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(RE)INScribing THE FEMININE: GENDER AND SOCIO-
POLITICAL MARGINALIZATION IN THE FICTIO
OF MARGARET ATWOOD AND TONI MORRISON

DISSERTATION

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

by

Diana Marlene Morris, B.S., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1996

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For my mother and my daughters
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INTRODUCTION

The conceptual framework for this project began to take shape as feminists began to debate feminism(s): theoretical versus activist perspectives; Anglo-American versus French perspectives; middle-class versus working-class perspectives; women of color versus Anglo-European perspectives; women of the "third" world versus women of the "first"; and so forth. The slogan, coined by Carol Hanisch and adopted by the second wave of the feminist movement—"The personal is the political"—resonated with ever-increasing complexity.¹ It became clear that the political categories of race, ethnicity, and nationality as well as class informed a woman's sense of "self," her feminine identity. These non-gender-related concerns profoundly affected the founding principles of the various feminisms and effected the formulation of each particular group's feminist issues.

The two writers selected for this study, Margaret Atwood and Toni Morrison, exemplify not only the complexity
of contemporary feminism but the paradoxical nature of literary studies in the late twentieth-century. Both Atwood and Morrison write seriously about women and therefore feminist issues pervade their work. But their particular focuses are different nevertheless.

Commenting on her resolve to be a writer, Atwood declared that she was "scared to death:"

I was scared to death for a couple of reasons. For one thing I was Canadian, and the prospects for begin a Canadian and a writer, both at the same time, in 1960, were dim. ...But it was more complicated than that, because, in addition to being a Canadian, I was also a woman. ...since gender is prior to nationality, the advantages of begin a Canadian woman writer were cancelled out by the disadvantages of being a woman writer (my emphasis).²

Atwood, while recognizing that her nationality played a role in her career choice, posited, like the white, middle-class feminist establishment, that sexism was a far more decisive factor in her success or failure as a writer than nationality. If we look at the chronology of Atwood's novels, we see the importance of her identity-hierarchy and how it affects her work. In her first novel, The Edible Woman, which is set in Toronto, Atwood primarily explores a woman's perception of and place in twentieth-century society; that is, Toronto generally represents the metropolis rather than specifically itself. The focus of the novel is gender. In the second novel, Surfacing, however, Atwood emphasizes her female protagonist's "Canadianness;" that is, she
conflates gender and nationality so that the woman's perceptions are also the Canadian's perceptions. After treating her core issues in these first two texts, Atwood broadens her field, but her protagonists are always consciously feminine and Canadian in that order.

Toni Morrison, on the other hand, makes no mention of nationality at all (although a chronology of her work will reveal that it is a concern) when queried about writing. Unlike Atwood for whom race is a transparent characteristic, Morrison positions it first in her identity-hierarchy. For her, race is prior to not only national status but gender.

When I began writing...there was just one thing that I wanted to write about, which was the true devastation of racism on the most vulnerable, the most helpless unit in the society—a black female and a child (my emphasis). Morrison, recognizing that gender played a role in her fictional exploration, posits, unlike the white, middle-class feminist establishment, racism as the central issue. If we look at the chronology of her novels, we see the importance of this category in Morrison's identity-hierarchy. In her first novel, The Bluest Eye, set in Lorain, Ohio, Morrison primarily explicates how racism effects women's perceptions of and place in twentieth-century society; that is, race colors gender. In her second novel, Sula, Morrison shifts the focus to primarily women's concerns, but these women retain their
"blackness" as a primary identity characteristic. That is, Morrison "wanted to write books that ran the whole gamut of women's sexual experiences, [because she] didn't like the imposition that had been placed on black women's sexuality (my emphasis):"

They were either mothers, mammies, or whores. And they were not vulnerable people. They were not people who were supposed to enjoy sex, either. That was forbidden in literature—to enjoy your body, be in you body, defend your body. But at the same time I wanted to say, "You still can be prey." (Dreifus 75)

Gender then does concern Morrison. She wants women to take back their bodies, and she recognizes that it is their bodies that make them vulnerable in many ways. But she is still primarily concerned with reinscribing black woman's body, because blackness is a part of that body and contributes to its vulnerability. After writing about her core issues, Morrison too expands her field, most notably into nationality—with the thematic significance of American history in Song of Solomon—and then beyond. But her characters are always consciously black first and gendered second.

The differences in emphasis are paradoxically significant. Both Morrison and Atwood transparently represent one of the aspect of their identity that deeply concerns the other. Morrison does not, for example, foreground her nationality as an American. Yet for Atwood, this identity-attribute is very important, because "the
Americans" represent the dominant culture of North America (of which Morrison is a part). Atwood's second novel, *Surfacing*, specifically explores how "the Americans" dominate the Canadian psychosocial landscape, effecting identity anxiety. Atwood, on the other hand, does not foreground her race as a white. And for Morrison, this identity-attribute is also very important, because whites represent the dominant culture of North America (of which Atwood is a part). Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye* specifically addresses how "whites" dominate the psychosocial American landscape, effecting black anxiety. That is, both Morrison and Atwood contend that they are in one way or another subordinated to and oppressed by the same aspect of the other's identity.

Although each writer emphasizes a different element as a crucial component of her identity, she draws this particular facet from a shared experience. Both Atwood and Morrison are North American: the culture which dominates this space was structured through the Western Logos, a worldview whose roots are planted in the Europeanized Judeo-Christian tradition, which grew into the value-systems embodied in the Enlightenment and Humanism. Significantly, both Atwood and Morrison suggest in *Surfacing* and *The Bluest Eye* that the dominant culture, as they define it, imposes itself upon and contributes to the characters' identity-confusion and resulting
madness. From apparently different perspectives, Morrison and Atwood arrived at very similar conclusions. And it is equally important that Morrison and Atwood suggest in their work that the dominant culture's impress most deeply effects, albeit not exclusively, feminine identity, but this is a point to which we will return.

In 1947, Arnold Toynbee coined the term Postmodern to describe the "final stage of Western History," a period that he asserted would be characterized by anxiety, helplessness, and irrationalism. Both Atwood and Morrison dramatize the postmodern condition in their fiction. Their characters are often anxiously alienated within and powerlessly dominated by the "It" of Western culture, particularly as it has evolved in and through North America. If we couple Atwood's and Morrison's fiction to the nearly overwhelming anxiety produced through the superhighways of the "Information and Nuclear Ages" and with the remarkable proliferation of "Psychic Networks," we certainly feel that there is credence in Toynbee's portrait. But when examined closely this characterization fits other periods in Western History. The most notable example is the period of European expansion and colonization.

As Anthony Grafton observes, "Between 1550 and 1650 Western thinkers ceased to believe they could find all important truths in ancient books." Along with the rise
of Empiricism, "Western explorers and writers had to deal with lands and societies, customs and religion, men and women whose very existence they had not expected." (5) That is, the world seemed to become overwhelmed by information that was often contradictory. This was a period of great ideological debate, which fomented considerable cultural anxiety and irrationality. In the early modern period, for example, mythical beings such as mermaids continued to exist in the "real" world but the empirically evident people of the newly "discovered" lands did not: conflated with the landscape or imaginatively relegated to the "past," the men and women of the New World became a "natural resource" in the vast cache of discovered treasures.

The standard "three-G" definition—gold, god, and glory—of the forces which drove the spread of Western ideology vis-a-vis European expansion comprise the grain of sand around which the nascent elements of the postmodern condition coalesced. The treasures of the New World(s) provided the capital by which Europe could dismantle its feudal system and reform itself into national states, consolidating discrete power bases under the umbrella of a singular identity. And the New World "natives" not only assisted with this endeavor but embodied the European's image of his or her primitive self which on many levels reified progressivism. And this was no
where more true than in the first postcolonial territory, the United States, which came to embody the principles of the West. The anxious response to the New World was then to "edit" but not substantially revise the master text. That is, Western explorers "discovered" the New World(s) and Western thinkers "made" History from them.

The salient characteristic of postmodernity, on the other hand, is to question the very metanarrative presupposed in Toynbee's assertion—"the unitary end of history and of the subject" (Lyotard 73). That is, from various fronts the ideological infrastructure of the Western logos has been vigorously interrogated during the postmodern period, sending shockwaves through its foundation.

Frederic Jameson suggests—after prefacing his argument with an apology for "periodizing" at all—that postmodernity erupted in the 1960s "with the great movement of decolonization" in the Third World:

The 60s was...the period when all these 'natives' become human beings, and this internally as well as externally: those inner colonized of the First World--'minorities', marginals, and women--fully as much as its external subjects and official 'natives'. The process can and has been described in a number of ways, each one of which implies a certain 'vision of History' and a certain uniquely thematized reading of the 60s proper: it can be seen as a decisive and global chapter in Croce's conception of history as the history of human freedom; as a more classically Hegelian process of the coming to self-consciousness of subject peoples; a post-Lukacsean or more Marcusean, New Left conception of the emergence of new 'subjects of history' of a nonclass type (blacks, students, Third World
peoples); or as some poststructuralist, Foucaultean notion...of the conquest of the right to speak in a new collective voice, never before heard on the world stage—and of the concomitant dismissal of the intermediaries (liberals, First World intellectuals) who had hitherto claimed to talk in your name; not forgetting the properly political rhetoric of self-determination or independence, or the more psychological and cultural rhetoric of new collective 'identities'. (my emphasis 312)

Jameson directly connects the ideology of postmodernity to the condition of postcoloniality. Indeed, he implicitly agrees with Belden Fields who "suggested that the two First World nations in which the most powerful [affects were felt]--the United States and France--became privileged political spaces precisely because these were two countries involved in colonial wars..." (Jameson emphasis 311).

As the "unitary subjects" of Western History began to fragment and then regroup, the driving force of Western culture--capitalism--seemed to emerge as a thing-in-itself:

...decolonization historically went hand in hand with neocolonialism, and that the graceful, grudging, or violent end of an old-fashioned imperialism certainly meant the end of one kind of domination but evidently also the invention and construction of a new kind--symbolically, something like the replacement of the British Empire by the International Monetary Fund. (315)

Late Capitalism "invade[d] everything, leaving no oppositional space outside itself." At this point in Western History, when "the Empire [began] to write back" most importantly to proclaim that it was not the "new subjects of Western history," the Western logos began to become the free play of language, to become
meaningfully indeterminant and endlessly referential: it was an abstraction in and of itself, which fragmented self-identity and rendered the articulation of experience impossible. The "new subjects of history" were, like the old, "simply reflexive epiphenomena of inpersonal deep structures or of a global agonistics of circulating and competing language games" (Waugh 349).

But, "A functional change in a sign-system," as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues, is a violent event:"

Even when it is perceived as "gradual," or failed," or yet "reversing itself," the change itself can only be operated by the force of a crisis. What Paul de Man writes of criticism can here be extended to a subalternity that is turning things "upside down": "In periods that are not periods of crisis, or in individuals bent upon avoiding crisis at all cost, there can be all kinds of approaches to [the social]...but the can be no [insurgency]. Yet, if the space for a change (necessarily also an addition) had not been there in the prior function of the sign-system, the crisis could not have made the change happen. The change in signification supplements the previous function. "The movement of signification adds something...but this addition...comes to perform a vicarious function...to supplement a lack on the part of the signified."

The not-new subjects of history record this double movement in their critical as well as fictional texts. "They generally perceive their task," as Spivak continues, "as making a theory of consciousness or culture rather than specifically a theory of change...[and] although [the force of crisis] is never far from their argument, [it] is not systematically emphasized in their work" (198). Both Atwood's and Morrison's fiction follow this pattern.
Violence of one sort or another permeate their novels, and most often it is violence directed against or by women. Rather than being simply an event in the text, however, the violence usually thematically speaks for or about the consciousness of the victim and/or the perpetrator. That is, it is revelatory of the deeper violence that surrounds and invades the characters' consciousness.

"There are obvious historical points of contact [between Postcoloniality, Postmodernism, and Feminism]:

[all three theoretical positions] attack the Romantic-Modernist cultivation of the Aesthetic as an autonomous realm,...assault Enlightenment discourses which universalize white, Western, middle-class male experience,...recognize the need for a new ethics...[and] offer critiques of foundationalist thinking to produce the recognition that...social institutions do not so much reflect universal truths as construct historical and provisional ones. (Waugh 348-349)

But Feminist interrogations such as Jane Flax's of Postmodern and Gayatri Spivak's of Postcolonial theory reveal that "the coherence and plausibility of [these] discourses depend on the congruence of the qualities ...assign[ed] to woman and the pervasive social meanings associated with her." When a cow-protection becomes a volatile signified in the re-inscription of a social position of various kinds of subaltern, semi-subaltern, and indigenous elite groups," as Spivak notes, "the cow is turned into a female figure of one kind or another (215). "The 'postmodernist' woman [and the postcolonial
woman to a lesser degree, for she is occasionally recognized in the struggle by her male counterparts] is in the same position as Emile's Sophie:

The major difference I can see between Rousseau's position and that of Derrida is he wants to identify, read like, become or (at least) openly envies woman as he has defined her. He still does not want her to speak for herself, or as Irigaray points out, among her or ourselves without him. (Flax's emphasis 216)

One explanation for postmodern Derridean "envy" may be found in Jameson's explanation of postmodernity itself. Notably he defined "women" as "one of those inner colonized of the First World" (312), even though they could and did fall into all the categories he represented: official 'natives,' blacks, students, Third World peoples, liberals, and First World intellectuals. In classifying women in the way, Jameson "edits" without substantially revising the metanarrative of the Western logos:

Postmodernist's still honor Man as the sole author and principal character in these stories, even if this Man is dying, his time running out. They retell the contemporary history of the West in and through the stories of the three deaths—of Man, (his) History, and (his) metaphysics. Whatever women have done with and in all this (becoming past) time is "outside" by definition and according to the conventions of (their) story/line.

...One of the grounds of possibility for and consequences of phallocentrism is the respression and denial of such [participatory] acts [by women]. (Flax's emphasis 214-215)

"The beauty of the prison-house [of language], as Walter A. Davis observes, "is that it protects one from analyzing the 'self' who inhabits it." In appropriating the voice
of the "inner colonized of the First World," the male theorist/intellectual recreates himself as the "new subject of History" thus retaining his privileged position.

Women, then, as Atwood and Morrison, suggest through their fiction experience the effects of the postmodern/postcolonial condition at a deeper level of consciousness. Morrison's and Atwood's placement in literature studies best illustrates the paradoxical nature of this doubled displacement.

Both Atwood and Morrison represent "the inner colonized of the First World." They are mainstream writers of world-class stature: Atwood is acknowledged by the international community, as Kathryn VanSpanckern observes, to be one of, if not the, foremost writer(s) in Canada (Vision and Forms xix), and in 1993, Morrison, an American, was awarded the Nobel Prize. Yet, both writers achieved this worldwide acclaim through powerfully expressing their socio-political marginalization within it. Their expressions of marginalization, however, pose problems, for as First World citizens, Atwood and Morrison hold privileged positions. So, how can or under what circumstances would a member of the First World claim marginal status? And, why would the international community recognize and then embrace them for just that reason?
Atwood herself adressed these issues in a review essay of *Midnight Birds: Stories of Black Women Writers*:

'It's...of note that this book is being reviewed in an issue of this magazine devoted to "Third World" writing. It's also of note, that I myself am female, but neither Black nor American. I am in fact Canadian, a citizen of a country which was until recently was dominated by one imperial power and is now dominated by another. Could it be that the editors of *The Harvard Educational Review* perceive that I have something in common with the writers in this collection? Could they be right?'

It is odd, as Atwood notes, that American writers would be categorized by an American journal as representative of "Third World" literature. And, it may very well be suspicious, as Atwood implies in the essay, that this magazine chose her, as if she had some special insight, to review this particular collection. What does a white (notably Atwood neglected to mention this), Canadian woman have in common with the black American women represented in *Midnight Birds*? This is one of the issues that this study will investigate in depth.

But two other matters of theoretical concern emerge through Atwood's comments and are equally worthy of examination, because they are defining characteristics of the postmodern condition. First, Atwood presumes that the editors of the journal assume that commonality legitimates critical perspective, and she implicitly agrees them. But then, she anxiously suspects the reasons why she was included in the project and challenges the American journal's institutionalized authority to determine the
parameters of that commonality. That is, in her interrogative assertion—"Could they be right?"—Atwood simultaneously affirms and denies the connections posited by the journal between herself, the writers of *Midnight Birds* and the Third World. The key to understanding Atwood's seemingly contradictory position is her self-conscious awareness of the politics of Western history and her relation to it: "I am in fact Canadian, a citizen of a country which was until recently dominated by one imperial power [Great Britain] and is now dominated by another [the United States]" (my emphasis). As we have seen in the discussion above and as Atwood seems to be aware, inclusion as "a new subject of history" in the metanarrative of institutionalized theory and practice may very well be a way to exclude or re-marginalize the speaking subject.

"It is no disparagement of writers like Achebe," Atwood notes, "but simple curiosity to wonder why this book has been placed on the 'Third World' shelf:"

These women are not writing about gential mutilation or polygamy or purdah, which luckily are not problems they have to deal with directly. These women are writing, these women can write, which makes them different at once from most Third World women. They are as American as Jazz and Lynching. By what strange squint--the same one presumably, that sees white male American writers as the norm and everyone else as the exception--have they been relegated to the "Third World" category. (Atwood's emphasis 359)
Atwood is quite right here (if problematically so, as I will demonstrate). The women writers of *Midnight Birds* do not have to deal "directly" with trials and tribulations that beset women in the Third World. (Neither do they have to deal with them indirectly, however, and we will return to this point after close reading of Atwood's and Morrison's novels) And, the writers of *Midnight Birds* can, like Atwood, read and write, which would seem to set them apart from their less fortunate sisters. But whether or not "most Third World women" can read is not really revelant to Atwood's argument. "Most" perhaps cannot, but this pronouncement does not include those writers (male and/or female) featured in the journal. The Third World writers included in the journal, like Morrison, Atwood, and Achebe, obviously can read (and write). They, unlike Atwood's category of "most Third World women," share in what Atwood implies is the privileged position of First World citizens.

All the parties, artists, reviewers, and editors alike, that participate in the production of this "issue" are of an elite class, "which come[s] to be loosely described as 'bourgeois nationalist'" (Spivak 197). And, significantly, they all seem to and conceptualize "the Third World" as a state of Being, effected by gender, race, class, and the relation of these three elements to the means of production. Women, however, as we have
seen above and as Atwood suggests in her review, are
doubly displaced within and by this discourse in that
they continue to serve as metaphor, as representative
of something other than themselves. Atwood herself
ironically records this double movement, when she
"feminizes" the Third World.

It is precisely this process of feminization that
produces Atwood's anxious response and accounts for the
mental energy she expends to separate herself and the
writers of Midnight Birds from the category of the "Third
World." She does not want "the inner colonized of the
First World" to be placed "outside by definition" the
privileged position of "speaking subject." She attempts
to construct in the essay a "space where the subject of
the statement and the subject of enunciation can no long
be separated."16

Isn't Harlem in New York? Is it perhaps that white
Americans would rather not see the visions of [women
like Morrison] as visions of their own society,
but as visions of somewhere else, somewhere foreign
and other." But there are many more worlds than
three, even in America, and some of the overlap.(359)

Atwood conflictedly recognizes that through the process
of feminization the Third-World-metaphor continues serve
the binary representation of the Western logos: there
are "masculine" voices and "feminized" ones. And, this
phenomenon has nothing to do with the biology of the
speaker: "White American feminists might have some
trouble...with the way men are dealt with here, though
nobody from a colony would” (362). That is, she clearly separates her self, albeit white and feminist, from the what she perceives to be the impositions of a "masculinized" position of power, the authorized speaking subject.

From a paradoxical position in the First World of literature, Atwood implicitly proposes through her contradictory stance that a "minor literature" is being expressed by "the inner colonized of the First World" or the "bourgeois nationalist" class of the not-new subjects of history: postcolonial women.

The three characteristics of minor literature are the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation. (Deleuze and Guattari 20)

Both Atwood and Morrison express these characteristics in their "texts." Close readings of Atwood's and Morrison's fiction demonstrate how the imaginary space of fiction enables North American postcolonial women writers to "deterritorialize" their doubly marginalized situatedness, constituting in the process a sense of indigeneity and ethnic-feminine identity within the socio-political hegemony.

As embodied alterity, postcolonial women encode and decode the contradictory and conflicted site of the subaltern socio-political struggle at its deepest level.
They do so, through what I term a "doubled contradictory" situatedness.

Both Morrison and Atwood employ a similar strategy to a different end. Not the least of their concern is the complex way that they represent the affect of political feminization on their male characters, a matter which this study considers in detail. Each writer begins to redefine their ethnic/national group by confronting the effects of socio-political feminization by (1) de-inscribing the female body as the "masculine" subject's object and (2) re-inscribing the feminine through an existentially-defined female presence. Through this process, both writers constitute a feminine subjective identity that is inseparable from their ethnic-national identity.

"Practices of representation," however, as Stuart Hall notes, always implicate the positions from which we speak or write—the positions of enunciation:

What recent theories of enunciation suggest is that, though we speak, so to say 'in our own name', of ourselves and from our own experience, nevertheless who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of, are never identical, never exactly in the same place. Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of Identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. The view problematises [sic] the very authority and authenticity to which the term, 'cultural identity' lays claim.
Keeping Hall's warning in mind, the presentations of ethnic-national and feminine identity in the body of this project are the analyses of the representations of their authors. These representations are not transparent or unproblematical. What they suggest and how they relate to the problems of identity politics in contemporary literature and culture will be addressed once we have a firm grasp of what the representations suggest about Atwood's and Morrion's situatedness.
END NOTES


4 I am drawing upon Louis Althusser's work for my definition of two particular terms: logos and ideology. Deferring to St Paul, Althusser asserted that "it is the 'Logos, meaning in ideology, that we 'live, move and have our being" (Modern Literary Theory 59) He defined "ideology" as the representation of "the imaginary relationship of individuals
to their real conditions of existence" Modern Literary Theory 56).


7 See Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). Lyotard argues that "A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmoderism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant" (79). All subsequent references to this work will appear parenthetically by page number.

8 See Frederic Jameson. "Periodizing the 60s, The Sixties Without Apology, 1984" (Modern Literary Theory: A Reader, eds. Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh. New York: Edward Arnold, 1992.) This is the "name" Jameson gives to the period beginning in the late 1950s and extending to the
early 1970s. All subsequent references to this text will appear parenthetically by page number.


10 I take this phrase from Bill Ashcroft's, Gareth Griffiths', and Helen Tiffin's The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures (New York: Routledge, 1989).


12 The types of violence that occur in Morrison's and Atwood's fiction are various, ranging from acts of self-multilation such as Sula's cutting off the tip of her own finger to acts against another such as Eva's murder of her own son. A cursory examination demonstrates that violence and/or its threat permeates their work. In the following list, I have selected only one or two of the numerous acts of violence in each text. The examples mentioned above occur in Morrison's Sula; in The Bluest Eye Pecola is molested and raped; in Tar Baby we learn
that Margaret Street physically abused her son; in *Song of Solomon* the Seven Days perpetuate the cycle of racial violence, Reba is beaten, and Pilate threatens to kill the perpetrator; in *Beloved*, Sethe is beaten by the schoolmaster; in *Jazz*, Violet mutilates the face of a corpse. In Atwood's first novel, *The Edible Woman*, Marian bears witness to the gory mutilation of a rabbit; in *Surfacing*, the unnamed protagonist encounters the multilated heron corpse; in *Life Before Man*, Chris commits suicide; in *Lady Oracle*, Joan is stabbed by her mother; in *Bodily Harm*, Lora is severely beaten by prison guards; in *The Handmaid's Tale*, the military State tortures, raped, murders at will; in *Cat's Eye*, Elaine is tied to a tree by a potential rapist.

13 Jane Flax. *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990. 215. All subsequent references to the work will appear parenthetically by page number. See also the work of Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray; Margaret Homans' *Bearing the Word: Language and the Female Experience in the Nineteenth Century*; Madelon Sprengnether's *The Spectral Mother: Freud, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis*; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*; Xiaomei Chen's "Fathers and Daughters in Early Modern Chinese Drama--On the Problematics of Feminist Discourse in Cross-Cultural


16 See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's, Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature, Trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986. All subsequent references to this work will appear parenthetically by page number.

I. Bearing Witness to the Seeing

In 1972 two books which precipitated considerable critical debate emerged in Canadian literature. Both were written by Margaret Atwood: *Surfacing*\(^1\), a novel and *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*\(^2\), a work of literary criticism.

The novel received wide popular and critical acclaim. It was heralded as "one of the best novels of the 70's," [a novel that] "really hits home, forcing us to re-examine our own lifestyles, our own memories as the increasingly desperate young heroine does."\(^3\) Atwood seemed to articulate through the consciousness of her unnamed protagonist the psychodynamics of living in the postmodern world, deftly rendering the anxiety of the Cold War and the emotional numbing of the simulacrum through which the world had become maddeningly distorted for "Every(wo)man" in North America.
Although the implications are often ignored, particularly by United States' critics, this postmodern "Every(wo)man's" text was decidedly politically-charged. The (dis)ease effecting the protagonist's environment was "spreading up from the south... (9) and it was seemingly carried into Canada by the dreaded "Americans." Like Survival, which Atwood fully acknowledged was a "cross between a personal statement...and a political manifesto" (13), Surfacing dramatized a Canadian's experience of twentieth-century North America.

Its protagonist, "plagued by a suppressed memory of an abortion," as June Schlueter observes, "connects the destruction of the Canadian wilderness with her own experience, until the Americans become objects of personal hostility and Canada a surrogate for herself." The "she" then of Surfacing evinces a personal (femaleness) and a political (Canadianess) perspective. The torsion formed by this combination interpellates Atwood's literary vision. So much so, in fact, that while we may agree with Arnold E. and Cathy N. Davidson's assertion that "Atwood is a writer of many facets," we risk overlooking what she personally and politically addresses in her work if we assume, as the Davidsons do, that these facets "speak with a different voice and...set forth a different vision."

Indeed, many critics, irrespective of their individual methods of interpretation, remark on the consistency with
which Atwood's concerns are treated in their various forms.

Barbara Rigney, for example, correctly argues that

"Although Atwood has stated in an interview that,

as a writer of prose, she is not just a 'somewhat
different' personality from the writer of poetry,
but 'an almost totally different one',2 the poems
and novels are nonetheless related ideologically
and even stylistically. Atwood's novels and short
stories are poetic in style and diction, and her
poems have a distinct narrative quality. The heroines
of both poems and novels are similar in character
and in psychological condition. Most important,
however, is the fact that both fiction and poems
are in the form of testaments: 'eye-witnesses, I-
witnesses' (Second Words 203). They, in essence,
comprise one story, which Atwood calls 'the story
of the disaster which is the world'.6

And with rare exception, it is a female protagonist or
poet-speaker who bears witness to "the disaster which
is the world," who attempts to interrogate, mediate,
negotiate and/or comprehend what it means to be human
in the world of the late twentieth-century.

Atwood is therefore most often identified as a
feminist writer. Frank Davey, for example, rightly notes
that the "basic dramatic situation" put forth in Double
Persephone, Atwood's first published collection of poems,
wherein a "Flesh-and-blood girl [confronts]...the timeless
ceremonial garden of patriarchal mythology...underlies
[not only] the male-female relationships in the novels
and long poems, [but] forms an essential part of her
political, social and aesthetic stances."7

So again, we might concur with the Davidsons that
Atwood "is not one of those authors who rewrites,
attempting to refine in the process, the same basic book...or rework and thereby work out the past and present of one representative fictive location" (9-10), we cannot equate "diversity" of method with "different voices and different visions." In fact, the ideological thread connecting Atwood's seemingly "different voices and different visions" is, as Sandra Djwa observes, spun from a socio-political situatedness that "is so often consciously Canadian" and feminine.

It is, therefore, important for the readers of Atwood's work to understand how her "femaleness" permeates not only her "eye-witness" explorations of "the story of the disaster which is the world" but how her "Canadianness" interpellates the construction of the feminine "witnessing-I."

To establish the intricacy of this connection, we will begin to comprehend the "political" side, the "Canadianess," of Atwood's protagonist postmodern psyche through a brief examination of the central argument of her critical study of Canadian literature.

Survival, the second book published in 1972, while creating quite a stir in Canada both popularly and critically did not fare quite as positively as did her novel. "Those knowledgeable about Canlit," as June Schlueeter notes, "responded not with applause for the clarity of Atwood's vision but with defenses: hers was
a myopic view, seen through a distorted lens" (3). What apparently nettled her Canadian critics was her methodology, which politicized the psychological at the same time that it "psychologized" the political. Using literature as a "mirror" which reflected the national consciousness and a "map" to discover "who and where [Canadians] have been" (18-19), Atwood, like her teacher Northrop Frye, deduced that "Canadians showed a marked preference for the negative" (35).

Reading Canlit against the historical timeline by which it was produced, Atwood observed that the concept of "survival" evolved from the notion of "bare survival in the face of 'hostile' elements in the [colonial texts] to the "grim" idea of cultural survival in modern literature" (31-32). According to the mirror-image of its literature, Atwood concluded that the Canadian "self-image," its national identity, hinged upon perceiving itself as perpetually threatened with physical and/or spiritual annihilation. She asserted moreover that Canadian literature suggested that the collective unconscious perceived itself as either unworthy of or inadequate to the task of "surviving." At best, "The survivor has no triumph or victory but the fact of his survival; he has little after his ordeal that he did not have before, except gratitude for having escaped with his life" (33). Indeed, according to Atwood, the price
of his survival was often to have *less* after his ordeal, because "he can survive only by amputating himself, turning himself into a cripple or a eunuch" (33).

Atwood attributed this psychology in part to what Frye had called Canada's "garrison mentality." But her reading of the modern literature suggested that while the harsh realities of the northern life still informed Canadian consciousness something else had now become encoded so that perhaps the garrison mentality had gone "a step further..., [that] the real condition may be "those who need to be exploited victims" (Survival, Atwood's emphasis 84). She speculated that the modern core of national consciousness was created through the socio-economic politics of colonialism, which constructs by its very dynamics of exploitation "victims" and "oppressed minorities":

A partial definition of a colony is that it is a place from which a profit is made, but not by the people who live there: the major profit from a colony is made in the centre [sic] of the empire. That's what colonies are for, to make money for the 'mother country,' and that's what--since the days of Rome and, more recently, of the Thirteen Colonies--they have always been for. (Atwood's emphasis 35-36).

While Atwood describes an economic position, the concerns of her analysis actually revolve around a complex of long-term side-effects. With this "partial definition," Atwood implies that European-colonists in the "New World" seem to internalize a sense of being "colonized," of being forcefully silenced and wantonly used and abused by the
entity who "gave birth" to them. But, this in and of itself does not fully account for her perception of the "cultural side-effects" for a long-term colony (36). It is therefore important to investigate the implications of Atwood's "partial definition."

The "definition" Atwood gives of the modern colony is essentially accurate, particularly as it addresses the colonization of the "New World." Few historians would dispute that the "three Gs" (Gold, God, and Glory) motivated the European invasion and occupation of the Americas. The territory now known as Canada as well as its sibling to the south, the United States, were originally engendered to augment European power bases. But, the language of Atwood's "partial definition" obfuscates Canada's history and alludes only to its modern anxiety.

Canada, like the United States, the Caribbean, Meso-, and Latin America, is a "New World" phenomenon, and to a certain degree, albeit significant differences, it shares this developing ideological history. We must not forget then that Atwood speaks in her "partial definition" of the colonizers (the occupying colonists) rather than the colonized native space and/or peoples, and paradoxically refers to them as "victim[s] or...oppressed minorit[ies] or exploited." She is not, for instance, describing the condition of "the others [who freely] used to [roam the land, before the colonial] government had put them somewhere
else, coralled them..." (Surfacing, 99). That is, while she is speaking of the colonial mentality of "native" Canadians, Atwood is not addressing the plight of the indigenous populations. She is representing, instead, those who participated in the appropriation of the land and the expatriation of "the others." Indeed, recognizing the possibility of a subjective existence in "the others" seems to occur only when the image of "the others" reflects the "self," as it does for her unnamed protagonist in Surfacing: "It never occurred to me till now that they must have hated us" (99).

It would seem, therefore, that we should detect some hint of irony in this passage. For surely, the Canadian colonists "profited" at the expense of those "others." They acquired, after all, the territory and established their reign over it. And the scene of recognition from Surfacing confirms that reality: the protagonist and her company continue to pick blueberries as the family of "others" glide silently "near the shore and then disappear around a point or into a bay as though they had never been there" (103). For Surfacing's protagonist, the "others" simply serve as a mirror for her own psychological state. She universalizes her feelings of oppression and in doing so denies the "others" difference. Although as we will see, Surfacing's protagonist's "femaleness" contributes to her capability
to "see" the others at all, her attitude here, as Tzetvan Todorov recognized, is markedly "colonialist." And, the colonialist orientation is undeniably a position of dominance, a domination which has the full force of the imperial power at its source.

On the other hand, while the Anglo-Canadian colonist retains his or her affiliation with Great Britain as a British subject with all the attendant privileges of "subjectivity" with regard to the indigenous "other," he/she is too subjected to British dominance and thereby held in a subordinate, dominated position. A Canadian colonist was a quasi-British "subject." The quasi-status of the Anglo-Canadian, however, was the "beneficial" byproduct of "colonial nationality." For at the same time that the Anglo-Canadian colonists grounded their difference in an American "national" sovereignty, they preserved through their "colonial" status the power of the Empire. So, for the most part, although often delicately negotiated, the "colony-nation" state was maintained, for it was important to all parties--British, French, and Canadian--that a bulwark be established against the United States of America. This situatedness, however, created for Canada an un-defined identity, taking on characteristics only in opposition to an other. A Canadian was not British, not French, and not "American."
Canadian history, then, explains some of what Atwood and others observe about Canadian-identity anxiety. Canadians are at once colonialist (as colonists) in that their world-view is an European derivative with respect to the Other whether Nature or Native and colonized in that they represent "intermediary subjects." That is, Canada feels itself caught between two imperial powers; both of whom for similar reasons—Canada's wealth of natural resources, for example—continue to have "colonizing" interests in the territory.

Atwood thematically suggests with her fiction that the predominant "Canadian" response to the anxiety created by this condition is flight or escape rather than confrontation. And this is a point to which we will return, because it gives Atwood's sense of Canadian consciousness its "core identity" and undergirds its sense of on-going "vicimization." 17

But what concerns Atwood far more is that the representation of Canada has been internalized by Canadians so that the other's image has become the self-image. That is, representation and self-representation coincide.

...Canada as viewed by international literature [is] a place you escape to from "civilization," an unspoiled, uncorrupted place imagined as empty or thought of a populated by happy archaic peasants or YMCA instructors, quaint or dull or both. Watching made-in-Canada beer ads and tourist literature often gives you the uneasy feeling that the perpetrators are basing their images on these kinds of reflections because that's what everyone, inside and out, wants to believe. (my emphasis Survival 16)
Seemingly, despite the urbanity of Toronto or Montreal or Vancouver, contemporary Canadians have been reduced to, fused with, and fixed in the "New World" colonial landscape as it persists in the "civilized," international imagination. That is, while the international community may recognize through the existence of these urban areas that Canada has progressed from trading posts to settlements, it denies these "settlements" metropolitan status.

In part, Atwood's analysis expresses a common feeling among settler-colonists: their "provincial" sensibility, that is, their sense of dis-connection to a metropolitan center. "Provincial communities," as Arthur R. M. Lower notes, "wear second-hand cultural clothes," metropolis' socio-political hand-me-downs, so to speak. So no matter how cosmopolitan a "provinical community" becomes, it is defined by what is perceived as its imitation of an other. In Canada's case, this "other" is either the old-world empire of the United Kingdom or the new-world colossus of the United States. But, accepting such an "identity" conceptually positions Canada outside the international community to which it ideologically belongs. Sustaining the imposed "identity" perpetuates Canada's sense of socio-political marginality. This situatedness, in turn, fosters Canadian post-colonial identity construction. Significantly, as Coral Ann Howells discerns,
"There are close parallels between the historical situation of women [in Western Culture] and of Canada as a nation, for women's experience of the power politics of gender and their problematic relation to patriarchal traditions of authority have affinities with Canada's attitude to the cultural imperialism of the United States as well as its ambivalence towards its European inheritance (2).

Atwood's description of the international representation of "Canada" as other than "civilization" suggests the parallels between the emergence of feminist and post-colonial consciousness. "That female is" as Maureen Devine notes, "associated with nature and male with culture, each in opposition to the other, is a long established assumption, one of the basic dualisms of Western thought."\(^2\) Canada's post-colonial international identity has been inscribed as feminine space. It is therefore important for the readers of Atwood's work to understand that the "femininity" which percolates through her work also represent a "facet" of Canadian national identity. The critical reception of her second novel, *Surfacing*, illustrates this meaningful connection, at the same time that it ironically reflects the masculinized perspectivism of the literary schools, which, through interpretation, universalizes her characters, blinding us to the import of her work.

Atwood observed in "A Reply," that most American feminist critics of the novel focus on the female protagonist as a "victim" of patriarchal oppression, more
or less ignoring the political significance of her Canadianness, and Canadian critics, notwithstanding their animadversions for her conclusions in *Survival* perceive the "victimized" protagonist as a metaphor for Canada itself, more or less overlooking the socio-political significance of her protagonist's femaleness. June Schlueter, documenting the numerous references to "the Americans" in *Surfacing*, thus sums up the connection:

> This vision of Canada's colonial mentality finds repeated expression in the novel, as the protagonist, plagued by a suppressed memory of an abortion, connects the destruction of the Canadian wilderness with her own experience, until the Americans become objects of personal hostility and Canada a surrogate for herself. ...Like the protagonist of *Surfacing*—who, finally, emerges from the collapse of her civilized self and refuses to be victim—Canada is vulnerable, consumable, and oppressed. (my emphasis, 1-2)

Both critical stances are reductive. But, taken together, they begin to explicate the complex psychological conflicts of postcolonial Canadian consciousness.

If we return to Atwood's analysis of "Canlit," we see the markedly masculine perspective that informed it. To cite an obvious incident, we can quickly see that Atwood's "survivor," the subject who gains so little and often loses so much, is designated as a *he*: it is a male body—"eunuch"—and a masculine subjectivity constructed upon that body which feels persistently under assault and which appears to constitute the national "self-image."

This is, of course, as feminist theory has so cogently
substantiated Western culture's universalization of the "I": the constitutive subject is masculine. Atwood does not directly address the significance of this issue in *Survival,* she simply describes its manifestations. The felt "emasculaton" of the Canadian masculinized subject, however, is less clear until we fully penetrate the significance of the Canadian contradictory situatedness. The Canadian nation is ideologically western and therefore masculinizes the subject, yet this masculinized subject actively asserts the "international" perception of Canada as a place closely associated with "nature" or the "organic" and the feminine. Fundamentally, Canada's post-colonial identity is ideologically split between gendered positions: at once subject and object.

In her fiction Atwood explores the intrapsychic complexity of this socio-political situatedness on gendered subjects in postmodern Canadian culture. The male-female relationship which forms, as Davey has observed, "an essential part of her political, social and aesthetic stance" resonate with deeper significance, because her female characters are doubly feminized within the socio-political realm. Although all of Atwood's fiction is informed by this situatedness and while I will range freely through her work as needed to illuminate the affect of this condition, my analysis will concentrate on *Surfacing,*
because this novel is so "consciously Canadian" as well as so consciously feminine.

II. The Colonial Mind(-)Body: Demythologizing the "Space Between"

Sherrill E. Grace observed that Leslie Armour (among others) in *The Idea of Canada and the Crisis of Community* (1981) locates the Canadian collective consciousness in what he terms the "space between." He suggests that Canadian "identity" is caught between its "inherited notions of an organic society and [its] confrontations with the technologically-based individualism associated with the economies of the contemporary west" (Grace 2). *Surfacing* seems dramatically to illustrate the effect of this situatedness by deliberately splitting the protagonist's realities between "two anonymities, the city and the bush" (68); the former representing the "technologically-based individualism associated with the economies of the contemporary west" and the latter conceptualizing the "inherited notions of an organic society," a sort of prelapsarian past. As she backtracks into her past, however, *Surfacing*'s protagonist eventually discovers that these apparently "opposite" modes of being in the "New World" are inextricably connected.

From the city of her adulthood, which ironically is the novel's "past" and probable "future" through the "border country" (30) which separates the urban and populous
rural areas from the "island" of her childhood, which is the novel's "present," Surfacing's protagonist moves from the Lacanian symbolic through what Lacan termed the real and toward, if not into, the "place" of the Imaginary. The search for the missing father pulls the protagonist back from the "place" of pure linguistic representation, e.g., the notion of an organic society, to the "place" in the real where represented experience intersects and conflicts with another experiential reality, e.g., the reality of the organic society of the past. That is, as the protagonist moves through this terrain, her memories begin to form moments of semiotic-like irruptions temporarily pulling the Symbolic veil so tight as to tear small, almost imperceptible, holes in it.

It was all real enough, it was enough reality for ever, 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 flattening it, scrapbook, collage 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. (168-169)

This passage refers to the fiction that Surfacing's protagonist has constructed as her personal history and points to the fragility of its construction. Whereas she can sustain the "image of life" in the city (the place that is obviously technologically-based), as she moves back through her own past (to the place that resides in
memory as "organic"), she must confront both images as image, neither of which is "real enough."

The "organic" place of her childhood, for example, is technologically transformed and made serviceable. It is the simulacrum creation of the "organic," a greenhouse constructed to simulate the natural.

It took them years to make the garden, the real soil was too sandy and anemic. This oblong was artificial, the product of skill and of compost spaded in, black muck dredge from swamps, horse dung ferried by boat from the winter logging camps when they still kept horses to drag the logs to the frozen lake. My father and mother would carry it in bushel baskets on the handbarrow, two poles with boards nailed across, each of them lifting an end. (94)

The [garden] fence is impregnable; it can keep out everything but weed seeds, birds, insects and the weather. Beneath it is a two-foot-deep moat, paved with broken glass, smashed jars and bottles, and covered with gravel and earth,....

The garden is a stunt, a trick. It could not exist without the fence. (210-211)

With this realization, Surfacing's protagonist begins to comprehend that her "past" was never "organic," that it did not grow into its own being but was instead a "made" thing, constructed to mirror other "made" things. Mimicing the "earliest ones who arrived when there was nothing but forest and no ideologies but the ones they brought with them" (68-69), unnamed protagonist's parents "technologically" transform the place (and relied on industry to do so) in order to impose their image of the "organic society. "This is," as Lorraine Weir discerns, "what Derrida calls 'differance,' the creation of the
humanist cosmos in which the silva is savage, the via rupta is written, discerned, and inscribed violently as difference, as form imposed on the hyle, in the forest, in wood as matter."

Thus the writing of places divides man from "his" world, creates ownership even as it imposes "order," ironically creates metaphysical "presence" even as it jettisons man from the ecosphere and—as though in compensation—sustains the delusion of human supremacy in the world apparently designed for our consumption.

Indeed, the protagonist's "organic" place is so complete in its technological transformation that all the dreaded, avaricious "Americans" need do for it to serve their desire is add "a power generator...and a septic tank..." (113).

But Atwood extends her analysis beyond the point of the material and demonstrates that the "past," whether literally embodied in history of the world or Europe or figuratively embodied in characters' childhoods, never quite measures up to the character's emotionally imagined construction of it. More often than not, the discomfort suffered or the disjunction felt in the present is directly connected to misconceptions of this "past." That is, Atwood's plots are devised so that her protagonists must confront not the "technologically-based" present but the "notions of inherited past" and dis-cover that past's reality.

How have I been able to live so long in the city, it isn't safe. I always felt safe here, even at night.
That's a lie, my own voice says out loud. I think hard about it, considering it and it is a lie: sometimes I was terrified, I would shine the flashlight ahead of me on the path, I would hear a rustling in the forest and know it was hunting me, a bear, a wolf or some indefinite thing with no name, that was worse. (84)

What Surfacing's protagonist must face when she returns to the ostensibly "organic society" of her childhood is that it too threatened her "self" in a different way--It wasn't the city that was wrong,...we just had different victims" (156).

To separate the "inherited notions of an organic society" and the "technologically-based individualism" of the contemporary west, as Armour and others do, is to create, according to Atwood, a false dichotomy, and in doing so, to "make" all narrations of the present condition unreliable. For these narratives, like the narrative Surfacing's protagonist tells herself (jealously guarding the revelation of this "fiction" from others) about her marriage and child, are fictions forged to cover an unaccepted, "sadder" truth. For Surfacing's protagonist, this is the abortion she underwent at the behest of another. She creates the story of divorce and a lost child, because although painful, it displaces the more painful, the much "sadder" truth. Her "story" is a response to reality but is not the "speaking" of or telling of it.
Surfacing's protagonist's personal "fictions" direct our attention to other images of the "truth" that too must be confronted, other layers that must be comprehended and scraped away until the new image appears, like the "flat cliff where election slogans are painted and painted over, some faded and defaced,...melange of demands and languages, an Xray of it would be the district's entire history" (18).

Atwood suggests with this image that even socio-political "stories" may be fictions created to displace "sadder truths." That is, when carefully analyzed each layer of the public "mélange of demands and languages" refers to the event that its attempts to displace. Like Surfacing's protagonist's "story," each layer referentially explicates an adjustment to a present condition in much the same way as the protagonist displaces her personal pain:

I'll start crying, that would be horrible...I bite down into the cone and I can't feel anything for a minute but the knife-hard pain up the side of my face. Anesthesia, that's on technique: if it hurts invent a different pain. (15)

For the Canadian national consciousness, Atwood suggests the continued fiction of colonial "victimization" is the story of a real but now displaced pain. She notes in Survival that contemporary Canadian fiction implies that "Perhaps our condition is that of 'exploited victim,' but by now our real condition may be 'those who need to
be exploited victims" (Atwood's emphasis, 84). And if we look closely at the "signs" on the flat-cliff, we will discern that the fundamental "history" represented here is the inscription of Euro-cultural phenomenon on the natural Canadian landscape:

...VOTEZ GODET, VOTEZ OBRIEN, along with hearts and initials and words and advertisements, THE SALADA, BLUE MOON COTTAGES ½ MILE, QUÉBEC LIBRE, FUCK YOU, BUVEZ COCA-COLA GLACE, JESUS SAVES,... (18).

When we begin to interpret even the most readily discernible "marks," we see, however obliquely, the transplantation of the Old Euro-world onto the surface of the "New:" The represented politics (Godet, French versus Obrien, United Kingdom) have their roots in the colonial struggle as does the modern offshoot "Québec libre"; "Jesus saves" suggests the equation of Christianity with Old World concepts of civilization and moral order; and the commercial advertisements hint at the original and continued European commodification of the place as well as the "Americans" increasing appropriation of it.

What is represented on the cliff seems to concern "Canadians" only by proxy: Canada seemingly is the site of inscription, a place yet to be defined. Like the protagonist's parents' "island-home," these "signs" represent the "place's" transformation. The cliff face serves as the mirror in which the Canadian collective consciousness sees not its own image but the reflection of its mother countries and its "brother," the United
States. Its own bodily imago has been obliterated by these presences. It is important to understand how this has occurred and why it affects Canadian identity anxiety.

The "organic society" to which Armour refers is a myth of the mother country that has been translated to and inscribed upon the "New World." As Atwood notes in *Survival*, the core symbol for England is the "island-as-body:"

...self-contained, a Body Politic, evolving organically, with a hierarchical structure in which the King is the Head, the statesmen the hands, the peasants or farmers or workers the feet, and so on. The Englishman's home as his castle is the popular form of this symbol, the feudal castle being not only an insular structure but a self-contained microcosm of the entire Body Politic. (32)

Drawing this symbol from Phineas Fletcher's, *The Purple Island*, Atwood suggests that during the colonial period England constructed a self-image into which the great expanse of North America could not fit. The finite boundaries of "island" and "body" seem to confound British North America's place within and relation to the United Kingdom's "Body Politic." This situatedness is further conceptually obscured by the language of colonialism, which evokes familial ties: a colony is the offspring of a mother country.

The parent-child paradigm itself suggests, as Jean Baker Miller so cogently delineated, a "temporary inequality." It implies separate "subjects": one imbued with the knowledge, power, and authority that will upon
maturation accrue to the other. And more signficantly, "these relationships," as Miller underscores, "are based in service to the lesser party. That is their raison d'etre" (4). Ideologically then, this "organic" relationship ideally is not conceived as "economic" or oppositional. At best it is posited as positively intersubjective. Atwood's partial definition of a colony, however, suggests otherwise--"the major profit from a colony is made in the centre [sic] of the empire." That is, the "mother" grows more powerful at the expense of the "child." Accordingly, the language which describes the condition intrapsychically triggers certain expectations in the colonist's consciousness. When the parent-child dyad is defined as "mother-son," as it has been historically in experiential colonialism, these expectations resound with gender-charged contradictions, because the socio-political situation experientially inverts the conceptual condition of its language. Not only do the colonial "sons" reflect the body-politic of the mother country but they are reduced to a part-object of her body in modern colonization. Consequently, the modern colonist must exert considerable mental energy to attenuate the tension between linguistic "meaning" and experiential reality. This always already conflicted position is exasperbated by Western culture's conceptualization of the mother. "She" is perceived as
an object rather than as a subject.

Regardless of the mother's cultural and psychoanalytic centrality, the figure of the mother, as Jane Flax and others have commented, "never appears as a complex person in her own right, with her own processes that are not simply isomorphic to those of the child[...]." "She" ceases to Be [and theoretically] her position may represent the primary annihilated Self."\(^{29}\) As an extension of the "mother" then, the colonist intrapsychically finds himself in the peculiar position of begin both subject and object. But, within Symbolic construction, the mother has no generative capacity: she bears but does not beget. Hence, colonial identity is constituted as replication rather than (re)generation and perceived as an impersonation of an object, which by definition is inscribed by the presence of a subject. Problematically, the mother's "image" stipulates identity construction at the same time that the image of the mother in Western culture inherently suggest an object rather than a subject. This intrapsychically implies that there is no "subject," no identity to be imaged as a "self." The self mirrors the image of an object of an other. In the terms of Atwood's partial definition then the mother country's "identity" elides the colonists' ability to create a self-image. S(he) is caught in the mirror of the Mother, sustaining objectification in order to maintain a semblance
of self-identity as the other's object. Thus, through the conflicted psychodynamics of Canada's "colonial mentality," the collective unconscious conceives its bodily imago as "feminine" and the feminized "self-image" as merely the imitation of an object.

This uneasy situatedness is further complicated by the creation of the North American subject, constructed ideologically on the notion of the frontier. This idea, as Atwood comments, forms a "core symbol" or creative core of being for Americans and suggests that the "self" and its reciprocal relation to the socius may be continually (re)born. The frontier, as she observes,

is a flexible idea that...suggests a place that is new, where the old order can be discarded,...a line that is always expanding taking in or 'conquering' ever fresh virgin territory,...a hope, never fulfilled but always promised, of Utopia, the perfect human society (Survival 31-32).

Notably, this "core identity" is endlessly, referentially ideal, of the mind. But on the practical political level, its promise is not "virgin territory," for example, forests, but gardens or more to the point "greenhouses:" that is, the frontier is not Nature but in the New World's beginning Nature-transformed-and-made-serviceable and in the present Nature simulated; in effect, the idea of the "frontier" tacitly suggests cultural inscription even as it surreptitiously erases the "idea" of culture. To fully apprehend the psychological and ideological import of the "frontier" in the North American--Canada as well
as the US—imaginary space, we must comprehend the phenomenon of colonization in Western culture.

Historically, with very rare exception, only males ventured into foreign territories. Once there, the "colonists" with deliberation and quite often extreme violence "incorporated" the indigenous population through the forceful appropriation of not only the territory but the native women as well. The inevitable children produced by these "unions" (signs in and of themselves of regenerative permanence and otherness) were both of the mother-country and not of her. This practice created for the colony an "identity" that was separate and distinct from yet in relation to the mother country. The historically-male enterprise constituted its "separated-ness" and retained its "masculine" identity by reducing the (M)other to a vehicle of (re)generation. As a self-determined masculine subject, the colony profits with the mother country as well as within itself. This paradigm of colonization suggests an intersubjective relationship between the mother (country) and child (colony) while it ideologically reinforces the notion that violence is the means by which both incorporation of and separation from the feminine is accomplished.

Using D.W. Winnicott's object-relations formulation, Jane Flax observes that separation and individuation from the feminine (parent) depends on "a firm sense of
differentiation from the mother, of being a me/self different from but in relation to an other" (112). By "incorporating" the indigenous population, then, the earliest Euro-colonization efforts created a "me/self" which was separate and distinct from the (m)other country at the same time as it retained a relation to her. That is, prior to its excursions into the "New World," Europe served as Winnicott's "good enough mother," creating for its colony-progeny a feminized transitional space upon which it effected "identity."

Although the mythology of North America suggests that many of the same factors which precipitated the earliest Euro-colonizations (religiously-based political dilemmas, the transportation of criminals, and so forth) contributed to the occupation of the Americas, historians generally attribute, as I noted earlier, the European expansion to the three "Gs": Gold, God, and Glory. Therefore, the European colonizing endeavors made no attempt to "incorporate" the other in the "New World" establishment. It sought, rather, to interpret the territory as if it were an extension of itself, relegating the native populations to at best servitude and at worst extinction. Despite the vast distance which separated them, the colony and the mother country were conceived as isomorphic: one body as well as one consciousness. The "New World" became the mother country's "womb," so
to speak, from which she bore the wealth and power that would serve her in the "Old." This fundamental reconceptualization of the colonial mission, however, was not accompanied by a change in descriptive terminology.

In modern history, the Thirteen Colonies serve as an ideological model for political separation and individuation. Although they did not literally "incorporate" the native populations, they did combine aspects of the "New World" with the "Old,"³¹ figuratively constituting a self-identity that was at once Anglo-European and not-Anglo-European. The "New World" colonization process, however, transformed the early literal model of incorporation/separation into a figurative, symbolic one. That is, the Derridean concept "erasure" was enacted when the underlying violence of inscribing the feminine was obscured in the symbolic transliteration.

Rather than inscribing the female members of the indigenous populations as signs of colonial permanence, the Thirteen Colonies, consistent with the symbolic individuation, inscribed the New World by appropriating (M)other-nature, transforming the "land" itself into a (pro)creative core of being. Essentially, the Thirteen Colonies symbolically appropriated the mother country's "womb" and separated themselves from her as the ideological force that would "inseminate" it. Under the colonialism
of North America, the "other" became fully abstracted as feminine.

Accordingly, the Thirteen Colonies "masculinized" their self-image by doubly separating themselves from the Mother-country and Mother-nature. And in doing so, they constituted a core of being that permitted potentially endless (re)generation. That is, the Thirteen Colonies ideologically transformed themselves from colonial "sons" into national "fathers," capable of begetting the New World. These colonial "fathers," however, assume the role of "brothers" in that their collective existence—the Thirteen colonies—and Enlightenment values preclude the establishment of the Father. Indeed, the "parent," who exercises tyrannical control over the "child," is conceived as "European."

Such a core of being, however, like the ancient paradigm, requires a (M)otherbody, a vehicle through which the ever-new "identity" is (re)born. As Atwood observes, the notion of the frontier's "always expanding line" continually reconceptualizes as feminine the object of inscription: "be it The West, the rest of the world, outer space, Poverty or The Regions of the Mind" (Survival 31). It thereby reifies the gendered subject/object split at the core of Western culture, sustaining its gendered--masculine subject and feminine object--connotations, and establishes Symbolic "colonialism" as
an ideological precept for the New World national identity. This "identity" is constructed as mutant form of its parent. Canada then seems to find itself caught between the British configuration of the colonial "body" and the North American definition of the colonial cultural "mind." The Canadian national identity appears to embody the umbilical cord that connects the "old" with the "new."

Lacan conceptualized the space of the real as "the umbilical cord of the symbolic, the ineliminable residue of all articulation, the foreclosed element, which may be approached, but never grasped" (ix). The real comprises the "gap" that connects the Imaginary, the prelinguistic place of the mother, to the Symbolic, the linguistic "place" of the father. The real, therefore, is the "place" where internal and external experience collide. And as the protagonist re-enters the "island place" of her childhood, she begins to experience this return as an attempt to excavate the "ineliminable residue" which oozes from between the seams of her life, continually revealing its construction, its imitation. The search for her father becomes the "archeological problem" of her own, her Canadian past, a past of which he and the "ideology" he represents are a part. "In 'border country,'" as Lorraine Weir notes, "the deception" [of the humanist's definition of presence] becomes obvious" (144).
Atwood's recasting of the Canadian socio-political position into a "family drama" permits us to comprehend the "colonist-child's" conflicted response toward concepts of self-definition and determination. For although Surfacing's protagonist has actively imitated separation and individuation like her traveling companions, who have "all disowned their parents long ago, the way you are supposed to" (19), by physically abandoning the "island" of childhood, her constructed memories "symbolize" that she has "left" the island but neither separated from it nor achieved an individual existence. She "constructs" her life as much for her parents as for herself, or perhaps more accurately, for the "them" that is she.

They never knew, about that or why I left. Their own innocence, the reason I couldn't tell them, perilous innocence, closing them in glass, their artificial garden, greenhouse. They didn't teach us about evil, they didn't understand about it, how could I describe it to them? They were from another age, prehistoric, when everyone got married and had a family, children growing in the yard like sunflowers, remote as Eskimos or mastodons. (my emphasis, 169)

By maintaining the archaic place in her adult history, the protagonist can continue to believe in the possibility of and potential return to a "place" of purity. But, she can sustain the pure-place only through its language. Whereas "speaking" the word divorce, which "isn't part of the vocabulary" (27), potentially would "upset" the climate of the "artificial garden," introducing the concept inherent in the word abortion would so disrupt the
ecological balance as to explode the "greenhouse" walls that preserve the image as a prelapsarian "place." But within the real, she must also confront the garden as "artificial," symbolic of another time, another way of life that is as foreign to her parents as it is to her.

What she begins to perceive is that her father sought to "escape" history by "creating" the illusion of a place that denied it--"I had a good childhood; it was the middle of the war...But I didn't know about that till later when my brother found out and told me" (21). Through the language of the father, she acquired the linguistic ability to (re)represent reality with a vocabulary that would express it as he and she preferred it to be: "I didn't want there to be wars and death, I wanted them not to exist, only rabbits with their colored egg houses, sun and moon orderly above the flat earth, summer always, I wanted everyone to be happy" (155-156).

Although she initially believes that she became "an escape artist of sorts" (83) in response to the aggressiveness of the "city boys" who would tie her up and forget about her (a metaphor which grows in this text to become "the Americans"), it is her father who conceptualizes the notion of "escape." He creates the illusion that he can periodically escape into the "non-world" of the natural, the "organic" and escape the "world" of culture, the socio-political--although to do
so, he must retreat further and further into "space" and "time: "he needed an island, a place where he could recreate not the settled farm life of his own father but that of the earliest ones..." (68). In this isolated place, the father never needs to confront either the "other" or his own beliefs; he can live his "fiction," sustaining the dichotomy between culture and nature, believing that he does not participate in ideological (material and cultural) history but the eternal "presence" of the natural order—he (re)creates the island-as-body, usurping the mother country's power to bring himself into being. The illusory walls of his "greenhouse," however, dissolve for the protagonist when it becomes clear to her that he funded his "escape" by cataloging, categorizing, and surveying for the government or the paper company. She realizes that he purchased his "greenhouse" with its own eventual destruction in that he drew a map for "them."

And as the protagonist excavates her past, she begins to realize that the "greenhouse" is impossible. Her father's "escape" from the world that he could not or would not comprehend provided the means by which the "world" could invade his place—"he was really a surveyor, he learned the trees, naming and counting them so the others could level and excavate" (218). As Lacan's concept of the real evolved from "the function of
constancy,...which always returns to the same place" through an intolerable tension "before which the imaginary faltered...[and] over which the symbolic stumble[d],"

it became in his formulation, the site of "the impossible" (x). Within the real, the power of the father to "create" and maintain his version of reality is visibly ineffectual--"Why is the road different, he shouldn't have allowed them to do it..." (15).

In constructing the image of an isolated and therefore protected place with a "limited" vocabulary of represented experience, her narrator's parents have betrayed her by not preparing her for the "world" in which she would have to live. Moreover, the father's "escape" implies through its construction that the "world" could be escaped, that there was a pure "place" for human beings that was not created or tainted by human beings, further subtly suggesting that that which is human, material and cultural history, ought to be escaped or abandoned.

Her father "escapes," like his colonial predecessors, to the idea of the New World "frontier," a place where he can avoid the "corruptions of the Industrial Revolution" and actualize his dream of a "balanced,...organic" (44) society. But the "ideologies of the earliest ones," which conceived the natural world as a thing to be overcome and/or a thing to be used in order to impose ideas of "culture" or "civilization," contradict the notion of
an "organic" Canadian society, because "society" itself is always already defined by the (M)other. This creates, as we shall see, a conflicted nostalgia for the modern Canadian.

The father's enactment of separation and individuation from his father as a literal and figurative movement away from the domestication of the "farm" with its "feminine" connotations of domestication into the "wilderness" of the frontier past and Atwood's association of the idea of the frontier with the masculinized "Americans" reveal at personal and political levels the significance of and difference between separation and individuation.35

In regressing to the "frontier," the protagonist's father asserts a "phallic power" prior to his father's that appears origin ary, seemingly "begetting" the place he discovers and himself. He "conceives" a place that is his own and constitutes his identity as separate from the domestic father, making it serviceable, while conquering and controlling Mother Nature's unknown body. Furthermore, the concept of the "frontier" intrapsychically as well as ideologically opens an endlessly referential "space," a creative core, by which his "presence" continues to be felt and reflected. His "presence," however, depends on the "non-presence" of a feminized "other." In re-asserting the "ideologies of the earliest ones," the protagonist's father, like the "Americans," re-produces
a masculinized presence through a feminized "body." His attitude, while superficially not as aggressive or destructive as the attitude "expressed" by the "Americans," underlies the conflicted response to the Americans' inscriptions of the Canadian landscape.

With Surfacing, Atwood clearly associates the "technologically-based individualism" of the West with "the Americans" and with a frontier ideology that presupposes culture or technological inscription and transformation in its notion of an "organic society." And as I have discussed, the colonial "idea" of the American frontier rests not only on the usurpation the mother country's position of power but also on the colonists' ability to wrest feminine productivity from mother nature and use it metaphorically as the "womb" from which their separate and distinct identity will be borne or "(re)produced."

In Surfacing as well as Atwood's other novels, this "idea" is consistently represented by male characterizations, which of course seems to align a phallogocentric perspective with "maleness." But Atwood is equally careful to demonstrate in her work that this attitude toward the "feminine," so deeply entrenched in the ideology of North America, has little to do with the "sexed" body. That is, women in Atwood's work also frequently objectify and inscribe their subjective presence on the embodied feminine represented in another
female or "feminized" character.

The most prominent example is the elaborate "Woman's Culture" of *The Handmaid's Tale*, but we see this phenomenon dramatically occur in various ways in all of Atwood's novels. Atwood furthers the understanding of these "realities" for Canadian identity by subtly revealing their gendering. As defined by a masculinist viewpoint, there is no "space between" the "notions of an organic society" and the "technologically-based individualism of the economies of the West." The distinction is linguistic, an opposition in language only.

The underlying difference rests upon definitions of feminine and masculine. The masculinist position creates its identity upon the feminine through Derridean erasure as the subjective presence which "marks" it. The feminine presence then within the *logos* comes into being only as it materially realizes or actualizes the masculine, most completely, that is, when it (m)others his identity. Atwood enacts the complexity of erasure through her Canadian male characters. In rejecting his father's domesticated life and regressing to the "original" state of the frontier past, the protagonist's father defines his separatedness his individualness through "the feminine;" and in doing so, he perpetually asserts phallic power and "conceives" himself from this place. Like David, who applauded the sign of "trash" as the masculine
privilege of marking the feminine even though he at least suspected that the hated Americans are responsible for it, the protagonist's father surveys for the industrial machine he abhors.

In *Surfacing*, Atwood clearly attributes the masculinist world view exemplified in her male characterizations to a Cartesian construction of reality. Through the novel's protagonist, she renames this construction the "illusion of the neck," the apparent space between the mind and the body:

> The trouble is all in the knob at the top of our bodies. I'm not against the body or the head either: only the neck, which creates the illusion that they are separate. The language is wrong, it shouldn't have different words for them. If the head extended directly into the shoulders like a worm's or a frog's without that constriction, that lie, they wouldn't be able to look down at their bodies and move them around as if they were robots or puppets; they would have to realize that if the head is detached from the body both of the will die (91).

Atwood suggests that the mind-body split is dangerous, because it is illusory. This illusion disconnects ideas from their consequences. Both her father and David suffer from the "illusion of the neck" in that they believe that their "ideas" are separate from material reality. Following the father's example, who "is an improvisor on standard themes" (51) and believes in "camouflage as
a matter of policy" (37), the protagonist creates a "space between" material experience and reality, repressing experience (the affair, abortion, and breakup) on the one hand and inventing it through a limited vocabulary (the marriage, divorce, and child abandonment) on the other. In doing so, she preserves her "father's world" and a masculinist point of view, which suggests that the world created in and through language has more substance than the world that escapes linguistic inscription.

The protagonist's dilemma is that she, as the embodiment of the feminine other, sees her own "reflection" in the empty space of nature at the same time as she must recognize her human consciousness—she sense that she is both inscribed and inscriber, victim and victimizer.

...what would they [the animals] say really? Accusation, lament, an outcry of rage;...
I felt a sickening complicity, sticky as glue, blood on my hands, as though I had been there and watched without saying No or doing anything to stop it: one of the silent guarded faces in the crowd. The trouble some people have being German, I have being human. In a way it was stupid to be more disturbed by a dead bird than by those other things, the wars and riots and the massacres...But...there was always an explanation, people wrote books about them saying why they happened; the death of the heron was causeless, undiluted. (154-55).

In her "reflection" she is beginning to sense a tension between the "explanation" constituted in language and its arbitrary signification. This tension, however, was apparent to the young protagonist as her childhood memories substantiate.
In the other lake [the leeches] never bothered us when we were swimming but we would catch the mottled kind, the bad kind [the protagonist's brother] called them, and throw them on the campfire.... I didn't mind that so much if only they would die; but they would writhe out and crawl painfully, coated with ashes and pine needles, back toward the lake, seeming to be able to smell where the water was. Then he would pick them up with two sticks and put them back in the flames again. (my emphasis 156).

As a young girl, the protagonist learns to participate in the arbitrary signification of language. Her reasons for doing so are complicated and we will return to them, but Surfacing's protagonist begins to perceive the "space between" as not separation but as connection, the erased hyphen. The explained "war and riots and massacres," events of obvious human-on-human violence, are intimately connected to the death of the heron, which is neither "food nor enemy" (154)--"Anything we could do to the animals we could do to each other: we practiced on them first" (143).

Atwood's protagonist begins to comprehend that denying presence or designating alterity as non-consciousness permits the reconfiguration of all that is "other" than the subject to be marked within language as an appropriable object, as non-present at the same time as it constitutes consciousness as the only presence and the only power. Seen from this perspective, the protagonist apprehends that the language of "explanation" is materially an extended discourse of legitimation. That is, the mythologizing of the "space between" as separation from
the corruption of technologically-based industrialization rather than connection to it permits the illusion of preserving, if only in remorseful memory, that which is being destroyed. But, more importantly, the mythology creates for the mythologer a position which appears morally pure, an "escape" from responsibility. "The Americans" or the timber corporation, for example, destroy the Canadian wilderness, not the protagonist's brother nor David nor the protagonist father, for they inscribe themselves through "the illusion of the neck" as victims rather than perpetrators--their Canadian "body" is split from the Western "mind" that operates in it. To recognize, as the protagonist does, their complicity in this destruction would require that they call their fundamental conceptions of the world, and therefore the world itself into question. Doing so would strike to the "core of being" by erasing the "transitional space" that mediates a masculinized version of "identity," and for the male characters, would concomitantly collapse their Canadianness.

The "inherited notions of an organic society" that positioned colonial Canada at once inside and outside the Empire as the source of "staple commodities" always already defined its postcolonial situatedness as a site of the technological. Indeed, as Arthur Kroker comments, "The Canadian mind may be one of the main sites in modern
times for working-out the meaning of technological experience." Because, "Technique is, in the end, the ontology, psychology, economy, and communicative ethic of the 'imaginary Canadian'." But, for "the descendants of a country formed in the image of the "staples commodity," as Kroker notes, "the technological experience will always to double-edged..." (94).

III. Postmodern Feminist, Feminine Postmodernist

Atwood's general interest in the dialectical tension produced by the dualism of Western thought as well as in the interrogation of the progresivist and rationalist discourses of the Enlightenment value-systems and in the play of language positions her as a postmodern writer. And, Surfacing exemplifies these concerns. The nameless and complexly-alienated protagonist's quest for self-knowledge seemed to capture the psychodynamics of postmodernity for everyone living in North America in the late-twentieth century. Backtracking into her protagonist's psyche, Atwood discovered the effect of the late capitalistic production-consumption "machine...[which] takes a little of you at a time, leav[ing] the shell" (Surfacing 195). With this novel, Atwood gives voice through the protagonist's unreliable narration to the progress of the simulacrum and the schizophrenic delusion that the postmodern person lives
as "sanity."

Unlike Atwood's first protagonist, Marian McAlprin in *The Edible Woman*, whose "body" senses the danger of the modern industrialized world, where "Gradually the clutter of raw materials... had disappeared, transmuted by an invisible process of digestion and assimilation," Surfacing's protagonist has lost contact with her body, no longer receiving its protests, and, as we begin the novel, has accepted, albeit tenuously, this existence. She is a member of the "new bourgeoisie" (46), who, guided by urbane relativism, glide only over the surface of life, imitating it: "A little beer, a little pot, some jokes, a little political chitchat, the golden mean" (46), interacting solely to prevent the "vacancy" [of their lives] from overtak[ing]" (46) them through "do[ing] a little magic...[as] a substitute for conversation" (10) and coming together, indiscriminantly and mechanically coupling, "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). For them, material technological advance represents human progress: "I'm on this road again...it's swelled enough to have a bypass, that's success" (9). These signs of progress are, as Duncan, *The Edible Woman's* most self-absorbed character, comments, the "good things" that "they have" (270). The "new bourgeoisie" easily
and unconsciously consumes the products of its "ordered" life.

Marian confronts the effects of late capitalism and the "new bourgeoisie" through a journey to Duncan's favorite place—a strip-mining pit. In this moment, although her protagonist stands only on the precipice of awareness, Atwood offers her readers a glimpse of the womb—production/assimilation—from which modern civilization is born, at the same time that she reveals its tomb—consumption/digestion—in the obvious evisceration of the natural world.

But, the farther away from the city that Surfacing's protagonist travels, the more clearly she begins to see that a disease traverses the "sign" of success, consuming more and more of the natural terrain, until the natural itself, rather than representing its own decimation, becomes camouflage, a facade, merely an imitation:

From here it looks like an innocent hill, spruce-covered, but the thick power lines running into the forest give it away... [revealing] the pit... hollowed out [for] concrete bunkers and...underground apartment buildings where the lights burn all the time (11). The natural now not only has been assimilated into cultural history by "the thick power lines" of technological advance but has been transformed in such a way as to "innocently" conceal the ramifications of its appropriation. Its transformation reveals the "innocent spruce-covered hill with its thick power lines" to be nothing other than the
simulacrum itself, a historical text basted together with the "thick power lines" of global politics. Atwood amplifies the play between "the innocent spruce-covered hill" and the "thick power lines," as she underscores the violent intent of the appropriation and the gravity of its repression: "'That's where the rockets are,' I say. Were. I don't correct it" (Atwood's emphasis 12). With this image, Atwood suggests that the Natural has been impregnated with death, that when the "rockets" are launched, they will "give birth" to the very destruction which they were allegedly "implanted" to prevent. Atwood's protagonist, however, actively creates the postmodern delusion lived as "sanity" when she represses--"Were. I don't correct it"--this knowledge.

And as Atwood tunnels into and through the detritus of modern Western culture's delusions, she simultaneously exposes the illusion of its romanticized prelapsarian nostalgia for "the simple life" (27)--"this is reality [for the new bourgeoisie]: a marginal economy and grizzled elderly men, it's straight out of Depression photo essays" (35). This concept of reality is, as the protagonist notes, part of the simulacrum, for it is in itself "an imitation of other places,...which are themselves imitations, the original someone's distorted memory..." (32). The myth of natural origins is lost, destroyed by the simulacrum, the cannibalizing machine of postmodern
industrialization.

On this level of the text, as many of Surfacing's critics have remarked, the protagonist seemingly mirrors the sensibilities and anxieties of every man and woman living in the twentieth century. Within the aesthetic of the postmodern, we may read Surfacing as a novel that reveals humanity's anxiety about the culture that it has created—we are all victims of "It," the ideological/technocratic Other, the thing-in-itself from which there is no escape and through which we are all victims.

But, this novel is nevertheless a woman's story, a woman's encounter with twentieth-century reality. And it is this focus that, as Atwood herself has observed, provides the impetus for feminist inquiry, particularly within the Anglo-American School. For although the protagonist returns to the island of her childhood to search for her mysteriously missing father, the journey becomes a personal "archaeological problem" (54), an excavation in search of her "missing" Self. And it is her own construction by and participation within the simulacrum that most plagues her. Because, her quest for self-knowledge leads her to the apprehension that she, too, is the technologically-constructed embodiment of an idea, "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, hairless lobed angel in the same heaven where God is a circle, captive princess in someone's head" (194).

Atwood uses the protagonist's search for the "father" to highlight the inscription of the feminine by the phallogocentric economy. In her first novel, The Edible Woman, Atwood describes the process of cultural assimilation of the feminine, wherein Marian is (re)formed for her betrothal. The language and the images Marian uses to reflect upon the process of her "make-over" oscillate between industrial manufacturing--"the assembly line of women seated in identical mauve chairs" (215)--and medicine--"she was being admitted to a hospital to have an operation" (215), suggesting that her manufacture is intended to cure her of some unnamed malady. What puts Marian at risk, her potentially tragic flaw, is her desire to be "cured" and transformed for normality, stability, fixity: "She only wanted to know what she was becoming, what direction she was taking, so she could be prepared" (211).

Marian is "becoming" during this process the definition of the feminine cultural product. These are the preliminary stages in her cultural metamorphosis. She is essentially being cured in every sense of the word: she is being rid of the dis-ease of her status as a "daughter" and is being processed so as to prepare,
preserve, and finish her identity. In her party costume, Marian presents the "image" of her sexual readiness to enter the final phase of feminine metamorphosis. As a constructed-sexual-object-who-is-about-to-be-married, she constitutes the second phase of her inscribed "identity" as "potential mother." And the group photograph, which positions her culturally and from which she flees would concretely image her in this phase: "Once he pulled the trigger she would be stopped, fixed indissolubly in that gesture, that single stance, unable to move or change" (252). This image would seemingly confirm "what direction she was taking," her fixed position on the "assembly-line of women." Marian, albeit only half aware of the implications of her transformation, senses its danger and attempts to resist.

Surfacing's protagonist, on the other hand, discloses through scrapbooks and photo albums as she scours her childhood home for clues about her father's disappearance that the transformative process begins much earlier and is institutionally reinforced so that its reification is internalized by the feminine psyche.

A lady was what you dressed up as on Halloween when you couldn't think of anything else and didn't want to be a ghost; or it was what you said at school when they asked you what you were going to be when you grew up, you said 'A lady' or 'A mother,' either one was safe;... (my emphasis 109).

"Either one" of these costumed roles "was safe," because either one of them functions within and for the masculine
The pictures cut from magazines and catalogs (both consumer texts) and pasted in her childhood scrapbooks reveal that the phallogocentrically-defined feminine constructs her as an object of dual utilitarian value—"They were ladies, all kinds: holding up cans of cleanser, knitting, smiling, modeling toeless high heels and nylons with dark seams and pillbox hats and veils" (109). These "ladies" depict domesticity and desire—the pleasant ("smiling") keepers of the hearth and the mysterious ("dark seams and veils") preservers of masculine sexuality.

The later pages of the protagonist's scrapbook punctuate the significance of the role-identities as inscribed "costumes" defining the female body: "On some pages were women's dresses clipped from mail-order catalogues, no bodies in them" (109). The female body, here, is superfluous to the meaning of the role. That is, the construct of the feminine has more "presence" than the body it covers. A Polish Count, Paul, a character from Atwood's third novel, Lady Oracle, and representative European voice for the ideology that crossed the Atlantic and entered the New World, attempts to explain the "essential" difference and value of the "invisible" female body to that novel's protagonist, Joan Foster:

"Ah, but the mystery of man is of the mind...whereas that of the woman is of the body. What is a mystery but a thing which is remaining hidden? It is more easy to uncover the body than
it is the mind. For this reason, a bald man is not looked upon as an unnatural horror, but a bald woman is."

"And I suppose a moronic woman is more socially acceptable than an idiot man," I [Joan] said, intending sarcasm.

"Just so," said Paul. "In my country they were often used as the lowest form of prostitute, whereas a man with no mind, for him there was no use." (186)

Paul asserts here that culturally a woman becomes "an unnatural horror" when her body becomes visible—bald. "Women's" metaphysical and therefore, socio-political value is constituted in their bodies insofar as their bodies symbolically represent the activity of the male mind, or more theoretically stated, "embody" phallogocentric desire.

The "mystery" of the female body, "the thing remaining hidden," is that it is not itself but a "living" metaphoric representation of an objectified "male" (other)body, the body split from the masculinized psyche and erased—"a man with no mind, for him there is no use." Essentially, according to Paul's explanation, without the female body or, in broader terms, the feminine, the masculine economy has no receptacle for its desire, no field upon which to constitute its Being. The "moronic prostitute" serves to remind the masculine psyche of its existence in the world: she supplies the body and he the mind which acts upon it. In Western culture's cosmography, women represent Woman, the metaphysical other. Because women are conceptually associated with the body, they are
particularly sensitized to the "illusion of the neck," as Joan Foster's failed sarcasm suggests. Even if a woman endorses the mind-body split, that is, attempts to enter fully the rational "mind" of the West, as *Surfacing's* protagonist does, she is nonetheless continually confronted with the unconscious recognition of her reflection as Woman, the essential Body. As body(mind), women, then generally must invest considerable mental energy in sustaining the split in that they are generally more "conscious" of and disoriented by language's construction of the body as an object upon which the mind "inscribes" its presence. When the body is "erased" from reality, within consciousness "presence" is lost. The feminine, then, as representative of and for the body in the metaphysical reality of language constitutes not lack but full and unerasable "presence" with an "identity" that language cannot inscribe. But culturally, the uninscribable, the inarticulateable is by definition "empty," non-existing, devoid of "identity." *Surfacing's* protagonist's discovery seems to suggest that a "lady," unlike the moronic prostitute, consciously participates in her inscription, "creating" herself, giving her self presence within the cultural linguistic economy.

But the power of masculine desire becomes most fully conceptually embodied in the figure of the mother, who is "created" through male insemination. S(he) represents
not only masculine desire but its ability to transform within and produce for the world. It, the female's (m)other-body is part of the Western culture's homoerotic circle, signifying masculine desire and its ability through gender inscription to (re)produce itself. This suggests that phallocentric inscription of the feminine truncates a woman's (pro)creative ability to discover, in D.W. Winnicott's formulation, a "true self." She is limited to assuming costumed roles in order to exist at all. We can see that the "safe" choices of lady or mother are in actuality "phases" in the phallocentric definition of feminine actualization; and we must recall that any other choice renders Surfacing's child-protagonist "a ghost," an entity without "body." Atwood suggests in Surfacing that this cultural attitude toward the female body creates the subtle violent undertow in male-female relationships in which both parties attempt to gain power over the female body's definition:

...Anna was more than sad, she was desperate, her body her only weapon and she was fighting for her life, he was her life, her life was the fight: she was fighting him because if she ever surrendered the balance of power would be broken and he would go elsewhere. To continue the war.

The significance of "the war" over the feminine body for the female psyche is best understood through one of Surfacing's protagonist's memories, a memory importantly evoked through her contemplation of the meaninglessly "sacrificed heron." Although lengthy, the passage will
be quoted in its entirety, because it clearly reveals the intrapsychic pressures which not only draw women into "the war" but prolong their participation:

He [the protagonist's brother] never caught birds, they were too quick for him, what he caught was the slower things. He kept them in jars and tin cans on the board shelf back in the forest, near the swamp, to reach them he made a secret path, marked only by small notches on the trees, a code.

...I went there by myself that day; one of the snakes was dead and several of the frogs, their skin dry and their yellow stomachs puffed up, and the crayfish was floating in the clouded water with its legs uppermost like a spider's. I emptied those bottles into the swamp. The other things, the ones still alive, I let out.

After lunch I hid but I had to come out finally for dinner. He couldn't say anything in front of them [their parents] but he knew it was me, there was no one else. He was so angry he was pale, his eyes twisted as though they couldn't see me. "The were mine," he said. Afterward he trapped other things and changed place, this time he wouldn't tell. I found it anyway but I was afraid to let them out again. Because of my fear they were killed. (155)

As the brother entered the world of the Father, he began to emulate the father's classification, categorization and compartmentalization, the rationalization, of the "whole place" by carving out his own marked space, a laboratory, with the island, which he initially shares with the protagonist. As the memory of that day unfolds, it reveals that the young protagonist, in spite of her sense that she was violating an unspoken tenet, acted in concert with what she perceived to be the principles of the natural world, and more importantly with her mother's attitudes toward it (a point to which we will return), returning each creature to the natural order:
setting free those that were still alive and "burying" the dead. Her brother's reaction, however, confirms her intuition of violation and exposes what her rescue efforts risk. In that, the protagonist's fear, here, is created by the brother's "look," a look that threatens to negate her presence—"his eyes twisted as though they couldn't see me." Her fear of his ostracism is complicated, for not only will she lose her only playmate, but she will lose her contact with the "world," if he chooses to exclude her from the knowledge he accrues "there."43 The fear bred of this possible loss paralyzes the young protagonist. She becomes caught in the gap between the rationalist world in which she may cautiously participate and the natural world with which she is culturally associated.

Atwood's characterization of the brother demonstrates that as the son turns toward the father's realm, he identifies not only with the sameness of the body but with his father's cultural position. The brother has at this point—"he was older then"—begun to emulate the father's rationalist worldview. That is, he has begun to dissect the "body" of the natural. And although the laboratory appears objective and neutral in its effort to separate, the act of separation appears to create a concomitant feeling of conquest-possession ("They were mine") and need for an arbitrary moral hierarchy:

Below me in the water there's a leech, the good kind with red dots on the back...the bad kind is mottled
gray and yellow. It was my brother who made up these moral distinctions, at some point he became obsessed with them, he must have picked them up from the war. There had to be a good kind and a bad kind of everything (44)

Although the protagonist implicitly question this postulation, she actively pursues his object of moral distinction and participates in torturing the leeches, as I noted. She does not, however feel empowered through this participation. What the young protagonist perceives here is the strength of their victims' "survival desire" at the same time as she witnesses its seeming futility in the face of the aggressor. Furthermore, these experiences reinforce an awareness that once the marked body of a slower thing is caught, there could not be and would not be any escape. In this way on a deep level of consciousness, she registers the need for her body to be appropriately marked and named within the masculine economy.

As the protagonist backtracks farther into her childhood, she begins to discern that the other "safe" choice presented to her, "a mother," is complicitously involved in sustaining the phallocentric definition of the feminine. For although her own mother does not fulfill the imaged-roles, she does encourage, if not directly participate in "imitating," her daughter's acceptance of these identity-roles and keeps a photographic record of daughter's "progress":

Further on, glossy color prints, the stiff dresses, crinolines and tulle, layered like store birthday cakes; I was civilized at last, the finished product. She would say 'You look very nice, dear,' as though she believed it; but I wasn't convinced, I knew by then she was no judge of the normal (my emphasis 129).

The protagonist recognizes that she has been "produced" for consumption and production. The "civilizing" process has made her a "lady," the name given to a "potential mother." The protagonist, however has been "persuaded" by a married lover, who attends his children's birthday party during the procedure, to have an abortion. Thus, the final "phase" of the feminine actualization process, the moment for which she has been prepared and into which she will "become," has been short-circuited. The protagonist is a (not)mother.

Atwood, in the protagonist's confused memories and efforts to conceal her unfulfilled "motherhood," conflates images so that the protagonist and her aborted child become intricately intertwined: "A section of my own life, sliced off from me like a Siamese twin, my own flesh canceled" (my emphasis 56). The protagonist's abortion metaphorically represents the appropriation of her body by the Symbolic, an appropriation which denies her a (pro)creative core of being through which she can grow and choose who she will "become." Both the protagonist and her child "drowned in air" (168), one figuratively aborted and the other literally.
Surfacing's protagonist, although set apart from her contemporaries by the insulating isolation of her upbringing, a condition which often makes her feel "like a person from another culture" (83), does not reject the "lady/mother" definition of femininity. Indeed, she senses that, however ideologically inscribed through the Symbolic, her own desire--"I did want to be those things" (109)--has been co-opted. That is, she does not reject her desire to be a sexual being. She searches, instead, for a good faith way to enact its authenticity by taking responsibility for a praxeological creation of its meaning--"Not only how to see but how to act" (179). The dilemma faced by Surfacing's protagonist is to redefine the terms, experientially self-determining meaning. This reading of Surfacing grounds the critical feminist inquiry of the text, particularly as it relates to Part III of the novel. In the concluding section, the protagonist seemingly descends into Lacan's Imaginary "madness" and enters a "conscious" prelinguistic state. From this place, she will liminally--surface into the Symbolic--"For us it's necessary, the intercession of words..." (224)--with the pronouncement of what she has learned through her journey: "This above all, to refuse to be a victim" (222).

Lacan's Imaginary is most closely associated with the mother and the protagonist's entry into this psychic...
space suggests that she will "give birth" to a new or re-inscribed self. At the same time however, Atwood's interrogation of her female protagonist's confrontation with the masculine economy of the Symbolic is consciously politicized: the protagonist as well as the novel's male characters are decidedly Canadian, and the masculine economy is metonymically represented as "the Americans." Indeed, Atwood through the consciousness of her protagonist declares that the (dis)ease, which infects all the characters in varying degrees of severity, identified as postmodernist by one camp of readers and patriarchal by another, "is spreading up from the south" (9). And what is more to the point for our present purposes at the moment is that the "femaleness" of Atwood's protagonist and her "feminine" perspective are intricately intertwined with her "Canadianness." This sensibility, as we noted earlier in June Schlueter's analysis of the numerous references to "the Americans" in Surfacing and the work's critical reception by Canadians, deeply informs Atwood's twentieth-century perspective as a Canadian and contributes to the dialectical tension in her work.

It is, for instance, "the Americans," who have eviscerated the "innocent spruce-covered hill" and installed "the rockets." But it is also this appropriation and assimilation of the Canadian landscape that has contributed to the "success" of the "border country" (30),
inducing the local merchants there to "imitate...other places, more southern ones..." (my emphasis 32). But the most notable affect of this political condition occurs in her examinations of male-female relationships and gender construction. A brief look at the dilemma faced by Surfacing's protagonist from this perspective illuminates this point.

IV. Colonial Consciousness: The Body-Politic Engendered

Although the conflation of a character's gender, intrapsychic "space" and socio-political "place" is more readily discernible in Surfacing's protagonist, a similar psychology manifests in the novel's male characterizations. The primary example is found in David, the novel's egregious misogynist, who frequently expresses an acrimonious but nonetheless psychically-conflicted anti-Americanism:

If we could only kick out the fascist pig Yanks and the capitalists this would be a neat country. But then who would be left? (45).

Atwood suggests that his "political" anger as well as its conflicted expression and his "personal" misogyny flows complexly from his identity as a Canadian. For not only does David feel that he has been enslaved by his colonial status and further oppressed by the United States' aggressive appropriation of his country, but he has specifically conceptualized the destructive
dismemberment of the Canadian "body" as an act through which he has been castrated, obscenely "feminized":

Do you realize that this country is founded on the bodies of dead animals? Dead fish, dead seals, and historically dead beavers, the beaver is to this country what the black man is to the United States. Not only that in New York it's now a dirty word, beaver. I think that's very significant. He sits up and glares at me [the protagonist] through the semidarkness (my emphasis 46).

David focuses on language--his national symbol has been appropriated and reduced to a female part-object. The "historically dead beaver," rapaciously trapped to the brink of extinction during Canada's colonial period, is a national symbol which signifies the territory's "wealth." This "wealth," however, did not accrue to the colonists, and David here spotlights the "dead" animals, signifying the "wealth" lost to the Canadian national. But in this case he nevertheless, as a male Canadian, identifies with the trapper rather than the trapped, enacting when and where possible his ability to subdue the other, in whatever form it is represented--"they [David and Joe] stuck the axe in the log...and took turns shooting each other standing beside it, arms folded and one foot on it as if it was a lion or a rhinoceros" (98). This identification sets him apart from both "the beaver" and "the black man": one indigenous and the other "transplanted," but both trapped, both working to enrich someone else.
David, as modern Canadian, perceives himself as at once part of the "natural" Canadian territory—the beaver—and set apart from it through colonial "transplantation"—his European heritage. That is, he is simultaneously inscribed (the beaver) and inscriber (European-descendent). His conflation of the "beaver" and the "black man" suggest that he feels that he has been granted only the "subjectivity" required to produce within and for a definition of the "masculine"-identified economy. Which, in the twentieth-century, is constituted through "American" ideology. An ideology fundamentally developed through the notion of the frontier, a feminized space through which the masculinized identity is constructed. David conflictedly responds to the "masculine" right to "inscribe" or transform the land with and through "his" presence. For David, a New World colonial, the notion of the frontier should provide the transitional space whereby he effects his separation and individuation from Europe, as it has for his American "brothers."

Atwood directly addresses the consequences of the "always expanding line" of the American frontier for Canada in Surfacing: from the occasional encounters with American fishermen, "who," according to legend, "stuffed the pontoons of their seaplane[s] with illegal fish" (144); through the character of Bill Malmstrom, who as a "member
of the Detroit branch of the Wildlife Protection Association of American" (112) has come farther north to survey property for "a kind of retreat lodge, where the members could meditate and observe...the beauties of nature...And maybe do a little hunting and fishing," because their "place on Lake Erie, is...giving out" (113); to the "Water War" between the United States and Canada predicted by David:

They're running out of water, clean water, they're dirtying up all of theirs, right? Which is what we have a lot of, this country is almost all water if you look at a map. So in a while, I give it ten years, they'll be up against the wall. They'll try to swing a deal with the government, get us to give them water cheap or for nothing in exchange for more soapflakes or something, and the government will give in, they'll be a bunch of puppets as usual. But by that time the Nationlist Movement will be strong enough so they'll force the government to back down; riots or kidnappings or something. Then the Yank pigs will send in the Marines...(115-116).

Atwood suggests with these pervasive textual undercurrents that Canada represents the "continuing" frontier in the American imagination, a place where a friendly, smiling American can come under the guise of the Wildlife Protection Association to hunt and fish and pollute. The perceived "American" onslaught contributes to the modern Canadians' feelings of dispossession and eventual spiritual annihilation. Atwood explores this issue in other ways in other novels. For example, what happens if (or perhaps from Surfacing's or postmodernist's perspective when) the literal "frontier" is destroyed?
Atwood takes up this question in her futuristic novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. Although most often read from a "feminist" perspective, the novel, which Atwood contends began to take form through her American experiences, explores the conceptions which underlie the notion of the "always expanding line" of the "American" frontier and its movement from the literal into the Symbolic.

In this novel, the "Handmaids" serves the state by becoming "mothers." Reduced to their reproductive Nature ("We are two-legged wombs, that's all..." (136)), they are symbolically transformed into "natural resource" (65) that will be exploited for the good of the state, indeed, will ensure the State's survival. Offred's "Commander" explains the Gileadean police-state as a "return[ing of] things to Nature's norm" (220).

The patriarchal state constructed as "Nature's norm" by the Commander suggests the core precept of the phallogos, the Lacanian law of the Father; although as Jacqueline Rose notes "The importance of the phallus is that its status in the development of human sexuality is something which nature cannot account for". This suggests that all embodiments of the feminine constitute "Nature" and that only the masculinized culture can give meaning to the feminine, that is, bring it into being as a regenerative force. "The concept of the symbolic states," as Jacqueline Rose notes in her analysis of
Lacanian theory, "that the woman's sexuality is inseparable from the representations through which it is produced ('images and symbols for the woman cannot be isolated from images and symbols of woman...it is the representation of sexuality which conditions how it comes into play') but those very representations will reveal the splitting through which they are constituted as such" (43).

In The Handmaid's Tale, Gilead comes into being when the "natural" frontier (the fully abstract feminine space) became a toxic wasteland and its Colonies, like the "earliest ones," the original Thirteen, are populated by incorrigibles, criminals, and political dissidents. For the purposes of the narrative, the most prominent "colonist" is Offred's mother. When the novel begins, Offred's mother is beyond child-bearing age and according to the cultural attitudes and mores of Gilead, she reflects the space to which she has been fatally banished. Although she confirmed her "feminine" being by producing a child, and importantly a "daughter," she has been declared "Unwoman," politically classified as an unproductive "wasteland," unfit for any form of cultivation. Her presumably post-menopausal body negates her as potential mother and her "political views" corroborate her cultural "toxicity." For Offred's mother, who bore and reared a daughter alone and thus proclaimed her "feminine" independence, was a feminist activist, who participated
in public protests against the use of the female body as object or receptacle for masculine desire.

Such activities, even in the pre-Gilead time, are threatening to the infrastructure of the phallogic realm, implying as they do that women are not objects upon which a subject is produced. Apparently, as long as a feminine other-object could be constructed outside the female body such as in "natural resources" of the frontier, these activities are tolerated, principally because the notion of the feminine embodied in Woman as the culturally sanctioned regenerative force continued to be at work in and through the protests. Notably, Offred's mother constituted her "feminine" subjectivity by simply reversing the terms of patriarchal oppression, reducing males to nothing more than their reproductive function—"A man is just a woman's strategy for making other women" (121). But "women" are not subjects here even for Offred's mother. They continue to serve as objects and "living" metaphors. For example, Offred has always sensed that she was "the incarnation of her mother's socio-political ideas" (122) rather than a subject in her own right. That is, as her mother's daughter, she was the product of her mother's mind, the object upon which her mother inscribed an existence as subject.

I admired my mother in some ways, although things between us were never easy. She expected too much from me, I felt. She expected me to vindicate her life for her, and the choices she'd made. I didn't
want to live my life on her terms. I didn't want to be the model offspring.... We use to fight about that. I am not your justification for existence, I said to her once. (122)

Once "the frontier" has been catastrophically destroyed, the feminized regenerative force it embodied in the phallocentric definition of Woman recoils, and the socio-political locus of power and control literally becomes invested in the potential (m)other-body of women: the Symbolic's Woman and "living" women merge into a single represented idea, each culturally reflecting the other. While Offred's mother represents the lost "frontier," Offred's experience in Gileadean culture literally represents the conflation of the "natural body and the something beyond the natural that the body stands in for" (Seltzer 7). Her female body has become fully feminized as a "living" metaphor of itself, operating as the mechanism of species and cultural reproduction. Ironically, as Offred observes, Gilead is perhaps the "women's culture" that her mother's unwittingly advocated, a culture in which women produce more women (127). This ironic scenario seems effectively to illustrate Lacan's concept of the masquerade. The irony is grounded through its phallocratic definition: it is a culture of Woman, the Earth-(M)other, which both produces and is produced by masculine presence and which women, as (m)other, conceptually represent. As Professor James Darcy Pieixoto remarks in the novel's last chapter during his presentation
concerning the "'Problems of Authentication in Reference to The Handmaid's Tale,'" "there was little that was truly original with or indigenous to Gilead: its genius was synthesis" (307) and reification. With this dystopic fiction, Atwood suggests the cultural culmination of Western ideology.

"The Americans" are a metonymy for Western ideology, the phallogic force drives identity construction in the New World, Atwood concurrently develops the idea that this power, albeit hypostatized in the United States, is the (dis)ease of the colonial venture itself, infecting the New World not in the twentieth-century but at the moment of invasion and occupation with "the earliest ones who arrived when there was nothing but forest and no ideologies but the ones they brought with them" (Surfacing, my emphasis, 68-69).

These "ideologies" conceptually grounded in fifteenth-century European humanism, become apotheosized in the Enlightenment value system, "processed" through industrialization, and fully enacted in the technocracy of late capitalism. Atwood clearly characterizes this force as phallic, and therefore, masculine, but she also recognizes that its "gendering" has little to do with either the biological--"I realized it wasn't the men I hated, it was the Americans, the human beings, men and women both" (Surfacing 180)--or national politics as the
episode of mistaken "identity" confirms—"we thought you were Yanks, with the hair and all" (152). The force is, instead, a cultural attitude, particular to the "new World," which has reached its zenith in "American" ideology, a "gendered" doctrine that not only indemnifies Western culture's subject-object binary but does so in order to constitute, in Mark Seltzer's words, its "counter-model of generation" (25). Which, as he argues, is "a compensatory male response to a threatening female productivity [that] underwrite[s]...what appears as an absolute differentiation of gender powers and 'principles'"...(28). By fully abstracting the "feminine" through appropriating the mother country's womb and politically freeing themselves from her, "the Americans" affirm phallic power and the masculine privilege of cultural (re)production. In possessing the womb, "the Americans" are "freed" from the human femaleness associated with the mother. "When they say Freedom" as Surfacing's protagonist observes, "what they mean is freedom from interference" (69) from another potential subject.

Even though it is his country that has been ostensibly inscribed, "like dogs pissing on a fence" (131), as the American frontier rather than the Canadian "wilderness," David, as a male "colonist," identifies with the "freedom" achieved by his brothers and expresses the compulsion "to leave [a] signature" on the "endlessness, anonymous
water and unclaimed land" (131). The "signature" attests to the masculine privilege to bring into Being the feminine other, the (m)other-body upon which his subjective position is confirmed.

During one of the group's excursions into the interior of the island, the protagonist and her party come upon an abandoned campsite, recognizing it not so much by the "fireplace," but by the "trash...strewn around...the tracks of humans" (131). Seeing the mess and responding to the disgust of his companions, David self-mockingly remarks that "It's the sign of a free country,...[adding that] Germany under Hitler was very tidy" (131). He here acknowledges the "right" of the masculine to inscribe its presence through the feminine object at the same time that he gainsays the "European" parent's control of "subject." It is, however, noteworthy that "Hitler" (indeed, World War II) is an abstract phenomenon for David and his Canadian compatriots, something learned about in books at school. "Hitler" encodes for the collective Canadian consciousness the violent inwardness of the European "parent," who continues to exert its pathologically oppressive colonial control. "Hitler" is unconsciously linked to the mother-country and represents her threat to consume Canadian "identity."

For David, his "American" brothers' signs translate into the ability to effect presence without interference
from a European parent or the Canadian sibling. That is, David's perceives the trash as a sign of the old order discarded and a free presence inscribed. Atwood suggests through his characterization that his belief in the masculinity of inscription blinds him to the material consequences of his perceptions. For, as much as David hates "the Americans'" presence in Canada, he shares the cultural attitude that permits the "marking" of his country by the "masculine" other. Indeed, he wonders "who would be left?", if "the fascist pig Yanks and the capitalists" (45) were expelled. David's speculation attests to his primary alliance to masculine privilege, for in the twentieth-century "Yank" activity ratifies the power of Western ideology.

The resignification of the term beaver by "the Americans," however, undermines David's colonial position as subject. For its "American" meaning sets him apart from his masculine siblings, controverting his subjective socio-political position by reducing him to a fetishized female part-object. As "part" of the feminine, he is reduced to an object of utilitarian value only. At worst he is "inscribed" by Paul, Lady Oracle's European Count and "mother" country's representative, as the "moronic woman" who serves as "the lowest form of prostitute" (Lady Oracle 186); or, at best, he fulfills the mother (country's) desire and is "shaped into anything for which
she could get a prize" (Lady Oracle 71). Through the feminization of his socio-political position, David perceives himself as a "masculine" sojourner in his own land; in that, he is at once keeper of its hearth and object of "the Americans" desire to (re)produce itself.

In Canadian consciousness, the "beaver" is the "living" sign of its colonial past, representing both the wealth accrued to the mother country and the sublimated desire upon which the New World civilization was built:

...those parts of the body...were magic drawings like the ones in the caves. You draw on the wall what's important to you, what you're hunting. They had enough food, no need to draw tinned peas and Argentine corned beef, and that's what they wanted instead during those monotonous and not at all idyllic trips up and down the lake, nothing to do but play cards, they must have detested it, back and forth chained to the logs...they probably hated each other (142).

It is important to note here that the male Canadian colonist seemingly forever "chained to the logs," which represent not only mother nature but mother country, long for a concrete feminine presence upon which they can act and through which they can consecrate a separate and individual masculine identity. The extended situation of Canadian colonialism, however, sabotages the creation of a phallogistic definition of masculine identity construction. The powerful (M)other, represented as both the harsh conditions of the Canadian wilderness and the mother country's desire to produce for her self, signifies his socio-political position as a female part object rather
than a subject. And the symbolic apotheosis of masculine identity defined by the United States' appropriation of the feminine further removes him from the realm of masculine privilege. He has been reduced by inscription and this has deprived him of his power to inscribe, or so he perceives. He has been translated into and represented as the absent-present part-object that "empowers" civilization and the Symbolic.

Within the isomorphic mother-colony relationship, neither separation nor individuation can occur for the colonial consciousness. As a "same-but-different" image of the mother country, the colony constructs its "image" as a feminine offspring: a "daughter." Not only do the colonial "sons" reflect the body-politic of the mother country but they are reduced to a part-object of her body and recognized as such by their "masculinized" siblings. And Canada, as Atwood observes in *Survival*, fundamentally retains the early feminized definition of the New World "frontier" in contemporary discourse; it is "internationally" perceived as "a place you escape to from 'civilization,'" an unspoiled, uncorrupted place imagined as empty... (16). This image clearly associates the nation with the conceptualized feminine realm, which "opposes" the masculine arena of "culture." But, this is not Mother-nature: it is "daughter"-nature, "unspoiled," "uncorrupted," virginal—yet to be given "identity" by
the masculine economy. Seemingly, the potential encoded in the New World has either been stolen by the mother in order to enrich her identity or is perpetually under threat of being taken and "made" by an other. Yet, Atwood notes in Survival that Canadian culture participates in sustaining this "identity."

The Canadian colonial identity is, therefore, "divided between "gendered" identities: the hegemonic masculine and the representations of mothers and daughters, which seemingly constitute same-but-different political positions and identities. As an extension of the "mother country," the colonist intrapsychically finds himself in the peculiar feminized position of being both subject and object, inscriber and inscribed. Atwood suggests that such a position forces the subject to internalize objectification and accept inscription as "identity." Within the Symbolic order, this psychic situatedness is doubly contradictory. Although we can see the affects of this dilemma on all the Canadian characters in Surfacing, Joan Foster in Lady Oracle best articulates the colonial-daughter conflict.

Joan relates an event early in Lady Oracle that is orchestrated by her mother. In which, "humiliation [is] disguised as privilege" (51) and through which she learned a "fundamental rule for dealing with situations like this: if you're going to be made to look ridiculous and there's
no way out of it, you may as well pretend you meant to" (49).

Given the "identity" of a mothball among butterflies at a dance recital by her mother and Miss Flegg, Joan painfully throws herself into the part, "trying to look, as she had instructed me, as much like a mothball as possible" (51). Despite continually repeating to herself that "This isn't me" (51), Joan performs her "identity" so convincingly—inventing a dance for which "there were no steps" (51)—that she momentarily receives the full attention of the audience: "the laughter and clapping went on, and several people, who must have been fathers rather than mothers shouted 'Bravo mothball!'" (52). Joan's contribution, however, is not recognized; she is the "object" upon which Miss Flegg (and her mother) inscribe the "priceless touch with the mothball" and for which they receive congratulations. Joan, in retrospect, comprehends that Miss Flegg and her mother, through "inventiveness" and "past experiences" (49), have acquired the ability to reconfigure situations to their benefit. On the other hand, she as object which testifies to their limited "subject" position is effectively erased by the inscribed "identity." Joan's only other option in this narrowly circumscribed situation, however, is to be "left out altogether" (50), that is, to be denied any existence whatsoever. She, therefore, in masquerading as the
mothball, becomes a mothball through "inventing" the role in order to participate in the dance. That is, she assumes the role imposed upon her and then "creates" it in order to have an "identity."

Joan's mother, who instigates her daughter's transformation from "butterfly" into "mothball," does so because her daughter's body does not conform to masculine definition of female form:

The problem was fairly simple: in the short pin skirt, with my waist, arms and legs exposed, I was grotesque. I am reconstructing this from the point of view of an adult, anxious, prudish adult like my mother or Miss Flegg; but with my jiggly thighs and the bulges of fat where breasts would later be and my plumb upper arms and floppy waist, I must have looked obscene, senile almost, indecent; it must have been like watching a decaying stripper. I was the kind of child, they would have thought back then in the early months of 1949, who should not be seen in public with so little clothing on. (Lady Oracle 47).

And clearly as well as ironically, because here the "grown" Joan looks back from her mother's perspective, we see that it is the female body as sexual object which defines Joan's potential for becoming a subject: that is, since she is perceived through the masculine definition as sexually unattractive, and therefore unlikely to be made into a "mother." This in itself calls her "subjectivity," her "self" into question. Her body *prima facie* suggests that she may be "unworthy" of even limited subjectivity.

The maternal presence represented in Miss Flegg and Joan's mother "recognize" the daughter's bodily *failings* and inscribe their comprehension upon her body. They
receive acknowledgment for their discernment and subjective power through the "bravos" shouted by "fathers:" their creative/created identity, therefore, is dedicated within the masculine economy. They "essentially" come into being through the inscription of "fathers." And this suggests that the maternal presence is accorded a subjective presence only to the extent which it produces appropriate objects. Joan Foster's mother's representation is not atypical; most of mother figures in Atwood's fiction participate in this "circle game" of feminine identity, replicating the phallogic with which they also struggle.

Hence, the colonial daughter-identity is constituted as replication of the "mother's" condition and perceived as an impersonation of an object. For this particular socio-political situation, retention of the (m)other's "image" stipulates identity construction. Simultaneously, however, the image of the mother in Western culture inherently suggests an object rather than a subject. This implies that there is no "subject," no identity to be imaged as a "self," for the "self" mirrors the image of an object of another. The mother country's "identity," consequently, elides the colonist's ability to create a self-image. For, in Western culture, when the mother country engenders a colonial "daughter," its "identity" will be inscribed only through its potential for "motherhood." As a mothball episode suggests, the mother
bears within a closely delimited arena "subjectivized" objects. Thus, through the conflicted psychodynamics of Canada's extended colonial position, the unconscious conceives its "self-image" as an imitation of an object. To reflect the mother is to reflect an "empty" and "anonymous" space, upon and from which a "subject" will be created as the "recognizer" of objects and/or the "producer" of objects.

When David attempts to capture the protagonist in his angry glare at the end of his explication of the Canada's core symbol, he indicates that he "sees" his reflection in her and ironically blames her for not being his "object." That is, his socio-political position within the masculine economy has been signified as colonial daughter rather than as colonial son. He cannot bring his subjective privilege into being, because he shares the feminized-object position.

To "re"-constitute his definition of a masculine identity as constructed by New World ideology, David (and Joe, the protagonist's artist-boyfriend) simulate the behavior of the "earliest ones," imitating their contemporary American siblings, who sustain the idea of the frontier in idealized form. The conflicted situatedness they experience in this psychological effort is symbolically imaged through a film which they produce during the trip. The film, Random Samples, images not
only the sensibility of the modern Canadian colonist's limited ability to effect presence—the "capturing" of the log, noted above, is the sole instance of their active appearance—but their feelings of co-optation and dispossession.

Within Atwood's system of representation, as numerous critics have explicated, the camera itself is a tool of conquest "aimed like a bazooka or a strange instrument of torture" (Surfacing 160). When David and Joe use it to capture images of the "other's" activity, they record their sense of doubled displacement and evinces their inability to inscribe presence. That is, their political position limits them to, in effect, indirectly participating in the violence inflicted upon them. The collection of images suggests the degree to which they have been violated and transformed—the ridiculously grotesque anthropomorhpized stuffed moose, another personification of the "beaver"—and the process by which their subjective position has been "disemboweled"—the sacrificed and fed-upon heron (the novel's icon of political and personal victimization), fish entrails, and so forth. David's brutally adamant insistence that his wife's body ("We need a naked lady...You'll go in beside the dead bird (my emphasis 158)) be included as a "random sample," however, is the most telling.
Unlike Joan Foster, who is transformed into a mothball because she has the "wrong body", Atwood directly connects *Random Samples'* images to a "co-opted" feminine presence embodied in the character of Anna. Anna does apparently have the "right" body and actively engages in donning the "costumes" of symbolic femininity. Indeed, the symbolic has so consumed Anna that her "artificial face is the natural one" (my emphasis 51-52). In her "artificiality," Anna has become, as *Surfacing*'s protagonist observes, like the bodiless dresses in her childhood scrapbooks. She is the image of an imitation.

Rump on a packsack, harem cushion, pink on the cheeks and black discreetly around the eyes, as red as blood as black as ebony, 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, hairless lobed angel in the same heaven where God is a circle, captive princess in someone's head. (194)

By fully becoming the image of Woman (and suggestively--"captive princess"--potential queen-mother), Anna perpetually represents her own disembodiment, her own abstraction. This ironically "locks" her in the image, and therefore, reveals her as an impostor, an impersonation of an object. As an obvious imitation of an imitation, she is not (m)other and cannot "bear" a subject: "she isn't allowed to eat or shit or cry or give birth, nothing goes in, nothing comes out" (my emphasis 194).

Anna as the "image" of the feminine is always already marked, made as Woman. David angrily attempts to strip
his "masquerading" wife of her "presence" within the Symbolic in order to demonstrate that he has the power to reduce and inscribe her female body as feminine object. And significantly, Anna's resistance to inscription ominously echoes Joan Foster's resignation to inscription:

Anna said as though she had guessed a riddle. "You're trying to humiliate me."
"What's humiliating about your body, darling?" David said caressingly.
"Okay, twatface," he said, is it off or into the lake?"
"All right," Anna said under its [the camera held by Joe] coercion, "you schmuck bastard, God damn you."
"Bottoms too," David said as though to a recalcitrant child. Anna glanced at him, contemptuous, and bent. "Look sexy now, move it; give us a little dance."
Anna stood for a moment...Then she stuck her middle finger in the air at them and ran to the end of the dock and jumped into the lake. (159-160)

Anna is "part" of the film whether she likes it or not. But, to be included, she must "dance" the role which she has assumed and "created." And she does, in that the situation of the "dance" fixes her, however momentarily as female body, unmoving and unspeaking, until "made" by David to "look sexy." No matter how Anna struggles against this aggression--and there is a physical battle of sorts here--and no matter what her expressed feeling is about the situation, the gestures do not attenuate either the aggression or her victimization. She "takes it off" and jumps into the lake. That is, in order to "escape" further victimization, she "becomes" a victim. The circularity of the position is obvious. In fact,
her apparent "resistance" only adds to the spectacle, helping to "create" the "dance." More importantly still, her humiliation is only complete when it is clear that she recognizes it as her **humiliation**:

...she was really crying now,...Her pink face was dissolving, her skin was covered with sand and pine needles like a burned leech. She went into the cabin without looking at me or saying anything. (161)

Anna apparently takes the event "in" to her self. The internalization of her humiliation constitutes her subjective existence. She is David's (and indirectly Joe's) victim; his attitudes and actions constitute her identity, not only individually but culturally.

Joe captures on film in this mini-drama of "sexual" politics, David enacting what he perceives to be his own plight as Canadian colonist, his own exploitation, his own brutal victimization. This struggle will be positioned "next to the dead bird" as if it dramatizes the heron's last moments. Anna's body, particularly when the "Bottoms" are removed and the "beaver" exposed, represents his inscribed mirror image. For as the protagonist observes, Anna and David are flipsides of the same coin; like her, David has assumed his identity and thereby "created" his image from "layers of political handbills, pages from magazines..." (178), coloring himself in to reflect the image of the masculine as defined by American ideology. The film reveals the "Secondhand" (178), imitative quality
of his identity. It is a "gesture" made in an effort to record Canadian appropriation and degradation, but in order to do this, he must "jump into the lake," that is, victimize and humiliate one of his "own": in Anna's humiliation and victimization, he sees himself. This does not exculpate David's brutality nor does it mitigate his fundamental misogyny. But it does illuminate the implicit connection between the "sacrificed heron," which has been killed if not by Americans then by American ideology, serving as the icon of Canada's political and cultural victimization and the "naked lady," who is a living metaphor for the Canadian "beaver."

Because David perceives that he bears the burden of socio-political feminization, he suffers from an exaggerated form of Western culture's ambivalence for the feminine. An ambivalence personified throughout its mythology in the figures of Demeter and Persephone, for example, or Mary and Eve in which the ostensible essential "duality" of Woman is symbolized. The protagonist, who hidden, witnesses Anna's humiliation, sees "her cut in half, one breast on either side of a thin tree" (160). That is, she "sees" Anna, a historical being, split by the dual abstract significations of the eternal feminine embodied in Woman, the Earth-(m)other. But, the "thing" hidden, the true source of "power," the
womb from which David's identity will be born, escapes his possession.

Surfacing's protagonist, who by the time of this episode recognizes that Anna's treatment is symptomatic of a greater problem, and Anna, who suffers the brunt of David's misogyny, literally embody the part-'object' of David's "perceived" transformation, and he senses an obsfucated, magical power in their female bodies to produce a presence without him: "she's an exhibitionist at heart. She likes her lush body..." (my emphasis 159). That is, their "breasts" are ripe with signifying a potentiality that he cannot actualize. David seemingly holds his wife and the protagonist, who he "captures in his gaze after his mini-lecture on 'the beaver,'" responsible for his symbolic emasculation, because according to the logos it should be through them that he achieves his masculine identity as the inscriber of the feminine.

"Marked" as a "beaver" himself by his socio-political position, he seeks "to possess" the desexualized sexual object of the breast, which represents the "mother" in desexualized form (the sign of nurturance) and the "potential mother" in sexualized terms (the sign of his ability to transform through the phallic inscription). As David says "What I married was a pair of boobs...it was when I was studying for the ministry..." (my emphasis 163). These object(s)--the breasts--resonate with
transcendent meaning for David, signifying his ability to constitute his masculine identity upon the distinct and separate part-object of the (m)other, not unlike his American siblings who took possession of the (m)other's "womb." David's anger stems, in part, from the protagonist's and Anna's "failure" as (m)other. For although the "breast" signifies potential for and nurturance of a "subject," it is not capable of giving birth to his identity.

We can best comprehend the significance of this through the character of Joe, whose expressions of dispossession are more unconscious and indirect—"Where is this?," a question he often asks upon waking (48). Like David, Joe expresses a gender-inflected colonial resentment. He clearly joins David in "capturing" the feminine but his participation is more indirect as well as more passive. His sense of feminized "impotence" manifests most conspicuously in his "art" as a potter.

According to the protagonist, Joe's pots resemble "disagreeable mutants, fragmentary memories or murder victims," skillfully thrown and yet deliberately mutilated so as to destroy any possibility of aesthetic or functional value: "I can't even put flowers in them, the water would run out of the rips" (66). Through these grotesque forms, Joe represents his incapacity to produce a masculine identity without the figure of Woman upon which to inscribe
it. Over and over again, Joe figuratively recreates the deformed "womb" from which he comes and into which his always already defeated attempts at (re)generation are deposited and spontaneously aborted.

Joe does not act out his rage as aggressively as does David, but he nevertheless symbolically evidences similar sentiments: "every time I [the protagonist] sell a poster design or get a new commission he mangles another pot" (66). His expressed resentment of the protagonist "commercial" success issues from her "collaboration" with the forces that he perceives oppress him. That is, she re-represents the (m)other's presence.

From the glimpse we get of the protagonist's work (illustrations for a collection of fairytales), we see that she constitutes her presence through imitation rather than origination. That is, she does not explore or (re)create the experience of the New World, but instead participates in the imposition of the (m)other's worldview, even though she is aware that stories do not speak of or for the Canadian experience:

It's hard to believe that anyone here, even the grandmothers, ever knew these stories: this isn't a country of princesses, "The Fountain of Youth" and "The Castle of the Seven Splendours" don't belong here. They must have told stories about something as they sat around the kitchen range at night: bewitched dogs and malevolent trees perhaps, and the magic powers of rival political candidates, whose effigies in straw they burned during elections. (6263)
The protagonist senses that the historical "grandmothers" would have produced stories, that is, given birth to a separate and individual mythology which reflected Canadian experience and sensibility. And notably, the "grandmothers" experience of the land would have been, in the protagonist's cultural imagination, both "natural" and unavoidably "political." But, she eschews dis-covering "Canada" in favor of sustaining the (m)other's "consciousness."

Importantly, in de-politicizing the "grandmothers'" experience and re-inscribing them as Woman by imaging the feminine within the prescriptions of the (M)other, a symbolic economy which erases the physical reality of the female body as it "colors in" a metaphysical feminine presence, the protagonist excludes Canada from History, relegating its national experience and status to obscurity. More significantly still, when the protagonist re-images the mother country's fairytales, she literally denies the "grandmothers'" imaginative experience, a creative core from which to speak a presence. The protagonist thus sacrifices the New World (grand)mothers in order to reify the (M)other.

I outline a princess, an ordinary one, emaciated fashion-model torso and infantile face, like those I did for Favourite Fairy Tales. Earlier they annoyed me, the stories never revealed the essential things about them, such as what they ate or whether their towers and dungeons had bathrooms, it was as though their bodies were pure air. (62).
The protagonist constructs presence within the Symbolic, by sustaining its power to give her an "identity" even though that "identity" denies her experiential authenticity. Through the fairytale illustrations and her protagonist's awareness, Atwood conflates Canadian colonial and women's history. The protagonist's work initially links her, as she becomes cognizant, with David (and Anna). For she, too, doesn't "know what language to use, [has] forgotten [her] own,...[and] had to copy" (178). She looks toward the colonial mother for a "language to use," and David and Anna "speak" its North American ideological transmutation.

Joe, on the other hand, silently constitutes his identity in the superiority of "absence": The pottery's "only function is to uphold Joe's unvoiced claim to superior artistic seriousness..." (66). He attempts to represent the lack in Canadian identity. Indeed, unlike David who violently responds to his perceived "dispossession," Joe signifies a "self" through his failure as (M)other: he has neither "womb" nor "breasts"; he cannot beget or bear or nurture a self-image. Although biologically male and therefore in a privileged position, as a failed artist, who is unable to inscribe symbolically cultural presence, he cannot claim a place in the "masculine" economy; his failed art signifies that he possesses neither the masculine force to appropriate the
(m)other nor the magical power of the "feminine" to produce for the masculine. He is, like the protagonist, who perceives herself to be "failed...classified as wounded" (105), separated from his body as well as the abstract "other": as modern colonialist (s)he is a "neutral," or better interpreted neutered, "country" (105), caught in the mirror of the (M)other, sustaining objectification in order to maintain a semblance of self-identity as the other's object.

Surfacing's protagonist, given the doubled personal and political association of her body with the "feminine" Nature as well as the "mother," unconsciously senses her "emblematic" connection to Canada's socio-political situatedness and sees her reflection in the "innocent spruce-covered hills." Within her consciousness, her "gendered" body shares this socio-political "place." Consequently, Atwood suggests that the protagonist subjectively suffers under the burden of her environment, feeling "emptied" and "sacrificed" to the demands of culture in the way she objectively perceives the scars of the cultural consumption of the actual environment. Which, for her, includes the novel's male characters, who express a castrated impotence which they conceptualize as "feminine."

Through the male psyche's perception of the "inscribed" female body, Atwood clearly outlines the
socio-political implications of phallogocentrism as manifested in modern colonialism and underscores the dilemma faced by not only Surfacing's protagonist but all her female protagonists. They represent a doubly "feminized" space, an overdetermined "object" for which "there's no sign; or there are too many signs..." (57). In order to locate a socius-position from which they may act authentically, Atwood's female protagonists must find and (re)define the content of and context for the female body they inhabit: they must "stop being in the mirror" (205) and must construct "a new kind of center-fold" (222), a new "core" bodily imago as well as the capability to translate that experiential "identity" into language, into the Symbolic. Only in (re)creating the female "self," as Surfacing's protagonist suggests, she may enable the (re)creation of her "other": "Perhaps for him I am the entrance...." (172).

V. Canadian Nationalism: Phallogic and "Feminizt" Politics

Many critics of Atwood's work focus their discussion on her themes of duality or polarity, because Atwood's apprehension of the dialectical tension inherent in the binary oppositions of Western culture provides a considerable portion of her works' depth. Atwood herself recognizes this as one of her artistic obsessions In
Surfacing, she notes that there are six oppositions actively in play: "There's humans vs. the land; there's Quebec Hydro vs. the lakes; there's the English vs. the French; there's the whites vs. the Indians; there's men vs. women; there's Canada vs. the United States." At the same time that these binaries groups clearly represent the primary dualities (culture/nature, masculine/feminine) of Western ideology, it is Atwood's apprehension of how they have specifically affected the consciousness of the New World subject that intrigues her.

Politically, she locates the greatest source of energy in the "difference" experienced at the margins of Western culture, for it is here that arbitrariness and often contradictory nature of its dichotomies is most readily seen. Atwood recognizes that her "Canadianess" seems to compromise her position, however, because she is both "Roman and Gaul" (Second Words, 360), of the first world and marginal to it. The attitudes expressed by her characters about "the Americans" and the scene of doubled mistaken identity in Surfacing underscore this situatedness.

The Americans were up, they were still alive; they were setting out in their canoe, the front one had his fishing rod trailing over the bow.

"Hi," the front one said to me, bleached grin.

"Say, what part of the States are you all from? It's hard to tell from your accent. Fred and me guessed Ohio.

"We're not from the States," I said, annoyed that he'd mistaken me for one of them.

"The front one held out his hand, though five
feet of water separated us. "I'm from Sarnia and Fred here, my brother-in-law, is from Toronto. We thought you were Yanks, with the hair and all." (151-152)

Atwood presents with this scene the contradictory situatedness of Anglo-Canadian postmodernity. Canadians mirror their perceived enemies. Atwood's Canadians nevertheless identify with the "Gauls." The protagonist's misidentified "Roman" in the front of the boat flies the flag of a dark horse: "I'm a Mets fan, have been for years, I always root for the underdog" (152). This, however, is of little consequence because the shared ideology, the logos, "killed the heron anyway" (152). The Canadians' perceived "difference" between "the Americans" and themselves is dangerously illusory. It is signified in name, in language only.

If you look like them and talk like them and think like them then you are them, I was saying, you speak their language, a language is everything you do. (153)

Importantly, for Atwood, this illusory political distinction is equally applicable to the personal situatedness of gender: "I realized it wasn't the men I hated, it was the Americans, the human beings, men and women both" (180). That is, Surfacing's protagonist "hates" the ideology which created North American men and women. Like Dorothy L. Sayers, she comes to the realization that "the fundamental thing is that women are more like men than anything else in the world."49
The negative positioning of "Canadian" and "women" in the binary system does, however, render "difference" within the ideological sameness. Within the Western system of signification, both are feminized, inscribed by the phallogos of Western culture. Indeed, Atwood employs this primary "logic" to explain to an American audience that "Canadians and Americans may look alike but the contents of their heads are quite different" (Second Words 380). Her first "example" is to reveal the gendered positions of each nation by drawing upon an example of a response to her poetry.

After the reading I had a conversation with a distressed young man who thought I was being unfair to men. He wanted to be liked, not just from the soles to the knees, but totally, and not just as individuals but as a group. He found it negative and in egalitarian of me to allude to war and rape. In vain did I point to him that as far as any of us knew these were two activities not widely engaged in by women, the first perhaps from lack of opportunity, the second for what we might delicate call lack of interest. He was still upset. "But we're in this together," he protested. I had to admit that this was so; but could he maybe see that our relative position might be a little different? (373)

This anecdote about gender(ed) difference becomes the metaphorical basis for "Canadian-American Relations."

Atwood demonstrates the connection between her anecdote about gender and national politics by recalling a Toronto Star article which discussed US and Canadian trade relations, using the film romance of American, Nelson Eddy and Canadian, Jeannette Macdonald in Rose Marie.
Atwood remarks that "a little verbal castration is better than getting a bomb dropped on you, but let's remember there has always been more than one way of getting the girl" (389). All the scenarios briefly constructed by Atwood, from marriage to rape, end, as she concludes, with "Canada get[ting] screw[ed]" (389). The dual connotations of her "conclusion" clearly express the power structure of national politics and the hegemony of gender in the Western collective (un)conscious.

The complexly intertwined pairs of Surfacing's dualities are woven into the paper upon which Atwood develops her image of the postmodern Canadian place for her female characters and protagonists: Canada is (not)American as Surfacing's protagonist is (not)male. This awareness underscores the doubled contradictory dilemma. Gloria Onley has called this picture Atwood's "cartesian hell." It is, however, important to note, as Sherrill E. Grace does, "that Atwood is not simply rejecting duality but working with it, from it" (4).

Surfacing's protagonist sees her image reflected on the simulacrum's glossy surface. She is both "in" the picture and "outside" of it, subject and object.

I watched myself grow larger. Mother and father in alternate shots, building the house, walls and then the roof, planting the garden. Around them were borders of blank paper, at each corner a hinge, then were like small gray-and-white windows opening into a place I could no longer reach. I was in most of the pictures, shut in behind the paper; or not me but the missing part of me. (128-129)
As she progressively descends into the "wild zone" of madness, Atwood's protagonist attempts to break from the gaze of her own image, to stop being the mirror-reflection, looking instead toward the margin, the "blank paper" where a new imago of the self may created. Atwood suggests with Surfacing that there is a dynamic tension in Western culture's dualism. She creates in her fiction, as Grace notes, "a dialectic (which is closer to Marx than Hegel because it eschews transcendence)" (5). That is, Surfacing's protagonist attempts to re-inscribe an imago of the self which reflects "Canadian" identity in the postmodern Western New World, an identity marked as feminine within the dichotomies of the West. Significantly, Atwood does not attempt to "escape" or transcend this categorization, but instead, metaphorically enters it to begin the process of constructing a feminine identity within a feminized space, of becoming a woman and a Canadian.

VI. The Canadian Body-Politic: Colonial-Daughters and Living Differance

Quite consistently with "American" ideology, New World subjects enter the "wild zone" by returning to the mythological site of self-determination: the frontier. For Canadian sensibility (as well as the United States, if we recall "the American" naturalists, hunters, and
fishermen in the novel), the last North American frontier is vast Canadian North, the setting of Surfacing. The Far North, like the United States' Wild West, as Allison Mitcham demonstrates, has "particularly in French Canada...long symbolized escape from dreary settlements and conventional responsibilities." Increasingly and perhaps most notably in the twentieth-century, the North, as Mitcham remarks, has infused the English-Canadian literary imagination as well, because it seems to offer an "unmaterialistic regenerative potential" (11), a place where humans beings can "avoid the corruptions of the Industrial Revolution and learn...the secret of the golden mean, the balanced life..." (Surfacing 44). And while Atwood employs this quintessentially Canadian (and with its frontier connotations American) space, she simultaneously demythologizes it as an invention of the logos.

[The protagonist's father] believed that with the proper guidebooks you could do everything yourself; ...his cache of serious books; The King James Bible..., a complete Robert Burns, Boswell's Life, Thompson's Seasons, selections from Goldsmith and Cowper. He admired what he called the eighteenth-entury rationalists:.... It astounded me to discover much later, in fact my husband told me, that Burns was an alcoholic, Cowper a madman, Dr. Johnson a manic-depressive and Goldsmith a pauper. (45)

The "discovery" of the "pathology" of the rationalists calls their ideas into question, particularly of "a balanced life," for Surfacing's protagonist. And as her father's
work substantiates, these ideas actively, albeit indirectly, participate in the ideology they purport to "escape." But more importantly perhaps, is both the inadequacy of these ideas to the New World experience and the desire to deny that inadequacy for the colonial. If the mother-country's thinkers were right, "Canada ought to have been the Great Good Place." "At first," as Atwood observes in *Survival*, "complaining about the bogs and mosquitoes must have been like criticizing the authority of the Bible" (50). Canada, however, did undeniably have literal as well as figurative "bogs and mosquitoes" with which "Canadians" had no choice but to contend. Excluding this reality created a false image of the Canadian experience; and yet, including it challenges the (M)other's text.

The only position seemingly offered by the ideological framework of identity construction in the New World--represented in "the Americans"--seems to be that of victimizer.

The garden's been rearranged: before there were scarlet runner up one side of the fence. The blossoms were redder than anything else in the garden, the hummingbirds went into them, hovering, their wings a blur. The beans that were left too long would yellow after the first frost and split open. Inside were pebbles, purple-black and frightening. I knew that if I could get some of them and keep them for myself I would be all-powerful; but later when I was tall enough and could finally reach to pick them it didn't work. Just as well, I think, as I had no idea what I would do with the power once I got it; if I'd turned out like the others with power I would have been evil. (43)
Disappointed in their ability either to make the protagonist's father's "fairytales"—to (re)create The Great Good Place—come true or to exploit the land in the ways formalized by the United States seems to create the "identity" with which the new Canadian bourgeoisie is most comfortable: neutralized (neutered) victims of "time" and "place." Within the "neutral country" of the victimized, lack has substance: indeed, it is the only substance, the only authentic presence for Canadian identity. The power of "self"-determination is perceived to be at once magical and evil.

But as Surfacing's protagonist discovers when she locates the lost father, the "melange of demands and languages" painted on billboard-cliff, which announces the entrance into "border country," represents only a relatively small segment of the "district's entire history." The cliff itself implies time-immemorial and the wall paintings she finds in the "home ground" that has become "foreign territory" (14) indicate a much older human presence. These paintings, unlike the "modern" signs which erase them, represent a silenced presence.

The subject matter [of the rock painting uncovered by the protagonist's father] falls into the following categories: Hands, Abstract Symbols, Humans, Animals and Mythological Creatures. In treatment they are reminiscent, with their elongated limbs and extreme distortion, of the drawings of children. The static rigidity is in marked contrast to the rock paintings of other cultures, most notably the European cave paintings. (122)
These signs, although unintelligible to the protagonist and the academician who describes them, are unique to Canada, separate and distinct from "other cultures."

What separates the "ancient" paintings from the "modern" inscriptions is not just time but the worldview each encodes. The billboard-cliff, unlike the ancient paintings, subtly suggest, through its "either-orness" (Anglo versus Franco-politics, Coca-cola versus some other brand, for example) the binary oppositions which found Western ideology. The novel itself explicates not only the complicated layers of each seeming polarity but the circle game of their interrelatedness.

The clearest example of the destructiveness of the "circle game" for Canadian identity construction is, as Atwood dramatizes in the aforementioned episode of mistaken identity, Canada versus United States. The contradictory situatedness is obvious when Canadians asserts an independent identity:

Canadians tend to be touchy about imported noxious influences: they want all noxious influences to be their very own. They feel the same way for instance about acid rain. If we want our lakes killed we'd rather do it ourselves; not that you [Americans] aren't doing a good job. (Second Words 386).

Importantly, but perhaps more subtly, Atwood's examination of gender reveals a similar form. David's and Anna's destructive relationship serves as a "textbook" example of the politics of the gender struggle; each actively sustaining the "other" in a vain effort to be the "other."
The protagonist's relationship with Joe also exhibits the symptoms of this syndrome: "Perhaps, it's not only his body I like, perhaps it's his failure;... (67). This "disease," however, "is [not] spreading up from the south" (9); it is endemic to Western ideology. Atwood examines the alienation produced for the subject when Western "otherness" constitutes the imago of the self.

This forms the strategy by which Atwood excavates the dualisms of Western culture, discovering the paradoxes formed through falsely splitting the world into opposing forces. She, as Grace observes, "identifies human failure as acquiescence in those Western dichotomies which postulate the inescapable, static division of the world into hostile opposites:" Indeed, one of the defining qualities of *Surfacing*, as Stratford explains, is Atwood's rejection of stasis in favour of a dynamic third way" (5).

In *Surfacing*, the "uniqueness" of the ancient pictographs signals a semiotic irruption in the Western text, articulating its "other" and opening the possibility of breaking the "circle game" in which Canadians find themselves personally and politically bound. The rock paintings themselves, like their Western counterparts, indicate the desire of a speaking-subject to inscribe presence, suggesting as they do the human individual with the genderless handprint, his and/or her cultural milieu with the god-like figure, and the conceptualization of
experience with the abstract symbols. But the inscribed-presence is not oppositional: the hand, the god, the concepts, and the cliff share presence. This shared presence while indigenous to Canada (and to all the "New World," for that matter) is foreign to the ideological framework of the protagonist even though she constitutes her identity as "Canadian," a New World speaking-subject.

Atwood variously signals these semiotic irruptions in her work. In The Edible Woman, they emanate directly from her protagonist's body; in Lady Oracle, her anti-gothic novel, Atwood uses dreams and the convention of Italy, which draws upon the familiarity of formalized "otherness" in the literary tradition of which she is a part. In other works such as Life Before Man, a realistic novel, she conjures the modern "other" in Western consciousness through the Chinese paintings, suggesting the ideological construction of both the "otherness" in the West's orientalism and "circle game" of global politics. These Chinese paintings, however like the rock paintings in Surfacing, only signal the irruption; they do not constitute it.

Elizabeth blinks back tears: foolishness, to be moved by this. This is propaganda. She does not want to line up and learn to throw grenades, she doesn't want to work a threshing machine, she has no desire to undergo group criticism and have a lot of other people tell her what to think. (367)

Communist China is only superficially different from the West. Its worldview is humanistic. Elizabeth knows that
the paintings represent something "other" than China. But more importantly she intuits that the paintings also represent something "other" in China.

[Elizabeth] knows it rains in China, even though it does not rain in these pictures. She knows the people there do not invariably smile, do not all have such white teeth and rosy cheeks. Underneath the poster-paint colors, primary as a child's painting, there is malice, greed, despair, hatred, death. How could she not know that? China is not paradise; paradise does not exist. Even the Chinese know it, they must know it they live there. Like cavemen, they paint not what they see but what they want. (367)

"Rain," of course, is necessary to human survival and "malice, greed, despair, hatred, [and] death" seemingly integral facets of human experience. Yet, "The turnips in their innocent rows, ordinary, lit from within, the praise lavished on mere tomatoes, the bunches of grapes, painted in all their translucent hues" are rendered "As if they are worth it" (my emphasis 367). Although Elizabeth cynically dismisses the value—"If she wants to see grapes she can go to the supermarket" (368)—of this revelation, this is the significance of the images for Atwood, the moment of semiotic irruption. It is this "otherness" that Atwood attempts to (re)integrate in human consciousness. The persistent grip with which Elizabeth holds on to the either-orness of Western rationalism invests the novel's conclusion with the source of tension that undercuts, for most readers, the small steps forward Elizabeth seems to
take and signifies the ultimate failure of her character in Atwood's philosophical system.

Elizabeth remains caught in the "circle game" of the logos, primarily because she elides the energy of the dialectic tension that she recognizes as the difference between China as a "place" and China as an imaginary "space." Like the "unreal" images of grapes in the paintings and the "real" grapes at the supermarket, Elizabeth conceptually abstracts concrete and imaginary human experience into the basic division of rationalism--is and is not; true and false--rather than searching for the point of reconciliation. Which, as the novel postulates, seem to reside in the artists' attitude toward their "object." That is, the paintings are subjectively inspirted with the artist's desire--"As if they are worth it"--for the object's independent value.

Surfacing's protagonist begins the novel in very much the same position, for, as Elizabeth R. Baer observes, acceptance of "Her father's rationalism is one of the forces most powerful in splitting the [novel's] narrator, dismembering her...," that is, creating the "illusion of the neck" which alienates her from her desire. Through the protagonist Atwood characterizes the Western "split" created through rationalism as morbid wound to the human psyche--"nothing but a head, or, no, something minor like a severed thumb; numb" (Surfacing 129). We can extend
the concept of this personal "wound" to *Surfacing*'s political consciousness. The novel's protagonist splits her political psyche between the mother country (England) and the brother country (the United States) but only in oedipal opposition. She constitutes her identity as both "other" than the mother and "other" than the brother. This of course confirms for her who she is not. But, the confirmation does very little to affirm who she is.

The central metaphors Atwood constructs through her bodily images highlight her concern with deconstructing dualisms. The "illusion of the neck" informs what Atwood suggests is the deep flaw in the *logos*: "if the head is detached from the body both of them will die (my emphasis *Surfacing* 91). For Atwood, it is the *logos*, not just its manifestations such as industrialization, that ordains the "machine" that "gradually" consumes the subject and leaves "the left-over flesh atrophied and diseased, porous like an appendix" (215). Atwood suggests through this image that the Symbolic "machine" is cannibalizing human consciousness by feeding upon the intrapsychic significance of the difference of the body. And, the result of this process will be that the desiring subject becomes vestigial. Yet, it is the desire of the subject that constructs the *logos* in its effort to apprehend the experience of this difference.
The **logos** not only divides the world so that it may be apprehended but genders those divisions. The image of the superfluous appendix (an organ without function) is equally significant to Atwood's deconstruction and (re)construction of Western ideology through its masculine/feminine polarities. The appendix is neither male nor female and yet it may simultaneously represent both: in its shape, the "atrophied" penis and in its sac-like "porousness," the unimpregnable womb.

Atwood depicts the dangers of symbolic cannibalization of the gendered body most clearly in the characters of David and Anna, who, as Bonnie St. Andrews remarks, behave like "sexual mechanics," using their bodies as weapons in the "circle game" of identity. The "Body-as-object," in fact, "produces," as St. Andrews recognizes, "emotionally irresponsible men and women" (98); but more importantly for Atwood, it sustains the "illusion of the neck," which negates the possibility of an authentic subject:

They know everything about each other, I thought, that's why they're so sad, but Anna was more than sad, she was desperate, her body her only weapon and she was fighting for her life, he was her life, her life was the fight; she was fighting him because if she ever surrendered the balance of power would be broken and he would go elsewhere. To continue the war. (180)

David and Anna represent the founding polarities of the **logos** through their gendered bodies, but there is really very little difference between them. Neither David nor Anna is a subject; each is the "other's" object. David
embodies the masculine position as inscriber and defines Anna as his opposite, the femininized site of inscription; and Anna's feminine position as the inscribed defines David's. Without each other as the object upon which identity may be constructed, David and Anna have no subjective presence. They enact concepts of the self in an effort to create the myth of a presence. The war they wage mimics the violent splitting of the world by the *logos* and the struggle the *logos* must sustain in order to maintain itself intact.

"People see two alternatives," Atwood remarked to Graeme Gibson in an interview: "You can be part of the machine or you can be something that gets run over by it. And I think there has to be a third thing" *(Conversations* 19). To find the "dynamic third way" for Canadian consciousness, Atwood first transliterates "otherness" into "sameness," as I have demonstrated above with the episode of mistaken identity and the characterization of David and Anna, and then from within this "sameness" tries to locate the difference in her characters' consciousnesses. The aforementioned billboard cliff, which the protagonist and her party pass on their way to the island of her childhood, for example represents the "demands" of the West in Canadian culture--Eurocentric politics, commodification, and so forth. But, the "melange of languages," expressing the West, principally English and
French at this level, already signal a Canadian difference in the North American "sameness." And Anna, although David's "opposite," is in the protagonist's vision "more than sad," because she embodies that which has been erased--"her body her only weapon." These differences within the logos are Atwood's focus. They subtly irrupt the dualistic hegemony of the Western text.

Atwood suggests with her fictional explorations of postmodern Western consciousness that the situatedness of the post-colonial daughter embodies such an irruption from within the metanarrative. Being both "Roman and Gaul," Atwood's daughter-protagonists are "naturally" dialogic, synthesizing the central dialectical tensions of the postmodern logos. Atwood's daughter-protagonists hover in the "space between" that which defines them (the masculinized position) and that which they cannot define (the femininized space).

A scene from Surfacing dramatically delineates the daughter's position:

Except for the bikini and the color of her hair [Anna] could be me at sixteen, sulking on the dock, resentful at being away from the city and the boy friend I'd proved my normality by obtaining;...Joe and David, when distance has disguised their faces and their awkwardness, might be my brother and my father, the only place left for me is that of my mother; a problem what she did in the afternoons between routines.... Sometimes she would take breadcrumbs or seeds out to the bird-feeder...or she would pull weeds in the garden, but on some days she would simply vanish, walk off by herself into the forest. Impossible to be like my mother; .... (my emphasis 59-60)
With the "necessary" (19) quartet, the protagonist has recreated the image of one of her childhood moments. As she looks out from the cabin, she sees an earlier image of herself in Anna. Like Anna, who constructs her identity in opposition to the men in the lake, the young protagonist validates her "normality by obtaining" a boyfriend "in the city," moving deliberately away from the "feminized" island of natural space toward the masculinized cultural realm. That is, she has completed the "civilizing" process, the boyfriend consecrating her feminine identity as a potential (m)other, capable of bearing the Western cultural inheritance. But the recreation of this moment unfolds with a specific and conflicted twist: "The only place left for [the protagonist] is that of [her] mother." While she can define the father/brother/male and daughter "identity," the protagonist cannot conceive the mother's. As the positioning in this scene illustrates, Atwood's daughters embody the "space between" the masculinized "technological economies of the West," represented by the men, who work in and/or for the (metro)polis, and the "inherited notions of an organic society," represented by the mother's embedded presence somewhere in the island's interior. The daughter's situatedness, because she is alienated from both positions, constitutes the site of "impossible."
With this scene, Atwood deftly situates her narrator within the Lacanian "geography." Because the daughter is alienated from both positions, she inhabits the impossible "space between." Within the impossible of the Lacanian real, Atwood's daughter-protagonist finds herself without a symbolic core identity. Although the protagonist possesses superior knowledge of the bush which was bequeathed to her by the father and that enables her perform the role of a "mother," she does not possess what she perceives to be her mother's magical power to create a position for her self both inside and outside the system of definition.

Her mother, after all, actively participated in the "civilizing" process of both the island and the daughter. As daughter, as "fairy tale princess," she was transformed along with the parent's "artificial garden:"

Mother and father in alternate shots, building the house, the walls and then the roof planting the garden, they [the photographs] were like gray-and-white windows opening into a place I could no longer reach. I was in most of them, shut behind the paper, glossy color prints...myself in stiff dresses, crinoline and tulle, layered like store birthday cakes, I was civilized at last, the finished product. She would say 'You look very nice, dear,' as though she believed it, but I wasn't convinced, I knew by then she was no judge of the normal (my emphasis 128-129)

The photo album imagistically records the process of "civilization;" its effort to construct and control the feminized space. But the mother's activity in this process is ambiguous. She neither encourages nor discourages the
daughter's consumption of the culturally sanctioned image of Woman. At most, she supports her daughter's choice, a choice that the protagonist recognizes as different from her mother's. This difference intuited by the young protagonist and confirmed by the recorded images in the photo album:

My mother in her leather jacket and odd long 1940s hair, standing beside the tray for the birds, her hand stretched out, the jays were there too, she's training them, one is on her shoulder, peering at her with clever thumbtack eyes, another is landing on her wrist, wings caught as a blur. Sun sifting around her through the pines, her eyes looking straight at the camera, frightened, receding into the shadows of her head like a skull's, a trick of the light. (my emphasis)

The outward difference—leather jacket as opposed to crinoline and tulle—signals the mother's choice. But, more importantly, the photograph suggests that the protagonist's mother has magically found a position within the "artificial garden" as well as within the "natural." The distinction between the "artificial"—the bird feeder tray, for example—and the natural—the mother's shoulder and wrist—becomes blurred in that all seem to share presence in the space. And in this sharing, the mother appears to be imbued with the remarkable power—"she's training them"—to preserve her self as separate and distinct yet in relation to the "other."

The protagonist's identification of this image as a photograph of her mother as suggested by the possessive pronoun "my," is, for Atwood, the intrapsychic trace of
the connection between not only the daughter's and the mother's consciousness but between the daughter's and the mother's shared "magical" power. A particular memory, invoked by the protagonist in an effort to ward off the anxiety she feels about the possibilities of her father's disappearance, underscores the significance of the protagonist's "possession" of this image of her mother and its importance for her quest for an authentic subject position within the socius.

Our father had gone on a log trip as he often did to investigate trees for the paper company or the government, I was never certain which he worked for. Our mother was given a three-week supply of food. The bear walked through the back of the food tent, we heard it in the night. ...we were eating...breakfast...when it materialized on the path.... My mother stood up and walked toward it; it hesitated and grunted. she yelled a word at it that sounded like "Scat!" and waved her arms, and it turned around and thudded off into the forest.

That was the picture I kept, my mother seen from the back, arms upraised as though she was flying, and the bear terrified. When she told the story later she said she'd been scared to death but I couldn't believe that, she had been so positive, assured, as if she knew a foolproof magic formula: gesture and word. She was wearing her leather jacket (my emphasis 94-95).

Notably, the memory begins with both parents being shared by the protagonist and her brother. The pronoun shift occurs when the protagonist's mother "magically" commands the bear to leave. Although there are other "pictures" of the mother, this is the private image "kept" by the protagonist of the personal mother, who seems able to share presence with the "other" and the public shared-mother,
who seems to participate in the imposition of presence through inscription. Through her husband's work, the protagonist's mother participates in the "civilizing" of the natural realm, but her personal engagement with this same space is markedly different.

Unlike the magic-mother, who apparently possesses the requisite gesture, word, and talisman of power, the daughter, in the "same place" of the Lacanian real, confronts her own "lack" of magic and must recognize that she cannot as she thought "imitate anything..." (16). The protagonist, like her brother, has been forcibly excluded from this space: "Our mother made us watch from inside the house, she said we frightened [the blue jays]" (111). This exclusion aligns the protagonist's consciousness not with her mother but with her brother. That is, while Baer and others are correct in noting that the protagonist's acceptance of her father's (and brother's) rationalism animates her alienation, they do not give adequate consideration to the lure of this position: "My father explained everything but my mother never did, which only convinced me that she had the answers but wouldn't tell" (86). Like the mother's son, the daughter witnesses the mother's "magic," but unlike him, she associates this magic with her own body, apprehending that the apparent "annihilation" of her "self" actualizes the "magical" power--"you had to convince [the blue jays] you were a
thing not an enemy" (my emphasis 111). The perception of the mother as a "thing" within the natural as opposed to its "enemy" (the father's posture) coincides with her definition within the phallogic of Western ideology. Represented by the mother as (not)son, the protagonist, like her brother, intrapsychically images the alterity upon which she constitutes her identity in the mother.

The doubled contradictory dilemma for the daughter is obvious: she is at once not-(m)other and female. She must apparently create her identity within sameness, as a mirror image of her "object," or define her female identity in masculinized terms which constitute her feminine being as the other from which signification flows as they simultaneously erase her presence. The daughter as daughter is always already dispossessed of intrapsychic "place." That is, she cannot define her "identity" as separate or individual in that she is always already defined by and for the (M)other.

Unlike the realm of the Symbolic, where the speaking (masculinized) and spoken (feminine) subject effect presence by the power of "naming" or being named, the mother's seemingly willed "non-presence," (her capability to become "a thing") as well as her willed "protection" of "otherness" appears to the protagonist as an authentic articulation of the feminized realm--"It looks like an imitation but it may be real" (14). And not insignificantly, Surfacing
protagonist's mother appears most powerful when she silently uses her body—upraised arms, shoulders, wrists—and/or otherwise "speaks" outside language—"she yelled a word that sounded like "Scat!" The mother figure in Surfacing suggests, although she herself does not "explain anything," the possibility of "articulating the mute" (Conversations 110), of bringing an "identity," a speaking subject, into being within the *logos* by comprehending and translating the "otherness" imposed through it.

The protagonist has presumed that her mother had not shared with her the experience of the feminine "wild zone," indeed had taken possession of it; but, in actuality, it has been her assumptions about "language" that have impeded her ability to comprehend the "wild zone's" language, the (M)other's logic.

I was seeing poorly, translating badly, a dialect problem, I should have used my own. In the experiments they did with children, shutting them up with deaf-and-dumb nurses, locking them in closets, depriving them of words, they found that after a certain age the mind is incapable of absorbing any language; but how could they tell the child hadn't invented one, unrecognizable to everyone but itself? (91) Through her protagonist, Atwood posits "language" as ontologically elemental to human consciousness—"For us it's necessary, the intercession of words" (224). That is, to be human is to have language: human consciousness itself creates it. If the "language" she received "spoke" one way of being, then she too as human consciousness could
bring an other way of being into language. The challenge of this new "translation," however, as the passage equally discloses, is to make the "other" language recognizable to everyone and the self.

There are many "questions" or moments of recognized possibility such as these posed through her protagonist's narrative. And with them Atwood challenges the logos. She of course does this in various ways, creating, for example, the anti-comedy The Edible Woman or the anti-gothic Lady Oracle, which formally "oppose" the masculinized conventions. But, the strategy of this passage is different. It does not imply an opposite, which reinforces as it exposes the binary Law; it suggests an alternative, a "third way," which is not only unspoken by the logos but unspeakable within it. What is the child's construction of its experience and how does it express this experience to its self?

Atwood uses a "memory" from her protagonist's early childhood to speculate upon those who live outside the confines of the logos:

Earlier we [she and her brother] would play we were animals, our parents were humans, the enemies who might shoot us or catch us, we would hide from them. But sometimes the animals had power too; one time we were a swarm of bees, we gnawed the fingers, feet and nose off our least favorite doll, ripped her cloth body open and pulled out the stuffing, it was gray and fluffy like the insides of mattresses, then we threw her into the lake. She floated and they found the body and asked us how she got lost, we lied and said we didn't know. Killing was wrong,
we had been told that: only \textit{enemies} and \textit{food} could be killed. Of course the doll wasn't hurt, it wasn't alive; though children think everything is alive. (my emphasis 154)

"From any rational point of view," as the protagonist will consciously be aware later in the narrative and nevertheless "act" in a similar way (a point to which we will return), the children's conception of themselves as non-humans and their ritual sacrifice of a non-living doll is "absurd" and therefore inexplicable. "[B]ut there are no...rational points of view" outside the \textit{logos} (199). The act, however, symbolizes the children's response to the Law of the Father that inheres in the Symbolic even as it remains outside its "logic." The children's activity here is "unspeakable," because it does not conform with the "logical" conception of the world with which they are being inculcated: "objects" have not quite yet been fully conceived as the opposite of "subject."

Atwood suggests that the dialectical tension between subject and object or self and other is first perceived as an \textit{intersubjective} tension. That is, because children "think everything is alive," they perceive the world as \textit{conscious}. Clearly for the protagonist and her brother, all the participants--bees, doll, parents--in this event are subjectivized rather than objectified. This early-memory then suggests that at a primal level in
consciousness, that is, from a child's perspective, there are no "objects;" there are only "other" subjects.

The children's identification with the "animals" or the "other subjects" emphasizes their unconscious fear of objectification, of being de-subjectivized by the "logic" of the parents, who have the power to pronounce the "other" as Other and object of the logos. The sacrifice of the effigy doll momentarily exorcises the parents' power to impress upon the "other subject" the Law of the logos, which divides the world into namer and named, subject and object, self and other. Both the son and daughter symbolically exercise the imaginative power of the subject to be "other" and most importantly to conceive the destruction of the Law. This "early-memory" is especially important when we compare and contrast it to her later ones.

For, as the protagonist and her brother become progressively enculturated by the system of beliefs that constitute Western ideology, they appear to lose, or more accurately repress, the imaginative ability to see beyond the logical structure and express their power within its confines by aggressively pursuing the "other."

The leeches were there again in the tepid pond water.... I didn't like them but distaste excused nothing. In the other lake they never bothered us when we were swimming but we would catch the mottled kind, the bad kind he called them, and throw them on the campfire when our mother wasn't watching, she prohibited cruelty. I didn't mind that so much
if only they would die; but they would writhe out and crawl painfully, coated with ashes and pine needles, back towards the lake, seeming to be able to smell where the water was. Then he would pick them up with two sticks and put them back in the flames again. (my emphasis 156)

As disturbing as this activity is, it is explicable within the logos. A subjective presence has objectified the leeches due to their obvious difference, judged them bad, and acted upon the distinctions. Although the protagonist participates directly in the capture and indirectly the torture of the leeches, which is already a marked change in attitude from the "early-memory" and the "laboratory episode" discussed earlier, she does not feel empowered by it as her brother appears to be. Indeed, what she recalls is the arbitrariness of their "othering" and the cruel deliberateness with which they exercised their power to do so. And what she imaginatively re-members is the leeches' pain and their desire to return to the lake, their "natural" place. The leeches, or the logos's objects, "desire" to Be, however, is negated by the imposition of the subject and their efforts to reassert their "presence" seemingly futile when confronted by its power to define difference. To enter the "otherness" of the leeches at this point of the protagonist's psychic development is to become powerless, to become the victim. The protagonist's acquiescence to the objectification of the other confirms her logical position: she too is a
subject rather than an object. Her "femininity" within the logos, i.e., her otherness, however, always already makes her subject position tenuous, because she too embodies an object position.

The protagonist's empathy with the leeches viscerally recalls the "early-memory" moment in her psyche when "bees" had a "consciousness," that is, when difference was recognized and yet not fully differentiated. Importantly, the young protagonist and her brother as children share a moment in consciousness that is both within the Symbolic and outside of it. They create an object upon which to inscribe an Imaginary experience but they choose not to bring that experience into language. That is, they do know what happened to the doll and they know that what happened to the doll is inexplicable, because it was an Imaginary experience—"Bees" did it. The children in this episode momentarily destroy the recognized boundaries of the logos and deliberately defy it hegemony. It is this intrapsychic "place" that Surfacing's protagonist desires to return—"To become like a little child again, a barbarian, a vandal" (156). This "place" in the children's consciousness hovers on the Lacanian Imaginary, which is associated with the mother-presence in infancy and madness in adulthood. Atwood masterfully evokes both states of "awareness" in Surfacing's narrator.
Notably, the descent into madness begins for her protagonist when she ritually reclaims her female body as potential (m)other through her lover, Joe.

I pull him down, his beard and hair fall over me like ferns, mouth as soft as water. Heavy on me, warm stone, almost alive. Teeth grinding, he's holding back, he wants it to be like the city, baroque scrollwork, intricate as a computer, but I'm impatient, pleasure is redundant, the animals don't have pleasure. I guide him into me, it's the right season, I hurry.

He trembles and then I can feel my lost child surfacing within me, forgiving me, rising from the lake where it has been imprisoned for so long, its eyes and teeth phosphorescent; the two halves clasp, interlocking like fingers, it buds, it sends out fronds. (190-191)

Atwood in this scene simultaneously objectifies and subjectivizes the female body within her protagonist's consciousness. In this moment, the narrator actively and most importantly (re)claims the female sexual body, and in doing so figuratively begins to (re)conceive the possibility of resurrecting the "lost child" who was once within her but who had been sacrificed to the logos, which mandated the division of the world into subjects and objects: "it wasn't a person, only an animal."

Although her body, as the photo albums record, had been appropriated and (re)constructed as an object by and for the logos, it remained the source of her power.

...he was pinning me, hands manacles, teeth against my lips, censoring me, he was shoving against me, his body insistent as one side of an argument.

I slid my arm between us, against his throat, windpipe, and pried his head away. "I'll get pregnant," I said, "it's the right time." It was
the truth, it stopped him: flesh making more flesh, miracle, that frightens all of them (173)

And importantly, the protagonist had herself "finished" the "civilizing" process when she relinquished the power of her mother's body and when she agreed to the abortion. That is, she had fully "rationalized" her self:

The bottle had been logical, pure logic, remnant of the trapped and decaying animals, secreted by my head, enclosure, something to keep the death away from me....

I was emptied, amputated; I stank of salt and antiseptic, they had planted death in me like a seed. (168-169)

(Re)claiming the reproductive capacity of the female sexual body defies the logical "machine" and (re)opens the Imaginary space in the protagonist consciousness. That is, in becoming (m)other, she (re)conceives a creative core of being from which she can (re)member the "lost child" of her self--"I tried for all those years to civilized but I'm not and I'm through pretending" (198).

The first external "signs" of the protagonist's "madness" are conveyed through her active rejection of the "signs" of the logos when she releases the "Random Samples" of Canada's victimization.

I unwind the film, standing full in the sun, and let it spiral into the lake. "You better not do that."

Anna says, "they'll kill you." But she doesn't interfere, she doesn't call them.

When I've unraveled the reels I open the back of the camera. The film coils onto the sand under the water, weighted down by its containers; the invisible captured images are swimming away into the lake like tadpoles, Joe and David beside their defeated log, axe-men, arms folded, Anna with no
clothes on jumping off the end of the dock, finger up, hundreds of tiny naked Annas no longer bottled and shelved. (195)

The Random Sample images, like the photo albums which recorded the "civilizing" process, memorialize Canada's objectification. The feminized images of victimization, which conflate in the "hundreds of tiny naked Annas," swim away like tadpoles, and cannot be recaptured like the "neutral" specimens in her brother's laboratory or the "bad" leeches. The tadpole image--ironically, "the lost child" of the frog"--recollects the protagonist's "lost child," the one who believed "everything was alive" and the act of destroying the film symbolically recalls her earlier "destruction" of her brother's laboratory, when in her naivete she freed the Canadian landscape from the logos.

Parts I and II of Surfacing dramatize its narrator's inscription by and existence within the phallogocentric order of Western culture. The photograph albums and the scrapbooks record the process by which the protagonist and the Canadian landscape was "civilized," chronicling not only the protagonist's objectification within in the logos but her internalization of her self as feminized object. And she "creates," just as Anna and Joan Foster "create" their "dances," the fiction that will support the logical constructed imago--"the words were coming out of me like the mechanical words from a talking doll,
the kind with the pull tape at the back; the whole speech was unwinding, everything in order, a spool" (105).

These images, however, prompt the narrator's memories, and these memories irrupt the dominant "text," constituting the trace of an alternative way of viewing the world. Through the "Surfacing" memories, the narrator begins to comprehend language's role in the construction of the image of a rationally compartmentalized and morally classified feminine alterity. The act of naming, like the camera, freezes the object in meaning for the subject. And this comprehension of language's role in the protagonist's quest is a point to which we will return, but what is important for us to recognize at the moment is that as an object-subject she cannot avoid "seeing" herself in the dual position, because she is a both a user of language and a word: Woman. Naming was "like cutting up a tape worm, the pieces grew" (153) from word to idea to concept to precept.

The narrator, however, unlike her male counterparts, cannot create the illusion of the dominant position. Her "illusions" or fantasy-denials do not negate her position of object; instead, they contribute to her participation in objectification. When the Random Sample images unwind into the lake, the master "text" too begins to unravel, revealing that "the power from [her] father's intercession wasn't enough to protect [her], it gave only
knowledge and there were more gods than his, his were the gods of the head, antlers rooted in the brain" (179). In "deconstructing" the feminized Canadian image, the narrator opens the possibility of reconstructing both the Canadian imago and the feminine subject, of (re)inscribing her self and of (re)writing the text. Atwood condenses and continually reworks certain narrative scenes in order to direct our attention to the significance of these connections.

In Part III of the novel, as the narrator descends into "madness," pregnant with her "lost child," she retrieves the only "original" image in the "text" of her experience. A drawing, preserved by her mother:

...a loose page, the edge torn, the figures drawn in crayon. On the left was a woman with a round moon stomach: the baby was sitting up inside her gazing out. Opposite her was a man with horns on his head like cow horns and a barbed tail.

The picture was mine, I had made it. The baby was myself before I was born, the man was God, I'd drawn him when my brother learned in the winter about the Devil and God: if the Devil was allowed a tail and horns, God needed them also, they were advantages.

That was what the pictures had mean then but their first meaning was lost now like the meaning of the rock paintings. (185)

Using the "lost child's" language as her guidebook and retaining the "knowledge" given her by the Father, she (re)enters the "wild zone" of her origin and edges ever closer to the prelinguistic Imaginary space in her consciousness--"the names of things fading but their forms
and uses remaining, the animals learned what to eat without nouns" (175). Within this space, the protagonist becomes a thing among other things. And here, there are "no rational points-of-view" to limit her experience. Perceiving herself free of the logos and fully "immersed in the other language," the protagonist (m)others herself into Being and (re)conceives that "everything is alive" within her:

Through the trees the sun glances; the swamp around me smolders, energy of decay turning to growth, green fire. I remember the heron; by now it will be insects, frogs, fish, other herons. My body also changes, the creature in me, plant-animal, sends out filaments in me; I ferry it secure between death and life, I multiply. (197)

The surfacing presence of the (m)other within the narrator's consciousness transports her into an "oceanic" connectivity, which (re)translates her immediate experience. That is, the dead heron was a distorted image, misrepresented through Symbolic; it was not dead but potentially "pregnant" with other life: "Insects, fish, frogs, [and most importantly] other herons" lived through its body. In aborting the logical conceptions that defined existence and non-existence, subject and object, the protagonist regenerates a pro-creative core from which she will emerge transformed.

Through her female protagonist, Atwood directly reconnects the literal female body with the figurative female-imago within the Symbolic in that her narrator
fully enters into the site of signification, the (m)other's body, from which inscribed difference flows. In doing so, Atwood reclaims the feminine space. **Embodying** the birth metaphor, so often used to describe the masculinized "creative" process in which ideas are imaginatively "conceived," gestate, and are "labored" into language where they then "take on a life of their own," Atwood accesses the possibility of a new vision of experience, a "third way." Which when translated into language will (re)define the subject position.

The undifferentiated state, embodied as the "lost child" through which the narrator returns to her "origin," however, is not an end in itself, although *Surfacing*'s protagonist will retain its trace—"I am not an animal or a tree, I am the thing in which the trees and animals move and grow, I am a place" (213)—in a subjectively-defined political form. This is, instead, the state through which she will (re)differentiate her self through an unmediated confrontation with alterity: "logic is a wall," I built it, on the other side is terror" (205).

The intrasubjective "terror" of difference informs the whole of the protagonist's experience, and importantly she, like her male counterparts, perceives the power of difference or that which threatens her subject as deeply entrenched in the feminine space of the (M)other.
The mushrooms are still there, the deadly white one. I'll save that till I'm immune, ready, and the yellow food, yellow fingers. By now many of them are too old, wrinkled, but I break of the softer ones. I hold them in my mouth a long time before swallowing, they taste musty, mildewed canvas, I'm not sure of them.

What else, what else? Enough for a while. I sit down wrapping myself in the blanket which is damp from the grass, my feet have gone cold. I will need other things, perhaps I can catch a bird or a fish, with my hands, that will be fair. Inside me it is growing, they take what they require, if I don't feed it it will absorb my teeth, bones, my hair will thin, come out in handfuls. But I put it there, I invoked it, the fur god with tail horns, already forming. The mothers of gods, how do they feel, voices and light glaring from the belly, do they feel sick, dizzy? Pain squeezes my stomach, I bend, head pressed against knees.

(212)

The "thick sargasso-sea of feminin[e]" (The Edible Woman, 172) fertility, that is, the Feminine's (re)generative power, threatens, like the logos she perceives she has "escaped," to overwhelm and consume the protagonist into itself: "they [both] take what they require" to sustain themselves.

It is the persistent sensations of her own body—cold feet, hunger pangs—that demand she recognize her own difference within the "sea of femininity." Indeed, her body-consciousness activates her subjective presence: "I have to get up, I get up. Through the ground, break surface, I'm standing now; separate again. I pull the blanket over my shoulders, head forward" (213). Alert to her difference within the feminine space, the protagonist (re)envisions her connection to it through
the presence of her own mother, who seemed to be able to "live" naturally in relation to the Other:

She is standing in front of the cabin, her had stretched out, she is wearing her gray leather jacket; her hair is long, down to her shoulders in the style of thirty years ago, before I was born; she is turned half away from me, I can see on the side of her face. She doesn't move, she is feeding [bluejays]: one perches on her wrist, another on her shoulder. (213)

The protagonist's mother unsurprisingly appears as in the form of her "kept" image, hand feeding bluejays, an image both witnessed by her daughter and recorded by the "machine." But importantly, the mother appears to the protagonist as the woman she was "before" she became a (m)other from whom the narrator would "escape." The protagonist's mother continues to Be both within the landscape and separate from it, both within the protagonist psyche and separate from it. Inspiriting the bluejays with memories of her mother, the protagonist confirms not only her mother's presence but her mother's separate and distinct existence:

I go up to where she was. The jays are there in the trees, cawing at me;.... I squint up at them, trying to see her, trying to see which one she is; they hop, twitch their feathers, turn their head, fixing me first with one eye, then the other. (213-214)

And in projecting her mother's presence in the landscape onto the bluejays, the protagonist's introjects her self with her own separatedness and distinctness in relation
to the other. All three presences—the mother, the bluejays, and the protagonist—exist in difference and yet are intimately connected. They are the landscape. The bluejays, who are the daughter's symbolic connection to her mother and who are the mother's symbolic connection to the Feminine, are ubiquitous, adapted to both the wild zones and the human metropolis. The bluejays bridge the gap between nature and culture.

Aware of the presence of difference, the protagonist confronts alterity. Initially imaged within the landscape as the "other" of the daughter and the mother, that is, as her father, a masculine form seemingly ponders "the places his mind cleared" in order to create "the garden," which now "excludes him, as logic excludes love" (218). This masculine presence, however, is not the protagonist's father although "it is what [her] father has become" (219). This is the Other, frightening in its neutral disconnectedness.

It does not approve of me or disapprove of me, it tells me it has nothing to tell me, only the the fact of itself. ...I do not interest it, I am part of the landscape, I could be anything a tree, a deer skeleton, a rock. (218)

The neutrality of the Other opens the possibility of ideological transformation.

From the lake [the Other in the form of] a fish jumps
An idea of a fish jumps
A fish jumps, carved wooden fish with dots painted
on the side, no, antlered fish thing drawn in red
on cliffstone, protecting spirit. I hangs in the
air suspended, flesh turned to icon, he has changed
again, returned to the water. How many shapes can
he take.
I watch it for an hour or so; then it drops and
softens, the circles widen, it becomes an ordinary
fish again. (219)

The Other is both the shape it takes in the world—the
ordinary fish—and the shape it takes in the human psyche—
the idea of a fish. Its form is varied and variable.
The Other is also a bluejay and the idea of a bluejay.

As the protagonist's self fully surfaces, she
incorporates this awareness into the logos. Armed with
this augmented power, the protagonist prepares to return
to "the city and the pervasive menace, the Americans"
(221) to combat "machine." Unlike her parents, who
retreated into the delusion of the colonial past in an
effort to "sustain [their] illusions of reason and
benevolent order," which in turn "allowed [them] to omit
the other things" (221-222), the protagonist chooses to
"join in the war" (220). The terms of engagement will
be intersubjective connectedness: "we will have to talk,
wooden houses are obsolete, we can no longer live in
spurious peace by avoiding each other, the way it was
before, we will have to begin" (224) again. She locates
the potential for the "third way" in the regenerative
capacity of her female body and its connection to the
other, "the primeval one who will have to learn, shape
of a goldfish now in my belly" (223). Although its existence is now "uncertain," she will "assume it" (223).

Just how Surfacing's protagonist will (re)translate her relation to the world is unclear. We end this novel, as we do Atwood's other novels, ambiguously. Surfacing's protagonist stands firmly planted on the edge, "tense[d] forward, toward the demands and questions, though [her] feet do not move yet" (224). All of Atwood's protagonists conclude their fictional journeys in this liminal posture, poised to act and effect change. But, the change inferred by their stance is "uncertain;" we must assume it like Surfacing's protagonist assumes the life within her. What is "certain" is that Atwood's protagonists' bodies, that is, their femaleness rather than their "femininity," will play a crucial part in determining their subjective presence, because it is through this presence that the past and the future flow.
END NOTES


While Davey's formulation of Atwood's vision seems, particularly in the earlier novels and poems, to account for the dramatic instabilities which drive her plots, this is a superficial reading of this dramatic tension. "The garden of patriarchal mythology" more often than not serves as the setting of her protagonists, but the narrative action is far more feminine. For example, all Atwood's protagonists remain "daughters," who are in continual (internal) dialogue with other women: mothers, mother-figures, peers. I further contend that even this apparently "universal" feminine position is demonstrably informed by Atwood's Canadian perspective. For instance, the U.S. ideology embodied in "the Americans" of Surfacing represents a socio-political patriarchy and its value system. Atwood addresses this issue in an review essay entitled "Midnight Birds: Stories of Contemporary Black Women Writers." In speaking of the male characterizations by African-America women writers, Atwood observes that "White American feminists might have some trouble, too, with the way men are dealt with here, though nobody from a colony would. In a colony, both men and women are oppressed... (Second Words 361-362). It is equally noteworthy that later novels--Cat's Eye and The Robber Bride--enter even more deeply into a feminine space and consciousness.

9 June Schlueter in "Canlit/Victimlit" that when Survival was published it sold in "such quantities that it quickly became the most widely read work of literary criticism in Canada" (3).

10 Paul Cappon, for example accuses Atwood of complicitous "liberal idealism" in "Toward a Sociology of English Canadian Literature" by "psychologizing... American imperialism...which is in fact material, not abstract..." (50). Paul Cappon ed. Our House: Social Perspectives on Canadian Literature. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978.

11 Atwood is not alone in this assessment of the Canadian consciousness, although her reasoning for it may be slightly different from other who have examined Canadian literary history. See for example Ronald Sutherland's "A Literary Perspective: The Development of a National Consciousness," Understanding Canada: A Multidisciplinary Introduction to Canadian Studies, ed. William Metcalf (New Work: New York University Press, 1982).

Although Atwood deliberately does not provide an indepth analysis of French-Canadian literature, she does suggest that these "colonists" share the psychology that she is developing. The French-Canadian condition, however, may also be further exascerbated by the French-Canadian's struggle against Anglo-Canadian hegemony. For, historically, as W.L Morton observes, while the French-colonist may well "share" with the Anglo-colonist what Northop Frye termed Canada's "garrison-mentality" with respect to the harshness of the "New World" landscape, he (and she) suffered from the colonial period to the present day a socio-political "garrisoning" which the Anglo-colonist did/does not.

Tzetvan Todorov argues in The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other (1992) that colonialist ideology creates "intermediary subjects." He suggests that this is a practical transmutation of the earlier enslavement extensively practiced in Spanish America. Enslavement completely reduces the other to object, but ideologically, the colonialist stance grants subject status insofar as the other produces for the colonizer. Todorov defines the "intermediary subject" as a "subject capable of producing objects which one might then possess" (175). I have expanded the definition of "objects" to include mirror-image representation of the self as in this-is-a-picture/photograph-of-me in the colonist's relationship
with the indigenous other, but as I will develop in the chapter, colonists also become "intermediary subjects" in relation to the mother country.

15 W. L. Morton notes that Canada "profited" from the American Revolution through a change in Great Britain's policies with respect to its colonies so that the "felt" domination experienced by the colonies prior to the Revolution was greatly mitigated: taxation without representation, for example, was abolished. Indeed, Great Britain encouraged self-government through the "adapting of British institutions to local needs." (39) And while Canada became a "colonial nation" within the Commonwealth, (indeed, according to Donald Creighton "created" the Commonwealth) the imperial power of the mother country continued to be exerted by more subtle means: Canadian colonists, for instance, could be and were pressured to participate in the Empire's military struggles; positions of political power were often awarded to British immigrants rather than "native" Canadians; and all too often "Canada" became a bargaining chip between Britain and the United States—Alaska serves as a prime example.

16 This was as important to the doubly defeated French as it was to the Anglo-Canadians, because as W. L. Morton notes:

[French] post[s] were garrisoned now, it [was] true, by British, not French, troops, but they were also
British, not American, troops. From these two facts was to come the survival of Canada, a Canada that in its deepest psyche was never to forget the bid for supremacy and the loss of empire in America.

Notably but briefly all of Atwood's central characters (as well as her minor ones) feel threatened by and "flee" their sense of domination: Marian McAlperin in *The Edible Woman* seeks, albeit perhaps unconsciously, to escape marriage to Peter; *Surfacing*'s protagonist initially "escapes" the isolation of her childhood; Elizabeth and Nate as well as Lesje in *Life Before Man* attempt to escape "time" and the emptiness of modern existence; Rennie Wilford in *Bodily Harm* "escapes" from the puritanical rigidity of Griswold and the seeming banality of her Canadian life; Offred's eventual "escape" from Gilead drives the plot of *The Handmaid's Tale*; Elaine Risley in *The Cat's Eye* "escapes" Toronto and the persecutions of her girlhood friend, Cordelia; and Roz, Charis, and Tony believe that they have "escaped" the machinations of Zenia. The legitimacy of all these characters' "escapes" however is always very much in question as is what they believe they have "escaped to."

Atwood remarks in *Survival* that "If Canada is a collective victim, it should pay some attention to the Basic Victim Positions." She notes that there are four, possibly five, positions that "a victimized country, a
victimized minority group or a victimized individual" may hold.

1. To deny the fact that you are a victim.
2. To acknowledge the fact that you are a victim, but to explain this as an act of Fate, the Will of God, the dictates of Biology..., the necessity decreed by History, or Economics, or the Unconscious or any other large general powerful idea.
3. To acknowledge the fact that you are a victim but to refuse to accept the assumption that the role is inevitable.
4. To be a creative non-victim.
5. For mystics. (36-39)

Notably, these positions are intrapsychic states that affect intersubjective relationships.

Coral Ann Howels notes in Private and Fictional Words: Canadian Women Novelists of the 1970's and 1980's (New York: Nethuen and Company Ltd, 1987) that the imperial politics of Canada's colonial history (multiple European and native inheritance), the continuing "internal tensions of a linguistically divided culture of great ethnic diversity and the conflicting regional interest" (25) as well as its relationship to the United States serve to fragment further the image it has of itself as a nation. That is, as she observes, "Canada has refused the monolithic stories of British and U.S. imperialism and has been
evolving from its marginalized position a self-definition based on an ideology of decentralization which recognizes both its difference from the outside powers as well as its differences within" (26). All subsequent references to this work will appear parenthetically by page number within the text.


24 Alan Sheridan notes that while these three dimensions of Lacanian thought are "profoundly heterogeneous" (x) they are linked and thereby constitute the subject. My
analysis of *Surfacing* suggests that Atwood describes the interaction of these dimensions of the psyche as her protagonist attempts to construct her self.


28 Historically, with very rare exception, only males venture into foreign territories. Starting with the Greeks rather than the Romans (who represent the advent of Western imperialism), as Atwood does, Sara Pomeroy observes that various socio-political instabilities, ranging from economic and political upheavals through over-and-under population problems, predicate the impetus for ancient Greece's colonizing expeditions. The colony during this period is brought into being more to alleviate the mother country's internal problems than it is to enrich her. "She" is,
for example rid of political rabble rousers or an excess of "citizens," all of whom were male.


30 Frederick Jackson Turner fully developed the concept in 1893. See *The Significance of the Frontier in American History.*


33 Coral Anne Howells notes that the "question of inheritance frequently becomes a questioning of inheritance in contemporary Canadian literature, where attempts at revision are problematized by the knowledge that self-definition can take place only with the very traditions that are being questioned" (3).

34 Maureen Devine in a summary of Western cultural attitudes toward nature, particularly as they have evolved in North America (and in which she notes subtle differences between U.S. and Canadian perspectives), observes that there have been periodically ideological shifts. But, while "the North American view of nature has tended to
change within historical and social contexts, [evolving] new metaphors," it retains the conceptions of its binary core.

When nature was chaos and disorder and needed to be civilized, it was feminine; when civilization became too much, woman was seen as the civilizing agent and wilderness became manly, acceptable, coveted; thus the woman-as-metaphor remains always opposed to the male need and the male need remains always the desirable end (15).


37 Kroker draws this phrase from Tony Wilden's *The Imaginary Canadian* (Vancouver: The Pulp Press, 1980).


Margaret Homans insightfully coins this phrase in *Bearing the Word: Language and the Female Experience in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986). The abstract viewing of all females as "potential mother" has far-reaching implications for women because of the objectification of the mother figure. Madelon Spregnether in *The Spectral Mother: Freud, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990) demonstrates that the "spectral mother" haunts psychoanalysis. While inadvertently drawing attention through an analogy to the "shaping power of the mother's body," Freud consistently denies her subjective presence; she essentially appears to be the "embodiment" of an "empty" space, the repository of infantile projection. At the same time, however, he "bodily" defines and masculinizes separation and individuation as recognition of difference from the female-mother. This is extrapolated ideationally into the "subject" (masculinized), who perceives "his" difference from the "object" (female-mother), which it names as other, as "not-me." Problematically, this inexorable "recognition" occurs when this "object" asserts its autonomy, revealing itself as "subject," compromising the narcissistic position. The "secondary" recognition of the female-mother's subjective presence, however, becomes erased in the Symbolic. Recognition of females as
"potential mothers" recreates women as objects, empty repositories for infantile projection.

At the end of the novel, Atwood compromises the success of Marian's resistance. Although Marian "escapes" marriage to Peter, she does not effectively reject Duncan and as he notes returns to "normal."

Ellen Moers observes in Literary Women: the Great Writers (New York: Doubleday and Company, inc., 1976) that bird imagery permeates women's writing. Examining the "contrast birds offer" through "a variety of size and color and habitat..., such a mixture of domestically familiar and mysteriously exotic" (250) Moers suggest that the bird metaphor might represent a particular form of liberation in "women's literature: not flying as a way for a woman to become a man, but as a way for the imprisoned girlchild to become a free adult (251). Within Surfacing, as my discussion will demonstrates, birds are associated, particularly within the daughter-protagonist's consciousness, with the mother's presence. Atwood's use of this imagery suggests that birds my symbolize for the daughter the female adult's ability to exist withinin "border country" or the site of the Lacanian real in which presence is articulated, "voiced," as Kristeava has postulated, semiotically without imposition. Atwood's "sacrifice" of the heron, so near its breeding/nesting island, may represent the dying of the Imaginary, its
cannibalization, into the Symbolic and the concurrent elision of the feminine psyche's ability to construct the Self.

43 Atwood suggests that the protagonist's brother initially serves as her connection to the world: "...my brother learned in the winter about the Devil and God...(185). He also learns about the World War II and derives from this knowledge his moral hierarchy. The brother (and the scientist father) seems to represent cultural, historical, and scientific "knowledge" for the protagonist, primarily because they have access to and activity within these realms in ways that she does not.


47 Anna is here connected to the protagonist's recognition of arbitrary signification. Anna is the "bad kind of leech" because she participates in the Symbolic image of Woman. Moreover, all women fall into this category because they are, like the bad kind of leech, marked through their
It is significant that Surfacing's protagonist does not "help" any of the novel's "victims." For example, although the sacrificed heron represents the personal-political victim and consumes much of her imaginative exploration of her own and Canada's exploitation, she does not cut it down but lets it hang and rot in the tree just as she found it. That is, she too objectifies, memorializes and symbolizes the victim, enshrining the horror of its senseless victimization in consciousness rather than acting to return to it some form of "living" dignity through a burial such as when she encountered her brother's laboratory. The heron serves her better as a "senselessly sacrificed victim" (not unlike the Count's "moronic prostitute) than as a brutally treated and killed living creature.


Elaine Showalter theorizes the "wild zone" of women's writing in "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" as "an 'other' space...[that] is always imaginary" (262). She uses Edwin Ardener's work with the Bakweri of Cameroon schematized below to develop her theory.

The diagram represents the speculations of Ardener's study. He has suggested that cross-culturally men because of their mobility are associated with and associate themselves with "culture(s)" and a wide range of "knowledge," whereas women, due in part to their immobility, are associated with and associate themselves with "nature." Ardener refers to
the area that appears to be the "pure" realm of women, i.e., the "space" in which there seems to be no "cultural" overlap between the male and female spheres, as "the wild." Showalter comments that while there appears to be a complementary "pure" male zone in which women are equally excluded, this zone remains "within the dominant structure and thus [continues to be] accessible to or structured by language." It should be noted, however, that Ardener's study suggests that the "wild zone" is not accessible to all women, albeit all women, most particularly pubescent adolescents, seem susceptible to or attracted by (or are culturally perceived as susceptible to or attracted by) its allure. Entrance into this "space" for Bakweri women generally requires a "guide" and ritual initiation. These practices imply that the "wild zone" too has "logic" accessible through language.


Although Freud does not fully examine the implications, he noted that the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego. Richard Wollheim in "The Bodily Ego" (Philosophical Essays on Freud, London: Cambridge University Press, 1982) argues that the "thesis of the bodily ego says something about the way in which mental states are related to the body through their representational aspect:...whose specific efficacy seems most readily explicable by reference to the way in which they are represented, hence represent themselves, are memory and imagination" (126-128). If we apply Wollheim's understanding of how the "bodily ego" functions for the subject, Atwood's image of the vestigial body suggest that in "consuming" the body, we are depleting our ability to (re)member and (re)generate imaginatively the "body" of human experience.


Generally, the subtext of Atwood's fiction emerges through her protagonists' struggles to define themselves in opposition to not the male figures in the texts but the mothers.
I. Postcolonial Survival: Preserving Difference in the Wild Zone

Approximately ten years (1981) after Margaret Atwood published *Surfacing* and *Survival*, she wrote a review essay of *Midnight Birds: Stories of Contemporary Black Women Writers*, which included a selection from Toni Morrison's work. Directly succeeding a brief description of the anthology's structure, Atwood felt compelled to comment:

It's of note that the book's subtitle mentions "women," "contemporary" and "Black," but doesn't bother with "American." (Black women do exist elsewhere.) It's also of note that this book is being reviewed in an issue of this magazine devoted to "Third World" writing. And it's also of note given these contexts, that I myself am female, but neither Black nor American. I am in fact Canadian, a citizen of a country which was until recently dominated by one imperial power and is now dominated by another. Could it be that the editors of *The Harvard Educational Review* perceive that I have something in common with the writers in this collection? Could they be right? (Second Words, 358)
She does not directly answer the questions she poses at the end of this paragraph. Indeed, the major thrust of Atwood's review is devoted to substantiating the "Americanness" of the collected stories. Her rigorous analysis of the collection's national characteristics underscores the biting irony in the journal's assumptions, for neither the authors nor the reviewer were of the "Third World" except perhaps in the definition of colonialist discourse.

But, she implies later in the essay that she does share something with the women writers of Midnight Birds, for unlike "White American feminists [who] might have some trouble, ... with the way men are dealt with here, ... nobody from a colony would" (my emphasis 361-362). "In a colony," Atwood continues, "both men and women are oppressed, the women doubly so, though the men feel emasculated by having their decision-making powers taken away from them" (362).

This postcolonial connection, in light of the previous discussion seems particularly credible, since Canadian women too are doubly oppressed within the ideological structure of North America. It is also, however, dangerously tenuous, because this insight could be interpreted as the Canadian version of the "colonizing mentality" rather than the "colonial mentality" suggested by Atwood. "White women generally," as Morrison notes,
"define black women's role as the most repressed because they are both black and female...."¹

Indeed, the White feminism that Atwood tacitly accuses of interpretative insensitivity with regard to postcolonial literatures has often found itself reflected in the experience of Black women. Remarkably, the most Eurocentric of feminist theory, the French School, fully universalizes the image of the Black woman.

Although many French feminists imagistically conceive otherness as "blackness",² Helene Cixous mostfully expresses the complexity of this connection. With Catherine Clement in The Newly Born Woman, Cixous asserts that women are "the Dark Continent."³ Clearly, her declaration is intended to (re)claim the Freud-encoded "wild" of feminine psychology. But Freud's "Dark Continent" metaphor itself is already ideologically encoded and Cixous, when she makes this wild zone her own, receives this baggage. Nigerian-writer, Chinua Achebe, in his potent criticism of Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, highlights the implications of Cixous' claim when he asks "Can no one see the preposterous and perverse arrogance in...reducing Africa to the role of props for the break-up of one European Mind?⁴ The image of Africa as the primal nature of human psychological experience is itself an invention of the logos.
In attempting to subvert the discourse with which she has been inscribed, Cixous inadvertently risks reinforcing its hegemony. Barbara Christian voices just this concern when she comments that critical theory can be as "hegemonic as the world it attacks." Most importantly, however, Cixous celebrates her reclamation of this "imaginative space" by appropriating African/African-descended women's political assertion of self: "we the repressed of culture, our lovely mouths gagged with pollen, our wind knocked out of us, we the labyrinths, the ladders, the trampled spaces...we are black and we are beautiful." African and African-descended women would appear to be once again "invented" by and defined for the dominant culture. These "two categories"—blackness and femaleness—as Morrison observes, "invite a kind of repression that is pernicious[ly]" (Lester 48) embedded Western consciousness.

"A consideration of language is primary," as Barbara Rigney notes,

in the development of theoretical paradigms as these relate to all literature [and, I would add, the theory which flows from it], but particularly to the African American feminine/feminist text. This is especially true in a critical approach to Toni Morrison's works, for, like the Sibyl of mythology, Morrison scatters her signs, her political insights, and it is only through an analysis of her language that we can reconstruct an idea of the political and artistic revolution constituted in her work. (7)

An awareness of the power structures that inform her fictional worlds permeates Morrison's texts. But, as
Melissa Walker demonstrates, Morrison "invites readers to seek the political dimension of seemingly personal stories" rather than laying it bare for them. For example, Morrison subtly addresses inscription through Pilate in Song of Solomon, her most overtly politically-engaged novel and undermine white feminism's reactionary appropriation of "blackness" as metaphorically feminine by revealing the limitations of perceiving the world as universally dualistic:

And talking about dark! You think dark is just one color, but it ain't. There're five or six kinds of black. Some silky, some woolly. Some just empty. Some like fingers. And it don't stay still. It moves and changes from one kind of black to another. Saying something is pitch black is like saying something is green. What kind of green? (40-41)

Pilate, who "know[s]...the occult of language" (11), as Rigney argues the women of Morrison's novels do, fictionally subverts Cixous's theoretical assertion. There are slippery yet meaningful differences within "blackness."

Understanding, as Rigney and Walker point out, that politics pervade Morrison's literary strategies is crucial for comprehending her work. Even in Morrison's seemingly apolitical novels, like Sula, the political dimension of the text emerges for the careful reader.

In her analysis of Sula, Walker observes that although both Nel, briefly, and Sula, for a more extended period, leave their isolated community, "neither woman ever indicates an awareness of the political or social forces
that inform the context of their small lives" (126). The political and social forces are nonetheless there, however, in absentia. Morrison deliberately excludes in the novel's structure significant political and social events in black American history. Which, as Walker cogently argues, "reinforces its concern with the consequences for those who live without attention to and involvement in the public forces that shape their world" (126). "The novel," then as Walker concludes, "is not about what Nel and Sula should have done, but rather about consequences of their living as they did--intentionally or unintentionally--outside of history" (126). Unlike her characters, Morrison, who relentlessly contends that all her work is "political" rather than "personal," confronts the political and social forces that shape her world through her work.

Cixous's appropriation of both Black women's oppression and their resistance, however, is not radical or new. Indeed, it is markedly conventional, particularly in North America. Like Cixous and Atwood, contemporary French-Canadians too, "see" themselves reflected in Black experience, as the twentieth-century protest manifesto, *White Niggers in America* testifies. The empathetic identification, however, occurs much earlier. Northup Frye demonstrates that Thomas Haliburton specifically addresses the dilemma of the Canadian colonial by aligning it with the plight of the African-descended in the United States.
And within the United States itself, "It is a commonly accepted belief," as belle hooks remarks, "that white female reformist empathy with the oppressed black slave, coupled with her recognition that she was powerless to end slavery, led to the development of a feminist consciousness and feminist revolt."11 "When white reformers," however, as hooks demonstrates, "made synonymous the impact of sexism on their lives, they were not revealing an awareness of or sensitivity to the slave's lot; they were simply appropriating the horror of the slave experience to enhance their own cause" (307).

Unlike American literature, which Morrison has cogently argued, reflected "for excellent reasons of state...the process of organizing American coherence through a distancing Africanism,"12 Canadian literature has historically seen themselves reflected, as David in Surfacing does, in the African-descended American experience and used it as a symbol of their own colonial and postcolonial oppression.

But, conscious of her "Roman-Gaul" postcolonial identity, Atwood does not, like Cixous et al, universalize her position. Atwood, instead, because of her postcolonial situatedness, purposefully sustains her difference within the affinity she proposes as politically Feminine in order to preserve Canadian identity as separate and distinct. Rightly, Atwood divides the postcolonial terrain. Neither
she as a Anglo-Canadian woman nor Morrison as an African-American woman share the space of Third World women: the writers represented in Midnight Birds "are not writing about genital mutilation or polygamy or purdah, which luckily are not problems they have to deal with directly. These women are writing, these women can write, which makes them different at once from most Third World women" (Atwood's emphasis 359). Atwood's postcolonial awareness of the significance of difference within apparent sameness sets apart the "connections" that she makes, although tenuously, from the imperialism of Eurocentric discourse.

Nevertheless, in making the connection at all, we are apt to ignore the relative difference in the socio-political histories. And, these differences, as Atwood too recognizes, are woven intricately into African American literature.

So, whereas Atwood may claim that she would read the male characters of African-American women writers more sympathetically than her Anglo-American counterparts, we must always remember that no white, Canadian male, for example, confronted a lynch mob for raising his eyes to a British (colonial) or American (neocolonial) woman. And while he may figuratively "feel" politically emasculated, he never literally suffered it for being a "Canadian." The type of oppression to which Atwood refers--the privilege of self-determination--is ironically
more akin to what a southern American, white male "politically" felt (perhaps, for some, continues to feel) after the American Civil War when his "decision-making powers [had] been taken away from them."

Despite the analysis presented in the preceding chapter, which demonstrated the effect of feminization on both the postcolonial men and women of Canada, we must recognize that this representation cannot be equated with the "doubled oppression" of African-American women. The difference between Atwood's and Morrison's postcolonial situatedness resides in the "gap" between the figurative and the literal created by their histories. Atwood's and Morrison's imaginative relationship to the natural world illuminates the significance of this "gap."

Atwood, for instance in Surfacing, uses animal imagery to represent Canada's exploitation and victimization: the "murdered" heron as the icon of "undiluted, causeless" brutality generally and the beaver as the emblem of postcolonial Canadian experience specifically. Such metaphors, however, do not serve Morrison's fictional explorations. Her characters' "connection" to the land of ancestral "immigration" and present generation has been ambivalently inscribed within African-American history. And intrapsychic responses to the natural wonder of the New world are conflictedly marred by this history as Beloved's Sethe makes very clear:
it rolled itself out before her in shameless beauty. ...Boys hanging from the most beautiful sycamores in the world. It shamed her--remembering the wonderful soughing trees rather than the boys. Try as she might to make it otherwise, the sycamores beat out the children every time and she could not forgive her memory for that.

The trees **ironically** represent Sethe's experience of the land--they are slavery. To (re)member the "beautiful sycamores" without the "boys hanging from [them]" is for Sethe unconscionable.

And, although it is hard to imagine an animal that would adequately bear the metaphorical weight of black experience, animal images themselves are, **too**, deeply enmeshed in African-descended woman's experience of America. She did not see self reflected in the animals; rather, animality was inscribed upon her. As Barbara Christian observes, "In the first two centuries of the colonies' existence much of the literature is obsessed with the establishment of blacks as a species, different from and lower than whites, the link so to speak in the Great Chain of Being between animal and man."

Whether animal or man, blacks were seen as 'lewd, lascivious and wanton.' Based on reports they had from slave traders and travelers, the planters believed the black female was sexually aggressive and sometimes mated with orangutan males, while the black male, because of his nature, hankered uncontrollably after the next link in the chain, the white woman.

Any association with "animals" is not surprisingly what the early African-American woman writer struggled to contravene. When Morrison does employ such imagery, she
invokes this very history.

A scene from her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, exemplifies Morrison's sensitivity to the history of her inscription and her particular double situatedness within the Symbolic. Pauline, in labor and about to deliver Pecola, describes her experience.

They put me in a big room with a whole mess of women. The pains was coming, but not too bad. A little old doctor come to examine me. ...he said now these here women you don't have any trouble with. They deliver right away and with no pain. Just like horses. (my emphasis 99)

Importantly, Pauline is not "represented" by the image of a horse: she is equated with it. And most significantly, "Science" institutionally pronounces the equation. According to the master text, Pauline is a mare foaling.

Morrison nonetheless uses (as Atwood does the heron in *Surfacing*) the image of the mare to represent the blindness of "the machine," that is, the limitations of Western ideology to comprehend the totality of experience.

He must never seed no mare foal. Who say they don't have no pain? Just 'cause she don't cry? 'Cause she can't say it, they think it aint' there? If they looks in her eyes and see them eyeballs lolling back, see the sorrowful look, they'd know. (99)

Pauline observes that the doctor's discourse is doubly removed from feminine experience: all females share the unique suffering of giving birth. But, the context of the doctor's declaration clearly separates Pauline from
the "whole mess of women."

Pauline herself recognizes the paradoxical difference of her inscription within the dominant discourse: "I weren't no mare foaling ...[and] I hurt just like them white women" (my emphasis 99). Pauline understands that the statement is a racially-determined questioning of her humanity. When she articulates, meaningfully outside language, this uniquely "female experience," she does so to irrupt the master text, that is, to represent her subjective presence—"The pains wasn't as bad as I let on, but I had to let them people know having a baby was more than a bowel movement" (99). Pauline's expression of "pain" is itself doubled, "speaking" for both her feminine and racial position.

While Atwood and Morrison both suggest through their work that the female body's direct link to a feminized conception of the other provides the locus of dis-covering an alternative way of being in the world from which a subject position can be constructed and enacted within the Symbolic, their very different socius positions create (dis)similar issues and therefore different alternate visions. Their explorations of "mothers" exemplifies their (dis)similarity.

Atwood again, for example, may metaphorically use the abortion of Surfacing's protagonist to represent the truncated identity construction of both her "femaleness"
and her "Canadianness." But, Surfacing's protagonist neither had this pregnancy forced upon her nor was the child forcibly torn from her prior to or after its birth; she willingly, albeit for very complicated and conflicted reasons, participated in the making and unmaking of her experience. African-American women, on the other hand, have not historically been afforded even the dubious "luxury" of participation in their "unmaking." Socio-political history itself complicates the African-American woman's experience of her own sexuality and of "motherhood." Morrison's novel Beloved most poignantly underscores the historical differences.

Sethe at the time we meet her is a "free" woman, but she was once a slave. And slavery continues to impinge upon her not only in the abstraction of socio-political reality but in the inscription of her scarred body and the ghost of her murdered daughter, Beloved. Importantly, although Sethe's "escape" from Sweet Home to the North is planned, she flees only after the rape of her motherhood: when she is beaten during her pregnancy (a hole dug to accommodate her swollen belly) and held down while two adolescent white boys pruriently suckle the milk from her breasts. Moreover, we learn as the story of Sethe's experience in slavery unfolds that the witnessing of this "rape" results in her husband Halle's madness. When Sethe's children are threatened
again by slavery, she chooses to save them from the experiences of their parents by killing them. Ironically with the sacrifice of Beloved, she succeeds. Atwood herself notes in her review of an earlier novel, *Sula*, that Morrison brings into high relief the doubled contradictory situatedness of African-American women through "the harrowing scene...in which [Eva] burns her own son to death because he has become a hopeless addict; yet even this act [as Sethe's discussed above] is rendered as profoundly maternal" (362).

While we can, in the abstract, assert that each woman, *Surfacing*'s protagonist, Sethe, and Eva, was coerced into sacrificing their children to the Western "machine," Morrison's characters, unlike Atwood's, actively and publicly "abort" their children with their own hands. And these children do not represent "potential" life--the subject's "Siamese twin," for instance--but living human beings, already separate and distinct from their mothers. Ironically, as deeply disturbing as these events are within Morrison's narratives, they in effect constitute, like Pauline's expressions of pain noted above, the characters' articulation of their subjective presence--each conflicted consciousness saturated to its very unconscious core with a politicized personal awareness of what it means to be a black woman.

Morrison's novels, as Christian observes, "emphasize
the paradox in the philosophy of survival" (my emphasis 174) within the postcolonial space. And Morrison embodies this paradox most powerfully in her characterizations of women, because the choices made by African-American women, both literally and figuratively effect, the African-American community. Not only has and will they bear its children, but, as Christian notes, "since its beginning, [she] has been entrusted with its survival and enrichment" (60). For our purposes at the moment, however, the depth of the doubled contradictoriness of African-American women's survival requires further illumination.

When Sethe murders her daughter in order to save that daughter from a life of slavery, all readers comprehend her act as maternally motivated, that is, as a sign of her love for her children. Her intent is to save her daughter from a fate she "knows" her daughter would not survive intact. All readers too comprehend her horrifying act as an act of "mad" resistance that is, she has wantonly destroyed the Master's property. Sethe is the sympathetic figure invoked by Cixous and others18 to underscore the extreme consequences of the oppression of women. A mother will kill her beloved daughter rather than have another woman suffer as she has suffered.

Eva, on the other hand, is far more problematical,
particularly after the lengths to which she has gone as a mother to "save" the son whom she kills: using her last dollop of lard to relieve his infant distress and apparently amputating her own leg to provide for him as well as her other children—"Somebody said Eva stuck it under a train and made them pay off" (31). Eva kills Plum not only to "save" him from a living death, as Sethe kills Beloved, but to save herself as well.

There are no abstract political motivations for Eva's act. She does not kill her son, like Sethe, to prevent his enslavement, nor does she kill him, like Sethe's mother who "threw them all way but [Sethe]" (64), because he is the master's progeny. Eva kills her son so that he may ironically survive as a man in the world that has ostensibly sought to destroy this possibility for him. Ultimately, however, she kills Plum so that she may survive as a woman. Because her son's consuming disability
threatens to rape her sense of identity, Eva acts to preserve her difference. In order to survive as Plum's mother and an independent woman, but not as any woman through which he will (re)make himself, Eva kills him. She cannot be, to appropriate a phrase from Atwood, "his entrance" into an alternate vision of existence. And importantly, although Morrison's female characters may inadvertently (like Pilate in Song of Solomon) open this possibility for a male character, the central female characters of Morrison's novel's do not conceive themselves as playing this role.

Eva chooses to save her self. She is determined to go on even if her son cannot and her husband will not. That, however, is not to say that she does not accept these men, has not "put her arms around [them]" (Beloved 62) as the sign of a chosen intimate connection. Implicitly, Eva apprehends that Plum's experience of the white world—in this case, World War I—has created the man who threatens her. And she does not love him less for it—"I held him close first. Real Close. Sweet Plum. My baby boy" (72). But it is he—a Black man—who nonetheless poses the immediate threat to her self, not the dominant culture.

"Black women writers," as Genevieve Fabre discerns, "call attention to the distinctiveness of their experience and vision that differs as broadly from that of some black
male writers as that of whites....

They also set themselves apart from white feminists who argue that sexism is more important than racism.... Triumphing over interdiction, they reveal the limits and the constraints of a system that has excluded their voices, and that should take greater heed of the problems of alterity and acknowledge the essential significance of difference.

Eva is no one else's metaphor, not Atwood's and not Cixous's, for neither would or could assert that they love but are nevertheless threatened by black men. Eva's experience is too direct, too personal, too infused with love, too marked by Western discourse to represent anything other than her experience: Eva represents a black woman struggling to survive as a African-American woman in a world which continues to marshall all its intellectual forces to possess, name, and own her.

II. "The Lady Among Races": Feminizing African-America

"The early struggle of black women," argues Fabre, "to achieve literacy (an authorial voice), closely associated with the quest for freedom, has paved the way for the present battles" (106). And, the "battle" as Morrison defines it, is to "repossess, re-name, and re-own" the African-American woman's experience. She is not, as Atwood has pointed out, of the Third World but of the First. She has not experienced polygamy or purdah but she has experienced American slavery and a racism so culturally pervasive that it infects the whole
social structure, even the communities its intent was to exclude. But, just as "American" ideology is inextricably woven into the African-American community, African-descended experience colors the fabric of American society.

How could one speak of profit, economy, labor, progress, suffragism, Christianity, the frontier, the formation of new states, the acquisition of new lands, education, transportation (freight and passengers), neighborhoods, the military—of almost anything a country concerns itself with—without having as a referent, at the heart of the discourse, at the heart of definition, the presence of Africans and their descendants? (Playing in the Dark 50)

"It was not possible," Morrison concludes (50). But since we know, like schoolteacher in Beloved, that "definitions belonged to the definer--not the defined" (192), it is imperative that we fully comprehend the import of this recognition for Toni Morrison and her female characters.

Animality, as I noted above, was the primary encoding of the African and African-descended in Western culture. From the United States colonial texts to Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness through Freud's metaphor of "the Dark Continent" for feminine psychology to Cixous's appropriation of all that the discourse encoded, black women have served to embody what Western ideology conceives as its "primal core," its "natural" connection to the earth-world.

In the United States, however, African-descendants
were essentially constructed as a "higher" form of "animal": The superior animal, in fact; who, although "animal," possessed the physical form necessary for "human" work and enough of the rudiments of "human intelligence" to perform the labor required by "human" civilization. The southern "mammy," as Christian discusses her figure, illustrates the complication of this construction. Most significantly, for our purposes at the moment, the mammy was gendered but desexed. That is, she was designated as fulfilling the feminine but was not perceived as a woman.

In an idealized romantic version, the "mammy" was imaged as almost a surrogate mother, providing through her physical girth and moral strength the very nourishment from which humanity springs. So that, on one level, it would appear that the "future" itself was entrusted to her. She was culturally defined as much more than a "milk-machine": indeed, a white child's physical welfare was often put entirely in her hands. But, she was also regarded as much less than a nanny or a governess in that she was not perceived to be in any way a part of the child's intellectual or spiritual developmental: the part of the child deemed "human." While the literature suggested that she gave her full attention to the domestic arena and its children, as would be appropriate for the figure of a "mother," it also implied that she preferred
the children of her master over her own, because she instinctively recognized their human superiority. She became the necessary link between nature and Southern culture: as almost mother, she enacted the feminine role of "mothering" without biologically becoming the mother of the children she tended; that is, she took care of nature so that culture might flourish.

This image of the African-descended woman was counterposed, as Christian further notes, with the image of the "white woman" so "desired" by black and white males alike: the Southern Lady, who as a "marvelous creation...was endowed with the capacity to 'create a magic spell' over any man in her vicinity" (8). The white Southern Lady became the "mother" of human civilization. "Since blacks were obviously needed for labor and since the planters accepted miscegenation between white men and black females as inevitable, as Christian remarks, "they charged the white woman with the responsibility of being the repository of white civilization" (6-7). Whereas the black woman was constructed as pure body, the "thing" to be risen above (and this was as true for the "mammy" as it was for any other black woman), the southern lady's image was constructed as pure spirit, the state to be achieved. In her, the southern colonialist created the image of his "higher self."
Not only was she the womb through which his heirs came into being but she bore his cultural inheritance as well. Within the dominant discourse, using her "human" intelligence, she submitted willingly to his superiority. As an animate objet d'art, her education entertained him, her extensive and expensive accouterments testified to the complexity of his wealth and power, and her alabaster beauty confirmed his aesthetic sensibilities. Moreover, her ornamental delicacy brought out his "humanness": love, compassion, protectiveness, and so forth. She embodied his "higher" functions and moral core.

Neither image embodied historical reality, of course. Plantation life was difficult for all women. But what is important is that the image of the Southern Lady required the creation of the "mammy." It was her bodily presence that permitted the spiritual Southern Lady's existence.

Although clearly from Christian's condensation of the colonial literature we can see that neither men nor women of African descent were accorded equal status with those who sought to categorize them (and as time went along pseudo-scientific "data" was collected to confirm their "animalness"). Within the dominant culture's discourse, a subtle identity-distinction is constructed for which there is a far-reaching implication. African-descended women were doubly split.

By virtue of his malesness, the black man is more human than than the black woman. He mates either with
black women or "because of his nature," desires to become fully "human" by mating with white females. Whereas the "sexually aggressive" black female, for whom there are no stories to suggest she longed for white men "sometimes" chooses to mate with "orangutans." She, then, in the cultural imagination, is more intimately associated with "animals" than is her male counterpart. Such pronouncements about the nature of her character did not, however, prevent her white male owners from raping her with regularity. Indeed, as Christian further demonstrates, since "the southern planters' defin[ed]...sex as an animal function, which was unfortunately necessary for the male to maintain his health and power, the black woman's [constructed] animality fit well into the scheme of the division between mind and body, spirit and matter" (14).

On the one hand, these images correspond handily to the fundamental definition of the feminine which flows throughout Western culture, starting with the creative/destructive split of "Mother" nature and continuing through the figurative embodiments of Woman such as Eve and Mary; both "mothers," but one responsible for the fall of man and the other for his salvation. The added dimension of race, however, as hooks has cogently argued and Alice Walker in The Color Purple has dramatized, realigned the links in the "Great Chain of Being."

A white woman was "less" human than her male counterpart in "higher" functions and could still fulfill
the carnal role of a whore or the destructive role of the femme fatale but she would not "choose" to mate with an orangutan. Therefore, the racist rhetoric used to "animalize," and therefore legitimize the slavery of blacks, firmly positioned the African-descended woman as the lowest link of the chain.

And to a great degree, it was she who became the "organic link," to use James Boggs phrase, between racism and capitalism. For the black woman was not only laborer and product rolled into one like her male counterpart but she was a "natural machine" as well, producing a seemingly infinite store of laborer-product when required. Her sexual body inscribed her technological dehumanization. The "mammy" attained a modicum of humanity "mothering" white children, but the highest human state a black woman as female (whose children were not regarded as her own) could achieve was as an "intermediate object." Neither position, however, associated in the cultural imagination the African-American woman with the mind, with ideas, with consciousness.

It is no wonder then, as Christian discerns, that when Frances Harper created the heroine Iola LeRoy in 1892 to refute Reconstruction's backlash, which suggested that in freedom African-descended persons would degenerate into animality, and to promote her ideas about the human dignity of blacks, she chose the figure of the white "Southern Lady": the feminine figure most closely associated with
ideas, spirituality, and morality. Iola LeRoy, a beautiful, educated, Christian octoroon, commits herself to her "blackness" and becomes "Like [other literary mulattas]...a cultural conductor between the white race and the black because of her education, refinement, and beauty:

She gives to the black race what she has learned from the white culture. And what culture means is Western Christian civilization at its best. She becomes, then a cultural missionary to the ignorant, the loudmouthed, the coarse but essentially good-natured blacks, who need only to be shown the way (Christian 29).

But she is more than a "cultural missionary," for Iola LeRoy sustains the essence of the white Southern Lady as the mother of human civilization. The constructed image of Iola LeRoy, and characters like her, gives birth to "the rise of a black middle class...who feel the grave responsibility of defining for the black race what is best for it, who work within the context of moral Christian ethics, and whose faith in the country and its culture enables them to be conservative in all matters except race" (Christian 29). The early African-American woman writer attained her authorial voice by speaking with and through the ideological precepts that had encoded her. In recreating the white ideal and endorsing its socio-economic mythology, she indemnified the value-system that oppressed her. We do find these character types in Morrison's fiction. Notable examples are Geraldine and Pauline from The Bluest Eye. But they are not "cultural bridges." Morrison clearly demonstrates through
them that an acceptance of white middle-class values destructively fragments the African-American community.

The "rise" of the black middle class is emblematically contained in "the great migration of blacks from the South to the North" (Christian 35), particularly the legendary Harlem, where the lure of economic opportunity, which signifies American freedom, obscures the region's more subtle racism. And, it is here that the African-American intellectual began to define and inscribe the African-American identity.

As Christian notes, the earlier representations of black women were too fresh in memory to take the opportunity, like their male counterparts, to explore the ascribed, and often debated "primitive" vitality and inherent nobility of African-American culture. They tended, then, to extend and to interrogate the tension between adopting WASP value systems and notions of original and constructed primitivism in the paradigm established by writers like Frances Harper.

To comprehend the significance of this tension, however, we must look at how the white intelligensia viewed the literary flowering of the Harlem Renaissance. Because, as Christian remarks, "The problem of [African-American] self-definition was further complicated...by the tendency of its leaders to view art as the means to social equality (38). Given literature's participation in the abolition of slavery, this view seems valid. But, the language
used to applaud the literary movement of the Harlem Renaissance is most telling. As Christian indicates, white liberals generally would have agreed "with Robert Park, the foremost white student of race relations of the period when he wrote that 'the Anglo Saxon was basically a pioneer while the Negro is primarily an artist living life for its own sake.... The Negro is the lady among races'" (my emphasis 39).

The African-American is here dubiously awarded the "highest" embodiment of the feminine within the white patriarchal value system. The "race" has been feminized so that it reflects, as the figure of "Southern Lady" did, the "higher" functions of the masculinized WASP realm. This pronouncement is, then, more than "another variation on the romantic theme of the superior Negro that nineteenth-century abolitionists had fostered," as Christian contends (39). It is an institutionalized representation of a powerfully powerless socio-political position. We have only to examine the images evoked by the descriptive terms to see that this idealization is a form of the humiliation disguised as privilege experienced by Joan Foster in Atwood's Lady Oracle.

The phrase "Anglo Saxon pioneer" connotes of course in the American imagination, nation-building: masculine activity, innovated, rugged, individualism, and the transforming conquest of nature by culture. And the term "Lady," as we have seen above, is functionally decorative,
suggesting, at most, spiritual inspiration for masculine activity and, at least, passive reception of what has been inspired. Masculinity and all the socio-political power attributed to it continues to be defined as the privilege of white Anglo-Europeans.

As Toni Morrison notes in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, "Whatever popularity the slave narratives [and I would extend this to narratives of oppression, generally] had—and they influenced abolitionists and converted anti-abolitionists—the slave's own narrative, while freeing the narrator in many ways, did not destroy the master narrative. The master narrative could make any number of adjustments to keep itself intact" (50-51). The primary "adjustment" of containment exercised by the white intelligensia was feminization. This subtly continued the objectification of the African-Americans as other and constructed for it a conceptual purpose.

Virginia Woolf observed in *A Room of One's Own* that "Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size." Moreover, "Man" here represents not only the masculine arena but the white realm as well. Woolf goes on to ask the question "How is he to go on giving judgement, civilising natives, making laws, writing books, dressing up and speechifying at banquets, unless he can see himself at breakfast and
at dinner at least twice the size he really is?" (my emphasis 36).

The praise bestowed upon the writers of the Harlem Renaissance mirrors this notion, for the transported-African "natives" have finally been "civilized," like the American frontier, by the "Anglo Saxon pioneers." In the backhanded manner of feminization, the Lady among races becomes a credit to and an emblem of the superior masculinized WASP value system. (S)he embodies its efforts to "cultivate" the wildness of the feminine wilderness. But as Woolf understood, "Whatever may be their use in civilised societies, mirrors are essential to all violent and heroic action. That is why Napoleon and Mussolini both insist so emphatically upon the inferiority of women, for it they were not inferior, they would cease to enlarge" (my emphasis 36).

This phenomenon is precisely what Toni Morrison discovered in her examination of and lectures on "literary whiteness" and "literary blackness" in American literature (xii). For, in the "literature of the United States, [which] has taken as its concern the architecture of a new white man" (Morrison's emphasis 15), Morrison found that the Africanist23-character's presence not only enlarged the value-system of white patriarchy in various ways but provided a vocabulary of "sign, symbol, and agency
in the process of organizing, separating, and consolidating identity along culturally valuable lines of interest" (39).

African-American women as well as the masculinely-defined feminine character play a large role in constituting the "new white man's" cultural and individual identity. The affect on gender construction for the Lady among races, however, is markedly more complicated, particularly for the black male intelligensia of the Harlem Renaissance who sought to claim this recognition for themselves.

III. Ladies and (Fe)males: Bearing the Mirror

While we do not find male characters such as Atwood's David or Joe, who express a politically interpolated misogyny in Morrison's work, we do find male characters who also suffer from the "illusion of the neck." Like David and Joe, Morrison's male characters "see" themselves reflected in the women of her novels, but Morrison suggests that racial politics stains their expressed ambivalence. She dramatizes the depth of this ambivalence and its consequences in a scene from Song of Solomon, when Pilate, in an effort to comfort her love-sick granddaughter, Hagar, asks "How can he not love your hair?"

It's the same hair that grows out of his own armpits. The same hair that crawls up on his crotch on up his stomach. All over his chest. The very same. It grows out of his nose, over his lips, and if he ever lost his razor it would grow all over his face. It's
all over his head, Hagar. It's his hair too. He got to love it.

...How can he love himself and hate your hair? (315)

Hagar insists, however, that "He don't love it at all, [that indeed] he hates it, [preferring] silky hair, Penny-colored hair, and lemon-colored skin, and gray-blue eyes" (315-16). That is, Hagar concretely apprehends, that Milkman, her lost lover and the novel's protagonist, desires (not unlike his father, Macon Dead) a woman who more closely embodies the culturally-defined object.

But, it is more than Hagar's hair that drives Milkman away, for her "hair" also represents in his imagination her socio-economic position. Unlike his mother, Ruth and the middle-class girls from the "Not-Doctor Street" neighborhood with which Milkman "normally" associates, Hagar lives at the margin of the Blood Bank, the very edge of "the rough part of town," so-called "because blood flowed so freely there" (32). She represents one of the culturally-inscribed stereotypes that Milkman and his middle-class family and friends have visibly "worked" to controvert. Like Junior in The Bluest Eye, Milkman has been taught, more by his father's example than any other method, to distinguish "the differences between colored people and niggers:"

Colored people were neat and quiet; niggers were dirty and loud. He belonged to the former group: he wore white shirts and blue trousers; his hair was cut as close to his scalp as possible to avoid any suggestion of wool, the part was etched into his hair by the barber (71).
Class distinctions underlie Geraldine's explanation, for just as she commands the barber to etch a "part" in for this racial characteristic, she carves a "part" into the African American community based on this racial characteristic. Her class position appears to be her reward for ideologically embracing the capitalist hierarchy. She (re)produces her son in the image of the middle-class. Geraldine's neurotic efforts to protect this image however, reveal its instability. But Morrison deconstructs the "illusion" most fully in the character of Macon Dead.

Himself the son of a slave and dark-skinned, Macon marries Ruth Foster, the lemon-skinned daughter of the most notable man in town, so notable indeed that the neighborhood bears "the quasi-official status" of his identity: Not Doctor Street.

Town maps registered the street as Mains Avenue, but the only colored doctor in the city had live and died on that street, and when he moved there in 1896 his patient took to calling the street, which none of them lived in or near, Doctor Street. (4)

In marrying Ruth, Macon hopes to enhance his socio-political position. The doctor's ostensible power to be "officially" recognized (and therefore Ruth's position as the "key" to Macon's upward mobility) is misconstrued by Macon. Dr. Foster's position within the community is in reality strictly circumscribed by those who have the official power to name:

Some of the city legislators,...saw to it that "Doctor Street was never used in any official capacity. And since they knew that only Southside residents kept
it up, they had notices posted...saying that the avenue...had always been and would always be known as Mains Avenue and not Doctor Street. (my emphasis)

No matter how integral to the community fabric Dr. Foster may be, the official notice denies him recognition. A creative "misreading" of the text--Mains Avenue and Not Doctor Street--seems to suggest the possibility of inclusion. The residents of the Southside opt for this possibility. But in doing so, the community can only sustain the doctor's presence by negating his achievement.

The illusion of the doctor's power eventually shatters for Macon, and he projects his "disgust" into an erotic fantasy about the doctor and his own wife. But he still inherently believes in system. Macon succinctly sums up, for his son, Milkman "what's real:"

Let me tell you right now the one important thing you'll ever need to know: Own things. And let the things you own own other things. Then you'll own yourself and other people too. (my emphasis)

Macon has essentially learned the lessons of the dominant culture. To hear the words spoken by the son of a former slave, who was duped and eventually murdered by the value system Macon has embraced, however, makes his philosophy bleed with irony.

But on one level, like the doctor and the wife who inevitably "failed" him, Macon, as a "man of property," actualizes his own illusion. For, by being Feather's landlord, Macon has the power to direct not only Feather's behavior but Milkman's and Guitar's as well. As "the
owner of things which own other things," Macon's desire takes precedence, even in absentia, and people bend to his will: they serve him. Macon believes that he has accomplished that which has eluded the other men of the Southside: subjective presence and the security that accompanies it.

Macon has, however, deluded himself. This "power" is tenuous and granted only so far as he works at the dominant culture's behest, sustaining a hierarchy built on exclusion. That is, he can own what it does not want, but only if in owning it he has prevented its possession by a more objectionable "other."

He knew as a Negro he wasn't going to get a big slice of the pie. But there were properties nobody wanted yet, or little edges of property somebody didn't want Jews to have, or Catholics to have, or properties nobody knew were of any value yet. There was quite a bit of pie filling oozing around the edge of the crust in 1945. (63)

Macon is a model of capitalist enterprise. We can almost hear the white establishment praise his ambition—he saw an opportunity and took it, made the most of what little he had, found his niche, and so on and so on. But, his "niche" was clearly defined from the beginning. And being the landlord of the Blood Bank generally permitted him no thing. Indeed, it further excluded him. In this position, he had no community in which he was accepted.

"And you, you baby-dicked baboon—he tried to point at Macon—you worst. You need Killin, you really need killin. You know why? ...Porter slumped down in the window, muttering, "Everybody know why".... (Morrison's emphasis 27)
Ironically embodied in Macon, Porter sees the reflection of the cultural values which contribute to his oppression. Macon serves as the dominant culture's mirror, for when it holds him up as "model," it praises its value system and denies all "others." Macon does not "beget" a life for himself or any one else; he willingly "bears" the cultural inheritance of another. He, like the literary intelligensia of Harlem, is the Lady among races, bearing the mirror in which the dominant masculinized culture sees and enlarges its self-image. In being the landlord and legislator of Not, of the negative, of the feminized other, Macon is the culturally-defined Lady.

Macon's particular delusion is not shared by all of the men of the Southside. Porter, like Railroad Tommy and the others of the Blood Bank are sorely aware that the power Macon claims is illusory. He did not create the negative space; he oversees it for someone else. The speech Railroad Tommy delivers to Milkman and Guitar, young black men, who are already frustrated with what they have been denied indirectly through Macon, articulates his awareness that Macon represents an imitation.

Railroad Tommy's lecture deconstructs Macon's social position, revealing its flimsy construction. But at the same time he discloses how expressing exclusion reconstitutes the nourishing "dream" of inclusion. That is, Railroad Tommy longs for the world from which he has
been excluded in much the same way as the boys desire
to be included in the masculine world represented in the
bar:

You think that's something? Not having a beer? Well,
let me ask you something. You ever stood still in
the galley of the Baltimore and Ohio dining car in
the middle of the night when the kitchen closed down
and everything's neat and ready for the next day?
And the engine's highballing down the track and three
of your buddies is waiting for you with a brand-new
deck of cards?

...That's right you never. And you never going
to. That's one more thrill you not going to have,
let alone a bottle of beer.

...You ever pull fourteen days straight and come
home to a sweet woman, clean sheets, and a fifth of
Wild Turkey? Eh?

...No? Well, don't look forward to it, cause you
not going to have that either.

...And I'll tell you something else you not going
to have. You not going to have no private coach with
four red velvet chairs that swivel around in one place
whenever you want 'em to. No. And you not going
to have your own special toilet and your own special-
made eight-foot bed either. And a valet and a cook
and a secretary to travel with you and do everything
you say. Everthing: get the right temperature in
your hot-water bottle and make sure the smoking tobacco
in the silver humidor is fresh each and every day.
That's something else you not going to have. You
ever have five thousand dollars of cold cash money
in your pocket and walk into a bank and tell the bank
man you want such and such a house on such and such
a street and he sell it to you right then? Well,
you won't ever have it. And you not going to have
a governor's mansion, or eight thousand acres of timber
to sell. And you not going to have no ship under
your command to sail on, no train to run, and you
can join the 332nd if you want to and shoot down a
thousand German planes all by youself and land in
Hitler's backyard and whip him with your own hands
but you never going to have four stars on your shirt
front, or even three. And you not going to have no
breakfast tray brought in to you early in the morning
with a red rose on it and two warm croissants and
a cup of hot chocolate. Nope. Never. And no pheasant
buried in coconut leaves for twenty days and stuffed
with wild rice and cooked over a wood fire so tender
and delicate to make you cry. And no Rothschild '29 or even Beaujolais to go with it. ...And No baked Alaska! (59-60)

Clearly, the vivid specificity of Railroad Tommy description indicates that he has witnessed the life of privilege. It is indeed likely that he served the "breakfast tray with the red rose on it" and "the pheasant so tender and delicate to make you cry." And on the surface, it would appear that he has simply informed the boys that they will never be among the wealthy. Few in the American middle-class, white or black, ever will. But, what underlies Railroad Tommy's speech is an awareness that "some" people can legitimately dream of this luxury and can even approximate it. And moreover, as the food images suggest, they are nourished by the "dream." They can, for example, "buy such and such a house on such and such a street" with little difficulty. Others even with "five thousand dollars of cold cash money in [their] pockets" cannot.

Railroad Tommy describes the American dream of economic and material security, but the absolute negativity of lecture erases it immediately upon invocation. These men live an awareness of the Derridean "trace" of presence.

But, there is more here. For, nothing (and all is masculine-centered) is recognizably achieved: not land possession, not rewarded heroism, not the power to direct, not payment for services rendered, not even common
relaxation. Every activity and every thing, including "a sweet woman, clean sheets, and a fifth of Wild Turkey," belongs to "some"one else. Like the "eight thousand acres of timber," Railroad Tommy and "the boys" exist solely to make luxury possible: they serve the masculine realm of cultural power but do not actively participate in it.

Macon's illusion, like Not Doctor Street, is an "adjustment without improvement" (The Bluest Eye 22). This is the crime for which Porter knows he "needs killin." Macon in Porter's view is an abberation, because it is "unnatural" for a man to perpetuate the culture that oppresses him. What keeps Porter from killing Macon is his conflicted admiration (much like Macon's for the doctor, much like Railroad Tommy's for the eaters of pheasant) of Macon's ability to sustain and extend the illusion.

Abandoning the "middle-class" illusion of freedom and security, Porter, as well as six other men, including Guitar from whom we learn about the "Seven Days," (re)constitute their masculine identities by dedicating their lives to combating the "unnaturalness" created by the racially-encoded dominance. The thrust of the organization's goal is generational parity: for each black person who is injured or killed by whites, the group sees to it that a white person receives similar treatment. This way, according to the group's philosophy, the world is kept in balance.
Numbers. Balance. Ratio. And the earth, the land.
The earth is soggy with black people's blood. And before us Indian blood. Nothing can cure them, and if it keeps on there won't be any of us left and there won't be any land for those who are left. So the numbers have to remain static. (159)

Essentially, these men are attempting to ensure their people's survival, to "beget" its continuance, so to speak: "What I'm doing ain't about hating white people. It's about loving us" (159). In order to do so, however, they have constructed their philosophy as the mirror image of the dominant culture's oppressive force. They too represent the negative cultural space.

Although it is the death of four little girls (reminiscent of the Birmingham bombing) that eventually makes Milkman an indirect target of Guitar's participation in the "Seven Day," (that is, when Guitar's rage turns inward) a far more common, and therefore chilling, incident grounds the group's work.

A young Negro boy had been found stomped to death in Sunflower County, Mississippi. There were no questions about who stomped him--his murderers had boasted freely--and there were no questions about the motive. The boy had whistled at some white woman, refused to deny he had slept with others, and was a Northerner visiting the South. (80)

The feminine is doubly objectified in this incident. The white woman, at whom the boy may or may not have whistled as well as the "others" with whom he may or may not have slept, is only the object upon which both the young black man and his white murderers inscribe their
struggle for masculine privilege. The men at Railroad Tommy's barbershop reveal this awareness.

"So he whistled! So what!" Guitar was screaming. "He supposed to die for that?"
"He from the North," said Freddie. "Acting big down in Bilbo country. Who the hell he think he is?"
"Thought he was a man, that's what," said Railroad Tommy.
"Well, he thought wrong," Freddie said. "Ain't no black men in Bilbo country."
"The hell they ain't," said Guitar
"Who?" asked Freddie.
"Till. That's who."
"He dead. A dead man ain't no man. A dead man is a corpse. That's all. A corpse."
"A living coward ain't a man either," said Porter.

Till's "whistle," as the men's discussion reveals, has less to do with sexual attraction, albeit couched in erotic language, than it does with masculinized cultural politics: Till voiced his masculine presence and protest.

But, masculine privilege is much broader than the woman-as-object upon which it was initially inscribed. This was a political act in which Southern white males, who themselves felt politically "castrated" after the Civil War, spoke through the dead body of a Northern black boy to Northern whites, who controlled from that point on socio-political power. That is, white southern males reconstituted their sense of masculine political power and privilege through their "possession" of the black boy's body. His body, therefore, (re)places the female body, which becomes an intermediate field. This incident clearly delineates the terms by which masculine power
and privilege are defined. They are inscribed on a feminine or feminized space.

Like Macon Dead, who defines his masculinity through the imposed system, even marrying a "lemony complexioned" woman, the men of the "Seven Days" define their masculinity through a literal opposition to it, accepting its basic, albeit mad, premises. And the results are very much the same: they, too, deepen their exclusion.

"You can't marry."
"No."
"Have children."
"No." (159)

The negatives are as clear here as they are in Railroad Tommy's speech or Macon Dead's limited middle-classness. But they may be more important, because these negatives dovetail and work against the group's logic.

Balance is not possible under these conditions, because the loss of one member of a subaltern group has a far greater impact than does the loss of a member of the dominant group. And these men do not contribute to future generations. In fact, they withdraw themselves from the group's survival, willingly embracing cultural impotence and ultimately annihilation.

While their group gives them a sense of purposeful communality and theoretically begets the possibility of a future, the practical static condition that they believe they achieve, bears, like Macon Dead, a perpetuation of "white madness" (99). These men "represent" the dangerous
feminine presence which Western ideology both creates and contrives to destroy. The "Seven Days" are culturally-defined (fe)males.

Morrison, like other twentieth-century writers, men and women alike, seriously examines the ideological structures of North American society, and, like Atwood and others find its primary oppositions—self/other, masculine/feminine not only limiting but detrimental to the expression of an authentic self. But, whereas Atwood suggests through her male characters that Anglo-Canadian men feel emasculated by the power dynamics of American ideology, Morrison suggests through her male characters that African-descended men have been also raped by it. That is, Morrison, like Atwood, finds in her analysis of the general political dynamics of late capitalism the same sense of masculine emasculation in her postcolonial community through Macon Dead, The Seven Days, and Cholly Breedlove, who "don't' want no tore couch if'n bought new." Pleading eyes and tightened testicles" (The Bluest Eye, my emphasis 32). She, however, signifies the difference for African-American men by focusing her critical lens on how class and race interpellate the construction of identity.

Morrison concludes that the class structure is a virulent societal force that infects both men and women and deleteriously divides the African American community. But, she suggests that the category of race
pushed the felt political emasculation of her male characters more deeply into the masculine psyche:

Cholly had been surprised in some bushes by two white men while he was newly but earnestly engaged in eliciting the sexual pleasure from a little country girl. The men had shone a flashlight right on his behind. He had stopped, terrified. They chuckled. The beam of the flashlight did not move. "Go on," they said. "Go on and finish. And, nigger, make it good." The flashlight did not move. For some reason Cholly had not hated the white men; he hated, despised the girl. Even a half-remembrance of this episode, along with myriad other humiliations, defeats, and emasculations, could stir him into flights of depravity that surprised himself--but only himself. (my emphasis 37).

Cholly is raped, forced at gunpoint to have sex by the penetrating flashlight beam. As his manhood is confirmed by the young country girl, it is simultaneously negated by the white men who hold the flashlight. Importantly, he does not hate the men who rape him; he can't, for to do so "would have consumed him, burned him up like a piece of soft coal, leaving only flakes of ash and a question mark of smoke" (119). Like Macon, who feels anything "to do with his wife...coated with disgust," and Guitar, who feels that black women (like white women) want "his life, [his] living life," Cholly, in order, to survive hates the young woman who witnesses his impotence.

Darlene, the young girl pinned under Cholly and the flashlight represents the doubled contradictory situatedness of Morrison's female characters and their doubled negativity. "With a violence born of total helplessness, [Cholly] pulled her dress up, lowered his
trousers and underwear...almost wished he could do it--hard, long, and painfully, he hated her so much" (117). Cholly too desires Darlene pain and humiliation.

She too is not raped in this moment, but Cholly's rage negates her pain and humiliation. Darlene's pain and humiliation is then doubled. In confirming her own sexual desirability, she emasculates the boy she desires and he hates her for it. Morrison fully develops the "madness" with which the African-American masculine has been inseminated when Cholly out of love, and self-hatred, rapes his eleven-year old daughter, Pecola:

She was washing dishes. Her small back hunched over the sink. ...Her back hunched that way, head to one side as though crouching from a permanent and unrelieved blow. Why did she have to look so whipped: She was a child unburdened--why wasn't she happy? The clear statement of her misery was an accusation. He wanted to break her neck--but tenderly. Guilt and impotence rose in a bilious duet. What could he do for her--ever? What give her? What say to her? ...If he looked into her face, he would see those haunted, loving eyes. The hauntedness would irritate him--the love would move him to fury. How dare she love him? Hadn't she any sense at all? What was he supposed to do about that? Return it? How? ...What could his heavy arms and befuddled brain accomplish that would earn him his own respect, that would in turn allow him to accept her love? ...[Pecola] shifted her weight and stood on one foot scratching the back of her calf with her toe. It was a quiet and pitiful gesture. ...The timid, tucked-in look of the scratching toe--that was what Pauline was doing the first time he saw her in Kentucky. ...It was such a small and simple gesture, but it filled him then with a wondering softness. Not the usual lust to part tight legs with his own, but a tenderness, a protectiveness. ...The confused mixture of his memories of Pauline and the doing of a wild and forbidden thing excited him, and bolt of desire ran down his genitals,... He wanted to fuck her--tenderly. His soul seemed to slip down to his guts and fly out into her, the gigantic thrust
he made into her then provoked the only sound she made——. Cholly stood up and could see only her grayish panties, so sad and limp around her ankles. Again the hatred mixed with tenderness. The hatred would not let him pick her up, the tenderness forced him to cover. (126-28)

The "love," born of hatred, that Cholly gives his daughter, like Macon's and Milkman's social position as a gift to Ruth and Hagar, or Guitar's political revenge—"Why worry about the colored woman at all? Because she's mine (Morrison's emphasis 223) as a gift to all "colored" women—perpetuates the "circle game" of despair. All these women are left wounded and alone; their and the community's very survival compromised.

The key phrase, bitterly declared by Guitar ("Because they're mine"), defines the feminine position within the masculine realm. Women reflect and enlarge male activity, becoming the object upon which the African-American masculine identity is negatively and ambivalently inscribed.

Milkman's frustration with his options—Macon Dead's middle-class mania, the Seven Days' psychosis, or Cholly Breedlove's schizophrenia—signals Morrison's hope for finding an alternative vision, a way of breaking through the destructive forces of the "circle game." But his desire to escape the feminized space where he finds himself and to (re)construct his masculine and ethnic identity independently of the women who share the space with him
is still an "illusion of the neck." Morrison directly interrogates new "illusion:"

He could fly! You hear me? My great-granddaddy could fly! Goddam! ...That mother fucker could fly! Could fly! He didn't need no airplane. Didn't need no fuckin tee double you ay. He could fly his own self!

"Who you talkin about? Sweet was lying on her side, her cheek cupped in her hand.

"Solomon, that's who.

"Oh, him." She laughed. "You belong to that tribe of niggers?" She thought he was drunk.

..."Where'd he go, Macon?"

"Back to Africa. Tell Guitar he went back to Africa."

"Who'd he leave behind?"

"Everybody." (my emphasis 330)

Milkman's elation at the discovery of his great-grandfather's legend is more than a little problematical.

On the one hand, the legend re-energizes African-American masculine power to constitute an identity—African— independent of the forces—American—which negate it. His great-grandfather's power to be ancestrally (re)membered fills Milkman with the sense of liberation he has so longed for. It is a reclamation of his history that frees him. On the other hand, in assuming this masculine privilege of self-determination, Solomon left everyone else behind: a wife, Ryna, and twenty-one sons and daughters, who continued to bear not only the forces he escaped but his absence as well. That is, as the opening and concluding pages of the novel suggest, Milkman's "illusion of the neck" flows from the depths of suicidal depression.
While Morrison thematically stresses in Song of Solomon the necessity of reclaiming history to identity construction, she suggests that that history must be critically introjected into the self. Milkman cannot survive the reclamation of his Africanness at the expense of his Americanness. He cannot be African, like his great-grandfather, because he was one of those left behind. Milkman is an American, an African-descended American male. And, this is the masculine identity he must create, separate and distinct from the women in this space but in relation to them.

Significantly, it is Sweet, a young black woman, who asks the obvious but profoundly important question: "Who he'd leave behind?" She does not deny Solomon's power or place in her history: indeed, she has known of him all along. But Sweet's recognition of Solomon does not negate the presence of the others, the ones he left behind, the ones to whom she and Milkman are equally, inextricably connected.

In creating a female character to pose the question, Morrison asserts in fiction, as she has in "theory," that "women...have some special knowledge about certain things [that comes from] the ways in which they view the world" (Lester 53-54). Like Atwood, Morrison posits the feminine space rather than the masculine or feminized as the source from which an alternate vision, "a third way," will be born(e).
IV. Complementary Pairs: Bearing the Negative

The world of Not, governed by men like Macon Dead and/or Guitar Bains, was invented by Western ideology as its negative image. Which is not to say, as Morrison paints it, that the world of Not is an ideological opposite. It is instead a mirror image. The portraits Morrison paints of "white" households, while rare and somewhat abridged, suggest that while they appear through their materiality beautifully fecund they are nonetheless at their moral core, violently sterile.

Like Atwood's female characters who struggle to avoid capture in the feminizing mirror, Morrison indicts the Western ideal of "physical beauty," declaring that it and its extrapolated notion of virtue are "Probably the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought. Both originated in envy, thrived in insecurity, and ended in disillusion" (97). Ironically, although with a much less devastating effect (and this difference is crucial for Morrison), Margaret Street, "the priniciple Beauty of Maine," is dehumanized for meeting the ideological standard in much the same way as Pecola Breedlove in The Bluest Eyes is for not doing so.

Still it left its mark on her--being that pretty with that coloring. ...Maybe her beauty scared them a little; maybe they just felt, well, at least she has that. She won't have to worry. And they stepped back and let her be. They gave her care but withdrew attention. Their strength they gave to others who
were not beautiful; their knowledge, what information they had they did not give to this single beautiful one. They saved it, distributed it instead to those whose characters had to be built. The rest of their energies they used on the problems of surviving in a county that did not want them there. (Tar Baby 47-48)

"The principle beauty of Maine" is an ornament or a sweet luxury not a person. And she, like Pecola, longs for the recognition of her subject:

Now that Michael was an adult, of all the people she knew he seemed to her the best. The smartest and the nicest. She liked his company, to talk to him to be around him. Not because he is my son, she told herself, my only child, but because he is interesting and he thinks I am interesting too. I am special to him. Not as a mother, but as a person. (50)

Margaret Street may be "interesting" and "special" to her son as a "person." This is a "person" her son assiduously avoids, because she violently acted out the "specialness" of her own pain by sticking him with pins when he was young. His cries of pain undoubtedly served as a masculine acknowledgement of her presence as an active subject rather than a passive object, a position denied her everywhere else, even in motherhood.

Morrison most fully develops the effects of this ideology on her black female characters in The Bluest Eye through the mother-daughter figures of Pauline and Pecola, and in doing so, reveals more cogently its dis-eased core.

In equating physical beauty with virtue, [Pauline] stripped her mind, bound it, and collected self-contempt by the heap. She forgot lust and simple caring for. She regarded love as possessive mating, and romance as the goal of the spirit. It would be
for her a well-spring from which she would draw the most destructive emotions, deceiving the lover and seeking to imprison the beloved, curtailing freedom in every way. (97)

In accepting the tenets of "white culture," Pauline, like Surfacing's Anna, participates in her co-optation. She cannot be, like Surfacing's Anna or Tar Baby's Margaret Street, the "princess" or "principle beauty," but she can construct her identity as an imitation. In doing so, however, she must negate her reality. That is, like Macon Dead and Guitar, she enacts negatively the world of Not and creates the "illusion of the neck."

In the white, upper-class Fisher household, where even her physical disability is muted by "deep pile carpets," Pauline finds the "Power, praise, and luxury" that which the "dingy storefront" home in which she resides could never provide her. In the Fisher's home Pauline can make her "mark" upon the world, inscribe her presence.

Here she could arrange things, clean things, line things up in neat rows. ...Here she found beauty, order, cleanliness, and praise. Mr. Fisher said, "I would rather sell her blueberry cobblers than real estate." She reigned over cupboards stacked high with food that would not be eaten for weeks, even months; she was the queen of canned vegetables.... The creditors and service people who humiliated her when she went to them on her own behalf respected her, were even intimidated by her, when she spoke for the Fishers.

Here, like Macon Dead, Pauline rules a closely circumscribed terrain. But, here, Pauline is not a poor, black woman. She is not lame; she does not live in a "building that had been built as a store" rather than
a home; she has not left her own children "to go back to work" in order to feed them. Here, there is "No zinc tub, no buckets of stoveheated water, no flaky, stiff, grayish towels washed in a kitchen sink, dried in a dusty backyard, no tangled black puffs of rough wool to comb. The negatives here are as pronounce as they are in Railroad Tommy's speech. But, Pauline imagines, like Macon Dead, that she has escaped them.

Only in the Fisher household could Pauline be the cultural image of the "mother" she saw created in and through the movies. She could give a child everything: blueberry cobbler, pink nighties, embroidered pillow slips, cleanliness, order, gentleness, warmth, comfort, and love. And more importantly, Here Pauline seemed to receive all that she gave in return. Her presence was recognized by all with whom she had contact. But only Here, because she is not one of the Fishers she simply reflects them.

For Pauline as well as the Fishers, this household embodies the "good life" created through the images of popular films. Which, by sustaining an ideology that connected ideas of virtue with materiality, portrayed the white cultural world as utopian. In this fantasy world, where "the flawed became whole, the blind sighted, and the lame threw away their crutches, [and where] death was dead, and people made every gesture in a cloud of music" (97), Pauline found a "role [that] filled
practically all of her needs" (100). The ugly, poverty-stricken reality of her own family's condition was so overwhelming that it increasingly fades into the background of her "life" and becomes only that which she must "work" against.

All the meaningfulness of her life was in her work. For her virtues were intact. She was an active church woman, did not drink, smoke or carouse, defended herself mightily against Cholly, rose above him in every way, and felt she was fulfilling a mother's role conscientiously when she pointed out [to her children] their father's faults to keep them from having them, or punished them when they showed any slovenliness, no matter how slight, when she worked twelve to sixteen hours a day to support them. And the world itself agreed with her. (my emphasis 102)

Pauline takes the "Fisher's World" back into her own community as negativity.

What simple pleasure there might have been in Pauline's past, which "only sometimes, and then rarely" takes on its own "dreaminess" (102) and what moral vision she might have taken from it, has been obscured by the harshness of her reality and the movie-Fisher world that indemnifies her perceptions of the "good life." So much so, that for Pauline to constitute a sense of self, she must "work" to sustain both "realities"--She came into her own with the women who had despised her, by being more moral than they; she avenged herself on Cholly by forcing him to indulge in the weaknesses she despised; and although her daughter was from the beginning, "a right smart baby,...who[m] she like to watch," Pauline, like "the world" that formed her opinions, decreed Pecola
"ugly" (99-100) and abandoned her to the "ugliness" she inscribed upon the world of Not.

The fact that Morrison sets The Bluest Eye in the mythic land of opportunity, the North, for blacks underscores how the value-system adjusts its images in order to preserve its hegemony. For Pauline and the Fishers, the "mammy" is both long ago and far away, a part of a southern past. Neither Pauline, who receives personal validation and "love" as the "ideal servant" nor the Fishers, who perceive themselves as generously appreciative and "helpless" without her, comprehend the socio-political mechanism which keeps them bound. Pauline is not a mammy; she is by Northern standards a conscientious "mother," diligently meeting the "needs" of white and black households, white and black children. Pauline, like Macon Dead, is the dominant ideology's "ideal servant."

Morrison deconstructs the "ideal servant in her third novel, Song of Solomon, through Circe, who has survived slavery and experienced first-hand Reconstruction's emancipation and understands the illusion of Pauline's subjective position. She too was kept, the "ideal servant," even as the Butler estate faded into the past. And when it became clear to Mrs. Butler that her world of privilege was crumbling under its own weight, she "killed herself."
[S]he started selling bits and pieces—land, jewels, furniture. The last few years we ate out of the garden. Finally she couldn't take it any more...[and] she killed herself rather than do the work I'd been doing all my life! ...She saw the work I did all her days and died, you hear me, died rather than live like me. Now, what do you suppose she thought I was! If the way I lived and the work I did was so hateful to her she killed herself to keep from having to do it.... (246-247)

Circe stayed with Mrs. Butler because she believed erroneously that she and Mrs. Butler shared the same space. Mrs. Butler's suicide underscored their difference. Circe and Pauline and Ondine from Tar Baby are all neccessary, like the southern mammy was for the southern lady, for Mrs. Butler and Mrs. Fisher and Margaret Street to represent the feminine "ideals" of Western ideology. All six women are inscribed by the logos as complementary "ladies," bearing its value-system and reflecting the image of the its (m)others. But, their burdens are nevertheless decidedly different.

Circe, like Guitar Bains, sets herself in opposition to the forces which have defined her existence. She presides, not unlike Pauline who reigns in maintenance of the Fisher household, over the Butler estate's deterioration:

They loved this place...loved it..Stole for it, lied for it killed for it. But I'm the one left...And I will never clean it again. Never. Nothing. Not a speck of dust, not a grain of dirt, will I move. Everything in this world they lived for will crumble and rot." (247)

Circe's life is still as dedicated to the Butlers as Pauline's is to the Fishers. That is, neither she nor
Pauline have broken the bond that united them in the first place. They have "adjusted without improvement," made the "dance" their own, and perpetuated the "circle game." Like their male counterparts, Macon Dead or Guitar Bains, they have accepted the terms of their feminization, (re)creating the site upon which logos inscribes its reflection. Either response to the dominan ting "white" presence as a mode for constructing a subject position is in Morrison analysis of self and of community always already defeated. She fictionally concludes as Henry Gates or McDowell does theoretically that "the attempt to posit a 'black self' in the very Western languages in which blackness itself is a figure of absence is a negation." 24

V. The "Organic" Link: (Re)conceiving the Black Feminine Space

The presence of the Western value system is nonetheless a given within Morrison's fictional worlds, as much a part of the Bottom in Sula, for example, as Reba's Grill and pear trees; its ideology overflows the white spaces on Morrison's pages saturating the black characters that she constructs through its language. But as her narrator tells us in The Bluest Eye, the "why" of this condition "is difficult to handle," so "one must take refuge in how" (9). That is, Morrison concerns herself less with comprehending the dominant mentality
than she does in investigating the effects of American-Western culture on the internal colonies she creates in remarkably rich detail. To break the "circle game" imposed by the binary logic with which the African-descended have been inscribed, Morrison "neutralizes" and then "naturalizes" it. Cutting the ideological umbilical cord that connects Western oppositions (culture/nature, white/black, masculine/feminine), she, as Deborah E. McDowell recognizes, "moves beyond them, avoiding the false choices they imply and dictate" (80) for all her characters, but most particularly for the women in her novels.  

Notably in *Sula*, Morrison's "feminist" inquiry into self-determination, the tension which suspends her characters in the "illusion of the neck" has already exploded when the novel opens. The "nigger joke" of the Bottom, "not a town...but that part of town where the Negroes lived" (4), is already, as numerous critics have pointed out, gone.

In that place, where they tore the nightshade and blackberry patches from their roots to make room for the Medallion City Golf Course, there was once a neighborhood. It stood in the hills above the valley town of Medallion and spread all the way to the river. It is called the suburbs now, but when black people lived there it was called the Bottom (3).

But the Bottom, although a "neighborhood" of families complete with the Time and a Half Pool Hall, Irene's Palace of Cosmetology, and Reba's Grill, never existed within
the consciousness of Medallion as a "town anyway" (4). It was instead a natural place, a wilderness of "nightshade and blackberry patches" and of "beeches, oaks, maples...chestuts, [and] pear trees" (3), tended by its inhabitants until it is required by the "town" that inscribed it as a pleasurable--"on quiet days people in valley houses could hear singing sometimes, banjos sometimes (4), like birds trilling from the hills--and profitable--when "a valley man happened to have business...collecting rent or insurance payments" (4). The Bottom was always potentially the "suburbs" and "Medallion City Golf Course" in the "town's" imagination, because it was otherness waiting to be re-ordered and made useful.

In exposing its illusion, Morrison attenuates the tension in the paradox of its existence. There are no adjustments to or confrontations with the dominant ideology to drive the plot or her characters in the novel: "the foot-bridge that crossed the river [and both separated and united them] is already gone" (3).

More importantly like the dominant culture which relegates her communities to the realm of Not, Morrison "naturalizes" the dominant culture. She reduces the "white" world to a dangerous but nevertheless "natural" phenomena within the black world.

In spite of their fear, they reacted to an oppressive oddity, or what they called evil days, with an acceptance that bordered on welcome. Such evil must be avoided, they felt, and precautions must naturally be taken to protect themselves from it. But they
let it run its course, fulfill iself, and never invented ways either to alter it, to annihilate it or to prevent its happening again. ...What was taken by outsiders to be slackness, slovenliness or even generosity was in fact full recognition of the legitimacy of forces other than good ones. They did not believe doctors could heal—for them, none ever had done so. They did not believe death was accidental—life might be, but death was deliberate. They did not believe Nature was ever askew—only inconvenient. Plague and drought were as "natural" as springtime. If milk could curdle, God knows robins could fall. The purpose of evil was to survive it and they determined (without ever knowing they had made up their minds to do it) to survive floods, white people, tuberculosis, famine and ignorance. (89-90)

In this way, Morrison decenters her text, shifting the focus from the masculine order, which splits the world between its self and the other, to the feminine space: the wild zone. Here, as McDowell notes, "she trangresses and blurs the boundaries these oppositions create, boundaries separating us from others and rendering us "others" to ourselves" (80).

This is not to say that the dominant ideology does not intrude upon (and eventually fully inscribe) the wild zone; it does. Shadrack and Plum return from their experiences in World War I to the Bottom physically and psychologocially wounded; Jude is emasculated when denied work on the bridge; and Sula, who is suspected of sleeping with white men, seems to bring its destructive force back with her. But, for the period enclosed in the novel, a (re)membered past, these intrusion are "moments" to live in and through.
The construction of this past time rebuilds "the foot-bridge that crossed the river" (3) from the South to the North, the site through which African-American women were inscribed and from which they constructed, despite the brutality of the inscription, a sense of self and identity.

Edging into life from the back door. Becoming. Everybody in the world was in a position to give them orders. White women said, "Do this." White children said, "Give me that." White men said, "Come here." Black men said, "Lay down." The only people they need not take orders from were black children and each other. But they took all of that and re-created it in their own image. They ran the houses of white people, and knew it. When white men beat their men, they cleaned up the blood and went home to receive abuse from the victim. They beat their children with one hand and stole for them with the other. The hands that felled trees also cut umbilical cords; the hands that wrung the necks of chickens and butchered hogs also nudged African violets into bloom; the arms that loaded sheaves, bales, and sacks rocked babies into sleep. They patted biscuits into flaky ovals of innocence—and shrouded the dead. They plowed all day and came home to nestle like plums under the limbs of their men. The legs that straddled a mule's back were the same ones that straddled their men's hips. And the difference was all the difference there was. (The Blues Eye, my emphasis, 109-110)

It is the sense of power associated with knowing that difference that enables these "grandmothers" of all Morrison's characters to (re)create and bring forth the "northern" identity which liberates Tar Baby's Jadine, who feels in New York that her "neck really connected her body to her head:"

...if ever there was a black woman's town New York was it. No, No, not over there making land-use decision, or deciding what was or was not information. But there, there, there, and there. Snapping whips
behind the teller's windows, kicking ass at Con Edison offices, barking orders in the record companies, hospitals, public schools. They refused loans at Housefold Finance, withheld unemployment checks and driver's licenses, issued parking tickets and summonses. Gave enemas, blood transfusions and please lady don't make me mad. They jacked up meetings in boardrooms, turned out luncheons, energized parties, redefined fashion, tipped scales, removed lids, cracked covers, and turned an entire telephone company into such a diamondhead of hostility the company paid you for not talking to their operators. (Tar Baby 191)

The women of New York share with their "grandmothers" of the South the ability to "re-create in their own image" this metropolis. Morrison's fiction dramatizes her theory of shared Being, and "for her, roots are less to do with place, than with inner space: the freedom to be oneself, and yet a member of the tribe" (Russell 44). That Jadine cannot feel the "neck" that "really connected her body to her head" in part contributes to the instability of her identity.

"Escaping," to borrow Atwood's phrase, "the sea of femininity" which Jadine perceives as the American South and in which she believes she would drowned, Jadine rushes to marry a white European, who "was not as bad as white and American (41), but "wonder[s]" as she does so, "if the person he wants to marry is me or a black girl?" (my emphasis 41). The anxiety produced by this tension prompts Jadine's desire "to get out of [her] skin and be only the person inside--not American--not black--just me" (41).

The "me" that Jadine posits as other than "the black girl," however, signals an underlying assumption—that
there is a static, apolitical, essential self—that further complicates her struggle for subjectivity. This is, as contemporary theory demonstrates, a fallacy of the logos. Jadine is, although separate and distinct in her sameness, an American, black girl. Her desire "to get out of her [black, American] skin" is a desire to negate her self rather than re-create her situatedness "in her own image" as her Southern grandmothers and New York sisters have done.

It is within the community of African-American women that Morrison locates the feminine space through which an authentic subjectivity can begin the process of Being. That is, Morrison suggests that the wild zone exists wherever and whenever African-American women come together. This configuration transliterates the binary subject-object relationship. In this space, a woman's "other" is another woman, a "mirrored" image of the self.

To create this dynamic space, Morrison consistently employs various forms of the double figure. In some cases, these pairs are "different" versions of the same woman such as Pauline Breedlove and Geraldine, two women whose self-images have been disastrously distorted in The Bluest Eye; or, they are similar versions of the different women such as Sethe and Denver, two women who are "different"—one a white, indentured servant, the other a black slave—yet meet as they flee their "similar" situations. One of
Morrison's more complicated pairs takes the form of "sisters." These "pairs" share a familial connection such as Claudia and Frieda MacTeer in *The Bluest Eye* or Ruth Foster Dead and Pilate Dead in *Song of Solomon*. These pairs are never, however, without an intimate connection to the larger community of women. Both Pilate and Ruth, for instance, are connected to Hagar, the former through her daughter and the latter through her son.

*Sula* serves as an exemplary text for comprehending the intricacy and intimacy of this community and the developing of Morrison's *wild zone*, because it is a "sea of femininity." Minimizing the forces that produce the anxiety that drives Pauline's and Geraldine's as well as Jadine's desire "to get out of [their] skin," Morrison momentarily suspends the Law of the *logos*, not only taking her characters out of the dominant culture's influence but out of time and place: the Bottoms no longer exists.

Within the feminine space, the figures of "sisters" expand exponentially through the inter-relational pairings and the multiplicity of subjective positions for each character. This "sameness," however, does not narcissistically limit intersubjective experience but rather meaningfully expands it.

*Sula* and Nel are the obvious spiritual "sisters" in the novel, but Hannah Peace as daughter, mother, and woman, intimately shares this space with Eva, her mother, *Sula,*
her daughter, and her "sisters" in the Bottoms. And, Eva, as mother, grandmother, and woman, actively engages Hannah, Sula, and Nel as daughters and women. It is through these "familial" connections that Morrison examines the feminine psyche.

A conversation between "mothers" illuminates the complexity:

...Hannah sat with two friend, Patsy and Valentine...all talking casually about one thing and another, and had gotten around...to the problems of child rearing.

"They a pain."

Yeh, Wish I'd listened to mamma. She told me not to have 'em too soon."

...Can't helping loving your own child. No matter what they do."

"Well, Hester grown now and I can't say love is exactly what I feel."

"Sure you do. You love her, like I love Sula. I just don't like her. That's the difference."

"Guess so. Likin' them is another thing."

"Sure. They different people, you know..." (my emphasis, 57)

Importantly, all these women are at once "daughters," "mothers," and "persons." That is, Patsy, Valentine, and Hannah, who are "mothers" discussing a daughter, who has herself become a woman, wish as daughters, who became women that they had comprehended their mothers as women, who gave what they now know was womanly advise. From the depth of their sameness, they apprehend a "difference that was all the difference there was," the difference that signified an other subject, who, like the self, was in a state of becoming. That is, the dominant/subordinate concept built into the subject-object relationship dissolves
and is replaced by an awareness of subjective motility. And equally important, that loving the other had little to do with liking her (or him). These basic precepts, defined by intimate yet separate and distinct sameness, ground the ideology of Morrison's wild zone.

This recognition does not come without intrapsychic confusion and intersubjective struggle, however, as characterized by Sula's and Nel's relationship. But importantly within Morrison's system, "it let them use each other to grow on" (52). Both Sula and Nel, who "clung to [each other] as the closest thing to both an other and a self...discover that [they, like Hannah, Patsy, Valentine, and Eva were nevertheless] not one and the same thing" (119). Indeed, while Nel feels that "talking to Sula had always been a conversation with herself" (94), an apparent internal dialogue or intrasubjective experience, she discovers, like Sula learns about Nel, that she is instead "one of them" (120), an other. Initially, and in reality only superficially, this discovery shatters the relationship, creating both an intrasubjective and intersubjective silence in their on-going "conversation" with their selves.

Without the masculine order to control and adjudicate experience, there are only questions to be asked of and answered by an other. And importantly the questions could as easily be asked, and Morrison suggests, should be asked
of the self. Sula establishes the depth of the demand and the complexity of intersubjectivity within the wild zone, when as young girl, accosted by young boys on her way home from school, she removes a pairing knife from her pocket, cuts off the tip of her own finger, and queries, "If I can do that to myself, what you suppose I'll do to you?" (54-55). She receives neither an answer from the boys nor a question from Nel who accompanied her, so no demand is pressed upon Sula to answer the question for her self. It hangs dangerously in the textual air, until immediately thereafter Morrison implies the answer, when Sula accidentally kills Chicken Little. In the silence that surrounds Chicken Little death, where his absence—"the something newly missing" (61)—expresses a questioning presence to the self, Sula receives an ambiguous answer from Shadrack for a question—did he see the what happened?—she believes she did not ask: "Always" (63).

Although uninterpreted by the little girls within the immediate context of experience, this answer's "promise licked at [Sula'] feet" (63), seeming to suggest that there would "always" be an other who would "see" and question the self. That is, an other who would reveal the self as other and demand that the self answer its own questions. This "promise," for the most part, goes unfulfilled for Sula. Silence surrounds her. Unlike Eva, who also
apparently mutilates herself and kills her son but must answer her daughter's inquiry into Plum's death, or Nel, who unquestioningly mutilates her sexual being by committing it to the social institutions of wife and mother, but must answer for both this ("About who was good. How you know it was you?" (146)) and her complicity in Chicken Little's death, silence surrounds Sula until the end of her life. Others react to her presence as an object from which they differentiate their selves but they do not respond to her as an other subject. That is, they do not question her self and demand that she articulate her difference. And this, Morrison suggests through Sula's longing, is the desire of the feminine self:

[Sula] had had been looking all along for a friend, and it took her a while to discover that a lover was not a comrade and could never be--for a woman. And that no one would ever be that version of herself which she sought to reach out to and touch with an ungloved hand. (121)

Sula desires direct, naked "contact" with "other" versions of her self, which she (mis)recognizes as Nel.

The metaphoric physicality (often contextually eroticized by its flow from a heterosexual encounter) with which Morrison characterizes the friendship between these two women suggests, as Barbara Smith observes, a lesbian experience that has been perhaps short-circuited by the intrusion of the masculine order. For, as Smith notes, Sula "works as a lesbian novel not only because of the passionate friendship between Sula and Nel, but because
of Morrison's consistently critical stance toward the heterosexual institutions of male/female relationships, marriage, and the family."  

But, the binariness of Smith's assumption—either heterosexuality or homosexuality—undermines the power Morrison locates in the Feminine. That is, Smith assumes that since heterosexuality has been institutionally inscribed by the masculine order it cannot be (re)inscribed by the Feminine and/or that feminine subjectivity can be only limited by it.

Morrison's consistent heterosexuality, unlike that of Alice Walker or Gloria Naylor, for example, suggests otherwise. Indeed, the portraits of Southern grandmothers and New York sisters reveal that she works from within the "institution," for these women are part and parcel of the societal infrastructure. Having differently shared the socio-political manifestations of the logos with their masculine counterparts, African-American women seem to come to their difference with a deeper sense of the significance of difference-within-sameness. Sethe doesn't "have to tell [Paul D] about Sweet Home—what it was--but maybe [he] don't know what is was like for [her] to get away from there" (Beloved 161).

Like Atwood, Morrison dialectically works within Western duality. Which is not say that black women have not defined a way of being within the value-saturated
dualisms that is their own. And significantly this feminine space is constructed through a complex recognition of difference-within-sameness and the value of subjective authenticity. In spite of, if not because of the logos, for example, Sethe becomes an "I" within it.

Covering the lower half of her face with her palms, she paused to consider again the size of the miracle; its flavor.

I did it. I got us all out. Without Halle too. Up till then it was the only thing I ever did on my own. Decided. An it come off right, like it was supposed to. We was here. Each and every one of my babies and me too. I birthed them and I got em out and it wasn't no accident. I did that. I had help, of course lots of that, but still it was me doing it; me saying, Go on and Now. (Beloved 162)

Sethe determines her self, constructs an I that acts and speaks, because her situatedness demanded it. And just as she acted "to put her babies where they would be safe" (164), Sethe attempts to articulate that active self to Paul D. At once "Proud she had done it...[and] annoyed that she had not needed Halle or him in the doing" (8), Paul D cannot comprehend the difference of Sethe's experience:

"It ain't my job to know what's worse. It's my job to know what is and to keep them away from what I know is terrible. I did that."
"What you did was wrong, Sethe"
"I should have gone on back there? Taken my babies back there?"
"There could have been a way. Some other way."
"You got two feet, Sethe, not four," he said, and right then a forest sprang up between them; trackless and quiet." (Beloved 165)
While Halle gave her the babies who are intimately tied to her "I" and Paul D will (re)connect her lost children and her self, the "help" Sethe received in the creation of that "self," came from "other" women, who supported her while her "I" born.

Black women had to be real and genuine to each other, there was no one else. In pre-agency days they took care of the sick, the elderly, the children. There was a profound and real need there, for physical as well as psychological survival. (Russell my emphasis, 45)

Males are not excluded from Morrison's world: they are also "sick, elderly, children," and wounded within it. But, they are often, too, an absent-presence, the "something newly missing," through which women share their experience.

The complementary legend of Ryna's story, the Flying African's wife from Song of Solomon, punctuates the (mis)representation of African-American women's experience.

They say she screamed and screamed, lost her mind completely. You don't hear about women like that any more, but there used to be more—the kind of woman who couldn't live without a particular man. And when the man left, they lost their minds, or died or something. Love, I guess. But I always thought it was trying to take care of children by themselves, you know what I mean? (my emphasis 323)

Although the masculine order encodes its absent-presence in the lost object of Ryna's experience, Susan Byrd's interpretation revises Ryna's story through her comprehension of women's lives.

The diverse community of women, who share a comprehension of the masculine order and the feminine space, comprises the "neck" that really connected a woman's
body to her head." But, there is still a difference within the community. For although Denver, the white woman for whom Sethe's daughter is named, helps Sethe physically survive the ordeal of her "birth," it is Baby Suggs, Halles' mother, who too had lost children to slavery, who helps her "bear" that self. And without Baby Suggs, Denver's effort would have been futile. As African-American women, Baby Suggs and Sethe share a (dis)similar reality with Denver and Paul D, and it is this difference that intersubjectively connects them. Even as little girls, as suggested by Sula, the black women represented by Morrison are cognizant of their socio-political position: "Because each had discovered years before that they were neither white nor male, and that all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them, they set about creating something else to be" (51).

The masculine presence, in Morrison's work, rather than representing the impediment to feminine identity seems to be its catalyst, especially as it ignites the (re)creative possibilities located in feminine sexuality. That is, from the logos which sought to define black women, Morrison's female characters, (re)created within it a feminine "heterodoxy" that was separate and distinct and yet in relation to it.

The reclamation of the black women's (hetero)sexual bodies and the experience developed through them is
connected with the concept of the mother's body within Morrison aesthetics. Notably, characters such as Pauline or Geraldine, who have endeavored "to get rid of the funkiness...the dreadful funkiness of passion, the funkiness of nature, the funkiness of the wide range of human emotions" fail as mothers and as subjects. In repressing their sexual being, they become feminized objects within the "institutions" which elide the construction of feminine self and identity. Morrison posits that without a relationship to their own sexual being, her female characters lose the ability to bring a feminine rather than a feminized self into being. That is, they lose the ability to (m)other their selves.

Indeed, it is the female character's initial and apparent masculine objectification that seems to tap, for Morrison as it does in Sula, the sense of difference from which they (re)create their selves as desiring subjects:

Nel and Sula walked through this valley of eyes chilled by the wind and heated by the embarrassment of appraising stares. The old men looked at their stalklike legs, dwelled on the cords in the back of their knees and remember old dance steps they had not done in twenty years. In their lust, which age had turned to kinkness, they moved their lips as though to stir up the taste of young sweat on tight skin.

Pig meat. The words were in all their minds. And one of them, one of the young ones, said it aloud. Softly but definitively and there was no mistaking the compliment.

...Years later their own eyes would glaze as they cupped their chins in remembrance of inchworm smiles, the squatting hauches, the track-rail legs straddling broken chairs. The cream-colored trousers marking with a mere seam the the place where the mystery curled. Those smooth vanilla crotches invited them;
those lemon-yellow gabardines beckoned to them. (50-51)

And although Sula and Nel have responded differently to the inviting "vanilla crotches," one experimentally and the other conventionally, they share an awareness that their selves are intimately (dis)connected to the men who awaken the power of their consciousness.

[Sula] waiting impatiently for him to turn away and settle into a wet skim of satisfaction and light disgust, leaving her to the postcoital privateness in which she met herself, welcomed herself, and joined herself in matchless harmony. (123)

[Nel feels that she] could be a mule or plow the furrows with my hands if need be or hold these rickety walls up with my back if need be if I knew that somewhere in this world in the pocket of some night I could open my legs to some cowboy lean hips.... (110)

The imaginary, indeterminate "maleness" represents not so much a masculine presence but a feminine one. That is, the imaginary other serves primarily as an invocation of the desiring subject. The focus of Sula and Nel's sexuality is turned powerfully inward. And it is this inwardness that they bring into dialogue with "other versions" of their selves.

Significantly, while Sula's shares the "events" of her life, she does not articulate her experience, particularly with "other versions" of her self, "other" women. That is, the "me" that she creates and so fiercely defends—"I'll split this town in two and everything in it before I'll let you put [whatever's burning
in me] out!" (93)—remains an enigma to her self. She does not share her consciousness with an other and is not (m)othered into being. Sula neither discerns the difference within sameness, nor does she fully comprehend the dynamic of the feminine space, which asserts that "somebody else" is necessary to "make" the self.

Ironically, Eva, Sula's remarkably unconventional grandmother, conventionally articulates the need for "otherness in her questioning of Sula's difference: "When you gone to get married; You need to have some babies. It'll settle you" (92). While neither Eva's own dramatic experience of the conventionality of marriage nor Nel's banal one would seem to recommend this course for creating a self, Morrison implies that these women engage "otherness" in ways that Sula does not.

"Morrison takes pains to underline the fact that for all of her refreshing bravado," as Grant notes, "[Sula] is an 'unfinished' woman, an entity who may not need a primary relationship but who does need to be in a relationship to something or someone." Through Eva, Morrison suggests that motherhood—babies are what will "settle" Sula not marriage—begins the process of becoming for the feminine psyche in that she becomes aware of her self in relation to other selves: she remembers her self as a child and (re)connects to her own mother and as a mother she connects to her own mother as a woman through
this shared experience. When Eva challenges Sula autonomy, she attempts to convince her that she is connected to others. According to Morrison's system, motherhood enables a woman to conceive her difference reflected by and in relation to the multiple "other" versions of her self.

Sula, however, "thinks" in opposites rather than differences. Modeled, as Morrison's comments, on a "masculine" character type, Sula constructs her identity through negating her connection to others and thereby negating her self. Sula's deconstruction of the "black man's" situatedness confirms her apprehension

I mean, everything in the world loves you. White men love you. They spend so much time worrying about your penis they forget their own. The only they was to do is cut off a nigger's privates. And if that ain't love and respect I don't know what is. And with women? They chase you all to every corner of the earth, feel for you under every bed. I know a white woman wouldn't leave the house after 6 o'clock for fear one of you would snatch her. Now aint' that love? They think rape soon's they seen you, and if they don't get the rape they looking of, they scream it anyway just so the search won't be in vain. Colored women worry themselves into bad health just trying to hang on to your cuffs. Even little children--white and black, boys and girls--spend all their childhood eating their hearts out 'cause they thing you don't love them. And if that aint enough, you love yourselves. Nothing in this world loves a black man more than another black man. You hear of solitary white men, but niggers? Can't stay away from one another a whole day. So. It looks to me like you the envy of the world (103-104).

Sula suggests through the play on the word love that black men embody desire in the logos. Sula's assessment of Jude's situatedness, despite the "feminine" language play, resembles Guitar Bains' proclamation that "Everybody wants
the black man's life...his living life" (Morrison's emphasis, *Song of Solomon* 281). This configuration either negates Sula—she is not white and not male—or constructs her as a negative reflection of the black man's anxiety—his desire to escape. While this is not the "sympathetic" reaction Jude expected, it nonetheless assuages his anxiety for he is assured of his privileged position.

"Desired" by and "desirous" of, yet at perpetual risk of being consumed by the order through which he constructs his identity, the masculinized subject creates the illusion of his individual autonomy by narcissistically focusing upon the self, recognizing the other only in opposition to it, only as object. In her doubled exclusion, Sula adopts a masculine method for constructing her identity. She objectifies the other, reducing the other to a manifestation of her desire.

"In her rhetoric, sense of humor, earthiness, ironic intelligence, and willingness to take chances and make leaps," as Grant observes, "Sula seems superior to her constricting environment" (98). That is, she appears to be an autonomous "I"/eye, who, as numerous critics have noted, dis-closes the hypocrisy of the dominant value-system. But Sula is also conventionally binary. By serving as the willing "pariah," she constitutes her self only in opposition to the dominant value-system. Rather than conceiving her self dentity from and through
the multiplicity of feminine positions, Sula accepts one of the roles conventionally presented to her. Without this designation, Sula has "no self," "no center," "no ego" (119). Like Nel who from fear retreats further and further into the safety of conventional virtue, Sula, from fear, reacts against all conventions. Both Nel and Sula are bound by the same order, fulfilling its "roles." And both are essentially static positions. Like Pauline Breedlove or Macon Dead, Sula sets herself in opposition to her own community. Most importantly for the feminine intrapsychic identity, Sula meaningfully opposes her Self to the African-American community of women. In perceiving her self in opposition rather than in relation to this community, Sula is doubly excluded, doubly negated. She has no "self"-image.  

The very structure of the *Sula*, however, as McDowell observes, "denies the whole notion of character as static essence, replacing it with the idea of character as process...a perpetual state of becoming" (153). According to Morrison's system, the difficulty for African-American women is to create a separate and distinct identity in intimate relation to the larger community of women. That is, each must independently (re)create an umibilical cord that will link her to the "other" feminine subject from which she will receive nurturing during her Becoming.
The process of Becoming does not end. Hence, Eva as a mother and grandmother must answer her daughter's "questions" and question her granddaughter's "answers." Through this, Eva's self must continually articulate—that is, bring into the object of "text" through narrative—her actions and the ideology that informs them. In articulating a moment of her Being, she others her Self. The "Me," who both Nel and Sula proclaim as distinct and separate from all others, intrapsychically confronts the I who acted and who believes.

Morrison stretches the continuity of Becoming beyond death at the end of Sula. Notably, as Sula passes out of life, she hopes to share this experience with Nel:

While in this state of wearly anticipation, [Sula] noticed that she was not breathing, that her heart had stopped completely. A crease of fear touched her breast, for any second there was sure to be a violent explosion in her brain, a gasping for breath. Then she realized, or rather she sensed, that there was not going to be any pain. She was not breathing because she didn't have to. Her body did not need oxygen. She was dead.

Sula felt her face smiling. "Well, I'll be damned," she thought, "it didn't even hurt. Wait'll I tell Nel." (149)

While Sula finally realizes the importance of articulating her experience to an other "self," the novel ultimately confirms her negative position:

"It was Nel who finally called the hospital, then the mortuary, then the police, who were the ones to come. So the white people took over. (172)

"Not until the white folks left, [the narrator tells us],...did those black people from up in the Bottom enter
with hooded hearts and filed eyes to sing "Shall We Gather at the River" over the curved earth that cut them off from the most magnificent hatred they had ever known" (173). The African-American community (re)claims Sula as its own, but it still perceives her through the masculine order: that is, in opposition to itself.

Only Nel, Sula's other self, reconnects her by introjecting and then projecting Sula back into the community of women and the feminine space.

Suddenly Nel stopped. Her eye twitched and burned a little. "Sula?" she whispered, gazing at the tops of the trees. "Sula?"

Leaves stirred; mud shifted; there was the smell of overripe green things. A soft ball of fur broke and scattered like dandelion spores in the breeze. "All that time, all that time, I thought I was missing Jude." And the loss pressed down on her chest and came up into her throat. "We was girls together," she said as though explaining something. (174)

For the first time since she was a little girl, Nel feels both the source of her loneliness and the source of her feminine self: the other woman-subject who shared her experience. Morrison does not, as Atwood does, impregnate her character with the feminine space of Nature, but Sula's memory does penetrate "the soft ball of fur" that has been gestating in Nel and from it "dandelion spores" scatter "in the breeze," suggesting that the woman Nel has become through Sula will grow in a new place and in a new way.

The "othering" of the self by a reflection of the self grounds Morrison's exploration of feminine identity.
For Morrison, the search for *difference* within sameness and the process of introjection generates the intrapsychic energy necessary for the formation of an authentic feminine self: a subject who is decidedly distinct and separate, but whose distinctness is only actualized in relation to the community of (m)others.

While the interaction between two "different" female characters drives Morrison's text, through emphasizing the introjection of feminine intersubjective experience, she posits the possibility of an authentic intrasubjectivity, a *subject-image*. That is, the "other" may be self-created through imagining it. *Sula's* narrator cites this as Sula fatal deficiency:

...her craving for the other half of her equation was the consequence of an idle imagination. Had she paints, or clay, or knew the discipline of the dance, or strings; had she anything to engage her tremendous curiosity and her gift for metaphor, she might have exchanged the restlessness and preoccupation with whim for an activity that provided her with all she yearned for. And like any artist with no art form, she became dangerous. (121)

Lacking the imagination to find a means of comprehending and articulating her experience, Sula, like Cholly Breedlove, whose life "only a musician would sense, know," is "dangerously free" (*The Bluest Eye* 125), detached from the community. In some circumstances when the ties to community have been cut, these characterizations suggest that the self must create and engage its own "text" in order to reconstruct the umbilical cord to the (m)other.
Sula and Cholly as well as other Morrison characters who are cut off from the community either by choice or deed fail to engage their selves as subjects.

But failure is not inevitable for a character in this position. Pilate, who "was cut off from people early" (Song of Solomon 141), apparently even before her birth, and who dragg[ed] her own cord and her own afterbirth behind her" (my emphasis 28) illustrates Morrison's construction of a meaningfully connected intrasubjectivity.

As a result of her extraordinary beginning, Pilate has no navel. Her "difference" separates her from the community of women, who consistently reject her when they learn of her "lack." "Finally," as the narrator observes, "Pilate began to take offense" (149). When she comprehends "what her situation in the world [is] and would probably always be she [throws] away every assumption she had learned and [begins] at zero" (149), deciding to engage her self as an other:

...she tackled the problem of trying to decide how she wanted to live and what was valuable to her. When am I happy and when am I sad and what is the difference? What do I need to know to stay alive? what is true in the world? (149)

That is, Pilate engages her self in dialogue--her "I" questioning her "Me"--rather than "opposing" her image to the community, accepting its inscription as a self-image.
In this dialogue, Pilate comprehends her experience of "difference," her distinctness, and while she remains on the community's fringe, she sustains her connection to it.

...her alien's compassion for troubled people ripened her and the consequence of the knowledge she had made up or acquired—kept her just barely within the boundaries of the elaborately socialized world of black people. Her dress might be outrageous to them, but respect for other people's privacy—which they were all very intense about—was balancing. She stared at people, and in those days looking straight into another person's eyes was considered among black people the height of rudeness, an act acceptable only with and among children and certain kinds of outlaws—but she never made an impolite observation. And true to the palm oil that flowed in her veins, she never had a visitor to whom she did not offer food before one word of conversation—business or social—began. (149)

Morrison cements Pilate's connection to the African-American community, and particularly the community of women through Milkman Dead, her brother's son. Broadly, Pilate narrates her history for him and it is this history that (re)connects them both to slavery in America and the (m)other country through the legend of "Flying African." But more subtly, she, assisting Ruth who carries Milkman, provides the "magic" potion that thwarts Macon's attempts to abort his son. Milkman thereby connects Pilate to Ruth; they share motherhood both literally and figuratively. Moreover, Milkman connects Pilate more deeply to her granddaughter, Hagar; they share a women's desire. Pilate recognizes in Ruth and Hagar a sameness
within difference. This recognition is the source of Pilate's power.

Morrison reveals the complexity of Pilate intersubjective awareness in an episode involving her daughter, Reba. An unidentified man, presumably one of Reba's lovers, is beating her daughter. Pilate picks up a knife and confronts him:

...approaching the man from the back, she whipped her right arm around his neck and positioned the knife at the edge of his heart.

...Now, I'm not going to kill you, honey. Don't you worry none. Just be still a minute, the heart's right here,...So you have to be real still, you hear? You see, darlin', that there is the only child I got. The first baby I ever had, and if you could turn around and see my face...you'd know she's also the last. Women are foolish, you know, and mamas are the most foolish of all. And you know how mamas are, don't you? You got a mama, ain't you? Sure you have, so you know what I'm talking about. Mamas get hurt and nervous when somebody don't like they children. First real misery I ever had in may life was when I found out somebody--a little teeny tiny boy it was--didn't like my little girl. Made me so mad, I didn't know what to do. We do the best we can, but we ain't got that strength you men got. That's why it makes us so sad if a grown man start beating up on one of us. You know what I mean? I'd hate to pull this knife out and have you try some other time to act mean to my little girl. Cause one thing I know for sure: whatever she done, she been good to you. Still, I'd hate to push it in more and have your mama feel like I do now. I confess, I don't know what to do. Maybe you can help me. Tell me, what should I do? (93-94)

The man answers Pilate's question by promising never to abuse Reba again. But Pilate's awareness of the "other" extends far beyond Reba and this man. She includes Reba, herself and the man's mother in the larger community of women. In beating Reba, he is abusing "one of us," and
his actions can effect all three women: he can hurt Reba, which will in turn hurt Pilate, who may have to hurt his mother by killing him.

Pilate's emphasis on "Mamas" is crucial in Morrison system, suggesting that these figures form the organic link between the masculine order and the feminine space. "Mamas" embody the intersubjective "umbilical cord" that connect women to the feminine space and through which they sustain a relation to the larger community. As Pilate observes, the man has a "mama," so he too can comprehend "what [she] is talking about."

But more significantly, Morrison posits the reproductive female body as the "organic" link to the feminine space. When the feminine psyche fully enters the wild zone of this shared experience, it (re)connects the head to the body "conceives" the "other" as a subject, like herself, rather than an object. The significance of becoming a mother for Morrison appears to be that it ensures subjective motility. As (m)others, Morrison female characters intrapsychically move between identity-positions. They are grandmothers, mothers, daughters, granddaughters, wives, and sisters. Each identity-position must be self-determined in relation to an other who reflect a "different" image of the self. This fluidity opens the possibility of revising, (re)inscribing not only the self but of "re-creating in one's own image," an existing
script like dandelions or other wild flowers sprouting in a man-made garden. The uniquely feminine experience of (m)othering connects Morrison's characters to the feminine space, and through this space they reconnect not only their intrasubjectivity to their individual bodies but they (re)create an umbilical cord that attaches them to "other" subjects who are remarkably different in their sameness.
END NOTES


2 Barbara Rigney in The Voices of Toni Morrison (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991) points out "The importance of the metaphor that pervades the works of such theorists as Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Helene Cixous, Catherine Clement, Marguerite Duras, and Monique Wittig...as symbolic of radical dissidence and linguistic revolution" (3). All subsequent references to this study will appear parenthetically by page number within the text.


10 Walker notes that "By omitting the decade between 1927 and 1937 and the quarter century between 1941 and 1965, the novel conspicuously excludes most of what we think of as the Great Depression and all the years that make up the modern civil rights movement. The Depression was, of course, a time when public forces profoundly affected the lives of most Americans, and during the years between 1941 and 1965 virtually all the changes that have affected the lives of African Americans took place." (126)

American: Cultural Contexts from Critical Thinking and Writing, eds. Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen, and Bonnie Lisle. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989. The recognition of and subsequent identification with this oppressed group, as belle hooks delineates, is at best problematical. Indeed, more often than not it eventually appears to deepen rather than attenuate the African-American's socio-political plight. Morrison does not directly tackle this dilemma in her fiction, but a scene from Alice Walker's The Color Purple (New York: Washington Square Press, 1982) explicates the complexity of the power struggle.

Mayor ______ bought Miz Millie a new car, cause she said if colored could have cars then one for her was past due. So he bought her a car, only he refuse to show her how to drive it. (100)

Sofia, an African-American woman, who "slaves" for Miz Millie under the terms of her parole, teaches Miz Millie to drive. Importantly, during the teaching process, Miz Millie and Sofia share the front seat of the car, alternating the driver's position. When Miz Millie finally learns how to drive and has the "power," she bestows upon Sofia a visit to her family, whom Sofia has not seen in Miz Millie's perception for "a while." It has been, as Sofia tells her, five years. As they start their trip, having achieved the power to "drive," Miz Millie reinforces her position of socio-political power as a
member of the dominant culture by moving Sofia from the front seat to the back.

Finally she say, Sofia, with a little laugh, This is the South. ...Have you ever seen a white person and a colored sitting side by side in a car, when one of 'em wasn't showing the other one how to drive it or clean it? (my emphasis 101-102)

Miz Millie begins this episode in a subordinate position as a white woman, privileged but powerless in an obviously masculine controlled household. But, she ends it by referring to herself as a "white person." She "achieves" her sense of self by at once subverting and reinforcing the socio-political hierarchy. Figurative identification may then preserve the hegemony of the dominant culture.


16 Walker argues that "the cause of the tragedy of Sethe's murder of her own child...is slavery itself and the public policies--the Fugitive Slave Act and lynching--that slavery engendered" (39). Subsequent citations from this study will appear parenthetically by page number within the text.

17 It is interesting to note that the "myth of the North" as a site of potential self-determination informs both writers work. The allure of and longing for "elsewhere" permeates "immigrant" and "settler" fiction from its beginnings onward in time to its twentieth-century descendents. Atwood identifies this as a function of "colonial mentality, for if you suffer from a colonial mentality you believe that the great good place is always somewhere else" (Second Words, 382). Colonial characters seem perpetually pulled between the old world of original ancestry and an "elsewhere" in their present history. Both Atwood's and Morrison's fiction resonate with this dialectic tension.

18 Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Slave at Pilgrim's Point" witnesses the historical use of the image in nineteenth-century Europe as well.
19 Genevieve Fabre. "Genealogical Archealogy or the Quest for Legacy in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*." *Critical Essays on Toni Morrison*, ed. Nellie McKay. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1988. 106. All subsequent references to this article will appear parenthetically by page number within the text.


23 Morrison uses this term not as Valentine Mudimbe has defined it but as a "trope" that encompasses "the entire range of view, assumptions, readings and misreading that accompany Eurocentric learning about [African/African-descended] people" (6-7).

All subsequent references to this essay will appear parenthetically by page number in the text.

25 Morrison remarked to Sandi Russell that she "writes for black women. We are not addressing the men, as some female writers do. Black women writers look at things in an unforgiving/loving way."

26 Trudier Harris notes in "Reconnecting Fragments: Afro-American Folk Tradition in The Bluest Eye" (Critical Essays on Toni Morrison ed. Nellie Y. McKay) that "move to the North parallels a dissolution in their abilities to use forces [African American culture] to which they have been exposed for many sustaining purposes. Thus, they break the chains of continuity in culture and can only produce children who are outside that which had the potential to nurture them." For a more focused study on the Northern migration of Southern blacks see Nicholas Lehman's The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed American (New York: A. Knopf, 1991).

27 While this novel, as Melissa Walker notes, addresses socio-political reality in conspicuous absence, Morrison deliberately excludes it in order to examine more closely the complex subjectivity of feminine identity.

28 This subtle understanding of the difference between loving and liking enables Morrison to render the horrific such as Cholly's rape of his daughter or Eva's murder of her son with paradoxical tenderness.
Deborah E. McDowell notes that "Because Nel's sexuality is harnessed to and only enacted within the institutions that sanction sexuality for women--marriage and family--she does not own it" (82). That is, she does not experience her self as a desiring subject.

Rpt in Barbara Rigney's *The Voices of Toni Morrison*, 113.


Sula's angry declaration of her "me," her separate and distinct self occurs as grown woman in a ferocious argument with Eva:

I don't what to make somebody else. I want to make myself.

...Whatever's burning in me is mine! (92-93)

Nel's proclamation of her "me" occurs internally much earlier when she is a young girl and after a painful trip to the deep south where she experiences her "difference:"

I'm me. I' not their daughter. I'm not Nel. I'm me. Me.

Each time she said the word me there was a gathering in her like power, like joy, like fear.

...Me, she murmured. [...]I want...I want to be...wonderful. (28-29)

Like Cholly Breedlove whose actions create "madness" and threaten the community as a whole, Sula learns early
that "there was no other than you could count on...[and]
that there was no self to count on either."
Toni Morrison commented in an interview with Rosemarie Lester that she believed that she was "valuable as writer because [she was] a woman, because women, it seemed to [her, had] some special knowledge about certain things:

[It comes from] the ways in which they view the world, and from women's imagination. Once it is unruly and let loose, it can bring things to the surface that men--trained to be men in a certain way--have difficulty getting access to,... (54).

I believe Atwood would agree with Morrison, for she too reveals in her work that women "can bring things to the surface that men...have difficulty getting access to."

As Adrienne Rich,¹ and other feminist scholars have argued as well as the writers of this study intimate through their dramatic presentations, "[t]he dominant male culture in separating man as knower from both woman and from nature as the objects of knowledge, evolved certain intellectual polarities which still have the power to blind our imaginations." Many of Atwood's and Morrison's characters, male and female, perceive the world in opposition. But importantly, for both writers, this perception is the
sign of the characters' failure, because they get caught in the either-or "circle game."

The "special knowledge" that women have, however, is not for either writer a biological essentialism. Atwood and Morrison imply that women's "special knowledge about certain things" comes from their complex relation to the logos: women are and have been simultaneously subjects in and subjected to it: having been inscribed as other, they perceive themselves in this way. This particular situatedness gives women "access to" the space between articulation and experience. For women, the logos always has failed to represent adequately their experience; its language always has been allusive; and their position as speaking subjects within it has always been in question. There are correlations here with the postcolonial experience.

Unlike some postcolonial writers, who work within an "foreign" language, Morrison and Atwood write in their "native" tongue, but they are doubly "strangers within it." (Deleuze and Guattari 26). On the one hand, they, like all North Americans are self-consciously aware that that the "native" language is not "originary," that it has been imported and imposed upon experience, and that connects them not to their place of "origin" but to somewhere else:

The colonial settlers had to create the indigenous, to discover what they perceived to be, in Emerson's
phrase, their 'original relation with the universe' (Emerson 1836:21)

This 'original relation' ought not to be confused, as Derek Walcott...points out, with a naive 'return' to (European) origins. The establishment of this new "Adamic" relation with the world does not represent a simple return to innocence; 'The apples of its second Eden have the tartness of experience' (Walcott 1974b:5) The relation between the people and the land is new, as is that between the imported language and the land. But the language itself already carries many associations with European experience and so can never be 'innocent' in practice. Concomitantly, there is a perception that this new experience, if couched in the terms of the old, is somehow 'falsified'--rendered inauthentic--at the same time as its value, judged with Old World terms, is considered inferior (The Empire Writes Back 135).

This problem is not just a question of familiarity with the place and adapting the language to it. The situation demands that the language and its forms be deterritorialized. At the same time, Atwood and Morrison cannot adequately express their experience because the imposed logos relegates the feminine "outside by definition."

Atwood and Morrison immerse their characters in this doubled displacement. Each writer creates from within in the logos a space where misrepresentation of the feminine is reflected through their characters as experiential difference. That is, when Surfacing's protagonist believes that she is pregnant with Canadian landscape, we see this as delusional: she cannot "embody" the natural world; ferns and furry creatures do not grow within her. Or, when Morrison fills the "beautiful
"sycamores" in Sethe's memory with lynched bodies, that which is "outside (by definition)" culture, becomes a political text. Both Morrison and Atwood disassociate their female characters from the grounding principle of the feminine.

Both Atwood and Morrison suggest in their fiction, however, this disassociation heightens their characters self-reflexivity and self-consciousness. Atwood and Morrison, like Jean Baker Miller and other feminist scholars, suggest "that what women [have] learned in subordination would be the 'psychic starting point' for... 'a different, approach to living'...." The key, for both Morrison and Atwood, is women's relation to their gendered bodies. Within the sameness of focus, however, there is a notable difference.

While Atwood's female characters do "want to be ladies (desired by) and mothers (connected to)," they also feel these categories threaten their sense of self, that they will be consumed by the other. As Eisenstein observes, "many [white, middle-class] feminists felt enormous anger against their own mothers, whom they saw as the major agents of their socialization into a passive 'female' role" (70). Atwood's work reflects this sentiment. Her protagonists struggle with and for a sort of autonomy that separates them from their own "mothers" (and men), and yet preserves a relation to them. More often than
not in Atwood's work, the relationship is symbolic. Although mother figures (and other women) pervade Atwood's novels, her protagonists have little direct interaction with them. Mothers in particular are absent-presences, evoked in memories. These figures tend to represent a value-system of intimate connection, which the character intrapsychically introjects. Surfacing protagonist is representative: she apprehends the mother's difference. But, she, like all Atwood's protagonists, stands alone, pregnant with a "self," whose difference in relation to the figure of the mother, at the end of the novel has yet to be articulated. Atwood's protagonists' connection to the other is always tenous, more intrasubjective than intersubjective. Atwood's postcolonial consciousness reflects the dominant culture's stress on individual autonomy.

Morrison, on the other hand, posits motherhood as the source of feminine consciousness. "All of us knew," she tells Lester, "that we always had to work, whether we were married or not:"

We anticipated it, so we did not have the luxury that I see certain middle class white women have, of whether to work OR to have a house." Work was always going to be part of it. When we feel that work and the house are mutually exclusive, then we have serious emotional or psychological problems, and we feel oppressed. But if we regard it as just one more thing you do, it's an enhancement Black women are both ship and safe harbor (my emphasis 49)
For Morrison, the perception of themselves as mothers (or a recognition of this encoded potentiality in their sexuality) opens for black women a space in consciousness through which they construct a separate and distinct identity always in relation to an actual other. According to Morrison's system, women who are excluded either by choice or circumstance from the "safe harbor" of feminine experience represented in the value-system of motherhood sink into madness or death. Morrison emphasis is on intersubjective experience, on creating a collective consciousness.

As "the inner colonized of the First World," Atwood and Morrison reflect different yet related experiences of North American postcoloniality. The two preceding chapters, each in its own way, record the history of the "New World," where "the differences confronted as a result of colonialism were [and are] palpable" (The Empire Writes Back 136).

Both Morrison's and Atwood's fiction reveal an immigrant's consciousness. They are in the process of creating their sense of indigeneity at the same that they are constituting their sense of feminine identity within the logos. Although conscious that they are immigrants to the New World, that there was a "time-Before," neither Atwood nor Morrison struggle to (re)member, the "before" moment in their cultural history;
that is, neither writes of Europe or Africa in an effort to reconnect this history to their present. They, instead, "attempt to discover what they perceive to be their (un)original relation with the universe" (The Empire Writes Back 135) They are consciously postcolonial and North American.

But they are not Native North Americans, the people of the First Nations, the "first world" of this continent. And this difference meaningfully separates them from other postcolonial subjects. Buried and silenced in both Atwood's and Morrison's work is the hint of this ambiguous "other" history, a Native presence.

The ancient rock paintings of Atwood's Surfacing are the most prominent example in her work. But, it is important to apprehend that these painting are associated within the consciousness of all her characters with the Canadian landscape and not with a people. Indeed, it is noteworthy that although Surfacing's protagonist spent extended periods of her childhood in the Canadian interior she does not recall a single encounter with Native people; only upon her return does a Native family momentarily glide into and out of view. The people whose ancestors painted the cliffs, which play such a significant role in the creation of her identity as a Canadian woman, appear only through their absence and serve only as the alterity upon which a reflection of the Canadian feminine-subject
is glimpsed or through which the masculine notions of Western "progress" are judged. The depth of alterity represented in Native people for Atwood's feminine-subjects is best disclosed in her first novel, *The Edible Woman*.

We are introduced to Native *otherness* as conceptualized in contemporary Western Euro-consciousness through a "coast-to-coast sanitary-napkin survey [in which] something had gone embarrassingly wrong in the West" (111). Although there are clear indications—a Mr. Leslie Andrewes responds to the survey as well as a woman who has been pregnant for seven years straight and another woman who is over eighty (112)—that the survey itself was faulty in its assumptions about "Womankind" (111), it is concluded that "that dumb cluck Mrs. Lietch—or Mrs. Hatcher, whoever it was—sent them to Indian reservations again" (112). For the survey company, the data is skewed because only "The lord knows what they use" (Atwood's emphasis, 112).

One of the survey reviewers' "decisive" speculations—"moss" (112)—situates Native women not in space (the western provinces where life might be "different") but in time, notably an archaic past (presumably shared by "Womankind" before the advent of "civilized" ways of life). For Atwood, the Native presence represent a nostalgic past, a way of being prior to the postmodern consciousness of her protagonists.
Toni Morrison, too, expresses her characters' (dis)connection to a Native heritage. Like Atwood's rock paintings, which "speak" for the mysterious spirituality of the New World landscape rather than its inhabitants, Morrison creates a Native non-presence through the "animation" of the New World landscape such as the mythic horsemen, "naked and blind," of L'Arbe de la Croix in Tar Baby and the female body in Song of Solomon. Both, however, are used as the otherness from which her feminine-subjects define their "selves" in a contemporary world.

The most notable example for Morrison's work comes from her third novel, Song of Solomon. Through the absent presence of the character, Sing, the protagonist's paternal grandmother, Morrison at once links her characters to and severs them from a Native heritage: "You know colored people and Indians mixed a lot, but sometimes, well, some Indians didn't like it—the marrying, I mean" (323). It is important to note that Susan Byrd's comment here is not racial but ideological—none of the Native women referred to in the text "marry." Heddy, Sing's mother and the Native cornerstone in this story, has children but no husband.

...my own father didn't know his [father]. Heddy never said. I don't know to this day if he was white, red, or—well—what (322).
The implications seems to be that the Native presence ambiguously represents a "primitive" unruliness that becomes "civilized" in the succeeding generations, particularly through the masculine influence. "Sing's name was Singing Bird" prior to her common law or actual marriage to Jake. "And...[Susan Byrd's] father's name was Crow at first. Later...changed...to Crowell Byrd. After he took off his buckskins" (322) and presumably donned the attire appropriate to "cultural" entrance, which provides for his children's middle-class gentility: "Like Susan Byrd, [who] wore black laced shoes and cotton stockings," owned a house...[with] a neat lawn separated by a white picket fence from the field grass on either side...," taught "at the normal school," and abhorred "hunting people" because they do not respect boundaries and indiscrimately trespass "on other people's property" (my emphasis, 289).

In this novel, Morrison deliberately severs all connections to and thereby all connotations of "tribal primitivism." She magically transports, notably through his own volition, Solomon/Shalimar back to Africa and ironically and fantastical completes the native American (dis)connection to Sing (and what she represents) through the character of Pilate. Sing becomes the "still, silent, and indifferent cave of flesh" from which Pilate "dragging her own cord and her own afterbirth behind her" delivers
herself into the "New" World (my emphasis 28). "Once the new baby's lifeline was cut, the cord stump shrieveled, fell off, and left no trace of having ever existed" (28). Sing's presence, particularly as a subject, is effectively negated and relegated to pure physical "otherness." Pilate enters the American landscape like a black Athena. This dual movement toward and away from Native presence is not "new" in the literature of the "New World." Indeed, as Louis Owens and others have shown, it is in many ways a convention of American literature:

As with all colonization, the native is made over in this fiction to reflect the psychic cravings of the colonialist—for the most part Indian characters in American fiction bear very little resemblance to the human beings who, whether living on reservations or in urban centers, identify with the many tribal cultures on this continent.

The Native presence in Atwood's and Morrison's work clearly supports Owens assertion. For Atwood, the native reflects the inarticulateable Canada that she feels is continually under threat of non-Canadian appropriation; and for Morrison, the native with its association with "hunting people" seems to reflect the deep loss of the, at once, exotic and familiar "motherland" of Africa. Both Atwood and Morrison record the "New World's mystery for those who came from somewhere else and reencode "That 'great narrative of entropy and loss' which is the Euro-American version of Native American history..." (Owens 22).
Atwood's and Morrison's fictional explorations then record the voice of "the inner colonized of the First World," and there are links through this discourse to other decolonization movements. But as Atwood observed, "there are many more worlds than three, even in America,..." (Second Words 359) Neither Atwood nor Morrison represent the "Third layer" of North America colonialism and their voices must not be conflated or confused with those who must "attempt to retrieve or reconstruct their culture at the end of [or as Native North Americans must, enmeshed in] foreign rule" (The Empire Writes Back 135), Indeed, Atwood and Morrison "feminize" this space and inscribe their First World presence on and through it.

"The construction [and/or] reconstruction [of the New World and the new subjects of history, however, as theorized by postcolonialism and feminism] only occurs as a dynamic interaction between European hegemonic systems and 'peripheral' subversions of them" (The Empire Strikes Back 197). Morrison's and Atwood's relation to Native North America may represent this dynamic double movement. For at the same time as they separate themselves from this deeper level of the First World in order to constitute their difference within it, they do not oppose themselves to Native North America. Rather, Atwood and Morrison retrieve and (re)incorporate the difference of
Native America into their histories and their consciousness. Surfacing's protagonist does "see," for the "first" time, the Native peoples who were invisible to her as she was growing up and Pilate does learn about the mother whom she never knew, and moreover comprehends that her father's ghostly whispers to Sing expressed his longing for this woman instead of the invocation of his daughter's voice. Atwood's and Morrison's double movement may, as Spivak argues, signal "the functional change in sign-systems" (197). Despite being "conventionally" represented in their texts as the unknown other, both writers situate Native peoples in the feminine space and yet imply Native subjects who did and can speak of their presence in the grand narrative of Western History. Atwood and Morrison posit, as Waugh observes of Feminism, "some belief in the notion of effective human agency,...and the possibility of a community of address,...which can allow for the connection of the 'small personal voice' of one [speaking subject] to another and to other liberationist movements." (349.)
END NOTES


LIST OF REFERENCES


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