

CONTESTED KNOWING: NARRATOLOGICAL READINGS OF  
DAPHNE MARLATT'S HOW HUG A STONE AND NICOLE BROSSARD'S  
PICTURE THEORY

By

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Abstract

This study begins with a question: what are the formal attributes of narrative in the feminine? Structural analysis of narrative posits a universal narrative grammar based on the quest: a subject seeks an object. At its most abstract, a subject crosses a boundary. Within this teleological framework, the subject's progress is complicated by helpers and opponents. Teresa de Lauretis argues that this narrative grammar implicates binary, patriarchal gender. How is such a grammar transformed by feminist writing? Narratological analysis of Daphne Marlatt's How Hug a Stone and Nicole Brossard's Picture Theory permits systematic description at the three interpretive levels of fabula, story and text, and thus enables comparison with hypothetical universal narrative grammar. Narratological analysis illuminates the ways that both Marlatt and Brossard transform the quest into more open-ended, gender-neutral and female-positive forms. In How Hug a Stone, the narrator's quest for her mother becomes a journey into the mothertongue and the realm of the arché-mother. The quest structure is displaced from the structuring level of fabula to the level of story, where it is a function of the powerful focalization by a paradigmatic female subject-in-information. In Picture

Theory, Nicole Brossard develops a dialogic narrative grammar involving a multiple lesbian actant who separates, reassembles and generates energy. This energy guides the actant in a spiralling movement out of the circle of "féminité," towards the utopia signified by a hologram of "la femme intégrale." Both authors generate a fabula structure which thwarts the generically masculine and single questing hero. At the story level, Marlatt pushes focalization to the limits of language, and in so doing, provides formal criteria for "writing the body." Brossard refuses single focus, engaging multiple perspectives which "metamorphose mental space" and "open the mind." At the textual level, both authors construct meaning intertextually, thus acknowledging the collectivity of meaning. Both face the consequences of writing as a woman, and in so doing, contribute to a new epistemology which validates the experience of women.



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## Part I: Narrative, Gender and the Grammar of Knowledge

to narrate: tr. To give an oral or written account of, tell (a story). intr. To give an account or description, especially, to supply a running commentary for a motion picture or other performance. [Latin narrāre, from gnārus, knowing.] see gnō-.

gnō-. To know. 1. Extended form \*gnōw- in Germanic \*knōw- \*knē(w)- in Old English cnāwan, to know: KNOW. 2. Zero-grade form \*gnə- in a. Germanic \*kunnan in Old English, cunnan, to know, know how to, be able to: CAN, CON, CUNNING; b. Germanic causative verb \*kannjan, to make known, in Old English cennan, to declare, and Old Norse kenna, to name (in a formal poetic metaphor). KEN, (KENNING); c. Germanic \*kunth- in Old English cuth, known, well-known, usual, excellent, familiar: COUTH, UNCOUTH; d. Germanic \*kunthithā- in Old English cȳth(the), cȳththu, knowledge, acquaintance, friendship, kinfolk: KITH. 3. Suffixed form \*gnō-sko- in Latin (g)nōscere, to get to know, get acquainted with: NOTICE, NOTIFY, NOTION, NOTORIOUS; ACQUAINT, COGNITION, (COGNIZANCE), CONNOISSEUR, QUAINT, RECOGNIZE. 4. Suffixed form \*gnō-ro- in Latin ignōrāre, not to know . . . (IGNORANT). 5. Suffixed form \*gnō-dhli- in Latin nōbilis, knowable, known, famous, noble: NOBLE. 6. Reduplicated and suffixed form \*gi-gnō-sko- in Greek gignōskein, to know, think, judge (and \*gnō- in gnōmōn, a judge, interpreter): GNOME, GNOMON, GNOSIS; DIAGNOSIS, PHYSIOGNOMY, PROGNOSIS. 7. Suffixed zero-grade form \*gnə-ro in Latin gnārus, knowing, expert, whence narrāre (< \*gnarrāre), to tell, relate: NARRATE./1/

This dissertation is a narratological study of two books, Daphne Marlatt's How Hug a Stone /2/ and Nicole Brossard's Picture Theory. /3/ Daphne Marlatt and Nicole Brossard, writing from Vancouver and Montréal respectively, are leading contributors to contemporary writing in Canada. Both are poets, theorists, novelists, editors, teachers and feminist activists. Daphne Marlatt is one of the few women to have participated in the Tish movement and the evolution of post-modernism in English Canada; Nicole Brossard played a key role in the flowering of contemporary Québécois writing and the elaboration of "la modernité." Recognizing the "crisis of narratives," which characterizes our contemporary or postmodern age, /4/ both writers have expressed distrust of traditional narrative forms. Narratological analysis of How Hug a Stone and Picture Theory demonstrates that both Daphne Marlatt and Nicole Brossard are innovators in the field of contemporary narrative. Each encodes the narrative quest as a woman's successful break from the inherited confines of femininity. Both texts revise narrative grammar, challenging deeply rooted binary structures which have historically determined western narrative.

Before proceeding with my analysis I will briefly sketch the history of narratology. Structuralist study of narrative was inaugurated in 1928 by Vladimir Propp,

of the Folktale. The book was published in the U.S.S.R. during Stalin's regime, when Russian formalism was in decline; it was thirty years before most European and American scholars were able to read it. Its translation and republication in 1958 inspired significant scholarly response from Claude Lévi-Strauss, Claude Brémont, A.J. Greimas and others. Alan Dundes, in the Introduction to the revised English translation of Propp's Morphology, reviews the history of the book's reception by European and American scholars who were themselves caught up in the structuralist revision of the human sciences./5/

Dundes argues that Propp's analysis was both inductive and syntagmatic in its basic approach:

[T]he structure or formal organization of a folkloristic text is described following the chronological order of the linear sequence of elements in the text as reported from an informant. Thus if a tale consists of elements A to Z, the structure of the tale is delineated in terms of this same sequence. Following Lévi-Strauss (1964:312), this linear sequential structural analysis we might term "syntagmatic" structural analysis, borrowing from the notion of syntax in the study of language (cf. Greimas 1996a:404)./6/

Propp identified thirty-one narrative functions or elementary events which combine to form specific narratives.

European structuralist readings, especially those of Lévi-Strauss, Greimas and Brémond, responded to Propp's work by shifting it towards the paradigmatic and deductive methodology inspired by the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure. This involved a reformulation of underlying mythical structure as a dynamic model rather than a sequence of functions; the model, furthermore, was "usually based on an a priori principle of opposition"/7/:

The champion of paradigmatic structural analysis is Claude Lévi-Strauss and it should be noted that he presented a paradigmatic model as early as 1955, that is, well before the English translation of Propp's work. The hypothetical paradigmatic matrix is typically one in which polar oppositions such as life/death, male/female are mediated. Lévi-Strauss is certainly aware of the distinction between Propp's syntagmatic structure and his paradigmatic structure. In fact, Lévi-Strauss's position is essentially that linear sequential structure is but apparent or manifest content, whereas the paradigmatic or schematic structure is the more important latent content./8/

Dundes suggests that narrative events can be read at increasingly abstract levels, culminating in the underlying binary opposition thought to be meaningful within Indo-European cultures. For example, one story begins with Propp's first function, "One of the members of a family is absent from home," and ends with the thirty-first or last, "The hero is married and ascends the throne."/9/ Paradigmatically, this story can be read

as a narrative which resolves once again the binary opposition male/female, in terms which are meaningful to patriarchal Indo-European cultures./10/

The distinction, entailed by the paradigmatic approach, between apparent and manifest narrative content is today a basic principle of narratology insofar as it corresponds to the distinction between narrative levels, in particular, the fabula, or underlying events, and the story, or manner in which these events are presented.

In 1966, Roland Barthes described narratology as a branch of linguistics which takes as its object language from the level of the sentence up:

[I]t seems reasonable that the structural analysis of narrative be given linguistics itself as the founding model . . . [T]here can be no question of linguistics setting itself an object superior to the sentence, since beyond the sentence are only more sentences . . . And yet it is evident that discourse itself (as a set of sentences) is organized and that, through this organization, it can be seen as the message of another language, one operating at a higher level than the language of the linguists. Discourse has its units, its rules, its 'grammar': beyond the sentence, and though consisting solely of sentences. . . . [D]iscourse must be studied from the basis of linguistics. If a working hypothesis is needed for an analysis whose task is immense and whose materials infinite, then the most reasonable thing is to posit a homological relation between sentence and discourse insofar as it is likely that a similar formal organization orders all semiotic systems, whatever their substances and dimensions. A discourse is a long 'sentence' (the units of which are not necessarily sentences), just as a sentence, allowing for certain specifications, is a short 'discourse.'/11/



The homology with the sentence is a recurring element of narratology. Here Barthes uses it in arguing that just as linguistics reads a sentence at the descriptive levels of the phoneme, the morpheme, and syntax, so narratology reads narrative at various descriptive levels, defining in this way the basic units, rules, and grammar of narrative discourse.

Researchers working in a variety of traditions and languages have naturally defined the units of narrative grammar differently and assigned terms which are not globally consistent. Jonathan Culler has commented on the confusing proliferation of terms in contemporary narratology:

There is considerable variety among . . . traditions. . . . [T]he theory of narrative requires a distinction between what I shall call 'story' -- a sequence of actions or events, conceived as independent of their manifestation in discourse -- and what I shall call 'discourse,' the discursive presentation or narration of events.

In Russian Formalism this is the distinction between fabula and siuzhet: the story as a series of events and the story as reported in the narrative. Other theorists propose different formulations whose terms are often confusing: récit, for example, is sometimes fabula, as in Bremond [sic], and sometimes siuzhet, as in Barthes. But there is always a basic distinction between a sequence of events and a discourse that orders and presents events. Genette, for instance, distinguishes the sequence of events, histoire, from the presentation of events in discourse, récit, and also from a third level, narration, which is the enunciation of narrative; but from the way in which Genette uses his categories

Mieke Bal argues, rightly I believe, that 'in the end Genette distinguishes only two levels, those of Russian Formalism.'/12/

A survey of the field easily produces more examples of terminological inconsistency. Mieke Bal refers to a "character-bound narrator" where Gérard Genette speaks of an "intradiegetic narrator"; she analyses narrative on the three levels of fabula, story and text, where Seymour Chatman uses story (corresponding to Mieke Bal's fabula) and discourse. Because of the inconsistency in terms, and because my focus is not narratology per se, but the application of narratology to specific texts, I have not, in general, compared terms but have followed Mieke Bal.

In Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative, Mieke Bal systematizes thirty years of structuralist analysis of narrative in a clear and useful exposition of narratology as a method of text analysis./13/ Bal's narratology describes narrative texts on three levels, fabula, story and text.

Fabula is the deepest structure of narrative. When Barthes posited "a homological relation between sentence and discourse" in order to uncover the "implicit system of units and rules"/14/ which constitute narrative, he was oriented towards an analysis of narrative fabula. Like narratology itself, the word

fabula comes from the Russian Formalists, specifically Boris Tomashevsky who, in 1925, distinguished between fabula and story, fabula and sjuzet: (fabula is here translated as "story" and sjuzet as "plot")

[The story is the aggregate of motifs in their logical, causal-chronological order; the plot is the aggregate of those same motifs but having the relevance and order which they had in the original work. The place in the work in which the reader learns of an event, whether the information is given by the author, or by a character, or by a series of indirect hints -- all this is irrelevant to the story. But the aesthetic function of the plot is precisely this bringing of an arrangement of motifs to the attention of the reader. . . . [A] plot is wholly an artistic creation./15/

In her use of the terms fabula and story, Bal essentially follows Tomashevsky, but she adds the third descriptive level of narration or text.

The three levels of narrative description are defined by Bal as follows: fabula is the aggregate of motifs or basic elements of a narrative, arranged in chronological, logical order; it is the underlying sequence of events, conceived abstractly. Story (sjuzet) is the particular presentation of the fabula in a given narrative: "Story is how information about the fabula is presented to the reader" (Bal, 116). Major contributions to the analysis of story have been made by Wayne Booth and Gérard Genette./16/ The third level of narration is that of locution, or words.

Barthes' definition of narrative did not stress the linguistic aspect: "narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting (think of Carpaccio's Saint Ursula), stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, conversation."/17/ Bal, however, specifies from the outset that narrative texts are "composed of language signs" (Bal, 5). The construction of subjectivity through deictic attributes of language corresponds in narrative analysis to the presence of a narrative agent; thus Bal also defines a narrative text as "a text in which a narrative agent tells a story" (Bal, 119). Generally, a narrative text is defined by the presence of a narrative agent, by the fact that the three levels of fabula, story and text can be distinguished, and by identifiable narrative content, consisting of a series of events caused or experienced by actors (Bal, 8).

Narratology is "an instrument for making descriptions," (Bal, 10) "a means to express and specify one's interpretive reactions to a text" (Bal, x). The method does not require adherence to a particular philosophy, whether structuralist, deconstructionist, feminist, Marxist or Christian. Mieke Bal uses narratology for feminist criticism because "it helps to make that approach the more convincing, because of the features a

systematic account entails" (Bal, x). Narratology, like rhetorical studies and discourse analysis, enables its user to understand and describe the relationship between a particular discourse and the kinds of ideological messages codified there. It can specify how ideology functions in narrative and, ultimately, how narrative itself is ideological.

Narratological analysis of How Hug a Stone and Picture Theory is especially fruitful in relation to narrative as an ideologically invested form. Both texts challenge the supposed innocence of inherited narrative structures, in particular the narrative grammar of the quest and the hero/obstacle opposition which it implies. In different ways, both Daphne Marlatt and Nicole Brossard engage with this grammar as a historically invested formal structure, and each succeeds in redirecting the fabula away from the teleology of heroic success or failure towards a form more open-ended, dialogic, gender-neutral and female-positive.

In How Hug a Stone, concern with the ideologically determining force of narrative is foregrounded as the narrator questions the necessity for narrative and the limitations inherent in narrative form. She identifies the powerful influence of inherited stories which, although fragmented, still give meaning to human existence. Pre-existing scripts which "write our parts"

(HHS, 73) are counterposed to freedom and to the condition of being lost; all are related to the narrator's grieving for her mother, Edrys, who has died and is lost in several senses of the word. "Lost" stems from an Indo-European root leu-<sup>1</sup>, meaning to loosen or cut apart, related to the Greek leuin, to loosen, release, untie. Etymologically, to lose something is to set it free by loosening or cutting a bond. How Hug a Stone imagines narrative to be that paradoxical bond, so that to be without a story is simultaneously to be lost and to be set free.

Edrys is lost without a plot of her own at the same time that she is enclosed by another's script:

where was she? Tino, my  
mother, small in a henge of emotion, removed some-  
where. no stars to plot this course, only fore-  
boding & hope against her father's words, against  
the script. learning how to fly.

(HHS, 45)

This passage brings together several important motifs: the henge and stars to steer by, the bird "learning how to fly," and the script backed by patriarchal authority. The Neolithic landscape of the poem is evoked by the word "henge": a circle of megaliths sacred to the earth mother, situated in a mathematical relation to more ancient stars. Edrys, like that arché-mother, is associated with birds, but she never

does fly: she "had her wings clipped growing up" (HHS, 67). The script, in a certain sense, clipped them.

The narrator resists the closure of narrative while recognizing that without it, she is lost. Early in the poem, she specifies that she distrusts narrative because of what it shuts out of its telling:

an elderly man sitting at the back says we have just left land, Baffin Island he means, now all is ice floes on black water, crazy paving they have pulled the blinds on. for the movie begins. Agatha Christie version of what we fly to, dense with intrigue. take intrigued attention to a star system elderly English lady plots, enraged mother at the heart of it: lost.

(HHS, 15)

The movie (read story) begins, so "they" pull the blinds, shutting out what doesn't fit into the plot: the "crazy paving" that is the surface of the earth itself, and the reality of flying. In rebellion, the narrator articulates their flying -- not the romantic version of it, but "with our shit, leftovers, earthladen sacs, thanks to 23,000 gallons of fossil fuel" (HHS, 15). Narrative wraps up the real in a closure the narrator resists:

fed a line so as not to imagine the end -- linear version of our lives unravelling in a look, back. mystery appeals to our belief that things do make sense, this plot we're in, wrapped up like knife fork & spoon.

& yet, left open, flapping, wide to the wind,  
 without narrative how can we see where we're going?  
 or that -- for long moments now, we happen.  
 (HHS, 15)

In "narrative continuity," this question is reiterated:

remnants of Old English, even moth, snake, stone.  
 word henge to plot us in the current flow. without  
 narrative how can we see where we've been? or,  
 unable to leave it altogether, what we come from?  
 (HHS, 19)

Unable to do without narrative but unwilling to be  
 wrapped up like a knife, fork and spoon in the old  
 scripts, the narrator makes her choice: "so as not to  
 be lost, invent: one clear act in all that jazz. (in  
 flight? & if the plane goes down?)" (HHS, 15). She is  
 seeking another narrative, "wanting to make us new  
 again: to speak what isn't spoken, even with the old  
 words" (HHS, 73).

This sequence illustrates the rich intertextuality  
 of How Hug a Stone. "[W]anting to make us new" recalls  
 Ezra Pound's dictum: "MAKE IT NEW."/18/ The idea of a  
 woman inventing a new story for herself suggests Vir-  
 ginia Woolf, who in 1929 foresaw that women were begin-  
 ning "to write of women as women have never been writ-  
 ten of before."/19/ The resolution "to invent" alludes  
 to Monique Wittig, who argues that in a golden age



before the rise of patriarchy, women were not oppressed. In Les quérillères, she urges women to remember that life: "Tu dis qu'il n'y a pas de mots pour décrire ce temps, tu dis qu'il n'existe pas. Mais souviens-toi. Fais un effort pour te souvenir. Ou, à défaut, invente."/20/ Finally, but not least, this intertextual crux and crucial moment of decision-taking, with its faith in "what hasn't been spoken" and its determination to invent, resonates with the work of Nicole Brossard.

Nicole Brossard is seeking to write a narrative which has never existed before. Picture Theory aims to create, in the mind of the reader, knowledge which has never been represented but which is suggested by the possibility of the hologram. The narrative grammar of Picture Theory is a radical departure from the traditional quest of a singular hero; the book announces the conditions of its own creation to be "depuis la mort du héros à double sens patriarcal" (PT, 25). A new kind of narrative is the necessary outcome of the death of the patriarchal hero.

Ezra Pound is not the only modernist whose text/intertext lies, palimpsestic, under the desire to make narrative new. Picture Theory is also, significantly, post-Finnegans Wake:

Depuis Finnigans Wake [sic]. C'était la nuit.  
Itinérante, Florence Dérive et tellement d'une  
femme. Cerveau - - - - - mémoire. La nuit,  
nombres et lettres.

(PT, 19)

Lorraine Weir has shown that Picture Theory is inspired by "the polyvalent system" of James Joyce's last epic, and by Ludwig Wittgenstein's investigations of "the intercalated relationship of language, picture, and language games."/21/ Brossard has written a novel in which linear and teleological narrative structures are deconstructed in order to be incorporated into the "three-way integration" and utopian possibility of the hologram./22/

Lorraine Weir also identifies in Brossard's "numbers and letters" a reference to Monique Wittig's golden age./23/ In Lesbian Peoples: Materials for a Dictionary, the language of numbers and letters is the original pre-patriarchal language to which the ancient Amazons remained faithful./24/ Monique Wittig and Sande Zeig credit this prehistoric tongue with enormous powers of destruction and creation; among other feats, it erected the Neolithic megaliths "un peu partout dans le monde."/25/ In Picture Theory, this originary language of numbers and letters re-circulates in the night which is Finnegans Wake, as meaning itself is reborn in an other book, with a correspondingly other narrative

structure: "C'était absolument dans un autre livre qu'elle saurait retracer le moment venu, les lignes d'une forme humaine parfaitement lisible" (PT, 25).

Brossard has worked with narrative theory in other texts. Un livre /26/ is a parodic tabulation of narrative conventions and a narratological reading of novelistic structure. L'Aviva /27/ and Le désert mauve /28/ involve unilingual self-translation;/29/ Brossard re-writes her fabula, playing with the irreducible in the narrative. Picture Theory, as "an induction into the grammar of the hologram,"/30/ and therefore a rewriting of narrative grammar itself, is Brossard's most ambitious text to date and her clearest challenge to the patriarchal canon. In complexity and scope Picture Theory is best compared with James Joyce's modernist reformulations of the central narratives of western culture.

In taking on issues of narrativity, Marlatt and Brossard participate in the contemporary effort to redefine and resituate the knowing subject and what is known in an epistemological framework not indebted to discredited metaphysics. Narrative, with semantic and etymological ties to knowing and telling, is a contested field. The work of Marlatt and Brossard illustrates that this is doubly true for contemporary writers who are women. What is known "in the femi-

nine"/31/ must be told in a patriarchal language which resists and undermines that knowledge. The subject position of narrative grammar is male by default; a masculine generic exercises its force on the legitimating narratives men and women rely on to give meaning to their lives.

In The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, Jean-François Lyotard argues that the liberation of the people and the life of the spirit constitute two legitimizing narratives of western civilization. Resituated by economic and scientific revolutions, these have lost their power "to legitimate knowledge."/32/ Scientific discourse "has always been in conflict with narratives," judging them to be "fables,"/33/ but nevertheless has historically been legitimized by the same metanarratives which are now in crisis. Incredulity towards metanarratives in science as elsewhere marks the end of the modern age:

To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it. The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements -- narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on. Conveyed within each cloud are pragmatic valencies specific to its kind. Each of us lives at the intersection of many of these./34/

In specifying in her text the intersection of language elements within which she makes sense of the world, Daphne Marlatt brings forward as much of the real as is possible, finding the limit of that possibility to be a constantly shifting horizon of her own sense and "what our patriarchally loaded language . . . can bear."/35/ Nicole Brossard, the more modernist of the two, works to "present the fact that the unrepresentable exists,"/36/ a task which Lyotard attributes to modern art: "To make visible that there is something which can be conceived and which can neither be seen or made visible."/37/ Both authors "activate differences and wage a war on totality."/38/

The crisis in narrative of which Lyotard writes has been at least as visible in literary studies as elsewhere. Roland Barthes' concept of a shift towards the non-narrative, from the readerly to the writerly, is one sign of the obsolescence of narrative forms in literature./39/ In film as in the novel, a tendency towards the non-narrative rejects the familiar complicity between reader and text, between the viewer and the already known. "Narration," Lyotard argues, "is the quintessential form of customary knowledge."/40/ Literature produces narratives that are fragmented, self-conscious and exploratory: evidence that the customary is in crisis. Lyotard considers that in tradi-

tional cultures, the conditions for the transmission of narrative knowledge both create and presuppose community: "the community's relationship to itself and its environment is played out. What is transmitted . . . is the set of pragmatic rules that constitute the social bond."/41/ In the modern world, the rules that constitute the social bond have been problematized in a hundred ways, and not least by feminism. It is not surprising that feminist theory has taken a particular interest in the questions posed by narrative.

Rachel Blau DuPlessis, in Writing beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers, argues that until the twentieth century, female characters in novels typically ended up married or dead; the novel reflected the reality that successful social integration for women was achieved through marriage, and the alternatives (except for death!) were anything but romantic:

Once upon a time, the end, the rightful end, of women in novels was social -- successful courtship, marriage -- or judgmental of her sexual and social failure -- death. These are both resolutions of romance./42/

Blau DuPlessis documents "the project of twentieth-century women writers to solve the contradiction between love and quest and to replace the alternate

endings in marriage and death . . . [with] a different set of choices."/43/ She relates this project to the impact of the first and second waves of the women's movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Blau DuPlessis represents narrative in Althusserian terms as a systematic representation through which individuals structure their relationship to cultural "values and institutions":

Narrative in the most general terms is a version of, or a special expression of, ideology: representations by which we construct and accept values and institutions. Any fiction expresses ideology . . . romance plots of various kinds and the fate of female characters express attitudes at least toward family, sexuality, and gender. The attempt to call into question political and legal forms related to women and gender, characteristic of women's emancipation in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is accompanied by this attempt by women writers to call narrative forms into question. The invention of strategies that sever the narrative from formerly conventional structures of fiction and consciousness about women is what I call "writing beyond the ending."/44/

Writing beyond the ending is Rachel Blau DuPlessis's metaphor for the invention of new narratives and new possibilities for women.

Virginia Woolf's denunciation of male values in fiction /45/ is an important element in Writing beyond the Ending. Blau DuPlessis argues that writing from a woman's point of view will inevitably involve breaking conventions, which she refers to as structure: "trying

to make fiction talk about women and their concerns, especially when a woman is the speaking subject, may necessarily lead to a critical transformation of narrative structures."/46/ The changes in the novel which she documents include the reinterpretation or revision of classical myths, self-conscious critique of the plot ending in death or marriage, and the development of a collective protagonist.

Writing beyond the Ending is an important study, but it suffers from a confusion between theme and structure; narrative structure is insufficiently distinguished from romantic and novelistic conventions. This confusion makes it impossible to distinguish between resistance to the romantic plot, with its choices, love interest, and "catastrophe in the accepted style,"/47/ and resistance to the teleology which, some have argued, is characteristic of narrative structure per se./48/ The structural analysis of narrative is not the subject of Writing beyond the Ending; the book analyzes women's resistance to social oppression as it has been codified and reflected in the conventions of romance.

Structuralist and semiotic analyses of narrative suggest that elementary narrative structure produces and reproduces patriarchal gender; this structure has been distinguished from thematic values. I am arguing



that both Marlatt and Brossard restructure elementary narrative forms. The struggle with narrative which is articulated in How Hug a Stone is both thematic and structural; Marlatt finds a variety of ways to thwart the already written. In Nicole Brossard's Picture Theory the grammar governing narrative structures is deconstructed and rewritten as part of Brossard's project to build culture "au féminin."/49/

As the earlier example from Propp showed, the relationship between gender and narrative structure is complex. Historically, signs of women have tended to occupy certain plot positions, and not others. It has been left to feminists to wonder out loud why the hero is so often male and why Sleeping Beauty doesn't make more of an effort to take fate into her own hands. Teresa de Lauretis, in Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema, analyses the complicity of gender and narrative structure. She suggests that the Oedipus story can be read as a kind of Ur-narrative for patriarchal culture. Her proposal reworks Lévi-Strauss's contention that the incest prohibition, which he interpreted as the exchange of women, is the principle found at the origin of human culture:

If narrative is governed by an Oedipal logic, it is because it is situated within the system of exchange instituted by the incest prohibition, where woman functions as both a sign (representation) and a value (object) for that exchange./50/

De Lauretis argues that the inherent logic of narrative is patriarchal.

The theory is that structurally, women have signified fixed boundaries, origins, obstacles or rewards for active male heroes. Plots in which women function as heroic transgressors of boundaries are rewritten. The stories of Eve, Guenevere, Clytemnestra and Medea have been retold so that the female figure is represented as an obstacle through which the male hero must pass. Orestes overcomes his mother, Theseus leaves Medea, Everyman must resist the temptation of Eve. Arthur turns a deaf ear to his Queen, who is, furthermore, an obstacle in Lancelot's quest for the Grail. The sign of the woman appears in its classical, fixed position and the male hero progresses to the end of the story. Teresa de Lauretis makes this point in the context of her reading of Freud:

The myth of which [the little girl] is presumed to be the subject, generated by the same mechanism that generated the myth of Oedipus, in fact works to construct her as a "personified obstacle"; similarly the narrative transforms a human child into a womb, "a cave," "the grave," "a house," "a woman." The story of femininity, Freud's question [what do women want?], and the riddle of the Sphinx all have a single answer, one and the same meaning, one term of reference and address: man, Oedipus, the human male person. And so her story, like any other story, is a question of his desire: as is the teleology that Freud imputes to Nature, that primordial "obstacle" of civilized man."/51/

De Lauretis develops her conclusions regarding narrativity and gender through her reading of the work of Yurij Lotman, the Soviet semiotician whose plot typology is both a theoretical model for the origin of culture and a structuralist analysis of plot types./52/ Lotman distinguishes between two historically and typologically contradictory kinds of plot. The lesser of these is a non-teleological chronicling of events that are excessive in that they exist outside the integrating framework of a life, season, or day; this plot would be a list of miracles, disasters, and inexplicable, anomalous events. The more important, mythological type of plot reproduces the cyclical flux of patterned reality exemplified by the rise and fall of days, seasons, and life-cycles. This cyclical, mythical plot-type is anterior to true plot, because it does not rest upon opposition between discrete events, but on "the establishment of iso- and homomorphisms and the reduction of the diversity and variety of the world to invariant images."/53/ Absolute equivalence is established between parallel events:

The cyclical world of mythological texts creates a multi-layered mechanism with clearly manifested features of topological organization. This means that such cycles as the day, the year, the cyclical chain of life and death of man (sic) or god,

are considered as mutually homomorphous. Thus, although night, winter and death are in some respects dissimilar, their close identification is not a metaphor as the consciousness of today would interpret it. They are one and the same thing (or rather, transformations of one and the same thing)./54/

This mythological mechanism was a way of making sense and order out of the world; Lotman argues that it lies at the origin of human science, categorization, regulation, order and religion. News, scandals, and miracles originate with the other type of plot.

The mythical text and its opposite, the list, both disappeared long ago; they are hypothesized as a "textual mechanism for generating myths" "[a]t the centre of the cultural massif."/55/ They would be true contemporaries of the incest taboo. In the abstract, these two types of plot could be represented as a circle and a line. "The modern plot-text is the fruit of the interaction and reciprocal influence of these two typologically age-old types of text."/56/ Five thousand or more years of linear thought have made us familiar with the hybrid plot as we know it. The cyclical mythological plot is unfolded or linearized, producing discrete story elements such as character and place./57/ The story, including the story-like versions of myth with which we are familiar, and contemporary texts, novels, movie scripts and so on, is

what remains of the mythological plot mechanism. According to Lotman, because the mixing began so long ago, we can look for signs of myth's continued vitality as easily in contemporary tales as in Robert Graves' compilations. The true heir of myth is the story, which is still a way of making sense of the world.

The mythological, cyclical plot ideal, operating as a molding force on linear representation of events, results in a manifest plot which has the characteristics of a sentence: neither a line nor a circle, it is a closed structure which moves forward out of itself:

The central myth-making mechanism of culture is organised as topological space. With projection onto the axis of linear time and from the province of ritual play-action into the sphere of the verbal text, it undergoes important changes: in assuming linearity and discreteness, it acquires the characteristics of a verbal text constructed on the principle of a sentence. . . . (The central sphere of culture is constructed on the principle of an integrated structural whole, a sentence; the peripheral sphere is organized as a cumulative chain, simply by the accretion of structurally independent entities. This kind of organization is most apposite to the function of the former as a structural model of the world and of the latter as a kind of archive of excesses./58/

An isomorphism is thus established between a myth-making cultural mechanism, the narrative structure it engenders, a sentence, and a model of the world.

When Lotman discusses the characteristics of the narrative sentence, he is analyzing the narrative fabula in the tradition of Propp, Brémond, and Greimas.

Lotman's plot typology is compelling because it proposes the dialogic interaction of two initial text-groups or narrative forms, manifesting themselves in the narrative sentence. This model is potentially more dynamic than any purely classificatory typology.

Propp's thirty-one plot functions, for example, are most applicable to the Russian folktale but decline in relevance outside the framework of that corpus. The dialogic play of the two essential plot-types is found in contemporary texts, folk tales, and linear, recorded versions of myth.

In the course of his characterization of narrative fabula, Lotman notes the gender of fundamental plot positions:

The elementary sequence of events in myth can be reduced to a chain: entry into a closed space -- emergence from it (this chain is open at both ends and can be endlessly multiplied). Inasmuch as closed space can be interpreted as "a cave," "the grave," "a house," "woman," (and, correspondingly, be allotted the features of darkness, warmth, dampness) (Ivanov and Toporov, 1965), entry into it is interpreted on various levels as "death," "conception," "return home," and so on; moreover all these acts are thought of as mutually identical./59/

"Woman" is here identified with the closed space or fixed position of every story. It is arguable that the plot-types Lotman hypothesizes existed anterior to gender as we know it, and only became elements of gender definition as patriarchy developed. In any case, drawing his data from the only kind of plot available to study, that is, from plots of the mixed type, Lotman remarks on an observable, historical relationship between the plot-positions and gender.

Identifying Lotman's theory as a "mythical-textual mechanics" with an inevitable logic of its own, Teresa de Lauretis draws disturbing conclusions with respect to narrativity and gender:

[T]he hero must be male, regardless of the gender of the text-image, because the obstacle, whatever its personification, is morphologically female and indeed, simply, the womb. The implication here is not inconsequential. For if the work of the mythical structuration is to establish distinctions, the primary distinction on which all others depend is not, say, life and death, but rather sexual difference. In other words, the picture of the world produced in mythical thought since the very beginning of culture would rest, first and foremost, on what we call biology. Opposite pairs, such as inside/outside, the raw/the cooked, or life/death appear to be merely derivatives of the fundamental opposition between boundary and passage; and if passage may be in either direction, from inside to outside or vice versa, from life to death or vice versa, nonetheless all these terms are predicated on the single figure of the hero who crosses the boundary and penetrates the other space. In so doing the hero, the mythical subject, is constructed as human being and as male; he is the active principle of culture, the establisher of distinctions, the creator of dif-

ferences. Female is what is not susceptible to transformation, to life or death; she (it) is an element of plot-space, a topos, a resistance, matrix and matter./60/

De Lauretis argues that the gender of narrative positions or plot functions is basic to the larger cultural system of structuring oppositions such as inside/outside, raw/cooked and life/death which systematically define woman. The hero/obstacle opposition is one of the binary oppositions structuring western culture. She suggests that these discoveries pose another problematic: the extent to which narrative as such is implicated in the production of gendered, sadistic and/or Oedipal meanings. Therefore, "the story must be told differently."/61/ Her analysis demonstrates the need to deconstruct the classical and gendered form of narrative which is our Indo-European inheritance.

De Lauretis argues that a hero overcoming obstacles and achieving goals, unless otherwise marked, is male; concomitantly, one of the ways that culture defines "male" is as a hero who overcomes obstacles and achieves goals. Obstacles and goals, unless otherwise marked, are defined as female, and one of the ways that "female" is defined and socially produced is as an obstacle and/or a goal. In other words, she argues that a masculine generic operates at the level of nar-



rative grammar. It is thus possible to identify a masculine generic at the three levels of sentence grammar, discourse, and narrative.

The masculine generic is the primary target of feminist linguistic reform. It has been widely discussed from the point of view of socio-linguistics and semantics, and historically, in terms of the debate over a non-gendered pronoun in English./62/ Feminist linguists argue that the maintenance of the masculine generic as standard English means that males "are the species. What it says about females is that they are a sub-species."/63/ As feminists have pointed out in many other contexts, the norm is the male point of view.

In the context of narrative it is appropriate to note the association, reaching back to Indo-European, between action words and the semantic feature [+male]./64/ In this case the homology between sentence grammar and narrative grammar is not difficult to identify; in fact it could be naively argued that both rely on a mimetic relationship to nature. The same could be said about lexical asymmetry: it is "natural" that there are many more words/stories available to describe action-oriented, heroic, transgressive males than females. It is easier to tell a story with a male hero because males are heroic. Feminist

scholarship argues that because of a long history of telling stories with exclusively male heroes, the vocabulary of feminine heroism and action has been systematically depleted. Old English lexicology provides evidence for this view of the problem; Julia Penelope Stanley and Cynthia McGowan point to the disappearance of such terms as lōcbōre "free woman", guthcwen "battle woman," and māedenheāp "band of female warriors."/65/ Narrative functions marked for performance by a male hero correspond to sex-marked predicates which exist, largely unnoticed, in English. In 1978, Julia Penelope Stanley and Susan Wolfe Robbins published an analysis of sex-marked predicates in English, noting that lexical asymmetry is reinforced by gender-specific distributional relationships./66/ Gender-marked characteristics, as might be expected, tend to define and reinforce cultural stereotypes of appropriate behavior for women and men.

Another set of considerations relates to de Lauretis's contention that all narrative is governed by a kind of Oedipal logic. The Oedipus myth was re-read by Freud precisely as the story of the production of a human who is subject to culture, a human subject. In Freud's version, everyone goes through the Oedipal narrative, and in so doing, is produced as a member of society, male or not-male. De Lauretis broadens this

assertion to include the idea that narrative -- like language in general -- is the production ground of subjectivity. She argues that in crossing a frontier and penetrating what was other, the hero is constructed as a mythical subject, a human being and male./67/ Birth has prior privilege as narrative content: the not-yet-human crosses the birth passage and enters the world as a human. This is the passage on which all subsequent rites of passage and initiation are modelled. Here, woman is not only not constructed as mythical subject and human, but is specifically that which remains unmoved, stationary and resistant: matter/matrix/mother. She is the other against which the human subject is defined. However, if the crossing from the womb into the world is the rite of passage into culture, why cannot women, as well as men, be so constructed as mythical subjects and female?

De Lauretis asks what Medusa felt "seeing herself in Perseus' mirror just before being slain?"/68/ What really became of the Sphinx who is supposed to have killed herself in frustration?/69/ Brossard uses both mythical female characters to ask very similar questions in Picture Theory. The violence of the images indicates the reality that, although simple in principle, telling the heroic story from woman's point of view is more than a simple reversal. A woman slipping

to the other side of the male/female opposition simply becomes male, as long as the opposition remains intact. The double-bind is exemplified by French grammar; a woman in a group including males or in a social role attributed to males becomes grammatically invisible, in spite of the gender marking in the language. Telling a story from an authentically female point of view must undermine or undo the male hero/female obstacle opposition. But does an authentically female point of view exist? An uncolonized woman's point of view is only beginning to be articulated in texts such as the two which are the object of this study.

Speaking about women and fiction to a group of women students in 1928, Virginia Woolf broached the subject of the future of fiction and claimed that "the book has somehow to be adapted to the body."/70/ Woolf foresaw the central relationship between a developing women's writing and the body, the violence that would be unleashed in writing women's bodies: re-writing or writing over bodies already written, zoned, colonized, claimed as the site of central cultural taboos. She argued that the woman writer needed first to devise a sentence suited to her use; beyond that she would redesign the architecture, "arcades or domes,"/71/ built out of such sentences and comprising the form of the book, epic, or poetic play. A new, womanly writing

would light up what has always been dark:

For if Chloe likes Olivia and Mary Carmichael knows how to express it she will light a torch in that vast chamber where nobody has yet been. It is all half lights and profound shadows./72/

What is the architecture of this new women's writing, which Virginia Woolf foresaw, and which has certainly begun to exist? With what kind of plots will women clear the ground? The two narratological readings which compose the body of this study are a contribution to our necessarily collective response to this question.

## Notes

/1/ The Houghton Mifflin Canadian Dictionary of the English Language, William Morris, ed. (Markham, Ontario: Houghton Mifflin, 1982). Etymologies and definitions used in Parts I and II of this dissertation, unless otherwise stated, come from this edition, because it is the Canadian edition of The American Heritage Dictionary, William Morris, ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), which Marlatt used in writing How Hug a Stone. The Canadian edition has deleted the word "cunt"; I verified this etymology in the American edition.

/2/ Daphne Marlatt, How Hug a Stone (Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1983). All further references to this work appear in the text.

/3/ Nicole Brossard, Picture Theory (Montréal: Nouvelle Optique, 1982.) All further references to this work appear in the text.

/4/ Jean-François Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester U.P., 1984), xxiii.

/5/ Vladimir Propp, Morphology of the Folktale, trans. Laurence Scott; 2nd ed. revised and edited by Louis A. Wagner, New Introduction by Alan Dundes (Austin: Univ. of Texas, 1968).

/6/ Propp, xi.

/7/ Propp, xi.

/8/ Propp, xii.

/9/ Propp, xiii.

/10/ Dundes does not use the term "patriarchal" in spite of its obvious relevance to his example.

/11/ Roland Barthes, "Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits, Communications 8 (1966), 1-27; "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives," Image - Music - Text, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 82-83.

/12/ Jonathan Culler, "Story and Discourse in the Analysis of Narrative," The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1981), 169-170.

/13/ Mieke Bal, Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative, trans. Christine van Boheemen (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto, 1985). All further references to this work appear in the text.

/14/ Barthes, 83, 81.

/15/ Boris Tomashevsky, "Thematics," Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska, 1965), 68.

/16/ Wayne Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction 2nd ed. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1983); Gérard Genette, Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1980).

/17/ Barthes, 79.

/18/ The Cantos of Ezra Pound (New York: New Directions, 1950), 265.

/19/ Virginia Woolf, "Women and Fiction," Women and Writing, ed. Michèle Barrett (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 49.

/20/ Monique Wittig, Les guérillères (Paris: Minuit, 1969), 127. Marlatt read Les guérillères before writing How Hug a Stone. Personal interview with Daphne Marlatt, July 19, 1989.

/21/ Lorraine Weir, "From picture to hologram: Nicole Brossard's grammar of utopia," A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing, eds. Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli (Edmonton: Longspoon/NeWest, 1986), 345.

/22/ Weir, 345.

/23/ Weir, 349.

/24/ Monique Wittig, Sande Zeig, Lesbian Peoples: Materials for a Dictionary (New York: Avon, 1979), 74.

/25/ Wittig, Zeig, Brouillon pour un dictionnaire des amantes (Paris: Grasset, 1976), 151.

/26/ Nicole Brossard, Un livre (Montréal: Quinze, 1980).

/27/ Nicole Brossard, L'Aviva (Montréal: nbj, 1985).

/28/ Nicole Brossard, Le désert mauve: roman (Montréal: l'Hexagone, 1987).

/29/ See Barbara Godard, "Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation," Tessera 6 (1989), forthcoming.

/30/ Weir, 352.

/31/ The project of building culture "au féminin" is outlined in Nicole Brossard, "De radical à l'intégrales," La lettre aérienne (Montréal: remue-ménage, 1985), 87-106. "Au féminin" is translated in English as "in the feminine." See in the feminine: women and words/les femmes et les mots: Conference Proceedings 1983, ed. Ann Dybikowski et. al. (Edmonton: Longspoon, 1985).

/32/ Lyotard, xxiv.

/33/ Lyotard, xxiii.

/34/ Lyotard, xxiv.

/35/ Daphne Marlatt, "musing with mothertongue," Touch to my Tongue (Edmonton: Longspoon, 1984), 47.

/36/ Lyotard, 78.

/37/ Lyotard, 78.

/38/ Lyotard, 82.

/39/ Roland Barthes, S/Z, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 3-6.

/40/ Lyotard, 19.

/41/ Lyotard, 21.

/42/ Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Writing beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1985), 1.

/43/ Blau DuPlessis, 4.

/44/ Blau DuPlessis, x.



/45/ Virginia Woolf, "Women and Fiction," 49; cited in Blau DuPlessis, 56.

/46/ Blau DuPlessis, 56.

/47/ Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," The Common Reader (London: Hogarth, 1925), 189; cited in Blau DuPlessis, 56.

/48/ For example, Fredric Jameson: "narrative . . . means something like teleology," Foreword to Lyotard, xix.

/49/ Brossard, "De radical à intégrales," 87-103.

/50/ Teresa de Lauretis, Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1984), 140.

/51/ de Lauretis, 133.

/52/ Jurij Lotman, "The Origin of Plot in the Light of Typology," Poetics Today, 1, 1-2 (1979), 161-184.

/53/ Lotman, 162.

/54/ Lotman, 162.

/55/ Lotman, 161.

/56/ Lotman, 163.

/57/ Lotman, 164.

/58/ Lotman, 173.

/59/ Lotman, 168.

/60/ de Lauretis, 118-119.

/61/ de Lauretis, 156.

/62/ Denis Baron, Grammar and Gender (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1986).

/63/ Casey Miller and Kate Smith, The Handbook of Non-Sexist Writing (Women's Press, 1980), 4.

/64/ Susan J. Wolfe, "Gender and Agency in Indo-European Languages," Papers in Linguistics, 13, 4 (1980), 773-794.

/65/ Julia Penelope Stanley and Cynthia McGowan, "Woman and Wife: Social and Semantic Shifts in English," Papers in Linguistics, 12, 3-4 (1979), 500.

/66/ Julia Penelope Stanley and Susan Wolfe Robbins, "Sex-marked Predicates in English," Papers in Linguistics, 11, 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1978), 487-516.

/67/ de Lauretis, 119.

/68/ de Lauretis, 109.

/69/ de Lauretis, 156-157.

/70/ Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (1929; rpt. London: Granada, 1981), 74.

/71/ Woolf, Room, 73.

/72/ Woolf, Room, 80.

## Part II: A Narratological Reading of How Hug a Stone

It is difficult to imagine that access to the possibility of a road map is not at the same time access to writing./1/

### A. Fabula

#### Event

Fabula is composed of four elements: event, actor(s), time and location. Of these four, event implicates the others because an actor is defined as an agent that causes or experiences an event (Bal, 5), and because events necessarily happen somewhere and take time. Narratological analysis therefore begins with the event or events of the fabula. Defined as "a transition from one state to another state, caused or experienced by actors" (Bal, 13), event is situated at the heart of every fabula.

In order to determine the events of a fabula, the reader can generate a one-sentence summary of the narrative or, alternatively, have several other readers write short summaries of the narrative and then select what they have in common. This intuitive approach is based on the perceived resemblance between sentence and fabula structure. Mieke Bal restates narratology's working assumption that a homology exists "between the

(linguistic) structure of the sentence and that of the whole text," and between "the 'deep structure' of the sentence and the 'deep structure' of the narrative text, the fabula" (Bal, 11). Gérard Genette argues that in essence, narrative is the monstrous development of the verb:

Since any narrative . . . is a linguistic production undertaking to tell of one or several events, it is perhaps legitimate to treat it as the development -- monstrous, if you will -- given to a verbal form, in the grammatical sense of the term: the expansion of a verb. I walk, Pierre has come are for me minimal forms of narrative, and inversely the Odyssey or the Recherche is only, in a certain way, an amplification (in the rhetorical sense) of statements such as Ulysses comes home to Ithaca or Marcel becomes a writer. This perhaps authorizes us to organize, or at any rate to formulate, the problems of analyzing narrative discourse according to categories borrowed from the grammar of verbs./2/

Bal clarifies the nature of the homology when she writes "that the correspondence . . . between the sentence and the fabula rests upon a common logical basis . . . logical principles of construction familiar to us from sentence analysis" (Bal, 11-12). Sentence logic refers us to the familiar world of subjects and objects, verbal actions and people or things acting or acted upon.

Bal notes that many scholars have searched for a correlation between the narrative events and the manifestation of verbal forms in a text, but she con-

cludes that "the linguistic form in which . . . [the event] is embodied can be an indication but it is not always decisive. Furthermore the general assumption that every event is indicated by a verb of action is unjustified" (Bal, 15). This point is demonstrated by How Hug a Stone, a text which characteristically presents events in paratactic series of nominal or adjectival phrases. For example, in "Combe Martin," we read:

let off the bus with our bags & pack & where shall we go? here at the heart of what i remember of Combe Martin, curve of Seaside Hill running down to the cove where tide daily climbs the shingle beach to a seawall clutter of small hotels, new plate glass fish & chip place, shops off High Street stretching back up the combe. let's eat, he says.  
(HHS, 45)

The elision of finite verbs does not indicate a scarcity of events in the fabula; it should be understood, rather, as the grammar of oral language.

An initial one-sentence summary of How Hug a Stone might be as follows: the narrator, with her son, travels in England for a month with the intention of better understanding her mother. This working summary corresponds to the narrator's intentions as articulated in the "Introduction":

June 14, 1981. we fly to England for a month of visiting my mother's side of the family, my mother now dead, her mother still alive. my son wants to meet his great-grandmother & i want to see her again, this writer of faithful letters that have crossed the Atlantic & Canada for 30 years. letters that reflect what we tell her but never say much about her own life. letters that remember me when i was small, tugging me back to a mother who was once my age.

now my son & i fly across, two living letters in reply, two single i's with Canadian accents, one 39, one 12. my Canadian-born son, who barely knew & didn't understand his English grandmother, will now meet his English relatives & understand them as best he can. & perhaps i will come to understand my mother too.

(HHS, 11)

This important statement frames the narrative which follows. It specifies that the voyage, motivated by the narrator's desire to understand her mother, is a quest for understanding. Narratological analysis proceeds from this point.

The fabula structure arrived at by intuitive means can be evaluated according to formal narratological criteria. "[T]he relative importance of being able to formalize one's analysis depends on one's purpose in conducting it. A very intuitive selection is often satisfactory, and a more formal method can be reserved for difficult decisions" (Bal, 18). Formal criteria have been developed by Claude Brémont, who describes narrative event as a process taking place in three phases: virtuality, realization, and conclusion./3/ Bal summarizes his argument:

A fabula may be considered as a specific grouping of [sic] series of events. The fabula as a whole constitutes a process, while every event can also be called a process or, at least, part of a process. Three phases can be distinguished in every fabula: the possibility (or virtuality), the event (or realization), and the result (or conclusion) of the process.

(Bal, 19)

Using Brémond's terms, the fabula of How Hug a Stone can be provisionally described as follows:

#### Model 1

1. Condition of virtuality: the possibility that the narrator, in making this journey, will better understand her mother
2. Process of realization:
  - June 14, flying to England
  - June 15, landing at Gatwick
  - June 16, staying at the stepmother's house; taking the train to Exeter
  - June 17, visiting Poltimore Village and the grandmother and uncle
  - June 21, the grandmother giving photos, telling stories
  - June 22, travelling to Ilfracombe, Combe Martin, where the narrator had stayed with her mother, sisters and grandparents as a child
  - June 24, staying at Ellesmere
  - June 26, on the train
  - June 28, Pilgrim Cottage with Jean and Nick
  - June 30, "circling the power thresholds of Stonehenge -- embracing the squat stone mothers of Avebury" (HHS, 64)
3. Conclusion: unspecified date, Trafalgar Square. "we want to be where live things are"

Narratology distinguishes between functional and non-functional events. Functional events involve a change

of condition caused or experienced by an actor. Bal cites Roland Barthes' "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" in arguing that in order to be considered functional, an event must pose a choice between two possibilities (Bal, 15-16). Once a choice is made it determines the course of the narrative; there is a causal relationship between the functional events of a fabula. The pattern of choice -- event -- choice is implicit in the travel narrative of How Hug a Stone. From Combe Martin, the narrator could have returned to London or Canada, but she chose to go on to the Cotswolds and Avebury. The events of the fabula as outlined in Model I are functional according to the criteria of choice and change of condition.

When there is no clear causal relationship between the important events of a narrative, narratology questions the "logic of events." "Structuralists often work from the assumption that the series of events that is presented in the story must answer to the same rules as those controlling human behavior, since a narrative text would otherwise be impossible to understand" (Bal, 6). Bal defines the "logic of events" as "a course of events that is experienced by the reader as natural and in accordance with the world" (Bal, 12). The self-referential conservatism of this definition is obvious. Analysis of the logic of events provides a clear occa-



sion for examination of the ideological commitment, conscious or not, of a text.

The normative assumptions tied up with "the logic of events" are not challenged by How Hug a Stone to the extent that they are by Picture Theory. They are, however, clearly challenged by Kit's dream of idolatry and sacrifice. The meaning of Kit's dream is a construct of the intertextual signifying system of the text, although it is presented as spontaneous and "real." Daphne Marlatt ascribes the dream to the activity of the collective unconscious; Kit subconsciously had a profound understanding of the issues his mother was struggling with./5/ The reader, if s/he discovers the relationship between Kit's dream and the mythological subtext of the poem, will likely ascribe it to authorial invention: s/he will assume that the dream is fiction. A reading of the poem as autobiography would have to struggle with the unity of narrator, author, and content of the narration and, therefore, with the question of fiction and reality. The relationship between the author of the book and the narrator of the poem does not, however, form part of a narratological analysis. It is enough to observe that a normative logic of events is challenged by the poem "on the train."

A third criterion for selecting events was developed by William Hendricks./6/ According to this

theory, the structure of the fabula is determined by the confrontation of two groups of actors; such a confrontation defines functional events as involving two actors and one action, two arguments and one predicate, or two objects and one process. Mieke Bal points out:

Linguistically, it should be possible to formulate this unity as: two nominal and one verbal component. The structure of the basis (sic) sentence would then be:

subject -- predicate -- (direct) object

in which both the subject and the (direct) object must be actors, agents of action.

According to this third criterion, only those segments of the text that can be represented by such a basis sentence constitute a functional event.

(Bal, 17)

The basis sentence, according to these criteria, could be written as follows: the narrator flies to England to understand her mother. Variations on the basis sentence which preserve its essential structure would include: the narrator travels to Poltimore/to Combe Martin/ to Ellesmere/ to Avebury, in order to understand her mother. She listens to stories/ relives her memories/ reads and writes/ becomes more conscious of her own mothering, and so on, in order to understand her mother. There are events in the narrative which do not fall into this pattern: Edrys herself confronting her mother, Kit telling his dream, British Rail return-

ing mother and son to their itinerary. These events essentially form subordinate clauses within the narrative sentence. Using Hendricks' formula, the activities undertaken by the narrator in her effort to understand her mother are functional events in this fabula.

According to each of these formal methods, the passage of the narrator from a condition of non-understanding to a condition of understanding is the central event of How Hug a Stone. The fabula has a quest structure. The narrator, who is the actor/subject, experiences a lack of understanding, and sets out to find what she is missing. After a series of adventures in which she receives help from donors and overcomes obstacles which can be referred to as opponents, she succeeds in her quest and the story is complete.

As a narrative grammar, the quest is historically and structurally related to the folktale fabulas which were the objects of Vladimir Propp's early narratology. In fact, the folktale fabula, refined by Brémond and Greimas, has served as the model for a hypothetical universal narrative fabula:

Taking as a basis the presupposition that human thinking and action is directed towards an aim, one constructs a model which represents the relations to the aim. This model claims universal validity for

its operative principle and is not limited to invented fabulas.

(Bal, 26)

The quest structure regularly occurs not only in the fairy tale and romance but, as a quest for understanding, development or identity, in the bildungsroman, the love story, the adventure or detective thriller, and in nonfiction.

The fabula of How Hug a Stone can be schematized as a quest:

the narrator -- wishes to understand -- her mother  
actant (subject) -- function -- actant (object)

This is the "head" or elementary series of events (Bal, 21). The fabula becomes more complex through embedded narrations, leading to an essentially different fabula model which I call Model II. In order to develop Model II, it is necessary first to define "actantial roles" (Bal, 26) and the concept of narrative "function."

### Actors

It is important to recognize the extent to which the quest model is goal-oriented. The subject has a goal, and helpers and opponents complicate her progression towards it. On the grounds of this goal-

orientation several actors may be considered as the same actant. Bal clarifies these relations:

(T)he model starts from a teleological relation between the elements of the story: the actors have an intention: they aspire towards an aim. That aspiration is the achievement of something agreeable or favourable, or the evasion of something disagreeable or unfavourable. The verbs to wish and to fear indicate this teleological relation and are, therefore, used as abstractions of the intentional connections between elements.

The classes of actors we call actants. An actant is a class of actors that shares a certain characteristic quality. That shared characteristic is related to the teleology of the fabula as a whole. An actant is therefore a class of actors whose members have an identical relation to the aspect of telos which constitutes the principle of the fabula. That relation we call the function (F).

(Bal, 26)

There are six actantial classes, which fall into pairs: subject/object, power/receiver, and helper/opponent.

In How Hug a Stone, I is the subject/actor of the head series. Her mother is the object, and understanding mother is the function. The power and the receiver are, respectively, that force in the narrative which enables the narrator to achieve her goal, and that entity which benefits from her success. Language is the medium for her voyage of discovery and the means through which stories of her mother come to her. It is, therefore, the most appropriate sender or power. The narrator herself is the receiver; she undertakes

her quest for herself. The roles of the power and receiver in How Hug a Stone can be schematized as follows:

power	--	function	--	receiver
language	--	enables understanding	--	for the subject

Power, Bal argues, is "power over the whole enterprise, is often abstract, usually remains in the background, [is] usually only one" (Bal, 31). It is distinguished in this way from the helper class of actants, which also make it possible for the subject to achieve her aim. Helpers, in contrast to power, are usually multiple, often come to the fore, are mostly concrete and give incidental aid. The helper is paired with the opponent class. The interventions of the helpers and opponents are generally what make a story interesting.

According to the logic of the quest, the stories that Kit tells can be integrated into the head series as helpers because they contribute to the narrator's eventual understanding. Other helpers include the grandmother and her gifts of stories and photographs; the cousin, uncle, aunts, nieces and Jean and their stories; and the landscape itself, with its residents, archaeological sites, flora and fauna. Everything counts in this story of unfolding stories. "everything calls, shines, points to itself" (HHS, 43).

Quest grammar specifies that opponents are struggled with and overcome in the progress towards the goal. The cousin initially seems to be an opponent, as he plays his game of death and, as a representative of the dominant ideology, "hails" young Kit. It is noteworthy that the text precisely presents the function which Althusser calls interpellation or hailing; it is the means by which ideology "'recruits' subjects . . . or 'transforms' . . . individuals into subjects" of already existing ideological formations./7/

However, the cousin's play results in the narrator's heightened awareness: "i thought i was free" (HHS, 17), and her consciousness that Kit's turning from her parallels her pushing past her own "mother's quick restraint" (HHS, 18), at the age of nine. These are gifts in a quest for understanding, so the cousin too must be understood as a helper.

Fear is the true opponent in How Hug a Stone: fear that vanquished Edrys and that threatens her daughter. In "back to Reading," the narrator articulates her struggle with fear:

i think of the shape of her life, her brooding silence. how i felt i was struggling often with her sense of fatality, either about herself or about us, her children. the struggle with her fear which i suspected of being so strong it could actually shape what happened to me. coming to meet it, i see what i've been struggling with here.

(HHS, 76)

In the rough notes for the book, which now form part of the Daphne Marlatt collection in the Literary Manuscripts Division of the National Library of Canada, we read, "fear is the great debilitator -- poisoning 'the well of being' so that we lose sight of our own potential (the wellspring, the source)." Fear is a powerful obstacle. It finally contributes to the narrator's understanding and is therefore related to the teleology of the quest.

The actantial role played by Kit is difficult to define. He is more than a helper; the stories he tells and the comments he makes repeatedly emphasize that Kit is a subject (actor) with a program (function) of his own to fulfill. He is the subject of language and of a number of sub-fabulas or fabulas embedded within the head series. He is not a double of the subject/actant, since he doesn't have the same functional relationship to the object of the narrative; Kit is not questing to understand his/the mother. He might be defined as an "anti-subject," that is, an actor who pursues her/his own object and, at a certain moment, stands at cross-purposes to the subject (Bal, 32). However, Kit is not, strictly speaking, independent of his mother. He has a dream, becomes ill and plays in relation to her.



Clearly, the quest model is not well-equipped to describe mother/child relationships.

### Beyond the Teleology of the Quest

The fabula of How Hug a Stone can be described in three ways. The first and most evident considers the fabula as a quest. Recent developments in feminist theory have, however, made it impossible to accept uncritically the quest model and the narrative grammar it implies. In any case, the fabula of How Hug a Stone deconstructs as it evokes the quest motif and structure.

As I pointed out in Part I, Jurij Lotman identifies at the heart of the quest fabula an "elementary sequence of events": "entry into a closed space" and "emergence from it."/8/ Noting that these form a "fundamental opposition between boundary and passage,"/9/ Teresa de Lauretis leaves no doubt as to the implications of Lotman's work for feminist theory:

[T]he hero must be male . . . because the obstacle . . . is morphologically female. . . . the single figure of the hero . . . is constructed as human being and as male. . . . Female is what is not susceptible to transformation, to life or death; she (it) is an element of plot-space, a topos, a resistance, matrix and matter./10/

Similar terms defining female are brought into play by Daphne Marlatt, with reference to the arché-mother:

although there are stories about her, versions of history that are versions of her, & though she comes in many guises she is not a person, she is what we come through to & what we come out of, ground & source. the space after the colon, the pause (between the words) of all possible relation.  
(HHS, 73)

In this passage, Marlatt articulates the classical plot position which constructs what it is to be female./11/ In defining a feminine ground through which the subject moves, Marlatt, like de Lauretis, suggests the relation between the physicality of the mother's body and the metaphysical arché-mother, earth-womb-tomb. Both authors specify the stationary, non-person status of this feminine ground: de Lauretis rather angrily, and Marlatt, factually, both in this text and in her notebook. In articulating the female plot position, Marlatt recontextualizes it and changes its meaning. Recognizing the matrix as archetypal and other, she claims it as what "we" come through. She uses these terms to construct her protagonist as human subject and female.

The quest model describes events in terms of the desire of one subject; conceived at its most abstract, a subject crosses a line. The narrator of How Hug a Stone crosses the ocean and crosses over the boundary into understanding. According to the logic of the

quest, the other characters in the poem, with the exception of Edrys who is an object, are helpers or opponents. The narrator is the one true subject. The quest structure subordinates all the other fabula elements to the telos of the subject.

Structural subordination on this level runs counter to How Hug a Stone's spirit which emphasises a plurality of voices and celebrates a listening and ultimately collective subject. In addition, the quest model fails to account for the character of Kit. However, How Hug a Stone has other deep structures which contest the teleology of the quest. The first of these becomes apparent when we bring forward the full complexity of the quest narrative itself.

The events of Edrys' life, as they gradually emerge, constitute a second fabula which is embedded in the head series, thus creating a much more complex fabula with not one hero but two: the narrator and her mother. Reading the narrative this way, tracing Edrys' struggle through the map of memory, the reader finds that the structure of the fabula metamorphoses. While the narrator's story moves forward in time and space, Edrys' story unfolds in the reverse direction. Considered as one narrative with a second embedded within it, the whole fabula is as follows:

## Model II

June 14 subject travels to Reading (narrator's memories of 1948: Edrys on vacation) to Poltimore (grandmother's memories of the late thirties and early forties: Edrys becomes a woman) to Pilgrim Cottage (Jean's memories: Edrys in school) to Avebury (cultural, ancestral memory) to London (vestige of dinosaurs) back to 1951, then to the present.

Moving in two directions at once, this fabula escapes the strict control of linear time; its double movement generates an effect of synchrony.

Schematized in this way the fabula corresponds to Brémond's analysis of narrative cycles, either in sequence or embedded within one another, which are constituted by "processes of improvement" and "processes of deterioration" (Bal, 22).

## Improvement

fulfillment of the task (crossing over)  
 intervention of allies (stories)  
 elimination of the opponent (fear)  
 negotiation ("Pilgrim night" to "long after The Brown Day of Bride")  
 satisfaction (feeding the pigeons)

## Deterioration

misstep (Edrys' marriage)  
 creation of an obligation (to be a wife and mother)  
 the sacrifice (going to North America)  
 the endured attack (madness, fear)  
 the endured punishment (silence)

In this version of the fabula, the two processes occur simultaneously; thus Model II clearly undermines the teleology of the quest.

A third fabula model accounts more carefully than the first two for the final movement of the poem, the narrator's trip to Avebury and her exploration of Neolithic ritual. The figure of Edrys gradually merges with that of Bird/Bride/Brigit, the British incarnation of the great goddess of Old European culture./12/ A shift into archaeological time is marked by the movement from "Pilgrim night," with its fear and its question, "who mothers me?" (HHS, 71), to "long after The Brown Day of Bride" (HHS, 72-73), with its direct invocation of the earth's mothering and mythological power. The narrator's quest to understand her mother has led her beyond Edrys and beyond her mother, to the "squat stone mothers of Avebury" (HHS, 64) and, finally, to the interior narrative of the mothertongue. The fabula thus moves from origin to myth to the integration of past and present.

In Model III, ceremonies held in the West Kennet long barrow in approximately 3500 B.C. are the first fabula event. They are followed by the construction of Silbury Hill in late July, 2660 B.C. Subsequent transformations may be arranged along a timeline that dissociates them from the narrator and her quest. The

speaking community is the subject/actant manifested by all the characters. Language is the power that makes transition from generation to generation possible.

This version of the fabula is as follows:

#### Model III

3500 B.C. West Kennet long barrow  
 2660 B.C. Silbury Hill  
 1890 A.D. Grandmother born  
 1941 Edrys brought out  
 1942 narrator born  
 1948 holiday in England  
 1951 emigration  
 June 14, 1981 the narrator and her son fly to  
 England etc.

In this version of the fabula, Edrys, her mothers before her, the narrator and Kit share equally in the subject function. The collective subject/actant crosses the boundary between life and death, a subject of language who, like the narrator, remains otherwise unnamed. The relationship between I and the other subjects of language is both familiar and familial, characterized by the "reciprocal ties" summoned by etymological play on the Indo-European root ghosti-, meaning "stranger, guest, host; one with whom one has reciprocal ties of obligation." Conceived in this way the fabula reflects and reinforces the thematic substitution of telos, "our obsession with the end of things," with "the old slow pulse beyond word become,

under flesh, mutter of stone, stane, stei-ing power" (HHS, 75).

Paradoxically, this model of the fabula, which explicitly reaches towards the Neolithic origins of our language and culture, reveals the illusory nature of a quest for origin. If the family is the subject/actant of the fabula, origin and teleology disappear in the mists of time: someone always gave birth to the one before. This "mise en abyme" is suggested in the evolutionary image of the final passage: "ruffled neck feathers ripple snakelike movement of the neck last vestige of dinosaurs" (HHS, 79). As long as humans survive, this story will continue; but survival too, the text points out, is in doubt. "This earth hospitable . . . . takes back what is given, ghost-i, hostly and hostile at once" (HHS, 48-49). By neglecting its reciprocal duties to the earth, modern society puts life itself in jeopardy, "planning . . . nuclear-powered killer submarines & radar-equipped reconnaissance aircraft. (getting rid of us)" (HHS, 48).

Taking Model III as the fabula, the poem has the character of a chronicle which repeats the birth and death of a single, collective actant without reproducing the binary opposition of inside/outside which is implicated in the production of male/female gender. The actant includes male and female. Understood in

this light, the fabula constructs gender as an attribute of story. To put it differently, the fabula implies a generic human who is both male and female. In addition, the form of the quest, which is often taken as a model -- even a universal model -- of fabula, can be reinterpreted as an aspect of story which depends on the focalization of one actor.

## B. Story

### Focalization

The adoption of the third model for the fabula structure results in a reading of the poem as the transformation of a collective subject who is manifested, at the level of story, by many different characters. The desire for understanding which motivates the travel narrative is displaced and reappears as an aspect of story; it is a consequence of our perception of the fabula through the senses of the narrator. Bal defines this sensory aspect of story as focalization, preferring the term to the more widely used "point of view" because it permits a rigorous distinction between the witness of fabula events and their narrator, who is the linguistic subject of language (Bal, 100-101). Character is related to focalization insofar as it is generally through one or more charac-



ters that a fabula is focalized. If a fabula is not focalized through the senses of a character, which is the case with sections of Nicole Brossard's Picture Theory, a radical displacement of narrative expectations results. Bal's discussion makes clear that there is more to focalization than seeing; the focalizer lends all of her sensory capabilities, that is, all of her body, to the experiencing and focussing of the fabula. This structuring presence is noteworthy in How Hug a Stone, a text which is distinguished by the powerful manifestation of a woman's body at the story level.

More than any other aspect of story, focalization mediates between story and fabula:

In a story, elements of the fabula are presented in a certain way. We are confronted with a vision of the fabula. What is this vision like and where does it come from? . . . I shall refer to the relations between the elements presented and the vision through which they are presented with the term focalization.

(Bal, 100)

The fabula of How Hug a Stone is strongly focalized through the vision and emotions of the protagonist; this focalization gives meaning and importance to a quest structure which begins with a transatlantic flight and which ends with her achievement of relative understanding. The travel narrative frames a series of

embedded subjective retroversions, or remembered incidents from the past, which tell the stories of Edrys and her mother. These depend for their form and motivation on the focalization by the narrator. Focalization also governs the regular rhythm of the travel narrative and the summarizing rhythm of stories held in memory.

The narrator's preoccupation with narrative can be read as her need to identify the fabula in which she finds herself. Once she establishes both its antiquity and its open-ended future, the question of origin is displaced and she is freed from the claustrophobic dynamics of her family. Her uncle drives the Dartmoor Hills, "furious" and "driven," asking "who writes the text?" (HHS, 33). His question is answered in the last section of the poem. Like the spiralled shell of the snail, the unwinding, sinuous, narrative sentence curls over on itself, with only a "blue/black hole at centre" (HHS, 70). Without fixed origin, the narrator writes at the beginning of her journey, "so as not to be lost, invent: one clear act in all that jazz. (in flight? & if the plane goes down?" (HHS, 15). By the end of How Hug a Stone, her invention has won her a place to stand (HHS, 78-79). That place is in the context of her family which, with its reciprocal rights and obligations, and repetitive form, transcends the life and death of

individuals: "memorial orbits of love, spasmodic, reaching far back in the blood -- where there is a gap, a black hole somewhere" (HHS, 34). Family structure is mirrored in the fabula with its one subject who passes in and out of language and life. The usual "numerical inequality between actors and actants" (Bal, 32) is here exaggerated to the extreme point of uncountable characters and one actant. This is a mythological form. The narrator traces a delicate line between her growing awareness of the collectivity which defines who she is, and her individual voice and freedom to act (HHS, 35).

In certain passages, characters merge into their actantial function. Distinctions among the grandmother, Edrys and the narrator blur:

& so coal lights, geulo-, ember from India born "somewhere in the north" in the 1890's, schooled in the hills, has a daughter born in Bombay, schooled in the Nilgiri Hills ("like the English downs," she said) & England, carried all the way to Malaya, thence to Australia when war breaks out, where i appear.

(HHS, 29-30)

It is impossible to identify the point when the grandmother becomes Edrys, or who exactly said that the Nilgiri Hills are like the English downs. Three births are mentioned; three generations of daughters are evoked, since it was the grandmother, and not Edrys,

who was born in the 1890s, and i is the narrator of the poem. The subject/actant of this embedded narrative is geulo-, promethean fire of life or simply, as Marlatt wrote in her notebook, "the same old coal."

Narratological reading illuminates the identification and conflict between Edrys and her daughter. This conflict is meaningful thematically, but it is clearly also a structural manifestation of the characters' identity at the level of the fabula. Within the discourse of the poem this relationship is manifested by their mutual resistance to the role that they are offered in the patriarchal script. Edrys ended by "lending her body" (HHS, 29) to the inherited dream, but her daughter,

refused, on a new continent, suffocated in changing rooms thick with resentment: you don't understand, everybody wears jeans here & i want a job. refusing the dream its continuity in what i thought was no man's land (not Rupert's, not the King's), just the trees'.

(HHS, 29)

The identification between the narrator and her mother with respect to their fears for their children can also be understood as anxiety relating to their actantial function as parents in the spiral of generation.

Strong focalization creates the impression of a sensory/sensing body extended through the textual

system. The generational blurring identified in these passages permits a glimpse of actantial function behind the mask of individual characters. It might initially be thought of as a temporary weakening of focalization. My argument is that the intense focalization is precisely what allows the focalizer to trace the effect of finding herself inside a collective subjectivity, which unfolds steadily through and beyond her body, and which incorporates the difference she herself made when she "refused on a new continent" to lend continuity to the patriarchal dream. She reaches into language, listening for stories that can tell her where she is. Aware of the effect of these stories on herself, the narrator comments that "stories can kill" (HHS, 51).

Focalization plays a significant and structuring role in How Hug a Stone. The text illustrates the extent to which focalization can govern a fabula's manifestation as story. As Mieke Bal puts it,

Focalization . . . has an 'overarching' position with respect to the other aspects [of story]. The significance of certain aspects cannot be viewed unless it is linked to focalization. Moreover, focalization is . . . the most important, most penetrating, and the most subtle means of manipulation.  
(Bal, 116)

Temporal relations in How Hug a Stone must also be understood in relationship to the overarching aspect of focalization.

### Temporal Relations

Although duration is an element of fabula, I discuss it here in order to group together three aspects of temporal relations: duration, anachrony, and rhythm. The travel narrative which frames How Hug a Stone has a duration of the developmental type (Bal, 38-42). This type of duration is opposed to that of the crisis, in which events developing for some time come to a head dramatically, and in a short period of time. These are relative distinctions which are useful for comparative evaluations.

Edrys' life is presented in summary and in a series of vignettes. The narrator's memory of catching a cinder in her eye on the train to Reading is literally and narratologically a crisis. An example of summary is the second half of the poem "Pilgrim Cottage," with its quick sketch of Edrys' life and death. The grammatical structure of recurring present participles emphasizes a timeless, descriptive temporality.

wondering even as a mother was she "doing the right thing"? hiding her doubts to wrestle with the angel authority of father, teacher, doctor, dentist, priest. furious, raging at the false front of society, tearing out the placid assumptions of family . . . & then lapsing, controlled, into silence.

(HHS, 67)

The alternation of evocative, metonymic crises with incisive summary is an expressive and economical way to tell Edrys' story. Similar methods are used to evoke the Neolithic Age and the prehistoric community at Avebury.

The building of a culture is obviously a developmental event. However, "long after The Brown Day of Bride" presents a particular event: the ceremonial construction of Silbury Hill. The archaeological reading of Silbury Hill revealed that earth was layered over living creatures whose seasonal wing development enabled scientists, almost 5000 years later, to date the construction of the hill, correlating it roughly with summer harvest festivals still held today in Wiltshire./13/ Archaeologists have found evidence of the religious significance of the foundations of the hill:

matrix of chalk block walls arranged in the pattern of a spider's web around & over a mound of turves, grass still pliable though brown in colour . . . beetles . . . flying ants with their wings showed them buried late July of 2660 B.C. why? /14/  
(HHS, 74-75)

The construction of the hill is an event of the crisis type, set into a context which the text pieces together from what evidence there is.

Michael Dames, whose book The Avebury Cycle is one of the sources quoted in How Hug a Stone, theorizes that the hill is the goddess's pregnant womb from which she gives birth to the harvest./15/ Alternatively, she gives birth to spring. Marlatt cites a Gaelic poem which is thought to remember the ritual of the birth of spring: "The Day of Bride, the birth of Spring/ the serpent emerges from his knoll . . . / The serpent will come from his hole/ on the Brown Day of Bride."/16/

the line hypothesized druid lore (in Christian times), today a collective need to endure winter to spring, when from his knoll . . . the Serpent will come from his hole/ on the Brown Day of Bride singing, wave on wave emerging: & at centre, earth, only earth.

(HHS, 75)

The hill is both a discrete topos and an integral part of the sacred body; activated in ritual it is an image of a singular event and of the endlessly repeated and therefore timeless movement of the seasons. The phrase, "at centre only earth," refers to the fact that archaeologists excavated the hill three times, fully expecting to find burials. Unlike the Egyptian pyramids, however, and unlike the West Kennet long barrow nearby, the hill contains no bones, only (sacred) earth, the matrix of chalk blocks, and a moat, resembling the one around the Avebury henge, which was



filled in with more earth at the time of construction. Dames interprets the structure as a ceremonial representation of both crisis and repetition, a symbolic summary of the "divine narrative"/17/ which served these early communities as "a strategy for survival" (HHS, 75).

Marlatt's narrative re-reads the "writing in monumental stones," reaching back to the "transformative, sinuous sentence emerging even circular, cyclic Avebury" (HHS, 75). Her narrative line is the line of her re-reading, a radical reinterpretation of the evidence:

she lives stands for nothing but this longstanding matter in the grass, settled hunks of mother crust, early Tertiary, bearing the rootholes of palms, they bring us up, in among stone-folds, to date: the enfolded presented waits for us to have done with hiding-&-seeking terrors, territories, our obsession with the end of things.

how hug a stone (mother) except nose in to lithic fold, the old slow pulse beyond word become, under flesh, mutter of stone, stane, stei-ing power.

(HHS, 75)

The critical/durational type of story presentation typical of How Hug a Stone is related thematically to the cyclical rituals of the earth and to a resolution of the narrator's grieving for her mother.

Insofar as the fabula reaches back to the Neolithic Age, it is characterized by an enormous ellipsis

separating that age and our own. This ellipsis, which dwarfs the rest of the fabula, is presented in the poem as absence and loss: thus the preoccupation with evidence. Nevertheless, in these misty regions the fabula, "wave on wave emerging" (HHS, 75), begins.

Fabula time moves forward as it must, bound by conventional and logical restrictions. Chronological and diachronic, it is encoded as TF or fabula time (Bal, 70). Fabula time of How Hug a Stone begins at approximately 3500 B.C. and ends with the present tense now of the last poem in the book. Story time, TS, is more flexible; it begins with the visit to the medium in Vancouver, six years prior to the voyage to England. From there it jumps to June 14, 1981, as the narrator and her son take off on a transatlantic flight towards their ancestral home. It covers approximately one month.

Anachrony is the non-coincidence of fabula and story time. "Differences between the arrangement in the story and the chronology of the fabula we call chronological deviations or anachronies" (Bal, 53). Two basic types of anachrony, retroversion and anticipation, correspond to the popular categories of flashback and anticipation. "Seen from that moment in the fabula which is being presented when the anachrony intervenes, the event presented in the anachrony lies

either in the past or in the future. For the first category, retroversion may be used; for the second, anticipation is a suitable term" (Bal, 54).

Story time of the travel narrative coincides unproblematically with corresponding fabula time, so that we could encode the relation between TS and TF in that portion of the narrative by saying that  $TS = TF$ . The simplicity of this relation is qualified by stylistic variations which introduce elements of anachrony, for example, internal retroversion.

Internal retroversion occurs when the story sequence differs from that of the fabula because events within the time frame of the story are presented twice. Internal retroversion fills in missing information elided in its sequential place (paralipsis) or repeats an event:

In addition to [having a] complementary function, internal retroversions may have yet another function . . . the repetition of a previously described event usually serves to change, or add to, the emphasis on the meaning of that event. The same event is presented as more, or less, pleasant, innocent or important than we had previously believed it to be. It is thus both identical and different: the facts are the same but their meaning has changed.

(Bal, 61)

This technique is familiar to many readers from its use in the detective novel, where the revelation of the

crime often involves a retelling of events already narrated.

In How Hug a Stone, internal retroversion occurs when different types of text report the same fabula events, particularly when travel journal entries at the head of sections give short summaries of activities which are developed elsewhere. The poems or poetic prose texts open out what is written in the journal, giving it voice. Linearity is undermined. For example, the events recorded in the journal entry, "June 17, Poltimore village. evening -- warm, silent, fragrant with hay & silage, timothy grass (June the worst month for pollen count)" (HHS, 22), are repeated and expanded in "June near the river Clyst, Clust, clear. Clystmois this holding wet & clear." An example of internal anticipation occurs in the following lines: "June 21, my grandmother is giving back my early self to me in photographs she foresees drained of meaning in strangers' hands" (HHS, 22). The journal entry comments on "Poltimore, Pwyll Ti Mawr, Pool by the Great House," identifying the grandmother's actantial function of donor. Powerful poetic material is uniquely presented, on occasion, in journal entries: "under her mothering wing" (HHS, 64), an image which brings together the symbolic and proairetic codes of the narrative, is a good example.

The story of Edrys' coming to be a woman and mother is presented through the memory and mind of various characters, in other words, through the technique of "subjective anachrony" (Bal, 57). Her story is told in the opposite order from which it occurred, so that fabula time and story time run counter to each other. Her story is presented in fragments of ever-increasing span, at ever-increasing distance from the primary story time of the narrator's present tense. Edrys is first recalled when the narrator remembers catching a cinder in her eye on the train to Reading; next she recalls driving in the car during the trip that the family took to England in 1948. The grandmother's memories pick up the thread, telling how Edrys was taken out at the age of eighteen and started her family during the Second World War. Edrys' friend Jean recalls her next, as a girl. The first anachrony spans a moment; the second spans a short scene; the third covers a period of several years; the fourth, iterative and vague as to temporal details, refers to the period of approximately seven years which Edrys spent in boarding school.

From June 30 to the end of the journey, elision of dates and factual details corresponds to the protagonist's increasing preoccupation with the past. Edrys begins to blend with the archetypal mother, some-

times imaged as a bird. The fabula stretches back to the Neolithic Age, while the story moves forward in the first person, present tense of the narration, in a linear movement imagined as the train in which the narrator and her son travel. The story and the fabula move simultaneously forward and backward in time. Like a spinning top that appears to be standing still, the two together convey an impression of timelessness. The subjective anachrony represented by Edrys' story merges with stories drawn from the collective memory of language, moving from mother to mothertongue. Edrys' origins fade. A powerful effect of distance is evoked as the focalizer travels huge areas of the earth's surface and through time, moving between Bombay and England, the Neolithic era and our own. At the same time, an effect of almost stifling identification links the narrator to her mother. Two characters share the role of subject/actant in a single fabula.

The embedded subjective anachronies play a crucial role in the narrator's quest for understanding. Mieke Bal points out that it is not uncommon for external retroversions to fulfil an explanatory function:

"External retroversions often provide indications about the antecedents, the past of the actors concerned, in so far as that past can be of importance for the interpretation of events" (Bal, 60). With the help of the

stories she hears (and invents), i discovers who and where she is. She remembers the past in order to understand her present. How can intense, physical focalization be maintained in a story which spans so much time? The narrator listens to her own memory and to stories held in the memories of others. She listens to the collective memory of language which succeeds the familial storytelling. The narrator focusses on language, and words tell her stories she needs to hear.

Rhythm is the synchronizing of the relative speed of story time and fabula time. In other words, rhythm correlates the relative speed of the events to that of their presentation. The presentation or performance time of a text can never be definitively fixed; Mieke Bal points out that scholars have nevertheless devoted attention to the traditional distinction between "a summarizing, accelerating presentation and a broad, scenic one" (Bal, 68). Dramatic presentation of dialogue involves a "scenic" rhythm in which story time is more or less equal to the time of the fabula. The remembered fragment of dialogue, "didn't i tell you?" (HHS, 16), has the rhythm of a scene. A summary condenses fabula time. At either extreme of rhythmic possibility we find the ellipsis, in which the fabula proceeds while the story does not, and the pause, in which the story is elaborated while the fabula stands still.

Mieke Bal encodes the potential relations of story time to fabula time as follows:

ellipses	$TF = n$	$TS = 0$	thus	$TF > \infty TS$
summary				$TF > TS$
scene				$TF = TS$
slow-down				$TF < TS$
pause	$TF = 0$	$TS = n$	thus	$TF < \infty TS$
				(Bal, 71)

Although ellipses naturally occur within narrative texts, they narrate nothing; the same can be said of pauses or descriptions. I have noted the enormous ellipsis between the Neolithic Age and our own. The text acknowledges the gap in knowledge which this ellipsis represents:

. . . that is the limit of the old story, its ruined circle, that is not how it ended or we have forgotten parts, we have lost sense of the whole.  
(HHS, 73)

Fabula time is infinitely greater than story time, and some of it is lost to memory.

More recent history such as the birth of the grandmother, "ember from India born 'somewhere in the north' in the 1890's" (HHS, 29), is sketched in quickly; lives are summarized and run together; the rhythm of the embedded subjective retroversions is fairly rapid. In "close to the edge," two events from the past are sum-



marized, the adventure at Wild Pear Beach and the scattering of Edrys' ashes (HHS, 55). Summarizing presentation is not limited, either, to retroversion: "if it wasn't for the clouds" (HHS, 62) is an example of summarizing rhythm, where fabula time is greater than story time. Whenever dialogue occurs, the rhythm slows to that of a scene. Good examples are "boy with tape recorder stalking horses in a field of cows," and "Nattadon Farm" (HHS, 36-37). "by train to Reading" has the decelerating rhythm of a slow-down ( $TF < TS$ ), as it gathers and acknowledges all of the associations of the fragment of dialogue, "didn't i tell you?"

Descriptive pauses contribute to a timeless effect. "cottage in the Cotswolds" describes the old knight at his cottage: "slate roof, roses twining up the stone wall to the eavestrough, delphiniums blue. larkspur & lupins in the honeyed light. Nick on his knees among the cabbage" (HHS, 65). Pauses are often intertwined with descriptive summary, and the two are not easily separated, particularly because of the frequent elision of finite verbs. "the feel of this cottage full of dogs, cats, flowers, currents of emotion. the drama of English manners" (HHS, 24) is descriptive, but events are implied, particularly as the passage continues: "'sorry, darling.' scones with Devonshire cream & strawberry jam for tea." Another good example is "such

tides of feeling -- grey despair even, listening to Kit coughing through the door in fits, attacks" (HHS, 51). The ambiguous rhythm of the descriptive summary is finally the one most characteristic of this text, which nevertheless exhibits the full range of rhythmic possibilities identified by Mieke Bal.

One scene of particular interest is the recalled conversation between Edrys and her mother, which would have taken place sometime in the late 1930s:

"We went to Penang and she said, 'Mother, I'm so tired of this life, of just wasting my time going out dancing every night, getting engaged to play tennis, somebody ringing up and wanting to take me out to golf. It seems so futile. I want to learn dress designing and dressmaking. I've seen advertisements and I've written off to England. I won't be coming back with you when we go on leave.' This was when we were in the hotel in Penang sitting on the grounds facing the sea just where her wedding photograph was taken a few months later. Isn't it extraordinary?"

(HHS, 29)

This important fragment of dialogue records Edrys' (unsuccessful) decision to write her own script. It is in a powerful position relative to story and fabula. The dialogue occurs within a scene in the story of the narrator's visit to her maternal grandmother, and within the embedded summary of Edrys' life. The scenic story rhythm (TS = TF) underlines the importance of her speech. Thus rhythm corresponds to semantic emphasis.

Mieke Bal notes that analysis of rhythm can indicate how attention in a narrative is patterned:

[S]uch research should not simply be aimed at precise calculation of the number of words or lines per event; the amount of text set aside for each event only indicates something about how the attention is patterned. The attention paid to the various elements gives us a picture of the vision on the fabula, which is being communicated to the reader.

(Bal, 69)

The narrator's journey is a month long and the book consists of thirty-nine poems which are spaced fairly regularly; there is a little more than a poem per day with approximately a page per poem. The rhythm of the narrator's story characteristically hovers between descriptive scene and descriptive summary. Edrys' story is most often summarized, a fact which makes her independence speech to her mother all the more striking. The typical rhythms accorded to the narratives of Edrys and her daughter reflect the story's focalization through the narrator. The ellipsis separating the Neolithic Age from the present is a rhythmic disruption which emphasizes "long after The Brown Day of Bride," "continued," and "Avebury awi-spek, winged from buried (egg."

C. TextLocution/Subjectivity/Gender

The textual level of narrative is the level of words. The narratologist is here concerned not with the elements of a narrative, nor with how they are presented, but with the telling itself: the act of locution. In the narrative utterance someone who is telling tells something that is known. Narrative implicates, epistemologically, this double construction of knower and known. At the textual level of analysis, the focus is on the knower.

The indications of the knower in language are defined in linguistics as deixis: "the location and identification of persons, objects, events, processes and activities being talked about, or referred to, in relation to the spatio-temporal context created and sustained by the act of utterance."/18/ Deixis is of particular interest as the register of subjectivity in language. Deictic signs have denotative meaning only in relation to a specific speech act; they are relative indicators of place, person and time. Examples include: here, there; personal pronouns I, you, we; proper names; now, the day after tomorrow, yesterday. The word deixis comes via the Greek "deiktikos," meaning "able to show," from an Indo-European root, deik, meaning "to show" or "to pronounce solemnly." Etymol-

ogy highlights the physicality of language: the body pointing, the mouth articulating a speech act. Deixis points to and posits the person who stands in the place of the I, in the here and now of language as it is generated.

In Problèmes de linguistique générale, Emile Benveniste outlined the relationship between subjectivity and language:

C'est dans et par le langage que l'homme se constitue comme sujet; parce que le langage seul fonde en réalité, dans sa réalité qui est celle de l'être, le concept d'"ego".

La "subjectivité" dont nous traitons ici est la capacité du locuteur à se poser comme "sujet". Elle se définit, non par le sentiment que chacun éprouve d'être lui-même (ce sentiment, dans la mesure où l'on peut en faire état, n'est qu'un reflet), mais comme l'unité psychique qui transcende la totalité des expériences vécues qu'elle assemble, et qui assure la permanence de la conscience. Or nous tenons que cette "subjectivité", qu'on la pose en phénoménologie ou en psychologie, comme on voudra, n'est que l'émergence dans l'être d'une propriété fondamentale du langage. Est "ego" qui dit "ego". Nous trouvons là le fondement de la "subjectivité", qui se détermine par le statut linguistique de la "personne"./19/

Our common sense impression of subjectivity, according to Benveniste, is simply a reflection of the deictic order of language. The subject is plotted by a deictic network of words at the moment of speech, creating what we know as subjectivity. In Julia Kristeva's analysis, this self-creation continually occurs in the form of a

"rupture and/or boundary" in which the subject separates from the object./20/ This phase, which Kristeva calls the *thetic*, constitutes the threshold of language. Behind every language act, in other words, is a subject in formation./21/

Returning to narratology, we can compare Mieke Bal's argument that the knower of the narrative utterance, whether speaking in the first or the third person, is, in her/himself, always an "I." This "I" is an effect of the narrative utterance. Bal discusses this phenomenon in a section entitled "'I' and 'He' are Both 'I.'" Her argument, which is perhaps indebted to Benveniste's, is as follows:

In principle, it does not make a difference to the status of the narration whether a narrator refers to itself or not. As soon as there is language, there is a speaker who utters it; as soon as those linguistic utterances constitute a narrative text, there is a narrator, a narrating subject. From a grammatical point of view, this is always a 'first person.' In fact, the term 'third-person narrator' is absurd . . . at best the narrator can narrate about someone else, a 'he' or a 'she.' . . . [T]he distinction between 'first person' and 'third person' narratives . . . rests in the object of the utterance.

(Bal, 121-122)

The subject-in-information in narrative language is a narrator and a first person. What can be said about the gender of this narrating subject?

Emile Benveniste assumes a masculine generic in outlining his theory of human subjectivity in a section of Problèmes de linguistique générale entitled "L'homme dans la langue." He fails to comment on whether or not women have a different rapport with language and/or subjectivity. However, feminist theory has addressed the specific rapport between women's subjectivity and language, often drawing on Benveniste's work in constructing its analyses.

The best feminist reading of Benveniste is that of Monique Wittig in "The Mark of Gender."/22/ Wittig argues that a "primitive ontological concept . . . enforces in language a division of beings into sexes."/23/ This is the law of gender which oppresses women. Lexical manifestation of the law of gender has "a plastic action on the real,"/24/ working through language to continually reconstitute the world according to the binary opposition of male and female. It places women in the ontologically impossible position of being a partial or "relative" subject. "The result of the imposition of gender, acting as a denial at the very moment when one speaks, is to deprive women of the authority of speech . . . to deny them any claim to the abstract, philosophical, political discourses which give shape to the social body."/25/

Wittig's argument complements Virginia Woolf's portrayal of the divided condition of women's subjectivity:

[I]f one is a woman one is often surprised by a sudden splitting off of consciousness, say in walking down Whitehall, when from being the natural inheritor of that civilization, she becomes, on the contrary, outside of it, alien and critical. Clearly the mind is always altering its focus, and bringing the world into different perspectives. But some of these states of mind seem, even if adopted spontaneously, to be less comfortable than others./26/

According to Woolf, a woman experiences a contested status as subject; both inheritor of and alien to her own culture, she has involuntary knowledge of states of consciousness which are "less comfortable" than others and which, A Room of One's Own argues, are considerably less creative. Woolf's theory of women's divided consciousness, and Wittig's argument that the law of gender intervenes at the moment of speech to make women relative subjects, both describe a consciousness divided against itself. Both describe an uncomfortable, habitual and involuntary shift out of the subject position.

Teresa de Lauretis argues that such a perilous or split relationship to subjectivity is in fact a product of the "symbolic function" inherent in narrative grammar:



The hero's . . . descent through the landscape of her body symbolizes the (now) unimpeded descent of the fetus along the birth canal. In short, the effectiveness of symbols, -- the work of the symbolic function in the unconscious -- effects a splitting of the female subject's identification into the two mythical positions of hero (mythical subject) and boundary (spatially fixed object, personified obstacle)./27/

She correlates this argument to the double or split identification of the woman who, faced with the cinematic image of woman, sees herself being seen:

[W]e can again recognize a parallel with the double or split identification which, film theory has argued, cinema offers the female spectator: identification with the look of the camera, apprehended as temporal, active or in movement, and identification with the image on the screen, perceived as spatially static, fixed, in frame./28/

How can a woman overcome this condition of split identification? On this subject there is less unanimity. Monique Wittig takes from Benveniste the critical notion of an abstract but whole subjectivity accessible to women as to men through the exercise of language:

For when one becomes a locutor, when one says I and, in so doing, reappropriates language as a whole, proceeding from oneself alone, with the tremendous power to use all language, it is then and there, according to linguists and philosophers, that there occurs the supreme act of subjectivity, the advent of subjectivity into consciousness. It is when

starting to speak that one becomes I. This act -- the becoming of the subject through the exercise of language and through locution -- in order to be real, implies that the locutor be an absolute subject. For a relative subject is inconceivable, a relative subject could not speak at all. I mean that, in spite of the harsh law of gender and its enforcement upon women, no woman can say I without being for herself a total subject -- that is, ungendered, universal, whole. Or, failing this, she is condemned to what I call parrot speech (slaves echoing their masters' talk). Language as a whole gives everybody the same power of becoming an absolute subject through its exercise. But gender, an element of language, works upon this ontological fact to annul it as far as women are concerned and corresponds to a constant attempt to strip them of the most precious thing for a human being -- subjectivity. . . . [E]ach time I say I, I reorganize the world from my point of view and through abstraction I lay claim to universality. This fact holds true for every locutor./29/

Wittig here identifies a critical dynamic between women and language. Language itself reproduces patriarchal structures which split women's consciousness, yet in accessing language a woman experiences herself as a "total subject . . . ungendered, universal, whole."

In emphasizing the role of the first-person subject pronoun above that of other deictic signs, Wittig follows Benveniste:

C'est en s'identifiant comme personne unique prononçant je que chacun des locuteurs se pose tour à tour comme "sujet". . . . Quand l'individu se l'approprie, le langage se tourne en instances de discours, caractérisées par ce système de références internes dont la clef est je, et définissant l'individu par la construction linguistique particulière dont il se sert quand il s'énonce comme locuteur. Ainsi les indicateurs je et tu ne peuvent

exister comme signes virtuels, ils n'existent qu'en tant qu'ils sont actualisés dans l'instance de discours, où ils marquent par chacune de leurs propres instances le procès d'appropriation par le locuteur./30/

The first-person pronoun is the most powerfully deictic of linguistic signs; it represents the subject at its most abstract and, in that sense, the subject who is beyond gender. Since Benveniste does not address gender, Wittig moves outside his theoretical framework to correlate subjectivity in language with the question of women's divided subjectivity. She argues that in saying "I," a woman becomes an undivided subject in spite of the law of gender; the use of language works directly against the exclusive appropriation of subjectivity by men.

In her fiction, Monique Wittig has experimented with ways to thwart gender in language. She disrupts the masculine generic without necessarily positing a feminine generic in its place. In Les guérillères, a universal point of view for women is achieved through her use of a feminine generic. Yet, in her essays, Wittig argues clearly that the feminine generic is a temporary phase which serves a particular purpose but then must end. "Gender must be . . . destroyed."/31/ Her vision of a post-gender future can be compared to Woolf's argument that only the "androgynous mind",

"man-womanly" or "woman-manly,"/32/ is truly creative. For women, such a quality of mind must lie in the future; in the present women's subjectivity is limited because it is contested. Or, both Woolf and Wittig might say, women's subjectivity is limited because it is "woman's." Women's true subjectivity is a human subjectivity in creation. Daphne Marlatt and Nicole Brossard work towards the construction of such subjectivity in How Hug a Stone and Picture Theory. Each demonstrates that a woman writing transforms her language to express what she knows as a woman, and thus embarks upon a dialectical transformation of her experience of herself as a subject and of her rapport with the world.

Virginia Woolf discovered in language an "I" which she equated with a type of male writing neglectful of the androgyny belonging to the truly creative mind. Woolf characterized the "other" side of women's consciousness as "alien" and "critical," and one of the things she is critical of is the imperial, male "I." In Woolf's view, if women's imaginations are limited by gender oppression, men's imaginations suffer from other distortions:

[I]t was delightful to read a man's writing again. It was so direct, so straightforward after the writing of women. It indicated such freedom of mind, such liberty of person, such confidence in himself.

One had a sense of physical well-being in the presence of this well-nourished, well-educated, free mind, which had never been thwarted or opposed, but had had full liberty from birth to stretch itself in whatever way it liked. All this was admirable. But after reading a chapter or two a shadow seemed to lie across the page. It was a straight dark bar, a shadow shaped something like the letter "I." One began dodging this way and that to catch a glimpse of the landscape behind it. Whether that was indeed a tree or a woman walking I was not quite sure. Back one was always hailed to the letter "I." One began to be tired of "I." Not but what this "I" was a most respectable "I"; honest and logical; as hard as a nut, and polished for centuries by good teaching and good feeding. I respect and admire that "I" from the bottom of my heart. But -- here I turned a page or two, looking for something or other -- the worst of it is that in the shadow of the letter "I" all is shapeless as mist. Is that a tree? No, it is a woman. But . . . she has not a bone in her body, I thought./33/

This male "I," unlike the "I" of a woman, is healthy, well-fed and not at all stunted, yet it is seriously flawed. It impedes perception; it makes it impossible to distinguish a woman from a tree. Woolf condemns this "I" for two reasons. First is its "dominance . . . and the aridity, which, like the giant beech tree, it casts within its shade. Nothing will grow there." Second is that the author is writing strictly from the male side of his brain. There is no androgyny to such a mind, and it is "a mistake for a women to read [such writing] for she will inevitably look for something that she will not find."/34/

From I to i

Feminist scholars have devoted particular attention to women's diaries, the diary novel and autobiography, all forms of writing at which women have excelled and which are written in the first person. They trace the development of a female writing tradition in which women, while not attempting the analysis of affairs of state or the writing of literature, have taken up the pen to re-create their own realities./35/ It is a curious fact that women's autobiographical strategies are characterized by recourse to an other -- God, father, husband, or greater cause -- which serves as a justification for the autobiographical act./36/ Typically, a woman's autobiographical "I" is, in the words of autobiographer Mary Meigs, only "seemingly audacious."/37/

Monique Wittig, although strongly endorsing the power of the pronoun "I," until recently avoided it almost entirely in her fiction./38/ In L'opoponax, the protagonist, Catherine Legrand, refers to herself as "je" only once, in the last sentence of the book: "On dit, tant je l'aimais qu'en elle encore je vis."/39/ Until this point the character speaks only of "on," building in this way a non-specific, non-gendered sense of subjectivity. Wittig explains that the single use of "je" at the end of the book indicates her hope that

"the transformation into the sovereign subject (which it implies) was accomplished for the character Catherine Legrand and all the others of her group."/40/ The characters of Les guérillères are referred to as "elles," the feminine plural being gradually invested with a universal and undivided point of view. The subject of Le corps lesbien is a double lesbian subject, "j/e" and "tu," who, in Wittig's words, is "an I become so powerful that it can attack the order of heterosexuality in texts and . . . lesbianize the gods and goddesses, lesbianize men and women."/41/ This "I" can be destroyed and recreated; it has transformed its contested status into a powerful, post-gender reversibility.

Like Virginia Woolf and Monique Wittig, Daphne Marlatt has explored in her poetry and in her theoretical writing the complex interrelations of the pronoun "I," subjectivity, and gender./42/ However, unlike Woolf and Wittig, she does not attribute the problems with the "I" solely to gender; her analysis encompasses other power imbalances as well. Unlike Wittig in particular, Marlatt does not avoid the first-person pronoun in her writing. In How Hug a Stone an insistence on the fact that the narrating, focalizing protagonist is known only as "i" underlines her status as subject of language. Neither Wittig's rather aggressive les-

bianizing "I," nor the "I" that Woolf criticized for its blighting effects on growth and perception, have much in common with the "i" that Daphne Marlatt constructs in this text. Marlatt's "i" is an "i"/eye; a channel for perception, a conduit that gives voice to a woman's senses: her eyes, ears, and skin. Marlatt developed this "i" in explicit opposition to the blindly ethnocentric and colonizing postures of white Europeans. The power relations which she criticizes include but are not limited to those of gender.

"In the Month of Hungry Ghosts" records the transition from "I" to "i."/43/ The narrator, returning to Malaysia and the scenes of her childhood on the occasion of her mother's death, feels herself and her sister to be:

uncomfortable parodies of the leisured class. Is this the only way to be a white woman here? Or is this the condition of being a member of an exploitative & foreign moneyed class?/44/

there's no authentic ground here for "Europeans." I want to rip out of myself all the colonialisms, the taint of colonial sets of mind. That's why as kids we hated everything "English" -- not because it was English but because we equated what was English with a colonialist attitude, that defensive set against what immediately surrounds as real on its own terms -- because to take it on as real would mean to "go native" & that was unthinkable to them./45/



The colonialist attitude tried to maintain as "real" what was elsewhere, denying the daily evidence of the senses, eating tinned food while ignoring the fresh tropical produce of the land. Marlatt opens her senses to the present, constructs a subjectivity that is radically immediate. "I stands for dominant ego in the world when you is not capitalized,"/46/ she writes, and doesn't use the capital letter for herself again.

The character of the grandmother in How Hug a Stone uses the capital "I" repeatedly, and its use forms part of Marlatt's continuing critique of colonialist attitudes:

"brought up in luxury with servants & comforts of every sort. When I see what people are going through now I think how lucky I was to be born when I was." sitting straight in the room where the tv is, my grandmother imperious.

(HHS, 27)

my grandmother monolithic in mauve, composed.

(HHS, 29)

"I always came first with Grandpa & your mother. I always want to come first with people" -- mauve & blue, she tells the story from her point of view, how else? "queening it around the lodge," he says. star of a shattered system of domestics, memorial orbits of love, spasmodic, reaching far back in the blood -- where there is a gap, a black hole somewhere.

(HHS, 34)

The egotistical "I" represented by this grandmother, "imperious & unpredictable," "& feeling sorry for her-

self" (HHS, 34), is a product of the British colonial and class system. She is oblivious to her class privilege and correspondingly blind to the realities of others. Her lack of perception resembles the blindness of Woolf's male "I." "Monolithic," "imperious," "queening it around the lodge"; the words chosen to describe her underline her monological, hierarchical role. With "i," the narrator defines herself in opposition to what the grandmother represents.

How Hug a Stone is a book with a thematic theme: the story of a woman who seeks ground for herself relative to her family and the world. The deictic "i" of the knower in the language is paradigmatic of a type of subjectivity opposed to the "I" criticized by Woolf. In "Writing our Way through the Labyrinth," Marlatt argues for a writing in the feminine which is more like reading, and again she argues for senses open to the world. In this essay, she relates the egotistical "I" to gender:

writing can scarcely be for women the act of the phallic signifier, its claim to singularity, the mark of the capital I (was here). language is no "tool" for us, no extension of ourselves, but something we are "lost" inside of. finding our way in a labyrinthine moving with the drift, slipping through claims to one-track meaning so that we can recover multiple related meanings, reading between the lines. finding in write, rite, growing out of ar-, that fitting together at the root of read (we circle back), moving into related words for arm, shoulder (joint), harmony -- the music of connection. making

our way through all parts of the figure, using our labyrinthine sense, we (w)rite our way ar-way, "reading" it, in intercommunicating passages./47/

This essay encodes the values Marlatt invests in the subjectivity of the writing woman she created in How Hug a Stone: harmony, music, fitting together, circling back. Marlatt moves away from a critique of women's subjectivity as constituted by the law of gender and damaged by hierarchical systems of class power and privilege. She moves toward a vision of the possible, using a non-hierarchical grammar at the level of the sentence and at the level of narrative. She constructs a subject who is always present: a sensuous body who listens and feels and speaks. The knower in How Hug a Stone is the subject of a world in which meaning is continuously discovered as multiple and dialogic. She is a subject of living language, striving to be in harmony with her world.

#### The Narrator of How Hug a Stone

My analysis of the story level of How Hug a Stone focussed on the strong focalization through *i*. The focalizer is also the primary narrator of the text. She can be classified as a character-bound narrator (CN) or, in Genette's terms, an intradiegetic narrator, in addition to being the character focalizer (CF). *i*

is not the only linguistic subject; other characters narrate portions of the text. She is, however, always present as focalizer, reading, seeing, or listening to the voices of the other characters. Her focalizing presence characterizes the thetic dialectic of the text; denotative and enunciative possibility is articulated through her. This produces a strong identification between *i* and the reader, since the reader learns that *i* is mediating between the world of the text, with its many voices, and the essentially private act of reading. Because of the strong focalization the reader is never in doubt that *i*, although she may not be linguistically represented as the narrator, is in fact telling what she has seen and heard. As Mieke Bal argues, a narrator is always a first person.

To take one example from the poem "Combe Martin," the line "let's eat, he says" reports Kit's words. The sentence can be encoded as follows:

CN (i), CF (i), CN2 (Kit) speaks, "let's eat."

The fragment of dialogue, "let's eat," is an embedded dramatic text. Kit is the narrator or linguistic subject of these words which are embedded within the primary narration. Thus, narratology establishes a hierarchy of narrative levels. If I tell you that she

told him that John said, "forget it," mine is a primary narrative, hers is a secondary narrative, and John's is a tertiary narrative. Here, Kit is a narrator in the second degree and i is the focalizer to whom he speaks.

Two points must be made concerning narrative embedding in How Hug a Stone. The first is that there are many, many embeddings. The text is full of characters who are subjects of language. The second concerns the way the embeddings are structured relative to one another. Often the words "he said," or "she said," which signal a shift in narrative levels, are elided. Instead, the reader is aware of another voice because italics or quotation marks are used, or because of a shift in speech rhythms or the sound of the voice. The use of these methods rather than the grammatical forms means that embedded narrations have a certain grammatical freedom. Levels of narration in narratology do establish a hierarchy, and although Bal argues that the hierarchy itself is only technical, it is undeniable that the terms "I said," "she said," and so on, are essentially hypotactic, subordinating the voices of others to the primary narrative. As Bal herself points out, because of the power of narrative hierarchies, one word from the primary narrator is enough to invalidate or render ironic the embedded text of another character (Bal, 149). The text of How Hug a Stone allows other

voices to stand on their own, uniting them not through grammatical marking but through the sensory and sensual focalization by I. This in turn creates a contradictory kind of subject: strong but not controlling.

The relationship between an embedded narrative and the primary narrative in which it occurs is a fruitful one for narratological analysis. Mieke Bal outlines several possibilities: the embedded narrative could be a sign to the reader, informing her/him how to interpret the primary fabula; it could be a sign to an actor in the story, enabling her/him to resolve a problem or solve a mystery, or, the two fabulas could resemble each other (Bal, 142-148). Resemblance means that the "two fabulas can be paraphrased in such a way that the summaries have one or more striking elements in common" (Bal, 146). In this case, narratology defines the embedded text as a mirror-text and as a sign of the primary fabula. "An embedded text that presents a story which . . . resembles the primary fabula may be taken as a sign of the primary fabula" (Bal, 146). Two important embedded narratives in How Hug a Stone are the grandmother's story of Edrys and Kit's dream on the train.

The grandmother recounts Edrys' coming out at the marriage of a magistrate and a planter's daughter in Malacca. The fabula of Edrys' story resembles the

fabula of the main text in that paraphrases of each share a striking element: a young woman confronts her prescribed identity. Edrys' story can therefore be described as a sign of the primary fabula and as a mirror text. In addition, the story of her mother serves as a sign to the narrator, who recognises that she escaped where her mother had been trapped by the "script that continues to write our parts" (HHS, 73). Edrys, the poem tells us, "had her wings clipped growing up" (HHS, 67), but she had wanted to fly: "no stars to plot this course, only foreboding & hope against her father's words, against the script. learning how to fly" (HHS, 45). Listening to her grandmother's voice, the narrator recognizes what Edrys had been up against:

"Do you know what she wore? I can see her now -- a lovely pale coffee-coloured organdy dress . . . and she looked a dream."

her dream, the one my mother inherited, her dress,  
my mother lending her body to it. as i refused  
(HHS, 29)

I have argued that the narrator's refusal of the dream is a moment when the two characters' identity as actant is articulated. The fabula of the embedded narration by the grandmother and that of the primary narration have this actant in common.

Kit's dream shares two characters with the main fabula, the narrator and Kit himself, but it is not clear that either is, strictly speaking, the same actor in each of the fabulas. Stylistically, the action-packed and heroic language of Kit's narration contrasts sharply with i's nominalized and detailed observation, thus suggesting and perhaps parodying traditional gender opposition: "sitting face to face across a moving table, recognizing our difference" (HHS, 61). The full relationship between Kit's dream and the main fabula can be illuminated only by an examination of meanings created intertextually. Before developing the analysis of Kit's dream, I wish to make several more points concerning levels of narration in How Hug a Stone.

The primary narrative is itself framed by a larger story, told in other voices. The book opens with the words of a Vancouver medium who, in 1975, foretold the voyage which is the subject of the book. The medium's is the first narratory voice; i is present in her role as focalizer:

"you'll cross to England & you will walk in  
'England's green & pleasant land' & she'll  
go home with you, though she has been already."  
Vancouver, 1975  
(HHS, 9)

A summary of main events at the beginning of a narrative is a "more or less traditional form" of narrative



anticipation, which "suggests a sense of fatalism, or predestination" (Bal, 63). This epigraph, which frames the story, is both a prophecy and a summary of the voyage to England, Edrys' presence there, and the successful outcome of the quest. The fabulas of the prophecy and of the main narrative can therefore be said to mirror one another.

The words of the medium are composed partially of a transposed line from the final stanza of the lyric in the "Preface" to William Blake's Milton:

I will not cease from Mental Fight,  
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand,  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England's green & pleasant Land./48/

Blake's words, embedded in Marlatt's epigraph, connect the narrator's quest for understanding with the prophet's desire to naturalize Jerusalem. The words of a prophet, embedded in another's prophecy, create a context which reinforces the themes of the poem and a reading of the narrator's quest as wider than her personal story. How Hug a Stone itself becomes a mirror text, and a sign that Jerusalem will be built. This shift in context highlights the political subtexts of the book: the comparison with Neolithic culture, the question of gender, the destruction of the environment and the danger represented by the arms race. The ques-

tion of the book's title, "how hug a stone?" could be rephrased: how do we get in touch again with the earth, our mother?

### Dialogism/Intertextuality

The powerful presence of the narrator as focalizer generates a dialogic sense of discourse rather than a monologic sense of history: the focus is on both the referential object of speech and on the act of telling itself. The narrator's acute awareness of the language of others in the world around her ensures that the narration is always oral, dialogic, and double- or triple-voiced./49/

Kit is often included in his mother's discourse. Emile Benveniste has shown that the first-person plural subject pronoun is in reality a first-person singular "I" speaking on behalf of him/herself and others. "La présence du 'je' est constitutive du 'nous.'"/50/ When the narrator refers to "we," she generally means herself and Kit. Kit generally addresses his mother in the second person. In "on the train," he speaks of his mother and her partner as "they," but modifies his pronoun to "you, or whoever" when queried by her (HHS, 59). The narrator and Kit embody the first and second persons of the discursive context. The text presents the often hierarchical relationship of mother to child

as a dialogic relation, with focalization resting with the mother.

How Hug a Stone substitutes for determining, syntactic structures a metonymic and relational grammar of juxtaposition and proximity: parataxis is privileged over hypotaxis, and a multiple intertextual voice and vision displaces a monologic, imperial point of view. The emphasis on grammatical relation as opposed to subordination reflects the thematic play of host and hostile, ghostly and hospitable, which is developed through cognates of the Indo-European root ghost-i. It also recalls Marlatt's interest in a writing that is more like reading, a writing of connection. The elision of "s/he says" and, frequently, of finite verbs, frees the sentence from syntactical restraint; control is at issue. In "Clystmois," for example, voices and indeed language seem to be speaking autonomously, free from mediation by the narrative agent. Thus, while the narrative is tightly controlled by the exigencies of a travel narrative and by strong focalization, it is free and decentred in relation to other techniques of narration.

How Hug a Stone is a dialogic narrative, imbued with the values of discourse, as opposed to so-called impersonal or historical accounting which passes itself off as Truth. This text takes a stance against the

invisible (white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied, bourgeois) generic subject of historical language. How Hug a Stone demands and generates a closer relationship to story: the relationship of a subject who listens, who refuses to silence others, who takes a feminist stance. She is a subject "lost" inside a writing of connection, who brings forward the relationships of language and place in a personal writing of human history which works to show forth a world./51/

The world of How Hug a Stone is full of voices./52/ Many belong to characters in the story; others come from sources which can no longer be located. The phrase "narrative is a strategy for survival" (HHS, 75) was overheard on a car radio./53/ Other voices come from written texts. Each instance exemplifies the fundamental signifying process which Julia Kristeva has defined as transference or intertextuality:

As we know, Freud specifies two fundamental "processes" in the work of the unconscious: displacement and condensation. Kruszewski and Jakobson introduced them, in a different way, during the early stages of structural linguistics, through the concepts of metonymy and metaphor, which have since been interpreted in light of psychoanalysis (see Lacan, Ecrits: A Selection, pp. 156-157, et passim.)

To these we must add a third "process" -- the passage from one sign system to another. To be sure, this process comes about through a combination of displacement and condensation, but this does not account for its total operation. It also involves an altering of the thetic position -- the destruction of the old position and the formation of a new one. The new signifying system may be produced with

the same signifying material; in language, for example, the passage may be made from narrative to text. Or it may be borrowed from different signifying materials: the transposition from a carnival scene to the written text, for instance. . . . The term inter-textuality denotes this transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another; but since this term has often been understood in the banal sense of "study of sources," we prefer the term transposition because it specifies that the passage from one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic -- of enunciative and denotative positionality. If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems (an inter-textuality), one then understands that its "place" of enunciation and its denoted "object" are never single, complete, and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated. In this way polysemy can also be seen as the result of a semi-otic polyvalence -- an adherence to different sign systems./54/

In How Hug a Stone we find instances of varying kinds of transposition, including transpositions from spoken language to text; from dream to spoken language to text; from the news media to text; internal transpositions from one position to another within the text; and, not least, the weaving of a variety of written texts into this one.

"at Cogswells ('whose wells?')" illustrates transposition from spoken language to text. It evokes the collectivities of family and village in relation to language and water: two life sources. The title is dialogic: one voice, probably Kit's, interrupts what could have been a univocal naming of the place. His question reminds us that wells, like village commons

(also featured in How Hug a Stone), resisted the institution of private property. In the landscape architecture of the Neolithic, wells were sacred.

at Cogswells ("whose wells?")

the feel of this cottage full of dogs, cats, flowers, currents of emotion. the drama of English manners. "sorry, darling." scones with Devonshire cream & strawberry jam for tea. "o bloody hell, there goes the phone." a constant stream of speech, my aunt in alliance with her teenage girls, the jokes, the stories -- "that old bag," "what rubbish," "a perfectly horrid little house." the comings and goings of my uncle, pater familias, Mephistophelian brows (my grandfather) with the full feminine mouth i see in my sister, the moods of my mother, charming & furious at once.

my son imitates an English accent, intrigued (to be in the swim) & yet stuffed up, finding it hard to breathe. allergic to the nearest thing we have to a hereditary home.

(HHS, 24)

Cogswells is full of the voices of family members who belong to the place. The narrator focalizes and transposes between the signifying systems of her relative's language and her own. She is at the centre of a network of deictic relations: "this cottage," "my aunt," "my uncle," "my sister," "my mother," and "my son." The family voices are "a constant stream of speech," suggesting the narrator's sensation as this stream washes over her. She hears her relations as subjects of their language and she transposes the music of their speech into her own textual sounding of her

environment. The one complete sentence refers to the watery quality of Cogswells: "my son imitates an English accent, intrigued (to be in the swim)." Kit's "finding it hard to breathe" adds an ominous note to the watery diction -- wells, currents, stream, swim -- used to describe this ancestral place. The transposition from spoken language to written is foregrounded; discursive language, both as a deictic force locating one in the world and as a stream of sound pouring over the ears, is a source of pleasure.

In "June near the river Clyst, Clust, clear. Clystmois this holding wet & clear," the heard voices are more ancestral. The text is a meditation on haysel or hay-making, the hay harvest which, taking place in June, the month of Oak, coincides with the summer solstice:

it's haysel, haymaking time, "Sweet an' dry an' green as't should be, An full o' seed an' Jeune flowers." tedding & cocking going on, shaking, turning, spreading, haytrucks go lorries lumbering by these twisty lanes line high with hedgerow, no seeing over, cow parsley, stinging nettles, campion, "day's eyes" & snails all colours coiled in their leaf byways. jeune the young, green June delayed by rain. June why do you punish me? "Take heede to the weather, the wind, and the skie." indeed, make hay while the sun shines you write, while the moon is on the wane.

(HHS, 25)

The text transposes phrases from Gail Duff's Country

Wisdom, an encyclopaedia of "traditional good sense," which acknowledges a long list of contributors for their "words of country wisdom."/55/ The following lines from Duff have been partially integrated into the opening of the poem: "Teddin' is shaking, turning, spreading the grass out to help drying. Cocking is making the grass into piles."/56/ Most quotations are indicated by quotation marks. "Sweet an' dry an' green as't should be,/ An' full o' seed an' Jeune Flowers," is cited in Duff along with a series of other proverbs to do with haymaking. These include "Take heed to the weather, the wind and the skie,/ If danger approacheth, then cock apace crie," and "Mow grass and make hay while the moon is on the wane."/57/ "Make hay while the sun shines" is not in Duff's list, although it seems like good advice and is cited in the OED under "hay"; it appears in the poem courtesy of a letter from Roy Kiyooka./58/ Snail shells, with their natural spiral images -- a sinuous line moving out of a "black hole at the centre," are associated with Neolithic burials./59/

Gail Duff's country proverbs are not the only texts which reappear, transferred to the signifying context of How Hug a Stone. The last lines of "Clystmois" refer to another intertextual system:



he wanes, my son redeyed & watery, phlegmatic in the face of phleum pratense grass of the meadow, timothy spikes erect a masculine given name, god honouring. not her who is cut, full of young vigour, from the living book, from the play of light & shadow, nothing less than herb-of-grace, rue i find, there with the queen's pinks in the clock that is a garden.

(HHS, 25)

The text opens up the meaning of words in order to illuminate immediate reality. The word "hay" comes from a root kau- meaning to hew or strike, and Marlatt takes this root meaning as a cue to link the image of haymaking to ancient harvest rituals. Like the moon, an image of cyclic life, the narrator's son wanes; the time is right, then, for the mowing. Timothy spikes refer to the grass, phleum pratense, "having narrow, cylindrical flower spikes and widely cultivated for hay." "Timothy" is "a masculine given name" meaning "God-honouring" and stemming from kwei<sup>1</sup>, to pay, atone, compensate. It is cognate to "punish," which perhaps accounts for "June, why do you punish me?" Duff records, on the page following the haymaking proverbs, a local tradition that blades of harvest wheat are young men./60/ Folk songs commemorate still the life and death of John Barleycorn at harvest. Dames suggests that a male harvest surrogate was sacrificed at mid-summer rites observed by early Neolithic,

agricultural cultures./61/ According to Robert Graves, the sacrifice of the surrogate son/king took place for the common good of the people and the recurrence of agricultural, life-supporting cycles; on June 24 an "Oak King" was burned alive, then after a seven day wake the second half of the year began: the Celtic New Year./62/ The month of Oak is June 10 - July 7, which roughly corresponds to the dates of the narrator's journey. It is the month of looking both ways, Duff's country wisdom reports, which is why oak is good for making hinges./63/

All signs point to the sacrifice of the harvest/son; the focus is on him and not, the narrator finds, on "her who is cut, full of young vigour, from the living book" (HHS, 25). "Her i lost, not him (HHS, 78). Edrys is the one whose life was sacrificed; "the common good" tyrannized who she was (HHS, 70). Now the narrator, rueing her loss, finds rue: herb of grace in the kitchen garden./64/ In the Oxford English Dictionary under "rue" one reads: "Ile set a Bank of Rew, sowre Herbe of Grace; Rue, e'en for ruth, heere shortly shall be seen, In the remembrance of a Weeping Queene."/65/ The final image of Marlatt's poem, "there with the queen's pinks in the clock that is a garden," resonates with the image of Demeter, weeping Queen and keeper of cyclical, time-keeping nature. The narrator

mourns her mother who in this moment is Persephone, too.

The mythological subtext of "Clystmois" is understated but important. We can read it because "Clystmois" is not isolate but is part of a narrative whole in which myth plays an important sub-textual role. Interpretation of How Hug a Stone depends to a significant extent on the reader's apprehension of the signifying systems from which the various mythical references are taken.

In the manuscript presently in the Literary Manuscripts Collection of the National Library of Canada, submitted to Turnstone Press for publication, Daphne Marlatt included a Bibliography (see Appendix). This Bibliography should have been published because it would have permitted readers who wished to pursue some of Marlatt's suggestions to move much more quickly into How Hug a Stone. Knowledge of the archaeological sub- or intertext illuminates the narrative as a whole and clarifies mythological references such as those in "June near the river Clyst." Knowledge of Michael Dames' The Avebury Cycle and Robert Graves' The White Goddess is particularly critical.

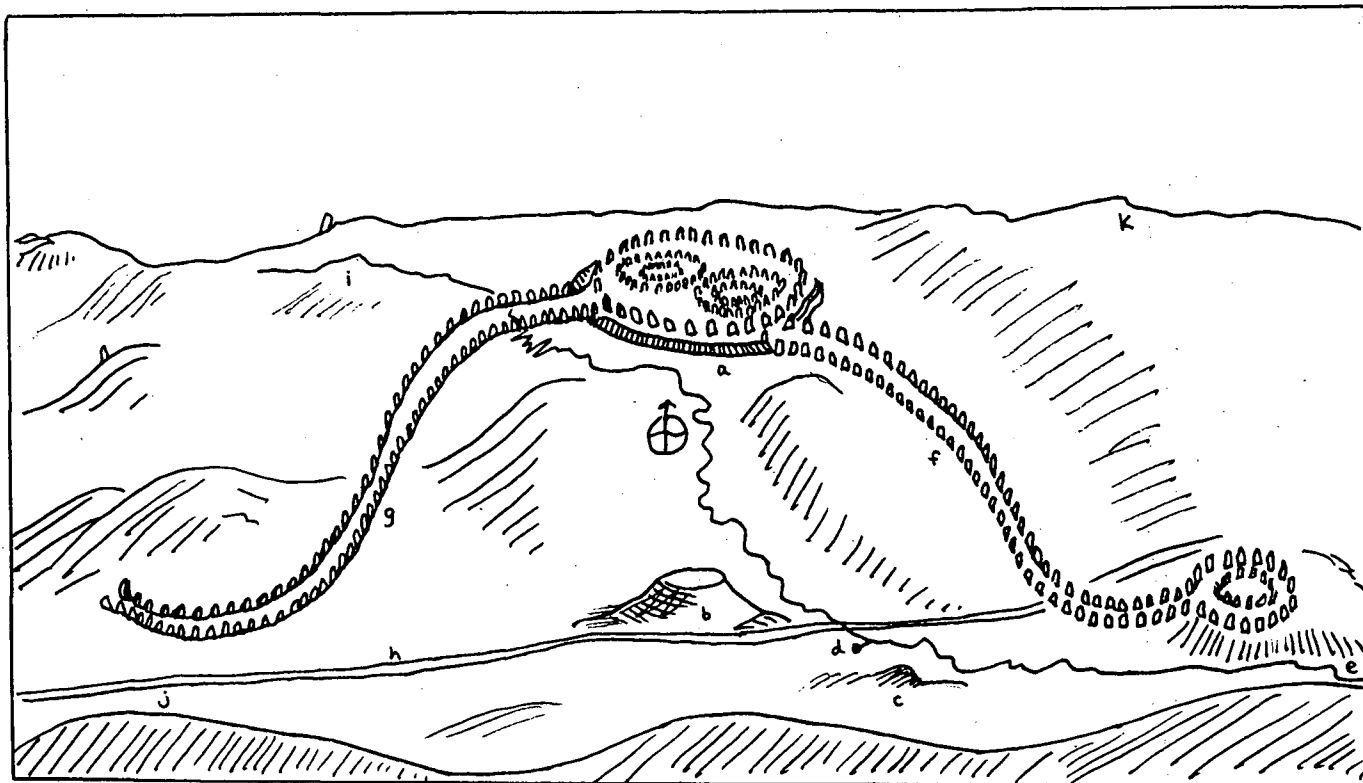


Figure 1 The Neolithic Complex at Avebury Parish,  
Wiltshire, England (after Stukeley).

Key to Figure 1

- a. Avebury Henge
- b. Silbury Hill
- c. South Long Barrow
- d. Kennett Spring
- e. West Kennett
- f. Kennett Avenue
- g. Beckhampton Avenue
- h. Bath Road
- i. Windmill Hill
- j. Saint Ann's Hill
- K. Temple Downs

Michael Dames and Robert Graves each reconstruct the religious system of the Neolithic era in Great Britain, characterizing it as goddess-worshipping and agricultural. Dames focusses on the complex of Neolithic sites at Avebury, pointing out that Avebury includes the largest known stone circle in the world; England's largest prehistoric barrow, West Kennet; the remnants of two monumental stone avenues; and Silbury Hill, Europe's tallest artificial hill (Figure 1). The society which built this complex left behind a fragmented record which nonetheless suggests that in its infancy European culture was non-patriarchal and in harmony with the earth. Marlatt observed in her notes for How Hug a Stone that the builders of Avebury were succeeded in the Iron Age by a warrior-oriented, patriarchal and class-stratified society. Thus the Neolithic is identified as both a source and a site of loss.

According to Dames, "the monuments [in Avebury Parish, Wiltshire] were created as a coherent ensemble to stage a religious drama which took one year to perform."/66/ The earth and stone constructions represent the body of the earth mother. "nose stuffed eyes holes in the chalk ridge of sinel bones rushed down back roads' upland grass wind weaving snakelike through," (HHS, 74) writes Marlatt of Avebury.

Following the rediscovery that Silbury is an image of the pregnant Mother Goddess in harvest, (described in The Silbury Treasure, 1976), it will be argued that the architecture of the entire cycle was designed to be read as a sequence of visual images of the Neolithic deity. These gigantic sculptures [sic] of the Great Goddess were regarded as living characters, brought, each in its turn, to a state of maximum vitality by the annual sequence of human rites conducted within. . . .

The acts (rituals) of the drama were joined together to make a cyclical play, with the monuments arranged so as to describe and contain the divine narrative in a sequence of architectural stages (symbols) shaped to correspond with the changing condition of the deity's form./67/

The changing condition of the deity's form is none other than the seasonal, agricultural cycle. Marlatt develops a sub-text based on the divine narrative which Dames posits, and relates it to her narrator's search for her lost mother. "The Avebury cycle," writes Dames, "provides a glimpse of the Mother we have lost."/68/

In The White Goddess, Robert Graves traces the signs of the goddess through Gaelic culture back to the Neolithic. In her notebook, Marlatt noted her names: Belili, the Sumerian white goddess who preceded Ishtar; Brigit, known as Bride. Reading through The White Goddess we find motifs familiar from Marlatt's poem: the Night Mare (HHS, 33), "one of the cruellest aspects of the Goddess;"/69/ the muse-ship, which the Medieval Brigit shared with "Mary Gypsy" or "Mary of Egypt"

(HHS, 72);/70/ the serpent, who is the lover or son of the goddess and is known as "the serpent of wisdom" and "the star of life" (HHS, 75);/71/ the "white lady" (HHS, 76);/72/ and a title for Mary who is also Brigit: "Bride of the White Hills" (HHS, 72)./73/

Another illuminating motif from Graves is the framing device of the riddle or poem which conceals the name and attributes of the goddess. The title, "how hug a stone?" can be read as a poetic riddle of the same type as the "Cād Goddeu," or "The Battle of the Trees," in which the poem itself, the correct response to the riddle, preserves and conceals the mysteries of the ancient goddess./74/ In like manner, How Hug a Stone presents and disguises the goddess's attributes: bird, horse, snake, cave, cow, and white lady.

The theme of the harvest sacrifice for the Mother is woven into the narrative of How Hug a Stone at the same time that it is re-written and rejected.

"Sacrifice of son refused," Marlatt wrote in her notes:

the fear that if i was to (~~identify~~ with) embrace Her, then he would have to die, be sacrificed. but she was never a person as (~~even~~,) He, Jehovah, became, dictating to Abraham. She was the source of all life, a cunt, wellspring, daemon of the earth out of which everything flows (Olson's Gaia?) Rhea (flowing) & her son in the old Mediterranean religions was both son & lover individuated, mortal, therefore of seasonal duration only.



The motif of sacrificing the son is the "raison d'être" behind the narrator's fear that she has put her son at risk in bringing him on her quest for the/her mother: "i only want to fly home with him, to keep him safe. where does this feeling come from that i have put him at risk? that the longer we stay here the more i tempt fate?" (HHS, 54). The sacrifice motif lies behind Kit's dream in "on the train," as the notebooks make clear: "Kit's dream -- the King/ the sacrifice. 'idol idol idol' etc." The manuscript notes leave no doubt that Marlatt took the narrative of the son's sacrifice from Graves and Dames. Kit's fever, in "Pilgrim night," where he is "very hot" and "scared," as well as his dream of idolatry and sacrifice, are proairetic developments of this subnarrative. The appearance of animals sacred to the goddess, specifically the serpent, in "as commonly told," and the horse in "boy with tape recorder stalking horses in a field of cows," combined with the emphasis throughout the poem on the importance of birds, can all be understood freshly when seen in the context of this ancient narrative. The text reconstructs at the same time that it refuses the Neolithic cycle of sacrifice and renewal, a process which Marlatt comments on in her notes: "subtext -- illuminates / collision of subtexts."

The notes also relate the growing historical significance of the sacrifice of the son to the depersonalization of the goddess as matrix and matter:

as we get caught up in the passion & pathos of His sacrifice, she fades into undifferentiated background, because she is not a person in that way. we can't relate the tragedies of our lives, our Mortalities, to Her because she is pure source.

Refusal of the sacrifice is thus correlated with refusal of the hero/obstacle opposition and the plot position defining woman.

Intertextuality is crucial in the Avebury poems, "long after The Brown Day of Bride," "continued," and "Avebury awi-spek, winged from buried (egg." "long after The Brown Day of Bride" traces the story of the goddess from the oldest monument in the Avebury complex, the West Kennet long barrow, to her survival as Mary in Christian ritual. The text cites portions of the following passages from The Avebury Cycle:

When winter approached, the harvest goddess personified by Silbury was transformed. As surely as winter follows summer, the Tomb Lady took over from the Mother, and invited the Neolithic population to follow her retreat into the underworld.

This meant that the focus of attention switched from Silbury, the August First Fruits temple, designed to operate as the Mother Goddess in labour, to a temple devoted to death . . . the mighty West Kennet long barrow./75/

The nature of the Winter goddess at West Kennet is revealed as much by her furnishings (now housed in

Devizes Museum) as by her overall form. Her tomb-body was built to contain that primary chaos of natural and man-made things -- the undifferentiated rubbish from which new life annually arises.

Within the tomb there was a blurring of distinction between corpse and corpse./76/

her tomb-body . . . built to contain that primary chaos, long barrow of bones, dismembered or not, of potsherds, all mingled together.

winter, this time of the year, submerged. as i am, heavy with cold. on the other side "down under" watching almond blossom in the chill streets of their world. a place to visit, blurring distinction between corpus & corpse.

quick, running to meet them, with pots, meat bones, flint implements, with stone, bone & shell beads. rubbish, from which new life annually rises

(HHS, 72)

The goddess as death is inevitably posed in a quest for a mother who has retreated to the underworld. The ritual of the long barrow must be enacted before spring will come again. The barrow, burial place and tomb-body of the mother, was a "place to visit," writes Marlatt, misreading Dames in order to point out how, in the sacred jumble of pots and bones, mingling "corpus and corpse," we read our heritage and learn what we need to know to survive. Dames comments, "It may seem strange and even offensive to our Western sensibilities that the tomb was frequented by the living as well as the dead."/77/ Frequenting the haunts of her dead mother, however, the narrator understands that "[t]he

seeker even today . . . must confront and assimilate in its most concrete form the meaning of death . . . His goddess, his loving mother in time."/78/ The long barrow was a ceremonial centre of death interpreted as winter from which new life annually arises. Both Marlatt and Dames move from this Neolithic premise to meditation on religious practices in modern India, where Tantric teachings preserve an ancient respect for death.

The next part of the poem is also related to a passage from Dames:

On balance . . . the life-giving force enjoys no absolute triumph, but always survives. This is shown in the traditional game, "The Farmer's in his Den," where the child selected to be Bone is destined to be chewed by Dog, and to receive a shower of blows from the others who shout: "We all pat the bone."

The bone disintegrates, but the end of one game is the start of another, because that very bone is changed into a new being. Bone becomes Farmer in the next round."/79/

cup-&-ring, stone ring within a ring, the Farmer's in the Dell (is that you, Bride of the Brown Day, of the White Hills?)

& we all pat the bone, thinking to make it ring us round, earth word (home again), seed word (safe again),

that bears us in this kiel, to ku-, to, a hollow space or place, enclosing object, round object, a lump. mound in the surrounding sea of grass. ku-, kunte, to, wave-breaking womb: Bride who comes unsung in the muse-ship shared with Mary Gypsy, Mary of Egypt, Miriam,

Marianne suppressed, become/Mary of the Blue Veil,  
 Sea Lamb sifting sand & dust, dust & bone, whose  
 son . . .

(HHS, 72)

Marlatt reads the long barrow as a ship in a sea of grass; the hollow space at the centre of the spiral; the genitals of the earth. Her transformation of Dames' text traces the signs of the goddess from the Neolithic cup and ring motifs which were incised on the megaliths themselves, through the children's game with its ancient refrain, to Christian iconography which also preserved certain elements of the goddess in Mary's divinity, and which transformed the sacrificed lover/serpent/son into the passion of Jesus Christ. The poem stops there. Again, the narrator refuses the sacrifice of the son. The next poem insists that reified, deified sacrifice is not the point of the story the narrator seeks to reconstruct. Or perhaps, reconstruction is not the point: "active[ly] misreading" (HHS, 75), she wants to "make us new again: to speak what isn't spoken, even with the old words:"

. . . that is the limit of the old story, its ruined circle, that is not how it ended or we have forgotten parts, we have lost sense of the whole. left with a script that continues to write our parts in the passion we find ourselves enacting, old wrongs, old sacrifices.

(HHS, 73)

"Avebury awi-spek, winged from buried (egg" moves the focus of the text from the barrow to Silbury Hill, thus tracing the ritual procession through the architectural whole of the Avebury complex as it has been reconstructed by William Stukeley./80/ A double procession led from the sanctuary up West Kennet Avenue, and from another, now obliterated circle, up Beckhampton Avenue, meeting at the henge for a ritual sexual/symbolic reaffirmation of life, represented by Silbury Hill, the goddess's pregnant belly. The narrator and her son, "rushed down backroads' upland grass wind waving snakelike through" (HHS, 74), perform this ritual movement which Dames relates to serpent dances and ritual marriages celebrated since time immemorial by agricultural people, including a "serpentine" dance called "dancing the hay."/81/

Marlatt reads the serpent dancing forth to his bride as the life principle, "wave on wave emerging" (HHS, 74), like the "sine" (HHS, 74) of continuity and renewal: "man's life like the life of cereals. woman's too" (HHS, 74). Kit's play signifies the future; finally freed from fear, it opens into renewal and light:

the, all-powerful tickle, gulp, wriggle gulping in the whole world hugged in ecstatic limit, breath's. nothing still, no duration now (a line) creeps through fields of (waves of) renewed green, cloud, light.

(HHS, 74)

For a moment, as in the divine narrative which the intertext of How Hug a Stone suggests, the human body is in harmony with the sacred body of the earth.

#### Postscript: Narrative in Language

Certain aspects of How Hug a Stone fall outside of Mieke Bal's definition of narrative. The maps that appear throughout the text, although significant, are non-narrative because they are not narrated by an agent. The proximity of different signifying systems adds complexity to the variation between travel journal and poem or poetic prose text which was considered as an aspect of story. The maps represent the need for maps; they are reminders of being lost. In addition to poems, maps and journal entries, the textual system of How Hug a Stone includes charts. The charts present geographical places, train stops, places where the narrator gets her bearings: the names of the poems often correspond to the names on the maps. What is the point?

The maps in How Hug a Stone leave out almost everything but the place names. Coastline, rivers,

mountains and fields are all invisible. The goddess's body is only inscribed in the memories of words and stones, but, like the well at Cogswells, the memories are there. The land is overwritten; history is inscribed there. The text unfolds names that are also maps. This unfolding is another aspect of the textual system which falls outside a strictly narrative framework.

A network of words stretches across the body of the text like a labyrinthine web, a phenomenon which Marlatt has named "narrative in language."/82/ In a text full of voices and of listening, language itself is speaking. The most important of these webs is based on ghost-1, the root which, with its apparent contradiction, represents the ambiguity of the narrator's relationship to the family into which she travels, in order to escape.

Another labyrinth of words opens out of the place name, Avebury: "Avebury awi-spek, winged from buried (egg." The routes offered by etymology are open-ended. The stone circle at Avebury was oriented towards the sky for divination and studying the stars, and the idea of augury is concealed in the roots and the sound of the name. The first part of the name, ave- is from the Latin avis, or bird. The word has an Indo-European root, awi-, with a compound, awi-spek, or "observer of



birds." An earlier poem, "magpie augury," linked bird augury to women's stories yet to be told; the connection comes full circle in the birth promised by the opening parenthesis of the poem's title. Augury comes from a root aug-<sup>1</sup>, meaning to increase, to divine, to wax august. The root avi- has many cognates, including the word for egg, thus suggesting the possibility of hatching, winged from buried, like the bones in the barrow. These meanings fold into the series of bird images which form another word chain: Edrys who "loved birds" (HHS, 40), who perched like a gull (HHS, 45), but who never did learn to fly; and the pigeons at the poems' close whose upward spiral signifies the movement of life:

ruffled neck feathers ripple snakelike movement of  
the neck last vestige of dinosaurs: then lift, this  
quick wing flap, heart at breast strike up a wild  
beating, blood for the climb, glide, rest, on air  
current, free we want to be where live things are.  
(HHS, 79)

The second part of "Avebury," "bury," is equally significant. "Bury" comes from the root bhergh-<sup>1</sup>, which means to hide or to protect, and gives us the words "burial," "burrow," "borrow," and "bargain." The root also means high, as in a hill, hill-fort (which protects) or burrow, in which people were buried, in order to rise again. Cognates include borough; thus

Avebury can be taken to mean Bird-Town. And bhergh<sup>-2</sup> is the root of the Celtic name for the ancient goddess: Briget, or Bride. In How Hug a Stone, burrows are places of safety:

& we all pat the bone, thinking to make it ring us round, earth word (home again), seed word (safe again),

that bears us in this kiel, to ku-, to, a hollow space or place, enclosing object, round object, a lump. mound in the surrounding sea of grass. ku-, kunte, to wave-breaking womb: Bride who comes unsung in the muse-ship shared with Mary

(HHS, 72)

This poem unfolds the roots to word "cunt," from kiel, keel of a ship, to ku-, in order to link the keel of the muse-ship, the sex of the goddess, the safety of the barrow, an "enclosing space," and a "mound in the sea of grass."

Marlatt has commented on her use of word chains in "Narrative in Language Circuits:"

a long poem offers the scope for . . . word/thought unravellings . . . the unravelling of "language." . . . in How Hug a Stone (which my publisher advertised as a novel but which could just as easily be termed a long poem) the chains are there too, but more hidden. one that runs through several poems: "guest", "obliged", "hostly & hostile" "ghostly", branches: into "tomb", "womb", "earth", in touch with "guest" again. these are the touch points, touch words in the secret narrative of the compositional process. these are the connecting points of the neural net language makes of experience, where light flares. moving along the net we find it moves

through us and the distance covered is circuit-ous.  
in all ways./83/

It would be illusory to think one could trace all these circuits and rewrite them as expository prose. At one point or another, every word bumps up against every other. Language is inexhaustible; its richness is the pleasure of the text.

Narrative analysis of How Hug a Stone shows that language functions actantially at the level of fabula, as the power which makes possible the fulfillment of the quest, and perhaps as the subject itself. At the level of story, language spans enormous durations, is rhythmic, is a stream of sound; at the level of text, language is the matrix for the creation of subjectivity. At this level, a step beyond narrative, language is telling its own story, speaking itself. Ultimately both the actor of the fabula and the narrator of the text are collective entities. The actant of the fabula is the collective of the family, those to whom one is bound through reciprocal relation, through time or space or both. The narrator, seen all along to comprise many voices, can perhaps also be ultimately understood as the collectivity of language itself. For language is a collective body and in its speaking are the voices of human history.

## Notes

/1/ Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1976), 108.

/2/ Genette, 30.

/3/ Claude Brémont, Logique du récit (Paris: Seuil, 1973.)

/4/ Barthes, "Introduction," 88-104; cited in Bal, 15-16.

/5/ Personal interview with Daphne Marlatt, July 21, 1988.

/6/ William Hendricks, "Methodology of Narrative Structural Analysis," Semiotica 7, 163-184; cited in Bal, 16-18.

/7/ Louis Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 174-175; cited in Kaja Silverman, The Subject of Semiotics (New York: Oxford U.P., 1983), 218-219.

/8/ Lotman, 168.

/9/ de Lauretis, 119.

/10/ de Lauretis, 118-119.

/11/ Teresa de Lauretis is not Marlatt's source, although Marlatt became familiar with de Lauretis's work after writing How Hug a Stone. Personal interview with Daphne Marlatt, August 3, 1988.

/12/ For an archaeologist's view of Old European culture, see Marija Gimbutas, "The First Wave of Eurasian Steppe Pastoralists into Copper Age Europe," Journal of Indo-European Studies 5, 4 (Winter 1977), 277-338; "An Archaeologist's View of \*PIE in 1975," Journal of Indo-European Studies 2, 3 (1974), 289-307; The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe 7000 - 3500 B.C. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974).

/13/ Michael Dames argues that the Tan Hill Fair, held in Wiltshire every year until 1932, was a "genuine Neolithic survival." The Avebury Cycle (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 210-218.

/14/ Marlatt's source was the official handbook put out by the Department of the Environment, where we read that Silbury Hill is "made up of a matrix of chalk block walls arranged in the pattern of a spider's web with a number of concentric circumferential and interrupted radial walls in plan" (26); and, "the highly preserved state of the organic material was quite exceptional. As well as the grass which was still pliable, through brown in colour, there was all the insect and floral life that goes with it; beetles, many other insect components, and flying ants with their wings. Although the date of construction of the hill is still only known within a bracket of a few hundred years, the ants with their wings tell us that the building started at the end of July or early in August, at a time of year when the wings of this ant develop" (28). The Avebury Monuments, Faith Vatcher and Lance Vatcher (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1976).

/15/ Dames, 131.

/16/ D.A. Mackenzie, Scottish Folklore and Folk Life (1935), 188; cited in Dames, 86.

/17/ Dames, 13.

/18/ John Lyons, Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics (London: Cambridge U.P., 1977); cited in Rhoda Hanafi, "When 'I' Speaks to 'You': The Literary Subject as an Effect of Pronominal Play in Two Works by Contemporary Women Writers," M.A. Thesis, U.B.C., 1987, 24.

/19/ Emile Benveniste, Problèmes de linguistique générale (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 259-260.

/20/ Julia Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia U.P., 1984), 43-45.

/21/ Cf. Nancy Chodorow: "Separateness . . . is not simply given from birth, nor does it emerge from the individual alone. Rather, separateness is defined relationally; differentiation occurs in relationship: 'I' am 'not-you'. Moreover, 'you', or the other, is

also distinguished. The child learns to see the particularity of the mother or primary caretaker in contrast to the rest of the world." "Gender, Relation, and Difference in Psychoanalytic Perspective," The Future of Difference, Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine, eds. (Boston, Massachusetts: G.K. Hall & Co, 1980), 6.

/22/ Monique Wittig, "The Mark of Gender," Feminist Issues 5, 2 (Fall 1985), 3-12.

/23/ Wittig, MG, 3.

/24/ Wittig, MG, 4.

/25/ Wittig, MG, 6.

/26/ Woolf, Room, 93.

/27/ de Lauretis, 119.

/28/ de Lauretis, 199.

/29/ Wittig, MG, 6.

/30/ Benveniste, 254-255.

/31/ Wittig, MG, 6.

/32/ Woolf, Room, 98-99.

/33/ Woolf, Room, 95-96.

/34/ Woolf, Room, 96.

/35/ Women's Autobiography, ed. Estelle Jelinek (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1980).

/36/ Jelinek, "Women's Autobiography in the Male Tradition," Women's Autobiography, 3.

/37/ Mary Meigs, The Medusa Head (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1983), 7.

/38/ Monique Wittig's most recent novel, Virgile Non (Paris: Minuit, 1985), uses the first-person singular pronoun.

/39/ Monique Wittig, L'opoponax (Paris: Minuit, 1964), 281.

/40/ Wittig, MG, 8.

/41/ Wittig, MG, 11.

/42/ Woolf is not Marlatt's source. Personal Interview with Daphne Marlatt, July 12, 1988.

/43/ Daphne Marlatt, "In the Month of Hungry Ghosts," The Capilano Review, 16/17 (2-3/1979), 45-95.

/44/ Marlatt, Ghosts, 63.

/45/ Marlatt, Ghosts, 62.

/46/ Marlatt, Ghosts, 70.

/47/ Daphne Marlatt, "Writing our Way through the Labyrinth," Tessera 2, nbj (1985), 49.

/48/ William Blake, Milton (Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala, 1978), 62.

/49/ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse Typology in Prose," Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views, ed. Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1971), 177-196.

/50/ Benveniste, 233.

/51/ Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," Poetry, Language, Thought, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971): An art work "opens up a world and keeps it abidingly in force" (44). In contrast with a piece of equipment, it does not use up material but sets it forth, as earth which "grounds" our "dwelling in the world" (46). "The setting up of a world and the setting forth of earth are two essential features in the work-being of the work" (48).

/52/ This is not the place to locate and catalogue the sources for every intertextual transference in How Hug a Stone. Much work remains to be done.

/53/ Personal Interview with Daphne Marlatt, May 29, 1988.

/54/ Kristeva, 59-60.

/55/ Gail Duff, Country Wisdom: An encyclopedia of recipes, remedies and traditional good sense (London: Pan Books, 1979).

- /56/ Duff, 22.
- /57/ Duff, 22-23.
- /58/ Personal interview with Daphne Marlatt, July 12, 1988.
- /59/ Dames, 71.
- /60/ Duff, 23.
- /61/ Dames, 70, 104-105.
- /62/ Robert Graves, The White Goddess: A historical grammar of poetic myth (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), 177.
- /63/ Duff, 135.
- /64/ Personal Interview with Daphne Marlatt, August 3, 1988.
- /65/ William Shakespeare, Richard II, III, iv, 105-108.
- /66/ Dames, 9.
- /67/ Dames, 9, 13.
- /68/ Dames, 218.
- /69/ Graves, 26.
- /70/ Graves, 394.
- /71/ Graves, 387.
- /72/ Graves, 24.
- /73/ Graves, 394.
- /74/ Graves, 27-48.
- /75/ Dames, 22.
- /76/ Dames, 43.
- /77/ Dames, 44.
- /78/ Dames, 44.
- /79/ Dames, 45.



/80/ William Stukeley, Stonehenge, a Temple Restor'd to the British Druids; Abury, a Temple of the British Druids, Introduction by Robert D. Richardson, Jr., Myth & Romanticism: A Collection of the Major Mythographic Sources used by the English Romantic Poets, edited by Burton Feldman and Robert Richardson, Jr. (1743; rpt. New York & London: Garland, 1984).

/81/ Dames, 168. "Dancing the hay" means to perform "a country dance having a winding or serpentine movement, or being of the nature of a reel." The Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933). (see "hay")

/82/ Daphne Marlatt, "Narrative in Language Circuits," The Dinosaur Review 7, Summer 1986, 60-61.

/83/ Marlatt, "Narrative," 61.

### Part III: Narratological Reading of Picture Theory

Nous partons, Danièle Judith, Claire Dérive et moi vers la mer, retrouver Florence Dérive et Oriana dans la grande maison, sur une île, au sud de Cape Cod.

(PT, 79)

#### A. Fabula

##### Event

Narratological analysis of How Hug a Stone began with the fabula, the deepest level of narrative, and with identification of the events out of which fabula is constructed. I outlined the procedures for establishing fabula events, arguing that in most cases the narratologist can begin with an intuitive, one-sentence summary of the action. Formal strategies can be used to evaluate the working model of the fabula which is produced in this way. In the case of Picture Theory, this useful technique is unable to account for large parts of the text. An initial effort to define the main events of Picture Theory introduces the reader to a complex system of textual transformations which Lorraine Weir calls the Brossardian "grammar of utopia." /1/ Events or actions are a minor aspect of the text's utopian transformations.

Brossard hangs a rudimentary plot upon a complex intertextual system which fugues its way to her concluding statement of women's place in a re-imagined world. That plot itself is, like similar aspects of Finnegans Wake, at first difficult to see and one undertakes the same risk of trivializing the writing by ferreting out characters and incidents and seeming thereby to dispose of the complex language games of the text./2/

As Weir argues, the real event occurs at the level of text or language, and "the facts of a narrative" may serve "only as a framework"/3/ for the event that is the writing itself. Yet the "characters and incidents" of the "rudimentary plot" do bear an important relation to fabula events. For narratology, they are the object of analysis. Initially, the narratologist must set aside the most striking features of the text, so that the narratological analysis may provide a surer method of acquiring insight into Brossard's complex textual system.

Any summary of the major events of Picture Theory directs attention to "livre deux," "L'Emotion," the most narrative of the eight sections. The series of events in "L'Emotion" is preeminent due to the clarity with which it is recounted, to the amount of textual space it occupies, and to its bringing together of the book's major characters. Fabula description can begin with the events of "L'Emotion": five women travel to an island off Cape Cod and spend their vacations together.

This germinal fabula begins with a journey and thus resembles the fabula model with which I began the analysis of How Hug a Stone: the narrator, with her son, travels in England for a month with the intention of better understanding her mother. The element of intentionality, as always, points to the quest structure (Bal, 26), and indicates that the narrator is the subject in a quest for understanding. In the case of How Hug a Stone, the teleology of the quest, which subordinates all other fabula elements to the desire of the subject, is ultimately undermined. At the level of fabula it is contested by other structures which allow for a plurality of voices, desires and subjectivities. The quest remains an important aspect of story and is linked to the strong focalization characteristic of the poem.

The problematic of the quest must be addressed again with respect to Picture Theory, for, as Lorraine Weir argues, Brossard traces "the stages of captivity and release in the quest narrative which constitutes the central structure of the novel."/4/ The quest stages are marked as a progression by the eight section titles, from "L'Ordinaire" through "La Perspective," "L'Emotion" and "La Pensée," to "Screen Skin," "Screen Skin Too," "Screen Skin Utopia" and, finally, hologramme. The quest is also implied by Brossard's

intertextual transformations of James Joyce, Djuna Barnes, Monique Wittig, Mary Daly and others. For example, Weir reads the snow falling on Montréal as follows:

[S]now falls on the city and becomes 'Sky-writing' (150). In sharp contrast to the snow which descends over all Ireland in frigid association with Joyce's Gabriel Conroy at the end of 'The Dead,' however, snow in Brossard is white light, agent of transformation, symbol of the hologram. Echoing Mary Daly's rejuvenation of 'spinster,' a woman who spins, (Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism [Boston: Beacon, 1978], chapter 10) Brossard's snow is a 'Spinster Spirale' (190), spinning creative webs in the service of the union of thought and writing./5/

The quest object is here articulated as the union of thought and writing, and is represented through intertextual transformations of James Joyce and Mary Daly. The symbols of snow and spinster are redeemed by meaning in the feminine, thus opening up the closure of Joyce's "The Dead." The example shows that Brossard's narrative can and must be read intertextually. This discovery, however, does little to illuminate the relationship between the "rudimentary plot" and the quest structure of Brossard's radical rewriting of utopia.

A narratological reading should be able to describe the quest as a fabula composed of functional events, defined by Barthes as any change of condition which poses a choice between two possibilities in the

fabula's subsequent evolution. The trip to the island is a functional event because it involves a collective actor's change of condition and because it permits the events of the vacation. The departure for the island implies the intentionality essential to quest structure, unlikely as a vacation seems as a quest object. In the course of their vacation, the women read books, eat, swim, talk, make love, visit the cliffs, stay up all night and watch the sun rise. The ironic substitution of these daily activities for the epic action of the questing hero links Brossard's quest to the modernism of Joyce's epics, Ulysses and Finnegans Wake.

Intertextual reading underscores the importance of the journey to the island and the vacation. In "De radical à intégrales," Brossard employs the word "vacance," with its double sense of void and vacation, to indicate the second critical stage in a two-part model of the construction of culture "au féminin":

1. L'éclat du sens unique
  - \* briser l'homme comme universel
  - \*\* rompre le cercle de la féminité
2. Produire une vacance, soit un espace mental qui peu à peu sera investi de nos subjectivités, constituant ainsi un territoire imaginaire à partir duquel nos énergies pourront prendre forme./6/

The break with one-way patriarchal thinking is the first stage on which future development of culture "au

féminin" depends. In Picture Theory, it corresponds to the departure "vers la mer," which is necessary for the progress of the fabula and brings into play the triple meaning of "la mer," "la mère" and "l'amer" which Brossard uses to signify the deconstruction of patriarchal motherhood in L'Amèr./7/ The difference that is lesbianism, in L'Amèr, makes thinkable the project of Picture Theory. In broad terms, L'Amèr corresponds to the rupture with patriarchal meaning and departure "vers la mer" in Picture Theory; Picture Theory itself corresponds to the vacation or resulting space in which women's energies can be elaborated. The elaboration of women's energies permits the evolution of woman as subject; thus, Brossard writes of the vacationing women that "Les subjectivités s'interpellent ainsi les unes les autres toute une nuit chaude de juillet, lentement" (PT, 91). The verb "s'interpeller," with its Althusserian connotations, reinforces the idea that the vacation makes possible the creation of subjectivity in the feminine.

The motif of five lesbian women spending time together in the privileged milieu of the island evokes the literary tradition of Sappho's academy for women on the island of Lesbos; indeed, Brossard, in choosing this motif, participates in what Susan Gubar calls the "fantastic collaboration" between Sappho and certain

contemporary women writers including H.D., Renée Vivien, Marguerite Yourcenar, Natalie Barney, and Amy Lowell./8/ At the same time that they supplement the loss of Sappho's texts, these feminist modernists create "an empowering literary history."/9/ Their project harmonizes with that of Brossard's narrator, who is herself a writer: "faire entrer de l'histoire dans ma vie est la chose qui m'est la plus difficile. Pourtant, j'y travaille réellement. Je lie l'histoire à ce qui m'entoure; elle est toujours ailleurs" (PT, 140). The island vacation off Cape Cod signifies a privileged milieu for cultural reintegration of history and experience. It provides an environment fulfilling the material conditions needed, as Virginia Woolf speculates, for the emergence of a poet of Sappho's stature: predecessors, membership in a group where art is freely discussed and practised, and freedom of action and experience. "Perhaps in Lesbos but never since have these conditions been the lot of women."/10/

Monique Wittig, whose work stands in a particularly intimate relation to Brossard's, also collaborates with Sappho. In Le corps lesbien, according to Namascar Shaktini, Wittig uses the voyage to Sappho's island to reconstruct human subjectivity around the image of the lesbian body, thus writing over culturally dominant, generic and "unmarked" phallogocentric subjec-



tivity./11/ The "companion lovers"/12/ leave behind Freud's definition of femininity as "le continent noir"/13/ and appropriate Watteau's Embarquement pour Cythère, in one brilliantly intertextual gesture:

adieu continent noir de misère et de peine adieu  
villes anciennes nous nous embarquons pour les îles  
brillantes et radieuses pour les vertes Cythères  
pour les Lesbos noires et dorées./14/

Embarking "pour les îles brillantes et radieuses," "les amantes" move from darkness into a light that is enigmatically "noires et dorées." This second "noire," feminine and dark, suggests the chthonic goddesses of the ancient world, to which Wittig makes extensive reference. It also recalls the primordial violence which Wittig attributes, throughout her oeuvre, to women's natures; in Les quérillères she writes, for example: "Elles disent que la guerre est une affaire de femme."/15/

Nicole Brossard's strategy, while equally radical, is gentler. She feminizes the grammatically masculine "le continent noir" and dwells there with other women writers:

ma continent multiple de celles qui ont signé: Djuna Barnes, Jane Bowles, Gertrude Stein, Natalie Barney, Michèle Causse, Marie-Claire Blais, Jovette Marchessault, Adrienne Rich, Mary Daly, Colette et Virginia, les autres noyées, Cristina Perri Rossi, Louky Bersianik, Pol Pelletier, Maryvonne si

attentive, Monique Wittig, Sande Zeig, Anna d'Argentine, Kate Millet, Jeanne d'Arc Jutras, Marie Lafleur, Jane Rule, Renée Vivien, Romaine Brooks, écrire: le réel / la peau clairvoyante prunelle essentielle dans le déploiement de ma conscience et expression: mon double une singulière mobilité et le continent certes une joie /16/

Brossard's list of co-signers overlaps considerably with those writers who, collaborating with Sappho and each other, transform relations between history, women, and reality, rewriting the traditional symbology of light and dark to which Freud's famous phrase refers./17/

Thus, Brossard embraces the dark continent as women's territory and watches it fill with light:

ma continent, je veux parler l'effet radical de la lumière au grand jour aujourd'hui, je t'ai serrée de près, aimée de toute civilisation, de toute texture, de toute géométrie et de braise, délirantes, comme on écrit: et mon corps est ravi./18/

In Picture Theory, patriarchy is associated with darkness; as women's energies take form, light intensifies. In Brossard's thought, as in Wittig's, this development corresponds to the emigration from the dark continent to the island: "du continent des femmes à la pensée conséquente" (PT, 150-151). The island is an environment where "des filles studieuses" (PT, 99) are able to

pass "toute la nuit explorant au grand jour le dictionnaire, le contexte dans lequel les idées s'étaient formées puis renouvelées" (PT, 99). The daylight which paradoxically illuminates this "nuit blanche" reflects disruption within the binary logic of patriarchal order, a disruption also symbolized by the island. The island, Shaktini argues, represents lesbian displacement of phallogocentricity because it "is central from the point of view of its own centre," yet "marginal from the point of view of the body of water that surrounds it."/19/ The contradictory centrality of the liminal, so essential to the narrative structure of Picture Theory, is signified by the screen, the skin, "le hall d'entrée," the horizon, the forest, and the island./20/

In Brouillon pour un dictionnaire des amantes, Monique Wittig and Sande Zeig write that at the end of patriarchal time, the companion lovers left their cities, particularly Paris, to live on equatorial islands:

Les migrations dans les îles sont déjà mentionnées à l'âge de la vapeur. Celles qui s'y rendaient marchant à pied jusqu'à la mer, chantaient, "adieu Pont-Neuf, Samaritaine / Butte Saint-Roch, Petits-Carreux, / où nous passions des jours si beaux. / Nous allons en passer aux îles / puisqu'on ne veut plus de nous aux villes", (tiré de la Bibliothèque, ensemble des livres et fragments du passé sauvés par les

amantes pendant la dernière période de chaos). C'est très massivement que les amantes de l'âge de gloire se sont mises à chercher leurs îles. La plupart ont préféré les îles où pousse la grande forêt hygrophile et continue. Il s'agit de la ceinture d'îles qui sont de part et d'autre de l'équateur./21/

In Picture Theory, Brossard writes another version of this contemporary lesbian migration to forest-covered islands. Both the phrase "vers la mer," repeated four times, and the emphasis on the passage through light and dark underline the symbolic significance of the journey:

Nous partons, Danièle Judith, Claire Dérive et moi vers la mer, retrouver Florence Dérive et Oriana dans la grande maison, sur une île, au sud de Cape Cod. Il y avait des autoroutes, de la forêt, des odeurs, des champs; nous avançons sur le continent vers la mer et nous regardions devant nous. Les autoroutes prennent la couleur des bois et des villes que nous traversons. Les autoroutes faisaient des boucles dans l'horizon et parfois nous avons l'impression de ne pas avancer. Chacune de nous prenait le relais vers la mer. L'autoroute était d'ombre et de lumière vers la fin du voyage, au crépuscule lorsque nous l'avons quittée pour des routes plus lentes et qui serpentent vers la mer. En arrivant à Woods Hole nous avons vu le bateau qui devait nous mener dans l'île et qui flottait devant nous comme un éclairage suspendu.

(PT, 79)

Brouillon pour un dictionnaire des amantes is honoured here in the image of forest-covered islands to the south, and "des boucles" where Wittig and Zeig wrote "ceinture d'îles."

Brossard's style, unlike Wittig's and Zeig's, is contemporary and colloquial, yet classical images are allowed to take their place in a late twentieth-century world. The voyage itself, the "routes qui . . . serpentent," and the eerie ferry that waits to transport the travellers across the water all suggest Ulysses' long voyage home. Homer is explicitly introduced in a passage from "L'Ordinaire" which looks forward to the island vacation of "L'Emotion":

Des vacances au bord de la mer, sur une île où quand le soleil se couche, on croirait voir Ulysse poindre à l'horizon de la maison (rose wood). "La terre des Yeux-Ronds était là, toute proche: nous voyions ses fumées; nous entendions leur voix et celles de leurs chèvres . . . Au coucher du soleil, quand vient le crépuscule, on s'étend pour dormir sur la grève de mer". Les transatlantiques nous font des raies dans le dos et sur les cuisses. Il est sept heures, Florence Dérive revient du village avec des moules.

(PT, 33)

The epic intertext expresses the magnitude of women's entrance into history.

Intertextual reading thus intensifies the significance of the journey to the island and the vacation, and suggests as well that narrative structure is integral to the intertextual complexity of the novel. Still to be established is the place of these two events within the narrative sentence. Given Brossard's concern with binary logic, how does she translate a

narrative grammar based on the hero/obstacle opposition of the quest? In other words, what is the fabula of Picture Theory?

Because it moves constantly between the level of the text and that of the fabula, intertextual reading is not an ideal method of establishing fabula structure. To establish the fabula, events must be isolated from their presentation at the levels of story and text. The following is a list of the events of "L'Emotion" in their order of appearance, which coincides unproblematically with chronology. Events involving a choice which determines the subsequent evolution of the action are identified as functional (F). Events which seem to participate in an order of the real beyond the ordinary are in parenthesis. Events which are in series, that is, which lead functionally each to the next, are numbered in series.

#### Events in "L'Emotion"

- 1Fa. Danièle, M.V. and Claire leave for the ocean
- 1Fb. They cross the water in a boat
- 1Fc. They meet Florence Dérive and Oriana on the island
- 1d. All five watch the sun rise
- 2Fa. They assemble around the breakfast table
- 2(F)b. Discussion
- 2c. ("Toute la maison, fenêtres ouvertes, s'ensoleillait") (PT, 82)
- 3Fa. Danièle, Oriana and M.V. drive the car to the village
- 3Fa. Florence and Claire go to the beach
- 3Fb. Danièle, Oriana and M.V. enter "dans l'ombre à la vitesse de la lumière" (PT, 82)

- 3Fc. They wait at garage for their car to be fixed
- 3Fb. Florence talks about their mother and their brother John
- 3Fc. Claire is overwhelmed
- 3Fd. Claire gives the impression she hasn't heard
- 3Fe. (her lips full of salt)
- 3Ff. Memories flow
- 3Fg. (the tide comes up)
- 3Fh. Claire shuts her eyes and cries
- 3Fi. Florence falls silent
- 3j. Florence looks at the ocean
- 3k. (The island reappears)
- 3Fl. They go back to the house
- 3Fd. Danièle, Oriana and M.V. arrive back from the village with groceries (they assemble)
- 4a. Oriana and Danièle go to the beach
- 4Fb. Claire and M.V. interact (talk)
- 4Fc. Claire spills beer
- 4d. Claire opens another beer
- 4Fe. Claire and M.V. interact (make love)
- 4Ff. Claire and M.V. sleep
- 4Fg. M.V. opens her eyes
- 4h. She hears, "la table est mise" (PT, 85)
- 4Fi. They assemble around the supper table
- 4j. They talk
- 5. ("Le lendemain, les jours s'écoulaient au bord de la mer") (PT, 86)
- 5Fa. Oriana proposes that they visit the cliffs
- 5Fb. Danièle Judith drives to the cliffs
- 5Fc. they arrive, park and look around
- 5Fd. they advance towards the cliffs
- 5e. (the cliffs tell a story of rainy days, etc.; there is writing/a woman in the rock)
- 5Ff. they cross the island in returning to the house
- 5g. ("Aujourd'hui une lumière blanche les rendait réelles") (PT, 89)
- 6Fa. they arrive back at the house, named "Tournant des chats" (PT, 89)
- 6b. they have naps
- 6c. they talk
- 6d. they read books all the next day
- 6Fe. M.V. writes about Curaçao
- 6Ff. Claire visits her in her room
- 6Fg. Claire and M.V. interact
- 7. they assemble at the supper table
- 7Fb. Oriana talks
- 7Fc. Claire/Florence and Danièle/M.V. hear her differently
- 7Fd. they talk
- 7e. ("les subjectivités s'interpellent ainsi les une les autres toute une nuit chaude de

- 7e. ("les subjectivités s'interpellent ainsi les  
une les autres toute une nuit chaude de  
juillet, lentement") (PT, 91)
- 8Fa. the next day they go to the beach
- 8Fb. except for Florence who listens to Carlos  
Gardel on the balcony
- 8Fc. Florence joins the others on the beach
- 8Fd. Florence sits down to write on the beach
- 8e. M.V. desires Florence
- 9Fa. Florence comes back from the city with food
- 9Fb. they assemble at the supper table
- 9Fc. they talk
- 9Fd. enthusiasm mounts
- 9Fe. (two sentences encounter each other)
- 9Ff. they open more wine
- 9Fg. they talk
- 9Fh. at the far end of the night, M.V. opens more  
wine
- 9Fi. ("les cités convergeaient dans nos verres")  
(PT, 96)
- 9Fj. they talk/transform ("des femmes  
émergeaient de partout, l'architecture")  
(PT, 96)
- 9Fk. they go to a night club
- 9Fl. they see a man dressed as a woman
- 9Fm. Oriana investigates his theatrical effects
- 9n. She reports that his breasts are plastic and  
his voice sounds like a recording
- 9(F)o. A man cries out an invocation to night from  
Finnegans Wake in French translation (PT,  
99)
- 9p. ("La nuit s'ouvre sur l'horizon") (PT, 99)
- 9q. The sun comes up/ they watch the sun rise
- 9r. they change the course of the fiction
- 9s. ("le cortex cherche à comprendre la nature  
des phrases") (PT, 99)

"L'Emotion" begins with the departure for the island and ends with the women's emergence from both the nightclub and the night, into the dawn. The women are the collective subject of a quest for light, figured last but most significantly as sunrise, and related to a cortical search for understanding. The events can be divided into nine cycles, each of which repeats the



change of condition which characterizes "L'Emotion" as a whole: a journey through the dark into the light. The darkness of the first cycle is broken first by flashes of lightning as the boat approaches the island: "Nous avançons vers l'île lorsqu'un éclair traversa le pont" (PT, 80). It is broken again and more definitively by the rising of the sun. The second cycle ends when the house floods with sunlight; the fifth cycle ends with "une lumière blanche [qui] les rendait réelles" (PT, 89). When one part of the group takes the car to the mechanic's, traditionally a male preserve, Michèle comments, "nous entrons dans l'ombre à la vitesse de la lumière" (PT, 82).

The narrative structure associates the interaction of the actors with energy in the form of light. The first time that they are seated around the table, light energy is generated by the voice of Claire Dérive:

La voix de Claire Dérive s'élevait avec passion dans la grande salle de bois. Des yeux, on aurait dit qu'elle circule concrètement départageant de tout son corps les formes du sacré et du profane. Pour la première fois, comme ce matin devant la mer, je n'ai pas peur d'entendre les mots d'une autre femme, l'esprit de corps conquérant l'horizon. Toute la maison, fenêtres ouvertes s'ensoleillait. Il est midi. La mer devant nous est au comble de la lumière.

(PT, 82)

The abundance of light in this passage, "la mer . . . au comble de la lumière," "la maison [qui]

s'ensoleillait," suggests a wave of light that swells in response to Claire's voice rising passionately in the "grande salle de bois." This event presages the appearance of the hologram accompanied by "volume tor-rere lumière cohérente" (PT, 205).

The play with light and dark extends throughout Picture Theory. One of the motifs of "Screen Skin" is a "phosphorescence dans la nuit comme une permanence féminine prenant relief dans la pierre" (PT, 130). The passage refers to the visit to the cliffs in "L'Emotion," at which time not the light but the darkness in the stone was paramount, recalling the fate of Medusa and Eurydice:

Il y a des femmes sculptées, des mujeres blanches, des jambes cassées, des fragments célèbres. Il y avait des femmes dans la pierre brute et la pierre "taillées de servitude et de ténèbres." Il y a la pierre parlante, les pierres de pluie. Il y a des pierres percées et sonores. Il y a les falaises et la ville de pierre opaque. Il y avait au coeur de la pierre une femme qui disait moi millénaire translucide, gravée dans la pierre utopique.

(PT, 87-88)

The woman in the stone poses a question which is thousands of years old. "Translucide," she is the one "qui est perméable à la lumière, la laisse passer, mais ne permet pas de distinguer nettement les objets."/22/ She is contrasted to Claire, whose gaze illuminates and whose discourse clarifies.

"La nuit patriarcale" is the opponent in this quest. Resemblance between the actantial functions of helper and opponent is relatively apparent (Bal, 30-31): by voyaging through "the dark continent," the women are able to change the course of the fiction (PT, 99). They enter light by traversing a darkness described as "une nuit parfaite" (PT, 95), "parfaite et claire" (PT, 96):

Des bribes de phrases. On entendait le bruit des vagues. C'était une nuit parfaite. C'était la nuit: traversée par la tendresse, les monstres et les exploits. C'était la nuit "parcourant le ciel enveloppée d'un voile sombre, sur un char attelé de quatre chevaux noirs avec le cortège de ses filles, les Furies, les Parques". La nuit comme en Irlande aurait vingt-quatre heures et comme l'éternité correspondrait à notre songe. C'est nuit dans la phrase. En cris(e), sinistre et sanglant patriarcat.

(PT, 95-96)

The naming of the Furies points to an earlier overwriting: the incorporation, recorded in Aeschylus' Oresteian trilogy, of the pre-patriarchal Eumenides into the patriarchal system. Ireland suggests Joyce and the Joycean night which extends over Dublin in Finnegans Wake and inside language itself. These images imply that by reading the texts of patriarchy, from their beginnings with Homer, Aeschylus and Sophocles, to their ultimate expression in Joyce's last epic, one is able finally to move through "des bribes de phrases"

(PT, 95) into a renewed narrative sentence based on other desires.

The narrative structure is oriented towards the epic in that the series of events constituted by the departure, descent, ascent and vision of "la nuit parfaite" resembles or parodies the classical, epic quests of western culture: Dante's voyage through the Inferno to Purgatory and Paradise, Orpheus's journey to the underworld in search of Eurydice, and Odysseus's descent into the underworld on his way home to Ithaca. In each of these spatially organized quests, the hero's movement traces the horizon of the known cosmos. Each story, mapping the universe as it can be known, is a revelation of a (patriarchal) world. Each male hero transgresses the boundaries of the known in a quest for a haven semantically marked as female. Brossard's intertextual system transposes these classical quest narratives as well as James Joyce's and Monique Wittig's modernist and feminist rewritings of them.

Brossard punctuates her quest with the motif of turning to stone, a fate linked to Eurydice and Medusa; in addition, she refers to Lot's wife who, looking back towards Sodom and Gomorrah fiery with God's wrath, was turned into a pillar of salt. This woman, excluded from the renewed patriarchal contract, was left behind in Gomorrah with the taste of salt in her mouth. In

defining utopia from women's experience, Brossard begins with God's interdiction against homosexual bonding between women. Oriana asks for the explanation: "Elle dit ne pas comprendre pourquoi, chaque fois que des femmes sont réunies, dans les films par exemple, le temps semble s'arrêter autour d'elles après les avoir figées ou changées en statues de sel chargées de symboles" (PT, 81). Oriana's question leads to a discussion of timelessness: is timelessness ecstasy or death? Claire, in her role of illuminator, makes a crucial distinction: "Claire Dérive affirmait qu'il ne fallait pas confondre la nuit des temps, le temps patriarcal et l'extase car de cette confusion naissaient des femmes suspendues et immobiles dans l'espace" (PT, 81). The question returns to the reorganization of desire in defiance of patriarchal injunctions; the woman who risks this reorganization risks the taste of salt in the mouth. The narrator, projecting the inscription of women into history and specifying the utopian quality of emotion between women, does taste salt in her mouth:

Nous étions assises autour de la table. Danièle Judith disait que le matriarcat est un mot d'anthropologie et qu'il ne peut pas être utilisé d'une manière contemporaine pour exorciser le patriarcat. Ce mot ne pouvait non plus servir à élaborer quelque utopie qui aurait rendu les femmes à leur genre. Je disais, avec dans la bouche un goût de sel, à propos de l'utopie en commençant par le mot femme que l'utopie n'allait pas assurer notre insertion dans la réalité mais qu'un témoignage

utopique de notre part pouvait stimuler en nous une qualité d'émotion propice à notre insertion dans l'histoire. Avant que Claire Dérive parle d'abstraction, j'ajoutais que nous devons socialiser nos énergies de manière à n'en être point victimes.

(PT, 85-86)

The taste of salt signifies the difficult point of origin necessary for the elaboration of utopia beginning with the word "woman." The motif corresponds to the logical paradox Brossard constructs around "femme" in "De radical à intégrales." In affirming "une femme est une femme," a woman commits "un vice de forme,"/23/ a tautology which explodes patriarchal logic and makes possible the emergence of meaning in the feminine. Because the word "femme" is rooted in patriarchal soil, the affirmation is risky: "Qui donc étant femme voudrait prendre le risque d'être une femme, c'est-à-dire une fiction dont elle ne serait pas à l'origine."/24/ The taste of salt correlates to this risky origin, to the polyvalent symbol of la mer/l'amer /la mère, and to the epic intertext of the novel.

Although the traditional quest narratives to which Picture Theory refers conspicuously lack successful, questing women, Brossard's characters emerge victoriously in the dawn, having successfully encountered patriarchal night.

Au lever du soleil, nous sommes cinq femmes à voir éperdument l'origine des corps en allée dans la cité, là où l'écriture refait surface, se condense, solution des eaux, la sueur perle sur nos fronts. Toute la nuit explorant au grand jour le dictionnaire, le contexte dans lequel les idées s'étaient formées puis renouvelées, identiques et machine gun à répétition dans nos bouches en commençant par le pire, à de la privation. Filles studieuses, nous détournerions le cours de la fiction, entraînant avec nous les mots tour à tour, spirale ignée, picture theory, une existence en ces termes pendant que corps crépusculaires, nous marchons en direction du bateau, entourées de touristes. Une expression se lit de front sur nos visages: tendre à l'abstraction est une issue. Rupture virtuelle dans le rythme/faune abyssale, corps céleste. Le cortex cherche à comprendre la nature des phrases

(PT, 99)

This passage, which closes "L'Emotion," ends with a sentence which itself doesn't close, but stays open to the possibilities of a new narrative sentence. At the conclusion of the quest of "L'Emotion," the women are in the process of redirecting the course of fiction; its destination is yet to be seen.

As the chart of events demonstrates, there are many more events in "L'Emotion" than have been taken account of in this discussion, which has concentrated on the movement through darkness into light, particularly in cycles one and nine, the journey to the island and the events of "la nuit parfaite." "L'Emotion" in its entirety manifests other narrative structures. If the descent into the underworld of the "boîte de nuit" (PT, 97) parodies the classical quest, the section as a

whole enacts, by means of structural and formal innovation, a departure from standard narrative grammar. This comprises a move away from linear causality towards the form of the spiral, the "spirale ignée" (PT, 99) of the redirected fiction.

"De radical à intégrales" outlines the development of "culture au féminin" as a spiralling movement out of the restricting circle of "féminité" or patriarchal femininity which makes nonsense of women's sense (Figure 2)./25/ The fabula of Picture Theory manifests this spiral. Each of the series, or cycles, is itself a quest; as the series repeat the spiral evolves and the horizon of meaning in the feminine brightens. This is why both series one and nine culminate in the sunrise. At a certain point relative to the evolution of the spiral out of the circle, the women are lost in the "zone dangereuse,"/26/ from which they can see both ways: they can see the horizon. The repetition of "éperdument" underlines the dangers of this passage through "la folie, délire ou génie."/27/

Puis nous sommes cinq au lever du soleil à la voir éperdument la mer, prononçant d'une manière atonale des phrases complètes et abstraites liant la vie et la parole dans l'heure horizontale.

(PT, 80)

Au lever du soleil nous sommes cinq femmes à voir éperdument l'origine des corps.

(PT, 99)



## VISION AÉRIENNE

Des séquences de la SPIRALE en son énergie et mouvement vers une culture au féminin

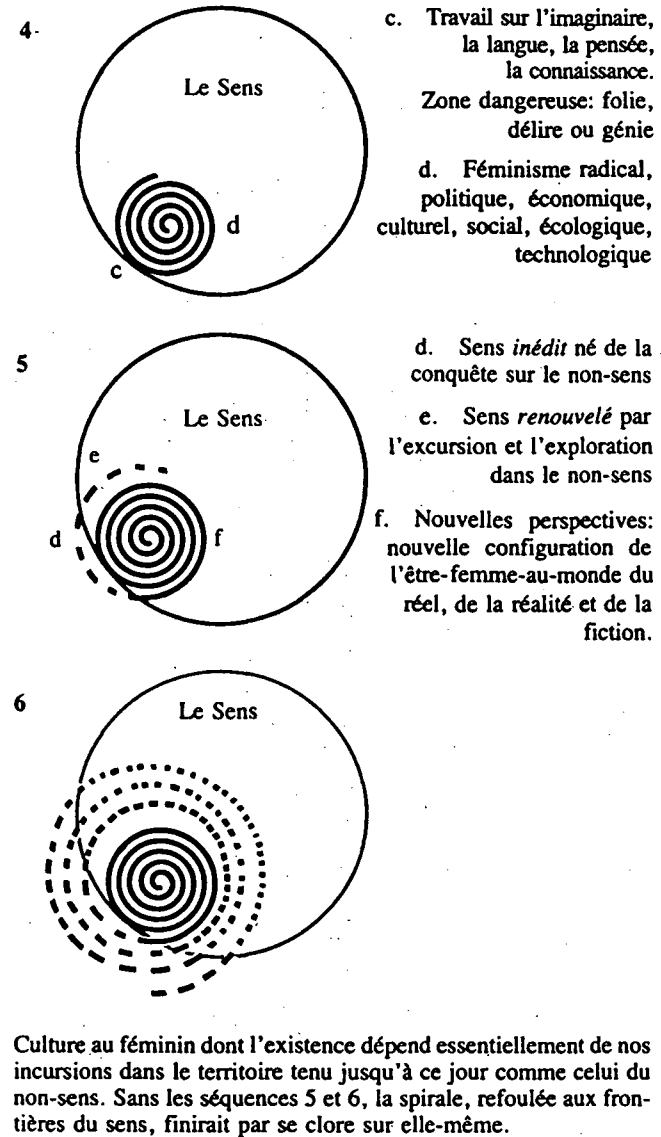
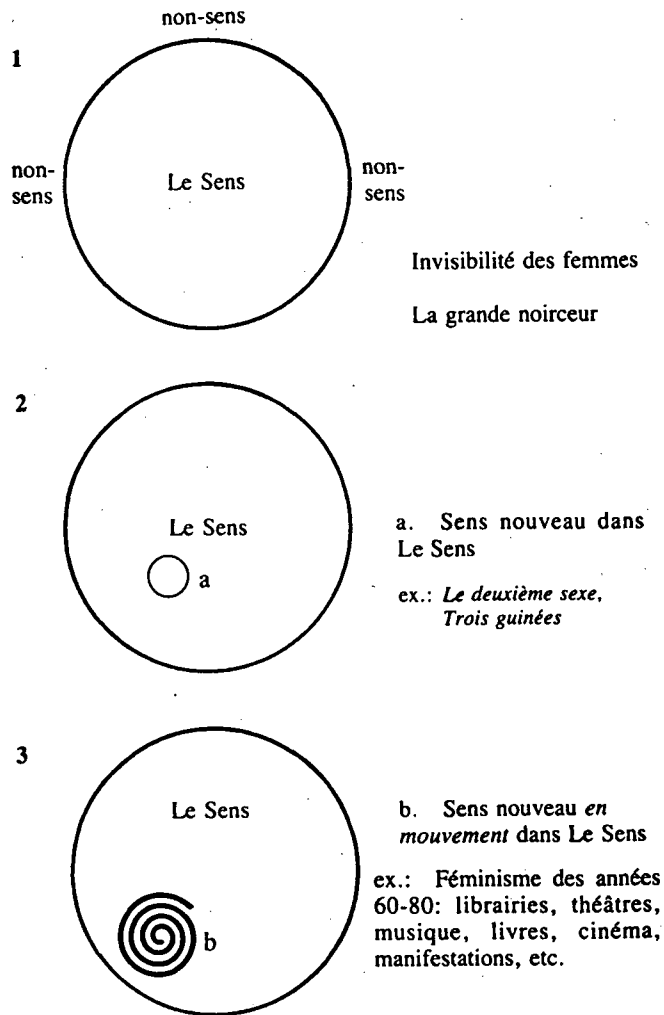


Figure 2 Nicole Brossard's spiral of culture "au féminin," from La lettre aérienne.

The diction points to the isomorphism of the event at the level of fabula: in series one and nine the women are lost in the danger zone just before seeing the sun rise over the horizon of the patriarchal world. The horizon is a special case of the liminal imagery of island, skin, screen and "hall d'entrée": it is the edge of "l'inédit."/28/

The spiral structure of the fabula can be seen more clearly when characterization, details of time and place, and textual effects are suppressed, leaving fabula events at their most abstract: actors who experience changes of condition. The events of "L'Emotion" can thus be described as follows:

#### Abstraction of Events in "L'Emotion"

1. A collective actor departs on a journey, in two groups
  1. They assemble
  1. They interact
  1. They interact with their environment
  1. (They watch the sun rise)
  2. They assemble
  2. They interact
  2. (The house fills with light)
  3. The group separates into two
  3. They set out on journeys
  3. One group enters light (the sunny beach)
  3. One group enters shadow at the speed of light.
  3. The group in shadow waits.
  3. The ones at the beach interact
  3. Memories flow
  3. (The tide comes up)
  3. The group reassembles
  4. They separate into two again
  4. One group enters the light
  4. The other group interacts
  4. They sleep

5. The whole group reassembles
5. They interact
5. They set out on a journey
5. They interact
5. They interact with their environment  
(The cliffs tell their story)  
("Une lumière blanche les rendait réelles")
6. They return from their journey (reassemble)
6. They read books
6. They sleep
7. One actor writes
7. She is joined by another and they interact
7. The group assembles
7. They interact
7. ("les subjectivités s'interpellent")
8. The group separates into two
8. One part goes to the beach
8. One actor writes
8. She joins the others and they interact
9. The group assembles
9. They interact
9. They interact with their environment (the night)
9. (The sun comes up)

Reading the fabula this way makes clear its repetitive, isomorphic structure. Each series is itself a cycle which resembles the first series: a collective actor splits into parts, journeys, reassembles, interacts generating energy, and splits again. This cycle of events is roughly repeated nine times in "L'Emotion," and also occurs elsewhere in the book: it is the primary event of Picture Theory and a striking variation on the elementary narrative event as defined by Jurij Lotman: entry into a closed space and emergence from it, or traversal of a spatial field. The actors of Picture Theory enter and exit closed spaces; the crucial difference is that their assembling and interact-

ing generates the light energy which is the object of the quest. The events of series two to nine frame these interactions, many of which are conversations or embedded texts (Bal, 142-146) which develop Brossard's feminist argument. The levels of narration in Picture Theory are particularly responsive to each other in that these embedded conversations generate the object of the fabula. I will discuss this question in more detail in the section on narrative embedding.

The fourth series sets in place some of the motifs of intertextual transformation which contribute to "la nuit parfaite": Joyce's Dublin, the desert sand, the Sphinx of Giza and the myth of Oedipus. The night suddenly darkens the sunny vacation:

je me débattais avec une émotion aussi forte, aussi pressante que des sables mouvants, qu'une mer de sable m'entraînant par les talons, jusqu'à ce que l'horizon ne soit plus qu'un reflet sur mon casque doré. Maintenant Claire Dérive parlait et c'est la nuit qui tombe sur nos épaules dans l'éclairage au-dessus de nos corps pensant. C'était de la nuit qu'elle parlait et pourquoi de Dublin quand elle disait ne pas croire en l'existence de cette ville.

(PT, 86)

Claire's association with the falling darkness and her puzzling interest in Dublin caution Michèle and the reader against simplistic readings of this character who represents not simply light but chiaroscuro, light in shade. The passage introduces several images of

night which recur in cycle nine. "Le casque doré" is a polysemic motif which signifies Athena, the goddess who represents patriarchal triumph over women-identified forms of belief. It is Athena who is born from the head of Zeus without the aid of a woman; who kills Pallas, her Amazonian counterpart, and then controls the trace of her friend by taking her name; who intervenes on behalf of Agamemnon, Apollo and Orestes against the Furies and Clytemnestra. Athena is a preeminent sign of patriarchal overwriting on the cultural palimpsest. She is reclaimed in Picture Theory as an image of the self which has been appropriated and defined, yet has remained an Amazonian warrior.


"Les sables mouvants" and "les talons" are images from the Oedipal story: the sands of the Sahara Desert which shift over the paws of the Sphinx, and the heels by which Oedipus as a baby was bound, and which gave him the name "swollen foot."/29/ "[L]a nuit qui tombe sur nos épaules" recalls the darkness of W.B. Yeats' "The Second Coming:"

. . . somewhere in the sands of the desert  
 A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
 A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
 Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
 Reel shadows of indignant desert birds.  
 The darkness drops again; but now I know  
 That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
 Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born? /30/

Brossard too announces that in the desert a form is stalking emotion and history: "Le désert est grand, rempli de pyramides et de Hilton qu'une lumière blanche fait surgir. Une forme guette l'émotion, l'histoire" (PT, 96). Both Yeats and Brossard refer to the Oedipal origins of culture in the context of a new epic cycle which is about to begin.

The detail of the Cairo Hilton highlights the superimposition of classical motifs upon a contemporary scene. The stony sleep of "des femmes dans la pierre" (PT, 88) is complemented by that of the sleeping stone Sphinx. In "Screen Skin Too," the motif is further elaborated when Medusa is juxtaposed with the Sphinx: two sleeping female monsters. M.V., petrified with fear, is ready to become Medusa's head adorning the shield of the patriarchal hero Perseus.

La falaise, le désert, la ville sur ordinateur  
devenaient continuité cosmique: Hilton - - - - -  
- - - - -  alors qu'aux pieds de la falaise,  
l'émotion se refermait comme un coquillage. La  
moindre fente. La Fente faisait un jour qui  
motivait M.V. dans chacune des surfaces qu'elle  
explorait avec la sensation de retrouver ses peines  
perdus dans l'horizon bleu des métaphores, là où  
régnait le Sphinx. Prise dans la pierre de  
l'effroi, M.V. était prête à devenir un buste de  
femme à la tête orageuse qui affolerait l'étranger  
lorsque la voyant paraître, il sentirait son pouls  
faiblir. Pulsion, pulsion, pulvérisant l'encrier, I

smell ashes in the ink. L'énigme/sandales/scandale des temps. O mémoire patriarcale qui fit croire que la Sphinx pouvait être vaincue par un homme dont les talons dépassaient des sandales.

(PT, 147-148)

In defiance of the Oedipal story, Brossard asserts that the (female) Sphinx was never overcome. The story that she was is a "scandale des temps." Brossard plays with the gender of the Sphinx, normally masculine in French, to make her point. Like Athena and Medusa, Oedipus and the Sphinx are signs of patriarchal overwriting. The story of Oedipal disaster safeguards the memory of man's triumph over the monster in his process of generically masculine self-identification. Thus, "le Sphinx" reigns on the blue horizon of patriarchal metaphor./31/ "La Sphinx" is supposed to have killed herself in despair, but in Brossard's spiralling night, the Sphinx in the desert is one of the stations in the journey towards the epiphanic horizon of sense in the feminine.

The repetition of the spiral structure is synonymous with progression. The cycles build in intensity, cresting with the events of "la nuit parfaite," and each occurrence of the primary event is affected by the fact of being in a series. Wave theory defines the difference between an event in isolation and an event in a series as a mathematical function

called "neighbourhood interaction." Neighbourhood interaction is critical to the development of a hologram./32/ In Brossard's fiction/theory, women use neighbourhood interaction to generate energy and light. The dynamics of "la nuit parfaite" are described as an irreversible reaction, a bush fire, a winding, climbing spiral:

L'atmosphère était à l'émotion sur les visages ça se voyait et dans les corps on pouvait imaginer. Oriana ouvrait une troisième bouteille de vin alors que le ton montait et que nous gravissions les échelons dans l'enthousiasme, les mots se succédant comme des phénomènes, des feux de paille, crépitant d'une manière irréversible.

(PT, 93)

Events move ahead in a quantum leap, a mathematically quantifiable reaction of energy and light.

The steady building of energy throughout "L'Emotion" is non-linear. The second series does not lead causally to the third, nor the third to the fourth, and so on. A causal relationship links the first series to the others, but series two to nine occur at the second level of causality and are non-functional relative to each other. This narrative structure resembles a tree; the first series is the trunk and all the others are branches. Two Brossardian metaphors, "la racine aérienne" and "le cortex," draw on such a structure. The first series, or tree trunk,



is the "racine aérienne" on which further development of the aerial network depends./33/ The tree structure itself resembles that of the synapses of the brain (Figure 3). The metaphorical relationship between tree and cortex is not original to Brossard; the cortical-synapses are conventionally described by terms relating to trees, "dendrites," for example, and "arborization."/34/ Brossard's contribution is to develop a narrative fabula corresponding to this model. The fabula structure of "L'Emotion" resembles both the brain or tree and the spiral. In any case, a series of isomorphic events follows the essential first step of departure "vers la mer" in order to take a vacation. This departure and arrival is the model for the primary event: an actant divides, crosses a spatially defined field, reassembles, and interacts producing light energy.

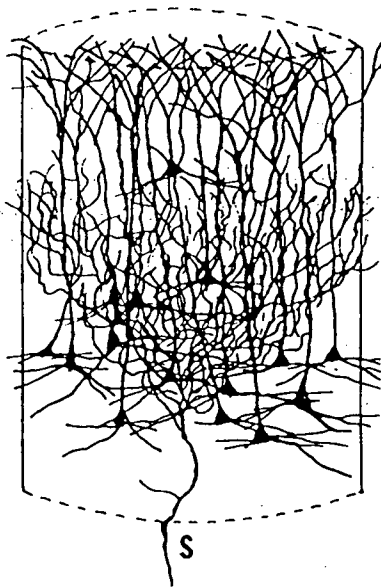


Figure 3      Diagram of microstructure of synaptic domains in cortex, from Pribram.

Each of the metaphors which describes the fabula contributes to the richness of the text, but ultimately the metaphor of the brain is the most developed because it opens into the possibility of the hologram. In the language of neuropsychology, the primary event can be understood as a wave front interaction which is synonymous with consciousness. In order to change consciousness, "the conduction of nerve impulses [must] pass the barrier of the synapse."/35/ Translated into the terms of Picture Theory, the women must cross "la mer" to get to the island. The metaphorical complex of brain waves, women, water and light is at the heart of Picture Theory. The primary event is diffracted through the book and is finally meaningful in terms of the production of the hologram, produced by wave front interaction exposed to coherent light.

The primary event of "L'Emotion" occurs with varying degrees of intensity in "L'Ordinaire." The book opens with several of its elements in place:

Dans le bar du Hilton, le danseur des Caraïbes dit: vous vous souviendrez sans doute de Curaçao à cause d'un détail (Anna, que le hasard m'avait fait rencontrer quelques heures auparavant, m'avait prévenue qu'une réalité n'en recouvre pas nécessairement une autre mais qu'hôtesse de l'air entre le Venezuela et Aruba la laissait à désirer). Ainsi chaque phrase ou dans le casino (ce qui s'en suivit fit dire à une femme: il est tard) lorsque les yeux tirés, j'allais d'une table à l'autre. Seules deux femmes misaient.

(PT, 19)

The journey to Curaçao is an event of the primary type; the narrator has travelled to Curaçao and interacts there, "[par] hasard," with Anna. "Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard."/36/ It is night in the modern age. Women are gambling alone. On the same page, Florence Dérive crosses another threshold, alone. It is night, and memory is again at issue:

Lorsque Florence Dérive entra à l'Hôtel de l'Institut, Montréal, 1980, rue Saint-Denis. Des bribes de phrases à l'intérieur. A la réception. C'était la nuit. Depuis Finnigans Wake [sic]. C'était la nuit. Itinérante, Florence Dérive et tellement d'une femme. Cerveau ----- mémoire. La nuit, nombres et lettres.

(PT, 19)

In both scenes, interaction is limited and it is dark. "L'Ordinaire" presents events of the same type as the spiralling cycles of "L'Emotion," but the characters are isolated and energy and light are restrained. However, numbers and letters, the embryonic elements of a new language, circulate in this dark, and as the chapter progresses, light increases.

The narrator makes a solitary journey to Paris, where she writes and visits the holography museum. Energy increases at the scene of writing, perhaps because in this singular location events first encounter one another.

A parcourir/texte, je m'en ressens. Pour décrire avec exactitude une seule réalité née en toute fiction. La scène blanche du 16 mai. Ce n'est que dans les eaux de Curaçao que l'idée me traversa.

(PT, 20)

The spatial terms which describe writing underline the isomorphism with the primary event; like the women traversing space and reassembling, the narrator moves through her text as her ideas move through her body, in a double wave formation travelling at the speed of light. The passage brings together the elements of women, thought and water; then, light appears:

Ce soir-là, c'est dans des Caraïbes que je suis le plus frileuse. Sans y penser, je regarde la mer, les poupées hollandaises. En plein soleil.

(PT, 21)

Perhaps the same evening, Florence Dérive lectures on women and torture:

Florence Dérive -- New York-Montréal -- ce soir-là. L'aube, la sonnerie du réveille-matin: jour de conférence. Sujet: les femmes et la torture. Hôtel de l'Institut, jour ensoleillé, Carré St-Louis. Smoke gets in your eyes. La patriarcale machine à faire des blues. Un peu plus tard dans la journée, Florence Dérive téléphona à Danièle Judith. Le soir venu, terminant sa conférence: en résumé, il est facile de comprendre que déterminés par l'écriture,

ils aient su alors imaginer que chaque femme devait être mise au service d'un homme, quel que soit son rang, quel que fût son sexe. Silence: la salle s'excite.

(PT, 23)

The diction denotes increasing light: "l'aube," "matin," "jour," "jour ensoleillé" and "journée." The contact between Danièle Judith and Florence is the first time in the novel that members of the collective protagonist interact. (There has been another telephone call mentioned, but we are not told to whom the narrator speaks.) "La salle s'excite" comments on building energy. There is light, even though smoke gets in one's eyes. The next day the narrator is "à l'horizon," (PT, 23) and the novel opens into "la scène blanche."

"La scène blanche" does not fit easily into a description of fabula because, at least superficially, it is a recurrent scene and not an event at all (Bal, 73-75). The intensity of light characterizing "la scène blanche" relates it to the function of light in the fabula. Entrance into "le hall d'entrée" (which is filled with light), also manifests the elements of the primary event. The appearance of a book recalls the scene of writing.

j'ajoute: il y a deux scènes alors. L'une datée du 16 mai\* l'autre très rapprochée. Celle du livre et celle du tapis. Rivées l'une à l'autre comme mises en suspens par une écriture, nous existons dans la laborieuse création du désir dont on n'a pas idée. . . .

\*Ce matin même le hall d'entrée est ensoleillé. L'odeur du bois est persistante. Une odeur de café aussi.

(PT, 27)

"Le hall d'entrée" is at the same time enigmatic and an aspect of ordinary reality. By definition liminal and initiatory, as a recurrent motif it underlines the spatial organization of the primary event. As "le hall d'entrée" fills with light, energy builds for "la scène holographiée" (PT, 27), the utopian scene which has been until now "indescriptible" (PT, 190).

"La scène blanche" is a scene of love-making between the narrator and Clair.

#### La scène blanche

la transparence des peaux. Répondant à certains signes, en toute fluidité, nos corps s'enlacent incités à se fondre dans l'étonnement ou la fascination. Littéralement pellicule l'une de l'autre au coeur d'une motivation radicale. La lumière du jour. Une telle abondance de lumière effrite le regard. Les yeux sombrent comme une mémoire. Tout en cette femme m'attire et les mots se font rares. Impérative grammaire incendiée, les yeux baroques, à profusion je les ferme, traversée par l'hypothèse que sur le tapis, nous avons à peine bougé.

(PT, 36)

Here the elements of the primary event manifest at intense levels; interaction is figured as bodies enlacing, and the transgression of space is a hypothesis (thought) traversing the body. Light is so abundant that it fragments ordinary vision. This act of love and abundance of light marks the shift into the second section of the novel, "livre un," "La Perspective."/37/

"La Perspective" reorients the ordinary in relation to a double articulation of the love scene as body and as text. The scene is critical to all further transformation.

Je sais que la scène amoureuse a déjà été vue et consommée dans plusieurs de ses mécaniques, je sais cela, je sais cela que répétée elle détermine l'ouverture et le point de non-retour de toute affirmation.

(PT, 47)

The love scene, densely overwritten as it is, nevertheless constitutes a "point de repère" for the production of the hologram. Like the pre-symbolic, watery link between child and mother, this amorous scene is the ground of all affirmation. This is the scene of the creation of new desire -- desire other than the always already written of the Oedipalized body. Essential to the utopian libidinal economy in creation, this desire metamorphoses mental space (PT, 27, 43). The creativity of the love scene is renewed when it is



reinscribed in history with the difference which Brossard foregrounds in the epigraph from Gertrude Stein: "Maintenant quelle est la différence entre une phrase et je veux dire. La différence est une phrase est qu'elles désireront les femmes" (PT, 13). This difference displaces the symbolic, the imaginary and the real of the phallogocentric order. In Brossard's utopian grammar, lesbianism is a "nouvelle optique" that changes everything.

The repetition of the love scene is a strategy for creating ecstasy and imprinting it in memory, a strategy which is declared in the opening pages of the book:

D'instinct et de mémoire, j'essaie de ne rien reconstituer. De mémoire, j'entame. Et cela ne peut être d'enfance. Seulement d'extase, de chute, de mots.

(PT, 19)

Ecstasy dislodges and rewrites the primary processes of subject development, just as the identification of the two women provides a non-binary ground for word cathexis. It opens up the possibility of the new.

The refusal to reconstruct is also a refusal of nostalgia; Brossard brings forward the goddesses and monsters of the classical world, but not in order to reconstruct a golden age before patriarchy.

Il fallait pourtant comprendre ce que les obèles cachaient. Tous ces textes dont la pensée avaient été interpolée par des millénaires de vie patriarcale. Papier d'impression, papiers-mythes de la légitimation masculine. D'instinct et de mémoire, j'essaie de ne rien reconstituer. De mémoire, j'entame.

(PT, 149)

Picture Theory's orientation towards the future is expressed most profoundly through the metaphor of the hologram.

Holograms were first produced in 1949 by Jim Gabor, a scientist searching for ways to enhance the fidelity of the electron microscope./38/ A light beam is split into a reference beam and another that reflects the object to be holographed. The two interact on a filter, creating a light wave interference pattern. Under appropriate conditions the filter can reproduce a three-dimensional image of the holographed object. Since the 1960s, holograms have been made with laser light characterized by coherent wave patterns. The holographic filter or screen is re-exposed to a laser beam to produce the hologram.

The mathematical model encoded in the hologram has a special relationship with the human brain. Karl Pribram, a leading neuropsychologist, was led by his research on human memory to the paradigm of the hologram. In Languages of the Brain (1971), he

presents the evidence for a holographic model of memory and cognition. Picture Theory draws on this holographic complex of image, memory and thought, proposing to open the mind (PT, 170), metamorphose mental space (PT, 27, 43), and inscribe a new image or idea of woman in history.

The hologram satisfies the complex desire which is the final expression of L'Amèr:

je travaille à ce que se perde la convulsive  
habitude d'initier les filles au mâle comme une  
pratique courante de lobotomie. Je veux en effet  
voir s'organiser la forme des femmes dans la  
trajectoire de l'espèce./39/

The manifestation of a three-dimensional picture of a woman in Picture Theory celebrates women's self-organization in the trajectory of the species.

As a sculpture in light, replete with information and energy, the hologram resembles the modern city, home of the "[t]raversières, urbaines radicales, lesbiennes" (PT, 88) who are the heroes of Picture Theory. Brossard also celebrates Montréal, an island luminous in the dark and an urban centre of transformation./40/ The hologram is the perfect vehicle for these celebrations because its three-dimensional images are capable of storing almost infinite amounts of information in accessible form and because its production parallels

the processes of changing consciousness. Brossard thus participates in the long work of creating a new cultural symbolic oriented to the future. It may be that her most striking contribution to date is the development of a narrative based on the metaphor of the hologram.

In an interview in Montréal in the summer of 1988, she pointed out that it is now possible to have metaphors, based on advanced technology, which reveal previously invisible aspects of nature.

N.B.: Now we are getting to have metaphors with some things which are not visible, like waves, "des ondes, des vibrations," things like that. I think we might have some new metaphors because usually metaphors are being made through things that we can see . . . that's something I'd like to work on.

S.K.: You talked about that once before, that I read, about the shift from the red of the heart to the white of the brain . . . I didn't quite understand that because it seems that women very much have been going through the heart also.

N.B.: What I was saying is that we live in general in our society with metaphors which belong to the industrial, agricultural but industrial period. We don't live with the metaphors of our new technology, and I think that the new technology provides us with some information which somehow we will fantasize, and when we do that then we'll come up with new metaphors which will tell more about space and about time -- will tell about space and time in a different way. There are things we can do because of gravity and in non-gravity, now we are discovering things we can do without gravity and we will be able to do them. It's very challenging. Just the fact that we only know so few things about the brain -- we can imagine a certain potential, but it doesn't mean that would make us happier, it only means that we can dream, because the body is the body and the body is there./41/

Picture Theory fantasizes information from wave theory, quantum mechanics, cognitive psychology, memory theory and light optics, in order to rebuild fabula structure around the metaphor of the hologram. "Ainsi voit-on surgir d'inédites métaphores ayant partie liée avec le cerveau: l'hologramme, l'ordinateur."/42/ Brossard uses holographic theory to create a non-linear and interactive web of relationships within the text of Picture Theory, and between Picture Theory and other texts, as pieces of information (images) are repeatedly encoded in the spiralling movement of a fabula which guards at its heart a change of condition from darkness into light.

In order to create something new, it is necessary to avoid familiar paradigms. The difficulty of doing this is expressed in Picture Theory by the refusal to reconstruct, specified early in a passage already cited: "j'essaie de ne rien reconstituer. De mémoire, j'entame. Et cela ne peut être d'enfance. Seulement d'extase, de chute, de mots. Ou de corps autrement" (PT, 19). Avoiding nostalgia and pain, this text focuses on ecstasy, words, irresistible slides and breakthroughs. It focuses on the *Dérive*, in the sense of drift and of evolution. The refusal to reconstruct

is developed further in the first appearance of "la scène blanche":

reconstituer serait l'aveu de ce qui n'a pu être qu'en fiction transformée par le temps. Pourtant nous voilà, l'horizon, jamais je ne saurai narrer. Ici sur le tapis, enlacées. Visibles. C'est ainsi que j'ai cherché à comprendre l'effet de la scène. Et puis sans jamais par la suite devoir nuancer. Impérative grammaire incendiée.

(PT, 24)

Experience surpasses fiction and traditional grammar goes up in flames. Language is reshaped by new realities.

In a lecture delivered to the Third International Feminist Book Fair in Montréal, Brossard spoke on "Mémoire: hologramme du désir," elaborating the relation between memory and utopia:

[S]i l'on convient qu'une mémoire de femme est une mémoire inscrite dans un corps marqué, si l'on convient que cette mémoire est étroitement liée à une série d'intimidations et de contraintes répétées dans le temps patriarcal, il va sans dire que celle qui travaille à la légende des images et des scènes qui se bousculent en elle, tracera inmanquablement une cartographie explicative des blessures, des cicatrices qui parsèment son corps mais aussi une cartographie des élans de joie qui enthousiasment la pensée. Aussi pouvons-nous dire que chaque mémoire de femme à laquelle nous avons accès par le biais de sa légende nous informe, nous incite à faire en sorte que ce qui fut blessure ne se répète plus, que ce qui fut émerveillement se reproduise. Ce n'est que lorsque nous pouvons dire la légende de nos vies que nous devenons capables d'engendrer des scènes nouvelles, d'inventer de nouveaux personnages, de produire de nouvelles répliques, nous frayant ainsi un chemin dans le présent./43/

Brossard's decision not to trace "une cartographie explicative des blessures, des cicatrices qui parsèment son corps," diverges from a significant current within the women's movement which has adopted exactly the opposite strategy: witness the flood of feminist books on incest survival, family violence, alcoholism and healing. Brossard's strategy is rather to construct, on the basis of the most positive elements possible, "des élans de joie qui enthousiasment le pensée." The privileged ground for this activity is writing. "La fiction serait le fil d'arrivée de la pensée" (PT, 165). Fiction is a medium in which it is possible to "faire en sorte que ce qui fut blessure ne se répète plus, que ce qui fut émerveillement se reproduise." Fiction is the key to creating in the text a hologram of desire, and this is the project of Picture Theory.

The title of Brossard's lecture, "Mémoire: hologramme du désir," refers to the theory of holographic memory function. Examination of this theory and of the mathematical relationships which it encodes illuminates the extent to which the metaphor of the hologram governs the overall structure of Picture Theory. Karl Pribram opens Languages of the Brain with the story of the search for the engram, a hypothetical unit of memory storage. He argues that the function of

recognition demands the memory or storage of three-dimensional images in the brain, which must somehow be spatially recorded in order to be readily available. His research led him to conclude that information is not stored, file-cabinet like, in particular places in the brain. Instead, the cortex is capable, he argues, of three-dimensional image production and reproduction. Memory is stored throughout the brain; as Brossard puts it, "la mémoire est en vue comme un site: toutes les régions du cerveau" (PT, 129). The brain's representations to itself are produced by "a two-process mechanism of brain function,"/44/ in which the interference patterns of two or more wave front formations are read out, as it were, in a decoding process which produces a representation which operates as a filter or screen./45/ Thus consciousness, awareness and brain modification through experience (i.e. memory) are accounted for as functions of parallel processes organized spatially within the brain.

In short, nerve impulses arriving at junctions generate a slow potential microstructure. The design of this microstructure interacts with that already present by virtue of the spontaneous activity of the nervous system and its previous "experience." The interaction is enhanced by inhibitory processes and the whole procedure produces effects akin to the interference patterns resulting from the interaction of simultaneously occurring wave fronts. [i.e. holograms] The slow potential microstructures act thus as analogue cross-correlation devices to produce new figures [which correspond to] . . . changes in awareness./46/



The energy field or slow potential microstructure is generated by electrical energy in the neurons. This field is crossed by incoming information which can be described either as wave activity or by using a quantum mechanical approach. In either case, the interaction of wave-fronts produces consciousness, intention, emotion, motivation and desire. The process is mathematically equivalent to the construction of a hologram by means of recording the interference pattern generated by two interacting wave fronts.

Consciousness is thus a constant match, or mismatch, between prior experience and incoming data:

Experimental evidence shows that, at any moment, current sensory excitation is screened by some representative record of prior experience; this comparison, the match or mismatch between current excitation and representative record -- guides attention and action./47/

This model clarifies the crucial role of positive experience in the development of further positive experience. Applying this paradigm to women's break with patriarchy, Brossard traces the cultivation of utopian consciousness as a gradual process during which the screen or wave front encoding prior experience becomes sufficiently imbued with utopian elements to allow a

match between incoming data (ecstasy) and what is already in place. This process is represented by the eight-part movement of Picture Theory. The sequence "Screen Skin," "Screen Skin Too," "Screen Skin Utopia" and hologramme traces the formation of a holographic screen. The gradual construction of a screen, skin or page of ecstasy complements the book's opening gesture of refusal to reconstitute, concentrating instead on ecstasy, sudden breakthroughs, and words.

The hologram in Picture Theory is associated not only with utopian experience, but with the preservation and projection of utopian knowledge into the future. The hologram is an appropriate vehicle for this because it stores information in the most efficient way known, the way the brain stores memory. Holograms can be reproduced using any part of the filter or screen. Utopian information can be reclaimed by the reactivation of body/corps and text (cortex). The cortex seeking to understand the nature of the sentence (PT, 99) is an energy field or cortical "skin"/48/ seeking a match for the incoming wave of utopian information.

La scène blanche est un relais qui persiste comme écriture pendant que le corps dicte ses clichés, ferme les yeux sur les bouches qui s'ouvrent à répétition touchées par le destin dans leur propre mouvement. Face à ce qui s'offre: l'extravagance des surfaces, transparence de la scène holographiée.  
(PT, 27)

"La scène blanche" is a talismanic illumination which reappears because it is associated both with the virtual image, or hologram itself (PT, 203) and with the coherent light, or laser, required for the reanimation of the hologram (PT, 202).

As the "scène holographiée," "la scène blanche" is critical because it is there that the lesbian body, language, and energy fuse and "l'utopie intégrale" (PT, 166) begins to take form. What begins as a series of scenes is transformed by "La Perspective," "L'Emotion," and "La Pensée," to become the screen skin which matches and makes possible the utopian transformation:

Skin/link: oui la langue pouvait être reconstituée en trois dimensions à partir de sa partie dite de plaisir là où fusionnent le corps lesbien, la langue et l'énergie.

(PT, 188)

The refusal to reconstitute is finally displaced by what can be reconstituted: "la langue," site of pleasure, body, language and energy. The utopian potential of language unites with the ecstasy of the reclaimed, reimagined body, and manifests itself as the virtual image of a woman who has unimpeded access to subjectivity:

Toute la subjectivité du monde.

L'utopie luit dans mes yeux. La langue est fiévreuse comme un recours polysémique.

(PT, 170)

Thus the horizon of language reached by Finnegans Wake is reopened in the feminine.

Depuis Finnigans Wake, [sic] le 16 mai, le blanc de la scène. L'abstraction incite au futur comme à la réalité. Voir: infraction/réflexion ou hologramme. Chaque fois que l'espace me manque à l'horizon, la bouche s'entrouve, la langue trouve l'ouverture.

(PT, 26)

The abstraction "[qui] incite au futur comme à la réalité," recalls the abstraction through which a woman "lay[s] claim to universality."/49/ It correlates too with "les mémoires d'utopie" which M.V. encounters "à chaque usage de la parole" (PT, 89).

Man, whom Benveniste located in language, is upstaged in Picture Theory by the generic body of woman: "[l]'utopie serait une fiction à partir de laquelle naîtrait le corps générique de celle qui pense" (PT, 165).

Je ne saurais narrer ce qui se cache dans la langue mais y voir clair oui l'éclair ouvrant l'horizon sur une perspective pensante. La partie de plaisir inscrite dans la langue est celle qui étonne au moment même où le plaisir converge. Au tournant d'un mot, la splendeur d'une femme qui fait sens: image tremblée de tout corps. La réalité se condense

en abstraction, la peau travaille, relief acoustique, j'entends l'innommable à l'insu des mots que je prononce: je la vois venir. C'est sans limite la nature des phrases une information visuelle parcourant nos corps à la vitesse de la lumière. C'est l'étreinte; puis lorsque séparées, virtuelles à nouveau reconstituons l'originelle des racines aériennes. (*italics in original*)

(PT, 186)

The holographic union of language, thought, and the lesbian body completes the feminist project of rewriting "woman." The hologram is "parfaitement lisible" (PT, 207).

If the textual system of Picture Theory is complex, the fabula is equally astonishing. Modelled on the spiral, on the hologram, on the neural-networking of the brain, Brossard's fabula uses modern technology to create structuring metaphors outside of the traditional and deeply rooted hero/obstacle dichotomy. At the same time, through an intertextual complexity which governs the events of the fabula, she brings forward the cultural system she has inherited in order to rewrite it as a heroic narrative by, for, and about women. Like Daphne Marlatt, she writes, in "that tongue our bodies utter, woman tongue, speaking in and of and for each other."/50/

## B. STORY

### From Actant to Characters

The fabulas of Picture Theory and How Hug a Stone both feature a collective subject actant and both undermine conventional narrative grammar, but the books exemplify opposite strategies at the level of story. While How Hug a Stone is powerfully focalized, focalization in Picture Theory is diffuse, mixed, and often difficult to discern. The subject of the primary event, defined by its functional relationship to the object, or hologram, is manifested as a multiplicity of actors (Bal, 29). Some are well-developed characters; others, Sandra Artskin and Anna, for example, signal the extension of the actant into other signifying systems./51/ Picture Theory also features characters who are actors in minor fabulas which contrast with the primary fabula.

The most important characters who are subjects of the main fabula are the five women who vacation on the island. The effort of these characters to make sense for themselves as lesbians and as women defines a political "frame of reference" (Bal, 82) which is basic to the story. Dinner table discussions are occasions for creation of a discourse which binds them together

at the same time that it differentiates them: Oriana talks too much, Danièle Judith had a difficult childhood in Gaspésie, Claire Dérive is a feminist theoretician. Michèle Vallée, unlike the others, does not relive her childhood; distinguished by her passion for ideas and her love for Claire Dérive, she exemplifies the ideal of eliding memory, focussing instead on "d'extase, de chute, de mots" (PT, 19).

The sense given to words is foregrounded in the discourse of these women; Oriana, for example, "nuançait les mots déserteur, subversif, révolutionnaire, viril pour s'arrêter plus longuement aux genres conformiste et anarchiste" (PT, 90). One discussion turns on the theoretically critical word "matriarcat": "Danièle Judith disait que le matriarcat est un mot d'anthropologie et qu'il ne peut pas être utilisé d'une manière contemporaine pour exorciser le patriarcat. Ce mot ne pouvait non plus servir à élaborer quelque utopie qui aurait rendu les femmes à leur genre" (PT, 85). The focus on words opens into the spiralling structure of the primary event when their interaction generates light and energy: "les mots se succédant comme des phénomènes, des feux de paille" (PT, 93). The motif of discourse, "Du discours autour de la table quotidienne" (PT, 79), is central in "L'Emotion." It

is also a synecdoche of actual feminist discourse to which Brossard contributes, partially but not exclusively by means of Picture Theory.

The object of the fabula is the hologram which represents the utopian realization of meaning in the feminine. The characters' desire for the hologram as quest object is focalized through the character-narrator, and particularly through the scene of writing which opens the horizon of skin and paper to envision "l'utopie l'intégrale": (PT, 166)

Le temps devient processus dans l'ultra-violet. Je suis la pensée d'une femme qui m'englobe et que je pense intégrale. SKIN (UTOPIA) geste va venir. Gravite [sic] aérienne et grave le rivage des îles suspendues. Je serai alors tentée par la réalité comme une verbale vision qui alterne mes sens pendant qu'une autre femme maîtrise à l'oeuvre l'horizon.

(PT, 166)

"La femme intégrale" is a "picture theory" of the aspirations of the collective subject, and like that subject, she is both singular and plural:

L'intégrales est radicale. Mes sens origynent d'elle. Elle en partage l'intégrité. Le temps, l'espace lui appartiennent; elle est "symbola" pour toutes, un signe de reconnaissance. Figure, image, métaphore, elle fait toujours sens et corps avec le sens qu'elle donne aux mots. La lumière est cohérente./52/



Each of the five main characters prefigures "la femme intégrale." They are differentiated from one another but, with the exception of Claire Dérive, they are not well developed as characters.

The characters of Picture Theory share many characteristics. Claire and Florence are sisters who grew up in New York; Oriana is their mother's good friend; Danièle Judith, who is serious, Québécoise, and interested in books, is trying to deal with her traumatic memories of childhood; Claire cries over childhood memories, and is an anarchist; Michèle is serious, Québécoise, and a writer. All the characters are related by a network of shared characteristics:

1. siblings: John, Florence, and Claire Dérive
2. generations: the maternal grandmother who bequeathed the house to Claire, Sarah Dérive Stein, Claire, Florence, John
3. lovers: Michèle and Claire
4. married couple: John Dérive and Judith Pamela
5. name: Judith Pamela and Danièle Judith
6. Québécoise: Danièle Judith and Michèle Vallée
7. "New Yorkaise": Florence, Claire, Oriana and Sarah
8. lesbian: Florence, Claire, Oriana, Michèle, Danièle and Sarah and Cecilia (PT, 154)
9. writers: Florence, Michèle, John, Danièle and Sandra Artskin
10. protestant: Judith and Sandra Artskin

Such overlapping of character traits could be accounted for by Jurij Lotman's plot typology, in which a mythological actant is "unfolded" into typically doubled or twinned characters. "The most obvious result of the linear unfolding of cyclical texts is the appearance of character-doubles."/53/ "[N]ot only synchronic character-doubles, but also diachronic ones like 'father-son' represent the subdivision of a single or cyclic text-image."/54/ For example, How Hug a Stone features the character-doubles Edrys and I, who manifest, along the diachronic line of generation, the actant who is the subject of language. In Picture Theory, character-doubles manifest synchronically to undermine the plot position which, in Lotman's system, constitutes woman: the enclosed space transgressed by the hero. As "traversières" (PT, 88), Brossard's characters occupy the plot position which defines them as male, in a text which insists that they are female. The paradox moves the text beyond a feminist reading of gender and grammar, "burning" grammar to generate light and energy: "Impérative grammaire incendiée. Je pense à cette scène comme au bord de la mer, l'énergie est sans secret" (PT, 24).

Although they share in the network of characteristics, John Dérive and Judith Pamela do not have the

same functional relationship to the teleology of the fabula as do Michèle, Danièle, Claire, Florence and Oriana. Both characters have an ambivalent relationship to the primary event. John's actions are partially isomorphic with it, in that he traverses spatial fields and crosses boundaries: "John roule allègrement sur la 95 en direction du Maine" (PT, 28). However, John at no point interacts with another character; he is absent from the vital realm of discourse. He is imaged not as light in dark but as shadowed and bloody: "C'est sans expression que John roule vite le profil sanglant découpé comme un paysage au soleil levant" (PT, 28). The narrator remarks that as a (male) character, John has no idea of the novel he is in: "omme personnage, John n'avait aucune notion du roman" (PT, 20).

Pleine lune, Greenwich Village, John titube. La ville s'abolit dans son oeil. La vie vient avec le brouillard, la transe, la panique, la pluie, on oublie tout et puis on recommence: les enfants, le ministre, son roman. Sexual harassment. Who do you think you are? Il a suivi le garçon sur les quais de la rivière Hudson, là où entre hommes on confond les torsos. Ascenseur, garçon. Black out. New York.

(PT, 25)

Homosexual desire leads John to a black out, in spite of the full moon. Unacknowledged and repressed, it is

incompatible with his role as "un fils viril" (PT, 21). He has "longtemps travaillé et beaucoup pleuré devant son roman" (PT, 22); his writing is associated with frustration. John does not share the functional orientation to the hologram. He is the subject of a contrasting, embedded sub-fabula.

Judith Pamela is also outside of the primary fabula. The paradoxical statement, "Flaubert était sa femme préférée" (PT, 28), links her to Emma Bovary and implies that she is dependent on male definitions of women. She reads and stares at the sea. There is magic waiting for her if she can find it:

Quelque part en Judith Pamela, une mémoire travaille qui ne contient pas son enfance et qui pourtant la fait se tendre de tout son corps vers les eaux. La fiction aînée s'approche d'elle, lui applique sur la joue un papillon aussi fictif qu'un baiser décoloré par l'eau dans l'horizon incertain.

(PT, 34)

A woman who "aimait le voyage et les langues" (PT, 28), Judith resembles the other women of the story. Her name and her association with the Québec border (PT, 20) are semantic bridges to Danièle Judith, who might have helped Judith Pamela across "l'horizon incertain" (PT, 34). Because she fails to traverse that frontier, her story is not isomorphic with the primary event.

An actor in John Dérive's sub-fabula, she is symbolically at odds with the other women in the book.

Claire Dérive manifests the actantial function of the subject and its relationship to feminist consciousness. Although she is essential to the timelessness of "la scène blanche," she is the most historically motivated character in the book. The marriage of John Dérive and Judith Pamela is an episode in the characterization of Claire.

le mariage de John avec Judith, la réception à Stanstead sur une pelouse verte comme dans Blow up, le bruit des verres brandis pendant qu'il posait sa bouche sur ses lèvres de mariée et que Claire, en compagnie de deux hippies qui chargeaient et rechargeaient les caméras comme des déments, n'avait cessé de prendre des photos d'une manière arrogante et insistante.

(PT, 83)

This scene links John and Judith to "straight" society, and Claire to the 1960's counter-culture. Straight society was mocked in Michelangelo Antonioni's 1967 film version of "Blow up," in which a photographer, working in his lab, realizes he has witnessed a possibly imaginary assassination./55/ The analogy suggests the wedding in Picture Theory as the site of an imaginary assassination, perhaps that of a woman. Claire's feminist trajectory, the wedding scene

implies, had its origins in her rejection of the patriarchal family.

From the first references to her in "L'Ordinaire," Claire is linked to the possibility of political change.

Florence Dérive, née de sa mère et d'un ultra modern style new-yorkais passait souvent ses vacances au bord de la mer, dans la maison de sa soeur anarchiste et seule héritière de la grand-mère maternelle. Maison vue and revue en plongée par la plupart des hélicoptères de surveillance qui pendant la guerre du Vietnam faisaient la ronde au-dessus des maisons pouvant abriter des hommes pansés. Pouvoir changer l'Amérique.

(PT, 20)

Claire is the proprietress of the house on the island, an anarchist and heiress of the maternal line. The house, dive-bombed by surveillance helicopters, shelters Vietnam war deserters who fled across the line into Canada. The phrase "Pouvoir changer l'Amérique" recalls the exuberant expectations of those who took part in the radicalization of the 1960's.

Claire is next mentioned in relation to Judith Pamela who visits the house on the island.

Au bord de la mer, le temps c'est du sable. Judith Pamela songe à l'immense galerie qui donne sur l'horizon, là où elle pouvait faire coïncider le silence et ses pensées, à cette époque où John et elle passaient leurs vacances dans la maison de la

soeur anarchiste\* qu'elle n'a pas revue depuis cinq ans.

\*Celle qui vit partout en même temps. Qui "passait" souvent la frontière. Un déserteur à la fois (la plupart sont devenus végétariens et ont ouvert de petits commerces sur la rue Duluth ou dans les montagnes de la Colombie-Britannique. A Nelson, leurs femmes portent des jupes marxistes et des petits foulards tissés à la main. Elles ont toutes deux ou trois enfants très beaux qui se promènent nus pieds dans les restaurants "natural food").

(PT, 37)

Associated again with the counter-culture and the anti-war movement, Claire is described by epithets which prefigure the primary fabula event and associate her with the hologram: "qui passait souvent la frontière," and "celle qui vit partout en même temps."

Claire is also a human and vulnerable character who cries, quarrels and sets aside time to communicate with Michèle: "nous avons fait le pacte de nous consacrer une heure par jour à l'exercice de la réponse. C'était maintenant à moi d'aller sur son terrain trouver une résonnance à ses propos" (PT, 85). Michèle and Claire are model communicators, but they argue over Claire's attitude to her mother (PT, 138-140), and, significantly, over writing:

Claire Dérive disait instinctivement: "Il ne faut citer qu'en dernier recours, s'interdire certains

passages de manière à ne pas se répéter". Je disais sentant la colère monter en moi qu'aucun passage ne m'était interdit et qu'ainsi pensante je pouvais m'ouvrir à tous les sens.

(PT, 84)

In this curious quarrel, Michèle insists on her freedom relative to meaning. Later, she realizes she misunderstood Claire:

Aimer son projet, le répéter, le fondre en soi, le citer avait un jour dit Claire Dérive au bord de la mer. Je mourrais de honte de n'avoir entendu que le mot citation.

(PT, 168)

The relationship between Claire and the narrator is analagous to the relationship between the writer and her writing, as Claire, in Michèle's memory, describes it here.

Love binds Claire and Michèle to a project of transformation which is increasingly in view: "Il n'était plus possible alors de perdre de vue l'espoir en hologramme" (PT, 168). Like the hope which she embodies, Claire is more and more in focus:

Claire Dérive marcherait dans le froid absolu jusqu'à la rue Laurier. Décembre, la neige. M.V. regardait dehors les passantes toutes plus futures les unes que les autres et à l'image de Claire Dérive qui enfin, visible à l'Arrêt, relevait le col de son manteau parmi les phares des voitures. Dans



le hall d'entrée, il fallait enlever la tuque, le foulard, le manteau et les gants, très amoureusement. Ce visage.

(PT, 157)

Claire is never the focalizer of Picture Theory; the reader is not invited to identify with her so much as to consider her carefully. Her appearance is linked to motifs of futurity and transformation which combine to create the love scene in which the literal and symbolic unite, becoming "le point de non-retour de toute affirmation" (PT, 47).

At the end of "L'Ordinaire," Claire leaves a message on Michèle's answering machine. "[L]e répondeur: Je suis Claire Dérive. La voix était belle, presque sans accent. Dans les eaux de Curaçao la blancheur est éclatante et les yeux se ferment à demi pour jongler avec les couleurs de l'arc-en-ciel dans l'iris" (PT, 42). Her telephone call is associated with the light which builds throughout "L'Ordinaire" and announces the next stage of the questing journey into light: "La Perspective."

Claire's name symbolizes her role in the narrative, and relates her firmly to the function of light in the fabula. Her given name derives from Latin, clarus, "bright," "qui a l'éclat du jour," and synonyms include "éclatant," "lumineux," "brillant," "net," "apparent,"

"certain," "évident," "sûr."/56/ She stands metonymically for the light of vision, "clairvoyance" (PT, 79, 99), and the sudden illumination of an "éclair" (PT, 80). She is light in the patriarchal dark, "l'obscur clarté" (PT, 79), or, as Lorraine Weir puts it, "light filtered through darkness in reJoyced chiaroscuro."/57/ She is most importantly the coherent light required for the production of the hologram (PT, 198, 202, 205). Dérive, too, as Michèle remarks, "était un nom qu'il fallait savoir mériter en dehors des questions de famille" (PT, 95). "Dérive" is a polyvalent word which signifies both the slow but immeasurably powerful drift of continents and the deviation of an air or water craft from its route. It also applies to the evolution of words and thus, meaning. A "dérive" is paradoxically both a drifting off course and a device which impedes such drifting, the centre-board of a ship or the vertical stabilizer of a plane. In Picture Theory, "Claire Dérive" signifies light, vision, and the emerging meaning of words which guide women through the spiral and assure that they will not circle helplessly inside the patriarchal frontier.

Claire's name appears on almost every page of "La Perspective." She is present as lover, beloved, and light:

Claire Dérive est invisible quand elle inonde la scène de son regard et qu'elle bouge lentement devant moi, légèrement dans la blanche matinée. Claire Dérive est l'onde et l'espace la mémoire miroitante que j'entends comme un sens en liberté

(PT, 72)

Claire inundates the scene with the light of her gaze (PT, 60).

The relationship between Michèle and Claire opens into the act of reading Picture Theory. Parallel sets of referents shift to produce a reading which includes not only the narrator and Claire Dérive, but the implied author, the reader and the text: "Rivées l'une à l'autre comme mises en suspens par une écriture, nous existons dans la laborieuse création du désir dont on n'a pas idée. Ou de l'Idée, tout ce qui parvient à métamorphoser l'espace mental" (PT, 27). This metamorphosis is accomplished by provoking thought, figured as light running through the body: "La pensée est sans comparaison avec le corps ce qu'il est à la vitesse de la lumière à la lettre" (PT, 103) Claire represents the illumination of thought united with language and emotion: the "corps crépusculaires" (PT, 99) of women in the light of a new dawn.

### Temporal Relations

Temporal relations in Picture Theory are extremely complex, governed by a spiralling presentation of the spiralling fabula. The timelessness of "la scène blanche" further disrupts temporal linearity. Mieke Bal notes that a text in which temporal linearity is broken demands a more intense reading (Bal, 52). In Picture Theory the attention required by the complex temporal relations is part of the overall strategy to transform consciousness.

The duration of the fabula is eight months to a year, and the sequence of the eight sections of the book follows the fabula. "L'Ordinaire" is followed by "La Perspective" which takes place on May 16, 1980. "L'Emotion" relates the events of July, 1980. "La Pensée" takes place the following winter when Claire's mother dies in New York; eventually Claire returns to Michèle and Montréal. "Screen Skin," "Screen Skin Too," "Screen Skin Utopia," and hologramme comment on the events of the narrative. However, because of alternation between past and present verb tense, the story is inconsistently positioned in time relative to fabula events.

"L'Ordinaire" is a complex and repetitive cycle of events. "L'Ordinaire" defies chronology; therefore,

anachronies cannot be established. Events and locations rotate, appearing as if on a turntable./58/ Scenes are short, ranging from one to eleven lines. They include "la scène blanche," the trip to Curaçao, Florence lecturing on women and torture, Oriana singing Wagner's Die Walküre, a trip to Ogunquit taken by Judith Pamela and John Dérive, the narrator's trip to Paris (where she visits one or several museums, and registers at one or several hotels), and the telephone call from Claire Dérive. Silent scenes involving a man and a woman not otherwise characters in Picture Theory are numbered from a(1) to d(2). Because these represent a purely patriarchal context which contrasts sharply with the evolving, woman-centred world of Picture Theory, I refer to them as "le livre au masculin." They foreground the fact that "L'Ordinaire" presents reality in need of transformation.

L'ordinaire est un bas-relief circulaire rempli de motifs inavouables. L'ordinaire s'empare de la lanque à son profit O quatre étoiles confond les noms de rues la gynécologie le devoir. D'ordinaire l'homme tient la femme dans ses bras de cascadeur la soulève l'emporte, métro ascenseur parking, lui fait lire ce qu'il veut.

(PT, 185)

Story time in "L'Ordinaire" is cyclic and diffracted. Events are presented as follows:

## Story Time in "L'Ordinaire"

## Page

19. Curaçao, the Hilton bar  
the scene of writing  
Montréal, Hôtel de l'Institut (Florence)  
New York (Florence)
20. the scene of writing  
childhood (Florence)  
childhood (Florence)  
childhood (John)
21. Oriana and Florence  
Oriana and John  
New York, Broadway (Florence)  
the scene of writing  
the scene of writing
22. the scene of writing  
Montréal?  
Paris, le Madison  
Paris, le Madison
23. Wood's Hole (the Dérive family)  
New York - Montréal (Florence)  
Montréal, Hôtel de l'Institut (Sandra Artskin)
24. "la scène blanche"
25. "le livre au masculin," rue du Dragon, Paris  
"le livre au masculin," the elevator  
New York (John)  
Montréal (Florence)  
Michèle and Danièle ?
26. New York, Florence  
Paris  
the scene of writing
27. "la scène blanche"
28. childhood (Florence)  
John, going to Maine  
Wood's Hole  
John
29. "le livre au masculin"  
New York  
the scene of writing  
airplane  
Paris  
Paris, hotel
30. Paris, museum of Holography  
Paris, hotel  
New York (Florence)  
Paris, museum of Holography
31. "la scène blanche"

32. New York (Oriana)  
"le livre au masculin," the elevator  
the scene of writing
33. Wood's Hole, a scene from "l'Emotion"  
Paris  
Montréal (Danièle)
34. Wood's Hole (Judith Pamela)  
New York  
"le livre au masculin," the metro  
"le livre au masculin," the metro
35. New York (Oriana, Sarah)  
Paris, hotel
36. "la scène blanche"
37. Wood's Hole (John and Judith)  
Wood's Hole (John and Judith)  
Curaçao
38. Opera (Oriana)
39. Wood's Hole (scene from "L'Emotion")  
Montréal, Hôtel de l'Institut (Sandra Artskin)  
Montréal, Hôtel de l'Institut (Florence)  
Paris, le Madison
40. Paris, le Madison  
Opera (Oriana)  
Paris, hotel?  
Curaçao
41. Opera (Oriana)  
Paris, museum  
Paris, hotel  
"le livre au masculin"  
"le livre au masculin"  
Airport, Montréal (Danièle and Michèle)
42. Montréal, the apartment on rue Laurier  
Montréal-Curaçao
43. Montréal, Hôtel de l'Institut

In "L'Ordinaire," synchrony triumphs over diachrony.

"La scène blanche" takes place on May 16, but is dif-  
fracted throughout the story, always signifying

"l'intégrale" of which the text theorizes a picture.

In that the scene is timeless, fabula time is

infinitely less than story time. "La scène blanche" is

one of several events which are reported many times,

illustrating the story function of "frequency." Bal argues that "the more banal the event, the less striking the repetition" (Bal, 78), but this is not the case in Picture Theory. Banal events are over-determined by frequent internal retroversion. Significant manifestations of the boundary crossing which is an element of the primary event include: entering l'Hôtel de l'Institut, various other hotels, "le hall d'entrée," and the forest, and traversing the ocean, the border, the horizon, and the book. The often repeated phrase, "d'instinct et de mémoire, j'essaie de ne rien reconstituer" (PT, 19), signifies on the level of the scene of writing the creation of a memory screen which will interact with incoming information to produce the hologram. In Picture Theory, repetition characterizes the three narrative levels of fabula, story and text. Story and fabula repetition combine to create a temporal complexity which could take this dissertation beyond its immediate scope. It would be interesting to see a computerized study of these intricacies.

### Focalization

Focalization in How Hug a Stone is so intense that it subverts the first person narrative through the narrator's awareness of the collective nature of language.



In Picture Theory, focalization is so diffuse that the text could be said to figure in writing the multiple focus which characterizes lensless photography or holography. Focalization rests sometimes with the narrator, sometimes between the narrator and a character, and sometimes is external. This variation corresponds to the fact that Michèle Vallée is inconsistently the narrator.

In "L'Ordinaire," focalization shifts as the scenes of the story rotate. Events are partially focalized through the character who experiences them. Florence's trip to Montréal is an example of character-focalization with external narration (EN/CF):

Maintenant, Florence Dérive récapitule son texte dans un bar situé à l'angle de la septième avenue et de la quarante deuxième rue. Elle se livre momentanément à la nécessité d'être ce que l'on nomme, parmi les encres, un personnage. Sa conférence est prête. Demain, Montréal.

(PT, 19)

Florence interprets her own behavior; the scene is focalized through her. The use of the deictic term "demain" locates her as the subject of discourse as well as the focalizing subject.

Other passages imply an external narrator-focalizer (EN/EF) who travels freely through space and time.

c(2) Le métro était mal éclairé. De dos, l'homme cachait la femme dont on voyait la main recroquevillée dans la sienne.

(PT, 34)

From whose point of view is the woman hidden? Who is the "on" referred to in the last sentence? This fragment of "le livre au masculin" is focalized through an unknown, external narrator.

In some cases focalization is ambiguous. In the following scene, either the narrator or the character sees the reflection in the metal.

b(2) L'homme regardait droit devant lui son destin sur la porte de l'ascenseur qui montait. Le métal reflétait flou ses vêtements sans visage et la valise à ses pieds.

(PT, 32)

Ambiguity occurs whenever Michèle moves in or out of the narrator's role:

Les cités de verre s'étaient éteintes. Dernier jour dans l'île, j'étais déjà "dans les eaux de Curaçao" en ville, prise par cette tension qui m'incite au présent. Michèle Vallée, livre trois, rue Laurier (MOTHER SICK - STAYING IN NEW YORK - WILL WRITE - LOVE - CLAIRE). Premier tango, Anna Livia Plurabelle, l'homme assis dans le couloir, la vie en prose, la culture m'allait-elle comme un gant mettre du tissu, de l'écran dans l'existence ou m'allait-elle préserver dans le contexte?

(PT, 105)

Here, focalization takes place essentially through Michèle, who is writing her book. At a given moment, however, she sees herself as a character, "Michèle Vallée, livre trois, rue Laurier."

The narrative of the love affair with Claire, the vacation trip to the island, the narrator's trip to Paris, the writing of a book and the desire for the hologram are all focalized more or less clearly through Michèle. Certain scenes, however, shift focalization suddenly; this is another technique which works to alert the reader.

Les mots volaient dans toutes les directions. En vue d'un sens, sillonnant l'espace, une question restait en suspens: l'origine sur laquelle M.V. restait penchée des heures entières. Du sens était en vue, amplifiait la réalité comme une comète sonore (allant vers la source, une femme casquée). L'éclat du musée. Mille fragments retombent sur mes épaules. De la matière partout, pièces d'identité: notes, lipstick, miroir, condom, clés, argent, mille fragments s'assemblent sous vos yeux dans le musée, dans le livre, il faut les voir venir.

(PT, 112)

The words "mes épaules," identify a first person in a passage which also refers to M.V. in the third person and in which the second person is also used: "milles fragments s'assemblent sous vos yeux dans le musée."

Is Michèle, who does go to the museum, present simultaneously in first, second and third person? Alternatively, the addressee could be Claire, or the reader of the book. Focalization and the narrative context are both ambiguous in this passage.

The story is focalized through M.V., other characters, and an external focalizer, and sometimes exhibits mixed or ambiguous focalization. "If one regards the fabula primarily as the product of the imagination, the story could be regarded as the result of ordering" (Bal, 40). Story is the arrangement of fabula events in an exciting, suspenseful, or emotionally gripping way. In Picture Theory, intrigue is displaced by the strategy of the hologram, and classical story aspects such as character development and dramatic arrangement of events are revolutionized by the refusal to reconstitute the already known.

### C. Text

#### The Narrative Contract

At the textual level as well as at the level of story, Picture Theory destabilizes relations between

the text and its reader, interpellating a subject who will "metamorphose mental space" (PT, 27, 43). Shifting narratory function, alternation in verb tense and the occasional use of English are textual strategies to "open the mind" (PT, 170).

A narrative text presupposes a narrative agent, which narratology defines as a linguistic constant. "The linguistic subject [is] a function and not a person, which expresses itself in the language that constitutes the text" (Bal, 119). Picture Theory foregrounds the narrator as a variable fiction of the narratory function. Narration is sometimes impersonal; sometimes a narrating character is indicated by the use of first-person pronouns and other deictic terms, and sometimes the narrator is specified as Michèle Vallée or M.V.; thus the text explores possible relations between the narratory function and fictional subjects who tell stories about themselves and other people (objects).

The fiction of narration changes from section to section and passage to passage. The following passage combines an external narrator (EN) who is not named and is not a character, with a character-focalizer (CF), Florence Dérive:

EN [CF (Florence) -- young woman with briefcase]  
(I narrate: [I invent: Florence focalizes:])

Lorsque Florence Dérive sortit ce matin-là de l'Hôtel de l'Institut, elle remarqua une jeune femme qui tout comme elle, tenait sous son bras un cartable, sans doute acheté chez Bloomingdale's, pensait-elle d'abord, puis elle se concentra sur une idée très précise dont elle voulait discuter avec Danièle Judith avant la conférence.

(PT, 39)

An external narrator "sees" Florence leaving the hotel, and "knows" the thoughts that pass through her mind. This passage exemplifies the traditional literary style of narration in the third-person "passé simple," in which the narrator is relatively omnipotent and the reader is relatively passive.

Other passages combine narratory and focalizing functions, while bringing the reader closer to the text through employment of the first-person present indicative:

CN (Michèle) [CF (Michèle) -- Michèle in the Paris hotel]

L'hôtel sent la verveine. Cela peut être le fruit de mon imagination mais il sent bon comme à Curaçao, Anna sentait la fiction, sur son dos, j'anticipe.

(PT, 29)

In this passage, both focalization and narration are through the character-narrator, Michèle. The reader is invited into her sensations as she draws on her experience to nourish the fiction she is creating. At this point, however, the narrator is anonymous; she is not named until one of the discussions on the island: "Stop it, Michèle, watch it, disait Florence" (PT, 95).

Michèle is consistently the character-narrator-focalizer of "La Perspective" and "L'Emotion."

From "La Pensée" to the end of the text, the narratory function shifts between Michèle (CN) and an anonymous external narrator (EN). In the following passage, the narrative agent changes while focalization rests with Michèle, creating an impression that Michèle is both inside and outside of the scene: double perspective which is a critical Brossardian strategy to create a new perspective on reality.

Son chandail traîne à côté du lit. M.V. lui parle doucement, raconte les insomnies du samedi soir, c'est-à-dire, celles qui précédaient toujours le néfaste dimanche, jour d'expiation dans les crinolines. Puis, Claire Dérive appuyait de tout son corps sur le mien. Ses mains sont une source de chaleur sur ma nuque. L'oreiller vient de tomber sur le tapis. Un détail. Je m'en souviens comme d'un jour de semaine. Quotidiennes et amoureuses. Sans personnage.

(PT, 142)

When physical contact is established between Michèle and Claire, the fiction of third-person narration dissolves into first-person narration, "sans personnage." The flexible relationship between the characters and the narratory function foregrounds the power of fiction to metamorphose subject positions.

Double perspective, with all that it implies for the interpellated subject, is also created through parallel verb tense. The conjugation of verbs is a major category of deixis in Emile Benveniste's analysis of the creation of subjectivity in language./59/

Picture Theory uses every tense in the French language, thus invoking every conceivable relationship a subject may have to time. These temporal gymnastics particularly implicate the narrative agent as a subject in language. The reader, too, participates in a flexible perspective on time.

Brossard uses perspective as a metaphor for writing. In "L'Ordinaire," fragments of narrative sentences circulate in the night; the communion of "La Perspective" puts them into a perspective that transforms the "flat" ordinary into three-dimensional reality, thus reversing the transformation of traditional perspective which is a "method of graphically depicting three-dimensional objects and spatial rela-



tionships on a two-dimensional plane or on a plane that is shallower than the original (for example, in flat relief)."/60/ The printed page, as a shallow relief of paper and ink, functions as a relay-transistor or screen for this two-way interaction.

Perspective creates a relationship between a work of art and an observer. Renaissance architect Filippo Brunelleschi rediscovered the mathematical principles of one-point or central perspective which were known to the architects of classical Greece, but lost during the Middle Ages. Leon Batista Alberti theorized and applied Brunelleschi's discovery of the vanishing point in his thesis Della pittura (1436; On Painting, 1956). According to his "picture theory," all parts of a painting were to be constructed so as to have a rational relationship to each other and to the observer. "The observer's height and distance he is to stand from the painting are controlled by the artist in laying out his perspective construction. By means of this system the microcosm of the painting and the macrocosm of the observer become one, and the observer participates in the observed." Traditional depth perspective thus places the viewer in a fixed and ideal position, whereas the perspective of Picture Theory demands a viewer in motion.

In "La Perspective," Brossard develops textual perspectives which situate the reader in a triangular relation organized by splitting "la scène blanche" into the two parallel scenes of the carpet and the book (PT, 27). Two perspectives on time are elaborated through alternate use of the present tense with the imperfect or the "passé composé."

comme il arrive que l'ombre d'un doute  
j'entre simultanément dans le hall d'entrée  
(un je se perd ici au travail  
instantanément en entrant dans la maison  
ce travail m'épuise rapidement)  
ma présence se confond à l'odeur du bois

le livre, je l'ai tout de suite remarqué  
sur la table, à l'envers et ouvert  
recto-verso le seul objet virtuel  
difficile à soutenir Claire Dérive sa joue  
qu'elle me tendait mise en abyme  
puis recomposé son regard m'arrivait  
à la poitrine à cette hauteur où  
l'impression c'est recueillie emprise  
(PT, 49)

The motifs of the "hall d'entrée" and the room filled with light, familiar from "la scène blanche," guide the reader through the transformations of "La Perspective." Like the viewer of a Renaissance painting, the reader participates in the observed. Brossard declines, however, to control the reader's "height and distance . . . from the painting." One-point perspective is made obsolete by the three-dimensionality of the

hologram, which permits a multiplicity of points of view. The split scene of "La Perspective" may also represent the split beam of light used to create a hologram; the passages in the present tense correspond to the reference beam, and the passages in the past tense have been reflected off the love scene and carry that information forward to the future. The perspective that eventually develops, therefore, is perspective on a hologram rather than on a two-dimensional picture. The change is significant. Brossard's triangulation creates a place for the reader in the textual perspective, but it is no longer necessary for this place or space to be fixed, because a hologram, like a "real" object, can be regarded from any situation and will retain its vital characteristics.

"La Perspective," however, is not yet hologramme, and the love scene has not dispensed with one-point perspective. Claire's cheek, offered to her lover, is the "mise en abyme" (PT, 49) or vanishing point. As the intensity of the love scene increases, the perspective appears more and more to be based on a vanishing point of light: at the end, everything is light (PT, 72). The rose of light which Dante saw in paradise appears here in aerial perspective: "/posture aérienne / l'apparence d'une rose double dans la clarté" (PT,

53). Claire enters first "le hall d'entrée," and then the forest. Read intertextually, the images of the section turn to Dante, Wittig, and the Joycean event of the book.

As the scene of the book is interfaced with the love scene, reading "la scene holographiée" (PT, 27) is more and more a question of reading Picture Theory. The writing, "traversé" or "crossed" by feminist consciousness, permits "another reading of reality and self,"/61/ and the reader reenacts the double process necessary for three-dimensionality: "l'hypothèse tramée" (PT, 60). The interference pattern produces a hologram which will be found not in a holography museum, but in the cortex of the book's reader.

In "Screen Skin Utopia," these strategies of multiple subjectivity are linked to the polysemic potential of language:

L'utopie luit dans mes yeux. La langue est fiévreuse comme un recours polysémique. Le point de non-retour de toute affirmation amoureuse est atteint. Je suis là où commence "l'apparence magique", la cohérence des mondes, trouée par d'invisibles spirales qui l'activent. Je glisse hors-lieu-dit emportée par la pensée d'une femme convergente. Tranche anatomique de l'imaginaire: être coupée des villes linéaires pour entreprendre mon rêve dans la durée, casquée, virtuelle comme celle qui rassemble un jour ses connaissances pour un livre.

M.V. s'était redressée, avait lentement tourné la tête le regard pris entre le rebord de la fenêtre et l'horizon. Le poème hurlait opening the mind  
(PT, 170)

The first paragraph is written in the first person, present tense. It illuminates the scene of writing from the point of view of the writer who senses the utopian potential of meaning: "la cohérence des mondes," "là où commence 'l'apparence magique'" (PT, 170). Meaning spiralling through the polyvalency of words as "le cortex spirale" (PT, 169) illuminates the convergent image of the woman who, writing, makes sense. The second paragraph, written in the pluperfect tense and the third person, looks at the scene from a position in the future. The focus is on the activity of the poem which opens the mind.

A third strategy which complements the effect of shifting narratory function and verbal tenses is the movement between English and French. This is as characteristic of Brossard's novels as it is of speech in Canadian francophone communities. As a textual strategy, it not only demands linguistic competence in the two languages, but economically evokes the linguistic politics of Québec. It is realistically motivated and is a function of characterization; Claire, for example, is an anglophone and speaks

occasionally in her mother tongue. But there is more to it. "[L]iterary bilingual consciousness"/62/ is creative because, as Bakhtin argues, "Two myths perish simultaneously: the myth of a language that presumes to be the only language, and the myth of a language that presumes to be completely unified."/63/ Thus in Picture Theory, the confusion of tongues is related to the creation of new discourse and "synthèse de la double origine" which engages Michèle as a writer:

Claire revenait avec le vin, hors d'elle, parlait bitch, dyke, sentait l'américaine à plein nez, ultra modern style new-yorkais. Stop it, Michèle, watch it, disait Florence très énervée pendant que je savais vouloir réaliser la fameuse synthèse de l'eau et de feu qui brûle la langue. I know, ça me trahit cette synthèse de la double origine, I knew, I know. Des bribes de phrases. On entendait le bruit des vagues.

(PT, 95)

"I knew, I know" enacts the strategies of parallel verb tenses and the use of English, while naming the new perspective. "Cette synthèse de la double origine" is opposed to the single logos of phallogocentric vision. "Des bribes de phrases" refers to the fragments of language circulating in the night, "Depuis Finnigans Wake [sic]" (PT, 19), "à la réception" (PT, 19). In the more evolved context of "la nuit parfaite," the phrase foregrounds the act of discourse which renders "woman"

meaningful. The chaos of circulating language elements is underlined by Oriana's speech:

Oriana parle et les langues se confondent dans l'excitation; du français à l'anglais; elle glisse des phrases totales en italien, une citation en allemand. Elle était tout genre à la fois d'une langue à l'autre.

(PT, 95).

Oriana, who of the five women is the character most marked by patriarchy, is helped in her progress towards a generically feminine mind by her polyglot origins.

#### Narrative Embedding

The shifting narrative agent in Picture Theory makes it difficult to enumerate levels of narration; numerous embedded narratives are intricately woven into the body of the text. A particularly rich rapport links the embedded conversations of the women on the island with the primary event of the fabula. As I pointed out in relation to embedding in How Hug a Stone, Mieke Bal identifies several possible relationships between a primary fabula and embedded texts (Bal, 144-149). An embedded fabula may resemble or mirror a primary fabula, or it may explain it. In the case of Arabian Nights, the narrative act which produces the embedded text is the most important event in the pri-

mary fabula. In certain cases, an embedded fabula may influence or even determine the outcome of a primary fabula, for example, if a character tells a story which changes the outcome of the plot (a girl explains why she cannot marry her lover. He is so moved by her tale that all is forgiven and they marry after all). Picture Theory provides another instance of response between levels of narration, in that the embedded conversations produce energy which is an essential element of the primary fabula event.

The conversations are presented through indirect discourse, a technique which blurs embedding and creates what Mieke Bal calls text interference, defined as interference between the embedded actor's text and the primary narrator's text (Bal, 139-143). The narrator identifies each speaker and summarizes her statement, thus exemplifying the controlling potential of a narrator to create irony, ambivalence or ambiguity. This is a distinctly different strategy from that used by Daphne Marlatt in How Hug a Stone, but the effect is similar. In Picture Theory, the weaving together of points of view, inevitable in text interference, is also a strategy to create the multiple perspective necessary for "la pratique collective de l'écart sémantique."/64/ The round table discussions are the



model and the occasion for the creation of discourse in the feminine.

The usual topic of women's trajectory out of patriarchy mirrors the concerns of the book as a whole, and ensures that the embedded text is essentially argumentative rather than narrative (Bal, 128).

Nous étions assises autour de la table. Danièle Judith disait que le matriarcat est un mot d'anthropologie et qu'il ne peut pas être utilisé d'une manière contemporaine pour exorciser le patriarcat. Ce mot ne pouvait non plus servir à élaborer quelque utopie qui aurait rendu les femmes à leur genre. Je disais, avec dans la bouche un goût de sel, à propos de l'utopie en commençant par le mot femme que l'utopie n'allait pas assurer notre insertion dans la réalité mais qu'un témoignage utopique de notre part pouvait stimuler en nous une qualité d'émotion propice à notre insertion dans l'histoire. Avant que Claire Dérive parle d'abstraction, j'ajoutais que nous devons socialiser nos énergies de manière à n'en être point victimes ou encore pour éviter que nos ventres seuls soient méritoires comme une virilité mentale pouvant servir par la suite à meurtrir les corps pensant.  
(PT, 85-86)

The characters reach for words and meanings which are adequate to a utopian experience outside the framework of patriarchal reality and therefore without language. The process implicates a speaking community which means and understands from a feminist or double perspective.

Michèle argues that women's energies must be resocialized, and that cannot be in isolation but must

involve the company of others who are doing the same. The passage is self-referential, referring to and metonymically representing a discourse which interpellates such subjectivities-in-process. In order to effect the transformation of individual utopian experience into a new symbolic and historical definition of gender, women must establish a new libidinal economy. The ideal point of departure for this enterprise is exactly where these characters are, around the table sharing language and energy. The repetition of the phrase "nous étions assises autour de la table" (PT, 80, 85, 89, 90, 93), with its feminine "assises," underlines the round table discussions as a motif in the novel.

Claire Dérive identifies the fact of their vacation as a sign.

Nous étions assises autour de la table et Claire Dérive disait que de nous voir ensemble et ici retrouvées au bord de la mer, c'est un signe. Bien qu'elle affirmait que le mot abstraction se glisse quelque part dans sa pensée, elle admettait pour le moment qu'il lui était difficile d'établir un lien direct entre le fait d'être cinq femmes dans une île et la notion même de ce que peut être une abstraction. Oriana se mit alors à parler du temps tout en cherchant ses mots en français pour dire comment elle l'imaginait. Elle dit ne pas comprendre pourquoi, chaque fois que des femmes sont réunies, dans les films par exemple, le temps semble s'arrêter autour d'elles après les avoir figées ou changées en statues de sel chargées de symboles. Oriana, après que Danièle Judith l'eût interrompue pour dire

matriarcat, continuait sa description du temps et choisit de dire qu'il n'y avait aucun intérêt à l'imaginer éternel: "au contraire ce serait là notre perte que d'oublier les heures". Je voulais dire que l'extase est une réalité en soi qui rend le temps éternel. Claire Dérive affirmait qu'il ne fallait pas confondre la nuit des temps, le temps patriarcal et l'extase car de cette confusion naissaient des femmes suspendues et immobiles dans l'espace.

(PT, 80-81)

The women seated together in the house by the sea are a sign of social change, signifying that the break from patriarchal meaning has been effected, and the second stage, the creation of the "vacance" to be filled with women's energies, is in progress. Claire's intuition of an abstraction refers to "l'abstraction vitale" (PT, 72) of May 16, which in turn opens into the abstraction through which women, as subjects of language, "lay claim to universality."/65/ They discuss the role of ecstasy in improving the status of women, an issue which is dealt with in the primary text because it is central to the construction of the hologram. Oriana's search for words to express what she imagines corresponds to the gradual creation of a screen skin sufficiently imbued with utopian elements that it will interact with experience of ecstasy and produce the hologram. Her speech is slowed by her ties to the patriarchal world, even as she speaks in the new tongue.

In speaking of the deathly effect of the patriarchal gaze on the bodies of women, Oriana refers to the myths of Lot's wife and Eurydice, each woman paralyzed by her husband's gaze. I have already shown that these myths, rewritten by Monique Wittig in Le corps lesbien, and woven into the intertextual web by Brossard in Picture Theory, are central to the lesbian rewriting of patriarchal mythology. The lesbian is able to lead her lover out of hell -- unlike the male lover who betrays her and incorporates her death into a religious symbolology. Oriana remembers and represents the ancient betrayal; she is less able to represent the utopian possibility that the fact of five women around the table on the island suggests. Danièle interrupts her with the talisman of matriarchy, a charm against the damage to the body and the imagination which is summoned up by Oriana's speech.

Both Michèle and Claire make programmatic interventions. Ecstasy is part of the utopian program; its timelessness has nothing in common with the timelessness of women's non-being in patriarchal systems, and patriarchal darkness has nothing in common with night. It is by imagining that they are the same and thus identifying pleasure with a masochistic annihilation by the father, that women are destroyed: "de cette confu-

sion naissaient des femmes suspendues et immobiles dans l'espace" (PT, 81). Women are paralyzed in "le temps patriarcal," betrayed, as Mary Daly also pointed out,/66/ by their mothers who initiate them into patriarchal law:

Le temps patriarcal ne s'est-il pas arrêté autour d'elles pour les confondre morbidement à la folie, à la mort et à la soumission. La mère est partout quand le temps s'arrête, la mère est pleine de secrets qui angoissent les filles laissées à elles-mêmes dans les ruines patriarcales: autos, pneus, ascenseurs, métros, verres brisés. L'âme en ruine, l'esprit de l'homme ne peut plus se concevoir autrement qu'en projetant la perte de sa déité dans les corps abstraits de quelques femmes isolément réunies, l'âme en ruines. Il y a là un manque à imaginer qui bien que n'étant pas nôtre, nous accable dans l'exercice même de nos fonctions mentales.

(PT, 81-82)

Claire here specifies the formation of female identity in the family and the destructive long-term effects that it has. She clarifies feminist theory which illuminates reality. The narrator testifies to the significance of her speech:

La voix de Claire Dérive s'élevait avec passion dans la grande salle de bois. Des yeux, on aurait dit qu'elle circule concrètement départageant de tout son corps les formes du sacré et du profane. Pour la première fois, comme ce matin devant la mer, je n'ai pas peur d'entendre les mots d'une autre femme, l'esprit de corps conquérant l'horizon. Toute la

maison, fenêtres ouvertes s'ensoleillait. Il est midi.

(PT, 82)

In addition to the discourses around the table, other embeddings contain argumentative elements and contribute to the richness of the text. A fragment of Richard Wagner's Die Walküre serves as a footnote to Oriana's opera career and presents a cornerstone of patriarchal myth: the disobedient daughter is isolated and denied community by the father:

Wotan

Did you not hear what I ordained?  
 J'ai exclu de votre troupe la soeur infidèle;  
 à cheval avec vous elle ne traversera plus les airs;  
 la fleur virginale se fanera,  
 un époux gagnera ses faveurs de femme;  
 désormais elle obéira à son seigneur et maître,  
 et, assise devant son foyer filant la quenouille,  
 elle sera la cible et l'objet de toutes les  
 moqueries.  
 Si son sort vous effraie, alors fuyez celle qui est  
 perdue!  
 Ecartez-vous d'elle et restez loin d'elle.  
 Celle d'entre vous qui oserait demeurer auprès  
 d'elle  
 celle qui me braverait, prendrait le parti de la  
 misérable,  
 cette insensée partagerait son sort: cette téméraire  
 doit le savoir!/67/

(PT, 38)

The embedded fragment contrasts with Brossard's story of a creative community of women. It is a mirror text

which serves as a sign of the primary fabula. "[T]he primary fabula and the embedded fabula can be paraphrased in such a manner that both paraphrases have one or more elements in common" (Bal, 146). The outcast "téméraire" is a rebellious woman and a common element with the main fabula of Picture Theory. Her punishment underlines the positive rewards enjoyed by the women in Picture Theory, and introduces the motif of marriage as symbolic death.

Concealed in Picture Theory is a new book, hologramme, which can be read as an embedded mirror text signifying the utopian possibilities concealed in daily life; the events of the first part of Picture Theory are repeated on the level of the hologram which realizes the potential of "l'Ordinaire." hologramme transcends the fiction of the novel at the same time that it takes up the elements of that fiction and uses them to create a language which affirms and moves forward the utopian experience which the fiction enfolds. The reenactment of a text within a text is a technique which Brossard has explored in french kiss,/68/ Le désert mauve and Aviva. As signs of the primary texts, the transformed/mirror texts are not interpreted by fictional characters, but by the reader who is the recipient of what Bal calls their "significance enhancing function" (Bal, 147).

### Intertextuality

I opened this analysis of Picture Theory with the argument that the events themselves must be read intertextually. It is appropriate therefore to close it with further exploration of the intertextuality of the novel. Lorraine Weir has brought to light the Joyce/Brossard intertext, showing the complex play which links Brossard's "nuit parfaite" with Bloom's wanderings through the Dublin night in Joyce's Ulysses. She points out that "La Pensée" presents:

a series of virtuoso inventions of Joycean themes and elaborations on the major topoi of the novel. Joyce's 'Mother dying come home father' (James Joyce, Ulysses [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968], 47) becomes 'MOTHER SICK - STAYING IN NEW YORK - WILL WRITE - LOVE - CLAIRE' (105), and the last sentence of Joyce's "The Dead" ("His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead" (James Joyce, Dubliners [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956], 220) is condensed into 'Dehors il neige sur toute l'étendue de la langue' (117). The image of the spiral, used throughout the novel to denote both the entry into the vagina and the passage of light in the hologram, here mutates into the chambered nautilus and its Joycean epigram, 'un sexe de femme c'est mathématique' (118), otherwise rendered in Ulysses as 'Musemathematics' (Ulysses, 227) and in Finnegans Wake, 'eternal geomater.' (James Joyces, Finnegans Wake [New York: Viking, 1959], 296-297)./69/



Weir also illuminates Brossard's transference of the texts of Ludwig Wittgenstein./70/ Other important intertextual relationships remain to be explored, including those with Gertrude Stein's Tender Buttons, Michèle Causse's Lesbiana, and other texts cited by Brossard in the "Notes" to Picture Theory (PT, 211). My own analysis focusses on intertextual links between Picture Theory and Djuna Barnes' Nightwood, Dante Alighieri's La divina commedia, and the oeuvre of Monique Wittig.

Picture Theory is a masterpiece of intertextual weaving. The elements of textual systems always have a context and an earlier life, and subject positions within any enunciation correspond to the galaxy of positions made available for subjects in other texts. What is remarkable in Picture Theory is the quality and the depth of the intertextual net, which captures the magnitude and beauty of western culture while criticizing it and giving precedence to lesbian literary tradition. Picture Theory also foregrounds the intertextual process, thus acknowledging a world which builds on the work of others and is fundamentally and historically collective. This is particularly clear in relation to the work of Djuna Barnes.

Writing in a lesbian tradition perpetually threatened by invisibility, Brossard specifies in the

"Notes" to Picture Theory, that "Toutes les citations du Livre Un sont empruntées à Nightwood de Djuna Barnes" (PT, 211). In Barnes' 1936 novel, the characters inscribe a downward and darkening spiral which ends in degradation and despair. Brossard replaces the self-hatred which defeats Barnes' characters with the love and friendship of Picture Theory. In "La Perspective," Brossard's text recontextualizes a series of passages from Nightwood. The first is that of "le plus étrange salon d'Amérique" (PT, 52). In Nightwood, this salon is the American house of the heiress and lesbian lover, Nora Flood.

The strangest "salon" in America was Nora's. Her house was couched in the centre of a mass of tangled grass and weeds. . . . It was the "paupers" salon for poets, radicals, beggars, artists, and people in love; for Catholics, Protestants, Brahmins, dabblers in black magic and medicine; all these could be seen sitting about her oak table before the huge fire, Nora listening, her hand on her hound, the firelight throwing her shadow and his high against the wall. Of all that ranting, roaring crew, she alone stood out./71/

Nora's house in the weeds becomes Claire's house on the sea island, and the "ranting, roaring crew" a company of like-minded women, who provide for each other a quality of companionship which Nora Flood tragically lacks.

Other phrases from Nightwood which transfer intact to Brossard's fiction are "une fièvre méthodique" (PT, 52),/72/ "avec au coeur une crispation si passionnée /qu'elle rendait le septième jour immédiat" (PT, 63),/73/ and "écartée de la mort . . . de successifs bras de femmes (PT, 66)./74/

une phrase presque complète  
elle parle d'éclipses et de relais  
cite un passage et je m'ouvre  
où elle veut en venir à la source  
oscille chaque fois textuelle

en parallèle j'étais confrontée  
"écartée de la mort" dans l'ovale du miroir  
"de successifs bras de femmes" au seuil  
au sol recueillaient mon souffle  
là-bas igné mon corps  
trouvait à se déplacer jusqu'ici  
(PT, 66)

In recontextualizing these passages, Brossard incorporates Djuna Barnes' fiction into the ecstasy of "la scène blanche." She thus transforms into a triumphant formula an expression which in Barnes signifies Nora Flood's despair at the moment that she abandons hope in her lesbian relationship:

[Nora] closed her eyes, and at that moment she knew an awful happiness. Robin, like something dormant, was protected, moved out of death's way by the successive arms of women; but as she closed her eyes, Nora said "Ah!" with the intolerable automatism of the last "Ah!" in a body struck at the moment of its final breath./75/

In Picture Theory Brossard rereads Nightwood, following the fiction in certain details, such as Nora's dream that her house was once her grandmother's, /76/ while radically changing the outcome. Where Barnes' characters descend into the night, the women in Picture Theory spiral into the dawn of paradise and of history. Barnes' lesbian characters are unable to communicate with each other; in Picture Theory they are skilled in communication. Nightwood's Dr. Mathew-Mighty-grain-of-salt-Dante-O'Connor, whose wisdom derives from his being "dead in the beginning," /77/ is transformed into the "travesti" whom the women encounter in the night. He crackles like a machine: "I speak because I am dead. I speak because I want to reply to words" (PT, 99). It is the women who have a transformative relation to the body of language. In Nightwood, Robin is the beloved through whom the world comes to an end; Claire is the beloved through whom all things are possible. Finally, and not least, the nightwood in which Robin and Nora are eventually and irremediably lost is transformed into "la forêt" of "La Perspective" (PT, 57, 58, 59, 63, 71), the forested landscape of the island and the body of a beloved woman. Brossard's forest in turn

recalls that wood in which Dante, lost in the middle of his life, "came to himself."/78/

Dante's La divina commedia illuminates the intertextual creation of a new symbolic which is at stake here. Four Dantesque motifs are transformed into elements of Brossard's Picture Theory: the forest, the beloved guide, the river of light, and the celestial rose.

The forest, as Mieke Bal points out, is an overdetermined image in any narrative: "The hero of a fairy tale has to traverse a dark forest to prove his courage. So there is a forest" (Bal, 96). The forest is the matrix or female ground on which the hero's action is inscribed. For Dante, the forest is feminine, una selva, and savage, harsh and dense.

Nell mezzo del cammin di nostra vita  
 mi ritrovai per una selva oscura  
 che la diritta via era smarrita.  
 Ah quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura  
 esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte  
 che nel pensier rinnova la paura!  
 Tant' è amara che poco è più morte;

In the middle of the journey of our life, I came to myself within a dark wood where the straight way was lost. Ah! how hard a thing it is to tell of that wood, savage and harsh and dense, the thought of which renews my fear! So bitter is it that death is hardly more./79/

Dante is guided out of this dark wood by his first guide, the poet Virgil. Brossard's text redeems the sublime of Dante's world as a vision for women as subjects.

Brossard's forest is feminine also, but "la forêt" is celebrated and passage through it marks the end of patriarchal night. In "La Perspective," the passage through the forest binds the love-making of Michèle and Claire to the utopian gesture of the primary event and to the historical/cultural context. In both La divina commedia and Nightwood the forest signifies darkness, but Brossard transforms it into a motif for the body of the beloved: dark and light, living and initiatory.

Claire Dérive pensait à la forêt quand elle  
prenait des mots entres ses lèvres ma langue  
qui lui allait réellement comme une peau  
faisait en sorte que mon corps soit légèrement vêtu  
devant elle pour que sa bouche entame d'instinct  
de mémoire, corps à son ultime qui n'épargne  
jamais le future et la réalité qu s'en va  
(PT, 57)

Claire Dérive savait mourir entre  
les jambes d'une femme "écartée de la mort"  
dans la forêt traversée de laquelle sortait  
une femme casquée, au matin clair  
chaque fois plus nombreuse  
en allée à la source Claire Dérive  
pour qu'entre mes jambes la joie l'inonde  
(PT, 58)

de mes pensées, casquée d'une certitude  
les continents affluent, il m'incombe maintenant

d'avoir une idée, une seule redoublée  
 de l'énergie même  
 pour de pas être épargnée  
 traversant l'oublie la forêt jusqu'à la mer  
 (PT, 59)

Claire Dérive est entrée dans la forêt  
 et les songes emportée par la vision  
 du temps qui s'écoule entre ses lèvres  
 elle entend la pluie qui danse sur son casque  
 elle traverse la forêt ruisselante  
 et déterminée comme l'est sa bouche  
 Claire Dérive est dans la rosée  
 l'horizon, allongée entre mes cuisses  
 (PT, 71)

Brossard's characters are not lost in the forest but traverse it "jusqu'à la mer," which is the dividing line between patriarchal and woman-centred reality. This watery landscape, "au matin clair," of "forêt ruisselante," "la rosée," and "la pluie qui danse sur son casque," is an imaginative opening out of the body of the beloved to produce a new world and new life, a vita nuova, in which heroic action is possible for women. The redefined terms transcend the binary opposites of light, dark, evil and good. Brossard's Claire moves heroically, wearing the helmet of Athena, into a forest which is an erotic, living place. In using the overdetermined and gender-determined motif of the forest in a lesbian context which refuses binary gender definition, Brossard redefines both the heroics and the ground.

Claire is the beloved guide who replaces both Beatrice and Virgil. Like Virgil, she enters the forest; like Beatrice, she guides the poet into paradise. Claire's identity as guide and as light parallels that of Beatrice: "O isplendor di viva luce etterna," "Oh splendour of living light eternal," in Dante's final apostrophe to her in Canto 31 of the Purgatorio./80/ The relationship between the poet and the beloved guide is also foregrounded in Monique Wittig's feminist revision of Dante's voyage through the inferno, purgatory and paradise. Virgile Non focusses on the guide/poet dialectic by addressing "Manastabal, mon guide," on almost every page. Manastabal also addresses Wittig by name: "(Ne te casse pas, Wittig. Ce sont tous des modèles démodés ou en voie de l'être avant même d'arriver à destination. Et elles le savent.)/81/ Virgile, Non is Wittig's most recent and most Dantesque reworking of the guide motif, but the motif itself is equally critical in Le corps lesbien, where, as I have already noted, Wittig rewrites Eurydice's voyage out of the underworld.

Dans cette géhenne dorée adorée noire fais tes  
 adieux m/a très belle m/a très forte m/a très  
 indomptable m/a très savante m/a très féroce m/a  
 très douce m/a plus aimée /82/



In Le corps lesbien, as in La divina commedia, the guide is the beloved; the relationship between the guide and the guided is the axis around which Wittig constructs a mythology to express the freedom of women released from an underworld of non-being into life as whole subjects. Wittig's narrator watches the back of her lover who does not turn around but instead accomplishes the unprecedented (for a woman) successful exit from hell.

J/e tairai ton nom adorable. Tel est l'interdit qui m//a été fait, ainsi soit-il. J/e dirai seulement comment tu viens m/e chercher jusqu'au fond de l'enfer. Tu traverses à la nage la rivière aux eaux boueuses sans redouter . . . . J/e vois ton large dos l'un ou l'autre de tes seins quand tes mouvements te montrent de profil . . . . tu m//entraînes jusqu'à la surface où le soleil est visible. C'est là seulement là au débouché vers les arbres et la forêt que d'un bond tu m/e fais face et c'est vrai qu'en regardant tes yeux, j/e ressuscite à une vitesse prodigieuse./83/

Wittig's oeuvre again has affinities with Brossard's. In "La Perspective," Brossard recalls Wittig's rewriting of the underworld voyage of Orpheus and Eurydice. The "dos adorée" (PT, 51) of Brossard's "hall d'entrée" rhymes with Wittig's guide's heroic back, seen "de profil" (PT, 88).

The "géhenne dorée adorée" of Wittig's hell suggests both the mythical and chthonic riches of the

underworld of Persephone's abductor, and the gilded ghetto of Djuna Barnes' Nightwood. In either case, Brossard transforms the place into a rite of passage, a "hall d'entrée" (a bilingual pun becomes apparent here), which Michèle and Claire are always leaving behind.

j'esquisse un geste de la main pour  
dire en voyant le tableau la stèle grise  
d'illusion, de perspective son dos momentanément  
lorsque nous quittons le hall d'entrée  
devant le tableau elle se tourne, je  
suis un relais l'intrigue si je désire

Claire Dérive demandait hors-texte si  
or tel est le mouvement de la main  
quand des doigts elle touchait le livre agitée  
et me regardait feindre la douleur  
qu'effectivement la stèle, la toile, tissu blême  
alors Claire Dérive s'esquivaient dos adoré  
(PT, 51)

In Picture Theory, the passage out of hell is an entrance into the Brossardian utopia.

Virgile, Non ends with a vision of Paradise: angels on motorcycles arrive and put on an open air banquet.

Des anges passent à présent portant sur leurs épaules des paniers et des caisses de fruits. Elles les disposent ensuite au centre de la cour dans des entassements géométriques. Il y a des cerises, des fraises, des framboises, des abricots, des pêches, des prunes, des tomates, des avocats, des melons verts, des cantaloups, des pastèques, des citrons, des oranges, des papayes, des ananas et des noix de

coco. A un moment donné, un chérubin seins nus,  
sonne la trompette pour annoncer que tout est prêt  
pour la cuisine des anges./84/

Wittig and Manastabal exit from hell into an earthly  
paradise. Le corps lesbien ends with a fragile reality  
in which the body may still fall apart at any time.  
Picture Theory, however, like La divina commedia, ends  
with a vision which is transcendent.

Dante's paradise is that of the rose, the river of  
light, and the light of intellectual love:

E vidi lume in forma di rivera  
fulvido di fulgore, intra due rive  
dipinte di mirabil primavera.  
Di tal fiumana uscian faville vive,  
e d'ogni parte si mettien ne' fiori,  
quasi rubin che oro circunscrive.  
Poi, come inebriate dalli odori,  
riprofondavan sè nel miro gurge;  
e s'una intrava, un'altra n'uscìa fori.

And I saw light in the form of a river pouring its  
splendour between two banks painted with marvellous  
spring. From that torrent came forth living sparks  
and they settled on the flowers on either side, like  
rubies set in gold; then, as if intoxicated with the  
odours, they plunged again into the wondrous flood,  
and as one entered another came forth./85/

The vision of the river of light is transformed into  
that of the heavenly rose, "rising above the light all  
round in more than a thousand tiers . . . the eternal  
rose, which expands and rises in ranks and exhales



main ingredients of his marvellous effects . . . he achieves . . . the presentation of a world beyond the perceptions of sense."/90/

In writing of utopia, Nicole Brossard likewise gestures towards what cannot be expressed because it lies beyond the range of our current perspectives:

de faire surgir cette dimension autre  
qui étonne soudain les lèvres au nom de la brûlure  
échapper à toute catégorie niant  
l'espace même et toujours fluide de l'instant  
(PT, 53)

Dante's river of light becomes Claire's gaze which inundates the scene with light (PT, 60):

Claire Dérive est invisible quand elle  
inonde la scène de son regard et qu'elle  
bouge lentement devant moi, légèrement  
dans la blanche matinée. Claire Dérive  
est l'onde et l'espace la mémoire miroi-  
tante que j'entends comme un sens en  
liberté

(PT, 72)

Like Dante's Paradise, Brossard's utopia opens with an earthly dawn which is related to the appearance of a rose and an angel:

dans la clarté, prête à commencer les gestes  
invisibles qui nous lient, une lecture attentive  
pousse les corps à agir

/posture aérienne  
 l'apparence d'une rose double dans la clarté  
 mortellement touchée ou traverse le savoir  
 si l'ange s'offre à la réflexion dans la lumière  
 miroir ardent.

(PT, 53)

"La Perspective" renders Dante's Paradise as the  
 hologram/love scene:

J'étais l'énergie sans fin, la sensation  
 de l'idée, j'étais dans l'expression de  
 l'utopie une femme touchée par l'appar-  
ence d'une rose. J'étais ce matin du 16  
mai, avec Claire Dérive, exposée à  
l'abstraction vitale

(PT, 72)

"La Perspective" closes with this glimpse of utopia  
 which returns to a kind of origin with the closing  
 words, "l'abstraction vitale." This expression evokes  
 the project of Picture Theory as it is articulated in  
 "L'Emotion":

Claire Dérive disait: à la source de chaque émotion,  
 il y a une abstraction dont l'effet est l'émotion  
 mais dont les conséquences dérivent la fixité du  
 regard et des idées. Chaque abstraction est une  
 forme potentielle dans l'espace mental. Et quand  
 l'abstraction prend forme, elle s'inscrit radicale-  
 ment comme énigme et affirmation. Avoir recours à  
 l'abstraction est une nécessité pour celle qui fait  
 le project, tentée par l'existence, de traverser les  
 anecdotes quotidiennes et les mémoires d'utopie  
 qu'elle rencontre à chaque usage de la parole. J'ai

tenté un jour de conquérir la réalité, de la rendre plausible.

(PT, 89)

In Picture Theory, utopia paradoxically transcends reality while creating another reality in which women, as historical subjects and subjects of language, generate meaning "au féminin." Utopia is not an isolated act of imagination, but a collective transformation which involves not only living women and men, but the cultural palimpsest on which our identities as human beings are written. In bringing forward the richness of history, Brossard simultaneously alerts us to the untapped potentialities of the brain, the body, language and culture.

## Notes

- /1/ Weir, 345.
- /2/ Weir, 346.
- /3/ Weir, 349.
- /4/ Weir, 351.
- /5/ Weir, 347.
- /6/ Brossard, "De radical à intégrales," 96.
- /7/ Nicole Brossard, L'Amèr ou le chapitre effrité (Montréal: Quinze, 1977).
- /8/ Susan Gubar, "Sapphistries," The Lesbian Issue: Essays from Signs, ed. Estelle Freedman et.al. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1982), 95.  
Collaboration with Sappho is not, of course, solely the domain of women writers. See David Robinson, Sappho and Her Influence (New York: Cooper Square, 1963).  
Among Canadians, Bliss Carman is perhaps most noteworthy. See Bliss Carman, Vision of Sappho (New York?: Bliss Carman, 1903), and Sappho: One Hundred Lyrics (London: Chatto & Windus, 1921).
- /9/ Gubar, 95.
- /10/ Virginia Woolf, responding to "Affable Hawk's" review of Arnold Bennet's Our Women and Otto Weininger's Sex and Character, The New Statesman (London, Oct. 9, 1920); cited in Gubar, 93.
- /11/ Namascar Shaktini, "Displacing the Phallic Subject: Wittig's Lesbian Writing," The Lesbian Issue, 137-152.
- /12/ "Companion lovers" is the term chosen by Monique Wittig and Sande Zeig to translate "amantes" in Lesbian Peoples: Materials for a Dictionary.
- /13/ "We know less about the sexual life of little girls than of boys. But we need not feel ashamed of this distinction; after all, the sexual life of adult women is a 'dark continent' (English in original) for psychology." The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud (London:



Hogarth, 1959), 20, 212. See also Freud, "On Femininity," The Standard Edition (1964), 22, 112-135. Cf. also Donald Stephens' formulation of the moderns' interest in "the ambiguity of Sappho's character; though [her] . . . age, the 'dark age of Greece,' was condemned, for the perversions of its women." Donald Stephens, Bliss Carman (New York: Twayne, 1966), 74.

/14/ Monique Wittig, Le corps lesbien (Paris: Minuit, 1973), 20.

/15/ Wittig, Les quérillères, 180.

/16/ Nicole Brossard, Amantes (Montréal: Quinze, 1980), 108.

/17/ Cf. Hélène Cixous: "The Dark Continent is neither dark nor unexplorable. -- It is still unexplored only because we've been made to believe that it was too dark to be explorable. And because they want to make us believe that what interests us is the white continent, with its monuments to Lack. They riveted us between two horrifying myths: between the Medusa and the abyss. That would be enough to set half the world laughing, except that it's still going on." "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, New French Feminisms, eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Schocken, 1981), 255.

/18/ Amantes, 109.

/19/ Shaktini, 146.

/20/ See Louise Forsyth's discussion of space, including the particular space of the island, in Brossard's work. Louise Forsyth, "Deconstructing formal space/ accelerating motion in the work of Nicole Brossard," A Mazing Space, 334-344.

/21/ Monique Wittig and Sande Zeig, Brouillon pour un dictionnaire des amantes, 131-132.

/22/ Le Petit Robert (Paris: Dictionnaires Robert, 1987).

/23/ Brossard, "De radical à intégrales," 94.

/24/ Brossard, "De radical à intégrales," 94.

/25/ Brossard, "De radical à intégrales," 94.

/26/ Brossard, "De radical à intégrales," 103.

/27/ Brossard, "De radical à intégrales," 103.

/28/ Brossard, "De radical à intégrales," 103.

/29/ Robert Graves, The Greek Myths (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), II, 13.

/30/ The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats, eds. Peter Allt and Russell Alspach (New York: MacMillan, 1957), 402.

/31/ From an aerial perspective, very distant objects appear blue. "Perspective," Encyclopaedia Britannica, Micropaedia, 1986.

/32/ Karl Pribram, Languages of the Brain: Experimental Paradoxes and Principles in Neuropsychology (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 140-149.

/33/ Brossard, "De radical à intégrales," 97.

/34/ Pribram, 27.

/35/ Pribram, 8.

/36/ Stéphane Mallarmé, Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard (Neuchâtel: Messeliller, 1960).

/37/ Lorraine Weir points to the importance of the love scene in the narrative's quest structure: "The first chapter, 'La Perspective,' focuses on the erotic relationship of Claire Dérive and the narrator, extending the fragmentary 'scènes blanche[s]' (20) of the first few pages into a series of paragraphs in which syntax and punctuation are opened out (as they will be repeatedly throughout the novel) in an effort to devise a language to express Brossard's utopia. . . . Brossard's utopian vision [is] enacted in terms of the sexual union of two women and of the articulation of a philosophy of history which inscribes women on the field of light." Weir, 346.

/38/ The following information on the technology of the hologram is taken from John H. Caulfield, "The Wonder of Holography," National Geographic 165, 3 (March 1984), 364-377; Emmett N. Leith and Juris Upatnieks, "Photography by Laser," Scientific American, 212, 6 (June 1965), 24-35.

/39/ L'Amèr, 99.

/40/ Cf. Forsyth's summary of the topos of the city in Brossard's work. Forsyth, 337.

/41/ Personal interview with Nicole Brossard, June 8, 1988 (English in original).

/42/ Nicole Brossard, "Synchronie," La lettre aérienne, 82.

/43/ Nicole Brossard, "Mémoire: Hologramme du désir," La parole métèque, 7 (Automne, 1988), 6.

/44/ Pribram, Chapter one.

/45/ Pribram, 152.

/46/ Pribram, 105.

/47/ Pribram, 49.

/48/ Pribram, 174.

/49/ Wittig, MG, 6.

/50/ Daphne Marlatt, Touch to my Tongue (Edmonton: Longspoon, 1984), 27.

/51/ Anna Livia Plurabelle (PT, 105) is "Joyce's . . . resolution of all women in the Wake." Weir, 350.

/52/ Brossard, "De radical à intégrales," 100.

/53/ Lotman, 164.

/54/ Lotman, 168.

/55/ Georges Sadoul, Dictionnaire des films (Paris: Seuil, 1976). The film version of Blow Up is based on the short story by Julio Cortazar, Blow Up and Other Stories, trans. Paul Black (New York: Collier, 1968).

/56/ Le Petit Robert (Les dictionnaires Robert-Canada, 1987).

/57/ Weir, 351.

/58/ Cf. Nicole Brossard, "La plaque tournante," La lettre aérienne, 11-28.

/59/ Benveniste, Chapter 18.

/60/ The following information on perspective is taken from John R. Spencer, "Painting, The History of Western," Encyclopaedia Britannica, Macropaedia, 1986, and "Perspective," The Encyclopaedia Britannica, Micropaedia, 1986.

/61/ Personal interview with Nicole Brossard, June 8, 1988.

/62/ M.M. Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: Univ. of Texas, 1981), 62.

/63/ Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, 68.

/64/ Brossard, "De radical à intégrales," 90.

/65/ Wittig, MG, 6.

/66/ Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism (Boston: Beacon, 1978), Chapter 4.

/67/ Richard Wagner, Die Walküre: erster tag aus der trilogie: Der ring des Nibelungen (Mayence: B. Schott's Söhne, 1882).

/68/ Nicole Brossard, french kiss: étreinte /exploration (Montréal: Quinze/présence, 1974).

/69/ Weir, 346.

/70/ Weir, 348-349.

/71/ Djuna Barnes, Nightwood (New York: New Directions, 1937), 50.

/72/ Barnes, 43.

/73/ Barnes, 52.

/74/ Barnes, 64.

/75/ Barnes, 64.

/76/ Barnes, 62-63.

/77/ Barnes, 152.

/78/ The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri, with trans. and comment by John D. Sinclair (New York: Oxford U.P., 1961), I, 23.

/79/ Dante, I, 22-23.

/80/ Dante, II, 408-409.

/81/ Wittig, Virgile, Non, 85.

/82/ Wittig, Le corps lesbien, 7.

/83/ Wittig, Le corps lesbien, 11-13.

/84/ Wittig, Virgile, Non, 138.

/85/ Dante, III, 432-435.

/86/ Dante, III, 437.

/87/ Dante, III, 443.

/88/ Dante, III, 432-433.

/89/ Dante, III, 441.

/90/ C.H. Grandgent; cited in Sinclair, The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri, III, 455.

#### Part IV: Narrative/Knowing in the Feminine

[Glender must be accounted for. It must be understood not as a "biological" difference that lies before or beyond signification, or as a culturally constructed object of masculine desire, but as semiotic difference -- a different production of reference and meaning as such . . ./1/

In Part I of this study, thinking with Virginia Woolf, I asked what is the architecture of the new women's writing. What are the features of writing in the feminine? Now, comparing narratological analyses of Daphne Marlatt's How Hug a Stone and Nicole Brossard's Picture Theory, I can offer certain conclusions in relation to the work of these two important Canadian feminist writers, conclusions which shed light on the international phenomenon of women's writing, especially in relation to narrative structure.

The binary opposition of hero and obstacle, inherent in the narrative grammar of the quest, is a cultural generator of patriarchal gender. The hero who traverses boundaries and overcomes obstacles is generically masculine, and the matrix or ground which he traverses is feminine. Both Marlatt and Brossard rewrite linear quest structure at the same time that they bring to light the gender of the fundamental plot positions.

Marlatt intuits the gender of the narrative matrix:

she is not a person, she is what we come through to  
& what we come out of, ground & source. the space  
after the colon, the pause (between the words) of  
all possible relation.

(HHS, 73)

Her text honours a female "ground and source": the  
arché-mother who signifies a primordiality sometimes  
dangerously in harmony with the life force of the  
earth. The strong focalization by the narrator ensures  
that the "we" in this passage includes women as well as  
men, thus creating a gender-inclusive human subject who  
occupies the hero-position in the hero-obstacle opposi-  
tion.

Delicate irony frames Kit's boyish heroics in "on  
the train," "boy with tape recorder stalking horses in  
a field of cows:" and "Avebury awi-spek, winged from  
buried (egg." Long cycles of history shelter the young  
fighter while defining his heroics by a context  
immeasurably more powerful than he is:

-- & small, toy pistol in one hand, cupped, &  
sheltered by the pelvic thrust of rock, jumps,  
gotcha mom!

as if to fix it  
(sine), that jubilant ego in the face of stone, of  
wind flocking grey wethers still gathered like (but  
not the same, not these) sarsens now in place,  
immutable from long time back. & front, weathered  
yes, in folds acquiring character we read in,

clothed & prickling now along the hairless spine, a line meeting a circle, two in one so huge (small hill) barely visible at grass view, red windbreaker fleck a sea of green & climb some moat in his imagination scaled he calls me to: come & get me  
(HHS, 74)

Kit's heroics reflect the origin of human culture ("always having to fight Wild Animals" [HHS, 36]) but are now linked to war games which threaten rather than promote human survival:

[Kit is] happiest in the Lucky Penny counting hits or testing quickness of eye against sci fi enemy bombers in Japanese computer games. divine wind recycled (on & on). while in Chatham they sing the Navy Blues, getting rid of us at a high rate of knots (outmoded). Nott planning to plug the Faroe gap with nuclear-powered killer submarines & radar-equipped reconnaissance aircraft. (getting rid of us.)

(HHS, 48)

The text features the hero motif but ironizes it and illuminates its deadly, monologic implications.

Marlatt uses quest structure but displaces it from the structuring level of fabula to the level of story where it is an aspect of focalization by a narrator who is trying to understand her mother. Language comes increasingly to the fore as the actantial sender. As Brossard specifies, the patriarchal hero is dead:

Nous parlons de profil comme un propos de civilisation qui marque un temps d'arrêt. "... nous man-



quons de manuscrits depuis la mort du héros à double sens patriarcal". C'était absolument dans un autre livre qu'elle saurait retracer le moment venu, les lignes d'une forme humaine parfaitement lisible.

(PT, 25)

New paradigms are necessary to express "le moment venu." Picture Theory suggests the hologram.

Brossard undermines the gender inherent in the hero-obstacle opposition with a narrative structure which repeatedly represents the female actant actively traversing the matrix of the continent (PT, 79), the island (PT, 88), "le hall d'entrée" (PT, 51) and the forest (PT, 59, 71). The motif of "le casque dorée" signifies a female heroics also grounded in the old opposition. At the same time, Picture Theory uses contemporary science to generate a post-relativity reading of the opposition between energy and matter, thus freeing the enormous energy inherent in matter itself.

Traversières, urbaines radicales, lesbiennes, aujourd'hui jour électrique, leur énergie prenait forme comme l'électricité par la structure de la matière elle-même. Hier à l'origine, leur énergie n'avait été mise en évidence que par leurs propriétés attractives ou répulsives. Maintenant dans l'orbe lunaire, elles avaient précédé la science de l'énergie.

(PT, 88)

Brossard uses a double strategy which associates women with the active principle in the binary opposition

while demonstrating that the opposition itself is outmoded. She invents a narrative grammar that is fundamentally dialogic: an actant separates, reassembles, and generates light energy. As I noted in relation to Claire's traversal of the forest in "La Perspective," Brossard redefines both the heroics and the ground.

Both Brossard and Marlatt use the image of the spiral to suggest the form of the stories they are telling. The narrator of How Hug a Stone, seeking coherence and origin, finds that the story she is part of has only a "blue/black hole at centre":

& still: i suppose all these people know better than i -- doubtful, paws to eyes, small creature at the heart of dreaming some blue elsewhere. & that is the reason, the story continues, circling back to its source, the dormouse curls, imagining delphiniums blue, o blue/black hole at centre, folding in on itself.

(HHS, 70)

Without fixed origin, the story must start in mid-air: "(in flight? & if the plane goes down?)" (HHS, 15). The narrator proceeds because "without narrative, how can we see where we are going? or that -- for long moments now, we happen" (HHS, 15). The story must start when "we happen," with Brossard's "le moment venu."

The paradox of the origin is developed theoretically in Brossard's oeuvre, and is linked to the image

of the spiral. In "De radical à intégrales," Brossard argues, "L'origine n'est pas la mère, mais le sens que je donne aux mots et à l'origine, je suis une femme."/2/ "Femme," however, is a word rooted in "une terre sémantique étrangère." "Femme, à sens unique, [est] . . . un mot sans autre racine que patriarcale."/3/ In the face of this dilemma, Brossard proposes breaking out of one-way patriarchal sense by means of the tautology/nonsense of the statement "une femme est une femme."/4/ This is the strategy adopted by "[les] féministes radicales et leur humanité se trouve justement là, dans la conquête qu'elles font mot à mot, corps à corps, de l'être femme. . . . En intervenant au mot femme, ces femmes . . . ont alors mis le doigt sur le bouton qui donne accès à la magie des mots."/5/ "La magie des mots est ce parcours et ce par quoi nous pouvons aussi transformer la réalité ou le sens que nous donnons à la réalité."/6/ By intervening around the meaning of words, and in particular the meaning of the word "femme," women can begin to create subjectivity rooted in their own realities, and "culture au féminin."

At the origin of words in Man's subjectivity, and as far as we have learned to consume words, we have consumed them with their root. We are now in the process of uprooting ourselves from the subjectivity/objectivity of Man to take root in our own subjectivity that transforms reality. Women have to be at the root of the meaning they give to words./7/

Women will give words new meanings which are rooted not in patriarchal soil but in collective relations with other feminist women. "La racine est aérienne."/8/ This is the process which Brossard figures as the spiral, and represents in Picture Theory.

Once again Monique Wittig figures in the intertextual cast, and in relation to both Marlatt and Brossard. The narrator of How Hug a Stone, "so as not to be lost," determines to "invent" (HHS, 15). "be unnamed, walk unwritten, de-scripted, undescribed, or else compose, make it say itself, make it up" (HHS, 35). I noted earlier that her decision recalls a celebrated passage from Wittig's Les guérillères:

[I]l y a eu un temps où tu n'as pas été esclave, souviens-toi. Tu t'en vas seule, pleine de rire, tu te baignes le ventre nu. Tu dis que tu en as perdu la mémoire, souviens-toi. Les roses sauvages fleurissent dans les bois. Ta main se déchire aux buissons pour cueillir les mûres et les framboises dont tu te rafraîchis. Tu cours pour attraper les jeunes lièvres que tu écorches aux pierres des rochers pour les dépecer et les manger tout chauds et sanglants. Tu sais comment ne pas rencontrer un ours sur les pistes. Tu connais la peur l'hiver quand tu entends les loups se réunir. Mais tu peux rester assise pendant des heures sur le sommet des arbres pour attendre le matin. Tu dis qu'il n'y a pas de mots pour décrire ce temps, tu dis qu'il n'existe pas. Mais souviens-toi. Fais un effort pour te souvenir. Ou, à défaut, invente./9/

Women are urged to remember a pre-patriarchal time when they were strong and free, but if the memory is gone and there are no words to describe it, they must invent. In her effort to piece together the "old story" (HHS, 73) and in her resolution to invent, Marlatt takes up Wittig's challenge.

Brossard quotes the critical last three sentences of this passage from Les guérillères in Amantes./10/ Her refusal to reconstitute the already known accords well with Wittig's imperative. However, her theory of the spiralling creation of culture in the feminine diverges at a critical point from Wittig's early writing. In "L'Ordinaire" a footnote refers the reader to the French feminist theoretical journal Questions féministes, No. 8, of which Monique Wittig was an editor (PT, 32). In this issue, the editors formulate their theory that women must reject the word "woman":

The word woman, I cannot and never could bear it. It is with this word that they have insulted me. It is a word of their language, a cadaver filled with THEIR phantasms working against US. Who is this "Us"? Women, to be sure -- and there again that WORD. With that they "have had us," as THEY SAY./11/

Brossard also argues that the word "woman" is rooted in man's subjectivity, but her strategy to redeem the word is at variance with Wittig's conclusion that women must

absolutely reject both heterosexuality and any identification as women: "'woman' has meaning only in heterosexual systems of thought and heterosexual economic systems. Lesbians are not women."/12/ Wittig's almost phobic refusal to be identified as a woman is the extreme opposite of the enthusiastic announcement, made by Hélène Cixous and endorsed by "Psych et Po," that "woman will affirm woman."/13/ As a result of this divergence the editorial collective of Questions féministes exploded, French feminist discourse became violently polarized and the women's movement in France was very badly damaged./14/ Nicole Brossard, in her essays and in Picture Theory, made a crucial intervention into this debate which unfortunately has been insufficiently heeded.

Memory plays a critical role in the feminist theory under discussion here, and Marlatt and Brossard, in How Hug a Stone and Picture Theory, each contribute to a reformulation of women's relation to memory. Narratological analysis showed that both texts manifest a chronological framework which is constantly interrupted by memory, although the two narrators explicitly refuse to be governed by the past (HHS, 29; PT, 19). In How Hug a Stone, the narrator's voyage is supplemented by information from increasingly distant history; finally, the origins of the fabula disappear in the misty begin-

nings of human culture. In Picture Theory linear chronology is confounded by the simultaneous presentation of events occurring over the period of about one year. Although the text does not reconstitute memory, it taps it constantly: "de mémoire, j'entame" (PT, 19, 43, 149). A double perspective on time is generated by the synchrony of past and present. Distant history is summoned by mythic motifs and the millennial woman "au coeur de la pierre" (PT, 88). Both texts link memory to the image of stone.

If "memory implies a relationship between past and present events,"/15/ the same could be said of stone. Geological memories of the distant past, stones are the oldest objects in our world, and representations in stone, whether fossils or carvings by our forebears, are our primary source of information about prehistory. How Hug a Stone is a Heideggerian meditation on stone, bringing "the earth itself into the Open of a world."/16/ Stones were already old in the Neolithic, or New Stone Age, during which patriarchy is thought to have developed. Neolithic megaliths or "squat stone mothers" (HHS, 64) are central to How Hug a Stone, and the riddle of the book's title folds into Heidegger's observation that finally, "Earth . . . shatters every attempt to penetrate it."/17/ The narrator and her son affirm the spiralling trajectory of life (HHS, 79), leaving behind Avebury, and pausing again to see

the white stone lady reclined on her stone couch at the foot of the garden at the end of the Empire, in an attitude of elegant attentiveness. what thunder is she listening to? who put her there? a tranquilly attentive point of return in the surreal wash this dream is.

(HHS, 76)

The stone images of the Neolithic Bird Goddess/18/ translate finally into the "rock-dove alone in the ruined palace crying, ku? ku? ku? (qua?) where have you gone? first love that teaches a possible world" (HHS, 78).

The transformation of "ku" into the Latin qua, "where, which way,"/19/ reminds us that words, like stones, conceal the being of the past.

what was familiar now is relic: sweetshop, pillar-box. clipped monosyllables with a distinctive pitch pattern. remnants of Old English, even moth, snake, stone. Word henge to plot us in the current flow. without narrative how can we see where we've been? or, unable to leave it altogether, what we come from?

(HHS, 19)

Tracing the stories concealed in stones and words is the effort of memory to understand where we come from, because we cannot "leave it altogether." Navigating "in the current flow" towards an open-ended future "where live things are" (HHS, 79), the narrator of How




Hug a Stone takes her bearings on the past, at the limit of memory and language.

In Picture Theory stone is repeatedly invoked as the repository of the time when women were immobilized by the creation of patriarchal gender. I have already shown the complex of myth and metaphor which links the stories of the Sphinx, Medusa, Eurydice and Lot's wife, all petrified in "le temps patriarcale" (PT, 81). Their fate is a reminder of the emotional damage patriarchy has inflicted on women, and inflicts still. "M.V. connaissait peu de l'émotion sinon que son mouvement pouvait arrêter le temps et la laisser suspendue et immobile dans l'espace comme une femme fatalement atteinte" (PT, 147). In "L'Emotion," on the day of the visit to the cliffs, the text opens into a meditation on what lies concealed in the sedimentation of rock:

Les falaises étaient très attirantes et le destin planait. Il y a des îles au-dessus de l'Arizona. Il y a des roches métamorphiques et des strates. Il y a la pierre. "La Polis, la Cité des Hommes est un tout dont le corps de pierre" citait de mémoire Florence Dérive. Il y a la pierre. Il en était donc ainsi au coeur de l'île, la pierre et l'eau, l'ardoise et la craie. Il y a des maîtres, des tableaux et des artisans. Il y a des caméras laborieuses et des mains qui travaillent. Il y a des femmes sculptées, des mujeres blanches, des jambes cassées, des fragments célèbres. Il y avait des femmes dans la pierre brute et la pierre "taillée de servitude de de ténèbres". Il y a la pierre parlante, les pierres de pluie. Il y avait des pierres percées et sonores. Il y a les falaises et la ville de pierre opaque. Il y avait au coeur

de la pierre une femme qui disait moi millénaire  
translucide, gravée dans la pierre utopique.  
(PT, 87-88)

In the heart of the stone Brossard finds not only  
memories of women, but chalk and slate, the materials  
for an immanent writing of civilization's story. At  
the foot of this cliff women's emotion is preserved:

La falaise, le désert, la ville sur ordinateur  
devenaient continuité cosmique: Hilton - - -  
- - - -  alors qu'aux pieds de la falaise,  
l'émotion se refermait comme un coquillage. La  
moindre fente. La Fente faisait un jour qui  
motivait M.V. dans chacune des surfaces qu'elle  
explorait avec la sensation de retrouver ses peines  
perdues dans l'horizon bleu des métaphores, là où  
régnait le Sphinx. Prise dans la pierre de  
l'effroi, M.V. était prête à devenir un buste de  
femme à la tête orageuse.

(PT, 147-148)

As emotion is freed, "une ouverture en forme de fente"  
(PT, 147), the writing in the stone becomes visible as  
"une lithophanie à l'aspect changeant" (PT, 147).

Women's buried emotion is the light in the stone which  
is released to become a component of the hologram:

Météorites dans le text. Ouverture. M.V. ne  
cherchait-elle pas à traverser toutes les  
atmosphères, tous les climats, tous du sens dans la  
pierre. Elle cherchait à se rompre ce qui n'était  
écrit nulle part visiblement dans la pierre et qui  
pourtant faisait sens et sens flamboyant dans le  
rouge des identités, infra p. 167. C'était donc  
cela qu'elle cherchait au coeur de la lettre  
aérienne, cela cette phosphorescence dans la nuit

comme une permanence féminine prenant relief dans la pierre. L'image est floue. Les mots lapidaires.  
(PT, 130)

M.V. doesn't seek all the history memorized in the stone, but only the emotions of women which were buried and concealed, but are now remembered in a text studded with meteorites and "mots lapidaires."

The liberation of the woman in the stone is related to the appearance of a generic human body and ultimately, the hologram. Each image is folded into the next in "a condensation of inscriptions": "L'identité dans la trajectoire du corps, une condensation des inscriptions: célèbre l'horizon" (PT, 113). The "abstraction pressentie" (PT, 165) of woman's subjectivity in language opens into "le corps générique de celle qui pense":

(dans mon univers, l'utopie serait une fiction à partir de laquelle naîtrait le corps générique de celle qui pense). Je n'aurais pas à faire naître d'une première femme une autre femme. Je n'aurais à l'esprit que l'idée qu'elle puisse être celle par qui tout peut arriver. J'aurais tout en l'écrivant à imaginer une femme abstraite qui se glisserait dans mon texte, portant la fiction si loin que de loin, cette femme participant des mots, il faudrait la voir venir, virtuelle à l'infini, formelle dans toute la dimension de la connaissance, de la méthode et de la mémoire. Je n'aurais pas dans la fiction à inventer. La fiction serait le fil d'arrivée de la pensée. Le terme exact.

(PT, 165)

In the night traversed by Michèle and Claire, "le corps générique s'apprête à souffler mots" (PT, 160). "C'est au bout de la nuit patriarcale que le corps s'anticipe à l'horizon que j'ai devant moi sur un écran de peau, la mienne, dont la résonnance perdure dans ce qui tisse le tissu la lumière lorsque sous ma bouche la raison du monde ruisselle" (PT, 167). The appearance of "le corps générique" is associated with the light of "la scène blanche" (PT, 187), and like "la femme intégrale," the generic woman is both singular and plural: "je la vois venir les femmes synchrones au matin chaque fois plus nombreuse, élan vital" (PT, 189).

"Le corps générique" is generic, but she is a woman. The abstract and universal is endowed with a woman's form: "My mind is a woman" (PT, 168). As hologram, she incorporates the luminous character of Claire Dérive:

sous l'effet d'une lumière cohérente la cendre des lettres les yeux interrogent fous de doute ou autrement la matière pour que le corps abstrait s'abandonne à la lumière soit c'est Claire Dérive s'incarnant cette fois le jour dans la forme d'une femme quotidienne

(PT, 202-203)

The hologram makes coherent the circulating numbers and letters of the Amazonian alphabet, and folds into itself the love scene between Michèle and Claire; the

"abstraction vitale" (PT, 72) to which they were exposed in "la scène blanche" is manifested as a perfectly readable human form which is a feminine generic:

la langue reproduira avec toi dans les plis de la  
 peau cette version sans fin de ton corps désormais  
 inaltérable car je sais me mouvoir avec toi dans le  
 volume torrere lumière cohérente peau la phrase  
 monte aux yeux une projection de soi de surcroît  
 synchronie de la page de la chambre de la cité dans  
 la nuit nombres et lettres au nom de ce qu'elle est  
 la forme humaine venait vers elle visible dans toute  
 sa morphologie occupant sa pensée comme un ter-  
 ritoire allant de soi elle en était venue en pleine  
 fiction d'abondance à se dire parfaitement lisible  
 (PT, 204-207)

Women are thus reinscribed in the cultural text as fully human.

Again, Brossard uses a double strategy, creating a feminine generic while denouncing the masculine, the universal man.

Ce que nous voyions converger dans nos verres, cette  
 nuit-là, parfaite et claire, était une forme  
 abstraite et concluante qui nous permettait  
 d'entrevoir, mais très distinctement, comment  
 l'esprit de l'homme était parvenu à se concevoir à  
 même la seule forme de la flèche, écarlate, dans la  
 nuit des temps; droit sur le corps des femmes pour  
 endormir leur esprit: l'homme-flèche.

(PT, 96-97)

Knowledge is always the prize of the Orphic plunge into the dark, and in "L'Emotion," the women are rewarded with a clear vision of the universal man. With the

apostrophe to night from Finnegans Wake, night reaches its limit:

Comme l'éternité, la nuit s'ouvre sur l'horizon. Les alentours sont dimensions que nos corps éprouvent avec clairvoyance dans toute l'étendue de nos mémoires. Le ciel rougeole autour de l'île. Le lendemain commence pendant que l'aube nous alterne dans une vision du monde.

(PT, 99)

From the danger zone of "la nuit patriarcale," the women can see both ways; thus, they can see and clearly understand the masculine generic for what it is, even as dawn is preparing to illuminate the island.

How Hug a Stone, which does not dramatically feature the creation of a feminine generic, manifests one in a characteristically subtle manner. I have already shown that the narrative fabula features a generic actant who includes both male and female. The powerful focalization by the female narrator generates a feminine generic at the level of story because she, and only she, is always there. In her story, which is also the story of her mother, grandmother and son, she is the human norm, and she is a woman. Her sensual presence inside the body of language invites the reader into a reality which has a woman at its origin. In a 1984 interview Marlatt related her writing strategy to "that very important theoretical push from France and Québec. Women writing with their bodies":

Women's bodies have been a lack, a negative space in our language, and have had no real presence. And writing is seen as male, rational, logical, the domination of spirit and thought over the material body. [Writing with the body] is a way of breaking that and allowing another form of writing, women's writing, female writing, or as they say in Québec, writing in the feminine, to emerge in the language. . . . It's . . . important to celebrate, and to celebrate what we do have as women, to invent it, to fantasize where we would like everything to be./20/

Writing with the body, enacted through the strategy of focalization, characterizes How Hug a Stone.

In How Hug a Stone and in Picture Theory Daphne Marlatt and Nicole Brossard identify fear as women's opponent in the struggle for whole being (HHS, 76; PT, 148). Countering fear is the utopian promise of "where we would like everything to be." This promise is affirmed in Picture Theory through the hologram, and in How Hug a Stone by reading back through William Blake: "you will walk in 'England's green & pleasant land'" (HHS, 9). In working towards a utopian promise, Marlatt and Brossard contribute to the creation of a new epistemology which incorporates the experience of women. Both create meaning intertextually, thus bringing forward cultural history at the same time as they transform it.

Epistemology is "the theory or science of the method or grounds of knowledge."/21/ The act of narra-

tion is inherently epistemological in that it implicates a knower and a known, a subject who is telling and what can be told. Both are contested by a reality which denies women subjectivity and invalidates their experience. How Hug a Stone and Picture Theory record the contested knowing of two women writing to embody what they know as real, because reality is in dispute.

Brossard has been relentless in denouncing patriarchal reality as a fiction: "jusqu'ici la réalité a été pour la plupart des femmes une fiction, c'est-à-dire le fruit d'une imagination qui n'est pas la leur et à laquelle elles ne parviennent pas réellement à s'adapter. . . . on peut dire aussi que la réalité des femmes a été perçue comme fiction."/22/ In her writing, and nowhere more than in Picture Theory, she has pursued what she calls "une écriture de dérive" which manifests what has been unthinkable and unexpressed:

C'est donc à la limite du réel et du fictif, entre ce qui paraît possible à dire, à écrire, mais qui s'avère souvent au moment de l'écrire, impensable et entre ce qui semble évident et qui apparaît à la dernière seconde inavouable que se trace une écriture de dérive. Désire de dérive/désir dérivé de./23/

The "désire de dérive" is translated in Picture Theory into desire for Claire Dérive, the love scene of "la scène blanche," "la scène holographiée" (PT, 27) which makes possible the hologram. The appearance of the



hologram in turn inscribes a new reality: "Je verrais cette femme manifestement formelle inscrire alors la réalité, l'écosystème" (PT, 166).

Daphne Marlatt too writes "about edges . . . where wings are needed . . . for flight."/24/ Writing "to speak what isn't spoken, even with the old words" (HHS, 73), her narrator's senses are tuned to "the actual character and structure of the real itself,"/25/ because it needs to be discovered and told. "narrative is a strategy for survival" (HHS, 75). In How Hug a Stone, subjectivity in language, the knower of the narration, and the "i" whose story is told unite in the figure of a writing woman who tells the truth: "by visible truth we mean the apprehension of the absolute condition of present things."/26/ The narrative technique Marlatt transforms for her purposes is, above all, focalization. The truth is difficult, and dangerous; as Nicole Brossard writes, "Ecrire: je suis une femme est plein de conséquences."/27/ In How Hug a Stone and Picture Theory, Daphne Marlatt and Nicole Brossard work through some of those consequences and in so doing, chart a course for narrative in the feminine.

## Notes

/1/ Teresa de Lauretis, Technologies of Gender (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1987), 48.

/2/ Brossard, "De radical à intégrales," 97.

/3/ Brossard, "De radical à intégrales," 89.

/4/ Brossard, "De radical à intégrales," 94-95.

/5/ Brossard, "De radical à intégrales," 95.

/6/ Brossard, "De radical à intégrales," 92.

/7/ "Interview with Nicole Brossard on Picture Theory," trans. Luise von Flotow-Evans, Canadian Fiction Magazine 47 (1983), 122.

/8/ Brossard, "De radical à intégrales," 97.

/9/ Wittig, Les quérillères, 126-127.

/10/ Brossard, Amantes, 45.

/11/ Feminist Issues 1, 1, 14. Feminist Issues is the English language version of Questions féministes.

/12/ Feminist Issues 1, 1, 110.

/13/ Hélène Cixous, "Sorties," The Newly Born Woman, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1986), 93.

/14/ The split in the French Feminist movement is documented in Hélène Cixous, "ô grand-mère que vous avez de beaux concepts! C'est pour mieux vous arriérer, mon enfant! un colloque féministe à New York "le second sexe trente ans après," des femmes en mouvement, hebdo, 1, 9-16 (nov. 1979), 11-12, and "Poésie, e(s)t Politique?" des femmes en mouvement, 4 (nov.-déc. 1979), 29-32; Feminist Issues, 1, 1 (1980); Feminist Studies, 7, 2 (Summer, 1981); Elissa D. Gelfand and Virginia Thorndike Hules, French Feminist Criticism: Women, Language, and Literature: An Annotated Bibliography (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985); Marks and de Courtivron, eds. New French Feminisms; Questions féministes;

Signs, 3, 4 (Summer 1978); Sub-stance, 13 (1976), 27;  
The Women's Review of Books, Special Issue, The French Connection, 3, 6 (March 1986).

/15/ Jacques Barbizet, Human Memory and its Pathology, trans. D.K. Jardine (San Fransisco: W.H. Freedman, 1970), 149.

/16/ Heidegger, 46.

/17/ Heidegger, 47.

/18/ These images can be seen in the Royal Edinburgh Museum, Large Stones Room.

/19/ Collins Gem Latin Dictionary (London: Collins, 1957).

/20/ "Text & Tissue: Body Language: Interview with Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland," by Ellea Wright, Broadside 6, 3, 4-5.

/21/ The Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford U.P., 1971).

/22/ Brossard, "La letter aérienne," La lettre aérienne, 53.

/23/ Brossard, "La lettre aérienne," 53.

/24/ Phyllis Webb, back cover of How Hug a Stone.

/25/ Charles Olson, "Equal; that is, to the Real Itself," Selected Writings, ed. Robert Creeley (New York: New Directions, 1966), 51.

/26/ Herman Melville; cited in Olson, 47.

/27/ Brossard, L'Amèr, 43.

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Appendix: Daphne Marlatt's Bibliography for  
How Hug a Stone\*

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 Vatcher and Vatcher, The Avebury Monuments  
 Robert Graves, The White Goddess  
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 Françoise Sagan, Scars on the Soul  
The Manchester Guardian Weekly  
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Daily Mail, Friday June 26, 1981 ("Nott's Navy Blues")  
 Gail Duff, Country Wisdom  
 A.E. Milne, Now We Are Six  
Welcome to London: A Collins Travel Guide  
 Dr. Fortescue-Ffoukes, A Short History of Poltimore  
 (Pamphlet)

The following books are also mentioned in Marlatt's  
 notebooks for How Hug a Stone:

J. Fowles, Barry Brukoff, The Enigma of Stonehenge  
 W.H. Stukeley, A Temple Restored to the British Druids  
 Leon Stover and Bruce Kraig, Stonehenge: the Indo-  
 European Heritage

\*This bibliography was included in the manuscript submitted to Turnstone Press, currently held in the Literary Manuscripts Collection of the National Library of Canada. Unfortunately, it was never published.