ISOLATION AND CONNECTION IN ST. AUBIN DE TERAN

ISOLATION AND CONNECTION

IN THE LIFE AND SELECTED WORKS

OF

LISA ST AUBIN DE TERAN

By

KAREN PATRICIA LUCAS-HUGHES, B.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

MASTER OF ARTS (1997)
(English)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Isolation and Connection in the Life and Selected Works of Lisa St. Aubin de Terán

AUTHOR: Karen Patricia Lucas-Hughes, B.A. (University of Lancaster)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. H.J.Ferns

NUMBER OF PAGES: v, 104

ABSTRACT

"We're born alone, we live alone, we die alone. Only through our love and friendship can we create the illusion for the moment that we're not alone" ("Loneliness"). This definition of the human condition by Orson Welles, the celebrated American actor and producer, aptly sums up the paradoxical nature of human experience: isolation and connection. In psychoanalysis, object relations theorists, in particular, have formulated ideas about the nature of the infant's early attachment to the mother, or primary care-giver, and its role in the development of a healthy ego. In essence, object relations theorists posit that an early, secure emotional attachment enables the individual to pass through maturational stages of development that decrease the emotional dependence on care-givers, allowing separation and the ability to form other significant bonds.

This study examines the theme of isolation and connection in the life and selected works of the contemporary British novelist Lisa St. Aubin de Terán, by applying the methods of some influential psychoanalytic thinkers, notably Anthony Storr, who has written extensively on the nature of creativity and the relationship between the internal and external world of the artist. A psychoanalytic discussion of St. Aubin de Terán's narratives as autobiographical acts is relevant because of the extent to which she has used her creative energies in a search for both personal and artistic identity. I concentrate on the three novels *Keepers of the House* (1982), *Joanna* (1991) and *Nocturne*(1992) because I believe them to be her strongest works. Written over a ten year period, they show a clear development in St. Aubin de Terán's exploration of isolation and connection as having both positive and negative possibilities and consequences.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. John Ferns for his time, help and encouragement during the writing of this thesis. I would also like to thank Lisa St. Aubin de Terán for her interest and correspondence. I am grateful to the English Department for their help and kindness during the difficult period of my mother's illness. I wish to thank my parents, Christopher and Sheila Lucas for all their love and support over the years. I am also grateful for the love of Lindy, my sister, Viv, my brother and other family members. I value my many friendships around the world. In Canada I am particularly grateful to my band of "Fairy Godmothers" in the McMaster Women's Club for their encouragement and willingness to discuss this project. Finally, I wish to thank my husband, Dr. Martin Hughes, with whom I have seen so much of the world, and shared so much, for all his love and friendship.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Sheila Patricia Lucas (née Barcroft) 1927-1996, who sadly did not see its completion, but who taught me so much about living and dying.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In 1818, John Keats wrote in a letter to Joshua Reynolds, "Now it appears to me that almost any man may like the spider spin from his own inwards his own airy citadel" (Keats, February 1818). This romantic view of the imagination and the artist seems particularly relevant to a study of British writer Lisa St. Aubin de Terán, who as a young person read and greatly admired Keats, Shelley and Byron, and who has created and recreated her life and art in a search for personal and artistic fulfilment. As Anthony Clare observes in *In The Psychiatrist's Chair* II (1995): "To suggest the themes in her novels owe much of their inspiration to key figures and events in Lisa's own life is to understate. Fact and fiction are inextricably interwoven" (Clare 396). Also, he notes that the story of her life is itself like one of her novels (*Ibid.* 395). He writes, "Lisa St. Aubin de Terán's life and her writing both raise and illuminate questions concerning the relationship between fact and fiction, life and art, identity and show" (*Ibid.* 398). In her interview with him in 1993, she admits that she herself is aware of the extent to which she has used her art in her life as "a *means* of discovering herself, that as she has moved from relationship to relationship, from house to house, place to place, escaping from herself, and experiencing degrees of contentment and unhappiness in the process, she has slowly been pulling together and integrating the various strands within herself" (*Ibid.* 394).

Born in London in 1953, Lisa St. Aubin de Terán is now an established British writer. In 1983, after the publication of only one novel, she was named one of Britain's twenty best young novelists by *TheTimes* (*Contemporary Authors* 126: 385). Since then, she has published seven novels, a volume of poetry, a collection of short stories and several memoirs. She has won awards for both fiction and poetry. In addition, she has made a T.V. programme for the B.B.C. series *Great Railway Journeys* (1993) and been interviewed by Professor Anthony Clare for the Radio 4 programme, *In the Psychiatrist's Chair* (1993). She has become a successful artist, with translations of her work published around the world, and something of a British public literary figure, although she now lives and works in Italy. Her first novel, *Keepers of the House*, retitled in the United States as *The Long Way Home*, was published to great critical acclaim in 1982. It was given considerable media attention, on both sides of the Atlantic, with reviews in such publications as *New Statesman*, *The Listener*, *The Observer*, and *The Times Literary Supplement* in Britain, and *Kirkus Reviews*, *Los Angeles Times Book Review* and *National Review* in the U.S. (*Contemporary Authors* 126: 389).

Based on St. Aubin's own experience, from eighteen to twenty-five, of managing her Venezuelan husband's sugar cane and avocado ranch, the novel chronicles the decline of the once powerful Beltrán family in an isolated, drought stricken region of the Andes. Isolated further by her husband's increasingly poor health, the protagonist Lydia Sinclair, listens to the family stories told by an elderly servant who wishes her to record them. Hermione Lee, writing in *The Observer,* describes *Keepers of the House* as an "exceptional first novel, richly evocative and cunningly crafted" in which "locusts, maggots, weevils, running sores, goitres,

amputated limbs, rotting avocados, litter the book with an almost boisterous abandon" (Hermione Lee, "Nightmares From the New World ". *Observer* 11 July 1982: 29). Douglas Hill, in *The Globe and Mail* writes of the chaotic nature and surreal events of the narrative, and notes that, "what is exemplary is the control the author maintains over her unruly materials; the novel is both expansive and tight" (*Contemporary Authors* 126: 385). Lisa St. Aubin's use of magical folklore associated with South American culture has led her work to be compared with the "Magic Realism" of other Latin writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez. In 1983, *Keepers of the House* won The Somerset Maugham Award and many critics agree that the vivid sense of place evoked by St. Aubin de Terán's elegant prose style gives the novel a powerful, haunting quality that makes it a remarkable first achievement.

Her second novel, *The Slow Train to Milan* (1983), won The John Llewelyn Rhys Memorial Prize also in 1983. This novel, too, draws heavily upon St. Aubin de Terán's own life story, but the reviews were somewhat more mixed. Once again, setting is an integral part of the narrative, but here she introduces the theme of travel, particularly rail travel, as an end in itself. Unlike the oppressive, static atmosphere of the first novel, where the protagonist is virtually a prisoner of a remote location, *The Slow Train to Milan* is about constant motion as both liberating and futile. A fascination and preoccupation with travel, journeys and places is a subject that recurs both in her fiction and non fiction. This novel tells the story of St. Aubin de Terán's life before she went to Venezuela. At age sixteen, living at home with her mother in London, she met and married a thirty-five year old Venezuelan exile; a virtual stranger who spoke very little English. She then spent the next two years with him and two

of his close friends, also political exiles and wanted by Interpol, travelling mainly between Milan, Italy and Paris, France, on the run. Philip Horne in *London Review of Books* writes of the novel, "Lisa St. Aubin de Terán is a fine writer, and her subtle prose looks best when it looks, unblinking, at the oddity of the dealings of out-manoeuvred men so courageous and ridiculous...The language...is twisted into a fine strain. Yet the charm and poise of manner can become mannerism, and Lisa St. Aubin's attentiveness sometimes slips into an embarrassing self-attention, an allusive display of sophisticated intentions...." ("Maids". *London Review of Books* 1-20 Apr. 1983: 14-15). He goes on to observe that the detailed itinerary of the novel elaborately circumscribes the central emptiness of her husband's misery in exile, but that it fails to evoke a genuine sense of pathos because her method is ultimately too oblique. The result, in Horne's opinion, is a failure to achieve a true unity of impression (*Ibid.*). Other critics praise St. Aubin de Terán's style, but point to a lack of plot and a distance in the characterization and dynamics of the central group. As Madison Bell writes in *The New York Times Book Review*, the motives of the three exiles are "most unclear, and Lisaveta [the protagonist]'s lack of curiosity about them at first astounds and finally irritates, for nothing is ever explained" (*New York Times Book Review* 22 April 1984: 14). Anatole Broyard, however, writing in *The New York Times*, observes that there is a certain novelty in the distance that is maintained between the characters and wonders, after so many modern books about people knowing one another too well, whether St. Aubin de Terán's sense of formality is actually a strength. He concludes that, "Like her characters, her book is protected by its elegance" (*New York Times* 25 April 1984: C19).

St. Aubin de Terán writes of her early publishing career,"My first book was almost overwhelmingly well received, the second, *The Slow Train* was slightly more mixed but often ecstatic. Since both books were for me early experiments in a field I felt convinced I could do much better in, later, I was worried by what I saw as excessive praise. What space did such praise leave me to occupy in the future?" (letter to the author, Dec. 1996). Her third novel, *The Tiger* (1984), returns to a South American setting but departs from autobiography, although it is, in part, based on the life of someone she actually met, as she explains in an interview with *Contemporary Authors*, 1987 (126: 387). Again, her focus is very much on extremes: of environment, of character and of surreal, haphazard events. In this work, the protagonist Lucien is a Venezuelan brought up by a cruel and tyrannical German grandmother, who singles him out as the favourite who will fulfil her ambitions. Even after her death, he feels her dominating presence as a disease within his own body. From her he inherits the ability to control chance, so that he is able to win a fortune gambling and use the money to live a life that becomes legendary. Luck suddenly deserts him, however. After a tour of Nazi Germany, he returns to South America where he is imprisoned for a crime he did not commit.

The critical response to this novel was again somewhat mixed. Favourable reviews tend to note the quality of the writing and the tone and atmosphere of the setting. Again, opinions were divided, particularly about characterization. Jonathan Loake writes,"*The Tiger* is episodic and closer to legend than conventional fiction. It describes a violent world of wealth, drought, poverty, the unwinnable battle against insects, disease, and death, and the

sheer weight and weariness of time. Her ability to portray so vividly the spiritual oppressiveness of this environment is Lisa St. Aubin de Terán's great imaginative achievement." However, Loake goes on to question St. Aubin de Terán's effectiveness at conveying the experience, rather than merely the oddity, of the life she observes, since for him the central characters remain too distant to arouse the reader's sympathy. He observes that not only does Lucien have few relationships with other characters; he has no relationship with the reader. ("Lifeless Legends". *Books and Bookmen* Sept. 1984 348: 16-17). Valentine Cunningham, writing in *The Observer* admires the novel's "dark fabulations" which "jut and seep into the imagination" but also notes that there remains something "oddly unstated and only part focussed at the heart of this novel's mysteries" ("Landscapes of Looniness". *Observer* 16 Sep. 1984: 20). *The Tiger* is one of St. Aubin de Terán's favourites among her novels. She comments, "it was my first really ambitious project and I am pleased with it. I see it as less flawed than my first two" (letter to the author, Dec. 1996). Consequently, she was disappointed by its critical reception and this influenced her decision to live abroad again, in part an attempt to distance herself from her reviews. She continues, "When I published *The Tiger* I hoped that the critics would perceive how far I had come...It seemed that I had had too much success with the first two books and with the third I was 'cut down to size'" (*Ibid.*).

The Bay of Silence (1986), St. Aubin de Terán's fourth novel, is something of a departure from her previous works. The representation of place as it relates to the human psyche is important to the novel, for example the malevolent atmosphere of a Breton village in the shadow of a nuclear reactor and the Italian "Bay of Silence" itself. These locations

have both harmful and beneficial effects on mental states. Here, though, St. Aubin de Terán's main focus is on the internal landscapes of the two main characters, Rosalind and William, and the relationship between them. The novel examines the effect on their marriage of Rosalind's schizophrenic illness and the mysterious death of one of their children. For the first time, St. Aubin de Terán lets the characters speak for themselves, in alternating voices, in order to dramatize the silence between them. As the dust jacket attests, there is "a new sense of pace and menace" with a single climactic event which gives the narrative more structure, than the meandering *The Tiger*. However, the novel was not generally well received. John Mellors, in *The Listener*, writes: "Eloquence which does not ring true makes [this novel] a disappointment after Lisa St. Aubin de Terán's expeditions into South American myth and magic in previous novels" (*Listener* 29 May 1986: 25). Valentine Cunningham, in *The Observer* even goes so far as to describe it as "choccy-box gothic... much of which fails to arrest". He refers to the tone of the narration as "irksomely smug" and relying too much on mentioning, and annotation, rather than proving and showing (*Observer* 4 May 1986: 0ct. 23).

It is interesting that the book was not well regarded by reviewers, since it was written at a particularly difficult period of St. Aubin de Terán's life, when she herself felt mentally unstable. Her mental breakdown, as she explains in her interview with Anthony Clare, was partly a crisis of identity contributed to by the illness and death of her mother, a great deal of media attention from the success of her early novels, problems in communication in her second marriage and the traumatic birth of her second child. She wrote the novel to exorcize

her own fears of madness and suicidal urges through the discipline of working. It had a therapeutic effect, she says, and put her in touch with herself again (Clare 426). In this sense, it is far more closely and directly an exploration of her own emotional experience than her first so-called autobiographical novels, but perhaps also for this reason, it fails to satisfy. What it does capture, however, is a profoundly disturbing atmosphere of fear, isolation and unreality.

Her next novel, *Black Idol* (1987),was not given much critical attention. It too is an attempt to explore issues in the relationship between a couple, the nature of love and suicidal behaviour, but from a greater distance in time and location, than *The Bay of Silence.* Like some of her other works, it is the imaginative recreation of real events, but not ones taken from her own life. It concerns the murder of Josephine Bigelow, a society beauty, by her lover, Harry Crosby, poet, diarist and publisher, followed by his suicide, in the Hotel des Artistes in New York in the 1920s. As St. Aubin de Terán explains in her interview with *Contemporary Authors*, "There was a two-hour time gap between the time he shot himself and the time Josephine died. My novel occurs during that time gap, on the idea that as a man drowns, his life flashes before him. In those two hours, the whole of Harry Crosby's life flashes before him" (*Contemporary Authors* 126: 388). Lorna Sage describes it as the story of a failed artist who makes himself his work of art (*Observer* 4 Oct. 1987: 27). The juxtaposition of the privileged, external world of the protagonists to their internal sense of emptiness is vividly portrayed, but the characters remain one-dimensional, leaving the central mystery of Crosby's motivation curiously intact.

After a book of short stories in 1989, Lisa St. Aubin de Terán published *Joanna* in 1991. This novel gained more attention and was better received than her previous two novels, but again, reviews were rather mixed, some even hostile. In this work, St. Aubin de Terán gets close to her own life again, through the fictional exploration of her own family history. As with much of her early work, it explores the nature of family myths, family dynamics, and the theme of inheritance, both actual and psychological. As with *The Bay of Silence* and *Black Idol* it is also concerned with questions of mental health, attitudes to mental illness, and the potential of love to heal, but also to harm. As with *Keepers of the House*, *The Slow Train to Milan,* and *The Bay of Silence*, it shows characters in the grip of both external and internal forces beyond their control. In *Joanna*, the loss and change in family circumstances provoked not only by human folly but also by historical events, causes profound psychological damage to be passed from one generation to the next.

Told in three voices, *Joanna* is based on the life story of St. Aubin de Terán's mother Joan, who later becomes Joanna. She was horribly physically and psychologically abused by her own mother Kitty, the author's grandmother, who suffered from mental illness and who spent much of her later life in a psychiatric institution. As a result, Joanna also suffered mental illness. The triangle is completed by Kitty's mother Florence, Joanna's grandmother, who struggles to keep the family together and to nurture and protect both women. Ruth Pavey writes of the novel in *The Observer,* "The novel is at its best evoking a nostalgic picture of Jersey, the paradisal island Florence was obliged to leave. As a story, it is very readable. But at a deeper, personal level it is less convincing." In Pavey's opinion, the style

of St. Aubin de Terán's prose, what she calls "the glamour of fiction" actually serves to diminish the impact of the story since it keeps protecting the reader from material that should be far more disturbing (*Observer* 20 May 1990: 59). There is some truth in this assessment, but even so the novel does engage the reader far more successfully than St. Aubin de Terán's previous two novels. It also represents a considerable development in her ability to create more vivid characters and to place them in dynamic relationships to each other and to the world. As a result, the story is compelling, disturbing and moving, particularly in its exploration of the nature of personal identity and the role of familial myths and interaction in psychological development. St. Aubin de Terán writes of this work:

> Perhaps *Joanna* was the first novel where I felt a sense of real maturity as a writer. It does not have the naive charm of *Keepers* but it works at many levels.... *Joanna* was the most reviewed novel/book [of hers] in England at the time it came out, almost all of them (the reviews) bad - - some of them desperately so. I was surprised, to say the least, it sold well, it got a lot of attention but it broke a taboo I had not fully been aware of until it was published: Fathers can be bad, mothers cannot - - Many feminists were outraged by Miss Kitty. Some of the reviews are almost hysterical - - so I felt they certainly didn't do the book justice.... In Germany, incongruously, it has done very well - - sold very well - - but not really been reviewed at all. (letter to the author, Dec. 1996)

St. Aubin de Terán's most recent work of fiction, *Nocturne*(1992), shows a further progression and maturing of her art. For it brings together many aspects of the author's previous style and themes, but into an artistically harmonious and satisfying whole. It is centrally concerned with the idea of both place and travel in identity. Furthermore, it is an exploration of the importance of imagination and narrative itself, and their ambiguous role in human life. Also, the novel raises questions about the nature of love and human

connectedness in the face of both stasis and change. It is richly evocative and stimulating on many levels. It can be read as social history or contemporary myth. However, it has been unfairly overlooked by critics, perhaps because, as one critic puts it, the genre of Magical Realism "has had a bad press recently" (Aisling Foster, "Speaking of the Simple", *Times Literary Supplement 2* Oct 1992: 21).

Nocturne tells the story of a peasant and war veteran, Alessandro Mezzanotte (whose name means "midnight") and the son of a judge, Stefano. Years apart in age, both are troubled and isolated figures, thrown together by chance when Stefano, on military service, is assigned to help the elderly, blind and disabled Mezzanote. An unexpected relationship develops which changes both their lives. After forty years of silence, Mezzanotte decides to reveal the story of his past and his life-long passion for Valentina, the daughter of a travelling circus owner. By listening to the story, Stefano discovers a new reason to go on living his own life, despite the loss of his mother and the dominating personality of his father. As Foster also writes, the language of the novel "is often more poetry than prose; places might be described in braille, bulging with smells and textures of Umbrian village life and a huge Italian landscape; events are enormous, preordained; humanity is larger than life, allowing Mezzanote...to develop from a simple peasant into a combination of Jesus Christ and King Lear" (*Ibid.*). A review in *Kirkus Reviews,* praises the exquisite style of the novel and observes that "St. Aubin de Terán uses her knowledge of rural Italy to evoke poignant images of tradition and a world in transition....[It is] a vivid, at times stunning depiction of Umbrian village life past and present - - and a first-rate portrayal of the heart's yearning and the vitality

of love" (*Kirkus Reviews* 1 July 1993 61: 812).

I believe that Lisa St. Aubin de Terán is a highly gifted writer whose work deserves more critical attention than it has been given, particularly in the last few years. A psychoanalytic, or object relations, approach to examining her work is worthwhile for several reasons. First, many of the issues that Lisa St. Aubin de Terán explores in her writings, on a thematic level, are those with which psychoanalysis is centrally concerned. The influence, for instance, of formative relationships in family life and the origins of mental illness; the positive and negative potentialities of both extreme connectedness and extreme isolation for the individual and group's mental health. St. Aubin de Terán is interested in how human beings find meaning and a measure of control within the random chaos of both external and internal landscapes. Her work deals with the nature, and role, of intimate communication between individuals and the place of fantasy and illusion, or narrative and imagination, as part of the connectedness or isolation of the self as artist. Second, another dimension to her writing life is the extent to which these themes are present precisely because she has, to a considerable degree, used writing therapeutically, to come to terms with her own formative relationships and her fears of both isolation and connection, by examining her own life in her art. As Anthony Clare observes, "She has analysed in her writings, with a detachment and a thoroughness which would have graced a series of psychotherapeutic sessions, her mother's remarkable mixture of strength, affection, ambition and despondency, her father's flamboyance, romanticism, creativity and detachment, her childhood of separation from the one and intense identification with the other, and her own persistent idealisation of personal

relationships" (Clare 395).

Furthermore, psychoanalytic criticism is a useful tool for looking not just at the manifest content of a writer's work, but also at the latent content. As Terry Eagleton writes, levels of meaning may be generated through the construction of what he calls a 'sub-text' for the work. This is:

> a text which runs within it, visible at certain 'symptomatic' points of ambiguity, evasion or overemphasis, and which we as readers are able to 'write' even if the novel itself does not. All literary works contain one or more such sub-texts, and there is a sense in which they may be spoken of as the 'unconscious' of the work itself. The work's insights, as with all writing, are deeply related to its blindnesses: what it does not say, and how it does not say it, may be as important as what it articulates; what seems absent, marginal or ambivalent about it may provide a central clue to its meanings. We are not simply rejecting or inverting 'what the novel says'...We are looking rather at what... [the author's] statements must inevitably silence or suppress, examining ways in which the...[writing] is not quite identical with itself. Psychoanalytical criticism, in other words, can ...tell us something about how literary texts are actually formed, and reveal something of the meaning of that formation. (Eagleton 178-179)

This is relevant to the study of St. Aubin de Terán's work since the creation of sub-texts may go some way to illuminate perceived artistic flaws or problems in a writer's ability to render some aspects of experience more authentically than others. In this way, it can explore the relationship between the writer and the reader, by focussing on the internal dynamics of texts, and the writer's own unconscious relationship of distance or closeness to the writing itself.

As Andrew Brink asserts in *Loss and Symbolic Repair* (1977): "Object relations theory, mainly a recent British revision of Freud's teachings, deserves to be more widely known for its pertinence to criticism of the arts" (Brink 3). This body of psychoanalytic theory has arisen from the works of various influential thinkers such as Ian Suttie, W. R. D.

Fairbairn, Melanie Klein, Michael Balint, Harry Guntrip, D. W. Winnicott and John Bowlby. However, they by no means form a school and frequently either ignore or react against each other in their writings (Brink, *Creativity as Repair: Bipolarity and its Closure*, [1982] 10). What they do share is a belief in the importance of a child's earliest experiences of parenting, particularly by the mother or primary caregiver, in the formation and subsequent development of an autonomous 'ego' or well integrated 'self' capable of distinguishing between fantasy and reality and able to sustain meaningful relationships with others. This differs from classical Freudian theory, as Ernest S. Wolf observes in the foreword to *Theories of Object Relations: Bridges to Self Psychology* (1990), in the shift from a one-body to a multi-body psychology. Thus, while Freud sees psychological development as primarily driven by instinctual urges, conflict and fantasy within the individual (Bacal and Newman x), object relations views it as the result of the infant's earliest interactions with others or objects; a process explored and to some extent mirrored by the collaborative interaction of analyst and patient. As Howard Bacal writes,""object relations" the now widely accepted term denoting interactive phenomena, constitutes the central experience that affects the sense of self...The self "knows" itself only in the context of the experience of the self-other relationship" (Bacal and Newman 20). Wolf notes that this gradual shift in emphasis, from a nineteenth-century Freudian view influenced by scientific theories of the day, in which, in a closed Cartesian world, objects and forces act upon each other, has given way to the post-positive world of subjective experience and response to a surrounding context (*Ibid.* x-xi).

This self-other dynamic is also important in the creation and appreciation of art.

While Freud explains creativity as the sublimation of sexual drives, Winnicott's theory is more convincing. As Peter L. Rudnytsky asserts, the work of Winnicott is important in this regard, but has been neglected by literary scholars. In his view, in both Britain and the U.S. "the perspective on psychoanalysis adopted by most academics has been filtered through the French postmodernist lens of Jacques Lacan, rather than the humanist lens of...Winnicott" (Rudnytsky xi). This neglect of Winnicott is all the more surprising, since, he continues, Independent object relations theory can claim to offer the first satisfactory psychoanalytic account of aesthetics. Rudnytsky writes:

> Uniquely among psychoanalytic approaches to art, Winnicott respects art's integrity as an autonomous human activity, while continuing to insist on its infantile origins. He derives art from *play*, a child's state of relaxed absorption made possible by its mother's unobtrusive presence, which differs from masturbation in that it terminates if somatic urges become too insistent. At first the mother (or other primary caregiver) must endow her infant with the capacity for illusion by making her love (metonymically represented by the breast) available on demand, but she must then also accustom the infant to disillusionment by gradual failures of empathy. Art provides a lifelong refuge to which we can turn as we negotiate our precarious oscillations between illusion and reality. Art, like play, must be situated in both a *temporal* and a *spatial* dimension, as Winnicott does with his concepts of transitional objects and potential space. (Rudnytsky xiii)

"Transitional objects" according to Winnicott, are the first possessions of infants and young children, such as blankets or teddy bears to which they become emotionally attached. They are a substitute for the mother's breast, or for a secure attachment figure (Storr, *Solitude* 69). These objects have an intermediate quality between fantasy and reality which foreshadows that of art, likewise, and simultaneously, both reality and illusion. Their use, as Storr notes, suggests that the positive functions of imagination begin very early in life (*Ibid.* 70). This

area, between complete subjectivity and complete objectivity, in which play and aesthetic experience can occur, Winnicott named "potential space". It is this space which originally both joins and separates a mother and baby (Rudnytsky xii). In a comparable way, Rudnytsky suggests, aesthetic experience hinges upon the relationship between the object, or text, and the subjective experience of the person who confronts it (Rudnytsky xv).

Andrew Brink has also successfully applied many concepts from object relations theory to the study, in particular, of poetry. He is interested in the origins of creativity as part of a broader exploration of human interaction . In this way, he approaches the creation of poetry as a mode of symbolic behaviour that communicates on different levels to the reader, but also to the writer. Indeed, he views creativity, in part, as the symbolic repair of loss or trauma in the poet's formative relationships and the potential effects of these within the ego. As such, he sees art, at least in part, as an attempt by the artist to achieve psychological integration, without which, mental illness may occur (Brink, *Loss and Symbolic Repair* 1-5). Brink's approach is one that looks at the interaction of a writer's biography with the texts that she or he creates. He writes:

> What is gained by looking at these poets in a psychodynamic framework?...A poem standing alone is surely an interesting object, a challenge to the interpreter's sagacity and skill, but a poem placed in the life-context of its maker's conflict and hope takes on quite another aspect...To see fully the experience embodied in aesthetic form, it needs to be viewed within a framework of interpretation such as we have suggested. (Brink 238-239)

David Holbrook also uses interpretations from psychoanalysis in his approach to poets' and novelists' work. While he starts from the texts themselves, he admits the necessity of

extrapolating from the creation to the creator, but he sees this as necessary to achieve a broader appreciation of the meaning of the social context of artistic messages, especially where these messages may actually be destructive, or based on distorted perceptions, as, he believes, in the case of Sylvia Plath (Holbrook 1-2). In Holbrook's view, aesthetic experience should be related to the enrichment of life's meaning and positive cultural values that enhance human relationships. He believes our fantasy life is crucial to the growth of our capacities to deal with reality: without fantasy there is no effective consciousness. For him, the conscious exercise of the imagination, through art, is the way that human beings come to terms with mortality and the desire to transcend it. In this sense, he sees literary criticism as directly concerned with the interrelationship of external and internal phenomena (Rudnytsky 190).

I believe that a broadly psychoanalytical approach in considering the life and selected works of Lisa St. Aubin de Terán is relevant since so much of her creativity reveals a central preoccupation with the positive and negative possibilities and consequences of isolation and connection which are so central to human experience. By looking at her life, the manifest and latent messages in her work are thrown into new relief, while an examination of tensions, ambiguities and difficulties in her development as an artist, can be illuminated by object relations theories of aesthetic experience. I will concentrate on three novels: *Keepers of the House*, *Joanna*, and *Nocturne*, to examine how the themes of isolation and connection are expressed thematically and structurally within them. I have chosen these novels in particular, because they are, I believe, her strongest works. In psychobiographical terms, they also plot St. Aubin de Terán's progress towards personal integration. While *Keepers of the House* is

predominantly the expression of physical and psychological distance, *Joanna* explores the consequences and possibilities of connection. Both novels are concerned with object relations within family groups. In autobiographical terms, the former can be seen as St. Aubin de Terán's symbolic search for her father, or paternal origins. *Joanna*, on the other hand, far more directly, concerns her experience of her mother and her mother's death, and can be viewed, on one level, as the creative integration of a process of grieving. *Nocturne*, St. Aubin de Terán's most recent novel, shows the writer, coincidentally, at her most mature psychologically and artistically. This novel's central focus is the integration of the self through the imagination. As such, it concerns the experience of the artist as self-creating. I hope to demonstrate that as the writer herself has achieved a greater degree of personal integration in the world, so the quality of her artistic production has attained new levels of aesthetic unity.

CHAPTER ONE

Keepers of the House: Visions of Isolation

Keepers of the House (1982) is a curious, original work obsessed with the idea of decaying splendour. Environmental, social, physical and psychological decline are woven together in a patchwork that overwhelmingly expresses isolation. Paradoxically, St. Aubin de Terán evokes this isolation through the history and relationships of an extraordinary family group known for its extremes of beauty, creativity and social leadership on the one hand, and physical and mental deformity on the other. As Ben Pleasants points out in "Down the Andes: A Family Decline" (*Los Angeles Times Book Review* 10 Apr. 1983: 12), the author, in writing about the decline of a great family, is in keeping with a European tradition established by writers such as Balzac, Proust, Galsworthy, and Thomas Mann. The work can also perhaps be seen in the context of post-colonial literature, since the family is descended from Spanish colonists.

In writing about the Beltrán family, St. Aubin de Terán foregrounds isolation but in the context of connection. Anthony Storr, in *Solitude* (1989), notes that anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists all concur in regarding human beings as social animals who require the support and companionship of others throughout life and whose survival as a species has, from earliest times, depended upon co-operation. (Storr 11). Attachment, he

argues, can therefore be given a high place in the hierarchy of human needs (*Ibid.* 12), particularly ties to the family or social group. Storr writes, "Most members of Western society assume that close family ties will constitute an important part of their lives." These ties are supplemented by other loves and friendships. It is thus close relationships that give our lives significance, identity and meaning (*Ibid.* 12). Here, Storr quotes Peter Marris in "Attachment and Society", where Marris observes:

> The relationships that matter most to us are characteristically to particular people whom we love - - husband or wife, parents, children, dearest friend - - and sometimes to particular places - - a home or personal territory that we invest with the same loving qualities. These specific relationships, which we experience as unique and irreplaceable, seem to embody most crucially the meaning of our lives. (*Ibid.* 12)

In *Keepers of the House*, St. Aubin de Terán examines the behaviour of individuals in a family with strong ties to both a geographical location and local community. These ties, which have both positive and negative possibilities, carry a sense of meaning and identity not simply in the present, but over generations.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, as Storr notes, object relations theory tends to place human relationships centre stage in the theatre of mental health. However, he argues that the current emphasis upon intimate interpersonal relationships as the touchstone of health and happiness is a comparatively recent phenomenon of modern, affluent societies perhaps compounded by the decline of religion (*Ibid.* 1-2). He writes: "Object relations theorists believe that, from the beginning of life, human beings are seeking relationships, not merely instinctual satisfaction. They think of neurosis as representing a failure to make satisfying human relationships..." (*Ibid.* 7). While Storr agrees that early emotional experiences within

the family have a profound effect upon mental health in later life, he is less convinced that intimate personal relationships are the only source of health and happiness. Indeed, in his view, in the present climate, there is a danger that love is being idealized as the only path to human salvation (*Ibid.* 8). Storr observes that many individuals, including some highly successful and creative thinkers, such as influential scientists, philosophers and artists, have led and continue to lead equable and satisfying lives based upon work and more superficial relationships *(Ibid.* 15). Furthermore, he feels that psychoanalysis has, for the most part, omitted to consider that the capacity to be alone is also an aspect of emotional maturity and one that is crucial for learning, thinking, innovation, self-realization. and the development of imagination (*Ibid.* 18-28).

In this way, both isolation and connection have negative and positive potential in human life partly dependent upon inherited characteristics and shaped by environment. While *Keepers of the House* seems to emphasize negative isolation, it also portrays community and communication as a source of strength. In terms of Lisa St. Aubin de Terán's own life, the novel both arises from and constitutes an important and profound formative experience in which solitude and isolation had both negative and positive consequences. In personal terms, her marriage at sixteen as an extremely shy person who"virtually didn't speak at all" (Clare 403) to her equally silent Venezuelan husband, and her life with him on an isolated sugar plantation, was extremely physically and emotionally challenging. In her interview with Anthony Clare (1993), she describes how the first six months were "a complete shattering of all my dreams and expectations" (*Ibid.* 411), not least because her husband started to have

periods of mental illness soon after their arrival, during which he did not recognize her (*Ibid.* 412). Also, although emotionally close to her mother in England with whom she was in frequent contact by letter, she felt unable to reveal to her, or anyone else, the truth about her marriage, isolation, loneliness or fears.

Although her husband Jaime Terán was extremely wealthy, St. Aubin de Terán describes the estate as "in some ways quite primitive...run in a sort of semi-feudal way" (*Ibid.* 412). It was also physically remote, with no public transport, which made her a virtual prisoner. In addition, her husband's family were very powerful in the region and she was warned that she would be unable to get out of the marriage. At first, as an eighteen year old foreigner, she was ignored as an outsider by the families of workers on the estate. At the beginning, she also spoke very little Spanish. This situation, combined with geographical remoteness and her husband's mental illness, resulted in almost total physical and mental isolation until, within a year of being there, she became pregnant. Once she had a blood link to the family she was accepted. Also, she had another person who depended on her. Eventually, she developed close ties to the land and to the workers, to whom she increasingly felt responsible, protective and attached. As Clare observes, "surrounded by feudalism, poverty and disease, [she] found herself acting as unofficial doctor, nurse and social worker to the estate workers' families" (*Ibid.* 397). This was especially the case in view of Jaime Terán's increasing mental incapacity, which resulted in her assuming, as time went on, more and more responsibility for the running of the plantation. As she explains to Anthony Clare:

> I realised I was going to have to leave about three years before I did because by that time my relationship with Jaime had broken down. Really from the time that Iseult [her first child] was a tiny baby...our relationship was deteriorating and he was becoming increasingly more unpredictable, more violent and there were a lot of very unpleasant incidents on the estate in which he was involved and I felt, I've got to leave while I still can. Because I think sometimes when you live with somebody who is very mentally unstable you can wind up becoming quite mentally unstable yourself. I felt this was a danger for me...I also felt in physical danger from him. He'd two or three times caused me quite serious injuries and he never had any recollection of anything he did, but I began to be quite frightened, physically frightened of him...I was frightened for my daughter and I realised it was going to be very difficult, physically, to get away. (Clare 416)

Eventually, she escaped abroad with her daughter, ostensibly to seek medical treatment for kidney problems.

Keepers of the House can be seen in the context of St. Aubin de Terán's own intense experience of physical, emotional and social isolation in Venezuela during the 1970s, although she sets the narrative two decades further back in time. This isolation was compounded, at least initially, by her cultural and linguistic separation as a foreigner. It was exacerbated by mental illness, marital violence and the threat of violence in the wider community. In addition, the novel can be viewed as an autobiographical act in which the author attempts to psychologically process painful, dangerous and chaotic life events, which she feels threatened her mental health, into an ordered pattern. As a result, a new sense of identity emerges. As she admits to Clare, she felt angry and bitter about this chapter of her life, for several years afterwards. She felt anger towards her ex-husband, but also towards herself for being so foolish as to have got into such a situation and wasted so many years of her life (Clare 418). Now a mature woman in her forties, she no longer feels bitter or blaming for, as she explains,

"I see [it] as though I'd sort of taken a sieve and sifted things out. I've sifted out the things mostly that I want to remember and want to take out from that experience" (*Ibid.* 415). Surely, writing the novel formed part of this psychological process, as, on one level, *Keepers of the House* can be read as a kind of farewell to Jaime, dedicated as it is to him, and, at a deeper level, to his family and to their marriage.

What St. Aubin de Terán sees now about her time in Venezuela, as she explains to Clare, are positive ways in which the experience changed her. Loneliness, for instance, developed the communicative side of her personality. Previously very shy and uncomfortable socially, she was impelled by her own need for contact to seek conversation. In *Keepers of the House*, this need is satisfied by the retainer Benito Mendoza, who tells Lydia all the family tales, and to whom the novel is also dedicated. In her interview with *Contemporary Authors* (1987), St. Aubin de Terán admits that he really existed and that, "It was as is written", in other words, she has retold the stories as they were told to her (*Contemporary Authors.* 126: 386). In the novel she describes the relationship between the young Lydia and the elderly, alcoholic Benito as "a well of mutual strength" (*Keepers of the House* 28), a highly significant analogy, in a setting characterized by drought. Thus, Lydia, in the novel, turns from someone who"rarely spoke at all" (*Ibid.* 29), into someone able not only to listen to stories, but to enjoy telling them, too. St. Aubin de Terán writes, "Benito and she sat very close together in the evenings, regaling each other with stories that they both knew off by heart" (*Ibid.* 33).

Surviving and mentally coping alone in a harsh physical and bewildering emotional environment so far removed from her previous life experience in England, and for which she

felt totally unprepared, made St. Aubin de Terán, as she tells Clare, aware of a toughness, determination and resilience within herself that she had previously felt was lacking (Clare 416). As Clare puts it, she "contained this disaster inside" (*Ibid.* 413). She explains, "It was rough in a way that I just had no preparation for and I coped with it and that gave me a lot of confidence for other things in my life. I felt I had actually dealt with this. I was running this estate" (*Ibid.* 415-416). Furthermore, her daughter Iseult had a series of tropical diseases from babyhood to the age of five so that St. Aubin de Terán felt she was constantly struggling to keep her alive. Interestingly, the death of a child and its psychological consequences are explored by St. Aubin de Terán in both *Keepers of the House* and, to a greater extent, in *The Bay of Silence*. The theme of grief for lost children is also present in *Joanna* and *Nocturne*.

The author's need to create and the act of creating itself seem to have been a way of dealing with potentially overwhelming emotions and deep-seated fears. Certainly during her time in Venezuela, St. Aubin de Terán's use of imagination may well have been extremely effective as a defense against the threat of mental disintegration of which she has spoken. As Andrew Brink writes in *Creativity as Repair: Bipolarity and its Closure* (1982),"Creativity can function as an emergency defence against depression. When life brings stresses beyond what are easily handled, creativity can become essential to maintaining the ego" (Brink 3). Creativity, thus, becomes the symbolic repair of damaging life events, in particular of loss. St. Aubin de Terán's writing can be seen as repair for the loss of her husband's mental health, their marriage and the consequences for her own sense of self. Perhaps, too, the writing of *Keepers of the House* represents a retreat from a painful reality, and a feeling of

powerlessness, into the world of the family stories. As she writes of Lydia Sinclair (whose name resembles her own), "She would find order in the chaos, and action through...words" (*Keepers of the House* 15). At another level, the novel can be seen as a method of mentally processing her actual experiences, but at a certain distance, since she is primarily concerned with characters other than herself. As Brink also writes, "This is the paradox of art, that it signifies without full disclosure, that it protects from the very torment revealed...." (Brink, *Loss and Symbolic Repair: A Psychological Study of Some English Poets [*1977] 182).

St. Aubin de Terán's isolation in Venezuela can be regarded as having had a positive effect upon the development of her identity, her imagination and her writing skills; all of which are interrelated. As she writes of Lydia, "More than anything, Lydia buried herself in her research [on the family]" (*Ibid.* 27). In her desire to preserve the stories, Lydia must overcome self-doubt; she is described as "at a loss to know how to set about such a task. She was not a natural story-teller...She began by imagining people one by one as shapes on paper, cutting them out and threading them together like beads on a rosary, or stones on a choker" (*Ibid.* 29). Here it is interesting that St. Aubin de Terán should make Lydia's starting point a period of imaginative play in which, like a child, she places objects in physical and psychological relation to one another and to herself. Given Winnicott's theory of art having origins in childhood play and transitional objects, St. Aubin de Terán's analogy seems apposite.

It seems clear that she managed to write a great deal in Venezuela, despite, perhaps, doubts about her abilities and the work of the farm and caring for her child. As she tells

Contemporary Authors, "the material from *The Long Way Home* was all written while I was living in Venezuela...and was selected from a much larger body of work. I had probably five or six times as much material as I included in the book, written up as short stories" (*Contemporary Authors* 126: 386). She explains that the novel started out as a collection of these stories, to which she later added the autobiographical frame, in order to try to make it more accessible. She adds, "I'm not very interested in the autobiographical side of my work. It's really an endeavour to represent other people" (*Ibid.* 387). While this may be true, St. Aubin de Terán nevertheless writes from her own life, about real characters in real places, many of whom share, or perhaps unconsciously mirror, her own psychological concerns. While the novel appears not to deal, in a direct way, with aspects of her personal experience in Venezuela, in particular the emotions engendered by her marriage and the reasons for its failure, nevertheless the psychological landscape of the novel, as a kind of subconscious subtext, seems to express the writer's emotions in a universalised or mythologized form. For instance, there is a sense of understatement or detachment about Lydia's experience, only small clues to her inner life are given, such as the rather ambiguous, "It was a lonely way to live" (*Keepers of the House* 27). However, the drought that destroys the valley can surely also be interpreted on a psychological level as the absence of sustaining warmth and intimacy in Diego and Lydia's relationship.

The narrative frame for the stories in the body of the novel does provide a meaningful context for them. For instance, it places Diego's behaviour against a backdrop of family and personal psychological history. Furthermore, in a sense, it provides the main action of the

work: Lydia's marriage, her arrival in Venezuela, the loss of her first child, along with the breakdown of the marriage and concomitant decline of the household and estate. These chance events accumulate in the urgent need to take control and escape and they are seen as the result of unassailable external forces. When Lydia looks back she sees, "a clear succession of catastrophes accumulating their debris in great dunes that changed the pattern of her life" (*Keepers of the House* 25). Here it seems significant that Benito, one of the keepers of the house and guardian of the stories, must die before Lydia can take control and assume full possession of them. Diego, likewise, must be reduced to a state of living death. Yet Lydia can only escape, in the novel, by taking her husband, the stories, and their unborn heir with her. In reality, St. Aubin de Terán had to leave Jaime, but there is a sense in which she carries his "best self" into her imagination. Her unborn child, at the end of the novel, can be seen, in this sense, as the novel itself waiting to be realised or the imminent birth of the writer's artistic life.

Paradoxically, the stimulation of Lydia's imagination, like St. Aubin de Terán's own, as well, perhaps, as her need to hear the family stories to alleviate loneliness and to feel connected, arises from the central emptiness and lack of communication in her marriage. The dynamics of this relationship, however, are mysterious. As a result, both Diego and Lydia remain rather shadowy figures. In a sense, the silence between them is the central void around which Lydia builds the castle of her fantasies and around which St. Aubin de Terán builds the novel. St. Aubin de Terán writes: "Diego and Lydia had what was really more of an understanding than a marriage. Even when Lydia's Spanish had become second nature to

her, they spoke very little, because Diego was an unusually silent man....So the estate became the missing link in their silent marriage" (*Ibid.* 12).

Yet the couple share a tendency to preserve and idealize the past. Lydia, for instance, wears Edwardian clothes. Their mutual enjoyment of family history, and the value they place upon it, is a connection between them, but one that cannot ultimately substitute for real communication. However, the breakdown of the marriage is hinted at, rather than stated, and Lydia remains loyal to Diego by physically rescuing him at the end. St. Aubin de Terán writes of Lydia, "In these middle years, in the face of her own marriage's failure, Lydia fought and challenged everything that threatened to erode the valley's strength" (*Ibid.* 17). Here, her overwhelming desire to save the estate seems to express attachment to her husband and suggests a subconscious transfer of object attachment. However, the attachment is unsatisfactory. Thus, "He and Lydia seemed united by some invisible bond, that kept them close to each other, but alone" (*Ibid.* 27). The only time we witness the marriage relationship in action is after the death of their child, when Lydia has withdrawn herself and Diego breaks open the door to exhort her to weep. Here, he speaks of how sorrow and death unite her with the family and the community in a common bond of suffering. He declares,"'We have no refuge other than in each other'" and "'We cling together like threads in a cloth'" (*Ibid.* 25). It is a strangely impersonal speech, which could equally well have been spoken by Benito. Although Diego's understanding of her grief is believable, his own self-imposed isolation belies his professed belief in community.

Diego's physical and emotional distance seems only partly explained by his kidney

disease, and later in the novel, his stroke, or by Lydia's own quietness. She, as a schoolgirl, for instance, is intrigued and attracted by his bizarre behaviour; his silence, yet persistence, in wooing her, a stranger half his age, glimpsed on the street. St. Aubin de Terán writes, "She liked to feel herself enclosed by greatness, rocking between extremes. It was the extremes that first attracted her to her husband" (*Ibid.* 11). Later, the author refers to his "manic isolation" (*Ibid.* 28), into which he chooses to retreat as an escape from his responsibilities and perhaps his fears. He has, it seems, always sought solitude, especially in the afternoons, when he habitually fingers the family tiles and repeats to himself all the family tales in a kind of religious ritual. His one intimate relationship appears to have been with his father, with whom he spent a great deal of time, until his father's death in 1945, when Diego was twenty-four. St. Aubin de Terán writes that "they needed each other to an extent that neither could understand. It was often commented that they were like lovers" (*Ibid.* 138). This description indicates an unhealthy, almost incestuous, closeness. As a result, Diego's grief is intense and prolonged. He "had stopped at that moment" (*Ibid.* 142); in other words, he has not gone through a normal process of separation and maturation. Instead, he appears to have chosen mental suffering as a form of continued identification with his father. Here he is compared to Jesuits who inflict constant physical pain upon themselves. Consequently, although neither Diego nor Lydia speak of it, "they both knew and accepted that Diego had a kind of sleeping sickness of the heart" (*Ibid.* 27). In other words, his problems are not simply physiological but psychological.

Yet there is also the suggestion, at the beginning of the novel, that even after his

father's death he has not always been so apathetic or withdrawn. In fact, "despite his present apathy [he] had done more to change... [the estate's] future" than "any other member of the family" (*Ibid.* 12). Towards the end of the novel, when Diego seems reduced to nothing more than a living corpse, this idea is further developed, as when Lydia reflects, "All his work and thoughts and dreams were scattered and buried in the empty fields, and no one would ever know - -to look at him now - -how very nearly he had saved the valley...But in recent years there had been only one rule: that of the drought" (*Ibid.* 174-175). It is difficult to square this image, coming so late in the narrative, with what we already know of Diego's acute passivity. In addition, earlier St. Aubin de Terán also writes more vaguely about his efforts "to ease the lives of friends and neighbours" but concludes "he would be remembered as an honourable man, not because of what he did, but because of what he was" (*Ibid.* 143). This seems somewhat contradictory about identity. Is it then, somehow essential, or does it reside in action and interaction?

Unlike the real marriage of St. Aubin de Terán to Jaime Terán, her fictionalized representation portrays the husband as a withdrawn but non-threatening figure. Interestingly, perhaps as wish fulfilment in the novel, Lydia is able, in a feat of superhuman strength, to save both herself, her child and him and so keeps the family intact. Perhaps from the desire for a degree of privacy, St. Aubin de Terán avoids any mention of violence or physical threat in the relationship of Lydia and Diego, and her own kidney disease to some extent covers her real experience of his mental illness. Instead, violence, madness, disease and danger appear elsewhere in the novel . Unpredictability and the physical threat to Lydia and her child, in

particular, are portrayed in the strange episode of the vulture Napoleon. Curiously, at a subconscious level, the bird seems linked to Diego, for alone in the library he reads *Lives of Napoleon.* Also Diego's eyes are described as "sad like Napoleon's and, like his, they followed her around" (*Ibid.* 32). The bird has a curious, unexplained attachment to Lydia and cannot be left alone. Gradually it becomes more temperamental, jealous and erratic. It starts to attack her, darting its ferocious beak at any wound, however small. When her child is born, in a nightmarish image, the bird pecks a hole in the wall and glares at the baby "with jealous savagery" (*Ibid.* 23). Ultimately she must rid herself of the pet since he has become too dangerous.

"The Floor of Gold" is, perhaps, the most optimistic section of the novel, since it deals, in essence with the birth of the Beltrán family, or at least with its saviour by chance events. Like Diego and Lydia's estate, it features "a crumbling mansion" (*Ibid.* 41) isolated, and almost consumed by decay, which is, in effect, a prison for the "two captive princesses" (*Ibid.* 43), the Labastida sisters. The story, like much of the novel, has a fairy tale style and atmosphere, with larger than life characters and magical, seemingly pre-ordained, events. This is reflected in an exaggerated style of narration that Lydia associates with Venezuelan culture and use of language. However, it also serves to distance the reader from the text by distorting the representation of the external world. The Beltrán brothers arrive, for example, "like half-gods from the hills" in whose fair hair the moonlight catches"like haloes of pale fire" (*Ibid.* 42). Consequently, the women are saved from a life narrowly circumscribed by their father's reverence for tradition and his attempt to control his family from beyond the grave.

His motives are ostensibly to protect the family from the effects of continued inbreeding, but, in reality, he is motivated by greed and the love of his gold. As in a fairy-tale, however, the good and the beautiful are rewarded. The couples' desire to unite and to procreate, shown literally by the building of a new home, is rewarded by the discovery of the Labastida twins' rightful inheritance, hidden under the porcelain tiles of their old hall floor. As a result of this gold, the family is saved from destruction. Hidden treasure, thus, becomes associated with the preservation of identity. Instead of new tiles, both couples are drawn to preserve the old ones because of their beauty and craftsmanship. Because of the story, these tiles assume the importance of "Catholic relics" (*Ibid.* 50) for later generations, imbued with great symbolic importance and a sense of family identity. They are seen as pieces of history or "fragments of a puzzle" (*Ibid.* 49) which Lydia must piece together in her narratives. Like the stories, and the various family members, each tile is unique and separate, but together they form a whole.

This chapter portrays rescue from isolation and decay, by marriage, gold and chance. Wealth enables the Beltráns to restore the Labastida estate and to become powerful and influential, although ultimately even wealth is not enough to protect them from the drought. St. Aubin de Terán writes, "Until well into the twentieth century..., [they] would have the finest farm equipment, livestock and installations" (*Ibid.* 48). This success breeds notoriety. It gives them the leisure to become innovators of technical and social change. They introduce the first bicycle, and later, the first car, to Venezuela. But the power of wealth is also a source of pride and eccentricity. Because of their high status in society, the excesses

of certain family members become tolerated by the wider community. Hence, Beltráns are remembered for both negative and positive influences on those around them, or for sheer harmless folly, as in the case of 'Admiral Silence' who spent twenty years in self-imposed silence, only to break it to upbraid somebody. Another kind of isolation is represented in the story of Mario Beltrán "military hero and inventor" (*Ibid.* 56) who survived leprosy for twenty-three years. Removed from human contact for fear of infecting others, and without disclosing his disease, he continued to design and invent, while becoming a kind of oracle of doom for local people who would come to ask his advice. Here, self-imposed semi-isolation seems to be the denial of vulnerability since "no one [must] comfort him- - not even his wife" (*Ibid.* 58). This is perceived by St. Aubin de Terán as evidence of self-control, dignity and the determination to endure in spite of physical and mental suffering.

Because of the indomitable energy and determination of various family members, Diego sees their influence on the community as positive: "He knew that the local people saw his family as a saving force that would see them through their constant battle with disease" (*Ibid.* 56). However, "The Massacre" deals with a chapter in the family history which Benito regards as evidence of a spiritual disease which will lead to their decline. He sees it as "the turning point in their history, and the first of many steps in their slow decline" (*Ibid.* 56). Perhaps it is significant that this pivotal event should come in 1903, at the beginning of the twentieth century, and when the family appears to be at the zenith of its success.

At this time, the leader of the family is Rodrigo Beltrán,"an uncrowned king and leader of his people" , who farms the land along with five brothers on neighbouring estates.

Rodrigo, with his lands, forms " the heart of the valley" (*Ibid.* 59). However, his popularity and power cause jealousy on his wife's side of the family. The accusation that he has caused his sister-in-law, Maria Candelaria, to lose her virginity results in the girl's brothers trying to kill him and the capture and murder of his brothers . Maria's fiancé, General Laurado del Toro, believing her to have been wronged, involves his troops. The local population, however, sides with the Beltrán family. A bloody riot ensues in which the General is killed by Benito's brother. Mortally wounded, he calls a ceasefire, but not before five of Rodrigo's brothers have died along with many others from both sides. Rodrigo, ambushed by his brothers-in-law, has his jaw shot away, but miraculously survives to seek treatment in the United States.

This chapter shows the negative potential of families or social groups to destroy themselves. Groups traditionally form as a defense against the threat from outside. Here, St. Aubin de Terán shows the devastating consequences of a threat from within.. Negative feelings flare into violence which endanger individuals and the local social fabric, since they represent a transgression of codes of behaviour that have ordered relationships for generations. For the surviving family members, the effects of this violence are profound and affect subsequent generations. Betrayal of trust and grief for loss become fixed in the collective memory. Forgiveness is difficult. Hence, it takes fourteen years for Rodrigo to forgive his wife for not having warned him before the attack, even though to do so would have risked the lives of her children. The children are affected by Rodrigo's attitude since he will not talk to her and she is banished from the family home every night. Likewise, Sara and

Rosa's lives are profoundly coloured by the loss of their father Pedro, one of Rodrigo's murdered brothers, and their mother's resulting grief and bitterness.

Interestingly, the catalyst to this horrifying explosion of hatred and bloodshed is the love of the General for Maria Candelaria. Her own fears of his discovery, after their marriage, that she has already broken codes of behaviour controlling female sexuality, cause her to lie in order to protect herself from punishment by death. But her lie about the loss of her virginity is also seemingly motivated by jealousy of Rodrigo's wife, her sister. Ironically, the General's attachment to Maria is based upon his own romantic fantasy. They are virtual strangers when their wedding is decided. He is infatuated by an image of her beauty and has totally idealized her, in the same way that he and his mother have a close, but mutually idealizing, relationship. He has no idea that Maria is wild, vain, spoilt and selfish. He sees "an angel", a paragon of innocence, and purity, with "the clearest, most honest eyes" he has ever seen (*Ibid.* 63). This might be humorous, if the consequences were not so tragic. Imagination, then, can be dangerous, if it draws us into danger by masking reality.

"The Eagle" also explores the theme of the breakdown of control, both personal and social, but through the character of one family member, Arturo Lino, a "strange recluse" (*Ibid.* 94). Ironically, he did not take part in the massacre because he was already in a mental asylum for murder. Here, St. Aubin de Terán sees the causes and effects of isolation as a vicious circle. Arturo Lino's violence is interpreted, in part, as the extreme expression of loneliness and vulnerability, for "his own loneliness and sensitivity had slowly twisted from misery to murder" (*Ibid.* 97). The origins of his mental illness are not explained, although

inbreeding seems a possibility. What appears to differentiate him from other family members is not his "wildness" but his "confusion" and lack of control (*Ibid.* 96). These traits are exacerbated by alcohol.

As Storr writes, "When we speak of a person being neurotic or psychotic, we imply that his ego, his conscious, ratiocinating self, has been to some extent overwhelmed... and...[this shows] in the form of symptoms" (*The Dynamics of Creation*, [1972] 204). In addition, psychoanalysis sees madness as the breakdown of the ability to distinguish between external and internal reality. Storr also writes:

> There is always something unsatisfactory and even dangerous in possessing an inner world which is utterly unconnected with the outer world. For the schizoid person, the inability to find any connection between outer and inner is a perpetual threat; for the failure to do so has the result that life becomes meaningless and futile....
>
> It is in schizophrenia that the inability to make any link between inner and outer worlds is seen in its full malignancy. The schizophrenic becomes 'mad' when he substitutes his inner world for external reality, and it becomes obvious that ordinary people can neither share nor understand his way of looking at things. There is generally a long precursory history of failure to find satisfaction in the external world, and a correspondingly intense preoccupation with phantasy. (Storr 177)

Whatever the label that might be given to Arturo Lino's illness, St. Aubin shows insight and compassion in portraying it in terms comparable to Storr's. A failure of Arturo's ego construction and his inability to form relationships, coupled with a frustrated need for attachment, creates unbearable ego conflict that results in violence, and increased social isolation. As St. Aubin de Terán writes, "For years now, no sign of friendship had come Arturo Lino's way from anyone, let alone the chance to love that he longed for" (*Keepers of the House* 108). Clearly, because of his antisocial behaviour, his relationships with family

members are not close and do not sustain him. They are the cause of more internal conflict, since he feels he cannot wholly belong to the family, nor escape from it.

Without attachment, Arturo Lino's life is meaningless. Isolation increases the role of his fantasy life and decreases his ability to act constructively or consistently. He neglects his farm, for example. He hates the waste of his life, but is paralysed by his own inertia. Hatred of others and self-hatred become confused. As a result, he "was terrified of having died without noticing it; and when people smiled or nodded or even turned away, he believed that they were referring to his state of physical decay, and he would strike at his own fears through them, dispelling his own doubts as he stabbed and shrugged. They were shadows in his nightmares, ghosts of his own fantasy, haunting his escape" (*Ibid.* 101). Ultimately, it is the murder of a mother and child that forces the community to take action and confine him. Before this, his excesses have been tolerated because of the influence of his family. Here it seems symbolic that his final act is to attack a powerful image of human identification and attachment: a child at its mother's breast.

In "The Five Wheels", St. Aubin de Terán explores the nature of the relationships of five family members to each other, but in particular to the central character in this grouping, Diego's father Alejandro Beltrán, the son of Rodrigo. He has inherited his father's estates and sugar mill, and longs to "find and erect the biggest cane-crusher in the Andes" (*Ibid.* 126). The new cane crusher is to have five cog-wheels. He dreams of it as "a work of art, a temple of fullness and emptiness, a hungry void" (*Ibid.* 127). This is an interesting analogy since it portrays Alejandro's dream as driven by an artistic need or desire. Interestingly, it reveals a

perception of art as the interplay of desire with satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Alejandro shows creativity in other areas of his life. He is a popular politician and State Governor who makes guitars in his spare time, plants trees and grows orchids.

The symbol of the cog-wheels is primarily one of waste and frustration. Isabel, Alejandro's cousin and lover, is ultimately unfulfilled by her relationship with him, since it fails to satisfy her own "voracious emptiness" (*Ibid.* 132). She sees the cog-wheels in terms of lovers "touching but never holding" (*Ibid.* 131). This perception of the insufficiency of human relationships seems related to her own illegitimate place within the family and her childhood spent in her aunt's household. Her lack of status in the family hierarchy has denied her the possibility of marriage with Alejandro. In turn, Isabel has a connection to her cousin and friend Maria Yolanda, "the third wheel" (*Ibid.* 132) who longs for a child but whose infertility leads to depression and suicide. The fourth wheel, Elias, is Alejandro's dead brother, who has inherited his father's artistic temperament as well as striking physical beauty. In 1918, he goes to New York to study painting, but he dies there of pneumonia. Diego's relationship to him, therefore, is characterized by the frustration of loss and the hunger of grief. He himself is the fifth wheel, closely identified with his father and also profoundly affected by his death. As a whole, "The Five Wheels" seems to portray human connectedness, particularly within a family, as crucial to self- identity. However, the threat of isolation and disintegration seems greater than the power of love and intimacy to sustain individuals through traumatic events. Is this, perhaps why Alejandro's dream of the great *trapiche* remains unrealised? He has assembled the pieces, but is never able to mount them.

Sara and Rosa's life, as told in "The House of Cards", is also the story of unfulfilled dreams. Here again, unresolved grief seems to play a significant part in the characters' inability to fulfil their human potential. These two sisters provide a link with the first Labastida sisters. The family, in a sense, has come full circle. Unlike their forbears, however, they are not rescued by chance events. As Sara reflects, "Nothing had worked out as Rosa and she had wanted it to. The two of them had spent a life of waiting" (*Ibid.* 146). Their mother's domination of their lives and her own bitterness about their father's death in the family massacre, has resulted in their social isolation. As a consequence, they have never learned to form relationships outside their home and rely on each other for constant companionship. Other potential relationships have been substituted by an extreme mutual attachment to the family past and to their mother's china collection. Their fear of leaving the house is transformed into a fear of intruders and a threat to the china. As a result, the sisters have isolated themselves. They pass the time by playing cards together. Their extreme passivity and lack of will power to direct their own lives, is shown in their reliance on the cards, and chance, to make even the smallest decisions about their narrow daily routine.

Is Rosa and Sara's isolation the cause or an effect of the decline of the family? Certainly, they appear to idealize the family and cannot accept their own fears of imperfection, as shown by the horror with which they regard their disabled half-brother, the chemist, and dwarf cousin, the shop keeper. Their retreat from the risks of life into their card games is an escape from the reality of time, loss and the inevitability of death. Furthermore, it is a denial of the desire for positive change. Even the sisters' relationship is not a fully satisfactory

substitute for the consequences of their shared solitude. Sara, in particular, longs for someone to love, for "it was strange how little and how much they understood each other" (*Ibid.* 155). When Rosa dies unexpectedly, Sara's inability to appeal for help outside the house leads her to accept suicide as the only logical course of action, even though she is reluctant to do so. She believes her decision to die is the hand of fate.

The last member of the family to be dealt with is also the oldest survivor, Christobal, who is over a hundred when Lydia prepares to leave. Like Arturo Lino, he is another example of extreme isolation. In his case, however, he has chosen solitude as a defence against his grief for the early loss of his mother and the savage cruelty of his brothers, who punish his unconventional desire to roam the countryside, by cutting off his leg. Does Christobal, then, also suffer from a form of madness? Like many other Beltráns, he is characterized by silence. His bizarre behaviour is, however, harmless. In fact, his wanderings around the various esates, represent for Lydia, another form of guardianship; a non-verbal expression of attachment and loyalty. He, too, is a witness of the family history and another example of the extraordinary strength of determination shared by some family members. Although the behaviour of his brothers has caused him to sever his family ties, it is important for Lydia to see him before she leaves. In her eyes, his solitude becomes a symbol of shared suffering and community. St. Aubin de Terán writes: "Despite the distance, Lydia could see him more clearly, more clearly, in fact, than ever before, and it seemed to her suddenly that the halo [of his hair] was composed entirely of splintered bones. He turned and walked away, taking with him his strange head-dress of a lifetime's hunger" (*Ibid.* 183). Here he seems like

a Christ figure, the crown of bones linking him to Christ's crown of thorns. In the lines that follow, the bones become those eaten by the family and the community, in times of both plenty and starvation. They are also the remains of past generations associated with "splinters of china" and "hidden wish-bones" (*Ibid.* 183).

Keepers of the House is a strangely discomforting work which draws upon a fascination for extremes and reflects them in a pattern of exaggerated images. Many of the stories express themes that appear, at least in part, to be external representations of the author's own sublimated internal experience of her time in Venezuela. For example, the oppressive atmosphere of futility and of time passing as a kind of imprisonment, seem related to her own failing marriage and isolation. The novel also dramatizes tensions between the overwhelming nature of physical reality, as in the drought that destroys the valley, and the potential of human energy and willpower to act, or in some other way, provide meaning in the face of the inevitability of decline and death. Extremes of power and helplessness abound in the stories. Many of the central characters have selfhoods distorted by social and physical isolation. They show an inability to communicate or to establish relationships, which results in silence and solitude. For Arturo Lino and Christobal, this is the cause or effect of violence and madness. Other characters, particularly parents to children, are so closely identified that separation is insupportable. Death, and the threat of death, is pervasive. Hunger, both physical and emotional, is a constant. There is little to relieve the darkness of the novel, except the prospect of escape and new hope for the future, and the transformation of chaos into order through imagination. This is reflected in the way separate incidents and stories are

brought together into a coherent picture, although sometimes links seem tenuous. Rather than love and tenderness, or religious belief, as a binding force,"strength of mind and body" (*Keepers of the House* 183) and endurance are what emerge from the nightmare world of the novel, as qualities of lasting value.

Narrative, too, is important, as a defence against destruction and, perhaps, as a way of setting painful reality at a distance. This can be seen in the importance of the stories to family members themselves and to Lydia, the artist, who is conscious of retelling what has already been told. Hence the expression of imagination becomes an important aspect of the ability of the human spirit to survive with dignity against impossible odds. Perhaps herein lies its hidden beauty. As Ben Pleasants writes in "Down the Andes: A Family Decline", "there is a curious, haunting quality to this book; it is the smell of heliotrope carried across the slave quarters of a rotting plantation. There is an essence here as well as a stench" (*Los Angeles Times Book Review*, 10 Apr. 1983: 12).

CHAPTER TWO

Joanna: The Dangers of Connection

Joanna (1990), Lisa St. Aubin de Terán's sixth novel, is "arguably the most revealingly autobiographical of all the fiction she has written" (Clare 396). Like *Keepers of the House*, it is focussed on the history of a particular, real family and the effects upon it of environmental and social change. Like the earlier novel, *Joanna* portrays an isolated group and is concerned with questions of material, physiological and psychological inheritance. However, unlike in *Keepers of the* House, where the characters in the stories may be related but do not necessarily interact, in *Joanna*, St. Aubin de Terán explores the causes and effects of mental illness within a dynamic family unit of three generations of women closely related and involved with one another. In this sense, the novel can be seen as far more concerned with the positive and negative possibilities of connection, than with isolation.

As autobiography, *Joanna* can be regarded as an exploration by St. Aubin de Terán of her own conception of her identity. For the novel can be seen as, in part, her search for her origins, as a connected person within her family's historical narrative. In psychoanalytic terms, this process may be seen as part of the subjective "abandonment of the multiple identifications with parents and other people [which] is, for the ordinary person, the beginning of the discovery of his [or her] own unique, true identity" (Storr, *The Dynamics of Creation*

223). As Storr adds, it appears that, at least, some creative people spend their lives trying to discover and consolidate their own sense of identity, and that this provides the motive force for their creative endeavours (*Ibid.* 223). Thus, by fictionalising the formative experiences of her own mother, experiences which were inevitably to affect St. Aubin de Terán's own childhood and psychological development, she places herself in a new relationship to the past, just as she, literally, writes herself into the story. Hence, she creates, through her text, a psychological and historical context that gives meaning to her own life and art. She herself, however, does not perceive the novel as autobiographical. As she tells Clare: "I like writing about aspects of lives of people who are close to me so a novel like *Joanna* isn't really autobiographical - - it's biographical. It's about people I knew or knew about but not about myself" (Clare 400).

Be that as it may, the "aspects" that St. Aubin de Terán chooses to work on in her imagination are often ones that appear to concern her own life experience. Mental illness, for example, recurs throughout her fiction. As Clare writes:

> The causes of mental instability are these days attributed to genes, environment or a mixture of both. By such reckoning, Lisa St. Aubin de Terán is a candidate for serious psychiatric difficulties and she has in fact experienced them. Her family history for psychiatric disorder is rich. Not merely did both her parents suffer psychiatric ill-health but her maternal grandmother died in an asylum, certified insane. Her own mother was seriously and suicidally depressed when pregnant with Lisa and spent much of the pregnancy in a psychiatric hospital. (Clare 395-396)

In *Joanna*, Joanna's breakdown, while pregnant with Lisa, is portrayed as the direct result of Joanna's own search for identity. Her own experience of motherhood awakens her latent

curiosity about her mother with whom she has had no contact for over a decade. By seeking out her parent, towards whom she still projects longings for a normal and meaningful attachment, she attempts to reconcile her adult self with her conflicted childhood identifications. This attempt at psychological integration is brutally defeated. When she finds her mother, now physically restrained in an asylum, Joanna relives, once again, the total rejection and distorted perceptions of her childhood world, a world she has tried to forget. She is verbally attacked. Because her ego defences are weak, her fragile sense of identity and self-worth collapses. She reflects, "Everything was lost. Fourteen years of my life, all my escape, obliterated" (*Joanna* 255). The result, in the novel, is her immediate attempt at suicide, five months of paralysis, six months of psychiatric treatment and years of denial that the encounter ever occurred. Here, the implication seems to be that relationships can be dangerous. Words are powerful and wounding but the past must be dealt with, it cannot be ignored or repressed, if we are to face life and death, with a measure of equanimity. As Joanna lies dying, it is the unresolved pain of her relationship with her mother that troubles her. St. Aubin de Terán writes: "If I can untangle what I feel about Mother, I can lie back and die" (*Joanna* 257). St. Aubin de Terán writes of the real Joanna, "My mother was deeply traumatised by her mother. It weighed on her all her life. She couldn't bear to die not understanding why she had been the cause and butt of such hatred. During her last months, she returned obsessively to the subject. In her final coma, she called to her" (letter to the author, Dec. 1996).

By dealing with her mother's past, St. Aubin de Terán comes much closer than in

Keepers of the House, to her own life and the relational dynamics that have shaped it and her art. Both intense connection, on the one hand, and separation on the other, characterize her experience of her own parents. Her mother, Joanna, married four times and had four daughters, St. Aubin de Terán 's half-sisters. She met St. Aubin de Terán 's father, Jan Rynveld, in a mental hospital where they were both recovering from nervous breakdowns. He was a novelist and professor of Afro-Caribbean studies, from the former British Guyana. The marriage ended when St. Aubin de Terán was only a year old (Clare 399). As a result, her childhood "was a disjointed and fragmented affair" (Clare 396) coloured by her keen awareness of her mother's struggles, both financial and emotional, to raise her four daughters as a single parent. St. Aubin de Terán writes in *Off the Rails: Memoirs of a Train Addict* (1989), that, before the age of four, she had lived in four different homes. As Storr observes in *Solitude* (1988), "Perpetual travel, or frequent moves of house, are often engaged in by the maternally deprived or by those who, for other reasons, find it difficult to create a place which they can consider 'home'" (Storr 113). When St. Aubin de Terán was five, "the family's very precarious fortunes collapsed...and we moved to what was then an insalubrious area of Clapham" (*Memoirs of a Train Addict* 12).

While St. Aubin de Terán developed what she describes to Clare, in her interview, as "an almost unnaturally close relationship" (Clare 406) with her mother, her father was, through her childhood, a mysterious, distant figure associated with an affluent lifestyle, creativity, travel and romantic intrigue. In *Off the Rails*, St. Aubin de Terán describes her father as "huge and alarmingly charming" (18). He is "a playwright, novelist, poet, painter,

singer, actor, diplomat, politician, journalist, professor and playboy, and extremely successful at all of them" (*Ibid.* 18). In other words, he seems larger than life; a colourful figure in what she describes as a childhood "more and more bereft of colour and of any chance to escape" (*Ibid.* 16). Jan seems to have been a stimulus to St. Aubin de Terán 's young imagination; a figure of curiosity and projected fantasy, since his visits were sporadic and often *ad hoc* affairs, coming at anything from three monthly to three yearly intervals, and with arrangements constantly shifting at the last minute (*Ibid.* 18). In addition, these visits were often complicated by his numerous "amorous imbroglios" (*Ibid.* 18) about which St. Aubin de Terán was ambivalent. He appears to have enjoyed the intrigue, but when things became too difficult, he would simply flee. As St. Aubin de Terán tells Clare, he kept himself a "moving target" by continuously travelling (Clare 402). As a result, she learned not to depend upon her father from an early age. She writes:

> I loved Jan, and was proud of him, but I knew that he had broken my mother's heart and spirit. Had I expected too much of him, he might have broken mine. As it was, I quickly learned to believe neither his postcards nor his many promises, and to make the most of his rumbustious company while he was there. (*Ibid.* 20)

In contrast to the evident drama of Jan's occasional visits and his flamboyant detachment (Clare 395), St. Aubin de Terán 's life with her sisters was overshadowed by their mother's constant anxiety about money, her disappointment with Jan, with life and the threat of recurring depression. Linked to this is St. Aubin de Terán's perception of London suburban life as dull and monotonous, a view perhaps filtered by identification with her mother and her own early experience of chronic, misdiagnosed illness that left her tired. This

condition ultimately led to a year in hospital, when she was nine. Interestingly, as Clare observes, there are constant references in her writing to an anxiety about boredom and dullness and to boredom as a disease (Clare 398). In her interview with Clare, St. Aubin de Terán explains how she felt especially close to and protective of her mother. She felt, perhaps as the youngest child, that she received the bulk of her mother's affection and time, that she had "an unfair share within the family of that" (*Ibid.* 407). At the same time, she was aware of her mother's emotional fragility. She explains to Clare: "She sort of seemed to need me more than a mother often would need a child and she was very, very close. It wasn't a closeness that was in any way oppressive, as a child. I was very happy to be that close to her but I was aware from I think the time I was maybe three or four that she really needed me, I had to prop her up" (*Ibid.* 406). St. Aubin de Terán describes how she shared a room with her mother, who, during periods of depression, would talk all night or, worse in her estimation, pace the floor. Often, St. Aubin de Terán would simply listen to her mother's monologues, which were interspersed with biographical anecdotes (*Ibid.* 406). At other times, she would offer advice, suggesting jobs her mother might take. In addition, she says, she would do the accounting, manage the housekeeping and sort her mother out at the bank (*Ibid.* 418).

As Clare points out, St. Aubin de Terán carried a lot of responsibility for her mother from an early age (*Ibid.* 407). This included the desire to please Joanna and fulfil her expectations, even if this meant concealing her own emotions and difficulties. Thus St. Aubin de Terán describes how she was, at least for her mother,"the goody-goody, the gifted, tragic

child too wise for this world, whose sweetness cloyed all over Clapham and its environs" (*Off the Rails* 30). She appeared to attend school in the normal way, yet she relates how she early became a school refuser and truant, without her mother's knowledge. She writes:

> I grew to know despair there in the primary school, and to understand more the despair I witnessed every day at home. And as I learned the grim lesson that dreariness and dullness maim and crush, I managed to gather what energies were left to me and prepare myself for a lifetime of truancy and escape.
>
> I had decided, after one term, that truancy was my only option. Joanna had too many problems of her own for me to feel I could burden her with my own complete inability to adapt to the orchestrated boredom of school. (*Ibid.* 17)

In *Solitude*, Storr notes that some children of depressed or ill mothers develop a premature or over-anxious concern for the feelings of others. Such children, he observes, keep their own feelings to themselves, whilst at the same time taking special note of the feelings of the other person. They are less able than most children to turn to the mother or other care-taker as a resource (Storr 115). Instead of attending school, St. Aubin de Terán spent time at home reading and daydreaming alone, and later taking secret train trips to Brighton. These involved the invention of elaborate stories to explain her lack of tickets and need to travel to rail staff and concerned members of the public. What this behaviour appears to indicate is that St. Aubin de Terán was affected by her family dynamics to the extent that she found it difficult to mix with other children and preferred the isolation that gave full reign to her imaginary world. Her truancy seems related to her own admission of intense shyness (Clare 403). As Storr notes, the interaction of play in children would appear to be an important part of social development, such that one of the earliest signs of emotional disturbance is a child's difficulty in doing so. He writes: "In dealing with adult neurotic problems, one is more and more

forced to the conclusion that isolation, and an inability to mix with contemporaries at an early stage in childhood, are important determinants of adult difficulties" (*The Dynamics of Creation* 132). On the other hand, the capacity to be alone can be an indicator of inner security. In Storr's view, some children who enjoy the solitary exercise of the imagination may develop creative potential (*Solitude* 19).

This need for imagination as escape from fears of boredom, depression and her dread, as expressed in *Off the Rails,* that she would lead "a dull life" (20), seems to go some way to explain St. Aubin de Terán's readiness to marry at sixteen and move to Venezuela. Was it, perhaps, linked to her association of adventure, romance and travel with her father? The fact that her first husband was also South American is itself significant, since, as she relates to Clare, at the time she met Jaime Terán she intended to study archaeology so that she could live and work in South America (Clare 410). She admits to being intrigued and attracted by her father's background. As a teenager, it seemed "completely exotic" and, like her father himself, had "the allure of the unknown" (Clare 411). One wonders, too, whether her marriage was not, at a subconscious level, the acting out of her desire to escape her mother's emotional dependency and depressions. On the other hand, Joanna encouraged the plan, despite the prospect of their separation, seeing the marriage as her daughter's escape from the difficult life she had lived. In other words, for Joanna, it was a projection of her own wish-fulfilment.

Published almost ten years after *Keepers of the House*, *Joanna* is literally and psychologically, a return to home ground, for much of the novel focusses on the dreariness

of London suburban life and the fantasy of another life elsewhere; surely an echo of St. Aubin de Terán's own childhood. It is also an exploration of mental illness. As the author explains in an interview given at the time of the novel's publication, "'mental illness is taboo and much misunderstood. I wanted to show the lines that exist between insanity and strangeness and to ask, if our circumstances were different, would we, too, be insane?'" (Clare 396). Interestingly, in her own life, it was in part the illness and death of Joanna that provoked St. Aubin de Terán's own nervous breakdown; essentially a crisis in identity. She describes, to Clare, feeling disturbed that she did not actually exist and being "very desperate and in need of a centre" (*Ibid.* 421). This negative self-image was compounded by what she saw as the bogus media images that had come about with the success of her early novels. Ironically, it had been her mother who had had literary ambitions for her, although she did not live to see them realized. As she says, "She wanted me to be very famous and very successful and she always convinced me that I would be" (*Ibid.* 408). Yet the realization of St. Aubin de Terán's literary dreams gave her a feeling of unreality, of separation from a private, more authentic self. She goes on to say that after her mother's death she felt that her reason for living in England had gone along with her reason for staying strong. It was difficult to come to terms with the loss of the person with whom she had felt so closely identified. Later, she felt suicidal and out of control. She coped by escaping to Italy and writing, but her second marriage failed.

During this period, St. Aubin de Terán explains that she felt very aware of her mother's presence, but felt Joanna to be angry and displeased with her, something St. Aubin

de Terán says was never actually the case throughout her life. She tells Clare: "I felt as if I'd really let her down terribly badly by pretending to be something I wasn't" (*Ibid.* 425). There is, though, as Clare observes, also a sense that since the death of Joanna, painful as it was, St. Aubin de Terán has actually been released from a sort of emotional bondage. This appears to have freed her to be more in touch with her emotions, both positive and negative. She now seems more able to engage in other significant relationships at a deeper, more sustainable level (*Ibid.* 397). She is, as she admits, no longer "completely sort of locked in emotionally in myself" (*Ibid.* 427). Death, then, seems to have permitted a delayed process of maturation and emotional separation that has corresponded with a maturing of her art. The writing of *Joanna*, as a tribute to her mother's strengths, weaknesses and contradictions, can be read as a dramatization of this process within herself. St. Aubin de Terán comments on the writing of *Joanna*:

> It was very painful to write because while I am writing, I always imagine myself so thoroughly into my characters that I often think, feel and dream like them. It was distressing, therefore, to be both my mother and Miss Kitty because they were too close. It took me seven years to write for that reason. I had to fully recover from my mother's death in order to be stong enough psychologically to be Miss Kitty for a while. (letter to the author, Dec. 1996)

As David Holbrook writes in *Sylvia Plath:Poetry and Existence* (1976), psycho-analytical theory asserts that the capacity to see the world in a meaningful way is linked with the capacity to love and the experience of being loved (Holbrook 17). This is of particular relevance to *Joanna*, since our first experience of being loved and of loving, usually takes place within the family. The story of Joan, however, is one in which the usual primary

relationship between mother and child is inverted and distorted by mental illness. Although Joan is nurtured by her grandmother Kitty, who becomes a mother figure for her, her ego is nevertheless permanently damaged by the trauma of her mother's rejection. This is expressed by Kitty's silent withdrawal alternating with her verbal and physical abuse of Joan. This behaviour is, in effect, the complete opposite of the attachment patterns regarded by John Bowlby as liable to promote healthy psychological development. As a result, Joan struggles throughout her adult life with an inability to find sustainable intimate relationships with men and with severe episodes of depression. Here, the eminent object-relations theorist, Harry Guntrip's explanation of psychological illness seems applicable. He writes, "Mental illness springs specifically from the ravages of early fear and basic weakness of the ego, with consequent inability to cope with life in any other than a dangerous state of anxiety....The struggle to force a weak ego to face life, or, even more fundamentally, the struggle to preserve an ego at all, is the root cause of psychotic, psychosomatic and psychoneurotic tensions and illness" (Guntrip 11).

St. Aubin de Terán's portrayal of the young Joan's acute confusion with regard to her mother is highly convincing. Although sustained by her grandmother's care, she cannot make sense of her mother's total rejection, along with the negative self-image it creates, and is not helped to do so. It is even, in fact, apparently justified by the stories told to her of the pain of her birth. She reflects, "I had no real understanding of Mother or myself beyond the imagery of fairy tales and half-remembered prayers" (*Joanna* 7). She never finds out that she is the child of a rape. She knows that her mother's behaviour is strange, but mental illness is

never mentioned. Joan only knows that somehow her birth has ruined her mother's life to the extent that she avoids her, never addresses her by name and only speaks to her or touches her in anger. Joan's response to her mother, as a very young child, is a kind of unrequited, unexpressed adoration of her beauty. She experiences a profound sense of guilt and a desire for forgiveness that is, in part, the influence of her Roman Catholic religious education. As she reflects, "I was being taught to serve Our Lady, but I wanted to serve Mother instead" (*Ibid.* 8). Later, her frustrated love is expressed in hatred and a kind of pride in her apparent physical and emotional strength. Always a large child, she grows so big that her mother can no longer attack her. In a sense, her need to feel some sort of relationship between them is satisfied by being the object of negative attention. Thus, she narrates, "Mother loathed me, and I grew to thrive on her disdain. I courted it. I gloated at her cruelty, I was proud of her hardness....I had borne what no man could. I was her target....I was the position she could not take. I apprenticed myself in her ways, studying how most to infuriate her" (*Ibid.* 9). This passage reveals a profound confusion of love and hate; a desire for attention at any cost. Perhaps the most damaging aspect of Kitty's behaviour to Joan is its unpredictability. Joan is either ignored or the object of irrational hate and uncontrolled rage. On one occasion, when Kitty is trying to please Peter, Joan feels overwhelmed by her mother's unexpected dissembling of normal motherly behaviour at the convent open day. The small show of professed kindness from Kitty results in more guilt and a feeling of instant forgiveness.

Joan, then, is forever torn between hope and despair, love and hatred, guilt and blame. Psychologically, this causes unbearable ego conflict since to love her mother she must deny

or reject herself and vice versa. She is in an impossible bind, for the only way to avoid disapproval is to cease to exist. Her yearnings for intimacy are focussed on an image of Kitty never shown to her, but which appears to obliterate Joan's experience of deprivation. She reflects, "I loved seeing her with her friends. It was like seeing a beautiful stranger from a distance....I often wished she lived next door so that I could spy on her and see her always at her best, unaware of my intrusion yet still near to me" (*Ibid.* 77). Here, there seems to be a distortion of closeness and distance. To feel close, she must maintain distance.

Joan's experience of contradiction and incoherence within her family unit is compounded by exile from Jersey and the relative social isolation of London. She herself remembers Jersey as a small child. Here the natural environment of the beaches and the countryside in which she would roam with Agnes, to be away from Mother, gave a stimulating sense of freedom and childish exploration, very different from her convent school. She could collect shells and flowers. In addition, she felt accepted in the small, friendly community where there were "fishermen to talk to who didn't care about the colour of my hair or the size of my feet" (*Ibid.* 23). London, by contrast, is "a maze of greyness that I never belonged to" (*Ibid.* 23). She has no contact with men or boys. Ironically, however, it is the very size and impersonality of London that protects the family from public knowledge of Kitty's illness. As Joan is aware, literally and metaphorically, "We hid our wounds" (*Ibid.* 26). These are both physical and psychological. In London, Florence is able to conceal her daughter's violence in a way that was becoming impossible in Jersey. St. Aubin de Terán writes of the house in Hendon: "The shrubs in the garden covered the downstairs windows.

Our house was camouflaged with leaves. The music from Mother's Grafonola, topped up by Granny's wireless, disguised our shouts" (*Ibid.* 27). The family's fall in social status, after Florence's ruin by her gambling husband, also plays a part in her desire to protect her surviving family from the further stigma of mental illness.

As a result, Joan has little contact with other families in London, in which she might observe more normal behaviour. Instead, further isolation and restrictions are imposed upon her by the rigours of a convent school life. Although disliking separation from Granny, she accepts that it is for her own protection, although this is never articulated, and finds a measure of peace and self-acceptance in an ability to make friends, although she always feels disapproved of by the nuns. Although her friendships involve trading secrets, Joan is never able to reveal the truth about her mother or herself to anyone, since this would represent an unthinkable betrayal. Public denial, though, becomes a kind of collusion in self-denial. From an early age, then, the family dynamics engender severe conflict within her sense of self and in relation to external reality. At school, she replaces the anguish of her home life with a highly idealized, but socially acceptable, fantasy of an idyllic love between mother and daughter. St. Aubin de Terán writes of Joan, "It was inexplicable, and even embarrassing, that I actually and actively missed Mother. And although I didn't and couldn't understand it myself, I couldn't bear it if any of the other girls were to think badly of her, particularly for anything she had done to me"(*Ibid.* 32). Before the open day, she is consumed by fear of public disgrace, but on this occasion is saved by Kitty's desire to please her boyfriend. Similarly, after a particularly violent attack, Joan needs hospital attention and instinctively

conceals the truth from the doctors. Finally, Joan's suppressed rage is expressed when another child calls her mother a "'slut'" (*Ibid.* 78). Here, she acts out a displacement of her mother's behaviour in a defence of her own tormentor. At the same time, she becomes her mother and is severely punished by a frightened Florence. Later in life, Joan turns her internalised, destructive impulses on herself by attempting suicide.

Another source of internal conflict for Joan is also fuelled by social attitudes to mental illness, and to children, at the time she was growing up. Freud's work was familiar to the intelligentsia of the early twentieth century, and made a considerable impact on artists and intellectuals of the day. By the time of his death in 1939, however, it seems unlikely that the basic tenets of psychoanalysis had spread far among the general population. In addition, Joan's primary carer, Florence, is a Victorian. For her, religion and prayer form the backbone of her emotional life. As a result, she teaches acceptance of suffering and self-control. She hides her own feelings and encourages Joan to do the same. Joan remembers her disturbing serenity (*Ibid.* 11) in the face of Kitty's anger and her own grief. Florence believes she is shielding Joan and Kitty by denying reality. Although she talks to Joan, particularly to feed her with happy memories of Jersey, certain subjects are taboo. Joan reflects, "I was never allowed to ask why mother treated me as she did - - or, indeed ,why she behaved as she did. But my other worries were allowed to surface and be smoothed..." (*Ibid.* 22). This silence forms part of the "unspoken code" of the household. It is never explained but Joan soon learns that her activities are ruled by the presence or absence of her mother in the house. She learns to look for signs of trouble in her grandmother's behaviour, for instance, the speed of

her crochet. In the same way, she is not told what is happening in her mother's life. Kitty's marriage to Peter is, thus, a complete surprise, as is the change in Joan's life as a result. When the marriage ends bitterly not long afterwards, Joan is similarly uninformed. She realizes something has happened only when her Christmas vacation is cancelled. Finally, when Florence collects her, she rebuffs Joan's natural curiosity with, "'There's no point asking questions, Joan, when you're too young to understand the answers'" (*Ibid.* 55). In a similar way, Florence excuses Kitty's behaviour to Joan, as to any one else who happens to witness it. She never admits to Joan that her mother's temper is abnormal. She even, euphemistically actually denies it by calling it "'headstrong'". Florence is terrified by the thought that Kitty might be taken away and locked up. In her mind, the asylum is linked to the poorhouse and the workhouse; places of degradation and shame. It does not seem to occur to her that the medical profession may be able to help, perhaps because her small allowance would not permit expensive treatments.

The physical and emotional strictures of Joan's childhood and her adolescence in an even more repressive German convent, from twelve to eighteen, make her view her adulthood as release, not perceiving until much later that she has carried the past within her. She feels that her life began at eighteen when she discovered her sexuality and fell in love. She reflects:

> I fell in love...and then I fell in love again and again, sating my appetite for touch and affection, slaking my need for love with an ardour that some might interpret as revenge. But my passions were genuine. I was no longer an alien. Sex became my family, my country. The exile seemed to be over. My long limbs dropped their package of guilt, and wrapped themselves around a series of lovers....I hungered for embraces; for near-lethal closeness. The minute there was a separation, a physical distance between me and my current love, the old doubts [about her self-worth] set

in again. (*Ibid.* 83)

This passage seems to echo the conflicted feelings of the younger Joan. In psychoanalytic terms it represents object seeking and object relating behaviour that mirror her earliest experiences. Of infant-mother relationships, Brink refers to Fairbairn's theory that if care is remote, with mother and infant never really joining to make a nursing couple, the deprived infant remains always hungry, not for actual food but for caring warmth. This leads to 'love made hungry', a term coined by Guntrip, which would appear to apply to Joan. Depression, on the other hand, which Joan experiences later in life, Guntrip calls 'love made angry' (Brink, *Loss and Symbolic Repair* 28-29). Although Joan clearly has formed an attachment to her grandmother, it would appear that her physical needs, rather than her emotional needs, were met by this relationship. St. Aubin de Terán writes of Joan that "Agnes and a daily nurse and a set of glass bottles were struggling to be a mother" to her while she screamed constantly (*Joanna* 16).

Consequently, throughout her life, Joan longs for an intense physical and emotional mutuality which is transferred to her conception of romantic love. This desire, though, might be said to be an infantile yearning for the breast, or longing for the pre-Oedipal stage, conceived by Freud, of total identification with another, that she has, in fact, never known. Whether such an emotional drive toward bonding with the natural mother can be said to exist is a matter for debate. It might, though, explain why so many adoptees try to find their natural parents. Negative feelings towards others are, however, repressed by Joan, leading to a pattern of idealization and disappointment. There is, too, in the passage, a suggestion of

danger, in the longed for intimacy since her fragile ego, in relation to its primary object, Kitty, is equally in danger of annihilation by closeness as by separation. Boundaries are thereby confused. At the end of her life, despite, perhaps, over-identification with her own daughters as a kind of compensation, Joanna still feels very much alone. However, she also realizes the extent to which she has sabotaged her own relationships. She imagines herself as "the Snow Queen's daughter", who has helped to fulfil her own expectations of unworthiness (*Joanna* 109). One of the ways she has done this is to become involved with "emotional cripples" (*Ibid.* 109); men unable to give her what she needs, but who make her feel, at least temporarily, strong and needed.

St. Aubin de Terán's characterization of Kitty is a subtle and compelling study of a schizoid personality. Storr writes of this personality type, "Often, but not invariably, an individual with this character structure gives an impression of coldness combined with an apparent air of superiority....There is a lack of ordinary human contact; a feeling that such a man is unconcerned with, if not superior, to the ordinary, mundane preoccupations of average people..." (*The Dynamics of Creation* 50). In addition, he goes on to add, they habitually play social roles that do not reflect their real feelings. In fact, the emotion characteristic of the schizoid state is a feeling of futility and lack of meaning (*Ibid.* 45). Such individuals tend to seek for meaning in things rather than people. They may appear extroverted but are essentially introverted; preoccupied with inner rather than outer reality (*Ibid.* 52). Another characteristic of schizoid people that Storr identifies is a paradoxical sense of extreme weakness and vulnerability with regard to others, combined with its exact opposite, a sense

of superiority and potential, if not actual, omnipotence (*Ibid.* 51). He writes, "This curious combination of opposites seems to originate from the infant's perception that, on the one hand, he is a helpless creature, entirely at the mercy of adults; on the other, since there is no clear differentiation of the self from other objects, the whole world seems comprised by the self" (*Ibid.* 51). Holbrook also refers to the schizoid individual's sometimes fanatical inversions of reality and truth (Holbrook 5) and to a tendency for him or her be disassociated from the physical body (*Ibid.* 6).

In *Joanna,* many of these characteristics are associated with Kitty from an early age, but become more marked over time as her ego fails to cope with traumatic life events. As a child, she is perceived to be "unique" by her grandfather (*Joanna* 123). Although secure within her family, she appears to be more attached to the lighthouse and to Claremont itself than to individuals. She likes the constant stimulus of change as in, "I liked life best when faces changed around me" (*Ibid.* 118). Although fond of Agnes and her mother, she seems curiously detached from them. She treats Agnes like a slave, while as a small child she is uncomfortable with her mother's "sentimental" protestations at bedtime. St. Aubin de Terán writes, "I tried not to listen, just as I tried not to listen to myself as I responded to her endearments" (*Ibid.* 119). There is a sense here that Kitty can make the required responses, but that her emotions are not engaged. Later, Agnes recalls for Joan the memory of the arrival of the remnants of Florence's possessions, after the auction of Claremont. Seeing her mother's sudden grief at the sight of one of her wedding presents, Kitty is insensitive and unsympathetic. She becomes angry at the merest hint of her mother's understated grief.

Kitty, in her interior monologue, protests a strong attachment to Harry de Gruchy, but this appears to be associated with his love of Claremont, and of her, rather than any real conception of him as a separate individual. They share games as children. He is not threatened by her anger, and so he gives her, perhaps, a feeling of emotional security. She cannot dominate him. She reflects, "I needed him" (*Ibid.* 132). When he dies, however, she seems totally distanced from her grief. She cannot cry. She quickly turns her attachment to hatred and forgets him in social activities and a precipitate engagement to Nelson. Kitty's emotional distance from others is also apparent in her inability to communicate her feelings, even to her mother. This may reflect attitudes of the day, yet Florence is dismayed to discover for herself Kitty's secret engagement as well as her brutal rape. Florence reflects, "I had thought I was so close to my daughter, and then I found I wasn't close at all" (*Ibid.* 242). She interprets her daughter's silence as a lack of trust.

This coldness and reserve is, also, evident in Kitty's friendships. Threatened by a sense of futility experienced in boredom, Kitty uses people and social occasions for diversion. As Joan observes, "She tired quickly of songs and friends and then discarded them" (*Ibid.* 21). In London, Kitty enjoys the company of well-to-do Jews, despite her mother's disapproval, because she shares their"love of glitter" (*Ibid.* 20). In other respects, she is extremely intolerant of those she deems socially inferior. She treats the maids, for instance, with disdain, venting her anger on them with complete self-righteousness. In addition, she regards vagrants as"'dogs'" (*Ibid.* 19). In general, Kitty seems detached and predominantly narcissistic. This is because she identifies herself primarily with objects for instance possessions like her

clothes, emeralds and furs and cannot empathize with the emotions of others. Even though Florence struggles with her allowance, Kitty only sells these possessions to buy herself clothes. It never occurs to her to look for work. In her comings and goings at the Hendon house there is little evidence of concern for her mother. This is apparently in contradiction to her desire, expressed in her interior monologue, to protect her mother. Her naive way to do this is to try to improve Florence's material life, through marriage to the rich and aristocratic Robert Peel.

Kitty's clairvoyance can be interpreted in a number of ways. On the one hand, it may be perceived as evidence of a paranormal sensitivity, since other people bear witness to her predictions. Alternatively, it seems more likely to be a symptom of schizophrenic illness, where hearing voices is a common complaint. The result is Kitty's conviction of simultaneous power and vulnerability, another symptom of schizoid psychology. For she feels besieged by the suffering of others to the extent that her ego is threatened with annihilation. When her grandfather is dying, for instance, she feels, "He was so clearly in my head that it was scarcely possible to be me anymore....his unspoken anxieties were so crushing my brain that I was no longer in possession of my own body " (*Ibid.* 124). Here, her separation from her own body seems significant. When he dies, she is released. In addition, she feels her identity to be scattered in the external world. She particularly associates herself with the lighthouse. Thus, "There was Kitty streaked into the clouds in the sky and Kitty in the lighthouse beam" (*Ibid.* 124). At the same time, Kitty feels she can control people by reading their thoughts. Others do find her unnerving, for example, the Claremont cook who is convinced that the child Kitty

has the power to induce Florence to miscarry five times because she does not want a sibling. Joan thinks of Kitty, "People said she had psychic powers. She could frighten people just by looking at them, and she could make people do what she wanted....She could make her world play her tune in endless repetition" (*Ibid.* 21). Kitty's apparent clairvoyance, though, is random and uncontrolled. She cannot apply it to her own life, even when she wants to, as in the case of her failure to predict Harry de Gruchy's death or her rape by Nelson Allen.

A dictionary definition of schizophrenia describes it as,"Any of a group of psychotic disorders usually characterized by withdrawal from reality, illogical patterns of thinking, delusions, and hallucinations, and accompanied in varying degrees by other emotional, behavioral, or intellectual disturbances" ("Schizophrenia"). This seems relevant to Kitty not least in the way in which her attitude to Joan demonstrates distorted thinking patterns. Her hatred of her child seems linked, in the first instance, to her abnormal fear of sexuality or her asexuality. Although her ignorance of sex before marriage is characteristic of the times, she seems devoid of sexual feelings, even towards Harry whom she kisses. This may be evidence of a latent schizoid disassociation from her body that becomes manifest after she is raped. This would be an horrific experience for any woman, but in Kitty her hatred of Nelson becomes centred upon the hatred of her own body. She has no empathy for the child growing within her and is desperate to destroy it. She even perceives it as totally alien and purposefully destructive, threatening to annihilate her fragile ego in the same way that Nelson has done. Of his violation she thinks, "I would never be myself again. Nelson destroyed me" (*Ibid.* 156). This seems a natural, initial reaction to trauma, but for Kitty it becomes an

entrenched attitude that colours her whole life and precludes any attachment to her child whom she can only conceive of as a psychological danger. Finally, it is Florence's threat to go to the police that prevents Kitty from continuing to try to terminate the pregnancy.

Kitty's rejection of her daughter is total. She cannot recognize her as a human being. She reflects, "It had a power of its own, a loathsome power that set itself up in defiance of my will" (*Ibid.* 165). She will not even name Joan and calls her"it" or "the thing". Her aversion seems exacerbated by an extremely difficult birth and her conception that Joan is ugly. Consequently, Kitty's hatred is vindicated by her belief, also held by her father, that "breeding and beauty were the most important things in life" (*Ibid.* 178). She feels that Joan has neither. She accepts, without question, her father's theories about human measurement, particularly his view taken from Lombroso, that criminals can be identified by physical characteristics. For Kitty, Joan's red hair and large feet are obvious signs of "criminal stigmata" (*Ibid.* 182). She cannot understand why Florence does not share her view. Her explanation is that her mother is being manipulated. Later, Kitty's distorted thinking becomes delusional when she even regards Joan as a German spy.

Another way in which Kitty's thoughts appear disordered is her projection of her own mental illness onto her mother. While she accurately detects Florence's anxiety about the outside world, she misinterprets the causes of her mother's behaviour. St. Aubin de Terán writes in Kitty's voice: "[Mother] began to imagine things and lived a prey to quite ludicrous fears. She confused her own disordered thoughts for mine. She fancied that it was I who was at risk, not herself. She became almost afraid of strangers, even of our maids" (*Ibid.* 179).

Kitty cannot understand that Florence fears the asylum not for herself, but for her daughter. Kitty not only denies other people's feelings, but she is also incapable of questioning her own behaviour. She has no conception of herself as irrational or violent. In her interior monologue, she only refers to temper tantrums that she perceives as "completely natural" (*Ibid.* 179). In her mind, her desire to harm Joan is justified by Joan's evil nature. Ultimately, Kitty interprets her incarceration in the asylum as capture by the German army. She muses, "I've been a prisoner for years. They took me during the Blitz. I didn't see them coming because my head was already damaged by the other casualties" (*Ibid.* 194). Here, the confusion of internal with external reality has become so marked that, without Florence's protection, Kitty is no longer able to function in society.

In *Attachment and Loss* (1969), Bowlby writes:

> Nothing in child psychiatry has been more significant in recent years than the increasing recognition that the problems its practioners are called upon to treat are not often problems confined to individuals but are usually problems arising from stable interactional patterns that have developed between two, and more often several, members of a family. (1:349)

The strength of St. Aubin de Terán's *Joanna*, lies in her ability to portray this "interactional pattern" among the three characters. The novel represents a development in imaginative vision from *Keepers of the House*, in that narrative is viewed from different perspectives, through three separate, but interlinking, points of view. Like *Keepers of the House*, however, narrative and imagination have an important role in the overall pattern. Thus, images of Jersey as a kind of lost Eden, resonate throughout and are linked with religious devotional feeling, for a shared sense of exile gives a sense of communal identity to the family. These

memories of Jersey are lovingly evoked by Florence, who tries to preserve them in lieu of a material legacy, in particular for Joan. Joan reflects, "It was all preserved, as for posterity, unchanged and magical in Granny's tangible fantasy" (*Joanna* 43). In one sense, these stories are an escape from the grim reality of family violence and genteel poverty in London. They are also a way for reserved Florence to communicate her love. On the other hand, they idealize the past to the extent of preventing the acceptance of change.

Another aspect of the three-dimensional pattern that the novel erects, is the exploration it gives of responsibility. To what extent are individuals responsible to each other? Where does blame really lie for a situation and its tragic consequences? Certainly, Joan and Florence are depicted as willing and able to accept some responsibility for what happens in their lives, but what about the circumstances beyond their control? Florence, in particular, spends eighteen years of life in London, motivated by a determined, but perhaps exaggerated, feeling of responsibility towards the two women she tries to protect from each other. Yet at the end of her life, she feels a sense of guilt for deserting them. However, she also recognizes that history has played a part in their tragedy. She could blame Dickie for losing the family home and fortune, but she chooses not to, instead she blames the Great War and its effects. Joan, in retrospect, also recognizes that societal changes can have a powerful impact on individual lives. After World War I, in her view, "there was institutionalised nostalgia" (*Ibid.* 74). She continues, of the Depression,"Whatever it was, this 'thirties malaise', it was endemic. Only Mother, and to some extent Granny and I, believed it to be unique to our family. Because of the peculiar circumstances surrounding our flight from the

Island, and our relative social isolation afterwards, we were unable to see that the whole country was altering its way of life, or having it altered" (*Ibid.* 74). In a similar fashion, Joan recognizes the psychological impact of World War II, on herself and her friends.

Joanna examines positive and negative possibilities of both isolation and connection, in particular, the nature of attachments and the role they play in individuals' relationships to their internal and external worlds. In autobiographical terms, it seems clear that *Joanna* represents a search for the author's mother, or the origins of relational dynamics that have given rise to patterns in St. Aubin de Terán's own life. Like her mother, for instance, she has had a succession of marriages and children, and experienced psychological breakdown. In contrast, *Keepers of the House*, can be viewed, at least on one level, as the search for her father and her South American roots. Both novels explore issues suggestive of links with the author's own formative experiences within a family that "lived on its illusions so that to fantasize [was]...a part of everyday life" (Clare 395). While one novel dramatizes connection, the other portrays distance and isolation. In addition, it is interesting to note that in *Joanna*, the focus is on female experience, in particular, motherhood, while in *Keepers of the House*, it is predominantly the male family members who take centre stage. Both works are, however, concerned with extremes of experience; with violence, loss, exile and the role of imagination and myth. In writing about families and social change, St. Aubin is concerned with the intersection of subjective and objective realities. As Brink observes in *Obsession and Culture: A Study of Sexual Obsessions in Modern Fiction* (1995):

It need hardly be repeated that we live in an era of severe destabilization of the

traditional connectedness of persons in families. Separation and divorce statistics remind us that monogamous union and maintenance of family coherence are on trial. Novelists tap into latent awareness of the direction of social change, their novels often being early warning systems in distressed areas of human relations....(Brink 13)

CHAPTER THREE

Nocturne: The Integrative Power of Imagination

St. Aubin de Terán published *Nocturne*, her most recent work of fiction, in 1992. The title means, "a painting of a night scene" or, in music, "an instrumental composition of a pensive, dreamy mood, especially one for the piano" ("Nocturne"). The word derives from the Latin *nox* or *noct-* meaning night (*Ibid.*) and relates to the tragedy and blindness of the central character, Alessandro Mezzanotte, whose family name means midnight in Italian. The novel is prefaced by lines from John Milton's *Samson Agonistes* (1671), a poetic drama modeled on Greek tragedy but with biblical subject matter ("Milton"). Milton wrote it after he went blind and the lines among those selected by St. Aubin de Terán, "Since light so necessary is to life,/And almost life itself, if it be true/That light is in the soul," suggest the central metaphors of sight and blindness, or light and darkness, which are woven through the novel.

For the character of Mezzanotte, the light shining within the darkness of his wasted life is the love he still bears for Valentina, the daughter of the fair owner, Maestro Rossi. This love, essentially a product of a youthful, passionate imagination, still burns brightly even after his rejection by her and fifty years of separation. It has helped him, he believes, to survive a difficult and lonely life. In her portrayal of the elderly, dying, Mezzanotte who, by retelling

the story of his grand passion, passes on his ability to dream, St. Aubin de Terán once again foregrounds the role of imagination. For Mezzanotte, blinded as a young man, his love is literally the light of his life. It has the strength of a religious faith and seems based, not on objective reality, but on the power of belief. As Mezzanotte expresses it, "when I die, I want to have something to believe in. I have never really done anything in my life but love. I love Valentina, then and now. She is my country, my religion, my faith. I believe in that true love and its purity" (*Nocturne* 150).

As in *Keepers of the House* and *Joanna,* in *Nocturne*, story-telling or narrative, linked as they inevitably are to imagination, once more become an essential component of personal identity. Mezzanotte, stimulated by the arrival in the village, after forty years, of Rossi's fair, and the hope, however faint, it brings of a reunion with Valentina, breaks years of silence in order to tell his story, before his death, to Stefano Altini, a sympathetic new recruit on military service assigned to help him. As a result, like the artist, Mezzanotte recreates himself and his experience by means of a highly personal vision of his life. In doing so, he also shapes Stefano's perception of the world. In this novel, St Aubin de Terán again depicts stories as a gift, or legacy, to be passed between generations, in this case, however, not between the members of one family. The effect of the narrative on Stefano is profound. As a young man whose psychological development has been deeply disturbed by maternal deprivation, through his mother's illness and his father's controlling personality, the act of listening to the story awakens his own repressed emotions. It becomes apparent that Stefano's fears of sleep and darkness are really the expression of deep-seated fears of death and separation, related to

grief for his mother's death. However, Mezzanotte's lack of bitterness about his life; his unfailing sense of fulfilment and acceptance, despite terrible physical and emotional loss, inspires Stefano with the courage to release his own imagination. By growing attached to the elderly veteran, and by being present at his death, Stefano has the opportunity to complete the grieving process for his mother, something he was unable to do as a child.

This development or maturing of St. Aubin de Terán's art, to encompass a broader vision of the possibilities of both isolation and connection, can perhaps be linked to events, both actual and psychological, in her life. It seems significant, therefore, that a novel about grand passion should come after the writer's own experience of this, for the first time, in her own life, and after her own process of grief for the death of her mother. As she tells Anthony Clare (1993), "I feel that now...I've managed to get in touch with my emotions in a way that I don't think I was able to do for a very long time. I always wanted to fall in love with someone, I always wanted to have this grand passion....It's only in the last seven years that I actually feel fulfilled as a woman, as a person. I didn't before" (Clare 427). She wrote *Nocturne* while living in Italy with her third husband, Robbie Duff-Scott. Clare, in his preface to the interview, describes him as "a colourful and romantic figure, a painter who shares Lisa's passion for extravagant clothes" (*Ibid.* 397). St. Aubin de Terán's relationship with Duff-Scott also appears to coincide with her desire to fulfil her dreams of establishing a family home. As Clare points out, "She does not appear to have felt any pressure to put down roots nor to have found any place where she wanted to stay, at least not until Italy" (*Ibid.* 397). It was only after consolidating her relationship with Duff-Scott that she, with him, made Italy

her permanent home and travelled less. The detailed and evocative depiction of Umbrian village life in *Nocturne*, gives the novel a vivid sense of setting that seems connected to St. Aubin de Terán's own positive experience of finding herself part of a small, but stable, community. Mezzanotte's solitude and the secrecy of his inner life, are set against the intimate life of the village, which Stefano inadvertently, but gladly, becomes a part of when the weather forces him to stay there. As a result, in *Nocturn*e, St. Aubin de Terán evokes both isolation and connection as interwoven strands of the same thread.

In *Off the Rails: Memoirs of a Train Addict* (1989), St. Aubin de Terán relates the story of how she and Duff-Scott met. Whilst still married to her, George Macbeth, her second husband, wrote to Duff-Scott requesting that he paint a portrait of his wife. The artist refused, but two years later, by a bizarre coincidence, he wrote to St. Aubin de Terán, after seeing her photograph in a magazine, asking if he might use her as a model for a painting of a "sad Magdalen" (*Off the Rails* 98). Because of the different surnames used by her and Macbeth, Duff-Scott had not connected them. By this time, St. Aubin de Terán had separated from Macbeth, had experienced a period of mental and emotional breakdown, and was travelling a great deal between England and Italy. This was the time after her mother's death and the birth of her second child. In *Off the Rails,* she describes it as "a phase of manic restlessness in which I used the railways like an emergency extension to my own nervous system" (*Ibid.* 130). In 1985, she went to sit for Duff-Scott and fell in love in a way she had not done before. In *Off the Rails*, she writes: "And here, at last, it seemed, was the person I had been dreaming of since my early days. For once I didn't have to add any skills or graces

to the memory that he left. They were all there, and I was in love with Robbie Duff-Scott, obsessed by him..." (*Ibid.* 140). She continues:

> I had become so enamoured of my painter that I found myself almost incapable of speech in his presence. On our rare meetings over the first year, I found the emotional strain of seeing him so overwhelming that I kept falling into nervous sleeping fits....His painting kept us together. The modern Magdalen was completed...and seemed to give back to me the confidence of a proper living person.
>
> The painter became an indispensable part of my life. In the spring of 1986 we went as a family to Italy, and Robbie came too. It rained continually, the old villa flooded and the holiday was dogged by disaster. But still our friendship grew, with the almost indecent speed of a desert flower, starved and then drenched by a sudden storm. Robbie had the effect on me of a ski slope and a longed-for burst of daring. I was not exactly pure as the driven snow, so, despite having decided to remain single and footloose...I found myself, instead, planning a shared future of volcanic proportions. I was dreaming again, and loving it. I was in love.
>
> In the autumn of 1986 I gave in to the flood of my totally novel emotions....So I moved to Bristol. We had decided to move to Italy together the following spring. (*Ibid.* 141)

This passage reveals the intensity of St. Aubin de Terán's initial romantic feelings; emotions both liberating and threatening. Correspondingly little about the nature of "the painter" is given. The emphasis appears to be, as in *Nocturne*, on the emotions of the lover. The importance here of a passionate love seems to be the way that St. Aubin de Terán associates it, in herself, with a renewed involvement in living. This revitalised zest for life seems associated with courage, with the renewal of creative energy and with the apparent rebirth of her imagination; she is "dreaming again". In addition, it is the image that Duff-Scott creates of her, part of his imaginary realm, that seems to restore her sense of her own identity. Furthermore, the image of the desert flower may be a subconscious link to the drought of a loveless existence depicted in *Keepers of the House.* At first, she and Duff-Scott

lived chiefly in Venice with her two children from her previous two marriages, Iseult, born in Venezuela, now an adolescent, and Alexander, three. In 1988, however, they bought the villa Sant' Orsola, a dilapidated mansion, situated outside a small village in Umbria.

In 1989 St. Aubin de Terán and Duff-Scott began the restoration of the Villa Orsola, described in her book of non-fiction, *A Valley in Italy: Confessions of a House Addict* (1994). The house appears to figure fleetingly in *Nocturne*, at the very end, where St. Aubin de Terán describes, in the village cemetery, "the terracotta angel with a broken wing stolen long since from the ruined *palazzo*...." (*Nocturne* 209). The reconstruction of this "dream house" *(A Valley in Italy* 1) was a huge undertaking, and teams of local workmen were involved. On one level, it appears to be the expression of St. Aubin de Terán and Duff-Scott's romantic love; it is a shared creative project, a work of art and an investment in the future, of "volcanic proportions". At the same time, it also gives them a new sense of belonging to a local community. As St. Aubin de Terán tells Anthony Clare, the house itself has a special relationship to village life. She says, "we've bought a house that had been derelict for 100 years and which used to be the centre of all kind of village festivities and after we'd bought this house, there was nowhere big enough for the scattered population of 400 of the village to dance in winter and so they use our house still for all their winter festivals so we've been very lucky making friends on a good basis with virtually everybody in the village and I'm sure that's helped us to feel as much at home as we do where we are" (Clare 401).

This period of St. Aubin de Terán's life seems to be characterized by a new feeling of personal fulfilment and a strong sense of attachment to both people and a specific location,

that has stimulated her imagination. Not surprisingly, perhaps, it coincides with the birth of her third child and Duff-Scott's first, Florence, born in 1990. *A Valley in Italy* culminates with this exciting event and the preparations of "lavish abundance" (*A Valley in Italy* 216) for the wedding of Iseult at the nearly completed villa. There is a sense, too, in which life, for St. Aubin de Terán, has come full circle. Her Italian situation, as she is aware, has echoes of her Venezuelan experience: she is living in a large and beautiful house, (a fulfilment of a childhood dream), with a husband and new baby, in a foreign country and in the midst of a rural community with close ties to the land and local traditions. She writes:

> As a writer, I found myself overwhelmed by the wealth of material given to me every day [in Italy]....The seven years that I had spent living in the Venezuelan Andes on a sugar plantation in a scattered community that existed in a time warp, isolated from the rest of the world, had been the essence of my writing and a most privileged springboard for my imagination. The place itself, and the fifty-two families of peasant workers who lived there with me, had marked and moulded me, for good and for ill, into what I am today. I was drawn into the claustrophobic world, initiated into its secrets, enriched by the original and archaic use of its high Spanish and enforced contact with the peasants....Subsequently, I never missed the violence or the madness of those Andean foothills, but I did miss the sense of community, the closeness and the mystery and the myths. I also missed the harmony of rural life, of being harnessed to the land and the elements. (*Ibid.* 139)

It is a sense of "harmony" that St. Aubin de Terán appears to find in the Villa Orsola, both in her internal and external worlds. As an artist, the spaciousness of the house along with its situation both on the outskirts of the village, but within the circle of its communal life, appears to give St. Aubin de Terán both the isolation and connection necessary to her creative life. As a foreigner in Italy, she can enjoy the culture without, perhaps, the pressures to conform experienced by native inhabitants. As she writes, "The cruelty and the violence of the

[Venezuelan] hacienda and its extreme poverty had been replaced by a pride and pleasure that were far easier to live with....I was contented in a way that had long escaped me" (*Ibid.* 141). St. Aubin de Terán's portrayal of both Mezzanotte's passion and the life of his village in *Nocturne*, seem coloured by her own experience. As she notes in *A Valley in Italy*, in the "guise of inept amateur historian and bumbling social anthropologist" she has enjoyed learning about her village and its past through the collective memory of friends and neighbours (*Ibid.* 137).

Mezzanotte's life, and indeed the reason for his lack of intimacy with his village neighbours, is closely bound up with a collective memory, in particular, the communal experience of suffering during the Second World War. He feels he cannot speak about his past because it will reopen others' wounds. The villagers, "born of generations of silent suffering" have put aside most of their bad memories: "The past became tradition. It became myth. Mezzanotte was a disturbing plumb line into a shared nightmare....Of all the war dead, the most remembered was Mezzanotte who was still alive" (*Nocturne* 79). As a result, his interaction with his neighbours is superficial and based on habit. Like Christobal in *Keepers of the House*, he has isolated himself from others, but is also connected to them by living among them and being part of local routine. While Christobal shows a kind of guardianship by roaming the family estates, Mezzanotte has "taken it upon himself to patrol the village" (*Ibid.* 79), taking the same route at the same time each day. Hence, "After fifty years, he knew the contours of the village but not its contents" (*Ibid.* 82). As he admits to Stefano, it was his choice to keep apart, and the villagers respected his need. However, even when,

aware of his loneliness, he has wanted to change his behaviour, he has felt unable to face the disruption to their mutually protective, carefully nurtured, social rituals. For their part, however, the villagers regret Mezzanotte's distance. After his death, they grieve for him and talk "about him more as he lay dead than they had ever been able to talk to him when he was alive" (*Ibid.* 204). Estelio, a village man asks, as he looks at Mezzanotte in his coffin, "'Do you think he knew how much we would have liked to have been close to him? He was one of us, you know'" (*Ibid.* 205).

There is a sense, however, in which Mezzanotte's isolation, at least immediately after his return from the war, may have served a valuable psychological purpose. As Storr observes in *Solitude* (1988), the capacity to be alone can be a valuable resource, especially when changes of mental attitude are required, for example, in the case of bereavement. He writes, "After major alterations in circumstances, a fundamental reappraisal of the significance and meaning of existence may be needed" (Storr 29). Perhaps Mezzanotte's isolation has enabled him to come to terms with his physical losses, the loss of Valentina and the physical and emotional suffering associated with both. As Mezzanotte tells Stefano,"I have had four decades to sit and think. If I hadn't been in love, I would have died of loneliness long before now , but I have had Valentina with me in my mind" (*Nocturne* 166). Here, St. Aubin de Terán shows how actual relationships with real people, as for instance, Mezzanotte's parents and sister, with whom he lives when he first returns to the village, have been largely replaced by his internal world. In psychoanalytic terms, Mezzanotte has introjected a "good object" (in this case, Valentina); someone on whom he relies emotionally even though they are not

actually present (*Solitude* 19). Unable to work and cut off from his former life and hopes for the future, he uses his memory and imagination as resources. As a result, he has undergone a long and painful process of reflection and self-discovery, but as an elderly man Mezzanotte has found peace. He can accept his own death. This is evident in his last words to Stefano, "'I have had a chance to arrange my thoughts, to order my ideas. Some little things have changed. I feel neither bitterness nor blame. I have known loneliness but I have been saved from desolation. I have become a man. I have witnessed every emotion, but my love is undiluted" (*Nocturne* 198).

Mezzanotte's attitude to his community, perhaps like the artist's, seems one of detached attachment. His separation from the villagers is perhaps also coloured by their attitude to his need to be different. This is first expressed in his youth by his desire to travel. In addition, by wanting to marry Valentina, an outsider and a gypsy, even by wanting to leave the village at all, he is breaking patterns of traditional behaviour. These dictate that village members marry one another and stay put. Even San Severino, two miles away, is considered "alien territory" (*Ibid.* 3). This attitude is shaped partly by fear of the unknown, and partly by Italy's feudal history. Thus, peasants, especially those of Mezzanotte's parents' generation, believed that "there was no safety beyond the boundaries of their village" (*Ibid.* 5). The poorest families, however, had for hundreds of years been forced to accept separation from their menfolk who lived away as woodcutters, haulers and charcoal burners. This was lonely, poorly paid work. Consequently, Mezzanotte's wanderings after the travelling fair are viewed with disapproval by the older generation, who cannot understand it. Some villagers even

think that it will bring bad luck, or divine punishment and feel vindicated when he later returns injured from the war. His parents share the village superstitions. His father, at first, beats him to stop him travelling, while his mother simply begs him to give Valentina up. Later, she changes her mind. However, neither strategy works. Mezzanotte tells Stefano, "At home we had survived for decades, probably centuries, by limiting the world to the known world of our village. Anything beyond was threatening. To leave was to draw attention to the nest, to attract the predators and lead them back. My traipsing around after Valentina...had filled my family with dread" (*Ibid.* 171). Here, the close-knit connectedness of the village is explained by survival instinct. Later, however, the war forces many to leave. It also creates divisions between those who support the Fascists and those in favour of the Partisans. Many families suffer the loss or wounding of loved ones and this serves to reinforce the view of danger in the outside world. In the meantime, before the war, some of the young people, however, admire Mezzanotte both for following the fair, and later, for participating in the war. Village girls see him in a romantic light as an "exotic daring explorer" (*Ibid.* 69). Both young men and women envy him not simply for his courage, but for the strength of his passion.

Mezzanotte's love for Valentina, then, appears to have both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, it sets him apart from the group; a difference that is feared. On the other, he is admired as a hero. His love does, however, create a distance in his relationships with both family and friends, that he himself is aware of, since, "he was either absent on his travels or absent in his mind" (*Ibid.* 69). This emotional separation is felt particularly by Mezzanotte's mother and brothers who seem to cling to him the more because

of it. His brothers try to entice him to stay near the village and join in the rural hunting and gathering activities he has always shared with them. One Sunday, as he makes his way to the station, Mezzanotte becomes aware of the emotional pull of the village. He experiences a feeling that somehow he is diminishing his identity, losing his roots, by leaving. He describes it as "unravelling my childhood like a spindle of thread, reducing myself, getting smaller and smaller" (*Ibid.* 125). Yet he also realizes that it is his own choice, and one that makes him something of an outcast, or outsider. He tells Stefano, "'That was the first time I became aware of what I was doing: making my choice. I became a voluntary freak, an honorary member of that fair, cut adrift from all that had been mine" (*Ibid.* 126). Later, after he is wounded in the war, these words seem doubly relevant. Ironically, during the war, when his regiment is confined to waiting in their barracks, it is Mezzanotte's passion that enables him to tolerate the boredom of the present by fantasizing about the future and the past. He is relatively detached from the taunts of the other soldiers, and from the fear of military action for "Valentina had promised to marry him, nothing else was real" (*Ibid.* 29).

It seems highly significant, in psychological terms, that Mezzanotte's desire to leave the village is associated with the fair. For the fair in the novel becomes a symbol of the imagination. During the years of Mezzanotte's childhood, its arrival causes great excitement and curiosity heightened by an element of fear and repulsion, for it is essentially a freak show. The villagers talk together endlessly and fantasize about it. For Mezzanotte, as a small child, associates the funfair curiosities he hears about with magic and spells. As his grandmother comments, "'Who can tell if this is good or bad magic, but it's magic and that's for sure'" (*Ibid.*

13). Also, the fair is linked to his family history and the psychodynamics that have, perhaps, shaped his need to escape. His parents' lives, for instance, are characterized by hardship and disappointment. St. Aubin de Terán describes how his father, once "a fierce man with inflexible standards" (*Ibid.* 6), experiences the failure of his crops during the Depression. As a result, he becomes broken and bitter. Previously, a controlling and violent man, he reacts to adversity by withdrawing into silence. Consequently, his wife, Agostina, acquires a new sense of personal power within the family, but she is also lonely. She, too, is haunted by loss, in particular the deaths of four of her eight children. She regrets that she and Secondo cannot share their grief. St. Aubin de Terán writes:

> She did not blame her husband for the loss of her babies; she knew that he grieved for them too. She did blame him, though, for refusing to share their death with her, and for refusing to share their life. He was like a stranger. The man she had known and married was smothered somewhere inside the other's grim, humourless shell. Hardship, she felt, was no excuse for turning sour; everyone's life was hard. They lived in an area traced and retraced by the fine lines of calamity. (*Ibid.* 7)

Agostina's reaction to Rossi's fair is somewhat mixed. It represents the opportunity for relief from the drudgery of daily life: the family have enough to eat, but there is never any spare money. Thus, poverty for her is "more boredom than hunger" as no-one starves in the village (*Ibid.* 10). Yet the fair also represents for Agostina the missed opportunity of a more emotionally fulfilled life; it is a reminder of her own emptiness. Thus,"The first time Agostina saw the cavalcade, it filled her with sadness. She saw it as a procession of all life's potential passing her by...." (*Ibid.* 11). Furthermore, the fair is a reminder of her own mother whose household, in contrast to her own, had been brimming with "laughter and understanding"

(*Ibid.* 14). In Agostina's mind, the happiness of her mother, a highly imaginative woman, is linked to the fair. She could talk for hours about the fair's sights. Although she worked tremendously hard, Agostina's mother enjoyed life because she could believe, perhaps like Mezzanotte, in the power of her imagination. In fact, the fair becomes so much a part of her imaginative life that she is visited in dreams, every harvest, by the camel. In old age, this "hunchbacked horse" (*Ibid.* 13) becomes an imaginary companion to whom she talks. Agostina associates her mother's imagination with an ability to feel connected, both to oneself and to others. She reflects, of her mother, that she "had known how to nurture and sustain not only her husband's love but also her love for herself" (*Ibid.* 16). Consequently, Agostina decides to encourage her children to visit the fair in order to "learn the language of pleasure, and speak it" (*Ibid.* 16) so as to escape her own sense of meaninglessness.

Is Mezzanotte's pursuit of the fair an escape, then, from the emotionally depressed atmosphere of his home? Is he, perhaps, a symbol of the artist who must follow imagination wherever it leads, even if this distances him from others? Certainly, his quest for Valentina gives him a heightened sensitivity, but only to aspects of his life directly associated with her. Through her, his experience of life is broadened and intensified. As St. Aubin de Terán writes, "Through Valentina he discovered love, sex and a life outside his village; and as a continual bonus, there was the phenomenon of the fair" (*Ibid.* 115). On the one hand, his passionate commitment to Valentina, involves him with life. On the other hand, it is also a kind of blindness. Even during the four years that Mezzanotte pursues her, there is the suggestion that his feelings are not entirely reciprocated, and that Valentina is very much an

idealized figure. For, St. Aubin de Terán keeps the reader at a distance from this character, who remains rather mysterious. Later, this impression is confirmed when Stefano reads her letters. Before he even notices Valentina, on his first visit to the fair, Mezzanotte's imagination is stimulated by the sight of Marco and his fiancée riding on the merry-go-round. He feels "a pleasure so great it took his breath away" (*Ibid.* 22). As a result, he returns to the fair and immediately falls in love at the sight of Valentina. She claims that he must have seen her the night before, on the candyfloss stand. It disturbs him to think, therefore, that it was not actually love at first sight. Here, St. Aubin de Terán seems to suggest that it is the effect of the fair upon his imagination that has stimulated Mezzanotte's desire. Mezzanotte sees Valentina as beautiful, although when Stefano questions the fair owner about her, years later, he remembers her differently, as very ordinary. He does not recall her being generally regarded as pretty, but "sharp more like" (*Ibid.* 103).

Later, during the relationship, Mezzanotte is so driven by his need of Valentina, that he is able to ignore, or rationalize, the signals she gives him which indicate a waning of her own involvement. During the war, she appears to become deliberately vague about the fair's locations; she no longer encourages her lover to visit at every opportunity, telling him she is afraid he will desert. She sends postcards without addresses whose postmarks do not correspond to the pictures. Mezzanotte's love is unchanged by her behaviour. He seems unable to consider that she might be trying to end the affair since she still writes of marriage. Instead, he becomes afraid for her safety and thereby increases, and justifies, his wish to see her. After his horrific accident it is Mezzanotte's fantasy of Valentina, rather than her real

love or support, that helps him to survive. His sister, Elenita, is aware of this. As a result, she cannot bring herself to reveal the true contents of Valentina's letters for she is convinced that they will break her brother's spirit. Instead of the harsh truth of Valentina's rejection, she gives him her own imagined words of comfort. Consequently, Mezzanotte remains blind to the depth of his sister's devotion. He also remains ignorant of the fact that Valentina has a son named after him. His imaginative vision, then, is highly selective. Like the artist, he sees only what he wants or needs to see. Is his love, then, as he admits himself at one point, "monstrously selfish" (*Ibid.* 180)? In *Loss and Symbolic Repair*, Andrew Brink writes of Keats that his "poetic impulse is powerfully directed towards objects of desire that are also objects of avoidance, the beautiful and the sublime" (155). This seems relevant to Mezzanotte. By focussing on his experience of desire, he avoids a real knowledge or acceptance of others' reality. Is this, in effect, though, his conscious choice? For he seems, at least partially, aware of what he is doing. As he tells Stefano:

> [Valentina]...reinvented her past and then worshipped it. She had little regard for truth, she reconstructed events to suit her. Her future was something she imagined and then projected on to a screen. The present was of scarcely any interest to her. She had so little upon which to build her past, yet her greatest enjoyment lay there. They say that lovers grow to be like each other, adopting each other's likes and beliefs. I know I have grown to resemble Valentina in that respect at least. (*Nocturne* 104)

Like Mezzanotte, Stefano has experienced the trauma of loss in his own life, although the elderly veteran does not know of it. The result, for Stefano, has been a similar emotional withdrawal from the world, but without the compensation of a highly developed imagination. In fact, Stefano's response to grief appears to be the opposite to Mezzanotte's; it has led to

the suppression of his imaginative life and his sense of identity. Like Mezzanotte, though, Stefano's early life has greatly shaped his conception of both his internal and external worlds. In particular, the dynamics of his parents' relationship has left him deeply troubled. He feels incapable of forming "any really close friendships because of the distance he always felt between himself and the world" (*Ibid.* 45). He feels detached from life, and himself, and emotionally numb. He is in the habit of deceiving his father, and, by extension, himself, by appearing to do what is expected of him. As a result, he goes to law school although his heart is not in it.

As in Mezzanotte's family, Edoardo and Mara Altini's relationship is characterized by disappointment, silence and emotional distance, although originally they, too, loved one another. Edoardo, like Secondo, is also a controlling, dominating man. Unlike Secondo, however, it is not he who experiences psychological breakdown, but his wife. Unable to deal with her husband's "monstrous egotism" (*Ibid.* 46) and emotionally abusive behaviour, Mara collapses into a bizarre, semi-comatose state which seems reminiscent of Diego's "sleeping sickness of the heart" in *Keepers of the House* (27). This is brought on by grief at the miscarriage of her second child. The effect on Stefano, as a young child of perhaps two or three, is a natural confusion at the unexplained loss of his mother's love, compounded by the hardening of his father's attitude to Mara whom he berates for shamming. Edoardo blames her and forbids his young son to sit with his mother. However, this rule is disobeyed by the housekeeper Fabrizia. Stefano, for his part, senses that his father's attitude is connected to his mother's illness. He conceives of his father somehow casting malefic spells on his mother

and feels responsible for protecting her, yet is powerless to do so. He also lives with the constant emotional strain of the hope that his mother will awake and the disappointment when she fails to do so. When he is seven, his uncle takes him skiing and he returns to find his mother has disappeared without warning; Edoardo has placed her in a convent hospice without telling him. Fabrizia secretly takes him to visit her there, twice a year, until Mara's death when Stefano is seventeen. These visits are associated in Stefano's mind with images of severely pollarded poplars, which he envisions as "mutilated" (*Nocturne* 40). St. Aubin de Terán writes, "It seemed to Stefano that the trees were like the hopes of all the sick patients...inside the convent walls: they would rise only to be destroyed again and again, slashed back with relentless regularity. He came to dread his visits...always hoping for a flicker of recognition from his sleeping mother and never finding it...." (*Ibid.* 40). Here, the images of mutilation are linked to Mezzanotte. When Stefano's mother finally dies, his childhood belief in the power of love to alter reality, also withers, until it is renewed by Mezzanotte.

When Stefano leaves the city of Castello for his military service, it is with reluctance and a sense of fear because he associates his home town with his mother. He appears to experience separation anxiety. In addition, the north, where, Mezzanotte's village lies, is linked in his mind with visits to the hospice and with the stunted poplars which represent, for him, "the landscape of loss" (*Ibid.* 57). When he enters the village, he has a feeling of claustrophobia, "He seemed to be entering a trap, a sinister maze that would swallow him up and never let him get back to the wide open spaces of Castello" (*Ibid.* 90). Yet he and the

elderly veteran quickly establish an easy companionship. In the beginning, this is based on drinking together. The villagers are amazed that Mezzanotte, on the first day, has broken his usual pattern of going out alone. They think Stefano must be a long lost relative. The two have an immediate and instinctive understanding with regard to the villagers' curiosity, "They understood each other, not a word to the women, or indeed to the world. They must reserve their talk for each other, and their secrets" (*Ibid.* 95).

As time goes on the friendship deepens and Stefano is drawn into Mezzanotte's imaginative life to such an extent that he himself experiences the stirrings of a new-found desire. He begins to dream, as when he dreams of making love to Valentina. It is a vivid dream that involves all his senses. This shows the beginnings of a psychological change in him, because up to now he has always been afraid of the dark and feared sleep, perhaps because of its association, for him, with separation and death. As St. Aubin de Terán writes, "Stefano had no memory at all of what went on in his sleep....He was afraid of sleep, afraid of its nothingness. He was afraid of the dark and he was afraid for his mother" (*Ibid.* 41).

Ironically, it is the chance event of severe winter weather which isolates the village and throws Mezzanotte and Stefano into more prolonged contact with each other. Thus, their enforced, shared isolation, coupled with Mezzanotte's illness, intensifies their mutual need for closeness. In addition to the story of Valentina, Mezzanotte also talks about his friendship with Massimo Gavarini. Here, sudden death teaches Mezzanotte about the importance of belief in life. This anticipates the effect of his own death on Stefano. As Mezzanotte observes, he does not wish to hold Stefano's hand, instead he wishes to give him the contents

of his head. Stefano, in response, denies that Mezzanotte is near death and is reassured by the doctor's visit. Stefano is afraid of death and the thought of abandonment. He says desperately to Mezzanotte, "'We've only just met. Don't leave me, you can't do that'" (*Ibid.* 157). In contrast, Mezzanotte is unafraid. Gradually, as his narrative intensifies with the story of how he is blown up by the mine on the beach, Stefano grows accustomed to listening in the dark, actually becoming soothed by it and losing his fear.

When Mezzanotte dies, unexpectedly but peacefully, Stefano has the opportunity to witness death at first hand. He sits with the body and is reminded of his painful childhood. Unlike at the hospice, in the presence of his mother, he no longer feels afraid or wishes to escape. St. Aubin de Terán writes, "During his vigil with Mezzanotte he had felt no such fears. By some strange paradox, when his mother had slept, he had feared she was dead; but now that Mezzanotte had died, Stefano felt sure he was merely sleeping" (*Ibid.* 204). At the funeral, the villagers notice Stefano's air of "calm assurance" (*Ibid.* 204). After sitting up with the body, he has fallen asleep and dreamed. Thus, on the morning of the funeral, "Images as clear and miraculous as visions stayed in his mind, and later he realized he was remembering dreams. It was the first time in his life that the void of unconsciousness had been peopled and alive" (*Ibid.* 207). He is reminded of throwing a stone into a pool, as a child, and imagines Mezzanotte as a stone thrown into the blank waters of his own mind. The result, he feels, is the release within him of "a spring of life" (*Ibid.* 207).

In *Nocturne*, then, unlike in *Keepers of the House* and *Joanna*, St. Aubin de Terán emphasizes the function of narrative not so much as the dramatization of loss, but as the

spiritual gain shared by both teller and listener (or reader). In psychoanalytic terms, narrative becomes crucial to self-development. Hence Mezzanotte's story, really the story of his life, his family, his village and their historical context, bridges years of self-imposed isolation to become the linchpin of a friendship that marks a meaningful connection, in spite of death, between two individuals. For Stefano, Mezzanotte's tale provides hope. The older man, without imposing any expectations upon him, has become his spiritual guide. St. Aubin de Terán ends with the lines:

> At Mezzanotte's funeral, the parish priest had said in his sermon, 'The ship of death leaves no wake and no gulls follow it.' Yet Stefano could still hear the gulls and he was following in the wake, knowing that Mezzanotte was there to ferry him through whatever darkness and light awaited him. For how long this would be, he did not know, but he felt that it would be for long enough until he could make the journey alone. (*Ibid.* 209)

Consequently, St. Aubin de Terán demonstrates a new optimism about the possibilities of both human connectedness and isolation which seems lacking in her previous works. In this passage, the reference to both light and dark links to the lines by Milton at the beginning and evokes a sense of balance and unity. Here, both suffering and joy are envisioned as fundamental to human experience. Indeed, they are seen as necessary, if individuals are to achieve psychological maturity. In *Solitude,* Storr describes the path of self-development along which Jung aimed to guide his patients. Jung called this journey 'the process of individuation', the goal of which he conceived of as 'wholeness' or 'integration' a state of mind in which the different elements of the psyche, both conscious and unconscious, become welded together in a new unity (*Solitude* 193). In *Nocturne*, St. Aubin de Terán dramatizes

this process in fiction. In her conception, imagination is of crucial importance. Interestingly, as Storr also notes, Jung encouraged his patients to use part of the day for 'active imagination', a state of reverie, in which judgement is suspended, but consciousness is preserved (*Ibid.* 194). Ultimately, integration for Jung's patients was experienced as the achievement of peace of mind, sometimes after long and fruitless struggles (*Ibid.* 195). Storr quotes Jung writing in *Psychology and Religion: Collected Works*, XI, (1958):

> If you sum up what people tell you about their experiences, you can formulate it this way: They came to themselves, they could accept themselves, they were able to become reconciled to themselves, and thus were reconciled to adverse circumstances and events. This is almost like what used to be expressed by saying: He has made his peace with God, he has sacrificed his own will, he has submitted himself to the will of God. (*Solitude* 195)

In *Nocturne*, as in *The Tiger*, St. Aubin de Terán departs from a more obviously autobiographical narrative, but she shows a far greater control of her imaginative material than in the earlier novel. The structure of the narrative of *Nocturne*, which switches back and forward in time, and which circles around the central mysteries of what happened to Mezzanotte and to Valentina, creates a greater sense of rising action and climax. There is a greater variety of tone and style than in her previous novels. For instance, St. Aubin de Terán increases the use of direct speech in *Nocturne*. In both *Keepers of the House* and *Joanna*, she has a tendency to rely upon the use of reported speech and reported action, which tends to create a feeling of distance between the reader and the events represented. In *Nocturne*, however, she manages to create characters of greater complexity who seem more connected to the reader's experience. In the same way, and unlike in, for instance, *Keepers of the House*,

the Italian setting is imbued with both positive and negative characteristics. Past and present seem more coherently interwoven. In spite of the intense suffering caused by violence, loss and grief in *Nocturne* and the fact that St. Aubin de Terán is still dealing, essentially, with the nature of tragedy, the ending gives a far greater sense of resolution to conflicts represented in the novel, yet at the same time she leaves room for a measure of paradox and ambivalence. The novel, thus, shows imagination as both a means of escape and as a source of vital connection to the world.

CONCLUSION

The experience of both separation and attachment, or isolation and connection, is crucial to human life and personal identity. Like light and dark, they embody concepts whose significance is relational. In psychoanalytic terms, they have greater or lesser importance at different stages of an individual's maturational development. For, as object relations theorists believe, the development of a healthy self-identity or a functioning ego, is directly related to the child's early identification with, and gradual detachment from, the mother or primary care-giver. As Anthony Storr observes, D. W. Winnicott postulates that the individual's capacity to achieve the sense of being a separate person with a separate identity begins very early, but can only be initiated if a secure attachment already exists. Storr writes, "Winnicott conceives that this begins to happen when the infant is able to be in a relaxed state which is constituted by the experience of being alone in the presence of the mother". As the child grows, it will no longer need the constant physical presence of the attachment figure (*Solitude* 20-21). Here, the child's earliest experiences of the external world are directly related to the development of his or her internal world. This, in turn, will affect her or his ability to form attachments in childhood and throughout life. In addition, Winnicott notes that in infancy, the earliest signs of the differentiation between subjective and objective experience involve the imagination when children learn to play (Rudnytsky xiii). Consequently, in Brink's

opinion, much can be learned by regarding creative acts, or art, in terms of object seeking and object relating (*Loss and Symbolic Repair* 4).

Storr notes that most modern psychotherapists, including himself, have tended to focus on the individual's capacity to make mature relationships with others as the yardstick for psychological health, whilst omitting to consider that the ability to be alone may be an equally important indicator of the well-integrated ego (*Ibid.* 18). Viewed in this way, it would seem that the quality of early attachment is directly related to the individual's ability to find meaning in both his or her internal and external worlds; in both isolation and connection. While individuals may vary a great deal in how introverted or extroverted they are, the integrated ego is able to find a satisfactory balance between attachment and separation. The aim of psychoanalysis is generally to seek to understand how the individual's earliest relationships have shaped her or his perceptions of the world and the self, with a view to effecting understanding and changes, where possible. It is also "concerned with putting the individual in touch with his or her deepest feelings" (*Solitude* 21). Interestingly, Storr conceives of traditional psychoanalysis as providing a secure environment in which the analysand is encouraged to be alone in the presence of the analyst, rather like a child in the presence of the mother (*Ibid.* 21). In traditional Freudian analysis, the analysand is also encouraged to free associate, allowing the imagination to signpost the unconscious, a technique similar to play. Storr writes of the psychoanalytic process:

> ...patients in analysis can be helped to form better relationships with other people in the outside world by working through and understanding their relationship with the analyst. When a person is encouraged to get in touch with and express his deepest

> feelings, in the secure knowledge that he will not be rejected, criticized, nor expected to be different, some kind of rearrangement or sorting-out process often occurs within the mind which brings with it a sense of peace; a sense that the depths of the well of truth have really been reached. This process, which in itself contributes to healing, is facilitated by the analyst...but is not necessarily dependent upon the analyst's interpretations. (*Ibid.* 22)

This "rearrangement" and "sense that the depths of the well of truth have really been reached" is also characteristic of aesthetic experience. Thus, the successful artist is able to shape and to reconcile difficult, conflicting and disparate aspects of both internal and external reality which, through imagination, become a unified, coherent whole, giving a sense of satisfaction or fulfilment to the reader (*The Dynamics of Creation* 236). Storr, in *Solitude*, explains this function of art in terms of his view of the construction of the human mind. He writes that:

> the discovery, or perception, of order or unity in the external world is mirrored, transferred, and experienced as if it were a discovery of a new order and balance in the inner world of the psyche....Similarly, the process of reducing inner discord and reaching a degree of unification within the psyche has a positive effect upon the subject's perception of, and relation with, the external world. (*Solitude* 200)

Hence, just as the analysand creates a process of healing in the presence of the analyst, so the writer may achieve a sense of integration in the presence of the reader, giving a sense of satisfaction to both. In a similar way, Brink sees creativity as the symbolic repair of damage done to the artist's psyche. In *Loss and Symbolic Repair* (1977) he argues that it is now, in the era of ego psychology, worth considering anew "the particulars of what making a verbal aesthetic object accomplishes for its maker" in order to achieve a greater understanding of the artist's communication to him/herself and to the reader. In this way, it is possible to increase

the human meaning of art (Brink 4).

However, it may be that if a work of literature, for example, fails to achieve psychological integration for the writer, even at a subconscious level, then its effect upon the reader will also be unsatisfactory. In Storr's view, this is because the reader identifies with the writer and so participates in the integrating process which the writer has carried out for her/himself (*The Dynamics of Creation* 236). David Holbrook, writing of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) in "Lawrence's False Solutions" takes a similar perspective. He considers that this novel by D.H. Lawrence fails as a work of art because it does not "enrich and develop the concepts of those who read it" as Holbrook believes a good novel should (Rudnytsky 190). Holbrook sees the book as a disastrous projection of Lawrence's psychic difficulties in which he distorts external reality to avoid painful inward truths (Rudnytsky 207). Storr, in *The Dynamics of Creation*, also distinguishes between literary efforts that serve as abreaction rather than integration, for both reader and writer. The former use imagination purely as a means of escape from reality and as such, they lack artistic merit (27). The latter, in contrast, involve fantasies that "foreshadow new and fruitful ways of adapting to the realities of the external world" (Storr, *Solitude* 69). In other words, they increase our understanding of life. In Rudnytsky's view, "The crucial test of whether an object or experience is aesthetic, however, lies neither in its intrinsic nature nor solely in the state of mind of the person who confronts it, but in the relation between the two" (Rudnytsky xv).

In St. Aubin de Terán's life, as in her writing, she has used her imagination both abreactively and integratively. This has resulted in considerable variation in the artistic quality

of her achievements, although, in general, her work continues to develop and mature. Interestingly, the novels *Bay of Silence* and *Black Idol* were published during a period when, according to her own accounts, she was experiencing severe ego weakness or poor mental health. As Storr notes, some creative people seem to have an inherently tenuous sense of self-identity and their work may be an expression of their search for this (*The Dynamics of Creation* 190). On the other hand, creative expression requires 'ego strength' or the idea of a will that can be controlled (*Ibid.* 198). Thus, complete mental breakdown, in the form of madness, usually interferes with creative production (*Ibid.* 203). St. Aubin de Terán did not suffer a complete breakdown and her writing appears to have had an important psychological function. Always readable, where her narratives fall short of complete aesthetic integration, it may be because of a failure of what Winnicott calls 'creative apperception' (Storr, *Solitude* 71). In other words, where she fails, in relative terms, to bridge the gap between her inner and outer worlds (*Ibid.* 71). The impression, for the reader, is that the distance between the writer and her imaginative material is either too close or too distant.

As discussion of *Keepers of the House*, *Joanna* and *Nocturne* reveals, St. Aubin de Terán has used imagination as a means of exploring issues of isolation and connection in her own life through the lives of her created characters. Looked at as, in Brink's terms, "communication to herself", these novels appear to trace a process of reordering her own experiences that has taken many years. While the first two novels, in autobiographical terms, can be read as the search for identification with and separation from her father and mother, *Nocturne* moves away from the dramatization of relationships in the external world to focus

on the role of imagination in the attainment of a fully realised, autonomous sense of self. Consequently, St. Aubin de Terán's psychological development and her artistic maturation can be seen to be intimately connected. Storr in *Solitude* quotes Abraham Maslow who observes:

> My feeling is that the concept of creativeness and the concept of the healthy, self-actualising, fully human person seem to be coming closer and closer together and may perhaps turn out to be the same thing. (Storr 200)

As Storr also notes, the creative process is ongoing and continues throughout life. Creators and artists are never satisfied with their achievements and are continually compelled to seek new solutions to new problems. For, "Completed works are but halts on the way; staging posts on a journey which, as in Jung's picture of the development of personality, is never completed. Indeed, the works of an artist are the outward and visible signs of his inner development as a person" (*Ibid.* 199).

Finally, in a letter to the author, St. Aubin de Terán describes her own perceptions of some public and private aspects of her writing career which is ongoing. She writes that she feels she is taken seriously as an artist in Britain, "but only by a loyal few critics, readers and publishers who seem to understand what I am doing. I believe that there has been too much frivolous publicity about me and my life.... Many of my bad reviews were aimed more at my public image than at my books" (Dec. 1996). She continues:

> My favourite novels of mine are (4th) *Keepers*, (3rd) *The Tiger*, (2nd) *Nocturne*, (1st) *The Palace* [to be published in 1997]. *Keepers* for being the first and its subject matter especially dear to me; but flawed. *The Tiger* because it was my first really ambitious project....*Nocturne* because I felt near to mastering the techniques I wanted, *The Palace* because I feel I have almost done that, blending my heroes and influences

into entirely my own style - - I am a poet and a novelist - - in *The Palace* I feel in control (I usually do when I write) but also a sense of saying exactly what I wanted to say in the way I wanted, of translating emotion into words. (*Ibid.*)

WORKS CITED OR CONSULTED

Bacal, Howard A. and Kenneth M. Newman, eds. *Theories of Object Relations: Bridges to Self Psychology*. New York: Columbia UP, 1990.

Bell, Madison. Rev. of *The Slow Train to Milan* by Lisa St. Aubin de Terán. *New York Times Book Review* 22 April 1984: 14.

Bowlby, John. *Attachment and Loss. 2 vols.* New York: Basic Books, 1969.

Brink, Andrew. *Creativity as Repair: Bipolarity and its Closure*. Hamilton, ON: The Cromlech Press, 1982.

- - -. *Loss and Symbolic Repair: A Psychological Study of Some English Poets*. Hamilton, ON: The Cromlech Press, 1977.

- - -. *Obsession and Culture: A Study of Sexual Obsession in Modern Fiction*. London: Associated UP, 1996.

Broyard, Anatole. Rev. of *The Slow Train to Milan* by Lisa St. Aubin de Terán. *New York Times* 25 April 1984: C19.

Clare, Anthony. *In The Psychiatrist's Chair II*. London: Heineman, 1995.

Cunningham, Valentine. "Landscapes of Looniness". *Observer* 16 Sep. 1984: 20.

- - -. Rev. of *The Bay of Silence* by Lisa St. Aubin de Terán. *Observer* 4 May 1986: 23.

Davies, Dido. "Bad Blood." Rev. of *Joanna* by Lisa St. Aubin de Terán. *Times Literary Supplement* 25 May 1990: 559.

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota Press, 1983.

Felman, Shoshana, ed. *Literature and Psychoanalysis: The Question of Reading: Otherwise*. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1982.

Forster, Aisling. "Speaking of the Simple." Rev. of *Nocturne* by Lisa St. Aubin de Terán. *Times Literary Supplement* 2 Oct. 1992: 21.

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers Of Research Papers*. 4th ed. New York: MLA, 1995.

Grotstein, James S. and Donald B. Rinsley, eds. *Fairbairn and the Origins of Object Relations*. London: Free Association Press; New York: The Guilford Press, 1994.

Guntrip, Harry. *Schizoid Phenomena, Object-Relations and the Self*. London: Hogarth Press, 1968.

Holmes, Jeremy. "Attachment Theory: A Biological Basis for Psychotherapy?" *British Journal of Psychiatry* 163 (1993) : 430-438.

- - -. "The Clinical Implications of Attachment Theory." *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 11.I (1994) : 62-76.

Horne, Philip. "Maids". *London Review of Books*. 1-20 Apr. 1983: 14-15.

Holbrook, David. *Sylvia Plath: Poetry and Existence*. London: Athlone Press, U of London, 1976.

Keats, John. *The Letters of John Keats*. Maurice Buxton Forman, ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1952.

Kurzweil, Edith and William Phillps, eds. *Literature and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Columbia UP, 1983.

Lee, Hermione. "Nightmares From the New World". *Observer*. 11 July 1982: 29.

"Lisa St. Aubin de Terán". *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Daniel G. Marowski, ed. Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1986. 36: 419-423.

Loakes, Jonathan. "Lifeless Legends". *Books and Bookmen* Sept. 1984 348: 16-17.

"Loneliness". *The Columbia Dictionary of Quotations*. Microsoft Bookshelf. New York: Columbia UP, 1993. CD-ROM. Redmond: Microsoft, 1994

Massie, Allan. *The Novel Today: A Critical Guide to the British Novel 1970-1989*. London:

The British Council; New York: Longman, 1990.

Mellors, John. Rev. of *The Bay of Silence* by Lisa St. Aubin de Terán. *Listener* 29 May 1986: 25.

"Milton". *The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia. Microsoft Bookshelf.* New York: Columbia UP, 1991. CD-ROM. Redmond: Microsoft, 1994.

"Nocturne". *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. Microsoft Bookshelf.* 3rd ed. Houghton Mifflin, 1992. CD-ROM. Redmond: Microsoft, 1994.

Rev. of *Nocturne* by Lisa St. Aubin de Terán. *Kirkus Reviews*: 1 July 1993: 812.

Pavey, Ruth. Rev. of *Joanna* by Lisa St. Aubin de Terán. *Observer* 20 May 1990: 27.

Pleasants, Ben. "Down the Andes: A Family Decline" *Los Angeles Times Book Review* 10 April 1983: 2.

Rudnytsky, Peter L.,ed. *Transitional Objects and Potential Spaces: Literary Uses of D. W. Winnicott.* Psychoanalysis and Culture. New York: Columbia U P, 1993.

Sage, Lorna. Rev. of *Black Idol* by Lisa St. Aubin de Terán. *Observer* 4 Oct 1987: 27.

St. Aubin de Terán, Lisa. *The Bay of Silence*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1986.

"St. Aubin deTerán, Lisa". *Contemporary Authors.* Susan M. Trosky, ed. Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1989. 126: 384-389.

St. Aubin de Terán, Lisa. *Joanna*. London: Virago Press, 1991.

- - -. *Keepers of the House*. 1982. London: Penguin, 1983.

- - -. Letter to the author. Dec. 1996.

- - -. *Nocturne*. 1992. London: Penguin, 1993.

- - -. *Off The Rails: Memoirs of a Train Addict*. 1989. London: Sceptre, 1990.

- - -. *The Slow Train to Milan*. 1983. London: Penguin, 1984.

- - -. *The Tiger*. 1984. London: Penguin, 1986.

- - -. *A Valley in Italy: Confessions of a House Addict*. 1994. London: Penguin, 1995.

"Schizophrenia". *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. Microsoft Bookshelf*. 3rd ed. Houghton Mifflin, 1992. CD-ROM. Redmond: Microsoft, 1994.

Storr, Anthony. *Solitude*. London: Fontana, 1988.

- - -. *The Dynamics of Creation*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1972.

Sussman, Henry. *Psyche and Text: The Sublime and the Grandiose in Literature, Psychopathology and Culture*. Albany, New York: State NYUP, 1993.

Williams, Linda Ruth, ed. *Critical Desire: Psychoanalysis and the Literary Subject*. Interrogating Texts. London: Edward Arnold, 1995.