

GENDERED HISTORICAL NARRATIVE: WOMEN IN TRANSLATION

IN DAPHNE MARLATT'S ANA HISTORIC AND LOLA LEMIRE TOSTEVIN'S FROG MOON

by

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GENDERED HISTORICAL NARRATIVE:
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ABSTRACT

This thesis draws on historical, narrative and translative theories to expose some of the ways in which female-authored historical narratives differ from traditional histories both in form and content. After determining what has normally constituted "history," the introductory chapter focuses on narratologists Michael Toolan's and Gerard Genette's techniques that post-structuralist, and particularly feminist, writers have employed in order to re-present a version of history in which women's bodies, desires and experiences are valued. The authors here studied, Daphne Marlatt and Lola Lemire Tostevin, confront and subvert the historical tradition which has excluded women's voices, not simply by deconstructing existing patriarchal narrative structures, but by reformulating a method of writing that allows them to translate their thoughts into text.

The second chapter focuses on Daphne Marlatt's Ana Historic, showing how Marlatt resists the monologic language of past accounts by subverting historical, economic, and medical discourses. Marlatt proposes instead a multi-coloured narrative which joins together the voices of many women who, by sharing their personal experiences, establish a female community and culture.

The third chapter analyses Lola Lemire Tostevin's Frog Moon, revealing how the author writes against a singular discourse by celebrating the diverse traditions, places and voices that have contributed to her identity. Tostevin deviates from the typical narrative scheme, fluctuating between two narrators, time frames, and languages to offer her own translation of history.

The conclusive chapter emphasizes the importance of translation as a process through which women establish their identities. Audrey Thomas' Latakia is suggested as a third book that could be adapted for this study.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The title of this paper, "Gendered Historical Narrative: Women in Translation," encompasses four major veins of theory in contemporary literary studies: historicism, narratology, translation, and the feminist theories that weave them together. The title also aims to introduce (by titillating) the reader to recent controversies about the nature of historical writing and its connection to narrative discourse and, above all, its relationship with feminist discourse; the colon splices the title into halves to emphasize the (at least) two-sided interpretation of history. Dominating the one side, the word "gendered" necessarily reinforces the claim that male and female versions of history not only tell different tales but that they are also told in quite different ways. Until recently, the patriarchal version of narrative has unquestionably been the accepted norm. Historian Hans Kellner argues that feminists "are concerned with the dilemmas of entering a discourse [including historical discourse], which, by its very structure as rational, sequential thought, they assert, excludes a certain notion of *woman*, as body, freedom, Other" (17). The colon seeks to connect the two sides of the equation, the "real" (history) and the "imaginary" (the translation of this history through the translator's imagination): "the colon with its two small dots, two tiny hands pulsing an introduction across the gap" (Marlatt, "Labyrinth" 246). To translate a male-centered history into a discourse that celebrates, or at least recognizes, female experiences, women must use the cola (a rhythmical unit of an utterance) to introduce their voices: to hear their voice in the quotation following the punctuation which has so often marked/silenced them. Women writers, more so than men, have felt the need to investigate narrative to create a space in which they can re-write themselves by articulating their thoughts and emotions. Canadian authors Daphne Marlatt (*Ana Historic*) and Lola

Lemire Tostevin (Frog Moon) seek to break out of the closed patrilineal circuit which has expressly denied (fait exprès) female story a significant presence in its exclusive monologue on past events.

Feminist authors such as these two do not desire to create an essentialist, binary opposition between male and female writers by diverging from the "official" man-made history to write their own historical narratives, so much as to instill a mode of writing in which women can enforce their individuality. This paper focuses on what narrative innovations women have adopted to establish their presence in the masculine canon and re-present themselves by voicing their hitherto untold stories, for, as feminist critic Luce Irigaray suggests, to find a voice (voix) is to find a way (voie). The way in which women can encourage an appreciation and valuing of their experiences is not by fixating on *the* sexual difference among Woman and Man, but by contemplating the diversity between and within women. Sally Robinson makes an important distinction between Woman and women, observing that Woman "identifies a difference," whereas women "as a plural and heterogeneous category fractures that singularity" (3) and brings all women in under that sign. Citing Woman's (with a capital "W") body as the overarching difference between the genders risks enclosing women writers in a theory of difference marked by specificity and locality, whereas viewing women's multiplicitous gender distinctions within culture opens up a more generalized, systematic theory of women's writing.

"Gender difference is a difference in language" affirms Robinson, "but it is also a difference in experience, widely conceived as a subject's relation to discourse and social systems" (27). While women write about their experiences as female in a patriarchal culture, using its limited language,

they adapt it to more effectively express their thoughts and emotions and to allot a space for themselves in the narrative network. In keeping with post-structuralist theory, feminists realize the importance of language as a site of social reality, the place where they construct their subjectivity to enable them to think, speak, and give meaning to the world around them. Identifying themselves as subject, women feel in control and are thus in a position to give meaning to their lived reality, hitherto bypassed by a history which claims to speak for women as well as men in an allegedly ungendered humanism. A feminist post-structuralist view sees that experience has no essential meaning but is given value through discourse; within a patriarchal language, women authors (Marlatt and Tostevin, for my purposes) effectively transcribe their own autobiographical fictions by using narrative innovations to differentiate them from history as we know it. While working to disseminate the liberal-humanist subject (which, though positing to be "ungendered," masks structures of male privilege and domination), female theorists and writers simultaneously construct a subject which can speak of/for/about events in women's lives. The two writers studied in this paper disassemble patriarchal structures inherent in a fixed economy of expression, reformulating a new method of writing that allows them to translate their thoughts into text. We will ultimately see how Marlatt and Tostevin use translative techniques to decode historical writing and re-code it in order to tell their own stories.

To appreciate how female authors of historical discourse re-create through writing their lives and those of other women, we must necessarily briefly outline the historical tradition that women must confront in order to subvert and rupture it. What is history? One common dictionary describes it as "that form of pure representative discourse the subject of which is some fact

or event, single or continuous" whereas "[i]f the event or fact is imaginary, it is fiction" (Funk & Wagnall's). This split definition raises two essential questions: if history is composed of facts, what then constitutes a "fact," and how can history (composed of these facts about past events) be *other* than an imaginative reconstruction of the past, since no historian can possibly accurately and fully re-create past lives or events in all their facticity.

In his book, The Nature of Historical Knowledge, historian-philosopher Michael Stanford argues that facts about past events do not necessarily represent a present, hard, objective reality, for the historian writes "after the fact," and cannot prove that any event actually occurred: "since historical events are never present for examination, the 'facts' must always be inferred rather than directly apprehended" (23). The evidence upon which history is based, therefore, is not necessarily a true account of events but a narrative believed by historians to be just.

Because the worthiness of historical evidence is *subjectively* determined, history, "'though based on facts, is strictly speaking, not factual at all, but a series of accepted judgments'" (Barracough, cited in Carr 8). Carl Becker more radically asserts that "'facts of history do not exist for any historian till he creates them'" (cited in Carr 15). Historical evidence, more obviously than evidence in some other disciplines, is not scientifically created but rather interpreted by human understanding of human experience. Since history reflects the (patriarchal) culture in which it is written, its "human" experience has been male-tainted, and the liberal-humanist subject which has proclaimed itself ungendered has in fact concealed structures of male privilege and control. History's traditional framework supports the canonical readings that contains merely the "facts" chosen by a

hierarchical body as representative of past occurrences. We must ask ourselves what type of histories women can construct for themselves if they are empty-handed of concrete evidence (though they have handfuls of ideas) about their past.

Controversy has thus arisen over what kind of histories female writers can create, using only their imagination. We return to the second part of the definition of "history" to further the argument: "if the event or fact is imaginary, it is fiction." Defined as "something invented by the imagination" or "an invented story" (Webster's Dictionary), fiction, it appears, bears close, but not whole resemblance to history. To imagine is merely to form a mental image of something not present which is what a historian does each time s/he re-inscribes the past. Stanford asserts that a past can only be known imaginatively and that the most reliable explorer of the past is one best able to integrate facts into a living imagined reality. Marlatt and Tostevin do just that, writing their own historical fictions by weaving together the past lives of women with their own present lives to produce a "made-up" account, for these women have only scant historical details (facts) to use a basis for the imagined story (a fact/ion, characterized as "self-seeking").

Feminist, together with new historicist and post-structuralist, writers argue that a work which incorporates imaginary events and persona should not be overlooked as an untruthful record of the past simply because it does not resemble the acknowledged narrative which, laden with historical dates, events and personages, claims to be *the* truthful account of what happened at a specific time and/or place. Post-structuralists would argue that the subjectivity and meaning of a narrative (history, in this case) are never absolute but rather are precarious structures that change, depending on their

discursive context, and thus should always be open to challenge and re-definition. Contesting history's pretentious claim that the events it recounts tell the complete story of what actually happened, fictional histories dilate the historical (eye) site by allowing us to read about episodes that are not necessarily recorded as having happened (although they could have happened).

While agreeing that fictional discourse does bear uncanny resemblance to historical discourse in format, I posit that the events appropriate to being recounted within the narrative alter, depending on who is writing the story. The teller of the narrative/story/tale determines both *what* is told and *how* it is told. The way of telling a history, too, differs from one person to another and, especially, for my purposes, from one gender to the Other. By focusing on methods of narration (how the story is told), and distinguishing between narrative as it has been conventionally written, and as it may be unorthodoxically conceived in a female-characterized narrative, I will discuss the female hi/story (a "translation" of the accepted discourse that focuses on women's bodies, desires and experiences) that is created when feminist writers deviate from the usual methods of narration.

To translate, or to "right" (write) a text which has been negligent with regard to women, is to both "invent, create, and often to betray--the source" (Mezei 9) and "to remake or remodel out of old material" (Funk & Wagnall's). Marlatt and Tostevin work on the original to de-center and displace it, creating what Barbara Godard terms, a "woman-handled" text. Recent theories posit that translation is transformation and creation whereas more dated rationales have perceived translation as equivalence or transparenence. Proponents of the latter position argue that a translator, rather than giving her own interpretation, should be faithful to the original

(the source text) in order to ensure an identity between the two texts: "'La traduction consiste à produire dans la langue d'arrivée l'*équivalent naturel* le plus proche du message de la langue du départ, d'abord quant à la signification, puis quant au style'" (Mounin, cited in Godard, "Theorizing" 47). Godard proposes that a "co-textual" view of interpretation, according to which two undifferentiated texts exist side by side, must be modified into a "con-textual" view within which the two works are interrelated and given equal stature ("Theorizing" 47-8). Because in such a reckoning language is not transparent--words do not act as windows that offer a single, crystalline meaning, but as mirrors which reflect a myriad of different meanings--translation provides equivalence not between the contents/words of two texts, but between the coding and decoding of two text systems (content *and* form).

This linguistic concept of translation can be further extended to a "gendered" transference of meaning, as we perceive that when women (re)read and (re)write standard discourses, they are converting the words on the page into their own language, inscribing the values of a developing women's culture into the words in order to give them a meaning with which they can identify. Interpretation of a written work then becomes more a cultural than a trans-coding act; a word in one language cannot always be merely replaced by a word that carries a similar meaning in another language, for there is often an underlying, unwritten cultural meaning attached to the word that cannot be transferred without difficulty into a different culture. Because words carry both linguistic and cultural baggage, we cannot sufficiently determine the sense of a word without placing it within the entire textual system, or larger culture. Mary Snell-Hornby contends that the person who has any hope of adequately interpreting a literary work must not merely be bilingual, but

bicultural: "[i]f language is an integral part of culture, the translator needs not only proficiency in two languages, he must also be at home in two cultures" (42). Female authors, like many other groups marginalized on the basis of nationality, colour or class, find themselves in a comparable position as translator, living and working between a patriarchal, and a struggling culture in which they are wholly integrated as active participants. While these authors write about female interactions and desires, women still remain to a large extent tied to standard forms and language in order to effectively communicate their realities.

Translation, when paired with feminism, invokes the doubleness of women's reading/writing the exclusive discourse, for women commonly not only move from this (one) language to an/Other, but also immerse themselves in two languages at once. Translator Dôre Michelut, whose maternal tongue is Furlan (a regionalized Italian dialect) but who speaks predominantly in English, remarks that her two languages together constitute the whole bracket that is the extent of her experience (67). Lola Lemire Tostevin would agree, for she finds that for her a wholeness of self is to be found in a space between (both inside and outside) her two languages (French and English)--a *mi/lieu* in which she can more completely utter herself than if she were communicating in one language or the other. A similar sentiment is shared by many women writers who see themselves living the life of a double agent, working in (bonded to) the dominant discourse, but interpreting, communicating and inventing a "feminist" *dis-course* that lies somewhere within/beside/around the established one. Daphne Marlatt describes translation as "what writing itself is about: sensing one's way through the sentence, through (by means of) a medium (language) that has currents of meaning, its own drift" ("Translating" 27-8).

A feminist story about the past d/rifts from the established historical canon through its variations in both form (its use of narrative innovations) and content (its concentration on female experiences). Because both post-structuralists and new historicists experiment with narrative form, feminist writers cannot claim sole jurisdiction in this area; it is the combination of both discursive deviations *and* a female-centered story line that create the difference in a history told by a woman. In such a way, the works of Marlatt and Tostevin open a re-writing, or a translation, of the privileged discourse.

Marlatt and Tostevin modify a traditional story of the past by firstly resisting and subverting the unfavourable image of the body presented (or excluded) in historical, economic, medical, and theological discourses, and secondly, by offering their own image of the body as emerging through a female-inclusive discourse. Their translation can be named as both a structural process (how the story is told) and a referential process (what is told in the story) or how the fiction refers to the world in progress. For the moment, we will focus on the structural process of interpretation to determine how Marlatt and Tostevin employ both the techniques set out by narratologists Gerard Genette and Michael Toolan, and their own unique innovations, to disconnect the power line of an insular historical discourse.

According to Toolan, discourse "roughly denotes all the techniques that authors bring to bear in their varying manner of presentation of the basic story" (10). The most prominent way that fictional writers (including certainly Marlatt and Tostevin) have re-adapted the presentation and constitution of history is through the exploration of different time frames and sequences. In Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method, Genette cites three major distortions in the articulation of the movement from real time to story

time: order, duration and frequency.

The "order" of a story refers to the relation between the sequence of events in the story and the actual order of presentation in the text whereby large gaps may occur between some events while others may come closer together in time. Disparities, or "anachronies," between these two time frames, occur when a part of the text is told at a point earlier to (prolepsis) or later than (analepsis) its natural or logical position in the event sequence which constitutes "story." A prolepsis, or "flash ahead" (not a foreshadowing), occurs when the narrator reveals future events or situations and then gradually fills in the reader on intervening happenings, jumping closer to the narrator's own present. Contrastingly, an analepsis, or "flashback," returns to the past to pave over gaps in the story line.

Post-structuralist and feminist writers use comparable methods of recycling the past both to give meaning to a past episode that in its own time it did not yet have, and to accord importance to an event that it did not once enjoy. This narrative strategy, which Genette labels "deferred significance," allows episodes that were separated in the past to become reassembled in the present where they are made significant, being now bound together rather than scattered through various pages/texts of history. In Ana Historic, Daphne Marlatt aggrandizes the life of a woman mentioned briefly in the Vancouver Archives, by piecing together meager scraps of information about her activities to re-create for her a whole life (a patchwork). Through the writing and re-producing of this woman's life, the author brings insight into her own life--a strategy also adapted by Tostevin. Present and past become inseparable as the narrators realize that they need to temporally re-order the events in their lives to give them a coherence they may not have had in "real"

life. The past emerges through the telling of the narrative, which shows how the past relates to the present. E.H. Carr agrees that "the past is intelligible to us only in the light of the present; and we can fully understand the present only in the light of the past" (Carr 49). The female protagonist cannot take steps into her future without glancing back to her past to determine where she has come from and how she has changed; any new story told about the narrator is interrupted by old stories so that she finds herself moving forward and backward, backward and forward in time. The narrators seek to reconcile their memories--what they desire to retain or reject from the past--with their longings--what they want from the future--in order to be content with their present life.

Luce Irigaray, HÉLÈNE Cixous, and other feminist theorists, believe women's writing is particularly influenced by this fluctuation, this cyclical movement in which women are pulled by diverse longings. Irigaray, especially, sees this multiplicity of female desire by which women circle to/around/back from their objects of desire, as representing a new economy, "one that upsets the linearity of a project, undermines the goal-object of desire, diffuses the polarization toward a single pleasure, disconcerts fidelity to a single discourse" (354). Opposing the linearity of a hierarchical language by transcribing the cycle that simulates the female orgasm, female authors, Irigaray says, express their sexual difference in writing. The text, in taking on the rhythm of the female body, opposes the narrative code of a beginning, middle and ending by becoming a coda--its ending enfolds back into the story to create an unceasing narrative flow which defies the boundaries of chronological time. Nicole Brossard surmises that "female stories become *dérivées*, de-rived, or off the main stream, beaching on the banks, the

margins" (cited in Wildeman 36). Women writers of historical fiction shatter the hourglass, rebelling against a linear concept of time, and the female figure which has been molded to fit this construct. The archaic hour-glass is tipped over to produce a more female-oriented writing which receives and diffuses diverse material and which in its beginnings and conclusions will "tend to be expressed more as gradations than as abrupt cut-off points" (Bennett 241). Writing a story told in the present about the past, these women authors oscillate between the two tenses, combining them to emphasize their co-dependency. Although the gap between present and past cannot be filled, women seek to go where the "Magic Boat goes through that gap in the horizon" (Thomas 30), the space between water and sky which symbolizes the meeting of past, present and future.

Where there is a gap, or a space between the order of the events in real story time and textual time, so is there between the amount of time the events cover in the story and in the text: what Genette refers to as "duration." Because an event in story rarely could command the length of time it would take to read about that full event, there are almost always spatiotemporal gaps between scenes that force the reader to abandon "real life" time for textual time. This relationship between the duration of the story and the length of the text gives the steadiness in speed of a narrative. Although a study of duration may offer insights into the actual story line, it is not especially useful in this paper, whose objective is to determine narrative differences between male and female-authored texts; instead, the paper will concentrate on order and frequency as methods of temporal manipulation used especially by authors Tostevin and Marlatt.

Writers of "new history" further challenge the ordered time structure of

the accepted version of history by altering the relation between (hi)story and narration, using a third method of temporal manipulation which Genette calls "frequency," or the repetitive capacity which narrative possesses. The repeated textual telling of a single narrative event varies with each repetition because each teller depends on her/his memory, which refuses to obey the rules of time. Memory distorts and convolutes events so that they become something different than what they were; their significance is modified within the memory of each person who recalls the incidents. However, Stanford reasons that for "all its obvious shortcomings as a form of knowledge of the past, memory surpasses every other in vividness and in the authenticity of firsthand experience--'I was there'" (147). According to Derrida, each repetition/re-telling of a story gives it a different meaning, for it is always told in a new context (showing what he calls *différance*). Hence, female interpretations of past events crucially differ from a male's rendition of the same episodes because the women's frames events in a different context.

A second way in which writers have sought to create a more personal and less authoritative account of history points to narrative innovations. The use of diverse types of narrators and narrations gives a new twist to monologic accounts which are typically recited in omniscient third-person. Assuming the role of the narrator, the authoritative author writes in third person, telling the reader about events from a distant or removed position. Contrastingly, the second type of narrator is more focused, writing in limited third person or first person, assuming a character's role to show the story from a personal perspective. It is this type of narrator that has been more frequently employed by historical fiction writers in order to personify/individualize a hitherto public/generalized history.

Because the author may tend to revert to her own life to provide information for her story, her composition often resembles an autobiography, narrated in the first person. Susan Lanser cites the fundamental difference between the authority inherent in a personal narrative and that in an authorial work: "authorial narrative is understood as fictive and yet its voice is accorded a superior reliability, while personal narrative may pass for autobiography but the authority of its voice is always qualified" (Lanser 20). She further states that "an authorial narrator claims broad powers of knowledge and judgment, while a personal narrator claims only the validity of one person's right to interpret her experience" (Lanser 19). A personal account permits a female author to forefront herself, a self that is finally expressed, "ex-pressed," which "presses outward, outered, uttered" (Cooley 71).

Marlatt and Tostevin write in the first person to personalize their story, but also employ a third person narrator--Marlatt to recount the life of a historical woman, and Tostevin to narrate her own past. By transcribing a story using (splitting themselves between) both "I" and "she," the two authors employ a type of narration called free indirect discourse (FID). In Toolan's scheme, FID, interweaving narratorial indirectness with what he calls character directness provides "a strategy of (usually temporary or discontinuous) alignment, in words, values and perspective, of the narrator with a character" (Toolan 127). This alignment can be used to create irony (as Audrey Thomas differentiates between the first person ["mind"] and the third person ["body"] in Mrs. Blood), empathy, stream-of-consciousness, or a dual, non-authoritative voice. Because in it both personal and authorial perspectives are given equal stature, the reader cannot verify if the discourse emanates from narrator or character and therefore s/he must enter

into the story to determine the function of their alignment.

As narrative techniques like FID, and alterations in order and frequency allow writers to deviate from the standard narrative, opening up the text for further translation, so do the particular discursive innovations that Marlatt and Tostevin adopt in their novels. Marlatt writes in her own quirky syntactical style and, like Tostevin, plays extensively with words themselves, breaking them down into their original sense (or non-sense); Tostevin transcribes her story in a hybrid, English/French language, shunning the accepted practice of writing in a single language. Both of the authors resist "closure" of their novels, encouraging instead the reader to creep into the tale and open it up by relating her own life to those of the narrators. In this manner, the reader adds her/his voice to the diverse voices narrating the story and thus becomes part of a community/culture of writers and readers bound through their shared experiences.

Thus, we arrive at the referential process of translation, or how the fiction refers to the society/culture from which it is born--what experiences are related in the female-authored story. Both Marlatt and Tostevin re-present versions of (hi)stories that differ from the canonical version not only through their narrative innovations, but also in their transcription of female bodies, desires and perspectives. It is through the *process* of converting a male-biased history (source text) into a female-inclusive one (target text) that these writers re-create not only their identity, but the identity of womankind, showing that they are not persons unto themselves, but rather an amalgamation of many other voices, lives and traditions.

Marlatt's and Tostevin's stories, which reflect (are products of) their multi-faceted bodies/lives, are flexible and able to incorporate new

information and diverse perspectives offered by an amalgam of sources. Ana Historic and Frog Moon are built on a collectivity of voices which create a dialogue both within the text and between the text and the reader, interweaving many points of view rather than projecting a single perspective. Mikhail Bakhtin, theorist of the polyvocal, argues that the dialogue produced by the internal dialogic character of the word allows for the writer to create a chorus of voices:

Those individual voices--or points of view, or individual languages--make up a pluralistic world in which a continual dialogue goes on, while the word itself becomes a shared property of the author, reader, and all those who in any way participated in the creation of its history (cited in Tabakowska 71).

While multi-voiced dialogues are common practice in a plethora of post-structuralist writings, such voices speak particularly, seem especially central, in a female-inclusive writing in which women are able to move beyond their position as separate (and isolated) individual entities into a communal space in which women become both writers and readers of their shared histories. Novels so inspired partake in dialogic communication with the dominant discourse, working within it to persuade, subvert and transform it, converting a form of subordination into an affirmation that would challenge an order resting on sexual indifference. The political force of interpretation lies in its ability to redress through different discourses the imbalance between dominant and dominated cultures: men and women, English and French Canadians (which Tostevin addresses), and heterosexuals and homosexuals (which Marlatt touches on). The discourse in Ana Historic and Frog Moon infers a certain running back and forth, speaking at length, running in different directions--it is not a unilateral, but a mutual translation that is inherent in these histories.

CHAPTER TWO
DAPHNE MARLATT'S ANA HISTORIC

"The assemblage of facts in a tangle of hair."

The epigraph in Ana Historic: A Novel defines Daphne Marlatt's conception of history; it is her intention to unweave the strands of his/tory, previously clumped together in a patriarchal version, in order to show how each strand/ part makes up the tangle/whole. When these strands (analogous to the lives of women) are separated, we can then appreciate the personal experiences of women that have been lost in the (k)not of public discourse; likewise, these individual experiences can be intertwined to create a tapestry, or a collective work of art (a history). In her novel Latakia, Audrey Thomas alludes to this image of women weaving tales, myths and legends when she describes the daily activity of the Cretan women:

The women on this street are never idle. They sit on their straight-backed chairs in front of the white houses, spinning or embroidering or winding enormous skeins of wool around their hands. And talking talking talking. The history of the street, too is being spun, embroidered, wound by these same women (Latakia 55).

The stories of the principal female characters in Ana Historic are similarly interlaced, for the lives of Annie, Ana, and Ina are woven into a braid which in turn intertwines with lives of other women--Zoe and Birdie--to produce a multi-textured/voiced tapestry-like story, complete from A(nnie) to Z(oe). The morphological link between the names of the principal female protagonists metaphorically connects their bodies and voices so that they all speak as equal subjects rather than as one subject which deems itself the authorial source of meaning. By basing these womens' names on the same letters, Marlatt aligns the women in similar origins, hints that they are learning to name/define themselves rather than being marked or branded by a hierarchical economy. She therefore re-verses the traditional concept of

naming as claiming rights to a person or place. Tostevin also re-marks on this belief that naming implies jurisdiction, noting that (British) colonizers claimed ownership of the bodies of water in South Africa which they happened to "name" before, and therefore appropriate from the natives.

Rather than being denied a name and identity in a privileged economy, women name, and thus write themselves into a space conducive to the sharing of their own identities and experiences as women. "Ina" is in part a backwards (re)reading of "An(n)i(e)," as is "Ana," and both names--Ina and Ana--contain the negative "na." Marlatt, in double-negating these women through both their name and their gender, includes them within previously exclusive discourse. Similarly, "Zoe" represents re-naissance, or the life breathed into women's bodies, devalued in a traditional economy, and "Birdie" symbolises the freedom of women to fly from their cage to pursue their own desires (Ana and Annie both concede to their longings to express themselves as lesbians and as writers). The protagonists succeed in finding their own identities, separate from those they are assigned as wives, or as the property of their husbands ("Ana Richards" and "Richard's Annie). In joining a community, they are encouraged to define themselves both as individuals and as members of a larger, collective body of women--a body who can say "we" and thus, according to Simone de Beauvoir, pool their resources and work together for their common good. This healthy, interactive community is represented in Marlatt's tapestry-like novel in which women's voices, lives and experiences are figuratively woven together.

This tapestry model resists the "facts" of traditional narrative for it rejects a monologue in favour of a multi-voiced dialogue in which both patriarchal historical and "feminist" a-historical, or non-factual, discourses

play a part. Marlatt uses the language of the dominant to persuade and transform it, creating a translative work in which "male discourse is re-marked by the multiplicity of female speech" (Godard, "Theorizing" 43-4). By extracting pieces of historical, economic, and medical documents and citing them in her novel, Marlatt gives them presence but emphasizes the absence of female voices within them; their authority as the historical "given" is reversed, for in telling only one version of events, they cannot claim to be the one or full account. Marlatt thus untangles and reties the knot of history, or writes against a monologue in which voices are clumped together, by converting the yet untold stories of three women (Annie, Ana and Ina) into a narrative in which female occurrences are foregrounded. Translation becomes a communal process of creation through which the characters, writer, and reader seek to break "out of silence in order to communicate new insights into women's experiences and their relation to language" (Godard, "Theorizing" 45).

The desire to tell the stories of women ignites when the main character, Annie, is helping her husband, Richard, conduct research for his project on Vancouver's history. Reading through piles of maps and papers, surveys and numbers, Annie comes across the name of a "Mrs. Richards," which appears only once in the documents; intrigued by the possibilities of the life this woman might have led, Annie embarks on an imaginative journey to re-create her life by re-writing her into a novel--and, as we will see later, in the process of writing Ana Richards, to re-construct her own life. Annie realizes that an orthodox historical narrative, presented as an objective, factual interpretation of past events and people, leaves no room for a subjective, more personal account of a past that would include women. Marlatt combats traditional language which, in denying women a semiology that includes their

bodies, has effaced them from historical accounts. To translate women back into the history which has excluded them, the author proposes a narrative that can effectively relate women's experiences because it is written in a language born of the body. Feminist writers Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar suggest that, "masculinist and feminist theorists alike have toyed with the idea of a culturally determined body language which translates the articulations of the body into that body of articulated terminology we call language" (Gilbert 81). Marlatt proposes that women's bodies metaphorically give birth to a language, which in turn gives birth to women as full, active human beings by allowing them to record and thus recreate women's lives in a history of their own making. Marlatt's intention is communicated by Annie's friend, Zoe, who (re)marks that "the real history of women...is unwritten because it runs through our bodies: we give birth to each other" (131). In Ana Historic, the author exposes and resists the monological discourses which have been accepted as authoritative or truthful accounts of past events even though they have excluded women, and further resists this repression by writing her own version (translation) in a language which she conceives as relating to women's bodies. In order to write this personal work which differs from the conventional historical narrative in its content, form, and language, Marlatt publicizes the language of traditional accounts.

Historical, economic and medical discourses that have banished women's experiences undergo a form of translation in Ana Historic, for their "documentary language becomes denatured, provoked to yield its ideological biases," and this language ultimately "breaks down into its components, namely, the language of nominalization, categorization, hierarchization, colonization, subordination, and control" (Banting, "Translation" 125). Musing

on the definition of "history" and its language, which has over-/under-written women's history, desire and bodies, Annie reveals,

i learned that history is the real story that city fathers tell of the only important events in the world. a tale of their exploits hacked out against a silent backdrop of trees, of wooden masses. so many claims to fame. so many ordinary men turned into heroes. (where are the city mothers?) the city fathers busy building a town out of so many shacks labelled the Western Terminus of the Transcontinental, Gateway to the East--all these capital letters to convince themselves of its, of their, significance (28).

Historians have inscribed events onto paper produced by the female "wooden masses" who silently provide their counter-parts with the resources required to preserve male experiences. Whereas ordinary men are valorized in written documents, women are merely marginalized, taught that their "proper" place is not in the foreground, or in the "story," but rather in the background, behind the "initial" capital of the male word. As Manina Jones observes, "[l]etters [specifically capital letters] themselves are here shown to be powerful producers of the 'real story.' They are conceived as valued property, 'capital' for the historiographic venture" (Jones 153). Annie, by using majuscules to tell Ana Richards' personal history, subverts the capitalization, "all that flexing of muscle," inherent in Public History: she emphasizes that history can move beyond its account of "large" public events to incorporate private experiences. Annie rescues Ana from the enclosed space in which she was subsisting as "Mrs. Richards," the mute property/object of her husband, by writing her as a speaking subject who can articulate her own identity as an adventurous, independent piano teacher in Hastings Mill. She moves from under the claims of the eminently "proper" noun--Mrs. Richards--to pass into the self-definition of a "common" noun--piano teacher. By seldom using capitals in her own story, Annie exposes the role of capitalization in excluding women from the dominant discourse.

Books on early Vancouver history fail to mention female inhabitants of the city, or, if they do, refer to them as small partakers in the grand scheme. Ana Richards barely appears in the city records of 1873:

'Miss Sweeney was shortly succeeded by Mrs. Richards, who soon became Mrs. Ben Springer and cast her lot with the struggling little hamlet, giving place to a Miss Redfern. . .great difficulty was experienced in keeping a teacher longer than six months' (39).

Ana's life is obscured in the public accounts which objectify historical personages, clustering them into a mass of indiscernable lives. Annie is determined to extricate the young school teacher's life from this entanglement by having Ana inscribe her experiences of early Vancouver in a personal notebook; she envisions Ana "sitting and writing in that journal of hers that later, years later, would be stored in the dustfree atmosphere of city archives. she was writing what would become a record" (29-30). In having a historical woman record her sentiments and views in a journal, Marlatt confirms the validity of private notebooks as historical documents despite their deviation from the strict plot sequence and objective narration required by a conventional narrative. By telling her story in a journal, Ana becomes a narrator who, in Genette's terms, is "present as source, guarantor, and organizer of the narrative, as analyst and commentator, as stylist" (Genette 167), and thus assumes control of her fictionalized life. Annie, by giving Ana "i"/site (eyesight), allows Ana to bypass a repressed existence as a Proper Lady for a "free" life which the others view as "unprotected" but which Ana sees as undefined and therefore unconfined. Annie shifts from writing Ana in the third-person to transcribing her in the first-person, seeking to highlight Ana's internal conflict between her hope of living independently and her fear of transgressing the limits of nineteenth-century propriety.

Ana's conflict ironically reflects Annie's uncertainty with her own

life's direction, both of which are narratively represented by the novels' constant fluctuation between subjective (Annie's) and objective (Ana's) voices. By consistently transferring from first to third-person narration, Marlatt blurs the line separating narrator from principal character, employing the narrative strategy Michael Toolan terms "Free Indirect Discourse" (FID): an "alignment, in words, values and perspective, of the narrator with a character" (Toolan 127). As the novel's subjective narrator, Annie does not claim full authority over the characters in her story, for she refrains from penetrating the mind of her principal character, Ana, and thus appropriating Ana's thoughts and feelings. Marlatt employs FID as "a sporadic, intermittent movement towards perceptive/intrusive/aligned understanding and disclosure of characters, not the straitjacket of total perception/intrusion" (Toolan 128). By refusing to take "control" of Ana by objectifying her in the third-person, Annie allows for Ana's eventual conversion from object in Annie's story to subject in Ana's own rendition of her life, thereby subverting the public discourse in which women are objectified if made present at all.

The city record make no reference to women, neither do the surveys and property documents, which reflect the male interest in the acquisition of material and the possession of a lot ("a measured parcel of land having fixed boundaries and designated on a plot or survey," *Webster's Dictionary*). Annie considers women as having a bad lot, as being allotted a cramped corner of the big historical picture, and a small space in the society to which they paradoxically contribute a great amount of the labour. Reflecting on these thoughts, Annie remarks to her mother, Ina: "i didn't notice the pinch of the shoe as you squinched down into your 'lot,' your woman's lot-a little too small" (80).

The protagonist struggles to remove herself from this assigned lot, the confined space that has always entrapped women, her mother among them. She seeks to put herself and Ana back in the "picture," to give life to the woman absent from the photographs of building, docks, and men in the Vancouver archives. Annie is aware that the photos which capture only select moments of a male-dominated life have been accepted as representing life in early Vancouver. Women are excluded from the picture but are still subjected to the photographer's/male gaze; they are "framed by a phrase that judges (virgin/tramp), sized-up in a glance, objectified. that's what history offers, that's its allure, its pretence. 'history says of her...' but when you're so framed, caught in the act, the (f)stop of act, fact-what recourse?" (56).

Men objectify and silence women through the vigilance of their gaze much as a camera frames and mutes its subjects. Manina Jones argues that in such a reckoning, history marginalizes women, putting them out of focus, and tends to concentrate instead on what it deems the more "important" (male) subjects whose lives are,

measured by the standards of the instrument of representation itself, in this case, 'the f stop,' literally a photographic gauge for calculating the opening of the lens aperture, which *regulates* the amount of light reaching the film, thus predetermining the 'obscurity' of its subject, just as conventional history prescribes what constitutes the 'significant' (Jones 155).

Annie shows her determination to place women back into history--to "step inside the picture and open it up" (56) by making Ana the subject of her own story to give her significance as an individual rather than as the property, or object of a man (as in her title, Mrs. Richards). Writing against the patriarchal objectification of women, Marlatt subjectifies Ana by placing her into a new context (her own story) and thus transforms women's absence from photographs into a presence in the negatives from which they are produced.

As Tostevin aptly puts it in Double Standards, it "seems some things just can't be written off like the guy said if you sit in darkness long enough the negative starts taking form" (DS). Women have been in the darkness so long that they begin to see the negative, or the inverse, of their situation, foreseeing that they can re-present their bodies, desires and histories which have for so long hidden in shadows.

As Annie realizes the importance of telling Ana's story, breaking the lens which has objectified her, so does the narrator in Marlatt's other novel, Zócalo, realize that she can see only the shape/form of her lover through the viewfinder, and that other parts of him can only be seen in her own mind's eye. Glen Lowry affirms that Marlatt, by "[g]iving voice to objectified woman," reclaims her "as a speaking subject actively participating in the creation of her world" (Lowry 84).

The single-minded language of history that excludes women from the "big picture" is evident not only in the books, surveys, and photographs that Annie reads, but also in the archival newspapers which, too, claim to depict "real," "civilized" society. Marlatt quotes from an early Vancouver newspaper:

'The present is decidedly an age of civilization. One of the chief signs of progress in this respect is the possessing a local paper. Moodyville, then, can now claim to be, what it really is, a go-ahead, prosperous, civilized locality. For here is the proof--here is its newspaper!' (39)

The newspaper, although written in a discourse which excludes women's views and experiences, operates as a sign of civilization (the State) in its "truthful" account of events. But we must question who becomes the authority, who states what is true and what is false, and what gets (im)printed in our minds. We are surely struck that the communal journal, "The Tickler," prints "Falsehoods of the Hour" which are supposedly made-up stories, but which come

gradually to be accepted as reports of actual occurrences: "truth told in the guise of falsehood" (105). Edward Said affirms the power of authoritative publications, stating that "all intellectual or cultural work occurs somewhere, at some time, on some very precisely mapped-out and permissible terrain, which is ultimately contained by the State" (Said 588). The state-produced documents which emerge in Ana Historic enforce the idea that worth is established by a competition/hierarchization within which one person or idea necessarily succeeds at the expense of another.

This win-or-lose attitude is conveyed in the following newspaper write-up of a boat race in early Vancouver history, a finding which in its quirky logic, and insistent repetitions of its terms, its tautologies, exposes itself in its full absurdity,

'But as the "Annie Fraser" came in first, the "Pearl" could not do more than come in second, unless she "tied." Well, she came in second, and was consequently beaten; while the "Annie Fraser" came in first, and consequently won. That is really the true solution of the whole matter' (124).

The "true solution," the black-and-white of the situation, is inscribed as such in an account which discourages further interpretation of the event. Annie's husband, Richard, adopts a similar attitude to these nineteenth-century newswriters who believed that the events recorded on (news)paper were *the* true accounts; in compiling information for his project, Richard scours the newspapers for "what is worthy of attention," concentrating on "small artificial columns of another world" (122-3). The culture, of which the newspaper is merely representative, essentially validates the state/authority. Annie resists supporting such a higher authority by working (writing) towards a female culture which is not based on any such authority ("power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behavior," Webster's Dictionary). Marlatt lays

out her views to Janice Williamson on how post-structuralist and feminist writers are now contesting the authority of "history":

We're not stuck in some authoritative version of the real, and for women that's extremely important, because until recently we always were--the patriarchal version was always *the* version, and now we know that's not true. We can throw out that powerful little article (Sounding 188).

Symbolically, in Ana Historic, Annie imagines Ana opposing instituted authority by crumpling the newspaper to create a bright, warm fire. In doing so, Ana emblematically rejects the news of a public/publicized world defined by capital(ization)s in favour of writings about her own personal experiences.

Just as the absence of female lives and experiences is evident in the various examples of historic narrative in Ana Historic, so too is it found in the economic discourse which perpetuates the capitalization sought in an illiberal economy. While researching for her husband's project, Annie comes across catalogues of imported goods, objects of male acquisition from "Mother Britain that show evidence of man's far-reaching power. She writes about "men exchanging goods, labelled the comforts of 'home,' for spars of wood, giant timbers struck from unknown territory. traffic (dealing) all this coming and going, this emptying and filling of ships' holds" (117). Ships (often named after women) are filled with male-acquired goods from the imperial "mother," much as women, being "vessels," are required to ful/fill the role of child-bearing.

Annie rejects this restrictive economy in which woman is reduced to the role of transporter, and in which both Ina and Ana are, in effect, "goods" carried from Mother Britain to British Columbia. Although Annie cannot write her mother out of the child-bearing/rearing role in which she was confined and in which she confined herself, she can write Ana out of its restrictive hold because she can imagine exciting possibilities for Ana's unknown life. Ina is

transported from the colonies of Britain and India, where she has been constantly surrounded by adults, children and servants, to British Columbia and the solitary life that Annie believes to have eroded her. While Ina attempts to transpose into Canada the British language and customs of the two (common/wealth) countries in which she has resided, she ultimately fails because she refuses to translate the language and allegiances of her previous life in a cultured society into her new life in the wilderness:

impasse: impossible to exit. dead end. when the walls close down. the public/private wall. defined the world you lived inside, the world you brought with you, transposed, onto a Salish mountainside. and never questioned its terms. 'lady.' never questioned its values. English gentility in a rain forest? (23-4)

Annie's mother maintains her British accent and vocabulary, and the same imperialistic attitude as *her* figurative mother (Mother Britain), refusing to be assimilated into a new and dynamic Canadian culture and economy (of meaning). As Pamela Banting aptly surmises, Ina discovers to her dismay that,

colonial British English, is not the same as the vernacular of British Columbia and attempts to recover her composure by trying to persuade her daughters to use the British terms instead of the Canadian--in other words, to preserve the source text and not to translate ("Translation" 126).

Rather than creating a life for herself on foreign soil, Ina responds to her new situation by preserving and perfecting the role of a wife and mother in the fifties through incessant housework, "through compulsively miming, to the letter, the source of her victimization" (Banting, "Translation" 126).

Annie, knowing the beginning and ending of her mother's story, cannot "save" her from her confinement, but because she knows only scant information about Ana Richards, she can fill in the blanks and create a life for her; the unwritten figures as the possible, the written as the foreclosed. Here, the narrator employs the narrative technique, "*analepsis*" (an interruption of

chronological sequence by an interjection of events of earlier occurrence) to feminist ends by returning to the past to give events and women a (deferred) significance that they did not initially possess. Annie connects her life in the present with a woman in the past, attempting to translate her experiences and emotions into Ana's life, a text yet unwritten which is replete with possibilities of new interpretations. Annie's translative abilities allow her to re-read and re-write her own life so that she will ultimately be able to take exploratory steps into the future. Annie, Ana and Ina become narratively bound across time and culture through the translation of their experiences as women. In telling the stories of Ina and Ana, Annie pulls these women out of the (k)not of history in which they are entangled and silenced. Although Annie cannot re-write the unfortunate history of her mother, she can and does write Ana into being as a British immigrant who refuses to replicate the role of the vessel that transports her from her "mother" land to a primitive wilderness.

Economic discourse in Ana Historic reveals its patriarchal bias not only in the catalogues of male-acquired goods from mother Britain, but also in the materialistic descriptions of this wildlife found in the local literature.

Trees are presented as an extractable resource for capitalism:

'The red cedar, unequalled as a wood for shingles, comes next to the fir in importance. Because of its variety of shading, and the brilliant polish which it takes, it is prized for the interior finishing of houses. As the cedar lasts well underground it is used for telegraph poles and fence posts... Well can this wood be called the settler's friend, for from it he can with simple tools, such as axe and saw, build *his* house, fence *his* farm, and make *his* furniture' (19-20, my emphasis).

The "historical text's concern with the economics of the production of lumber with the male-defined 'economics' that regulate a woman's reproductive body" (Jones 150) is replaced in Marlatt's text at a site where feminism and ecology meet. Marlatt stresses the male fixation on capital gain and material

domination of the natural environment; the trees in this environment are equated to women, silenced by their overbearing counterparts. Females, like their ecological allies, are exploited by men who strip both of their protective layer, and convert them into a commodity (paper) on which men write themselves. Women are silenced, mutely accepting their position as provider of the resources on which men capitalize and take advantage, hidden under male words: women are "hardly there off screen somewhere in photographs / or writing letters women strong as trees but rarely defiant" (Double Standards).

Both Annie and Ana are warned about entering the woods where bears/men may harm/silence women, and the young Annie is told that the woods at the end of the street are "male territory," off-limits to women. Ina, Annie and Ana learn the dangers of this restrictive male economy that robs women of their voices, but Annie has the strength to defy the "rules," seeking to make space for women in this forbidden territory through a new alliance of women/nature/trees that refuses to be uprooted. Although Ina warns her daughter never to enter the woods alone, as a child, Annie finds pleasure in nature: "anonymous territory...something inhuman i slipped through. in communion with trees...i was native, i was the child who grew up with wolves, original lost girl, elusive, vanished from the world of men..." (18). As a teenager, Annie also feels a precious connection with nature as a place in which she and other women can articulate themselves verbally and physically, as do the two lesbians she sees one day in a car, secluded in "that leafy tunnel they'd chosen, the silence of dripping woods and, under glass as under water, two mouths meeting each other" (107). Ana, too, although somewhat wary of venturing alone into the woods, finds a certain inner peace in a natural, open space that is no one's property and where she does not have to play the

"proper" role but can act on impulse. While nature does offer only a temporary sanctuary for female self-expression, Ana and Annie dare to seek out an undefined territory in the wilderness, breaking out of the confines of a privileged order that appropriates nature for its own benefit.

The women in the novel are similarly appropriated by the medical discourse that silences women in its depiction of the physical and mental trauma of hysteria, the physical development of the female body, and the birth process. The patriarchal silencing of women is dramatized in the excerpts from a medical journal which matter-of-factly discuss the electric shock therapy applied to a hysterical (female) patient/victim: in this case, Annie's mother, Ina. Rather than attempting to understand and deal with her mental problems, doctors immediately submit the woman to shock treatment to "cure" disturbances of the womb, originally thought to be the site (cite/sight) of hysteria. In their practice, they retain the notion that hysterical citation (speech) is female-specific as is loss/blurring of sight ("female concerns"). Doctors, who have the power to act upon others' reason, react to woman's madness, Shoshana Felman argues, "by trying to appropriate it: in the first place, by claiming to 'understand' it, but with an external understanding which reduces the madwoman. . .to an *object* which can be *known* and *possessed*" and thus muzzled (Felman 14). In the patriarchal structure that Marlatt deconstructs, the hysterical woman (Ina) is silenced the same way that women have always been muted by a singular historical discourse. Glen Lowry, focusing on the same point, remarks that Marlatt suitably relates the absenting of women within the exclusive historical narrative to the mut(e)ilation of hysteric women's bodies: "In her effort to recreate the life of Ana from history, Marlatt is also creating the life of Ina lost to hysteria. History and hysteria are

associated with violence against women (hysterectomies)" (Lowry 88). Lowry goes on to quote an exemplary passage from Ana Historic:

hystery. the excision of women (who do not act but are acted upon). hysterectomy, the excision of wombs and ovaries by represssion, by mechanical compression, by ice, by the knife, because we were 'wrong' from the start, our physiology faulty, preoccupied as we are with the things of the flesh" (AH 88).

Lowry reads Ina as being "unable to fit the confines of her body as it is imagined in phallogocentric bourgeois society" (Lowry 88); however, we can also perceive Ina as being incapable of escaping an enclosed male-centered society. She remains simultaneously confined in the body that is not her own but a beautified object subjected to the male gaze, and confined to her house and her roles of mother and wife which leave no room for a life (or a room) of her own. Failing to translate the source of her angst, the loneliness of her life in the Canadian wilderness, into a positive source of energy, Ina is metaphorically entrapped between source (patriarchal economy) and target (female space) text, caught in the covers of a repressive historical discourse. As a result of the electrical shock therapy she undergoes, she becomes "absent-minded," absent from herself, likely, but literally absented too from the society to which she could not adapt. She remains within the closed parentheses of a patriarchal world, becoming one among the many women (who do not act but are acted upon).

Never learning to progress beyond what is expected of her as a woman in the divisive sexist society of the 1950s, Ina becomes submissive, subconsciously passing her way of thinking on to her daughter. Although Ina always fusses about her own appearance, she teaches Annie to be ashamed of and to conceal her body in order to prevent sparking a man's desire; the historical Ana has been likewise taught to hide behind her form-fitting

dresses to prevent herself from exceeding the bounds of propriety, and most imperatively, to refrain from using "body language." Expression through dance is forbidden, especially for "a minister's daughter, still wearing the supposed weeds of widowhood, she the school teacher, a model of propriety no doubt" (72). The puritanical society teaches women to conceal not only their body but also their private bodily functions, and Annie herself is encouraged to feel ashamed of the "painful" monthly release of blood, a biological quirk to be merely tolerated rather than enjoyed. The male perception of a woman's monthly period as a degrading phenomenon that must be obscured from men who se(m)e(n)ingly risk contamination by female blood has existed for ages. Applying here Lola Lemire Tostevin's assessment that "Contamination means differences have been brought together so they make contact" ("Contamination" 13), we can surmise that until recently the exclusive discourse of a male-dominated society has refused to let women enter (contaminate) it to create a dialogic discourse in which languages may interact, and into which women's experiences, biological and otherwise, might be translated. Marlatt quotes a passage from Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex to emphasize the negative view of menstruation (that women have been encouraged to adopt):

'(Her body) is a burden: worn away in service to the species, bleeding each month, proliferating passively, it is not for her a pure instrument for getting a grip on the world but an opaque physical presence; it is no certain source of pleasure and it creates lacerating pains; it contains menaces; woman feels endangered by her "insides"' (133).

Although Annie grows up with the knowledge that her body should hide its difference, should be necessarily silenced by the noisy monotone of the patriarchy, she resists succumbing to the same mutation as her mother. Annie exposes the male bias evident not only in the painful accounts of a woman's period, but also in the birth process. Extracting a passage from Genesis in

the Bible, "*the* great 'genetic' code of Western culture, and one powerful (textual) source of women's subjugation" (Jones 148), Marlatt emphasizes the archaic view of giving birth as a necessarily scarring ordeal which has been perpetuated in generations of women as the "accepted" view: "To the woman he said: I will greatly multiply your pain in child-bearing; in pain shall you bring forth children" (118). In this Genetic conception, women are told to conform their body's natural process of giving birth to a higher authority's painful procedure. Marlatt's Ana contradicts this patriarchal conversion of the birth process, this concept of *ana*-genesis ("evolutionary change involving a continuous succession of forms replacing one another without branching," Webster's Dictionary), promoting instead the idea that women, as the trees that represent them, need to branch out of the forms that stunt their growth. As Tostevin resists in Frog Moon this misogynist ideal of women as vessel, "full(filling)" her duty as transporter of life, so does Marlatt oppose women's subordination to men, who do not share the power to produce human life, by showing how women can bond together in this solely female experience. She proposes a way for females to utter themselves in a language that is metaphorically born of the female body, then developed into a discourse which allows women narratively to "give birth to each other" by speaking their stories and sharing their experiences.

Women are not given a place in the patriarchal writing of history, so Marlatt proposes a place/space for them in her own version of history which is told in a female-inclusive language. While decoding/deconstructing the authoritarian structure which has erased women, Marlatt re-codes, or recovers, the lost mother tongue which she believes will allow women to speak and write their experiences. The author thus engages in a translation process in which

the "source text" (history, for my purposes) is conveyed into an/Other language in the "target text" (this female version of history). Rather than simply replacing one version with the other (which is not the aim of translative work), Marlatt allows the two versions to work together; she includes women-exclusive historical, economic and medical discourses in her version of history, but provides her own personalized interpretation of the events they recount. *Ana Historic* demystifies and subverts the codes of a privileged language, but the novel also proposes a way for women to vocalize themselves in a writing based on a women's culture. The difference in women's writing is to be found in this female-centered discourse which, in writing against the dominant one, "incorporates ideas about women's body, language and psyche but interprets them in relation to the social contexts in which they occur" (Showalter 470). The ways in which women view their bodies and their sexual reproductive functions are related to the culture in which they live, as are language and psyche products of cultural forces. Women's bodies, desires, and histories will, Marlatt esteems, be joined together in a women's culture and discourse that values them.

Urging women out of their near-deathly quiet in her essay, "musing with mothertongue," Marlatt promotes a return to a mother tongue in which words are given different meanings--a matrilineal tradition that generates a body of women who can speak themselves and each other: "putting the living body of language together means putting the world together, the world we live in: an act of composition, an act of birthing us, uttered and outered there in it" (*TMT* 49). Women, then, live inside their writing as they do inside their bodies.

Marlatt insists that the processes of menstruation and giving birth let

women's bodies in a way speak, or mark themselves in a female version of history. Women reclaim their bodies which have been taken as masculine possessions (for example, "le vagin") and marked by lack, silence, erasure. Rejoicing in the ability of her body to make its own natural (re)mark, Annie realizes the female body can write/express itself to mark its uniqueness:

there is still even now the innate pleasure of seeing on a fresh white pad the first marks of red, bright red when the bleeding's at its peak. innate because of a childish astonishment, *i made that!* the mark of myself, my inscription in blood. i'm here (90).

Thus, Annie's blood allows her to write a language specific to women, one that celebrates female difference. She elaborates on this body-inflected language which allows her to write her own story:

writing the period that arrives at no full stop. not the hand manipulating the pen. not the language of definition, of epoch and document, language explaining and justifying, but the words that flow out from within, running too quick to catch sometimes, at other times just an agonizingly slow trickle. the words of an interior history doesn't include...(90).

The language in which women's story is written is born of the body-- knowing that women *can* make their mark (X marks the spot) with blood from their own body means that they are present on their own (note)pad. Despite the fact that they have been erased from the canon for centuries, women learn that they are capable of creating their own histories but because they have been denied the pen for so long, they resort to using their bodies for inscription. Women then translate their stories written by the blood that courses through them into stories told by the ink that flows from the pen they have finally been able to recover. Annie says that a female narrative is not told in the language of traditional history for it cannot be expressed in the confining discourse of explanation and justification. Marlatt herself asks: "how can the standard sentence structure of English with its linear authority, subject

through verb to object, convey the wisdom of endlessly repeating & not exactly repeated cycles her body knows?" (ITMT 47). *Ana Historic* rejects the formal linear structure of sentences in narrative in favour of sentences that traipse, meander, circle back, continue forward seemingly into a space beyond words unmarked by fixed patriarchal codes. The female characters seek to remove themselves from their position beneath the patriarchal code that has been stamped on them, in order to re-code/re-mark themselves in their own language--to get themselves out from behind the line that holds them back. Annie writes about little Alice commencing a race from "'behind the mark, yes, *behind* it'," and overcoming her most threatening male competitors to be the first to the other end of the field, "head high, free in her own momentum" (73). By marking their presence in a male world, these women characters write (right) their own version, or translation, of history.

Women's textual story naturally germinates from an "internal history" which is written in the blood of their period "that arrives at no full stop." Knowing that they are unstoppable once they get started, the women in the novel translate the internal flowing in their bodies into a narrative flow that spills forth stories replete with their shared experiences. In addition to menstruation, the act of giving birth creates a strong link between the "a-na historic" women and it is, according to Marlatt, from this process that a women's language--or "mothertongue"--is born. The birth process serves as a link between the women who participate in the birth of their friend, Jeannie Alexander's, son. Ana remarks that she cannot describe the birth as it has been traditionally depicted in Biblical words for it exists as something beyond those constrictive words. She records in her journal: "'I expected her groaning-pain and sorrow, the Biblical words, the pangs of which they speak.

I expected the rending apart of flesh, the blood--now I write of it Biblically but that is not how it was. What words are there?" (120) It is Marlatt's intention to find a way in which women are able to express themselves without being reduced to their previous silence. In "musing with mothertongue," Marlatt discerns the body as the origin of a language in which women will be able to translate their living presence into written presence and, in so doing, give themselves a(na) history. Watching Jeannie writhe and moan as she struggles to release her child, Ana "caught a glimpse of what she almost failed to recognize: a massive syllable of slippery flesh slide out the open mouth" (126). In Annie's reaction, language becomes flesh, a living substance, as the mouth speaks the babe and then the afterbirth, and that "mouth speaking flesh" also shows how the flesh is made word, "present in this other language so difficult to translate" (126). Thus, a language which does not originate in words is produced from the woman's body/mouth which speaks the "unspeakable," telling the story of this female experience. Women, Marlatt believes, can find a place in the historical (economic and medical) discourses which have erased them by writing their experiences in a language translated from the body--a mothertongue. Gilbert and Gubar, referring to one of Walter Ong's recent language studies in their essay, "Sexual Linguistics," argue that this language is not distinctly marked as "female" speech, for it also constitutes "father speech":

'the relationship between the common *materna lingua* (or mother tongue) and the 'civilised' *patrius sermo* (or father speech)" implies [that] European male writers have, since the High Middle Ages, been deeply involved in a struggle into the vernacular which has continually forced them to usurp and transform the daily speech of women and children so as to make it into a suitable instrument for (cultivated) male art" (Gilbert 91).

Gilbert and Gubar surmise that "the mother tongue, far from being a

unique women's language, is what we would ordinarily mean by the phrase 'ordinary language'" (91) and that both men and women are born of the same mother tongue. They go on to say that the power of the father in our patriarchal society is therefore not irrevocably tied to the power of language, for it is the mother who assumes primary importance in a child's acquisition of language. The authors conclude that,

if the primary moment of symbolisation occurs when the child identifies difference with distance from the mother, it is not only the presence of the mother's words that teaches the child words, but also the absence of the mother's flesh that requires the child to acquire words (Gilbert 96).

Thus, even when absent or silent, the mother generates language within others and also within herself, reconstituting her lost presence in symbolisation and, for my purposes, historical narrative. Women transform their absence from society and its discourses into a presence by expressing their unwritten lives in a mother tongue re-gained from the patriarchy which has appropriated it to exclude women. Marlatt's decoding (or de-boning) of the patriarchal discourse allows us to get to the bare flesh of the matter--to the mothertongue that has been tied, or over-written in patriarchal discourse.

Pamela Banting refers to the language in which women find themselves as a "(m)other tongue" which is "a simultaneous translation between language and the body, between the already spoken and the unspeakable, between the familiar and the un- and/or de-familiarized" (Banting, "S(m)other" 85). She refers to it as an "interlanguage" that is situated between the source language (based on the logos, or mind) and target language (based on the female body) which "results from a learner's attempted production of the target language" and which "emerges only in the process of second-language learning" (Banting, "Translation" 127). It is a tongue which connects the interior language of

women to the external patriarchal language, traditionally employed as a "tool" to grip/dominate. Similarly, Marlatt's Annie determines that, "our writing, which we also live inside of, is different from men's, and not a tool, not a 'pure instrument for getting a grip on the world' (133). Marlatt suggests that as women live in their bodies, they also reside in the language they speak and write--it becomes a house, dwelling, living space in which women can give birth to each other. The female characters in Ana Historic figuratively come to life, having first given life to a language which allows them finally to tell their own experiences in a personalized history emanating from the body. Seeking to re-possess the body of which women have been de-possessed, Marlatt effectively parries history as hysterectomy, or the silencing of women. She proposes that women write themselves back into a discourse which has erased them by inscribing themselves in their own fictions which "run through them"; this internal history can be translated into writing through contact with the external environment. The birth canal which produces life also serves as a passageway of a mothertongue, a language connecting the inside to the outside world. In Wild Mother Dancing, Di Brandt writes:

[t]his conception of language as mothered, mothering, as truly mothertongue, has far-reaching implications. . . . If it is possible to image the mother as presence rather than absence, as speaking subject rather than mute object, container, vessel, then it is possible to write the mother story as a story of relationships between existing women (Brandt 66).

To write this story in which women's lives and relationships are interwoven, Marlatt translates the inner language of the mother tongue into a verbal/written utterance; she maintains that women can assert their difference by writing and speaking through their body, but they can also express themselves in language by using it in different, innovative ways. Just as women are both inside and outside of their bodies while giving birth, they are

inside language (writing in the patriarchal structure) and outside language (writing their difference into this structure). By using the resources of language to express a new feminine reality, Marlatt supports Elaine Showalter's assertion that the "problem is not that language is insufficient to express women's consciousness but that women have been denied the full resources of language and have been forced into silence, euphemism, or circumlocution" (Showalter 466). Marlatt writes against this silencing by using the same language which mutes women in its historical, economic, and medical discourse to make women *present* in discourse; she steps "into the page/image that has flattened or defined woman's life according to a single standard" (Lowry 91).

She asserts female difference in writing through syntactical innovations in commas, slashes, dashes, ellipses, parentheses. Dennis Cooley suggests that, "[h]er syntax spaghetti on our laps, old shoelaces--infinitely accomodating, intimately enfolding. A syntax happy to fall upon its laces its finds run pleased look look at that into new unfoldings unexpected propositions" (Cooley 69). Cooley's (un)comman usage of syntax reflects Marlatt's non-comma/nding, unpunctured sentence. Or, Marlatt's tendency to create run-on sentences, without periods (the full stop)--to get a sense of the direction of the sentence, which is in effect going nowhere, or everywhere, circling around and back like the rhythms of the body. Rather than existing in a conventional structure which restricts rather than encourages free movement, Marlatt's sentences, like her female characters, run wild in Ana Historic: "the sougning, sighing of bodies, the cracks and chirps, odd rustles, something like breath escaping, something inhuman i slipped through. in communion with trees, following the migratory routes of bugs, the pathways

of water, the warning sounds of birds" (18).

Like Annie's playing and running through nature, her sentences become a natural place for Marlatt to articulate her childish (and adult) longings, meanderings. Marlatt's syntactical play does not stop with commas; she uses slashes between words to indicate that the desired meaning lies between the meanings of two words, or encompasses the meanings of both words, as a translated work lies somewhere between source and target text. In an especially effective instance, Annie tells Ina that "the public/private wall. defined the world you lived inside" (23); by using the slash, Annie stresses the separation, yet melding of "public" and "private"--Ina's difficulty in living both in the public world of the patriarchy (represented by a general history) and in her own private world (her individual story). Constantly feeling she must live up to societal standards, but wanting her own private life as well, Ina eventually forces herself to play the role of perfect mother and wife that she believes society expects of her. Ina finishes by (s)lashing out/blaming herself for not succeeding at integrating her externally portrayed self and internally repressed self. All the female characters in the story, however, share Ina's experience of living between two states, at "the gap between two versions" (106), thereat the virgule, metaphorically caught between the source text (the "normal") and target text (the a-na-normal). Unlike Ina, however, Annie and Ana choose the way they will follow at the proverbial fork in the road. One is the road of convention/silencing--the other of new possibilities/speech. They move "vers" (towards) the di-version, by sub-verting/in-verting the societal norm; because Annie can imagine new possibilities for her character and herself, they break with convention to choose the seldom trod path of lesbianism.

Marlatt seeks to escape the boundaries of patriarchal society and discourse by unconventionally employing not only the slash, but also the dash--she makes a dash for it. The dash is often used to show a change in thought flow--to add information or insight to the previous thought so that the story is written in stream-of-consciousness. Marlatt rejects the strict subject-verb-object sentence construction that forces thoughts to be linear in their organization, subject acting on object. She also uses the ellipses to resist the standard sentence structure; by allowing the thought to continue beyond its existence as words on a page, she avoids the precise beginning and ending of a sentence. This progression of thought toward wordlessness is exemplified in Zoe's question to Annie: "'so what is it you want from her [Ana]?' the question surrounds us sudden and floating, chairs suspended outside this ordinary cafe..." (91). Like the chairs that exist outside the walls of the cafe, the thought moves beyond the restrictive packaging of words/text into an area that does not necessarily require words to give meaning to thought and desire. Both Zoe and Annie contemplate the life of the historical Ana which Annie is recreating; Zoe reminds Annie that she can imagine a life for Ana, for she is not bound by any previously recorded material that would prove "false" her version of Ana's history. Marlatt's elliptical usage echoes her ability to imagine the life of Ana Richards out of the restrictive barriers of a patriarchally-loaded language and history. Annie pictures Ana in front of "the page, her tapping there, looking for a way out of the blank that faced her" (45)--to present herself on the page (turn over a new leaf?) by eluding the conventional form and language of history which has effaced her.

Marlatt also breaks the frames of a patriarchal language by using the open parentheses, not to contain a thought separate from the main story line,

but to include the off-line-reflection in the story. Annie says to her mother: "i can't turn you into a story. there is this absence here, where the words stop. (and then i remember--" (11). The single parenthetical bracket allows her to expand her musings / her story beyond parenthetical restriction--to actually create a dialogue between words. Cooley notices, "[b]ut because the ruptures come so interactively and so frequently in mid-sentence (not at the end where they would be less disruptive) they speak more equally with and to the rest of the text" (Cooley 71). Glen Lowry further affirms that both Marlatt and Tostevin undermine "the system of classification that Foucault so succinctly demonstrates to be part of the power structure of the Norm" by exposing "phallogocentric objectivity as parenthetical, put on to separate us from each other" (Lowry 93-4). He quotes Marlatt, who writes: 'break the parentheses and let it all surface! falling apart. we are, i am. we have fallen apart. the parts don't fit. not well. never whole. never did.'" (150). Annie's story becomes a collection of thoughts that spill forth from her mind onto the page, resisting enclosure and linear organization of the patriarchal-based language which attempts to "railroad" women out of the picture. The metaphor is apt, for Annie is awakened in the night to darkness and solitude, to the non-comforting presence of her husband by "the sound of a train, in some yard where men already up were working signals, levers, lamps" (9). Her train of thought is de-railed from the solace of sleep's passage to careen towards the unknown: the fear of who may be outside, off the beaten track. Yet it is this path she wishes to follow, to confront her fear of the unknown by leaving the comfort of the known, the "standard" track. Manina Jones states that *Ana Historic* effects

a kind of 'derailment/*déraillement* ('talking nonsense') of narrative and even syntactical sense in which the parenthetical becomes primary,

and (the) story gets off track. . . . Annie for example, says she 'can't seem to stay on track, nor can my sentence, even close its brackets' [17]. She cannot, in other words, conform to established norms of behaviour (Jones 154).

Annie opposes a monologue whose stories are forcibly contained within the linearity of its "tracks," as parentheses close (off) and segregate thoughts not consistent with a rigid story line.

As Marlatt resists the idea of imposition and closure through her syntactical innovations, so does she in her etymological breakdown of words. Words are translated over the generations as they are adapted to different social contexts, in the end, assuming a meaning often unrelated to their original meanings. It is the root, or source of words that Marlatt attempts to unearth to determine how a patriarchal language/society has subsequently shaped, or misshaped, their meanings. Her principal character, Annie, seeks to understand the reasons for her mother's untimely demise by digging up the roots of the words that ail their family tree--the words that her mother passed onto her daughter, perpetuating a dominating patriarchal language. Annie recites: "words. words, that shifting territory. never one's own. full of deadfalls and hidden claims to a reality others have made" (32). She attempts to get past the external covering of words ("wardrobes. wordrobes") to compare their original meanings to the meanings they have acquired through social usage.

The word "lady," epitomizing the constriction of a woman's insides for the sake of a proprietarial appearance, is "a word that has claimed so much from women trying to maintain it. . . a woman whose conduct conforms to a certain standard of propriety" (32). Annie, rather than accepting the restrictive standards imposed on women generation after generation as her mother did, Annie chooses to question and resist subscribing to an imperialistic language

which forces people to speak and write words whose meanings have no significance for them. Women are just as culpable as men of perpetuating a language of fixed expression by passing on words such as "lady," whose meaning has transformed greatly from its use in the society in which Ina grew up, to its meaning in the world in which her daughter is raised. As Ina teaches her daughter women should always act as "ladies," the nuns of Laura's childhood teach the girls the different "categories" of women--"whore," "mother," and "saint" in Tostevin's Frog Moon. These words become empty signifiers because the girls fail to equate these out-dated terms with what they believe to constitute a "woman." The patrilineal circuit transmits singular meanings through its linguistic wire, preventing other interpretations/readings in its closed discursive system. If one is ignorant of the patriarchally-loaded meanings in this system, s/he is cut off from the power of words--left in the dark, so to speak. Such is the case when Ana instructs a native child to write the letter "a" by equating its written form with the sound of the word "angel," unaware that she is forcing the child to learn a language of colonization whose cultural codes differ so extensively from her own tongue that she is unable to translate them. Like the native girl and the principal female characters in Ana Historic, the girls in Frog Moon inherit a language in which they cannot adequately express themselves, so trapped are they in its linguistic encasements. Glen Lowry suggests that Marlatt and Tostevin break through this seemingly impervious discourse of singular meaning by "sounding the difference, letting the other voices be heard, the other truths be told" and "finding the dormant meanings (not the essential or even original meanings, but the plurality from which the singular meaning has been extracted/abstracted" (Lowry 96).

Marlatt, and Tostevin for that matter, reject the theory of language which consists of a "masculine desire for meaning--for direct correlation between the word and thing" whereby "[a]nything outside this masculine quest for meaning is superfluous, and as such, must exist as erasure" (Lowry 90). One example of this masculine linguistic (and narrative) negation of women occurs in the word "tom-boy," a girl who has male characteristics. The name doubly negates her. "Mrs. Richards" is another title that insists on negating the woman within it, naming Ana out of existence by denying her an identity in a story constructed from a decidedly non-male perspective. Annie pre-positions Ana, getting beyond/under/behind the anonymous "Mrs. Richards" by giving this historical woman a first name, Ana, a name whose first initial marks not only the beginning of the Roman alphabet, but also a fresh embarkation for this woman who places herself first and above all in a story of her own making. In re-naming herself "Annie Torrent" at the end of the novel, Annie also permits herself to acquire another identity as a woman who may more passionately gush forth her thoughts and feelings rather than contain them in a "spring" (as Ana would have been forced to do if she had married Mr. Ben Springer, if she had become a "Springer"). As Annie fights against containment in words, so she resists fixation in a history that mutes women in its objectification. Marlatt insists that women must somehow decode the fixed, and fixing, language of patriarchal discourse, and recode it with their own meaning through a language that values women's experiences, bodies and histories.

The story of Annie, Ana and Ina is not one which would be found in official documents, for it refuses to be written in the language and form of discursive history, which Marlatt defines as "the story. . .of dominance. mastery. the bold line of it" (25). Her/story is nonetheless an account of

women's lives that is equally valid as historical, "factual" accounts. Unlike Ina who becomes de-valued and phased-out of action (like defunct currency) by the male economy which has historically ac/counted for women's lives, Annie, Ana and Zoe learn to account for themselves in a new economy which values female experiences. Thus, Ana Historic differentiates itself from conventional history by resisting its definitive content (a concentration on male and usually public experiences) and form (a strict closure that forces the events and people it recounts to become "flattened by destiny, caught between the covers of a book" [150]). Marlatt asserts the validity of her version of history even though she refers to it as "a-historic": it is not written in the "factual" discourse of history, nor in the form of a historical text. Di Brandt writes that Marlatt "reclaims and develops this idea of the 'ahistoric,' the 'ana-historic' as the appropriate narrative space for women's fictional stories: because we cannot remember women's lives from the historical record kept about us, we are free to invent them" (Brandt 69). In the same way that Ana Historic is a-historic, it is a-novelistic, a novel, and "not a roman/ce" (AH 67). In other words, it refuses to be written in the standard form and content of a novel, or an idealistic "romance"; Marlatt's romance is not a love story which ends decisively in a new and reformed identity for the protagonist, but is rather a continuous search for identity that does not cease with the last page of the story. Annie can imagine/write a new ending for herself, but it is only by writing about her mother, Ina, and her story's character, Ana, as well as conversing with her friend, Zoe, that she realizes that she can indeed create a new and different self.

Elaine Showalter ascertains that a model of female difference in writing is based not only on women's body and language, but on a "theory of the female

psyche or self, shaped by the body, by the development of language, and by sex-role socialization" (467). Having studied how Marlatt locates within the female body a mother tongue, and how women writers have developed this language to feminist ends, we will now observe how sex-role conditioning constructs the female self, who will assert her difference in a non-patriarchal writing. Showalter argues that a study of sex-role socialization helps us see "the mother-daughter configuration as a source of female creativity" (467). Most women are influenced by their mother for it is often the mother who passes on her societal role to her daughter. Weaving together their different thoughts, desires and relationships with those of their mothers to determine how their mothers have influenced their lives (their stories), Annie and Ana emphasize the importance of a common mother-daughter bond. Ana is taught only that her mother, led "astray" by her dancing, left her and her father, who now considers his wife as good as "dead for her sins" (72). Ana's maternal loss echoes that of the narrator in How Hug a Stone, who cries: "dance out names at the heart of where we are lost, hers first of all, wild mother dancing upon the waves" (Marlatt, Ghost Works 187). Although she has never known her mother, Ana connects with her when she desires to dance at the party to liberate herself from the repressive life as a minister's daughter, just as her mother dances out of her position as a minister's wife. Ana inherits a sense of her mother's wanderlust/search for her own identity, and is thus compelled to leave her father and his inflexible religious life to begin a new life in British Columbia.

As Ana's mother may have inspired Ana to de-code the exclusive discourse, so, too, Annie's mother encourages Annie to assert herself in a patriarchal society that has deterred women from voicing their own opinions.

Ina's example is more negative, however, because Annie is motivated by what her mother does *not* do. Constantly trying to conform to society's expectations of a 1950s woman, Ina becomes conditioned into being the agent of her own repression, unable to see her real self beneath her covergirl makeup/facade. Marlatt implies that women, living in a body which is objectified ("seen") by the male gaze, have been disconnected from their self/mind--from actually "seeing" for themselves. Their mut(e)ation has occurred because they have been living in a body (of language) that has been appropriated by the system. Annie's mother is an example of a woman who is entrapped in a code/language which has taught her to concentrate on her looks, not her brain; because she doesn't actively resist this code, Ina assumes and then retains the identity that has been carved out for her as mother and wife rather than seeking status as a woman with needs and wants of her own, separate from those of her husband and family. Pamela Banting explains that it is Ina's failure to extricate herself from this personal/public dichotomy that causes her demise:

Ina becomes a victim partly of her own learned inability graduating to refusal to translate. Her response to her immigrant situation and to the circumscription of her life by the predefined roles of wife and mother in the forties and fifties is rigidly to preserve and perfect these roles through obsessive house-cleaning--in other words through compulsively miming, to the letter, the source of her victimization ("Translation" 126).

Ina transfers some of these feelings of victimization onto the young Annie as Ina, in mimicking the very male-serving society that threatens to silence her (for good), frightens her daughter by telling Annie that her previous source of security has disappeared: "Mummy's gone" (11). It is "a very primal experience to have the mother turn into this person who denies that she is the mother figure," Marlatt discloses; the mother "is saying what the child feels has to be impossible, and yet, because she is saying it,

language makes it real and her absence is suddenly there as a frightening possibility" (Sounding 185). And then Annie's mother is gone/absented before Annie has the opportunity to really talk to her and get to know her thoughts, her language. Only upon becoming a mother herself does Annie begin to understand her own mother and thus transfer her resentment at being abandoned from her mother to the social structure that repressed her. As a result of suppressing her own desires to fit into her assigned place in a patriarchal society, Ina becomes split into two: "the self and the body that betrays the self...the body that defeats the self. *the* body, not even *your* body. split off, schizophrenic, suffering hysteric malfunction. all of this contained, unspoken" (89). Annie writes, "Mum: mum," but Gilbert and Gubar reverse her equation, writing that if "mom is not mum, one might bridge the grievous gulf of absence [between child and mother] by expressing desire in language and reconstituting a lost presence through symbolisation" (Gilbert 96). Annie realizes that the previous chasm between her and her mother has been created and widened by a society that promotes maternal alienation and thus female absence from the very discourse with which women instill and nourish a child. Ana Historic's protagonist, seeing that women can regain their lost presence by writing an historical fiction in the mother tongue that re-presents women's bodies and desires, is able nonetheless to cement her and Ina's relationship by allowing Ina to speak in her own vernacular.

In the process of writing her mother into presence, Annie re-writes not only Ana into being, but also herself, thereby creating an intimate connection between the women present(ed) in the novel. Realizing early in life that she does not want to undergo the same trauma her mother undergoes, Annie rebels against the gendered roles she has been assigned and seeks to live outside the

parameters of the socially "acceptable." Although Annie initially succumbs to the requirements of marriage, with the help of her friend, Zoe, she is eventually able to knock down the societal "norm" and open the door to a previously inconceived lesbian lifestyle.

She can only translate a hitherto heterosexual existence into a homosexual one by first confronting her fear of change, of acknowledging what she most desires. Annie must be able to reconcile the inside world in which she lives (her body/her house) with the outside world by opening the door out into it and confronting her fear of what lies beyond her world--essentially translating the internal language of the body into the written language of story. Telling herself that "our stories are hidden from us by fear" (79), Annie discerns that the fear of "telling stories," which her mother has accusingly identified, or of not writing history, as her husband would say, is really her own fear of becoming Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, creating her own monster (which subsists by imagination alone). The monstrous story that Annie creates in fact remarkably resembles Mary Shelley's monster, subsisting as a wild fabrication of bits and pieces of different bodies. The narrative is also a figurative melding together of the bodies and experiences of different women; both monsters personify the imagination which will forever roam freely through the "wild zone" (Showalter's space for women's unexpressed "imaginary").

Insisting that Annie's story has the right to embody imagination, Zoe ("life" in Greek) emphasizes that women need to live in both history *and* imagination (in a-na-history); when the characters live in the writer, they narratively come alive themselves, jumping out of the dusty pages of history. Zoe points out that Annie's own character has seeped into her story character,

Ana, and that in imag(in)ing her own reversal in Ana Richards, Richard's Annie is, in fact, constructing another version of herself through her writing. Annie and Ana bond across time and space as they simultaneously "come out" as lesbians in a society which encourages women to become wives and mothers. This "coming out" process within the lesbian community," writes Susan Krieger, "parallels and works in conjunction with coming out to the self and to the outside world" (Krieger 230).

Annie writes Ana venturing out of her definitive social role as the widow Mrs. Richards, who is expected to remarry an eligible bachelor (Mr. Ben Springer), but instead becomes the lover of another woman, Birdie; Annie thus converts Ana (and herself) from their position as subordinate wife in a repressive economy into one as liberated lesbian in a dialogic environment. Annie realizes she has the power to re-write both Ana and herself within a daunting social system by changing the order within their own lives. The change/transformation of self comes from within, much as, in Marlatt's taxonomy, the beginnings of a mother tongue, which gives women the means to utter themselves, emanates from the female body. Because Annie writes a different "ending" for Ana than the one offered in the history book, she can also imagine a new ending, and re-versely, a beginning, for herself. Zoe steps into the picture, helping Annie knock down/break through the codes of a female-exclusive language in order to re-code themselves into discourse and thus make a space for women to utter their hitherto internalized longings. Celine Chan confirms that "Annie and Zoe have placed themselves in nomad space--the kinetic, unbounded region that lies outside the static enclosures of patriarchal power. . . a space whose openness is conducive to the unlocking and expression of repressed desire" (Chan 69).

The place where the two lovers converge becomes the narrative space in which the reader meets the characters in the story, breathing into them a life that allows an image of the protagonists to remain within the reader's mind even after the novel is closed. On the last page of the written story, Marlatt writes: "you she breathes, is where we meet," implying that the text becomes a meeting place for women as writers and as readers--"you" (the writer/the text) allows for "she" (the character) to connect with "we" (the writer/reader). Sharing her own views and experiences with the women in the novel, as a translation of the patriarchal version of the past, a female reader becomes actively, no longer passively, involved in the creation of the hi/story which now bonds women across time and space. Exchanging ideas and experiences in this site, women compose narratives that are not reflections (reproductions) of traditional histories, but are unique productions that assert female difference. Marlatt suggests that writing/reading history is necessarily a communal process in which women can become audiences for each other, reading over each other's shoulders, touching the other's pen, poised above the paper; Marlatt announces a kinship between the writings and bodies of women. Annie imagines Ana writing: "her hand holding the pen could embody the very feel of life. as if she could reach out and touch her" (45). Telling Annie that "it's women imagining all that women could be that brings us into the world," Zoe encourages Annie to get in touch with her character in her story. Ana can be written out of history's muting because Annie can imagine her as a daring and lively woman courageous enough to break out of the corset of propriety; because Annie knows her mother's life, she cannot create for her a new one but she can tell her story to show how women have been silenced against their will and against their imagination.

Imagination becomes the will and not the fantasy to create women's lives differently by giving them possibilities beyond the closed "facts" of a history text. The desire of the female characters to move beyond an imposed textual closure reflects the desire of the reader to determine her/his own ending to the story. Glen Lowry states that "[r]eading actively is at odds with a male economy of language; it dislodges the *author* from his *work*, upsetting a 'theme of *authority*' (Barthes 30) crucial to 'the network of writing' upon which society is based" (Lowry 93). In allowing her story to continue on "into the page ahead," Marlatt offers a different version of a traditional narrative which, in positing a definite conclusion to the events it narrates, prevents the reader from imagining other possible endings. Ana Historic "resists the closure of fixed meaning and offers many varied positions to the reader. Through their activity of decoding and recoding, of reading/writing, the readers are co-creators of meaning" (Godard, "Body I" 494). The reader, as well as the writer and characters, engage in an active translation process in which they decode a female-exclusive his/tory in order to re-code it with their own experiences, to re-present themselves. The text, which is what Godard so effectively names a "casse-te(x)te," or text-breaker ("Body I" 494), becomes a site where women can meet to share their stories--narratively to give birth to each other by speaking and writing in a language emanating from their bodies.

CHAPTER THREE
LOLA LEMIRE TOSTEVIN'S FROG MOON

Lola Lemire Tostevin's Frog Moon is an amalgamation of stories that weaves together a diversity of traditions, places and voices to create one woman's multi-textured history. The author argues that through the telling of these stories, which she says, "spin themselves into the spine of my history, each tale an acoustic mirror reflecting the different facets of my background, my geography" (151), the body reproduces itself. In her richly diverse narrative, bodies metaphorically produce each other, interlocking like the subjects in a Picasso painting whose physical parts become scattered in order to be bound together; in a jumbled mass in which individual bodies are indiscernable, history becomes the vision of an infinite flesh. This image of hi/story as a living entity in which many voices speak is a translated version of a traditional account whose monologic, authoritative voice claims to speak for a society. In her translation, Tostevin rebels against the image of "women whose voices are so soft it's as if they feared to speak / the cause of their absence afraid maybe of breaking the hold / on the story" (Double Standards). As the author threads together her personalized--what Barbara Godard terms "woman-handled"-history, she is conscious of working between a pre-conceived idea of history, and her own (con)version/translation of this history/histoire (both "history" and "story" in French). She leads a double existence, not only as a woman, writing against the patriarchal discourse in order to invent a feminist dis-course, but also as a Franco-Ontarian whose mother tongue is French and who has been conditioned to write/speak/live in English. Throughout Frog Moon, the narrator, Laura, wrestles with this doubleness as she fluctuates between her present life as an anglophone mother and wife, and her past life as a young francophone girl in a convent, attempting to reach a unified self who will encompass her vast array of experiences, languages, and

traditions--a self who will come to life through the telling of her autobiographical history.

While the author seeks, like Marlatt, to emphasize the importance of the female body within a discourse that has excluded it, she perceives the body--her body--as the production of a personalized, female-specific history. Hers is a "franglicized" language, rather than a mother tongue, one that enables women to speak/write their own lives and the unwritten lives of other women. Tostevin posits that we reproduce ourselves as we participate in a cyclical process (like the internal cyclical female rhythm) that causes us to return to our past and our roots, and relate/supplant those experiences as we re-turn to new contexts in the present. So, we are always shifting, moving, changing contexts, shedding our skin--metamorphosing, as in Ovid's Metamorphoses, a book the narrator's English instructor gives to that graduating Laura to remind her of the fluidity of life. While our internal space, in which we store our experiences and knowledge, remains constant, our external layer sloughs off as we adapt to different circumstances and environments. There is, therefore, constancy in our transformation. Tostevin applies this idea of progression/transformation through stasis to the human desire to maintain traditions or continuity in our mutable lives.

To this end, the author manipulates time to deviate from its structured linearity in many narratives. Gerard Genette's term "frequency," or the repetitive capacity of narrative, insinuates that every telling of an event varies, as each teller depends only on her/his memory which refuses to obey the rules of sequential time. Thus, with each re-telling, the structure, meaning and message of a narrative alters so that it never completely replicates the story which has preceded it. According to Jacques Derrida, this

repetition with variation creates a "différance" between stories and among versions of the same story, as each adapts to new contexts. Writers use the idea of difference through repetition to deviate from the structured form of a standard narrative while still retaining similar content, as do translators in remaining loyal to the basic meaning in the source text. Tostevin maintains that such translation occurs constantly, for "we're always translating something that we have lived, either through another book, or through experience, or through language. . .writing is an ongoing translation process" (Sounding 274-5). George Steiner confirms that any act of reading is also an act of translation or, in French, "interprétation," because we traverse time and space, seeking to understand works of other writers by converting them into our own idiolect. "Interpretation," Steiner writes, "gives language life beyond the moment and place of immediate utterance or transcription" (Steiner 27), and is in large part influenced by the grammar and vocabulary of the interpreter's language, and the culture in which the interpreter is residing. Ergo, translative activity allows for much creativity and diversity; Octavio Paz affirms that while all texts are "translations of translations of translations," each version retains its own individuality:

Every text is unique, and at the same time, it is the translation of another text. No text is entirely original because language itself, in its essence, is already a translation: firstly, of the non-verbal world and secondly, since every sign and every phrase is the translation of another sign and another phrase. However, this argument can be turned around without losing any of its validity: all texts are original because every translation is distinctive. Every translation, up to a certain point, is an invention and as such it constitutes a unique text (Paz, cited in Bassnett-McGuire 38).

If, in Paz's view, every text is a translation of another, and the language in which it is written is a translation of the non-verbal world, then texts written by women authors are yet a further translation in this interpretive

chain, for their works seek to transform a language in which male experiences are privileged, into one in which women can communicate their previously unexpressed thoughts and feelings. All writers are maneuvering in a language which is not a complete transposition of the non-verbal world; such is the impossibility of creating a discourse in which all gestures and other codes are wrapped in neat linguistic packages. The written and oral language that has evolved, however, mirrors more closely male than female experiences, for the former have perhaps been more easily converted into words than have the latter. By decoding the hitherto non-verbal female "body language" and recoding it into the body of language from which it has been excluded, feminist authors seek to write the histories of women which once were untranslatable and unwritten. Translation therefore becomes a means for female writers like Tostevin to express their difference within a discourse, one whose restrictive parameters endure generation after generation, by giving new and diverse interpretations of a history which has underprivileged women.

The author focuses on tradition as a way of showing how translation operates in our lives. When time imposes a shift and ends a tradition, we desire to forge history to prevent our past from shifting and dissolving and to allow for the perpetuation of our rituals, our lives and experiences. In Frog Moon, Tostevin, acclaimed by critic Anna Cundari as doing "an admirable job of reminding us how the repetition of stories is what makes a family and a culture" (Quill 22), writes of the multitude of traditions in her life that weave themselves into her own work. This personalized female history seeks to resist and subvert a repressive, conventional his/tory in which women and their bodies are de-valued, in order to present its own (con)version which esteems the bodies and experiences of women. The author herself affirms that

"personal experience has always been excluded from the discourse of knowledge," but that the writer "disseminates institutional authority" by incorporating the personal into history ("Is this where" 6). As we will see in the discussion of oral history, Tostevin favours a discourse in which the voices of not only women, but of all folks, speak their unwritten stories. Thus, her tale, differing from Marlatt's more rebellious attitude towards the patriarchal canon, resists demoting verbal and written male-authored fictions in order to forefront female stories.

Proposing the idea of "neutrality," as the space between discourses in which different sides do not combat but cooperate, Tostevin extends it into the sexual field and the confrontation between the sexes. In an interview with Janice Williamson, she describes a concept that Roland Barthes refers to as "le neutre," which "allows us to escape the constraints of bipolar gender differentiation. Not so much as neutral but as sexually indifferent to ideological wars between men and women and in some cases even between women" (Sounding 276-7). She remarks that this gender differentiation is the result of the culture in which we live which defines us and creates for us gender-specific roles. In order to exceed these cultural definitions, we "have to stop thinking of one section of the population being right and the other section being wrong and more about the possibilities between the two" (Sounding 277). The individual history told in Frog Moon is a characteristically female work to the extent that it speaks of a woman's personal experiences, celebrating the difference (presence) of the previously missing female body, but it does not sever itself from the patriarchal discourse in which it is written, and notably includes tales told by different male sources. While admiring, and even sometimes feeling indebted to her

father's, and other men's stories, Laura foregrounds her own life (hi)story.

Translating his/tory into her own version of hi/story, Tostevin writes in the same discourse in which narratives have traditionally been recorded, but adds her own touch to make tactile her work--to make present her body in her writing. Barbara Godard professes that, "feminist discourse works upon the dominant discourse in a complex and ambiguous movement between discourses. Women's discourse is double, it is the echo of the self and the other, a movement into alterity" ("Theorizing" 44). This doubleness is evident in Tostevin's Frog Moon whose narrator oscillates between two selves, two worlds, trying to unite her body and mind by writing her seemingly split personality. Through writing, the narrator, like Annie in Ana Historic, assumes control of her life. She unlocks her desire for expression that has been repressed for so long within the layers of the skin that protect her (frog-like) body. She gives (re)birth to herself as she tells her story; her body becomes a physical (re)production of her written work, assuming a presence that women have not enjoyed in conventional history. As Marlatt unwires the power line of historical discourse, so too does Tostevin, by firstly exposing and resisting the undesirable images of the body presented (or made absent) in archaic medical, theological and historical discourse, and secondly, by offering her own image of the body as created/ reproduced through the telling of tales, anecdotes and legends.

The convent in which the young narrator lives and is educated represents the confinement imposed by not only hierarchical, authoritative institutions, but also the limited discourses they produce. While she relates her experiences as a young girl in a Catholic convent, the narrator exposes the resoundingly repressive teachings to which she is subjected--a discourse that

makes absent bodily presence. This canonical language encourages the young girl to view the female body as an object as sterile as the language used to describe it and, by covering and denying her sexuality, to prevent her inner desires from exceeding her physical frame. Laura is conditioned in childhood by nuns, who ironically perpetuate a social and religious order that demotes women, to detach herself from her own body in order to offer it in service to a higher cause. Hence, as a young girl, the narrator learns that her body is not her own, and that it can be appropriated by other persons for reasons she does not completely comprehend. It becomes de-valued, emptied in a religious economy that paradoxically inferiorizes the very woman it claims to grandize as bearer of life. The girls at the convent are conditioned to perceive themselves as secondary to their male counterparts by learning that women have essentially two identities, or faces--the damned in bewilderment and the saintly in rapturous ecstasy--as outlined by the masculine libido. Psychoanalyst Nancy Chodorow affirms that girls and boys develop their sexual/gender identities at a young age, and that: "[w]omen's difficulties with feminine identity come after the Oedipal phase, in which male power and cultural hegemony give sex differences a transformed value" (cited in Showalter 469). It is this de-valuation of her sex (son sexe) that the narrator exposes and resists.

In the chapter entitled "Carnal Knowledge," Tostevin juxtaposes medical, carnal discourse with theological, incarnate discourse to emphasize how, by proposing two extreme versions of the female body, these patriarchal languages do not allot a tenable space for that body--a milieu in which women can feel more in touch with themselves. The young narrator's search for an identity separate from the chaste, Catholic girl the nuns make her is further thwarted

by the Word of the Bible which states that good women rise to spirituality and "bad" women sink into carnal degradation. Laura remarks that because the Bible is written in a language foreign to her, she must translate its stories into her own language to determine what they mean through their form and not strictly their content. As these parables become forms emptied of meaning, so do women's physiques, emptied of their own significance in order that they ful/fill a contract with the "higher" religious order. Women's bodies become vessels (vassals) to the constricting parochial system. The parish priest summarizes their role:

[God] had a special role in mind for the woman's body. Her body is a receptacle, a vessel for the sacred duty of motherhood, and as we all know...each woman's body is a symbol for the vessel that carried the Son of God. There is no greater honour than that (58).

In Ana Historic, the young Annie must similarly imagine herself as vessel when she plays the role of the Virgin Mary in the Christmas pageant; a mother tells her to imagine the divine baby sent from the Father, living inside her: "your own body has given birth to this child which is on loan from God, your body has had *God* living in it in the form of a baby" (101). In such a narrative, the female body becomes a mere symbol for the transporter of life, adhering to a restrictive religion in which women are subsidiary to their domineering counterparts.

The Church, the central institution in this patriarchal symbolic order, and the convent that supports this higher power, assume authority over Laura's life. Upon entering the convent, "she relinquished all power over her own small life. There was nothing to do but yield to God's representatives, the nuns, day in and day out. No choice, no voice, no say" (128). The author writes of her early educative years: "[c]onvent girls are perfect examples of Philomelas robbed of language in the name of God, and since I was also tone

deaf I didn't even have the consolation of a nightingale's song" ("They'll say" 65). Steiner remarks that since the beginnings of Christianity, "sweet and low" women's voices have been cherished by the male establishment, but "an even greater and more concordant beauty is silence. The motif of the woman or maiden who says very little, in whom silence is a symbolic counterpart to chasteness and sacrificial grace" (Steiner 42) is overtly present in early classical literature, most notably the Bible. The nuns in the convent enforce rigid teachings and prevent the girls from nourishing their own beliefs through not only the Bible but also religious symbols. The girls must cross their bodies to show repentance for their sins, the most serious being the sin of the flesh--yielding to, rather than suppressing the body's sexuality:

The flesh, *la chair*, the hush sound of its shhh seals it with disgrace. . . . Flesh, the soft part of a mother's body, *shhh*. Bloody flesh, mucuous flesh, entrails, organs, *shhh*. Nakedness, buttocks, penis, vagina, menstruation, *shhh*. Sex, *shhh*. The most doubtful parts of human nature, *shhh*. For these are the deadly sins that stain the soul, deface it until it caves under the weight of its own decay, under the weight of its own flesh (101-2).

Only the representative of the Almighty Father can cleanse the girls' cavities by making the sign of the cross and absolving them in a language translated from Latin; the girls are thus doubly estranged from God, hearing His words only through an interpreter. They are confused to find that though they are forgiven by the divine Father, they cannot respond to Him--it is a one-way correspondence (a bad translation). Ironically, God effuses presence/power in his absence whereas women remain hidden and powerless in theirs. In her poetry book, 'sophie, Tostevin comments on Derrida's course on "The Political Theology of Language," saying that "God as name is origin of the law and he can only maintain his role if he remains hidden, which means he can only be experienced as absence, as silence" ('sophie 46). In Tostevin's view, women

also exist only by name, by the labels which are given them in the patriarchal order. In a doctrinal religious economy, women are lost in the translation, trapped between the two versions of woman presented in religious teachings: angel or whore / spiritual figure or sexual body. Laura realizes that neither version is desirable, hearing that her grandmother, while a hard-working, generous, frugal, multiple child-bearing "saint," apparently worked herself to death, and, through her mother's story about Rose LaTulippe, and in the Church's reading, learning that a woman can be eternally damned for submitting to her sexual desires. As the narrator wrestles between the two images to find a space between them, we are reminded of the woman author's struggle to write a history that is not an Essentialist version of women, but a version which incorporates feminist innovations in narrative content and form. Creating such a work in Frog Moon, Tostevin exposes the theological and medical discourses that have negated the female body, and retaliates by reinscribing women within the history that has silenced/de-sexed them.

Medical discourse excises women from the text every bit as much as theological language. The girls at the convent perpetuate this "cutting out" process by inflicting harm upon, and even slicing into, their bodies. They do so, ironically, in order to gain access to the infirmary ward, where the most descriptive and desirable medical texts are stored. The young narrator gains entry only after she physically abuses herself through self-imposed starvation, becoming so weak she cannot "properly" perform her chores in the sanctioned economy of the convent. Ironically, she opens the glass-fronted case which houses the medical books with a tongue depressor, a sterile instrument that represents the suppression of the mother tongue by the dominating patriarchal discourse. Alone in the infirmary, Laura is able to

find a small space conducive to the unlocking and expression of her own desire for knowledge, although in her sanctuary she still remains enfolded within the strict walls of *conventional* beliefs and teachings. As Ina teaches her daughter to deny her own sexuality in Ana Historic, the nuns also hope to dispel any discussion about the female or male anatomy by denying the girls access to written or audio material that is overtly sexual. They even censor kissing and nudity in films, showing only kisses given by saintly women to poor souls. Teaching that the mind is separate from the body, the nuns affirm that the only acceptable form of affection between men and women is kissing for salvation (not salivation).

The other books the young narrator uncovers affirm that the body's physiological functions are separated from the soul so that saintly women bleed milk instead of blood--an idea(1) confirmed in the nuns' teaching. Presented (as Annie is with the newspaper accounts and photographs which negate women in Ana Historic) with such black-and-white images of the human physique--purely sterile or savagely sexual--Laura is unsure how to view her own body and is consequently alienated from the very space in which she lives. The male body as well is a mystery to the young convent girls; the narrator is not surprised to find that the pages in Gray's Anatomy on various parts of the male anatomy and "The Male Organs of Generation" have been carefully cut from the spine (of the text) to prevent the curious reader from reading it. The words that she finds to be missing are written in another language (Latin) that she must decode in order to have access to an/Other language.

She translates these words by touch, reading the Latin names for the different parts of her sexual anatomy as she feels them herself. While Laura reads the foreign names of her body parts, she cannot find the words to

describe what she is feeling. She refuses to look at her sexual organs, thinking such a digression of modesty sinful, so instead she "reads" her contours as a blind person reads braille--not by sight but by touch. Rubbing her clitoris back and forth, Laura is overcome by an excited sensation welling within her body as it responds to her touch, expressing itself without need of words, as Annie's body also speaks its sexuality in Ana Historic. The narrator eventually succeeds in writing her presence into her own history as she discovers how to express her difference as a woman living between languages. She is only able to make this revision as an adult; while as a young girl, she seeks to challenge the theological and medical discourses that over/under/un-write women, she still remains within the hallowed walls of the convent.

Following her religious teaching, the young protagonist believes that ingesting the body of the Son of God will cleanse her insides of the "sinful" incident that occurred in the infirmary. Laura violates the rule that keeps anyone apart from the priest from touching the sacred chalice, the receptacle of the blood of Christ, retrieving from it a handful of consecrated wafers, the body of Christ, and stuffing them into her mouth, thinking,

The body of Jesus will cleanse the rot of her bowels. . . . This is the rite through which unworthy daughters swallow the flesh of the Father and make themselves worthy again. Not only the Father's liver but his entire body, so the two of them, daughter and Father, are one (136).

Instead of feeling a powerful internal sensation at the ingestion of Christ's own body, the young girl feels only constriction in her throat, as if she were choking from this act of putrefaction. There is a danger of amalgamating individual bodies into one entity, for persons cannot survive in their own rite. The ritual that Laura performs--swallowing holy wafers while repeating "Il nomine Patri"--represents the religious order that encourages its followers to adhere to certain rules and standards, inhibiting individual

expression. This closed system, which values the name of the "Father" above all else, prevents women from acquiring a status that rivals this hyperflated Word and its connotations as not merely the power of God, the Father, but also as the law of the patriarchy. Women become out-lawed, unnamed, living in a house-hold whose paternal name and habitudes they are forced to adopt, ignoring their own desires. Tostevin writes against customs that preclude self-expression and serve only to perpetuate the monologic, authority-driven regime reflected in conventional history, offering instead her own version that writes in traditions and rituals that encourage diversity through their continuity.

Frog Moon offers a version of history in which different traditions, stories, voices, places and languages merge together to form a multi-coloured work that has the ability to change (its colours), to incorporate new ideas and perspectives. In his essay on the "Tower of Babel," Michael Oakeshott agrees with this concept of story:

A proper story is like a river; sometimes it may be traced back to a source in the hills, but what it becomes reflects the scenery through which it flows. It has a history, and its history is marked by the appearance of new incidents of new characters; its colours change (Oakeshott 165).

Frog Moon encapsulates this definition of story, for it is a collection of bits and pieces of Laura's and her family's past and present lives that resists adhering to any rules of strict plot design. Laura shows that patterns can be altered metafictionally, remarking while working on a tapestry that, "[t]he kit has a pattern already stamped on the webbing, but I've decided to make up my own pattern as I go along. . . . I like the new configuration emerging against the stamped design" (192). Laura's mother, who refers to her daughter as her "belle rebelle," confirms the narrator's determination to

advance beyond the out-dated idea of women embroidering and sewing, always keeping to the pattern ("le patron," also "boss," a symbol of authority) to be the author of her own creation. Tostevin does not simply reject tradition, for she values it as supplying an important foundation in our lives. She does, however, oppose it as "an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behaviour (as a religious practice or social custom)" (Webster's Dictionary) that persists over time and refuses to adapt itself to constant shifts in the social, religious, and economic order. Tostevin values tradition as providing continuity in people's diverse lives--a comforting pattern that is repeated time after time, not because it accepts habit unconsciously observed, but because it gives its partakers enjoyment and satisfaction. In Frog Moon, the narrator celebrates particularly familial, festive religious, and oral traditions as contributing to her sense of self, for the stories spurned from these traditions ultimately spin themselves into the spine of her history.

The author affirms her present self by looking into her past at all the stories, traditions, people, and places that have shaped her own geo-graphy, or the space in which she ultimately writes herself. No one is an independent creation, for to some extent, we have been influenced by the words or actions of others. Tostevin intertwines the tales and tellers that have influenced her life into an autobiographical narrative, rejecting traditional history's concentration on public rather than personal experience. She cites her family and their traditions, though they occasionally are emotionally trying, as a form of security and stability in her transient life. The annual Christmas get-together is both a source of trepidation and pleasure to the two families as the three generations converge their diverse interests, beliefs and

languages for the holiday celebrations. Especially tiresome is the annual tradition of Laura's mother's surreptitious inspection of her daughter's house; like Annie's mother, Ina, in Ana Historic, Laura's mother assesses a woman's worth by the cleanliness of her floors. But as Annie learns another "version" of her mother that is hidden beneath the "spic-and-span" one she presents to her husband, children, and community, so too does Laura intermittently see the many sides of her mother's personality. While Laura's mother is a very traditional woman, she has also rebelled against the system, wearing pretty dresses and make-up to church, and refusing to work her fingers to the bone for little reward in the way her mother before her sacrificed herself. She conducts the usual house inspection because she, like Ina, has been raised to believe a woman's duty is to nurture and support her family in a clean domestic environment. Although Laura and her mother may differ in many of their views, this mother-daughter ritual is important for the bond it creates between the two generations of women who combat their subservient role as women from within the system, while still adhering to certain traditional standards and customs (as do women writers).

The mother and daughter are not alone in perpetuating tradition. However grudgingly, so do their two families who annually congregate for the Christmas festivities. The narrator relates the family's goings-on in four sections of the book entitled "Babel Noël," a term which connotes the blending, sometimes cacaphony of her parents', husband's, and children's voices. These sections are interspersed throughout the novel in order to keep returning the reader to the family, nestled amidst a potpourri of stories about the young narrator, the important figures in her childhood, and characters in her own parents' lives; the cyclical pattern that brings the reader back to a familiar yet

different "Babel Noël" (numbered i,ii,iii,iv) recapitulates Tostevin's sense of tradition as "continuity through diversity." Each of the four sections marks a step in the gradual blending and harmonizing of the voices in the two families as they learn to compromise their ideals with those of the other members.

The story of "The Tower of Babel" points to the Biblical account in Genesis XI 1-9 which epitomizes what happens when people focus too narrowly on creating an ideal, or an imposing structure (comparable to patriarchal history) that allows for little individual improvisation. The townspeople, forgetting to listen to each other and work cooperatively to build the Tower, pay heed only to faults within the building and not to the well-being of the people helping in its construction. To punish the workers for their lack of compassion, God confounds their tongues, and they become so frustrated with their inability to understand one another that they abandon both the Tower and the community. The flood of meaningless words that pours from the mouths of the townspeople (likened to the members of Laura's family) creates one indiscernable sound in which individual voices are all but lost. The narrator writes a different version of Babel, her own interpretation of this fateful story, as she re-establishes a harmonic accord in her passionately verbose family and gives "Babel Noël" a "happy ending." When the members of her family insist on shouting over each other, "as if each person represented a different clan speaking its own peculiar dialect" (63), they are merely speaking their own "idiolect," which Steiner defines as a means of expression in language that is unique for each person. He states that "aspects of every language-act are unique and individual. . . . The concept of a normal or standard idiom is statistically-based fiction" and notes especially that the "language of a

community, however uniform its social contour, is an inexhaustibly multiple aggregate of speech-atoms, of finally irreducible personal meanings" (Steiner 46). In much the same way, the seeming confusion of voices of Laura's family is merely a dramatization of language's natural make-up as a compilation of individual idiolects. The languages and voices in Laura's family simultaneously speak, but a positive diversity rather than a negative confusion results from the lively banter. In the words of Roland Barthes, "the Biblical myth is reversed, the confusion of tongues is no longer a punishment, the subject gains access to bliss by the cohabitation of languages working side by side" (cited in Moyes 79).

Laura, as subject of Frog Moon, an autobiographical fiction, harmonizes the conflicting voices within her own body as she realizes that although she previously compromised her ideal of becoming a writer, she can still pursue this desire. Like Ina in Ana Historic, Laura has always tried to adhere to ideals imposed on her--to be outstanding scholar, nurturing and supportive mother and wife. By following the "rules," she hopes to fit into an acceptable "form." These familial rituals put Laura in touch with her roots, helping her forge a connection between her younger self, re-born when she is in the presence of her parents, and her older, more experienced self, re-established when she is among her husband, son, and daughter. The cyclical pattern of returning to the past to understand and appreciate (or criticize) her upbringing, and progressing to the present to determine the person she has become, allows the narrator to spiral ahead into the future to explore her potential as a writer.

Religious rituals, which put the narrator in touch with the child still living within her, similarly encourage her to view tradition as an important

presence in her life. The adult Laura objects, however, to the stale, authoritative Catholic rituals she was forced to endure as a child. Just as Ina instructs Annie, and the women of Hastings Mill inform Ana that a "proper" Lady adheres to certain social rituals, the nuns at the convent teach Laura that (during that era) a "proper" participant in the communion ritual does not touch the host, the body of Christ, nor the chalice which holds his blood, for risk of "contaminating" the blessed objects.

This aversion to contamination in a puritanical religious order can be related to the resistance of a self-contained language to accept and incorporate other languages within it. Tostevin describes the peril of enclosing oneself not only into a rigid religious, but also linguistic system: "[r]efusing translation, or even the contamination of one language with another, might give us the illusion of authenticity and purity, but it is only an illusion which eliminates the possibility of a relation of differences" ("Contamination" 14). But the religious order perpetuates, rather than relates, differences between the chastity of God's workers, and the impurity of sinners who need to be educated in the ways of the righteous. As such, Laura is warned to avoid contact with the "pure" chalice when drinking the blood of Christ. This custom forces the young girl to accept what is given her in silence, bowing to a higher authority, as women have been culturally conditioned to do. As well, the narrator is required to relinquish her innermost sinful thoughts to the priest, the representative of God who sits on the opposite side of an imposing grille that marks the separation between lowly vassal (vessel) and Divinity. In all other aspects of convent life, the young Laura is encouraged to hold her tongue, not to talk back and to follow orders, but in the confessional, she is compelled to impart, and at times to

invent, her weekly sins to be forgiven by her interlocutor. The socio-linguistic structure (represented by Laura's confession) seeks expansion into the narrative it requires (the priest's conditions). Saying the "wrong" thing in the classroom means you will face a reprimand in the convent. Having disobeyed the rule of silence by uttering something controversial, Laura is "marked" by "cards blazoned in red hanging from her neck" (21) (as poor Hester Prynne is stamped with a red "A" as punishment for committing adultery in The Scarlet Letter). The narrator is taught faithfully to follow the rules that are imposed on her to discourage any original/individual thought or act.

Even as Laura decries the type of repressive ritual which perpetuates a monologic, hierarchical order, she does appreciate the positive role that religious tradition has played in her life, and enjoys attending the annual midnight mass ceremony. Laura remarks that she is continually drawn to rituals by "the choreography of gestures and words, the allegorical figures who people myth and liturgies" (68); she is attracted to these religious stories because of what they represent. Tostevin explains that religion is "largely defined by its forms and while its concept and ideologies are expressed through its rituals and ceremonies, the appreciation of its forms is not necessarily limited to its system of belief" ("Is this where" 28). She adds that religious rituals for her are important not because of their message, but the way in which they express their message, so that the feelings these rituals invoke in her are independent of their form, or their words' objective meaning. "You always have to see past the story" (68), Laura's mother says, meaning that the worth of narratives, traditions, and even rituals, is not to be found in their manifest content, but in the way they can be applied to one's own life. Implying that stories "live" on inside us, Tostevin adheres to a more apt

meaning of tradition, one close to Webster's: "the handing down of information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another without written instruction."

The oral tradition of reciting tales plays a significant role in the life of the narrator, for in reflecting the people and places of her colourful background/geography, traditional oral story-telling teaches Laura to appreciate her origins and gives her confidence to write her own story which merges diverse tales, tellers and places. She explains the merit of transmitting our past with our vocal cords, stressing that it is not the truthfulness of stories that is essential, but their good intentions:

That's probably why I love listening to ourselves talk, even if we do repeat the same stories over and over again. They give shape to those long expanses that would have been forgotten otherwise, each story as intimate as family or an old friend. You come to appreciate them for their good intentions, aware that they don't always tell the truth. . . They select, discard, and amend plots that become history. That's how we invent ourselves (20).

Through the cycle of telling and re-telling stories, we reproduce ourselves, returning to the past and supplanting those narratives/experiences into new contexts in the present. Rationalizing that histories reflect the different facets (faces, facts, feats) of our childhood, we can then expand ourselves to incorporate many voices and places, rather than live in a monologic economy. Unlike the canonical history devoted to "facts," stories become important for their intentions; like religious traditions, they are important not merely for their manifest, but also their symbolic, content. The tales that the narrator's parents tell her further her appreciation of not only her own origins but also those of her parents, who, through their stories, give their daughter messages or advice taken from their own experience.

Laura's mother repeats the legend of Rose Latulippe to teach Laura that

a woman must not succumb entirely to her sexual desires, for if she does she will be punished by the social and religious order. The allegorical tale of Rose proffers several endings: she becomes a nun, she remains an old maid, or she marries her fiancé and bears at least a dozen children. Remembering what her mother reads her, Laura affirms that,

Allegories allow her [mother] to hint at things other than what is actually being said. Her memory becomes so absorbed by the ambiguities of her circuitous accounts that the facts can be altered any way she wants, because they are, after all, only incidental details of a story (53).

Telling this legend while dissociating herself from the protagonist permits Laura's mother "to warn against, while differing from, the moral of the tale" (53); *she* is no Rose Latulippe (whore), but neither--to name the second half of the binary that informs the reception of the story--is she a "saint," like her own mother. Both women are carried away (as transport) in a single-track economy--Laura's deceased grandmother's body is moved by train (*le cheval de fer*) and Rose's unconscious body is whisked away by horse (*le cheval*)--which has technologically changed over the years, but which has silenced and branded these women with similar fates. The story presents the two versions of women that Laura is offered as a child (angel or whore) offering no other space in between in which a woman can transmute these extreme definitions to develop her own sense of self. Remembering this story from her youth, Laura is able to see that her mother was encouraging her to take charge of her own body, and to make her own tracks, rather than being consumed by a larger patriarchal body.

The tale of "The Old Woman and the Knight," told in Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Tale" and extracted from Heroes and Heroines, a book gift from her mother, imparts a message similar to that of the legend of Rose Latulippe: women want and need to attain power over their own lives, and the equality of

men and women can only be achieved through men's relinquishing of power. Laura has read through this parable so frequently that it becomes ingrained in her memory, as spoken stories rest within the mind of the teller. Laura's mother does not cease to read her the narratives over and over again from the time Laura is four years old. Their habit of reading echoes the oral story-telling tradition; although the same tales are repeated, supplying continuity from one generation to another, they are conveyed by a rich assortment of tellers, each with his/her unique narrating style. Laura's mother indirectly encourages her daughter to deviate from the beaten path/way to follow her own meandering story line.

In telling stories about an array of characters and places, the narrator's father also persuades Laura to resist a single-minded historical tradition in which all lives are melded together. He speaks of his own experiences as a child and adult in Northern Ontario, offering a multi-coloured history that includes not only himself, but also characters such as the Prophet of the Rand. The prophet's personal rendition of events in the days of early colonized Canada, spoken aloud to groups of men who will later transmit these stories to their family and friends, distinguishes itself from a written public history about the same events. According to Jan Vansina, oral traditions are unique in that they "make an appearance only when they are told. For fleeting moments they can be heard, but most of the time they dwell only in the minds of people. The utterance is transitory, but the memories are not" (Vansina xi).

Because it is unrecorded, oral history requires that the teller memorize details of events, and names of people and places in order to communicate it to his/her listeners; the more imaginative the storyteller, the more s/he

distorts the facts. In this way, an unwritten tale is adapted and modified over time as it is told in different voices and places to an ever-changing audience; "it is possible for a mind to remember and out of nothing to spin complex ideas, messages, and instructions for living, which manifest continuity over time" (Vansina xi). Because it does not have to remain loyal to any formulated account, voiced history can metamorphose, assuming different shapes while still retaining essentially the same content--what matters is *inside* the story, inside the body. A tale which is relayed from mouth to mouth is not any less significant than a history recorded in a book--the details and facts are merely committed to memory, living inside the bodies of those who are a part of those events and experiences. The parables, legends and anecdotes originate in and are relayed by the body, thereby connecting individuals to form a history that belongs to everyone.

This concept of history as a collective body is especially important to the women whose bodies have been otherwise voided. In Latakia, Audrey Thomas relates a narrative in which women speak their experiences to an enormous woven tapestry which incorporates the seemingly irrelevant lives of people: "[a]ll the houses are joined to one another, just as all the lives appear to be joined. There are no secrets. Each woman's joy and sorrow belongs to all the rest" (Thomas 55).

Laura's father remarks that voiced stories allow even the smallest names to be remembered--the ones not mentioned in the written records which focus on "big" names like Prospectors and Discoverers. The life of the average person is made significant because it is included in a verbal history when it would have been otherwise voided from a written account. Oral story-tellers commonly employ a narrative technique that Toolan calls "analepsis," to recount, and

therefore give significance, to past events and lives deemed unimportant at the time; as these narrators give back voice to persons forgotten in the grand historical scheme, Tostevin re-verses women with the speech of which they have been deprived in public history. The oral story-telling tradition connects public with private experience, brings courage to the tellers, meaning to communities, and contact between generations. Tales and legends are not only translated from a particular to a succeeding age and culture, but also from one language to another, and from one form (oral) to another (written), transforming themselves to fit into new contexts.

Lola Lemire Tostevin infers that it is not necessarily the form or content of a story that evokes feelings but the way in which it is uttered. For her, written accounts are the translation of sensations instilled by oral discourse in which she hears the lives of women and men believed forgotten. Audrey Thomas aptly describes the vocal nature of women's history as she describes the female Cretans spinning and winding wool around their hands, and "talking talking talking. The history of the street, too, is being spun, embroidered, wound by these same women" (Latakia 55). Oral and indeed feminist re-writings of history, give history back to the people, and in giving them a past, also help them towards a future of their own making. "Oral traditions have a part to play in the reconstruction of the past. . . . It is a part similar to that played by written sources because both are messages from the past to the present, and messages are key elements in historical reconstruction" (Vansina 199). In Frog Moon, both oral and written accounts are essential in rendering the narrator's own integrated autobiographical novel.

As Laura converts her father's spoken history onto the blank page, she realizes that she is not only translating the spoken word into the written

word, but also her father's French into her English, and history into fiction. The writer becomes "alchemist, practising the arcane art of transmuting elements of reality into the shining, enduring element of fiction" (161). She practises alchemy as "a power or process of transforming something common into something special" (Webster's Dictionary), ensuring the unrecorded oral stories of common folk endure in a textual history. The narrator writes that, "[f]rom my father's point of view his version is more accurate in its relation to the past, while from my point of view my version is an advance on the future" (161). Each translation is merely one version in the endless renditions of a story or life which both circle forward to new possibilities and backward to familiar memories. Like the narrator, stories continually metamorphose as they move from one location to another, compelled to adapt their colours to new environments.

Laura's childhood nickname, "Kaki" ("frog" in Cree), represents her double-faceted self, living between two homelands (rural Northern Ontario and suburban Toronto) and two languages (French and English), and trying to write a singular history of which she will ultimately be the subject. The narrator wrestles with her identity/subjectivity from her childhood days, when she is "named [Kaki] after the croaking voice of the lowly frog" (40). Caught between a Cree name and her French Canadian name, "Laure," the narrator has difficulties deciphering her "real" identity. While Laura tries to use her vocal cords and establish some kind of presence for herself, her (translated) name is deemed "improper" not only by her father but also the nuns, who tell her that "frog" is another word for swearing; consequently, she is robbed of speech--she cannot talk around the frog in her throat. The narrator seeks to regain the voice, the presence that she had in her parents' stories, in order

to present herself in a personal (written) history.

It is the collaboration of audience and teller in the construction of a story that the narrator seeks to replicate in her own fiction; according to Barbara Godard, feminists "insist on the interactive, communal nature of the woman's text: author-to-reader, reader-to-context, both-to-extratextual history" ("Voicing difference" 92). The narrator essays to draw her reader into her text while simultaneously drawing her attention to the oral rituals that form her "extratextual history"--both of which are essential in defining the narrator. The child Laura combines both voiced and written tradition, inserting herself into stories and speaking and gesticulating with the characters, like the Chinese emperor whom she metaphorically brings alive from the pages of her L'encyclopedie de la jeunesse. Losing herself in her stories away from parental or religious authority, Laura finds that she is happiest composing and dramatizing scenes in which she is the principal character, speaking in "her own gibberish" (35). The young narrator hopes to create her own language, a bastardized dialect, which opts for symbols rather than words, to express ideas and desires too immense to be boxed into smaller linguistic packages. Gilbert and Gubar confirm that "women's imaginary languages arise out of a desire for linguistic primacy and are often founded on a celebration of the primacy of the mother tongue" (Gilbert 95). Even at an early age, Laura searches a territory in which she is free to communicate how and what she wishes--to convert the names, languages, and stories she is given into her own terms, her own mother tongue.

The diversity of the narrator's life is reflected in Tostevin's array of originally titled chapters, or anecdotes, each of which reflects a distinct facet of her personal history. It is the combination of these fragmented

shards that form the narrator's kaleidoscopic tale, adhering together because in one significant way or other, they all reflect the narrator's image of herself. The narrator esteems that she can achieve a version of herself despite her fragmented background by conversing with her parents and looking into herself to discover that a person is a product of not one, but numerous, voices, places and traditions.

Before the narrator is able to appreciate her vivid background, however, she must first confront and quell the dualling factions within her. The narratorial split between first and third-person that occurs throughout almost the entire novel reflects the divorce between the anglophone, middle-aged mother and wife who is presently telling the story, and the francophone, pre-pubescent girl who is an object in the narrative. During her life, Laura is constantly torn between the French language of her parents and ancestors, and her religious education, and the English language of her spouse, children and employment. Laura is tied to French because it binds her to her roots, her past, and she finds that speaking her mother tongue puts her more in touch with her feelings: "as if some emotions can only be expressed in the language closest to those emotions. As if fragments of myself can only link to specific sounds. . . . As if some emotions had to defy the barriers of one language in search of closer bonds" (23-4). Her innermost passions are connected to and most easily communicated in the language which she first mouths--a mother tongue which is metaphorically born of the body. She frequently communicates her excitement or anger in French, for French words come forth spontaneously from her body without having to be translated, as English words do. French is the speech that the narrator's body first learns to produce and which connects her to her earliest memories as a child living in the comfort of her parents'

world; consequently, even as an adult, she remains very attached to her mother's (and father's) tongue. Laura admittedly reverts to her childhood self ("[m]iddle-aged and still my mother's child" [23]) when her francophone mother, making her annual Christmas visit to her daughter's home, supercedes Laura as head of the household. Conversing in French with her mother, Laura is shuttled backwards in time to her early years spent in a familiar, inclusive domestic environment.

Unfortunately for Laura, the inclusion she senses among her French-speaking parents and ancestors translates into feelings of exclusion in the Catholic convent she attends as a young girl. To be educated in French, she has to be sent away to an "école séparée," literally isolated from the outside (English-speaking) world. The French in which the girl is instructed does not induce the warmth she associates with her mother tongue; rather, the cold, privileged discourse of particularly Medicine and Religion causes Laura to feel alienated from the external world, and from herself. Women are encouraged to follow the straight and narrow path of monologic, parochial discourse if they desire to attain (as do the nuns) any nominal power within this patriarchal order; these monologues encourage the narrator's own silence in the French-speaking convent/ional environment. Her mother tongue is translated into a Father tongue characterized as inflexible and parochial--mal(mâle) construit.

Seeking to escape the walls of the convent and its rigid discourse, the narrator pursues her interest and adeptness in English, which figures as emancipatory by allowing the young girl a channel through which she can assume some control over her own life. English is a means of protection/privacy for the young girl, who suggests to her mother that they correspond in English,

for "[m]ost of the nuns spoke it badly, and if nothing else the letters gave her the impression that she could evade their scrutiny" (177). As the official inspector of all new English books donated to or purchased for the convent library, Laura soon learns that English is also a site for discovery of what is put under "interdiction." Her duty, which is to report any material containing suggestive discourse or scenes esteemed inappropriate for her fellow classmates, she occasionally fulfills to appease the nuns, but more often foregoes in her passion to read as much English literature as possible; "[t]hus the nuns believe that they have one of their own on their side, while the young girl not only gets to read anything she wants, but gets to exercise a certain amount of power over the other girls" (173). In achieving mastery of a language as foreign to the sisters as the language of religion is to herself, the narrator refuses to be reduced to a silence the nuns would require, and thus regains control of her own desires.

Although the Soeurs permit the teaching of English, they esteem French and Latin as the more essential tongues within the convent, and thus have difficulty understanding Laura's fascination with the English language and her urge to learn new words by copying their definitions from her English dictionary. The narrator's interest in etymology--seeking the original meanings of words which have been lost or distorted over time--parallels her search for her own origins (somewhere between her French upbringing and English adulthood). The narrator hopes to re-define (translate) the self which the puritanical discourse of her education has suppressed by adopting a new language through which she can voice her thoughts and opinions and gain some power over her life. English becomes a site of permission and possibility because it is beyond the jurisdiction of the nuns, beyond their capacity to

supervise. Laura "rebels" against the nuns' French by searching words in another language, reverting to what Soeur calls a "perverse pastime," in the same way that Le Noir, the tailor (originally mentioned in Double Standards) rebels against his profession (of clothing people) by posing nude in his store window; both are "perverts" in deviating from the trodden pathway to follow their preferred course.

Laura chooses English as the language in which she will live and work, appreciating its strong assimilative powers, its tendency, like a frog, to swallow other discourses and cultures down the narrow passage of its slippery throat and to make them part of one glutinous mass. In Frog Moon, Tostevin quotes Robert Kroetsch who says that,

The danger in our time is not the Tower of Babel, but making everything into *one*. Making historical, cultural or linguistic diversity into oneIt is frightening to consider the power of the English language to eliminate the natural multiplicity of language, for example (137).

The protagonist realizes the utility of retaining a common national and international language in English, but she likewise promotes a tolerance for a bilingual nation whose inhabitants are not forced to espouse either French or English. For, by encouraging national competition between not only languages, but also people and cultures, the government, who ultimately represents the nation, discourages a compromise that would allow for a nation *content* in its linguistic and cultural diversity. English and French discourse and culture in Canada, are, and always have been, separated by differences in power. Rather than according one discourse significance over the other, however, Tostevin, (via the narrator in Frog Moon) appreciates how both work together to help her construct her identity. As a Franco-Ontarian, the narrator, like Tostevin herself, finds herself not fully in one language or the other but in an undefined area between the two. Lianne Moyes, in her article on Lola Lemire

Tostevin's bilingual writing practice, says that it is difficult to "classify" Tostevin as a writer: "In a country where one is either English or French, the tendency to group her with one category or the other (often with women writers of Quēbec) risks erasing the difference of Tostevin's position as 'franco-Ontarienne'" (Moyes 75). Tostevin seeks to re-establish this place of difference between the two sides by incorporating elements of both her anglo- and francophone culture and vernacular into her autobiographical history. Rather than being silenced between two discourses, Tostevin uses translation to move from one language into another, as a passage to speech, saying that,

Babel should have taught us that no one language can impose itself on the world, yet most of us continue to experience the passage from one language to another as essential loss. To a certain extent it is a loss but it should also be experienced as gain ("Contamination" 14).

Translation allows transit between places and adaptation to new contexts and environments--what the narrator aspires to find in Frog Moon. In changing her colours ("of Her Speech"), the narrator passes between her two languages without discarding one for the other, and is therefore able to rectify her double identity, her amphibian existence, as a francophone girl and anglophone woman by encompassing one within the other. She becomes more comparable to the frog after which she is nicknamed, the "one creature able to live a double life, able to live anywhere and make it feel like home" (156). In In the Second Person, Greek-Canadian writer Smaro Kamboureli relates how she also encompasses her two selves, and two languages into one body: "I grew a second skin, wrapped around my self another self" (cited in Godard, "Discourses" 179). To use the metaphor of a Russian doll set to describe this multi-layering, a woman becomes a doll in a set of nested dolls, each living within a version of herself. Each one breaks out of her silence, and all of their voices blend together to speak as one intrinsic entity: silence is re-versesd.

The narrator first learns to translate silence into sound when she is a young girl singing in the convent choir. Told to refrain from singing because of her inability to carry a tune (because she sounds like a frog), the girl is forced to simply follow the music and mouth the words, and especially not to produce any sound. The nuns teach her that singing is an extension of speech, and that the key to singing is to first imagine the sound and then reproduce it from within the body. Essentially, they encourage the girls to imagine what Laura perceives as the unimaginable, for while she can re-create images, she has great difficulty envisioning sound. For an entire year, Laura never utters a word during choir class, but instead of allowing her musical ineptness to repress her thinking and creativity, she uses her muteness as a means of expression. The silent words on the page give way to the image that the word would have stood for if she had spoken it. Lianne Moyes writes on Tostevin's playing with the word "spoke" (in Double Standards), using it to draw "attention to the absent discourses that can be inferred from the spoken frame of reference." Moyes says that Tostevin aims "to incorporate words normally written off as outside a given language, to bring the unspoken within the frame of the speakable" (Moyes 78). The author tears down the barriers between discourses as she "déparles," or unspeaks, producing sound but not distinguishable words. In Frog Moon, Laura learns too to translate the silent words into images that talk in the sounds that her body produces. Like Marlatt's Jeannie Alexander who uses her "mouth," shaped as "an angry powerful o...a mouth working its own inarticulate urge, opening deep" (Ana Historic 125) to give birth to a "massive syllable of slippery flesh" (AH 126), Laura opens her mouth to produce and shape vowels and consonants which in turn shape apparitions and words.

As she articulates each vowel and consonant against the roof of her mouth or her lip, as if reading to herself, each letter spirals into the shape of the object it is about to spell. . .each letter [carves] the empty space of her mouth into a familiar shape (15-16).

Where there was once emptiness within the narrator, there is now fullness, as she stimulates her imagination to translate the silent, written words into visual shapes and symbols that communicate as effectively as words. The first poem in 'sophie puts into words the beauty of sound as a space between languages: "forget about lyrics hear / the mystery of voice trace in time a space between the lines one note above one note below" (9). In imag(in)ing and creating sound from silence, the narrator learns that she, and all women, can speak against the muteness that has been thrust down their throats and declare the validity of their own unwritten stories.

The narrator eventually learns that writing offers a space in which she is free to imagine possibilities for not only her own life, but the lives of other women; as Marlatt suggests in Ana Historic, women desire and need a place in which they can confident(ial)ly share their experiences with one another, and metaphorically meld their bodies into a larger body--a history in which all their voices will be heard. Laura is ultimately able to create such a work by assimilating her younger francophone self into an older anglophone self, and incorporating both of their languages into her writing. Marlatt asserts that "it is in the energetic imagining of all that we are that we can enact ourselves" ("Self-Representation" 17). Laura finally succeeds in imagining a self which will allow her to remain loyal to her mother tongue while living within an adopted language. "Le Baiser de Juan-les-Pins," the sole chapter entitled in French, reflects the narrator's determination to maintain her French roots when writing an account of her life. The chapter begins with the words with which she intends her own novel to commence--"il

pleut"--transcribed in the language that she associates with her own origins, but ends with the phrase--"Le Baiser de Juan-les-Pins. It was raining...."--written in both of her tongues. Laura creates new possibilities for herself as a woman celebrating both of her cultures and discourses by living in each of them (in the area between the two). This space represents the middle ground in a translative system in which there is "an operation of interpretative decipherment, an encoding-decoding function or synapse" (Steiner 47). The narrator realises that she is ironically most settled when she is situated between languages, for she is able to decode the monologic discourse of a patriarchal economy, and encode her thoughts and feelings in her own rendition of language: a "mi-dire," or "a kind of midspeak that speaks the part / the art of the half spoken that opens wide the middle ground" ('sophie 57). It is this territory that exists between all dualities that Laura seeks as a d/welling inside her.

As Laura aligns the language of her family and education with that of her spouse, children, and profession, she also blends together her past and her present life. Throughout the novel, the protagonist relates anecdotes in the past tense about her years spent in the convent and with her parents, while converting to the present tense to recount the Christmas festivities with her immediate family and parents. Using the past tense to tell stories from her early life, and the present tense for current incidents, Laura forges a rift between her younger and older self that she can seal only as she learns to appreciate that both past and present tales told in diverse places and voices constitute her body, her history; Jan Vansina confirms that "traditions are documents of the present, because they are told in the present. Yet they also embody a message from the past, so they are expressions of the past at

the same time. They are the representation of the past in the present" (Oral Tradition xii). Traditions and rituals encourage Laura to maintain contact with the past that has so influenced her, enfolding her within a cycle that turns her back into the familiarity of her past and forward into the diversity of her present and future.

The double-helical DNA structure is an apt model for epitomising Laura's vision of her own self: as the two halves spiral between the past and present, they entwine to form the one molecule which replicates within her own body and determines her characteristics. Rather than forgetting the past as events and people that have come and gone, irrelevant to those of the here and now, the narrator appreciates what she has learned in her younger years, using her memory to spiral her backwards in time. According to Tostevin, memory houses our past, builds rooms that resist closure so that we may always enter them and reflect there on our origins. The narrator achieves harmony between the girl (written in third person) and woman (denoted in first person) by remembering what, against the odds, she learned at the convent and realizing this knowledge in the present:

she's cramming for a science test in spite of the nun's warnings that cramming will only make her forget everything right after the test. But *she* didn't forget, because as *I* look across the bay I remember how the movement of heat converts into new forms of energy as it travels from one place to the next (215, my emphasis).

As the narrator moves from one place to another during her lifetime -- Northern Ontario to Toronto to Paris--she transforms herself into "new forms of energy," fitting into new environments and circumstances. The adaptations serve as yet further signs of translation. Born in June, the month of the "Moon of the Frogs," Laura assumes characteristics of the moon under which she is created, the same moon perhaps which the protagonist, Alice, in Audrey

Thomas' *Intertidal Life* alludes to in thinking of all women's connection with the lunar body: "[s]isters of the moon we are, shape shifters but oh so predictable in our shifting. We hold the water of the world in our nets" (206). The moon determines women's bodily rhythms as surely as it does the rhythms of the tides and allows them to drift in the space between sea and land, amphibian on the currents of their own meaning. Laura shifts and alters her own shape to accommodate the changes in her mutable environment. Imitating the frog after which she is named, Laura changes her external epidermis but remains the same inside her body; she says that the "frog yearns to change its skin, pull it over its head like a dress, place it in its mouth, chew it, ingest it, so the fiction of the body is never lost" (215). The narrator's older body folds within it the body of her younger self, both reproduced through the telling of stories. She remarks that we store inside us our experience and knowledge and all that is to come will only be a repeat of that knowledge; "[t]he future only holds more of the same. As such it has already been invented" (109). To refer again to Genette's narrative "frequency," or the repetitive capacity of stories, we can appreciate that though we may experience the same events, the manner in which we perceive those events changes so that there is a diversity in the continuity of a history.

Frog Moon mimics the cycle of time and history by both beginning and ending with "The Chorus," a body representing a history which speaks in one voice but which is a colourful assortment of people of multiple languages, cultures and traditions. Such is the narrative that Laura decides to write about her own life. Once Laura realizes that she does have the prerogative to determine her own destiny (obtaining the power over her life that "The Old Woman and the Knight" says all women wish), to pursue her one great desire--

writing--she is able to embody the past within her to live in the present, and proceed into the future. She does not metaphorically expel from her body the francophone girl of Northern Ontario, but rather stor(i)es her inside as an intrinsic part of herself. This young girl will always partially frame the older woman but never will she seek to paint the elder out of the picture. The woman in turn gives power to her younger self by subjectifying/incorporating her into the "I," instead of leaving her in the third-person objectified "she."

Throughout Frog Moon, Tostevin employs what Michael Toolan terms "free indirect discourse," or the weaving together of narratorial indirectness with character directness, as the narrator fluctuates between telling her story in first and then in third-person. While this alteration in narrator creates an interesting counterplay between Laura's younger and older selves, it also perpetuates Laura's feelings of alienation from her own self, unable to combine the two narrators into one until she sees that both her francophone and anglophone sides can speak as one voice and one subject. Even though the narrator reverts to using "I" to refer to herself at the end of the novel, this "I" is not static, for if it were it would then indicate that Laura is not subject to mutation. Tostevin reveals to interviewer Janice Williamson that "subjectivity can never be one subject or static because immediately we become defined into that one subject. The 'I' in my book is an ongoing 'I,' an ever-changing 'I'; the 'subject-in-process,' to use Kristeva's term" (Sounding 274). Writing herself in the first-person allows the narrator to assume presence as the subject of a history, but one which is not impervious to change as is the inflexible subject of traditional narrative.

The protagonist's ability to subject herself in her own novel provides a

model for women to write their own lives and experiences into histories. Tostevin addresses the necessity of providing more than one unheterodox version of the past which, in dismissing women from its yellowed pages, has perennially denied them a voice. Writing becomes not only a means of communicating women's versions of the past, but also a way for male and female accounts of an event or situation to communicate with each other. Frog Moon exemplifies such a gender interchange when Laura's English teacher, Madame Wickersham, writes a response to a fellow teacher, Mr. Woolacott, who blames the current political and economic distress on female instructors. Laura's English teacher retaliates, providing some facts on the actuality of the situation: women are treated as inferior in the educational system, as they are in a patriarchal economy. In providing Laura with a copy of her letter of refutation, Madame Wickersham urges Laura to speak up for herself and to not allow anyone, especially not a man, to speak *for* her.

Asserting that writing, art and music are media for self-expression and transformation, Laura's English instructor echoes the theory of another teacher, Barbara Godard: these media, as translative activities, foster creativity and originality, not mere imitation of a previous work. Women's history, too, is not merely a re-writing of traditional discourse but a unique, transformative work in which, according to Madame Wickersham, "there exist possibilities far beyond the obvious" (174). It is through the telling of stories, rituals and traditions in which women imagine all that they can be that the female body is re-produced, re-turned and re-versed into a history that is truly "woman-handled."

**CHAPTER FOUR
CONCLUSION**

Feminist post-structuralists, including Daphne Marlatt and Lola Lemire Tostevin, employ a reversed, or translated, discourse to enable the muted subject of traditional discourse to speak in her own right. They speak from within the discourse which has silenced them, but assert their authority as subjects deviating from the linear trajectory of male-centered experiences. As we have seen in this paper, female authors seek to open a discursive space within which women can validate their own histories. The power the patriarchal discourse has come to assume opens itself up to possibilities of such resistance by the very forces that have elevated it to its stature:

'Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it but it also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. In like manner, silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions, but they also loosen its hold and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance' (Foucault, cited in Weedon 111).

Chris Weedon states that reaction against the dominant at the level of the individual subject is the first step in the production of alternative forms of narrative. Marlatt and Tostevin have well demonstrated the discursive variations that female writers can adopt to speak out of the silence that the patriarchal canon has imposed on them. Another author who employs structural and referential narrative techniques similar to those of these two writers, but who I have unfortunately had to forego in the interest of this paper's length, is Audrey Thomas. I will briefly touch on the key affinities among Thomas' novel, Latakia, Marlatt's Ana Historic and Tostevin's Frog Moon to illuminate how the authors translate/return women as subjects in a discourse which has excluded them.

Marlatt and Tostevin refer both to their own and to other women's lives and perceptions, then in foregrounding how women see the world as opposed to how they have been seen (objectified) in it. So Thomas focuses on the ways

Rachel, the protagonist, views/reads mythology, literature, daily experiences, sex, and other people, in a substantially different way than does her lover, Michael. While in Greece, originary site of our patriarchal "civilization" (although paradoxically, Crete was initially a matriarchal society), Rachel is inspired to re-present a lost female presence in a culture which has advocated a specific way of thinking and seeing--by objectifying the Other. The protagonist attempts to convince Michael to adopt alternative forms of perception which focus on the shadings and small details of daily life, and thereby allow us to appreciate the fragments that make up the whole of human existence. Rachel muses that she sometimes feels like an Impressionist painter, wanting to sacrifice the subject for the scenery, to portray lovers in a landscape, but only as one part of it: "they are shape, tone, movement (or lack of it), not STORY. The trees and rocks are just as important. I want to stop looking for the 'eternal aspect' of the story" (Thomas 30). Like Annie and Laura in the other two novels, Rachel strives to look beyond the dominating (male) subject of the historical picture to foreground and bring into the light (in true Impressionist style) the previously shadowed female lives and experiences.

Through the process of writing the "letter" to her ex-lover, Rachel transforms her own thoughts, desires, and perceptions from her mind into written form. But she rejects the linear plot structure of conventional narrative in favour of a cyclical pattern to recount her story which, written in the form of a letter to an ex-lover, moves from her present life in Africa, to her past life in New York and to her recent past traversing the ocean between the two. As Rachel reflects on her voyage from one continent/place to another, she is not so much focussed on her destination, as the process of

moving between the two. This passage from one territory to another reminds us of the method of translation through which feminist writers seek to reinscribe women's lives, under-valued in the patriarchal "source text," into a non-traditional history, or "target text." It is in this right/write/rite of passage (a ritual associated with an individual's change in status) that the female protagonists in these novels are compelled to metamorphose/re-construct their identity to adapt to their changing environment/culture. As Rachel travels from North America to Africa, Annie moves from Britain to Canada, and as Laura migrates from Northern to Southern Ontario, they all transfer from one vision of their selves to new, more confident and independent versions. Throughout these three novels, the middle-aged female narrators fluctuate between their secure, though not completely satisfying present life, and the exciting but unsettling possibilities of a new existence in which they can pursue their desires.

Thus, the narrators are presented with the dichotomy of two cultures and the two discourses that reflect those cultures: the language of the dominant in which they have been well, and not so well, versed (out of a significant presence within it), and a plausible female-inclusive, *re*-versed discourse. Rather than nonsensically abandoning the present linguistic system, the protagonists (and the authors) resort to writing from *within* the dominant discourse to internally resist its claim as sole provider of truth, for as Chris Weedon asserts, "[i]t is possible for feminists to approach the question of truth from within this same discursive framework, aiming, through reversal, to establish new truths, compatible with their interests" (131). The authors therefore work both inside and outside of (between) discourse as they transcribe the history of their body into the body of language from which it

has been absented.

To include themselves into the established canon (the set of "source texts"), women must first re-read history to reinscribe its prevailing codes, and to open a space of difference. As women learn to read their own histories, or bodies, they can then translate them into a narrative which foregrounds their desires. Writing, which is born of reading (the body), provides a means for women authors to utter themselves in their own re-visions of patriarchal discourse. As Tostevin and George Steiner attest, both writing and reading are transformative acts whereby the interpreter translates, or "rereads" the original work into her own idiolect to make sense (or non-sense) of it. Writing becomes a process of rereading--not merely reading, which "would only be writing/without breathing a word," as Tostevin writes in her poem "re" in Double Standards. Lianne Moyes interprets this poem to signify that "[w]riting as rereading, as a process of re-marking discourse and social relations, is a way to break this silence, to inhabit two languages" (80). Rather than being muzzled by an exclusive history, the narrators in Ana Historic and Frog Moon convey their own story--a rereading or translation of traditional discourse. As Tostevin aptly re-marks:

rereading reverses to resist to reverse the
movement along the curve of return as the well-turned
phrase turns on herself to retrace her steps reorient
and continue in a different voice
("re," Double Standards).

No longer is the translator silent behind the text, or the translation a supplement to the main body of work, for the translator denounces her position as object, (re)embodying herself in her own version of the past, and thus creating a space for herself, and all women, in the present and future.

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