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Discourse and identity: A dialogical feminine voice on the margins

Bowman, Rebecca S., Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1988

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DISCOURSE AND IDENTITY:
A DIALOGICAL FEMININE VOICE ON THE MARGINS
DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

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INTRODUCTION
Discourse and Identity:
A Dialogical Feminine Voice on the Margins

Is there a distinctly feminine voice in literature and, if so, what is the significance of that voice? The question of a feminine poetics has been debated for some time, yet current analyses seem divided among those who attempt to explain it in terms of biological origins and those who would more broadly define it as anything written by a woman.¹ Both of these approaches, however, ultimately attempt to isolate a feminine voice from the larger social, political and literary contexts from which it arises—and of which it is, by definition, a part—and, in so doing, they deny that voice its most significant function.

As M.M. Bakhtin suggested more than fifty years ago, "only the mythical Adam, who approached a virginal and as yet verbally unqualified world...could really have escaped" the social and political nature of language, since "the living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological
consciousness around the given object of an utterance, it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue" (279, 276). Language, Bakhtin logically insists, is "ideologically saturated" and, as we confront it, we are producing and receiving not abstract, objective meaning, but "a world view...a concrete opinion" (271). Consequently, Bakhtin argues that alongside a culture's dominant language are many other "languages" struggling against the ideology it embodies, and I would argue that it is precisely within this social dialogue of competing ideologies that a feminine voice becomes discernible. Among the many voices vying to be heard from the margins is one that is distinctly feminine, and its significance lies in the challenge its specific perspective on feminine identity, experience and morality presents to the dominant and "socially specific" ideological perspective. The voice that emerges from this socio-ideological dialogue is specifically feminine, in other words, because it is specifically intent upon exposing and disrupting conventional definitions of femininity and reconstituting the ideological context that produces those definitions. Since the feminine voice identified within this framework is dialogical and political, it reflects a particular marginal perspective rather than some essentially "female" quality. Consequently, it is likely that a feminine voice arising from the literature of women who have
been marginalized for reasons of class or race as well as of gender would reveal an ideological debate different from that which I have isolated in the novels of four, white middle-class writers; one of the challenges which goes beyond the scope of this analysis is an examination of how this dialogical feminine voice is modified by women with different marginal perspectives.

The insistence that language—and literary texts which expose and challenge the ideologies embedded in language—must be seen as dialogical and social rather than monological and biological phenomena, and the recognition that women find themselves on the margins of a hegemonous patriarchal social context, has also become the focus of several contemporary women theorists. There has been a pointed reluctance, however, to isolate a specifically feminine voice from among the many others that also occupy the margins. As Toril Moi has noted in her analysis of Julia Kristeva's innovative studies in linguistics, Kristeva's strong insistence that femininity is a political construct rather than a natural category leads her, somewhat paradoxically, to disregard the specific political perspective of someone whose identity has been thus constructed:

Her deep suspicion of identity...leads her to reject any idea of an *escriture féminine* or a *parle femme* that would be inherently feminine or female: 'Nothing in
women's past or present publications seems to allow us to affirm that there is a feminine writing ('escriture feminine'), she claims in an interview published in 1977 ('A partir de', 496). It is possible, Kristeva admits, to distinguish various recurrent stylistic and thematic peculiarities in writing by women; but it is not possible to say whether these characteristics should be ascribed to a 'truly feminine specificity, socio-cultural marginality or more simply to a certain structure (for instance hysteria) which the present market favors and selects among the totality of feminine potentiality' ('A partir de', 496).

In a sense, then, Kristeva does not have a theory of 'femininity', and even less of 'femaleness'. What she does have is a theory of marginality, subversion and dissidence... The strength of this approach is its uncompromising anti-essentialism; its principal weakness the somewhat glib homologization of quite distinct and specific struggles...(163-64).

Not only does Kristeva assert quite convincingly that both femininity and identity itself are social constructs, but she also demonstrates that there is an attempt by the "subject in process" to dislocate itself from and displace those constructs and constraints ("From One Identity to An Other" 124-47) and that "literature" itself is "the very place where social code is destroyed and renewed" (132). And I suggest that literary discourse which reveals, challenges and attempts to reconstitute the socio-ideological context that defines femininity certainly reflects a "truly feminine specificity" in its focus on a "specific struggle"; a feminine voice can be discerned, in other words, not through stylistic nuances that are somehow innately female, but through the dialogue it initiates in order to deconstruct and reconstruct the "social code" that
constitutes feminine identity.

And, while Luce Irigaray strongly asserts that language and discourse belong to men and that there is some innate feminine voice that can't express itself within that discourse, the voice that emerges from her own work--particularly *Speculum of the Other Woman*--is remarkably similar to the voice I will identify in the work of the four women analyzed her. Acknowledging that, in order to communicate at all, women must adopt the discourse of men, Irigaray asserts--and artfully demonstrates--that women can also disrupt that discourse; in other words, while Irigaray convincingly insists that, because women under patriarchy have no language of their own, "the feminine finds itself determined in discourse...as lack" or "default," she nonetheless demonstrates in her own work that a woman writer can "show on the feminine side [that] it is possible to exceed or disrupt" (*This Sex* 78) that discourse. Irigaray, therefore, does not exclude the possibility of a dialogical "feminine side" or voice. And, the dialogical feminine voice that Irigaray herself so skillfully puts into play through mimicry of, and direct challenges to, patriarchal discourse and ideology makes use of the same disruptive methods that we seen in the work of Charlotte Brontë, Kate Chopin, Virginia Woolf and Joan Didion, among many other women writers. Moreover, the reluctance to
assert a specific feminine identity that underlies both Irigaray's and Kristeva's reasoning—and which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter—also becomes a specific issue within the dialogue created by the feminine voice in these four novels.

Since the feminine voice that emerges from the four novels analyzed here is dialogical in nature, it necessarily arises from a context that is inherently socio-ideological. The distinction between calling it a "feminine" or a "feminist" voice, therefore, becomes almost arbitrary, and I have chosen the former simply because the outsider's voice within this political context is specifically intent upon disrupting and reconstituting social codes pertaining to feminine identity and experience. While some would argue that the shared vision thus expressed is not necessarily a feminist perspective,\(^3\) the distinction seems impossible to make as women writers struggle to express that vision against a social and literary context that is "ideologically saturated" with patriarchal values and conventions. Moreover, not only do many women writers recognize themselves as outsiders to that dominant ideology, but they see a clear connection between their marginal perspectives, their writing and their personal identities as women.

Even those women writers whom critics are reluctant to credit with overt feminist intentions indicate an awareness
of the dialogical and political repercussions of their individual voices. Still disguising herself as "Currer Bell" in the preface to the second edition of *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë addresses those "in whose eyes whatever is unusual is wrong." Indicating by the pseudonym that she understands that, as a woman, she is an outsider to the literary tradition, Brontë directly confronts the notion of tradition itself. "Convention is not morality," she writes. "To attack the first is not to assail the other...appearance should not be mistaken for truth...and it is a good, and not a bad action to mark broadly and clearly the line of separation between them" (Preface). It is obvious that, to Brontë, the vision of "truth" and "morality" articulated by her "unusual" voice stands outside something larger than the literary tradition, and her juxtaposition of those concepts to the term "convention" indicates that she understands, too, the ideological and political implications of her own voice.

Likewise, critics have made much of Virginia Woolf's vision of "androgyny," yet Woolf herself had a very clear sense of what it meant both to write as a woman and to approach writing as a woman. In her essay "Women and Fiction," Woolf emphasizes not only that a woman stands outside conventional notions of "meaning" when she assigns value to experience, but that the woman writer must stand
outside both literary and social conventions if she is to express that experience adequately:

But it is still true that before a woman can write exactly as she wishes to write, she has many difficulties to face. To begin with, there is the technical difficulty--so simple, apparently; in reality, so baffling--that the very form of the sentence does not fit her. It is a sentence made by men; it is too loose, too heavy, too pompous for a woman's use...this a woman must make for herself, altering and adapting the current sentence until she writes one that takes the natural shape of her thought without crushing or distorting it.

But that, after all, is only a means to an end, and the end is still to be reached only when a woman has the courage to surmount opposition and the determination to be true to herself. For a novel, after all, is a statement about a thousand different objects--human, natural, divine; it is an attempt to relate them to each other. In every novel of merit these different elements are held in place by the force of the writer's vision. But they have another order also, which is the order imposed upon them by convention, as they have established an order of values in life, these values prevail there also to a very large extent.

It is probable, however, that both in life and in art the values of a woman are not the values of a man. Thus, when a woman comes to write a novel, she will find that she is perpetually wishing to alter established values...(48-49).

To Woolf, then, the very act of writing becomes dialogical and political as the woman writer discovers that, in order to convey her experience as a woman, she must attempt "to alter established" conventions in both discourse and "life."

In fact, Woolf's understanding of the way her marginalized relationship to both language and patriarchal ideology affects her as a writer and her metaphorical comments about
the shape of the sentence are remarkably similar to Irigaray's call for the "feminine side" to "exceed and disrupt" patriarchal discourse and Kristeva's assertion that "literature...is the very place where social code is destroyed and renewed."

Underscoring and accentuating the "plot" in the four novels analyzed here, then, is an ideological dialogue initiated by a feminine voice which both underscores its own marginality and attempts to disrupt and reconstitute social codes pertaining specifically to feminine identity. The marginality of perspective in these novels is stressed through the relationship of the protagonist to her community; in these novels, not only do the protagonists strongly assert that they are outsiders, but much of the dramatic tension arises from their struggles to remain so. And the dialogic effect of this emphasis on marginality seems obvious: as outsiders, these protagonists can achieve the freedom and subjectivity that allows them to reassign value to their own experiences and issue a direct challenge to conventional social codes which constitute femininity.

While it may be argued that nearly every protagonist is, to some degree, an "outsider," what is interesting about this position in these novels by women is both that it is essential to the protagonist's achieving and sustaining a sense of self and that it occurs even though she
is usually at the social center of her world. In these novels, the protagonists must remain outsiders in order to affirm a sense of self and assert a alternative vision of identity against a patriarchal ideology that would deny them subjectivity. And, when they cannot maintain their marginal perspectives, the result is frequently suicide or death. The tension created by this dialogical feminine voice, then, is the result of the protagonist's struggle to remain detached from definitions that would restrict, divide and deny her full experience as a woman and a human being, and this tension is intensified by the fact that she does not have the luxury of simply being an "observer" but is required to fulfill the responsibilities inherent in the very definitions she refutes. One of the things that makes the voice behind this dialogic and dramatic tension so distinctly feminine is its simultaneous exposition of the patriarchal hegemony which confines women and its insistence that only by standing outside and refuting the ideology inherent in that hegemony can an alternative vision of feminine identity be suggested.

By juxtaposing the protagonist's sense of self and identity to the conventional ideology of her particular world, the feminine voice in these novels establishes a dialogue that not only forces us to see femininity as a political construct but also challenges the whole concept of
identity itself. This dialogical feminine voice not only firmly rejects specific labels which reflect conventional, patriarchal definitions of feminine identity and experience, but it also firmly refuses to simply create new names for those concepts. Ironically, the protagonists in these novels can assert their identities only by refusing concrete definition, and it is this paradox that permanently casts them as outsiders; only by continually refusing to be defined by the various names that family and society thrust upon the, by repeatedly asserting that "I am not this" and "I am not that" can these women develop a sense of self that encompasses the wide range of human experience that the connotations of such terms as "woman," "wife" and "mother" would attempt to deny them.

By refuting the labels, and by refusing to posit others, these characters assert both to themselves and to others that their sense of identity does not fit into the established order of their worlds, and that their personal understandings of the complexity of experience cast them as outsiders to the worlds within which they must function. Luce Irigaray has noted that:

...to speak of or about woman may always boil down to, or be understood as, a recuperation of the feminine within a logic that maintains it in repression, censorship, nonrecognition.

In other words, the issue is not one of elaborating a new theory of woman which would be subject or object, but of jamming the theoretical machinery itself, of
suspending its pretension to the production of a truth and of a meaning that are univocal (This Sex 78).

While the dialogical feminine voice in these novels does seem, finally, to insist on "woman as subject," its refusal to concretely name a feminine identity also appears to be an attempt to disrupt the "theoretical machinery" of patriarchal hegemony which produces "univocal" concepts of both self and identity; the unnamable feminine identity which this voice juxtaposes to hegemonous assumptions about femininity is a multidimensional identity that encompasses—rather than excludes—contradiction and ambiguity. Of course, feminists who adhere to Lacanian theory, such as Irigaray and Kristeva, would also assert that this refusal to name reveals a self that is anterior to and distinct from "identity" and, in fact, this refusal to locate meaning firmly within the Symbolic Order results in something very similar to Kristeva's "subject in process." Certainly, this refusal to entirely separate the self from the other results in an integrity quite different from the unity of the "transcendental ego" asserted through naming but, as will be demonstrated, the assertion of feminine identity made by the feminine voice in these novels, necessarily presupposes some sort of integrity. And, because this suggestion of feminine identity is directly and dialogically juxtaposed to and challenges conventional
concepts of feminine identity, I will refer to it as an alternative vision of feminine identity, but it should be understood that both the adjective and the noun are being called into question by this feminine voice.

In an analysis of "marginality and Subversion," Toril Moi offers further insight on naming that also helps explain why this feminine voice reflects such a reluctance to attach labels to the feminine identity it asserts:

To impose names is, then, not only an act of power, an enactment of Nietzsche's 'will-to-knowledge,'; it also reveals a desire to regulate and organize reality according to well-defined categories. If this is sometimes a valuable counter-strategy for feminists, we must nevertheless be wary of an obsession with nouns...The attempt to fix meaning is always in part doomed to failure, for it is of the nature of meaning always to be elsewhere. As Bertholt Brecht puts it in Mann ist Mann: 'When you name yourself, you always name another.' This is not to say that we should avoid naming--simply that it is a more slippery business than it appears, and we should be alive to the dangers of fetishization (160).

Thus, in Mrs. Dalloway's insistence that "she would not say of herself, I am this, I am that" (Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway 11) and Edna Pontellier's refusal to define her "character" other than by asserting that she is not a "mother-woman" and not an artist (Chopin, The Awakening 181,259), we see reflected both a refusal to locate meaning and "organize reality" according to "well-defined categories" and an understanding of the dangers and limitations inherent in those fixed categories. Categories, of course, result in
dichotomy and opposition and, as Helene Cixous points out, "death is always at work" (The Newly Born Woman 64) in such logic since asserting one category automatically negates many others. In other words, we see in this feminine voice that refuses to define feminine identity by imposing names, a rejection not only of specific, conventional names, but of the entire ideology that attempts to limit identity according to the dichotomy thus created.

Another characteristic of this dialogical feminine voice is its determination to reassign value and meaning to a woman's unique marginal experience, and the result of this is a specifically moral argument. As these women writers convey a white, middle class social context that restricts women's activity to home, family and caring for others at the same time that it devalues those activities, it is hardly surprising that the morality of an ideology that denies women autonomy and devalues their experience is called into question. In a direct response to this patriarchal hegemony, the dialogical feminine voice asserts a concept of morality which, in assigning value to mutual respect and caring, contextualizes morality and places it in the realm of individual authority rather than conventional authority.

Intertwined with the moral argument characteristic of this feminine voice is a vision of experience that places
value on the private and the subjective. As these women writers attempt to give their protagonists complex identities that will refute conventional stereotypes and posit a moral ideology that will accommodate those identities, it is also not surprising that the question of what constitutes meaningful experience is also raised. The female protagonist in these novels cannot as Leslie Fiedler says of her American male counterpart, escape "into the forest and out to sea, down the river or into combat" or "anywhere to avoid...the confrontation of a man and a woman which leads to...sex, marriage and responsibility" (26), but must, instead, conduct her quest for identity in the midst of roles and "responsibilit[ies]" which physically restrict her. Although these protagonists cannot physically escape the patriarchal hegemony which confines them, they can disassociate themselves from it through a nonconventional ideology that validates their own experience and places value not on concrete accomplishment and external validation, but on internal integrity and self awareness. The vision of experience articulated by the feminine voice, then, is one that endows the protagonist with the subjectivity denied women by patriarchal ideology and, at the same time, asserts a sense of being and independence that can never be obliterated by social and political conventions, a sense of experience and "life" that "can't be
dealt with...by Acts of Parliament" (Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway 5). In these novels, the essence of life and experience becomes embodied not in "society" but in the integrity of the psyche, in the self's ability remain both unviolated and nonviolating, even though doing so requires standing outside of and, frequently, defying moral convention.

In the analyses which follow, my selection of novels is guided by a desire to demonstrate that, by intentionally isolating woman writers who have not been marginalized for reasons other than gender, a distinct dialogical focus might be discerned. I have also tried to demonstrate, however, that within this deliberately narrow framework, there are recurrent dialogical challenges to the social codes which constitute both femininity and identity, and that these challenges can be traced throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the novels of both British and American women.

In Jane Eyre, this feminine voice is apparent in the implicit—and occasionally explicit—dialogue between the protagonist's vision of identity and morality and the ideology institutionalized in the conventions of her world. And, as in all the novels analyzed her, the dramatic tension in Jane Eyre is the direct result of this ideological debate; as Jane Eyre becomes convinced that her own sense of feminine identity will always be denied, distorted and
devalued by the dominant patriarchal ideology, both her moral outrage and her determination to remain an outsider increase to the point that a conventional dramatic "resolution" seems impossible. Consequently, in order to validate the position asserted by this feminine voice—which demands that feminine identity be acknowledged and respected as "equal"—Brontë must reverse Rochester's and Jane Eyre's circumstances to such an extent that they are entirely isolated from the social world and placed in a very contrived situation beyond the grasp of patriarchal hegemony.

The ideological confrontation in The Awakening focuses directly on the issue of naming. Here, the feminine voice becomes apparent in the protagonist's doomed attempt to assert a feminine identity that cannot be reduced to the classic dichotomy of madonna/whore or, to put it another way, of angel/monster. Both the moral argument and the dramatic tension in The Awakening arise from the pervasiveness of, and self denial inherent in, the binary logic the feminine voice confronts; to be classified on either side of the opposition denies the complexity of individual identity, and therefore denies the self, while, at the same time, an ideology based on such opposition allows no alternative—if one label is deemed inappropriate, then the other is simply applied. Thus, it becomes
impossible for Edna Pontellier both to remain an outsider and to assert her own vision of feminine identity, and the feminine voice in this novel can only be validated by demonstrating that, without personal integrity and self realization, life is not worth living.

In Mrs. Dalloway, as in the other novels treated here, a dialogical feminine voice directly confronts the morality of social conventions that demand "conformity" at the expense of the self. In this novel, however, a greater emphasis is placed on subjectivity as a means of sustaining and asserting an integrated identity, an identity that derives its integrity from the very fact that it incorporates, rather than denies, apparent contradiction. In Mrs. Dalloway, in fact, "masculine" and "feminine" become concepts directly related to the individual's relationship to the dominant social ideology which Woolf has expressly stated as being male-arbitrated; masculine, in this novel, is specifically associated with those who uphold and impose conventional values, while feminine experience is specifically located outside of and in opposition to the conventional.

As in the other three novels, examined here, the dialogical feminine voice in A Book of Common Prayer is recognizable in the protagonist's insistence that she is an
outsider, in the rejection of labels and categories, in the assertion of a nonconventional feminine identity and in the reassignment of value and meaning to experience. However, as Didion explores the "motive role" (217) of Charlotte Douglas, "an outsider of romantic sensibility" (22), through the narrative of another woman who proclaims that "I have been de afuera [the outsider] all my life" (52), the moral argument generated by the feminine voice confronts much more than the distortion of feminine identity. The doubly alienated feminine perspective in this novel is arguing against a male-generated political ideology so absurd that even a pretense of meaning has been dropped; "society," as it has been defined and propagated through centuries of male "leadership" is here exposed as nothing more than empty form, a "game" with "certain ritual moves" (195) that is "played" simply "for the action (229). Consequently, in A Book of Common Prayer the feminine voice becomes essential not only to a vision of feminine identity, but to all of humanity as it attempts to "revise" a political ideology that places no value whatsoever on human life.

As stated earlier, this isolation of a dialogical feminine voice in the novels of white, middle class women writers certainly invites wider avenues of investigation; not only is it important to determine the ways in which this voice is modified in the literature of women marginalized
for reasons other than gender alone, but it would also be enlightening to determine whether or not there is a form of this dialogic feminine voice in the works of "popular" women novelists, such as romance writers. The most striking result--and certainly the most significant finding--of these analyses is the fact that, even in the nineteenth century, we see women novelists attempting to dialogically deconstruct patriarchal hegemony. And, through their focus on morality, naming and the subjective self, these women are not simply challenging the specific manifestations of patriarchal ideology but, rather, they are questioning the very nature of the logocentric and phallocentric thought that underlies that ideology.
NOTES

1. I use the term "feminine" to indicate one who has been culturally engendered, rather than as a reference to biological sexual determination (i.e., "female"). And this, I think, is a major difficulty in confronting the French feminists whose language allows one word to denote both "feminine" and "female." Both Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous, for example, assert that, while "femininity" is a political construct, a "feminine" voice is innate rather than political. Irigaray's "le parler femme," or "womanspeak," deliberately incorporates the French word that denotes biological sex, but elsewhere her discourse about "le feminine" is more ambiguous. Le parler femme, however, she directly relates to female sexuality which she defines as "tactile," "fluid" and inclusive. A true example of womanspeak, to Irigaray, reflects these sexual characteristics in that it "is a style that takes all figures back to their tactile birth" and is "always fluid" (This Sex 79). Likewise, in a more complicated and sometimes contradictory discussion of masculine and feminine "libidinal economies," Cixous links "woman's writing" directly to her "body without...appendage" and her "libido [which] is cosmic" (The Newly Born Woman 88).

There are those, on the other hand, who make no such essentialist assertion, but would still isolate a canon of literature based on the sex of the author. These include Elaine Showalter who is careful to distinguish between "female, feminine and feminist" ("Toward a Feminist Poetics" 137-39) but who seems unintentionally to obscure her own firm delineation elsewhere. In "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," for instance, she proposes "a description of women's writing [that] would insist upon gender and upon a female literary tradition" (266). And the female--as opposed to the gender--tradition appears to be what Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar follow through with in The Norton Anthology of Women's Literature.

2. The concept of hegemony was first defined by Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci, but is perhaps most concisely explained by Gwynn Williams. In "Gramsci's Concept of Egemonia," Williams defines hegemony as "an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations" (587). John Cammett, in his own book on
Gramsci, also adds the significant point that "hegemony is the predominance, achieved by consent rather than force, of one class or group over another...Hegemony is therefore achieved by the institutions of civil society" (204).

3. Responding to an article by Rebecca O'Rourke, Rosalind Coward insists that "feminine" cannot be considered synonymous with "feminist," and firmly asserts that "feminism can never be the product of the identity of women's experiences and interests--there is no such unity" (155). And, responding directly to Coward, Michele Barrett agrees with her at to the extent that "an emphasis on women's experience, or the fact of female authorship, or indeed a concern with the female body, is not enough to make a work of art feminist" (163).

Likewise, in her introduction to The Awakening, Nina Baym acknowledges that "it is impossible not to see specific women's questions" (xxxiv) in this novel, but goes on to qualify this by asserting that, since the questions raised were not specific political issues in "Chopin's day," they cannot be considered feminist.

4. It is important to make a distinction between the terms "self" and "identity." Self is here used as synonymous with "subject" and refers to the "inner life" of a character; this is not meant to suggest that the self is unaffected by external, cultural reality but, rather to emphasize that the self consists of internal and private processes. The self, in these novels, is what Edna Pontellier refers to as "thoughts and emotions which belonged to her and were her own [and] concerned no one but herself" (Chopin 134) and what Mrs. Dalloway defines as "the privacy of the soul" (Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway 192). Identity, on the other hand, refers to that which is asserted by or imposed upon the self in a social context. Consequently, while the female protagonists in these four novels frequently focus on an affirmation of the subjective self, that which they—as well as the inherently social dialogical feminine voice that arises from these novels—attempt to assert to others is an alternative vision of feminine identity.
CHAPTER I

Jane Eyre: The Rebel Slave

It is vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquility: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally; but women feel just as men feel: they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a constraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow creatures to say they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex.

—Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre

Virginia Woolf has written that "in Jane Eyre we are conscious not merely of the writer's character, as we are conscious of the character of Charles Dickens, but we are conscious of a woman's presence—of someone resenting the treatment of her sex and pleading for its rights" ("Women and Fiction" 47). That generalized "woman's presence" to which Woolf refers—a presence which, despite Woolf's artistic objections to it, also stands behind her own
work--can more accurately be described as the feminine voice and, in *Jane Eyre*, that voice makes itself felt in much more subtle and significant ways than the now famous plea "for its rights" that opens this chapter. Like the feminine voice that arises from all the novels included here, this presence in *Jane Eyre* expresses much more than displeasure at the "treatment of her sex"; this is the voice of an outsider intent upon remaining on the margins not merely so it can criticize and plead, but so it can articulate and sustain a vision of feminine identity and morality not endorsed by the conventional ideology.

This dialogical feminine voice in *Jane Eyre* rings out quite clearly in the constant clash of the heroine's personal perspective with that embodied in the patriarchal hegemony of her world. Elaine Showalter has suggested that, in novels written by women during the Victorian era, "the feminist content...is typically oblique, displaced, ironic, and subversive" ("Toward a Feminist Poetics" 138), yet this seems true of *Jane Eyre* only if "feminist content" is narrowly defined as that which directly voices a concern for "women's issues." Although the epigraph above, which does address those issues, is an unusual outburst in this novel, I nevertheless suggest that Jane Eyre's personal struggle to define herself is an inherently political struggle as well and that the specific confrontation of perspectives that
emerges from this conflict results from a woman's unique position on the margins. In this novel, Jane Eyre is clearly trying to assert and sustain an individual identity in a world intent upon denying individuality to women and, as she does so, the morality of those conventions which demean women and devalue their experiences becomes a major source of contention; it is in this specific focus on establishing an alternative vision of feminine identity and defining a nonconventional morality that will encompass and embrace that identity—and the tension that arises from this endeavor—that the dialogical feminine voice emerges in this novel.

Noting that in the "human sciences...whether one accepted the structuralist or the existential definition, the human subject was theoretically inscribed--hence solely conceivable--in terms of a patriarchal symbolic order; and of that subject, women represented the sexual component or counterpart" (160), Teresa de Lauretis points to the necessity of entirely redefining the concept of "experience" from a feminine perspective. This appears to be precisely what Brontë—and many other women novelists—have attempted to do; Jane Eyre's experience in Brontë's novel cannot be read as the "counterpart" to male experience because the author makes it clear that her heroine, like the protagonists in so many novels by women writers, must assert
herself as an outsider to patriarchal conventions and perspectives before she can even begin the process of self definition. Both the particular forces that drive Jane Eyre to the margins and the unique position she occupies there reflect a specifically feminine experience, and the dramatic tension and moral perspective that arise because of this experience is characteristic of the feminine voice.

As a female, Jane Eyre cannot conduct her quest for identity by escaping "into the forest and out to sea, down the river or into combat" (Fiedler 26) as her American male counterpart would be apt to do. And, for more subtle but equally important reasons, this heroine certainly cannot hope to discover her identity within the established social order as her compatriot male contemporaries were likely to do. The community within which Jane Eyre must exist, Brontë emphatically demonstrates, is based upon a patriarchal ideology that denies a complex, subjective feminine self. The images of slavery, starvation and death that permeate Jane Eyre are openly associated with the conventions of that ideology and, through the powerless child's perspective that opens the novel, Brontë reflects one of the central ironies facing not only Jane Eyre, but all women: although they may also be trapped for reasons of race or class, all women experience life as outsiders to a patriarchal ideology that distorts and suppresses their
feminine identities yet are trapped within the very conventions which institutionalize that ideology. In order for Jane Eyre to assert an alternative feminine identity, then, she must begin by disassociating herself from the conventions of patriarchal hegemony.

There can be no doubt that initially Brontë firmly establishes the orphaned and unloved Jane Eyre as an outsider, and it seems impossible to overlook the fact that this character's major conflict—and Brontë's major artistic dilemma—lies in her equally strong desires both to maintain her outsider's freedom and perspective and to surround herself with the warmth of human society. Because she begins life as an orphan-outsider, Jane Eyre is freer from the restrictions of her world than "millions" of other women "condemned to a stiller doom" simply because they are secure within their families and, consequently, more firmly entrenched in social conventions. From her more detached perspective Jane Eyre is able to achieve a sense of self that she must constantly struggle to sustain and defend against a dominant social ideology which will neither acknowledge nor tolerate the individual identity she attempts to assert. And, as a result of this struggle, a larger conflict emerges: as Jane Eyre's sense of self and self-worth increase so do both her desire for "human affections" (214) and her awareness that the patriarchal
hegemony governing human relationships is likely to devalue her own contributions to them and, therefore, undermine her own identity. For this female protagonist, then, "lighting out for the Territory" (Twain 243) is not the route toward freedom and the outside that she would prefer even if it were a viable alternative, yet the path toward home and family poses a danger even more threatening than isolation; for Jane Eyre to establish human affections and sustain her sense of self worth—both of which are essential to the alternative feminine identity she asserts—she must somehow place herself at the center of hearth and home while remaining outside those very rigid customs which deny women the right to "exercise their faculties" and assert any identity beyond the roles assigned to them by a patriarchal social ideology. This seemingly paradoxical—and uniquely feminine—quest to establish a place for herself within the social order, while at the same time sustaining her marginalized perspective and outsider's freedom from its hegemony, is the primary source of dramatic tension in Jane Eyre. And the source of this tension is the dialogical argument initiated by the feminine voice.

As Jane Eyre struggles against a patriarchal hegemony which devalues her experience and denies her individual identity, a dialogical relationship is established between the "morality" embodied in that perspective and Jane's own
insistence upon a morality which places value not on adherence to social codes but on respect for the individual and evaluation of the specific context. In Jane Eyre, Bronte creates a very sharp contrast between her maturing protagonist's sense of ethics and those social institutions--religion and marriage, in particular--that embody the morality of her world, and this, too, is a characteristic of the feminine voice. In fact, the concept of morality voiced in Jane Eyre is not only the same as that which arises from the other novels discussed here, but the same as that which contemporary psychologist Carol Gilligan has detected in empirical studies of feminine moral development.¹ According to Gilligan, this vision of morality contrasts with the hegemonic moral ideology in that it represents "a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative rather than abstract and formal" (19), and, within it, "care becomes the self chosen principle of a judgment that remains psychological in its concern with relationships but becomes universal in its condemnation of exploitation and hurt" (74). As Jane Eyre fights first simply to survive and then to assert and sustain her individual identity, her outrage at the "exploitation and hurt" doled out in the name of conventional morality gives rise to a personal commitment to an ethic of equality and caring, and ethic which, as Gilligan suggests, is subjective
in its emphasis on context and relationships but universal in its insistence on mutual respect and interdependence.

Neither the criticism of hegemonous patriarchal conventions nor the alternative vision of a morality based upon equality and personal evaluation of context can be seen as accidental effects in Jane Eyre. Asserting in the preface that her novel is a "protest against bigotry," a criticism of "Narrow human doctrines, that only tend to elevate and magnify a few," Brontë goes on to make her own perspective quite clear. "Conventionality is not morality," she unambiguously declares. "These things and deeds are diametrically opposed: they are as distinct as is vice from virtue...and it is a good, and not a bad action to mark broadly and clearly the line of separation between them" (Preface). This attack on hegemonous morality is characteristic of the dialogical feminine voice in its argument with a patriarchal social ideology and, in Jane Eyre, it is the dominant characteristic of that voice.

Particularly in the initial sections of Jane Eyre, the juxtaposition of the protagonist's vision of self and morality to that of her world creates such a sharp contrast that Jane Eyre's chances for psychological survival seem nearly nil. At Gateshead, Jane Eyre is constantly reminded that she is a "dependant," and Brontë makes it apparent that this is not simply a reflection of her financial situation.
Jane Eyre's survival, we come to see, is quite literally dependent upon an outward submission to rules that she can see are "unjust" (8), immoral and irrational in their insistence on her complete self denial. And, even as a very young girl, Jane Eyre recognizes herself as a "rebel-slave" (8); physically restricted by patriarchal hegemony which threatens both real and psychological annihilation, Jane Eyre somehow vaguely perceives that she can survive only by clinging to her sense of her own marginality.

Significantly, Bronte associates Jane Eyre's first memory of the reality of her predicament with Gateshead's "young Master," a fourteen-year-old schoolboy who "was not quick either of vision or conception" (14), but who commanded the obedience of the entire household through sheer force and terror. "You have no business to take our books; you are a dependant," the "bilious" John Reed brutally asserts to his cousin as she sits in a secluded window seat quietly reading. "Go and stand by the door, out of the way of the mirror and windows" (5). Literally forbidden to turn her vision either inward or outward, the frightened Jane Eyre attempts to obey but, when the very book she had put down is flung at her, she can no longer contain her sense of both the injustice and impossibility of such a request. "Wicked and cruel boy," she screams, "You are like a murderer—you are like a slave driver..." (5).
Jane, of course, is severely punished for this outburst against Gateshead's young patriarch and, locked within the ghostly, "suffocating" (9) red room, she realizes the implications of John Reed's command, and the range of her own choices becomes frighteningly clear.

"This reproach of my dependence," Jane recalls from her experience in the red room, "had become a vague singsong in my ear; very painful and crushing, but only half intelligible" (6). It is no wonder that this ten-year-old girl finds the fact that her existence is dependent upon obedience to household rules that forbid both introspection and self assertion "crushing" and "half intelligible," for it means that, in her world, injustice and irrationality reign and that her impulsive outburst to John Reed is, in fact, accurate; the master of Gateshead is imposing upon Jane Eyre a form of slavery which, in its refusal to allow either self exploration or expression, is also an attempt to "murder" the psyche. Through her terrifying imprisonment in the red room, Jane Eyre also comes to understand that "escape from [the] insupportable oppression" of such an ideology requires extraordinary measures such as "running away, or, if that could not be effected, never eating or drinking more, and letting myself die" (8). But, since it is not yet apparent to the young Jane Eyre that "running away" might entail something other than establishing a
geographical distance, she sees her real choices limited to two others; this oppressed female child can either give up life completely or she can exist in a "condition of perfect submission" (9); she can choose either actual death or psychological death.

As Jane Eyre's rage dissolves into fear in this episode, so does her sense of self begin to dissolve as "agitation, uncertainty, and an all predominating sense of terror confused [her] faculties" (10) and she loses consciousness. While Jane Eyre does escape this punishment alive, she has also keenly experienced the effects of patriarchy on the feminine psyche--the repression, distortion and eventual dissolution of the self. This is the same effect which Jane has already witnessed daily in the narrow-minded, bitter Mrs. Reed and her two superficial, constantly quarreling daughters whose obsessions with family, religion and social status--and complete acceptance of the underlying ideologies--leave them alienated, unfulfilled and embittered. And it is precisely this distortion and usurpation of feminine identity under patriarchal hegemony that the feminine voice in Jane Eyre exposes and attempts to deliberately deconstruct through Jane Eyre "rebellion" against its logic.

At Lowood, the same threat of both physical and psychological annihilation is continued and intensified,
becoming attached to conventions that extend far beyond the family. As the dialogical feminine voice initiates a specifically moral argument. Here, in a Christian, "evangelical, charitable establishment" governed by its patriarch, the Reverend Brocklehurst, the girls are expressly forbidden even "to conform to nature," and their feminine identity is symbolically condemned and stripped from them as the barber is ordered to crop the "natural curls" (37). This respected Christian institution is determined that the orphaned female outsiders dependent upon its "care" will also conform to its ideology and emerge as submissive members of the fold. In the names of religion and discipline, these girls are kept so physically weakened that the possibility of rebellion—even a psychological one—would seem out of the question:

Sundays were dreary days in that wintry season. We had to walk two miles to Brocklebridge Church, where our patron officiated. We set out cold, we arrived at church much colder: during the morning service we became almost paralyzed...The Sunday evening was spent in repeating, by heart, the Church Catechism, and the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of St. Matthew...A frequent interlude of these performances was the enactment of Eutychus by some half dozen little girls; who, overpowered with sleep, would fall down, if not out of the third loft, yet off the fourth form, and be taken up half dead. The remedy was to thrust them forward into the centre of the school-room, and oblige them to stand there till the sermon was finished. Sometimes, their feet failed them, and they sank together into a heap; they were then propped up with the monitors' high stools (35-36).
The loss of consciousness is symbolic of the loss of self imposed upon feminine identity by patriarchal hegemony. Yet Jane Eyre does manage to rebel and, through her relationship with Helen Burns, the feminine voice both exposes the extent of this ideology of feminine self sacrifice and begins to assert through Jane Eyre an alternative vision of self and morality that is directly and dialogically opposed to the hegemonous patriarchal perspective.

"Half dead" already from the effects of the "religious" environment at Lowood, Helen Burns continually extols to Jane the benefits of meekness, submission and "turning the other cheek"—precisely the morality preached in the Matthew chapters cited above and precisely the morality hegemonized as a means of keeping the down-trodden from rebelling against their lot. Jane Eyre's emerging sense of self and ethics, however, contrasts sharply and directly with the one imposed by this hegemony:

...If people were always kind and obedient to those who are cruel and unjust, the wicked people would have it all their own way: they would never feel afraid, and so they would never alter, but would grow worse and worse. When we are struck at without a reason, we should strike back again very hard; I am sure we should—so hard as to teach the person who struck us never to do it again (34).

In her refusal to be "obedient" and in her emphasis on self assertion, Jane Eyre is voicing a direct challenge to the "morality" imposed at Lowood, and it is exactly this
marginal and subversive perspective that allows Jane Eyre to survive while Helen Burns dies. Through Helen's fate, Brontë again emphasizes the complete relinquishment of the feminine self demanded by the hegemonous moral perspective and, through Jane Eyre's protest, we see a direct dialogical challenge to that perspective.

The fuller articulation of Jane Eyre's expanding sense of self and her uniquely feminine moral perspective also begins at Lowood and is marked by a stronger belief in her own power and a determination to further detach herself from the ideology institutionalized at Lowood:

"A new servitude! There is something in that," I soliloquized (mentally, be it understood; I did not talk aloud). "I know there is, because it does not sound too sweet; it is not like such words as Liberty, Excitement, Enjoyment: delightful sounds truly; but no more than sounds to me; and so hollow and fleeting that it is a mere waste of time to listen to them. But Servitude! That must be a matter of fact. Any one may serve: I have served here eight years; now all I want is to serve elsewhere. Can I not get so much of my own will? Is not the thing feasible? Yes--yes--the end is not so difficult...(51).

Jane Eyre is beginning to perceive that, while her options are limited by a patriarchal hegemony which, in fact, classifies all women's occupations as subservient, that very perspective can paradoxically be used to her advantage in attaining a degree of economic independence that will, in turn, free her from conventions imposed by a more dependent status. While such basic human desires as "Liberty,
Excitement, Enjoyment" still appear to be beyond her grasp, her pursuit of "a new servitude" ironically becomes a means of asserting an individual identity. It is significant, too, that Jane Eyre approaches her future, not by deciding upon a specific career—or even a specific location in which to establish herself—but by a desire to get out; this young woman simply wants to escape the "prison-ground, exile limits" (50) that have heretofore circumscribed her life and to be "elsewhere."

And, combined with this yearning to get beyond the hegemony institutionalized at Lowood is Jane Eyre's determination, finally, to get something "of my own will." Jane Eyre is beginning to demand something for herself, and her desire to leave Lowood is not only a means of escaping the concrete conditions of her dependency, but a means of becoming further detached from a social ideology that demands selflessness in women. Jane Eyre's perspective here, her new focus on fulfilling her own "will" is, in fact, a significant dialogical contrast between hegemonous, patriarchal "morality" and her own sense of ethics; Jane Eyre's belief that her "servitude" can somehow serve her as well as others again stands in direct opposition to what Carol Gilligan would later succinctly define as "conventional definitions" of morality by which "only others are legitimized as the recipients of woman's care" (74).
The feminine voice in *Jane Eyre* is recognizable in the implicit dialogue between the protagonist's increasingly articulate sense of self worth and morality and a patriarchal hegemony which would deny it.

While the full impact of her decision to leave Lowood is not immediately apparent to Jane Eyre, the implications seize her suddenly en route to Thornfield Hall:

> It is a very strange sensation to inexperienced youth to feel itself quite alone in the world, cut adrift from every connection, uncertain whether the port to which it is bound can be reached, and prevented by many impediments from returning to that which it has quitted. The charm of adventure sweetens that sensation, the glow of pride warms it; but then the throb of fear disturbs it...I pray God Mrs. Fairfax not turn out a second Mrs. Reed; but if she does I am not bound to stay with her; let the worst come to the worst, I can advertise again...(56).

There are, indeed, "many impediments" to keep Jane Eyre from returning to the "port" she has "quitted," and the primary one is the increasingly unbridgeable distance between her own ideology and that embodied in patriarchal hegemony. In going out on her own and relying only on her "own will," *Jane Eyre* is quite literally "cut adrift from every connection" that would keep her "bound" to rules and roles designed to suppress and extinguish that will. This young woman is taking a significant step away from the morality of submission and selflessness imposed at Gateshead and reiterated in the Bible recitations at Lowood; *Jane Eyre,*
rather, is demanding to be acknowledged and rewarded for her contributions to society and, in this, we see an assertion of her own value and a recognition of her real value to others. This character is implicitly arguing against an ideology which, in demanding that women's services be done solely for the benefit of others, devalues women and denies a subjective feminine self. The marginality and dialogical relationship of Jane Eyre's perspective—the fact that she has made a significant break with the hegemony of her world—is also intensified here as Brontë emphasizes that Jane Eyre owes her freedom of movement and perspective to the fact that she is "quite alone in the world." Consequently, the possibility of this female outsider sustaining her sense of self and individuality and establishing "human affections" appears very remote, and this becomes the central conflict in Jane Eyre's engagement to Rochester.

With Rochester, Jane Eyre comes face-to-face with the paradoxical nature of her quest and the essential conflict it contains. It is through the relationship of these two characters that the dialogical feminine voice rings out most clearly as the vision of feminine identity and morality it articulates—a vision based on the equality of the individual self and mutual respect—directly challenges the hegemonous patriarchal ideology enacted in male-female
relationships. Through the contrast of Jane Eyre's personal perspective to patriarchal attitudes toward marriage, through the portrayal of Rochester's changed behavior after he proposes and through the introduction of Bertha, the ideological argument is intensified to the point that it appears there can be no conventional dramatic "resolution" to this novel. It becomes very apparent that Jane Eyre cannot enter into a conventional Victorian marriage and sustain either her sense of self or her moral perspective and, therefore, her desire to assert both an individual identity and achieve human affections—the very foundation of the moral philosophy asserted by the feminine voice—appears jeopardized. Consequently, it also becomes clear that if the argument asserted by the feminine voice itself is to be validated, Brontë must move the relationship between Jane Eyre and Rochester outside the reach of patriarchal hegemony.

Helene Moglen has noted that Brontë "came of age as a writer, as a feminist and as a human being when she insisted that it was morally desirable to establish her heroine on the same terms as the traditional hero—by virtue of her inferiority: her qualities of mind, character and personality. From this vantage point Brontë could question and pose alternatives to a romantic mythology which exaggerated sex roles defined and supported by social
structure" (107). In her discussion of the relationship between Jane and Rochester, however, Moglen both modifies her statement about an equality based upon the "interiority" of hero and heroine and seems to shift from a definition of morality founded on that equality to a more conventional definition. "Economic and social status," Moglen claims, "seem after all to be the minimum conditions of sexual equality. These would at least lend support to the sense of self which makes love possible in a patriarchal world...From this point of view, Jane's decision to leave Rochester, her decision not to live with him as his mistress, is not simply a moral issue" (129). Yet, if we look at the dialogical relationship established immediately prior to Rochester's proposal--and, later, in the conditions that allow Jane to return to him--it becomes apparent that, in fact, the "economic and social" commodification of women is precisely what Jane is challenging; through Jane Eyre's relationship with Rochester, the feminine voice exposes and attempts to deconstruct a hegemonous perspective that assesses women in terms of "beauty" and "wealth"--without in any way granting them "equality"--and challenges that perspective with a vision of morality consistent with Moglen's original definition. Jane Eyre asserts to Rochester a morality that is, in fact, based upon the characters' equality of "interiority":
I tell you I must go!" I retorted, roused to something like passion. "Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automation?--a machine without feelings? and can bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips, and my drip of living water dashed from my cup? Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong!--I have as much soul as you,--and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty, and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom or conventionalities, or even of mortal flesh:--it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if we had both passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal,--as we are!" (152).

Clearly, Jane Eyre's "sense of self" does not come from economic and social status; she not only acknowledges that she has neither, but she challenges these very conditions with her own assertion of equality. And that challenge is underscored here through the emphasis on Jane Eyre's own marginal and dialogical voice--she expressly states that her "spirit" can find voice only by stepping outside "conventionalities" and "customs" that would distort or deny it. Moreover, the assertion that Jane Eyre is an "automaton" and "a machine without feelings" in Rochester's eyes and that she would be worth something to him only if she had "beauty" or "wealth" also makes explicit the hegemony her dialogue is reacting against; a patriarchal ideology that objectifies and commodifies woman is here pitted directly against the morality based upon an equality of "interiority"--or, in Jane's words, an equality of
"soul" "heart" and "spirit"--articulated by the feminine voice. With the above passage, the connection between asserting an alternative vision of feminine identity and revising the hegemonous moral code is also underscored; the expression of a feminine identity that is individual, internal,"equal" and articulate directly challenges the morality of an ideology which objectifies women and values them only in terms of their "economic and social" market value.

Rochester, of course, wants to marry Jane Eyre not Blanche Ingram as Jane had assumed and, in his proposal, he validates the assertion of equality that informs both Jane Eyre's moral perspective and her sense of identity; he wants to marry her, Rochester claims, precisely "because my equal is here, and my likeness" (152). Brontë, however, very quickly reminds us that, despite Rochester's acknowledgment, this claim of equality cannot be sustained within a conventional marriage that objectifies and literally considers the woman to be the property of her husband. Once Jane Eyre accepts Rochester's proposal, the dialogue between the morality espoused by the feminine voice and that institutionalized in marriage is continued both through Rochester's new expectations of his future wife and through Brontë's introduction of Bertha.
Interestingly, Rochester expects a greater degree of submission from Jane Eyre, his fiancée, than he did from Jane Eyre, his hired governess. As the governess, Jane Eyre had first become attracted to Rochester because he insisted that "I don't wish to treat you like an inferior" and suggested that they both "dispense with a great many conventional forms and phrases" (80) in their dealings with one another; in the initial stages of their courtship, it was clear that Rochester appreciated and respected Jane Eyre's individuality as much as she did his. The day after Rochester's proposal, however, this relationship undergoes a dramatic change--suddenly this man not only expects a greater degree of submission from Jane Eyre, but he wants to remake her. Rochester now becomes frustrated that she refuses his advances and, despite her protestation that "You won't know me sir; I shan't be your Jane Eyre any longer" (155), he insists upon draping her in clothing and jewels that reflect his own vision of what she should be. This change in attitude is acutely apparent to Jane Eyre, who nervously notes that Rochester has suddenly "become peremptory, both in look and voice," and that this affects her to such a degree that "something of unsubstantiality and uncertainty had beset my hopes. I half lost the sense of my power over him. I was about to mechanically obey him..." (159). As she prepares to enter into marriage, Jane Eyre is
also losing her outsider's detachment and, without it, her sense of self seems about to dissolve under the "mechanical" roles imposed on women in conventional male-female relationships.

It becomes very clear that if Jane Eyre enters into a conventional marriage her sense of self and the assertion of an alternative vision of feminine identity and morality based upon the equality of that self--the dialogical alternative posited by the feminine voice--will be destroyed. As the wedding date approaches, Brontë's language again resonates with the same images of slavery that characterized the Gateshead and Lowood sections of this novel:

Glad was I to get him out of the silk warehouse, and then out of a jeweler's shop: the more he bought me, the more my cheek burned with a sense of annoyance and degradation..."It would, indeed, be a relief," I thought, "If I had ever so small an independency; I never can bear being dressed like a doll by Mr. Rochester, or setting like a second Danae with the golden shower falling daily round me...if I had but a prospect of one day bringing Mr. Rochester an accession of fortune, I could better endure to be kept by him now." And somewhat relieved by this idea...I ventured once more to meet my master's and lover's eye; which most pertinaciously sought mine, though I averted both face and gaze. He smiled; and I thought his smile was such as a sultan might, in a blissful and fond moment, bestow on a slave his gold and gems had enriched: I crushed his hand, which was ever hunting mine, vigorously, and thrust it back to him red with the passionate pressure...(161).
The dialogue between the feminine voice and hegemonous patriarchal attitudes is quite clear here in Rochester's actions and Jane Eyre's reactions. While Jane Eyre admits that she loves Rochester so much that he "was becoming my whole world to me" (165), Brontë simultaneously demonstrates the dangers of entering into a patriarchal concept of marriage which reduces the woman to a dependant and a possession and which, in so doing, certainly cannot incorporate a morality of equality and mutual respect. Consequently, even before the introduction of Bertha, it is obvious that Jane Eyre cannot enter into this marriage if she is to sustain the vision of identity and morality that she has struggled so hard to assert. Despite her love for Rochester, Jane Eyre cannot submit to his conventional attitudes toward marriage without relinquishing her own sense of self; it is once more apparent that this character's self realization is dependent upon her ability to remain an outsider to patriarchal conventions that acknowledge her only as a mindless "doll" and a will-less "slave." Moreover, while Jane Eyre does seem here to feel that an improved "economic" condition might help to sustain her sense of self, Brontë makes it clear in the conclusion to this novel that money alone is not enough to empower women in a patriarchal society.
In Bertha, Brontë not only introduces an obstacle to a marriage that would destroy the feminine identity and moral perspective advanced through her heroine, but she does so while issuing further warnings about the loss of self experienced by women in marriage and about the morality of such sacrifice. As Jane Eyre has already recognized, the sense of equality and mutual respect that form the basis of her love for Rochester is seriously undermined by just the promise of marriage, and it should not be overlooked that Bertha's primary function in this novel is to prohibit a union that would destroy the sense of self and ethical conviction that Jane Eyre has thus far embodied.

Many feminist critics, however, have demonstrated that Rochester's first wife also serves as both a double and a warning to Jane Eyre. Barbara Hill Rigney's analysis of this character's function is particularly interesting because it points to the interrelationship between feminine identity and conventional morality. Rigney notes that "Bertha serves as a distorted mirror image of Jane's own dangerous propensities towards 'passion'...Bertha embodies the moral example which is the core of Brontë's novel--in a society which itself exhibits a form of psychosis in its oppression of women, the price paid for love and sexual commitment is insanity and death, the loss of self" (16). Bertha, with her "passion" that can find no voice other than
mirthless laughter, does seem to be the "moral example" of the "loss of self" experienced by women enslaved by the patriarchal hegemony institutionalized in marriage; through Bertha's madness and caged existence, Brontë recalls Jane Eyre's earlier experience in the red room at Gateshead and the dialogical feminine voice further emphasizes the distortion of dissolution of the feminine self which results from patriarchal oppression.

An alternative, nonconventional concept of morality is perhaps most fully articulated by Jane Eyre's reasons for, and feelings about, leaving Rochester. Curiously, Jane Eyre never directly considers the obvious legal and ethical conventions against bigamy as she prepares to depart and, consequently, we can safely surmise that these are not the basis of her concern. In fact, not only is it impossible for Jane Eyre to condemn Rochester on conventional grounds, but she actually sympathizes with his plight to such a degree that she finds that the idea "that I must leave him decidedly, instantly, entirely, is intolerable. I cannot do it" (179). Although Jane Eyre realizes that she certainly must leave, the moral crises she faces here hinges not upon the hegemonous stance against bigamy, but upon the contextual question of "exploitation and hurt." The dialogical struggle between this nonconventional morality based upon mutual respect and non-violation and a
hegemonic ideology that cannot accommodate this perspective is revealed in Rochester's words and Jane Eyre's thoughts as they confront his intended bigamy:

"You make me a liar by such language: you sully my honor. I declared I could not change: you tell me to my face I shall change soon. And what a distortion in you judgement, what a perversity in your ideas, is proved by your conduct! Is it better to drive a fellow-creature to despair than to transgress a mere human law--no man being injured by the breach? for you have neither relatives no acquaintances whom you need fear to offend by living with me."

This was true: and while he spoke my very conscience and reason turned traitors against me, and charged me with crime in resisting him. They spoke almost as loud as Feeling: and that clamored wildly. "Oh, comply!" it said. "Think of his misery: think of his danger--look at his state when left alone; remember his head-long nature; consider the recklessness following on despair--soothe him; save him; love him; tell him you love him and will be his. Who in the world cares for you? or will be injured by what you do?"

Still indomitable the reply--"I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself. I keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man. I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad--as I am now. Laws and principles are not for times when there is not temptation...They have a worth--so I have always believed; and if I cannot believe it now, it is because I am insane--quite insane: with my veins running fire, and my heart beating faster than I can count its throbs. Preconceived opinions, foregone determinations, are all I have at this hour to stand by: there I plant my foot" (191).

A vision of morality outside conventional definition, an ethic based upon mutual caring and non-violation of the self reverberates throughout this passage as both Rochester and Jane Eyre raise the question of "who will be injured" by
"transgressing a mere human law," and Rochester questions the morality of the "despair" that will result from adhering to convention. But even though Jane Eyre's "conscience" and "reason" both tell her that conventional behavior is inappropriate here, her decision to leave has already been made. Although she attempts to muster her strength in this passage by blindly clinging to hegemonic "laws and principles," the worth of which she admits she "cannot believe...now," Brontë has already disclosed the real reason that Jane Eyre must leave Rochester.

At the moment that Rochester, in making a full disclosure of his past to Jane, admitted that "Hiring a mistress is the next worse thing to buying a slave: both are often by nature, and always by position, inferior: and to live familiarly with inferiors is degrading" (188), Jane Eyre resolves to leave him:

I felt the truth of these words; and I drew from them a certain inference, that if I were so far to forget myself and all the teachings that had ever been instilled into me, as—under any pretext— with any justification—through any temptation— to become the successor of these poor girls, he would one day regard me with the same feeling which now in his mind desecrated their memory. I did not give utterance to this conviction: it was enough to feel it. I impressed it on my heart, that it might remain there to serve me as an aid in the time of trial (188).

In her own mind, Jane Eyre can even envision a moral "justification" to staying with Rochester, a justification
based upon her caring and her desire not to hurt him, but she also realizes that she would be hurting herself in doing so. As Rochester's mistress, Jane Eyre would once again be relegated to the position of "slave" and "inferior," and her individual identity and equality would, in her lover's eyes, be erased, taking with it both Jane Eyre's sense of self worth and her vision of morality. It is this conviction of her self worth and her own right to be cared for, her affirmation that "I care for myself," more than the ingrained hegemonous "laws and principles" and "preconceived opinions" which automatically come to mind, that Jane Eyre upholds as she leaves Thornfield Hall.

To the Victorian reader, Jane Eyre's flight from Thornfield Hall may have appeared to conform to hegemonous ethical standards, but the heroine herself is tormented by the implications of her decision. "In the midst of my pain of heart and frantic effort of principle," Jane tells us, "I abhorred myself. I had no solace from self-approbation: none even from self-respect. I had injured--wounded--left my master. I was hateful in my own eyes" (193). Clearly, Jane Eyre is decrying hegemonous "principles" of morality that extract hurt as payment, that leave either the self or the other--or both--"wounded," and articulating an ethic of non-violation and mutual respect; even the "self-respect" that is Jane's real motivation for leaving Rochester
dissolves as she realizes that, in her "frantic effort" to grasp onto conventional rules of morality, she has violated her own principles of care and mutual respect. As she stumbles through the wilderness prior to reaching Marsh End, and in her tenuous peace at Morton and Moor House, Jane Eyre for the first time seems alienated not only from the world, but from herself; tormented by the pain she may have imposed upon Rochester, Jane Eyre can fully enjoy neither her new-found wealth nor her family. In looking for strength in hegemonous "laws and principles," Jane Eyre fails to recognize that, in leaving Rochester, she is, in fact, affirming her sense of self worth which is an essential factor to her own moral vision.

Through her relationship with St. John Rivers, Jane Eyre finally fully recognizes the necessity of remaining an outsider in order to achieve self-definition. As she contemplates her cousin's proposal, the threats of slavery, imprisonment and death that have haunted her existence return, and we again see the feminine voice confronting an ideology which institutionalizes the denial of the feminine self:

...I looked at his features...and fancied myself in idea his wife. Oh! it would never do! As his curate, his comrade, all would be right: I would cross oceans with him in that capacity; toil under Eastern suns, in Asian deserts with him in that office; admire and emulate his courage, his devotion, and vigour; accommodate quietly to his masterhood; smile
undisturbed at his ineradicable ambition; discriminate the Christian from the man; profoundly esteem the one, and freely forgive the other. I should suffer often, no doubt, attached to him only in this capacity: my body would be under rather a stringent yoke, but my heart and mind would be free. I would still have my unblighted self to turn to: my natural unenslaved feelings with which to communicate in moments of loneliness. There would be recesses in my mind which would be only mine, to which he never came; and sentiments growing there fresh and sheltered, which his austerity could never blight, nor his measured warrior-march trample down: but as his wife— at his side always, and always restrained, and always checked— forced to keep the fire of my nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry, though the imprisoned flame consumed vital after vital— this would be unendurable (245-56).

While the feminine voice in Jane Eyre never challenges the concept of romantic love, it continually exposes the threat that marriage poses to the feminine self. In this passage, there is a clearer articulation of the same loss of self that Jane Eyre experienced— and Bertha embodied— as she found herself about to "mechanically obey" Rochester after his proposal. Here, though, the dialogical feminine voice underscores both the fact that meaningful experience is personal and subjective and the fact that even this internal life is threatened by hegemonous conventions; Jane Eyre's understanding that a great deal of life takes place in the "recesses" of her "mind," and her realization that even this is likely to be "blighted" and "trampled" if she marries expresses a vision of the self and of feminine experience— and of the particular problems women
face in sustaining this vision in the face of conventions which demand their self denial—which becomes a much stronger assertion of the feminine voice in the other three novels analyzed here.

Even here, however, the feminine voice makes it clear that Jane Eyre can sustain her sense of self, her "natural unenslaved feelings," only as long as she maintains a nonconventional relationship with St. John; only by remaining detached from patriarchal conventions institutionalized in marriage can this woman resist self-dissolution and prevent her self and her individual identity from being "consumed vital after vital." And Jane Eyre's vision of the complete sacrifice of self required of her in marriage is confirmed by St. John as he rejects her offer to accompany him as his curate with the demand that "A part of me you must become" (246). While the threat to Jane Eyre's sense of identity is here associated specifically with St. John Rivers, it clearly has farther reaching implications because, in recognizing the danger, Jane also finally recognizes the essence of the identity that has for so long struggled to articulate itself to a world that refuses to hear.

What St. John scorns as her "woman's heart" (246)--her desire to care and be cared for--Jane Eyre now fully embraces, not as a mark of inferiority, but as a valid
perspective from which to view the world. In holding firm against St. John's persistent and frank offers of a dutiful, loveless marriage, Jane Eyre is also reaffirming her own sense of self and morality; the feminine perspective that St. John criticizes in her, the concern with individuality and interdependence, with mutual caring and non-exploitation, Jane Eyre again affirms as the only valid principles of judgment. And, in the juxtaposition of Jane Eyre's vision of self and morality to the cold, abstract and conversional Christian morality embodied in St. John, the dialogical feminine voice is again apparent as it directly contrasts this woman's perspective to the conventional ideology of her time. Consequently, as Jane Eyre continues to resist the "beautiful...formidable...imposing figure" (245) of St. John she is also resisting the full force of patriarchy and asserting a vision of identity, experience and morality that is outside its ideology and conventions. When Jane Eyre faces her weakest moment with St. John and is recalled by Rochester's voice, she is also recalled to herself, to her own "conscience and reason," with an opportunity to reassert her own moral perspective which became lost to her as she fled Thornfield Hall clinging to hegemonous "laws and principles."

The problem at this point in the novel is that, although Jane Eyre has achieved and affirmed an alternative
vision of feminine identity, a vision of herself and her relationship to others that asserts the self and "inferiority" as fundamental, Rochester too must change if that vision is to be validated by anyone else. While Jane Eyre now has an income of her own, the independence this might otherwise guarantee would be lost in marriage since "in mid-century the traditional subjection of wife to husband was still emphasized by the complete vesting of any property she might have had before her marriage in her husband" (Webb 406). Furthermore, although Brontë has demonstrated that Rochester himself views Jane Eyre as "my equal," this has been simultaneously undermined by the dialogical feminine voice as we see Rochester's individual assessment obscured beneath the veil of patriarchal hegemony that governs marriage. Just as Jane Eyre has had to disassociate herself from the preconceptions of her world in order to assert an individual identity, Rochester must now move outside the dominant perspective in order to recognize the alternative vision of feminine identity and morality conveyed through Jane Eyre.

Although she overlooks the dialogical and deconstructive implications of her own significant insights, Rosemarie Bodenheimer provides a reading of Jane Eyre that suggests a reason for the rather contrived ending of this novel. In an article entitled "Jane Eyre in Search of Her
Story," Bodenheimer begins by asserting that "a crucial tension is established between Jane's moral progress in designing her story and the novel's implicit assertion that 'truth' is not credibility, that it is made of different, less coherent stuff" (158), but concludes that:

Jane's own story is forever veering into one or another recognizable literary mode, only to be brought up short in a comic deflation...Yet this quiet but constant undertow of concern to claim originality for Jane's character and narrative actually takes the form of using, then apparently disengaging from literary models, as though the only possibility of originality in a world full of other stories were the ability to draw back and recognize them as conventions. The stance is really a dependent position of independence...(162-63).

In order to tell her own story, Jane Eyre must, in fact, deconstruct those "conventions" which would distort that story, and this is not a matter of dependence so much as it is one of necessity. And the extent to which this deconstruction goes beyond literary deconstruction is underscored by the ending of this novel. The fire at Thornfield, which not only kills Bertha but leaves Rochester blind, maimed and a recluse at Ferndean, reveals in the magnitude of its effects the kind of disruption and reorientation required before those enveloped in a hegemonous perspective will even hear the arguments asserted from the outside. With the destruction of Thornfield, Bronte moves Jane Eyre and Rochester geographically away
from "society" and isolates them at Ferndean, where "even when within a very short distance of the manor-house, you could see nothing of it" (259). And Rochester, of course, is even farther removed; having literally lost sight of, and touch with, the world, Rochester is completely dependent upon Jane Eyre to act as his "eyes and hands" (262); instead of imposing a masculine perspective onto this woman's experience, Rochester must now experience the world through her "translation" of it.

The ending of Jane Eyre is disturbing not only because it appears to be such a contrived literary resolution, but because of what it says about the possibility—or impossibility—of the perspective asserted by the dialogical feminine voice affecting the contemporary social context. Only in this rather unrealistic situation, which has almost no connection with society, can the vision of feminine identity and morality dialogically articulated through Jane Eyre become a practical reality. It is only thus removed that Jane Eyre's vision of self, equality and mutual respect can be affirmed through a marriage in which she can proudly claim that "I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine...To be together is for us to be at once, as free as in solitude, as gay as in company" (272). And it is only in this remote situation—and stripped of his own sensory connections with the world—that Rochester can finally
accept Jane's perspective; "I was then his vision, as I am still his right hand," Jane informs us, "He saw nature—he saw books through me; and never did I weary of gazing for his behalf, and of putting into words the effect," and Rochester "claimed these services without shame or dampening humiliation" (272). Through Jane Eyre's story, the dialogical feminine voice has not only demonstrated the necessity of remaining an outsider in order to achieve an alternative definition of feminine identity and morality, but it seems to suggest, too, that only other outsiders will be able to hear it, that only a blind and crippled patriarchy will be able to acknowledge the perspective it articulates.
1. Gilligan's delineation of the stages of feminine moral development is worth noting because these crises and transitions are the same ones that Brontë highlighted in Jane Eyre nearly one hundred and fifty years earlier:

In this sequence, an initial focus on caring for the self in order to ensure survival is followed by a transitional phase in which this judgement is criticized as selfish. The criticism signals a new understanding of the connection between self and others which is articulated by the concept of responsibility. The elaboration of this concept of responsibility and its fusion with a maternal morality that seeks to ensure care for the dependent and unequal characterizes the second perspective. At this point the good is equated with caring for others. However, when only others are legitimized as the recipients of women's care, the exclusion of herself gives rise to problems in relationships, creating a disequilibrium that initiates the second transition. The equation of conformity with care, in its conventional definition, and the illogic of the inequality between other and self, lead to a reconsideration of relationships in order to sort out the confusion between self-sacrifice and care inherent in the conventions of female goodness. The third perspective focuses on the dynamics of relationships and dissipates the tension between selfishness and responsibility through a new understanding of the interconnection between other other and self. Care becomes the self chosen principle of a judgment that remains psychological in its concern with relationships but becomes universal in its condemnation of exploitation and hurt...an increasing differentiation of self and other and a growing comprehension of the dynamics of social interaction...informs the development of an ethic of care. This ethic, which reflects a cumulative knowledge of human relationships, evolves around a central insight, that self and other are interdependent (74).

With her transition from slave and prisoner at Gateshead and Lowood to servant at Thornfield to wife and partner at Ferndean, the nature of Jane Eyre's struggle against a patriarchal "morality" that threatens to extinguish both her physical and psychological existence follows the same blueprint that Gilligan has outlined more than a century later. In Brontë's novel, Jane Eyre's
initial struggle for simple "survival" within patriarchal conventions that would either literally or figuratively kill her gives way to a battle against the "inequality" of these male-generated traditions and results, finally, in a feminine vision of identity based upon equality, interdependence, caring and non-exploitation of the self.
"One of these days," she said, "I'm going to pull myself together for a while and think—try to determine what character of a woman I am, for, candidly, I don't know. By all the codes which I am acquainted with, I am a devilishly wicked specimen of the sex. But some way I can't convince myself that I am. I must think about it."

--Kate Chopin, The Awakening

The dialogical feminine voice in The Awakening makes itself heard through Edna Pontellier's refusal to label herself, in the insistence that feminine identity exists outside conventional definitions of women's "character" and in the juxtaposition of Edna's own sense of morality to hegemonous "codes" which would deem the feminine outsider "wicked." As in Jane Eyre, the feminine voice in The Awakening is recognizable in its revelation of and argument with a socio-ideological context that dehumanizes women and degrades feminine identity. And, as with all the novels analyzed here, the tension created by this dialogical feminine voice is not a tension incidental to, or separate from, the novel's overt "plot"; rather, the tension created by these conflicting assertions of feminine identity.
accentuates and is integral to the novel's dramatic conflict. In her introduction to The Awakening, Nina Baym acknowledges both that "it is impossible not to see specific women's questions" in this novel and that Chopin is obviously concerned "with how being a woman may be a constraint on a person's full humanity" (xxxiv). Yet Baym diminishes the textual and contextual implications of her own insight by adding that:

The issue of self and society is certainly bigger than a "woman's issue," and Chopin's greatest contribution to the woman's question—as it was called in her own day—may well be her use of a female protagonist to represent a universal human dilemma...in considering the ways in which The Awakening deals with questions specific to women, one needs to have a sense of how these questions were perceived in Chopin's own time...[and] within the frame of feminist thinking of the time, Edna's "case" does not really develop as a "woman's issue" story (xxxiv, xxxvii).

The issue of self and society is certainly a "universal human dilemma," but Baym fails to pursue the fact that not everyone confronts that dilemma from the same social vantage point; in fact, Baym's earlier observation about Chopin's concern with how "being a woman" places a "constraint" on achieving a full sense of self indicates that the text itself reveals a socio-ideological context that restricts women in very particular ways and, consequently, particularizes for them the "issue of self and society." The suppression of the feminine self may not, in itself,
have been a "woman's question" during Chopin's day, but, as Baym indicates, it is certainly a social and political reality that makes itself felt in Chopin's text, and it is through the exposition of argument with that reality that the dialogical feminine voice makes itself heard in The Awakening.

One of the greatest constraints placed on women, both in life and in literature, is labels which would reduce them to one-dimensional, selfless stereotypes, and it is the repressive ideology inherent in such labeling that the feminine voice directly challenges in The Awakening. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have so excellently demonstrated in the introduction to The Madwoman in the Attic, "women writers...have been especially concerned with assaulting and revising, deconstructing and reconstructing, those images of women inherited from male literature, especially...the paradigmatic polarities of angel and monster" (76). Not only is it exactly these "paradigmatic polarities" that come under attack in The Awakening, but the entire ideology underlying such catagorization is exposed and rejected by the dialogical feminine voice in this novel. It is significant that Edna Pontellier, like the heroines in all the novels analyzed here, is quick to say what she is not, but refuses to articulate what exactly what she is.
Edna's sense of self is directly and deliberately juxtaposed to the angel and monster paradigms, yet the feminine identity she herself asserts is never expressed in concrete terms. Rather, Edna understands her identity to exist in "thoughts and emotions that never voiced themselves" (244) and to encompass the apparent oppositions that constitute "life's delerium" (258), while Chopin underscores this vision of an irreducible, inexpressible feminine integrity through impressionistic and allusive passages celebrating a multidimensional self. The dialogical feminine voice in The Awakening makes itself felt in the direct challenge this suggestion of integrity and identity poses to a socio-ideological context that categorizes and dichotomizes feminine identity.

It is interesting, too, that Chopin herself seems to have delighted in contemporary critics' inability to pin down her protagonist's "character," and refused to label Edna Pontellier even in the wake of reviews unanimously critical of that character. In a tongue-in-cheek letter to Book News following criticism that her novel was "trivial" and "unwholesome," that its plot involved a man who "proves strong enough to resist temptation, while she [Edna Pontellier] is too weak to think of atoning for her fault..." and that "the story is a simple one, not without charm, but not altogether wholesome in its tendency" (Payne
Chopin "apologized" with the explanation that:

"Having a group of people at my disposal, I thought it might be entertaining (to myself) to throw them together and see what would happen. I never dreamed of Mrs. Pontellier making such a mess of things and working out her own damnation as she did. If I had had the slightest intimation of such a thing I would have excluded her from the company. But when I found out what she was up to, the play was half over and it was too late (Rankin 173).

Wryly acknowledging that she does, indeed, have a certain "group of people at my disposal," Chopin also states that Edna Pontellier is an outsider to that "company"; unlike the stereotypical feminine characters conveyed in Madame Ratignolle and Madamoiselle Reisz, Edna Pontellier's character is complex and unpredictable. And, despite Chopin's feigned lack of control, it becomes quite clear in The Awakening that Mrs. Pontellier's function is precisely to "make such a mess of things" that we come to question not the weakness of this character's integrity, but the depth and life of the one-dimensional, feminine characters that surround her. As Edna Pontellier strives in this novel to define, in her own terms, "what character of a woman I am" and Chopin simultaneously refuses to name that character, we see the dialogical feminine voice asserting a vision of feminine identity that cannot be reduced to simple stereotypes.
In *The Awakening*, then, the dialogical feminine voice not only exposes and rejects the angel/monster paradigm that lies behind the "mother-woman" and "artist" labels conventionally applied in Edna Pontellier's world, but it also reveals and argues against the logic inherent in such categorization. Although Toril Moi seems, finally, to fall victim to the same theory of unity that she challenges—a unity which fixes meaning and, in so doing, becomes a unity of exclusion—her criticism of Gilbert's and Gubar's call for an integrated feminine aesthetic sheds some light on the aversion to naming that is so characteristic of the feminine voice:

...A fragmented conception of self or consciousness would seem to Gilbert and Gubar the same as a sick or dis-eased self...But this emphasis on integrity and totality as an ideal for women's writing can be criticized as a patriarchal or—more accurately—a phallic construct. As Luce Irigaray and Jaques Derrida have argued, patriarchal thought models its criteria for what counts as 'positive' values on the central assumption of the Phallus and the Logos as transcendental signifiers of Western culture. The implications of this are often astonishingly simplistic: anything conceived of as analogous to the so-called 'positive' values of the phallus counts as good, true or beautiful; anything that is not shaped on the pattern of the Phallus is defined as chaotic, fragmented, negative or nonexistent. The Phallus is often conceived of as a whole, unitary and simple form, as opposed to the terrifying chaos of the female genitals. Now it can be argued that Gilbert and Gubar's belief in unitary wholes plays directly into the hands of such phallic aesthetic criteria... (66-67).
Certainly, the need to assign "positive values" through naming can be seen as part of this phallocentric and logocentric drive both to eliminate contradiction and ambiguity and to possess the object whose "meaning" has been thus determined. But it appears to be the particular kind of unity that results from this drive—rather than the concept of unity itself—that we see this feminine voice arguing against. After all, some sort of integrating process is required in order even to conceive of the self, and the integrating self conveyed by the feminine voice in its refusal to give a name to feminine identity is a self that is unified precisely because it incorporates the apparent contradictions that naming would deny. Naming threatens this concept of a multidimensional but integrated self because it becomes the fragmenting force as, in giving voice to one aspect of identity, it denies many others. And it is this fragmenting, dichotomizing logic behind the specific, conventional names associated with feminine identity that the feminine voice reveals and refutes in all the novels here, and this ideological confrontation is the primary source of tension in The Awakening.

The dialogical feminine voice in The Awakening makes it clear that the binary logic inherent in naming and categorization is such an integral part of patriarchal hegemony that those deeply indoctrinated in that perspective
are blind to alternative concepts of meaning. In the stereotypical alternatives of Madame Ratignolle and Mademoiselle Reisz, the feminine voice not only exposes the "extreme images of 'angel' and 'monster' which male authors have generated" (Madwoman 17) and which Gilbert and Gubar see all women writers struggling against, but it also reveals the reductive and myopic ideology underlying those extreme oppositions. In Chopin's novel, we come to see the binary logic inherent in such "extreme images," and the so-called morality it perpetuates in its demand for self-denial, as a direct threat to the concept of of a multidimensional, but nonetheless integrated, feminine identity asserted by the feminine voice. As Helene Cixous has pointed out, "death is always at work" (64) within this logic because one can never be on both sides of the opposition--to assert the characteristics of one side is to deny those belonging to the other. But the insidiousness of the phallocentric and logocentric ideology behind naming goes even further, since it is equally true that to deny one side of the opposition automatically asserts the other. It is the fragmentation and self-denial inherent in this perspective that the feminine voice in The Awakening exposes in the angel/monster dichotomy conveyed through Madame Ratignolle and Mademoiselle Reisz, while the blind, self-perpetuating logic underlying that perspective is
exposed in the attitudes of Edna Pontellier's acquaintances who can conceive of her identity in no other terms. Through the juxtaposition of these character's and attitudes to Edna Pontellier's sense of self and assertion of identity, the dialogical feminine voice rings out quite clearly in Chopin's novel.

The alternative vision of feminine identity Chopin asserts is thus foreign to hegemonic patriarchal ideology and can only be attained and sustained through a conscious awareness and rejection of the conventional perspective. In *The Awakening*, the protagonist's ability to achieve an integrated sense of self is the result of her ability to understand that her individual identity transcends the bounds of society's traditional definitions of "woman"; but, as in *Jane Eyre*, her ability to communicate that unique identity is only possible so long as others can also step outside the dominant perspective enough to recognize alternative possibilities.

Thus, Edna Pontellier is immediately established as an outsider by inclination as well as by circumstance. Transported from the austere, bluegrass fields of Kentucky to the effusive Creole culture of New Orleans, both Edna and the characters around her quickly recognize that "She is not one of us; she is not like us" (200). And it is made quite clear, too, that it is not simply a matter of regional
conventions that separates this character from the others. The sense that her detachment from larger traditions, the sense that her real identity exists outside the roles she performs and the slots into which the world would classify and mold her, we are assured, has preceded Edna's regional transition. "Even as a child," the narrator informs us, "she had lived her own small life all within herself...she had apprehended instinctively the dual life--that outward existence which conforms, the inward life which questions" (190). And, as Edna Pontellier's "instinctive" knowledge of that subjective "life...within herself" grows stronger, as her understanding of her own experience as something much more complex than those divisive, self-denying definitions of woman to which the world would make her "conform" becomes more pointed, her determination to remain outside the narrow definitions hegemonous conventions would impose on feminine identity is intensified. It is through Edna Pontellier's assertion of herself as an outsider, through her awareness of an unnamable "inward" experience and self that is significantly different from the identity to which the world would have her conform, that we see the dialogical feminine voice asserting the marginality of its own vision and positing a concept of feminine identity that directly challenges the hegemonous patriarchal perspective.
Although, in her "outward existence" Edna is a wife and mother; she is firmly established as an outsider to the paradigmatic "mother-woman" role so esteemed by her society, and both the paradigm and Edna's marginality are stressed in our introduction to Adel Ratignolle:

In short, Mrs. Pontellier was not a mother-woman. The mother-women seemed to prevail at Grand Isle...Many of them were delicious in the role; one of them was the embodiment of every womanly grace and charm. If her husband did not adore her, he was a brute, deserving of death by slow torture. Her name was Adele Ratignolle. There are no words to describe her save the old ones that have served so often to picture the bygone heroine of romance and the fair lady of our dreams. There was nothing subtle about her charms; her beauty was all there, flaming and apparent: the spun gold hair that comb nor confining pin could restrain; the blue eyes that were like nothing but saphires; two lips that pouted, that were so red one could only think of cherries or some other delicious crimson fruit when looking at them...Never were hands more exquisite than hers, and it was a joy to look at them when she threaded her needle or adjusted her gold thimble to her taper middle finger as she sewed away on the little night drawers of fashioned a bodice or a bib (181-82).

The feminine voice is apparent here in the hyperbolic introduction of Adele Ratignolle which parodies— or "mimics," as Irigaray would say—"the old [words] that have served to picture the bygone heroine of romance and the fair lady of our dreams" and exaggeratedly recreates in Madame Ratignolle one of the classic stereotypes of feminine identity. We see in this character the perfect embodiment of the "angel" or "madonna" paradigm— the conventional label applied to "good" women who fulfill the roles a patriarchal
society has outlined for them. Significantly, this stereo-typical concept of feminine identity has no more depth than Chopin's purposefully archaic description, because it does not allow for a self at the center. The sense that this very conventional "role" excludes the possibility of asserting a personal identity, that it, in fact, demands self denial, is highlighted not only through this exaggerated introduction of the "mother-woman" ideal, but through Adele Ratignolle's subsequent behavior; in Adele's total devotion to her husband and children and in the confinement necessitated by her seemingly continual state of pregnancy, the feminine voice reveals the self denial at the center of this revered image of woman. As Gilbert and Gubar have noted, the very essence of the "angel text" is "the surrender of her self--of her personal desires, or both--that is the beautiful angel-woman's key act...[and] to be selfless is not only to be noble, it is to be dead. A life that has no story...is really a life of death" ([Madwoman] 25). And, in the firm insistence that "Mrs. Pontellier was not a mother-woman," we see the feminine voice beginning a dialogue with the ideology that perpetuates such selfless stereotypes by asserting a vision of feminine identity that exists outside conventional labels, roles and expectations.
The argument between the feminine voice and the ideology of feminine selflessness inherent in the "mother-woman" label is most clearly and obviously articulated by Edna Pontellier herself as she firmly and repeatedly rejects the role that is imposed with the label. Although she has two sons of her own, Edna straightforwardly admits to Adele Ratignolle that "I would give up the unessential; I would give my money, I would give my life for my children; but I wouldn't give myself. I can't make it more clear; it's only something which I am beginning to comprehend, which is revealing itself to me" (244).

Obviously, Edna not only recognizes that her identity, her sense of "myself," exists outside of and is larger than the conventional definition of the mother-woman, but she also senses the threat which that stereotype poses to self-realization and vehemently asserts that her sense of self will not be subjugated to the role. And, as Edna is aware, her vision of identity can be sustained and asserted only as long as she does not "give herself" over to the role, only as long as she remains an outsider to the connotations and expectations patriarchal hegemony has imposed on the word "mother." But Edna is a mother and she is a woman, and the pervasiveness of the socio-ideological context that creates the stifling conventions attached to those terms is revealed both in Adele Ratignolle's
bewildered response to Edna's assertion and in the only alternative definition of feminine identity that her culture recognizes.

A larger ideological argument emerges through Edna's relationship with Madamoiselle Reisz, and the feminine voice is again apparent as it exposes and rejects not only another conventional definition of feminine identity, but the logic behind such definition. In order to sustain and assert an alternative feminine identity, Edna must not only resist the mother-woman stereotype, but she must also refuse the "artist" or "monster" paradigm that is the other side of the coin and, therefore, remain outside the only concepts of feminine identity her society recognizes. The fragmentation and distortion of self inherent in both the conventional definitions themselves and in the either/or logic that perpetuates them becomes quite clear when, in the introduction of Madamoiselle Reisz, we see an equally exaggerated embodiment of Adele Ratignolle's paradigmatic opposite:

...She was dragging a chair in and out of her room, and at intervals objecting to the crying of a baby, which a nurse in the adjoining cottage was endeavoring to put to sleep. She was a disagreeable little woman, no longer young, who had quarreled with almost every one, owing to a temper which was self-assertive and a disposition to trample upon the rights of others. Robert prevailed upon her to play without any too great difficulty.

She entered the hall with him during a lull in the dance. She made an awkward, imperious little bow as
Chopin's description of Madamoiselle Reisz's "small weazened face and body and eyes that glowed" is, quite explicitly, the portrait of a monster and quite obviously a direct contrast to the earlier idealization of the mother-woman as characterized by Adele Ratignolle. Not surprisingly, the "self-assertive" and "unpleasant" Madamoiselle Reisz who finds a crying baby objectionable, is also an artist. As Gilbert and Gubar have pointed out, the monster women, unlike the selfless angels, are selfish and crafty; the monster women, according to the patriarchal ideology that constituted them, are "committed only to their own private ends" and are seen as deformities meant to repel, [who] in their very freakishness...possess unhealthy energies, powerful and dangerous arts" (Madwoman 26). The binary logic that produces this definition of feminine identity, of course, imposes it upon any woman who refuses to assume the selflessness of the angel, upon any woman who would attempt to create and assert an identity of her own; by openly rejecting the angel label and role, in other words, a woman simply finds herself cast as its paradigmatic opposite, and the integrity of the identity she is trying to assert is once again fragmented and denied. Consequently, although
Edna Pontellier is "not a mother-woman" and, while she does paint and draw, it is also clear that she must resist the artist/monster label if she is to assert an alternative vision of feminine identity.

As she was with Adele Ratignolle, Edna is distanced from Madamoiselle Reisz through both narrative contrast and the character's own recognition of her difference. Unlike the "homely," "weazened," antisocial musician, Edna is attractive and sensuous and, in certain moods, she enjoys being surrounded by friends. In addition, Edna herself both firmly denies that the label "artist" captures her identity and refuses to embrace those paradigmatic qualities of the "monster" which convention attaches to that label and which the feminine voice exposes in the exaggerated character of Madamoiselle Reisz. Despite the fact that Edna devotes more and more time to her art—and even begins selling her paintings—she insists that "I am not a painter" (259). For Edna, painting is neither her life's ambition nor a summation of her identity, but simply one thing that, on a sunny day, she enjoys doing: "being devoid of ambition, and striving not toward accomplishment," the narrator tells us, "she drew satisfaction from the work itself" (285). And, although Edna is one of the few people toward whom Madamoiselle Reisz senses an affinity, this artist creates for Edna a "disagreeable impression" and she bluntly tells
the "homely little musician" that "I don't know whether I like you or not" (297); clearly, Edna can no more sublimate her multifaceted sense of self to the paradigmatic role of artist-woman than she can to the role of mother-woman. The dialogical feminine voice is quite apparent here as, in distancing Edna Pontellier from Madamoiselle Reisz as well as Adele Ratignolle, it reveals and rejects the binary logic inherent in the angel/monster dichotomy and asserts a concept of feminine identity that exists outside such a reductive perspective; in Edna Pontellier we see the assertion of a feminine identity that challenges the fragmentation inherent in conventional definitions of women as, in her "outward existence," Edna shares traits conventionally attributed to both the angel and the monster while, in her "inward life," she demonstrates a complexity conventionally attributed to neither.

As Edna becomes increasingly convinced that "becoming herself" can be accomplished only by "daily casting aside that fictitious self which we assume like a garment with which to appear before the world" (260), the feminine voice is recognizable in the insistence that the hegemonous socio-ideological perspective stifles the recognition and expression of a complex feminine identity. And, in direct contrast to those one-dimensional, male-generated paradigms of feminine identity parodied in Adele Ratignolle and
Madamoiselle Reisz, the "self" that we see Edna Pontellier "becoming" is deliberately drawn impressionistically and allusively. To avoid simply entrapping Edna in another label that excludes more than it includes, to avoid constructing for her another logocentric and phallocentric vision of "identity" that dichotomizes and distorts by denying complexity and ambiguity, Chopin creates in her protagonist an identity that is expansive and diffuse and, in so doing, challenges the conventional ideological perspective.

While Edna herself will steadfastly assert her sense of "myself," she is equally steadfast in her refusal to formalize that identity by articulating it in concrete terms; she asserts to herself, rather, that she has "thoughts and emotions which never voiced themselves," which "belonged to her and were her own, and she entertained the conviction that they concerned no one but herself" (244). In Edna, the feminine voice asserts a feminine identity that takes into account the individual self, an identity that consists of internal, subjective and self-affirming processes rather than external, conventional prescriptions and which contains an integrity that defies the fragmentation and self-denial inherent in those dictums; we see in Edna the assertion of a feminine identity that "belonged to her," an identity that exists outside of—and encompasses much more than--those conventional paradigms of
woman to which it is directly juxtaposed.

Edna Pontellier's own awareness of a powerful but unnamable identity is intensified by the narrator's reluctance to convey that essence in concrete terms. The identity that Edna realizes but never names is conveyed by the narrator in impressionistic language that frequently echoes Whitman. By creating a backdrop of experience that is suggestive rather than concrete, the feminine voice creates a sense of identity and integrity that is the very antithesis of conventional definitions of woman. Very early in *The Awakening* the sea becomes reflective of Edna's emerging sense of self, and through the impressionistic and allusive narrative meditation on the sea, we begin to get a clear sense of the type of identity and integrity the feminine voice posits:

In short, Mrs. Pontellier was beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and about her. This may seem like a ponderous weight of wisdom to descend upon the soul of a young woman of twenty-eight--perhaps more wisdom than the Holy Ghost is usually pleased to vouchsafe to any woman.

But the beginning of things, of a world especially, is necessarily vague, tangled, chaotic, and exceedingly disturbing. How few of us ever emerge from such a beginning.

The voice of the sea is seductive; never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander for a spell in an abyss of solitude; to lose itself in mazes of inward contemplation.

The voice of the sea speaks to the soul. The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace (189-90).
We again see Chopin making use of the deconstructive force of mimicry as, through the allusion to the Annunciation, she both exposes the phallocentric and logocentric insistence on absolute, abstract truth and simultaneously challenges that concept of truth through the implicit contrast to the subjective, "individual" truth which "descends" upon Edna. And both the parody and the insistence on a subjective feminine self direct us to the confrontation between the feminine voice and the conventional ideological perspective. Clearly, the feminine voice is articulating in Edna an identity as a complex "human being" and an "individual" rather than a hackneyed stereotype that is simply the vehicle which affirms male-defined "truth." It is made clear, in fact, that this vision of feminine identity is so removed from the hegemonous perspective that it marks the "beginning" of a new "world," a territory so uncharted that mapping it out can be "exceedingly disturbing." And that new world, that territory so previously unacknowledged, is, of course, the subjective feminine self.

As the feminine voice directs us inward in its assertion of an alternative vision of feminine identity and integrity, we see a direct reflection of the real social context in which woman find themselves and a firm rejection of hegemonous socio-ideological perspective which deems them
selfless. After all, patriarchal ideology has so tightly restrained women within the conventional roles it imposes upon them that the only real freedom they can achieve is a psychological--rather than an actual--detachment from them. Moreover, the affirmation of a subjective, feminine self asserts a sense of identity and integrity that cannot be violated, segmented or destroyed by "the world...about her."

In the "abyss of solitude" within her own mind, Edna Pontellier can explore and affirm the regions of herself that are denied to her by conventions that would fragment feminine identity; in her "inward life which questions," Edna can experience and assimilate her own complexity and recognize an individual identity which celebrates both ambiguity and complexity.

The complexity and multiplicity of the identity asserted in Edna Pontellier are magnified in The Awakening by Chopin's allusions to Whitman. The description above of the "never ceasing, whispering...murmuring" "voice of the sea" not only leads us into the realm of Edna Pontellier's "inward contemplation," but also strongly recalls the "whisper and "lisp" of the "melodious" sea in Whitman's "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking." Consequently, as the "awakening" of a male poet is superimposed onto the identity to which Edna herself is awakening, we see the feminine voice dialogically challenging the whole concept of gender
designation as it attempts to deconstruct the binary logic which can only define one gender in terms of its opposition to another. Whitman's own realization in his poem that "Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake/And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer,/louder and more sorrowful than yours,/A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me,/never to die" (213-14), is so closely intertwined here--and throughout The Awakening--with Edna's own awakening to the various and varied facets of herself that we get a sense of identity that "deconstructs" the masculine/feminine dichotomy that some say lies behind all binary oppositions. Through both the allusions to Whitman and Chopin's own impressionistic conveyance of Edna's identity, in other words, we see the feminine voice asserting in this character a complex identity that defies both the specific, one-dimensional and selfless definitions of woman which convention enforces and the entire ideology of exclusion behind those definitions; the very essence of the identity asserted by this feminine voice is that it contains "a thousand songs," songs that may be considered in themselves "angelic" or "monstrous" or "masculine" or "feminine" but which, together, create a complexity and integrity that incorporates apparent contradictions and oppositions. This vision of integrity, the identity the feminine voice has "started to life" in Edna Pontellier, is
one of a multidimensional self which, because it is realized within the "abyss of solitude" of the mind, remains outside of and unviolated by even the most confining conventions imposed upon women. Consequently, we again see the feminine voice posing a direct challenge to the definitions of feminine identity which are here caricatured in Adele Ratignolle and Mademoiselle Reisz.

Female sexuality, of course, is also debased or denied by conventional definitions of femininity and, in The Awakening, the feminine voice is also recognizable in the insistence that Edna Pontellier is a sexual being who is attuned to, and in command of, her own sexual impulses. Both the self-denying angel woman, who "gives herself" for her husband's pleasure, and the monster woman, who Gilbert and Gubar note is either "'unsexed' or freakish because sexually 'fallen'" (Madwoman 63), are distortions of female sexuality and, in Edna Pontellier, we see an attempt to construct a sexuality which accepts and celebrates its own nature.

In her introduction, Baym concludes that viewing "Edna's sexual emancipation as a feminist issue...would be somewhat anachronistic" because:

...As a matter of ideology, these Victorian and late Victorian feminists tended rather to downgrade the body and its passions than find life's essence there; they wanted women to develop their willpower and their intellect, not their capacity for pleasure.
If we understand this background, we will see that Chopin's treatment of Edna's sexual awakening, with its intensely private focus, is not particularly feminist either in its way of formulating the question or in its "answers" to it. Sexuality is portrayed with unusual frankness for the time and place, but that frankness does not derive from any conviction that more honest or open sex will lead to socially, or personally desirable goals for women. Edna is really no better off as a result of her expanded sexual consciousness...(xxxvii-xxxvii).

The Victorian "ideology" that "downgrades the body" in order to assert the "intellect" reflects the same either/or ideology which, in its various manifestations, we have seen the feminine voice expose and dialogically challenge throughout The Awakening, and the "question" posed by Edna's sexuality can be seen as a further attempt to undermine that fragmenting perspective. As Edna continues to divorce herself from hegemonic assumptions about femininity and becomes more insistent about her own complex identity, she also becomes increasingly determined not to relinquish her sexuality. Reflecting upon her affair with Alcee Arobin, Edna quite calmly "felt as if a mist had been lifted from her eyes, enabling her to look upon and comprehend the significance of life, that monster made up of beauty and brutality. But among the conflicting sensations that assailed her, there was neither shame nor remorse. There was a dull pang of regret because it was not love which had held this cup of life to her lips" (301).
While Edna would have preferred that "love" accompany this encounter, she feels "neither shame nor remorse" that it did not, and her experience with Arobin is neither romanticized nor condemned by the narrator; we see, rather, an assertion of feminine identity that "downgrades" neither the body nor the intellect as Edna Pontellier consciously acknowledges the significance of her sexual desire and consciously and without guilt rejects the fact that romantic love is a necessary condition for expressing it. In The Awakening, Edna's sexuality becomes a significant facet of feminine identity which further detaches this character from conventional definitions and which, in so doing, implicitly calls those definitions into question. Through this dialogical challenge, it becomes clear that Edna is "better off as a result of her expanded sexual consciousness" because that consciousness further undermines and deconstructs the dichotomies that phallocentric and logocentric thought imposes on feminine identity and allows Edna to assert a feminine identity that integrates body and intellect; to deny the significance of Edna's sexuality in this novel would deny an aspect of her self so fundamental that the result would be an image of woman as one-dimensional and selfless as those to whom we see her juxtaposed.
While the feminine voice is apparent in the assertion of a "character of woman" that rises above and defies hackneyed stereotypes of feminine identity, it is also apparent in the more pessimistic suggestion that the ideological perspective that creates those stereotypes is so blinded by its own logic that it can recognize no alternatives. As we have seen, Edna's ability to "become herself," her ability to recognize her complex individuality, is dependent upon her ability to recognize and reject the conventions her culture imposes upon women, yet the feminine voice also suggests that the ideology behind those conventions is so hegemonous that such deconstructive questioning never even occurs to most people. With Robert Lebrun's rejection of Edna at the end of the novel, and Adele Ratignolle's warning to "think of the children" (343), Chopin resurrects the monster and angel paradigms and it becomes clear that the hegemonous acceptance of the binary logic behind those "paradigmatic polarities" poses the greatest threat to Edna's assertion of a complex feminine identity.

The dialogic challenge Edna Pontellier poses to the conventional perspective is made quite explicit when Chopin brings Edna and Robert together for the last time. While Edna is as determined to assert her awakened sense of self as she is to confess her love, the identity she claims
eludes Robert. When Edna declares that "you never consider for a moment what I think, or how I feel your neglect and indifference. I suppose this is what you would call unwomanly; but I have got into the habit of expressing myself. It doesn't matter to me, and you may think me unwomanly if you wish" (336), Robert denies this accusation, but his subsequent actions speak otherwise. Robert can see this woman only as Leonce Pontellier's wife, and both her claim to a distinct identity and her "habit of expressing" herself do become for him "unwomanly" in their defiance of convention. The narrator tells us that "his face grew a little white" as Edna informs him that "I am no longer one of Mr. Pontellier's possessions to dispose of or not. I give myself where I choose. If he were to say, 'Here, Robert, take her and be happy, she is yours,' I should laugh at you both" (339). The idea that Edna sees herself and her experience as separate from and outside of her husband's control and never questions the "morality" of her assertions--the fact that she is rejecting the selflessness characteristic of the mother-women Robert flirted with at Grand Isle--is both unsettling and incomprehensible to Robert; he is entirely oblivious to this woman as an individual and can see only his world's definitions of "woman." Robert's final rejection of Edna, his declaration that "I love you. Good-by--because I love you" (346), is a
confirmation of the slot Edna will be forced into if she insists upon rejecting the "mother-woman" label and role; by attempting to assert an identity of her own, Edna will simply be seen by the world—even by Robert, who "loves" her—as an aberrant "monster," and her individuality will once again be obliterated by a label that deliberately denies it. With Robert's rejection, it becomes clear that the logocentricity and phallocentricity that governs the conventional perspective blinds it to the possibility of a complex feminine identity which resists labels.

The ideological confrontation between the feminine voice and the conventional perspective in *The Awakening* reaches a climax when the argument initiated by the feminine voice in the assertion that "Mrs. Pontellier was not a mother-woman" is brought full circle. It is Edna's children, finally, who most clearly illuminate both the "death at work" (Cixous 64) in conventional definitions of feminine identity and the demands of the ideology that promotes them. With Adele Ratignolle's admonition to "think of the children" ringing in her ears, Edna realizes that even her sons will only be able to see her as their world defines her. It becomes increasingly clear to Edna that, in order to be judged a good mother by both her children and her culture, she must relinquish her sense of self to the label and role. Understanding that "I don't want anything
but my own way. That is wanting a good deal, of course, when you have to trample upon the lives, the hearts, the prejudices of others— but no matter— still, I shouldn't want to trample upon the little lives" (345), Edna begins to perceive her double bind. The "prejudices" which patriarchal convention imposes upon the term "mother" are so pervasive and so ingrained that, even should she be willing to "trample upon" them, they would only persist so that, in defying them, she would ultimately be trampling upon the "little lives" of her own children who expect their mother to be exactly what their world says she should be. And Edna is fully aware of what is expected "for the children." It is the role of the selfless, self-sacrificing angel that we see embodied in Adele Ratignolle, a role which we are assured "was not a condition that fitted [Edna]... she could see in it but an appalling and hopeless ennui," a role which causes her to feel "a kind of compassion for Madame Ratignolle—a pity for that colorless existence that never uplifted its possessor beyond the region of blind contentment... in which she would never have the taste of life's delirium" (258). The idea of that "colorless existence," that conventional view of woman that denies self realization, becomes so oppressive to Edna, and is so antithetical to the identity we have seen asserted in her, that "the children appeared before her like antagonists who had overcome her, who had
overpowered and sought to drag her into the soul's slavery for the rest of her days" (350).

Finally, it is impossible to understand Edna's suicide without acknowledging the ideological argument that has been taking place throughout the novel. It has become clear that Edna can sustain her sense of self only as long as she can assert herself as an outsider to conventions which would fragment that self according to the paradigmatic mother-woman/artist-woman polarities. Through the argument implicit in the contrast of Edna to Adele Ratignolle and Madamoiselle Reisz it becomes apparent that, for Edna to "live" at all, she must remain outside an ideological perspective which, in its denial of contradiction and ambiguity, dichotomizes and destroys the feminine identity Edna embodies. But it is also clear that the binary logic inherent in the classic dichotomy of feminine identity is so hegemonously accepted that Edna cannot assert an identity that lies outside its premises. And the self sacrifice required by the conventional perspective, Edna has repeatedly indicated, is worse than death.

Edna's suicide, in fact, can be seen in the same light as Julia Kristeva's explanation of the writer who tries but fails to "destroy and renew" the "social code":

It should be equally understandable why suicide...marks the failure of a revolution...a [transcendental] "rescue" is...impossible for the heterogeneous,
material, and polylogical experience of the subject in unsettling process. But what about suicide: It is, indeed, the ultimate gesture, if one exists, and which is prevented only by the jouissance of regaining control—the recovery of the "I," this "springing of the subject" against (as one says, "leaning against") her, the other, as well as against the others, the other in itself; against the symbolic, structuring, regimenting, protective, historicizing thesis—to be shifted, traversed, exceeded, made negative, and be brought to jouissance ("The Novel as Polylogue" 206).

The very thing that Edna Pontellier's world will not allow is the "jouissance" of a "heterogeneous, material and polylogical experience" of herself. Unlike Brontë, Chopin has not moved her protagonist away from the world governed by social codes in order that the alternative vision of feminine identity she embodies can be acknowledged, and suicide does, in fact, become in this novel both the ultimate affirmation of the unnamable identity. Edna Pontellier attempts to assert and the ultimate condemnation of social codes which she cannot "destroy and renew." And, in the dialogical relationship thus established through Edna's suicide, the feminine voice underscores the argument it has sustained throughout this novel.
CHAPTER III

Mrs. Dalloway: The Privacy of the Soul

She would not say of anyone in the world now that they were this or they were that. She felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged. She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on. She had a perpetual sense, as she watched taxi cabs, of being out, far out to sea and alone; she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day. Not that she thought herself clever, or much out of the ordinary. How she had got through life on the few twigs of knowledge Fraulein Daniels gave them she could not think. She knew nothing; no language; no history; she scarcely read a book now, except memoirs in bed; and yet to her it was absolutely absorbing; all this; the cabs passing; and she would not say of Peter, she would not say of herself, I am this, I am that.

--Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway

Clarissa Dalloway's recognition of herself as an outsider and her absolute refusal to either accept or impose rigid definition reflects Virginia Woolf's own determination to redefine experience and identity from a feminine perspective. In the twentieth century, the refusal to accept conventional, male-generated visions of life becomes a much more overt concern for white, middle class women writers, and we see in their novels not only a stronger assertiveness in the open rejection of a
hegemonous patriarchal perspective, but a new confidence in the validity of their own perspectives. Mrs. Dalloway's resistance to classification, her insistence that she will not condense her personal identity to caricature with the simplistic, objectifying statement, "I am this, I am that," combines the moral indignation we saw in *Jane Eyre* with the aversion to naming that we saw in *The Awakening*. And, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the dialogue between the feminine voice and the conventional perspective is quite explicit as Mrs. Dalloway herself challenges and rejects those same issues that the feminine voice brought to the forefront in the earlier novels; in *Mrs. Dalloway*, we again see the assertion of a complex, contradictory feminine identity directly juxtaposed to a socio-ideological perspective which, in the name of "conversion...feasts on the wills of the weakly, loving to impress, to impose, adoring her own features stamped on the the face of the populace" (151) and, in so doing, would fragment and destroy Woolf's vision of feminine identity.

Moreover, Woolf herself not only felt that the concept of feminine identity needed to be reconstituted from a feminine perspective, but she also believed that this redefinition would and should take the form of dialogue. While Woolf's critical essays frequently reflect her own belief that "any emphasis, either of pride or of shame,
consciously upon the sex of a writer is not only irritating but superfluous," she believes that this emphasis is unnecessary because the "enormous difference in experience" between the genders will make itself felt anyway, through "infinite differences in selection, method and style" ("Women Novelists" 70-71). To Woolf, in other words, a dialogue necessarily emerges as the woman writer attempts to convey her "different experience"—her own marginal perspective—and discovers that she must first confront and deconstruct patriarchal conventions which would distort it:

Before the nineteenth century literature took almost solely the form of soliloquy, not of dialogue. The garrulous sex, against common repute, is not the female but the male; in all the libraries in the world the man is to be heard talking to himself and for the most part about himself. It is true that women afford ground for much speculation and are frequently represented; but it is becoming daily more evident that Lady Macbeth, Cordelia, Ophelia, Clarissa, Dora, Diana, Helen and the rest are by no means what they pretend to be. Some are plainly men in disguise; others represent what men would like to be, or are conscious of not being....Some of the most famous heroines even of nineteenth century fiction represent what men desire in women, but not necessarily what women are in themselves...

...Granted that the woman of the middle class has now some leisure, some education, and some liberty to investigate the world in which she lives, it will not be in this generation or in the next that she will have adjusted her position or given a clear account of her powers. 'I have the feelings of a woman,' says Bathsheba in _Far from the Madding Crowd_, 'but I have only the language of men.' From that dilemma arise infinite confusions and complications. Energy has been liberated, but into what forms is it to flow? To try the accepted forms, to discard the unfit, to create others that are more fitting, is a task that must be
accomplished before there is freedom or accomplishment ("Men and Women" 65,67)

To Woolf, not only does the feminine perspective—a woman's assignment of values to experience—exist outside hegemonous, male-generated definitions of feminine identity but, because the conventions of language itself would distort that perspective, a dialogue necessarily emerges as the woman novelist comes up against and attempts to deconstruct and reconstruct all those conventionally "accepted forms." In fact, Woolf's distrust of language is so deep that there is almost no dialogue between the characters in Mrs. Dalloway; rather, the dialogical effect in this novel is the result of contradictory perspectives converging around the same external reality.

It is not surprising, then, that in novels such as Mrs. Dalloway, the motifs of subjectivity and the isolated, marginalized self, and of personal integrity and interpersonal communications, become so central to Woolf's concept of feminine identity and experience; because women do view life from outside the hegemonous patriarchal perspective which has engendered them, and because, like Mrs. Dalloway they know "no language" and "no history" of their own, it is only as they confront and reject the conventional ideological perspective that they can validate their own experiences and find the terms with which to
express themselves without "crushing or distorting" their own sense of identity (Woolf, "Women and Fiction" 48). And, in the clear contrast between the experience of the feminine self embodied in the protagonist and conventional definitions of feminine identity which attempt to objectify, dichotomize and deny that self, the dialogue between the feminine voice and the dominant socio-ideological perspective reverberates throughout Mrs. Dalloway.

While Woolf's criticism supports the theory of a dialogical feminine voice, her novels seem to insist upon it. Both the fact that Mrs. Dalloway embodies a marginal perspective and the fact that the dialogical voice here is specifically feminine become apparent in Mrs. Dalloway's insistence that she is an outsider and in the fact that she is marginalized for no reason other than gender. In terms of class, Peter Walsh, Septimus Warren Smith and Miss Kilman are all outsiders to a much greater degree than Mrs. Dalloway. Yet it is only Mrs. Dalloway who actively rejects the socio-ideological perspective that has marginalized her, and her reasons for doing so are specifically attached to her sense of her individual identity; the very fact that Woolf makes it clear that this is a white, middle class perspective--the fact that Mrs. Dalloway certainly has no objections to her class standing--then, helps us to identify what is specifically feminine.
Mrs. Dalloway's acknowledgment of herself as an outsider reflects both a rejection of conventional values and an understanding that it is only by detaching herself from those values that she can assert her own subjective perspective and reconstitute meaning and identity. Mrs. Dalloway's sense of her marginality—and her recognition of the significance of this fact—becomes clear in the contrast she sees between her life with Richard and what she imagines a life with Peter Walsh to have been like:

There was an emptiness about the heart of life; an attic room. Women must put off their fine apparel. At midday they must disrobe...The sheets were clean, tight stretched in a broad white band from side to side. Narrower and narrower would her bed be...For the House sat so long that Richard insisted, after her illness, that she must sleep undisturbed. And really she preferred to read of the retreat from Moscow. He knew it. So her room was an attic; the bed narrow; and lying there reading, for she slept badly, she could not dispel a virginity preserved through childbirth which clung to her like a sheet...She could see what she lacked. It was not beauty, it was not mind. It was something central which permeated...(45-46).

The imagery with which Woolf conveys Mrs. Dalloway's perceptions here greatly illuminates her recognition of herself as an outsider. For, although Mrs. Dalloway articulates it vaguely, referring to the "emptiness about the heart of life," it is the starkness and emptiness of her attic room and her feelings of nakedness and a "virginity preserved through childbirth" that impart the overwhelming sense of her being cut off from the world around her even as
she stands at its social center. And, while this sense of isolation and marginality leaves Mrs. Dalloway feeling that she "lacked...something central that permeated," there is also the sense that this position protects something central.

For, despite the ambivalence that overcomes Mrs. Dalloway in her attic room—the feelings that she both "lacked" something but "preferred" life this way—Woolf makes it clear that she has deliberately chosen this life with Richard; Mrs. Dalloway married Richard rather than Peter Walsh because "in marriage a little license, a little independence there must be between people living together in the same house; which Richard gave her...But with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into. And it was intolerable...they would have been destroyed" (10). Through the dialogical feminine voice in this novel, it becomes apparent that, to Mrs. Dalloway, Peter's "intolerable" sharing would have "destroyed" her sense of identity and integrity by dissecting, redefining and objectifying that personal, subjective process which assigns value to experience and creates meaning in life. In Mrs. Dalloway's rejection of Peter, we see both the recognition that the isolation resulting from her marginality is necessary to preserving "something central" in herself and the beginning of an argument against the objectifying,
alienating effects of language itself. And, through Mrs. Dalloway's specific objection to conventional marriages--her assertion that "a little independence there must be between people living together"--and her implicit objection to language, we see the feminine voice beginning a dialogue which ultimately challenges the relationship of the self to social codes and the very process of engenderment.

One way that the dialogical argument in *Mrs. Dalloway* becomes specifically feminine is through Woolf's constant insistence that the hegemony her protagonist is combating is patriarchal. On a more theoretical level, however, both the emphasis on a complex, creative subjective self and the insistence that patriarchal hegemony is a threat to the unique integrity of that self which we see in *Mrs. Dalloway*--and so many novels written by white, middle-class women--can be seen as a logical reaction to the engendering process that has marginalized women. In *Alice Doesn't*, an analysis of the relationship of women to cinema, Teresa de Lauretis attempts to tie the concept of experience directly to social position of the subject. Asking how we can even begin to "envision women as subjects in a culture that objectifies, imprisons and excludes" (10) them, de Lauretis underscores both Mrs. Dalloway's sense of knowing "no language...no history" and Woolf's comments that "in all the libraries in the world, the man...is talking to himself
and...about himself" with a more fundamental reality:

...In this context [psychoanalysis] subjectivity, or subjective processes, are inevitably defined in relation to a male subject, that is to say, with man as the sole term of reference. Hence the position of women in language...is one of non-coherence; she finds herself only in a voice of meaning, the empty space between the signs...a place not represented, not represented, not symbolized and thus preempted to subject (or self) representation (8).

De Lauretis, like Luce Irigaray and Woolf herself, goes on to argue that the possibility of woman as subject, of woman as interpreter of experience, has been denied to the extent that women are provided no terms with which to represent themselves as such. Consequently, according to de Lauretis, even in introspection women are affected by the social context which "en-genders" them as they struggle against language itself. Following this reasoning, then, even subjectivity is not entirely separate from or unaffected by external, cultural reality, and de Lauretis suggests that "experience" be viewed as "an ongoing process by which subjectivity is constructed semiotically and historically...a complex of habits resulting from the semiotic interaction of 'outer world' and 'inner world,' the continuous engagement of a self or subject in social reality" (182). This is the same general concept of experience that the dialogical feminine voice asks us to consider in Mrs. Dalloway, yet the interaction between the
self and the "outer world" becomes much more complex in Woolf's novel than in de Lauretis' brief definition; in Mrs. Dalloway, experience is certainly defined as the engagement of the self in "social reality," yet the self is a potentially creative agent in this process and, consequently, attempts to "construct" subjectivity through the imposition of conventional values are exposed as immoral because they threaten to usurp the power of the self by denying its creativity. And, as both Woolf's own theory of the woman novelist's need "to alter the established values" in order to reflect "the natural shape of her thought without crushing or distorting it" ("Women and Fiction" 48) and the narrative structure of Mrs. Dalloway affirm, this need to assert the self is a particularly feminine concern because it is the natural result of women's specific position on the margins; one of the most obvious ways in which women have been both engendered and marginalized is in the denial of their subjective perspectives and, consequently, they must actively and creatively reconstitute the social context if that perspective is to be asserted and sustained.

The feminine voice in Mrs. Dalloway is apparent, then, in Woolf's assertion of a creative, subjective feminine self who both recognizes and rejects the hegemonic values which have marginalized her and attempts to alter that social
context through the projection of her own, subjective perspective. While the narrative perspective in Woolf's novels has often been considered problematic, it is, in fact, through the shifting and often overlapping points of view that Woolf sustains and underscores the argument between the feminine voice and the patriarchal social code. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf attempts neither to deny her authorial presence in favor of recording the direct, subjective impressions of her characters nor to undermine the impact of external, cultural reality; rather, through her shifts in point of view, Woolf conveys the subtle interweaving of social and subjective reality and the ability of the marginalized feminine self to assert a unique and individual sense of identity and integrity within this experience.

In his close analysis of the "brown stocking" passage in *To The Lighthouse*, Erich Auerbach proposes that Woolf's shifts in perspective suggest "that we are here after all confronted with an endeavor to investigate an objective reality" (*Mimesis* 536). It appears, however, that through those "overlapping, complementing and contradictory" perspectives which also prevail in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf is forcing us to consider subjective experience from a feminine point of view. In a culture which objectifies and distorts their identities and restricts their actions, women must
necessarily look beyond the hegemonous values of that culture in order to affirm a sense of self and assert an alternative vision of identity. And, in Woolf's novel, the creative interaction of the self with the social world in order to assert an identity and integrity denied by patriarchal ideology becomes a specifically feminine experience; while this is not accomplished by all the women characters is Mrs. Dalloway, it nonetheless becomes clear that the processes of engenderment make it impossible for the marginalized male to achieve the same creative interaction.

In other words, the feminine voice is apparent behind Woolf's narrative technique which insists that an alternative vision of feminine identity can only be achieved through the creative interaction of the subjective self with the external world; through Woolf's narrative technique we see both the assertion of a feminine identity that encompasses and transforms the "social reality" that exists outside the self and the exposition and rejection of conventions that would attempt to deny this simultaneously deconstructive and creative process. And Woolf locates this process only in Mrs. Dalloway:

For having lived in Westminster—how many years now? Over twenty—one feels even in the midst of the traffic, or waking at night, Clarissa was positive, a particular hush, or solemnity; an indescribable pause; a suspense (but that might be her heart, affected, they
said, by influenza) before Big Ben strikes. There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. Such fools we are, she thought, crossing Victoria Street. For Heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh; but the veriest frumps, the most dejected of miseries sitting on doorsteps (drink their downfall) do the same; can't be dealt with she felt positive, by Acts of Parliament for that very reason; they love life (4-5).

Despite the fact that there is clearly an authorial voice pointing out that "Clarissa was positive," that this is what "she thought," the subjectivity, the sense of the inner life of the character herself, is not diminished in this passage and, through her split perspective, Woolf manages not only to focus on the processes of Mrs. Dalloway's imagination, but to convey her own vision of feminine experience, identity and integrity.

Because there are third person references to Clarissa Dalloway in the above passage, it is difficult to determine where the authorial voice ends and Mrs. Dalloway's own perspective begins, yet it is precisely because of this intermingling of perspectives that Woolf's own vision becomes apparent. Whether it is Woolf's voice or Mrs. Dalloway's voice, or both, that declares the hour struck by Big Ben "irrevocable" and then goes on to add that the "leaden circles dissolved in the air," Woolf manages to convey in this passage her own sense of the natures of objective, cultural reality and the subjective feminine
self; the only sense of the significance of the passing of the "irrevocable" hour is in the fact that Mrs. Dalloway has heard it declared through the "booming" of Big Ben. This conventional tribute to the passage of time does not—and cannot--irrevocably and absolutely separate past from present and we are led to wonder, as its booming voice simply dissolves, if it is this imposing but feeble attempt to dictate order by dissecting the moment that leads Mrs. Dalloway to consider what "fools we are." Woolf creates here the sense that, although the external, conventional reality of Big Ben certainly makes itself felt, its significance lies not in its imposition of absolute truth and order but, rather, in the sense of order that Mrs. Dalloway creates around it; it is Mrs. Dalloway's power to encompass and transform what goes on around her, her "making it up, building it round...tumbling it, creating it," that imposes the real unity here. What we see here, in fact, is Mrs. Dalloway deconstructing and reconstituting meaning.

And, through this subjective process which incorporates what is outside the self into the self and, in so doing, reconstitutes its meaning, we see the feminine voice dialogically challenging hegemonic assumptions about both meaning and feminine identity. What emerges from this passage is the sense of Clarissa Dalloway as an active, creative subject who assigns her own values to the world
around her and who is quite aware of herself in the process; this alternative vision of feminine experience—of an active, creative reconstitutive process that "can't be dealt with...by Acts of Parliament"—is the very point on which the author's voice and the character's voice seem to merge in this introduction to Mrs. Dalloway. For, if it is not the character who feels that "heaven only knows why one loves it so," and goes on to equate "life" with the creative, transformational processes of the subjective self, it is an extremely unassertive author, and the very ambiguity in point of view here creates a fusion between the two. And, as the result of this fusion, the feminine voice emerges in the assertion of an active, creative feminine self who asserts as a direct, dialogical challenge to hegemonic conventions—even "Acts of Parliament"—that would attempt to eclipse that self.

The dialogical feminine voice becomes even more distinct in this novel in Mrs. Dalloway's specific objection to hegemonic, patriarchal conventions that would usurp the creativity necessary for the feminine self to reconstitute meaning and identity. This argument is made most explicit in Mrs. Dalloway's vehement rejection of those conventions that demand passivity and selflessness:

Love and religion! thought Clarissa, going back into the drawing room, tingling all over. How detestable, how detestable they are...The cruelest things in the
world, she thought, seeing them clumsy, hot, domineering, hypocritical, eavesdropping, jealous, infinitely cruel and unscrupulous...love and religion. Had she ever tried to convert anyone herself? Did she not wish everybody merely to be themselves? And she watched out of the window the old lady opposite climbing upstairs...let her, as Clarissa had often seen her, gain her bedroom, part her curtains, and disappear again into the background. Somehow one respected that—that woman looking out of the window, quite unconscious that she was being watched. There was something solemn in it—but love and religion would destroy that, whatever it was, the privacy of the soul (191-92).

To Mrs. Dalloway, love and religion—those traditional bastions for women in a male-defined world—are "domineering, hypocritical, eavesdropping, jealous, infinitely cruel" impositions because they deny the right of the individual to assert her own values and, therefore, they suppress the subjective self; love and religion require passivity and selflessness in women and demand that personal interpretation give way to prescribed, male-conceived perspectives. Within the alternative vision of feminine experience asserted in Mrs. Dalloway, it is the subjective self that creates meaning and identity, and it is this that Mrs. Dalloway realizes as she laments the effects of love and religion and declares as "solemn" "the privacy of the soul" which she sees reflected in the woman next door. To Mrs. Dalloway, "the old lady opposite," who neither imposes herself nor is imposed upon, represents a personal integrity which a woman can attain only by actively rejecting
patriarchal conventions that deny feminine subjectivity. And, again, the feminine voice becomes quite distinct here in the dialogical relationship Woolf establishes between Mrs. Dalloway's insistence on "the privacy of the soul" and hegemonous conventions that would override individual interpretation.

In fact, we see the feminine voice attempting to assert in Mrs. Dalloway a concept of "identity" and integrity that is much closer to Kristeva's "subject in unsettling process" than it is to conventional notions of the unity of the transcendental ego. Although many critics have noted a tension in Woolf's novels, it is usually attributed either to the conflict between the "external world" and "the internal world" (Freedman 216) or to that between the simultaneous desire to maintain the integrity of the ego and to "get...outside the ego" (Naremore 156). While both of these conflicts are certainly apparent in Mrs. Dalloway, they are part of a much larger ideological argument concerning the constitution of identity. As Mrs. Dalloway struggles to assert and communicate a sense of self and integrity which encompasses not only contradiction, but also the "other," the nature of language again comes under attack. As in The Awakening, an argument emerges against the static, objectified and fragmented identity asserted through naming; through the dialogical feminine voice in
this novel we come to see that the problem with saying "I am this" or "I am that"--the problem with giving a name to identity, in other words--is the objectifying and dichotomizing effect on a subject who not only embraces contradiction, but who is reluctant to entirely separate herself from the other. The alternative vision of feminine identity we see see asserted by the feminine voice as it argues even against the stabilizing effects of language, then, is quite similar to Kristeva's subject in process who "springs...against the symbolic, structuring, regimenting, protective historicizing thesis" ("The Novel as Polylogue" 206). While Kristeva certainly does not suggest that this is a feminine process, Woolf does seem to suggest that the engendering process itself makes this a uniquely feminine experience.

In order to convey this alternative vision of feminine identity as subjective "process," Woolf is very careful to convey in Mrs. Dalloway an identity that eludes formal definition. By revealing a complex, often contradictory woman who certainly cannot be labeled as simply "this" or "that," and by giving Mrs. Dalloway only a very vague physical definition, Woolf, like Chopin, asserts in her protagonist an identity that cannot be objectified and stereotyped and an integrity that encompasses contradiction and ambiguity. And, once again, the dialogical feminine
voice is apparent in the assertion of a creative, multi-faceted inner self which is directly contrasted to the conventional view of identity:

How many millions of times she had seen her face, and always with the same imperceptible contraction! She pursed her lips when she looked in the glass. It was to give her face point. That was her self--pointed; dartlike; definite. That was her self when some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one woman who sat in her drawing room and made a meeting point...never showing a sign of all the sides of her--faults, jealousies, vanities, suspicions...(55).

The fact that we see no concrete image reflected in the mirror does not indicate that Mrs. Dalloway lacks identity; rather, Woolf's refusal to give Mrs. Dalloway specific form and feature, and this character's own recognition of how "incompatible" the reflection in the glass is to her own sense of "self," conveys a sense of identity that eludes the "structuring, regimenting...thesis" of formal definition. In remarking that the "self" reflected in the mirror exists "for the world only," and in enumerating those intangible "other sides of her" that cannot be given definite shape, Woolf creates in Mrs. Dalloway an identity that is subjective, complex and contradictory--an identity which is, in fact, a subjective process rather than an objective fact. And, by juxtaposing Mrs. Dalloway's sense of self to the image in the mirror, this vision of identity is directly
contrasted to "the world's" objectifying, one-dimensional view of her. While Mrs. Dalloway understands that the world may, indeed, see her as "one centre," her own sense of identity and integrity resides beneath the surface in the ambiguous, competing and contradictory "jealousies, vanities, suspicions" which cannot be objectified. To Mrs. Dalloway, the horror of saying "I am this, I am that" is that it reduces identity to one thing and denies both her complexity and her subjectivity, and she is determined not to give in to such definition. Through Mrs. Dalloway's own perception of herself as a complex, contradictory individual, and through Woolf's juxtaposition of Mrs. Dalloway's sense of identity and integrity to "the world's" perception of her, we see a direct challenge to an ideological perspective which both strives to eliminate ambiguity and contradiction by formalizing and naming identity and attempts to deny feminine subjectivity; as in The Awakening, the feminine voice in Mrs. Dalloway becomes apparent in the assertion of a feminine identity that is unified precisely because it contains contradiction and ambiguity and in the implicit--and here explicit--challenges this presents to phallocentric and logocentric concepts of identity.

In Mrs. Dalloway, the dialogical feminine voice is also apparent in the insistence that language can only be a
threat to the multidimensional, subjective process of identity asserted in Mrs. Dalloway. Mrs. Dalloway's famous parties, in fact, appear to be a direct challenge to language in the "attempt to communicate" (280) identity without reducing and distorting it beneath "ideologically saturated" (Bakhtin 271) discourse—an attempt to find a means of expression that actually transcends and subverts language:

...But could any man understand what she meant either, about life? She could not imagine Peter or Richard taking the trouble to give a party for no reason whatever. But to go deeper, beneath what people said (and these judgments, how superficial, how fragmentary, they are!) in her own mind now, what did it mean to her, this thing she called life? Oh, it was very queer. Here was So-and-so in South Kensington; some one up in Baywater; and somebody else, say in Mayfair. And she felt quite continuously a sense of their existence; and she felt what a pity; and she felt if only the could be brought together; so she did it. And it was an offering; to combine, to create; but to whom (184-85).

This passage echoes Woolf's own sentiments about language belonging to men and the need for women to create their own forms of expression. In the dialogical relationship between Mrs. Dalloway's contrast of her own understanding of "life" to the "superficial...fragmentary" judgments of "other people" and what "any man" understands of it, the argument between the feminine voice and the patriarchal perspective embedded in language itself becomes more explicit. In stating only that she feels "quite continuously a sense of
their existence," Mrs. Dalloway consciously avoids labels and "judgments" that would objectify, fragment and reduce the identities of others; rather, in Mrs. Dalloway's understanding that the identities of others have become a part of her own subjective experience, we see the assertion of an integrity and identity that incorporates, rather than excludes and objectifies, the other. In Mrs. Dalloway, language is exposed not only as a threat to the integrity of this alternative vision of identity, but as an alienating force that underscores the separation of the self and the other. Mrs. Dalloway's parties seem to be an "offering" and a challenge, an attempt to communicate something of the self that defies conventional definition; they are an attempt "to create" a means of communication that subverts the dichotomizing effects of language and translates the self into something more than the objectified, alienated other.

The reason that it becomes clear that the alternative vision of identity and experience being asserted here is a particularly feminine perspective is not simply because Woolf embodies this vision in a female protagonist, but because of the relationship she reveals between the self and a hegenomous patriarchal perspective. James Naremore has suggested that the contrasts among kinds of experience in Woolf's novels are between "an active life that is time-bound...a world of separateness, struggle and death;
and on the other hand an immersed, passive life without any sense of personality or time, a watery world of emotion and feminine sensibility which makes of all experience a great unity" (135). While it is true that Woolf does juxtapose masculine and feminine experience in *Mrs. Dalloway*, and that the former is characterized by divisiveness and the latter by "unity," Naremore's analysis of the role of "personality" and his distinction between the "active life" and the "passive" one denies what is actually taking place here; Woolf's assertion of an alternative feminine identity and experience makes the self's recognition of itself as the creative, unifying agent essential, and this experience is certainly an active one. And, again, this creative process can be seen as particularly feminine not simply because Woolf associates *Mrs. Dalloway* most closely with it, but because of the engendering process that has necessitated it; in order to overcome what de Lauretis calls the "non-coherence" of a cultural perspective that denies them subjectivity, women must both actively assert themselves as subject and actively attempt to deconstruct and reconstruct the ideological perspective that has objectified them and rendered them passive and powerless. Furthermore, masculine experience in *Mrs. Dalloway* is, in terms of personality, the passive one; masculine experience in this novel is specifically associated with a patriarchal hegemony that
refuses to see the self as the active, creative agent in the process of constituting meaning and identity.

Not all the women in Mrs. Dalloway achieve the alternative vision of feminine experience and identity asserted through the protagonist and, in those who do not, we see the feminine voice exposing the powerlessness and suppression of "personality" experienced by women who refuse to challenge the patriarchal social context which has engendered them. As if to underscore the extent to which these women have accepted and assumed hegemonous, patriarchal values, Woolf drapes them in pseudo-masculine affectations; Miss Kilman always appears clad in her galoshes and army-surplus coat and Lady Bruton "had the reputation...of talking like a man" (160-61). More significant, however, is the repression of self and "personality" we see in these women. Miss Kilman, we are told, "turned into a church two years three months ago" (188). Instead of asserting her "hot and painful feelings" and her "grudge against the world" (188) which has marginalized her, Miss Kilman submerges her sense of self beneath the very perspective that enforces her powerlessness and creates those intense feelings; instead of attempting to reshape social realities through the projection of her own marginalized, subjective perspective, Miss Kilman relinquishes her sense of self to an establishment that
extols "calm" (189) and passivity at the expense of individual personality. Through Miss Kilman, who is marginalized by class as well as gender, Woolf also seems to be asserting her own view that women cannot even begin the process of "adjusting" their "positions" until they have some sort of economic independence.

Lady Bruton does have that independence yet, despite her "reputation...of talking like a man," she can't even compose a letter to the *London Times*. And this is precisely because she embraces a hegemonous perspective that empowers men and marginalizes women; rather than asserting her self and attempting to reconstitute a socio-ideological perspective which makes her "feel the futility of her womanhood," Lady Bruton passively stands "in deference to the mysterious accord in which they [men], but no woman, stood to the laws of the universe" (165); rather than actively reshaping the social context which engenders her and renders her mute, Lady Bruton denies both the creative potential of her subjective self and the socio-ideological nature of her "feminine" identity. The only way Lady Bruton can imagine herself gaining a voice and becoming empowered is in her dreams of becoming a man as she picks up the phallic "baton such as her grandfathers might have held" and "command[s] battalions" (169). And the dialogical feminine voice is quite apparent as, through both these women, it
both reveals the degree to which women are marginalized and
disempowered by patriarchal hegemony and emphasizes that
only by actively recognizing and rejecting the conventions
of that hegemony can an alternative vision of feminine
identity and experience by asserted.

Significantly, the dialogical feminine voice in Mrs.
Dalloway is also apparent behind the depiction of the
dangers a patriarchal society poses to the marginalized
male. As de Lauretis points out, "subjective
processes...are inevitably defined in relation to a male
subject" and, in Mrs. Dalloway, this engendering process is
also exposed as a threat to the marginalized male identity;
through the portrayal of Septimus Warren Smith, it becomes
clear that the same socio-ideological perspective that
excludes the possibility of feminine subjectivity and places
masculine subjectivity "in mysterious accord" with "the laws
of the universe" makes it impossible for the marginalized
male to assume the role of the active, disruptive,
reconstructive "subject in process" that is conveyed in Mrs.
Dalloway.

While Septimus begins his adult life recognizing
himself as an outsider and imagining himself a poet, he is
also a man and, as such, he is forced to actively
participate in the world of men; the visionary poet that
Septimus once saw in himself is first "swallowed up" (127)
by the routine of a clerical job in London and is, finally, totally destroyed by the war in Europe. Most importantly, though, Septimus emerges from his devastating induction into patriarchal hegemony believing that, in fact, his mind does mirror the laws of the universe. Unlike Mrs. Dalloway, Septimus does not recognize the interaction of the self with the external world and, because of his inability to distinguish between subjective and absolute truth, he can reconstitute neither meaning nor his own identity and, therefore, can pose no threat to people like Holmes and Bradshaw. Through Septimus's inability to recognize his subjective self, Woolf conveys his insanity, but the feminine voice is also apparent here as it parodies phallocentric and logocentric thought processes:

But they beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made the statement. The sparrows fluttering, rising, and falling in jagged fountains were part of the pattern; the white and blue, blurred with black branches. Sounds made harmonies with premeditation; the spaces were as significant as the sounds. A child cried. Rightly far away a horn sounded All taken together meant the birth of a new religion...(32-33).

Septimus Warren Smith's self-awareness and "personality" do "dissolve" within his vision of universal harmony, and the coherence and unity which he so pathetically seeks in his experience cannot be realized.
And, what is exposed here as Septimus contemplates the "pattern," "harmony" and universal significance of the random and indifferent events that take place around him—as he imagines his mind to be attuned to the "laws of the universe"—is not only his insanity, but the phallocentric and logocentric drive to assert and impose "universal" truth. Ironically, the thought processes revealed in Septimus's insane vision—the belief in absolute truth and the refusal to recognize the subjective self as an active agent in creating meaning—are the same ones that are acted upon by Holmes and Bradshaw in their insistence upon "conformity" and "proportion." While Septimus senses the threat that these men pose, he is trapped within the very logic they attempt to impose and, therefore, he can issue no challenge and begin no dialogue; Septimus has actually been "converted" by the Holmses and Bradshaws of the world long ago and, consequently, he cannot hope to assert himself and reconstitute the context because he knows no argument. The dialogical feminine voice makes it clear that Septimus's masculine engenderment within a patriarchal hegemony has left him no voice with which to argue against the logic it embodies and, suicide, therefore, is the only way he can rebel.

Septimus's suicide, in fact, reflects the same inability to deconstruct and reconstruct social codes that
we saw in Edna Pontellier's suicide. The significant
difference, however, lies in the fact that Edna had
first tried to dialogically "renew" those
codes--something that it is impossible for Septimus
to attempt. And, in a passage remarkably similar to
Kristeva's later analysis of suicide versus the "recovery of
the I" as a subject in unsettling process ("The Novel as
Polylogue" 203), Mrs. Dalloway herself makes the same sort
of connection:

She had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine,
never any thing more. But he had flung it away. They
went on living...they would grow old. A thing there
was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with
chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop
every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had
preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt
to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of
reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them;
closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone.
There was an embrace in death...
Or there were the poets and thinkers. Suppose he had
had that passion, and had gone to Sir William Bradshaw,
a great doctor yet to her obscurely evil...extremely
polite to women, yet capable of some indescribable
outrage--forcing your soul, that was it--if this young
man had gone to him...might he not then have said
(indeed she felt it now), Life is made intolerable;
they make it intolerable, men like that (280-81).

But Mrs. Dalloway has done something "more," something
which, in this novel, is impossible for the marginalized
male to accomplish. Unlike Septimus, Mrs. Dalloway does
"recover the I" and here we see the dialogical feminine
voice working through her to expose and deconstruct those
same issues it has brought into question throughout. In Mrs. Dalloway’s insistence that language, or “chatter,” obscures what “mattered,” in her insistence that identity can best be communicated without language—“indeed she felt it now”—and in her insistence that “forcing the soul” through the imposition of hegemonous conventions is an "indescribable outrage," she presents a deconstructive and reconstitute challenge which Septimus could not. Through Mrs. Dalloway’s final arguments, and through the final juxtaposition of Mrs. Dalloway to Septimus, the dialogical feminine voice in Mrs. Dalloway continues to challenge both the relationship of the self to the "social code" and the engendering process that affects that relationship.
CHAPTER IV

A Book of Common Prayer: Continuing the Argument

Charlotte would call her story one of passion. I believe I would call it one of delusion. My name is Grace Strasser-Mendana, nee Tabor, and I have been for fifty of my sixty years a student of delusion, a prudent traveler from Denver, Colorado. My mother died of influenza one morning when I was eight. My father died of gunshot wounds, not self inflicted, once afternoon when I was ten. From that afternoon until my sixteenth birthday I lived alone in our suite at the Brown Palace Hotel. I have lived in equatorial America since 1935 and only twice had fever. I am an anthropologist who lost faith in her own method, who stopped believing that observable activity defined anthropos. I studied under Kroeber at California and worked with Levi-Strauss at Sao Paulo, classified several societies, catalogued their rites and attitudes on occasions of birth, copulation, initiation and death; did extensive and well-regarded studies on the rearing of female children in the Mato Grasso and along certain tributaries of the Rio Xingu, and still I did not know why any one of these female children did or did not do anything at all...I did not know why I did or did not do anything at all.

--Joan Didion, A Book of Common Prayer

Despite social changes that allow women to work equally with men and to travel on their own, the dialogical feminine voice in A Book of Common Prayer exposes a contemporary context permeated with the same patriarchal hegemony which defined the nineteenth century worlds of Brontë and Chopin and the post-World War I milieu of Virginia Woolf. Didion's...
contemporary world is still governed by "rites and attitudes" established by men and still classifies the behavior of "female children" trapped within that structure according to "methods" and theories which define women not as subjects, but as objects of exchange. This is still a world, therefore, that can only be incoherent and incomprehensible from a feminine perspective. And, as one woman who calls herself "de afuera" (the outsider) examines the "motive" of another woman whom she describes as "an outsider of romantic sensibility," the dialogical feminine voice becomes quite apparent in this novel. Through Grace Strasser-Mendana's revelation of a historical and political perspective in terms which render it blatantly absurd, and through Charlotte Douglas's attempts to "revise" that perspective, the dialogical argument becomes more insistently political here than in the three earlier novels. While we see the same insistence that women must reject and reconstruct the conventional social context in order to affirm their subjective selves and assert an alternative vision of feminine identity, and the same assertion of a morality of mutual respective and caring, that we saw in Jane Eyre, The Awakening and Mrs. Dalloway, there is a much stronger emphasis on the political ramifications of this endeavor in Didion's novel. A Book of Common Prayer is distinguished from those earlier novels by Didion's
insistence that the marginalized perspective thus asserted cannot simply end in an affirmation of the feminine self; in order to impose meaning and coherence onto a world which, in Didion's own words, is in a dangerous state of "disorder" ("Slouching Towards Bethlehem" 12), the feminine voice in this novel dialogically insists that this feminine, outsider's perspective must attempt to reconstitute the entire political context.

The specifically feminine focus in A Book of Common Prayer arises not only from the fact that this is presented through the eyes of one woman examining the life of another woman; through Grace's implicit questioning of why any woman "did or did not do anything at all" and the revelation of a socio-ideological context in which women are so repressed that any vision they may have of an alternative perspective is stifled at the onset by the impotence and voicelessness imposed upon them by that context, this novel also emphasizes its own feminine perspective.

In the epigraph above, the reference to Levi-Strauss in the same context in which Grace questions anthropological studies "on the rearing of female children" must be seen as neither incidental nor coincidental. In his "structural" approach to culture, this modern anthropologist completely eliminates the possibility of woman as subject and thus simply "confirms" the historical perspective that
guided—and blinded—his own approach. As Teresa de Lauretis has noted in her analysis of Levi-Strauss's theory,

...the universalizing project of Levi-Strauss—to collapse the economic and semiotic orders into a unified theory of culture—depends on his positing woman as the functional opposite of subject (man), which logically excludes the possibility—the theoretical possibility—of women ever being subjects and producers of culture...It is in his theory, in his conceptualization of the social, in the very terms of his discourse, that women are doubly negated as subjects: first, because they are defined as vehicles of men's communication—signs of their language, carriers of their children; second, because women's sexuality is reduced to the "natural" function of childbearing, somewhere in between the fertility of nature and the productivity of a machine. Desire, like symbolization, is a property of men, property in both senses of the word: something men own, possess and something that inheres in men, like a quality (*Alice Doesn't* 20).

This objectifying, dehumanizing view of women and the problems that accompany this perspective—problems which extend, finally, beyond the question of femininity—is the perspective we see the feminine voice attempting to deconstruct in *A Book of Common Prayer*.

In the world Didion conveys here women are, indeed, acknowledged only as the possessions of men, as something of social value only to the extent that they are the "things that were exchanged" (de Lauretis 20). Despite the often paralyzing effects of this hegemonous perspective, however, Didion demonstrates that "desire"—subjectivity and the drive to create—has not been entirely stamped out in women.
In fact, if desire can be said to be "the property of men" at all, in this novel, it is only in the most narrow, sexual sense of the word; Didion's male characters appear as unthinking automatons, reenacting the same political "games" (195) that have been perpetuated for centuries, compulsively following the established forms and never questioning the basic premises. But, because she has been denied participation in this social "order," and because she consciously, actively and vocally asserts herself as an outsider to it, Charlotte Douglas not only recognizes its illogicality but envisions cultural "possibilities" that exist outside its narrow, self perpetuating premises; it is Charlotte, finally, who most fully embodies desire in this novel because it is she who wants to deconstruct and "renew social codes" (Kristeva, "From One Identity to An Other" 132) and become a producer of culture rather than its pawn. And, in the dialogical relationship established by Grace's exposition of a clearly patriarchal socio-ideological context and Charlotte's persistent attempts to "revise" that context, the dialogical feminine voice is discernible in A Book of Common Prayer.

The dominant, patriarchal perspective in this novel is revealed through the eyes of a self-proclaimed "outsider" who clearly sees the absurdity of that perspective yet can envision no alternative. Didion's narrator, Grace
Strasser-Mendana, having received her "training" from male anthropologists—including Levi-Strauss himself—has given up trying to ascertain any meaning or order revealed through the application of their approaches. Yet, because she received her education at the hands of these men—whose "methods" she now refers to as "my own"—Grace also seems unable to envision an alternative logic or perspective, and this is the entirely predictable result of her indoctrination in methods which refuse to consider "woman" as subject and active participant. Not only does Grace assert that she no longer knows "why I did or did not do anything at all," but early in her narrative she also claims that "'the narrator' plays no motive role in this narrative, nor would I want to....Unlike Charlotte I do not dream my life" (14). Grace, always an observer rather than a creator, has long ago resigned herself to the impotence bestowed upon women by patriarchal hegemony. And the "dream" and the "delusion" that Grace finds so compelling in Charlotte Douglas is precisely that this woman—who is also by cultural definition an outsider—imagines that she can "play a motive role." In the juxtaposition of Grace's sense of impotence to Charlotte's constant desire to revise, we again see a dialogical relationship that both exposes a socio-ideological context which denies feminine subjectivity and attempts to deconstruct and reconstruct that context.
Katherine Henderson has suggested that Charlotte's belief "that social ills can be cured" is one of several "fantasies...based on stubborn blissful ignorance" (Joan Didion 76). But this view both fails to explain Grace's fascination with Charlotte and does not account for the tension that results from Charlotte's "stubborn" insistence upon "revision." It is not Charlotte's "ignorance" but the illogic of the hegemonous political context that is exposed and deconstructed by Charlotte's revision, and it is this ideological challenge that creates the dramatic tension in A Book of Common Prayer.

And, through Grace Strasser-Mendana, we are always made aware that the ideological arguments raised in this novel are posited from a specifically feminine perspective. Grace makes it very clear that Charlotte can assert an alternative vision of "possibilities" because, unlike Grace herself, Charlotte has never become totally submerged in the theories of men. Charlotte, we are told, has remained "immaculate of history, innocent of politics" (56):

...until she was twenty-two and Warren Bogart divined and corrected her misapprehension she believed that World War II had begun at Pearl Harbor. From Leonard Douglas she had absorbed a passing fluency in Third World power, had learned what the initials meant in Algeria and Indonesia and the Caribbean, but on a blank map of the world she could not actually place the countries where the initials were in conflict. She considered the conflict dubious in any case. She understood that something was always going on in the world but believed that it would turn out all right.
She believed the world to be peopled with others like herself. She associated the word "revolution" with the Boston Tea Party...[and] events in France and Russia that had probably turned out all right, otherwise why had they happened (56-57).

The language with which Charlotte's perceptions are conveyed and the fact that, prior to age twenty-two, Charlotte "had read mainly the Brontes and Vogue" (56) are both significant here; until she is a young adult, this woman remains "immaculate" and "innocent" of "history"--the repetitious, "dubious" struggle for control directed and recorded by men--gleaning her knowledge of the world, instead, from the perspectives of other women. Charlotte Douglas's consciousness, in other words, has not been stamped with the imprint of male dogma and, by focusing her attention on the expressions of other women, Charlotte has also been exposed to interpretations of meaning that exist outside that dogma. And this passage also makes clear that Charlotte's perspective, her belief that political upheaval should represent progress ("otherwise why had they happened") and that it has something to do with what is "right," stands in direct opposition to the patriarchal political perspective exposed through Grace. Despite the efforts of two consecutive husbands to "correct" her determinedly optimistic understanding of history, however, Charlotte remains innocent and unconverted; Charlotte's own re-visions continue to make more sense to her than the "meaning"
imposed by men and it is this ability to sustain and assert an alternative perspective that so fascinates Grace Strasser-Mendana. And, through the specific challenges that Charlotte's revisions pose to the patriarchal hegemony wryly revealed by Grace, the dialogical feminine voice asserts its argument.

Grace, trained to see culture as the creation and occupation of men, is not so innocent of their political processes and motivations and, through her, the feminine voice exposes the inanity of a historical perspective that precludes self examination and prohibits the possibility of criticism from the outside by rendering outsiders voiceless "objects." The history that Charlotte Douglas refuses to accept is conveyed by Grace as one in which politics is a ritualistically re-enacted "game" conceived of and played exclusively by men, a game played not with an eye toward the advancement of civilization, but one entered into simply "for the action" (229):

...I know for months before the fact when there is about to be a "transition" in Boca Grande...A game is under way, the "winner" being the player who lands his marker in the Ministry of Defense, and the play has certain ritual moves: whoever wants the ministry that year must first get the guerrilleros into the game. The guerrilleros seem always to believe they are playing their own game, but they are actually a diversion, a disruptive element placed on the board only to be "quelled" by "stronger leadership." Guns and money begin to reach the guerrilleros via the usual channels. Mimeographed communiques begin to appear, and twenty people are detained for questioning. A few
are reported as prison suicides and a few more reported in exile but months later, again mysteriously, the same twenty are detained for questioning...(195-96).

Both the game metaphor and the name Boca Grande ("Big Mouth) parody and trivialize patriarchal politics in the same way that Chopin parodied patriarchal definitions of feminine identity in The Awakening. This tactic of parodizing rather than directly evaluating a point of contention is, according to feminist theorists such as Luce Irigaray, itself a particularly feminine dialogical technique because it allows "a woman...to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it" (This Sex 76). And, in fact, by conveying Boca Grande's political logic as analogous to that of a board game, the absurdity of the political context Grace reveals becomes apparent without direct discursive analysis. Through this apparently straightforward account of Boca Grande's political history, these processes are exposed as a simplistic, formulaic and ritualistic cycle that ultimately accomplish nothing of cultural value; the only result of Boca Grande's "revolutions" is a change in the final positions of the male players and the only logic reflected here is the simple result of an unvarying, predictable structure. Even the word "revolution" itself is challenged through Grace's parody, as it takes on the meaning of rotation or going around in
circles rather than of a force that creates fundamental political change. And Grace makes it clear, too, that the political context she reveals here is not unique to equatorial America. Not only is there a universality implied by Grace's disillusionment with her studies of various cultures, but she later shows us that these are the very same "games" that Leonard Douglas participates in in North America and the same "history" within which Marin Bogart is "lost" (3).

Through Grace's consistent equation of politics and history with games, the dialogical feminine voice is apparent in this novel as it reveals what de Lauretis calls a"logic internal to the system...[which] apparently does not address...woman, spectator" (18). Because they are outsiders to this system, because they are "spectators" rather than players, both Grace and Charlotte can see that its "logic" is the peculiar reflection of its own rules rather than of some abstract, absolute truth. And it is in the very different means that each woman chooses to cope with this apparent absence of meaning that the dialogical relationship is established in A Book of Common Prayer; through a seemingly nonevaluative narrative which frequently parodies and mimics patriarchal hegemony, Grace exposes its illogic while Charlotte attempts to reconstitute that socio-ideological context through the imposition of her own
revisions. In the argument that emerges from this dialogical relationship, the feminine voice is apparent as it echoes de Lauretis's insistence that women must "be willing 'to begin an argument,' and so formulate questions that will redefine the context...but [this] is more than a game...That argument is also a confrontation, a struggle, a political intervention in institutions and in practices of everyday life" (3). It is exactly this kind of intervention that Charlotte Douglas attempts and exactly this determination to "formulate questions that will redefine the context" that distinguishes her from the other characters in A Book of Common Prayer and makes her such a perceived threat to the political establishment in this novel.

Through Grace, the dialogical tension in A Book of Common Prayer, the desire to deconstruct and reconstruct the socio-ideological context, is linked directly to sexual politics. Grace makes it very clear that all the women here are victims of a hegemonous perspective that completely objectifies them and sees them only as items of sexual exchange. Yet we also see that each of these women--with the notable exception of Marin Bogart--is to some degree attempting to affirm her subjective self by rejecting that perspective and detaching herself from it. Grace herself may be too indoctrinated in patriarchal "methods" to perceive alternative possibilities, but she nonetheless
rejects and refuses to participate in them any longer. And if the wives and mistresses collected by the men in this novel appear out of touch with reality, it is not because they are the selfless objects their world defines them as, but because they are quite literally talking to themselves as they attempt to personally "redefine the context." These women are clearly outsiders to the dominant social and political context, yet their goal is not so much to become a part of that context as it is to further divorce themselves from it. Through these women, the feminine both exposes the degree to which women are marginalized and emphasizes the necessity of asserting that marginalized perspective in order to reconstitute a socio-ideological perspective which places no value on human life and functions only to perpetuate its own logic.

Even the narrator's sisters-in-law, seemingly oblivious to anything outside themselves, reflect a certain logic in their solipsism. In the context of a Christmas lunch dominated by Antonio—a man who, according to Grace, had he "been born in other circumstances...would have been put away early as a socio-path" (36-37)—these women's behavior is not as inappropriate as it first appears. As Antonio demands attention by shooting lizards and breaking china, Isabel and Bianca turn their attention to each other:
"So am I sick," Isabel said. "I need complete quiet...like Arizona...I should have stayed through December, Dr. Schiff begged me. The air. The solitude. The long walks, the simple meals. Yoghurt at sunset. You can't imagine the sunsets."

"As you know. I take no interest. Look here, the plan for the eleventh floor. If we lived up that high we'd have clean air. If I could live on the eleventh floor I think I'd take an interest again," Bianca said.

"Quite frankly it's better when you don't," Isabel said, abruptly and unsettling lucid, and in the silence that followed she stood up and put her arms around Bianca.

For a moment two of my three sisters-in-law stood there in the courtyard with the guard at the gate on Christmas afternoon and buried their faces in each other's hair...They were little sisters crying (37,39).

Katherine Henderson has pointed out that "Didion lays much stress on the bond between women, a bond formed by common experience" (86). While Henderson doesn't define that "common experience," the feminine voice in A Book of Common Prayer reveals it in the dialogical relationship between these women's attempts to assert the self and an alternative vision of meaning against a patriarchal perspective that is here conveyed as blatantly absurd. For Isabel and Bianca, and for all the women in this novel, there is no possibility of physical escape from cultural "circumstances" that embrace, condone and empower behavior like Antonio's and simultaneously define their own behavior as ignorant, insignificant and inferior. Arizona is not far enough and the eleventh floor is not high enough to elude "the guard at the gate" who has historically refused women authority, even over their own identities. Isabel's
acknowledgment of herself as "sick," therefore, and both women's conscious and deliberate attempts to "take no interest" in the world outside themselves, is the logical result of the dis-ease that world creates in them. Yet, through Grace's exposition of both the chaos that surrounds these women and the self-justifying and self-perpetuating nature of the logocentrity that continues that chaos, it becomes quite clear that that perspective will not change until it is confronted by voices from the outside. And, through Charlotte Douglas's revisions, the feminine voice emerges in this novel as it presents a direct dialogical challenge to the patriarchal hegemony Grace has exposed.

Charlotte, whom the Central American men commonly refer to as "the Norteamericana cunt" (207) is acutely aware of both the degree to which women are objectified and of the connection between this attitude and men's equation of "desire" with ownership. Charlotte, Grace observes, "was for example incapable of walking normally across a room in the presence of two men with whom she had slept...Her body went stiff, as if convulsed by the question of who had access to it and who did not...Who had prior claim" (83). It is her understanding of this phallocentric drive to objectify and "own" the object--an understanding gained through her own marginal experience--that forms the basis of Charlotte's arguments and this is made most explicit
through what Grace reveals about the relationship between Charlotte and her first husband, Warren Bogart.

Grace tells us that Warren Bogart is also an outsider but, in noting that he is "an outsider who lived by his ability to manipulate the inside" (165), she also distinguishes this man from both herself and from Charlotte. Warren Bogart chooses not to participate directly in the overtly political games that occupy all the other men in this novel, but he neither acknowledges their absurdity as Grace does, nor does he challenge their rules as Charlotte does; rather, this male "outsider" chooses to insert himself into the social center of his world where he manipulates others by exaggerating the rules of their own game. And the rule that Warren Bogart is most fond of exaggerating is the dehumanization of women.

In A Book of Common Prayer, the fact that Warren Bogart's behavior towards women—no matter how sadistic and outrageous that behavior may be—remains unchallenged by anyone other than Charlotte, reflects the extent to which women are devalued and dehumanized within North American culture; Warren may be banished from his acquaintances' homes for depleting the contents of their liquor cabinets, but never because of his demeaning treatment of women. Even Charlotte's current husband, Leonard Douglas, refuses to interfere with Warren's manipulative, badgering insistence
of "prior claim" to his wife; in refusing, despite Charlotte's distress and protests, to banish Warren from their San Francisco social life, Leonard himself tacitly acknowledges and approves the concept behind Warren's claim—the concept of women as the possessions and objects of exchange among men. No one interferes, either, when Warren Bogart literally uses a woman "friend" as a puppet by forcing her to vacantly recite, over and over again, men's poems about death as others continue their dinner-time conversation. Even Grace, who witnesses this scene first hand, remains silent, taking moral issue only in retrospect when she notes that, while Warren's "self-pity" and contempt for the world may be "justifiable...it is never enough to be right...it is necessary to be better" (164). Grace's comment is somewhat ironic since, consistent with the dialogical framework of this novel, it is Grace who exposes the problem—in this case the extent to which women are considered the property of men—but is only Charlotte who voices an argument and attempts to revise the context.

Grace's delayed moral reproach carries an implicit comparison, and the comparison is the direct result of her perception of Charlotte Douglas; Charlotte, Grace demonstrates, does intervene in "the practices of everyday life," and her final rejection of Warren Bogart—which Grace reveals immediately after her own moral commentary about
Warren—is just one example of what sets Charlotte apart from the other characters in this novel. Only Charlotte, finally, refuses to be a party to Warren's blatant manipulation of hegemonous attitudes towards women. When Warren insists that bruised and dizzy Julia Erskine, the current object of his "desire" and obvious object of his physical abuse, is simply drunk and needs a sandwich, Charlotte insists that what she really needs is medical attention and care. And, when Warren refuses this, Charlotte walks away forever, explaining later that she can no longer abide his behavior because she can see that "You hit that girls on the head. You don't take care of anybody" (179). Of all the characters in *A Book of Common Prayer*, only Charlotte directly confronts the social and political reality of everyday life and openly challenges the logic and morality of a socio-ideological perspective which objectifies and devalues human beings. Through Charlotte's specific objections, the feminine voice raises an argument that not only challenges Warren Bogart's behavior, but also stands as a dialogical reproach to the self serving nature of the socio-ideological perspective parodied by Grace throughout.

Charlotte's almost impulsive willingness to intervene and revise specific social situations by redefining and expanding the context according to her own marginalized,
feminine perspective is the quality that makes her "better" than others. Grace's assertion that "I revised my impressions to coincide with reality" while "Charlotte did the reverse" (197) emphasizes Charlotte's significance within the novel. Like the other women here, Grace's ability to envision alternative possibilities of meaning has been stifled and suppressed beneath the weight of a patriarchal hegemony that denies women authority and cannot see beyond the boundaries imposed by its own "logic." Yet Charlotte's behavior stands as a direct dialogical challenge to that logic as she not so much denies "reality" as she insists that it must be entirely deconstructed and reshaped in order to make her own vision of coherence and morality a part of the social context:

There were some things about Charlotte I never understood. She was a woman who grew faint when she noticed the blue arterial veins in her wrists, could not swim in clouded water, and once suffered an attack of acute terror while wading in water where an artesian well churned up sand. Yet...I once saw her make the necessary incision in the trachea of an OAS field worker who was choking on a piece of steak at the Jockey Club. A doctor had been called but the OAS man was turning blue. Charlotte did it with a boning knife plunged first in a vat with boiling rice. A few nights later the OAS man caused a scene because Charlotte refused to fellate him on the Caribe terrace...Similarly, during the cholera outbreak that year Charlotte volunteered to give inoculations, and she did, for thirty-four hours without sleeping, until the remaining Lederle vaccine was appropriated by one of Victor's colonels. When the colonel suggested that the norteamericana might be in a position to buy back some of the vaccine Charlotte only smiled, took off the white smock she had borrowed from the clinic, and
dropped it at the colonel's feet...but within a week she had revised the situation to coincide with her own view of human behavior and assured me that the vaccine had been taken only so that the army could lend its resources to the inoculation program. I used to think the only event in Charlotte Douglas's life to resist her revisions and erasures was Marin's disappearance (57-58).

Obviously, Charlotte can recognize the reality of what takes place before her, even when doing so is dangerous and personally distasteful to her; in this novel, Charlotte frequently, and almost reflexively, dismisses her personal "terror" in her attempts to save the lives of others. What Charlotte refuses to accept and attempts to revise, both in the passage above and throughout the novel, is the illogic of a socio-ideological perspective in which caring and basic humanity are not a part of the context. And both the illogic of the hegemonous perspective and the dialogical challenge Charlotte's revisions pose are made quite clear through juxtapositions like those above.

That Charlotte Douglas should turn away from the external imposition of values and look within herself to establish meaning follows naturally from the same engendering process that prompted Jane Eyre, Edna Pontellier and Clarissa Dalloway to do the same; the incongruity and incoherence resulting from recognizing the self as subject while the most basic and pervasive cultural conventions deny that reality forces not just Charlotte, but Grace and her
sisters-in-law, to do the same. But it is only Charlotte who attempts to revise the social context according to her own vision of identity and meaning, and Charlotte's revisions and arguments are always placed in a much more overtly political context than were those in the three earlier novels:

...They came in packs and they ate and they asked for odd drinks and they went through her medicine cabinet and they borrowed and did not return her sweaters and they never addressed her directly and she could never remember their names...

"You see you don't know Marin," she added finally. "I know her."

The fat FBI man coughed. The other examined a matchbook he had picked up from a table.

"I mean I'm her mother."

"Of course you are," the fat FBI man said.

..."I don't quite follow what she's saying about this Chinese couple," one of the new FBI men said. It was almost time for lunch and Charlotte had not yet eaten breakfast and the house on California Street seemed to be filling up with mean who spoke to each other as if Charlotte were not there. "What Chinese couple?"


"I don't quite follow what she's talking about."

"She's talking about caterers, Eddie, it's not a point."

...Charlotte wished that the FBI man would not insist upon calling the Chinese couple "caterers." They were not caterers, they were a couple. Under certain circumstances which had not yet arisen they might come to the house on California Street not as cooks but as guests (59-61).

Here, in a North American setting, as she reveals how Charlotte Douglas "lost one child to 'history'" (3), Grace exposes the same kind of political history that she parodied in Boca Grande. And, through Grace's exposition of these
politics and Charlotte's rejection and revision of them, the
dialogical feminine voice again becomes apparent as it
undermines and deconstructs the "logic" that perpetuates
this common political history.

Through Grace, it becomes clear that the FBI men, like
their Central American counterparts, are simply fulfilling
their roles in a repetitious game of revolution in which
nothing really changes and within which one of the most
fundamental rules is that women are the pawns, not the
players. In fact, Didion captures in this scene, in which
Charlotte is kept under guard in her own home only to be
dismissed and ignored by her captors, a literal and
contemporary representation of the simultaneous imprisonment
and exclusion of women throughout history. These men
clearly have no regard for Charlotte as a subjective being;
they never speak to her directly, they dismiss her words and
they cannot seem to understand her concern for and
relationship with her own daughter.

Moreover, as Charlotte's words either go unheeded or
become misinterpreted, there is a sense here, too, that the
subjective perspective which these men give her no credit
for having is actually so far removed from their own that it
cannot be expressed in terms with which they are familiar.
And the feminine voice rings out quite clearly as it
initiates the same argument against language that we saw in
The Awakening and Mrs. Dalloway; through Charlotte, we see the same rejection of the phallocentric and logocentric drive to fix and limit meaning that was apparent in the earlier novels. It is quite obvious, for instance, that to Charlotte the word "mother" conveys much more than an objective, biological fact; to her, this term also connotes a relationship that connects, rather than separates, the self from the other--she and Marin, she frequently insists, are "inseparable." Yet, the FBI agent's patronizing affirmation that "of course" she is Marin's mother reduces that relationship to a simple, objectified biological one. And Charlotte's desire to revise the language these men use, specifically their use of the word "caterers," emphasizes her objection to that kind objectification and exclusion. What Charlotte challenges with her revision is a term which fixes identity and denies complexity and ambiguity, and her insistence that these are not "caterers" but a "Chinese couple," that they are complex people with thoughts and voices of their own whom she'd be interested in knowing personally, is an attempt to expand the discourse beyond its phallocentric and logocentric limits. Through Charlotte's desire to redefine the context right down to the very language that represents it, the feminine voice emphasizes the degree to which "the practices of everyday life" not only reveal, but help to enforce, cultural attitudes. As
Grace observes Charlotte's efforts to revise discourse, it suddenly strikes this anthropologist "that I had never before had so graphic an illustration of how the consciousness of the human organism is carried in its grammar" (238). Implicit in this dialogical argument, then, is the assertion that, if the vicious cycle of "history" is ever going to be broken--if any real "revolution" is to occur--that challenge will come from voices from the outside which challenge and disrupt its most basic premises. And Charlotte, in imposing her own outsider's re-vision onto the world, in challenging the very words that reflect cultural values, becomes a very real and perceived threat to the status quo.

Through Didion's portrayal of Charlotte's daughters, finally, the dialogical feminine voice is apparent in the suggestion that the hegemonic patriarchal perspective has remained unchallenged for so long that young girls are literally "disappearing" within it. In the exaggerated absence of a subjective self conveyed in these daughters and descendants of a long patriarchal tradition, we see the feminine exposing the total denial of a subjective feminine self that patriarchal ideology demands. Charlotte's younger daughter is quite literally born with no possibility of developing as a subject; born hydrocephalic--with an atrophied brain--she cannot possibly become an autonomous,
thinking person. And Charlotte's elder daughter's "condition" is not much better. Marin Bogart, who Grace repeatedly insists is "lost to history" (3), seems to have been lost well before her involvement in the California bombing; unlike the other, older women in this novel, Marin cannot perceive the illogic and lack of substance in a perspective which denies her own subjectivity, and her mechanical "involvement" in the same kind of political "game" that Grace described in Boca Grande reflects the degree to which she is lost.

Marin is characterized by Grace as a young woman who has become so lost within the hegemonous perspective that she cannot even perceive of herself as a subject and interpreter of meaning. Not only does Marin behave according to her culture's stereotypes of women by being "patronizing" towards "all adult women" and "seductive" towards "all adult men" (65), but she refuses to question the morality behind those stereotypes. Grace assures us that Marin, unlike her mother, "would never bother changing a phrase to suit herself because she perceived the meanings of words only dimly...Marin was easily confused by such moral questions as were raised by...the problem of dividing her Halloween candy with the Episcopal orphans" (65). Marin never even recognizes that she has a mind and a voice of her own, so it's impossible for her to interpret the moral
implications embedded within the structures of her world. In this light, her imagined "participation" in a revolution becomes particularly ironic since she can neither perceive herself as an active subject nor make moral distinctions between one political system and another. And both the real extent of Marin's participation and the illogic of the politics of her revolution are made clear in the statement her group releases to the media. "The fact that our organization is revolutionary in character," Marin proclaims, "is due to the fact that all our activity is defined as revolutionary" (80). Like the statement itself, Marin's cause is "revolutionary" in the sense that it is circular, not in the sense that it attempts to create change. And Marin's role here is much like her father's puppet-like woman friend because Marin has simply become the mouthpiece for male-generated words; the absurdity and lack of substance in her taped message, Grace tells us, "was not original with Marin but had been lifted from a handbook by a Brazilian guerrilla theorist named Marighela" (81).

Charlotte Douglas's murder, and the fact that immediately before her death she "cried not for God but for Marin" (66), must be viewed in the context of the sexual politics that the dialogical feminine voice has so consistently exposed and attempted to deconstruct throughout A Book of Common Prayer. Charlotte, finally, is perceived
as the most dangerous element in Boca Grande because her revisions threaten to initiate a real revolution; the feminine voice makes it clear that this woman's attempts to assert her subjective, feminine perspective and to make caring for others a part of the cultural context would, in fact, require a true re-vision of that culture and a real disruption of its current conventions. And Charlotte, in her seemingly innocuous work at a birth control clinic, becomes the victim not just of Boca Grande's "revolution" but of a hegemonous patriarchal perspective so lacking in a vision of morality that it denies half the human population control over their own minds and bodies.
CONCLUSION

Implications of the Dialogue

One of the most significant challenges posited by this dialogical feminine voice addresses the nebulously defined literary canon itself. Terry Eagleton has suggested that, following the industrial revolution, literature replaced religion in enforcing "moral values," and goes so far as to assert that "literature becomes more than the handmaiden of moral ideology: it is moral ideology for the modern age" (Literary Theory 27). It is certainly this understanding of literature as the champion of conventional moral ideology that underlies both Bronte's protest in her preface to Jane Eyre and Woolf's comments about the woman writer's need to "alter the established values" ("Women in Fiction" 48-49) in both literature and life. This understanding explains, too, the reason that concept of morality itself becomes one of the "established values" that so many women writers openly confront and attempt to "alter"; unwilling to participate in the propagation of a moral code which devalues and dehumanizes feminine identity, the woman writer seeks to redefine morality from outside the hegemonous perspective and, in so doing, her voice resounds as an outsider not only
to the literary tradition, but to the socio-ideological context which that tradition affirms and perpetuates.

Eagleton's theory about literature as the enforcer of hegemonous values becomes difficult to attack when we examine the literary "canon" taught in American universities which, I would argue, still includes women writers only marginally. What exactly is it that has made Great Expectations more "important" than Jane Eyre, or The Sun Also Rises more important than My Antonia, if not their embodiment of an aesthetic that insists that the only valid experience is male experience? Nina Baym has noted that, in fact, the canon has been--and still is--expressly defined in terms of male experience. Explaining the reasoning behind crediting Charles Brockden Brown with being America's first "serious" novelist--despite the obvious flaws in his work and despite the proliferation of novels by women during the same period--Baym points out that:

...by this strategy it becomes possible to begin major American fiction historically with male rather than female authors. The certainty here that stories about women could not contain the essence of American culture means that the matter of American experience is inherently male. And this makes it highly unlikely that American women would write fiction encompassing such experience. I would suggest that the theoretical model of a story which may become the vehicle of cultural essence is: "a melodrama of beset manhood." This fiction is presented in a fiction which...can be taken as representative of the author's literary experience, his struggle for integrity and livelihood against flagrantly bad best-sellers written by women ("Melodrama" 70).
Nor, Baym adds, has this theory of literature, which defines both textual content and the act of writing itself as male experiences, been confined either to American literature or to a "pre-feminist" era. Citing Harold Bloom's famous theory of literature as a struggle between fathers and sons and Edward Said's theory of "filiation" in literature, she notes that both focus on British literature and suggests that the recent proliferation of such theories might be more than coincidental. "Just at the time that feminist critics are discovering more and more important women," Baym observes, "the critical theorists have seized upon a theory that allows women less and less presence" (78-9).

With feminine experience being thus doubly negated and specifically excluded even from contemporary theories of literature, how can the voices of women writers who assert and embody just such experience not be recognized as specifically feminine? A refusal to recognize it as such seems paradoxically to deny, on the one hand, that "femininity" is, in fact, a political construct but, at the same time, to fall victim to a political ideology that has negated the significance of that feminine experience. Yet, if we look at the novels written by both British and American women throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the dialogical voice that emerges is confronting
and refuting both of those assumptions about femininity. Each of the novels analyzed here reflects a direct dialogical challenge to hegemonously accepted concepts of feminine identity and experience. In the one hundred twenty five year span between the publication of Jane Eyre and A Book of Common Prayer, however, that challenge progressively becomes more insistently political and more intent upon deconstructing the fundamental premises that underlie assumptions about both femininity and identity.

In Jane Eyre, this dialogue is apparent in the opposition between the protagonist's insistence upon an equality of "spirit" and the customs of a socio-ideological perspective that objectifies and commodifies women according to wealth and beauty. While the conflict Brontë establishes through this opposition is thus inherently political, it is nonetheless carefully confined to Jane Eyre's very individualized interaction with the social world, an interaction which becomes increasingly minimalized following her experience at Lowood. Consequently, Brontë also confines this conflict to a personal, rather than overtly political, arena. And, more importantly, the alternative vision of feminine identity asserted through Jane Eyre's insistence that her "spirit" is "equal" (152) refuses to confront the basic premises about identity and gender which elevate the "masculine" and devalue the "feminine."
With The Awakening, a more fundamental challenge emerges as Chopin creates in her protagonist an identity that is directly juxtaposed to a social milieu that insists upon dichotomizing feminine identity. As Edna Pontellier refutes the madonna/whore dichotomy her world imposes through the mother-woman/artist-woman labels, and as both Edna and the narrator refuse to give a name to "the character of woman" (299) Edna actually is, we see a challenge to the very concept of identity asserted through naming. In Edna's refusal to be labeled and categorized, there emerges an assertion of feminine identity that derives its integrity from the very fact that it contains contradiction and ambiguity, and this concept of identity is dialogically opposed to the "unity" of exclusion and self denial inherent in the binary logic behind the mother-woman/artist-woman dichotomy. Moreover, in Edna's personal inability to assert this alternative vision of identity to a world blinded by the limits of its own logic, we also see the suggestion that the attempt to deconstruct and reconstitute definitions of feminine identity must address the political before it can affect the personal.

As in The Awakening, the dialogical argument in Mrs. Dalloway focuses on language and the concept of identity. In Mrs. Dalloway, however, the attack is directed not simply towards naming but toward language itself and, consequently,
the sense of identity asserted in this novel poses very fundamental questions to assumptions about the separation of self and other as well as to theories of communicating identity. The political nature of this argument is emphasized, too, as Woolf very overtly juxtaposes her vision of feminine identity to specifically patriarchal conventions which, in their insistence upon conformity and "proportion," both deny the creativity of the subjective self and promote dichotomy and opposition.

In *A Book of Common Prayer*, finally, the assertion of an alternative vision of feminine identity is dialogically opposed to both history and politics themselves. Both the dialogical effect and the political ramifications of the argument in this novel are clearly established through the narrator's relationship to the protagonist. Through Grace Strasser-Mendanna's consistent exposition of a political context that not only dehumanizes women but makes no pretense, even, of existing for the good of "mankind," and through Charlotte Douglas's attempts to assert her subjective self through her "revisions" of language and morality, we see an attempt to deconstruct and reconstitute the entire socio-ideological perspective. The dialogue established in *A Book of Common Prayer*, in other words, not only asserts an alternative vision of feminine identity, but it also insists that this outsider's perspective is
essential to reconstituting social and political codes which have nothing whatsoever to do with benefiting society.

Thus, Eagleton's assessment of the literary canon as the enforcer of social and moral codes is not only accurate, but reflects an insight which women writers seem to have been aware of for quite some time. As this analysis demonstrates, women writers seem intent upon dialogically deconstructing socio-ideological codes which constitute feminine identity, codes which, disguised beneath theories of aesthetics, are continued and reinforced through the literary canon. If we recognize literature as the social phenomenon that it is, then, we will also have to recognize that it can be something more than an ideological monologue and that, in addition to the white, middle class feminine voice identified here, there are many other voices from the margins asserting their unique challenges to the hegemonous perspective.
LIST OF REFERENCES


