

THE MYTH OF AMOR AND PSYCHE
AND FEMALE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING

by

Shu Huang

A thesis
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of English
University of Manitoba
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For Jianjiong

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Introduction

Twentieth-century scholars have identified the myth of Amor and Psyche as a paradigmatic story of feminine development.¹ Reduced to the level of plot, the myth records the progress of Psyche from her status as a naive and passive maiden to her position as a self-respecting wife and mother, as a result of a series of rebellions and struggles.

Since self-development is also a major concern in modern autobiographical works by women, one would expect to find definable "echoes" of the Amor and Psyche myth in such works. Generally stated, this thesis is designed to explore the extent to which three twentieth-century autobiographical documents evidence an Amor and Psyche configuration.

As much as they agree about the importance of this myth, however, so much have scholars advanced different ways of interpreting the nature and goal of Psyche's development. Hence the first chapter of the thesis will compare and contrast various approaches to the myth. In the subsequent three chapters, I will then both utilize and test these insights through an investigation of the presence of the Amor and Psyche myth in the following works: The Early Diary of Anais Nin (volumes I and II); Mary McCarthy's Memories of a Catholic Girlhood; and Alice Munro's fictive kunstlerroman, Lives of Girls and Women.

My choice of these three texts derives from the way their differences enable one to address the relationship between what Leslie Fiedler has called "archetype and signature"--with signature being those features of a work which constitute its individuality and which reflect the culture and time in which it was written. Nin's diary spans the period of 1914-23 and bears the marks of her Spanish-French heritage. McCarthy's memories are those of an American girl and conjoin her reflections of her childhood and her 1957 perspective on them. Munro's narrator was born in the climate of World War II and her development is portrayed in a Canadian ethos from the vantage point of the 1970s.

Thus in my concluding chapter, I will discuss the way these factors may account for the different features of the myth that the respective authors have highlighted, just as I will attempt to show how the three works collectively constitute a story of the psychic development of the feminine.

Chapter I. Critical Interpretations of the Myth of "Amor
and Psyche"

Almost two thousand years ago, the myth of Amor and Psyche was given its first coherent and written articulation in Lucius Apuleius' Latin narrative The Golden Ass. As Apuleius tells it, Psyche, the sublimely beautiful and hence unmarrriageable princess, has aroused Aphrodite's deadly jealousy and is thus condemned to marry the vilest wretch in the world. Sent to fulfill this decree, Amor, son of Aphrodite and god of love, is himself smitten with love for Psyche, and transports her to his secret palace. Everything seems perfect, except that Psyche is forbidden to know the identity of her lover. Abetted by her sisters, Psyche breaks Amor's command by lighting a candle as he lies sleeping, as a result of which he departs from her in anger. After accomplishing four difficult labours set forth by Aphrodite, Psyche is reunited with Amor, deified as a goddess, officially married to him, and gives birth to a daughter called Pleasure.

Significantly, The Golden Ass is itself an autobiographical narrative, and the story of Amor and Psyche takes the form of an initiation tale related by an old woman in a bandits' cave to a young girl kidnapped on her wedding day (99). As if inspired by Psyche's example, the once helpless bride later seductively deceives and blinds the villain who had killed her husband (161). Similarly, Psyche's apotheosis functions as a variant of the other major

transgressive paradigm employed by Apuleius, namely, the "degeneration" of "good" women into witches--with witches being those who dare to gratify their sexual desire and assert their themselves under patriarchal rule. Witchcraft, as Bruce Clarke explains, constitutes women's "daemonic and metamorphic power to steal the phallus" (17). As presented by Apuleius, then, the story of Amor and Psyche correlates female initiation and metamorphoses and expresses the possibility of women's acquisition of sexual as well as spiritual powers through suffering and struggle.

Modern interpretations of the myth generally fall into one of two major categories: psychological, on the one hand, and feminist/sociological, on the other. The leading spokesman for the psychological approach is Erich Neumann, who subtitles his discussion The Psychic Development of the Feminine. Dispensing with the realistic framework provided by Apuleius, Neumann interprets the tale as the story of the individuation process, and thus he reads Psyche's struggle as one which involves her liberation from the primordial matriarchal unconscious, whereby she also comes to symbolize the freeing of the individual from the hold of mythical thinking itself (153).

According to Neumann, therefore, Psyche's journey incorporates the whole canon of motifs to be found in myths and fairy tales: "Marriage of death, existence in the paradise of the unconscious, fight with the dragon, calvary of labors,

journey to the underworld and acquisition of the precious substance, failure as second death (which in myth takes the form of imprisonment), redemption, hieros gamos, resurrection, rebirth as a goddess, and birth of the child" (138-39). To Neumann, Psyche's ultimate goal is knowledge and her final acceptance on Olympus signals the beginning of a new epoch in which not only is the human the equal of the divine but also in which the gods have become internalized.

C. S. Lewis is equally concerned with the psychological implications of the myth and the psychic development of the feminine, but whereas Neumann was content simply to interpret the Apuleius story in this way, Lewis' strategy is literally to rewrite the narrative to make this point. Thus in Till We Have Faces, he shifts the focus from Psyche to one of her sisters, Orual, whose search for Psyche (whom Lewis renames Istra) becomes the individuation process and takes the form of an autobiographical narrative. In Lewis' revision of the myth, Psyche's labours are played out in Orual's unconscious, and the climax involves Orual's recognition that she and Istra are one. While Istra journeys in search of her lover, Orual journeys in search of Istra who resides as a force inside her. The final reunion of the two sisters in the dream state signifies the maturity of Orual's own psyche as well as her success in recognizing the goddess within herself. Highlighting the connection between autobiography and the individuation process, Lewis makes Orual's pattern of

development begin with her childhood and end with her old age.

Both versions of feminine development manifest what Neumann identifies as the motif of the marriage of death. To Neumann, the marriage of death symbolizes not only the death of maidenhood but also the matriarchal view of marriage as violation. This interpretation of marriage finds its agreement in Lewis' tale in which Istra is believed to be sacrificed to become the bride of the Brute, an unknown, horrible, holy monster (145). Just as Neumann suggests that the matriarchate recognizes marriage as abduction and rape (63), so Orual's masculine counsellor, the Fox, tries to convince her that Istra was kidnapped by some vagabonds or outlaws on the high mountain (152). The concept of marriage as sacrifice of maidenhood is also dramatized in the aftermath of Orual's duel: "I felt all of a sudden very weak and my legs were shaking; and I felt myself changed too, as if something had been taken away from me. I have often wondered if women feel like that when they lose their virginity" (229).

The view of marriage as abduction, Neumann argues, comes from the view of marriage as a violation of the primacy of the daughter-mother bond (63). In the myth, the relation of mother and daughter first manifests itself in the rivalry in beauty between Aphrodite and Psyche. In her subsequent struggle toward independence, Psyche is continually in conflict with Aphrodite, who is determined that she should not emerge from the matriarchal unconscious. Seen from another perspective,

Aphrodite's influence has the effect of inadvertently fostering Psyche's independence; by reason of the tasks Aphrodite imposes, Psyche is forced to demonstrate and realize her own strength. Whether (or perhaps because) her influence can take either a positive or negative form, therefore, the mother provides an indispensable impetus to her daughter's growth toward individuation.

In Lewis' tale, the maternal influence on the daughter functions in almost the same manner. Orual is not only a sister to Istra but also plays the role of her mother, as a result of the death of Istra's mother (Orual's stepmother) in childbirth. Orual regards Istra's marriage as abduction, and when she discovers that Istra (her child) is living in an erotic paradise instead of being devoured by a monster, Orual becomes the Terrible Mother. Just as Orual is haunted in her childhood by the fear of the primitive female goddess Ungit, so Istra is hampered by Orual's desire to keep her in a state of infantile dependence. Despite playing the role of Terrible Mother, however, Orual also plays a positive role in persuading Istra to disobey male order by lighting up the face of her lover and thus dragging Istra from the dark palace of sexual slavery. The mother-daughter bond, therefore, functions as both a negative and positive force on the feminine development. Moreover, it symbolizes the development of feminine from the collective matriarchal unconscious toward consciousness and individuation. As the Fox says, "All, even

Psyche, are born into the house of Ungit. And all must get free from her" (312).

Parallel to the motif of mother-daughter bond is that of the envious sisters. In Neumann's interpretation, the envious sisters are Psyche's shadows. When they advise Psyche to kill the monster they believe her husband to be, they represent Psyche's projections of suppressed or unconscious matriarchal tendencies (73). Although the sisters die because of their matriarchal hostility toward the male and their rebellion against patriarchal domination, Psyche does realize their frustrated objectives by disobeying Amor's command and by arming herself with a dagger should he turn out in fact to be a monster. Despite their negative character, therefore, the sisters also represent an aspect of the feminine consciousness which aids Psyche by making her question her contentment in the dark palace of Amor (74).

Although Lewis makes the two sisters behave differently, he concurs with Neumann in regarding them as Psyche's "shadows" and as embodiments of matriarchal tendencies. Thus the younger sister Redival represents Aphrodite's sensual indulgence and Orual Aphrodite's manipulation and domination. In foregrounding Orual by making her the narrator and by making Istra her creation, Lewis also makes Psyche a form of "shadow" for Orual, and thus when Orual gives Istra a lamp and a knife, she actually expresses her own need to rebel against patriarchal authority. Consequently, following the

disappearance of Istra, Orual ends her subservient status with regard to her father by taking up his arms, and overthrows male authority by defeating Prince Argan. Whereas Neumann interprets the death of the sisters as an "exemplar of the destruction of the feminine through the paternal uroboros" (133), Lewis lets both sisters live. Redival, however, never transcends Psyche's first stage in Amor's palace and consents to sexual slavery in her marriage. As such, Redival represents a force that Orual must also overcome in her psychological development, and thus Orual's celibacy may be seen as one way of avoiding patriarchal oppression. In making the identities of Orual, Redival and Psyche interchangeable, Lewis seems to suggest that they reflect a trinity of forces which must be coordinated and brought to consciousness.

This process of self-exploration and consciousness-raising is the essence of the tasks imposed upon Psyche, according to Neumann, of which the first--the sorting of seeds--represents her ability to "select, sift, correlate, and evaluate, and so find her way amid the confusion of the masculine" (95). Likewise, Orual sees her writing as a way of "sifting and sorting, separating motive from motive and both from pretext" (266). Moreover, as Albert F. Reddy points out, writing transforms Orual from the actor into the narrator and hence permits the reader to view the myth from the inside (161). Through writing, Orual arrives at a higher level of consciousness and is able to look back on her life more

clearly.

Neumann interprets Psyche's second labour, the gathering of the golden fleece, as symbolic castration, the taming of the hostile masculine principle. Similarly, Orual confronts prince Argan in the battle field and conquers him. Psyche's third task, the fetching of the water from the Styx, is seen by Neumann to represent her ability to receive and assimilate the masculine and give it form (106). In Lewis' version, this third labour of psyche's is discernible in Orual's relationship to her two male counsellors, Bardia and the Fox, with Bardia representing masculine bravery and the Fox masculine intellectual power. Orual's ability to hold her own in politics, economics and the law, thus makes her like the eagle in the myth, which to Neumann symbolizes the male-female spirituality of Psyche, who "receives like a woman...but at the same time apprehends and knows like a man" (108).

Psyche's fourth labour is to go to the underworld and acquire the beauty ointment from Persephone, and here she is given two related commands. The first command, not to show pity for the dead, signifies her need to maintain ego stability; the second command, not to open the beauty casket, signifies the need to resist the narcissistic impulse to remain forever young. Although Psyche obeys the first command, she disobeys the second; but here, to Neumann, her "failure" is her triumph; for by opening the casket she reasserts her

femininity and willingness to risk death in the interests of being beautiful for her lover.

In Lewis' tale, the first command takes the form of Bardia's cautioning Orual that she will be killed if she falls prey to pity during the duel with Argan. Psyche's breach of the second command--her opening of the beauty casket and her consequent deadly sleep--takes the form of Orual's declining rationality due to old age which enables her to apprehend the world of the unconscious. Here the Fox, as the spokesman of intellect, is unable to guide Orual. Only after his death is the Fox able to be Orual's teacher in the underworld, helping her to internalize the four labours performed by Psyche and to recognize her own feminine development in Psyche's growth. In the myth, Psyche's labours are toward reunion with Eros for which she is rewarded with the product of their reunion, their child--Pleasure. Orual's labours are toward liberation from Ungit's imprisonment (297) and toward independence and self-knowledge. The product of her labours is thus the her book of self-knowledge, which she calls her child (256).

A final point of divergence between Neumann's and Lewis' interpretation of the myth pertains to the motif of light and darkness, and to the values ascribed to them. According to Neumann, darkness represents the unconscious and non-existence, and light represents consciousness and knowledge. Psyche's journey can be regarded as a journey upward from the unconscious into consciousness, from darkness to light, from

matriarchal captivity to sexual independence. In Lewis' version, however, light can also be an obstacle, and in the context of Orual's development serves to prevent her from understanding the feminine aspect of her psyche. This is precisely why Orual, who has absorbed her masculine intellectual prowess from the Fox, her Greek instructor, was unable to perceive the invisible world in which Istra dwells. Significantly, it is not until her old age, and after the death of the Fox, that Orual is able to descend into the unconscious and perceive Psyche again in her dream and vision. Similarly, the Fox, during his life-time is unable to comprehend Istra's union with Amor and always distinguishes Orual clearly from Istra; only, after his death and in the underworld, is he able to perceive Orual and Istra as one (308). In rewriting the myth, as Reddy has noted, one of Lewis' major concerns is with the limitations of reason and the validity of romantic yearnings (159).

Despite these differences, however, Neumann and Lewis have in common their essentially psychological approach to the myth of Amor and Psyche; in contrast, the approach of the two most extensive feminist studies could be described as sociological. Moreover, whereas the male scholars are concerned with interpreting the myth per se, the two women are concerned with the way Psyche's development provides a touchstone for interpreting women's fiction of the past three centuries. Specifically, in Aspects of the Female Novel and

Psyche as Hero, Jaqueline McLeod Rogers and Lee Edwards, respectively, see Psyche as a rebellious figure who challenges the traditional feminine role that her fictional sisters combat vehemently and who achieves the new type of relationship equally desired by them. To Edwards, women in a patriarchal society are always given an inferior position in relationships to nature, society and God, and the myth of Amor and Psyche provides not only the possibilities of altering such a relationship but also of envisioning its alternative. Similarly, Rogers regards Psyche's development as one toward an equal relationship with Amor/man, which involves the achievement of selfhood.

Rogers' major concern is with Psyche's changing relationship with Amor, whom she sees as both Psyche's inner masculine self and her external lover. She thus seems to concur with Neumann that the ultimate goal of Psyche's development is a loving relation with Amor and a balance of the masculine and feminine inside the psyche. To Rogers, because love, "whose basis is mutuality," is impossible so long as Amor is "all powerful and Psyche wholly dependent" (63), Psyche's final attainment of a genuine relationship, or love, with Amor requires her growth into an autonomous woman capable of loving instead of fearing and worshipping Amor. In other words, Psyche must break away not only from her initial subservient relation with Amor but also from the merely "sensual pleasures" (62) of her initial relationship with him

which would make her a slave to Aphrodite. As well, she must grow beyond her two sisters whose rebellion against the implications of marriage in a patriarchal society drives them to another extreme, namely, to the hatred of men.

To Rogers, in Psyche's disobedience of Amor's command, the motif of light and darkness, interpreted by Neumann and Lewis as generally representing consciousness and the unconscious, stands for a hierarchical relationship. Because light dominates darkness as man does woman, Amor's command to keep Psyche in the dark constitutes an attempt to keep her in ignorance and submission. It follows that "Psyche's light-bringing act registers her refusal to be ruled by her lover" (63). For Psyche, to expose Amor to the light, that is, to her knowledge, means "to gain awareness and power" (83). Indeed, only when Psyche lights the darkness, does she become conscious of the blindness of her adoration of Amor. Unlike Neumann who perceives Amor as godlike and beautiful upon his revelation, Rogers emphasizes that in lighting his face, Psyche discovers that Amor is in fact an immature, willful and arrogant youth (99). Hence Psyche's escape from darkness, from her inferior position in the relationship, signifies the end of her dependence, worship and submission to the male authority (88-89).

Rogers' interpretation of Psyche's rebellion against patriarchal marriage is further supported by her understanding of Psyche's labours. While agreeing with Neumann that Psyche's

first three trials represent her triumph over "'the masculine promiscuity, the deadly masculine, and the uncontainable masculine'" (65), Rogers goes further in arguing that it is masculine fallibility that Psyche comes to recognize through her trials. Psyche's successful performance of her tasks proves that the masculine forces are not insurmountable (90). As a result, Rogers claims, Psyche realizes through her labours that "the masculine, although exalted by the culture, is vulnerable and imperfect, and that the feminine, although subservient in the culture, is strong and competent" (88). Psyche's labours, from this point of view, enable her to experience a dramatic change in her relationship with Amor. At the same time that Psyche overcomes her weakness and wins her transformation from an inferior woman to the position of goddess, Amor suffers "degradation" and is reduced to an adolescent youth in his mother's captivity, "no longer worshipped" and "humanized rather than all powerful and god-like" (89).

Nevertheless, love between Amor and Psyche is still impossible if Psyche now simply becomes stronger and superior to Amor. Here again Rogers differs from Neumann in her interpretation of Psyche's failure, that is, her inability to resist opening the beauty casket, in her fourth labour. In her failure, Neumann reads Psyche's desire to maintain her feminine self (123) whereas Rogers detects Psyche's caution against "egoistic self-absorption" and her refusal to be

superior to Amor (67). Therefore, by "failing" and thus giving Amor a chance to rescue her, Psyche in effect enables Amor to break free of Aphrodite's maternal control and to become reunited with Psyche as an independent individual. Love becomes possible now that Amor and Psyche enter their relationship "based on equality" (67) rather than hierarchy. By the same token, Psyche's formal marriage with Amor on Olympus symbolizes her own inner marriage of the feminine with the masculine: by encountering masculine power, the culturally and socially superior, Psyche has developed the spiritual strength (64) which makes her an equal of Amor, the male divinity.

Psyche's development into a genuine relationship with Amor, according to Rogers, also involves freeing herself from the mother-daughter bond in the form both of Aphrodite and Psyche's two sisters. The sensuous and narcissistic aspects of Aphrodite as the Great Mother are manifest in Psyche's initial delight in her mindless erotic relationship with Amor (62). The Aphrodisian attributes, Rogers argues, confine a woman to "drunken lust" (95) and sexual slavery. In this context, Aphrodite is the maternal figure whom Psyche must outgrow in order to achieve her individuality and reunite with Amor on an equal plane.

Psyche's liberation from the matriarchal matrix, however, brings with it the danger of development into the other extreme--the hatred of men--represented by her two envious

sisters. Although Psyche's sisters stand for "an aspect of the feminine consciousness" in Neumann's interpretation (74), Rogers argues that the sisters, in their rebellion against patriarchal marriage, have come to equate love with power (109). As a result, they will never be able to relate freely to the opposite sex but will continue to be "always angry and resistant" (147). To Rogers, this disproportionate growth of the masculine in the form of hatred for the external male figure will not only destroy true relationship but destroy the self as well, for to the extent that relationship is an elemental component of female nature, what is involved here is a denial of the feminine itself (66).

Like Rogers, Edwards discerns in the myth of Amor and Psyche the possibility of a new relationship free of power and mastery. Unlike Rogers, however, Edwards perceives genuine relationship not in terms of gender but in terms of Victor Turner's concept of "communitas"--"as opposed to the norm-governed, institutionalized abstract nature of social structure" (13). Love, or relationship, in this sense is "neither romantic nor sexual" (23). To Edwards, heterosexual love in a patriarchal society can result only in women's dependence and men's domination in marriage. Psyche's development, therefore, symbolizes her heroic quest to liberate herself "from a ritualized bondage to authority" (151). In other words, Edwards reads Psyche's heroism in terms of her rebellion against the social structures that underlie

the relationships between husband and wife, and mother and daughter.

Psyche's rebellion against patriarchal marriage starts in Amor's dark palace, which is also where the theme of marriage of death acquires its social meaning. Though apparently exclusive, weddings and funerals, in Edwards' view, are in fact inclusive, representing the twin poles of worldly continuation and personal defeat (105). On the one hand, men appeal to the sanctity of marriage as a way of disguising their desires to own a wife and to control her (38). On the other hand, women's submission to their husbands, required by their economic and legal dependence, means the denial of their autonomy as well as the repression of their sexuality (109). Marriage as a social institution is thus seen to destroy women's autonomy and warp female sexuality. Consequently, to Edwards, acquiescing to marriage means "submitting to at least a spiritual death" (109), which reduces women to asexual beings, to non-existence.

Since marriage is a socially sanctioned relationship, Psyche's disobedience signifies her rebellion against both patriarchal culture and religion. To Edwards, the hierarchical relationship in marriage mirrors "God's relationship to mankind", which "sets father above daughter, brother over sister, husband above wife" (31). As well, Psyche, in her rebellion, violates the conventional feminine virtues of obedience, passivity and piety. Those virtues are the

Christian moral standard which becomes the conventional expectation of every "good" woman. Accordingly, while Edwards agrees with Neumann that Psyche's refusal to show pity is essential to ego stability, she sees Psyche's refusal specifically as a necessary challenge to the Christian scheme.

Undoubtedly, it is her concern with the social significance of Psyche's rebellion that leads Edwards to emphasize the importance of the dagger in the discovery scene. Psyche's rebellion, as Edwards sees it, is a form of revenge against the oppression imposed on women by the patriarchal order. Therefore, the dagger that Psyche holds in her hand when she gazes on Amor is not a weapon to break through the uroboric unconscious, as Neumann would have it; rather, it is like the sword used by Orual in Lewis' tale. To Edwards, Psyche is "a warrior" and the dagger symbolizes not only the desire to conquer the masculine forces but also a quasi-historical "retaliation against past wrongs" done to women (246). Accordingly, whereas Rogers allies militancy with Psyche's animus-ridden sisters, Edwards regards the warrior spirit as Psyche's indispensable means to break loose of patriarchal control. Because Edwards regards Psyche's achievement as her escape from heterosexual relationship, she also departs from Neumann with respect to the significance of Psyche's actions. Adopting a psychological point of view, Neumann perceives each of Psyche's rebellions--her light-

bringing, her opening of beauty ointment and her refusal to pity--as "a rite of initiation" toward a higher level of consciousness (112). In contrast, Edwards is concerned with the way that Psyche's experiences enable her to become an independent woman in the society. Defying her prescribed role as a passive and dependent woman, Psyche escapes from the domestic world to the public world. Her subsequent labours--seen by Neumann as the conquering of masculine forces--are regarded by Edwards as the point of departure for the challenge of women's ability to function in the work force. It is Psyche's "labours" that free her from her dependent and inferior position in both familial and social structure. For Edwards, the working Psyche not only contradicts the conventional feminine role but "replaces the static hierarchies of community with a more free-flowing, less role-bound *communitas*" (192).

Psyche's labours, from this perspective, enable Edwards to generate a new understanding of the mother-daughter bond. In Edwards' interpretation, the mother and daughter bond is manifest first in Psyche's relationship with nature and then with Aphrodite in the form of Psyche's conventional mother. Nature, though a maternal figure, is seen to be hostile and alien to Psyche, either withdrawing help from her or appearing to be inadequate to answer to Psyche's needs (82). This perception of nature suggests the alliance of the maternal with the patriarchal power in their common oppression of

Psyche the daughter: the conventional mother, herself a slave under patriarchal oppression, acts out the intolerable frustration of her position in her mistreatment of her daughter (176). Aphrodite's jealousy and her subsequent punishment is thus read by Edwards as a conventional mother's repressiveness "rooted in a simultaneous desire to preserve her daughter for life in the world as it actually is and to punish her for the life imposed by these actualities" (178). Such a crippling relationship between mother and daughter, Edwards believes, can be changed and transcended only by Psyche's labours. In labour, Psyche becomes independent of Aphrodite's control as well as Amor's.

Psyche's labours, therefore, restructures the mother-daughter relationship, which to Edwards is positively reflected in her relationship with her daughter, Pleasure. For Neumann and Rogers, the goal of Psyche's quest is her reunion with Amor. Edwards, however, criticizes Neumann for confining Psyche's quest to a private romance (246). In Edwards' view, the goal of her quest is the restructuring of the existing social order into one free of patriarchal control, as is evidenced by the fact that Psyche's heir is a daughter, a female rather than a male (13). Moreover, Psyche, independent and deified, is mother and daughter in one.

In seeing Psyche as capable of restructuring social relationships, Edwards presents her as a female redeemer in opposition to the Christian male God. Hence her interpretation

of Psyche's "failure" is drastically different from that of Neumann and Rogers. In Edwards' view, Psyche does not fail but purposefully "chances death, learns the gods' secrets and empowers another [Amor]" (12). Psyche's beauty, to Edwards, also symbolizes this kind of power; what makes Psyche unmarriageable is the way her unearthly beauty makes her above human race and thus unpossessable by men.

What is significant to Edwards is that Psyche, in disobeying Aphrodite's order, is not punished but accepted on Olympus (11). Hence Psyche's opening of the beauty casket constitutes her final rebellion rather than "failure," and the effect is to open up the road to Olympus by liberating herself and redeeming women from their unrealized captivity on earth (254).

As much as they vary in their interpretations, then, modern critics do concur in seeing the myth of Amor and Psyche as an essential touchstone for discussing the problems and potentials for women's development, both individually and collectively.¹ As such, these critical interpretations also provide the necessary context for explaining the way women writers themselves address the question of "coming of age" in the twentieth century.

Chapter II. The Early Diary of Anais Nin

"Yes, I am very ugly, not very interesting, really crazy.... But O beloved diary, I shall change in a wonderful way when I find my shadow," writes the sixteen-year-old Anais Nin (1: 245). The first two volumes of The Early Diary of Anais Nin records this magical change by tracing Nin's girlhood dreams about her father and her future husband up to her nuptial consummation with Hugh Guiler. As Nin records it, her transformation involves the change from a pious young girl who envisions being carried off by a mysterious lover to a woman who is determined to be true to herself. Accompanying this change is also a change in the nature of her "shadow": from a narcissistic double to a concrete "other," from a godlike figure to a special but human male companion, from a father surrogate to a husband. Thus if Robert Kirsch aptly describes the early diary as "the revelation of the rites of passage of a young girl" (jacket cover of the second volume), we may now identify more specifically the mythic paradigm involved: namely the story of Amor and Psyche.

In particular, Psyche's blind worship of Amor provides a mythic analogue for Nin's childhood delight in dreams and fancies about her father, Joaquin Nin. Just as invisibility makes possible Amor's control of psyche, absence is the factor which leads Anais to idealize her father. Separated by the

ocean and living in another country, Nin can communicate with him only through her dreams and writing. Knowing little of the real cause of her parents' separation, Nin as a child feels that she must have behaved badly when her father left the family and thus initially her diary is not merely a way of maintaining contact but also of inventing an image of herself that will please him. As eager as Psyche to serve and please Amor, Nin extols her father to the highest degree: "His name is on every tongue, he is invoked as the god of music. No one can compare to my Papa, no one plays like him, no one can imitate him" (1: 9).

God of music and god of Anais's imagined world, Joaquin Nin already stands for Christ himself in his daughter's mind. He not only dominates his daughter's dreams but also her prayers. Praying, like writing, becomes a form of dreaming, and communions are turned into visions in which she can hear her father talk and see her parents reunite happily: "At the moment of Communion, it seems more as though I am kissing and hugging Papa, rather than receiving the body of Christ" (1: 27). Catholicism thus has a sensual and aesthetic appeal to the young Anais, and helps to nurture the concept of the authoritative male. This religious fervor cools, however, when her prayers are unanswered and her father still remains absent. Her diary now becomes more introspective, and religious aspirations now give way to pursuit of self-realization. Religious frustration thus frees her from

servility to patriarchal authority, a liberation similar to that of Ursula in D. H. Lawrence's The Rainbow (Hinz, "Ursula's Liberation"). Nevertheless, just as Psyche admires Amor both as a god and a lover, so Nin's attainment of liberation is difficult, for not only does she envision an authoritative father but also a fatherly husband. No matter how elusive this future husband, or her "Shadow" (1: 245) is to the imaginative Nin, this Shadow is pictured in effect after the form of her father: "I liked to think of my shadow as a strong, stern, severe figure, full of wisdom, with nobly graying hair and steely eyes" (1: 257). This concept of her Shadow as a fatherly figure, Otto Rank warns us, should not be regarded as Nin's expression of her unconscious desire for incest (23). Rather, it reveals her consent to a destiny of male domination and female submission, be it her father or her future husband. Even after her father's image begins to fade and her dreams of her phantom lover becomes more frequent and concrete, Nin continues envisioning him in terms of Psyche's invisible Amor: "I know that I wanted someone very strong, very powerful, very handsome who would love me and whom I could love with all my heart. It is an image or an idol that my dreams have created and that I am searching for in mortal form" (1: 231).

Imagining an unknown young male is no different from dreaming about her absent father. Both reflect an unrealistic sense of masculine strength and domination, on the one hand,

and female weakness, dependence and servility, on the other. What particularly evokes the Psyche myth here is the setting she envisions for the meeting with her future lover: "Of one thing I am sure: I shall not meet my Stranger at a dance. Perhaps in some strange, wild place in the mountains, somewhere in the heart of nature" (2: 188). Walking alone down a dangerous street, she imagines herself being kidnapped by "a sinister band of bad men, and saved by some gallant young knight of the twentieth century" (2: 26). Nor is she deterred by the voice of common sense; rather, as in the case of Psyche's initial refusal to adopt her sister's view of her situation, she proclaims: "I shall wait for my Prince, even if the entire universe assures me that he doesn't exist" (1: 309).

Fortunately, Nin is not only naive and romantic like the early Psyche but also as curious as the latter. While trying to identify with the feminine role represented by her selfless mother Rosa, Nin, as if warned by Psyche's sisters, becomes increasingly dubious about the value of such self-sacrifice and aware of the need for self-development. Rosa wins her daughter's infinite love and respect but, more importantly, arouses the latter's fear and rebellion. In Rosa, Nin discerns a once rich, pretty Cuban girl who, as romantic and willing to be abducted as Nin, devoted herself and her money to Joaquin Nin, then a poor musician. Instead of turning out to be the god of love, however, Joaquin Nin turns out to be the

promiscuous Cupid, leaving Rosa with the responsibility of taking care of the three children on her own, just as Cupid forsakes the pregnant Psyche. Seeing the consequences of her own rose-colored dreams about her future husband reflected in her mother's marriage, Nin begins to realize that marriage based on male dominance and female submission can lead only to female self-destruction. According to Lee Edwards, marriage based on hierarchy can only be fatal to women because men appeal to its sanctity as a way of disguising their desires to own and control a wife (38). This certainly seems to be the case with Nin's parents: marriage grants Joaquin Nin the power to own and then dispose of his wife at his will, free of responsibility. Commenting on her mother's exemplary wifeness and motherhood, Nin reveals her conflicting feelings toward the desirability of such a role: "She sacrificed all as a young woman to follow the man she loved and he proved unworthy. Then she turned to her children and spent all of herself on them, laboured and slaved as no mother has ever done, showering all the gifts in her power to give, immolating herself and finding in them her one and only compensation, her only source of courage and perhaps the one and only reason of her reconciliation to life" (2: 437).

Although, in her study of Psyche's four labours, Edwards argues that economically compensated labour liberates women from self-suppression in marriage, Nin observes almost the opposite effect in the case of her mother. Faced with the

responsibility of feeding her three children and being inexperienced in the business world, Rosa struggles bravely but not without exhaustion. A tower of strength to her children, Rosa more often than not conveys the impression of a tired combatant worn out by business frustrations and adventures. Economic independence, forced upon her by her husband's abandonment, does not result in self-sufficiency but rather self-sacrifice. Equally, economic independence means sacrificing her career as a vocalist and repressing all desires except maternal love. Thus instead of liberating her aggressiveness in the work force, her ability to work for her living warps her sexuality and turns fertility into sterility. Nin is not only disappointed but chilled to discover that Rosa no longer thinks much about love and that she equates love and sensuality as important only in one's youth (1: 308). The impact on Nin of such a sacrificial mothering role was so strong that, according to Sharon Spencer, Nin continued to be haunted by her mother's selflessness even years after Rosa's death:

This fear that mothering can kill the one who devotes her life to it is expressed with a mixture of pathos and wry humor in the fifth Diary. Nin dreams that her mother, now dead, did not die of natural causes but took her own life because of the destructive monotony of filling endless lunch boxes. "Everyday more lunch boxes. Lunch boxes again. Nothing but lunch boxes." The implication to me was that my mother had filled too many lunch boxes and had finally gone mad and committed suicide." During the years spanned by the first four Diaries, Nin's own mother is rarely mentioned, for the author was devoting tremendous energy to escaping the role

represented in her life by Rosa Culmell. (86-87)

What keeps Rosa from being liberated is perhaps less her marital and social situation and more the way she has internalized the belief in the traditional feminine role of self-sacrifice. Optimistic, brave, combative, and able to function without a husband, Rosa nevertheless continues to yield to others, in this case, her children's needs. Although Nin often complains in her early diary that business has worn out Maman and taken all her attention and love from children, actually Rosa's life contains nothing except her love for her children. Her business is only a means to make her children as happy as possible. Instead of changing her affiliational relationship to her children, Rosa still lives up to the patriarchal expectation of women which encourages self-immolation and glorifies self-sacrifice.

Rosa's model as a mother is at first admired and imitated by Nin, who describes herself as taking care of the three meals for the family and mending and sewing for her two younger brothers. In a sense, Nin also presents herself as the wife who stays at home while her mother works outside like a husband. In the evening, she tries to entertain her exhausted mother by either keeping up a conversation with her or reading at her bedside. Obviously, the feminine sacrificial spirit is passed down from the mother to the daughter. Nin becomes obsessively concerned with her mother's well-being, regarding

her mother's happiness, headaches, worries and frustrations as of ultimate importance in her own life: "Dearest Maman, oh! I love, I love you, I will do anything for you. Just ask! ask! and I will do it" (1: 9). The desire to be subservient, to fulfill her mother's needs becomes so strong that Nin considers marrying a rich Cuban in order to take the economic burden from her mother's shoulders (2: 484). Repeatedly, she emphasizes the way she sacrifices her own interest in order to meet Papa and Maman's needs, to please her godmother and aunts, and to comfort her two brothers and cousins. This attempt to live up to conventional feminine standards accounts for her childhood fascination with Joan of Arc (1: 98). Like Psyche who is obedient to her father's will to be sacrificed to an unknown monster, Nin dreams of becoming Joan of Arc, sacrificing her life for France.

As Nin's adherence to the stereotype comes into conflict with her desire for self-development, however, she begins to reject such a feminine model: "Am I clever enough to be a woman and a writer? Is such a thing possible? Or will I make a bad woman, a useless woman, because I love books?" (1: 248). Although willing to serve her two younger brothers, Nin envies their freedom to gratify their own interests whereas she is bound by her duties as a sister and a daughter. What encourages her two brothers' superior attitude to her, Nin observes, is her mother's tendency to indulge them simply because they are male: they are taught to "think always of

their comfort, their happiness," and not only do they "forget I am their sister [but also] think of me as a second mother whose sole duty is to take care of them" (1: 299). Gradually, Nin begins to realize that the unfair expectations of her brothers, and by extension men in general, is a result of women's blind acceptance of patriarchal authority and its view of the female sex. Accordingly, she begins to question her mother's self-depreciating attitude toward men. As she sees it, despite her mother's opinion that men are selfish and egoistic, Rosa seems to take it for granted that they are justified in being so whereas women should aspire to the opposite (1: 299). This, Nin feels, explains why Rosa continues to be unliberated even after her marital separation and despite her economic independence. Nin's insight into the conventional attitude toward women, therefore, ultimately also helps her to understand her girlhood anxiety about being pretty, an anxiety reminiscent of Psyche's concern with being unmarriageable. In the myth, Psyche is unmarriageable because her beauty "engenders worship rather than desire" (Hinz and Teunissen 210). In her early diary, Nin records her fear of being ugly and thus remaining an old maid all her life (1: 382). Imagining her Shadow as a handsome young prince, the teenaged Nin is worried about not being pretty enough to attract him. The anxiety becomes so great that she frequently has to quote others' remarks about her appearance. In interpreting Nin's doubt of her sexual

attractiveness, Stephanie A. Demetrakopoulos attributes it to her parents' separation: a sense of sexual inadequacy "is a common syndrome in daughters of deserting fathers" (123-24). Nevertheless, in the context of the myth, Nin's concern with her appearance and her fear of unmarriageability represent a common female psychological phenomenon, one that reflects the traditional concept of woman's role in life. Taking beauty as her sole feminine value, Nin remains insecure until she has proven her attractiveness and is courted by several male admirers. By this time, however, she has started to sense the danger of equating beauty with femininity and of accepting marriage as her sole destiny of life.

The key incident in this respect is the vulnerability she experiences when she agrees to pose as a model for artists. Her innocent appearance and shyness are mistaken by some male artists as a sign of inviting their sexual aggression: "The first thing Mr Brown [an artist] did was to try to kiss me, to make me dance with him" (2: 407). The feminine virtues of passivity and obedience, which she has been trained to practice, now are proved to be the demand that patriarchal authority places on women in order to maintain its control. Fortunately, Nin's rejection of such a passive feminine role has enabled her to protect herself by rebelling against the masculine power: "I was posing downtown for an artist who drew subway advertisements.... When he tried to touch me I slapped him, and I had to leave without my money" (2: 411). Whereas

the first volume of diary witnesses Nin's obsession with beauty and her anxiety to serve the male authority, the second volume reveals a changed Nin, who despises female sensuality when it is designed to ensure women's servility to men: "Woman, primitive and animalized, who rises no higher in her estimation of life than in seeking its physical joys and no higher in her relationship to man than to desire to please his senses--what an obstacle she is to civilization!" (2: 517-18).

If working fails to liberate Rosa from the traditional concept of the female, then working plus thinking and writing certainly catapult Nin from the dream world into reality and challenge her uncritical acceptance of a passive role. Despite her young age, Nin's early diary, as Kathleen Leverich points out, is written with "an uncommonly adult awareness of the transience of childhood and adolescence" (B4). Like Orual's autobiographical writing that helps her sort out the welter of feelings during the process of self-development, Nin's diary keeping also helps her to tear down the masks and glamour which her early dreams had built around her father and her phantom lover. In contrast to the diary she had originally kept to communicate with and please her father, she now records her struggle to dig out her painful but truthful memories. Instead of being a path leading to her romantic world of dreams, writing becomes now her weapon to fight back the pity and love which threaten to repress her recollection

of a patriarchal tyrant.

As a result, Nin learns to remain firm and objective when she recalls her father's cruelty before her parents' separation and especially the way her fear of him easily forced her into submission: "it was only through a great deal of acting that I escaped punishments, for I was a capable actress.... I would do anything to keep him from lifting my dress and beating me" (2: 86). She recalls that the only time her father showed his love for her was when she was critically ill (2: 87). What she earlier perceived as his elegance, she now sees as his economic extravagance and immaturity: "He was impulsive, quick-tempered, hasty in words to wound, scathing in judgment, and almost childishly irresponsible for his actions" (2: 86).

Writing thus helps Nin to realize that she has worshiped the connotations of the word "Father" instead of the real person, and that her beloved Shadow is a self-projection:

To me, "Father" is a mystery, a vision, a dream. What infinitely beautiful stories I have wound around the magic name, what a place I have given to it in my home and my heart. Father! Father! All my life has been one great longing for you. A longing for you as I want to be. Alas, not as you have been, not as others believe you to be. Oh dearly beloved shadow, what a great emptiness your absence has created in my life! (2: 87)

Just as Psyche's lamp puts an end to her idyllic existence with Amor, so Nin's refusal to pretend terminates her father's

authority over her. Unaware that she knows the truth, like the disobedient Psyche, and still confident of his control over her, Joaquin Nin lies to his daughter about his infidelity and blames the fault of their separation on Rosa Culmell. However, this time he earns only Anais's bold criticism on his selfishness and irresponsibility: "With our young strength, we are paying the price of the obligation you ran away from.... Think of the sorrow I have felt in realizing, little by little, the extent of your mistakes against us, our whole childhood was darkened by you " (2: 477). As the paternal icon is knocked down, Nin is able to argue with her father as an equal. Moreover, she forces herself to reveal and face her father's true identity as an unfaithful, selfish husband. In particular, she becomes indignant of the injustice that he has done to her mother: "Whenever I think of Mother's life, a burning rebellion and bitterness is roused in me. That such self-sacrifice, such abnegation, such wasting of youth and beauty and devotion upon a man devoid of all sense of what is noble and right--that this should exist!" (2: 453).

As Nin comes to see through the true nature of the patriarchal authority, she also destroys the dreamy castle she builds around her phantom lover. Her experience with several young male admirers leaves her feeling disappointed with their immaturity and thoughtlessness. Of these, Marcus is perhaps the first to play the role of Amor. Like Psyche in Amor's dark palace who does not love but is loved by an all powerful male,

Nin initially feels flattered and frightened by Marcus's admiration for her: "I was so awed, so bewildered at the thought that someone could possibly be in love with me that I was a little afraid of him" (2: 187). Especially is she in awe of Marcus's intellectual power which, displayed through his romantic poems and eloquent love letters, makes him appear superior to Nin. Despite her admiration for his poetic talent, however, Nin often feels intimidated by his self-assertive manner and his "strange conceit" (2: 187). Addressing Nin as "my dear child," Marcus believes that he can make her return his love by appealing to her pity and innocence (2: 9). But his jealousy of Nin's other admirers and his attempt to make Nin kiss him only turn her pity into anger, so that ultimately she cannot "even like [her] poor shattered idol" (2: 9). Retrospectively, she concludes that although Marcus thought he loved her, in effect he wanted only to dominate her (2: 187).

Nin's break with Marcus thus signifies the end of her romantic dreams about the godhead in men, and her realization that her search for her Shadow is in fact her search for the godliness or power she has invested in them. Thus, after her disillusionment with Marcus, Nin writes: "It seems as if I am always climbing the dangerous ladder to reach romance and always slipping down again," and so she decides to abandon romance and "climb the ladder of knowledge" instead (2: 9).

If Marcus represents the powerful and dominant aspect of

Amor, Eduardo, Nin's cousin, represents the irresponsible and youthful Amor crippled by his family's control. What makes Eduardo appear attractive to Nin is his poetic and dreamy mind which coincides with that of Nin's. However, this dreamy quality is also a sign of his immaturity, for his passions and sorrows are as changeable as those of little boys. He admits to Nin that he loves her only as if in a dream and that he cannot remain faithful: "I am as a flame that needs constantly to be kindled. I received your letter and I am kindled" (2: 220). To Nin, what is particularly disappointing about Eduardo is his passive submission to his family's authority. When his rich family objects to their son's intimate relationship with the daughter of their poor relation, Eduardo obeys the prohibition not to see Nin, without even bothering to question it (2: 220). Regretting Eduardo's failure and lack of courage to rebel against such a crippling relationship with his family, Nin writes: "Unless he emancipates himself from his father's hardness and calculating tyranny, he will have to give up every inclination and inborn love of art" (2: 235). Significantly, in dedicating one of his books to Nin, Eduardo inadvertently identifies himself with the wounded Amor under Aphrodite's control: "To My Lost Princess: When my wings shall cease to be clipped--then shall I stretch my pinions and fly to thee with all my joy, all the fervor, all the ardor of Youth" (2: 235).

Despite her growing passion and admiration for Eduardo,

Nin sees clearly the danger of Eduardo's capricious moods and his "lack of steadfastness" (2: 219). As a result, she overcomes her temptation to pity him and forgive his instability, rebelling firmly against Eduardo's emotional slavery by tearing herself away from him (2: 220). The separation between them, forced by Eduardo's family, is nevertheless deemed by Nin as necessary for them both:

[T]his separation which so deeply saddened me is only temporary. Meanwhile, he [Eduardo] will become a man, know his own heart and know his own mind in such a way that he will be a truer, better friend, even as I will be a woman, with more understanding, more to give in return.

I will often look forward to this reunion in the future. How thankful I am to possess such wondrous memories to keep me company while I wait, to replace Eduardo until he flies back to me, free. (2: 235-36)

Earlier, Nin was content merely to wait for her Shadow, her prince, to come and save her; now, realizing that her Amor is a wanton boy still imprisoned and undeveloped, Nin waits instead for him to mature, and like Psyche recognizes the need for her own transformation from a naive, dependent girl into a knowing and independent woman. The chasm between the dream world and the reality, the godlike Shadow and the actual man, makes Nin realize that female dependence upon male authority will result in a hierarchical relationship that is detrimental for both parties. Consequently, instead of seeking solace from her mother, Nin begins to reject maternal overprotection and

to ally herself with the positive aspects of her mother's "deserted" character. Working as a model enables Nin to become practical and to understand the significance of her mother's economic struggle. The attempt of some male artists' sexual ensnarement and female artists' attempt to take economic advantage of her labour no longer frighten her to retreat to her mother's protection. Instead, she becomes more courageous, more determined and more knowledgeable about how to protect herself economically, physically and psychologically: "Slowly my shyness is vanishing. I have a strong foothold upon the earth" (2: 408). Working, like Psyche's labours, fills Nin with the feeling of becoming a new person, powerful and confident that she can depend on herself and that she "can handle life and not be handled by it" (2: 434).

However, Nin's desire to work outside and become independent comes into conflict with her mother's wish to keep her protected: "Mother was at first unhappy to think of her 'little girl running from studio to studio.'" Rosa has cherished the dream of passing her daughter "from her hands and her care to the hands and watchfulness and protection of a husband" (2: 408). Rosa's wish to keep her daughter protected and dependent forever is a variant both of Aphrodite's wish to keep Amor under her control and her fear that Psyche should challenge the hierarchical status quo. Her efforts to make Nin stay at home and sheltered from the cruelty of the outside world, however, now meet with Nin's

objection; for she has grown independent enough to perceive any form of external forstering as destructive rather than generative. Her gratitude for her mother's sacrifice does not prevent her from seeing such a mother-and-daughter bond as crippling her self-development, especially when Rosa expresses the wish to keep Nin under her watch and care and guidance forever: "In spite of my great love for Mother and although it would be my life's greatest sorrow to feel that by my own fault her life's best loved dream (and she has so few) should not be realized, in spite of all this, I say, something much stronger in me moves me to maintain an attitude which seems unbelievably cruel and selfish, but I cannot, I cannot adapt my ideals to her plan; my whole being revolts in the very effort (2: 437-38).

When Psyche is in the underworld, she is warned not to show pity to a corpse, since "what pity symbolizes here is the indiscriminate all-embracing tendency of the female in the same way that the corpse symbolizes the dead drag of the past and the antilife principle" (Hinz and Teunissen 217). In a similar light, Nin has achieved this ability by preventing herself from falling prey to Marcus's intellectual power, to Eduardo's emotional slavery and, above all, to her mother's devastating protection in the mask of love. Knowledge of the true nature of patriarchal authority and feminine self-sacrifice has enabled Nin to achieve masculine power in her effort to shape her own life.

What Nin desires as the goal of her self-development is not, of course, a transformation into a virago like Psyche's militant sisters capable of power but devoid of love. She has always given first place to her relational concern, that is, her desire for love. Her girlhood worry over her appearance is now turned into her effort to preserve, like the independent Psyche, her beauty and her feminine nature in order to achieve genuine relationship with men. Commenting on her later and, in fact, lifelong concern with her appearance, Lynn Z. Bloom and Orlee Holder argue that "Nin's desire to maintain her looks becomes part of her feminist crusade" (200). Nin wants to maintain her female self while working, living and acting as men's equal. Her own experience tells her that strength, power and desire are not "destructive" but important qualities to make a woman "a good wife" (2: 434).

Now that she feels herself powerful instead of weak, equal instead of inferior to men, Nin desires as eagerly as Psyche to make herself beautiful for her beloved, Hugo [Hugh Guiler]: "I had violently wished to be beautiful some time ago (to please Hugo)" (2: 357). When Psyche opens the beauty box, she is no longer possessed by vanity; rather, her act manifests "the self-respect of the truly liberated woman--the refusal to sacrifice femininity for the sake of achievement and the willingness to risk losing a lover in the interest of being true to herself" (Hinz and Teunissen 218). Similarly, Nin's desire to be beautiful for her beloved is

radically different from her former desire to be able to serve her Shadow through marriage. For Nin is now able to distinguish between love and blind worship:

Marcus's poetry moved me, yet I despised the boy. Eduardo's perfect response where dreams are concerned thrilled and enchanted me and does so even now, but I do not love him as a man. In Hugo these outward forms in which he clothes his nature, his very self, are merely ways. What counts, what holds my attention is this Self, apart from whatever brilliant method he has chosen to express himself and reveal himself. (2: 394)

In her relationship with Hugo, Nin feels herself independent and free. Instead of trying to control her, Hugo wishes her to be independent of him and encourages her to work outside (2: 408). Despite his family's vehement objection to his relationship with Nin, Hugo remains firm in his own choice. Even though he is separated from her in Europe by his family, Hugo makes up his mind to come back and marry her in Havana. This romantic and brave gesture makes Hugo look like the developed and matured Amor flying away from his mother's control toward reunion with the developed Psyche.

Psyche's desire for beauty and her curiosity, Neumann tells us, are the two desires that prompt her to open the beauty casket. The thirst for knowledge leads Psyche to defy Amor's demand for darkness. And the wish to be beautiful makes her disregard the tower's warning against opening the beauty casket. Likewise, Nin's quest for knowledge has endowed her

with the power to shatter the idol of male authority and to develop the "destructive" masculine qualities--the capacity of working, thinking and writing--in order to protect rather than deny her feminine self. As a result, Nin is now glad to admit her vanity. For she knows that it is human, and especially womanly, to love beauty and to want to be beautiful for one's beloved (2: 357).

In her introduction to A Woman Speaks, Evelyn Hinz emphasizes Nin's courage to speak not only her mind but also from her heart, that is, her ability to express and be honest with the personal and the intimate (xii). The same can be said of her early diary, wherein Nin often struggles to write truthfully about her personal life, and specifically her changing attitudes toward her parents and toward her self. A result of her curiosity, first about the inexplicable reason of her parents' separation and then about the true nature of life, diary writing enables her to understand and solve the conflict between her desire for love and her desire for a career. Indeed, diary and fiction later become her lifelong conscious exploration of relationships. It is through her sorting/writing, Patricia Lawlor argues, that Nin achieves an awareness of the self: "an awareness of her self that would exceed her identity as a daughter, sister, friend, wife, lover. She always sensed that she--her self, her soul--was more than each of these and more than the sum of these different parts" (23). In the same way that Psyche's

rebellion--her disobedience of Amor's command and her opening of the beauty box--does not result in her punishment but is rewarded with her reunion with Amor and her deification, Nin's rebellion--her writing and questioning of her role in life--is equally rewarded with a marriage based on independence and mutuality.

Chapter III. Memories of A Catholic Girlhood

Criticism of Mary McCarthy's Memories of A Catholic Girlhood usually focuses on two major subjects: the relation between fact and fiction (Eakin; Rose; Hewitt) and the quest for the self (Lifson). To C. S. Lewis, however, these twin concerns constitute the essence of the Amor and Psyche myth. Similarly, if McCarthy's narrative does not end with a heterosexual relationship, she does make reference to her husband and son, just as her key memory involves the major symbol of transformation associated with Psyche's name: namely, the butterfly. Finally, like Psyche, McCarthy's development reflects not only her rebellion against the masculine but also her cautious effort to manipulate a zigzag journey between two extremes, that is to say, between the power-ridden females like her paternal grandmother and the impersonal sensual femininity represented by the Bent sisters and her maternal grandmother.

McCarthy's earliest experiences are those of an abducted child who is virtually imprisoned by her hired father and guardian, Myers. As a guardian in name but oppressor in reality, Myers exerts military discipline on McCarthy and her three younger brothers. An ignorant and "somnolent brute," Myers, though a good-for-nothing who stays lazy in his "lair"

(58), seems to take the punishment of the four orphaned children as the sole joy of his life. His hatred of the intellect, of reading and education is especially directed at McCarthy who like Orual delights in reading and intellectual cultivation. Obviously, McCarthy's intellectual aspirations not only violate the conventional feminine role but also threaten Myers' authority. To Myers, McCarthy's quest for knowledge means challenging his power, because--as in the Psyche myth--to know is to be aware of the true nature of the god who keeps one in the dark or in a state of subjection. Consequently, when McCarthy brings home the prizes she has won in an essay contest, she receives severe beating instead of encouragement. Nevertheless, the furious whippings she receives do not subdue McCarthy but only increase her contempt for Myers' ignorance and for his authority. His literary tastes are limited to Uncle Remus stories, which McCarthy feels suggests his desire to reduce human beings to the level of talking animals (65).

McCarthy's rebellion against Myers, significantly, reaches its climax in the episode in which she is falsely accused of stealing her brother Sheridan's tin butterfly. Although the accusation is Myers' way of finding an excuse to punish McCarthy, the inevitable whipping that follows, in which Myers and his wife Margaret take turns, defeats rather than satisfies Myers' determination to make her submit to his dark authority. In sticking to the truth and maintaining her

own innocence, McCarthy triumphs over what Barbara Rose terms "a symbolic rape" (45): she "limped up to bed, with a crazy sense of inner victory, like a saint's." Nor does McCarthy regret disobeying Aunt Margaret who had urged her to admit the stealing in order to escape the beating: "It did not occur to me that I had been unchristian in refusing to answer a plea from Aunt Margaret's heart and conscience." For the first time in her life, McCarthy learns the virtue of resisting the feminine tendency to pity and the danger of yielding up to the masculine, for not only does the beating strengthen McCarthy's inexorable spirit but also punishes Aunt Margaret's female weakness and submission: "I rejoiced in the knowledge that I had made her [Margaret] continue to beat me long after she must have known that I was innocent; this was her punishment for her condonation of Myers" (78).

McCarthy's triumph over the masculine power at home, then, does enable her to defeat the equivalent of male authority and hierarchy at the Ladies of the Sacred Heart convent two years later. The convent school system, McCarthy observes, is "a highly centralized order, versed in clockwork obedience to authority" (102). As a result, the girls there are also divided by the "thrones and dominions" according to beauty, power and seniority, with some assuming the status of "Olympian goddesses" and others like McCarthy, in her first year, feeling like a "lorn new soul come to Paradise ... but unable to get a nod from any of the angels" (105). In her

frustration with such ranking, McCarthy is determined to get herself recognized "at whatever price.... If I could not win fame by goodness, I was ready to do it by badness." (110). Initially she considers elopement, but its impossibility is quickly replaced by a more dramatic dare: her decision to pretend that she has lost her faith. Initially, a symptom of vanity, her pretended atheism soon turns into a serious intellectual questioning of God's existence (119). In her subsequent debates with Father Dennis and Father Heeney, McCarthy experiences further evidence of patriarchal authority and patronage. Father Dennis brushes aside her questions and advises her to "give up reading that atheistic filth" (121). Similarly, Father Heeney relegates her serious doubts to "part of ... the gift of gab" (122). Designed to indicate her own incompetence, these conversations have the effect of revealing the incompetence of the church fathers. In her subsequent pretense that she has been converted through a dream (for she "had no intention of giving him [Heeney] the credit), McCarthy gives Father Heeney "a mere pious effigy of myself" (123) whereas her true self remains atheist.

McCarthy's challenge of patriarchal authority, religious as well as secular, however, does not blind her to the danger of assuming a masculine role. In this case, McCarthy differs from Orual, whose growing military and intellectual prowess gradually erodes her feminine nature. In contrast, McCarthy's fame and respect, earned by her defeat of the fathers and her

simulated conversion, leads not to her identification with the power structure but rather to her realization that the power structure will destroy her true and female self.

In the light of McCarthy's double role as an outward Catholic and inner atheist, her simulated conversion is a reenactment of her first Communion, in which the eight-year-old McCarthy took a sip of water unthinkingly and then realized that this would prevent her from receiving the Host, in accordance with the rule of fasting. Out of fear of disappointing the nuns and losing the honor of leading the girls' procession in the communion, McCarthy decides to receive Communion and to keep secret her "sinful" deed. The ferocious battle between her conscience and the need to preserve outward appearance and to live up to other people's expectations of her, leaves McCarthy "in a state of outward holiness and inward horror": "When I supposed I was damned, I was right--damned, that is, to a repetition or endless reenactment of that conflict between excited scruples and inertia of will" (21). Hence Catholicism means for McCarthy the repeated need to play a false role, just as Myers' treatment of her had turned her into "a problem liar" (65).

As McCarthy becomes more and more self-conscious, her rejection of this role playing also grows stronger, culminating in her radical rejection of her false identity as a woman and her nickname. In the section "Names," McCarthy deftly juxtaposes two absurd but no less traumatic

experiences. One is the bed-sheet stained by blood, caused by the cut on McCarthy's leg but believed by Mother Slattery to be evidence of her menstruation. No matter how hard McCarthy tries to prove that the blood actually comes from the cut on her leg, Mother Slattery and later Madame MacIllvra remain firm in their conviction that McCarthy has become a woman. Again McCarthy feels the threat of the convent authority which imposes a false female identity on her: "I talked about my cut, and she [Madame MacIllvra] talked about becoming a woman.... Owing to our different positions in the convent, she was free to interrupt me, whereas I was expected to remain silent until she had finished speaking" (134). To maintain the pretense that she has become a woman, she is forced into cutting her leg in order to stain the sanitary napkins she is given every month (134). Meanwhile, she lives in constant fear of being found out about her false womanhood, and ironically, precisely at this moment when she is burdened with "guilt and shame" of her false menstruation, she is found out by her nickname "Cye." Unable to penetrate the meaning of the nickname, McCarthy instinctively links it with "something horrible, something I could never guess because it represented some aspect of myself that the world could see and I couldn't" (135). This mysterious nickname haunts McCarthy "like halitosis" and forces her into acceptance, just as the nuns force her to pretend to be a woman. Powerless to reject such a false name and identity, McCarthy refuses to stay at the

convent, which by making her a fraud also makes her a non-woman.

Perhaps because of her experience with convent authority, McCarthy comes to link the Catholicism of her paternal grandmother with the latter's thirst for power and grudging manner: "the Catholicism practiced in my grandmother McCarthy's parlor... [was] a sour, baleful doctrine in which old hates and rancors had been stewing for generations, with ignorance proudly stirring the pot" (21). In McCarthy's view, the Catholic religion is a temptation to the deadly sins of pride and anger (23), especially for bad-tempered and selfish people like her grandmother McCarthy. In attributing her grandmother's sense of privilege, her aggression and self-righteousness to Catholicism, however, McCarthy initially fails to understand that her grandmother is also a victim of patriarchal power, manifest not only in her religion but also in her domestic and marital situation. The family is Irish Catholic nouveau-riche, with aristocratic aspirations and tense competition in matters of beauty, wealth, power and fame. With her own ugly "bulldog" appearance (9) and a monstrous balcony of a bosom, grandmother McCarthy's married life is, at its best, only a "robust" sexual history, attested to by three tall sons and one daughter (33). Love is something alien to grandmother McCarthy whose husband, though treating her "kindly" (32), is "preoccupied with business matters and with his rheumatism" (31). Hence it becomes clear why

grandmother McCarthy responds the way she does to the death of her daughter-in-law, Mary McCarthy's mother, who--pretty, happy, loving--is in every respect her opposite and rival:

For my grandmother, the death of my parents had become an eventful occasion upon which she looked back with pleasure and a certain self-satisfaction. Whenever we stayed with her, we were allowed, as a special treat, to look into the rooms they had died in, for the fact that, as she phrased it, "they died in separate rooms" had for her a significance both romantic and somehow self-gratulatory, as though the separation in death of two who had loved each other in life were beautiful in itself and also reflected credit on the chatelaine of the house, who had been able to furnish two master bedrooms for the emergency. (44)

Just as her hidden envy of her daughter-in-law's attributes helps to explain her self-justifying response to the couple's death, so her strange bursts of generosity toward her four orphaned grandchildren become explicable if one takes into account the gratitude she gets from the children and her delight in the appearance of generosity. Deprived of love yet unwilling to be reduced to the mere means for reproduction, grandmother McCarthy resorts to combativeness and possessiveness, not unlike that of Psyche's two sisters. Regarding the grandchildren as her property, she turns her home into "a centre of power" which is not to be "derogated by easy or democratic usage" (34). Religion thus becomes an outlet for her resentment of the power structure in her marriage: "The religious magazines on her table furnishes her

... with fresh pretexts for anger; articles attacking birth control, divorce, mixed marriages, Darwin, and secular education were her favourite reading" (33).

If grandmother McCarthy's frustration turns her into a virago, then Miss Gowrie, McCarthy's teacher at Annie Wright Seminary, stands for another negative example of the sister type. An eccentric and austere spinster of forty, Miss Gowrie's intellectual pursuits and her obsessive concerns with meeting masculine standards of discipline turn her into "a stoic of the Roman mold" (153), incapable of any human emotions. Students groan in her chilly classroom, where the windows are kept open "to obviate sleepiness" (148). Sacrificing relational concern for self-autonomy, Miss Gowrie effaces her humanity and grows impersonal: "she had no private life or history and consisted totally of national attributes (thrift, humorless hardwork, porridge-eating, tea-drinking), like one of these wooden dolls dressed in national costume that they show at fairs and expositions" (149). In her own identification with Catiline, McCarthy is able to enact his ganster aspect by her deliberate violation of school rules, whereas Miss Gowrie's equal admiration of this hero-villain takes the mute form ensuring that his costume surpasses even that of Cicero's in quality and color (60).

In retrospect, McCarthy congratulates herself that the injustices she and her three brothers suffered in their childhood, both at her grandparents and the Myers' homes, have

not turned her into a monster like her paternal grandmother McCarthy, devoured by the patriarchal power (167). Likewise, her love of justice, as a result of her rebellion against her unjust guardians and her grandparents, has not turned her into a second Miss Gowrie, whose love for justice and masculine discipline drains her of her emotional concerns. Both grandmother McCarthy and Miss Gowrie have become women in name rather than in fact, just as the convent school had falsely imposed womanhood on the adolescent McCarthy.

As much as McCarthy rejects excessive assimilation of the masculine, however, so much is she also aware of the lack of resistance which reduces women to either asexual creatures or mere sexual objects. Aunt Margaret is an instance of the latter--who hands over her power to her husband in marriage and lives in constant fear of losing his love, as if Myers, like the powerful beast-man Amor, might disappear from their habitat at any moment. The relationship between Myers and Margaret reflects nothing more than male domination and female submission. Aunt Margaret's servility to her husband, moreover, also turns her into a terrible mother, always in alliance with Myers in his cruel and unreasonable punishment. This love-and-hate attitude makes Aunt Margaret a perfect example of the conventional mother pointed out by Lee Edwards. Even worse than Margaret's blind love and worship for Myers (58) is the way it leads her to accommodate Myers' patriarchal values in exerting military discipline on the children: in

whipping McCarthy, Aunt Margaret is bowing before Myers' authority. Believing that female obedience is the only way for women to survive under patriarchal control, Margaret is also whipping her own "not unkindly" feminine nature which "was warped away by bureaucratic zeal and by her subservience to her husband" (71). Similarly, Aunt Mary, another weak and silent woman in the household, never dares to protest against Myers' violence, though she loves and treats McCarthy as her daughter.

If Aunt Margaret and Aunt Mary thus stand for the type of female powerlessness which characterizes the marriage of death, the Bent sisters represent another type of weakness in their false appearance of female power. The Bent sisters, Ruth and Betty, are the boldest persons the young McCarthy has ever met. They defy conventional feminine roles by dressing boldly, approaching men without scruple or reservation, and getting male authorities to accommodate their desires. In the adolescent McCarthy's eyes, "they merely did what they wanted, in a bald, impersonal way, like two natural forces--a sultry dark browned wind and light playful breeze" (175). What surprises McCarthy most is their "liberated" attitude toward men and sexuality: competing with men in drinking and indulging themselves in nightly drunken sexuality. Like Psyche in Amor's palace, their delight in relationship has a sensual and impersonal quality: they know little about the identities of their sexual partners and they prefer to be drunk rather

than awake.

This carnivalistic celebration of eating, drinking and drunken lust, however, is soon replaced by sober reality. The Bent sisters' seeming rebellion against sexual ensnarement in patriarchal marriage leads them only to another form of sexual captivity, just as McCarthy discovers that their nightly drive, though forever going somewhere, actually arrives "nowhere" (184). The goal of the sisters' rebellion is ultimately marriage and dependence on a man for their livelihood. Indeed, Ruth Bent, at twenty-one years old, has become a "very-well-to-do" widow who runs a chocolate factory which "her husband, who had been killed in a plane crash, had left her." Having accepted the deathly marriage as "her destiny," Ruth looks "not a bit wild any more" (191).

It is through the Bent sisters that McCarthy comes to view marriage as death and abduction. In order to avoid her grandfather's control and his embarrassing over-protection, McCarthy goes with the Bent sisters to their hometown Medicine Springs, which McCarthy mistakes as being somewhere near Yellowstone Park. Like the innocent and weak Psyche taken by the West Wind to Amor's cave in the deep valley, McCarthy feels that she is being taken to a place not marked on any maps: "it was not near any place I had heard of.... I kept looking out the window for scenery, but there was nothing, not a river, not a hill, not a tree--just a flat expanse of dry grass and gopher mounds." When McCarthy reaches Medicine

Springs, it turns out to be "a small, flat, yellowish town set in the middle of nowhere" (176). This sinister place debases human consciousness to the level of insensibility, as can be seen in the impersonal atmosphere in the Bent family. The parents are remote from their children to the same degree that their offspring "took no notice of their parents, who might as well have been a pair of mutes at the family board" (177).

Equally disorienting is the fact that "there were no boys in Medicine Springs; all the men in Medicine Springs were married" (178). Consequently McCarthy's "first official date" is Bob Berdan, "the handsomest man in Medicine Springs" whom every single girl was after (179). As the Bent sisters start to enjoy their drinking, riding and sexual intoxication, McCarthy also experiences her first physical encounter with a man. Reminiscent of Psyche's initial situation, McCarthy experiences her marriage of death in an unconscious state, since she passes out every night from "moonshine." When she wakes up, she is unable to recognize the man sleeping beside her, and the first thing that comes to her mind is that her life is over (182).

Fortunately, unlike the two "tough" sisters who remain at the impersonal, insensible level in their relationship, McCarthy manages to emerge from her loss of maidenhood. "Yellowstone Park," as this chapter is titled, was not her true destination and the experience leaves her feeling that like the awakened Psyche, she has grown up "overnight." When

she thus escapes, both geographically as well as psychologically, from that "curious wonderland where all the men were married" (192), it is with little knowledge of "Old Faithful" or the magnificence of the natural world but with valuable insights into male nature and the female condition.

It is, however, especially McCarthy's writing that functions like Psyche's lamp and which enables her to perceive the imperfections of the men in her family. Whereas the child McCarthy has only admiration, gratitude and respect for her two grandfathers, when she writes about her childhood, she begins to note the disparity between their reverential images as the generous rich and their disregard for their grandchildren's poverty. On the one hand, McCarthy recalls her paternal grandfather's renowned munificence in allotting a sum of money for support of his four orphaned grandchildren. On the other hand, she is amazed to discover that her grandfather was content to live peacefully in his luxurious mansion while indifferent to the suffering of his grandchildren at their guardians' hands only two blocks away: "We were too poor, spiritually speaking, to question his generosity, to ask why he allowed us to live in oppressed chill and deprivation at a long arm's length from himself and hooded his genial blue eye with a bluff, millionairish grey eyebrow whenever the evidence of our suffering presented itself at his knee" (31).

Likewise, McCarthy's maternal grandfather, Simon Manly Preston, is seen to be surprisingly insensible to the four

children's account of their mistreatment and suffering. It is not because of the terrible whipping that McCarthy had received from Myers but because she is not wearing glasses that grandfather Preston rescues her from the guardians' hands (79). Subsequently, McCarthy also comes to feel that grandfather Preston's overprotectiveness is in fact crippling her growth; by treating her as a sweet innocent child and by keeping her out of ordinary contact with young males, grandfather Preston actually turns her into a simple, naive and helpless female vulnerable to sexual ensnarement by men.

As much as these two authoritative males are now perceived differently by McCarthy, even more so does her own father, Roy, suffer a fall, changing like Joaquin Nin in Anais Nin's mind from a hero to a villain. At the beginning of the memoir, McCarthy remembers her father as a loving, romantic and handsome husband and father, and she tends to recall with nostalgia the mysterious romance between her dead parents. In retrospect, however, she comes to realize and admit that many of her "most cherished ideas about my father have turned out to be false" (11). This discrepancy between her memory and the facts marks not only her growing sense of reality but also her changing attitude toward men, from childhood worship of a godlike father to an unbiased perception of an imperfect male. Roy is not the hero who draws a gun on the train conductor when the latter wants to put the sick family off the train; rather, his whimsical determination to take the family to

visit his brother during the fatal flu epidemic, makes him responsible for his and his wife's death. In coming to terms with her guilt for exposing him and her continued love, McCarthy begins to present her father as a hero-villain, keeping her cherished memory of him as well as truthfully recording Uncle Harry, Roy's brother's contradictory recollection.

As her writing progresses, the paradisaal relationship she had thought to exist between her parents also loses its lustre, and she begins to perceive their marriage as one of death based on hierarchy. Her father she now sees behaved more like an uncaring Amor than a considerate husband, when he brought home an armful of roses and left the family without food for dinner (10). Despite the physician's warning that McCarthy's mother would die if she had another child, her father refused to practice birth control. Moreover, according to Uncle Harry, her father has been a periodical drunkard and a philanderer, besides being a spendthrift. Therefore, the romantic marriage between her handsome parents, Uncle Harry believes, was "just another drunkard's dodge for extracting money from his [Roy's] father, all other means having failed," and wherein McCarthy's sweet, pretty mother had functioned as "the innocent lure on the hook" (15). As in the case of Psyche's perception of the true nature of Amor, so McCarthy's father is ultimately revealed to be a willful and immature male, who has "wantonly absconded into the irresponsible

paradise of the hereafter" (30). What also begins to fall into place, therefore, is the connection between the tin butterfly episode and McCarthy's discovery that "twice in my father's diary, on February 28 and November 7, 1916, the single word, 'butterfly,' is written over a whole page" (81).

Although this perception comes by way of her paternal grandmother who "had a case of his specimens" (81), it is by way of her maternal grandmother that McCarthy is initiated into the dark secrets of womanhood. Thus just as Psyche's final labour involves her meeting with the great goddess Persephone from whom she obtains the beauty ointment, so the last chapter of Memories of a Catholic Girlhood focuses on McCarthy's grandmother Preston and elaborates on the theme of feminine vanity.

As a child, and based on the example of her pretty and youthful mother, McCarthy had regarded beauty as the criterion for happiness in marriage. Similarly, her standard of judgment for the nursemaids hired by her mother was their aesthetic attractiveness, rather than any kindness or moral suitability. This obsession with beauty, in turn, is the major link between herself and her grandmother. Grandmother Preston's spacious bathroom, closed between twelve and two, in which she performs her ritualistic daily make-up, has an irresistible fascination for McCarthy. Like Psyche, the twelve-year-old McCarthy steals into her grandmother's forbidden bathroom and tries her grandmother's beauty aid. Significantly, she is caught and

punished by her grandmother not for what she has done but for denying her act and by extension her motive (228). What angers her grandmother, in other words, is McCarthy's denial of her feminine desire for beauty, or of the mother-daughter bond. Indeed, grandmother Preston, the greatest beauty in Seattle, looks youthful even in her old age and is taken by others as McCarthy's mother (220).

If the child and adolescent McCarthy is fascinated by grandmother Preston's extraordinary charm, however, in writing about her grandmother, she comes to understand another meaning of her beauty, that is, beauty as death. The spacious, mysterious bathroom which locks her grandmother's sensuous body corresponds to the underworld and thus makes her grandmother one of the living dead. That the young McCarthy finds her grandmother's beauty aid unfit for her, therefore, serves as a symbolic warning against equating beauty with power and against indulgence in sensuality. In recollection, moreover, McCarthy links her grandmother's sensuality with her cannibalistic appetite:

...I can see her [grandmother Preston] at the head of the table, on a summer morning, wearing her horn-rimmed reading glasses, the newspaper before her on a silver rack; there is a bowl of fresh apricots in the middle of the table, and as she reads, her bare, plump white arm, as if absently stretches out toward this dish; her slender, tapering fingers pinch the fruit, and she selects the choicest, ripest one. The process is repeated until the bowl is empty, and she does not look up from her paper.... [M]y grandmother's voracity, so finical, so selective, chilled me with its mature

sensuality, which was just the opposite of hunger. I conceived an aversion to apricots...from having watched her with them, just as though I had witnessed what Freud calls the Primal scene. (225)

Grandmother Preston, in McCarthy's eyes, is an Aphrodite-Persephone figure, forever entrapped in her narcissistic beauty and incapable of genuine relationship. Like Aphrodite, grandmother Preston perceives every piece of merchandise as suing for her favor, whereby it assumes "the masculine gender" and therefore becomes "subject to rebuff" (219). Like Persephone, grandmother Preston's emphasis "on the youth of the garden's produce made her fastidious appetite seem a little indecent--cannibalistic, as though she belonged to a species that devoured its own young" (224). The only reason she can find to justify her marriage is that her husband is "good" to her (212), and consequently after his death, instead of grieving she seems rejuvenated, looking very handsome and taking a new lease on life. In contrast, the death of grandmother's own sister deals her a fatal blow, making her scream "like a fire siren on the moon" (242). It dawns on McCarthy that her grandmother "had never really cared for anyone but her sister" (243). In this way, McCarthy's perception of what lies behind her grandmother's fascination with beauty is the equivalent of the way that Psyche's opening of the beauty casket informs her of the deathly sleep that turns women into beautiful but lifeless dolls.

In addition to this negative lesson, however, McCarthy's

grandmother also passes on to her granddaughter an important and potentially corrective gift--her storytelling--which significantly also coincides with the death of her husband. Having been silent throughout her long married life, following her husband's death she becomes extremely "chatty" (241). In grandmother Preston's storytelling, she always presents herself as the helpless heroine, the disconcerted one. But in reality, McCarthy observes, she appears to be "the disconcerting one, short of speech when she was not telling a story" (217). In her stories, in short, the grandmother reveals herself to be both less self-sufficient than she seems and also able to adopt other perspectives. Similarly, McCarthy presents a variety of changing selves, and behind her rebellious stance evidences her concern with the lives and motives of others. Indeed, the primary example of her relational concerns and mothering capacity consists in the exchange of roles between herself and her grandmother, when she assumes the pose of mother when the latter reaches her "second childhood" (222).

Hence, just as Orual comes to realize that she has played out the tasks of Psyche, so it could be argued that the last chapter of Memories of a Catholic Girlhood is an autobiography of McCarthy as a mature woman and writer reflected in a biography of grandmother Preston. Entitled "Ask Me No Questions," this last chapter also constitutes the final command that McCarthy disobeys and which, like Psyche's

disobedience, involves the curiosity that sets her free.

Chapter IV. Lives of Girls and Women

"I wanted men to love me, and I wanted to think of the universe when I looked at the moon," says Del Jordan, the protagonist in Alice Munro's fictional autobiography Lives of Girls and Women.

A bildungsroman, Lives of Girls and Women records Del's journey from childhood to maturity, a journey toward what Jaqueline McLeod Rogers would term a genuine relationship based on love and selfhood. Indeed, Lives of Girls and Women can be perceived as a book of relationships, relationships that Del fears, rejects, and grows beyond. These relationships, observed and experienced in her childhood, girlhood and womanhood, reflect most of the elements that Psyche experiences in the course of her development. First, Del's childhood fear of marriage as death is expressed in her observation of the tragic relationships of older women around her. Second, Del's rebellion against the mother-daughter bond marks her break with the maternal control and hence with women's conventional relationship with Nature and God. Third and lastly, Del's rejection of relationships based on sensuality or power builds up her capacity both for love and for self-autonomy.

The first marital relationship that Del remembers in her

childhood is that of Madeleine and Uncle Benny, Mr Jordan's workman. At the age of seventeen, Madeleine has already undergone a marriage of death, and is dependent upon her brother for her and her daughter's livelihood. As a piece of property, a domesticated animal, Madeleine is sold by her brother and bought by Uncle Benny as the latter's wife. Her first marriage, however, has proved a fatal one, killing all the love inside her and leaving her wild, full of hatred for all mankind. What she is capable of doing, when she comes to Uncle Benny's house, is cutting Benny's wedding suit (18), chasing Irene Pollox the madwoman back inside her own yard, and holding the stove lifter overhead against anyone who dares to approach her (17). Unable to survive the marriage of death, Madeleine becomes like Psyche's militant sisters, equating love with power, men with beasts; and finally, though not surprisingly, she runs away from Uncle Benny's house without a word, leaving behind her the legend of a "madwoman" (27). Although Madeleine's "legend" is seldom discussed by critics and although Rosalie Murphy Baum refers to it merely as "a form of memory" and story-telling (205), Madeleine's madness is integral to an understanding of young Del's concept of marriage and relationships.

On the surface, Madeleine's insanity and her flight seem to distinguish her from women like Del's Aunt Moira and Aunt Nile, both of whom seem to have conformed to patriarchal society. Actually, however, the marriages of these two women

suggest that their fates are only variants of Madeleine's. From the matriarchal perspective, every marriage is "a rape of Kore ... by Hades, the ravishing, earthly aspect of the hostile male" and a boundary between "end and beginning" (Neumann 62, 64). Aunt Moira, who narrowly survives hemorrhaging in childbirth, does not, however, survive her spiritual death. Marriage for Aunt Moira means endless torture, suffering and fear, physically as well as psychologically. She is thus regarded by young Del as "one of those heavy, cautiously moving, wrecked survivors of the female life" (40). Comparing Aunt Moira to her two spinster sisters, Del observes: "Not much could be said for marriage, really, if you were to compare her with her sisters, who could jump up so quickly, who still smelled fresh and healthy" (40). Just as Madeleine's madness derives from her psychological repression as a result of deathly marriage, so Aunt Moira's mental instability is caused by her physical suffering as well as by her witnessing street fights and drunken rapes which she endures as part of her daily life (40-41).

Similarly, Nile's indulgence in material comfort, her silver fox coat and luxurious life, does not remove her from the category to which Madeleine and Aunt Moira belong. A prey to sexual captivity, Nile is content with her own ignorance, her extreme artificiality and passivity. She is no more than an animal, a pet, kept by Uncle Bill (82), reduced to her minimum capacity for eating, sleeping, and the simplest verbal

communication. Nile's beauty, youth and immaturity qualify her to be Uncle Bill's obedient and dependent wife. Uncle Bill himself, moreover, has been crippled by the indulgence of his mother and is an immature Amor incapable of love based on mutuality. Given his conviction that his mother was "some sort of a saint on earth" (85), Uncle Bill's relationship with Nile cannot but rest on the material and sexual level. Nile's extreme "feminine decorativeness" and "perfect artificiality" (85), it seems to Del, makes her look inhuman, unreal: "her skin was without a mark, like a pink teacup; her mouth would have been cut out of burgundy-colored velvet, and pasted on. Her smell was inhumanly sweet" (82). Like Psyche in Amor's dark palace, Nile's existence is, in Neumann's words, "a non-existence, a being-in-the-dark...devoured by a demon, a monster" (74). In view of her utter dependence on Uncle Bill and the latter's imminent death, Nile has really married death itself.

The fact that marriage has the same meaning for Madeleine, Moira and Nile is also evident if one examines the theme of deathly marriage from a sociological point of view. Marriage in a patriarchal society, Edwards argues, can result only in women's dependence and men's domination; women's submission to their husbands, required by their economic as well as legal dependence, makes sexuality and domination inseparable (39). It follows that Madeleine's boundless rage at sexual slavery, like that of Psyche's two sisters,

inevitably leads to her repression of sexual desires in order to end her dependence on men, in this case, on Uncle Benny. In the same vein, Aunt Moira and Nile's consent to marriage warps their sexuality and destroys their self-autonomy.

In addition to Madeleine and Nile, who represent the rejection and acceptance of marriage, Mary Agnes, Aunt Moira's daughter, represents another type of victim to marriage of death. Already weak from lack of oxygen in birth, Agnes nearly died when she suffered from the violence of marriage, when, out of ignorance, she was persuaded by five boys to go out and forced to lie naked on the cold mud of the fairgrounds (42). This traumatic experience, which parallels Psyche's lonely exposure on the mountain's summit, is a dramatic rendering of marriage as rape and abduction. Half crazed, Agnes never emerges spiritually from death, the unconscious world. Behind her mask of meekness before adults, Agnes often reveals "unpredictable strength" (42) and bloodthirsty power when she is alone with Del. This outburst of madness as a suggestion of Agnes' relation to the matriarchal unconscious is clearly indicated in Del's observation: "I was amazed as people must be who are seized and kidnapped, and who realize that in the strange world of their captors they have a value absolutely unconnected with anything they know about themselves " (42). Having wandered at the gates of Hades, Agnes has greater familiarity with the unconscious than the conscious world, and hence her audacity to touch the dead cow's eye, which

surprises and frightens Del who cannot perform the act (44).

Representing matriarchal ensnarement, therefore, Agnes becomes for Del a dangerous threat and a psychological stage that she must break through. At Uncle Craig's funeral, Del wanders around to avoid encountering the dead Craig, only to find herself alone with Agnes in the storeroom, a place Aunt Elspeth calls "tomb" and the young Del mixes up with "womb" (53). In "inviting" and then forcing Del to see Uncle Craig's body, Agnes again manifests her "demon power" (55) and attempts to submerge Del in the matriarchal matrix. Del's subsequent biting of Agnes to break out of Agnes's control, out of the "hollow marble egg" (53) of a storeroom, corresponds to Neumann's interpretation of Psyche's struggle, with her lamp and knife, to break away from the Eros of Aphrodite, the ensnarement "in the darkness of the egg" (86).

Del's biting, her rebellion against Agnes control, is seen by adults as her inability to stand the strain of Uncle Craig's funeral, and she is forgiven. However, being forgiven gives Del the "voluptuous feeling of exposure, of impotence, self-betrayal" (57) and thus suggests her attraction to the matriarchal power of the unconscious. Unlike Agnes, however, Del survives this feeling of exposure and is able to encounter death, to see Uncle Craig without fear: "I ... was relieved, glad that I had done it after all, and survived" (58). This experience of marriage as deathly exposure is well expressed by a lady attending the funeral: "I passed out at a funeral

myself, one time before I was married" (56). Indeed, Uncle Craig's funeral, seen from Del's eyes, is arranged more like a wedding than a funeral; Aunt Grace, a spinster, is "subdued and grateful," behaving "as if she had been a bride" (52).

Critics have tended to see Del's response to death as an artistic and intellectual reaction (Baum 204; Struthers 35), or to regard Del's biting of Agnes as her effort to get free from the restrictions of the ordered and civilized world (Macdonald 202). Read in the context of the Amor and Psyche myth, however, one begins to see that what is highlighted is the connection of death and marriage. As Neumann points out, the marriage of death is "a central archetype of the feminine mysteries" (62), and this accounts for Del's concern with her seemingly comic and absurd female relatives. Indeed, the motif of deathly marriage is central to understanding the link that Del, the participant-observer, feels between herself and the female characters she describes, and the impact they have on her own growth.

Similarly it is by way of Neumann's perception of marriage as abduction, a violation of the mother and daughter bond, that one appreciates the dynamics of Del's relationship to her mother, although here it is also important both to correlate Neumann's psychological interpretation with Lee Edwards' sociological approach. To Edwards, nature functions essentially as a "female, maternal figure" (82), although sometimes it takes a hostile and alien form. Thus Madeleine

evidences a maternal animal instinct in her mistreatment of Diane, her daughter. In fact, the identification of Madeleine with the natural world is one of Del's earliest memories about the way both Del's parents and Uncle Benny talk of finding the latter a wife as if they were going to buy "a cow", with the requirements being that she have good teeth and have "her appendix and her gallbladder out" (10). This conventional concept of woman as an animal, an object of conquest and exploitation, accounts for Madeleine's attitudes toward Diane. On the one hand, Madeleine keeps Diane as her precious possession, bringing her daughter with her when she comes to Benny's house and taking her away when she flees from the marriage. On the other hand, Madeleine's anger at herself as an object of male consumption prompts her cruel treatment of Diane, who, she feels, has no way of escaping the same fate. Madeleine's frequent beating of Diane becomes all the more understandable when Munro juxtaposes it to the behavior of female foxes:

At this time of year the foxes were having their pups. If an airplane from the Air Force Training School on the lake came over too low, if a stranger appeared near the pens, if anything too startling or disruptive occurred, they might decide to kill them. Nobody knew whether they did this out of blind irritation, or out of roused and terrified maternal feeling--could they be wanting to take their pups, who still had not opened their eyes, out of the dangerous situation they might sense they had brought them into, in these pens? They were not like domestic animals. They had lived only a very few generations in captivity. (21-22)

As Munro presents it, the animalistic connection between Madeleine and Diane is the mirror image of the spirituality which characterizes the relationship of Del's grandmother and her daughter, Ada. Once a school teacher, Mrs Jordan's mother becomes a religious fanatic after her marriage. While the males are busy in the outside world, Ada's nameless mother spends long hours kneeling at prayer or lying "flat on her back and weeping (74). Therefore, just as Madeleine shows her animal instinct by loving and beating Diane, so Mrs Jordan's mother finds religion an outlet for what she has repressed in marriage and emphasizes abstinence as the only way to prevent her daughter from suffering a similar fate. However, religious fervor makes Mrs Jordan's mother not only inhuman but turns her daughter against her, forcing her to crop her hair and wear hand-me-downs from her brothers to guard her "against vanity" (73). Despite the family's poverty, Mrs Jordan's mother spends every cent of the money she inherited on the purchase of expensive Bibles and forces her daughter, the eight-year-old Ada, to distribute them over the country, "in boys' shoes and not owning a pair of mittens " (75). Here Mrs Jordan's mother represents Aphrodite in her negative form and seems to act out what Edwards would term her intolerable frustration in the mistreatment of her daughter (176).

Out of revenge, Ada reacts by becoming an atheist,

rebellious both against her mother's power and oppressive religion. At the same time, however, she cannot liberate herself from patriarchal attitudes toward women. It is true that Ada rebels against the conventional feminine role through her persistent intellectual pursuits, even after she is forced by her father to quit school and stay at home until marriage. Similarly, she evidences self-determination in her flight from patriarchal authority at home and in her hard work at the boarding house in order to pay for her living and education. Nevertheless, Mrs Jordan's rebellious adventure, from "dark captivity, suffering, then daring and defiance and escape", is not rewarded, as Del hopes, with a happy ending though it does end in marriage (78). Her rebellion against patriarchal authority and religion does not lead her to challenge the patriarchal view of women as the dangerous sex and as men's property. Hence Del perceives a basic contradiction in her mother: she campaigns for birth control and sells encyclopedias on the one hand, but forbids and fears the mention of sex, especially in front of Del, on the other. In this respect, then, Mrs Jordan does not differ much from her mother.

Perhaps it is because of their mutual conformity with the patriarchal world that Mrs Jordan never comes to terms with her mother, even after she herself becomes a mother. Unable to penetrate the real cause of her mother's religious fervor and abstinence, Mrs Jordan simply rebels against a negative

maternal image rather than the patriarchal system that turns women into such negative models. Mrs Jordan's anger, however, does break a link in the maternal chain; she passes down to young Del the resentful rather than loving memory of her mother, even when her memory is contradicted by her brother Bill's recollection of their mother's affection (88). Lorna Irvine, who emphasizes the importance of the mother-daughter bond in female development, argues that the successful journey toward independence for women involves not only anger but, more importantly, the transformation of this anger, on the part of the daughter, into a recognition of responsibility and a reconciliation with her past (243-44). In Mrs Jordan's case, however, no sympathy replaces anger, no understanding transforms hostility. And her failure to incorporate the past, therefore, prevents her from assuming joyfully her own role in the generational cycle. Indeed, in her own relationship with her daughter, Mrs Jordan is seen to be more capable of bitterness than affection.

Like her mother, Del goes to church, at first for the purpose of annoying her mother (94). This defiance of her mother, however, soon turns into an intellectual search for God's existence, which enables her to obtain an insight into women's relationship with God and Nature. After her exploration of various creeds, Del comes to realize that it is impossible to ask God to stop cruelties on earth, cruelties such as the killing of Major, her brother Owen's favourite dog

who has reverted to killing sheep. Her sense of the cruelty in the human and animal world leads her to an awareness of the inevitable collision between life and religion (114). She can neither stop Owen's painful praying nor stop her father from killing Major. For Del, the failure reveals the unfairness of the hierarchical system based on faith and trust between the weak and the strong, between sheep and Major, animal and man, and son and father. In her growing consciousness, Del gradually breaks away from the conventional female identification with Nature, and with the weaker and inferior in the hierarchical structure.

Significantly, Del's rebellion against her mother does not blind her to the positive effects of maternal influences. Although Mrs Jordan sees only the religious fever in her mother, Del the observer-daughter does not forget to include the female rebellious spirit, that is to say, their common thirst for knowledge, that is passed down from her grandmother to her mother and herself. On the one hand, Del feels ashamed of the public ridicule directed toward her mother's intellectual pursuit in the form of writing articles in local newspapers. On the other hand, she recognizes this inherited intellectual interest early in her life: "I myself was not so different from my mother, but concealed it, knowing what dangers there were" (80). Unlike Mrs Jordon who turns atheist simply because her mother is a religious fanatic, Del assimilates instead of denouncing her mother's intellectual

aspiration. Moreover, she draws lessons from her mother's blunt challenge of the feminine role and develops tactics to protect her intellectual power while surviving in the patriarchal world. Commenting on Mrs Jordan's impact on Del, Rae McCarthy Macdonald rightly points out that Mrs Jordan, in her desire for acceptance and her inability to conform to the limitations of the garrison, is "an adult version of Del's problem, and Del comes to recognize their similarity" (203).

One is not surprised, then, to see the end of Del's childhood naivety signaled by the death of her school teacher, Miss Farris. Miss Farris, though not young, always dresses up as a girl and attempts to display her youthfulness in skating. To Mrs Jordan's boarder, Fern Dogherty, she does so in the interests of attracting men (120), but Del herself discovers the opposite in Miss Farris' face: "What she was after, it could not be Mr Boyce ... it could hardly even be men " (121). When Miss Farris mysteriously drowns in the Wawanash River, Del comes to see the ceremonial nature of her act: like Narcissus, she drowns with her face down as if to behold her own image in the water (139). Del's own ritualistic dancing in the operetta, supervised by Miss Farris before her death, is accompanied by her erotic attraction to Frank Wales, a boy participating in the same operetta. When Del comments on Miss Farris' death, she is in fact referring to the change inside herself: "I felt as if Miss Farris existed away back in time,

and on a level of the most naive and primitive feelings, and mistaken perceptions. I thought her imprisoned in that time, and was amazed that she had broken out to commit this act. If it was an act" (139). But it is an act, one of hieros gamos (62) in Neumann's interpretation, if one takes into account the two hypotheses of her death: suicide or abduction. In either case it is indicative of the end of maidenhood and the death of childhood in Del, who feels Miss Farris "fad(ing) but hold(ing) trapped forever our transformed childish selves, her undefeated, unrequited love " (139).

It is no accident, then, that Miss Farris should die not at the time of the operetta but three or four years after it, when Del is already an adolescent in high school (138). Miss Farris' drowning, in Macdonald's opinion, is a protest against the "artificial, self-perpetuating garrison order" which suppresses her unrealistic and romantic life; hence her "suicide" externalizes Del's inner damage, namely, her denial of the whole chaotic underside of life while living within the confines of the seemingly safe garrison world (206). In the context of the myth, however, one might also argue that Miss Farris represents the matriarchal unconscious in opposition to patriarchal order and that her drowning signals both Del's loss of her own childish, narcissistic self-love and her refusal to be submerged in the Aphroditic realm of the unknown.

Accordingly, when Del becomes sexually conscious, her

experiences are similar to the stages that Psyche undergoes in her relationship with men. Like Psyche's initial delight in the amorous advances of her mysterious lover, Del fantasizes that she is naked and seen by Art Chamberlain, Fern's lover (151). Similar to Psyche's situation under Amor's prohibition, this daydreaming cannot but keep Del in the dark, in inferiority. Significantly, Amor is specifically evoked in the way light and darkness function in Del's envisioning of Mr Chamberlain: "His presence was essential but blurred; in the corner of my daydream he was featureless but powerful, humming away electrically like a blue fluorescent light " (152). Fortunately, Del's desire for dark, stealthy relationship, soon comes to an end when, instead of being seen naked by him, Del sees Mr Chamberlain's true self in the scene of his masturbation in the broad daylight.

In her relationships with men, therefore, Del first shares but then rejects the seemingly liberated attitudes of Fern. Although Fern's extra-marital sexual encounter appears to be a gesture of rebellion against patriarchal marriage, Del comes to realize that her remaining single most likely derives from Mr Chamberlain's refusal to be restricted by marriage. According to Edwards' theory, Fern's economic independence and her non-marital status should have brought about her self-autonomy and her liberation from the sexual bondage in marriage. In actuality, however, Fern's conventional attitude toward relationship prevents her from developing beyond

Psyche's first stage in Amor's captivity, that is, the stage of impersonal sexual intoxication and blind worship of the male. Like Psyche, Fern consents to a clandestine relationship with Mr Chamberlain and to the latter's masculine domination. Without challenging patriarchal authority, Fern's pursuit of masculine freedom within the hierarchical structure is thus doomed. Nor is the style of loose relationship with Mr Chamberlain free of contempt and scandals; marriage, as a means of reinforcing the hierarchical status quo, is what patriarchal society depends on. Consequently, Fern's joy ends and her life is shattered when Mr Chamberlain forsakes her.

In commenting on Fern's role, Phyllis Sternberg Perrakis argues that Fern fills an important gap left by Del's mother in that Fern provides Del with "a female model for whom the sensual and sexual aspect of life is important" (63). What needs to be emphasized is that Fern's model, though important for Del, is nonetheless a negative one. Mrs Jordan uses Fern's pathetic example to demonstrate that the female sex is damageable whereas "men were supposed to be able to go out and take on all kinds of experiences and shuck off what they didn't want and come back proud" (173). Indignant at such gender stereotyping and determined not to fall into the same lot as Fern and her mother, Del decides to take up a masculine role and to act "without even thinking about it" (174).

Although at first glance, Del's friend Naomi would seem to be a good model for such a life style, Del soon discovers

that Naomi too accepts marriage as her destination (180), and that her flaunting of her sexuality is in the interests of finding a husband. Her adventures, in the form of drunken driving and fighting with men in order to get hold of them, pushes her closer to Aphrodisian mindlessness than to self-consciousness. After her drunken experience with Naomi and two other men at the Gay-la Dance Hall, Del falls asleep "in deep engulfing swirls of light and darkness" (190) and wakes up sobered. In her careful sorting of types of relationships, it becomes clear to Del that Naomi's concept of "normal life" (191) and her competition with men are only old wine in a new bottle. Naomi is ready to give up not only her work, her economic independence, but also her whole identity when she gets married (229). Consequently, her efforts to break loose from her father's sadistic torture only transfers her from one form of patriarchal captivity into another. As far as women's economic and social independence is concerned, Naomi's rebellion is even less satisfactory than that of Mrs Jordan, for the latter at least keeps her economic independence after her marriage. To obtain this knowledge of the true nature of Naomi's rebellion, however, Del has to pay the price of intoxication and loss of Naomi as a friend and confidante.

The next stage of Del's development, therefore, takes the form of a relationship with Jerry Storey, her scientific-minded classmate. In this situation, the more Del develops her capacity for reasoning through argument and competition with

Jerry, the more his power over her is weakened. Moreover, Del discovers that despite his seemingly superior intellect, Jerry is actually an immature youth kept in his mother's captivity. The "husband-and-wifely way" (199) between Jerry and his mother is thus reflective of the crippling relationship between Amor and Aphrodite. Like Amor, Jerry wishes to keep his relationship with Del in the dark and secret from his mother. When there is a threat that their intimacy may become known to his mother, Del is amazed to see the authoritative Jerry transformed into a furious but tearful little boy. Since he is therefore incapable of loving her, he can provide Del only with intellectual fulfillment, forcing her to repress her relational concern: "My need for love had gone underground, like a canny toothache" (205).

If Jerry tries to conquer Del with his intellectual power, then Garnet French, a youth capable only of passion, represents another aspect of Amor. A Baptist convert with little education, Garnet first overcomes Del by reason of his sexual attractiveness. Like Psyche dwelling in Amor's dark sensual palace, Del is temporarily content with Garnet's sexual captivity, tolerating his demand for her submission to his will under religious pretext. Nevertheless, though Garnet revives Del's feminine concern for relationship, she describes her loss of virginity by Garnet as a marriage of death, a defloration on the animal level. Pointing to the blood on the peonies where she has her first sexual encounter,

Del tells her mother, "I saw a cat there yesterday tearing a bird apart. It was a big striped tom" (224). Reduced to animal passion, Del discovers that she has become an unthinking creature and realizes that the world she "saw with Garnet was something not far from what I thought animals must see" (218).

Garnet's demand for Del's submission and selflessness in their relationship reaches its climax when, in his attempt to baptize her in the River, he forces her into the water, into the unconscious: "I thought that he might drown me.... I thought that I was fighting for my life" (235). Fighting with Garnet underwater, it suddenly dawns on Del that her submission, her ignorance of his desire to dominate her, has made their relationship a "possibly fatal game" (235). Here, in a neat reversal of the way that Psyche's being kept in the dark makes her subservient to Amor (Rogers 88), so what gives Del strength is her astonishment at his ignorance concerning her true nature: "I felt amazement, not that I was fighting with Garnet but that anybody could have made such a mistake, to think he had real power over me" (234). While Psyche's disobedience makes Amor lose his power over her, Del's rebellion against Garnet's demand that she be baptized, his condition for their marriage, enables her to break free from his ensnarement. Moreover, her defeat of Garnet under the water, like Psyche's gathering of golden fleece and her encounter in the underworld, symbolizes her appropriation of masculine power.

Del's rebellion against relationship based on power, however, does not turn her into a man-hater. Neither does she, like Psyche's two sisters, deny her female self in the interests of assuming masculine power. On the contrary, she declares that "it had never occurred to [her] to want to be a boy" (178), and her separation from Garnet is a painful experience: "I was crying ... whimpering in a monotonous rhythm the way children do to celebrate a hurt" (237). This hurt of separation, like that of Psyche's, forces her to wander in the world on her own and to organize her changing visions of the world.

Writing therefore marks an important stage in Del's progress toward maturity, as it did for Orual in Lewis' tale. Just as Orual, through her retrospective narrative, undertakes the tasks that her sister Psyche performs, so Del's writing leads her to examine the relationships she has experienced. Hence Del, in her writing and her imagination, identifies part of herself with her fictive character Caroline. Significantly, Caroline's live model is Marrion Sheriff, who suffers Miss Farris' fate by drowning herself in the Wawanash River. Again a mysterious death, Caroline's drowning, like that of Miss Farris, represents yet another phase that Del experiences in her development. Whereas Miss Farris' childish innocence and romantic aspirations suggest Del's girlhood before her sexual awareness, Caroline's indulgence in sensuality and her disillusionment about "sullen high-school heroes, athletes"

(242) is reflective of Del's near fatal attraction to Garnet after her disappointment with Jerry, the high school genius. Significantly, Del perceives Caroline as "the sacrifice" (242), the sacrifice of sensuality that is necessary for Del to achieve selfhood and independence.

Hence writing, like Del's fighting with Garnet in water, is Del's way of controlling the helplessness associated with sensuality and femaleness. Ildiko de Papp Carrington is thus perceptive of what lies behind the recurrent images and metaphors of drowning in Munro's fiction:

Munro's repeated criticism of helplessly drowning characters suggest a close causal link between what seems to be her own fear of abdication, that is, her fear that she might give up or lose her own artistic powers, and her deeply paradoxical thematic obsession with control. In story after story, she reiterates her underlying theme: although helplessness is inevitable, it must nevertheless be controlled.... Fearing drowning both in the literal and the metaphorical sense, Del dreads being buried alive in the water and not being free to write. (212)

We can now, however, also see the drowning metaphor in the context of the Amor and Psyche myth. In particular, Del's portrayal of the pregnant Caroline is evocative of the pregnant Psyche who repeatedly thinks of drowning herself when she is faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Whereas Del sees Caroline drown in the river because her lover, the photographer, disappears, Del herself appropriates his role, through her writing, and becomes the subject rather than the

object; like Psyche, she becomes the one who sees and who also sees the "invisible."

Like the nameless photographer whose truthful pictures capture the ugliness behind the mask of beauty with "a bright un pitying smile" (242), Del the artist seeks to portray the town behind the veil of reality, the town that "was lying close behind the one I walked through every day" (244). Her first imitation of the photographer, who makes people age twenty or thirty years in his pictures, is nevertheless an awkward and mechanical one; the adolescent Del, overwhelmed by her feelings in the process of writing, makes people either very thin or "fat as bubbles" (243). The Del who ultimately narrates the lives of girls and women, however, does succeed in obtaining the subtlety by controlling her memories and her writing. Hence like Psyche who is warned against the danger of showing pity, Del the narrator manages to maintain her ego stability by overcoming a tendency toward pity and vanity in portraying herself and others.

As a result, the adolescent Del who tells about Caroline's romantic and sexual adventure is transformed into Del the narrator who is able to provide objective pictures of people in dialogue, people inside stories told by Uncle Benny, Aunt Elspeth and Grace, Mrs Jordan and many others. As well, one finds incorporations of Uncle Benny's newspaper headlines (5), Uncle Craig's history writing (60-61), passages from Medieval romance (117-18), songs taught by Miss Farris (121),

Fern's letters and copied verses (162, 163), as well as hymns (208) and the revivalist's sermon (208). It is through those narrative techniques that Del maintains her distance in writing and keeps her perspective unbiased. Just as the adolescent Del breaks free from fantasies and self-deception after she breaks free from Garnet's domination (238), so Del the narrator learns to provide a picture of herself untainted by pity or self-indulgence through comparing and contrasting, imitating and rejecting the various models of relationships provided by other girls and women.

Del's development, therefore, accords with Rogers' view of the successful growth of the feminine in *Psyche*; like *Psyche*, Del has both grown beyond the Aphrodisian aspect of impersonal sensuality and the animus-ridden aspect of *Psyche*'s man-hating sisters. The goal of her development is both reunion with Amor and selfhood. Although Perrakis does not deal specifically with the Amor and *Psyche* myth in her reading of Del's feminine growth, she correctly argues that Del's development is toward the fulfillment of her desire to be loved as a woman and her desire to become a thinking human being (64). More than that, however, Del's development, though unrewarded with a marriage in the physiological and legal sense, does discover her capacity for genuine relationship with men, in this case, with Bobby Sheriff.

Bobby is different from all the other male characters who are more or less linked either with the cruelty of killing-

-like Uncle Benny, Del's father, Uncle Bill, Mr Chamberlain who used to be a soldier--or linked with power, like Uncle Craig, Jerry and Garnet. Bobby's mental illness has dramatically changed his position from a rich storekeeper's son to an outcast, a piriah. Hence Bobby, a man who occupies a woman's marginal position in the society, becomes alien to the patriarchal structure and is able to talk with Del without the involvement of powerplay. Moreover, when Del talks to Bobby, she has already transcended, at least in her writing, the gender roles that bind men and women to the hierarchical structure. Therefore the ritualistic eating of cakes and drinking of cherry (245) that Bobby and Del share reveal a new type of relationship based on equality. The fact of Del's inner balance between the masculine and feminine, and the interplay of love and selfhood is most dramatically reflected in Bobby's comic imitation of a ballerina: a masculine figure with a feminine gesture (250).

If, as Macdonald argues, Munro wants us to see the existence of "the other world," namely the world of disorder and irrationality suppressed by the garrison, so Del's recipe for writing conjoins both the darkness of Amor's palace and the need for Psyche's lamp: "People's lives, in Jubilee as elsewhere, were dull, simple, amazing and unfathomable--deep caves paved with kitchen linoleum" (249).

Conclusion

In his study of the way St. John's Revelations is informed by pagan symbols, D. H. Lawrence accounted for the situation by emphasizing the archetypal nature of such material and by providing the following definition of a myth: "Myth is an attempt to narrate a whole human experience...a profound experience of the human body and soul, an experience which is never exhausted and never will be exhausted, for it is being felt and suffered now, and it will be felt and suffered while man remains man. You may explain the myths away: but it only means you go on suffering blindly, stupidly, 'in the unconscious,' instead of healthily and with the imaginative comprehension playing upon the suffering" (296). Similarly, in Patterns of Experience in Autobiography, Susanna Egan has observed that despite the uniqueness of the individual life, the autobiographer tends to rely on a myth which is "capable of describing the quality of his secret and inner experience both because it acts as an emotionally and generally accurate description of that experience and because it means much the same thing to him as it does to his reader" (5).

My concern in this thesis has been to demonstrate that the story of Amor and Psyche is a myth of the kind described

by Lawrence and also that it is the one which best describes the "pattern" in female autobiographical works. More specifically, I have attempted to show that despite their formal differences, Nin's The Early Diary, McCarthy's Memories of a Catholic Girlhood and Munro's Lives of Girls and Women have in common the depiction of the growth of a female self along the lines of Psyche's development.

Particularly worth noticing in this respect is the emphasis these writers place on the importance of knowledge and their view of knowledge as power--as the indispensable means both to gain true insight into patriarchal authority and to outgrow the conventional mother-daughter relationship. Similarly, as in the myth, all three emphasize not only the importance of rebellion but also the importance of relationship, and in each case the goal is seen to be a type of consciousness that is both logos- and eros-oriented. As such, all three concur with the message Erich Neumann sees as encoded in the myth of Amor and Psyche: "Love as an expression of feminine wholeness is not possible in the dark, as a merely unconscious process; an authentic encounter with another involves consciousness, hence also the aspect of suffering and separation" (85). Equally, all three concur with C. S. Lewis' retelling of the myth to emphasize the importance of writing in the individuation process.

Before Nin, McCarthy and Munro's Del can love and not merely worship men, they suffer a painful period of

disillusion and readjustment of their relationships, and here, as in the case of Orual, writing becomes the equivalent of Psyche's task of seed sorting, the means whereby they attempt to distinguish what they truly feel from what they have been taught. Each higher level of consciousness brings about their growing doubt of the patriarchal authority and its emphasis on male supremacy. Consequently, the hero-like fathers in Nin and McCarthy's childhood memories are gradually exposed, just as Del comes to perceive the wanton and immature boy behind the masks of intellectual and religious power worn by Jerry Storey and French Garnet.

This concept of women as men's equal radically distinguishes Nin, McCarthy and Del from their mothers and grandmothers, and accordingly Psyche's light-bringing also marks the beginning of a new relationship between mother and daughter. Significantly, this restructuring of the mother-daughter relationship is seen less a matter of mere economic independence, as Edwards would suggest (165), and more as a matter of the daughter's understanding of the mother's oppression under the patriarchal system and the daughter's growth beyond the conventional mother-daughter relationship.

Thus Anais Nin is able to portray Rosa Culmell as both a loving, selfless mother and a domineering Aphrodite, who wishes to keep her daughter in infantile dependence. Although Rosa's piety, exemplary motherhood and self-containment makes her the ideal Spanish woman defined by Havelock Ellis (87),

Nin comes to realize that the demand that women be angelic as well as robust can only reinforce the patriarchal concept of women and their acceptance of male superiority. Although Nin experiences a long period of blind worship of her father and the phantom lover, her intellectual curiosity and rebelliousness ultimately prevent her from following her mother's example.

Whereas knowledge enables Nin to rebel against her Spanish heritage and break away from her mother's control, knowledge is the means whereby McCarthy is able to recognize an inherent link between her and her Grandmother Preston. In the light of her American heritage, it would be only too natural for McCarthy to deny her grandparents and to maintain an orphan image. As Seymour Martin Lipset has observed in his analysis of the American character, "American flight from history is the root of the American dream, the Horatio Alger myth, the self-made man" (63). Indeed, the recurrent image in McCarthy's memoir is an orphan girl running away from home and the convent, breaking rules and orders whenever possible. In particular, her relationship with her paternal grandmother evidences what Lipset calls the "masculine sharp break" of the American character (63). This, however, has mainly to do with the way grandmother McCarthy manifests masculine hostility and cruelty as a result of her unsuccessful rebellion against her deathly marriage. Accordingly, this "masculine break" changes into a "feminine one" in McCarthy's relationship with her

maternal grandmother Preston. Here McCarthy rebels only against the latter's impersonal sensuality while acknowledging the feminine nature existent in her grandmother, her mother and herself.

Just as knowledge helps McCarthy to complete the three female generational cycle (on her mother's side) without hostility, so ignorance causes hostility between Mrs Jordan and her mother whereas understanding brings reconciliation between Del and her mother. In the Canadian cultural climate, the mother-daughter relationship, according to Lipset, is "a feminine one of rejection and reconciliation" (63). This does not seem to fit the case of Mrs Jordan, who not only runs away from her family but forever feels indignant toward her mother. The problem here, however, is that Mrs Jordan is unable to distinguish between her mother and the patriarchal system and to appreciate the extent to which her mother is a victim. In contrast, Del's rejection of her mother has more of an intellectual quality, and her understanding of Mrs Jordan's unsuccessful rebellion enables her to feel love in place of resentment toward the latter.

Knowledge and understanding, therefore, play a decisive role in the daughter's rebellion, and so does love. In other words, it is the daughter's desire to retain her feminine nature that prevents her from making a masculine sharp break with the mother. Hence the significance of Psyche's opening of the beauty box becomes clear. Once she is equipped with

knowledge, it is necessary for Psyche to disregard the tower's warning against feminine vanity or expression of her feminine nature. The divine beauty that she obtains proves her achievement of balance between the masculine and feminine, just as in the case of Nin, McCarthy and Munro intellectual development is seen as a means rather than an end in itself.

Intellectual development and relational concern thus make up the feminine consciousness expressed by these women writers. This feminine consciousness, perceived chronologically, suggests a progress toward sexual openness and a transformation from passivity to active self-assertion, like that of Psyche's. Thus Anais Nin's diary, written between 1914 and 1923, retains an element of submissiveness, even though her honesty about her vanity makes her a bit daring by the standards of the time. In any case, this gentle, angelic and almost asexual aspect of female experience is replaced by the mention of menstruation, sleeping with a man and Grandmother Preston's exposed limbs in McCarthy's memoir thirty years later. Yet McCarthy's attitudes toward the female body are still expressed in a negative and elusive manner: through her rejection of the false claim of her menstruation; through her sexual encounter under intoxication; and through her repudiation of as well as attraction to Grandmother Preston's sensuous body. It was not until the 1970s that Alice Munro realized what Nin (while writing the two volumes of her diary) and McCarthy would have wished to do, that is, to

assert and express their female self in a relatively uninhibited manner.

Notes

Introduction:

1. Significantly, although Psyche's name remains constant, the myth has been titled in a variety of ways: "Amor and Psyche," "Cupid and Psyche," "Eros and Psyche." I have chosen the first usage, because its conjunction of two different cultures (Roman and Greek) not only highlights the universal nature of the myth but also suggests the concept of a marriage of two different orientations.

Chapter I.

1. In addition to the four major studies of the myth surveyed in this chapter, the following have also provided various supplementary insights which are incorporated in later chapters. Robert Johnson's study of feminine psychology and Mary Ann Ferguson's study of the female novel of development, emphasize the mother's indispensable influence on the daughter's growth (Johnson 7; Ferguson 62). Ferguson also concurs with Edwards' view of Psyche's economic independence as capable of creating a new mother-daughter relationship free of women's traditional roles either as the Terrible Mother or

the powerless mother or wife (71). Likewise, Ann Ashworth, who compares Psyche with Milton's Eve, agrees with Rogers that Psyche's attainment of light and knowledge equals her attainment of "power, ambition and godhead" (53). Concurring with Neumann, Evelyn J. Hinz and John J. Teunissen, in their study of the myth in D. H. Lawrence's Women in Love, perceive the feminine tendency to pity as problematic for female growth (217) and regard the motif of "the unmarriageable daughter" as bringing into question the traditional concept of woman's role in life (210).

What seems the most controversial issue is Psyche's opening of the beauty casket. In a study of sex and sanctity in the myth, C. C. Schlam finds Psyche's act of opening the casket evidence of her subjection to curiosity (98) whereas Ashworth equates the act with Psyche's light-bringing--a result of both her curiosity and doubt (55). Ferguson shares with Neumann the perception of Psyche's act as her intention to affirm her feminine nature (62) whereas James Hillman's psychological analysis of the myth argues that Psyche's attainment of beauty is not physical but "the beauty of the knowledge of death and of the effects of death upon all other beauty that does not contain this knowledge" (102). In her postmodernist/feminist study of the myth, Rachel Blau Duplessis supports Edwards' reading of Psyche's act and calls it Psyche's "last discovery" of beauty as death, since Psyche's failure is not for the sake of love for Amor but for

the sake of freedom from the sexual slavery which entails women's reliance on changeless beauty, or sleep of beauty (Duplessis 95).

In their study, Hinz and Teunissen note the classical association of the butterfly with Psyche and the motif of metamorphosis, just as Hillman provides the following interpretation of the symbol: "We find...Eros shooting and wounding Psyche; Psyche's wings burnt, or the burnt moth or butterfly, whose name in Greek gives them symbolic identity. (The same motifs occur in dreams today. A woman dreams that she tries to burn a wormlike insect in a bonfire; but it proves indestructible, and out comes a winged butterfly. A young man dreams of crushing green winged creatures on his ceiling and whitewashing over the spot, or of ridding himself of a caterpillar by setting fire to it; but in a later dream a crowned and winged frog-insect appears.)" (93).

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