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Presence, absence, and the interface in twentieth century literature and painting

Roberts, Claudette M., Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1989
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These consist of pages:

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47, Figure 4
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123, Figures 15 and 17
124, Figures 18, 19, and 20
125, Figures 21 and 22
164, Figures 27 and 28
PRESENCE, ABSENCE, AND THE INTERFACE
IN
TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERATURE AND PAINTING

DISSERTATION

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

By

Claudette M. Roberts, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1989

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INTRODUCTION

For man to be revealed to himself he would have to die, and he would have to do so while living—while watching himself cease to be.

G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*

Traditionally, Western culture has operated on an assumption that polarities describe people's awareness of life, that is, that everything can be understood and explained in terms of an either/or relationship. The dynamics of this traditional system has generated an entire matrix of dichotomies such as speech/writing, sound/silence, presence/absence, innocence/experience, man/woman. These dichotomies, however, never express equality. In each case, the first term is privileged, the second condemned: speech over writing, sound over silence, presence over absence, and so forth. Furthermore, the first term describes the condition of primal entities and thus acquires a temporal priority: it was first and therefore should remain so. The second term, on the other hand, represents a rupture or a shift from the status described by the first term; its change...
corresponds to the fall of human beings and therefore carries the sense of loss, of corruption and undesirability: it must be second.

This system of rigid binary oppositions comes under fire in the works of Jacques Derrida, a contemporary French critic, who is following both Nietzsche and Heidegger and their examination of Western philosophical and everyday thought. *Dissemination* contains the Derridean essay "Plato's Pharmacy," a critique of Plato's *Phaedrus*, in which Derrida notices how Plato legitimizes the system of oppositions at the same time that he problematizes it. When Socrates explains the dichotomy speech/writing to young Phaedrus, he illustrates speech as a presence by reminding him that speakers are always present to their listeners. This immediacy assures Socrates that the speaker knows what he means and says what he knows, for

> only in principles of justice and goodness and nobility taught and communicated orally for the sake of instruction and graven in the soul, which is the true way of writing, is there clearness and perfection and seriousness . . (Phaedrus, 327).

Speech then becomes the presence of understanding, of true knowledge, which is recorded in the soul and not on paper.

> Words recorded on paper, however, "are tumbled about anywhere among those who may or may not understand them"
for they "can neither speak for themselves nor teach the truth adequately to others" (325), thus emphasizing writing's lack of immediacy and its possibility of misunderstanding. Socrates finds that "writing is unfortunately like painting" (324); it is no more than an image, a representation announcing the failure of knowledge and the absence of presence. Thus, Socrates demonstrates the hierarchical nature of these polarities— the desirability of the first term and the inferiority of the second one. This is the way binaries work, however, to obscure the value of the second term. And their danger is that people often are not aware of the hidden values and of the restrictions and inescapable contradictions which these binary oppositions impose on them and on the meaning of what they do and say.

And yet, there is the supplement. Indeed, at the same time that Socrates calls Phaedrus's attention to writing's failure to achieve immediate and authentic knowledge, he also notices its supplemental nature. That is, writing will be useful when time or space separates speakers and listeners. In addition, it will serve as a protective measure; people will write words, "for the sake of amusement and recreation" (325), which they wish to treasure against the forgetfulness of old age. But immediately writing's gain is cancelled, for although
writing will fill the gap when speakers and listeners are absent, it will never be more than a substitute for their inability to use the spoken word. And when they write, saving their reminiscences for the future, they will learn to rely on that writing and not on their memory. Writing will thus cause forgetfulness. In his effort to define or to give presence to speech and to exclude writing, Plato uncovers an ambiguity, one that is inherent in his system of oppositions: writing both prevents and causes forgetfulness.

Although Plato's use of oppositions assumes that one term is the matrix, i.e., the origin, of all oppositional possibility and that the second one is dominated by it, the ambiguity points to an excess that cannot be contained or comprehended in polar relationships, an excess that opens up the very possibility of the second term. In "Structure, Sign, and Play," Derrida explains this resulting movement:

If totalization no longer has any meaning, it is not because the infiniteness of a field cannot be covered by a finite glance or a finite discourse, but because the nature of the field--that is, language and a finite language--excludes totalization. This field is in effect that of play, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions only because it is finite, that is to say, because instead of being an inexhaustible field, as in the classical hypothesis, instead of being too large, there is something missing from it: a center which arrests and grounds the play of
substitutions. One could say . . . that this movement of play, permitted by the lack or absence of a center or origin, is the movement of supplementarity. (289)

This excess which cannot be contained is supplementarity, the space in which speech and writing differ. Because of the difference, speech cannot subsume writing, for where there is temporal or spatial distance between speaker and listener, there can be no speech. This is its lack and the reason for its need of a supplement. Thus it needs writing; it needs the written word which can contain thought to be read by someone not present or after the writer's death.

Unfortunately, writing has retained the discredited status conferred by Plato. And many thinkers—although writers themselves—will accept his reasoning; they will become locked into this classical system which requires an either/or explanation for opposites, and in doing so, they will imprison themselves within the same kind of contradiction: like Plato, they will maintain the values of the first term, the spoken word, over that of the second one, the printed word, ignoring the contradictory statement that their own acts of writing make. So it should not be unduly surprising to read the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson in the 1841 essay "Self-Reliance" but to hear the lament of Socrates: "civilized man" relies on
the printed word to the extent that "his note-books impair his memory; his libraries overload his wit" (856).

Speech, the presence of truth, and writing, the absence of speech: in this way, writing acquires the status of secondary speech within the traditional system. Not fully present to itself, writing is an instrumental substitute for full presence. And the fully present voice is valued over its supplement. This illustrates the pattern which operates in binary systems, a pattern in which mutual relationships are always described in terms of presence or absence: the being of any first term is determined as presence, that of the second term as absence or lack, thereby indicating the centrality of a particular pair of binary oppositions to the classical system—presence/absence.

An interrogation of presence reveals that it, like speech, has been valorized. In fact, as Jonathan Culler notes in On Deconstruction,

> The authority of presence, its power of valorization, structures all our thinking. The notions of 'making clear,' 'grasping,' 'demonstrating,' 'revealing,' and 'showing what is the case' all invoke presence. To claim, as in the Cartesian cogito, that the 'I' resists radical doubt because it is present to itself in the act of thinking or doubting is one sort of appeal to presence" (94).

The cogito is the desire of people to be present, to be fully present, to themselves. Such awareness constitutes
what amounts to an affirmation of self and therefore proves some sort of human worth. By necessity, then, the second term must be opposed to the first one; absence must be reserved for a state of exclusion, for radical separation, for otherness. Typical language-use extends these opposing values. On the one hand, a phrase such as presence of mind describes the ability not only to think clearly, but also intelligently, and to act quickly when necessary. On the other hand, absent-minded is used to describe one who suffers a mental lack, one who is habitually forgetful, and it suggests aimless mental wandering. So, beyond the denotation of presence and absence, language conceals a valorized scheme, a frame of connotations that makes the condition of presence desirable and that of absence undesirable.

But those of us who silently cheered for Satan in Paradise Lost or who hoped that Moby Dick would somehow continue to outwit Captain Ahab or that Beatrice Cenci would escape the law of the "fathers" must be drawn also to this outlaw in language, to this second term—absence. As a result, I should like to focus on both presence and absence in order to explore their uses in selected twentieth-century literary works and in paintings, pushing always to question traditional values of the privileged first term, presence, and of the
supplemental second term, absence. An awareness of twentieth-century literature and painting suggests that the classical system of expressing mutual relationships in terms of polarities and of describing a being simply as presence to itself is ultimately untenable. Although we may desire full presence to ourselves, Hegel raises the doubt that it is even possible. In fact, contrary to the received notion that absence is best described in contrast to presence and that it is characterized by lack, by powerlessness, and by negativity, the twentieth-century arts often use absence to represent affirmation, power, even presence. This might suggest, then, that a reversal of the dichotomy, the placing of absence in the favored position, would be desirable in order to deal with our contemporary experience. But I would disagree with the many who urge this, who seek to elevate any outside term to a favored status. A reversal of the traditional hierarchy is not viable, for such practice actually preserves binary oppositions. And neither practice, by itself, will help us experience that literature and art where people are never fully revealed to themselves, where presence and absence are deeply embedded, where they are not only already connected with one another, but also part of a dialectical process which leads beyond them to a new dimension which Maurice
Blanchot describes as "an indubitable absolute presence" (77) in *The Space of Literature*. Roland Barthes might call a similar space "zero-degree," while for Brian McHale it becomes the "zone," a spatial or temporal construct. I, however, borrow from contemporary computer language and identify this dimension as the interface, a new space which differs from the original pair of oppositions.

But how can absence mean presence? a reader may ask. How could one possibly find forcefulness, much less presence, in absence?

In the short story, "There Shall Come Soft Rains," Ray Bradbury describes presence in absence:

The entire west face of the house was black, save for five places. Here the silhouette in paint of a man mowing a lawn. Here, as in a photograph, a woman bent to pick flowers. Still farther over, their images burned on wood in one titanic instant, a small boy, hands flung into the air, higher up, the image of a thrown ball, and opposite him a girl, hands raised to catch a ball which never came down. (197).

The subtext for Bradbury's story was written on the morning of August 6, 1945, a day documented by The Pacific War Research Society of Tokyo, Japan, in *The Day Man Lost*. At 18 seconds past 8:15 that day, the *Enola Gay* dropped what had affectionately been named the Little Boy from a height of almost six miles above the center of Hiroshima, Japan. Fifty seconds later, the intense heat
of this man-made "sun" incinerated everything within a radius of some 500 yards. The heat literally burned the image of stair shadows onto the side of a nearby tank, both located over 2000 yards from the hypocenter (that point on the ground directly below the explosion). So, although the stairs were melted and did not exist as they had previously, their original presence remained as a trace, as a shadow on the tank. But perhaps the statement made by this photograph (Figure 1) taken in Hiroshima at that time is more emphatic. It shows only a shadow on the concrete steps of a house, the shadow of a man sitting there at the time of the blast. Though he was probably incinerated immediately, his presence nonetheless is etched where he sat, a demonstration of presence in absence that is repeated years later in short fiction by Ray Bradbury.

Do these ideas of presence and absence represent, then, a new development in people's experience, one that is perhaps a result of nuclear power's promise and threat? If so, then they would have to be part of a dimension exclusive to modern life and, therefore, non-applicable to earlier periods of time. Yet there are many instances long before 1945 and Hiroshima where presence has been perceived in absence. In James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Molly Bloom is absent from all but the last
chapter where she makes her first appearance. Yet her presence throughout the work is, in a sense, as real as that of Stephen Dedalus or of Leopold Bloom. Virginia Woolf also anticipates Blanchot's "indubitable absolute presence" of absence in her novel To the Lighthouse, where, ten years after the death of Mrs. Ramsay, Lily Briscoe reacts to the dead woman's presence:

Oh, Mrs. Ramsay! she called out silently, to that essence which sat by the boat, that abstract one made of her, that woman in grey, as if to abuse her for having gone, and then having gone, come back again. (266)

Although Mrs. Ramsay, the protagonist, has died midway through the novel, the force of her spirit continues to animate the other characters and to hold the work itself together. Therefore, it would appear that the use of presence and absence is not limited to post-World War II texts, that either presence or absence has always already had the power to evoke its opposite in certain situations. But we sense that there is indeed a difference in some texts and art works, that something else is going on in a creative world where Constantin Brancusi's sculptured Bird in Space is not a bird at all, where a contemporary canvas entitled Roses has no roses. Thus, we will need to ask not only whether or not presence and absence are used within the framework of the classical binary system—that is, if presence is the
desirable condition and absence the less desirable one—but also how presence and absence are used. In other words, is the use of presence in absence or absence in presence part of the background, a subtle, haunting kind of evocation which permeates the literary or pictorial text? Or is it foregrounded; is it part of the work's focus?

A reading of representative literary and pictorial works will allow us to interrogate both presence and absence as they are used in twentieth century texts. Since I am neither trying to locate influences in order to show that a particular writer or painter has been influenced by another, nor analyzing in order to interpret what the artist intends the work to mean, I would like to use the paintings to complement and to complicate the literary texts. The paintings must be permitted to provide an amplification to the readings, and the literary texts must represent, not a state of being, but one of becoming so that each chapter can become a meditation toward a possibly revealing connection between presence and absence, between literature and painting.
I want to write a novel about Silence; . . . of the things people don't say.
Virginia Woolf, The Voyage Out

The Mental, Moral, and Physical Inferiority of the Female Sex, the title of a "monumental work" housed in the British Museum, is adequate to rouse a demon in the breast of the speaker of Virginia Woolf's work, A Room of One's Own. Angered, she puts the book down, leaves the library, and picks up a newspaper outside, scanning its headlines. She is jolted again. No one could fail to notice the dominance of a patriarchy, the power of the "professor." He has the money and influence. He builds the universities to perpetuate patriarchs. He is the judge who makes decisions that perpetuate patriarchs. In this way, Virginia Woolf begins her own deconstruction of the male/female hierarchical opposition, one that is developed in several of her works.

But why, she continues, when he owns or controls everything already, does he concern himself with the
inferiority of women? People who are mentally, morally, and physically inferior should not trouble him. Perhaps his interest is not in their inferiority, but in his own superiority. He may be protecting his own burrow and fortifying his self-confidence. People achieve some innate superiority, some real sense of presence to themselves, by thinking others inferior. Thus she understands "the enormous importance to a patriarch who has to conquer, who has to rule, of feeling that great numbers of people, one-half of the human race indeed, are by nature inferior to himself" (35).

A sketch produced by Arvid Fougstedt in 1912 and included in Shulamith Behr's Women Expressionists can help us, for it addresses a similar patriarchal need. In Students in the Academie Matisse 1910, (Figure 2), a Matisse-like figure is surrounded by painters in a studio full of evidence of their work. There are the expected canvases littering the room, the classical nude model which students are painting, and the master discussing the virtues of the nude drawing still on its easel. Some of the painters suspend their work to move nearer the canvas, the way we do in order to get a closer view of something rare. One rushes over so quickly that he forgets to lay his palette and brush down. Another has just minutes to spare from his own work, so he enters
only the outer fringes of onlookers. Still another is
disinterested; he props his foot nonchalantly on a chair,
and, unable to see the work being discussed, he listens
quizzically to Matisse's words. Many stare in disbelief,
for this drawing is by the lone female artist in the
Academy. Most are convinced that women are incapable of
artistic creativity, for this is a predominantly
masculine accomplishment; women's art responds to men's
art. It accompanies but always remains outside the realm
of male artistic mastery. The elegant clothing of the
female artist in the workroom (for she has only two modes
of dress here—elegance and nudity) or the fact that she
alone is sketched from the rear, almost faceless, is
surely dismissive and is another way of making her absent
to the profession. Behr notices that Fougstedt seems to
find "it inappropriate to have equipped [Sigrid] Hjerten
with the tools of her profession" (7). She may create no
"master"pieces; woman must remain inferior to man.

And yet, as Virginia Woolf notices, woman has
functioned as a mirror for man for centuries. The woman
who demurely pours his tea at the breakfast table or who
listens approvingly to his reactions to current events
reflects the figure of man "twice its natural size."
This mirror is extremely important: she charges his
vitality and fills his illusion, so that he can stride
off to give judgment, to civilize natives, to make laws, and to write books.

In this interrogation, Woolf has put her finger on a lack in man; she has uncovered a need, an absence already there. Not at all complete and fully present to himself, man has always needed woman. He, therefore, is always already a supplemented entity. And because woman supplies an originary lack in order for him to be complete, presence is deferred. That is, man is not an entity fully present to himself. If he were, supplementation would be neither necessary nor possible.

Unlike the supplement in Plato's Socratic dialogue in which writing adds nothing to speech and thus remains the outside term, this deferral of full presence, which Virginia Woolf has uncovered, opens up the binary opposition to the possibility of play in the Derridean sense. That is, the traditional distinction of inside and outside loses its rigidity; any separation becomes problematic and the status of the two terms remains indeterminate.

Several of her texts are closely bound to an examination of this dichotomy of male/female, to its possible statements about the relationship of these two separate groups of people. Thus, this pair of opposites, already connected to the hierarchical issue of
presence/absence, holds the key to the use of presence and absence in her work. How, then, will Virginia Woolf's questioning in *A Room of One's Own* transfer to her treatment of the male/female hierarchy in her most experimental novel, *The Waves*? She has several possibilities. She may observe the traditional binary oppositions, thus insuring a sense of presence for men and a status of absence for women. Woolf may reverse the dichotomies that so infuriate her in *A Room of One's Own* and in *Three Guineas*. Such a reversal would secure the originary, the preferred position to women. Or she can seek a synthesis; she can, somehow, blend the two entities or create a peaceful coexistence between them. There are strong indications in her writings to suggest any of these possibilities.

There also are strong links in Woolf's work to the values and methods of Expressionism, a European art movement that sought to refute both Impressionism and a complacent middle class. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, a prominent German Expressionist painter, declares:

> we want to wrest freedom for our gestures and for our lives from the older, comfortably established forces. We claim as our own everyone who reproduces directly and without falsification whatever it is that drives him to create. (qtd. by Wolf-Dieter Dube, 21)

As Dube explains in *The Expressionists*, "this generation
demanded the freedom for a new kind of art to come into existence, to be the symbol and the expression of a new kind of human being" (21). They therefore need to find ways to overcome "fossilized bourgeois attitudes" (31) and ways to find the "new human being." Their method of representing this goal is to subordinate the individual to the general. For this reason the titles of their paintings refuse to name people or their individual attributes. Instead titles refer to situations (31).

As an extension of this practice of subordinating the individual, Expressionists transpose very private emotions into problems that involve people in general. Lothar Lang tells us in Expressionist Book Illustration that they strive to make public the "most intimate psychic states . . . . to expose the soul . . . ." (33) in their search for inner vision and inner experiences.

While the women Expressionists share this drive to record psychological realities on paper, they also oppose those who establish the aims for the movement. Behr reports that they focus much attention on the patriarchal art system which maintains its control by restraining women from entering both art academies and state exhibitions (6-15).

Gabriele Munter's Boating, 1910 (Figure 3), is an example of their subversive Expressionism. It offers a
different interpretation of nature from that which a male peer would paint; that which is considered the typical Expressionist concept of nature would make the mountains and the sky dominant, as in Kochel—Lake with Boat, 1902 (Figure 4), by Wassily Kandinsky. In his seascape, nature is overpowering, and it diminishes the importance of the person in the boat. That, however, is not the central effect in Munter's interpretation. Although her mountains and sky are vibrant, the man looms up in the center of the work, the top of the hierarchal grouping of people. Behr notices that because of his profile position, he does not look at us. Thus we see him from the rower's perspective. Like her, we must look up to "the spectacle of the male" (38).

Because Woolf also protests against some of the practices and attitudes of the past, she will agree with the Expressionists' desire for a new kind of human being. She, however, is more demanding; like the women Expressionists, she rejects the restrictions of the patriarchal society and will seek one which collapses binary oppositions. Thus Woolf interrogates polar relationships, embedded in the language of the patriarchy, and she finds a synthesis of oppositions in androgyne. And her use of soliloquies in The Waves to reveal what people feel but often fail to verbalize—
their inner reality—provides the basis for an analogy with the Expressionists' quest for inner vision. Because of these similarities, I would like to use Expressionist works as a direct continuation of Woolf's text. At times contradictions will surface to provoke a more pointed examination; at other times, however, ideas will be strengthened "by being stated twice over" (Lang, 16).

Woolf's opening of The Waves might well have been the scriptural "In the beginning. . . . the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep":

The sun had not yet risen. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky. . . . the sky cleared. . . . as if the arm of a woman crouched beneath the horizon had raised a lamp and flat bars of white, green and yellow, spread across the sky like the blades of a fan. Then she raised her lamp higher. . . . The surface of the sea slowly became transparent. . . . Slowly the arm that held the lamp raised it higher and then higher until a broad flame became visible; an arc of fire burnt on the rim of the horizon, and all round it the sea blazed gold. (7-8)

Thus light comes to the Woolfian world, light which illuminates sea and land, joy and pain. But the bringer of this light, the giver of this sun, is no son. It is not the Hebraic God performing his creatio ex nihilo. Nor is it the Ovidian masculine deity who causes fire to leap up and "claim the highest place in heaven." Instead of Apollo, a woman brings light to this world. And in a world where "everything was without shadow. . . . Then
shapes took on mass and edge" (110), a feminine deity is the natural creative force. Thus the myth of origin is reframed, so that clarification becomes a feminine gift, creation a feminine power.

And gradually life unfolds because of this deity. But how will she speak to her world? Were she a male god, she would assert her presence by causing mountains to tremble or bushes to burst into fire. Or, as Ludwig Meidner suggests in his illustrated book, Septemberschrei 1920 (Figure 5), a forceful deity would threaten; he would stretch his arm high, holding the Law of the fathers above his creation: follow my commandments or perish. This is a world in which the ground shakes, buckles, and folds in on itself, where houses slide from their foundations. It is a place where people are hurled into the air, where bodies tumble off the earth and ships slide off the seas. It is a creation that seems to survive by violence and by force.

But Meidner's lithograph suggests an antithesis. In addition to the urge to change or to destroy, there is first the urge to create communities and continuity. Houses, churches, and ships evidence the desire to live together. Groves of trees and cultivated farmland nurture the people. This is the space in which Virginia Woolf's creator dwells. She is the communal spirit, the
feminine psyche, seeking unity and harmony. Unwilling to intimidate or to terrorize, she is the antithetical movement which we discover in Meidner's landscape, the deity who will speak through children.

Her first child says:

I have seen signposts at the crossroads with one arm pointing 'To Elvedon.' No one has been there. The ferns smell very strong, and there are red funguses growing beneath them. Now we wake the sleeping daws who have never seen a human form. . . (17),

and you and I are transported to a primeval landscape, to a land before the advent of aggression and fear. With Bernard and Susan we look over the wall and down into Elvedon, down into a time and space where peaceful coexistence makes it possible for a lady to sit writing while men sweep with brooms. Even in old age, Bernard has not forgotten this glimpse of "those fabulous presences, men with brooms, women writing" (285). Thus, by means of analepsis, by Woolf's movement to a mythic past, we are witnesses to what we consider a reversal of the male/female opposition: we see a woman performing the act that will create a literary canon, and men doing the domestic acts. The Mental, Moral, and Physical Inferiority of the Female Sex is impossible in this space where a woman writes.

And yet all is not peaceful and nurturing in this land, for suddenly Bernard shouts, "Run! The gardener
with the black beard has seen us! We shall be shot! We shall be shot like jays and pinned to the wall! We are in a hostile country" (17). Both Bernard and Susan flee, hiding under trees and taking advantage of secret paths as if they were forest animals. Surely children pose no real threat to life in Elvedon.

But these two young people are of another world; they are from a world in which a kiss can be experienced as a strike on the nape of the neck, a betrayal, a thoroughly shattering experience. The two carry fear and the possibility of violence with them when they go to Elvedon, and it is important to remember that they never cross the wall. They see the presence, but they never descend into Elvedon itself. Although Bernard and Susan inhabit a world whose light and life come from a female deity, and although they glimpse those fabulous presences possible in her ideal world, they must return to their own.

And what is the nature of their world? The consciousness of their experiences comes to us by means of six voices, three males and three females—a gender balance. Might we then expect to find Woolf's ideal, a world which is made human instead of merely masculine, a world in which masculine and feminine characteristics are balanced? The arrangement of their speaking parts seems
to bear this out initially, for the six speak in
soliloquies, and when we first meet them, their
soliloquies are arranged so that all seem to speak an
equal number of times. Young Bernard, the phrase-maker,
the story-teller of the group, is highly articulate, and
his perception is interesting. He is not "one and
simple, but complex and many" (76) and is unable to know
who he is—Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis. A
more mature Bernard refines this philosophy, realizing
that what he calls "his life" is not a single life that
he looks back upon but a composite. Its most efficient
metaphor is the red carnation placed on the table when
the six meet to honor Percival before he leaves for
India. A single flower as they sit waiting, when their
circle is complete, it becomes a "seven-sided flower,
many petalled. . . a whole flower to which every eye
brings its own contribution" (127).

And in addition to being unable to separate the
facets of his life from other lives, Bernard expresses
his inability always to know if he is "man or woman,
Bernard or Neville, Louis, Susan, Jinny or Rhoda—so
strange is the contact of one with another" (281). Thus
we find evidence of an attempt to effect a balanced
whole, to create a universe where men and women might
overcome their one-sidedness.
And Jinny is one of the most beautiful illustrations of the harmony which their lives suggest is possible. She never ceases to move and to dance; "there is nothing staid, nothing settled" (46) in her universe. Passionate and uninhibited sexually, she wishes to be singled out, to be chosen by one person who is attracted to her, who will tell her what he has told no one else. But Jinny refuses to be fixed in one place and to be attached to one person only. And although we might wish to associate passion with darkness, Jinny refuses such divisions. She hates darkness and sleep and night. She would make the week one long day if possible. At only one time do we note any animosity directed toward Jinny because of her erotic behavior. This occurs in her childhood when she kisses Louis on the nape of the neck, and the equally young Susan becomes furiously jealous. But the others always respect and recognize her as the vibrant and voluptuous woman. They express no disrespect for her. Even in old age, when he has lost his own biological urgency, Neville can think of her and say: "I pass Jinny's house without envy, and smile at the young man who arranges his tie a little nervously on the doorstep" (196).

Woman in front of a Mirror, 1913 (Figure 6), by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, might be a painting of Jinny, for
this work studies the woman of the modern city, the woman whose doorstep Neville has often passed. When others have taken off their dresses, put on white night gowns, put out the lights, and gone upstairs, Jinny grooms herself for the streets. "This is the beginning," she tells us. "I glance, I peep, I powder. All is exact, prepared. My hair is swept in one curve. My lips are precisely red. I am ready now" (101) to go out into the city. People look at her; men touch their breast-pocket handkerchiefs and arrange their suit coats; one moves toward her--this is Jinny's most exciting moment.

Yet there are other readings for Kirchner's painting of the urban woman. The thin waist, the proportioned legs and arms do not belong to a body that bears children and scrubs clothing. The hands of Kirchner's female are soft, seductive; her tapered fingers have never curled themselves around a hoe handle in a potato field or a pitchfork during haying season. Her body, which we view from the rear, is the voluptuous body of the street woman, of the prostitute. Her surroundings support this value judgment. The mirror, which she uses to make up herself, is aslant; it hangs discordantly. Its tilt is disconcerting, for it places us somewhere above her, and we are, therefore, forced to look at her from a superior (and judgmental) position. The face, reflected for us
in the mirror, is angular, coarse, drawn; the cheeks are
hollow. Her left eye is closed and her right one is a
black cavern, creating a tension between them and
suggesting that, although she knows herself, she closes
her eyes to that which is sinister and degrading in her
life.

Does Kirchner's treatment of the prostitute
complicate Virginia Woolf's Jinny for us? Are we tempted
to view her as an immoral rather than an amoral woman?
Kirchner's work suggests that we would restrict her
passions more than we would those of a Neville or of a
Louis, for example. She is a street woman; she dresses
to attract but is elusive. She promises with her body,
but she does not give; she sells.

But this is not Jinny, readers will clamor. Of
course, it is not, and that is a point which Virginia
Woolf will insist on making. The reading of Kirchner's
painting, of the cocotte is a typical patriarchal reaction
reflecting its insistence on viewing the passionate woman
as a fallen person. Although Bernard advises us "to see
things without attachment, from the outside, and to
realise their beauty in itself" (263), the system of
binary oppositions and its particular dichotomy of
male/female will not permit this simple but nonaggressive
vision. As a result of looking at the same kind of
person through different eyes, through those of Woolf and of Kirchner, we get a contrastive vision of the sensual woman, one which, instead of complicating, enhances our experience of Jinny's presence in The Waves and one which exposes a concealed project within mutually exclusive terms.

Indeed, the woman who bears and rears children is exemplary and belongs in this world; she lives here in the shape of Susan. But the woman who lives her body, the woman who loves and does so honestly and openly is rare. Even more rare, though, is the world in which she can be passionate without incurring ostracism, without being censored by others. The Waves appears to offer such a possibility.

Yet it is a world in which men are dominant. Bernard may say that he experiences the inability to tell whether he is male or female, thus suggesting that he is androgynous, but there are many instances in which he and the others demonstrate values of the patriarchy. When he speaks listing their names, he most often groups them according to gender--e.g., "Neville, Louis, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda" (254)--thus reinforcing the male/female hierarchy.

In one of Bernard's speeches, he describes his trip to the city. A train rushes through the misty English
landscape and into London, while he stands looking out one of its windows. He describes the glittering city as a majestic, feminine body presenting herself to the train and its occupants. "She lies sleeping," he tells us, and "we are aimed at her. Already her maternal somnolence is uneasy," for this "train from the north is hurled at her like a missile." Faces stare from sidings as the lighted windows flash past, and the wind from the train's rush brings visions of death. "But we roar on. We are about to explode in the flanks of the city like a shell in the side of some ponderous, maternal, majestic animal" (111). These are the words of the same person who visualized a future biographer writing: "Joined to the sensibility of a woman. . . Bernard possessed the logical sobriety of a man" (76), the same person who occasionally told us that he had difficulty telling if he were a man or a woman.

The aggressiveness of the diction which Bernard chooses to describe his entry into the city—words such as "aimed," "hurled like a missile," "roar," or "explode"—cannot characterize peaceful coexistence between men and women. Instead, it contains the same urge to violence which we noticed in Ludwig Meidner's lithograph (Figure 5) and represents a project calculated to insure control and domination. Bernard's language
expresses, metaphorically, a sexual violation and the breaking of a taboo, the forceful and explosive penetration into the maternal body. This language is threatening within the system of binary oppositions, i.e., threatening to the outside term, female. It has to be nonexistent within a system built on the principle that the two sexes can coexist peacefully.

After Bernard marries, however, he speculates that several notice a growing tendency to domesticity in him. In a soliloquy near the end of the work, he recreates a domestic scene—breakfast with his wife—which he initially describes as giving him "a feeling of existing in the midst of unconsciousness such as the treefrog must have couched on the right shade of green leaf" (260). Their dialogue consists of simple words such as "Pass" or "Milk"; their nonverbal language of "opening, shutting; shutting, opening; eating, drinking," and their objects of interest are "toast and butter, coffee and bacon, the Times and letters" (261). Suddenly the telephone rings, and Bernard tells us that he rises from the table with urgency, imagining the ease with which his mind adjusts itself to a change of pace, adapting itself to a richer, a stronger, a more complicated world in which I was called upon to act my part and had no doubt whatever that I could do it. Clapping my hat on my head I strode into a world inhabited by vast numbers of men who had
also clapped their hats on their heads [and were striding out] to achieve the same end—to earn our livings. (261)

The images of violence have disappeared from Bernard's language, but his words continue to reflect traditional values. The domestic scene, as he characterizes it, is mechanical, nonstimulating, and it necessarily devalues those who must remain within its framework. But the telephone summons him to a world radically different, to a world inhabited by men, by men who earn their livings. Such a world necessarily enhances those who exist within its framework.

In a curious way, then, Woolf also appears to perpetuate patriarchal values of the binary tradition by setting up Bernard, a male, as the articulate and exemplary speaker of The Waves. Critics try to explain Bernard's role in this novelistic space. Jean O. Love, for example, in Worlds in Consciousness, explains that he "forms himself and other persons more fully in consciousness than do the other five characters, and tries more persistently than they do to integrate self and others within the conscious world" (218). Although this is true, our question is yet unsolved: if Woolf wants to demonstrate the undesirability of mutually exclusive oppositions, why does she place the greatest consciousness of self in a male? Does this make Bernard
the central consciousness, the center for the others? I think not. Even though he is a male and even though his is a dominant presence here, Bernard is not their center.

That center, however, is male. And, as if to complicate the matter further, Percival, the central spirit, is absent from the work. That is, although he dies half way through the novel, he never speaks in soliloquies.

The boys meet Percival at boarding school. Neville, Bernard, and Louis sit with others in chapel; Neville scoffs at the words of religious authority corrupted by the speaker. He twists in his seat, looking around; then he sees Percival, who sits upright, breathing heavily.

His blue, and oddly inexpressive eyes are fixed with pagan indifference upon the pillar opposite. . . . He sees nothing; he hears nothing. He is remote from us all in a pagan universe. (36-37)

To the boys, Percival represents the consciousness of the hero, the man elevated above the others, the man who sees vistas closed and forbidden to them. To demonstrate their worship, they imitate Percival when he flicks his hand to the back of his neck.

Soon Louis also notices Percival, for everyone is following him. Louis's description captures part of Percival's uniqueness:
He is heavy. He walks clumsily down the field. . . . His magnificence is that of some mediaeval commander. A wake of light seems to lie on the grass behind him. (37)

Trying to create definition for Percival is difficult, for all we are to know of him must come to us through the consciousness of Bernard, Susan, Neville, Louis, Rhoda, or Jinny. They are the only ones who speak, the only to tell us what and how Percival is. As the six sit in London, waiting for him to arrive for their dinner party, Neville worries: "Now is our festival; now we are together. But without Percival there is no solidity" (121). When he arrives, however, "the reign of chaos is over" (122) and their lives assume shape and order. Jinny realizes the importance of this figure in their lives, and she tells us: "we shall perhaps never make this moment out of one man again" (145). In a sense then Percival is their creation; they give him life. And as parents might, they then center their lives around him. But we can never know Percival; we may only follow them, piecing together the fragments which they leave for us: Percival cannot read; he plays cricket and rows; he loves Susan. But what can we produce with these pieces? What kind of being can we construct? Only an elusive presence that hovers in the
margins of this text, a presence that is never actually present to us.

And because he is always absent to us, we sense his presence most in the sorrow and mourning the others experience when he dies. Neville compares him to the sun, to the source of life: "all is over. The lights of the world have gone out" (151). The visionary Rhoda demonstrates an unusual awareness of his importance. While all of them are feting Percival before his departure for India, she realizes that she fills her emptiness from the presence of Percival and Susan. That is, by looking between their shoulders and over their heads to distant hills, she can see "a shape, white, but not of stone, moving, perhaps alive" (139). It is not one of them; she, however, can see it only in the presence of Percival and Susan. Then in a perplexing parenthetical interlude, she and Louis seem to watch a primitive death ritual. Horns and trumpets accompany the ritual dancing; "flames leap over their painted faces, and the bleeding limbs which they have torn from the living body" (140). Although we might be tempted to read this as a reenactment of the dismemberment of Osiris, Rhoda tells us that the painted procession throws violets and honors the beloved with garlands of laurel leaves. As it passes, however, Rhoda becomes aware of
"downfalling" and of decay. This inserted passage is a moment of prolepsis and becomes more important to us when she learns of Percival's death. At that time, the image of the puddle which she cannot cross reappears; there is the rush of a roaring wind in her face, and she is threatened:

Unless I can stretch and touch something hard,
I shall be blown down the eternal corridors for ever. What then can I touch? What brick, what stone? and so draw myself across the enormous gulf into my body safely. (159)

This is an expression of an existential angst, of her recognition of the nothingness at the center of being. It also foreshadows her leap to death. But it is more, for immediately Rhoda returns to the figure seen earlier on the mountain, the one clothed in white. Now the shadow has fallen and the shape that was

robed in beauty is now clothed in ruin. The figure that stood in the grove where the steep backed hills come down falls in ruin, as I told them when they said they loved his voice on the stair, and his old shoes and moments of being together. 159

So the white-robed form she sees on the distant mountain is not the Percival who sits here. There is another--one yet to come--who is closely related to the hero honored by the earlier procession of savage-like people in the vision she and Louis share. This is the Percival in India, the Percival who, "by applying the standards of
the West" will solve the problems of the Orient and will be regarded "as if he were--what indeed he is--a God" (136). But that Percival falls, is "clothed in ruin," and all is agony.

Rhoda walks through the streets now, seeing a world as if torn apart by lightning. Oaks are split where "the flowering branch has fallen" (159). She is alone in a hostile world where the human face is hideous, and she acknowledges that she rides "rough waters and shall sink with no one to save" her. "Percival, by his death," she says, "has made me this present, has revealed this terror" (160). She tears violets up by the roots, binds them together, and walks to the river's edge, to the river that flows to India. "Into the wave that dashes upon the shore, into the wave that flings its white foam to the uttermost corners of the earth I throw my violets, my offering to Percival" (164).

And Bernard, the phrase-maker, the story-teller, is without his usual string of phrases. In solitude and loss, he wanders the streets, and then realizes that he has seen the first morning Percival will never see. So it is through their sorrow and mourning of his absence that we most acutely sense the importance and a presence for Percival.
Woolf's creation of Percival as a symbol of love and loss would have been comprehensible to Kathe Kollwitz, a German Expressionist painter. Through her paintings, Kollwitz expresses the sadness of the world as she perceives it, and her 1903 etching *Woman with Dead Child* (Figure 7), repeats and extends the gripping encounter with the death of a beloved in *The Waves*. In Kollwitz's pieta, the mother's body curls to receive its own once again. Her legs cross in order to cradle her child, to give it warmth, and she buries her face into its flesh, breathing her life into it. This is her child, though lifeless; this is her body which she clutches, which she cannot release. And Bernard's lament for Percival is hers for this child: "No lullaby has ever occurred to me capable of singing him to rest" (243).

Kathe Kollwitz includes only a few details in her work, a gold background, a few lines, and some shading. Yet the piece is gripping. How does it achieve its emotional impact, then, with almost no definition? We seem to have repeated our situation above in which we tried to create a presence for Percival without any soliloquies from him. He is never a subject to us, only an object, a person whom others create. Thus, we listen to the six soliloquists and become privy to their growing loneliness, desolation, emptiness. We watch and listen
to their struggles to deal with a Percival who will be forever absent. And it is in their articulation of a loss of community, in their realization that "for pain words are lacking" (263), that we have a strong sense of his absence functioning as a presence. How do we understand this, and how do we experience the mother's grief in Kollwitz's work? Virginia Woolf would tell us that this is the point at which our imagination kicks in, that there are two kinds of truth, the masculine truth of reason, and the feminine truth of imagination. Both are ways of knowing, of perceiving reality, and we must make use of both in order to feel and understand the emotional impact of these situations.

Although it is difficult to describe Percival as a person, we find that in several ways, limited though they may appear to be, Percival is a masculine presence. The fellows tell us that he is an athlete, a participant in leisure-time activities reserved for males during the novel's time. Furthermore, he is an adventurer, is able to travel to India when he is in his early twenties. This, too, is a masculine right and rite. Bernard notices that when Percival enters the restaurant, he smoothes "his hair, not from vanity (he does not look in the glass), but to propitiate the god of decency" (122-
Thus, he demonstrates the innate assurance of the privileged masculine presence.

It might be beneficial to explore the similarities he shares with the archetypal hero, not because we want to classify Percival as a mythical hero (although the text has already invited us to make these connections), but because such a study will reveal his relationship to the patriarchal structure. Like the archetypal hero, Percival is remote and remains detached from the others. They notice this presence about him and attribute it to a "pagan indifference." They also supply him with a quest: he is to become the nation's benefactor, the one who will lead it to a realization of its uniqueness. Thus, Percival can be seen as a hero, as one who, according to his creators, undertakes a mission.

But there is still the matter of Percival's death. Heroes often achieve greatness and die as saviors, as exemplary warriors, but Percival's death comes before he achieves deeds. That is one of the reasons that his death seems incomprehensible to his friends, one of the reasons that Neville could sense "a grinning," "a subterfuge," "something sneering behind our backs" (152) and Bernard could look to the sky and demand, "Is this the utmost you can do?" (154). There is no inevitable confrontation with a superior force; there is no choice
of death or life, so that Percival can willingly and heroically die. His horse trips, stumbles, and throws its rider to the ground. He dies there, a senseless death which undercuts their description of him as a hero.

On the other hand, his death is not senseless within Woolf's project. Percival represents the very forces which she and women Expressionists are challenging. He represents the patriarchal figure, the male who can participate in athletic activities, the man who seeks power through subjugation. Such preferential values must disappear before a new and androgynous order can survive.

And yet, he does become the instrument of their growing self-awareness, revealing their situatedness in the world, their separateness. As a result of his death, they become aware that no magic circle protects them as one entity. They realize that, though exposed to the same experiences day after day, they view them through different eyes and thus become separate bodies. "We are doomed, all of us" (152), Neville says.

In an earlier movement Rhoda revealed to us the impact of Percival's death on her. She immediately experiences the recurring mental image of a puddle she is unable to cross. Now her whole being is threatened unless she can find something substantial to touch, to draw herself across the gulf and into her body safely.
"Look now at what Percival has given me. Look at the street now that Percival is dead" (159), she says. And she sees the world of Ludwig Meidner's lithograph, a world without stability and security. "I am alone in a hostile world," a world of "hate, jealousy, hurry, and indifference frothed into the wild semblance of life"; "Percival, by his death, has made me this present, has revealed this terror" (160). "This terror," for Rhoda, is the awareness of the tenuousness of her own stability, the difficulty of imposing order upon her "dishevelled soul" (161). She questions in order to know "the thing that lies beneath the semblance of the thing" (163), but Rhoda is unable to find the answers she seeks.

Jinny, on the other hand, recognizes death—millions have died; Percival died—but she still moves; she still lives. She sees her reflection in a glass, the reflection of an aging woman, and resolves not to be afraid. Instead, she will powder her face, redden her lips, and make the angle of her eyebrows sharper than usual. "Let the silent army of the dead descend," she vows. "I march forward" (196).

And Susan, the only woman to seek fulfillment in a home and family, how does she define herself? She tells us that with her son she has reached the summit of her desires, that she has had "peaceful, productive years"
and is "fenced in, planted here" (190) like one of her trees. She would thus appear to be the somnolent maternal figure, content in her domesticity, in her service to a husband and children. "Yet sometimes I am sick of natural happiness. . . . I am sick of the body, I am sick of my own craft (191) . . . . But my body has been used daily, rightly, like a tool by a good workman, all over" (215), she adds. So we find an identification of both contentment and desire in Susan, an awareness that life has been good but that something has escaped her.

In the last section Bernard sums up the meaning of his life, and he also has ambivalent ideas about a life spent collecting words and phrases to be used in the true, the one story of his identity. But are there stories? he asks. He must discover for himself the answer to this question. And sitting alone on a grassy bank, "by some flick of a scent or a sound on a nerve, the old image--the gardners sweeping, the lady writing--returned" (268). He now identifies "the sense of what is unescapable in our lot; death; the knowledge of limitations; how life is more obdurate than one had thought it" (269). He wishes to walk and laugh with Percival, but Percival's place is empty. So Bernard turns to that inner self instead; he waits and listens, but no answer comes. Nothing. "But how describe a world
seen without a self?" he agonizes. "I saw but was not seen. I walked unshadowed. . . . Thin, as a ghost, leaving no trace where I trod, perceiving merely, I walked alone in a new world, never trodden" (286-87).

Bernard, however, realizes that

This difference we make so much of, this identity we so feverishly cherish [is unimportant]. . . . Am I all of them? Am I one and distinct. I do not know. We sat here together. But now Percival is dead, and Rhoda is dead; we are divided; we are not here. Yet I cannot find any obstacle separating us. There is no division between me and them. (288-89)

Consequently, Bernard begins to doubt the measure that he has applied to life, "all this pitting of sex against sex, of quality against quality; all this claiming of superiority and imputing of inferiority," (A Room of One's Own, 110) he would explain, for earlier he advised us to look at things from the outside and to realize their beauty in themselves. Now when he begins looking from the outside—and particularly from the position of the outside term—he sets up the possibility of dissolving separateness. He relinquishes traditional masculine priorities and accepts transcendencies, seeing the beauty of crumbled bread crusts or of spiraling pear peelings or of the fine tracery of veins in human hands.

Even though Bernard projects a world where male and female can achieve a synthesis and even though he says
that "there is no division between me and them," there is also no dialogue among them. Soliloquy, used dramatically as a retreat from the spoken word, becomes the shadow of speech in The Waves. By it we are made privy to their inner experiences: first "he said" and then "she said," surging up, then subsiding back into silence. This may be the novel which Terence Hewet, in The Voyage Out, wants to write: "Silence, or the Things People Don’t Say."

Bernard, however, accepts the impossibility of stories, of novels, of beginnings and ends: "after Monday comes Tuesday, and Wednesday follows Tuesday" (271). He relinquishes the patriarchal dependence on linearity, on the concept of time stretching out from past to future. We are all figures "doomed yet eternal" (271), he realizes; life is "the eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again" (297).

Earlier we questioned Woolf's choice of a male as her most highly developed consciousness in The Waves. Clearly, her choice is right. She realizes that a man stands to lose more of his preferential status than a woman with the collapse of a patriarchal system. A man, therefore, would resist the threat of such loss longer and with more struggle than a woman. So, near the end when Bernard makes his turn toward real unity of being,
toward the possibility of wholeness in the world, we find *The Waves* both credible and propitious in its pear-peeling synthesis of male and female values and its possibility for life after binary oppositions. For Bernard, as for Virginia Woolf, the optimum state of being is "when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating" (*A Room of One's Own*, 102).
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Hiroshima, 6 August 1945,
The Pacific War Research Society

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CHAPTER II

MARGARET ATWOOD AND PABLO PICASSO: THE SILENCE OF EXILE

There ought to be an absolute dictatorship. . . . a dictatorship of painters . . . a dictatorship of one painter . . . to suppress all those who have betrayed us, to suppress the cheaters, to suppress the tricks . . . to suppress history, to suppress a heap of other things. Pablo Picasso to Christian Zervos

Whatever is silenced will clamor to be heard, though silently. Margaret Atwood

The unnamed protagonist of Margaret Atwood's novel Surfacing stands alone in the Canadian wilderness, a dirty blanket hanging on her nude body and leaves and twigs in her matted hair. She looks into a mirror and sees the dirty and scabby creature: "this was the stereotype, straws in the hair, talking nonsense or not talking at all," a madwoman for all who have "someone to speak to and words that can be understood" (222). But much interrogation of herself and of her past stands between the young woman who returned to the Canadian wilderness to check on her missing father and the
protagonist who stands here, looking at her image. Instead of accepting society's view that her mirror's reflection represents a distortion of what woman should be, the protagonist sees it as the reflection of "a natural woman, state of nature" (222). Surfacing should be read, therefore, as the protagonist's journey into her past in order to give birth to another self and to find a language that includes, rather than excludes, that new woman.

Although she accepts the necessity of the "intercession of words" and is beginning to formulate her own discourse, there is no intercession of words in this text, for Surfacing ends with a question: "Are you here?" (223). The protagonist does not answer; she does not commit herself. She does, however, in Margaret Atwood's later work, The Handmaid's Tale. There is this suggestion, then, of a continuity, of a special link between these two works, for the Handmaid begins with a self-awareness comparable to that finally achieved by the protagonist of Surfacing.

In addition, the two protagonists exist in a mode of silence in which the word, both spoken and written, belongs to others. As a result of becoming skeptical of language and of people, the protagonist of Surfacing withdraws from their world, recognizing that silence is
her most important possibility. The Handmaid's exile, however, is not self-imposed. She is the victim of the society of Gilead which decrees that Handmaids may not read, write, or dialogue. Yet both protagonists view themselves as separated from others and in need not only of a language, but also of someone who can and will hear their words. Thus their overarching preoccupation will be with connecting, with building their sense of self in relationships.

I am not positing the thesis that these characters are the same woman, that Atwood is attempting to sustain a narrative thread with the same protagonist, for there are important differences. Instead, I find it possible that a dialectical process, arrested in *Surfacing*, is picked up and completed in *The Handmaid's Tale*. For by itself, *Surfacing* is not a full dialectic, but when read with *The Handmaid's Tale*, the two works offer a spiraling movement that does indeed reach a transcendence of binary oppositions and an interface, a space where the protagonist can and does become a creative non-victim within Atwood's description of the Basic Victim Positions.

Atwood introduces and develops these Positions in *Survival*, and they constitute a formula which is integral to a full understanding of her works. Position One
describes our denial that we are victims when we rationalize the obvious, suppress anger, and refuse to recognize that certain visible facts exist. For example, we may see ourselves as better off than many around us, and because we are afraid of losing the slight advantage we have, we typically deny our experience as victims and solidify that negation by accusing our fellow-victims of indolence or ignorance. Thus, we think: "We made it, therefore it's obvious we aren't victims. The rest are just lazy (or neurotic, or stupid); anyway it's their own fault if they aren't happy, look at all the opportunities available for them" (36).

Position Two involves our recognition and acknowledgment that there are victors and victims, and that we are the victims. But we cancel the full possibilities for subjective growth as a result of this awareness if we explain our victimization, not as our own fault, but as a condition imposed on us by "forces" or "things" more powerful than we. This way neither can we be blamed for our position nor can we hope to do anything about it. We may be resigned, Atwood explains, or we "can kick against the pricks and make a fuss" (37), but we expect to be described as foolish or sick, to lose, and to be punished. Who can fight Fate or the Will of God or the Establishment? Any possible scorn we might
feel is directed not only at those around us, but also at ourselves.

In Position Three we accept the fact that we are victims, but we refuse the assumption that the role is inevitable, that we can do nothing to change our victimization. Atwood explains that in this position we question our experiences, attempting to distinguish between our role of victim and those experiences that make us victim. We may find that we actually seek the victim position because it absolves us of blame and of the need for explanations. If we find life safer as a victim, we fail to alter our situation and remain in this position, most often paralyzed by anger and scorn. But if we are dissatisfied, we have the possibility, the freedom, Atwood would say, of deciding how much can be changed and how much cannot and of acting on that awareness. It is at this level of awareness that Atwood's unnamed protagonist of Surfacing declares ultimately: "this above all, to refuse to be a victim" (222), and at which the Handmaid challenges and subverts Gilead's edict that women are to remain silent.

Position Four categorizes those who deny the victim role, those whose "internal causes for victimization have been removed" (38). Energy is no longer being used to deny that we are victims or to displace the cause of our
victimization or to fuel anger. Now we can accept our experience for what it is; we are no longer tempted by the game of victor/victim (36-39).

Although this outline may suggest that experience is linear, that we only pause or move forward, such is not the case nor does Atwood intend it to be. Often, by repeating our experiences, we fail to move and sometimes we regress; we may, in fact, be in more than one position at a given time, for our awareness may exceed our willingness to effect change.

But it is important to note that her concept of victor/victim elaborates only the project of submission, of what may be a position of absence, not that of aggression or of dominion. As a result, her fiction will develop a single perspective, a single possibility, that of the victim. How will this loss, then, of the possibility for the conflictedness of two people interrelating affect her works? Will it be impossible for her to describe fully the way in which a woman achieves self awareness, a sense of presence to herself?

Although Atwood does not develop this other-than-victim position—that is, she does not focus on the characteristics of a master or victor in an individual character who could work against one of her female protagonists—she does, however, create aggressive and
dominating societies and groups of people in her texts. The oppressive but silent society backgrounded in *Surfacing*, for example, is pulled to the foreground in *The Handmaid's Tale*. There it becomes a collective antagonist, enacting much of its aggression against the female body.

Many of the paintings of Pablo Picasso appear to set up an analogous victim/victor project. That is, the female body, traditionally selected for its aesthetic value, frequently becomes an object of male pleasure and aggression in his works. Leo Steinberg reminds us in "The Algerian Women and Picasso at Large" that the representation of the nude female body depends "on the profession of erotic disinterest, on the distinction between engaged prurience and the contemplation of formal beauty whereby the erotic will to possess was assumed into admiration" (173). Not only does Picasso break this tradition of emotional distancing for the painter, but he also implicates us as viewers, for we often become voyeurs, accomplices in his aggressive attempt to possess the female nude.

All of his canvases, however, do not violate the woman's body; there are figures painted around 1905 that appear to be androgynous. Frank Elgar notes in *Picasso* that these nudes share "equally effeminate features"
their hips are narrow and their chests are almost flat. In addition, the figures possess a serenity and an easy grace which result in "reduced tension" (36) in Picasso's canvases. The artist has given the figure in *Seated Nude, 1905* (Figure 8), features which, at first glance, appear to be masculine. The short hair, plain face, square shoulders, and large hand more often characterize male nudes, but we recognize the nude's femininity in the exposed right breast and the rounding of her belly. Picasso's juxtaposition of both masculine and feminine features gives this figure a serenity and a detachment characteristic of his androgynous subjects.

These ambiguous figures, however, do not represent the typical attitude which Picasso expresses toward the nude subject, nor is serenity his characteristic mood, for he abandons art's traditional desire to please. In a conversation with Christian Zervos, Picasso explains his shift:

> a picture used to be a sum of additions. In my case a picture is a sum of destructions. I do a picture--then I destroy it. In the end, though, nothing is lost: the red I took away from one place turns up somewhere else. (Barr, 272)

The snout, for example, which he takes from an animal turns up on a woman's face in *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*, 1907 (Figure 9) and in *Head of a Woman*, 1938 (Figure 10),
and the female body is thus revised. As a result of this revision (or distortion), woman herself becomes monstrous; her own femininity is brutalized and negated. But "nothing is lost," Picasso assures us.

Because of the conflict which frequently takes place in the bodies of his female models, I would like to juxtapose paintings by Picasso with these two novels by Atwood, for while some can complement her work, many of his paintings will help elaborate the marginalized and important project of the master in Surfacing and The Handmaid's Tale.

As we examine Atwood's texts in which protagonists search the past for meaning, for a sense of self, we will be interested in her foregrounding of a twentieth-century awareness and concern for presence and absence, for that "presence" which lies behind our transcendental signifiers—e.g., human nature, common sense, reason, God—or for the sense of absence when transcendentals become problematical.

Part of who and where we are is where we have been, Atwood explains in Survival, thus placing herself firmly within Martin Heidegger's sense in which we are always existentially already located. Consequently the novel's first line—"I can't believe I'm on this road again, twisting along past the lake. . . ." (9)—negates a
traditional narrative beginning and, instead, emphasizes the view that we are always already involved before we are fully aware of implications, a description of the condition of this protagonist.

She sits in the back seat of the car, explaining the landmarks and the changes that have taken place in the village and along the road. "'That's where the rockets are,' I say. Were. I don't correct it" (12). Soon she finds her old road supplanted by a new one. Gone are the potholes and the hairpin turns, the familiar scraping around rock-faces. "They used to go over it as fast as possible," she thinks, "their father knew every inch of it and could take it (he said) blindfolded. . ." (17). Suddenly the protagonist interrupts herself. "That won't work, I can't call them 'they' as if they were somebody else's family: I have to keep myself from telling that story" (18), revealing the defense-mechanism she has constructed and the lies she may use to repress "that story" and its implications for existence. Because of this unreliability, we have no fixed center for the narration of events, for she may repress some details and manufacture others.

A good clue to the fact that she continues to be unreliable is her lack of feeling, of involvement. In "Dialectic of the Tragic," Walter Davis explains that
memory involves a complex Freudian struggle in which "we only remember what we want to remember and the effort is fraught with defense, distortion, and denial." If we remember "rightly," however, memory will strip away our masks and expose our conflicts and denials (4). But Atwood's protagonist avoids engagement and thus sidesteps conflicts. She recalls Joe's impression of her coolness, of the way she took her clothes off and later put them on again as if she were feeling nothing at the time of their first sexual intercourse. "I really wasn't" (33), she adds. "What to feel [is] like what to wear" (132): you watch others and memorize their actions. And when he suggested that they live together, she did not hesitate. "It wasn't a real decision," she remembers, "it was more like buying a goldfish or a potted cactus plant, not because you want one in advance but because you happen to be in the store and you see them lined up on the counter" (49). Is this, then, the realm of the stoic, the border country of Margaret Atwood, the place where we try to avoid decisions and commitments and conflicts? Barbara Rigney would say that the protagonist has made a decision, whether or not she realizes it; "to decide not to decide . . . is in itself a decision" and the protagonist has already committed herself. She is condemned to her freedom; consequently, she must assume
the responsibility for both her action and her refusal to act (Margaret Atwood, 47) and for her memory that can both conceal and reveal. Her dilemma is real now: the protagonist is returning to the Canadian wilderness of her past and will be forced to confront the distortions of her memory. She may fortify the walls of these false constructs or she may interrogate the past in order to confront it and then reconstruct a possibility for her own authenticity.

Part of the explanation for her impasse lies in the fact that she sees all of life in terms of polarities. She distinguishes between the bush and the city, security and fear. She separates the head and the body, thought and feelings into distinct and opposite categories. After she crosses into Canada she notices that "the white birches are dying, the disease is spreading up from the south" (9). We read this as an indication of her awareness of a real botanical threat: the white birch blight has already moved this far north. But when the protagonist notices the number of new summer cottages at the lake, she tips her hand; "they spread like measles, it must be the paved road" (35), the new highway which makes the area accessible to Americans for hunting and fishing. She feels that the new road has somehow vitiated Canada's natural world. Thus, on another and
more important level her statement about the spread of the birch disease addresses the general state of disease that is moving from the industrial south, from the United States, north and into Canada.

The paved and two-laned highway introduces us to another important instance of her acceptance of polarities. Her avoidance of change is an example of such division. "Nothing is the same, I don't know the way anymore," she laments. "I'm starting to shake, why is the road different, he shouldn't have allowed them to do it. I want to turn around and go back to the city..." (15). Change is one of the most serious threats to the stoic and to the avoidance project that this protagonist has structured. Unable to see the totality of oppositions, however, she blames her parents for getting old, for not dying when she was young; they would have stayed unchanged that way. And when she arrives at the family cabin which her father built of cedar logs--wood that rots quickly--she remembers his explanation that he didn't build it to last forever. "Why not?" she asks now. "Why didn't you?" (40). Thus, she fears change and desires the security of the unchanging. Like the slave or the victim, she would give herself over for safekeeping to a master, a god, or her parents.
Unable to deal with interpersonal relationships because she is unable to accept the inevitability of change or of failure, she denies the existence of feelings, of love, of the body. And her negation marks the beginning of a possible definition of her own subjectivity. Thinking that perhaps she has missed out on some kind of knowledge that might make a successful marriage—and demonstrating her separation of thought and feelings—she questions Anna, the only available married woman. But she is unable to understand Anna's advice to "make an emotional commitment . . . to let go" (55), for the protagonist has already insulated herself against feeling, and she does not know what to let go of. She remembers that earlier she had thought marriage possible, that she would become "part of a couple, two people linked together and balancing each other" (46). The security of that dream has vanished and she is skeptical now. What we do is meaningless, she decides and remembers the history books that tried to teach neutrality by using long words like "demarcation" and "sovereignty," words that did not say what they meant. But she found the skeptic's solution; she learned to deconstruct. "If you put your eye down close to the photograph they disintegrated into gray dots" (117). In this way she disseminated the photo's attempt at meaning:
when you cannot understand or explain something, cancel all determinations, she would advise.

Concomitant with her skepticism of meaningful actions and relationships is a distrust and subsequent rejection of language. For example, she tries to explain her ideas to David, Anna's husband, but he is only "verbs and nouns . . . fragments and tatters"; his language is second-hand American which spreads "over him in patches, like mange" (178). Later, an American comes to talk to her about selling the cabin and the land around it. With his "executive moustache," his "woody, semi-worn" clothes, and the binoculars around his neck, he has the appearance of slick advertising--"shirt ads, the vodka ads" (112). He identifies himself as a representative of the Wildlife Protection Agency of America, however. She hears "wildlife protection" and thinks that he belongs to a group dedicated to protecting animals and birds. Behind his words—as behind his appearance—is an absence, for instead of nurturing life, his words conceal a desire to extinguish, to empty the area of wildlife. "Our place on Lake Erie is, ah, giving out, so to say" (112-13), he explains. Thus the disease spreading from the south infects not only the wilderness but also threatens the people and language.
Nor is this a recent development in language for the protagonist. She surmises that at some time her neck must have closed over, shutting her into her head, and since that time words have glanced off her; "it was like being in a vase or in the village where I could see them but not hear them because I couldn't understand what was being said" (126). And when Joe confronts her now, insisting that she answer whether or not she loves him, the protagonist knows that she wants to "love" him, that she does in a way. She searches for words to describe her emotion, her feelings toward him, "but it was like thinking God should exist and not being able to believe." She realizes that "it was the language again, I couldn't use it because it wasn't mine" (127).

As she confronts the past, the protagonist interrogates what she recovers:

I have to be more careful about my memories, I have to be sure they're my own and not the memories of other people telling me how I felt, how I acted, what I said: if the events are wrong the feelings I remember about them will be wrong too. I'll start inventing them and there will be no way of correcting it . . .

(84)

So far, so good. At this point the protagonist appears to recognize the possibility of warp, of distortion. She realizes her duty to remember rightly, for the ones who could help are gone. I run quickly over my version of it, my life,
checking it like an alibi; it fits, it's all there till the time I left. Then static, like a jumped track, for a moment I've lost it, wiped clean . . . . (84-85)

The possibility for recovery of her past, for a movement beyond her denials and distortions of memory are interrupted by David's knock on the outhouse door. She has, however, introduced the first questioning of her self and has initiated the possibility not only of a recognition of her role as a victim but also of a confrontation with her own complicity, her own guilt.

Her reflection continues and she begins differentiating herself from the other three. Some of the awareness is new but some is already there, "only needing to be deciphered" (91). Perhaps her refusal of Joe's proposal of marriage and her decision to cancel their relationship once they return to the city is a result of her self-differentiation. We, however, are not fully convinced that this rejection is an outgrowth of reflection; she may still harbor fear of taking a chance, wishing, instead, to isolate and protect herself from the conflicts of existence.

She does, however, make a decisive movement toward self-awareness during a trip to a nearby island. On the way inland, they see a slaughtered blue heron hanging upside down, its wings open. It must have been the
Americans, she decides. But why kill the bird that "couldn't be tamed or cooked or trained to talk? To prove they could do it, they had the power to kill" (138). And time after time we have met "ugly Americans" in the backwoods, Americans who ostentatiously display their wealth and the power that that wealth gives them. We soon are ashamed of them; we even resent their presence. But before we pass the dead heron again, we meet the Americans and learn that they are not from the States at all. In fact, like these four, they too are Canadians. "It doesn't matter what country they're from," her head says, "they're still Americans" (152). But significantly, she is disturbed by this dead bird; she feels for perhaps the first time in many years. A sickening complicity surges in her as if she had watched without doing anything to stop the slaughter: "one of the silent guarded faces in the crowd" (154-55), she says, aptly describing herself without fully realizing it, for several days earlier she had taken the three fishing. When the standard bait did not hook a fish, the protagonist put a small frog on the line. "God you're coldblooded," Anna noticed. With the frog, David landed a Walleye, and she handed him the knife to kill it. He, however, was unable. So she grabbed the knife and crushed its skull with the handle; "one of its eyes is
bulging out and I feel a little sick, it's because I've killed something, made it dead," she thinks.
Immediately, however, she corrects herself: "but I know that's irrational, killing certain things is all right, food and enemies, fish and mosquitoes . . ." (75). Now, however, when David catches a bass and tells her to kill it, she refuses. Killing it for sport, for amusement is no longer the right reason.

She is beginning to question binary oppositions and suspects that a past distinction between nature and the city, between Americans and Canadians is tenuous at best. With the modern highway and the seaplanes for rent, the village and the lake are accessible. No longer are nature's boundaries clearly defined. In fact, the Canadians whom she described as Americans also thought that she and her friends were Americans, perhaps from Ohio. There is no obvious difference now between Americans and Canadians and all others. And although she is not able to transcend the oppositions at this point, she does question her belief that the city with its fumes and grease and its schools where others tormented her is less desirable than the country where she always felt safe. For now she remembers being terrified at night on the island, fearing some indefinite thing with no name. And she remembers how she and her brother tortured
leeches in the summer. The city was not the only scene of evil. She moves closer to a collapse of her distinctions between these two oppositions, but "a thing closed in my head, hand, synapse, cutting off my escape: that was the wrong way, the entrance, redemption was elsewhere, I must have overlooked it" (156).

Indeed this binary opposition is the wrong entrance to her subjectivity. The protagonist has labored carefully to weave a protective cocoon around herself and around her past relationships; it will not unravel easily. We have heard her conflicting accounts of a marriage and a child; we have listened to her chide herself for lying, and we have been privy to her mourning for the part of her that is missing, that has been detached: "the other half, the one locked away, was the only one that could live: I was the wrong half, detached, terminal" (129). She has worked feverishly to conceal the very recognition that can offer her release.

When she dives, searching for flooded cliff paintings she thinks her father discovered, the protagonist sees "a dark oval trailing limbs" (167), an image locked in her unconscious. Therefore, she does not "see" her father's body but the fetus she aborted nine years earlier, and she is filled with the terror of released repressions from that past. She now remembers
the abortion, the child-that-could-have-been scraped into a bucket, the fake marriage and husband:

I couldn't accept it, that mutilation, ruin I'd made. I needed a different version. I pieced it together the best way I could, ... pasting over the wrong parts. A faked album, the memories fraudulent as passports; but a paper house was better than none and I could almost live in it, I'd lived in it until now. (169)

Thus she fashioned another reality, cubist style, a collage made up of fragments of reality and of illusion: "it wasn't a person, only an animal" (170); legal, simple; "it's better this way" (106); "love without fear, sex without risk" (96). Now, she slips in and out of the present, deconstructing her fabricated past. She acknowledges her complicity and accepts her guilt: "I should have said No but I didn't ... Since then I'd carried that death around inside me, layering it over, a cyst, a tumor" (170).

But why would the protagonist, a liberated woman, lace her memory with "defense, distortion, and denial" because of an aborted fetus? The feminist movement, the body politic, supports abortion as freedom of choice. But what about the gendered body; can the female split herself between the modern, competitive woman and the procreative one? Can she get by with partitioning the two selves so that they do not conflict? The protagonist would have to respond No at this point, for she, as well
as Maria in Joan Didion's *Play It As It Lays*, finds that she has been unable to abort and then continue as if nothing more than induced menstruation had taken place. Neither woman adjusts easily to her loss. Is there perhaps a concealed contradiction within the liberated stance, one that promises us control of our bodies but one that delivers an anguish difficult to endure?

At this point, we are near the protagonist's subjective crisis. Her remembrance of the details of the abortion will trigger the release of suppressions that have caused her paralysis. As she reflects on this part of her past, she turns the ring on her left-hand finger. Souvenir. Plain gold. Opener of doors. And she admits:

> For him I could have been anyone but for me he was unique, the first, that's where I learned. I worshipped him, non-child-bride, idolator, I kept the scraps of his handwriting like saints' relics. (174)

The loss she suffered with the collapse of this relationship was neither a natural nor a biological loss but an existential one. Unable to surmount her lover's rejection and the lack of recognition—the denial of identity—she experienced the failure of desire and the destruction of her sense of personal value. And, in an instance of dialectical doubling, she produced the opposite of what she actually sought. Unable to accept suffering as the essential for subjective growth and
unable to accept the possibility of her failure, the protagonist reverted to a realm of static values and to a project of otherworldliness, searching for another power source, one still outside herself.

Now, liberated from these acts of bad faith, she is condemned—and happily so—to confronting her core-conflicts. "They think I should be filled with death, I should be in mourning. But nothing has died, everything is alive, everything is waiting to become alive" (186), she tells us.

Even though she still does not acknowledge her full responsibility for herself, she does begin to construct her own experiences, and she moves toward becoming a creative non-victim. In a demonstration of sexual initiative, she uses her hand to awaken Joe's body, to guide him outside the cabin, to pull him down, to guide him into her and thus to conceive a child. Atwood invites us to read this act of conceiving as an expression of the protagonist's will, since it is no accident and no attempt either to please or to coerce the other. But hasn't she used Joe nonetheless? Instead of transcending binary oppositions, she seems to have reversed them. Instead of the man's using the woman's body as happened to her with the "husband," she now uses Joe's. It is true that she does not lie to him about
love. But her sexual act does encourage him to believe that this relationship will continue, although she takes him back to the cabin knowing that it will not.

Her next demonstration of this newly accepted self-consciousness is an awareness of parody. The protagonist first destroys "Random Samples," the movie of weird objects and situations, the burlesque of cinematic art. Then she comments on the parody that Anna is, "a seamed and folded imitation of a magazine picture that is itself an imitation of a woman who is also an imitation, the original nowhere" (194). With similar insight, the protagonist has seen into David, recognizing the imposter beyond her help: "it would take such time to heal, unearth him, scrape down to where he was true" (179). This image of unearthing becomes a key to her dialectical movement now. As a result of her awareness of these parodies, she is able to see herself more clearly. Thus she understands that the genuine is underground, underneath and must be uncovered and brought to the surface, and that what shows is counterfeit, the absence of meaning. Instead of returning to the city, she flees alone into the marshes. "I am by myself," she thinks, "this is what I wanted, to stay here alone. From any rational point of view I am absurd; but there are no longer any rational points of view" (199). This
regression from rational consciousness to a prelogical past is her route to the new awareness she needs of her own past.

One of Picasso's paintings depicts a young woman's exploration of the self analogous to that of Atwood's protagonist in *Surfacing*. *Girl before a Mirror*, March 1932 (Figure 11), his most beautiful painting of a female, shows a woman contemplating herself in a long oval mirror. We immediately notice that her head is separated into two parts, into what at first glance appears to be a profile and a frontal view. In *Picasso in the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art*, William Rubin identifies this split as a "variant of the 'double head'" which Picasso explored in earlier paintings (138). His *Seated Woman* of 1922 (Figure 12), for example, displays two faces in which the front profile shades into shadow. *Girl before a Mirror*, however, is more complicated. Instead of a split with two views juxtaposed, the profile is defined within the full face, for both eyes are frontal. Ordinarily, in Picasso's double heads the profiles are light and the full faces are dark or shadowed, as in *Seated Woman*. *Girl before a Mirror*, however, represents an inversion in that in this painting the profile is pale lavender while the frontal portion is bright yellow with red cheeks and lips. Thus,
as Rubin notices, "the exposed profile is cool," restrained, while the full face, which should be in shadow and thus hidden or unseen, is intense, sensuous (138). At once we are reminded of the protagonist of *Surfacing* who maintains a cool, detached profile, a woman who believes that she has not felt much of anything for a long time (126), yet who, behind that cool facade, conceals complex and intense involvement with others.

Not only is the head of the girl standing before a mirror separated into two parts, but her torso also is divided. One part of the body is clothed in horizontal black stripes and the other is the same pale lavender of the facial profile. The striped section is reminiscent of bathing suits in earlier Picasso works. For example, one of the females in the 1918 *Beach Scene* (Figure 13), sports on the beach in a horizontally striped suit. And in *Baigneuses au Ballon*, 1928 (Figure 14), all three figures wear the same costume. Carla Gottlieb, however, in "Picasso's 'Girl before a Mirror,'" suggests that the heavy parallel lines, the black on green and the red curvilinear on black, may be "a stylized generalization of ribs and vertebrae which show through the flesh made transparent for this purpose" (509). This interpretation becomes more significant when we examine the girl's action in Picasso's painting, and it also provides the
basis for a close analogy with the protagonist of Surfacing.

As mentioned above, the girl stands before a mirror in which she is reflected. Yet the reflection is a distorted version of the girl we see. Instead of the assertive chin of the lavender profile, the mirror images a recessive and darker purple chin. Her reflected nose is larger, her face shorter, and these changes, combined with the darker colors and the bands which encircle the face, distance her, suggesting a remoteness, an inaccessibility of the reflected image. Gottlieb finds the key to the young girl's action and to her vision of herself in the type of mirror which Picasso includes in this work. The looking-glass he uses is a full-length, free-standing one attached to a rod in the center so that the mirror can be moved from either the top or the bottom in order to view the upper or the lower portion of one's body. This type of mirror, popular during the nineteenth century, disappeared in the early part of the twentieth. In France and Austria it is called a psyche; in Italy it is a psyche, and in Spain it is a psiquis. Our English translation of the word psyche is "soul" (510). Thus, the mirror's name can be directly linked to popular beliefs concerning the ambivalence of looking-glasses. They reflect not only the viewer's outward appearance but
also his or her soul. As a result, when Picasso's girl looks into her psyche, Gottlieb shows us that she is also looking into her soul. And in a similar kind of activity, the protagonist of *Surfacing* looks into her mother's mirror on the cabin wall:

I must stop being in the mirror. I look for the last time at my distorted glass face: eyes light blue in dark-red skin, hair standing tangled out from my head, reflection intruding between my eyes and vision. Not to see myself but to see. I reverse the mirror so it's toward the wall . . . . (205)

The protagonist is not prepared to see herself yet. That moment will be possible later when she stands here in the cabin once again, a blanket draped about her shoulders. Then she will be able to look into her mirror—and into her soul—and see the truth, the "natural woman."

In addition to her clue of the psyche which makes the activity of Picasso's girl more precise, Gottlieb's suggestion that the stripes on the body may be an internal and structural view, "a flesh made transparent," offers additional insights for Atwood's woman as well. Although the construction of this figure does not rely on the slim hips and flat chests which Elgar notices in earlier androgynous works, Picasso arranges the body so that we are invited to see more than a nude female form. As the girl's left arm reaches across her reflection, it forms a phallus for which the twin lobes of her breasts
become testicles. When we allow our eyes to follow the sweep of the left arm across the reflected image, we notice the breasts beneath and the rounded belly at the bottom of the looking-glass. We find the reason for its roundness in the girl's body. There, the womblike circle reminds us of her procreative powers. Robert Rosenblum reinforces this reading in "Picasso and the Anatomy of Eroticism," so that "the black, nipple-like spot on the breast reflected at the right of the mirror" becomes significant. "As if newly fertilized, this egg shape blossoms forth with a green sprout . . ." (350), an embryo reminding us of woman as the generative force. Although Picasso's intention may have been to delineate the sensual image of a young woman who is standing at the threshold of sexual maturity, we can read a complication into his work. We can find an androgynous dimension in which the female form transcends the dichotomy of male and female.

And we find this same richness of movement in Atwood's unnamed protagonist of Surfacing. When the four reunite for dinner on their last evening together on the island, Anna and David resume their marital war—Anna has had sexual intercourse with Joe during the afternoon, and David allows his arm an intimate brush against that of the protagonist, implying that he too has enjoyed the
body of another. But the protagonist will not participate in their game; she tells Anna that she refused David's sexual advances. Immediately both turn against her: "a ring of eyes, tribunal; in a minute they would join hands and dance around me, and after that the rope and the pyre, cure for heresy." David counters lightly: "she hates men. . . . Either that or she wants to be one" (180). The protagonist questions herself: "Maybe it was true, I leafed through all the men I had known to see whether or not I hated them. But then I realized it wasn't the men I hated, it was the Americans, the human beings, men and women both" (180). She hates their lies, their struggle for domination, and their selfishness. In *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*, Annis Pratt recognizes that they see her as an aberration, that "none of the three can recognize that the hero has achieved an androgynous synthesis beyond male and female" (160).

Now, when the protagonist of *Surfacing* observes the life and death opposition in nature, instead of privileging life over death as she has in the past, she continues this newly developed attitude that encourages her to transcend oppositions. She sees, instead, a cycle, the "energy of decay turning to growth" (197),
each transformation different. By now the heron has become insects, frogs, fish, even other herons.

Her dialectical movement requires that she abandon reliance on others, on transcendental props. So she retreats from language and from people in order to discover and to uncover a self. And after she is sure that the others have left the island, she returns to the cabin and strips away all the masks she has used—the typescript and illustrations for *Quebec Folk Tales*, paints and brushes, the wedding ring, the scrapbooks—all the words, all the things that have divided her. Then she burns the artifacts of her parents that she has used as a crutch. She returns to the marshy area of the lake and in a curious scene lies down in the water, her back on the sand, her hair spread out, "moving and fluid in the water" (208). When she submerges herself in this pool of water, she is "diving" not for the myth of woman, not for any construct identified in her culture as female, but for the thing itself. With the help of the red sun which sears "away the wrong form that encases" her, "warming the blood egg" (208) which she carries, the protagonist gives birth to herself, to a new woman. She is reconstituting the lost parts of the original woman she must be and the "first one, the first true human" (223) her child will be.
Cleansed, she comes up out of the water but avoids the accoutrements of people. She eats what she can in nature, even hallucinogenic mushrooms. She identifies with nature: "I lean against a tree, I am a tree leaning" (212); and with animals by leaving her droppings on the ground, covering them with earth, and then hollowing a lair in which she can sleep, thus collapsing any distinction between herself and the other.

In this primitive stage she prepares to contact the gods, those who have a higher knowledge. Knowing that she must approach their condition of disembodied freedom, she too avoids all enclosures, all contact with metal, indeed with all traces of mechanized society. She eats only the wild food which the gods provide, nourishing the fur god growing within her. Then in different moments she sees her parents. First her mother, who was never threatening to her, stands in front of the cabin. The protagonist's fear that this is an illusion communicates itself to the mother who vanishes. But her presence, her power remains. When she sees her father, she realizes that he has become the thing with yellow wolf's eyes, "the thing you meet when you've stayed here too long" (218), in fact, the very thing she always feared seeing in the past when she walked alone outside.
What comment does this revelation make on her past fears of the island and on the father's dependence on logic and on reason? "I'm not frightened," she tells herself. Its yellow eyes gaze at her, like reflectors of a car's headlights. "It does not approve of me or disapprove of me, it tells me it has nothing to tell me, only the fact of itself" (218), thus collapsing the power she has always associated with reason and with the "word" of the father. Her childhood belief dwindles now, her parents growing to become what they were--parents. With them there is "no total salvation, resurrection, Our father, Our mother. . . . Reach down for me" (221). It will not work now. She realizes that their innocence has been her own, that she has been islanding herself, setting herself apart from her friends, using masks and lies to sustain her belief that contamination and evil belong to the others, to the "Americans."

After her father disappears, she walks to the fence and sees his two footprints. But they are too small to be his; she steps into them, into her own footprints, and into the possibility for her own subjectivity.

That evening she dreams of her parents, the way they were in life, aging. She releases them and stands alone on her own; her parents have been exorcised. She will now define them "by their absence . . . love by its
failure, power by its loss." Her credo must become:
"this above all, to refuse to be a victim" (221).

This protagonist has "regressed" to a primal state, to one comprehended by others as absurd, as mad. But it is only through this regression into the depths that she can surface, that she can construct a "natural woman" for whom the neck no longer separates that knob from the rest of her body, and one for whom life is framed by possibility. There must be no expectation of guarantees: "we will probably fail, sooner or later, more or less painfully" (224), she finally acknowledges.

But her discovery of her mother's sensitive and spiritual nature, of her father's terrible shape, of the materialistic and mechanistic attitude of others, of the contamination of language is not the end. In other words, it is not sufficient for her to be aware, to have broadened her view, her outlook of the whole of her nature. Her subjective growth requires more than stepping into footprints of possibility; it requires surmounting fears of rejection and loss. Thus, she must act on this heightened awareness by shaping it into a living relationship with others.

Joe returns to the island, takes several steps toward the land, and asks, "Are you here?" She hears him call her, and she is brought back to the very
situation she has tried to resolve. The protagonist realizes that they failed once, that silence has been her language, absence her form. She stands alone, wrapped in her dirty blanket, neither concealing nor revealing herself. "Someone to speak to and words that can be understood"; Joe calls again, his voice annoyed. "To trust is to let go. I tense forward, toward the demands and questions, though my feet do not move yet" (224). Nor do they move within this text, and we wait for her response, for her commitment to actual human relationship.

Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* offers a possible denouement for *Surfacing*, both the complication and the development of a woman's exile in a world of silence. Early in *Surfacing*, the protagonist remembers that Anna once read her palm at a party and asked:

"Do you have a twin?" I said No. "Are you positive," she said, "because some of your lines are double." (10)

She does have a double, a sister who continues woman's struggle to reconstruct and to integrate herself into a social context where it will be possible "to have someone to speak to and words that can be understood" (*Surfacing*, 222). And like the protagonist of *Surfacing*, Offred of *The Handmaid's Tale* is also already involved in remembering and retrieving her past before she is aware
of it. But whereas the former is caught in her own
distortion of the past, in a space which Barbara Rigney
succinctly describes as existing "somewhere between
memory and lie" (Madness and Sexual Politics, 96), the
Handmaid finds that the big problem in remembering is not
filling in the gaps that exist in her memory of the past
but making sense of all that she does remember.

People without a history are happy, according to
Herbert J. Muller in The Uses of the Past, for as long as
they have only a sense of now, of the one and living
culture, they are unaware, unconscious of anything else
(27). This is also the reasoning of the controllers of
Gilead, the new society. Aunt Lydia instructs the
Handmaids for their role in the repopulation of their
world. "Ordinary," she tells them, "is what you are used
to. This may not seem ordinary to you now, but after a
time it will. It will become ordinary" (45). And as the
Handmaid sits at the women's Prayvaganza, the scene of
group weddings, she looks at the line of veiled daughters
dressed in white. She wonders if they remember anything
of the time before, if they remember riding bicycles or
reading by themselves. For a few years they will, but
the ones who come later will have lost such
possibilities: "They'll always have been in white, in
groups of girls; they'll always have been silent" (283).
The Handmaid realizes, however, that she is not one of those persons without a history; she is not one who can be happy because of ignorance of all that has taken place before now. And her "attacks of the past," those recurring "I remembers," trouble and complicate her acceptance of this new society and of her function within it as being "ordinary."

As she steps sideways out of her own time and into her past, the Handmaid reconstructs places and people and relationships. She remembers hotel rooms, sterile and innocuous with their matching bedspreads and draperies, unread Gideon Bibles always on a table or in a drawer, dreadful paintings on the walls. The sameness of all these rooms provoked no expectation of surprise. Similarly, she remembers her mother, "wiry, spunky, the kind of old woman who won't let anyone butt in front of her in a supermarket line" (155). She remembers her mother's struggle for freedom of choice and control of one's body, for men to be domestic if they chose or footloose and free if they wished. And she remembers being embarrassed by her mother and resenting her mother's friends. She wanted her mother to live a "more ceremonious" life (234). Unlike the protagonist of Surfacing, the Handmaid is remembering the past rightly. But its values are not self-evident to her.
When did it all change? she wonders. What happened? "I know I lost time. There must have been needles, pills, something like that. I couldn't have lost that much time without help" (51). That certainly is true. When she was captured fleeing the country with her husband and daughter, she was sedated for easy control. But there is more, and it is through a continued focusing on the past that the Handmaid is able to understand that the threats of social change had been present for some time. By trying to figure how and when things changed, she is able to articulate the importance of the past—a nondescript hotel room which offered privacy and freedom or a mother who expected much of her. "I want her back. I want everything back, the way it was" (157). But this will not work. She cannot have any of it back. It is more fruitful for her to remember when and how the change occurred.

She recalls marches of protest, but she did not go on any of them. Her husband said it would be futile, so she stayed at home, cleaning and baking more than usual. Few people talked on the streets; no one wanted to be picked up for disloyalty. "We were the people who were not in the papers. We lived in the blank white spaces at the edges of print. It gave us more freedom" (74). But then she remembers when women's bank accounts were
frozen, when they were banned from owning property, and when she was fired from her job. Her husband told her that it was only a job, but she felt a personal loss. She had been dismissed from her society.

That dismissal and her banishment are immediately evident in *The Handmaid's Tale*, for we meet the protagonist in transit, moving from a past in which a gymnasium was the site of basketball games to a present in which a gymnasium is outfitted with rows of army cots and the game's rules are enforced by Aunts carrying electric cattle prods instead of men with whistles. Rather than the uproarious cheering of fans, there is the nearly silent whispering of women who have been collected for redistribution and almost muted. Although the protagonist of *Surfacing* existed within parameters of silence, in a space from which the word had disappeared, she chose her retreat from people and language. The protagonist of *The Handmaid's Tale*, however, has had this condition imposed on her life. As she will learn, she is in part responsible, and she will work to determine that degree of responsibility, but for now, she is a woman both possessed and dis-possessed, silent and invisible.

The Swiftian epigraph to this work establishes an analogy between Jonathan Swift's proposal, which he modestly calls "Modest," a "realistic" proposal to curb
the population growth of the Irish poor by offering young Irish babies as gourmet items for English consumption, and the masculine and equally "modest" proposal of the power structure of Gilead that all women capable of bearing children have a Republic-appointed man who will fuck them monthly in order to increase the population and to give all women an equal opportunity to have babies. The Handmaid's Commander reminds her of the trouble women had before Gilead--the singles' bars, the humiliation of blind dates, the meat market, the cosmetic surgery to make themselves desirable to masculine eyes. "We thought we could do better," he moralizes (273). "This way they all get a man, nobody's left out" (284). Oh, Mother, the protagonist thinks. "You wanted a woman's culture. Well, now there is one. It isn't what you meant, but it exists" (164).

At the same time, these women are reduced to their function; for us, they are a ludicrous feature of Gilead: "two-legged wombs" (176). This, however, is the secret of being able to destroy or to banish any entity: neutralize it; "create an it, where none was before" (249). And by being reduced to her function, i.e., to a womb that must be filled, the Handmaid loses any notion of separateness, of individuality, and of freedom which she enjoyed previously.
In addition, Gilead deprives women of the legal right to use their surnames. Thus they are cut off from a past familial connection. The Handmaids, moreover, are reduced to the status of a masculine appendage. That is, their names are made up of the possessive "of" and the Commander's given name. They, therefore, become the possessive and the possession of a man. But even though all family names are removed and the Handmaids are renamed--actually inventoried for property records--all but the protagonist retain a sense of their previous names. Of course, it is through the narrator, the unnamed protagonist herself, that we know names such as Moira or Janine or Alma. But she is unable to use and to tell us her former name.

In the introduction to *Ineffability* Peter S. Hawkins focuses on "the struggle of language to speak about dimensions of reality which are ineffable" (1), and he reminds us of the "taboo protecting the name of Yahweh--'I am that I am'" (1-2). Of course, the lack of a name for the Handmaid is not connected with the ancient Hebraic tradition against naming the divinity, but it may be a survival of similar taboos. Even though the divine name was sacred and unutterable, all knew it and knew who He was. Now, in her "diaspora," the name of the Handmaid is similarly forbidden. "I tell myself it doesn't
matter. . . but what I tell myself is wrong, it does matter" (108). During her bath, the Handmaid, now called Offred, looks at her ankle. "Four digits and an eye, a passport in reverse. It's supposed to guarantee that I will never be able to fade, finally, into another landscape" (84-85). Later her Commander's "fingers encircle the ankle, briefly, like a bracelet, where the tatoo is, a Braille he can read" (330). The society may not say the name, and the tatoo articulates that taboo.

The Handmaid, thus, sees herself as a blank, a space between parentheses (295). And she describes her experience of banishment with words such as "clipped whispers," "unsaid," "amputated speech," "creeping," and "secrecy." She remembers that she "used to think there were no contingencies, no boundaries," that she was "free to shape and reshape forever the ever-expanding perimeter" of her life (294). Choice, however, has disappeared.

The Handmaids have become a kind of wandering exile in that they are "passed around" from Commander to Commander. The Aunts tell them that when the world is repopulated sufficiently, there will be enough Handmaids to go around. Then, they will remain with one man, not as a wife, rather as an additional female to be used for childbearing.
These Handmaids are also "passed over"; they are the outsiders, the preterite of Gilead's social structure. And inside this exiled and silenced group of women, there is another space. Although the Handmaids are alienated from the Wives, the Econowives, and even the serving Marthas, there is the marshalling of a collective identity among them. When the Aunts are not looking, they touch hands; they learn to lip-read so that they can exchange forbidden names. "We grip each other's hand, we are no longer single," the Handmaid tells us, or "we are one smile" (161-62). They share a delight in the whispering of obscenities about those in power. Someone has written Aunt Lydia sucks on the bathroom wall. It is an act of rebellion, and the very idea of Aunt Lydia sucking is delightful to them.

From their outcast status, the Handmaids use irony to undercut the accepted and the privileged of Gilead. At the birthing, when the Handmaid Janine is in labor and her Commander's wife ceremoniously participates in the labor, the Handmaids are disdainful of Commanders' Wives. When Aunt Lydia defines Handmaids as pearls, as something rare and hard to get, the protagonist scoffs silently at this woman; for her, pearls are nothing but congealed oyster spit. The hymn "There's a Balm in Gilead" becomes "There's a Bomb in Gilead" for the
ironical and realistic Moira. And the Handmaid watches her Commander as he reads to his women from the Bible. She describes their watching and sizing him up. Although the passage is long, its entirety is necessary in order to capture her delightful use of irony.

To have them putting him on, trying him on, trying him out, while he himself puts them on, like a sock over a foot, onto the stub of himself, his extra, sensitive thumb, his tentacle, his delicate, stalked slug's eye, which extrudes, expands, winces, and shrivels back into himself when touched wrongly, grows big again, bulging a little at the tip, traveling forward as if along a leaf, into them, avid for vision. To achieve vision in this way, this journey into a darkness that is composed of women, a woman, who can see in darkness while he himself strains blindly forward. 113

She thus reduces the power figure that controls her to a phallus, to an image which might delight him. But here the penis becomes a slug that oozes its way along in blindness. The Handmaid admits that she often amuses herself this way, with what she calls "small mean-minded jokes," but more seriously she realizes that they are used "to keep the core of yourself out of reach, enclosed, protected" (339). By applying irony to those who effect and enforce their banishment from the community, however, the Handmaids deal with that power structure in one of the few ways possible for them. This mental skirmishing may not be evident to the established
society, but it does reaffirm in their minds that the desirable as posited by Gilead is specious.

It requires considerable effort, however, for the protagonist of The Handmaid's Tale to question the brainwashing effected by the Aunts, that corp of men-hating women who are in charge of the reeducation of all the Handmaids, because the protagonist's present sense of decorum is, to a great extent, a product of their aphorisms, euphemisms, and cliches. The Aunts have taught the Handmaids that their voluminous clothing is desirable, that it protects them from sunburn and from indecent exposure. Aunt Lydia reminds them:

The spectacles women used to make of themselves. . . . no wonder those things used to happen. Things, the word she used when whatever it stood for was too distasteful or filthy or horrible to pass her lips. . . . Such things do not happen to nice women. (72)

The Handmaid recognizes that her nudity is strange to her already. "My body seems outdated. Did I really wear bathing suits, at the beach? I did, without thought, among men . . ." (82).

Although the Aunts tell the Handmaids that they too are sacrificing themselves, that they also "have learned to do without a lot of things" (84), and that their intentions are to give them the best chances for success, the Handmaid at times finds a wrinkle in the messages of the Aunts. "It's a risk you're taking, said Aunt Lydia,
but you are the shock troops, you will march out in advance, into dangerous territory. . . . She clasped her hands, radiant with our phony courage" (144). The Handmaid notices their preoccupation with sensational actions—gang rape, abortion, porno films—on actions being performed on the female body. And in order to heighten the Handmaids' experience and to produce in them a hatred against perpetrators of this kind of violation, the soundtrack of violent films is played so that these women hear the "screams and grunts and shrieks" (153). This is what men thought of women in the past, and the Handmaids are taught a new prayer: "thank you for not creating me a man" (251). Men are weak, the Aunts remind them, and implicit in all that Aunt Lydia says is the idea that "men are sex machines" who "want only one thing" (186). While Picasso might disagree with this assessment of men, his paintings would reply depicting the Aunts as monsters, as women bent on the subversion and destruction of all men.

The Aunts exhibit both their barbarism and their hatred for men at the next Salvaging, where women who have disobeyed Gilead's rules are "salvaged." According to the Oxford English Dictionary, salvage means to save or salve from danger (14:419). Thus we might expect a performance here similar to that at Testifyings, where
the woman reveals her past crimes publicly and where the female audience jeers in unison. In this way the woman, who is testifying, is taught a lesson through humiliation and is saved or salvaged for the community. The OED, however, also includes an older use in which *salvage* and *savage* are variants of the same word, meaning "to act the savage; to indulge in cruel or barbarous deeds" (14:523). It is within this context that the Aunts conduct their Salvaging, for their two Salvagers (or Saviors) hang the three women accused of unspecified crimes and then seize hold of their kicking feet and "drag downward with all their weight" (355).

But the Aunts reserve an equal measure of monstrous cruelty for the main target of their hatred, for a young man. After the Salvaging, Aunt Lydia smiles benignly, graciously and offers the Handmaids a Participation, her euphemistic neologism for participation in an execution. Two Guardians then drag and carry a young man, who shows visible evidence of already having been maltreated, to the center of the red ring formed by Handmaids. Their only rules are that they must begin and end when Aunt Lydia blows her whistle. Otherwise, the Handmaids may vent their bloodlust on this man who is accused of raping two of their sisters and who, according to the Aunts' interpretation of Deuteronomy, must die for that crime.
The protagonist reels with revulsion at the sights and sounds on the ground, but she sees "the Wives and daughters leaning forward in their chairs, the Aunts on the platform gazing down with interest" (360). The Aunts, thus, become a specter of female savagery and a real threat for men.

Although Picasso's numerous love affairs and his ability, even as an elderly man, to attract and marry beautiful young women have been the topic of much discussion (and admiration probably), his work reveals an ambivalent attitude toward women. The figure in Girl before a Mirror (Figure 11) displays a serenity and a beauty infrequently found in the oeuvre of Picasso. More typically, as Mary Gedo notices, he directs a rage and a savagery at women. In a series of paintings of prostitutes, a popular subject for early 1900 literary and artistic works, Picasso reveals an unusual lack of compassion and mercy for them. Instead of painting them as social victims who are unable to support themselves in any other trade and are "ground down by their dreadful lives," as others depicted them, "Picasso's ladies feed off men, survive, and prosper..." (34, Picasso), for his are richly dressed in long gowns, feathers, and elegant hats. Woman in Blue, 1901 (Figure 15), and Girl With Plumed Hat, 1901 (Figure 16), both picture well
dressed but hard-faced prostitutes. His earlier
Streetwalker, 1898-1899 (Figure 17), which Patricia
Leighten includes in Re-Ordering the Universe, shows an
aggressive woman lewdly pointing to her pelvic area,
soliciting the two men who stand watching her (34).
Leighten notices the feline face of the woman in Harlot
with Hand on Her Shoulder, 1901 (Figure 18), who stares
at us boldly (34), her eyes narrowed like those of a
cat mesmerizing its prey. Gedo cites these prostitutes
as "the spiritual ancestors of a whole series of monster
women who people Picasso's later oeuvre" (34).

These turn-of-the-century paintings of whores are
not Picasso's only engagement with the female subject,
however. In "The Philosophical Brothel," Steinberg
includes a 1905 inking which makes a savage sexual
statement about females, one which will work to link the
behavior of beast and woman. Steinberg uses "S.V.P.,"
(Figure 19), to explain both the evolution of one of the
nudes in Les Demoiselles d'Avignon and the sexual rather
than cubist significance of this important work, but the
small drawing is in itself indicative of a misogynist
attitude toward women. It shows a nude lying with her
legs spread apart, revealing an accessible and inviting
vagina, for both arms curve toward the crotch in a
welcoming gesture. The legs, assuming the firm curve of
horns, make a reference to cuckoldry, to one of man's most devastating sexual threats and a reference, according to Steinberg, to "the cloven sex" (31), to the devil herself. "S'il vous plait," Picasso comments crudely. And we shift uneasily as a result of his contempt.

Seated Bather, early 1930 (Figure 20), continues this painter's hostile dialogue with the female body. Here woman assumes a classic pose, a solitary nude silhouetted against the sea and sky. This bather, however, has often been described not as the traditional ideal of femininity, but as a predator, her nose a wedge-shaped weapon and her eyes bulging knobs. Her mouth, at the ends of two curved and armlike jaw bones, displays its teeth in vertical rows. Instead of only a moveable lower jaw, Picasso's version has two, enabling them to saw and tear in a brutal fashion. William Rubin compares her head to that of the praying mantis, an insect that preys on other insects, devouring them by holding them in its thin forelegs. Rubin, however, makes the connection sexual by reminding us that the female mantis consumes the male during copulation (132). All contribute to the description of a feminine monster. Indeed, we must notice the threat which the seated woman embodies.
But the remainder of the body might be read more pleasingly, for this is a figure sitting comfortably, her arms locked around her knees. Our eyes move from the head down the body in a fluid movement until they are arrested by the diagonal of the left arm. Remove that arm, however, and the eye movement sweeps from the top center, down along two breasts, and around the legs. The head is less threatening from this perspective, since it is so much smaller than the rest of the figure, and even though the head and the torso are hollow, the muted mauves and pinks blend with a non-threatening background. Replace that left arm, though, and Seated Bather exudes aggressiveness and possible violence. Why does this occur? Part of it, of course, stems from the disruption caused by the arm which intrudes, a horizontal which works to sever both the painting and the body. But the horizon where the sea and sky meet, that horizontal line in the very center of the work, does not interfere with a sense of ease in the figure. Why, then, does the left arm disconcert us?

Unlike some of Picasso's earlier bathers who were amorphous bulbs of flesh, such as Bather, 1927 (Figure 21), or Figure, early 1928 (Figure 22), Seated Bather is a skeletal figure, a "sculptured" form, according to Alfred Barr in Picasso: Fifty Years of his Art. Because
the body is reduced to its skeleton, Seated Bather is part of a group of Picasso's paintings which are called "bone" pictures (162). As a result of the lack of flesh, there is an emphasis on negative space, i.e., volume or presence created as a result of its absence. The woman's head, for example, is defined by its absence.

In addition to its skeletal reference, however, bone also carries a gross sexual resonance. It is frequently used to refer to the penis, and this may furnish us with a clue to the unease caused by that left arm. It violates her anatomical structure because, although the painting is an abstract sculpture, the left arm separates her two breasts sufficiently to suggest to viewers the phallus and its two testicles, as in Girl before a Mirror. Thus, the interruption which we noticed earlier is this inclusion of the masculine symbol.

The Aunts of The Handmaid's Tale also incorporate what we typically consider to be masculine characteristics. Like sergeants in charge of basic training, they monitor their new "recruits" forcibly. They walk behind rows of kneeling Handmaids, flicking slumping backs with wooden rods: "a little pain cleans out the mind" (251), and they use electric cattle prods to maintain silence, the official language for Handmaids. In addition to enforcing a military-like
discipline, the Aunts dress in olive drab, for Aunt Elizabeth's uniform is described as "a khaki dress with the military breast pockets" (150). They take their authority from the patriarchy, especially from Deuteronomy and Saint Paul. But the Aunts frequently rephrase, twist, or substitute words of the Scriptures, adding what Gilead needs the Bible to say. For example, the description of the early Christian community in Acts details the unification of the people, where no one said "that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." All sold their houses and lands and shared the money they received; thus "distribution was made unto every man according as he had need" (4:32-35). The Aunts' version, however, reduces the scope of the Pauline account, applying it to the Handmaids instead of to the whole community, and bastardizes the earlier idea of sharing. Thus the founding principle for the early Christian community is recast to articulate that of Gilead: "From each according to her ability; to each according to his needs" (151). By altering the Scriptures, the Aunts can explain the placement of Handmaids for the sexual service of Commanders. At the same time, however, they destroy the original meaning of the biblical text and thus emasculate it for their society.
Rubin reminds us that Picasso's *Seated Bather* contains the motif of the *vagina dentata* (132), the threat of masculine castration. Although Gilead's Aunts are not Picasso's idea of castration *per se*, they do weaken the original force of biblical scriptures, and they organize and supervise the literal and savage pulling and tearing apart of a man. One Handmaid, for example, leaves the grass space in front of the stage, carrying her trophy for the event—"a clump of blond hair" (361). In a sense then, the Aunts do have characteristics analogous to those of Picasso's *Seated Bather*, in that they too represent a powerful threat to men. Thus they may be seen as castrating figures.

Even though the Handmaid initially believes that she is an exiled entity, and—unlike the Aunts—powerless to affect this society and to effect any significant changes for herself, she becomes aware first of the power games that others play and then of a kind of power that she herself may exert within this society. Because she does not become pregnant by the first two Commanders to whom she is assigned (a narrative not contained within the text), she is relocated in a third Commander's home. And in a thorough examination of the room which she will occupy here, she discovers but cannot recover a message scratched in the darkest corner of the closet floor:
"Nolite te bastardes carborundorum" (69). This hidden, forbidden, and cryptic note from an unknown woman, a past occupant of the room, becomes a source of power for her. With no language of her own, it is the prayer she whispers to any god who can hear her; later it begins to sound more like a command, but to do what? she asks. The Handmaid learns from the Marthas, the kitchen staff, that there was a Handmaid living in the room previously; she, however, did not work out. And for the present she can find out nothing more about the former Offred.

But the Handmaid who failed to work out, has left the protagonist another message, equally cryptic and equally forbidden. On the ceiling there is a relief ornament shaped like a wreath and in its center is a plastered-over blank space. There must have been a chandelier there at one time, the protagonist thinks, but, for now, it is like a Rorschach blot; she looks at it and creates different shapes—a hat, a halo, a zero, a ring on the water's surface where a stone has been thrown.

Her observation of the world around her continues. She notices how others play a game of trade-off and achieve a kind of power. Janine, a wimp of a Handmaid, listens obediently and sympathetically to Aunt Lydia's tale of horror about the cunning and treacherous escape
of another Handmaid. Then as if the experience is too much for her to stand, Janine asks to sit down, to be excused from the rule that requires a Handmaid to stand or to kneel in public. Her attention, her cooperation in the Aunt's telling of this bit of gossip has some value in their society. Later, when the Commander summons the protagonist to come to his study alone and at night, she questions his motives. Her presence there is illegal and refusal is impossible:

But there must be something he wants, from me. To want is to have a weakness. It's this weakness, whatever it is, that entices me. It's like a small crack in a wall, before now impenetrable. If I press my eye to it, this weakness of his, I may be able to see my way clear. (176)

So while they sit in his office playing Scrabble, a game forbidden because it involves language, she realizes that he has compromised himself; but why does he want to play a word game with her? When she reflects about this evening, the sense of freedom that she derives from coming to his office alone and without the knowledge of others gives her a surge of derring-do, and she dreams of taking the back of the toilet apart to get the sharp lever out that helps adjust the water level. That would provide her with a weapon, one which she could smuggle into the Commander's study the next time. The Handmaid will not do this; she is afraid of punishment. But she
has begun to think of herself as having a source of power. She does not know why she has been invited to his study; she does not know what the terms are, but she knows that she will be able to ask for something in exchange.

At some point all these class distinctions must finally break down, for the logic of the supplement operates so that the basic values or the founding principles of Gilead will turn out to be constituted by those on the outside, by the Handmaids themselves, and yet will permeate all of Gilead. The visits, which continue, finally give the protagonist such an insight of her supplemental function. That is, she becomes increasingly aware of the nature of Gilead's social structure and of the values which found it. At the same time, her awareness of her own subjectivity and of her significance increases. Previously she was able to effect a state of absence from her body during the Ceremony, the formal sexual act between Commander and Handmaid. He, however, is no longer a thing to her, for she knows him outside this room. She does not love him, but she knows him now as a man who has touched her face, who has laughed with her. And her hatred for his wife is no longer simple. It is part jealousy that the Wife would rear any child she might have and part guilt that
she is intruding in territory that should be his wife's alone. The importance of this complication is not articulated in terms of an awareness of personal power. Instead, the Handmaid recognizes that she is his mistress, his kept woman. She is not kept in a separate house or in an apartment, but underneath it is the same. She plays Scrabble with the Commander and shares his fondness for remnants of the past. And more importantly, she supplies the viable ovaries that will help repopulate Gilead. She is the outside woman, the woman whose job it is to provide what is otherwise lacking for both the Commander and for Gilead.

Only after her visit to his office do we as readers realize that this Handmaid is a story teller. It may be that she becomes a teller of her tale as a result of those visits and of a fuller awareness of herself. But we first notice the mental word games she plays to compose herself, games which she calls litanies. They are free association exercises or deconstructions that explore possibilities and uncover unexpected combinations. In addition, they are subversive. They exist within the outlawed framework of language, thus extending her control through the word, and they undercut the values which Gilead cherishes. For example, she must spend much of each day in her room, sitting or lying
down. She describes the appearance of her food: "the arrival of the tray, carried up the stairs as if for an invalid. An invalid, one who has been invalidated. No valid passport. No exit" (290). Then, during the protagonist's first Ceremony with the Commander named Fred, she lies on her back, fully clothed except for her white cotton underdrawers. What she would see if she opened her eyes would be the large white canopy of the Wife's bed. She thinks of it as a sagging cloud over the three of them, "or the sail of a ship. Big-bellied sails, they used to say, in poems. Bellying. Propelled forward by a swollen belly" (120). What is the significance of these words for her? At one time she tells us that none of the facts hooked together in the litanies have any connection with the others. As far as a denotation is concerned, invalid and invalidate are not connected. And in the second example, the puffy canopy and big-bellied sails are not related, strictly speaking. But, in another way, these words do connect, for an invalid is unable to participate actively and is thus without full effectiveness, without validity. The big-bellied sails or the ship propelled by a swollen belly push our thoughts to the sexual intercourse and to the Commander's desire for fertilization which will give her a swollen belly. In a sense, the pregnancy and a
healthy child would propel her forward: she would advance in the esteem of Gilead and would never be declared an Unwoman and exiled to the Colonies. In addition to adding an unexpected and delightful dimension to her narrative, these word games also remove some of the abasement of her imposed exile. That is, by concentrating on the absurdity of three clothed adults spread out on a bed with a man fucking one of the women, she can distance and, to an extent, divorce herself from the event. From this perspective she can then endure the Ceremony, and madness or suicide will not be her only possibilities. The games, therefore, employ her mind and add to her growing confidence in her own power.

Although without a job and without any hope of a return to the past, she will continue to challenge Gilead's edict that women are not to write, that they are not to record the word. She will keep her mind busy remembering, revising, and reconstructing where memory fails. She will create her own work which foregrounds a thirty-three-year-old brown-headed, five-foot seven-inch woman with viable ovaries, a woman with one more chance and a woman who is caught in the moment, unable to escape two dimensionality, unable to achieve the perspective she desires. Her visit to the Commander's office produces a change in her attitude to herself and to others; her
circumstances have altered. "It could be important, it could be a passport, it could be my downfall" (186). Her possibilities proliferate.

The Commander's office continues to be a source of enlightenment for the protagonist, and finally she becomes confident enough to ask him the meaning of *Nolite te bastardes carborundorum*, the phrase she found in her room. After she writes it down for him to read, he laughs: "That's not real Latin. That's just a joke" (241). Then he removes what looks like an old textbook from his bookshelves and shows her the inside. She sees his Dada version of the Venus de Milo; moustache, brassiere, and armpit hair have been added. In the margins of the text he shows her other examples of schoolboy humor—Latin verb conjugations that approximate the sound of risque language and the phrase she has just written on paper. Now she knows where the closeted message came from; the former Handmaid must have learned it here, in this room. "But what did it mean?" she asks. "Which?" he says. "Oh. It meant, 'Don't let the bastards grind you down' " (242). So she has not been the first to come here alone late at night; she has not been the first "to enter his silence, play children's word games with him" (242). Without hesitation, the protagonist asks him, "What happened to her?" "She
hanged herself. . . . That's why we had the light fixture removed. . . . Serena found out" (242-43). There is no remorse in his voice, no sadness because of the former Handmaid's death. He entertains her here in his office so that her life will be bearable to her, so that she will not exit via the bedsheets. The protagonist realizes that the stakes are different now, that they involve more than something as simple as a bottle of contraband hand lotion:

Things have changed. I have something on him, now. What I have on him is the possibility of my own death. What I have on him is his guilt. At last. (243)

And her most effective weapon may be the bedsheets.

Isak Dinesen also emphasizes the importance of the bedsheets and the superiority of silence in her short story "The Blank Page." The story itself is that of a Carmelite order that grew the finest flax and manufactured the best linen of Portugal, linen destined to be the bridal sheets for all the young princesses of the royal house. On the morning after the wedding, the bridal sheet was displayed for all to see the spot of blood, the proof of the house's honor. Then the narrative square would be cut from the center of the sheet, framed in gold, sent back to the monastery, and hung on a gallery wall with an engraved plaque bearing the name of the princess. In "'The Blank Page" and
Female Creativity," Susan Gubar points out that these princesses "have been 'framed' into telling the same story, namely, the story of their acquiescence as objects of exchange" (301).

In the long row of gold-framed bridal sheets there is, however, a different canvas. Its golden plaque is there with the royal crown, but there is no name, and the linen square is white, a blank page. In the unknown princess's tale, silence and the blank piece of bedsheets speak to us deeply, delightfully, and subversively, for, as Gubar points out, it is a powerful piece of resistance (305).

The bedsheets and silence, the central images in Dinesen's text, are important in Atwood's work also. Although in Gilead blood on a Handmaid's sheet means failure--menses has begun and fertilization has not taken place yet--the bedsheets have a subversive possibility for the Handmaids also. Instead of using it to proclaim masculine honor and pride and achievement as in the world of royal princesses, the Handmaids--like the anonymous princess--may challenge that masculine presence. They may choose suicide; they may choose their own kind of absence. This is the message which one Offred leaves another.
In addition to this sense of power the Handmaid acquires after learning of the previous Offred, she realizes that their bodies can be a source of disruption. In order to maintain healthy muscle tone thought to be beneficial for a woman in labor, the Handmaids do the marketing each day. A Guardian opens the gate for the pair of Handmaids one morning, allowing them to pass into another section of the city. The protagonist knows that the two Guardians are watching them walk down the street. The two men are young and are not yet allowed to touch women; instead "they touch with their eyes" (30). She swings her hips a little and feels the satisfaction of thumbing her nose from behind a fence. Is she ashamed? No, she enjoys the power, passive, but power nonetheless. She hopes that they get hard and have to rub themselves against the wooden sections of the barrier gates and that they suffer later when they are lying alone in bed.

From her marginalized position in Gilead's structure, the Handmaid realizes the considerable disruptive potential that she and her sisters could have, but, like the protagonist of Surfacing, their language is silence and their form is invisibility. More completely than in Surfacing, they have been excluded and threatened with effacement. Margaret Atwood and Isak Dinesen,
however, would agree: "whatever is silenced will clamor to be heard, though silently" (196).

The Handmaid's most decisive action is one which disturbs her considerably. While reconstructing the past, the protagonist remembers that before exile, the body was a tool to accomplish her will or "an instrument of pleasure" (95). She could use it to make things happen such as open doors or use appliances or write. She remembers meeting a man in hotel rooms, and she thinks that if that were never to happen again she would die. Then she corrects herself; we do not die because of the absence of sex but because of the absence of love. So when the Commander's Wife, Serena Joy, offers to fix her up with another man, one who will possibly make her pregnant and save her from the Colonies, the Handmaid listens. Serena explains that she has Nick, the chauffeur, in mind. The Handmaid's remorse, however, is not that she allows Serena to arrange and to carry out a tryst with Nick, but that she goes back repeatedly to see him in his apartment. "It wasn't called for, there was no excuse. I did not do it for him, but for myself entirely" (344). So love, the very thing without which she has believed she would die, is the very thing that causes her anguish. Later, when a friendly Handmaid asks her to get information from the Commander and promises to
use the Underground Femaleroad if she is at risk, the protagonist refuses. Her reason is complicated by her having established a connection with another, with Nick. But she also remembers the Aunts' lesson about "freedom to and freedom from" (33). In the past it was freedom to. In Gilead, however, it's freedom from, Aunt Lydia would explain. Yet, the Handmaid remembers that at the Particication, it was freedom to (359). What is the difference? she would ask. She no longer wants to cross a border, for where and what is freedom?

The protagonist has uncovered a sameness that characterizes the present in Gilead and the past in what was the United States. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's critique of capitalist American society in Dialectic of Enlightenment suggests a possible application to the society of Gilead. Because the beliefs which are the center of Gilead have no opposition, they also have no meaning. In other words, if it were necessary to reconcile the society and the demands of its inhabitants, then those beliefs, those aims of Gilead, would be meaningful. As it is, the society cannot tolerate any opposition, any tension, and what would be a difference ceases to be different (120-67). For example, the "different" classes prove to be all alike. Although Gilead would privilege both the Aunts
and the Commanders, what finally is the difference between a Moira at Jezebel's, the Commanders' brothel, and an Aunt seeking gratification at a Salvaging? What is the difference between a Handmaid who sneaks around to have a love affair with her Commander's Guardian and a Commander dressing his Handmaid as a whore and sneaking her into Jezebel's? Difference is illusory. And the very practices that Gilead condemns the past for are those that it maintains. It condemns both surrogate mothers and mistresses yet maintains Handmaids; it disapproves of brothels but staffs Jezebel's. And those at Jezebel's who could produce children, are sterilized, are "made" barren.

This emptiness at the center of the founding aims of Gilead is imaged effectively in its use of the negative prefix un-. At some point un- would have been part of a dialectical process, a form of negation, but now it retains only its terrifying character, and it represents the dark abyss, the void at the center, the threat of annihilation. For example, at one point in the process, there would have been women. In Gilead, however, there are Wives, Aunts, Marthas, Handmaids, and Unwomen. Unwomen are the discards. They are old women and women without viable ovaries, rebels (feminists in another era) who question Gilead's rules; they are Handmaids who draw
three sterile Commanders and fail to become pregnant. They are Godless women from the past, women who have made porno films and those who have participated in kinky sex. They have become the untouchables, the undesirables, and they are shut out from the human circle that exists in Gilead, swallowed up by what people now call the Colonies. *Un-* used this way, represents a termination of the dialectical process with no movement beyond. It is, therefore, a leveling agent, one that brooks no contradiction, no tension, and no reconciliation.

When Serena discovers that the Handmaid has visited Jezebel's with the Commander, she calls the protagonist a slut. Yet this is the Wife who both suggested and arranged for the Handmaid to have sexual intercourse with the Guardian assigned to her husband. The protagonist goes upstairs and sits in the darkening room, waiting. "Don't let the bastards grind you down," she says. But the command is meaningless; there is no alternative. The protagonist in *Surfacing* also recognizes the lack of possibilities: "withdrawing is no longer possible and the alternative is death" (223), she reminds herself finally. Both women are in Position Three as described by Margaret Atwood. Both acknowledge that they are victims. The protagonist of *Surfacing* realizes that the
word games, that the sado-masochistic games of winner and
loser, of victor and victim must be abandoned; "at the
moment there are no others but they will have to be
invented" (223). The Handmaid watches a black van with
the white-winged eye on its side pull up in front of the
Commander's house. As the two men lead her downstairs,
she thinks: "Whether this is my end or a new beginning I
have no way of knowing: I have given myself over into the
hands of strangers, because it can't be helped" (378).
Neither protagonist is seeking victimization at this
point. Their actions are not static, for both have
identified the real source of oppression. For the
protagonist of Surfacing it was the need she felt to be a
victim and the games that people played with each other.
The protagonist of The Handmaid's Tale, however, cannot
change her experience in Gilead. She cannot alter that
oppressive society, not from inside it. So she goes out
now--"into the darkness within; or else the light"
(378). Although exiled and silenced in Gilead, the
Handmaid, known for a time as Offred, finds a place to
inscribe the word. She hides it among other words,
concealing her narrative as she must conceal her
freedom. The tapescript which she leaves us is a
testimony of her toughness and of her ability to
transform the ugliness and the threat of Gilead into the poignancy and the pathos of *The Handmaid's Tale*.

The two novels, therefore, form a completed dialectical project with *Surfacing* beginning the movement. In that text, the protagonist perceives herself and her country as victims of a dominant foreign culture. While part of her assessment might be true and might be constructive in another stage of her dialectical movement, the victimization role is counter-productive at this point. It releases her from responsibility and from involvement here. That is, she can locate a reason for all her failures, for all her losses and can think that they are inevitable, that she has no control. Thus, she must begin to articulate to herself a person and a life framed by possibility; there must be no expectation of guarantees: "we will probably fail, sooner or later, more or less painfully" (224), she finally acknowledges.

*The Handmaid's Tale*, on the other hand, delineates a protagonist who, instead of using binary oppositions as a way to explain her life as the protagonist of *Surfacing* does, sees oppositions as possibilities. When she meets the Wife of her new Commander, she notices that the Wife usually does not speak to her. "I am a reproach to her; and a necessity" (17), she says, linking alternatives. And it is this kind of connecting that she typically does
which makes her aware of a potential power to disrupt. Although she cannot change Gilead, she wants to do anything that "subverts the perceived order of things" (300). Finally, two Guardians, the official police of Gilead, take her from the Commander's house. But from a space outside Gilead and outside the text, the protagonist, perhaps finally a creative non-victim, records her tale.

It is interesting that this interface is a space that exists both after our text and before it. That is, the protagonist is able to create the narrative as a result of being "arrested," removed from the Commander's home, and, we hope, moved along the Underground Femaleroad. Yet she must live an exiled life of silence in Gilead, learning both her lack and her possibility of power before she can surface and articulate that silence. And it is the frame, the appended "Historical Notes on The Handmaid's Tale" which alerts us to the provenance of our text and which makes us aware that indeed the interface does exist. Thus, Surfacing and The Handmaid's Tale generate an authentic spiral that contains a woman's subversion of the master's desire to dominate, "to suppress history, to suppress a heap of other things." This becomes her way to self-awareness and to a discourse of her own.
Figure 8, Seated Nude

Figure 9, Detail of Les Demoiselles d'Avignon

Figure 10, Head of a Woman
Figure 11, *Girl before a Mirror*

Figure 12, *Seated Woman*
Figure 13, Beach Scene

Figure 14, Baigneuses au Ballon
Figure 15, Woman in Blue

Figure 16, Girl With Plumed Hat

Figure 17, Streetwalker
Figure 18, *Harlot with Hand on Her Shoulder*

Figure 19, "S.V.P."

Figure 20, *Seated Bather*
Figure 21, Bather

Figure 22, Figure
CHAPTER III

GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ AND REMEDIOS VARO:
SILENCE OF SOLITUDE

Everything tends to make us believe that there exists a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions.

Andre Breton, Manifestoes of Surrealism

One Hundred Years of Solitude, by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, has been described variously as the history of Colombia, as a history of Latin America, and as humanity's experience from genesis to the apocalypse.

Gustavo Alfaro in Constante de la historia de Latinoamerica en Garcia Marquez describes the one hundred years of the title as those years stretching from the formation of the Republic of Colombia in 1830 until the end of the forty-five years of conservative control in 1930 (76-77). Angel Rama, however, sees the novel as a representation of "la nueva expresion artistica del continente." In his essay, "Un novelista de la violencia americana," Rama expands Alfaro's angle of perspective for One Hundred Years of Solitude so that it includes the
experiences of all present-day South Americans: "el realismo revivia con nueva vitalidad, revelandose como un eficaz instrumento para penetrar en las circumstancias hondas de la vida del hombre americano actual" (30)
Alfaro's view, although enlightening when studying the history of Latin America as a series of violent acts committed against these Americans, is too restrictive, too reductive, for while their history has contained much violence, not all of it has originated outside these countries. In Argentina, for example, the Rosas regime was notorious for the exploitation of its own people. But, more importantly, this emphasis on violence does much to encourage and to perpetuate a stereotypical picture of Latin Americans, an image which Garcia Marquez recognizes in his short story "No One Writes to the Colonel": "to the Europeans, South America is a man with a moustache, a guitar, and a gun" (21). The history of Latin America seen as a series of violent encounters is not adequate to describe the life experiences of this hemisphere, nor is that what Garcia Marquez intends to do in One Hundred Years of Solitude.
His work traces six generations of the Buendia family and their founding of Macondo, and, as Ricardo Gullon insists in "Garcia Marquez o el olvidado arte de contar," more than violence must be addressed in order to
describe this novelistic space: "la casa de los Buendía y la ciudad de Macondo son representaciones de un universo vastísimo en el cual todo se incluye, incluso el tiempo" (143). But what is the space of this novel like, then, if it is a representation of a universe so vast that it includes everything? Is this merely a figure of speech which Gullon chooses to use in order to flatter his compatriot's work? Is it the same as Jorge Luis Borges's Library of Babel which is total, which contains a record of all that has happened or will happen? Such a claim immediately appears absurd. How will Garcia Marquez contain a limitless world inside the finite perimeter of a book?

The author gives us some clues. To write well is to know how to exploit reality, to estimate its infinite possibilities, and to realize that reality "no termina en el precio de los tomates," he says (qtd. in Earle, 9). And in an interview with Ernesto Gonzalez Bermejo, recorded in "Garcia Marquez: Ahora doscientos anos de soledad," the author recalls how his idea of the nature of reality changed, how it gradually opened up to include the myths of the people, their beliefs and their legends. These make up the fabric of their everyday reality. And although he realizes that the presence of police who threaten them with death is indeed a part of
that reality, so also are their superstitions and folklore (245). He incorporates this pluralistic concept of reality into *One Hundred Years*.

Garcia Marquez is aware that the incorporation of all that forms part of the life of people into a book projects that novel onto a level that many will call fantastic. But he would defend his combination of what we call the real and the imaginative:

> he llegado a creer que hay algo que podemos llamar pararrealidad, que no es ni mucho menos metafisica, ni obedece a supersticiones, ni a especulaciones imaginativas, sino que existe como consecuencia de deficiencias o limitaciones de las investigaciones cientificas y por eso todavía no podemos llamarla realidad real. (245)

As a result, Garcia Marquez will create a space in which "real" reality is suspended, a framework which exists because of either deficiencies or limitations of scientific investigations into the full nature of reality, and we will be concerned with the result of this mix of the real and the "unreal" in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez wrote his text in Mexico, over a period of eighteen months beginning in 1965. The country which welcomed him also offered refuge to Remedios Varo, a Spaniard who fled first the Spanish Civil War and then the Nazi occupation of Paris. Garcia Marquez and Remedios Varo share a desire to create a
marvelous but real universe, one in which the extraordinary can coexist with the ordinary. This may be all that connects the Colombian writer and the Spanish painter. Although most of Varo's work was created between 1953 and 1963 in Mexico, we have no evidence that they knew each other or that they were familiar with each other's artistic creations. Yet there are many striking similarities in the structure and the content of the worlds which these two fashion.

Remedios Varo, always affectionately called Remedios by Mexican critics, presents a unique world in her paintings, a world meticulously created with her brush and her imagination. Here the organic and the inorganic, the animal and the vegetable, the magic and the mundane grow together so subtly that we have difficulty separating them. At first we may be startled to see a head bursting from the back of a chair or a floral carpet full of "real" plants and blossoms or a woman painting birds on canvas that metamorphose into real birds and fly away. But, as Edouard Jaguer notes in his study _Remedios Varo_, there is a perfect coherence in her universe and we are seduced by it. Although the disquieting, even the perilous may be present in her oeuvre, the impression that dominates is not that of danger. Her serenity and humor take her far from
laborious and pedantic workings, far from what Jaguer calls the threat of a fantastic art. "Con Remedios estamos en un grado superior de la realidad, en una suprarealidad" (65). Her work, then, will have this in common with that of Garcia Marquez: it will blend the commonplace and the marvelous, and it will locate its reality outside what we typically call the real world.

Garcia Marquez demonstrates an awareness of the traditional priority for that which is real over that which is imaginative or speculative when he defends his combination of the two. In a traditional system of mutually exclusive terms, that which is commonplace or ordinary will be considered present to itself; it has been made legitimate by investigations, by studies, or by that tradition itself. On the other hand, the speculative or that which is not "real" will lack credibility and its value, therefore, will be reduced. That which is called by names such as superstition or mental telepathy or magic is not legitimate. As Garcia Marquez notes, we cannot situate it within "real reality" because it exists in an alienated space which is a result of scientific deficiencies or limited investigations. Consequently, it has the value of an absent entity.

Because both One Hundred Years and the Mexican paintings of Remedios Varo create another and a new, a
dynamic dimension for the articulation of their ideas, this chapter will juxtapose the novel and several paintings by Varo as a way of casting light from one to the other. Because they both seek to unite what is usually mutually exclusive, the marvelous and the ordinary, their works will complement each other.

Their merging of what is usually considered antagonistic will create another space, one that I have designated as the interface. In the examination of previous works, the interface has made brief appearances—the possibility of an androgynous self for Bernard in *The Waves*, the space inside or beyond the boundaries of Gilead in which the ex-Handmaid could write her narrative in *The Handmaid's Tale*. But Garcia Marquez, in *One Hundred Years*, and Remedios Varo, in the works produced during her "Mexican period," have created an interface, a space which is neither fantasy nor real, neither purely marvelous nor wholly ordinary.

Haven't other writers and painters juxtaposed opposites, entities that appear to have no sameness that would justify the and which connects them? Gothic, for example, uses a medieval or a wild, picturesque setting in which to juxtapose the macabre and the everyday, the sensational and the ordinary. The aim of such combinations in literature, as in *The Mysteries of*
Udolpho, is to create anxiety in the reader, or, as in The Monk, to arouse interest in the forbidden. Giovanni Battista Piranesi created feathery inkings of dungeons and endless stairways that both fascinate and chill us. We consider these works to be escapes, however, a no-man's land where startling, thrilling, sensational happenings might be frequent, according to A.C. Baugh in A Literary History of England. The aim appears, therefore, to be an attempt to stand reality on its head, not to create another reality. This is the distinction that is necessary in order to understand the importance of what Garcia Marquez and Remedios Varo are doing when they merge—not juxtapose—the marvelous and the ordinary.

The first sentence of One Hundred Years of Solitude places us within the narrative method of Garcia Marquez: "Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendia was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice" (11). The story begins in the memory of Colonial Aureliano, and we believe that we are about to read a chronologically-sequenced narrative, one which, in this instance, will situate us at a "beginning," at a child's discovery of ice and then move gradually toward the Colonel's encounter with the business end of rifles. The text,
however, does not fulfill this expectation, for the child does not see the ice until the end of the chapter. By that time, we already know that we are in a different kind of novelistic space, one where there is no beginning.

In this world things appear to be new. The stones on the bed of the nearby river are "white and enormous, like prehistoric eggs." In fact, "the world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point" (11). We, therefore, assume that we have somehow penetrated a curtain of time, that we are "back behind" it in a mythic dimension, looking at a world just beginning. The arrival of the gypsies supports our assumption, for they bring new inventions. One of them, a stranger to the village, introduces himself as Melquiades and puts on "a bold public demonstration of what he himself called the eighth wonder of the learned alchemists of Macedonia" (11), a magnet. Each year when they return, the gypsies bring another invention—the telescope, a magnifying glass, false teeth. Thus we visualize Macondo as an isolated village, existing as countless others may at this same originative time, their common link the gypsies.
This assumption of an originary space in which their world exists new and unexposed to civilization is complicated, however, by the patriarch of the Buendia family, by Jose Arcadio. On the one hand, he suggests mythic time, for he is the teacher who "would give instructions for planting and advice for the raising of children and animals" (17). Because his house was the first and the best, the others have been built "in its image and likeness" (17), the language itself suggesting the Platonic "idea" or "form" for houses. His imagination fired by the inventions which the gypsies bring to Macondo, he wants to access the wonders of the world for himself. He, therefore, sets about clearing land to open a way which would put his village in contact with the rest of the world. On the other hand, he is the one who, in his youth, with men, wives, and children, "crossed the mountains in search of an outlet to the sea, and after twenty-six months they gave up the expedition and founded Macondo, so they would not have to go back" (19), back toward Riohacha, that ancient city where Sir Francis Drake had hunted crocodiles. Thus Jose Arcadio is also part of the historical world and time. So we have a slippery situation, a novelistic construct which at times appears to signal a mythic dimension outside time, yet one which then vexes that suggestion of
"original" time and space. The first sentence of One Hundred Years of Solitude introduces both urges.

In addition to the combination of mythic and historical or ordinary dimensions, the novel also incorporates a structural circularity with Ursula Iguaran at its center. Part of the original pair of Buendias who found Macondo, Ursula mothers her corner of the universe. When she realizes that the house is too small to contain their children and future grandchildren, she uses the money accumulated from her business of making and selling candy animals and converts the Buendia house into a matriarchal mansion. Although Ursula collects the best from various old-world cultures--Vienese furniture, Holland tablecloths, a pianola and an Italian expert to assemble it--the house is for living.

Gullon views her as the source of the ordinary, the everyday experiences of life (142), and her voice is indeed one of common sense. It carries the determination necessary to make ordinary day follow ordinary day. When her husband, for example, becomes frustrated because of his inability to find a route to civilization, to the benefits of science, he decides to move the family. His reasoning is that they have no roots until someone in the family is dead and under the ground. Ursula, determined that the family will remain together in Macondo, in the
village which they helped found, replies softly but firmly: "If I have to die for the rest of you to stay here, I will die" (22).

Ursula also is the one who keeps the family wisdom alive, reminding them that a Buendia must never marry one of the same blood. She and her husband Jose Arcadio are cousins, and in spite of the awareness that a child could be born to them deformed, they ignored the taboo against incest. Ursula, however, is always apprehensive when a Buendia is about to marry or to have a child: the children may be born with the tail of a pig. When we pull this out of context, her concern for the added appendage appears ridiculous. Yet at the same time that we hear about her preoccupation with the possible shame, we also hear of a horrible precedent:

An aunt of Ursula's, married to an uncle of Jose Arcadio Buendia, had a son who went through life wearing loose, baggy trousers and who bled to death after having lived forty-two years in the purest state of virginity, for he had been born and had grown up with a cartilaginous tail in the shape of a corkscrew and with a small tuft of hair on the tip. A pig's tail that was never allowed to be seen by any woman and that cost him his life when a butcher friend did him the favor of chopping it off with his cleaver. (28)

In this way, that which might initially appear ridiculous, becomes common sense through Ursula's experiences. We readers remember sensational news
releases in tabloids about the deformities to the human body, malformations which are quite possible and probably more common than we realize, for the present state of medical care promises us better odds for surviving and concealing than a butcher's cleaver would. Because Ursula is the generative force in the Buendia family, the one who not only gives their bodies life and nourishment, but also the one who nourishes their minds, she is situated at their very center of existence. At the same time, she is also at the axis of the novel's circularity. The theme of incest, expressed as the terror of having a Buendia with a physical deformity, runs through the novel, from the union between Ursula and Jose Arcadio to that last one between two Buendias--Amaranta Ursula and her nephew Aureliano--which finally does produce a Buendia with the tail of a pig.

Circularity is evidenced in various other ways. One Hundred Years is divided into sections, but there are no headings and no numbers to distinguish them, only the same motif of three flowers repeated at the beginning of each section. Julio Ortega notices the same linking function in the repetition of family names. In Poetics of Change, he comments on the game of mirrors which names and the two personality types play (89). We are confused, even lost occasionally, in the morass of
Arcadios, Aurelianos, Amarantas, all of them Buendías. The different names also carry personality characteristics common to them which lends a suggestion of something like reincarnation or of infinite replication. The Jose Arcadios, for example, are those who prolong the family, who persevere. Ursula studies her great-grandson Jose Arcadio Segundo, noticing his "linear, solemn, and . . . pensive air," a characteristic unlike the Jose Arcadios. She reexamines the past and decides that at some time Jose Arcadio Segundo "had changed places with his twin brother, because it was he and not the other one who should have been called Aureliano" (245). At the time of death the bodies of these twins are placed in identical coffins. Aureliano Segundo's drunk friends, however, confuse the two bodies, get "the coffins mixed up, and [bury] them in the wrong graves" (327). García Marquez chuckles that all their lives they were confused as to their identity, but with death the situation is corrected. Because of this repetition of names and of dominant characteristics, however, we have a sense of returning to where we have already been, of seeing what we have already seen, in short, of moving in a circle.

Jose Arcadio Segundo listens to Colonel Aureliano's story of the grounded Spanish galleon and renews a
Buendia scheme to link Macondo to the sea. "'I know all of this by heart,' Ursula would shout. 'It's as if time had turned around and we were back at the beginning'" (185). When she listens to one of Colonial Aureliano's sons and looks at the sketch that he draws on the table, she realizes that it is "a direct descendent of the plans with which Jose Arcadio Buendia had illustrated his project for solar warfare. Ursula confirmed her impression that time was going in a circle" (209).

Although Ursula would seem to contradict herself when she visits Colonial Aureliano in jail just before he is to face the firing squad, she later revises her description of time in favor of circularity. Her son recalls the many colors the houses have been painted, all indications of political interference.

"What did you expect?" Ursula sighed. "Time passes."

"That's how it goes," Aureliano admitted, "but not so much" (123).

Years later Ursula visits Jose Arcadio Segundo, who has isolated himself in Melquiades's room. Without knowing it, he repeats her past conversation: "What did you expect? . . . Time passes."

"That's how it goes," Ursula said, "but not so much."
When she said it she realized that she was giving the same reply that Colonel Aureliano Buendia had given in his death cell, and once again she shuddered with the evidence that time was not passing, as she had just admitted, but that it was turning in a circle. (310)

People's habits of doing things in order to undo them also create a circularity. Colonel Aureliano finds his only happiness since seeing ice in making little gold fishes. Ursula, however, "with her terrible practical sense" is unable to understand her son's business:

he exchanged little fishes for gold coins and then converted the coins into little fishes, and so on, with the result that he had to work all the harder with the more he sold in order to satisfy an exasperating vicious circle. 190

And Amaranta, Ursula's daughter, sits sewing, taking buttons loose in order to sew them back on. Unlike her mother, she understands her brother's actions, because death, a lady dressed in blue, has appeared to her and ordered her to begin sewing her shroud. Fearful that she will die before Rebeca, a person she hates with as much intensity as many people love, she works slowly at first, stalling for time, taking four years to produce the thread alone. Later, resigned to her own death, Amaranta listens to Meme, the daughter of her great-nephew, and she hears "the repetition of another adolescence that seemed as clean as hers must have seemed and that, however, was already tainted with rancor" (260). Gullon,
believes that this repetitious activity accentuates the
futility of human actions (148) and denies change.

Pilar Ternera, a prostitute who bears two
Buendía sons, one for Jose Arcadio and later one for
Aureliano, images the circularity of the family and of the novel most acutely:

experience had taught her that the history of the family was a machine with unavoidable repetitions, a turning wheel that would have
gone on spilling into eternity were it not for the progressive and irremediable wearing of the axle. (364)

The axle does indeed wear out. The last couple in One Hundred Years is known for their love and their happiness, but they are both Buendías. And their union produces the unusual Buendía: "the only one in a century who had been engendered with love" (378) and the only one with the tail of a pig.

Ursula, who finally becomes lost in her memories and "in a labyrinth of dead people" (315), teaches the children how "to make up imaginary visits with beings who had not only been dead for a long time, but who had existed at different times" (303). Moreover, her loss of lucidity is paralleled by a physical change, for "little by little she was shrinking, turning into a fetus . . . . She looked like a newborn old woman" (315). "It's as if the world were repeating itself," Ursula would have said.
There is also a circularity at work in various paintings by Remedios Varo, images of a world repeating itself. Although Varo does not develop her ideas as Garcia Marquez does using words, she can, nonetheless, accumulate a "vocabulary," a technical style, and thematic concerns which will distinguish her oeuvre from that of others and which will also make it possible to talk about paintings and writings, using the same terms. Thus we can juxtapose her works and his novel, and then talk about them analogously.

Part of any description of Varo's work will ultimately comment on her use of what Janet Kaplan, in Unexpected Journeys, calls "vegetal, rootlike extensions" (111). These extensions usually take the form of roots or vines that appear to encrust and to merge with other organic forms. Frequently, however, they may be roads or waterways that lose their normal characteristics and become fluid undulations that thread their ways across the land- or seascapes. In The Thread, 1956 (Figure 23), vegetal extensions appear throughout the room. They hang from the moldings at the tops of paneled walls, from the wooden mantle, and on furniture upholstery and arms. At first glance the growth resembles the epiphytic Spanish moss, a rootless plant that decorates many trees in the southern United States and in Central America. The
carpet, however, draws our attention; it is real grass and flowers. The same kind of carpet appears under the table in *Visit to the Past*, 1957 (Figure 24). The emphasis in this work is on what happens when we return to the past, for the protagonist returns with her luggage to find the room full of her mirror images: presence lingers, even in absence. Although digressive, this reading of another Varo work offers us a clue for her use of vegetal growth in both works. Even though the wood and the fabric are now manufactured goods in *The Thread*, they have not forgotten their past. The walls and ceiling of the room and the upholstery of the chair and sofa retain traces of their life as plants, which grow now in spots as leaf and root extensions. And instead of existing as a painted or woven floral carpet, an imitation of what the fibers were at one time, the two carpets are trompe l'oeil illusions. That is, they are so visually real that we must differentiate them from others, saying that they have real plants, not imitations. In addition to taking part in a visual pun which amuses us, these vegetal extensions indicate a circularity at work in which things either return to or retain traces of their original forms.

*Space-Time Weaving*, 1956 (Figure 25), may be seen as a single statement about circularity. In this instance,
we look into space and time, perceiving a moment highlighted for us: a man offers a single, white flower to a woman holding a candle. Although the sparsely furnished room offers a sense of depth and space which pulls us into it, that is illusionary, for its short door and low ceiling constrict the room, pushing us out. The woven pattern repeats this push-pull movement. In one instance, it acts as a scrim, separating us from what we see, yet in another, it is transparent, allowing us to see through its patterning. Closer examination, however, reveals that what we thought were latitudinal and longitudinal lines crisscrossing a globe are afterimages of what we perceive in this room. We can see the man's head above his body in at least five repetitions as in a film sequence, and there are images repeated above other objects also.

But how do we explain the reflected images beneath the figures? Instead of seeing the man's head, as we do above him, or the woman's hair, we see their lower extremities imaged in the weave. If they always move in the same direction, the reflection will be the same on either end. For example, if they are rising now, the path of reflections will be that of the lower portion of the room—his feet, her wheel, and the chair legs. But they are not rotating in a single direction. Instead, we
have another repetition of the push-pull movement. Like the back-and-forth swinging of a pendulum which really forms an arc, a section of a circle, this globe or wheel is moving back and forth. Here we are reminded of relative rather than absolute time and, as Jose Arcadio Buendia would explain it: "time also stumbled and had accidents and could therefore splinter and leave an eternalized fragment in a room" (322). Every time we look into this "space-time weaving," the man will be holding his flower and she will have her lighted candle, for here, as in Macondo, time and space are moving, but only in a circle.

Kaplan includes this work with a group of paintings that uses variants of wheels and gears to produce mechanical bodies (197). The wheels and meshing gears in the bodies of these two beings provide a pictorial analogy for Pilar Ternera's metaphor describing the Buendias: "... the family was a machine with unavoidable repetitions." And although mechanical bodies are capable of action, it is only repeated action.

One of the most striking statements of circularity in Varo's paintings is that made by the figure who appears in most of her work. Jaguer describes her as a tall, thin, androgynous being (48), and the figure does appear androgynous in the painting Harmony (Figure 26).
But the typical Varo figure can be more specifically described as one having a "delicate heart-shaped face with large almond eyes, long sharp nose, and thick mane of lively hair" (Kaplan, 9). She is the central figure in *The Thread* (Figure 23) and in *Space-Time Weaving* (Figure 25). In one of the panels of Varo's triptych (Figure 27), she has been duplicated; all of the young women are Varo's mirror images. Although the hair color may vary, the heart-shaped face, the large eyes, and the delicate features will repeat themselves in most of her paintings, and this mirroring effect, this duplication, is analogous to that which occurs in *One Hundred Years* with the repetition of names and of personality characteristics. As a result, the repetition creates a linkage, a circularity among paintings.

It is interesting to note at this point one kind of embedding that she and García Márquez achieve. This distinctive female who appears in Varo's works is an image of the painter herself (Figure 28). And García Márquez includes himself and part of his past experience as the young García Márquez, friend of Aureliano, Meme's son. In an interview with Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, García Márquez comments on the way his grandmother used to threaten him with the appearance of dead relatives, relatives who walked freely about their home, according
to her. "To this day," Mendoza adds, "when Garcia Marquez wakes up in the middle of the night in some hotel in Rome or Bangkok he relives, just for a second, the old childhood terror: those dead relatives dwelling out in the darkness" (The Fragrance of Guava, 10). In One Hundred Years Gabriel is the friend who "would spend his nights awake, disturbed by the noise of the dead people who walked through the bedrooms until dawn" (359).

Although Remedios and Garcia Marquez may appear to be absent from their works, they are, in a curious way, present.

In her works, Remedios Varo returns again and again to the theme of women as creators, as the generative force. The setting of The Creation of the Birds, 1958 (Figure 29), is an alchemical laboratory where both art and life are created. A wise owl, with the familiar heart-shaped face of other Varo works, sits at her drawing table. One hand paints the tail feathers on a bird with a brush connected to a violin around her neck. The other hand holds a triangular magnifying glass which catches and separates moonlight into life-giving rays. As the moon's light touches the painted image of the bird, it flies away.

There are many characteristics of the feminine principle in this alchemical laboratory. The moon, with
its pale, silvery light, is the domain of both the owl and the woman, and its properties, which are considered feminine, are imagination, sentiment, and perception. The alembic standing to the owl's right is egg-shaped; it catches the night's light and processes it into primary colors for the creator's palette. The violin around her neck is feminine by virtue of its receptacle-like shape. Its tone is shrill and light, silvery, and therefore lunar. Jose Cirlot explains in A Dictionary of Symbols that the black or hidden sun, i.e., the moon, symbolizes "prime matter," the unworked state of life (304). In this context, then, the owl sits working in her alchemical lab, not producing imitations but converting prime matter into life. Whitney Chadwick comments on the woman creator here who becomes "an image of knowledge," who already "possesses the secret of all creation" (Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement, 202).

Woman is again the creator at the center of life in Harmony (Figure 26), a work in which the androgynous figure mentioned above (but one that nevertheless resembles Varo) struggles to create harmony and order in the natural world. The condition of the room indicates its present chaotic state—chests and drawers disordered, loose tiles lying on the floor, scraps of paper tossed
Kaplan quotes an explanation from Varo's notebooks:

The person is trying to find the invisible thread that links everything and, for this reason, is skewering all kinds of things on a staff of metal threads. . . . When he has succeeded in putting each of the diverse objects in its place, by blowing through the clef that supports the staff, a music should come out that . . . is harmonious. . . . (178-79)

Kaplan reports that Varo repeatedly warned against "misguided [scientific] attempts to conquer nature," believing "that science must adopt the role not of domination but of harmony with natural forces" (172). In her repeated return to the theme of women as creators and discoverers, as those who would seek enlightenment and harmony in nature, Varo achieves a structural circularity that echoes throughout her work.

Yet human relationships are conspicuously absent in the oeuvre of Varo. Although woman produces life in The Creation of the Birds, although she is the one who brings knowledge as a result of the Exploration of the Sources of the Orinoco River (Figure 29), she is solitary. She sits alone in a laboratory in one painting and alone in an "invented" boat in the other. The boat itself heightens our awareness of her confinement within that isolation, for she sits in a stiffened and hollowed out coat, bound by cords and a waistband. In fact, clothing
is most often a metaphor for confinement in Varo's pictorial language.

There are other paintings, however, in which men and women meet as if in love. In *The Lovers*, 1959 (Figure 31), she shows a man and woman sitting alone, holding hands. The bodies are frozen in a rigid stiffness (reinforced by Varo's use of cold colors); their hands are the only contact between them. And instead of "gazing into each other's eyes," the way in which we typically describe lovers, these two look into the hand mirrors that have replaced their heads. As a result, they see not the other but themselves. According to Varo, this painting is "a depiction of narcissistic lovers who drown in the stream of their own passion" (Kaplan, 227). Even in love there is solitude.

*Encounter*, 1959 (Figure 32), calls attention to human contact with its title. Here a classical male statue had stepped down from his pedestal and walked directly to a door in which a fiery, swirling mass of femininity waits. She grasps both his arms as he looks away. Their touch may have generated the golden filaments swirling in the room, or they may indicate her passion. He, however, is reticent; his body stands as if braced against entering and his head is turned, looking at another woman. The background reinforces a sense of
solitude in this work. The darkened and empty arches suggest the architectural silence of de Chirico. They are shallow, leading nowhere, and we feel enclosed, hemmed in, as unsure of ourselves as the male statue who hesitates at the door.

Farewell, 1958 (Figure 33), is a marvelous statement of absence in presence and an enigmatic statement about human relationships. Our eyes are immediately caught by two pockets of gold light at either side of this painting, two light areas that frame a woman on the left and a man on the right, both disappearing from our view. The remainder of the painting is a warm orange-red. Then we focus on the shadows which these two have left lying on the stone floor, two shadows about to embrace. In this painting, Kaplan sees that "it is only their lengthening shadows that sneak back to grab an extra kiss" (152). In short, there is no presence of love here, only its shadow, its absence. Kaplan has noticed at various times that Varo's works do not build on human relationships. Instead, they express a sense of loneliness, a possibility of pain, and the specter of solitude. As a result, her work may appear enigmatic to us, for she uses a warm palette and has a delightful sense of humor which manifests itself in her choices of topics and in her visual puns. Yet there is a silence
which permeates her settings and an absence of human warmth.

Garcia Marquez has said that the lack of warmth, of love is written in every page of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, from Ursula who is terrified of an incestual curse for having married her cousin to the last Buendia who is cursed because of his parents' incestual union. Colonel Aureliano Buendia decides that no one, not even his mother, can come closer to him than ten feet, so he isolates himself in the center of a circle of chalk. Later when he searches "in his heart for the place where his affection had rotted away . . . he could not find it" (167). Melquiades dies but returns to Macondo "because he could not bear the solitude" (55). Fernanda seals the house in solitude, "obeying the paternal order of being buried alive" (319).

And "in the impenetrable solitude of decrepitude," Ursula examines her family, for the first time perceiving what she had failed to see earlier:

she realized that Colonel Aureliano Buendia had not lost his love for the family . . . but that he had never loved anyone . . . . the son for whom she would have given her life was simply a man incapable of love. (233)

She examines herself and recognizes a desire "to let herself go . . . and allow herself at last an instant of rebellion" (235), a desire she has refused because of a
century of conformity. She thinks about all of the bad words she has never been able to say.

"Shit!" she shouts.

"Where is it?" Amaranta asks in alarm, thinking that Ursula has been bitten by a scorpion.

"What?"

"The bug!"

"Here," Ursula answers, putting her finger on her heart (236).

Ursula puts her finger on the reason for the "solitary fate of the family" (243), the fear of incest and its concomitant withdrawal from love, from human commitment. She also fingers her century of conformity, and Julio Ortega reminds us:

conformity condemns us to solitude, to the absence of communion. Conformity reduces existence to the endless daily occurrences in which man is always the object of a world that determines him and in which he succumbs without full consciousness, without being able to fight back. (94)

The distance between people in One Hundred Years of Solitude is both infinite and nothing. It is infinite because of the individual solitude which separates and distances them. It is nothing because of their sameness. Yet this represents a pessimism which Garcia Marquez may not wish to see fulfilled. Kathleen McNerney includes part of his acceptance speech for the Nobel
Prize for One Hundred Years of Solitude in Understanding Gabriel Garcia Marquez. He begins the speech: "This is, friends, the knot of our solitude," and he concluded it with an anticipation of

a compelling utopia of life, where no one can decide for others even the way they will die, where love will be true and happiness possible, and where races condemned to one hundred years of solitude will finally and forever have a second opportunity on earth. This is, friends, the size of our solitude. (155-56)

Carl Jung has said that "the man whom we can with justice call 'modern' is solitary. He is so of necessity and at all times, for every step towards a fuller consciousness of the present removes him further from his original participation mystique with the mass of men" (qtd. in Seymour Menton, 15). Every step toward a scientific understanding of our world isolates us from the natural world and dehumanizes it. That is, Jung explains in "Approaching the Unconscious," "the surface of our world seems to be cleansed of all superstitions and irrational elements" (95).

Yet Garcia Marquez and Varo wish to remind us that our real inner world is not "cleansed" of all irrational elements. Thus they combine elements of the occult—such as alchemy, magic, superstition, mental telepathy—and those of the observable world and create what appears to be a different reality. It has been called fantasy,
magic realism, lo real maravilloso, hyper realism, and some have even compared it to surrealism. Kaplan says that Varo sets "revelations of the marvelous in the context of daily activity" (172), and Jaguer notes a magnetic current which seems to circulate throughout Remedios' world, a current which produces attractions and . . . distractions. (48). We have commented on Ursula's impregnating the novel's space with the everyday, the ordinary, and then subtly inserting the marvelous and the non-ordinary. Her admonition against incest exemplifies this kind of activity. Although on one level the threat of having a child with the tail of a pig may appear ridiculous and stupid, within the context of One Hundred Years, this warning is part of a received body of wisdom. The people believe that marrying one's blood relation can indeed produce such an anomaly; therefore, marrying a relative would be stupid. In this way, Gullon explains, the space created and normalized by her assimilates the unusual and converts it into acceptable events and situations without any protest from the characters in One Hundred Years or from us readers (142).

"Dazzled by so many and such marvelous inventions, the people of Macondo did not know where their amazement began" (211). Their first sight of a train causes a commotion, but they reduce any threat it might suggest by
naming it and thus incorporating it into the daily reality: it becomes "a kitchen dragging a village behind it" (210). Then they are introduced to electric bulbs, films, phonographs, but the arrival of the telephone in Macondo is a strain on their credulity:

> It was as if God had decided to put to the test every capacity for surprise and was keeping the inhabitants of Macondo in a permanent alternation between excitement and disappointment, doubt and revelation, to such an extreme that no one knew for certain where the limits of reality lay. (212)

How do we decide where the limits of reality lie?

The methods of Garcia Marquez and Varo appear very similar. Juliana Gonzalez, a Mexican critic, says that Varo "saw in everything the life latent within; she observed the most diverse objects, delighting in all their details . . . ." (qtd. in Kaplan, 8). Varo then takes ideas from her observations and from her imagination, her "inventions," and grounds them in the ordinary world, "making them more convincing by the use of accurate and recognizable detail" (Kaplan, 186). Each painting becomes an instance of her method. Harmony (Figure 26, Insert), for example, is painted in a meticulous manner with attention to small details. All brush strokes are carefully concealed, with its result, effacement of the painterly process. In this painting Varo creates a realistic medieval space in which a figure
works. But in the corner of the room is a bird nest with two eggs, a nest built into a tear in a chair's upholstery. The illusion of the nest is so real—the painterly process obliterated so thoroughly—that it fools not only us but also a bird that flies toward it (186).

In Macondo an American company sets up a banana plantation. Neither the government nor the American company, however, is a reliable guide as to what is real and what is not. After the workers strike for improved sanitary conditions and medical services, the government moves in with soldiers and machine guns. Over three thousand workers are massacred and their bodies carried away by a train. Jose Arcadio Segundo rides that "endless and silent" (284) train, but the officials deny that it ever existed, that a massacre ever took place. The company's lawyers then prove that the banana company did not have any workers in its service. Therefore, all allegations were fables; "workers did not exist" (280). Although Jose Arcadio Segundo tells the people what he saw, no one believes him. The event has been erased from their memories. The official version insinuates itself into the textbooks, and years later books confirm that there never was a banana company in Macondo.
Historically, the American company did set up a banana plantation in Colombia. There was a strike and there was a massacre. Kathleen McNerney juxtaposes the historical and the "fictional" in *Understanding Gabriel García Márquez* (it is interesting that fictional must now be qualified because of an awareness of the play that exists within the traditional binary opposition history/fiction). She reports that frequently the banana company had proved that part-time workers did not exist in order to evade paying benefits demanded by organized labor and that their accounts of the massacre, given by the officer in charge, Cortes Vargas, claimed nine deaths. McNerney cites a telegram, however, sent by the U.S. Legation to the Secretary of State which "proudly announced that there were a thousand victims" (28). Although García Márquez's account is probably closer to the truth, the concern is not with an actual number of people killed. Rather, "how can 'history' be given so much credit and be so unshakably believed when it is impossible to reconstruct?" (27). McNerney continues:

It is the historical conspiracy of silence that followed the strike that [García Márquez] sees as most dangerous. The Colombian government had nothing to gain and much to lose by letting out the facts of the case, and the witnesses were naturally reluctant to speak out in an aftermath of bloody reprisals. The episode, surely an extremely important one in the
history of Colombia, is in danger of being lost or suppressed from the collective memory. (27)

How do we decide today what is real and what is not? On 1 July 1989 international wire dispatches reported that Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China, was opened for the first time in almost four weeks. The Square was crowded with hundreds of tourists, many of them Chinese seeking "autographs from a general whose troops crushed student protests on the square" on June 3 and 4, 1989. Most of the people in Tiananmen Square said that they had heard nothing about any recent violence there, nothing about a bloody confrontation between the government and students in which the Chinese Government stilled the voices of protest in China. Who decides what is real and what is fantasy. And how do we decide what is history and what is fiction?

It is this play between possibilities which Garcia Marquez and Remedios Varo set up in their works. We may call it magic realism, commenting on the oxymoronic combination of realism and magic, of mutually exclusive terms. But they have compromised any separateness which we might wish to maintain. They show that "reality" may be something that can be created, that frequently reality is more questionable than what we have denied presence to and called "non-reality." These two have fashioned a new space, a marvellously real interface, in which
separation is problematic, in which "life and death, the real and the imagined, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions" (Breton, 123).
Figure 23, The Thread

Figure 24, Visit to the Past
Figure 25, Space-Time Weaving

Figure 26, Harmony

Figure 26, Insert
Figure 27, To the Tower

Figure 28, Self-Portrait
Figure 29, The Creation of the Birds

Figure 30, Exploration of the Sources of the Orinoco River
Figure 31, The Lovers

Figure 32, Encounter
Figure 33, Farewell

Figure 34, from *Through the Looking-Glass*
Chapter IV
Beyond Presence/Absence

Once we perceive limits
we're already beyond them.
G. W. F. Hegel

Oppositions, in themselves, are not threatening;
they set up the possibility of thesis and antithesis, of
affirmation and contradiction. But when one term becomes
the standard of measure, then oppositions become mutually
exclusive, and constraint and servitude follow.

Twentieth-century literature and painting evidence a
concern with such binary oppositions that are concealed
and are difficult to recognize. Frequently set up under
the aegis of authority, they take the shape of dominion
and impotence, of master and subject, of language and
silence.

The writing of art histories illustrates the
insidious nature of binary systems. Although Giorgio
Vasari's Renaissance text, which serves as a prototype of
art histories, includes several women in its survey of
noteworthy artists, two important art histories written in the twentieth century—one by Janson and Janson and the other by Gombrich—mention women only in the title of a work or as the object of some painting or piece of sculpture. Women either have made no worthy contributions according to contemporary artistic standards or they are excluded, victims of an ideological binary system.

Our language also excludes women, for artistic works of value are called masterpieces and are produced by master artists, by men. When we then articulate a possible set of terms, trying to redress the situation by including women, we come up with master and mistress. Mistress, however, is not adequate to describe the relationship; it comes loaded with other meanings. Thus we have difficulty articulating the problem within the traditional language system. Furthermore, when women are not recognized as creators and are perceived as subjects as in the oeuvre of Picasso, they are present, but they are no longer women. Females have become monsters, recognizable only by or for their erogenous zones. Thus they are absent from the canon in various but equally important ways.

Thomas Pynchon reminds us of the treacherous nature of the binary system in *The Crying of Lot 49*. At one
point, several of the characters are discussing the first military confrontation between Russia and America, an exchange of shots between a Russian cruiser and a Confederate man-of-war in 1863. According to their historical account, the Confederate Commander was appalled because of "some military alliance between abolitionist Russia . . . and a Union that paid lip-service to abolition while it kept its own industrial laborers in a kind of wage-slavery" (33).

"But that sounds," objected Metzger, "like he was against industrial capitalism. Wouldn't that disqualify him as any kind of anti-Communist figure?"

"You think like a Bircher," Fallopian said. "Good guys and bad guys. You never get to any of the underlying truth. Sure he was against industrial capitalism. So are we. Didn't it lead, inevitably, to Marxism? Underneath, both are part of the same creeping horror."

"Industrial anything," hazarded Metzger. "There you go," nodded Fallopian. (33)

In his way, Pynchon, writing before Derrida's critique of the classical system of thinking, warns us to examine our traditional ideas and to push against any dichotomies which we find operating there.

The foundation for this system of rigid binary oppositions is presence and absence. The excluded term absence, the focus of much examination in twentieth-century thought, frequently manifests itself as silence; it stands in opposition to the sense of power that comes
with both speaking and having someone listen to that speech. Many explain silence as a recent failure of language. George Steiner, for example, in *Language and Silence*, speaks of the silence out of which the Word emerged. The use of language defines men and women, not only lifting us above the animals, but also placing us next to the gods. Through the Word, we too create words and create with words (37). World War II, however, complicates the use of language for many people. Steiner, in particular, distrusts a language which can be used to describe a lyrical experience at the same time that it can describe and explain the actions at Belsen, Auschwitz, and Hiroshima. As a result, he would return to the originary mode, believing silence to be the more effective mode of communication. But what does this achieve? How can withdrawal into a solipsistic position of self-imposed silence effectively deal with life and with a thought system based on binary oppositions?

Nor can Derrida's critique of that same system be adequate. His interrogation has received much publicity. Subsequently, many are motivated to question received language patterns, patterns that, indeed, need to be questioned. Derrida's project, however, is incomplete; it remains trapped in aporia, in an abstract freplay of language, according to Davis. While it is
necessary to question binaries such as male and female or speech and silence, it is not desirable to tolerate indeterminacy as our highest expectation for their relationship. Although indeterminacy defuses the privileged first term of binary oppositions, it also diffuses important issues. Virginia Woolf, for example, could have been content with her deconstruction of male/female detailed in Chapter 1, content with her location of man's necessary supplement, i.e., woman functioning as a "looking-glass," which makes it possible for man to believe himself "fully present." That, however, would represent an arrested state of thinking on her part and a diffusion of the important issues. Woolf, not content with indeterminacy, pushes for a synthesis, for an androgynous space in which men and women will still be men and women, but one in which they will have forgotten what it means to be man or to be woman within the traditional binary system.

These binaries also permeate the relationship between literature and painting, for traditionally, when illustrations have been used with literary texts, the relationship has been one of mimesis. The artist, in most cases, follows the narrative, reproducing selected textual experiences. As a result, he or she functions as a reader who translates scenes from a linguistic
experience to a pictorial one. This describes the relationship above, in Chapter 1, between *The Waves* and the selected Expressionist paintings. Although the drawings and paintings work to extend or to complicate Woolf's text, their meaning within the chapter is dependent on her narrative. Kollwitz's *Woman with dead Child*, for example, works within the context of Percival's death to provide a touchstone with the grief which the six young people experience and to offer a stylistic analogy: both texts create subjects with little definition. The painting, therefore, does not make any statements beyond those warranted by the novel.

One of the most famous illustrated classics is Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* series. The *Alice* books and John Tenniel, the original illustrator, are as inseparable as the names Gilbert and Sullivan. Even though it is difficult for us to imagine one without the other, the center of the relationship is the literary text, for the pictures follow the story, articulating it faithfully. In Chapter 4 of *Through the Looking-Glass*, for example, Alice meets and talks to Humpty Dumpty, the crotchety old egg, who promises to explain to her a poem called "Jabberwocky." Alice repeats the verse to him:

"'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe."

Humpty Dumpty explains brillig and the portmanteau word slithy. But what are toves?

"Well, 'toves' are something like badgers--they're something like lizards--and they're something like corkscrews."

"They must be very curious-looking creatures."

"They are that," said Humpty Dumpty: "also they make their nest under sun-dials--also they live on cheese." (114-15)

Tenniel's drawing (Figure 34) reproduces Carroll's lizard- and corkscrew-like toves in response to the writer's narrative. While one tove uses its corkscrew beak to investigate a discarded cheese rind, another may be grying; that is, it may be moving "round and round like a gyroscope" (116). Underneath the sundial Tenniel provides the visual representation of a wabe, an outcropping of grass in which these toves have built their nest. Thus artwork helps readers visualize the text by illustrating highly recognizable moments.

This reflects the traditional idea of the proper relationship to be effected between literature and art; that is, art serves to illustrate literature. Such, however, is not the only possibility for pictures; nor should we attempt to contain paintings within this function, for in doing so we support the binary opposition which valorizes literature over paintings. We
become part of that classical thought system which considers the literary text primary and the painting an imitation.

But how can the relationship be different? someone will ask. Can a text "illustrate" paintings? Although it is conceivable—for many critical texts spin out of single paintings—seeking this type of defining relationship between art and literature merely perpetuates binary relationships, making art the originary term instead of literature. This will not resolve the situation satisfactorily. We need to recall Hegel's thought: once we perceive the limitations of dichotomies, we are already beyond them. Thus we need to act on that perception and create contexts in which art and literature are complementary, in which they refuse mimetic relations. Chapter 3 illustrates such a possibility. There it is difficult to decide that one is primary and the other secondary, that one is the illustration and the other the illustrated. By not participating in a game of one-upmanship about privileged status or about full presence, neither is a dominant art form, and from that interface both are able to interrogate experiences characteristic of the twentieth century.
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