pearce maintains there is no chronological development in the concerns of Stevens's poetry, he also says the later poems offer intensive "retrospection and redefinition" of themes from the earlier work, and that what changes is the perspective on these concerns. In early poems such as "Sunday Morning," both speaker and reader are safely on the outside of the subject looking in, while readers who are "able to follow [Stevens] ever inward" through the later poetry find themselves "trapped [with him] on the inside looking out" ("Lesson" 137).

The third group of critics identifies positive developments through Stevens's poetry. Nassar, for example, observes approvingly that ontology is more obviously the subject of the later poems than of the earlier (23). Joseph Carroll says that Stevens's method is consistently dialectical, but that the dialectic changes. In the early *Harmonium* the dualism is between mind and body, whereas in the later poetry the new dualism is between the earlier one and "a transcendent unity of the mind and
reality within [what Stevens calls] 'the mind of minds’" (Carroll 3), which is incidentally a "triad" structure similar to those Orange also detects in Page’s Evening Dance poems (258). I find it difficult to align the terms of this extremely abstract and nuanced discussion with the more general terms "impersonal" and "personal." Whatever changes may occur in Stevens’s representations of the self throughout his career, they are evidently so much more subtle and debatable than those in the oeuvres of Eliot and Page that they do not have a useful bearing on my study.

Marianne Moore

The critical discussion of Moore resembles that of Stevens in that both poets are seen as adhering consistently to the impersonal mode, and in that a similar degree of abstraction and subtlety characterizes the discussions of these poets’ representations of identity. According to Randall Jarrell, most critics do not see Moore’s oeuvre as changing over time ("Her Shield" 118). In a panel discussion, Joseph Parisi and Susan Gilbert readily agree that the "moral portrait" in Moore’s poetry is "remarkably consistent" from beginning to end, Gilbert’s only qualification being that the later work is "pithier" and "more pointed" than the earlier (Parisi 107). Many other critics describe her poetry as dynamically balancing various dualisms, a characteristic critics also find in Stevens’s poetry. Charles Tomlinson praises her "unity" of humour and insight, science and poetry, and spontaneity and order, "marriages" which he sees as the source of what Moore herself calls "spiritual poise" (3-6), while William Carlos Williams sees destruction and creation as "simultaneous" in her
Kenneth Burke characterizes Moore's poetry as expressing the relation between the external and internal, the visible and invisible, background and personality (87).

Of those who do see a developmental pattern in Moore's poetry, some see the later work as superior to the earlier, but this change is subtle and presents itself differently to different readers. Robert Beloof offers one of the more specific evaluations, observing that the later poems are more "lyrical," because they are more iambic, with more overt sound echoes (148), but in general the more qualitative the assessment, the more vague the terms. Christianne Miller sees in the late poetry the "clearest revelation" of Moore's "longstanding conviction of the importance of community to her poetic" (xi). For Roy Harvey Pearce, in the "later, greater" poems "observation becomes a means to, not a mode of insight" ("Moore" 156), and the later Moore is "fully in control of herself and is unwilling to control anyone or anything else." The later Moore, however, also exhibits a "curious lack of commitment" (157), and Pearce does not attempt to reconcile this "lack" with his otherwise positive assessment of her "later, greater" poetry. Randall Jarrell, similarly ambivalent, observes that Moore's later poetry lacks the "abstract, mannered, descriptive, consciously prosaic commentary" characteristic of the earlier work, but then in the same paragraph concedes he is "emphasizing this difference too much, since even its existence is ignored, usually." He closes the subject with the non-committal comment that "it is interesting what a different general impression the [later] Collected Poems gives, compared to the old Selected Poems" (118-9).

Just as some critics regard Stevens's later poetry as an
unfortunate retreat into philosophy, David Bromwich sees a negative change in Moore's poetry from self-assertion in the early work to self-protectiveness in the later. Qualities such as "aggression" and "satirical humour" are present in her earlier work but conspicuously absent in the later, and Moore even suppressed re-publication of the more revealing early work (Bromwich 68-9). This change from "self-assertion" to "self-protectiveness" could be aligned with a change from the personal to the impersonal, opposite in direction to the shift in the work of Eliot and Page toward a more personal voice. Bromwich's terms, however, do not suggest a change in Moore's configuration of the self, as we see through the careers of Page and Eliot, but rather a change in Moore's evaluation of the self, of its strength, perhaps, or of its worth.

These assessments are striking in their tentativeness and lack of clarity, very different from the precise, although equally abstract, terms in the discussions of Stevens's poetry. This difference in critical assessments may be connected to a difference in emotional response to the degree of impersonality in these two poets. Richard Howard echoes Stevens's and Bloom's statements about the impersonal when he argues that Moore's "refusal to be autobiographical" makes hers "the most personal poetry ever written," that her poems are not really "about animals" but "about the poet and about themselves" (2-3). Stevens's version of impersonality, however, is generally seen as assertive, whether he is praised for attempting to write "pure poetry" (Carroll 3), or accused of hedonism and irresponsibility (see Riddell 257).

Critics frequently associate Moore's impersonality, on the other hand, with weakness or fear. It is a strategy of "double
resistance," both to the "external menace" and to what Moore terms "this disease, myself" (Howard 2-3), the external and internal others. Thus it constructs in her poems "an elaborate social presence" intended to "disguise or protect" (Pinsky 14). This difference in critical views of Stevens and Moore suggests either that gender might affect the poetic representation of (presumably non-gendered) impersonality, or that gender might affect critical perceptions of the representation of impersonality, or perhaps some combination of the two. I will discuss these issues in Chapter 2 with reference to Page's early poetry and the critical responses to it.

Elizabeth Bishop

Critics generally agree that while Bishop's thematic concerns change very little through her oeuvre, her view of the self changes substantially from her early collection *North and South* (1946) to her last collection *Geography III* (1976). Bonnie Costello thinks the impersonal narration and ironic masks in the early poems protect the "emerging self-consciousness" from the "disorienting" experiences Bishop describes (119), noting that although sometimes Bishop includes a "we," "you," and "I," they hardly interact at all (132). The narrative distance narrows in later poems such as "In the Waiting Room," in which only time separates the speaker from her childhood experience (119). David Kalstone similarly notes that the poems of *Geography III* are more openly "inner landscapes" than are Bishop's earlier poems (31).

Each of these assessments suggests a change from the impersonal to the personal, although as in the discussion of this
development in Eliot's poetry, some of Bishop's critics detect other currents that run counter to it. Penelope Laurans, for example, sees in Geography III more than in the early poetry a tension between the controlling forms and the powerful emotions evoked by the content (88). This assessment suggests that through her career Bishop on the one hand approaches more emotionally challenging subject matter, which we might associate with a development towards a more personal poetry, while on the other hand she tightens the formal control that Laurans associates with the impersonal voice. These counterbalancing changes resemble those observed by Spurr in Eliot's poetry, as well as the counterbalancing developments I see in Page's representations of the self.

Dorothy Livesay

Livesay's early and emphatic rejection of the impersonal mode of high modernism (Arnason 16-7) sets her apart from all of the above poets; even in the most personal moments of their later poetry Eliot, Bishop, and Page do not approach the confessional quality in some of Livesay's more graphic love poetry, such as "The Woman" or "The Touching." Even the titles of Livesay's books suggest that she is much more overtly interested in defining her own identity than the other poets I have discussed. She calls her three volumes of memoirs Beginnings; Right Hand, Left Hand; and Journey With My Selves; and two of her poetry collections The Woman I Am and The Self-Completing Tree. Throughout her career, Livesay counterbalances her project of representing the influence of private experience on identity with her other project of
documenting the effect of political forces on the individual. The critical discussion of Livesay’s work is not centred on developmental sequences through her career, but rather on this dichotomy of the public versus the private. This dichotomy is reflected in Livesay’s chosen modes for each of these subjects, the documentary as opposed to the lyric (Denham 87-8).

Of the critics who do mention developmental sequences within the "overall unity of theme" in Livesay’s work, most relate them to biography, tracing sequences of external influences on Livesay, such as personal crises, political events, artistic orthodoxies, or social structures (Dornay 1). Only Dennis Cooley identifies a sequence that could be related to changes in self-other negotiations. He says the early poems show women who are "enclosed" in various ways, drawn towards the world but afraid of it, whereas the later poems represent "earth mothers" with the strength and courage to "take in and harbour men" (107). This sequence suggests a development from projection to introjection, in Klein’s terms, both psychological strategies that Stokes relates to identification. Cooley and the other critics who see developmental sequences through Livesay’s oeuvre, then, all seem to be describing variations of her use of the personal voice.

Helen Regueiro considers as the central concern of all modern poetry the "quest for wholeness," which necessarily fails, because all poetry can do is illuminate the dialectic between reality and the imagination (9). This dialectic remains relatively stable in Livesay’s personal poetic, perhaps because she generally treats external reality in different poems from those describing private
psychological experience, as does Page in her later, more personal poetry. It also remains relatively stable in the poetry of Stevens and Moore, presumably because of the inherent stability of the subject-object dichotomy in the impersonal mode. Eliot and Bishop examine the dialectic between external and internal reality from different perspectives at different stages in their careers, at a safe distance from the speakers in their early impersonal poems, and closer to the speakers in their later more personal poems. Other developments that some critics have detected in the oeuvres of both Eliot and Bishop, however, complicate and even subvert the overt development from the impersonal to the personal. These are the underlying purposes that are characteristic of modern art (Ehrenzweig 81-2), reflecting the tension between the conscious and unconscious motives of the artist. The oeuvres of Eliot and Bishop are sites of a particularly dynamic engagement between external and internal reality. This is the dynamic tension that I want to reveal in Page’s representations of the self, a layering of intentions that is constituted differently at different stages of her career.

This brief survey of critical perspectives on impersonal and personal voices in modern poetry also suggests an answer to the question of how generally applicable Page’s experiences of identity might be to other life stories. In terms of poetic voice, Page’s poetry, like that of Eliot and Bishop, falls between the more consistently impersonal work of Stevens and Moore and the personal to confessional voice in Livesay’s work. This impression of Page’s use of poetic voice aligns with the biographical information readily available about Page, which similarly suggests a
personality that has generally been capable of compromise, one that is capable of both love and work, to borrow Freud's definition of psychological health. I am approaching this study with the assumption that although the details of Page's representations of identity may be unique to her, these representations are neither extreme nor exceptional. I therefore hope that by examining Page's particular quest for self-knowledge, readers can arrive not only at a fuller appreciation of Page's poetry, but also at a clearer and more complete understanding of what the self might be.
CHAPTER 2

THE EGO-LESS OTHER IN THE EARLY POETRY

... In their eyes I have seen
the pin men of madness in marathon trim
race round the track of the stadium pupil.

--"The Stenographers"

John Sutherland observed in 1942 that the socialist beliefs of
the other Preview writers had strongly influenced Page, who was
like "a field worker for the magazine, making a special practical
report on the lives of stenographers" ("Page and Preview" 7). In
February of 1947 Smith offered a different assessment of Page's
work, saying that although some of her poems were objective, her
"most characteristic work is subjective:"

In the inner life of reverie, of self-analysis, and of
dreams she finds a mirror-like stage for the re-
enactment of the hesitations and struggles of the outer
world of objective experience. ("New" 250)

In a letter published in April 1947, Sutherland protested the
"misleading or false statements" in Smith's review, and Smith's
"complete disregard of one fundamental aspect of the poetry:"

Smith has nowhere informed us that Miss Page tries to
interpret the illness of her separate self in relation to
a particular social system, that she frequently sees the
"hesitations and struggles" in terms of class oppression,
and that she suggests a solution as well as an analysis. ("Letter" 17)

Smith responded to this attack with bewilderment ("Reply" 18), because Sutherland had also recently published an article arguing that Page's social criticism was "decidedly confused, bound to the caprices of a personal conflict," and her idea of a solution was "vague and weakly felt" ("Poetry" 17). I summarize this sequence of early assessments of the social criticism in Page's poetry because this debate, and especially Sutherland's puzzling about-face, suggests the degree of ambivalence that readers have found, and continue to find, in these ostensibly socialist poems.

In "The Stenographers" (I 102), the most famous of Page's early poems about office workers, a detached speaker describes the plight of women in low-paying office jobs. In Stokes's terms, the relationship between the self of the speaker and the "other" of these women appears to be one of extreme objectification. In Ehrenzweig's terms, the superficial theme of this poem is the conflict between the external demands of the modern workplace, which is associated with quasi-military discipline and sterility, and the women's private desire to return to a carefree childhood associated with nature. The conflict between the two is so severe that it effaces the individual egos of the stenographers, who are not referred to as separate people, but as members of a group. The form of the poem reflects its thematic progression from conflict in the early four-line stanzas, as the memories of childhood stand against the present reality of work life, to the eventual crushing of the id and its desires. The longer, last two stanzas of five and seven lines respectively suggest that the stenographers'
torment will continue indefinitely.

As Trehearne observes, Page unifies her early poems through several prosodic effects, including "echoing effects" and "the mimetic effects of rhythm" (85). In many of these poems the first category consists primarily of alliteration, rhyme, and partial rhymes. In the first stanza of "The Stenographers," the speaker reinforces the military terms and images with the poetic devices of Anglo-Saxon battle narratives:

After the brief bivouac of Sunday,
their eyes, in the forced march of Monday to Saturday,
hoist the white flag, flutter in the snowstorm of paper,
haul it down and crack in the midsun of temper.

The first three lines include the harsh consonants and strong alliterative patterns common in Anglo-Saxon poetry, as in "brief bivouac" and "flag, flutter." The last two lines are broken, in Anglo-Saxon style, into half-lines each consisting of a verb phrase.

The meter is irregular, various patterns clashing against each other and echoing the violence wrought by the workplace against the workers. The first, third, and fourth lines open with the trochaic patterns of "After," "hoist the," and "haul it," but apart from this regularity the stanza is a mix of iambs, trochees, anapests, and dactyls. Iambs collide with trochees to produce double strong stresses in "the brief bivouac" and "white flag, flutter," the awkwardness of the stress patterns reinforced by the awkwardness of the reader having to enunciate consonant sequences such as /t/ to /f/, or /f/ to /b/. In other near-double stresses the prevailing meter of the line struggles against the sentence pattern, for
example the prevailing anapests in the phrase "in the forced march of Monday to Saturday" mark "march" as unstressed, weakening the stress required by the meaning of the sentence.

In the second stanza pastoral memories of a rural childhood mitigate the difficulties of adult work life, an effect signalled by the softer consonants and more regular meter of mostly iambic and anapestic:

In the pause between the first draft and the carbon they glimpse the smooth hours when they were children--the ride in the ice-cart, the ice-man's name, the end of the route and the long walk home . . .

The alliteration and double stresses persist, but to much less dramatic effect in the fluid lines of this stanza. The sequence "the first draft and," for example, juxtaposes an iamb with a trochee, but the "t" of "first" slides readily into the "d" of "draft," reducing the awkwardness of the meter. Ease of pronunciation further reduces other double stresses that are already undermined by their metric environment. In the clause "they glimpse the smooth hours," for example, the "th" of "smooth" leads easily into "hours," and whereas the phrase "smooth hours" could in other environments receive two stresses, in this case the stress on "smooth" is midway between the unstressed "the" and the strong stress on "hours."

These undermined near-double stresses appear through the third stanza, in "high tide," "grey toffee," and "wasps' nests," and into the fourth in "Bell rings" and "Rope snaps," but an increasingly regular anapestic tetrameter with occasional iambic finally overwhelms these last weak metric anomalies, signifying that the
battle is over: the demands of the external world have overwhelmed the id. Natural imagery no longer includes the "vines" and "leaves" of the childhood memories but instead a sterile snowscape in which the relationship between cause and effect is ruptured:

Bell rings and they go and the voice draws their pencil like a sled across snow; when its runners are frozen rope snaps and the voice then is pulling no burden but runs like a dog on the winter of paper.

The dog pulls but the sled doesn't move, and lack of wind renders the kite useless. In the last four stanzas of the poem the anapestic tetrameter relentlessly clashes up against the images of stasis, of the "terrible calm" from which the "stagnant" and "starched" stenographers can escape only by "fighting to drown" in sleep. The final lines of the poem, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, encapsulate this sense of entrapment by unifying the cyclical form of the anapests with the circles and ovals of eyes and racetrack. Whereas the first six stanzas include only the two partial rhymes of "tide" with "vine" and "kites" with "flight," in the last two stanzas rhymes and partial rhymes complement the mesmerizing effect of the anapestic meter. "Weeping," "sleep," "sheep," and "leap" unify the seventh stanza; "machines" and "seen," "taut" and "vault," and "pin" and "trim" the eighth.

According to this reading "The Stenographers" seamlessly unifies form with content, both evoking and describing the struggle between the id and the external world in a Marxist vision of the childlike and natural worker crushed by the mechanized aggression of the modern work world. This degree of aesthetic unity has probably contributed to the poem's popularity with editors of
As many critics have pointed out, however, certain stylistic features of this poem distract from and ultimately undermine its overtly Marxist theme. Sutherland observes that Page’s poetry of this period "suffers from monotony of form--for excessive variety is eventually repetitious--from too many images and a failure to choose among them" ("Poetry" 18-9).

In each stanza of "The Stenographers" Page explores the possibilities of a new image or metaphor, only to discard it and start fresh in the following stanza. Military images in the first give way to a childhood ride in an ice-cart, fishing floats, a dog-sled, kites, a café at noon, sleeping as a metaphor for drowning, stenographers as machines, and madness as runners on a track. The lack of a unifying image or of any logical transition between the images reinforces our sense of the stenographers’ inability to make sense of their own experience, but it also heightens our awareness of and curiosity about the speaker, who appears only in the third from last line. Orange says this "explicit editorial voice" is the only flaw in an "otherwise seamless" poem ("Page" 246), indicating the extent to which our perception of the poem as unified depends on our willingness to ignore the speaker.

Sutherland identifies another kind of stylistic gap through which we glimpse what Ehrenzweig might call the unconscious purpose underlying the overt Marxist theme. He calls attention to Page’s frequent pairing of two words close in meaning or connotation, such as "a world of day," noting that these two words "nearly close on

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7 "The Stenographers" appears in the 1985 Twentieth Century Poetry and Poetics, the 1988 and 1991 Heath anthologies, Sullivan’s 1989 anthology of poetry by Canadian women, and the 1993 Broadview, to name only a few.
one another, but a slit is left open through which we imagine that we see something startling and original." Sutherland concludes that the effect is illusory, and that what these semantic gaps really reveal is "some emotional discomfort with the subject-matter" ("Page and Preview" 8).

Most later critics have agreed with Sutherland's early assessment, similarly identifying conflicts between the aesthetic and political goals of the poems about office workers. George Woodcock says that poems such as "The Stenographers" come "as close as any writer can to the meeting of satire and compassion" (832), suggesting that these poems depict the subjects as victims of their own making. Namjoshi suggests that the source of this tension in Page's ostensibly political work originates in a negative form of class-consciousness, a split between the "pro-proletarian" influence of the Preview group and the "white-collar anglicized" sensibility of the poetry (21-2). Because the poems themselves leave open to interpretation the source(s) of the contradictory sensibilities within them, I have turned to biographical information in the hope that it will illuminate this issue. As it happens, Namjoshi's assessment aligns with comments Page has made recently about these poems:

I wrote them in Montreal during the war when for the first time I came up against people who were totally different from those I had known when I lived with my family. I was appalled by what seemed to me the smallness of their lives, and concerned that so many of them seemed cornered. This may have been arrogant of me. I may have misjudged their potential. (Orange,
A biographical reading of these poems might conflate Page with her speakers. What Page does not say here is that she had also been "cornered" into the work life of a stenographer, that in practical terms only her father’s financial support stood between her and the women she wrote about (Djwa 40). If the stylistic excess in "The Stenographers" functions as the unconscious subversion Ehrenzweig says must undermine the modern poet’s conscious intention, in Stokes’s terms we might see this excess as the response of a creative and ambitious speaker (and poet) to tedious work, a response she projects onto the office workers, in unconscious identification with them, in order to avoid confronting her own fear of being trapped in such a situation.

The only critic who argues that the poems about office workers are successfully unified is Diana Relke, who says that they "translat[e] female experience into working class experience" ("Mothers" 120). Relke’s 1994 article was the first extensive feminist analysis of Page’s writing, closely followed by those of Laura Killian and Nancy Paul, both in 1996. Relke notes that few critics have discussed Page’s work in the context of other female Canadian poets, because "among women, she has always impressed us as unusually unique" ("Tracing" 29), a characterization on which she doesn’t elaborate. Paul interrogates Relke’s characterization: "is it an issue of subject matter? of perceived opacity? of a poetic persona sometimes seen to be masculine and reserved?" Paul agrees with Relke that Page’s early work endorses a sense of feminine interconnectedness with nature, but points out that this reading does not mesh well with Page’s own statements about her
When questioned directly on this subject Page has said: "I consider myself a feminist but not a feminist writer" (Orange, "Conversation" 70). She often acknowledges her debts to male poets, and she denies that her use of initials was ever intended to disguise her gender ("That's Me" 51) or that her male colleagues at Preview affected her in any negative way (48). Killian specifies other problems that Page presents for the feminist critic. First of all, like Moore, she rarely writes about personal experience from a specifically feminine perspective. She neither positions herself as writing within a female or feminist tradition, as does Adrienne Rich in acknowledging Emily Dickinson's influence on her, nor does she reject this tradition, as does Amy Lowell. Because her poetry affords few obvious "footholds" for critical approaches concerned with gender, Killian says Page has been in danger of exclusion from feminist revisionary canons and criticism (90-1).

I suggest, however, that the reason Page's poetry has not generally been embraced by feminist criticism is not simply that it doesn't fit in, but that it actively resists the most common feminist project of validating feminine experience while explaining the limitations of this experience as the result of patriarchal oppression. Just as the stylistic features of Page's early poetry undermine attempts to read it as socialist in intent, so Page's negative attitudes towards the female subjects in her early poetry undermine attempts to read it as feminist in intent.

Constance Rooke acknowledges this negativity, suggesting that the office workers in Page's early poetry are partially responsible for their own plight because they submerge themselves in "fuzzy
dreams of love," paralyzed by "the dim hope of chivalric rescue." Ultimately, however, Rooke thinks that Page speaks of "unfortunate people" with "sympathy" and "generosity of spirit" (178-9). Relke promotes a similarly positive view of Page's representations of femininity. Conceding at the outset that "twenty-five years of feminist scholarship, coupled with our increasing environmental awareness, have made it ludicrous to insist that one sex is somehow 'closer' to nature than the other" ("Tracing" 12), Relke still finds in the early poems about girls and women the "terrestrially-grounded side of Page's sensibility" (13). By the end of the article, Relke has slipped into the very essentialism she begins by condemning, claiming the poem "After Rain" demonstrates that "the female mind has its own unique metaphysic of order and beauty which is capable of transforming a ruined garden into a poem" (26).

Like Relke, Killian begins her article by worrying that in reading Page "as a woman" she risks being "forced" to make "untenable" claims based on gender essentialism (86). Like Relke, she is unable to avoid making these claims. In discussing Page's impersonality, she says

while we might assume [the] 'extracted' I/eye to be gendered feminine in the case of the poet, I feel that she characterizes it as masculine: it is the eye that would fix, the (phallic) camera that would kill, the gaze that would harden; on the other hand, the poetic and impersonal objective eye (from which the 'I' of personal experience has been carefully excised) is characterized by a feminine fluidity, by its receptivity to an unending flux of images which merely flow through it, like light through glass, air or water, and
I have quoted Killian at length to illustrate the seemingly inexorable slippage into essentialism that characterizes feminist readings of Page. Note that Killian locates the gendering of the personal and impersonal "I's" in Page's sensibility, but in fact it is Killian who associates "fixing" and "killing" with masculinity, and "fluidity," "receptivity," and "flowers" with femininity.

Killian's thesis is that Page "cannot sustain this divorce of a poetic vision coded feminine and a gendered self--that is, the splitting of the female subject implicit in the modernist aesthetic" (94). She reads "After Rain" and "Arras" as attempts at reconciling feminine and masculine sensibilities, observing however that this reconciliation marks "not the dawning of a new era of poetry for Page, but rather the beginning of a ten-year-silence, about which she remains disturbingly silent." When Page resumes writing in the late 1960s, it is with "a new wholeness of vision which now readily embraces the sensual," "the sensual" being equated with the earlier "feminine." I agree with Killian that gender ceases to be a source of conflict in Page's later poetry, but the question Killian does not ask is why, at the moment Page arrives at "the poetic self of a woman" (100-2), do gender and gender-specific experience all but disappear from her poetry?

As Paul's article was published within a couple of months of Killian's, it responds only to Relke's conclusions, finding them "compelling," but remaining "distrustful" of the categories Relke uses in arriving at them. She states what no previous critic has, namely that some of the early poems about girls and women do not
seem feminist in intent. Like other feminist critics of Page's poetry, Paul often attributes the sensibility in these poems not to their speakers, but to Page herself. Paul observes the "distaste" in "Page's descriptions" in "Little Girls" of the "lolloping fatness" of adolescent girls who "goggle, flounder, flap," and constantly cry, and she asks why Page, as opposed to her speakers, usually identifies children in groups as female, while young boys appear as individuals (117-8). Paul also notes the contempt "Page" shows for the women of "The Landlady" and "No Flowers" (123). But like other feminist critics Paul draws back from investigating the strong negativity expressed in many of these early representations of femininity, instead conceding Relke's point that "Personal Landscape" and "Summer" connect nature and femininity in positive ways, presumably therefore counterbalancing the negativity elsewhere.

The frequent conflation of poet with speaker in feminist criticism on Page may contribute to the reluctance of these critics to acknowledge the negative representations of femininity in these poems, as to do so would seem to mean accusing Page herself of misogyny. Critics who wish to maintain a respectful attitude towards Page, whether out of a feminist impulse to respect a female artist or out of some more general sense of decorum, may be reluctant to recognize fully these negative attitudes on the part of her speakers. This reluctance may alternatively or additionally allow feminist critics to avoid recognizing similar attitudes in themselves. The problem of how to address the relationship between poet and speaker is a vexed one for me as well, especially as I occasionally look to biographical information to clarify points I
cannot resolve in Page's poems themselves.

The only partial solution I can offer to this problem is to try to forefront the moments when I shift my focus from speaker to poet and back again, thereby inviting my own readers to evaluate these shifts. By primarily attributing material in the poems to their speakers rather than to Page, I am not simply trying to evade the question of Page's relationship to the misogynist attitudes expressed by some of her early speakers. Rather I am assuming that even if these attitudes were her own at the time, we are all capable at certain moments of attitudes that on reflection we might disavow, as Page has at times expressed various doubts about some of her early work. In identifying the negative attitudes towards femininity in this work I am not interested in attributing these beliefs to Page herself. Because some people do hold these beliefs, however, I think it is important to examine the series of moments through which her speakers progressively leave these attitudes behind.

For Paul, Page's ambivalence towards the feminine lies primarily outside of the poetry, in Page's consistent description of her writing as a passive process and in her denial that she has artistic control over her poetry. Paul regards this stance as a "cultivated female persona of passive inter-connectedness with the natural world" (127), arguing that Page is "self-consciously following in a male tradition, while simultaneously purporting a feminine modesty in her public statements" (130). Feminists, she says,

are drawn to her celebration of the empathetic female sensibility that Page sees as essential to the kind of
artist she is, but they resist her identification of this sensibility as fundamentally passive, powerless. (133) Like Killian and Relke, Paul ultimately sees a feminist purpose in Page’s poetry, albeit a subversive one that requires the poet to distance herself from femininity in order to survive in a male-dominated modernist milieu. Also like Killian and Relke, Paul drifts gradually into the gender essentialism she initially repudiates, identifying in the last line of her article the "feminine impulse" that motivates Page’s poetry: "simple delight in beauty" (134).

All three critics, in the face of evidence from Page’s writing that conflicts with their portrayal of her as feminist, and after they have themselves condemned gender essentialism, fall back on gender essentialism in order to extract a reading of the poetry that is at least pro-female. Equally importantly, none of them fully acknowledges that the poetry on which they base their analyses is from the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, or asks what happens to Page’s "feminine impulse" in the later poetry. The limitations of their assessments become apparent if we accept Page’s own assessment of her poetry: it is not feminist. Even in the poems about office-workers Page does not focus on the sexist oppression of these women. The poems record instead her speakers’ horrified response towards the women’s passivity and weakness, which either have no apparent cause, or are caused by a modern work environment equally oppressive to all employees. In Stokes’s terms, the overt objectification of the female characters in these poems partially masks a strong undercurrent of identification. In this early work as in none of Page’s later work, we can see what Sullivan calls
"the unclaimed needs" that are the "basis for the world's murderousness" (162), as the speakers all but directly accuse many of these female characters of deliberately causing their own misery.

Page's representations of female subjects fall into a definite pattern. In her novel *The Sun and The Moon*, written in the late 1930s (although not published until 1944), her narrator subjects all of the female characters to angry attacks. In the poems about office workers, first published from 1942 through 1944, female characters still appear in a negative light, but the speakers' attitude toward them is one of pity and disgust rather than outright anger. The poems about young girls, first published in 1945 and 1946, reveal more ambivalence, often juxtaposing negative attitudes towards femininity with more positive ones. "After Rain," published in 1956, and "Another Space" and "Arras," both published in 1967, are the three poems usually cited as proof that Page has successfully integrated a "feminine voice" into her poetry. In the work that follows, gender and gender-specific experience all but disappear as overt subject matter.

I suggest that rather than trying to reconstruct Page as either consciously or unconsciously feminist in being concerned with the plight of women generally, we can see in her writing a record of moments in which her speakers struggle with their personal revulsion at the negative aspects of feminine behaviour encouraged by traditional gender roles. This subject causes her speakers such pain that the only way they can talk about it is to project it onto groups of female characters. This struggle took place at a time when intellectual analyses of gender politics were
not necessarily accessible even to intellectually or artistically inclined women, although these analyses had certainly existed for more than a century, since Mary Wollstonecraft. It seems natural in retrospect that women who resented the process of gender role socialization without realizing that other women were fighting the same battle might see their difficulties as personal rather than political.

The feminist project I see arising from Page's writing is the tracing of what we might think of as a pre-feminist process in which Page's speakers gradually realize that although society promotes both negative attitudes towards women and negative behaviour in women, they can still find on a personal level a sense of self-worth as women. In the terms of ego-psychology, external reality presents the female speaker with an extremely negative and limited self-image not in accord with her inner sense of self. Instead of rebelling against external reality, a project that must have appeared self-destructive to most women before feminism became widespread, the speaker deflects the attack against her onto other women. Direct representations of gender and gendered experience disappear in Page's later poetry because she gradually identifies and focuses on the underlying and non-gendered power struggles that determine many of our perceptions of femininity and masculinity. This process is recorded in a series of early poems I will discuss in Chapter 3.

One of Paul's reservations about Relke's analysis of gender politics in Page's work is that Relke spends "undue critical effort" on The Sun and the Moon, effort that Paul believes unwarranted because Page herself was embarrassed about the novel
(115), which she published years after writing it and under a pseudonym. Killian, in her analysis of Page's treatment of gender, does not even refer to the book. In any investigation of Page's representation of gendered behaviour, however, critics ignore this novel at their peril, because it is the most extensive statement Page ever makes about the relations between men and women. As far as her reluctance to publish it goes, the fact is that she did publish it, not only under the pseudonym in 1944, but also under her own name in 1973. Her reasons for re-publishing it are not clear.

Page says now that any questions the novel raises about gender roles may have been in her subconscious when she wrote it, but that she consciously intended it as a love story about a woman who loves a man enough to sacrifice her mind for him. She now seems accepting of the weaknesses of her youthful work, observing for example that the characters are flat because she had no sense of how to develop them (Djwa 39-40), and that in any case she finds it difficult to write prose and doesn't feel she does it well (Pearce 38). In her introduction to the 1973 edition, Atwood sees beneath "the pink boudoir setting and sometimes breathless language" a "relentless allegory" that places the novel in the select category of Canadian romance, with such works as Howard O'Hagan's Tay John. As social realism the novel is "incredible," but on a psychological and allegorical level Atwood says it "makes great sense," without, however, explaining why she thinks so. Constance Rooke says that although the novel is "intensely romantic and sometimes overwritten" it provides us with Page's "authentic starting place" (170).
The protagonist is Kristin Fender, a socially isolated girl of seventeen (Sun 8) who, as her conventional father tells her suitor, is "queer." She has "never in her life before had a man take any interest in her whatsoever," and she "has never been trained to do anything," having "no more idea how to run a house than to fly," as she is "unable to cook or mend or manage money" (86-7). Undaunted, Carl Bridges, who is thirty-seven years old, financially independent, and a successful artist, insists on marrying her. Kristin was born during a lunar eclipse, which created in her a potential for empathic experience so intense that she sometimes "becomes" an object from nature, such as a rock. When she falls in love with Carl she discovers another aspect of this potential, namely that it can make her a succubus capable of annihilating Carl's artistic talent and even his identity. In the end, in order to save Carl from her terrible power, she permanently "becomes" a tree, destroying her own personality and also her marriage.

Orange reads the novel as feminist in intention, observing that the female characters forced to join a patriarchal value system suffer an eclipse of identity ("Page" 239). One of Carl's ex-girlfriends, for example, the "badly shaped" Egg, who is named after her father Egbert, cannot utter a thought that she has not "pilfered" from other people and presented as her own (Sun 43-4). Orange does not mention, however, that for these women superficiality is not just a coping mechanism, but often a goal. At a cocktail party, an older woman with "metal eyes" and a "knife-blade body" tells Kristin: "I was just like you when I was your age." She advises Kristin to overcome her shyness by "limbering up" with alcohol. The woman then telepathically "catches" a
thought of Kristin's, repeats it as her own joke, and wins the approval of the man beside her. "Make them laugh and they'll love you," she tells Kristin (10). Kristin's mother, too, has "travelled a long road to surface serenity," and in attaining this superficial calm has lost her husband's love (46), an outcome she apparently chose and in which her husband apparently played no part.

Orange doesn't acknowledge that nowhere in the book is there a positive image of a woman to counteract these negative ones, or that coupled with the narrator's revulsion at the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual deficiencies of the female characters is a revulsion towards their bodies. A special horror is reserved for women who draw attention to their bodies in any way, especially Carl's ex-girlfriends. Denise, "the wanton with the kitten's eyes," is "absurdly small, with her little rounded behind stretching her tight dress even tighter," speaking "always so quietly that it was as if her eyes spoke." Marmo, on the other hand, is "shrill, aquiline," and delights in the "absurdity" of wearing heels that put her at six two; she plays the role of enfant terrible, embarrassing any man involved with her (43-4). Any distinguishing characteristic, whether physical or behavioral, condemns these women in the eyes of the narrator.

Kristin is consistently contrasted with the other female characters. She herself never doubts her own superiority to other women, who are "silly" and satisfied with "little empty phrases" (79). For Carl she is "clean and sweet" in contrast to his ex-lovers (45), and he sees her as "what [her] mother might have been and has sacrificed for propriety" (74). But apart from her "slim
and supple and straight" body (32), her "long and straight" legs (12), and the rightness of her "every gesture, every line" (24), she is actually not different from the other women but rather is an extreme case. The other women are empty and without any identity of their own, but they borrow ready-made roles or patch together pieces of other people's identities and in so doing avoid being dangerous to themselves or others. Kristin by her own description is "like an octopus, like a cobra, like a leech, like a vampire" (99).

Apart from detailing her physical advantages over other women, the narrator represents her as "superior" to the other female characters by associating her with nature rather than with negative aspects of culture such as plastic or metal. Relke extends Orange's analysis on the basis of these associations, arguing that the novel is an early attempt by Page to work out her "ecological poetic" ("Tracing" 17). For Relke, Kristin's potential for empathy with natural objects is a positive quality, both from an ecological point of view and in her "potential for creating interpersonal bridges." The ironically named Carl Bridges immediately seeks to control her by painting her, thus "containing" her as an "art object." The tragedy of the story, says Relke, is that neither can "fully appreciate the positive power of Kristin's gift" (18). Carl intellectually understands Kristin's capacity for empathy, but is at fault for experiencing it as "an assault on his identity," and for his "conventionally masculine inability to relax his ego boundaries" and accept the possibilities of the special relationship "she creates for him." Relke pardons Kristin, on the other hand, for having "no intellectual grasp of the empathetic,"
and faults her only for "her conventionally phallic idealization of him" (19). Like Orange, who sees in the novel "generally feminist attitudes" and "sympathy" for women who have been "robbed" of "innocence and integrity" ("Page" 242), Relke sees Kristin and her empathic ability as the corrective to patriarchal culture, which devalues femininity as it devalues and destroys nature.

In fact, Carl is the only character in the novel who consistently appears in a positive light. Not only is he intelligent, talented, sociable, and attractive, he is also capable of healthy and happy relationships with men such as his father and his friend Dick, and any limitations of his relationships with women are clearly caused by the limitations of the women involved. Orange qualifies his approval of Kristin’s final sacrifice, calling it "a selfless act of love (of sorts)," and noting that it destroys herself and possibly Carl’s ability to paint as well ("Page" 242). Relke evades any judgement of the ethics of Kristin’s decision by shifting her attention at the end of her analysis onto the aesthetic merits of Page’s conclusion. Kristin has "only two alternatives" available to her given her "unreciprocated desire" for "interconnectedness": "withdrawal into the loneliness of independence and autonomy" or the "self-erasure of sustained merger with the powerful phallic other." By turning Kristin into a (phallic) tree, says Relke, Page satisfyingly unifies these apparently mutually exclusive choices (20).

But Relke’s two alternatives constitute a false dilemma arising from assumptions based in gender essentialism. She cannot question Kristin’s "unreciprocated desire for interconnectedness" because it is inherently feminine, while "independence and
"autonomy" must equal "loneliness," the fate of men who refuse to "connect" with women. Neither Relke, the young Page, nor Kristin perceive the possibility of a compromise between these limited options at the two extremes of Stokes's spectrum of relationships between self and other. Kristin's choice must be either identification or objectification.

Whether we consider Kristin's empathy to be a mental illness, as Sutherland does ("Poetry" 13-5), or an "unreciprocated desire" presumably under voluntary control, as Relke does, in the context of the novel her empathy is clearly the problem. I read the novel as an unintentional and indirect indictment of the socialization process that taught women to rely on love as their sole survival strategy. The novel is not feminist in any conventional sense, because the anger and revulsion in it are directed not at the social structures that hindered women from becoming whole and healthy people, or even at men, who in this novel play no apparent part in inventing or maintaining these structures. Instead the destruction of women's identities seems the wilful act of the women themselves, who are not only unable or unwilling to save themselves, but also cause collateral damage to the innocent men in their lives. The tragedy in this novel lies in Kristin's inability to imagine for herself a more interesting and active life, and in Carl's unhealthy attraction for a withdrawn child not yet able to cope in the adult world.

In the poems she wrote in the 1940s about office workers, Page reports on (and condemns) one of the most accessible alternatives of that time for women who might want to escape Kristin's dependence on men: low-paid drudgery in the modern office. The
primary effect of this work is similar to the effects produced by feminine role socialization on the women in *The Sun and the Moon*, none of whom works for a living. Office work does not prove an escape from social pressures to be decorative and domestic, rather both forms of oppression produce the same pattern in the female personality, that of a functional but artificial external image barely concealing an inner void. Superficially the women of "The Stenographers" are "efficient and sure as their adding machines," but "they weep in the vault," an image in which the word "vault" does double duty as an office stronghold and as an empty and well-protected inner space where valuables could be kept. Killian reads this poem as evidence of the "divided female self" in modernist poetry: the "I" in the last stanza denotes an objective observer who is not one of the stenos. Not only is the excision of the subjective voice of the stenos contrary to the goal of generating empathy with them, but ironically the objective voice of the "I" comes to resemble that of the "system" it critiques (91). For Killian, this collusion between speaker and oppressive socio-economic system is just an unfortunate byproduct of the division of personal and impersonal selves of the female modernist, a division itself produced by patriarchal power structures.

This benevolent interpretation of the impersonality of Page's early speakers may be tenable in the case of "The Stenographers," but it doesn't explain the more scathing attacks on the female characters in some of the other poems about office workers. In "Prediction Without Crystal" (1101), for example, the speaker blasts the hopes of young women that marriage will confer meaning upon their empty lives:
Oh, you girls, with your sad eyes and your visions of fortune-tellers floating in the pond of the crystal or breathing on your palms in the electric moment of seeing marriage written surely . . .

The first three stanzas evoke the dreamy disorientation of the "girls," as generally soft consonants flow unimpeded through slow, measured lines. In "The Stenographers" anapests become oppressive in their regularity, but in the first three stanzas of "Prediction" they produce a soothing effect by lengthening the gaps between stressed syllables. The "girls'" degree of self-delusion can be measured by the appearance of the fortune-teller as not a person but a reflection. A rationalist might say that the "truth" within the crystal ball is actually a reflection of the fortune-teller's personality, but for the "girls" the crystal ball subsumes the person interpreting it because only within it is "marriage written surely."

Like "The Stenographers," "Prediction Without Crystal" appears aesthetically unified in that its formal features reinforce the ideas it expresses. Whereas the rush of disconnected images undermines the apparently socialist message of the earlier poem, the imagery in "Prediction" is more consistent, unified by the concept of rooms. In the first three stanzas imagery from the fortune-teller's room prevails. These stanzas are separated from the last three by the central fourth stanza, a structure that reappears frequently in Page's later poems:

there is no private world, I tell you truly, no single room for you except the lonely room of yourselves. I can predict your futures . . .
Here, the announcement of the prediction in the fourth stanza acts as the pivot, while the last three stanzas of the speaker's dire prediction counterbalance the "girls'" delusions in the first three. The metaphorical "lonely room of yourselves" in the pivotal stanza returns in the last. The unrelated images of the prediction are linked by their surreal, nightmarish quality and by the fact that they come from the outdoors, outside the illusory safety of the rooms. But in "Prediction" the speaker's initial adoption of a superior, paternalistic tone clashes with the horrific imagery and violent diction of the last three stanzas, so that this poem, like "The Stenographers," demonstrates Ehrenzweig's precept that the modern poet's unconscious purpose must undermine the conscious one.

As most of Page's poetry employs grammatically correct sentences, the syntactical confusion in the fifth stanza signals unusual emotional intensity in the speaker. She delivers her baleful prediction in a barrage of hard alliterative consonants:

... I can predict your futures:

bandstand your bacchanals, the blackened alleys
bright for you, cock-crow your reveille
and darkness your desired and nimble dodger...

"Bandstand" and "cock-crow" at first seem to be acting as verbs in parallel with "predict," but the second and fourth phrases apparently in parallel with the first and third are definitely noun phrases based on "alleys" and "darkness." This syntactical ambiguity opens up an ambiguity of interpretation. If "bandstand" and "cock-crow" are verbs, we have to provide understood verbs to
make sense of the noun phrases, for example, "[I can make] the blackened alleys/ bright for you." This makes the stanza sound like what the speaker says it is: a prediction. If, however, we read the stanza as a sequence of noun phrases, then the speaker is no longer describing her own act of predicting, but rather describing what will be: "[the] cock-crow/ [will be] your reveille." This interpretation is darker because it sounds less like opinion and more like inevitable fact. It is supported by the furious tone of the penultimate stanza:

you’ll walk like a crow along the winter furrow
wild in a world of day and mean with terror
while hips and cheekbones squeak and totter narrow . . .

This sounds not like a prediction, but like a curse.

The violence of both imagery and alliterative patterns, for example in "cheekbones squeak," strengthen the impression that the speaker is not merely informing the "girls" of their fate, but actually wishing it on them. The appearance of rhymes and partial rhymes in the last two stanzas reinforces the sense of a ritualistic utterance: "crow," "furrow," "narrow," and "terror" in the penultimate, and "mirrors," "covers," and "lovers" in the last:

then run from newsreel, strike and strychnine street
into the room of you and die in mirrors
for click and close the camera covers lovers.

Through the last three stanzas the meter becomes increasingly iambic, driving home the inexorability of the fate awaiting the "girls."

The prediction/curse culminates in the relentlessly iambic and alliterative last line. Because they have never known themselves,
or understood the relationship between their "room" and the outside world so terrifying to them, they are doomed to "die in mirrors," their only self-knowledge caught from reflections in external sources. The love they imagine will save them from this fate will actually, like Kristin’s love, succumb to it. The word "covers" suggests partly a journalistic reporting, in that their lack of self-knowledge means their love will necessarily be of a public kind that must be verified by external evidence such as photographs. The word also suggests suppression, however, in that this limitation will eventually destroy their love, and with it the "girls’" hope for happiness.

These women, like the socialites of The Sun and the Moon, are criticized for their superficiality, but with the important difference that the speaker does not represent them as dangerous like the women in the novel, but rather as infuriating to her in their passivity and lack of insight. The class distinction between Page and the office workers she writes of could account for the less threatening nature of these women as compared to the upper middle-class women in The Sun and the Moon. The imagery in these poems is so extreme, the characterization so selective, that I suspect the speakers are actually describing their own responses to the work environment and the desire it induces to be rescued through marriage. They are projecting onto their co-workers their own terror at the thought of being trapped for life in a situation that denies them an outlet for their own intelligence or creativity. While their fear is understandable enough, it causes the speakers to lash their co-workers with the anger they are too afraid to direct at their own situations, forcing the co-workers to
pay the price for the speakers' protection of their own self-images.

To acknowledge this fear and anger, and the cause of it, would require the speakers to ask questions about their own self-images and self-esteem, questions far more personal than those asked, for example, by Auden's speaker in "The Unknown Citizen." Male workers in the capitalist system of the time were in a different position from that of the female office workers. Whereas the key to male success both economic and romantic was clearly assertiveness and ambition, the possibility of rescue through marriage tore women in two contradictory directions: if they strove against huge odds to improve their economic status through ambition and assertiveness, all social cues told them this would decrease their chances in the marriage market. I think that this paradox is the source of the terrible paralysis Page's speakers attribute to the female office workers.

In her poems about children, published later than those about the office workers, Page considers the process by which girls were initiated into this bind, and at this stage her speakers' negative view of femininity is mitigated by a more genuine sympathy than her earlier speakers show toward the adult secretaries. Her images of girls in these poems are primarily images of passivity, as in the first two stanzas of "Young Girls" (II 12):

Adolescence tumbles about in them . . . .

See them in class like porpoises
with smiles and tears
loosed from the same subterranean faucet; some
find individual adventure in
the obtuse angle, some in a phrase
that leaps like a smaller fish from a sea of words.
But most, deep in their daze, dawdle and roll;
their little breasts like wounds beneath their clothes.
The first two stanzas include twenty-five double or triple unstressed syllables in fifteen lines, the anapests and dactyls evoking the "loolloping" and "giggl[ing]" of these stenographers-in-training.
The "giggles" in the first stanza give way to "smiles and tears" in the second and "tempers and tortures" in the third, as the girls mature. The third and fourth stanzas include only nineteen double or triple unstressed syllables in sixteen lines, signifying that the mindless freedom of childhood is ending. The "springs and taps" of their own tears "set them perilously afloat:"
Not divers these--but as if the waters rose in flood making them partially amphibious
and always drowning a little and hearing bells . . .
Whereas the adult stenographers choose to live in fantasies, and thereby create the trap that immobilizes them, the girls seem to generate their own watery trap the same way they generate "breasts" and "unfamiliar blood," without any choice or intention at all.
But being "perilously afloat" is not the last trial they will endure:
. . . [one] day the shoreline wavers less,
and caught and swung on the bright hooks of their sex,
earth becomes home--their natural element.
Two shifts in syntactic construction exclude from these lines the
female subjects whose experience is described. As I mentioned in reference to "Prediction," confusing syntax generally appears in Page's poetry at moments when we might expect the expression of a strongly negative emotion. In the first clause of these lines the shore is the grammatical subject, although the clause describes the perception of the implied female subject. In the second line what should in formally correct writing be a clause is instead a dangling participial phrase modifying the still-absent females. By the last line "earth" is the grammatical subject, and the repeated pronoun "their" refers back twenty-seven lines to the word "girl" in the second line of the poem--the only direct identification of the poem's subject. These syntactical gaps mirror on a technical level the emotional gap between the casual, even optimistic-sounding tone and the actually brutal image of the girls being reeled in like fish.

Although Relke sees in the last line a "coming home to oneself once the crisis of female adolescence is negotiated," the imagery suggests no possibility of negotiation, indicating rather that the girls are dragged from one dangerous element to a "home" not chosen by them, but forced upon them. The overall effect, as Relke concedes, is a marked ambivalence toward femininity ("Mothers" 121). The poem on first encounter seems playful and even whimsical, but on further contemplation it begins to read like the fairy tale in which the mermaid gets to be human, but at the price of feeling she is walking on knives. Although Rooke reads "Young Girls" as a feminist protest against traditional feminine roles (185), in that it describes the pain caused by these roles, the speaker's refusal to identify herself with the experience she
describes suggests fear rather than anger, and fatalism rather than protest. As Laurie Ricou notes, the attitude of Page’s speakers towards childhood is that of "remote observer[s]" (90) of a child-subject who is "a presence, a vehicle representing a way of seeing, rather than an individual who has been part of the writer’s own experience" (93). The third-person perspective, the complete lack of self-reference on the part of the speaker, and the density of metaphor combine to create a point of view which seems that of an observer who has never been a child, or at any rate not a female child.

Killian argues that Page first achieves the unification of speaker with female subject in the poem "After Rain" (2 109), first published in 1956:

here, for the first time and in sharp contrast to all that has come before, Page openly claims her poetic vision as belonging to a gendered self, not as some ethereal, mystical, feminine flux of images, but concretely. (97)

In the first stanza of "After Rain" the speaker imposes upon nature the culturally produced geometrical patterns of a "woman’s wardrobe." This process is then reversed in the second stanza, which describes how the rainstorm has disrupted the (culturally produced) geometrical layout of the garden. These two opposite processes are articulated by two different speaking voices, one representative of internal, private responses, the other of external, socially shared responses. Here is the voice of the dreamer who projects culture onto nature:

The snails have made a garden of green lace:
broderie anglaise from the cabbages,
Chantilly from the choux-fleurs, tiny veils--
I see already that I lift the blind
upon a woman's wardrobe of the mind.

This voice employs frequent alliteration, as in "the garden of
green lace;" frequent double unstressed syllables, as in "broderie"
and "cabbages;" as well as rhymes such as "blind" and "mind" and
half-rhymes such as "ink" and "drunk." The other voice is more
practical and self-aware, and speaks primarily in iambics with little
alliteration or rhyme:

Such female whimsy floats about me like
a kind of tulle, a flimsy mesh,
while feet in gumboots pace the rectangles . . .

These two voices alternate in a debate that is central to ego-
psychology, that between private and public views of reality.

The more self-aware voice speaks in the iambic first three
lines of the third stanza:

I none too sober slipping in the mud
where rigged with guys of rain
the clothes-reel gauche
as the rangy skeleton of some
gaunt delicate spidery mute
is pitched as if
listening . . .

She is nudged out in the fourth by the voice of the dreamer, who
meditates on the fractal relationship between the web-shaped
"clothes-reel" and the spider's web hanging from it, unifying the
two images through the rhymed "listening" and "glistening." As
Sullivan points out, the introduction of the gardener Giovanni in the fourth stanza obliges the speaker to recognize the practical and philosophical implications of the image-making process that has "seduced" her (33):

I suffer shame in all these images.
The garden is primeval, Giovanni in soggy denim squelches by my hub, over his ruin shakes a doleful head.

His response to the chaotic scene aligns most closely with the speaker's self-aware voice, suggesting that a feminine and masculine world view are competing, and the presence of the male "other" reveals the speaker's fantasies about the scene as "feminine," in that they exclude his perspective. Half-way through the fourth stanza, however, the voice of the dreamer again pushes out the remorseful self-aware voice, describing the gardener with the dactyds of "beautiful" and "diademed" and the alliterative "wrung with rain." The self-aware voice returns in the iambic final three lines of the fourth stanza:

I find his ache exists beyond my rim and almost weep to see a broken man made subject to my whim.

Its pragmatism is now qualified, however, by the rhyming "rim" and "whim," signifying the speaker's increasing reluctance to separate her two voices.

In the final two stanzas the voices join in a kind of duet, calling for a unification of their two visions of reality:

O choir him, birds, and let him come to rest
within this beauty as one rests in love,
till pears upon the bough
encrusted with
small snails as pale as pearls
hang golden in
a heart that knows tears are a part of love.

The tension between the two voices persists at moments when the primarily iambic metre conflicts with the sentence rhythm. The iambs in the line "within this beauty as one rests in love," for example, confer a stress on "as," while the sentence rhythm calls for no stress. At the beginning of this stanza the alliterative effect is weakened by the distribution of "birds," "beauty," and "bough" over three lines, but alliteration dominates the line "small snails as pale as pearls." This small crescendo of sound effects reinforces the imagistic progressions from snails to tears, and pears to heart, as well as alerting the reader to a larger cresendo effect achieved through rhyme. This stanza has only the partial rhymes on "snails," "pale," and "pearls" as well as the internal rhyme on "heart" and "part," while the sixth builds to the ringing rhymes on "whole" and "toll," "will" and still," and "shine and "line:"

And choir me too to keep my heart a size
larger than seeing, unseduced by each
bright glimpse of beauty striking like a bell,
so that the whole may toll
its meaning shine
clear of the myriad images that still
do what I will--encumber its pure line.
The last two lines precisely link form and content by alternating metric patterns with every reference to the original two world views. The double unstressed syllables in "of the myriad images," and "do what I will" highlight every reference to the original voice of the dreamer, who to the last resists the assimilating efforts of the iambic self-aware voice that concludes the poem.

In order to unify the perspectives of the two voices, as well as unifying Giovanni's sensibility with hers, the speaker must, according to both Sullivan (34) and Rooke (190), "convert image to symbol." The process occurs in the fifth stanza, which introduces the concrete image of the pears with the snails that eat them, a private image dependent for meaning on the context of this poem. It visually parallels the image of a heart afflicted by tears, an image that is not concrete but rather symbolic, recognizable in many cultural contexts. Because it is a symbol that would be accessible to Giovanni, it has the effect of opening up the poem to include him. The beauty of these images of harmony between opposing forces such as "tears" and "love" moves the speaker to adopt a new self-discipline that will prevent her from again excluding the "other." Her celebration in the opening stanzas of complex and diverse geometrical patterns has finally evolved to the desire for a "pure line."

For Killian, "After Rain" integrates the female self into the modernist poetic voice, which is theoretically non-gendered but in practice masculine (94). She finds "disturbingly deprecatory" the tone of such phrases as "female whimsy," but she sees this as a necessary step toward Page's realization of the "depersonalization" of her "habitual image making." Giovanni is not only the subject
of the poem but is subject to it, converted by the speaker into an "aestheticized object" (97). Only by "embracing her own [feminine] subjectivity," says Killian, can the speaker "rescue the [masculine] other from objectification." For Killian, "After Rain" is the beginning of a new wholeness of vision in Page's poetry, resulting from her rejection of the falsely "genderless" voice of modernism.

I think Killian is too ready to gloss over her discomfort with the representation of femininity in this poem. The controlling image is the "wardrobe," suggesting the importance of superficial appearance, but this is not even the wardrobe of a woman leading an active, varied life. The "lace," "veils," "flimsy mesh," and "sequins" are the paraphernalia of feminine role socialization, specifically that occurring in the upper classes. Insofar as this poem validates a "feminine" voice, allowing the speaker to identify with femininity, it does so through valuing the perceptions of an upper-class employer over those of a servant. If the male "other" were of the speaker's own culture and socio-economic class, would his sensibility be so easy to sweep aside, or objectify, and then to assimilate through introjection? Killian finds "disturbing" the hiatus in Page's poetic production following "After Rain," and I suggest that this silence makes sense if we consider that the attempt by her early speakers to work through their conflicts over their own femininity does not lead to a tidy resolution. It leads in this poem to subsuming the masculine within a vision explicitly identified as feminine, which merely reverses the traditional power imbalance between the genders, rather than eliminating it. Moreover, the speaker of "After Rain" accomplishes this reversal
through introducing a power imbalance across class lines, which might remind Page’s readers that this issue of class lingers unresolved from her poetry of the 1940s.

The majority of Page’s poetry, as Killian notes, excludes specifically feminine experience (91). Besides those about the office workers and those about young girls, only a few of the early poems (up to and including the 1974 volume) refer to gender, and these generally present rather conventional juxtapositions of gender roles, without the extreme emotional tension that characterizes the poems about female subjects. In "The Flower and the Rock" (229), for example, a woman perceives a man’s pain in organic terms of "flowers" and "plants," while the man perceives it in terms of "rocks" and "swords." Similarly, in "Vegetable Island" (247), men wish to escape from the "sickly" and "debauched" flowers to the cleanliness of "rocks" and the "acid ocean."

"Another Space" (2170) (1969) and "Arras" (146) (1967), as Killian observes, both dramatize the interaction of the female self with images it has created, conflating sexuality and spirituality. "Nightmare" (192) (1954) describes through specifically feminine imagery a psychic schism in a specifically female self. All three of these poems, however, primarily address psychological experiences that are not specific to women. Because the speakers describe these experiences in terms influenced by their gender, as opposed to speaking primarily about gender, I will discuss these poems in an appropriate context in my fourth chapter. In general, the poetry published after Poems Selected and New (1974) rarely refers to femininity or to gender issues, and the occasional references seem emotionally neutral, as when Page pragmatically
corrects Mark Strand's gender-exclusive reference to "man" by adding "or woman, come to that," in her glosa "The End" (2 215) on his poem of the same name.

Why should Page's speakers have gone through this process of initially rejecting femininity and then finally coming to some kind of peace with it? In a review of Germaine Greer's book The Whole Woman, Lesley White asks how we should judge a feminist who regularly attacks women even while criticizing the society that discourages them from being "whole" people. Greer, she says, is the product of a generation in which serious-minded [women] were a mysterious minority, when the best way of distinguishing oneself intellectually was to join the men and castigate soppy females even more brutally than [did] their brothers, husbands and tutors. Underlying Greer's message of "emancipation," White detects "a note of disbelief that women could ever have let [feminine role socialization] happen to them, whatever the patriarchal bludgeoning" (White H10). In The Sun and The Moon I hear the same anger and contempt towards women that White hears in Greer's writing, with the added complication that Page's narrator, unlike Greer, does not offer any analysis of the status quo.

Consider this assessment of Page's representations of gender in the light of her acknowledgement in a recent interview that the poem "Cullen" (I 127), published in 1942, is "semi-autobiographical."

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8 Greer was born in 1939, twenty-three years after Page.
... I gave myself a male persona for some reason unknown to myself, except I was very protective of myself at that period of my life. Eager to not be associated. (Djwa 35)

"Cullen" is then a disguised account of a woman's independent and active exploration and evaluation of what the world has to offer. Not only was the young Page apparently afraid to express openly such "masculine" attitudes toward the world, but decades later Page still does not consciously contemplate her reasons for this subterfuge. If an adventurous, active, and intelligent female character required a masculine disguise, no wonder Page's early speakers express such contempt for the female subjects they are "allowed" to represent: the hapless, helpless stenographers.

How did other female modernist poets respond to their presumably similar situations? Relke outlines traditional male associations of the penis with the pen and femininity with sources of male inspiration such as the muse or Mother Nature. She sees Livesay as breaking ground for later women poets in her poem "Green Pitcher," which logically and gracefully posits the womb as creative organ ("Mothers" 116-9). The young Livesay was "mad" about female artists such as HD, Emily Dickinson, Elinor Wylie, and Katherine Mansfield (Right Hand 22). Through the 1920s and 1930s, however, Livesay felt she was "struggling alone to make a woman's voice heard," and while she admired her male contemporaries such as Raymond Knister, Earle Birney, Robert Finch, and A.M. Klein, she felt "curiously detached" from their literature and their lives (Right 19). Relke speculates that Livesay shifted her 1920s focus on feminist issues to a focus in the 1930s on Marxist issues
because she lacked a community of female poets. Relke also thinks that Livesay’s early poetry enabled Page to do what Livesay could not, namely unify feminine and working class experience in the poems about office workers, and directly focus on femininity in the poems about girls ("Mothers" 118-120). The second of these claims seems more likely to be true, as Djwa says Page did not encounter Livesay’s poetry until the fall of 1944 (personal communication).

Relke’s model of a mother-daughter relationship between the two does not, however, account for their uneven personal relationship (Givner) or for the gap between Livesay’s neutral to positive representations of women and the misogynist representations in Page’s early work. Livesay wistfully describes Page’s generation as including the first recognizable grouping of Canadian female modernists such as Miriam Waddington, Anne Wilkinson, Anne Marriott, Margaret Avison, and Phyllis Webb (Right 19). The reality for Page, though, was that in the 1940s most of the poets she knew were men, and during most of the 1950s she was out of the country.

Marianne Moore responded quite differently from either Page or Livesay to the pressures of being a female modernist poet. While nearly eliminating biographical material from her work, she promoted an elaborate public persona. Early commentators, and particularly her male modernist contemporaries, tend to accept at face value her public self-portrayal as either an overgrown child or spinsterish schoolteacher, and offer correspondingly qualified praise of her poetry. Introducing her Selected Poems in 1935, for example, Eliot side-steps the question of her "greatness" by asserting that this is one quality we cannot judge in our
contemporaries (5). He praises instead her "genuineness," which he warns, however, "the majority will call frigid." Rather than inquiring further into this aspect of her poetry, he gallantly dismisses this response as the fault of "those who can only feel in accepted ways" (9).

Another admirer of Moore's poetry, Randall Jarrell, writes in 1953 that Moore's poems have "thoughts, things, animals, sentiments, moral insights" but no "money and passion and power." For him, her strength is her moral insight, but it is the morality of a "child," "simplified into self-abnegation" (122). Both Eliot and Jarrell are curiously ready to accept what seems like a very wide gap between the limitation they see in her sensibility and the degree of respect they insist she deserves. Their acceptance of this gap may have arisen from a respect for Moore's feelings, but in retrospect this acceptance also suggests an unwillingness to pry too deeply into questions that might well have forced them into an uncomfortable examination of their own premises about what modern poetry should be.

Feminist critics now tread where male modernists feared to, often by expanding the New Critical focus on aesthetics to include biographical and social context. In an article entitled "Female Female Impersonator," Gilbert suggests that Moore self-consciously constructed her image as an eccentric spinster, just as Edna St. Vincent Millay constructed her own image as *femme fatale*. Gilbert sees both women as simultaneously giving in to, capitalizing on, and ironically challenging the roles of "poetess" offered up by the male-dominated tradition. By striking their respective poses, she says, both poets attracted a wide public and enabled themselves "to
work from the positions of fetishized femininity in which critics had placed them." Eventually, however, these poses also resulted in their marginalization not only by male critics for whom "good" poetry required an "escape from personality," but also by early second-wave feminists such as Adrienne Rich who were looking for strong and healthy female role models (31-3).

Feminist critics have also employed biographical information in studies of Bishop's use of impersonality. Bishop resented her friend Lowell's designation of her as "the best woman poet" (Goldensohn 71), and she refused to allow her work to be published in women-only anthologies (Lombardi 6). She said regretfully that because of her "era, sex, situation, education" she had written "a rather 'precious' kind of poem" (Goldensohn 70-2), suggesting that she had employed a form of self-protectiveness parallel to Moore's. Lee Edelman notes another form of self-protection on Bishop's part in her frequent insistence that her poetry does not represent "real life" but rather is "just description," suggesting that by her own assessment she paid too much attention to surface appearance. Edelman thinks these strategies have limited the appreciation of Bishop's work even by her admirers (91-3).

Apparently the question of gender identity was a wrenching one for all of these female modernists, even if their poetry does not address it directly. Any critic wishing to consider Page's published work from a biographical perspective, however, would work under constrained circumstances, as Page has always been protective of her privacy. Brazilian Journal, for example, avoids subjects both personal and political because it is based on letters she wrote to family members she did not wish "to offend or worry"
Page herself sometimes seems mystified by her own self-protectiveness, as in her comment on "Cullen" cited previously, and when she wonders in Brazilian Journal:

Strange how I rarely write of things that distress me. Why? Because I cannot bear it? Because I try to forget? (I don't succeed.) I don't even know why. (194)

Whatever the biographical background to these early poems, their speakers' struggles with issues of femininity give way in Page's later poetry to concerns equally immediate to women and men: psychological, philosophical, and spiritual explorations of identity.
CHAPTER 3

THE EGO OF THE OTHER IN THE EARLY POETRY

. . . Coming near
he hears the words their moving mouths repeat:
that nothing’s changed, that everything’s the same.
And though he cannot see because of mist
he knows it’s true--that everything’s the same.

Forever, everywhere, for him, the same.

--"Round Trip"

In the early poems describing women and girls, discussed in
Chapter 2, the intense conflict between the external world and the
id completely effaces the ego of the subject. Without the
mediating function of the ego the subject lacks any kind of
individuality. Not only do these subjects not speak for
themselves, but the speakers describe them in groups, their
personalities and lives reduced to types. In the context of these
poems, the merging of female subject and speaker in "After Rain"
appears as a sudden developmental jump, but certain other early
poems represent psychological negotiations that could have
contributed to the speaker’s uneasy reconciliation with her own
femininity in "After Rain." Page wrote the poems about girls and
women between 1942 and 1946, and during that time she also began
writing about specific individuals, in poems often referred to by critics as "psychological portraits" (see, for example, Birney 45). These individual subjects, unlike the female "types" of the other poems, do have egos that try to mediate between the id and the external world.

In 1947 both Sutherland ("The Poetry" 23) and Smith ("Reply" 18) characterize Page's poetry as Freudian, using the term in a general sense to suggest a psychological as opposed to a Marxist focus. Orange also notes Freud's presence in the early poetry, although he says Freudian "theories, solutions, and lexicons" are far from clearly represented in Page's work ("Page" 249). Page herself never mentions Freud as an influence. In 1996 Djwa asked her when she had read him, and Page replied that in the 1940s she "tried to make sense" of his ideas, but "wasn't terribly keen" on him. When Djwa suggested that some early poems such as "The Landlady" (I 97) and "Man With One Small Hand" (I 84) seem influenced by Freudian ideas, Page did not respond (44).

As Orange and Djwa say, however, several of the early poetic portraits invite readings either as poetic case histories or as allegories of some basic Freudian principles. Page may not have consciously connected the themes in these poetic portraits with Freudian ideas, just as she says she did not consciously intend to comment on gender roles in The Sun and the Moon. Her denial of any interest in Freud does not preclude the possibility that she experimented with Freudian themes in her poetry, however, as she could hardly have avoided becoming familiar with his best-known ideas, both from her attempt to read him and in the course of her self-described "intellectual awakening" through her contact with
Like the poems about girls and women, the portraits of individuals Page wrote from 1944-54 focus on psychic experience rather than on social, economic, cultural, or political factors in shaping personality. Some critics have strongly objected to this inward focus. Milton Wilson, for example, calls her poetry of the 1940s "a glass-tight but vulnerable aquarium" that provides "no poetic means of escape," and leaves him "gasping for air" (126). He bases his criticism on "The Stenographers," but adds that "even her ostensibly objective portraits are passive, self-indulgent round trips." Referring to the image of a looking-glass in an early poem, he suggests that the potential for positive development in Page's poetry lies "in the increasing transparency of this glass" (129).

Earle Birney takes a different view, that the psychological portrait is . . . only the outward cloak, in many of her poems, for an allegorical portrait, for a human pattern pregnant with the moral and intellectual dilemmas of our time. (45)

Birney does not say what "dilemmas" he sees as allegorically represented in these poems, but the claustrophobic quality of many of them arises from the entrapment of a subject within a dominant-submissive relationship. This relationship arises between individuals in the poetic "case histories" of "Only Child," published in 1946, and "Portrait of Marina," published in 1951, which detail the negative influence of a parent on a child and the effects of this influence when the child becomes an adult. That Page should publish two such similar poems five years apart
suggests a strong interest in their theme, and points to their usefulness in understanding some of her less straightforward early poems, in which the dominant-submissive relationship is to varying extents internalized into a conflict between different elements of a psyche. Just as some of Page's early speakers progress from objectifying femininity to identifying with it, so these other speakers progress from objectifying to identifying with these power struggles, whether between child and parent, or within the mind. These two developmental processes seem interconnected, because gender plays a part in many of the dominant-submissive relationships represented in these poems.

In the two early case histories the objective speakers describe conflicts between children and parents of opposite genders, whereas "Round Trip" employs allegory to consolidate this gendered conflict within one objectified character. "Reflection in a Train Window" narrows the relationship between speaker and subject by making it ambiguous, and further consolidates the internalized conflict within one personality by eliminating the gender component. Although the perplexing and uncharacteristic poems in the later suite entitled "Melanie's Nite-Book" are narrated by a semi-fictional character, they recount in the first person the rebellion of the speaker herself against the limiting influences of her parents. Finally, in the apparently autobiographical "Voyager," the speaker directly and simply describes her own problematic relationship with her father.

Freud describes the ego as the seat of anxiety, threatened by three sources of danger: the external world, the libido of the id, and the severity of the superego, which is the internalized
influence of the ego's earliest encounters with authority figures, usually the parents (Ego 46-7). As the ego is differentiated from the id, so the superego is differentiated from the ego, but it is less connected with the conscious (18). It is either extremely moral or extremely cruel, a "gathering place for death instincts" (44). Whereas Freud distinguishes the external world and the superego as separate threats to the ego, Page's early psychological portraits tend to conflate these threats, thus trapping the subjects in inner conflict. This lack of distinction between the external world and the superego's internalizations of it probably contributes to the claustrophobic quality Wilson objects to in the early poetry. But in many of Page's poetic portraits of individuals the impressions of closure and confinement are relatively superficial, and depend upon the reader's acceptance of gender role stereotypes that govern the characters' behaviour.

Ehrenzweig says the surface gestalt of a modern work of art, representing the artist's conscious purpose, appears fragmented, while the "substructure" is coherent (81-2). This pattern appears to me to be reversed in Page's psychological portraits. I would designate the apparently Freudian motifs in these poems as constituting the "surface gestalt," but these motifs play out in neat, circular patterns. The superficial coherence of these motifs, however, is undermined by another purpose I would designate as the "substructure," an understated questioning of gender role stereotypes. We can forefront this questioning by reading these poems in the light of a particularly anti-essentialist form of psychoanalytic feminism such as Jessica Benjamin develops in her article "A Desire of One's Own: Psychoanalytic Feminism and
Intersubjective Space." Benjamin identifies and challenges the gender essentialism inherent in much of the psychoanalytic tradition. Similar questioning of gender roles in Page's poetic portraits has the effect of separating external reality from the superego's perceptions of it, and suggesting possible escape routes that are not, however, evident to the characters in these poems.

Characters dominated by their superegos appear in Page's poetry as insubstantial in various ways, suggesting that they are too influenced by their inner reality to be fully present in the external world. The boy in "Only Child" (I 75), for example, is "pale" from some unspecified "early conflict." We might first assume this to be a conflict between his parents which has resulted in the otherwise unexplained absence of his father. From a Freudian point of view, however, the crucial early conflict for a boy is that between his pre-oedipal attachment to his mother and his "first and most important" ego identification with the father (Ego 21). Page complicates the situation for the boy in this poem, by confusing the conventional imagery for gender roles that is so prevalent in much of her other early poetry: as Killian notes, the mother in "Only Child" is associated with hardness and reason, the boy with fluidity and emotion (94). The boy cannot objectify his mother as he needs to in order to get through the oedipal phase, because of her determination to identify with him, because his father is not there for him to identify with, and because his mother incorporates the "masculine" qualities that according to convention he would seek in his father.

During his childhood, he prefers the pre-oedipal terrain of the id, only hazily aware of the outside world his underdeveloped
ego cannot adequately process:

and when he woke from those long weeping slumbers she was there

and the air about them--hers and his--sometimes a comfort to him, like a quilt, but more often than not a fear.

In the first two stanzas the soft consonants and long sequences of modifying phrases evoke the boy’s preference for dreaming and sleeping over activity. His mother’s sensibility, on the other hand, is expressed in generally shorter sentences with more prosaic diction and harder consonants:

Then they would plan another walk, a long adventure in the country, for her sake--in search of birds. Perhaps they’d find the blue heron today, for sure the kittiwake.

The clipped rhymes on "sake," "kittiwake," and "lake" in the next stanza emphasize the mother’s purposeful activity and common-sense view of the world.

Initially we sympathize with the boy’s desire for independence from a parent who seems overly involved in his life. Ricou notes in the following lines the "studied, almost strained, syntax" (92) evoking the boy’s resistance to his mother’s objectification of birds:

Birds were his element like air and not her words for them--making them statues setting them apart, nor were they lots of little facts and details like a book.
Here the phrase "not/ her words for them" should be a subject complement in parallel with "his element," but also reads as a compounded object of the preposition "like." This ambiguity further blurs the already ambiguous function of the following participial phrases, which could modify either "her" or her "words." The connection between the "facts and details" and the "book" is similarly ambiguous; in formal English the phrase would be "like [those in] a book." The syntax seems strained because it forces ideas together without clarifying the relationships among them, suggesting the logical patterns of an upset child, along the lines of "they'll be sorry when I'm dead. . . ."

Brian Bartlett sees a more general problem in the boy's reasoning, in that his consistent perception of birds as "soft," "gentle," and "shy" reveals a view of nature that is "passive," "narrow," and "sentimental." Bartlett suggests that the boy uses nature as "mother substitute," a "surrogate nest or womb" (95):

Rather would he lie in the grass, the deep grass of the island
close to the gulls' nests, knowing
these things he loved and needed by his hand,
untouched and hardly seen but deeply understood.
Or sail among them through a wet wind feeling
their wings within his blood.

The imagery in these lines of nesting, of wetness, and of unconscious connection with one's surroundings suggests that, ironically, the boy seems to be trying to escape his mother by returning to the womb, a circular pattern Wilson might designate as a "round trip" (129).
Accompanying the motif of the mother’s hardness and the boy’s softness is the equally consistent association of the mother with surfaces and the boy with depths. Hers is the shared world of "names," "facts," and "pictures" that show the birds "flat and coloured on a painted land," while he feels the birds "near his heart." Unable to negotiate the conflict between these polarities, he manages to objectify his mother only through splitting off his aggression towards her and expressing it in the pre-genital, sadistic imagery of his dream (Gen. Intro. 287). Freud says that all dreams are wish fulfillments (Gen. Intro. 195), and this one resolves the dichotomies of hardness and softness and surface and centre that govern the metaphorical structure of the poem, as well as the oedipal tensions underlying these dichotomies.

The birds are "caresses" at first, in keeping with the "softness" and "gentleness" that had attracted him to them as a child, but in the fifth line of the penultimate stanza the soft consonants and relaxed rhythms evoking his escapist tendencies disappear, replaced by plosives (/p/, /t/, and /k/) and precise diction suggesting controlled rage:

he caught them all and snapped and wrung their necks brittle as little sticks.

Then through the bald, unfeathered air and coldly, as a man would walk against a metal backdrop, he bore down on her and placed them in her wide maternal lap and accurately said their names aloud:
woodpecker, sparrow, meadowlark, nuthatch.

In killing the birds he renders the world a hard, cold, superficial place of metal backdrops rather than natural landscapes, in accordance with his perception of his mother's wishes. He has also, however, destroyed the central symbols of his surrogate womb and separated himself from the "wide maternal lap."

But in the poem the crisis of the dream does not lead to resolution. Ricou notes that the perspective in the poem is that of an adult observer until the end, which "recreates the dream as it occurred in the [son's] mind" (92), leaving the reader to interpret the significance of the dream without suggesting that the son will do so. The poem describes a problem that evolves in form throughout the son's life without diminishing in intensity. The circular development of the theme, from the "long weeping slumbers" of his childhood to the unsettling but censored content of his adult dream, reflects the degree to which his ego remains trapped between his desire to escape into the id and his parent/superego's refusal to let him do so.

While Bartlett notes that the mother's scientific activity undermines the traditional association of naming and categorizing with masculine exploitation and domination of nature (93), he does not point out that the boy's sensibility coincides with the ideal in essentialist feminism of what Relke calls "integrity and interconnectedness" with nature ("Tracing" 28). In reversing the traditional gender assignment of these sensibilities, Page seems to be, perhaps unconsciously, experimenting with loosening the connections between gender and behaviour. "Portrait of Marina" (1972), first published in 1951, continues this experiment by
reversing the genders of the earlier parent and child, describing a daughter who is unable to identify with her father because of his determination to objectify her. "Portrait" differs technically from the depiction in "Only Child" because of its much denser metaphoric structure and more pronounced mimetic effects. Marina's father names her for the sea that obsesses him, and as Bartlett observes, the name restricts her identity to the roles her father chooses for her (100), trapping her first as a symbol of his youthful experience of the sea, and then as assistant in his attempt to contain and control "the ocean of his memory" by sewing it in a needlepoint image. As in "Only Child" both the form and the imagery of the poem convey the fear and pain of someone imprisoned within a psychological system she does not understand.

The poem begins with the sentence "Far out the sea has never moved," and ends with another image of still water "offshore full fathom five." In between are images of moving water associated with life, so that all of the dynamism in the poem is contained between the two images of stasis, as Marina's life is contained within the psychological boundaries established by her father. Forty-eight of the poem's sixty-six lines are ten syllables long, the exceptions occurring in apparently random patterns, sometimes as single anomalies, sometimes in clusters of two to five lines. The imperfect regularity of line length coupled with the predominance of iambic feet replicates the mesmerizing effect of ocean waves, tending to lull the reader into believing Marina's perception of her world by replicating the hypnotic effect her father seems to exert on her.

For her father, the idea of the ocean is not mesmerizing, but
rather inseparable from his libido, the life energy that enabled
him to become skipper of a four-master. His wish that Marina be a
"water woman, rich with bells," links her to the sea nymphs of
Ariel’s song in The Tempest, the sensual imagery of which in turn
suggests a link between the "nymphs" and their more overtly sexual
cousins the sirens, who use music to lure sailors to their death.
The speaker only hints at the possible inappropriateness of the
father’s hopes for his infant daughter, emphasizing instead the
romanticism with which he views his own experience. As Geoffrey
Durrant notes, alliterative phrases such as "smack of salt" evoke
the Old English tradition of adventure poems such as "The Seafarer"
(175).

But because the sea imagery in Marina’s life comes to her not
through her own experience but instead mediated by her father’s
imagination, she derives from it not the energy of the sea, but
instead the characteristics of water, its lack of form and colour.
She is shaped by him as water is shaped by a container: "his
call/fret[s] her more than waves." The verb "fret" means
"torment," but the noun "fret" refers to the ridges on the neck of
a stringed instrument such as a guitar, ridges that determine which
musical frequencies can be produced. We can understand the verb in
the poem to carry the double meaning of the father creating "frets"
in his daughter’s behaviour. The waves correspond visually with
the series of frets on a musical instrument and physically with the
sounds produced, so that the tight abrupt line of one-syllable
words contains an expanding pattern of potential associations, as
the father’s limited recognition of Marina contains her potential
as a person.
She is not just "pale" like the "Only Child," but even "transparent:"

She walked forever antlered with migraines
her pain forever putting forth new shoots
until her strange unlovely head became
a kind of candelabra--delicate--
where all her tears were perilously hung
and caught the light as waves that catch the sun.

Durrant observes that the "pin-pricking" of alliterative plosives in these lines evokes the hypersensitivity to light and sound associated with migraines (175). Whereas the "Only Child" splits off his aggression towards his domineering parent and expresses it by regressing to pre-genital perversion, Marina represses her aggression, creating a neurosis (Gen. Intro. 300-1). The "antlers" that should symbolize sexuality and fertility and the "shoots" that should symbolize new life grow not outward into the world as these organic forms would, but instead inside her head. Finally, these distortions of normal vitality are no longer even organic, but inverted into the inorganic "candelabra," a manufactured product of civilized society, as Freud says neurosis is.

The sex instinct has become in Marina indistinguishable from the death instinct, and the process of this distortion is contained between, and by implication caused by, similes comparing it to "waves," reiterations of her identification with the sea. Freud also describes a convergence in the opposing instincts toward life and death: both are ultimately conservative, leading us through different routes toward an archaic pre-life state. A healthy life requires "conflict and compromise" between them, not, as in
perversion or neurosis, an artificially induced resolution of the two (Ego 30).

The usefulness of Freudian ideas in understanding Marina’s situation emerges as Page makes it clear that the father’s influence endures far beyond the stage when he could have enforced his demands physically. The adult Marina has internalized the conflict between her ego and his, and loses the ability to distinguish between her father and her own superego. By the time he makes his needlepoint "portrait" of the sea, the youthful libido implied by his mastery of a sea "harsh with sea serpents" has been reduced to the "furious needle" with which he cannot sew unless she threads it, an apparent reference to sexual impotence. Finally he becomes "docile as a child," a "fearful salty man." Two possible readings of the poem pivot around the ambiguous word "fearful." Does it mean he is terrible, as Page later uses the word in the phrase "Father’s Fearful Sea," or does it mean that he is afraid? If the former, then within the context of the poem Marina deserves our sympathy as the victim of a controlling parent. If, however, she remains afraid of him even after he has become afraid himself, then we see her as someone who has if not created then certainly perpetuated her own predicament.

An endless series of mirrors traps and exhausts Marina’s courage and self-esteem through constant reflection and deflection, until finally "in her head/ too many mirrors dizzied her and broke." As Rooke concludes, Marina is destroyed by a lack of immediate experience of reality (183). Hypnotized and demoralized by the mirroring possibility of the still, far-off water of her father’s memory, she misses her chance to experience the sea where
it is dynamic and nourishing, at the shore where it resembles "gelatine" and "aspic." The first three lines of this penultimate stanza strive to break out of the predominately iambic pattern of the rest of the poem, echoing the struggle between Marina’s ego and superego:

But where the wave breaks, where it rises green
turns into gelatine, becomes a glass
simply for seeing stones through, runs across
the coloured pebbles of the shore
and makes an aspic of them . . .

Dactyls and double stresses dominate the beginnings of the first three lines, suggesting the force of a breaking wave which then recedes. By the fourth line the iambs are re-established, the rhythmic disruption, like Marina’s struggling ego, "suck[ed] back/in foam and undertow."

This poem links sexuality with the quest to achieve direct perception of the world. Marina is a "spinster," a word which suggests not only an unmarried state but also a lack of sexual experience. Her father’s sea with its masculine imagery of "serpents" and "drowning men" holds for her "no spiral of a shell/for her descent to dreams," an image conflating female sexuality with access to the id. For Freud also, sexuality is linked with the id. Sexual repression thus cuts one off from vital functions of the unconscious such as complex problem-solving and even self-criticism (Ego 16), both skills Marina lacks.

Freud observes that a sufficiently strong superego may force psychoanalytic patients to resist treatment and choose to continue suffering (Ego 39), which could account for Marina’s situation.
The final three words of the poem, from Ariel’s song (I.ii. 397-405), eerily and ambiguously evoke the death instincts governing her superego:

For her the sea was Father’s Fearful Sea

... And where it moved in shallows it was more imminently a danger, more alive than where it lay offshore full fathom five.

Clearly, the direct perceptions and experiences of life that are associated with the shallows are more dangerous for Marina than the death associated with deep water.

We cannot tell whether death is simply the lesser of two fears, however, or whether she actually desires it, as suggested by the smooth iambic pentameter and soft consonants reminiscent of Keats’ line: "to cease upon the midnight with no pain." Neither can we tell whether it is her own death she does not fear, or her father’s, as suggested by the reference to Ariel’s song, or perhaps both, since she has so completely internalized his influence over her. Equally, we cannot tell whether it is literal death she does not fear, or perhaps the apparent but false death of Alonso. Ariel’s account of the transformation of Alonso’s body to pearls and coral proves a metaphor for Alonso’s actual "sea change" from a tyrant to a father who finally asks forgiveness from his "child," his daughter-in-law Miranda (The Tempest V.i. 199). The similarity between the names "Miranda" and "Marina" suggests that Marina wishes a similar "sea change" for her own father, but Page’s psychological "portrait" of Marina equally suggests that the death she does not fear could change her into "something rich and
strange," echoing her father's original wish for her in naming her. The end of the poem thus returns us to the beginning, suggesting that both father and daughter wish the same thing for Marina, but that the very strength of his wish prevents her from being able to realize it.

This irony is intensified by the speaker's perspective on this story of battling egos, which is related by "a dimity/ young inland housewife," evidently the great-granddaughter of a brother of Marina's, in whose home the needlepoint picture hangs. As Diane Schoemperlen observes, each successive generation of the family is further removed from the immediacy of the father's experience of the sea (9), so that four generations later the symbols of time, life, and adventure collected from exotic lands by Marina's father are contained and neutralized within a domestic scene. From this perspective we see the wearing down of the father's libido through time, distance, and genetic dilution. Dimity is a cotton fabric woven with raised stripes or checks (Oxford), suggesting a functional and decorative but artistically debased version of the needlepoint portrait. The term also sounds like the word "dimwit," suggesting the degeneration of the family.

Namjoshi comments that "Only Child" and "Portrait of Marina" seem different from Page's other poems about "victims," in which the speaker apparently sympathizes with the victims. In these two poems, Page identifies with the children (23). A biographical interpretation of the relationship between the two might suggest that the earlier poem is a disguised account of the distorted psychological development of a girl, with the gender attributes of both parents conflated into the mother. We could read "Only Child"
as another case of Page dissociating herself from her own poem by disguising its female protagonist as a male, as she does in "Cullen." "Portrait" would then be a more self-revelatory treatment of the same theme, the density of metaphor and mimetic effects replacing the earlier gender switch as a buffer to distract both poet and reader from the painful experiences described in the poem. But attempts to read the later poem as describing Page's own relationship with her father run up against the same confusion of gender-related traits as in the earlier poem. Needlepoint, the medium through which the elderly father both expresses himself and oppresses his daughter, is strongly associated with women, so much so that Rooke assumes the needlework is Marina's (182), although Page tells us in the third line the "portrait" is the work of the "antique skipper."

In both "Portrait of Marina" and "Only Child," Page seems indifferent to readers' expectations of gendered behaviour, not emphasizing the uncharacteristic behaviours of the parent in each poem, but rather presenting them as incidental, details fleshing out figures that would otherwise be two-dimensional. I think that in these poems Page is exploring a concept of the self that lies deeper than the relatively superficial connections between behaviour and gender. The psychological depth of this vision of the self is suggested by the fact that she can approach it through completely different metaphors: in "Only Child" the central metaphor is the opposition between superficial hardness and underlying softness, whereas in "Marina" the central metaphor is of control through containment.

Taken together, the two poems seem to characterize early
childhood development the way relational psychoanalysts such as Jessica Benjamin characterize it, as the beginning of a lifelong negotiation of the boundary between a self and an "other," in which any distinctions between female and male negotiations are caused by socially and culturally determined forces and perceptions rather than by inherent differences between female and male personalities. Traits such as passivity and activity are not determined by gender, but are learned from early infancy, initially through divisions of labour in parenting. When the mother is the primary caregiver, children associate her with stability, security and immanence, whereas the father represents the excitement and challenge of the world beyond the home, and the potential for transcendence ("A Desire" 85-6).

Benjamin argues that the broader cultural tendency to view male experience as normal causes even psychoanalytic feminists, such as Juliet Mitchell and Lacanian feminists, to emphasize the masculine experience of the oedipal conflict at the cost of failing to articulate an equally clear account of female psychological development. Benjamin believes that both sons and daughters want to identify with both parents, and that they therefore each undergo reciprocal developmental processes. Sons are drawn to the security and stability represented by their mothers, but are deterred from this identification by cultural demands to be like their fathers. Daughters are drawn to the excitement and dynamism offered by their fathers, but are deterred from this identification by their realization that society has assigned them the less valued role of their mothers ("A Desire" 80-89).

For Benjamin, distinctions between male and female behaviour
arise from the culturally induced rift between maternal and sexual roles, which causes both sons and daughters to associate sexual desire with masculinity. This rift is at the root of the differences between Page's two accounts of childhood psychic development. Although the genders of the parents are to a certain extent conflated in these poems, the mother in "Only Child" is desexualized, while Marina's father is governed by his libido. The effects on the two children are quite different. However unsatisfying his private life may be, the son can thrive in the external world as a "noted naturalist," because he can objectify his mother in a dream without coming into conflict with norms of masculine behaviour.

Benjamin says the psychoanalytic tradition holds that the boy has one object, his mother, while the girl has two, both her parents. Because the girl doesn't want to identify with her desexualized, disempowered mother, however, and is discouraged by her culture from identifying with her father, it is just as accurate to say the boy has two objects and the girl none at all ("A Desire" 89). In Page's poem Marina certainly loses both ways, because she cannot even unconsciously express her anger at her father, but instead must internalize it. She is therefore unable to achieve satisfaction in either public or private life.

Whereas "Only Child" and "Portrait of Marina" objectively describe relationships between parents and children, "Round Trip" (I 30), first published in 1945, represents through allegory the effects of gender role conditioning within a single personality. Here the main character has internalized parental influences such as those described in the case studies, to such an extent that
except in one reference to his childhood home the parents are absent from the poem. The "girl" evidently represents an aspect of the traveller's psyche that he wishes to reject. Each individual reference to her leaves open the possibility that she could be a separate person, for example the traveller "arranges his long pressed legs away from the aisle," which suggests that he occupies the aisle seat and that "the girl inside" is a person occupying the "inside" seat. She is "afraid of adventure" and "trembles against his wrought-iron ribs like paper," which could describe either a person huddled close to him for protection, or his own heart beating too fast. She is consistently negative and fearful, but because her fear fluctuates with his own mental state, by the end of the poem we realize "she" is a split-off aspect of his personality.

Superficially, the traveller resembles the "Only Child" and Marina. He is "white," "pale," and generally lacking in energy, but he has also taken on the main personality traits of the domineering parents in the two other poems. The traveller prizes superficial order as does the only child's mother, and shares her willingness--at least from her son's point of view--to sacrifice deeper and more meaningful experience in order to preserve her sense of control. So intense is the traveller's desire for order that it slips effortlessly into sadistic imagery:

He waves through the window a last farewell,
his pale
sigh of a hand caressing the delicate pane
blots out the faces one by one as though
he were snuffing candle flames.
The word "caressing" and the action of "snuffing" out the faces recalls the son's dream in "Only Child." The traveller is so self-absorbed that the people around him do not seem real, and his disregard for other people mirrors his disregard for the suffering part of himself, the weeping "girl." This internal relationship resembles the relationship between father and daughter in "Portrait of Marina." But although the traveller shares the negative personality traits of the parents in the other two poems, he does not share their positive traits, neither the mother's active curiosity about the world around her nor the father's strong libido.

From a Freudian perspective, we could read "him" as allegorically representing the traveller's domineering superego, while the "girl" is the ego, her gender a remnant of the "constitutional bisexuality" of early childhood (Ego 21). His fear that other people might discover the "ill-drawn map" he tries to conceal verges on paranoia, and Freud maintains that paranoia invariably arises from an attempt to subdue powerful homosexual tendencies (Gen. Intro. 270). If we read the poem from the perspective of Benjamin's psychoanalytic feminism, however, the gender and sexual orientation of the traveller are irrelevant. What is significant is that Page has chosen to represent the psychological split in terms of traditional conceptions of gender, between the masculine aspect of the personality that yearns for autonomy and transcendence, and the feminine aspect trapped in dependence and immanence (79). From a Freudian point of view, the poem reads as a case description of a man hampered by his own psychological conflict, whereas viewed from Benjamin's perspective
it describes the psychic damage inflicted on any personality through the cultural opposition between "masculinity" and "femininity," and the traditional devaluing of the "feminine" side of this dichotomy (91).

As in many of Page's poems throughout her career, eyes mediate between external and internal reality. Because the traveller's ego is so underdeveloped, external observers see no such mediator, but only "the bare/ buttonholes his pallid eyes had cut." He tries to fill this emptiness with the "acid drops of the poplars" and "the perpetual great-god-green upending marshes." In suddenly appearing to him with such hallucinogenic intensity the scenery "dilates the pupil's I." Here is the potential for a breakthrough for the traveller, a moment of mind-expanding experience succinctly evoked through the multiple possibilities of interpretation arising from the double meaning of "pupil" and the play on "I" and "eye." But even in this new intensity of perception something is missing. He lacks an "I" that can effectively integrate the information from his "eye:" even a lifeless doll has a more effective internal mechanism guiding the action of its eye.

The traveller has only one chance to draw aside the "curtain" and discover the "hero," the "I" that could perceive what is "hidden" in the "changing country:"

A white house, stark with the memory of home,
jumps from the unseen field--an ace in his face--
and slips back swiftly in the indolent pack.
(He feels the girl's long-fingered hands like tears,
feels the contortions of her weeping face.)
Here, the visual cue of the house resembling his childhood home
appears at the moment when his mind is unusually open to new possibilities, but in Freudian terms his traumatized ego is incapable of combatting the superego's "moral" directive to continue suffering (Ego 39). The traveller hears this directive in the voice of a surgeon he remembers telling him that travelling is "a boomerang business" which "return[s] you to yourself," in other words that his attempt to experience something new and possibly "miraculous" was doomed from the start. Significantly, the superego, source of both religious and secular authority (Ego 27), has fixed not on the advice of a spiritual leader or psychiatrist, but rather on that of a surgeon, certainly a secular authority, but in this case pronouncing on a subject on which he has no professional authority.

His opportunity missed, only in dreams will the traveller be free to explore . . . the place

where everything is foreign:

the orange groves and the quick

walk of the women

which fit together like glass arithmetic.

He does not recognize the similarities between the dream-world he desires and the external world he fears. "Nothing [is] permanent" in the dream-world, which is precisely the instability and dynamism he resists so strenuously when he encounters it in the external world. The "purple fulminating smoke" of the dream resembles the real-life sand that "seeps," "crawls," and "spreads" into his teeth, nails, and even his heart, in that both smoke and sand foil the superego's attempt to maintain clear distinctions between
different objects (Ego 24-6). Awake he perceives the real-life landscape as sterile, supporting only "anaemic weeds," but his dream has also ended in sterility as "diamonds [replaced] his eyes."

He longs for the superficial order and imperviousness of his appearance to extend through his whole being, a degree of order possible only in death:

To be caught in a glacier, he thinks, to be mint in the heart of an ice cube, to be contained in anything smooth, to touch a hardwood floor in Iceland.

Instead of this solidity and structure, however, he finds himself in a mist in which things are "colourless," "shapeless," and barely discernable. Ironically, this lack of structure is another form of order, but one which denies him the definition and certainty he desires, substituting instead infinite uncertainty.

From the point of view of Benjamin’s anti-essentialist feminism, the subject’s masculinity and our own assumptions about that cultural construction veil the solution to his problem, not only for him but for the reader. The "hero" he needs to rescue him from his impasse is actually the "girl" burdened with his projected fear and weakness. She appears to him as the exotic objects in his dream, as the women whose "quick walk" must somehow be integrated into all of his other experience. The more eroticized "silver girls on silver stilts" call to him in his "turret," an appeal that takes place on a level safely above the earthiness of sex. Benjamin might locate the traveller’s problem in the bias caused by the Western ideal of the autonomous individual, strongly connected
with masculinity, a bias that causes many people to equate interdependent social relations with dependence. This ideal of autonomy denies any degree of dependency, and therefore requires that the object, which cannot in reality be completely separate from the subject, be possessed and controlled (80). For the traveller to feel autonomous, he must assimilate and control the elusive feminine other of his dreams in the form of the "girl."

But from Benjamin's point of view the passive and objectified "girl" in this poem also contributes to the traveller's problem, by acquiescing in a quest that leads him away from instead of toward connection with the people in his life. Benjamin points (as does Sullivan) to Simone de Beauvoir as an example of a feminist who was similarly reluctant to abandon her idealization of the masculine struggle for transcendence (79-80). For Benjamin, power imbalances between the genders are not caused by this ideal of transcendence, but rather the culturally determined dominant-submissive relationship between the genders gives rise to the ideal of transcendence (81).

Whereas "Only Child," "Portrait of Marina," and "Round Trip" represent various permutations of the gendered relationship between transcendence and immanence, "Reflection in a Train Window" (II 52), first published in 1954, focuses on the manifestation of this relationship within the female psyche. The three poems I have just discussed are third-person narratives, about apparently "real" individuals distinct from the speaker and by extension from Page herself. "Reflection in a Train Window" blurs these distinctions. Freake assumes that the speaker is a second passenger, and that the "unseeing eyes" belong to the passenger who is reflected (101).
Schoemperlen also thinks that the speaker is observing someone else, a woman who represents "all the nameless faces" around us, marked as a martyr because she is unreal to those who do not care enough to understand her (3). The emotional distance between speaker and reflection supports these assumptions, but Page’s precision in working out the physical details of the conceit invites an equally precise reading of the physical situation of the poem.

In the last four lines the speaker’s perspective zooms in sharply from an objectified view of generalized human suffering to an intimate "close-up" of an individual in pain. Like the crying girl in "Round Trip," the reflection is powerless to speak or even to see, able to communicate her distress only through the slight bodily movements associated with silent weeping. The soundlessness and visual subtlety of the suffering reflected in the window would require that the speaker be in close physical proximity to the reflection in order to observe this suffering, but any external observer at such close range would surely interrupt the meditations of the reflected woman. As Trehearne speculates (102), the speaker seems to be describing her own reflection. This possible merging of female speaker and subject comes just two years before the explicit merging in "After Rain."

"Reflection" is organized around the physical and symbolic possibilities arising from a reflection in a train window at night, when the inside of the train is lit. Freake points out that, except for two short lines emphasizing the insubstantiality of the reflection, the poem is a half-rhymed sonnet, connected through form, content, and emotional quality with Donne’s Holy Sonnets.
Donne's sonnets are about separation from God, while Page's sonnet is about separation from the self, but both separations cause emotional responses ranging from "muted ecstasy" to pain (100).

In "Reflection," the speaker never refers to the person whose reflection she describes, and she introduces the reflection itself as a "woman." The weak expletive "there is" removes it from the subject position of the sentence, further distancing it both from the figure that produces it and from the speaker. This "transparent" woman shares the insubstantiality of the "Only Child," Marina, and the traveller in "Round Trip," "floating" unattached to her surroundings or to any other people. She yearns for the social and spiritual connections represented by the passing Christmas wreaths that momentarily confer upon her the illusion of intellectual, physical, and emotional health, as they "shine now in eye and now in hair, in heart."

Two similes at the end of the first stanza suggest the particular psychological dynamic affecting her. She is "like a saint with visions," a simile that reduces the external world to a projection of her unconscious. At the same time the objects passing behind her are "stigmata/ marking her like a martyr," a comparison that reduces the external world to a role as the source of her pain. This 180-degree shift in attitude toward external reality succinctly incorporates the central paradox in Buddhist thought, that all pain is caused by desire. The speaker, however, shows no recognition of any connection between the concepts of sainthood and martyrdom, and her apparently unconscious linking of extreme morality and images of torture links her with the superego, unaware that she, rather than the outside world, is the immediate
cause of the ego's pain.

The primarily iambic meter of the first stanza opens out in the second with the increased frequency of dactyls in the first, third, and fourth lines, evoking what Freake describes as "muted ecstasy:"

Merged with a background of mosaic she drifts through tenement transoms, independent stars, while in between her and herself the sharp frost crystals prick the pane with thorns.

The increased alliteration in these lines relative to that in the first stanza confers upon them a ritualistic quality, heightening our sense of the symbolism inherent in their imagery. Passive and without individual identity, the reflection/ego is "merged" with a "mosaic" external reality in which nothing else has any particular identity either, "tenement transoms" and "independent stars" being of equal significance and value. The allegorical possibility of the relationship between passenger and reflection is implied in the first stanza and confirmed in the last two lines of the second.

The word "pane" recalls its homonym "pain," suggesting that the pain caused by the schism in the self is itself injured, producing what we might think of as "meta-pain" associated through the image of the "thorns" with the suffering of Christ, a suffering not of one individual and limited in time and place, but universal to all Christians. At the same time the word "pane" calls attention to the physical object which on the one hand enables the superego to perceive the suffering of the ego, but paradoxically is also the cause of the separation between the woman and her
reflection, since the reflection could not exist without the pane. The frost crystals, an agent of nature, attack the pane/pain of the psychological conflict that Freud says is caused by civilization (Civilization 33), represented by the manufactured glass, the moving train, and the artificial lights that have produced the reflected images. At the same time, however, as Freake notes, the frost crystals will eventually obliterate the reflection, completing the separation of "her" from "herself" (101).

The structure of the poem reiterates the central conceit of reflection, as the concepts of sainthood and martyrdom introduced in the first stanza appear once more in the last, but less overtly. It is as if the encroaching frost, in gradually obscuring the reflected image, also allows the superego to resume its habitually complete domination of the ego:

She is without substance, ectoplasmic, still,
is haloed with the reading lamps of strangers
while brass and brick pass through her.

Yet she stirs
to some soft soundless grieving and tears well
in her unseeing eyes and from the sill
her trembling image falls, rises and falls.

The superego neutrally observes the other-worldly qualities connecting the reflection with sainthood, unmoved by the impression of its martyrdom by "brass and brick." The poem ends by withdrawing from the abstractions of the conceit, returning to the impression created in the first line that the image is an actual woman. The repeated "s" sounds approximate the quick intakes of air during weeping, and evoke the experience of riding in a vehicle
in which the ambient sounds muffle all speech except sibilants.

As in "Only Child," "Portrait of Marina," and "Round Trip," the thematic structure of "Reflection" is circular, emphasizing the sense of entrapment experienced by the main character. As in the other three poems, this entrapment depends on the conflation of the external world with the superego's perception of it. This poem represents the same conflict between superego and ego as do the others, but without any reference either direct or indirect to the gender dualism present in the others. It is a powerful, subjective statement of the problem Benjamin identifies in her own brand of anti-essentialist feminism. Benjamin concedes the logic of Juliet Mitchell's assertion that only by acknowledging the symbolic power of the phallus can we understand the negativity of women's condition (J. Mitchell xii). Lacking a positive symbol of their own desire, says Benjamin, condemns women to seeking the ideal love that alone can confer upon them the power of the phallus, but the price of attaining this ideal love is submission (80). The ideal love in this poem is the saint-like quality of the reflection, its martyrdom the price.

The central tension in this poem is between the immanence desired by the reflection and the transcendence forced upon it by the speaker. Like Kristin in The Sun and the Moon, the ego/reflection in Page's poem must submit to martyrdom in order to fulfill the superego's desire for saint-like detachment from the external world. Benjamin contrasts this submission with the masculine model of sainthood and martyrdom, which involves actively pursuing an ideal (80), as the traveller in "Round Trip" actively undertakes his trip. The obscuring of the window in "Reflections"
is the opposite process to the increasing transparency of the looking-glass that Wilson calls for in Page's poetry, and in Benjamin's terms clearing this window would require an understanding of the process through which women's desire is transformed into submission (80).

From the male character in "Only Child" (1946) to the female character in "Portrait of Marina," (1951), and from the male character in "Round Trip" (1945) to the female character who could be the speaker in "Reflection in a Train Window" (1954), Page gradually closes the gap between her speakers and their subjects. Almost all of the poetry suggestive of Freudian thought was published by 1954, with the notable exception of a strange suite of poems first published in 1976 under the title "Melanie's Nite-Book" (I 145). The suite is written in the first person, and represents the speaker's own family relationships. This topic is otherwise absent from Page's published oeuvre except in the overtly autobiographical poems "Voyager," also first published in 1976, and "The First Part," first published in 1981.

An ambivalent introductory "Note" first distances Page, or at any rate a preliminary speaker, from the material in the suite, and then invites a biographical reading:

I am not Melanie.
We do not know one another.
Yet her poems found among my papers paint
the underside of something I have known-
a parallel existence in a key
significantly lower.

The note is almost a concrete poem in itself, its symmetry of line
lengths mirroring the ambiguity of its content. The group of poems following it would be difficult to comprehend without employing Freudian ideas as well as psychoanalytic feminism, which reveal within the poetry a partially straightforward and partially symbolically encoded account of past psychological conflicts. The difficulty of "Melanie's Nite-Book" also prompts me to turn to biographical information for clues as to its meaning. This set of poems veers closer to a confessional voice than any of Page's other published poetry, and it remains partially inaccessible even after we consider it in the light of her public statements about her life.

The suite opens with four poems that evoke with varying degrees of realism "Melanie's" relationship with her mother, sister, father, and brother. In a 1996 interview, Page elaborates on the relationship between this set of poems and her own life:

In "Melanie's Nite-Book" there's far more fiction than truth. The emotional feeling toward my father was true. . . . I loved my father very much, and I always felt we belonged to each other. But we were never fully reconciled before he died. . . . The "Mother" poem is totally untrue. . . . I was mixing her up with the Snow Queen. She wasn't like that at all. She was a loving, humorous, healing, encouraging, and joyous person. So that is a total fabrication. Also, I never had a sister and my relationship with my brother was quite different.

(Djwa 36)

In a 1999 magazine article, Page describes her childhood as idyllic: "... if my parents were there, it was home. Home meant
love, security, safety; laughter too, and talk" ("Safe" 20). Her description in this article of her mother corresponds with the description in the interview, neither revealing any connection with the "Snow Queen" of the poem. Her description of her father, while consistently positive in tone, includes some childhood memories that apparently served as raw material for the poem "Father."

"My father," she writes, "attempting to draw my attention to my endless chatter, and in the most beautiful gothic script, wrote 'Silence is Golden' in my autograph album" ("Safe" 22). In the article Page describes her father's message as a loving corrective for an overly talkative child, but the poem "Father" describes a parent for whom "My silence only/ [was] golden in thy ear." In the article she describes the magic tricks her father performed at her birthday parties:

most wonderful of all, the "operation," performed on the bravest of us that made us into babies again. How can I possibly explain this without making it sound macabre or sadistic? It was neither. But it was funny and at the same time curiously thought-provoking, as if one had truly been taken back in time. ("Safe" 22)

Page never explains what the "operation" is, and we are left wondering how this magic trick seemed "sadistic" while being "funny." The unexplained gap between these two terms mirrors the unexplained gap in the interview, between her expression of love for her father and her immediate but unconnected reference to the unspecified conflict between them which was not "reconciled" before his death.

Reflecting on her childhood, Page says: "There must have been
bad moments. I don't seem to remember them" ("Safe" 22). Later in
the same article she says that, in her later years,
absurd as it may sound, I feel I am suffering from
amnesia--trying to recall something I once knew.
Something that has left a trace, neither erasable nor
quite legible. ("Safe" 25)
She makes no connection between the two statements. Page has
meditated before on the theme of her own "amnesia," in a 1970 essay
titled "Traveller, Conjuror, Journeyman:"
My childhood is a series of isolated vignettes, vivid as
hypnagogic visions. Great winds have blown my past away
in gusts leaving patches and parts of my history and pre-
history. No wonder I want to remember, to follow a
thread back. To search for something I already know but
have forgotten I know. To listen--not to but for. (36).
In "Traveller" she does not speculate on the nature of the
forgotten experience. In the later article she implies the
forgotten experience may contain the "bad moments" of her
childhood, but then explicitly connects her "amnesia" with a story
about a child "who lives in perfect harmony with his parents" until
he grows up, when they send him on a quest. He suffers from
amnesia until he reads a letter from them which enables him to
accomplish his goal:
And then he remembers: he is the son of a king. And when
he remembers, he is drawn back to the world of his
fathers--a realm of dazzling beauty that he knows at
last for the place where he truly belongs. Home.
("Safe" 25)
Again there is an unexplained gap, between the "bad moments" she realizes she has forgotten and the "dazzling beauty" of the forgotten experience in the story. For Freud these gaps in memory accompany neurosis. The analyst's primary therapeutic aim is to replace neurotic symptoms with conscious thoughts, and the secondary and theoretical aim would be to fill in the memory gaps (Dora 11). Oddly, the interview and article of the 1990s allude to memory gaps that Page seems to have in the past at least partly filled in, in the poems of "Melanie’s Nite-book" published twenty years earlier. This reappearance of problems that at one time seemed solved calls to mind Freud’s observation that conflicts from early childhood are never really resolved, but periodically reappear in response to new situations and must be renegotiated each time (Beyond 36, Civilization 24).

The poems of "Melanie’s Nite-Book" narrow the gap between the conscious and unconscious motives apparently driving Page’s various statements about her childhood. The speakers in the poems I discussed previously objectify the children/egos, who are unable to change their situations. Because the speaker in "Melanie’s Nite-Book" not only identifies with but is the ego of a child, she can directly rebel against the negative influences of her parents. In its lack of realism, the first poem, "Mother," is clearly an account of a "parallel existence":

She said I gave her her jewelled breasts
and he, my father, her jewelled pubis
In return, she gave me a diamond heart
a splinter of ice for either eye
In this family potlatch I want no part
I am giving her back her diamond heart

The degree of abstraction of the symbolism contrasts startlingly with the explicit references to sexual body parts, rare in Page’s published work. Crystals are commonly images of precision, matching the precision and simplicity of the diction and the short, direct sentences, which though they are not marked off by periods are each two lines in length. The poem is reminiscent of Freud’s case history "Dora," in which he establishes a metaphorical connection between jewelry and female sexuality. Even if Page was unaware of this precedent, however, "Mother" so clearly and directly specifies the relationships among family members and those between crystals and body parts as to invite specific interpretation along Freudian lines.

The mother is never addressed, and we learn nothing about her as a person, only her role in the "potlatch," which appears to be an allegorical representation of the feminine counterpart to Freud’s model of the oedipal moment in a boy’s life. Juliet Mitchell proposes a feminine complement of this model, based on the assumption that the pre-oedipal attachment to the mother is identical in both sons and daughters, and only the father’s disruption of this dyad initiates gendered behaviour. The boy transfers his negative feelings towards his mother onto his father, but the girl cannot do this, because culture dictates that she must repress her aggression and direct her passive aims toward her father (58). Mitchell says the girl’s only other choice on recognizing her and her mother’s apparent castration is to despise her mother and become inhibited and neurotic (96).
Mitchell's model does not completely account for the psychological dynamics in the world of Page's poetry, however. Marina seems to choose both of the negative options described by Mitchell, and in the poem "Mother" the speaker does not recognize in herself and her mother a lack of something, as required by the castration/penis envy model, but rather that the traditional model of femininity involves being given something extra that seems superficially to be of value, but is ultimately destructive. Betty Friedan details in *The Feminine Mystique* the economic nature and psychological effects of this "gift" of traditional culture to middle-class women who comply with its rules.

Only the speaker and her mother are associated with the "jewels," which initially seem to have a positive value as decoration. Their connection with specifically female body parts suggests that these are enhanced in value by their usefulness to other people, breasts for their role in nurturing children, the "pubis" for sexual function. The daughter recognizes that these rewards for reproductive potential are really a price, as the crystals that decorated the mother assume in the daughter sinister and even deadly roles. A "diamond heart" cannot function biologically, or even metaphorically as the organ associated with love, and the "splinter of ice" replacing each eye metonymically suggests the excruciating pain of a splinter entering an eye, also connecting this poem with several other images in the early poetry of eyes "hardening" and being unable to "see," as in the refusal of the boy in "Only Child" to see birds as his mother does. In the last line the speaker refuses to pay the price exacted by the objectification and artificial value-enhancement of the mother's
sexual body parts, giving back the apparently valuable "diamond heart," in exchange presumably for a real one that functions.

Benjamin's analysis of the early psychological development of a girl begins where Mitchell's leaves off. She argues that Mitchell's assertion that the phallus represents the principle of individuation demonstrates the extent to which the psychoanalytic goal of autonomy is connected with a traditional model of gender. The poem "Mother" supports Benjamin's view, because if we equate the speaker's missing heart and eyes with her "missing" phallus, we retain a sense of the speaker's struggle to separate herself from other people, but lose some of the richness of the symbolic associations of the heart and eyes with feeling and understanding in the context of interpersonal relations. Benjamin argues that the oedipal complex functions defensively in both sexes to split off from the self the inferior feminine, both in external social reality (Shadow xvi) and in internal psychic reality (Shadow 8). Symmetry is the rule in Benjamin's relational model, as in "Mother." If men must give something up (namely the "jewellery," suggesting the slang expression "family jewels") in order to participate in a permanent sexual relationship, then women must not simply accept this "gift," but must also give up their illusory, because conditional, possession of it. The "jewels" basically signify the desire to feel that one holds the balance of power in a relationship.

From the point of view of relational psychoanalysis, by separating herself from her mother the speaker has taken a first important step in rejecting the traditional model of femininity. The complementary step would be to separate herself from her
father, which she does in the third poem of the suite. Her attitudes towards the two parents could hardly differ more, given the parallel situations. Whereas the speaker is cold and haughty towards her mother, refusing to even represent her as a person, she beseeches her father for understanding, her detailed description of his individual characteristics testifying to the attention she has focused on him.

The archaic second-person singular pronouns and verbs set the form of this poem apart from the others. The diction, tone, and short lines connect it with the prayer "Our Father:"

Father, O farther  
in what heaven circlest thou?  
Daily and dearly  
ask I for thy succor . . .

In the second stanza, official paraphernalia also connects the father with military authority, completing the Freudian picture of the father's authority internalized in the superego as the basis of both religious and secular authority (Ego 27). The speaker is completely subjugated to the father, "obedient, house-trained," but somehow also has power over him:

Father, O father  
tremblest thou with dread  
of my grey gaze  
the twin of thy grey gaze?

This unexplained contradiction emphasizes the degree to which her struggle for independence from him parallels a struggle within her own personality:

Father, father
can we call a truce?
Our binary stardom cancel
you from me . . .
by that one word
which severs as it heals.

As the speaker narrows the gap between her conscious and unconscious motives, we might expect the erotic aspect of the parent-child dynamic to emerge, and it is almost explicit in the lines: "Who settest the world on fire/ for others quenched/ my smallest fire . . ." The metaphor expresses Benjamin's principle that the price women must pay for idealization of an other with whom they cannot identify is the negation of personal desire. As in Benjamin's analysis, the erotic component of the parent-child relationship is not the nucleus of the relationship. It is rather an aspect of the larger problem that the child needs to be free to identify with the parent, a freedom that is impossible if the relationship is predicated on a gendered power imbalance favouring the parent.

The speaker of "Voyager" (I 183), first published a few months after "Melanie's Nite-Book," articulates in the same terms as does Benjamin the central problem in women's psychological development: "the key to the missing desire in women is in one sense the missing father" (88). Page's poem is simple, direct, poignant and apparently autobiographical. It employs almost no metaphors except for the metaphor the speaker believes her father lives by, seeking his family "in other places/ [studying] maps,/ [setting] out in search." The speaker's only defense against the pain of recognizing her father's rejection of her is to describe it not
through active verbs, but through parallel phrases modifying him:

He comes back
night after night
from some long journey
reluctant to return
bored to be home, disregarding our
presence, acting as if
we were not there--
a blank space in the air--
or seeing us and passing us by with no
glance of recognition.

The modifying phrases provide a buffer between his actions and his intent, which allows the speaker to reassure herself that his actual intent in leaving his family is to search for them. This suggests the comforting idea that his rejection of her is not because of any deficiencies on her part, but rather because for reasons of his own he is not able to recognize who she is.

In "Father" the speaker desires separation from her father, while in "Voyager" she desires connection, a balance between transcendence and immanence that suggests Page achieved something like an interdependent relationship with the memory of her father. She has never published a similarly personal account of her relationship with her mother. A negative interpretation of this silence might be that an investigation into this relationship would necessitate asking difficult questions about her own life, which might more closely resemble her mother's than her father's. This silence may also be connected with the revulsion toward femininity expressed in the early poems about girls and women. A less
reductive interpretation, however, derives from the position of relational psychoanalysts that the relationship between mother and child is primary, which suggests it might be more deeply associated with the unconscious than is the secondary relationship with the father. The relationship with the mother may for this reason simply be less accessible to conscious inquiry.

In the poetry following her period of silence from 1954 to 1964, Page consciously adopts new frameworks for exploring her own unconscious, notably frameworks derived from the teachings of Carl Jung and of the Sufis. These teachings do not share the emphasis Freud places on formative experiences from early childhood as key to understanding the self. Page's affinity for them might be explained as a positive developmental step following her conscious recognition of her father's influence on her personality, or it might be explained as a reluctance to approach a similar recognition of her mother's parallel influence on her. Whatever the reason, just as gender ceases to be an overt subject in the later poetry, the dominant-submissive relationships in these early poems also cease to be an issue in the later poetry, replaced by a new emphasis on representing the self's progressive identification with the internal and external others.
CHAPTER 4
THE EGO OF THE SELF IN THE MID-CAREER POETRY

And to-fro all the atoms pass
in bright osmosis
hitherto
in stasis locked
where now a new
direction opens like an eye.
    --"Another Space"

Whereas in most of Page's early poetry her speakers objectify the subjects they describe, her speakers merge with her subjects in much of the poetry she published after her decade away from writing in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Many of the objectified characters of the early poems are defined either by gender or according to a Freudian model of personality, but the speakers who describe their own psychological experience in the poems written just before and after Page's poetic hiatus often employ concepts and constructs of personality that may be correlated with those developed by Carl Jung. Page says, "If I was interested in any psychologist, it was Jung, not Freud" (Orange, "Conversation" 72). Whereas in the previous two chapters I discuss gender issues or Freudian ideas that Page shows little interest in, my approach in this chapter aligns with her own interests. She frequently cites
Jung as an important influence on her, and says she read him "avidly" from the 1940s through the 1960s (see Pearce 36). 9

I argued in Chapter 3 that many of Page's poetic portraits of individual "others" involve a dominant-submissive relationship that plays out both between people and also within an individual psyche. Freud characterizes the internal version of this relationship as the domination of the ego by early parental influences internalized into the unconscious as the superego (Ego 21), while Jessica Benjamin describes it as the internalization from an early age of social inequities between the genders. Both interpretations assume that early childhood experiences largely determine the configuration of an adult personality. Jung, on the other hand, believes that not all psychological conflict is caused by childhood events, and that too much emphasis on past events can interfere with understanding the present (Modern 7). For Jung, psychological conflict results from the ego, or conscious mind, attempting to control the chaos of the unconscious (Undiscovered 62), although this binary is complicated by the fact that some of the mechanisms of repression are unconscious (Undiscovered 67). Jung does not believe the unconscious is composed of "archaic vestiges" passed down from parent to child across the generations, as Freud believes, but rather that it is composed of ineradicable and

9 Although Page says she read Jung "avidly," nothing in her interviews or essays suggests that she read him extensively, as she refers only to well-known Jungian terms and concepts. I therefore rely primarily on Jungian teachings that have been made widely available, either through books written by him for the general public or through volumes of selected works. My intention is not to provide an exhaustive Jungian reading of Page's poems, but rather to trace the basic psychoanalytic motifs that link the constructions of identity underlying several important, and apparently very different, poems from Page's mid-career.
ultimate "archetypal forms" (Undiscovered 49). If we wish to speculate on the biographical background for Page’s interest in Jung, his psychological model would certainly have suggested a rationale for not analyzing her relationship with her mother.

But we do not have to interpret her interest in Jung as escapist. Ehrenzweig says that when the superego has dominated the ego for too long, the ego "decomposes" and falls back on the id in order to obtain new material for image-making (230-1, 283-5). This observation suggests that Page’s increasing focus in her mid-career on exploring and representing her own unconscious may have been a natural response to her earlier focus on superego influences. We might even more simply interpret her interest in Jung as a function of her age; she was in her forties during the time she stopped writing poetry. Jung says younger people need to develop the ego in order to achieve adaptation, which could be why Page’s early speakers gradually recognize and finally rebel against the influence of the superego. Older people, says Jung, need to develop access to the unconscious (Modern 81).

Just as Page’s early speakers to varying extents objectify both gender-related experience and the Freudian conflict between ego and superego, so her early speakers objectify more Jungian configurations of psychological conflict. In "If It Were You," first published in 1946, the speaker describes the invasion of the conscious mind by the unconscious in a process first resembling Alzheimer’s Disease, and then resembling Jung’s description of schizophrenia. This disintegration of the ego takes place in a hypothetical subject, "you." In "Nightmare," first published in 1952 as "Incubus," the first-person speaker arrives at a horrified
recognition of what Jung might call her own "shadow" side. The speaker in the later "Preparation," first published in 1971, expresses an uneasy acceptance of psychological splitting in herself, regarding it as inevitable and not wholly negative, in accordance with Jung's views. Over this period, then, Page's speakers progress across Stokes's spectrum of relationships with the other, from objectifying psychological splitting to identifying with it.

Jung's definition of the ego corresponds with that of ego-psychologists: it is the dominant personality, the "I" that mediates between internal and external demands (Analytical 11, 21). He designates as the "persona" the aspects of the whole self that one consciously chooses to present to the world (Psychological Types 590), which makes the persona a subset of the ego, serving the ego's negotiating functions. Both aspects of the psyche break down in "If It Were You" (I 65). Structurally the poem is like an essay, written in whole sentences with complex patterns of subordination, and arranged in the strict chronological order of stages in a process. The logical structure and matter-of-fact tone, however, are undercut by the speaker's evasiveness regarding her relationship to her subject, by the intense fear revealed through her barely controlled syntax, and by the emotional impact of her images and metaphors. As in the poems about dominant-submissive relationships, superficially this poem appears coherent, while its sub-structure undermines this coherence.

Page published the poem in 1946, the same year as "Only Child," and as usual in her poetry of this period the psychological threat she describes is represented as happening to someone other
than the speaker, in this case an unspecified "you," effectively
the reader. The speaker removes herself even further from the
experience she describes by insisting continually that it is
hypothetical, unconnected with any actual person, an impression
reinforced by the interjected "say" in the first lines of the first
and second stanzas. She only hints that she may be more involved
in the subject matter than she appears to be when she follows her
request for empathy from the reader, "if it were you," with the odd
disclaimer, "not me this time." Sullivan describes this as a
"throwaway line" that "buckle[s] against the tight control of the
imagery" (36), but it produces logical as well as emotional
effects. Logically the phrase is unnecessary, because we have no
reason at this point in the poem to implicate the speaker in the
experience she is inviting us to imagine. The phrase seems to
function somewhat like the ambiguous disclaimer at the beginning of
"Melanie's Nite-Book," apparently distancing the speaker from her
material, while implicitly inviting the reader to connect the two.
By the end of the poem the speaker has imagined the experience of
psychological disintegration in such vivid detail that she seems to
be actually communicating her horror at the possibility that this
could happen to her, if not "this time," then at another
unspecified time, either in the past or in the future.

Jung says an individual in a normal state of dissociation,
that is with some aspects of experience split off from conscious
recognition, can recognize the difference between her persona and
her self (Undiscovered 79-80). In neurosis, however, the ego
cannot differentiate between conscious or unconscious responses to
external conditions (Undiscovered 96). A careful observer can
usually detect the teleological nature of a neurosis, which is oriented not only toward its cause but also toward its goal (*Elementary 113*). If the dissociation becomes extreme, however, as in schizophrenia, it appears chaotic (*Undiscovered 81*). In the first six stanzas of "If It Were You" the persona disintegrates, leaving an ego that cannot interact with external others. The poem offers no clue to the cause of this process, which, however, resembles Jung’s description of the invasion of the conscious by the repressed unconscious (*Elementary 76*).

Jung says the repressed unconscious will continually subvert the desires of the conscious self until the conscious self either experiences the repressed factors, or else these factors are expressed by what Jung calls a "numinous symbol" (*Undiscovered 62*). In the terms of ego-psychology, the numinous symbol would reveal to the ego an aspect of experience that it has in the past split off, and which now must be re-incorporated. In Page’s later poetry and essays the revelation of unconscious material is desirable, leading to numinous experiences that reveal truth and confer strength. In this early poem, however, the subject experiences all of the terror and pain of the repressed unconscious without being able to attain the numinous experience that would break down the barrier separating the conscious from what Jung calls the "hidden foundations of psychic life" (*Modern 80*).

The "conscious surface gestalt" of this poem, in Ehrenzweig’s terms, represents an unexplained and apparently inexorable process of psychological disintegration. Whereas the early poems about subjects locked in conflict between ego and superego tend to be thematically circular, this poem’s development is linear, like a
tumbling fall down a steep slope. As the superficially coherent
Freudian motifs in "Only Child" and "Portrait of Marina" are
disrupted by the underlying questions these poems raise about
gender roles, so the apparent inexorability of the psychological
disintegration in "If It Were You" is called into question by the
preference of the imagined subject to engage not directly with
reality, but instead with artificial and artistic representations
of reality.

The helplessness of the subject's ego against the encroaching
chaos of the unconscious is evoked partly by the speaker's
insistent use throughout the poem of conditional clauses and
rhetorical questions, as Freake notes (101), and partly by her
loose, breathless syntax. In the long periodic sentence of the
first two stanzas, for example, run-on dependent clauses and
parallel and nested modifying and appositive phrases tumble over
each other toward the independent clause of the last two lines:

If it were you, say, you
who scanning the personal map one day knew
your sharp eyes water and grow color-blind,
unable to distinguish green from blue
and everything terribly run together as if rain
had smudged the markings on the paper--
a child's painting after a storm--
and the broad avenue erased,
the landmarks gone;
and you, bewildered--not me this time and not
the cold unfriendly neighbour or the face in the news--
who walked a blind circle in a personal place . . .
Occasionally these sentence elements slide out of control, as in the disjunction between "unable to distinguish green from blue," which modifies "eyes," and the next lines. In formal English the first dependent clause, "if it were you," would be linked by "and" to a second dependent clause: "[if] everything [had] terribly run together." The following participial phrases, "and the broad avenue erased," "the landmarks gone," and "you, bewildered," would similarly become parallel clauses. In the poem, the proliferation of phrases and their inadequate linking by coordinating conjunctions or dashes creates a sense that the speaker is barely controlling her anxiety.

Her attempt at controlling her response at the prospect of psychological disintegration is not limited to her attempt to retain or regain control of her syntax. She also repeats words and sounds in patterns that sometimes distance her from the content of the poem by emphasizing its connection with the reader/subject, as in the repetitions of "you" in the first, tenth, and thirteenth lines and in the negative appositives at the end of the first stanza: "not me," "not the . . . neighbour." At other times these repetitive patterns draw attention away from the process the speaker describes. The rhymes on "you," "knew," and "blue" in the first stanza, the four uses of "that" in three lines of the second stanza, the half rhyme between "easy" and "lazy" in the fourth stanza, the intense alliteration in the fifth, and the repeated negatives in the sixth all transfer attention away from the content and onto the words themselves. This distraction from the content of the poem creates a formal tension that reinforces the thematic tension between the apparent inexorability of the psychological
disintegration and the possibility that the subject could be responsible for either causing or worsening it.

The ambiguously gendered subject of the poem\(^\text{10}\) (to whom I will refer as masculine in order to avoid the awkward second person and to distinguish him from the speaker) initially has difficulty not in interpreting reality, but in interpreting representations of reality. He orients himself according to a "personal map," with "the broad avenue" and "landmarks" perhaps signifying his most common psychological activities. Once this representation is "smudged" it is like "a child's painting after a storm," a simile which could suggest either that we should trust the impulse to create representations of reality, because even children have this impulse, or that we should distrust this impulse as inappropriate to adult life. The simile is unambiguous, however, in emphasizing the fragility of these representations.

At the end of the opening stanza the speaker shifts immediately from these descriptions of damaged and useless representations of reality to the practical effects of their loss, the subject's inability to navigate, first in the external world and then within himself. As in much of Page's poetry about psychological experience, the prevailing conceits are based on geometrical relationships. The inability to navigate in external space, for example, is characterized by the inability to "distinguish left from right," and this pattern also characterizes

\(^{10}\) Nancy Paul assumes the person addressed is male because "his masculine detachment keeps him separate from the anguish of others" (121), but given the degree to which the presumably female speaker identifies with the subject's predicament, I do not see gender as an issue in this poem.
the internal confusion. In later poems such as "Another Space," the dissolution of an internal boundary and the resulting experience of unity opens the self up to new possibilities. In "If It Were You," however, the internalization of the confusion between left and right is part of the general pattern of the self collapsing inward, a perception from inside the self that corresponds to Jung's description from a clinical perspective of the unconscious "rising" into the conscious mind (Undiscovered 80-1).

As the symptoms worsen, there are "walls of air, invisible, holding/ [him] single and directionless in space," producing a claustrophobia intensified by isolation. While many of the later poems about identity (echoing Jung's concept of individuation) assume a single self engaged in a lone quest, in this poem solitude is terrifying. Correspondingly, the unified and centralized self that is sought after and celebrated in the later poems is represented in this poem as pathological. What differentiates this subject from some later ones is that he never questions his tendency to see the world in terms of artistic representations of it. Even while afraid and in pain he sees flowers not as simply existing, but as "[writing] their signatures in colored ink." Birds do not simply sing, but "[go] on with their singing," a phrasing that emphasizes the process of creating music.

In the fourth stanza, even after the subject would have ceased to recognize people and places from his own life, the speaker imagines him summoning "angels of deliverance:"

Would you call Ariel, Ariel, in the garden,
in a dream within a dream be Orpheus
and for certain minute take a step
delicately across the grass?

Literary characters are more enduring influences on this personality than the real people in his life. This priority reflects Jung's emphasis on archetypes as keys to unlocking the secrets of the unconscious, but archetypal figures from literature cannot help this subject. If he, as Orpheus, could find the faith to "take a step" away from the past he has lost, it would be magically restored to him, as Eurydice to Orpheus. The reason this strategy fails in the context of this poem is not that Orpheus fails in the myth, but simply that Orpheus does not exist; the subject's appeals for help to literary characters elicit "no answer or reply." In Jungian terms he is unable to find in the literary tradition an archetype capable of producing for him the numinous experience that would break down his resistance to his own unconscious.

The speaker herself offers no opinion about the subject's reliance on artistic representations to solve the problems he encounters in his life, or about the failure of this strategy. The subject, on finding himself alone in the garden, could presumably choose to question his own premises and recognize that his avoidance of reality might be part of his problem. This process might be represented as a continuation of his progress "down" through layers of metaphors to a fundamental perception of reality, in the sense of Roman Jakobson's concept of metaphor as "vertical." Instead the speaker imagines for the subject a lateral digression, into what Jakobson might term "metonymy" (Jakobson 57-61) and psychoanalysts call "displacement" (Wright 19). The speaker
imagines for him a strategy that will enable him to continue to evade acknowledging his psychological problems.

Although he is no longer capable of creating for himself the illusion of controlling his external reality through representing it artistically, he can still attempt to control it by shaping it, through obsessive gardening:

Then there would be the things your head had prepared for your fingers:
rooting the dandelion from the lawn and training the runner up the pole or clipping the privet hedge and always explaining your actions by the phrase:
There's work to be done.

In other contexts, the activity of gardening could function as sublimation, or else as a metaphorical "digging" through to reality, but in this poem it leads to disaster.

The speaker imagines the dismantling of the persona to be a terrifying process resembling the kind of dementia associated with Alzheimer's Disease. In attempting to ignore this process, however, the subject would bring upon himself the even more terrifying experience of "madness," a state resembling schizophrenia. The activity of gardening is the subject's method of denying the early stages of his dementia. Eventually even the fingers understand the danger of remaining so "mechanically/occupied," and ask the head for "a meaning for their continuing movements." The danger is only revealed at the moment the subject finally "raise[s] [his] head" from the gardening, when the madness
would "rush" at him from the shrubbery itself, suggesting that his denial of the disintegration of his persona is itself the reason for the onset of his madness.

Jung says the unconscious is normally an autonomous and organized matrix that acts in counterbalance to the conscious mind (Analytical 123-4), and that schizophrenia is the invasion of the conscious mind by the unconscious in the form of delusions and voices (Analytical 24). He says the onset of schizophrenia is often marked either by an explosive sound or by the image of a cosmic catastrophe such as the splitting of the sun or the fall of a star ("Schizophrenia" 241), as in this poem the image of the falling sun marks the onset of the subject's madness. Whereas the speaker represents the early stages of dementia in terms of relatively simple geometric relationships, such as confusion between right and left or confinement within a space, she describes the later madness as a complex tangle of images of paradoxical geometric relationships:

the great sun, stampeding through the sky,
would stop and drop--
a football in your hands--
and shrink as you watched it
to a small dark dot
forever escaping focus
like the injury to the cornea which darts
hard as a cinder across the sight but dims
fading into the air like a hocus-pocus
the minute that you are aware
and stare at it.
Whereas the sun normally appears to travel continuously and predictably across our line of vision, to the subject it appears to stop and then drop vertically toward him, finally resembling an eye injury which does not actually move, but appears to move continuously but unpredictably across his line of vision. Initially the huge and gaseous source of our reality, the sun contracts progressively into a solid football, then a dot, and finally an illusion. Initially the source of virtually all light and therefore of our ability to see, it becomes finally an impediment to vision which paradoxically cannot itself be seen. The persona can no longer discern even the most basic logical patterns in his experience, and is therefore rendered incapable of even the most basic functional responses to his world.

Whereas the dementia apparently has no cause, the madness appears to come from outside of the mind, from the shrubbery, but is actually generated inside the mind, through the delusions intruding on the conscious from the unconscious. This intrusion produces a degree of confusion that could cause the subject to "slash [his] own wrists, commit/ an untidy murder." The startling slippage from suicide to "murder" suggests that in the final stage of disintegration the subject cannot make any distinctions at all, even between his own body and someone else's, until his face, the most important physical representative of the self, is "destroyed by rain" like the child's painting at the beginning of the poem. In the penultimate stanza the patterns of repeated sounds are even more intensive than in the fifth stanza:

Might you not, if it were you,
bewildered, broken,
slash your own wrists, commit
an untidy murder in the leafy lane
and scar the delicate air with your cries or sit
weeping, weeping in the public square
your flimsy butterfly fingers in your hair
your face destroyed by rain?
The alliterations (/b/, /l/, and /f/), the rhymes on "air," "square," and "hair," and the repetition of "weeping" all suggest the subject's last desperate attempts to create some meaningful pattern in his experience.

Only now, when the subject is apparently beyond help, does the speaker obliquely raise the question of the role played in this disaster by the subject's reliance on artificial representations of reality, in suggesting it might be reasonable under the circumstances to "grow phobias about calendars and clocks." These methods of representing time are arguably even more fundamental to our everyday lives than artistic representations of the world, and therefore could be seen as even more fundamentally involved in our tendencies to separate ourselves from direct experience of reality. This connection between the specific "phobias" and the general madness correlates with Jung's belief that although the symptoms of schizophrenia appear disorganized, there is an underlying order to them (Analytical 112-3). The speaker suggests that calendars and clocks have caused the subject's madness, but she does not suggest that it is possible for us to do without them. This poem suggests no possibility of countering the apparently self-destructive impulse to control reality, whether through creating representations of it or through shaping it according to our
Freake says the image of the "personal map" in the first stanza suggests "the personal is a trap" because it consists of external relationships between the self and the "public world." He finds the conclusion of the poem "disappointing," maintaining that it contradicts the opening by suggesting that the madness is caused not by entrapment in this public world of clocks and calendars, but rather by a loss of faith in it (102). In the context of the poem, however, the "phobias," or "loss of faith" are the result of the madness, not the cause of it; the subject is driven to his suspicion of clocks and calendars. The poem appears unified if we infer the central problem to be the same problem described more explicitly in "Portrait of Marina," published a year earlier: the subject’s lack of direct engagement with both external and internal reality, which are inextricably related. "If It Were You" suggests that dementia results from the attempt of a severely dissociated ego to avoid experiencing repressed factors from the unconscious. In Jungian terms, the unconscious attempts to re-establish connection with the conscious by subverting the ego’s dependence on the conceptions of reality with which it has progressively replaced reality (Undiscovered 80). Madness occurs if the ego refuses to submit to this corrective process.

Sullivan detects an "incipient terror" under the "smooth urbane surface" of many of the early poems, and particularly in "If It Were You." She describes this terror as "metaphysical in implication," but "unlocated in any specific way" (35-6). In the same article, however, Sullivan discusses at length the "deep split at the core" of the early poems about office workers, a split which
results from the ostensibly humanitarian theme of these poems being undercut by the barrage of metaphors in them (35). She also says that the speaker in "After Rain" is concerned that her verbal and poetic dexterity may be "sterile," and that this speaker wants to explore language "as experience, not evasion" (34).

I think the source of the terror in "If It Were You" is the speaker's dawning suspicion of representations of reality, that they can be part of the ego's method of resisting the threat it erroneously perceives as located in the external world and in the unconscious. Complicating the speaker's fear is an irony she does not acknowledge but must on some level sense, that these representations must also include the poem in which she is exploring this problem. This self-referential tangle resembles too closely the speaker's own conceptualization of madness as a breakdown of the ability to distinguish between different elements of reality. In "If It Were You," the speaker seems paralyzed with fear at the mere suggestion that she too is implicated in these issues. The speaker of the later "Nightmare," although she stops short of openly acknowledging this problem, actually finds the courage to begin the process of coming to terms with it.

First published in 1952, "Nightmare" (192) addresses more directly than any previous work the source of the "incipient terror" Sullivan detects in Page's early poetry. As Killian says, the poem is unusual compared to others from this period because of the "sustained presence of a speaking subject" that is no longer impersonal, but "intensely implicated" (97). This is the first poem in which the speaker frankly locates the source of her fear within herself, and identifies its cause specifically as a schism
within her personality. In Jungian terms the nightmarish creature is the speaker's "shadow" side, a part of the unconscious that struggles for recognition and acceptance by the ego. In Jung's model, however, the shadow side of a woman should be the *animus*, a "masculine" element of her personality.

Jung's conceptualization of the *anima* and *animus* resembles Freud's description of the superego, in that the *amina/animus* is deeply rooted in the unconscious and connected with parental influences. Jung's model differs from Freud's, however, in his insistence on gender essentialism in this aspect of the personality: in men the *anima* produces moods, and in women the *animus* produces opinions. Jung's discussion of these psychological elements not only highlights his normalization of masculine experience, but reveals an antipathy toward women. The *anima* is the "feminine weakness" that undermines even the "ideal man," whereas the *animus* produces in women their only version of logical processes: "incontestable judgements" and "disputatiousness" ("Ego and Unconscious" 205-9). Page published "Nightmare" just two years before "Reflections in a Train Window," and four years before "After Rain." The essentialism inherent in Jung's characterizations of these gendered archetypes apparently does not interest her during this early stage of her mid-career, when her speakers are trying to develop a concept of femininity with which they can identify.

The formal features of "Nightmare" reflect the intensity of the struggle between the ego and its "shadow."

In the white bed
this too dark creature nests,
litters her yelping young
upon my breasts.

The need to understand the struggle between conscious and unconscious is more urgent here than in "If It Were You," because this struggle now takes place within the speaker, rather than within an objectified other. The lines in the earlier poem average at least ten syllables, and most of the sentences range from eight to twenty-three lines in length. In "Nightmare" the lines are shorter, averaging five or six syllables, and the sentences are also shorter, the first four being four lines long, the next three being eight lines long. In spite of the shortness of the lines, many of them have three strong stresses, conveying a sense of breathless urgency. The regular pattern of four lines per stanza is striking, because Page's stanzas usually vary in length. The regularity of stanza and sentence lengths in "Nightmare" reflects the speaker's attempt to control and make sense of her experience.

The poem opens with clearly defined dichotomies: the "dark" apparition occupies a "white" bed, and the animal nature and silence of the "creature" contrasts sharply with the humanity of the speaker, demonstrated by her articulateness and her eventual willingness to accept the terrifying message of the dream. Her resistance to this message takes the form of a series of metaphors she employs to describe the creature and its effect on her. Rather than revealing a hidden aspect of her self, which she eventually recognizes the creature to be, each image involves splitting off an aspect of her self, which operates in the outside world. Through these metaphors the speaker expresses her ambivalence: they acknowledge the creature as emerging in some way from her self
while still emphasizing that in other ways it is separate from her. In Jungian terms the ego is struggling with the realization that she cannot restrict her interactions with the external world to those involving her persona, that no matter how much she tries to control these interactions her shadow side will also participate in them.

The first image involves reproduction. In the "thicket" of the speaker's dreams the creature "litters her yelping young," but on the speaker's breasts, so that the offspring are produced by the creature but nurtured by the speaker, and like real offspring both are and are not of whoever their "mother" is. Killian sees the association of the feminine aspects of reproduction with animals and demons as expressing "a deep split in feminine consciousness" that is "fundamentally self-destructive" (97), and I think the split between giving birth and nurturing is equally suggestive. This image must in some way connect with the "Ice Queen" image in the later "Mother," which expresses in different terms a similar horror of female reproductive functions. The absence of masculine characters or imagery in "Nightmare" suggests that the speaker's aversion toward femininity is not directly connected with men, but rather, as Benjamin might say, it must be resolved within her own psyche. The disappearance of gender-specific imagery and themes after the first stanza suggests that this aversion to femininity is an early stage in the speaker's process of coming to terms with her shadow side, and that this poem is about psychological splitting as experienced by a woman, rather than about a psychological experience peculiar to women.

Having given birth, the creature takes the form of an actor
who "dissembles," "wearing masks" of the speaker's "familiar faces" but still remaining separate from the speaker, much as the character played by an actor is an extension both of the actor's self and of any real person represented by the theatrical character. In the next stanza the speaker's falcon, an extension of a human being which remorselessly commits acts of violence on command, is revealed as controlled by the creature rather than by the speaker. By this point the initial alignment of black with evil and white with innocence is completely subverted as the apparition's "white wrist bone" is both connected with and contrasted to the "black skeleton" into which she transforms the speaker. At her core, the "dark" creature is white, while at her core the speaker is black.

Like the subject's efforts to deny his dementia in "If It Were You," each attempt the speaker in "Nightmare" makes to express her separateness from the creature only intensifies her problem:

Or, an appalling valentine
of lace and hearts
hot and frilled,
abandoned in the sun

do I become
at the dark bitter wish
of this night-walking
anxious alchemist.

Each metaphor produces more raw material for the "alchemist," who transforms even the speaker's most innocent influence on the world around her, symbolized by a child's valentine, into something
"appalling." The poem pivots around this image of the valentine in the middle stanzas; following it the speaker stops trying to control and evade the creature through metaphors. Unlike the speaker of "If It Were You," the speaker of "Nightmare" chooses to grapple with the issue of the moral dichotomy contained within the concept of metaphor.

Rhetorical analysis generally focuses on what we think of as the constructive aspect of a metaphor, namely the use of a familiar object or concept to illuminate our understanding of an unfamiliar one, thus allowing both writer and reader to reach beyond conventional understanding. James Olney, however, explores the complementary aspect of metaphor, as substitution of a known for an unknown, an "act of imposing order on the world and the self." Olney extends his analysis to the act of writing itself as a metaphor that substitutes a written representation of reality for reality itself (3). Sullivan sees this issue as resolved in "After Rain" through the evolution of Page's personally grounded metaphors in the first part of the poem into the communally recognized symbols of the last two stanzas. We could conceptualize this resolution as achieved by pushing more deeply into metaphor until reaching what Sullivan calls "the controlling principle of symbol" (34-5), which would re-establish the artist's connection with the external world through her arrival at socially shared values. The speaker's response in "Nightmare" is in a sense the opposite, a withdrawing from metaphor to the more literal modes of simile and direct description, concurrent with a cautious approach toward the new and threatening aspect of her reality.

In the second half of the poem she describes the creature not
through metaphors but through its actions, which themselves are rendered mostly through similes:

Sometimes she smiles at me
as if I were
her own face
smiling in a mirror . . .

She even unflinchingly details its appeal to her, through its associations with "barley sugar" and "butterflies." The series of metaphors representing extensions of the self in the first half of "Nightmare" are the verbal equivalents of the drawing, painting, mapping, and gardening in "If It Were You," as these activities are all ways to extend a controlled version of the self into the world. The speaker in the earlier poem is unwilling to consider the possibly destructive aspects of artistic activity, as she is unwilling to acknowledge as her own the terrifying experiences she imagines for her subject. In "Nightmare," the speaker finally becomes so horrified by the paradoxical results of her attempts to control the creature through metaphors that she stops, and so achieves a vision, however uneasy, of the creature as part of herself:

Yet should I sleep forever
she would eat
my beating heart
as if it were a plum

did she not know
with terrible wisdom
by doing so
she would devour her own.

Killian sees the incubus as a muse, a connection I would not have made because, apart from the references to acting and to the valentine, the poem does not seem to be overtly about creativity. The connection is appealing, however, in view of Page’s frequent references to herself as a "muse" poet (see, for example, Heenan 102, Pearce 32), and her exploration of the destructive aspects of the relationship between muse and artist in The Sun and the Moon. Killian reads "Nightmare" as investigating the peculiarly complicated relationship between a female artist and her muse. The traditionally female muse inspires the traditionally male artist to action, but in "Nightmare," says Killian, the "passive receptivity" of the female muse poet enables the "demon-muse" to trick her into believing she is in control by "shape-shift[ing]" into "seductive, ego-gratifying poses" (96).

If we accept this reading, the poem expresses not only a suspicion of metaphor, but also a suspicion of the concept of the poet-muse relationship. Even when she does not use the term "muse," Page consistently refers to her creative process as a channelling of some influence beyond her control, refusing to accept credit for her artistic output. This concept correlates with Jung's description of the unconscious as an autonomous matrix capable of creative acts (Analytical 124). The flip side of credit, however, is responsibility, and the concept of the muse can in itself be a way for a poet to distance herself from the artistic creations that could otherwise be understood as arising from her own personality. Recognizing the "demon-muse" as an aspect of herself is an important step in the speaker’s process of what Jung
calls "individuation," the bringing into reality of the "whole human" (Modern 31), and therefore implicitly an important step toward the ego's recognition of external reality.

"Nightmare" and "After Rain" are among the last poems Page published before the decade of silence between The Metal and the Flower, which came out in 1954 while she was in Australia, and her return to Canada in 1964, when she began writing the poems included in Cry Ararat (1967). George Woodcock observed a change in Page's poetry after the ten-year hiatus, from the "inner landscapes" of early work such as "The Stenographers" towards her later "mystical concern with the view out of the self towards images," a "vision [of] the way of liberation from the alienated, prisoned self" (832). Many critics since have made similar observations about the changes in Page's poetry after her period of silence. Marshall, for example, praises the poems written after Page's return to Canada, which move "beyond" the earlier "social and psychological subjects mediated by Marxist and Freudian theory" into a later "religious" realm better approached through Jungian thought (105). "Preparation" (II 167), first published in 1971, is representative of Page's later poetic voice in that its speaker, instead of resisting recognition of her psyche as split, accepts this state as inevitable, as Jung believes it is.

Like "If It Were You," "Preparation" is written in the second person, putting some rhetorical distance between speaker and subject. In this case, however, the "you" does not represent even a hypothetical individual "other," but rather a universalized subject like "one," which implicitly includes the speaker herself. The speaker issues advice to "you" that clearly derives from her
own experience of psychological splitting. The short, terse lines create an emotional immediacy resembling that in "Nightmare:"

Go out of your mind.
Prepare to go mad.
Prepare to break
split along cracks
inhabit the darks of your eyes
inhabit the whites.

Both "Nightmare" and "Preparation" average five syllables per line, but in the latter poem eleven of the twenty-three lines are end-stopped independent imperative clauses, while three lines are end-stopped dependent imperative clauses, and another six are end-stopped infinitive phrases. Rather than the sense of barely controlled panic in "Nightmare," the insistent imperative verbs, the prevalent pattern of two strong stresses per line, and the end-stopped clauses and verbal phrases create in "Preparation" a sense of desperate intention. The conflict in "If It Were You" and "Nightmare," between reality and artistic representations of it, is here reduced to a more fundamental conflict. The impulse to act, evoked by the imperative verbs, struggles against the awareness that this activity would be futile, as in the two earlier poems the speakers' various attempts to control reality by representing or shaping it are futile.

Whereas the poems I have so far discussed align readily with Ehrenzweig’s principle that a work of art comprises both conscious and unconscious intentions of the artist, "Preparation" is about the speaker's split psyche. I am unable to see one aspect of any of the dualities in the poem, such as action versus inaction, or
wholeness versus splitting, as more "superficial" or "conscious" than another. This poem signals a new tendency in Page's later poetry to separate the negotiations of the ego with the external world from its negotiations with the inner self, and represent these two sets of negotiations in separate poems. "Preparation" focuses on the internal experience of psychological splitting, and excludes external experience. This exclusion results in the striking absence of the concrete visual imagery so prevalent in Page's early poetry, and its replacement with metaphors based on concepts describing physical reality, such as "form" and "point."

In the first stanza the speaker represents madness as unambiguously destructive and terrifying, through the harsh consonants of words such as "cracks," and the stark images of various patterns of splitting: "you" can actually leave "your mind," or your mind itself can "break" into separate parts. If you leave, you can be trapped in sites external to your mind, in locations forever divided, binaries such as the "darks" and "whites" of your eyes. The terror evoked in the first stanza in response to the process of becoming mad dissipates in the second, in which the speaker describes the state of being mad. These words have softer consonants and the images are less threatening than in the first stanza because they open up the possibility of existing in two contradictory states at once:

Prepare to be huge.
Be prepared to be small
the least molecule
of an unlimited form.
Be a limited form
and spin in your skin
one point in its whole.

Here the active imperatives give way to passive imperatives that emphasize being rather than doing, evoking highly abstract images of dynamic stability, as opposed to the violent images of breaking in the first stanza. They suggest that "madness" is not a purely negative experience, but could take any form the mind is capable of generating. The cause is equally likely to come from within the self, such as from dreams, or without, as in the final image of the light that "crashes in." As the obsessive gardening is a source of the subject's madness in "If It Were You," in "Preparation" the cause of the crisis could be the limits one has set or respected for the very purpose of protecting the self: one might "burst like a pod" or "break at [one's] seams." The repeated plosives evoke the abruptness of the experience, echoing the explosive sound Jung says schizophrenics often experience at the onset of their disease.

In the first line of the fourth stanza the speaker splits the verb "prepare" into prefix and root, urging the reader to "prepare" for the disaster. The Concise Oxford defines "pare" as "cutting away irregular parts . . . diminish[ing] little by little." The earlier defences, the "pods" and "seams," are efforts by the self to contain and unify its disparate parts. Since both these strategies are doomed to fail, a more radical strategy would be to decide which parts are "irregular" and peel them away in order to concentrate protective efforts on the more valued centre of the self. The narrowing of focus that is so threatening in "If It Were You" is in this poem a defense strategy. The mind, however, cannot prevent its own fragmentation:
But its never like that.
It is where you are not
that the fissure occurs
and the light crashes in.
The personality contains the mechanism of its own disintegration,
and it cannot therefore perceive this mechanism until too late.

This disintegration, however, is not the ultimate disaster
described in "If It Were You." Although the verb "crash" certainly
suggests the violent physical invasion of a healthy brain, Page
usually associates madness with darkness, as in the "dark" creature
in the opening of "Nightmare." The final image in "Preparation,"
of light entering a consciousness, suggests the idea of
"enlightenment." Page says this poem is about the positive
potential for growth under a new influence from outside the self:
"If you can remove yourself enough, by concentrating enough, then
space is made for something else to crash in--which otherwise
can't" (Pollock 138). Whereas Freud tends to pathologize
psychological conflict as the result of restrictions on sexuality
in our civilization (Civilization 55), Jung says it is normal to
experience a "jostling together of components and contradictions"
in our psyches, and that in fact we can apply ourselves toward an
undivided goal only through repressing other aspects of the self
(Undiscovered 61). "Preparation" therefore demonstrates a
fundamental shift in the way Page represents not only madness, but
identity itself. It offers no explanation, however, of how Page
arrived at this new willingness to see the loss of conscious
control over the internal and external others as a potentially
positive experience.
Page has discussed at length the effects of her inability to write poetry while she lived in Brazil and for several years afterwards, but she has not discussed the cause, beyond suggesting that living in another language was part of it. In "Questions and Images" she describes the unnerving experience of becoming a "child" during the process of learning Portuguese, and then a "different adult" than she had been before, asking "Who am I, that language can so change me? What is personality, identity? . . . Where could wordlessness lead?" (212) She also describes her anxiety at being unable to write poetry: "The thing I had feared most of all had happened at last. This time I never would write again" (213, emphasis in original).

Page has told Messenger in conversation that Brazilian Journal avoids topics both intimate and political because it is based on letters she had sent home to family members she did not wish to "offend or worry" ("Ekphrasis" 110). There are some indications, however, in the Journal and in her other public statements about this period, of the forces underlying her lengthy writer's block. Page says Brazil "pelted" her with images, and that she was "compelled" to draw them in order to "make them mine, or make peace with them" ("Questions" 212-3). Messenger explores this urge to control external experience as it is manifested in some of the few poems Page wrote about Brazil. She focuses on those employing the rhetorical device of "ekphrasis," which means speaking in words either for or about a mute art object, as Auden does in "Musée des Beaux Arts." If all representations of reality are attempts to order and therefore control experience, as Olney argues (3), ekphrastic poetry doubles this effect by introducing an
intermediary art object between poem and experience.

In "Some Paintings by Portinari," the speaker feels on looking at these paintings as if "he’d cut off my breasts/ and levelled my nose," and "painted the grey all over my skin/ [while] the pain/ pulled all the muscles and cords." Messenger says the paintings confront the speaker with "a narrative of deep psychic torture, a catalogue of Brazil’s social problems," and observes that this poem reveals a persona not present in Page’s published work ("Ekphrasis" 112-4). The paintings mediate a painful encounter between the self and external reality, as in "Nightmare" the dream mediates a painful encounter between the ego and the "shadow" aspect of the unconscious. In Brazilian Journal Page muses about her dependence on these intermediaries: "I think much of my pleasure is a literary pleasure. Had I read nothing and seen no pictures, what would I see?" (72) As her pleasure is "literary," so are her responses to negative experiences. The pain her speaker expresses in "Some Paintings By Portinari" is not a response to real people, as she never refers to the subjects of the paintings. The poem is instead an artistic response to implied artistic representations of suffering.

In Brazilian Journal Page’s response to real-life suffering is more contradictory:

Today I fired the laundress with elephantiasis. Hated doing it, but she was not a very good laundress and eighteen sugar bananas and five kilos of beef unaccountably disappeared on Saturday. Unfairly, perhaps, I suspect her. Yet I am sorry to see her go. It is unlikely I shall ever again employ a grotesque:
elephantiasis of the legs and breasts and a strange little beard which hangs straight down under her chin and curls only at the end. . . . [She] is pure Baudelaire. (Journal 14)

The gaps in the logical sequence here resemble the gaps in Page's account to Djwa of her relationship with her father (discussed in Chapter 3). Although her house is filled with unsatisfactory servants hired and fired at rapid intervals, she for no apparent reason singles out the "grotesque" to punish for the theft, even admitting her own unfairness. Her expression of sorrow is abruptly followed, with no transition, by a resolve never again to hire such a person. The most obvious explanation for the gaps in the logic of this account is that Page found it difficult, as many people would, to confront this real-life victim of the very social inequities that made her own life at the time so exciting and exotic. Once the woman is safely out of the house, Page can control her horrified response by converting the woman into a literary character.

By itself this passage suggests Page's understandable inclination to separate herself from aspects of experience that she found unpleasant. The personal price of this strategy, though, is suggested in a reference to this same laundress in the poem "Brazilian House" (II 120). The speaker describes her "echoing days" isolated "in this great house white/ as a public urinal," while "downstairs the laundress/ with elephantiasis/ sings like an angel," and the "skinny little black girl" laughs as she polishes silver. Isolated by class, culture, race, and language from the people around her, the speaker is eventually "forced by the white
porcelain/ yammering silence" to leave her own house. Whatever forces affected Page during the time she stopped publishing poetry, her poetry just before and following this period suggests a growing realization of the necessity of accepting and incorporating outside influences into the self.

The struggle I have already outlined in Page's mid-career poetry, towards achieving a balance between the needs of the conscious self and those of the internal "other" in the unconscious, parallels a concurrent struggle in other poems of this same period to accept the external "other" in other people. Although the external world is filled with threats, it also, as Jung explains, offers the self a chance to be whole and healthy, the chance to understand and accept threatening aspects of one's own unconscious, such as fear or aggression, through first accepting them as part of other people's personalities (Undiscovered 66). In "Arras" and "Another Space," written over the same mid-career period as "If It Were You," "Nightmare," and "Preparation," Page's speakers describe the gradual and frightening process by which a self approaches recognition of the existence of the external "other." Why Page's poetry splits in this way during this period, between the poems that represent encounters with the internal other and those representing encounters with the external other, is a question I will address in Chapters 5 and 6.

"Arras" (I 46), first published in 1954, just two years after "Nightmare," is an example of what John Hollander calls "notional ekphrasis," in which the poem speaks for or about not an actual art object, but one imagined by the poet (209). The imaginary nature of the art object, in this case a tapestry, adds yet another degree
of objectification to the subject of the poem. The subject of "Arras" is even further removed from reality than the subjects of other examples of notional ekphrasis (such as Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts") in that, as Orange comments, the poem "seems calculated to disorient the reader," producing both the anxiety and wonder of a dream ("Page" 252). No other poem by Page so deliberately pushes the content so far away from a first-person speaker, and few others employ metaphor so extensively and effectively to disguise meaning while still inviting interpretation.

The poem is organized around an extended metaphor that opposes a two-dimensional state associated with culture against a three-dimensional state associated with nature and with humanity. Page frequently employs the concept of different dimensions as a metaphor for different kinds of understanding. In "Traveller, Conjurer, Journeyman" she describes breaking through the limitations of our ordinary apprehensions of reality:

I am a two-dimensional being. I live in a sheet of paper. My home has length and breadth and very little thickness. The tines of a fork pushed vertically through the paper appear as four thin silver ellipses. I may, in a moment of insight, realize that it is more than coincidence that four identical but independent silver rings have entered my world. In a further breakthrough I may glimpse their unity, even sense the entire fork--large, glimmering, extraordinary. Just beyond my sight. Mystifying; marvellous. (36)

The speaker of "Arras" is similarly trapped in a two-dimensional
world in which everything natural and human is converted into a
cultural product, a process connected with the anxiety over
representations of reality in "If It Were You" and "Nightmare:"

Consider a new habit--classical,
and trees espaliered on the wall like candelabra.
How still upon that lawn our sandalled feet.
Naturally three-dimensional trees are in this poem "espaliered,"
making them two-dimensional. The trees become cultural products
like "candelabra," while peaches "hang like lanterns" and the
"green garden" is a "cinema." The third line ironically echoes a
line from the Song of Solomon, "How beautiful are thy feet with
shoes" (Chapter 7 Verse 1), juxtaposing the calls for action and
love in the biblical poem with the static, isolated images of the
arras, the wild mountains and lush vineyards of the Old Testament
with the controlled and flattened environment of the "lawn."

With the loss of the third dimension comes the threat of
immobility, a sense of entrapment reinforced by the short
sentences, which are one to three lines long except for one
sentence of four lines. Whereas the effect of short sentences in
"Nightmare" and "Preparation" is to restrain fear, in this poem the
sentences seem unable to gather enough momentum to continue, like
someone unable to run in a nightmare. The seven stanzas of the
poem pivot around the fourth, in which ideas are compressed into
ambiguous imagery and equivocal wording that slow the reader into
the kind of stasis the speaker fears, and even evoke the speaker's
later sensation of spinning:

I ask, what did they deal me in this pack?
The cards, all suits, are royal when I look.
My fingers slipping on a monarch's face
twitch and go slack.
I want a hand to clutch, a heart to crack.
The speaker reduces the "figures," already flattened to two-dimensional images on the arras, to yet another degree of artificiality as faces in a "pack" of cards. "Deck" would have been a more neutral term, and the positioning of "pack" at the end of both a line and a question, and before the card image has been established, suggests an alternative interpretation of the word: it could refer to a group of hunting animals such as wolves. The word subtly contributes to the speaker's building sense of unease.

In "Arras" the cards are "all suits," referring to the four suits in a deck of cards, but also suggesting the formal attire of those attending the garden party. Only the "royal" cards can logically represent people, but the word also suggests the social status of the guests. As Rooke suggests, Page may also have in mind a blurring of the words "royal" and "real" ("Approaching" 68), as Page comments in a later essay on their common origin ("The Sense of Angels"). The etymological association would be in this case ironic, as when the speaker tries to hold the guests/cards they are insufficiently three-dimensional, or "real." Out of her "want," with its double sense, comes her vision of the peacock.

It emerges from the retina of her eye, at first a one-dimensional point at the intersection of the various forces paralysing her:

The spinning world is stuck upon its poles,
the stillness points a bone at me. I fear
the future on this arras.
I confess:

It was my eye.
Voluptuous it came.
Its head the ferrule and its lovely tail
folded so sweetly; it was strangely slim
to fit the retina.

From the one-dimensional point of the retina emerges a linear (two-dimensional) arrow, which finally unfurls into the three-dimensional peacock, introducing into the scene some of the sensuality and vividness of the Song of Solomon. The magical appearance of the peacock suggests its potential as a Jungian archetype with the power to re-integrate repressed unconscious factors into the speaker's ego, freeing her from the stasis in which she has been trapped and opening a new pathway toward individuation, the experience of wholeness (Analytical 186-7). Like Ariel and Orpheus in "If It Were You," however, the peacock does not produce the numinous experience anticipated by the speaker.

The peacock correlates with Jung's description of art emerging from the unconscious as "primitive" in style, "barbaric" in colour, and "archaic" in sensibility (Modern 82). Although the speaker perceives her vision as disruptive enough to destroy the illusion of the arras, however, it in fact produces no effect at all. She does not speculate on why this should be so, but the imagery of the poem suggests a reason. When the peacock unfurls, its tail becomes "rattan," a human-made product, and its colours become "jewels" and "silks;" as soon as it appears it is co-opted and converted to yet
another artificial feature of the culturally produced scene. As Rooke observes, "the king of birds" belongs to the tapestry as do other heraldic animal symbols such as unicorns and harts ("Approaching" 66). The other birds waiting to invade the arras through the speaker’s eye will meet the same fate, because as symbols they are too abstract and ambiguous to function as archetypes, too removed from the central issue of the poem, which remains unarticulated. Orange commented in 1988 that the poem "lends itself to contradictory interpretations" ("Page" 252), and at present no other poem by Page has elicited so many and such contradictory readings.

Page herself says that "Arras" is one of her favourite poems, in which "I felt I had come very close to saying something I wanted to say" (Pearce 40). She has not, however, offered many hints as to how to read it. In the 1970s, critics differed over whether the arras represents a fallen or an ideal world. Smith, calling this Page’s "finest, most difficult poem," sees the peacock as "somehow sinister," as violating the "perfection and purity of the classical Eden" ("Poetry" 26). Namjoshi too calls the peacock "vaguely sinister." She also, however, without speculating on the speaker’s motives, ascribes to her a "grim satisfaction" at having produced a "disturbing element" that no one else perceives (27). Rooke, on the other hand, strenuously objects to any suggestion of a "sinister" quality in any element of the poem, insisting that the "royal denizens" of the arras represent the "perfection of human life," while the peacock is "a monarch returning from exile" ("Approaching" 65-6). Rooke’s attempt to represent every element of the poem as positive requires some leaps across logical gaps,
however, as when she maintains "the poet's desire to 'smash' and 'crack' the figures with her peacock-arrow in fact expresse[s] her will to love them" ("Approaching" 71). This interpretation might seem compellingly logical to a "lover," but could be perceived quite differently by the "beloved."

In a 1996 interview Page says the peacock is the "life force" created in the speaker's mind (Djwa 47), but does not comment on the nature of the "figures" or the arras itself. Readings since the 1970s have been roughly aligned with her comments and lack thereof in that they generally ascribe the threat in the poem to the arras rather than to the invading peacock. For Orange, "Arras" represents a central paradox of creativity: "the Gemini poet both is and is becoming part of her own vision of the perfection held in the infinite stillness of the work of art." The peacock mediates between the two aspects of the poet, the one who desires to be part of the arras, and the one who knows that completely becoming part of the work would mean "certain death" ("Page" 253). Killian takes the related view that the "excessively voluptuous peacock . . . embarrass[es] the poet in her 'classical' intent." In denying her association with it, she becomes "Gemini," split in the same way as the "poet's" consciousness in "Nightmare." Killian speculates that "the 'classical' impulse behind her formalist poetry . . . is at the root of the poet's alienation from herself" (Killian 98-9), thus also implicitly locating the threat in the arras.

Relke says the poem cautions idealists such as Christians and Platonists to fear a state of timelessness where "future" means nothing. Like Orange and Killian she implicitly identifies the dangerous element as the arras, but unlike any other critic she
reads the "poet" as confessing responsibility not for the peacock but for the arras itself ("Tracing" 28). This interpretation at first glance seems improbable because the line "It was my eye" opens the stanza describing in ecstatic imagery the "voluptuous" and "sweet" arrival of the bird. Her reading becomes more compelling on closer examination, however, because the line "I confess" ends the previous stanza describing the speaker's fear of the arras. At the very least the splitting of the two parts of this sentence into the two different stanzas confers an ambiguity appropriate to Relke's sense of the speaker's situation "poised on the threshold between the material world and the world of the arras" ("Tracing" 27-8).

The readings of Orange, Killian, and Relke assume that the central conflict in the poem is between art and life, the conflict I identify as central to "If It Were You" and "Nightmare." Critics have largely ignored, however, a line in the third stanza that does not fit neatly into any of these interpretations: "No one joins/those figures on the arras." This might seem on first reading to be a throwaway line, as in itself it contributes no additional meaning to the poem. In "Melanie's Nite-Book" and "If It Were You," however, apparently throwaway lines when re-assessed can open up new possibilities of interpretation. At the very least, it seems reasonable to wonder who "no one" might be, and what "join" might mean. Does it hint at someone who was expected simply to arrive, or someone who was expected to unify the group? Could it refer to the speaker?

Killian connects the sexual imagery of the speaker's union with the peacock to Page's acceptance of her feminine nature in
"After Rain," citing both poems as evidence of "reunion, restoration and re-vision" within Page's poetic sensibility (Killian 98-9). Given Page's ten years of poetic silence following these two poems, however, Killian hears in retrospect "a foreboding sense of helplessness" in Page's "appeals to external forces" in both poems, in her appeal to the birds to "choir" her in "After Rain" and her question "Does no one care?" in "Arras" (99-100). I suggest that whatever gender issues may be addressed in "Arras," they are overshadowed by the central and unarticulated issue of this poem: the failure to "join" the external other. In Ehrenzweig's terms, this is the underlying theme that can unify the superficial confusion of meaning. We can better perceive this

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11 Nancy Paul reads "Arras" as primarily concerned with the gender politics of creativity, claiming that the conflict between Relke's and Rooke's interpretations of this poem is central to the problems feminists have with Page: "Does she reject the two-dimensional stasis of the arras or embrace it?" She says Page is "self-consciously following in a male tradition, while simultaneously purporting a feminine modesty in her public statements," an assessment I agree with. I am not convinced, however, that "Arras" in particular is concerned with gender, because Paul's conclusions about this poem rest on interpretations that depend almost entirely on cross-referencing specific images in it with similar ones from other poems. This is particularly dangerous when reading Page's poetry, because as I explained in Chapter 1 Page tends to use the same images again and again, but from radically different perspectives that alter their meanings and values.

Paul says the phrase "all suits" suggests the figures are all men, and more specifically Page's literary ancestors. "Gemini" refers to two genders, and the "poet" fears that "masculine hands will prevent her poetry," the hands being "masculine" presumably because of the "bite of fingers" that she fears. Finally, the figures can't be bothered to respond to this challenge by a woman because "they are too remote and uncaring to bother." Although Paul attributes only negative qualities to the masculinity she sees represented in this poem, she concludes that this poem challenges feminists because it provides "glimpses of the poet's acknowledgement of, and debt to, a poetic tradition predominantly male" (129-31).
issue in "Arras" if we first see Page directly address and at least hypothetically solve it in a later poem, "Another Space."

Rooke says of this poem that it is "less difficult" than "Arras" but "equally brilliant" ("Approaching" 71). Because there is no critical disagreement about it, it provides a useful reference point from which to consider thematically and stylistically related works that are more difficult to understand, including "Arras." Page says that "Another Space" (II 170), first published in 1969 just two years before "Preparation," is based on a dream she had in the late 1950's (Djwa 50) and "carried around" in her head for seven years, until "one day it started to write itself as a poem" (Orange, "Conversation" 74). Most critics observe that the poem employs the same central images as does "Arras," that is, the spinning axis and the arrow-like object that penetrates the speaker's head, but in the second poem these images appear in very different relationships with the speaker, and so carry completely different values. Some of the differences between the two poems parallel differences I already pointed out between "Nightmare" and "Preparation," differences that developed across the same interval of time, Page's decade of writer's block. One of the most obvious thematic differences between "Arras" and "Another Space" is the absence in the later poem of the conflict between art and life. Except for a reference to a kaleidoscope and a comparison of a dream image to "a Chagall," the process of converting experience to cultural or artistic representations of it is absent in "Another Space." The speaker relies instead on metaphysical conceits in the manner of John Donne or George Herbert, using precise physical and geometrical imagery to evoke
psychological and spiritual experiences.

In "Arras" the speaker offers no cue as to the situation in the poem, which seems dreamlike because of the unreality of the two-dimensional world and the loose associations of images and ideas. In "Another Space," however, the speaker wonders twice if she is dreaming, paradoxically creating a sense of immediacy by suggesting the experience seems too real to be a dream:

Those people in a circle on the sand
are dark against its gold
turn like a wheel
revolving in a horizontal plane
whose axis--do I dream it?--vertical
invisible
immeasurably tall
rotates a starry spool.

Perhaps linked to this greater awareness of the later speaker, the fear in "Arras" of being trapped in a two-dimensional existence has evolved in "Another Space" into a desire to break out of three dimensions into a new one. Whereas the speaker in "Arras" is imprisoned in a cultural product and process, "Another Space" unfolds in a natural setting evocative of Jung’s description of the dream as the situation of the unconscious from the point of view of the unconscious (Analytical 123).

The collective unconscious is ancient and conservative (Undiscovered 69), hence the apparently pre-modern culture of the dancers. Its archetypal forms cannot be grasped intellectually because if one "destroys" a manifestation of an archetypal form by
intellectualizing it, it will reappear as something else (Undiscovered 49). Thus each time the speaker tries to pin down some aspect of the dream, it metamorphoses into something else, as the "bow" of the musical "instrument" becomes the "arrow" of the (archery) bow, which in turn becomes the physical movement, the "bow," of the headman. In Jung’s model of the unconscious, it is capable of autonomous acts (Analytical 124), as in the message sent to the dreaming ego by the "headman:"

For now the headman--one step forward shoots
(or does he bow or does he lift a kite
up and over the bright pale dunes of air?)
to strike the absolute centre of my skull
my absolute centre somehow
with such skill
such staggering lightness
that the blow is love.

"Another Space" concludes, in the lines I quoted at the opening of this chapter, with the revelation that eludes the speaker of "Arras." Unlike the peacock, the "headman" can function as a Jungian archetype, because this later speaker is open to being influenced by other people.

The speaker of "Arras" not only never approaches the "figures," but she never even refers to them as human, whereas the second word in "Another Space" is "people," and the speaker calls them "beautiful." In "Arras" the "poles" of the "spinning world" become first a "bone" pointed at the speaker, referring to an Australian aboriginal curse of death, and then the bone becomes the arrow that finally becomes the peacock. Given the "figures’" lack
of response to the peacock, the speaker's reaction to them seems retrospectively at least overwrought, if not paranoid, in that she has created out of the neutral image of the poles a weapon, however beautiful, with which to "smash" them.

Reading "Arras" as a highly coded representation of the self's fear of the external other unifies most of the conflicting readings of the poem, because it shifts our perspective from that of the frightened speaker to one external to the poem. From the speaker's point of view, the danger is in the arras, which seems external to her. If we see the entire situation as a product of her imagination, however, the arras with its figures and the peacock are all charged with ambivalence. The artificial arras does require the introduction of the "life force," but Namjoshi's perception of a "grim satisfaction" on the part of the speaker at having produced the "sinister" peacock is also accurate, as the speaker continues to launch attacks on people who pose no verifiable threat except in being oblivious to her presence and impervious to her attacks. From a Jungian point of view, the danger to the speaker comes from her own fear, which prevents her from identifying with the external other, as this identification would reveal it as also the internal other.

In "Arras" only the speaker's ability to produce peacocks distinguishes her from the people around her, and she does not understand why she is not one of them but instead an "observer." By the end of the poem she is still "Gemini," divided. In Jungian terms, the speaker of "Arras" projects upon other people the aspects of herself that she does not wish to acknowledge (Undiscovered 66), in this case potential aggression. Only in
recognizing the external "other" as both separate from and necessary to the self, as the speaker does in "Another Space," can the self be unified and break out of whatever situation it has been trapped in. For the speaker at the end of "Another Space," the "eye" is no longer a source of weapons, but "a new direction" out of an impasse.

"Another Space" represents a psychological breakthrough, but only in the context of a dream. Its metaphysical conceits foreshadow the metaphysical style of many of the poems in Evening Dance of the Grey Flies, which I will discuss in Chapter 5, and the sense of balance and openness at the end of the poem foreshadow the representations of psychological equilibrium so characteristic of that collection. As Rooke says, however, although the speaker at the end of "Another Space" has "left for now the pain of subjectivity behind," she will awaken to find the real-life problem of the external other unresolved ("Approaching" 71-2), as it is in the poem "Difficult" (I 222), first published in 1981.

This poem has not attracted critical attention, possibly because of its stylistic awkwardnesses and opacity of meaning. It is written in the first person and addressed to "you," creating a tone similar in urgency and intimacy to that in "If It Were You," only this time the "you" does not seem to be the reader, but rather a participant in an exchange observed by the reader. The diction is prosaic and the sentences short and direct, as if to render more ordinary the fantastic content:

You would lead me into a world where I may not go.
I am trying to climb the Royal Tree. Its trunk is slippery elm. A tiny crown
its intricate branches high above my head.

The pattern of conflict set up in the first line develops both
directly, through the characterization of the "you" as "the prince/
stepped from the shape of the beast," and indirectly through the
unspecified location and even nature of the "you." The speaker
says she is being led, but she also seems alone in her predicament,
as she sees the "you" only "from the corner of [her] eye," and the
person addressed does not seem to be climbing the tree.

It is tempting to see the tree as a phallic symbol, with its
"smooth" trunk and its "crown," especially since by the end of the
fifth stanza the tree-climbing allegory breaks down in a repeated
stuttering of "trunktrunktrunk . . . ," a device extremely
uncharacteristic for Page. The stuttering suggests an anxiety more
severe than an outside observer might judge that the situation
calls for, as well as an emotional block associated with the
meaning of the word. The difficulty of pronouncing the sequence of
"k" followed by "t" intensifies these emotional associations.
Clearly, Page wants to draw attention to the word and what it
signifies, and clearly the tree trunk is central to what Jung might
term the near-numinous experience represented in the last stanza:

... Even the wind

speaks of your features as if you were God
GodGodGodGod. Words repeat and repeat.
I do not understand quite simple sentences.
Soon they will put me away.

The speaker nearly identifies the "you" of the poem with God,
separating the two only by the subordinating conjunction "as if."
The stuttering repetition of the word "God," the sequence of "d" followed by "g" as awkward as the earlier juxtapositions of "k" and "t," links it in turn with the tree trunk. The final stanza might suggest an approach toward communion with the external other and with God through sexual experience, but the approach seems to stall in the repeating words, reminiscent of the circling peacocks waiting to enter the world of the arras. The poem ends with a vision of isolation and insanity resembling that in "If It Were You."

The climb up a mystical tree appears again as the central motif of "The Sky Tree," a fairy tale Page published in 1996. In this story a king and queen climb together, resisting temptations and enduring fear and hardship, and are finally united with a mystical figure called the Wizard. Their son follows them on the climb, and is rewarded by a vision of his parents permanently restored to a state of youth and beauty like his own, and the realization that if he rules the kingdom as "wisely and as well" (87) as they have he will one day rejoin them in this state. The fairy tale is unsatisfying in that the characters are undeveloped, idealized, and completely at the mercy of mystical forces, so that no qualities or actions of their own contribute to their eventual apotheosis.

Why does the experience of climbing the tree end so badly for the speaker in the poem, while the same experience ends so happily for the characters in the later fairy tale? I think that the speaker of "Difficult" finally recoils in horror from the idea that the other person is God, because this would suggest that all aspects of humanity are within each of us. In the later "The Sky
Tree," climbing the tree also leads to a vision of identity as communal, but Page has eliminated the sources of the fear that pervades "Difficult." The fairy tale is told in third person rather than first; the tree is not at all phallic, and the threats encountered by the King and Queen are too vague and unidentifiable to be connected with sexuality or any other specific real-life force, so that the vision of unity at the end is completely removed from both earthly life and individual experience.

In "Arras" and "Difficult," some barrier separates the speakers from the healing and humanizing effect of the numinous experience. In "The Sky Tree," the disappearance of this barrier seems linked to the inherent superiority of the three members of the royal family, recalling the similar royal family in the story Page relates in her 1999 magazine article (discussed in Chapter 3). The royal family alone achieves the ultimate goal of unity with each other and with the Wizard; their less noble friends stay behind in "a beautiful place where everyone is happy," without any explanation of why this apparently perfect place suffices for their friends but not for them (81). Considered in the light of "The Sky Tree" and "Arras," the barrier in "Difficult" appears to be the speaker's desire to believe herself in some way different from the people around her, a belief that is threatened by her intimate encounter with the "you" of the poem.

This desire to distinguish the self from other people also appears in Jung's teachings, possibly arising out of what Wright sees as the "theoretical vacuum" behind Jung's claims that both the self and social relationships are numinous in origin (63). She says he slides over the question of how archetypes are transmitted,
through his suggestion that the potential for them is genetic (62). For Wright, this question of how archetypes are transmitted could only be addressed through a theory of language, something Jung would resist because he distinguishes between the languages of poetry and science (61). She quotes Jung:

Art by its very nature is not a science, and science by its very nature is not art; both these spheres of the mind have something in reserve that is peculiar to them and can be explained only in its own terms. ("On the Relation" 66)

Wright refutes Jung’s claim by citing some famous examples of overlap between these two "spheres," such as Kelkule’s derivation of the structure of the benzene ring through his spontaneously arising mental image of a snake eating its tail (61).

Whether or not we concur with the particulars of Wright’s description of the "theoretical vacuum" she sees behind Jung’s psychology, this gap corresponds with other occasional gaps in Jung’s world view, for example between the genders. Jung is much more insistent than Freud in employing the word "Man" and masculine singular pronouns, and in treating male experience in general as normative. For example, although he acknowledges men find it difficult to distinguish themselves from their feminine autonomous complex, or "anima," the parallel difficulty is "even more marked" in women:

In intellectual women the animus encourages a critical disputatiousness and would-be highbrowism, which, however, consists essentially in harping on some irrelevant weak point and nonsensically making it the
main one. Or a perfectly lucid discussion gets tangled up in the most maddening way through the introduction of a quite different and if possible perverse point of view. Without knowing it, such women are solely intent upon exasperating the man. . . ." ("Ego and Unconscious" 207-9).

Here he perceives women's behaviour only in relation to his own intentions, inadvertently illustrating a moment in which the self fails to recognize the external other as both autonomous and potentially of value.

In Modern Man in Search of a Soul Jung reveals yet another gap between the self and the external other, this time along socio-economic lines. He says the "truly modern man," the "most evolved form to date," must strive to reduce the unconscious as much as possible by admitting its material into the realm of the conscious. In order to do this, he must embrace poverty, chastity, and solitude. Jung says, however, that in order for these renunciations to be meaningful, the modern man must have achieved more than most in worldly terms (226). This socio-economic "entrance requirement" seems especially peculiar coming from Jung, who sought psychological and spiritual knowledge from pre-modern cultures, often amongst individuals who were not particularly distinguished in terms of worldly accomplishments as western culture defines these.

Jung also suggests an abstract distinction between morally superior and inferior people, in maintaining that even when someone attains "the full psychic picture," through psychoanalysis for example, "it is strictly a moral question whether he applies what
he has learned or not." The answer to this question is determined by a quality so elusive as to be discrete from "the full psychic picture." Jung calls it "moral stamina" (Elementary 124), an indefinable and unmeasurable indicator that could be useful to someone intent on designating some people as "superior" to others, without wishing to specify the parameters of this designation.

Many people prefer Jung's view of personality to Freud's because, as Wright points out, Freud's theory that psychological conflict arises from the concept of castration is "less exalted" than Jung's theory of reconciliation of opposites. In Wright's view, Jung separates art from science in order to "rescue" it from the Freudian theory that art arises from neurosis; Jung wishes to elevate art by connecting it with the numinous. But D. Cornell suggests that deferring to the concept of the numinous could itself be escapist:

The strangeness of the Other is that the Other is an "I."
But as an "I," the Other is the same as "me." Without this moment of universality, the otherness of the Other can be only too easily reduced to mythical projection. (57)

Cornell's observation links the idealization of the self, which is overt in "The Sky Tree" and implied in "Difficult," with the artistic impulse as it appears in "If It Were You," "Nightmare," and "Arras." In the context of these poems, both strategies limit the interaction between the self and the external other. Self-idealization limits recognition of the self, while the artistic impulse limits the self's recognition of external reality by selecting some elements of it and omitting others.
Jung shows some awareness of the limitations of his own belief system when he humbly acknowledges that every stage of psychological development has a "final feel" to it, inducing the belief that "now I am adapted and things will go smoothly" (Modern 52). He seems to suggest that every time we manage to recognize a new aspect of our "shadow side" we defeat some aspects of our idealism and elitism (Undiscovered 104), paradoxically leading us once again to believe ourselves "innocuous, reasonable and humane" (Undiscovered 84), oblivious to the remaining shadow side so evident to those around us.

In a 1996 interview, Page says that in her later years she moved "beyond" Jung and further into the "transpersonal realm" (Fisher 130); her interest shifted in the 1960s from Jungian thought to various strands of mystical thought, particularly Sufism. Page has not publicly explained what limitations she came to find in Jung's world view, but whereas Jung strives to perceive and incorporate his own shadow side, Sufism celebrates all differences and paradoxes, secure in the assertion that however threatening differences may appear to be, they are merely illusory. In Page's later poetry, she strives to represent the Sufi vision of identification among the self and the internal and external others. However, as she continues to separate into different poems her negotiations with each of these two others, she achieves these identifications only to a certain extent.
CHAPTER 5
THE LATE POETRY: BEYOND THE EGO?

Somewhere in between the two, a third
Wishes to speak, cannot make itself heard,
stands unmoving, mute, invisible,
a bolt of lightning in its naked hand.

--"The Selves"

The difference between Page's early and later poetry in some respects parallels the evolution Cynthia Messenger describes in Page's visual art, from her initial preoccupation with mimesis to her abstract works from the late 1950s and on ("Selecting" 118), a progression we can glimpse through the series of reproductions of her art in The Glass Air of 1991. These changes also parallel the development Sullivan traces from the beginning of "After Rain" to its ending, from the initial "spontaneous profusion" of metaphors to the "controlling principle" of a symbol ("A Size" 34). As Orange notes, the "restless . . . proliferation of images" in Page's early poetry is "pared down" in the later ("Page" 246, 248). Page speculated in 1975 that her drawing and painting during her break from writing may have "siphoned off the visual images so prevalent in [her] early poetry" (Heenan 103).

Where Sullivan sees in Page's early work visual images that are "self-generating, and multiply and reproduce in a kind of
literary osmosis" (33), many of the poems in Evening Dance of the Grey Flies (1981) explore in detail the metaphorical possibilities arising from a single image such as a geometrical pattern. They are verbal counterparts to some of Page's later abstract visual art, such as "Labyrinth," reproduced in The Glass Air of 1991 (96), or the precise geometrical webs, hourglasses and vortices reproduced in Hologram (1994). George Woodcock praises the poetry of Evening Dance for its "release from the moral and social anxieties that at times seemed to haunt her early work," and for its "calm metaphysical confidence" (Introduction 103). Woodcock uses the term "metaphysical" in its general sense, but as early as 1948 Smith identified Page as one of the Canadian poets writing in the "metaphysical tradition" of Donne (Introduction 30). This affinity reaches its fullest development in those poems of Evening Dance that evoke complex psychological experiences through imagery based on the precise working out of physical relationships.

"The Maze" (I 215) is representative in several ways of the metaphysical poems in Evening Dance. This is one of the thirty-two out of a total of forty-two poems in the collection in which the persona speaks in first person about her own experience, compared to only four first-person accounts of personal experience out of thirty-two poems in The Metal and the Flower (1954). These numbers substantiate Orange's observation that Page's poetry after 1967 is "more personal" ("Page" 229) than the earlier poetry.

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12 Although we have only dates of publication for Page's poems, thirty-seven of the forty-two poems from Evening Dance appeared in journals from 1969 to 1980. Thus I assume that this collection was generated at least primarily after her break from writing in the late 1950s and early 1960s.
Maze" also serves as an example of what Woodcock identifies as early as 1970 as the "progressive purification of [Page’s] line." He describes her earlier lines as "long and flowing" with the "full eloquence" of Canadian and British poetry of the 1940s, while in the poems of Cry Ararat (1967) "there is still a fluidity, but it is more controlled, sparser, yet totally moving" ("Page" 833).

As Orange has noted, Page uses a combination of alliteration, subtle metrical effects, and partial rhymes in unifying many of the poems of Evening Dance ("Page" 261). "The Maze" is more conversational in style than most of Page’s early poetry, but the distinct yet constantly shifting rhythmic patterns confer upon the mostly prosaic diction a poetic tension and concentration of meaning:

I clearly recall the feel of the clipped hedges--laurel or box--I am not sure which.
I was still small
so the little leaves of box
would have seemed bigger.
I remember they shone, looked black in places, scratched the skin of my wrists and ankles as I passed.

Iambs dominate in most lines, interrupted by occasional double stresses, as in "still small," and occasional dactyls, as in "would have seemed bigger." Any tendency for the irregularity of these rhythms to relax into prose, however, is countered by alliterative patterns (/k/, /l/, and /s/), as well as by occasional rhymes and half-rhymes such as "thread" with "head," or "scratched" with "passed." The diction, like the hedge, is "clipped," and the short words prevented from flowing into each other by consonants that
work like speed bumps, as in the juxtapositions of "c," "l," and "r" in "clearly recall."

"The Maze" illustrates yet another of Woodcock's characterizations of Page's later poetry, as being aware "with equal intensity of the general and the particular" (Introduction 99). It opens with precise sensory information about the physical maze. The speaker establishes an emotional ambivalence by alternating impressions of safety and beauty with hints of danger; the "little leaves" may seem harmless but they can scratch, and the beauty of the sky is tempered by the shadow cast by the hedge. Following the relentless inward progress that culminates with the phrase "in and in," the poem shifts direction with dizzying abruptness. The focus on immediate place and time expands suddenly to link the speaker's memory of her physical progress towards the centre of the maze with the disorienting psychological process of approaching the unconscious:

Compelled, and carrying out a strange instruction--
vital, timeless, tangible as a thread--
I was tracing the spiral nebula in my head.

The abrupt consonants and one-syllable words of the previous lines are suddenly released here in lines that flow without impediment towards the destination of the speaker's inner journey: the unification of patterns psychological and physical, microscopic and macroscopic, organic and inorganic, as her spiralling physical and psychological progress approaches the "vanishing point" at the "eye of the nautilus, the ram's horn."

The speaker of "The Maze" knows, based on the logic of geometry, that as a child she must have arrived at the centre of
the maze. Because she cannot actually retrieve from her unconscious the memory of doing so, the physical journey becomes a perfect conceit to represent the psychological journey of the conscious mind toward the unconscious. The conscious mind attempts both to extrapolate and interpolate from what it does know of itself and of external reality, and to extend this knowledge into the unconscious, but to no avail. Paradoxically, what was easy for the child--reaching the centre of the physical maze, and perhaps in the case of a young enough child occupying the centre of the psychological one--is impossible for the adult.

As with "Preparation," I find it difficult to apply Ehrenzweig's principle of split artistic intentions to this poem and to the many others in Evening Dance that are actually about the split between the conscious and unconscious. The main tension in "The Maze" arises from the contradictory nature of the desired experience of unity:

I follow
the spiralling pathway over and over, run--
hoping to pass that place on the sharpening turn--
to grow small, then smaller, smaller still--and enter
the maze's vanishing point, a spark, extinguished.

The speaker seems only too aware that her desire to arrive at "le Ciel" is inextricably connected with a desire to die.

The "strange" but "vital" "instruction" compelling the speaker links the centre of the maze with Jung's conceptualization of the unconscious as capable of autonomous acts, such as issuing instructions. "The Maze" seems aligned, however, with whatever limitation Page found in Jung's view of the psyche, because here
the speaker's passive conscious mind can not allow itself to be drawn in by the activity of the unconscious. In a few other poems in *Evening Dance*, other similar unresolvable dualities prevent a similar desired experience of unity, as in "Custodian" (I 177), where the speaker describes her sense of separation from her physical self. "The Maze" and "Custodian" are uncharacteristic of the whole collection, however, in terms of their content. As Orange observes, Page's later poems tend to represent "reconciliation and release" rather than "entrapment and death" ("Page" 264). Twenty-seven of the forty-two poems in *Evening Dance*, as well as the story "Unless the Eye Catch Fire," end with the resolution of a duality through the transcendence the speaker seeks, but fails to attain, in "The Maze." In terms of Stokes's spectrum of relationships between the self and the other, whereas Page's early poetry tends to emphasize objectification, her later poetry emphasizes identification.

The painful split between mind and body, which cannot be resolved in "Custodian," approaches resolution in "Dwelling Place" through the introduction of a third party "between" the mind and the body, in an example of the most striking metaphysical paradigm in *Evening Dance*, what Orange calls "triads" that function as "metaphors or allegories of conditions of being" ("Page" 258). I count eight poems in this collection that are overtly based on these triad structures, which in each case provide a means of release from entrapment in contradictions. In every case, one element of the triad can be read as the unconscious, while the other two close toward a kind of negative conceptualization of the unconscious by delineating what it is not. Whereas in "The Maze"
the conscious mind passively regresses toward a childhood memory, the transcendent experiences in the other *Evening Dance* poems are attained through conscious activity that takes the speakers "between" or "above" a dualism, rather than "into" one aspect of it, as in some of our common idioms for problem-solving: we "step back" from a conflict, or "rise above" it.

Whereas some of Page's early work lends itself to readings based in gender politics or in Freudianism, and much of her mid-career poetry shows affinities with Jungian thought, since the late 1960s she has espoused Sufism as her central spiritual influence. Several critics (for example Rooke "Chameleon" 194, Djwa 50, Fisher 133) have referred to her affinity with Sufism's affirmation of love and the possibility it offers of transcendence. However, only Orange has outlined this affinity more specifically, citing the Sufi acceptance of all established religions as pathways towards truth, its assertion that experiences of "completeness" (such as during artistic inspiration) are necessarily transient, and the recurrence in Sufi literature of angels, which also appear in Page's poetry ("Page" 256-7). It seems to me, however, that the most obvious connection between Page's later poetry and Sufi teachings is not with the emotional or mystical aspects of Sufism, which the latter shares with many religious traditions as well as artistic movements such as romanticism, and which at any rate were also present in Page's early poetry. Arthur Deikman comments that scholars in general tend to focus on the mystical aspect of Sufism, rather than emphasizing the logical basis of its methods ("Report" 243). This bias characterizes the connections critics see between Sufism and Page's later poetry. The main connection I see between
this poetry and the Sufi tradition is in Page's use of logical patterns in what Peter Brent says is the main activity of Sufism: resolving paradox ("Masters" 13).

Page says that her reading from 1967 to 1977 of Mideastern poets such as Rumi and Jami reaffirmed her own beliefs but did not influence the formal aspects of her poetry (Pearce 36). She denies, for example, that her various images of "spinning" derive from the practices of Sufi dervishes, noting that both "Arras" and the dream that later gave rise to the poem "Another Space" predated her introduction to Sufism, and citing Idries Shah's belief, like Jung's, that poets draw from a "stream of ideas" available to anyone (Djwa 50). Page describes her fascination with Sufism as having evolved naturally out of her affinity for Jung, pointing out that a Sufi is what Jung calls an "individuated man" (Djwa 49). Still, she says Sufism reaches "beyond Jung, further into the transpersonal realm" (Fisher 130), and that although she looked all her life for some "spiritual way," only Shah's teachings gave her a glimpse of a "new direction or world" (Djwa 51), presumably the one that "opens like an eye" at the end of "Another Space."

She does not elaborate on her sense of the relationship between Jungian and Sufi thought, but her comments correspond with Shah's assertion that intellectual, emotional, social, and psychological development are all at a "lower level" than Sufism, which includes them (260). Although unlike Freud and Jung Sufi writers do not attempt to construct a coherent framework for understanding psychological experience, they employ logical constructs that dismantle faulty and superficial perceptions of reality in order to reveal underlying truths. If Jung's ideology
affords a broader view of psychological experience than does Freud's intense focus on sexual drive, Sufism can be seen to provide the logical basis Wright sees as lacking in Jung's teachings, without, however, providing either Freud's or Jung's specific accounts of psychological experience.

Here is Peter Brent's conceptualization of the paradox at the heart of Sufism:

God is separate from the worshipper, and at the same time is the worshipper himself; the passionate element in Sufism can only come from a perceived duality that acts as a barrier between God and the worshipper. It is the barrier itself, however, that resolves this paradox: its resistance sets up precisely the intense devotional energy which the worshipper must develop in order to burst through it. Beyond lies that in which no paradox survives . . . This perceived singularity, in which at one level one remains oneself, at another one totally loses oneself, is the Real, . . . the object of [Sufi] disciplines. (13)

This insistence on the illusory nature of paradox and therefore the possibility of transcending it characterizes the teachings in Shah's The Way of the Sufi, the book that introduced Page to Sufism. In this book almost every statement Shah either makes or cites about Sufism is contradicted by some other statement. Shah insists, for example, on the difficulty of defining or even categorizing Sufism, but most of his lengthy introduction is given to vigorously challenging various other authorities on the subject, in what is apparently a scholarly and possibly also an inter-
cultural turf war. These conflicts over the issue of authority also pervade his selections of ancient literature, as illustrated by the variety of advice he cites regarding teachers, couched in parables that in themselves often involve paradox (56).

Because "to the sick man, sweet water tastes bitter in the mouth" (51), the student must place absolute trust in the teacher no matter how mysterious or unorthodox the pedagogical methods involved. Recognizing one's teacher, however, is a problem: the devil reports in an ancient story that he has no work to do since "theoreticians and would-be teachers of the Path have appeared in such numbers" (169). Recognizing teachers by their words is problematic, since Sufis teach "within frameworks that as effectively screen their inner meaning as display it." One of Rumi's titles is "You get out of it what is in it for you," by which he indicates that those seeking poetry, stories, or intellectual stimulation will find these things in his writings, but only those seeking the truth will find it there (102).

Recognizing Sufis by their actions is also difficult, as they "will probably have to dissimulate" when among people who do not share their views (123). Chishti's unapologetic validation of lying may lend itself to moral slipperiness, but the fact remains that some Sufis have suffered horrific martyrdoms in defending their visions of truth (172-3). Finally, although Insan-i-Kamil writes that "Sufi means love," and a central Sufic aphorism advises "speak[ing] to everyone in accordance with his understanding" (156), Chishti's writings hold that ordinary people are too "greedy" and "stupid" to recognize teachers unless they identify themselves by "the crudest possible means" (120), an attitude that
seems far from loving.

It is difficult to get even a vague sense of the degree to which Shah and the writers he cites are aware of these various contradictions, given what Shah explains as the necessarily fragmented and diversified nature of Sufi teachings. Sufism is commonly thought of as an esoteric sect split off from early Islam, but unlike Islam, Judaism, or Christianity it resists definition in terms of major leaders, geographical or cultural connections, or doctrine. Shah says the greatest Sufis are anonymous (32), and Page notes that even Shah does not proclaim himself as a Sufi, although other people say he is one (quoted in Djwa 49). For Shah, canonization of ideas or methods equals "fossilization;" Sufism must be dynamic and responsive to its cultural environments (28-35, 259). A coherent doctrine, even were it possible, would defeat its own purpose, since one approaches transcendence by gathering fragments of understanding from diverse sources and assimilating them, thus bringing them "to life" for oneself (28-35). Other systems of thought or belief include and even celebrate contradictions and paradoxes, but Sufism goes further by refusing any singular, received definitions or meanings, its only defining activity being the transcending of ordinary limitations (14).

These limitations, Sufism suggests, are caused by our unwillingness to recognize and accept contradictions. In everyday life, time and circumstances often obscure the connections between two contradictory perceptions of reality, enabling us to avoid consciously recognizing the clash. Sufi teaching presents isolated moments of insight, stripped of the details that would connect them to any particular situation, so we can easily accept them as true.
It then randomly jumbles together these moments of insight, so that in reading we encounter two starkly contradictory statements and must acknowledge the apparently impossible fact that both are true. This forces us to seek a third perspective from which we can tolerate the contradiction, a perspective necessarily removed from the social reality that would normally obscure the contradiction. Sufi teachings avoid systemization to the greatest degree possible in order to mimic the randomness with which we encounter contradictions in our everyday lives, and also to acknowledge the individuality of our responses to contradictions.

The response Sufism intends to elicit in the reader or student is essentially the triad structure Orange sees in some of the Evening Dance poems. There is a parallel between Page's attempts in Evening Dance to comprehend the incomprehensible, and the attempts by Sufi teachers to evoke a state of transcendence that cannot actually be evoked, because it must be achieved through direct experience. As Sufi writers do not attempt to characterize transcendence in a definitive way, so in Evening Dance Page does not attempt to describe the unconscious directly. In "Dwelling Place" (I 221), for example, she evokes it indirectly.

Through the first two stanzas of this poem we assume the speaker is the mind, objectifying her body in the tone of an indulgent adult describing a loved but occasionally difficult child. The images of machinery reinforce the speaker's sense of detachment from her body:

This habitation--bones and flesh and skin--
Where I reside, proceeds through sun and rain
a mobile home with windows and a door
and pistons plunging, like a soft machine. The impression of the body as machine is progressively undermined, however, in this first stanza by isolated words such as "flesh" and "soft." The dichotomy of active mind and passive body also begins to disintegrate with the assignment of the verb "reside," grammatically active but denoting a passive state of being, to the mind, and the verb "proceed," indicating not only activity but also purpose, to the body. This sense of the body’s capacity for purposeful activity culminates in the present participle "plunging," which attributes to the body’s movement an emotional quality, either of desperation or of aggression.

This tension between the inorganic and organic qualities of the body is reinforced by the formal qualities of the poem. The machine-like regularity of the four-line stanzas and iambic pentameter is consistently undermined by the refusal of the sentences to fit neatly into this form. In the first stanza the sentence is fragmented by interjected phrases, either modifiers such as "where I reside," or appositives such as "bones and flesh and skin." By the third and pivotal stanza, the longer clauses at the beginning of the poem have given way to short clauses requiring pauses between them that break up the regular meter of the lines:

It sleeps, it weeps, its poor heart breaks,
it dances like a bear, it laughs, opines
(and therefore is) . . .

Whereas the first stanza ends with a period, the next three end only with the end of a clause, the rest of these sentences running into the following stanzas.

The body becomes increasingly endearing in its awkwardness and
vulnerability as it progressively acquires the characteristics of the mind. Rather than crediting the mind with the capacity for emotion, for example, the speaker observes of the body that "its poor heart breaks." Rather than crediting the mind with the ability to think, she notes that the "mobile home" "opines," indulgently granting that it therefore satisfies Descartes's condition for existence. As the conscious functions of the mind are subsumed within the physical functions of the body, however, they are stripped of intention and meaning, and by the last stanza disappear into the mechanism of the "bus," recalling the "mobile home" of the opening stanza. In Stokes's terms, the speaker begins by identifying with the mind and objectifying the body. Through subsuming the mind into the body, she extends her identification with the mind into an identification with the body. Paradoxically, however, she ends by objectifying both mind and body, a logical tangle reminiscent of that which the Sufi literature says must be worked through in finding (that is, identifying with) a teacher.

This intellectual and emotional separation of the "I," initially from the body and finally from both mind and body, resembles the slide toward the disintegration of the self represented in "If It Were You." In "Dwelling Place," however, this process is arrested in the last three lines:

I, its inhabitant, indweller--eye
to that tiny chink where two worlds meet--
or--if you so discern it--two divide.

The speaker is finally poised at the point of balance between two unspecified "worlds," perhaps internal and external, perhaps temporal and eternal. The poem ends in a recognition and
acceptance of the same paradoxes that destroyed the self in "If It Were You," that the "I" is also an "eye," and therefore part of itself as well as itself, and that a meeting can also be a division. Like the unattainable centre of the labyrinth in "The Maze," the point of balance from which these paradoxes can be tolerated can only be inferred by what surrounds it but is not it. The negativity and self-reflexivity of this characterization of the "I" corresponds with Brent's description of the "perceived singularity" that is the goal of Sufism, in which "at one level one remains oneself, [while] at another one totally loses oneself."

Each of the eight poems overtly organized around triad structures describes a similar experience of achieving a third perspective that emerges from an original dichotomy. But within this group of poems this pattern itself shifts and fragments, so that although these poems share a formal device, they avoid reducing the triad form to a single conceptualization, to an extent that might even impress Shah. Four of them end with a vision of stability, harmony, and completeness. In "The Flower Bed" (I 159) and "Domestic Poem for a Summer Afternoon" (I 163), the sun represents the third point of a triad including nature and the speaker, whereas in "The Filled Pen" (I 210) the third point between artist and subject is the ideal "behind the apparenacy of things." In "Cullen Revisited" (I 165), however, the third point is a "Third World" that is not the ideal, but rather midway between the immanent and the ideal. In the four other triad poems the resolution ending the poem suggests not the conclusion of a process but the beginning of some new potential; in "Traveller's Palm" (I 157) and "Ours" (I 181) (although this poem commemorates the death
of this particular "other," Patrick Anderson) the union of self and other produces a bird, emblematic as in "Arras" of creative energy. And whereas in "Dwelling Place" the third element of the triad is a mysterious aspect of the self poised at some balance point between fairly conventional dichotomies such as mind and body or external and internal experience, the third party of "The Selves" (I 209) is more difficult to characterize. Standing between the passive "invalid" self and the active "fit" self, "unmoving, mute, invisible,/ a bolt of lightning in its naked hand," it is not even as recognizable as the observing entity at the end of "Dwelling Place." It is not even the energy symbolized by the lightning it holds, but something so abstract we might think of it as "potential."

No wonder these records of Page's conscious journey towards her own unconscious inspire critics to ascribe to her the triumph of having transcended various dualities. Freake says that in Page's later poetry "she registers her Romantic and Modernist heritages, but goes beyond them to a new paradigm of the relation between self and world" (98). Her later poetry reflects "acceptance of the ways in which one consciousness blends into another and a sense that an 'alignment' with the world around us is the key to a centred existence" (112). But as Ricou points out in discussing Page's use of the child's voice, "the ideal of a seamless world . . . is at the heart of Romantic mythology" (91).

Orange says that some of Page's later work transcends the scope of aesthetics itself. "The Flower Bed" and "Domestic Poem for a Summer Afternoon" are "the rare kind of poem that defies paraphrase or analysis:" "they can only be savoured in their
entirety again and again" ("Page" 261). Without taking away from the beauty of these poems, I would point out that they are based on the triad motif he discusses elsewhere in general terms, and therefore are subject to at least some analysis in terms he himself has laid out. Woodcock concurs with Orange, however, that "the ideal poem as self-sufficient artefact cannot be explained." He offers as an example "Finches Feeding," which creates "stages on the way to deeper and more universal identifications," and he concludes that "there is no point . . . in attempting to explicate [it]" (Introduction 101-2).

The poem Woodcock says resists analysis as art, "Finches Feeding" (I 158), addresses the futility of artistic representation itself. In the first stanza the speaker describes through similes not the visual appearance of the birds but rather the visual impression of the energy behind their frenetic movements:

They fall like feathered cones from the tree above,  
sumi the painted grass where the birdseed is,  
skirl like a boiling pot  
or a shallow within a river--  
a bar of gravel breaking the water up.

The mysterious life energy expressed through their "skirl" is connected through the similes to forms of energy we find it easier to conceptualize and describe, the heat that produces the movement of boiling water, or the gravity that directs the flow of a river. Having attempted to describe in intellectual terms her perception of this life energy, the speaker rhetorically throws up her hands in the second stanza: "Having said that, what have I said?/ Not much."
In the final stanza, she expresses her inability to express the effect of the birds on her state of mind. Woodcock attributes "magic" as a factor in this poem and others in Evening Dance that he says approach "a poetry of sibylline utterance, almost a possession by the vision" (Introduction 101-2). As much as I agree with his enthusiasm over "Finches Feeding," however, I do not see it as any more resistant to explication than any other of Page's poems. It is a direct statement of the inadequacy of objective artistic representation, expressed in self-referential terms so that the "failure" of the speaker to convey her subject itself becomes the subject of the poem, which nevertheless proceeds to do what the speaker has already told us it cannot. The speaker accomplishes what she says she cannot, by switching from an intellectual and objective representation of the birds to a subjective description of her emotional response to them. (Critics of Donne's poetry readily trace this kind of convoluted logical sequence, without attributing its effects to magic.) The shift from intellectual to emotional response is intensified by a shift from the concrete connections expressed by the similes in the first stanza to the more abstract connections suggested by the metaphors in the last:

Neither my delight nor the length of my watching is conveyed [t/o]
and nothing profound recorded, yet these birds
as I observe them
stir such feelings up--
such yearnings for weightlessness, for hollow bones,
rapider heartbeat, east/west eyes
and such wonder—seemingly half remembered—as they rise spontaneously into air, like feathered cones.

Here, the speaker conveys her response to watching the birds through expressing her yearning for a more direct experience of the life energy that drives both bird and speaker. Achieving this direct experience would require that she be freed from the physical, physiological, and anatomical constraints that limit what humans can do, feel, see, and know.

The transcendent quality of the ending comes partly from the image of the "spontaneously" rising birds, and partly from the repeated word "such," which we expect to be followed by "that . . . ." The two repetitions of "such" are almost lost in the series of nested modifying phrases of the last four lines, so that by the end of the poem the long sentence of this stanza seems almost complete. We are left with a vague sense that something should follow, without quite knowing what it is, which is precisely the sense produced in the speaker while she watches the birds.

Finally, the poem closes with the word "cones," which echoes its opening simile. In the first line, the birds visually resemble conifer cones in that they are a similar size and in that both "fall" from trees. The image of cones "rising" in the last line is at first perplexing, in that pine cones do not actually rise. The image only makes sense if we shift our attention away from the obvious physical properties of cones and focus on their essential nature: they are transmitters of the life energy the speaker perceives in the birds. The dichotomy between birds and cones in the opening simile is thus resolved by the speaker, and by implication the dichotomy between the speaker and the birds is
resolved by the essential nature of the cones as seeds. The underlying triad theme in the poem is reinforced by the other meaning of the word "cone," a three-dimensional shape that appears from the side to be a triangle, which "rises" from a duality to a singularity.

But it is relatively easy to analyze in a single poem the aesthetic effects that create the impression of transcendence. It is more difficult to account for the disappearance of a duality in the course of an entire poetic oeuvre. I have argued, for example, that the question of gender roles underpins many of Page's early poems about identity, and that this issue disappears in the later poetry. If Page did not "transcend" her apparent early concern over gender roles, as Killian argues that she does (102), how else can we describe what happened to this concern? Relke proposes that such early poems as "After Rain" offer a vision of what Jessica Benjamin calls "intersubjective space," within which the rift between humanity and nature can be healed ("Tracing" 28). Relke's argument implies, as Benjamin argues explicitly, that the rift between the genders can also be healed within this intersubjective space. I argued in Chapter 2 that the vision of unity Relke and Killian read in some of Page's early poems depends heavily on assumptions of gender essentialism. I think, however, that Relke's application of Benjamin's concept to Page's early poetry can be a useful starting point in understanding what happens to gender issues in Page's later work.

Many of the *Evening Dance* poems align with the Sufi vision of ultimate reality as infinitely eluding definition or description, without, as Page says, borrowing from the formal qualities of Sufi
teachings. Most of these teachings are accounts of interactions between people, and can be read either as entertaining stories or as allegories for psychological experience. As Orange has noted, the prevalent vehicles for Page's new tendency in *Evening Dance* toward philosophical expression are geometrical shapes used as metaphors ("Page" 260). These spatial metaphors did not suddenly appear in her late poetry, however. Freake observes that throughout her career, the sense of being "directionless in space" is her most common metaphor for alienation from the self (102), and that in her later work she almost always describes in terms of "centredness and ordered space" the "epiphanic moments" in which the self becomes a "total I," such as in "Cry Ararat" (109). In the early *The Metal and the Flower*, fourteen out of thirty-two poems employ geometrical metaphors crucial to their meanings, an even greater proportion than the fifteen out of forty-two similar poems in *Evening Dance*. The difference is that the later geometrical relationships tend to be represented more explicitly, and they more often control the development of the whole poem, for example as the speaker's progress up the tree controls the development of "Difficult," and her progress inwards controls that of "The Maze."

Page's account of her visit to the cathedral at Bahia suggests that by the time she lived in Brazil she was very conscious of the intellectual and emotional power generated by geometrical patterns:

There is an infinite mystery about the interior which may be mathematical. Here the whole is unquestionably greater than the sum of its parts... all [of which] combine to focus the eye and with it the mind, perhaps
even the heart. (Brazilian Journal 130)
The concept of space is also central for many contemporary relational psychoanalysts besides Benjamin. D.W. Winnicott, for example, theorizes an "intermediate area of experience," between the inner reality described by Freud and the outer reality of the environment. This area is occupied by what he calls "transitional" phenomena, which initially serve as the infant's defence against separation from the mother. Insofar as the mother allows the infant to work out its fear and anger in the intermediate area of play, the infant will come to accept that although it cannot control external reality, the potential for sharing this reality compensates for the loss of the infant's early sense of omnipotence (111).

Some writers, such as Winnicott, Stephen Mitchell, and Wright, do not belabour the role of gender politics in relational theories. Benjamin, however, sees Freudianism and feminism as equal contributors to relational psychoanalysis, in that both strive to "bring the inarticulate subject to speech" (Shadow xv), a phrase which strikingly if accidentally recalls the "mute" entity at the end of Page's "The Selves." For Benjamin, the external intersubjective space between analyst and patient, a later manifestation of Winnicott's intermediate space between mother and infant, mirrors inner spaces in both analyst and patient, into each of which the split-off other must be re-admitted (Shadow 6). So the external space of the cathedral at Bahia mirrors the inner space in Page's "The Hidden Room" (I 11):

It is in a house
deeply hidden in my head
It is mine and not mine [sic]

yet if I seek it
it recedes
down corridors of ether

Each single version
is like and unlike
all the others

a hidden place
in cellar or attic
matrix of evil and good . . .

Benjamin argues that this inner space, theorized by such writers as Erik Erikson, is an organizing metaphor for psychological activity that has as much potential power for expressing female agency as the phallic model has for expressing male agency. Even if gender issues have disappeared from the overt content of Page's later poetry, then, Benjamin's theory suggests that these issues could still be present, in a more abstract form, in Page's later psychological and philosophical inquiry.

Benjamin says "what is experientially feminine is the association of desire with a space, a place within the self, from which this force can emerge," as long as it is not limited to a sense of absence, a passive "waiting to be found by the phallic explorer," but rather represents "the opportunity to explore one's own inner life as a creative activity" ("Desire" 96-7). This model corresponds with Orange's sense of Page's poems as "interlock[ing]
on all sides to form an enclosed world of their own" ("Page" 235).

The interpsychic, or spatial, mode certainly prevails over the intrapsychic, or phallic, in *Evening Dance*, in which the spatial images are only rarely entered, as in the vortex of "After Donne" (I 225), or explored, as in "The Maze." Some of the other spaces are more recognizably interpsychic, as their contents are described, for example the "inhabitant" occupies the "Dwelling Place" at the point where two worlds meet or divide, and in "The Selves" the third "self" is positioned between the passive and active selves. Other interpsychic spaces are conceptualized, as in "Chinese Boxes" (I 227) the "inner eye" sees reality as a set of nested boxes ranging from the infinitely small to the infinitely large, and in "Star-Gazer" (I 226) the speaker "reads" the cosmos as an error-free script. Still other interpsychic spaces are rearranged, as in "Tethers" (I 223) social connections are "guyropes" that make a "tent" of the speaker, who without them would be a "sail" or "wings," and in "Spinning" (I 229) the speaker wishes to find in a "measureless continuum" both "stock-stillness" and "dizzying movement." Is it possible that the prevalence of spatial metaphors in Page's poetry supports the idea of gender essentialism after all?

Benjamin associates the intrapsychic mode with "symbolism," the phallus being the quintessential symbol, and the interpsychic mode with "spatial representation" ("Desire" 95). She clearly privileges the interpsychic mode as a possible means of resolving the subject-object dichotomy. She even extrapolates from her model of female psychological self-exploration a concept of an intersubjective space in which men and women interact based on
shared "agency and receptivity toward the world" (93), effectively subsuming the masculine within a paradigm she has explicitly identified as feminine. But are spatial metaphors as benignly neutral and as inclusive as Benjamin assumes? Her assumption of their nature rests on her distinction between "symbolic" and "spatial" representations, and on their association with gender-specific psychological patterns. I would argue, however, that spatial images often function as symbols in much the same way as phallic images do, and furthermore that both are used by both male and female poets.

Of the seventeenth-century metaphysical poets who influenced Page both directly and through their influence on other modernists such as Eliot, Donne shifts with apparent ease among the conventional heterosexual masculine use of the phallic mode, its reversal with respect to himself, and what Benjamin calls the interpsychic mode. In Elegy XIX, "To His Mistress Going to Bed," the male speaker attempts to seduce the woman by using metaphors of exploration, with its assumed corollary of domination: "O my America, my new-found-land!" The speaker in "The Sun Rising" similarly describes his love from a masculine heterosexual perspective that mirrors the political realities associated with this perspective: "She is all states, and all princes I." In the same poem, however, the lovers' bed is a microcosm that contains the entire world, a spatial metaphor representing an interpsychic experience. Similarly, in "The Canonization" the couple's undying love takes the form of "pretty rooms" built in sonnets, "a well-wrought urn," and "half-acre tombs." In "The Flea" the interpsychic mode, contrary to Benjamin's conception of it, is put
to unethical use, albeit ironically, as the male seducer riffs on the metaphorical potential of the flea as a space in which "our two bloods mingled be." Finally, in the fourteenth Holy Sonnet "Batter My Heart" the speaker asks God to invade him as He would a "usurped town," and finally to "ravish" him, reversing the conventional heterosexual masculine perspective on the phallic.

If connections between gender and the interpsychic and intrapsychic modes seem unstable in Donne’s poetry, they seem equally so in modern poetry. In Margaret Avison’s "The Swimmer’s Moment," for example, the feminine spatial image of the whirlpool represents experience that one must "penetrate" at great risk if one is to "win" peace, a distinctly intrapsychic process, whereas e.e. cummings combines the two modes in "somewhere I have never travelled, gladly beyond" (spacing in original). His presumably male speaker associates feminine sexual imagery first with his presumably female lover, as in the line "in your most frail gesture are things which enclose me," and then with himself: "you open always petal by petal myself as Spring opens/ (touching skilfully, mysteriously) her first rose." The paradoxical relationship of these intrapsychic images culminates in complete identification between the two lovers. When the speaker says in the last stanza "I do not know what it is about you that closes/ and opens," we cannot tell whether the two verbs should be read as transitive, with the implied object "me," or as intransitive; the grammatical ambiguity creates the effect of complete intersubjectivity.

This cursory survey of course indicates nothing about the tendencies of each gender towards a particular "sexualized"
metaphor. In Erikson’s study of play-scenes constructed by children and adolescents, girls constructed more than two-thirds of the scenes that represented interior spaces, and boys constructed the same proportion of scenes with phallic features (270). Even if these tendencies were also found to pervade poetry, however, the question of whether these behavioral patterns were caused by nature or nurture remains open, as does the question of what moral values might be associated with each type of metaphor, given some of Page’s early poems such as "Round Trip" in which a "girl" is trapped within a man’s ribcage, and "Only Child" in which the son is trapped within his mother’s conceptualization of him.

Perhaps the reason even a feminist theorist like Benjamin has trouble imagining a symbol for feminine desire is that Western culture has not been in the habit of connecting spatial metaphors with female sexuality as readily as we connect phallic metaphors with male sexuality, and we therefore do not tend to recognize spatial representations as "symbols" with more far-reaching implications than any single metaphor. In some other cultures spatial symbols may be more readily identifiable, although their connection to female experience is far from clear. Anjali Bhelande, for example, points out similarities between many of Page’s geometric images and "yantras" from the Indian Tantric tradition, configurations which "lead the observing eye to a centre-point" and can aid in meditation leading to a sense of unity (145-6).

I would argue that the potential for detecting spatial metaphors and relating them to "feminine" experience as automatically as we recognize phallic metaphors and relate them to
"masculine" experience depends upon the scope of experience available to people of each gender. Benjamin says that the more socialization by gender role disintegrates, the less either agency or receptiveness will be associated with a particular gender. The difficulty in letting go of ingrained gendered associations, however, is reflected in Benjamin's difficulty in responding to criticism that her privileging of the intersubjective merely reinforces essentialist notions of feminine tendencies toward connection rather than separation (Shadow xviii). This privileging of connection threatens to condemn women, and men too, to perpetual entanglement in the kinds of relationships Page depicts in "Portrait of Marina." Benjamin convincingly argues that the equation of phallus with desire is simply a cultural construct that can and should be dismantled. She then proceeds, however, to establish a feminine "alternative" to the phallic mode of structuring experience (92). But why should we want to replace one deficient model with another that is equally deficient for opposite reasons? Close examination of Page's later poetry suggests that the pure identification associated with the interpsychic mode is no less limited a relationship for the self to have with the other than is the pure objectification associated with the intrapsychic.

The gender issues in Page's early poetry are not exactly transcended in the later poetry, as might be suggested by poems that represent male and female behaviour as complementary and equivalent, for example as in cummings' "somewhere I have never travelled." Rather they seem to have fallen away as relatively superficial manifestations of the more fundamental issue of how the self relates to the other. Page often in turn reduces these
relationships between self and other to abstract representations in the form of spatial images. The possibility of transcendence held out by the Evening Dance poems, then, seems to be in the eye of the beholder. Page herself consistently denies any experience or knowledge of transcendence:

I don't for a minute think of myself as a mystic. . . . The mystic, if he talked at all, would have known what he was talking about, whereas I don’t. Also he would have direct perception, whereas I don’t." (Orange "Conversation" 72)

The poems organized around logical and geometrical patterns are tranquil and optimistic visions of the unified, balanced self, but at the cost of a loss of the emotional energy so prevalent in many of Page’s earlier poems.

This loss of emotional energy arises partly from the fact that these poems do not represent the process of arriving at their visions of the interpsychic, or the Sufi "singularity," but rather represent the visions as eternally existing, if only occasionally revealed. We admire the aesthetic qualities of these poems, but like Page’s painting "Labyrinth" many of them seem strangely empty of content because they present little of the "resistance" Brent says Sufism recognizes as paradoxically necessary in attaining transcendence; they are highly conscious, cerebral representations of experience. The tensions that operate within the earlier poems have been displaced in Evening Dance into a rift between two kinds of poems. Besides those organized around conscious and logical approaches toward transcendence, some other poems do express strong emotion, explicitly articulating the conflict between the self and
the external other. "Voyager," for example, discussed in Chapter 3, describes the speaker's sorrow at the difficulties of communication between her and her father. "Difficult," discussed in Chapter 4, seems to hint at difficulties of communication within a sexual relationship, and in "Phone Call From Mexico" (I 173) the speaker despairs at her inability to comfort an old friend. All represent failure of communication between the speaker and a true external other, by which I mean one that resists the self's attempts either to objectify it or identify with it. These poems do not attempt, however, to represent the other's perspective on the self, but exclusively represent the self's subjective perspective on the other.

The rift that opens up in Page's mid-career poetry between her representations of the internal other and those of the external other, then, continues through her later attempts to represent identification with each of these others. The reason many of the Evening Dance poems appear so unified, and resist analysis according to Ehrenzweig's concept that conscious and unconscious purposes must oppose each other within a modern work of art, is that in this collection the primary split actually occurs between different poems. This interdependence of the poems might account for the fact that Dragland reproduces Evening Dance intact and in its original order in the Collected Poems, although he fragments and rearranges the contents of every other volume except Hologram. Freudian, Jungian, and Sufi teachings all recognize this particular rift between the self's experiences of the internal and external other, but Steven Mitchell says this rift is fundamental to contemporary relational psychoanalytic theories, dividing these
theories into "interpersonal" theories of interactions with the external other and "object-relations" theories of interactions with the internal other (8-9).

For interpersonal psychoanalysts such as Fairbairn and Fromm, says Mitchell, psychopathology results not from conflicts between inner drives and defenses, but from split loyalties to different external others, and further splits among different aspects of each relationship (28). For object-relations theorists such as Kohut and Winnicott, problems arise not from conflicts between drives or between loyalties, but from an incomplete inner sense of self resulting from an incomplete mirroring of subjective childhood experience by one's parents (32-3). Something of the difficulty of distinguishing between the self's experiences of the external and internal others is suggested by the fact that Wright assigns object-relations theorists to the opposite side of a similar schism. She says that ego-psychology focuses on the relationship between the ego and the internal other (49), juxtaposing this school with object-relations theory that focuses on "the psychic processes that mediate the relationship between the self and the world" (71). Freud evokes the mysterious nature of the relationship between external and internal other in his dictum "the shadow of the object falls upon the ego" ("Mourning and Melancholia" 249). The unanswered "metapsychological" question, says Mitchell, is how and why an external other becomes internalized (48).

Although there is no evidence in Page's writing or interviews that she is aware of contemporary relational psychoanalysis, the theoretical difficulty of unifying the self's experiences of the
internal and external others suggests an explanation for the parallel split in the content of Page's later poetry. The approach towards recognizing and accepting the internal other, which I traced in the first part of Chapter 4 through "If It Were You," "Nightmare," and "Preparation," leads into the metaphysical poetry that characterizes Evening Dance. The less straightforward approach towards recognizing and accepting the external other in other people, which I traced through "Arras," "Another Space," and the Evening Dance poem "Difficult," leads into the poems of Hologram, in which Page says she "marries" (Hologram 10) her poetic voice to those of some of her favourite poets. The two later volumes each focus on a different "other," then, but the methods of approaching the internal and external others are similar, based in the Sufi methods of transcending contradiction. In Evening Dance this method is manifested through metaphysical conceits such as the triads. In Hologram, the logical component is no longer embedded within the content of the poems, but rather controls the development of the poems through the externally imposed form of the glosa.

In the poems of Hologram, the dichotomy between the speaker and the (external) other poet is apparently resolved within the form of the glosa, which opens with a quatrain from another poet, followed by four ten-line stanzas by Page, each of which ends with a line from the quatrain. The sixth and ninth lines must rhyme, or half-rhyme, with the tenth. The glosa is thus an intersubjective space between the voices of the two poets, forming a triad pattern that mirrors the triads in the metaphysical conceits of Evening Dance. The triad also governs the abstract designs separating the
poems, which are curved patterns constructed from triangles juxtaposed at angles that fall into mathematically predictable sequences: the basis of calculus. As calculus describes curves in terms of straight lines that diminish to points, in these poems Page uses the ultra-rational form of the glosa to approach the irrational concept of the union of self and external other. Ehrenzweig says a work of art acts as "a containing 'womb' which receives fragmented projections of the artist's self" (185), a metaphor particularly appropriate for the glosa, which comprises fragments of two selves. As Sullivan observes, Page both echoes the other poets and asserts her own voice, converting Leonard Cohen's irony into "pure celebration" in "Inebriate" (II 197), and in "Presences" (II 201) "returning to [Eliot's] words the joy and enthusiasm that often seemed masked by a certain diffidence in his own work" ("Hologram" 124-7).

The self of Page's speakers approaches the other of the borrowed poetic voices, but within such a tight formal structure that the most obvious tension in these poems is not between the voices, but rather arises from the technical challenge of the form. Page suggests the same in her introduction to the collection, describing the difficulty of finding appropriate quatrains:

They had to be end-stopped, or give the illusion of being; as nine of my lines would separate them from each other, they had to give me nine lines worth of space; as well, their rhythm had to be one I could work with . . . Finally, and vitally, they had to parallel my own knowledge, experience, or--but preferably and--some other indefinable factor I could recognize but not name.
The requirements she identifies in precise terms are technical, whereas she leaves the questions of theme and content much more open.

The technical challenge of these glosas seems to be balancing the mathematically precise demands of the form with Page's long rolling lines and profusion of romantic imagery. These features represent a startling release from the tight control of both line and imagery in Evening Dance. Charles Hanly says that artistic form provides "an order that allows the ego to tolerate the exploration of identities and experiences that would otherwise be denied to it" (14). This observation suggests a reason for the contrast between the sparser imagery and logically ordered content that characterizes Evening Dance, in which the stanzaic forms are generally flexible, and the emotional release that characterizes Hologram.

Unlike Hanly, Benjamin connects this desire for formal control with gender. She says female patients who employ spatial metaphors in discussing psychological states often also report fantasies of submission to a controlling external other who "release[s] [them] into abandon" while himself remaining in control. Benjamin says this fantasized other "represent[s] an alienated version of the safe space [within oneself] that permits self-discovery, aloneness in the presence of the other" ("Desire" 97). Page says she has always been attracted to "set forms" because they liberate her mind, opening it up to poetic possibilities from the unconscious (Bashford 1). Whether or not Benjamin's association of aesthetic form with specifically female erotic fantasies is justified, the
The title poem "Hologram" (p. 189) is based on a quatrain from George Seferis:

All that morning we looked at the citadel from every angle.

We began from the side in the shadow, where the sea,
Green without brilliance,—breast of a slain peacock,
Received us like time that has no break in it.

As Kevin McNeilly reminds us (163), this quatrain is translated from Greek, and so I am not actually analyzing the interaction between Page’s speaker and Seferis’s, but an interaction between Page’s speaker and a speaker comprised both of Seferis’s voice and that of his translator. To avoid the awkwardness of repeating this formulation, however, I will refer to the "other" here as Seferis.

Page matches his long lines of eleven to sixteen syllables, and nearly matches their flexibility. Seferis achieves this flexibility by employing frequent anapests and dactylys; his quatrain includes fourteen of these, while Page’s first four lines include nine. Her first four lines also echo the frequent "s" sounds in his quatrain, naturalizing the transition from his voice to hers:

It was astonishing, larger by far than we could imagine, larger than sight itself but still we strained to see it. It was Kafka’s castle in a dream of wonder, nightmare transmuted, black become golden . . .

Seferis’s narrative has an oratorical quality, created partly by a syntax that is more complex than that of ordinary speech, for
example the two modifying phrases of the third line of his stanza split the dependent clause beginning with "where." The other source of this oratorical quality is that all of his lines are end-stopped, not just in sense but by punctuation, which creates a measured, formal-sounding rhythm.

Page amplifies these effects in her first stanza, which is pure description, syntactically mostly a series of adjective and appositive phrases, with eight out of nine lines end-stopped by some form of punctuation. Her next three stanzas become somewhat more narrative, in that they do not just describe the scene, but increasingly relate the responses of the speaker and her companion to what they see. As Page's contribution to the *glosa* develops, her voice becomes progressively distinct from Seferis's as the proportion of her end-stopped lines decreases, to six in her second stanza, three in the third, and four in the fourth. By the end of the poem these graded changes in form have created a sense that Page's and Seferis's voices are "interlocked," as are the speaker and her companion within the poem, echoing the idea in the poem that a miraculous vision can only be "invented" by two minds in perfect harmony.

The degree of identification between the "I" and the undescribed "you" of the poem, however, surpasses that between the speaker and Seferis. Page bends the rules a bit in order to work his lines into her stanzas, changing the word "where" in Seferis's second line to "and," and adding "was" to the beginning of his third line. These technical erosions of the "otherness" of Seferis's voice are almost unnoticeable, however. More intrusive is the thematic awkwardness arising from the breadth of the gap
between Seferis's use of the colour green to describe the sea, and Page's use of it to describe the initial appearance of the hologram:

And then we sensed it together—the tremulous foreshock of what lay ahead: what could not be imagined, possibly not even dreamed, a new range of experience. And—unbelievably—what revealed itself as earthquake

was green without brilliance, breast of a slain peacock.

Green is a logical colour for Seferis's sea, but one has to construct a reason for Page's hologram initially appearing as green. According to the OED, green is fourth in the series of seven colours that conventionally comprise a rainbow. It is therefore the central "line" in the spectrum of refracted colours, appearing in the poem first as a "spear," and then presumably expanding to include the entire spectrum "from infra-red to ultra-violet," perhaps similarly to the arrow that becomes the peacock in "Arras." This is an ingenious metaphysical conceit, but given the extent to which it bends Seferis's original words to fit the glosa, it draws attention to Page's description of these poems as "two sensibilities intermingling."

Without taking away from the beauty of these poems and from the appeal of the glosa as a concept, Page has the upper hand in deciding to "marry" the other poets (Hologram 9-10), as opposed to two poets deciding to "marry" each other in collaborative writing. "Hologram" is a poetic representation of identification through introjection, and implicitly suggests why this relationship alone does not equal a "marriage." Besides introjecting the "otherness" of Seferis's poetic vision into the speaker's, the poem also
introjects the external other in general, by using rhetorical
devices to suggest that she has incorporated into the final
eccstatic vision of identification the pain and negative experience
that can result from encounters with a true "other."

The speaker and her companion are "pierced" as if by a
"spear." The emotional impact of these two words is intended to
justify the following rhetorical question: "(When joy is great
enough/ how distinguish it from pain?)." Even within the context
of the poem, however, the "piercing" is only metaphorical, as the
"spear" is only the green line of the colour spectrum. The
parentheses de-emphasize the importance of the question, suggesting
that it is not intended to stand up to philosophical scrutiny. Our
impression of the power of the final epiphany, however, depends
upon our acceptance of what this question suggests, that the vision
comprises, in Wallace Stevens's words, "all pleasures, and all
pains" ("Sunday Morning"). The idea is easy enough to gloss over
on first reading: intense joy can merge into pain, for example in
romantic love, and the opposite can also be true, as, for example,
the pain of intense athletic activity is difficult to distinguish
from the pleasure also associated with it. The flaw in this
alleged relationship between joy and pain, however, is that joy,
even whatever joy may be associated with masochism and martyrdom,
can only be experienced voluntarily. Pain, on the other hand, can
be inflicted by an external "other" that is truly beyond the
control of the self. The absence of this truly external other
functions somewhat as Ehrenzweig's unconscious sub-structure
functions in much of Page's early poetry, undermining the
superficial and presumably consciously intended impression of
identification and unity that is created by both the form and content of "Hologram."

The negative aspects of encounters with the external other are absent not only in "Hologram" but in the collection as a whole. Loneliness is romanticized in "Autumn" (II 193), obsession in "Poor Bird" (II 195), death in several poems, and even the drudgery of doing other people's laundry, presumably for a living, is romanticized in "Planet Earth" (II 203). The only challenge to the prevailing visions of love, beauty, and optimism comes in "Love's Pavilion," based on a quatrain from Dylan Thomas's poem "And death shall have no dominion:"

Though they go mad they shall be sane,
Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;
Though lovers be lost love shall not;
And death shall have no dominion.

Page echoes Thomas's dominant metric pattern (except in the title line) of four strongly stressed syllables per line, and his frequent division of lines into half lines after the Anglo-Saxon tradition, with two strong beats each. She also echoes the insistent iambics and anapests that drive each of his lines to its final stressed syllable, and the alliterative patterns that are particularly pronounced in these four lines of his poem.

Through most of his poem Thomas varies the stresses on the first syllable of each line, so that from three to five of each nine lines per stanza both begin and end on strong beats. Thomas uses these lines like battering rams to force into the poem the images that most strongly challenge his assertion of the power of the force that can "dominate" death:
Twisting on racks when sinews give way,
Strapped to a wheel, yet they shall not break;
Faith in their hands shall snap in two . . .

In his last stanza the four lines that come just before the final repetition of the title have this meter, so metrically his poem builds to a climax.

Oddly, Page both exaggerates and reverses this pattern. In her first three stanzas six to eight lines of nine both begin and end with strong beats:

Tell me the truth. How does it end?
Who will untangle their matted hair?
Shine in the dark hole of their sleep?

Only three lines follow this pattern in the final stanza, however, so that the metrical force of the initial questions far outshadows that of the final answer, making it sound unconvincing:

With the Lord of the Dance we shall form a ring
and there in love's pavilion
hand in hand we shall say Amen
and we shall dance and we shall sing
with Love, with Love for companion.

McNeilly says that Page's "crafty, matter-of-fact ironies" introduce "a sceptical standoffishness into [the] transcendental fury" (161) of Thomas's poem. Page's first-person speaker aggressively questions Thomas's assertion that death is not an ultimate phenomenon, but then she arrives at an even more optimistic conclusion than his. Thomas only implies through negation that something exists which is more powerful than death. He makes no attempt to characterize it, and only names it once, in
the first stanza. His poem asserts that love never dies, even though we have no assurance of this and even if we cannot sustain faith in the face of the direst trials. Page’s poem, on the other hand, makes a precarious leap from demanding the reassurance Thomas refuses to provide, and then providing it, in the form of romantic images of ideal "Love."

The lack of conviction conveyed by the deflated meter in Page’s last stanza is consistent with a lack of conviction in the speaker’s interrogation of Thomas’s message, in that her images of trials and tribulations are entirely metaphorical, as opposed to Thomas’s, which range from the metaphorical to the disconcertingly concrete. Even more distracting are the apparently unintended logical inconsistencies, as at the end of the first stanza listing the afflictions of those suffering she asks: "What is the price they pay for the pain?" The line is rhythmically and alliteratively consistent with the rest of the stanza, but logically the "pain" is the "price," which "they" must pay for some unspecified thing, presumably to arrive at "Love." The speaker piles up rhetorical questions that repeat the same idea over and over, without seeming to notice that some of them actually contradict her poetic argument:

How can they twin when their love has gone?
How can they live when their love has died?
When the reins to their chariot have been cut?

If "love" can die (which Thomas says it can not), then how can "love’s pavilion" be our final destination?

_Hologram_ is a gorgeous celebration of much that is positive about life, but however dramatically the _glosa_ form forefronts the
presence of the external other, in the actual content of the poems this other is as illusory as the hologram itself. I am arguing, then, that the poetry of *Evening Dance* and *Hologram*, much of which apparently incorporates into visions of the whole self either the internal other of the unconscious or the external other, achieves these apparent identifications through splitting off aspects of other dualities, such as the emotions from the intellect, or negative experience from positive. What these two collections have in common is their straightforwardness: in both Page tells the reader what she means much more directly than in some of her earlier poetry. We can appreciate the beauty and artistry of these later poems, and we can analyze her methods and techniques, but because of the schism between external and internal others these later poems leave as little interpretive room for the reader as does a mandala. Page’s most challenging poetry investigates the peculiar qualities of the interface between the internal other and the external other, what Freud, Jung, and other psychoanalysts call transference and counter-transference. This interface appears most clearly in some of her early poems, in which her speakers do not attempt to resolve or transcend differences and conflicts, but rather enter into these interactions and experience them as dynamic processes.
And stories of this kind are often told
in countries where great flowers bar the roads
with reds and blues which seal the route to snow—as if, in telling, raconteurs unlock
the colour with its complement and go
through to the area behind the eyes
where silent, unrefractive whiteness lies.

"Stories of Snow"

I have argued that in many of Page's early works her speakers represent other people whose egos are either effectively absent or else weak and embattled, while the speakers in her later work represent their own egos, but separate into different poems the ego's encounters with the internal other and those with the external other. In this chapter I look at three poems in each of which the speaker overtly configures her own ego as engaging with both the internal and external other. These poems all appear fairly early in Page's career, between the years 1945 and 1967, before she had formulated from Jungian and Sufi teachings the relatively coherent models of identity she would later articulate in interviews and essays, and before she had developed the high degree of conscious control her later speakers exert over their representations of the unconscious. Jung might describe these
early poems as particularly influenced by the unconscious, and so it seems logical to me that they do not appear to fall into a meaningful chronological sequence, nor do they seem connected with any other of Page's poems in terms of content or theme.

They do not invite readings according to any particular psychoanalytic framework, but instead require an interpretive flexibility beyond that demanded by much of Page's other poetry, both early and later. In Jung's terms we might regard them as consciously generated accounts of spontaneous eruptions of the timeless unconscious into conscious life. In Freud's terms we might say they represent transference, the displacement of the self's feelings from one object onto another, and countertransference, the response of the "other" to the self's transference. In relational terms we might say they function as a "holding environment" within which narcissistic idealizations of unity and omnipotence are alternately generated and relinquished (S. Mitchell 189, 196). We might also say these poems approach the experience of the "singularity" that Brent says is the goal of Sufism.

Many of the later poems of Evening Dance and Hologram, discussed in Chapter 5, present an initial dichotomy that is preserved even as it is transcended, as in the triad of birds, cones and speaker in "Finches Feeding." We can think of the baseline of these triad structures as a line joining the two points of a binary, such as Stokes's linear spectrum of relationships between self and other. In the early poems "Photos of a Salt Mine," "The Glass Air," and "Stories of Snow," however, the speaker does not withdraw from the initial dichotomy in order to transcend
it, but rather enters into it, with the result that the dichotomy is destabilized. Harold Bloom similarly destabilizes the dichotomy of personal versus impersonal voices in poetry by asserting that "impersonal" poetry such as Elizabeth Bishop's is actually deeply subjective. In approximating the two "ends" of the conventional dichotomy, he implies that our conventional sense of personal and impersonal voices in poetry as defining the ends of a linear spectrum is illusory.

By convention we see a spectrum from a "horizontal" perspective, so that it appears as a line. If we instead look at it from "above," it might possibly appear as a circle, with the personal and impersonal voices at 180 degrees from each other. We might therefore think of the poles of a binary as connected not only in the conventional sense of points on a line, but also, and simultaneously, in the sense of points along a circle. The paradoxical relationship between these two perceptions is similar to the one Page evokes in her analogy based on the four silver dots of convention revealed from "another dimension" as the tines of a fork. These three early poems of Page's have the effect of destabilizing the apparent linearity suggested in Stokes's spectrum. By convention, identification is the opposite relationship to objectification, but the projectory aspect of identification merges with objectification, as in order for the self to get rid of "bad" qualities, these must be projected onto something that is by definition identified with the self, but by necessity also separate from the self, in other words the other. Benjamin points out the complementary merging of the ends of Stokes's spectrum, in proposing that the distinction between object
love and (introjectory) identification may be as elusive as that between femininity and masculinity (Shadow 59).

These three early poems of Page's investigate the nature of the interface between the internal and external other, the ego's attempts to negotiate between the two through identification and objectification, its attempts to balance the intrapsychic with the interpsychic, the emotional with the intellectual, and the negative with the positive. Of course many of Page's other poems both early (such as "Another Space") and later (such as "Hologram") feature epiphanies that are represented in terms of destabilized dichotomies, but usually these epiphanies are far removed from any immediate experience of external reality. The people in the dream of "Another Space," for example, are not representative of real people: they are archetypal. Similarly, the vision in "Hologram" is imaginary. In "Photos of a Salt Mine," "The Glass Air" and "Stories of Snow," the external world is represented, however indirectly, through some element we can recognize as part of shared reality. This inclusion of what I have referred to as a "true" external other introduces into these poems a high level of the resistance Brent says is necessary to achieve oneness with God.

In relational terms, Winnicott describes this experience as the destruction of the self's sense of omnipotence, a destruction which must be violent enough to threaten the existence of the other. If the other "survives" this process, meaning that it neither submits nor retaliates, the self then recognizes the other as external to it. Notice how difficult it is to discuss this phenomenon without inadvertently revealing a bias towards either identification or objectification. Winnicott, for example, assumes
the self is "enslaved to identifications and projections," and that the "destruction" of these illusions will result in the self's ability to recognize the other as external (90-1); presumably, however, the "destruction" of an objectification, such as the breakdown of a racist attitude, would result in identification with the other.

In "Photos of a Salt Mine," "The Glass Air," and "Stories of Snow," the destabilization of dichotomies is not communicated to the reader in a straightforward way, as are the transcendent experiences in the later poetry. In order to arrive at a perception of the destabilization represented in these early poems, the reader must strive to recognize and interpret dense poetic effects that create ambiguities edging into chaos. In his characterization of reading as psychoanalysis, Norman Holland reverses the classical model of text as analysand and reader as analyst, replacing this relatively safe dichotomy with a potentially more threatening one in which the reader is the analysand and the text the analyst. This perspective is particularly appropriate in a consideration of these three poems by Page, which require the reader to bring her own experience to bear on them. The reader who actively participates in creating the speaker's tentative, temporary sense of simultaneous identification with and objectification of the other becomes the self/other tentatively and temporarily realized in the poem.  

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Whether for the reasons I am suggesting or for other reasons, anthology editors since the mid-1980s have emphasized Page's early poetry. Only Sullivan's 1989 *Poetry By Canadian Women* presents a selection reflecting the different stages of Page's career, in which four of the seven poems are from *Evening Dance* and the 1991 *Glass Air*. Rosengarten and Goldrick-Jones include only
"Photos of a Salt Mine" (I 48), first published in 1951, is similar to the metaphysical poems in *Evening Dance* in that it is carefully structured around the idea of the salt mine as a place where ordinary perceptions of reality, even of basic physical qualities such as light and dark and cold and hot, are unreliable. The difference between this early poem and later metaphysical ones, such as "The Maze," is that the later ones present paradoxical relationships as eternal and unchanging, like the pattern of a mandala. In "Photos," the central confusion of light with dark is not a given, but rather develops through the process of the speaker coming to a fuller understanding of what the photos signify. The poem never arrests as if in a photograph the interplay between light and dark, although the photographs paradoxically have participated in the speaker's experience of this dynamic interplay of opposites.

"Photos of a Salt Mine" is unified imagistically by the enclosed location, and aurally by the whispering sibilants evoking in nearly every line the eerie quiet of a cave:

How innocent their lives look,  
how like a child's  
dream of caves and winter, both combined:  
the steep descent to whiteness  
and the stope  
with its striated walls

---

one *Evening Dance* poem along with six earlier poems in their 1993 *Broadview Anthology*, while the *Heath* anthology of 1991 and Geddes's 1985 edition of *Twentieth-Century Poetry and Poetics* include only poetry prior to *Evening Dance*. 
their folds all leaning as if pointing to
the greater whiteness still,
that great white bank
with its decisive front,
that seam upon a slope,
salt's lovely ice.

Repetitions of /l/, /c/, and /t/ within individual lines add layers of alliterative density, creating an echoing effect also characteristic of a cave. These repetitions reinforce an echoing pattern in the syntax, created in the first two stanzas by the long sequences of noun and adjective phrases. In each stanza these sequences explicate the first line without advancing any action, as if the first line were said aloud and the caves themselves passively generated the following lines in response. The first stanza includes only one finite verb, in the exclamatory clause of the first line, the grammatical passivity of the rest of the stanza evoking the dreamy, receptive state of mind necessary for both speaker and reader to embark on the psychological journey of the poem.

"Photos" opens with the speaker's initial response to the apparent unreality of the photos, which are not simply dreamlike, but like a "child's/ dream," the suggestion being that children slip more easily than adults into the realm of the unconscious. As so often in dreams, however, the speaker's point of view within the dream is objective; she is detached from the scene and its implications, recording its physical details as mechanically as the camera that produced the photos. In spite of her meditative state, she operates in what Benjamin would call the intrapsychic, or
phallic, mode, penetrating the "caves" and the womblike stope with its "striated walls" and "folds."

The dreamlike quality of the first stanza arises not so much from the unfamiliarity of the scene, as from the slippage of meanings as the individually unambiguous and descriptive words jostle against each other in contradictions both overt and implied, like the various elements in Jung’s model of the psyche. "Caves and winter" are paired as if these two concepts belong naturally together, whereas one is associated with darkness and the other with whiteness (in northern European cultures), and one is a clearly defined physical space while the other is a force of nature that cannot be contained. Similarly, the phrase "descent to whiteness," so descriptive of the physical reality of the salt mine, simultaneously evokes and refutes the more common metaphysical conceit of a descent into darkness, as in the closing image of Stevens’s "Sunday Morning."

This implied slippage from the physical to the metaphysical carries over to the phrase "the greater whiteness still," which has metaphysical overtones, but is then identified as a physical phenomenon by the precise description in the following two lines: "that great white bank/ with its decisive front." The last line of the first stanza arrests this pushing and pulling between the literal and the metaphorical, by presenting us with a paradox linking the two unambiguous and usually mutually exclusive physical substances salt and ice, signalling that the literal and metaphorical qualities of this poem cannot be separated, unlike the divergent literal and metaphorical qualities of some of Page’s other early poems such as "The Stenographers."
In the second stanza we are released from the intrapsychic process of entering into the scene and allowed the interpsychic contemplation of the beauty of its whiteness and light, rendered benign in the domestic image of sweeping the "snow of salt." But the speaker's and the reader's neutral and therefore safe role of watcher slides into that of participant through a series of images propelling the reader from physical reality to the metaphysical: muckers might make angels in its drifts, as children do in snow, lovers in sheets, lie down and leave imprinted where they lay a feathered creature holier than they. When children make snow angels they engage in the artistic activity of creating an image of "reality," inherently paradoxical because we don't even know whether angels exist, much less what they might look like if they did. When the speaker imagines the "muckers" making salt angels, she forces together the filth associated with the term designating the victimized workers and the whiteness and innocence she associates with the scene.

The children make an image, and the speaker makes a paradoxical image based on their image-making. She then creates the visually associated image of lovers making angels in sheets, which metaphorically connects the happiness of the children with the happiness of the lovers, and this adult happiness to the adulthood of the presumably miserable "muckers." From this complex tangle of literal and metaphorical identifications emerges the "feathered creature holier than they:" what Jung might call an archetype, a symbol of a metaphysical concept. Readers are drawn
into the poem through this imagistic vortex. We are first conflated with the speaker, through our recognition of the communal symbolic value of the angel, and then implicated in the intrapsychic activity of the miners, whose initial role as victims is now conflated with that of aggressors as they "probe with their lights/ the ancient folds of rock," their exploration culminating in the extraction of riches from rock, "glitter" from "darkness."

The poem pivots around the word "but" at the beginning of the fourth stanza. From this point, the eerie stasis of the first three stanzas gives way to dynamic processes of change, as the initial binaries destabilize, each element transforming into its opposite: "fire" is "melt[ed]" to "brine," and "salt’s bitter water trickles thin." Jung calls this process "enantiodromia," "a running counter to," or a play of opposites such as life and death. Clinically, it designates the "emergence of the unconscious opposite" wherever an extreme one-sided tendency dominates the conscious life, as in the conversion of Saul (Psychological Types 541). For Jung, enantiodromia "makes possible the reunion of the warring halves of the personality" (Modern 275).

In this poem, the disintegration of the static dualities of the first half transforms "white" into "jet," and transforms the dreamy, romantic perspective of the first stanzas into a more prosaic and practical description of the miner’s actual work:

There grey on black the boating miners float
to mend the stays and struts of that old stope
and deeply underground
their words resound,
are multiplied by echo, swell and grow
and make a climate of a miner's voice.

In the first half of the poem, the proliferation of visual images based on the comparison of salt to snow leads to the symbol of the angel, a fanciful progression from the physical to the metaphysical which is restated in bleaker terms in the second half. Here, the sound of the miners' voices as they work is "multiplied by echo" to "make a climate." The echoing effect of the dense alliteration in these lines (/b/, /m/, /s/, and /d/) is "multiplied" by rhymes, as in "underground" with "resound" and "echo" with "grow," as well as partial rhymes, as in "jet" with "opposite," and "boating," "float" and "stope." Whereas Marina is trapped by multiplied reflections, repeated visual images that make it impossible for her to distinguish her own internal reality from the external reality once experienced by her father, these miners are similarly trapped in repeated sounds, suggestive perhaps of political prisoners incarcerated for speaking out against a repressive government.

By the end of the poem, each of the dualities established in the first stanzas has reversed itself, as innocence becomes guilt and the carefree movements of "dancing" or playing at snow angels become hard labour:

... the last picture [is] shot
from an acute high angle. In a pit
figures might be dancing but you know they're not.
Like Dante's vision of the nether hell
men struggle with the bright cold fires of salt
locked in the black inferno of the rock:
the filter here, not innocence but guilt.

The "high angle" of this last photo suggests the transcendent
perspective advocated by Sufism, but whereas the third perspective of the Evening Dance triads creates a static resolution of a dichotomy, by the end of "Photos" the binaries seem suspended in a ceaseless process of enantiodromia, in lines containing the most extreme, complex, and forcibly compressed contradictions of the poem.

In the last four lines, meanings disintegrate as quickly as the speaker and reader together can generate them: Dante's hell is a more "real" description of the scene than the child's dream, but it is also a product of the imagination. The "filter" of guilt simultaneously suggests the political process that selected "guilty" people to send to the salt mine, and the idea that anyone looking at the photos is necessarily not in the mines and is therefore, according to the speaker, to some degree complicit in producing the suffering recorded in the photos. The speaker's objective account in the opening lines of her dreamy response to the appearance of the photos is transformed by the last line into a subjective conceptualization of the reality represented by them. As Bhelende says, the two perceptions are inextricably connected by their falsity, as each results from a "filtered" view of a reality that must comprise both (139).

Admittedly, the ekphrastic nature of this poem safely separates the speaker from her subject. As in other early poems such as "The Stenographers," the political message in "Photos" is to an extent overshadowed by the compelling aesthetic qualities of the poem itself. As Milton Wilson observes, however, compared to "The Stenographers," "Photos" is "a more uncompromising and more sharply defined working out of the chosen material;" the "vague
social malaise" of the earlier poem here seems more "terrible and fundamental" (128). Within what Benjamin might call the "safe space" ("Desire" 97) of ekphrasis, the speaker uses formal techniques to unify extremes of human experience without attempting to explain, rationalize or control them.

This idea of a dynamic tension between the speaker and the external experience related in the poem parallels a central concept in psychoanalysis, that of transference and countertransference. Like many relational theorists, Wright says these experiences are present to some degree in all of the self's relationships with the other (14-5). Clinically, the question is to what extent the analyst, in the process of allowing the patient to experience transference, can or should experience transference of her own. In the classical model, the doctor should experience transference in his training analysis and not with his own patients. Some relational theorists, however, conceptualize the clinical relationship as more mutual: doctor and patient analyze each other (Benjamin Shadow xiv, 6).

The classical model risks perpetuating the patient's reliance on authority figures, and also risks condemning the analyst to isolation in his role as that authority. In Civilization and Its Discontents, Freud inadvertently reveals his own sense of isolation when he rejects other people's descriptions of an "oceanic feeling" as the heart of the religious experience. Because he himself has never experienced this "oceanic feeling," he concludes that the heart of the religious experience is instead a longing for the authority of the father (19-21). In relational terms, the "oceanic feeling" would result from the full experience of transference and
countertransference by both self and other, or we could relate it to the experience of "singularity" Brent describes as the heart of Sufism. Clinically, however, this experience could edge into full identification. Jung describes the danger of slipping into this state in clinical practise, that if each party were to go along unthinkingly with the other's experience they would fall into an uncritical passivity incompatible with social responsibility (Undiscovered 51-2). It appears that in psychoanalytic theory, as in Page's poetry, as the terms of one dichotomy approximate one another, the terms of another dichotomy diverge.

Whereas "Photos" employs art objects that have the effect of maintaining a distinction between the speaker and the external other represented in the photos, "The Glass Air" (II 59), first published in 1967, is about a dream. Whereas "Photos" is structurally and thematically unified enough to be recognizable, in terms of Joyce's concept of "integritas" (Portrait 212) as the product of a unified modernist consciousness, "The Glass Air" pushes at even the modernist boundaries of this limitation, just as in its final image the expanding figures break the "glass air."

Constance Rooke is the only critic who has so far attempted a reading of this frequently anthologized poem:

It seems the enigmatic gopher is a kind of talisman for the lady's past which her lover attempts to possess. The dream of a return to childhood can be interpreted as a test of the lovers' relationship, a trial uncovering their failure as adults. . . . Thus do the nightmarish qualities of the dream solidify, like the lovers themselves to destroy the visionary world through ego.
As Rooke observes, often Page’s poems about love "are themselves difficult to understand, as if to mirror the peculiarity of division where union has been the aim" ("Chameleon" 187-8).

"The Glass Air" opens from the perspective of the conscious mind observing, and therefore "containing," the unconscious:

I dreamed my most extraordinary darling

gangling, come to share

my hot and prairie childhood

the first day loosed the mare from her picket

and rode her bareback

over the little foothills towards the mountains.

The individual lines are unified by subtle alliteration (/d/ and /r/ in the first, /g/ in the second, then /h/, /f/, /r/, and /b/, and /t/ and /l/ in the last). The lines are linked to each other both by the run-on syntax and by the partial rhymes on "-ary," "share," "prairie," "mare" and "bareback." The languorous sound and subjective quality of the word "extraordinary" clashes with the abrupt and rational announcement "I dreamed," throwing us off balance and preparing us for the syntactic confusion of the second line, which obliges us to engage in the process of making some meaning out of both the dream and the poem.

The word "gangling" is linked to the word "darling" because no comma separates the two, which also half-rhyme and echo each other rhythmically. The meanings of these words, however, resist this linking, as "gangling" is a disparaging term, conflicting both with "darling" and with the modifier "extraordinary." Because it comes after the noun, we initially want to read "gangling" as a present
participle with an understood auxiliary verb, then realize it is an adjective with no verbal quality. We then encounter the second participle "come," and are disoriented even further as we are forced to alter our initial expectations that the "darling" must be the subject of a dependent clause, and realize the "darling" himself is here the focus of attention, rather than anything he does. The strained parallelism between "hot," a physical property, and "prairie," a location, intensifies our sense that the ordinary conventions of communication do not apply here.

The boy appears vulnerable and loveable in the first stanza, where his relationship with the speaker is one of identification. He evolves rapidly through the next four stanzas, however, to become an autonomous other. Finally allowed two finite verbs in the second stanza, he gradually draws the speaker, whose perspective was so clearly established in the first stanza, into his own point of view. He appears to us both competent, through his decisive actions, and confident, a quality enhanced by the definite article preceding "mare," which suggests that if we don't know which mare then we have not been paying attention, although in fact the mare is new to us. The fact that he rides bareback suggests both sensuality and a high degree of comfort and experience with his natural environment. The speaker's chronological listing of the days reinforces the sense of his evolution as a narrative, and evokes the idea of spiritual journeys that are traditional for young men in some cultures. His passage through the "foothills" and into the "mountains" could signify physical maturation, and certainly foreshadows the apotheosis of the lovers at the end of the poem.
By the second day he is "striding" rather than "gangling," and the speaker indirectly reveals her new attitude towards him through her use of the words "twisted," "noose," and "butcher," which suggest that she *wishes* to see him as potentially dangerous, although actually a child can set a trap for a gopher. The fourth and fifth stanzas bear out this hint of a female adolescent’s romanticization of a lover:

The third bright day he laid the slack noose over
the gopher’s burrow
unhurried by the chase

and lolled a full week, lazy, in the sun
until the head popped, sleek, enquiring.

The noose pulled tight around his throat.

The relaxed syntax, the diction, and especially the way the repeated continuant /l/ slows the first line of the fifth stanza during his wait, all suggest a patient, prolonged seduction culminating half-way through the poem in a confusion of sexual imagery that opens the question of just who is seducing whom. The gopher’s head "enquiring" out of the safety of its burrow suggests the adolescent female lulled into a false sense of security by a male intent on tricking her, but the visual image of the head is phallic, and the "noose pull[ing] tight" around the "throat" suggests female entrapment of the male through sexuality, while the pronoun "his" conflates the boy with the gopher, which had not previously been assigned a gender.

Stanzas six and seven intensify this confusion in the midst of what seems to be a struggle for control over sexual energy itself,
reminiscent of Benjamin’s analysis of the politics of articulating desire:

Then the small fur lashed, lit out, hurling
about only to turn
tame silk in his palm

as privy harness, tangled from his pocket
with leash of string
slipped simply on.

In this poem, however, there is no distinction between the sexual energy of the self and that of the other. The "small fur" suggests nature in the raw, and possibly genitalia of either gender which turn to "silk," nature "tamed" for the uses of civilization. That it ends up "in his palm" suggests that from the speaker’s point of view the boy has retained control of the situation, evoking Benjamin’s account of female fantasies of submitting to a controlling other, who in this poem releases the speaker into an abandon suggested by the breakdown of logical and even syntactic connections in the seventh stanza.

Between these two stanzas is a syntactic gap, often associated in Page’s poetry with particularly dangerous encounters between the self and the other, as in "Difficult." In this case the threat seems to be the interface between the fantasized and the "real" (in the context of the dream) other, a degree of threat suggested by the speaker’s description of the gopher as "tamed," while it is of course "actually" dead. Whereas in the comparative psychological safety of the ekphrastic "Photos of a Salt Mine" the speaker can trace the conversion of one aspect of a dichotomy into its
opposite, in "The Glass Air" the speaker is one element of the dichotomy, so that she cannot detect, or at any rate communicate, the specific stages of the enantiodromia. The reversals of the complementarities appear as a blur of form and meaning.

The two stanzas hinge on the word "as," which could function as a subordinating conjunction but turns out to be a preposition introducing a phrase that cannot be said to modify anything. As our attempts to establish some syntactic context for this phrase fail, we turn our attention to its meaning: what in the world is a "privy harness"? The OED lists an obsolete phrase "privy coat," meaning chain mail worn under ordinary clothing. Taken together with the more familiar phrase "privy parts," meaning sexual organs, this usage suggests to me that the phrase alludes to a harness on sexuality, related metaphorically to the string around the gopher's neck. This association suggests that the phrase modifies no one word of the previous stanza, but rather the whole image of the gopher's struggle against the noose, perhaps connecting this struggle with the constraints on the sexual energy of the self imposed by the recognition of the other. But the confusion deepens. "Tangled from his pocket" modifies "harness" if we assume this means the string, but then what is it that is "with leash of string" (emphasis mine)? It has to be the gopher, "on" whom the leash is "slipped simply," an emotionally deadened description that negates the complexity and violence of the preceding struggle, as the energy generated by the harder consonants (/l/ and the plosives /t/ and /p/) in the sixth stanza dissipates into the sibilants of the last two lines of the seventh stanza.

This release of energy prepares us for the resigned tone of
the eighth and ninth stanzas:

But the toy beast and the long rein and the paid-out lengths
of our youth snapped
as the creature jibbed and bit

and the bright blood ran out, the bright blood trickled over,
slowed, grew dark
lay sticky on our skins.

The paratactic syntax in these lines evokes the weird logic by
which dream images can unfold. The conflation of "toy" with
"beast," the "long rein," and the "paid-out lengths" all suggest
the confusion of a coming-of-age experience, which pushes the
boundary between childhood and adulthood and finally ruptures it,
an image of loss of virginity reinforced by the appearance of blood
in the next stanza. The excitement and drama of the adolescent
event, signified by the "bright" blood, gives way to new and
negative realities of adult life, "slow," "dark," and "sticky." As
Rooke concludes, the ending suggests failure and loss, as the
lovers become their own tombstones ("Chameleon" 188):

And we two, dots upon that endless plain, Leviathan became
and filled and broke
the glass air like twin figures, vast, in stone.

The loss of childhood innocence is counterbalanced, however, by a
vision of this loss as a ritual. Their experience immerses these
lovers in nature, as "dots" on the "plain." It also immerses them
in humanity, through their identification with the kind of Jungian
archetypes that might be represented in any culture by sculptured
images that evoke an idea beyond rational explanation.
In "After Rain," the speaker goes beyond individual metaphors to a symbol capable of integrating individual experience into a communal vision (Sullivan "A Size" 34). In "The Glass Air" the conceit of the gopher and noose, dependent for meaning upon the context of the dream, is transformed through the lovers' numinous experience into the presumably entwined "twin figures," symbolic of sexual experience. The image of "glass air" is particularly compelling for Page, who used it as the title for not one but two volumes of selected and new poetry published six years apart (Freake 113). Frank Davey associates the phrase with the "illusory immortality" of childhood, into which he says Page seeks to "escape" (232). The fact that the air is "glass" suggests that its primary function is not to be breathed, but to be seen through, connecting it with Sullivan's discussion of Page's anxiety in "After Rain" over the possibly escapist motivation of her early visual imagery. If we see the glass air in these negative terms, the interpsychic space it represents cannot be escaped into, but must be "broken," as it cannot contain an idea that is "larger than seeing:" the self and the other must not simply identify in a "safe space," but must engage simultaneously in the processes of identification and objectification.

Insofar as Freud and other psychoanalysts link art with dreams, we might say that a poem about a dream is in a sense ekphrastic. Perhaps the dream affords a narrower gap between the speaker's self and the ultimate "other" (in this case the boy) than is possible if this encounter is mediated by an actual art object, or even a consciously imagined one as in the "notional ekphrasis" of "Arras." In "The Glass Air," the alienating effect of this
partial ekphrasis is counter-balanced by the speaker's open acknowledgment of it in the first clause: "I dreamed." This counter-balancing effect is only limited, however, as the final images of the poem so compellingly draw the reader into the dream that the existence of the conscious speaker is all but forgotten. As the dichotomy between the two lovers disintegrates, the gap between waking reality and the dream correspondingly widens.

In my opinion, Page's most balanced and powerful representation of the ego's negotiation between internal and external others is in the early "Stories of Snow" (I 53), first published in 1945. This poem seems to me to hover at an equilibrium between many of the dichotomies I have discussed in her other poems, for example between the tight logical control of "Photos of a Salt Mine" and the obscure mysticism of "The Glass Air." Sullivan calls it "one of those rare things, a perfect poem, in which language and metaphor have a compelling inevitability and rightness." She also calls it a "kind of parable" illustrating that the imagination always seeks "the ideal, impossible other" (36-7), suggesting that the poem works on an emotional as well as an intellectual level. In the terms of relational psychoanalysis, "Stories of Snow" not only represents the dynamic tension between conscious and unconscious, and self and external other, but also the mysterious process by which the external other becomes the internal other.

Page has commented on this poem in several interviews. She tells Djwa:

"Stories of Snow" began at a Christmas dinner in Victoria in our first year when I was very homesick for snow.
There was a Dutch man at the dinner who too must have been homesick for snow, and he told the story of how in Holland they had a swan hunt. (45)

In "Questions and Images" she says:

My subconscious evidently knew something about the tyranny of subjectivity years ago when it desired to go "through to the area behind the eyes/ where silent, unre refractive whiteness lies." I didn’t understand the image then but it arrived complete. It was not to be denied even though only half-glimpsed, enigmatic. It’s pleasant now to know what I was talking about! (216)

Whereas Page’s later poetry tends to be controlled from the perspective of the conscious, Page experienced the creation of this poem as controlled by the unconscious, although to the reader it approaches a balance between the two.

The formal features of the poem are symmetrical, unified, and consistent, yet flexible enough that the content appears to unfold spontaneously and without constraint. Nearly every line is unified by alliterative patterns, while rhymes, partial rhymes and assonance link many neighbouring lines. "Photos" seems to be a controlled "descent" by the conscious into the unconscious, and "The Glass Air" represents a dream by which the unconscious speaks to the conscious. "Stories of Snow" approaches a balance of these perspectives, in that the dream sequence through which the unconscious speaks about the conscious (hunters) is bracketed by the first and last stanzas of seven lines in which the conscious mind speaks about the unconscious:

Those in the vegetable rain retain
an area behind their sprouting eyes
held soft and rounded with the dream of snow
precious and reminiscent as those globes--
souvenir of some never nether land--
which hold their snowstorms circular, complete,
high in a tall and teakwood cabinet.

The introductory image of "the area behind [the] sprouting eyes" is mysterious to the reader, who must experience the dream in order to arrive at an understanding of the restatement of this theme in the last stanza. Within this overall framework the images follow each other with a logic that shifts in kind, but not in effectiveness. Significantly, the only strained connection in the poem is that between the "soft and rounded" eye and the souvenir globe. This connection appeals to the conscious speaker because it is based on physical similarities of shape and content and also the conceit of the eye as microcosm of the world, but it jars the reader because of the huge gap between our emotional responses to the image of the eye and to the trivial toy. This incongruity signals the limitations of the speaker's conscious apprehension of the world.

The microcosm conceit of the first stanza implicitly extends to the dream in the second, which is itself a microcosm of all psychological experience. As Ricou observes, the snow is a "metaphor for intuitive understanding," a "conceit followed every which way in order to suggest the filling up, the inarguable completeness of this world behind the eyes" (94). The conscious ego is passive and helpless in the face of what it perceives as an oppressive external reality, which "protrude[s]" on it with mysterious and threatening connections between cultural and natural
phenomena. The safety of the bed, in which it is not expected to act, and in which it can escape the reality of its limitations, is connected through whiteness to the id's vision of a whole, unified self as "an imaginary snowstorm" falling "among the lilies:"

And there the story shifts from head to head, of how, in Holland, from their feather beds hunters arise and part the flakes and go forth to the frozen lakes in search of swans—the snow light falling white along their guns, their breath in plumes.

These lines are denser in repeated sounds than any others in the poem except the last stanza, the alliteration (/h/, /f/, /s/, and /w/) reinforced by rhymes on "head" and "bed," "go" and "snow," "flakes" and "lakes," and "light" and "white," as well as by partial rhymes on "swans," "along," "guns" and "plumes." The density of these technical effects suggests that these lines contain information particularly important in understanding the poem. That the story shifts "from head to head" reflects Page's idea, which she will later find articulated by Jung and by the Sufis, that psychological experience is somehow universal, even if this experience can never be expressed in universally accessible terms. The geographical and cultural perspective of this poem, for example, makes snow paradoxically exotic, which will only make sense to someone from a snowy climate.

The images of whiteness and colourlessness pervade and unify every element of the dream sequence, from the swans, symbolic of natural beauty and grace, to the unnatural and destructive guns. Within the dream, which is generated by the self, every element of
the self is represented, creating a self-reflexive loop. The morally directionless energy of the id appears as the wind against which the boats must be "tethered," released only through the conflict of the hunt. The ego, as the hunter, tries to control the external other by killing its representative, the swan. The "jet strips of naked water" are in relational terms the gaps between the facets of a personality fragmented by "split loyalties to different others" (S. Mitchell 28), gaps which can only be negotiated through the pursuit of the other, which also unifies pleasure and pain in the coldness of the air. At the same time, also in the terms of relational psychoanalysis, the snow is the intersubjective space linking the self of the hunter with the external other of the swan.

The conceit of the alcohol at first seems a digression, based as it is on the physical properties of this substance, which "logically" should not be assimilable into the winter scene because of the volatility it shares, relative to water, with the ether:

And on the story runs that even drinks in that white landscape dare to be no colour; how, flaked and water clear, the liquor slips silver against the hunters' moving hips.

The fourth line of this sentence, however, establishes the symbolic function of the alcohol as essence of the sensuality already evoked by the description of ice-sailing, with the added dimension of sexuality. The particularly intense alliteration in the last two of these lines (/h/, /c/, /t/, /l/, /s/, and /p/), shifts the mood to prepare for the killing of the swan.

In Freudian terms, the killing of the swan transmutes the libido signified by the alcohol into the death wish:
And of the swan in death these dreamers tell of its last flight and how it falls, a plummet, pierced by the freezing bullet and how three feathers, loosened by the shot, descend like snow upon it.

The prey is linked paradoxically to the "flying, sailing hunters," who in order to kill it have usurped its usual activities, in effect becoming swans themselves. The description of its fall as a "plummet," the usual meaning of this noun being a lead weight, also links the swan to the hunter via the bullet. The swan then merges with the snow through its feathers, which are "deep as a drift," while the snow itself "metamorphos[es]" into the swan. It is not clear whether the hunters "dive their hands" into the feathers in order to warm them or in order to wring the bird's neck. These ambiguities render hunter, swan, and snow, a triad symbolically highlighted by the three falling feathers, finally indistinguishable from each other

in that warm metamorphosis of snow
as gentle as the sort that woodsmen know
who, lost in the white circle, fall at last
and dream their way to death.

The reference to the dream and the death of the hunter/ego/swan/external other signal the closing of the "white circle," the end of the dream and the return to the relatively unreal, because fragmented, world of consciousness. But the content of the dream is drawn from external reality, in the story of the hunters' physical experiences, the raw power of which propels them from external reality into an archetype of the
collective unconscious. The conscious world is fragmented by barriers of distinct colours that cannot be "sailed" over as can the strips of "jet" water in the dream. It does have one advantage, however, in that it is social. The people in it are not differentiated but unified, not by death as in the dream, but by their awareness of their progress towards the death of the ego which will occur with their physical deaths, if not before. Years before poems such as "After Rain" and "Nightmare," in which the speakers worry about the possibility that artistic representation may bring them farther away from reality rather than closer to it, the speaker of "Stories of Snow" asserts the value of the representations of reality that link "refracted" humanity by reminding us that the other both is and is not the self.

The instability of binaries Page represents in these three early poems parallels the experience Sullivan describes in *Labyrinth of Desire* as the confusion between lover and beloved. Sullivan concludes that "falling obsessively in love is one of life's necessary assignments," because "it cracks us open" and demands that "we put everything at risk" (5). In "The Swimmer's Moment," however, Margaret Avison points out that we have the freedom to choose whether or not we undertake the assignment of fully realizing the self through risking the full experience of the other, and she succinctly outlines the possible outcomes of our choices. Like Page, she does not attach these choices to any one particular life situation, such as romantic obsession. Instead, she represents the general experience of destabilization of the self-other dichotomy through the metaphysical conceit of a
whirlpool. Some people refuse to be drawn into this whirlpool, "And so their bland-blank faces turn and turn/ Pale and forever on the rim of suction/ They will not recognize." For some other people who do "dare the knowledge," the "ominous centre" of the whirlpool "seals up/ . . . an eternal boon of privacy," evidently the "closing down of the self" that Sullivan describes as the result of having insufficient "stamina" to "learn the lessons of obsessive passion" (176). "One or two" of those who dare the knowledge of self and other, says Avison, attain "The silver reaches of the estuary," what Sullivan terms "a clear-eyed awareness of the illusions by which we live" (175).

The clearest and most powerful representations of the interface between external and internal others occur in Page's early poetry, rather than in the later. Is this because the disintegration of boundaries between the self and the external and internal others is so threatening that once the self has experienced this disorientation it will do anything it can to control its subsequent interactions with the other? Or is it because once the self has experienced this disorientation it must expand its boundaries in a controlled way in an attempt to preserve and protect an other it has come to perceive as essential to its own survival?

These questions open up the more general question of how Page's poetic representations of identity might connect with the particular details of her life. Are they directly connected with situations that actively engaged her at various stages of her life, or do they sometimes function as a counterbalancing effect that enabled her to avoid situations that might have been destructive to
herself or to other people? Equally important is the question of which real-life concerns may not be represented in the poetry. Obsessive passion as Sullivan describes it, for example, appears only once in Page’s writing. Page, however, is one of the people Sullivan thanks for offering "inspiration" on her subject (178), which suggests that Page has considerable insight into this experience.

In the short story "Fever," written in 1999, a diplomat’s wife, whose situation resembles in many details the life Page describes in Brazilian Journal, falls obsessively in love with her surgeon. The story does not ring quite true, however, partly because of its lack of detail, and partly because the surgeon conveniently dies in a plane crash before the protagonist can decide whether or not to act on her obsession. Anyone tempted to read the story as autobiographical also needs to consider that Page has published it in a collection entitled A Kind of Fiction, in which at least eight other of the eighteen pieces specifically address the difficulty of distinguishing between inner and outer reality.

Given that Page’s poetry represents both directly and indirectly (possibly consciously and unconsciously) the relationship between self and other, I would assume that some of her configurations of self and other reflect aspects of her personality that those close to her would readily relate to opinions and behaviours they have observed in her, while other configurations may fulfill a more compensatory function. What I think is important for readers who have no personal relationship with Page is the sheer range of configurations her speakers have
employed through the years to constitute their identities. I suspect that most of us need to employ either consciously or unconsciously a similar range of configurations as we engage with the question of identity at different stages of our lives.

Page's early objectification of some manifestations of the external other and her later attempts to control the other through identification seem natural stages in the development of a sense of self, at least in contemporary Westernized culture. Some external "others" we use as screens on which to project aspects of the inner other that we do not want to acknowledge, as Page's early speakers do in the early poems about women. Some "others," either external or internal, we engage in power struggles, as in the conflicts Page's early speakers represent in some of her "psychological portraits." And some "others" we try to control not through objectification or projective identification, but through the introjective identification Page's later speakers frequently employ. Occasionally, possibly at different times in different people's lives, we encounter an other who continues to exist autonomously from us despite our best efforts to control it through these various strategies, and whom we are eventually forced to recognize as not only the external other, but also the internal other.

It is tempting to assign moral values to these configurations, for example as social conservatives value objectification of the other and liberals value identification. I suspect, however, that all of the strategies for controlling the other, as well as the relinquishing of control over the other, have both constructive and destructive potential. To be constantly aware of the interface
between internal and external others, for example, would mean at best living the disciplined life of a mystic, requiring the kind of withdrawal from worldly engagement that Jung advocates for the "modern man." At worst it might mean madness. The most constructive moral position to take with regard to these configurations would be to concede that all of them contribute to our sense of identity, and to be ready to acknowledge and change them when they become destructive to ourselves or to others. As Sullivan says, we need to tolerate "the continuous shattering of our fondest ideas of ourselves" (175).

At the end of his article, Freake speculates that Page's increasing popularity through the 1990s is "not just because of her long and continuously developing poetical career." Rather, it is because we as a culture are moving away from the concept of the individual as a "disengaged, autonomous subject," a paradigm of identity that Freake sees as related to the political paradigm of the nation-state. We are moving, he says, toward a new concept of interconnected individuals, one more in keeping with the new political paradigm of the "post-national" global community (113). Whether this paradigm is real or imaginary, I do think that various aspects of contemporary Westernized culture, such as feminism and environmentalism, are highlighting in new ways the question of what the self is and how it interacts with internal and external others. I agree with Freake that Page's poetry speaks to changes in broader cultural perspectives on the self, although I do not think this is because, as he says, the "multiple self" in her poetry is "capable of seeing all levels of its reality" (113).

I think Sara Jamieson's assessment comes closer, that Page
does not represent "immortality" in her poems, which I understand to be some eternal, unchanging truth about reality. Jamieson instead sees Page’s frequent "revising [of] her poetic vision" as a process of continuous "self-renewal" (65). Page attempts through her poetry to describe different levels of reality, and in so doing to represent different facets of a whole self. Page’s "perfect, all-inclusive metaphor" of the kaleidoscope, and her courage in constantly reinventing herself through her poetry, are to me reassuring suggestions that however painful it may be to relinquish apparently "safe" conceptualizations of self and other, the new ones awaiting us will be as compelling as those outgrown, both in their strangeness and in their familiarity.
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