

"OTHER-WRITING" IN SELECTED TEXTS BY DAPHNE MARLATT

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By

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Abstract

Language is loaded. Entire ideologies can hide themselves within the contextual meaning of one small word - "mankind" for example. Daphne Marlatt is a poet who attempts to write against our patriarchally imbued language to find an "other" space, a woman-space, within which to write. This thesis attempts to unveil the strategies that Marlatt uses to find this "other writing" by investigating poems from her earlier works (leaf leaf/s, Net Work), her long poem "How Hug a Stone," and her widely unstudied collaboration with Betsy Warland, "Reading and Writing Between the Lines." I conclude with a discussion on the philosophical and political problems faced by any writer who attempts to write "otherly."

This is by no means either a comprehensive or a conclusive study. The nature of both Marlatt's work and any study that attempts to investigate "other" language systems is anti-cohesion and against conclusions. Therefore, the gaps remain in my text to encourage, as Marlatt does, a reading that is conscious of the language structures that encode our understanding.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

pre/ambling through other spaces

An Introduction in the Linear Voice 1

Chapter One: Poems of an Other Woman 5

Chapter Two: (M)other Writing: Spiraling out of the
Script in "How Hug a Stone" 21

Chapter Three: A Map to Interzone: "Reading and Writing
Between the Lines" 45

Con/clusions 69

pre/ambing through other spaces

hey...space the final frontier of unwritten
words and (double space please) well i really "need some
space" so i can understand what matters is my "living
space" my "parking space" where i leave my words to
amble to ramble into your spaces those outer spaces
uttered other space

OTHER ? OT/HER ? OLD TESTAMENT HER ?

the remaining

[read (read {read alternative} different) additional]

rib

surrounded by layers of thy/thou/hast/Him words that
bind her into an/other role, first mate, second
in/come/and opposite as night and day, black and white,
dog and cat, man and woman,

or
man and boy
or
man and machine
or
man and animal

(wait, this isn't as simple as they said)

RUPTURE inter-RUPT-your binary code

gap alert !

gape alert marking the space i march down the lines
through his words, his rules, his story that leaves me

as adjective and pronoun other speeches other remarks

re: Marx

you divided me economically binary opposite to power the
i in ideology sounded like it was talking to me but the
reality is not i-deal because He deals out the cards
over and over again merely shuffling up the words while
the theories remain the same

FLASH - (a semiotic voice is entering the text..quick,
stab it before it mat(t)ers)

she's still subordinate she's still proletariat and no
language is neutral in this game... whose surly law
keeps me opposite to the Word, who surely lauds binding
binary, who..

Husserl?

conscious because i think of you thinking of me mise en
abyme supposing i suspend suppositions (you're
suspended!) but to be conscious is to be conscious of
something hence fencing suppositions is a tensing of
consciousness, othering of objects (go away object and
let me be)

but where is the epic époqueé?

"refusing to include the object is still a conscious act

no chance of a suspended...

id

r g

b e

(note the ID at the top, hey,

that reminds me of____(lack) ____)

here an I builds an empire around i and eye is

stuck in an/other ball of fraudulent male-signed

reference (too easy to say "Freudulant")

i gaps again

and another structure steps in to fix me as

non-man, no penis, linear-less, i cause your split and

yet still i'm petrified object, scarred by your desire,

marked marketed and markered by the male gaze... a belle

image imaged in your words, your language, your signs

where is the other tongue, is there a mothertongue?

Simone says i'm the other tongue the Second Sex the not

speaking subject the negative Object the one in whom you

confirm your power, your image your character

i put on the institutionalized veil and my identity dies

What would Daphne do?

Derride that monologic voice

backed-in to a

corner the iii's will spin amongst dialogic streams of

sound churning in an eddy of linguistic murmurs that

tell me there is no centre

i'm not the opposite of man

gaps do speak

Marr the lot of language

muse with mothertongue - otherize on your own terms.

An Introduction in the Linear Voice

When Barbara Godard, Daphne Marlatt, Kathy Mezei and Gail Scott decided to editorially collaborate on the bilingual feminist literary journal "Tessera," they commenced by recording the four-way conversation of July 4, 1983 explicating the *raison-d'être* of this new journal. That conversation prologued the first issue and was titled "SP/ELLE: Spelling out the Reasons." The new word "SP/ELLE" surfaced as such:

- DM : Barbara was throwing out words right and left and we were making acronyms, bilingual puns and everything else.
BG : I can't remember all of the different ones that we came up with but we did have one that would function bilingually SP/ELLE.
GS : Which I liked.
DM : The speaking elle. (5)

In terms of spaces in language, SP/ELLE bridges English and French and hence represents a neutral linguistic space where both French writers and English writers might be heard. SP/ELLE is also the building blocks of a new language, a new spelling system, that allows for a particularly female voice to emerge. SP/ELLE is the "she space" where a woman can speak outside of patriarchal systems, and hence outside of the "he space." And finally, SP/ELLE is "[t]he speaking elle," that rare species that has been heretofore largely

absented from Western culture.

Daphne Marlatt uses a poetic sp/elleing to out the voice of the silenced literary woman. In her eloquent text "musing with mothertongue," Marlatt claims that a female language space can be born from the male structures of language:

in poetry, which has evolved out of chant and song, in riming and tone-leading, whether they occur in prose or poetry, sound will initiate thought by a process of association. words call each other up, evoke each other, provoke each other, nudge each other into utterance. (224)

This strategy, the uttering of the other through association, is strongly linked with the female body and specifically, the mother's body. A possibility is presented that language could be like a womb that bears us and births us "insofar as we bear with it" (224). Nevertheless, before the mothertongue can be claimed, the reality of the current "patriarchally-loaded" language must be declaimed.

Marlatt describes present language in terms of male dominance, male experience, male hierarchies, legalities, and patriarchal holdings. This language does not allow for female experience ("where are the poems that celebrate the soft letting-go the flow of menstrual blood is as it leaves her body?") and hence the woman writer must find a voice in the differences and

discrepancies between her experience and the male language, all the while:

risking non-sense, chaotic language leafings,
unspeakable breaches of usage, intuitive leaps.
inside language she leaps for joy, shoving out
the walls of taboo and propriety, kicking
syntax, discovering life in old roots (226)

In the following three chapters, I will investigate how Daphne Marlatt's search for an other-writing has changed as she redefines the concepts of "woman" and "otherness." Chapter one will treat Marlatt's "pre-feminist" poems which nevertheless indicate a profound concern with expressing the as yet unwritten female experiences in a male code. Chapter two delves into Marlatt's examination of (m)otherness in her long poem "How Hug a Stone." In this poem, Marlatt alternately spirals between the grounding and abstracting of the mother in an attempt to negotiate a space outside of the male linear narratives of the past. Chapter three investigates another realm of otherness, the lesbian space, in the largely undiscussed text "Reading and Writing Between the Lines." This article, which is co-written by Betsy Warland, works to create a new space for women writers that denies the possibility of single authorities through the insistence on the female collective.

Daphne Marlatt creates a double-bind with the

concept of otherness. She recognizes that women have been absented from literature and from history due to their position as "other" to the dominant male class. She also recognizes that in order to be able to speak her own voice, her mothertongue, she must other herself from the "patriarchally loaded" language systems. Hence to escape the bonds of otherness, the writer must write otherly. Of course, there are huge problems with an attempt to "reinscribe" the woman into another code, and although I spend the bulk of this thesis attempting to reveal the positive strides Marlatt has made to that end, I do investigate the political ramifications of such a project in my conclusions. Her space may seem precarious, but it is only through this other-writing that Marlatt's voice may be heard.

Poems of an Other-Woman

I, Woman Immortal
I am the creator of life
I am the reason why you will die
I am the root of all your problems
And this samba is dedicated to you.
Malcolm McLaren

To write and be a woman is not necessarily a difficult task in Western society if the writer is willing to bend to a few minor roadblocks: the lack of visible female precursors, the publishing world which is largely populated by men, the categorization of the woman writer into certain genres such as romance, cooking, and beauty articles, the deficit of spare money from the job that pays on average one quarter less than the male counterpart, and the paucity of spare time away from the unpaid work which is considered a "given" if you are a woman (mothering, cooking, cleaning). These roadblocks seem insurmountable for the "woman writer" and yet negotiating a path through them is a necessary and sometimes unconscious part of many women's lives.

However, to write as a woman is a necessarily difficult task in Western society. It entails being continually conscious of her position as "other" to the norm of the writing world. It means realizing that the forms available to the writer - the novel, the poem, the

short story, the play - were created by men and hence may not be suitable to reflect the female viewpoint. It means that even the language that I am using to express these ideas, and the dictionaries in which I verify my spelling, were created by male scholars and hence are not gender-neutral. The tools that the writerly woman has to work with are already damaged - bent towards a patriarchal viewpoint.-

Daphne Marlatt began her career as a writer who happened to be a woman (a "woman writer"¹). She was a constituent of the TISH movement which opposed the inherited academic view towards writing due to its insistence on classical forms. Interestingly, Fred Wah (an originator of TISH) in his introduction to Marlatt's collection Net Work, carefully distances Marlatt from the nucleus of that influential group:

The development of Marlatt's writing has its roots in the activities focused around TISH in the early sixties in Vancouver. She was not part of the original group (Frank Davey, George Bowering, Fred Wah, David Dawson, Jamie Reid, Lionel Kearns), but she was directly involved with the second wave of writers who continued TISH after the Vancouver Poetry Conference in 1963. (8)

1 I would like to make a distinction between "woman writer," a term I mean to be used in the same way as one would say a "woman doctor," and "woman-as-writer" which signifies a consciousness of writing as a woman within a male structure.

Although Marlatt was "permitted" to uphold the ideologies of TISH, she was still rated "second wave," and hence "other" to the (male) creators of the group.

Another possible example of Marlatt's early position as "woman writer" is her entanglement in Charles Olsen's "proprioception," the phenomenological poetics which supports writing through the body:

Any word is a physical body. Its body is sound, so it has that absolute literal quality that sound has, which connects it up with sounds around it. And then, it has that other aspect, which is meaning...You move out from the word to a shape, which is the whole poem.²

However, the theoretical body which one is to write through is a male perceiving organism and hence the woman must write as a male subject. In turn, the female becomes an eternal object to the male subject "I". Consequently, the literary theory behind the poem also entrenches Marlatt in the "woman writer" role.

Nevertheless, Marlatt's early poetry does seem to be aware of the linguistic positioning of woman as "other" to a male norm. From her short-line poems in leaf leaf/s to her longer prose pieces in Uncollected Poems, one can find a trace of "other-writing," an

2 Daphne Marlatt in conversation with George Bowering, "Given this Body," Open Letter, 4th Series, No.3, Spring, 1979, 69-70.

attempt to elicit an other voice from these male language structures. In spatial terms, I would characterize this writing as squeezing through the lines of patriarchal literature, a glimpse at a "woman-as-writer" using and ab/using male models of writing in this the beginning of her editorial search for an/other form of writing.

The poem "dialog" from leaf leaf/s is a poem where one can read a cognizance of woman as language's immortal object. The form of the poem follows that of the TISH poets: short lines, broken words, elision of connectives to create a sense of ultimate presence, and strong sonoral repetitions. Yet, as the title implies, this is a two-way dialogue between the "I" and the "she" of the poem. Interestingly, the dialogue remains incomplete both in the title "dialog" and in the text, because the "she," the subject, is silent.

The woman-as-writer is also traceable within the element of danger that lurks throughout this poem. The "dialog" is ruled "such hazard" in the opening lines which subsequently enforces a tie between the voice, that danger and the body:

such hazard as
my body's threat death in
forms the take

pictures

what words I read she
 almost died of
 caught
 on the steep

verge of it down the
 pitch of sleep words
 fail

The poem elicits an apprehension of the language's fixedness within which the speaker is caught. Although one is perceiving through the body, that "body," which is also language, threatens closure by "death." The death extends to the "she" of the poem who is fixed by "what words I read." The word "pictures," which could represent the fixing of objects either materially (on film) or mentally (perceiving, hence picturing), is itself fixed alone, hanging between two stanzas and surrounded by white space. Even the consciousness "fails" through the "sleep words" that are "die / ing on the run." This poem is both "in / forms" of male poetic structures and "in/forms" a woman's position by tracing the danger of writing as the perceiving "I."

Yet even though that danger is written in this poem, there is still a reticence of presentation in these short lines. In some ways this poem appears closed, passive and impenetrable. The words are pared down, the syntax is broken, and "the joke seems to be a private one" (Godard 482). It is difficult to read the poem stanza by stanza because each word relies on the

next word to create a network of puns and double meanings. The large spaces beg to be naturalized and filled by other voices and other words. Perhaps it is the overwhelming silence that is most remarkable; consequently, each written word merely serves to underline the words that are not present. In a style that is supposed to emphasize the ever-present nature of perception and language, this poem cannot help but do the reverse by emphasizing that which is absent.

The following poem in leaf leaf/s questions this non-presence in language. "of to mother" words the presence of different kittens who, when absented or "missed," find their voices (albeit "shrill" ones):

...kittens, one
 black 2 white, tiger
 striped the

 black one shrills loudest when
 she's missed

Reading the "black kitten" as female, a "she," there is an implication that "being missed" or absented will elicit a voice. And yet this voice is not a part of the language of the poem but a non-linguistic "shrill" -an "other" language. The otherness of the kitten's language is emphasized at the end of the poem where:

the kittens

 in their box night
 mare or hiccup sound

less.

Unlike the "shrills," the "hiccup" is silenced, "sound / less." Conceivably this silence is born of their placement in a confined space - "their box." Or, perhaps the silence originates in fear; a fear of blackness, "night," or a fear of what is connected to the night, the "night / mare." These kittens find a voice in absence and subsequently lose it in structure. Notably, this double bind mirrors Marlatt's literary dilemma: the voice she creates in the absence is silenced by the male "box" of language.

Therefore: "To naturalize or not to naturalize...the text begs the question." For example, the format of the poem absents the lines of definition between the perceived felines creating a need to naturalize them into: "one black," "2 white," and an implied one "tiger striped." However, unnaturalized, the text refuses to allow the reader to create any categories whatsoever. For example, there is no comma between "black" and "2", hence that category becomes "one black 2 white." The number "1" is written "one" yet the two is left in its numerical form. Sonorically, the "2" recalls "to" creating a kitten that refuses binary division (black and white) and rests coloured "black to white." Similarly, unnaturalized, it is not the "black"

kitten that "shrills" but the black one who (being) "tiger / striped...shrills." Hence, Marlatt makes the text itself resistant to singular phenomenological perceptions and "natural" readings.

The brief poem that follows "of to mother" is untitled, yet the last lines of this poem succinctly capture the subject/object bind of phenomenology:

who blows me from
yr lips' air.

The subject not only perceives the object, but also perceives because of the object; however, this passage asks "who is it that is creating "me" as object" and "who can "blow" me from being trapped in yr lips' air?" In this case, the perceiving body undermines the speaker because the lips, while necessary for nourishment and breathing, can also ensnare the object when the lips combine with air to create language. It is the female object who must be "blown" off the course of language and into an "other," expressly female, perceiving space.

Marlatt identified another of her short-line poems, "so cocksure," as one of her first explicitly feminist statements about male "chauvinism."³ The title itself underlines threefold the unquestioned superiority

3 Bowering, p.56.

of the male in both society and language. For example, in Lacanian theory, the "phallus" or "cock" is the ultimate symbolic language signifier. In addition, the "cock" evinces an image of animalistic male arrogance (picture the male rooster strutting, chest puffed, naming the morning as he marks his territory with scratched lines). Finally, the title echoes a Freudian example of male power, the gun, which must be loaded and "cocked" before it "kills." The title acts as a wry literary wink, preparing the reader to read against the grain of the structure of the poem.

The first three sections revolve around a flurry of movement and a barrage of hyper-alliteration. There is a sense of being caught in a vertiginous descent that turns the spoken world around, reversing the placement of stars, sky and hill:

momentum

eventually of stars
runs down
hill,
 the shingle

back't us slippery
feet collide with dry
sky

The "momentum" that begins the poem reflects the momentum of the language that Marlatt employs. The continuum of her words mirrors the action of a snowball

at the top of a hill that, with each small push and each little shift, gains size and speed in an attempt to crash into a new space.

The collision at the end of section one leads to the narratological death of the speaker by alliterative over-exposure. The voice seems trapped in the cumbersome structures of accepted poetry which is "simply / spoken out" absenting the speaker twice by its "hunger hole" that is "in / visible." The constructed "tongue" spills the alliteration onto the page in the line "licks lights lightens its," and in:

lie under
lined our
laughter his.

It is unclear whether the laughter is "his" or "our[s]" but the repetition of the "l" sound creates an hysterical hold on the section.

The last section recreates a "cocksure" Stevensian image of a perceiving head perceiving itself which in turn brings itself into creation:

unspoken his
head of
stars stares
a head.

His "head" is "unspoken" because no other words are needed to bring it into being: he is the subject that can chiastically bear itself. The "head of stars" recalls the image of the aurora borealis in Wallace

Stevens' "The Aurora's of Autumn":

This is where the serpent lives, the bodiless.
His head is air. Beneath his tip at night
Eyes open and fix on us in every sky. (Canto I)

In Stevens' poem, the speaker must come to terms with the possibility that the grandeur of nature, the "first idea," cannot be captured by the artist although the artist does create that nature as he writes. Stevens' language is "cocksure" in its masculine bias and its use of the female as an unsigned author of the poem: "The mother's face / the purpose of the poem" (Canto III). In Marlatt's poem, "his head" is revealed to be "that lie." This "he" does not speak for the speaker. This "he" does not understand the speaker. And ultimately, this "he" is not concerned with the speaker:

that we shd kiss & make
up he sd before
driving to
sleep.

"So cocksure" the male voice communicates in clichés that are not only emptied of meaning, but also emptied of letters. His pronouncement made, the speaker is deleted from his consciousness, gapped from his text as he plunges to the depths of sleep. This man could easily be the speaker who ends Stevens' "Auroras of Autumn":

In these unhappy he meditates a whole
The full of fortune and the full of fate,
As if he lived all lives, that he might know...
(Canto X)

"So cocksure" is the man who silences the woman and the male poetic code that silences the female poet.

These early short-line poems allow for glimpses of a feminist sensibility, an "other" writing space which seems to be quietly stating its presence between the quick little lines of these poems. In an interview from 1977, Marlatt states:

I felt too confined by the short line and by absolute attention at every step to the word, so I decided to open up the line deliberately and to use that extended line which looks like prose - left margin to right margin on the page...Like I wanted to move in larger units, in paragraphs, and I wanted larger rhythms than those very short lines would allow. ⁴

Indeed, Marlatt turned to the longer lines to utter the female voice, although one might wonder what it is about the longer line that would represent for Marlatt a particularly female voice. I will use the poem "seeing your world from the outside," which was written the year after the above interview, in an attempt to disclose how the longer lines are more conducive to Marlatt's particular brand of "other-writing."

"seeing your world from the outside" is a poem that rewrites the violence that a woman faces on the

4. David Arnason, Dennis Cooley and Robert Enright, "There's This and This Connection," CVII, Vol. 3, No.1 (Spring 1977), p.29.

street, in society and in language due to her "outside" position. The poem is riddled with interdictions that "wall" the woman into prescribed male roles:

"not upside"
 "the walls say no"
 "Do Not phone. Do Not move on to Go."
 "stop"

The prohibitions that channel the woman resemble a game that is "rigged" to benefit and empower the male (is it any wonder that the speaker in the children's game "Simon Says" is a "Simon" and not a "Simone"?). These negative imperatives mirror the woman's position as negative object to the man's positive subject and hold her captive in that world structure.

Another patriarchal strategy unveiled in the poem is the man's authorial voice. His voice permeates the first half of the poem where he greets the women on the streets, "salud! ladies of the night," a salutation that defines the women as lady and whore in one breath. "Salud" is also a strange cross between the French word "salut" which signifies an informal greeting and a type of homage ("I salute you"), and the French word "salaud" which is a colloquial term for "scoundrel" or "bastard". These simple phrases build the walls of language upon which the woman can only graffiti her cry for help -invisible words on an non-visioning wall.

Hence, the world that the woman is in is a world of absence and silence. It is the night where "absence is whirling down," to a place that is "full of holes." Nevertheless, these blanks are being inscribed within the longer lines of this poem. In the leaf leaf/s' poems, the silence is presented as gaps between the disparate words; however, this silence is named and physically presented on the page. The difference is a measure of control over those gaps that are recognized as absenting the female from the linguistic field. There is an emphasis on "reading" as the speaker reads "the black tint under your eyes from banging your head all night" thereby naming the anguish of futility that leads to pain and bodily disassociation.

The longer lines also allow for a narrative to develop. The reader does, of course, have gaps to fill in, but in this case, those gaps do not constitute the entirety of the woman's voice. For example, the lines lengthen in the second half of the poem where the speaker begins to "see" her world from an/other perspective. The whims of "chance" that rule the life of the woman are permitted to be explored, rooted and deconstructed by "other" voices that enter the text. The woman's voice enters the text through alternative venues: questions ("is this the right spot?"), scrawls

("annie was here"), and political quotes ("because the night belongs to us"). The non-verbal "scream" that represents "appraisal" for the man is turned into a refusal of silence:

"a scream is an appraisal." you.a scream
is a refusal. we. refuse to keep in all that
silence pressing thru the walls
o women, women who write

"because the night belongs to us"

This refusal demands the long lines of this narrative because this refusal is created by abolishing silence through the acts of the woman-as-writer. For Marlatt, the longer lines are a form of "other-writing" because it is only through the exploration of what has been encoded as "female narrative" that a new voice can emerge. The long lines break down the "confining walls" of patriarchal poetic forms, crossing the boundary between poetry and prose to make visible the woman's writing on the wall.

Perhaps what is most striking about the change from short-line to long-line poems is the change from a detached, passive voice to a political, active one. Marlatt moves from being a "woman-writer" in a male discourse to being a "woman-as-writer" outside of the patriarchal forms. One could argue that the mere lengthening of a verse line is not a particularly "female" format (after all, numerous twentieth century

male bastions of the poetic canon employ a longer line: T.S. Eliot, and the aforementioned Wallace Stevens just to name two). However, I believe the difference in Marlatt's poetry is that the longer line affords a vaster range of voice. These lines resist a cohesion towards which perchance the male versions strive. As the length increases, so do the number of interruptions, diversions, interloping voices and fragmentations. This is the beginning of an "other" writing for the "other woman" - a writing that, to quote Betsy Warland, opens new linguistic vistas while breaking down old patriarchal forms. "Open is Broken," and broken forms can spiral to an opening up of the mothertongue's space.

M(other) Writing:
Spiraling out of the Script in "How Hug a Stone"

The woman you call the mother of the child
is not the parent, just a nurse to the seed,
the new-sown seed that grows and swells inside her.
The man is the source of life - the one who mounts.
She, like a stranger for a stranger, keeps
the shoot alive unless god hurts the roots.
I give you proof that all I say is true.
The father can father forth without a mother.
Here she stands, our living witness. Look--
[he points to Athena]
(Apollo in Oresteia by Aeschylus)

How hug a stone? For Daphne Marlatt, the stone represents all things motherly that have been fixed beneath layer upon layer of patriarchal scripts. How erode that enclosing surface? How deep that surface reach? By derailing the trains of linear narrative, Marlatt attempts to spiral inwards and outwards to an "other" space where the mother-figure, and the mothertongue can speak not only outside of patriarchal scripts, but also "unscripted"... without a script.

The mother-figure in Western texts has existed as an 'other' to the power of male paternity. For example, the ancient Greeks simply employed an exception to prove this "truth": Athena, born fully grown and powerful from the head of her father Zeus, embodies the mythological proof of the power of the father over the maternity of the mother. Here is the "decisive" answer

to that age-old male creative self-doubt: "If I am the dominant gender, then why is it that SHE can create life?" Enter Athena, daughter exemplaire, goddess, warrior, and judge of Orestes (murderer of his own mother), who, by being born without the aid of a mother, undermines the threat of patriarchy. In addition, Athena is birthed from her father's head, indicating the superiority of man's mental creative powers over woman's biological creative abilities. Plus, Athena is born fully grown, a much more respectable deed than the mere birth of an undeveloped, non-verbal baby. And, in case there are still any doubters, Apollo purports (incorrectly) that although a woman carries the child, it is the man who is the "source of life." According to that philosophy, the man is the "parent," sower and creator of the seed of life, whereas the woman is reduced to the role of "nurse to the seed," a living vessel that carries a child by grace of (a male) god.

Now one might argue that "one mythological story does not an ideology make." However, when these Greek stories are dubbed "the classics" (eg. Sophocles, Homer, Aeschylus) and therefore become mandatory study for generations of "great" modern writers, then the political influences behind these stories tempt the possibility of becoming fixed as "truths." Ideology

wrapped up in the form of teachable literature is just one of the scripts against which Daphne Marlatt must write to find the mothertongue in "How Hug a Stone."

In a similar fashion, Western religions carry the burden of purveying "truths" in a society where such scripts can also work to petrify maternal narratives. Like the women in Apollo's script, Mary the mother of Jesus Christ, is also "vesselized"; she is not the "creator" of Christ, but the container into which God places the physical life of his son:

When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.
(Matthew 1:18-21)

In this the first scripted New Testament description of the birth of Christ, a few key points arise concerning the role of the mother, Mary. For example, angels of the Lord appear, not to counsel Mary on her maternal role, but to quell Joseph's fears of marrying a non-virgin. Consequently, by absolving Mary of any sexual participation in the conception of Christ and thereby rendering her a virgin and marriageable, the text also

absolves the mother of any claim to creation. In other words, Mary is treated as temporary storage for the creative powers of the Holy Ghost. In addition, it is Joseph who is given the power to name the child that Mary is carrying. Finally, Mary's role is completely marginalized through the grammatical use of the passive voice - "she was found with child," "that which is conceived in her" - which creates a gap between Mary's role as mother and the apparent passivity that is complicit with that role. The script also encloses the mother in verse twenty-three through the replacement of the words "give birth" by "bring forth." Mary's labour is, if not absented, then at least abstracted to the point that it seems as though she had been merely keeping a child in a back room for nine months and is bringing him out for air.

The Gospel according to Saint John further displaces the role of the mother by insisting on the secondary nature of physicality in the act of creation:

He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

(John 1:11-14)

In this account, Mary is erased by Christ's ability

to give birth to himself: "He came unto his own." In fact, the chapter's beginning foreshadows an absenting of Mary when in verse three we find: "All things were made by [God]; and without Him was not any thing made that was made." Although Mary is a vessel in Matthew's Gospel, she does not even merit a reference in this one.

Interestingly, this verse is also often pointed to as the "birth" of logocentrism where it is "The Word" which God makes "the flesh." Undoubtedly, this "Word" is meant to act as a centre of meaning and truth and hence language becomes a signifier of reality. Yet, not only is the "Word" prioritized through its stature as

1 Mark does not mention the birth of Jesus, but begins when Jesus meets John the Baptist. Luke does tell the story of Mary's virgin pregnancy as well as her cousin Elizabeth's barren pregnancy. Both pregnancies are acts of the Holy Ghost and are miraculous due to God's power to overcome these female physical impossibilities. It is this gospel that sets Mary up, especially in the Catholic tradition, as the mother of all mothers: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (Luke 1:42). While this verse may seem on the one hand to valorize the woman as mother, in fact it serves to alienate mothers from the perfect mother Mary. What mother could ever emerge from the shadow of a virgin who gave birth to the Messiah? Hence, far from helping to create an open maternal narrative, the existence of the Virgin Mary has only served to "other" mothers to her perfect form.

originary² and God-like, but also through its capitalization (whereas "flesh" rests miniscule). Birth is once more abstracted from the physical realm into the mental realm through the scripting of the power of Christ, the Word, in a literary form. In other words, Christ is not great because Mary gave birth to a physical man; Christ is great because he is a part of his father's intellect and language (the mother does not create the son who creates the words, the Word creates the son who is also the Word). Unlike the post-structuralist view that we are born into language, Christ is language which creates itself.

Hence, one can begin to fathom the narratological quandary that envelops women, and more succinctly, women writers. Primarily, "giving birth" is labelled as a physical act, a biological feat, for which a woman is naturally created. Secondly, physicality is rated second to intellectuality, evidenced in the archaic assumption that it must be the male, the "rational sex", who creates life and then ejaculates it into the female receptacle (as God did to Mary). Hence a

2 By "originary" I am referring to the Platonic concept that there are original perfect ideals from which we have fallen. This theory valorizes the "original" object and hence theoretically poses a problem for the female who, according to Christian myth, was created after Adam.

double-bind presents itself for the woman writer: not only must she script the heretofore oppressing maternal narrative, but also she must use the tools (language) that have been employed to oppress her. Consequently, one can note a great lack of maternal narratives in pre-twentieth century writings. In fact, the most convenient manner of addressing the question of maternity is through avoidance: once the female protagonist gives birth, she is eliminated by either the rigors of the delivery itself, or soon after by an appropriate disease such as "consumption" (as though motherhood physically consumed her and left nothing) (Brandt 14).

One may argue that these views were abolished with the advent of modern science, yet if that is so, then why do Western institutions still work to suppress a maternal narrative? As Mary O'Brian remarks in her book The Politics of Reproduction:

In Western society, we acknowledge this moment as culturally productive by calling it "labour," and yet we negate its social importance by refusing to reward it as work and by rendering the mother passive, inert and often unconscious during the birth process, so that it appears that the (well-salaried) doctor is delivering the child - often with invasive medical procedures - rather than she. (30)

Thus it is that the mother becomes "other" to Western

society on many fronts. She is other to women in that she is re-identified and renamed according to an emotional state or job (ie. to "father" a child is to provide the sperm for a child, whereas to "mother" a child is to coddle or to take care of a child as well as give birth). She is other to men because for nine months she is trapped in a shadowy state of expectancy outside of the binary male/female code. She is other to the religious mother Mary because the corporeal woman must be penetrated by a man to become pregnant. She is other to the economic work force which asks her to absent herself with a maternity leave. And she is psychologically other, in the Freudian meta-narrative which has dominated twentieth century thought:

Not only is the mother rendered powerless in the patriarchal order by her lack of a penis, but she is also an object to be attacked, displaced, and overcome by the child in the process of ego formation. (Butling in Brandt 13)

Therefore, how can a writer tackle this paradoxical situation of motherhood? How can an author valorize motherhood without being labeled "essentialist" or "originary." And how do you examine an institution that has been used to oppress women, without remaining caught in that patriarchal frame? Perhaps it is through a reinvestigation of the framework of language itself that this aim can be achieved. In her long poem "How Hug a

Stone," Daphne Marlatt attempts to refind and redefine the mother by dislodging the mother from the language systems - spiraling out of the scripts - that have kept her patriarchally encoded as other to a male prototype.

"How Hug a Stone" records a month-long trip that Daphne Marlatt and her son took to England with the intention of better understanding her mother. This quest for understanding spirals out from the local search for her mother to a broader collective search for her mothertongue. Usually, the traditional quest unravels in a linear fashion with the hero moving from place to place, participating in various exploits, and unearthing bits of information in a teleological movement towards knowledge and "home". Interestingly, Daphne Marlatt wittingly employs this bastion theme to find "mother," moving the quest outside the framework of the linear text and into a type of textual gyre or spiral that moves her "beyond Edrys, her mother, to the squat stone mothers of Avebury and finally to the interior narrative of all the monthertongues" (Knutson,59). In this way, the quest can take place on numerous levels, moving up and down in time to find/create a multi-faceted maternal space where it is possible to speak outside of the linear male literary tradition.

This spiral movement is not in any way new to feminist literary theory. In fact, the influence of the spiral may come either from Marlatt's own background as a postmodernist or from her alliance with Quebecois writer Nicole Brossard:

The "spiral" or "spirale" has been identified by feminist theorists as an appropriate narrative model for contemporary feminist writing: in contrast to traditional linear and circular narrative structures with their inherent sense of closure, of completion and ending, the spiral offers the possibility of repetition without sameness, the celebration of difference along with return. In the words of Nicole Brossard, the spiral charts a journey from "women's invisibility to new perspective: new configurations of woman-as-being-in-the-world of what's real, of reality and of fiction."

(Brandt, 46-47)

In "How Hug a Stone," Daphne Marlatt writes from and through the spiral in order to peel back the layers surrounding the stoned mother and hence reinscribe not only her own mother but also the "mother" in language...the mothertongue.

In form alone, "How Hug a Stone" appears to trace, through a series of "documentary-lyrics," Marlatt's trip with her son to England. The reason for this trip is to find her lost/dead mother by visiting the places where she grew up and by recording the stories of her family and friends. The text is distinctly divided up into five numbered sections:

1. Crossing-over
2. These Still-Standing Walls of Home
3. Burning into Blue
4. Trains of Thought
5. Black Hole at Centre

which places a linear grid over the text. Furthermore, each of these headers introduces a series of italicized dates and destinations, as would appear in a well-organized travel journal. In fact, one could map the narratological process of realization of Daphne³ and Kit from beginning to end as follows:

- June 14 - Flying to England
- June 15 - Train to Reading
- June 16 - Step-mother's house, train to Exeter
- June 17 - Visiting Poltimore village
- June 21 - Grandmother, photographs and stories.
- June 22 - Ilfracome, Combe Martin
- June 24 - Ellesmere
- June 26 - on the train
- June 28 - Pilgrim cottage with Jean and Nick
- June 30 - Stonehenge

Here seems to be the framework for a complete start to finish travel quest, and yet even this frame contains some built-in hitches that disallow normative assumptions that are tied up with the "logic of events" (Knutson 46). For example, even in this temporal list, days are omitted or "gapped" by the author, thereby creating seven "lost" days. Secondly, the year is withheld, forcing the reader to either naturalize the

3 I am going to break that critical taboo and refer to the speaker as "Daphne Marlatt" herself if only to emphasize her position as a mother, creator and writer.

text (assuming that these dates are all from the same year) or face the possibility that these dates spiral through many different time frames (perhaps at the same time). Thirdly, the presence of a train, although explicitly linear (in shape, direction, and conformity to a track), is implicitly an odd combination of time frames: while looking out the window of a train, the traveller either witnesses what is just past (riding backward) or what is just coming (riding forward). The lines between future, present and past blur ever so slightly to create a suspension of time ("commuter time" if you will). Most interestingly, it is the train that first sends Marlatt spiraling out of linear time and back into the past:

it is the rickety clacking of the wheels that is familiar, or this sideways motion, this compartment speeding down the line, of brick houses, rows of washing, embankment flowers, it's my son discovering the window open, staring head out into wind, ecstatic, until the cinder bit in eye:

didn't i tell you?

that was it, my vision smeared with soot like some kind of powdered ink my mother's handkerchief a scalding rubdown, tearful eyes to the horizon line of the cut, those fences other kids were climbing free as they went in their unscripted world... (132)

In this passage, the double-bind re-presents itself.

While the language insists on linear images - "speeding

down the line," "rows of washing," "horizon line" and "fences" - the "i" shifts from a monologic voice to dialogic voices (mother/daughter). Who says the words "didn't i tell you?" Is it Edrys, her mother? Is it herself as mother or perhaps an atemporal mother? Or could it be the words that all mothers speak? As her son's eye is blurred by the soot, the speaking "i" also becomes blurred by Marlatt's temporal shift back to when she was a child.

The passage ends with children "climbing free" in "their unscripted world" and implies a possibility of escape from the lines by undermining the "script." Although Marlatt endeavors to stay within a temporal script - "this plot we're in" - the lines are quickly "unscripted" or "delinearized" in the merest blink of a (soot-filled) eye/i. The mother is momentarily remembered outside of the script, and hence that patriarchal time-line which is pulled straight by narratological conventions is suddenly "unravelling in a look, back," springing into a coiled shape as the hands of linear logic lose their grasp (HHS 131).

It is interesting to note that Marlatt's mother is first introduced outside of the main text in the "prescribed" dedication "for Edrys who was also Tino." The name's double twist becomes tripled with the

reader's realization that Edrys/Tino is the woman whom Marlatt knew as "mother." (Banting 211). The triple naming undermines the figure of mother-as-monolith by rescripting the mother into a field of linguistic deferral and "play," which allows mother to be daughter. Brenda Carr states in her thesis titled Daphne Marlatt's Salmon Texts, "By avoiding the more typical "to my mother" dedication, Marlatt affirms the mother's right to her abducted daughter self" (288). While the archetypal mother-figure is "othered" in the fixed patriarchal ideological plot, Marlatt attempts to step outside of that "othering" to "other" her mother on her own terms by multiplying the perspective stories about the life of "Edrys who is also Tino." Carr explains:

Seeking and calling up the lost one involves a process of confronting the fixed plots, stories, scripts, veils, versions of the feminine which have covered over her woman's "reality"...The subversive text of the double palimpsest - to uncover the writing under erasure, to put under erasure the covered writing. (288).

Edrys is reconstructed for Marlatt through different types of scripts - memories, photographs, and other people's stories - while Marlatt herself also creates her own script. How does the script motif work to undermine the patriarchal line of thought that has erased the maternal narrative?

The script is primarily characterized as a male-

owned strategy. In "grounded in the family," Marlatt whirls through an eddy of memory to a time when she, as a child, played in the garden with her step-brother. This time is characterized as when "i thought i was free" yet the present reveals that even then she was "host & guest fixed / in the one script, the prescribed line of relationship" (133). The passage turns back to the present where the step-brother presents himself as the controller of the script, backed by a male scientific tradition. In a ritual that closely suggests courtship, the step-brother lures moths ("moththe, math-" read "mother") to be killed, labelled and displayed:

with a white sheet spread on the lawn, with a bedroom lamp he lures their bodies, heavy, beating against the walls. he wants to fix them in their families, he wants them wing-pulled-open, pinned on a piece of cotton, mortified...as if he held the script everyone wants to be in, except the moths... (133)

Like mothers, the moths are stuck in this script, being lured by a white sheet (wedding dress, virginity), a bedroom lamp (light and sexuality), and fixed in their families (renamed and impregnated). This script is "mortifying" in both meanings of the word (causing death and disgust) yet remains acceptable under the guise of a "barrage of scientific names." Through the spiraling of

the "winds of the years" in this section, scripting is typified as a male construct that has served to pin the mother in a singular familial and textual role.

"driving Dartmoor hills" educes another male authorial script. In this section, Daphne and her son are driving with their uncle through Ashburton and Widecombe, stopping to lunch and play cards. In this scene, the uncle is aligned with a scientific male tradition:

"rethinking God now homo erectus has been found to go back 2 million years, & yet," he formulates, turning the wheel, furious, driven, "at His doorstep I lay certain unexplained events." who writes the text? who directs this masque? (147)

This passage underlines another double-bind: that between science and religion. Whether the authority is "father science" or whether the authority is simply the Father, the assumption is that the creator of the historical text is male:

The subject position of narrative grammar is male by default; a masculine generic exercises its force on the legitimating narratives men and women rely on to give meaning to their lives. (Knutson,17)

In this case, it is the masculine generic that is questioned by "who writes this text?" Although Marlatt cannot soundly undermine the fact that the uncle is both physically and ideologically in the driver's seat ("brooding under the shadow of the wild grey mere, / who

never would have had children he says, / deleting himself & my mother from the text of the day" (147)), even these tentative quest/ions denote a change in tone from the earlier passage where Marlatt cannot control (let alone question) her step-brother's scripting. Marlatt begins to investigate these ideologies as texts, and hence her questions open a door to those con/scripted mothers - the "Indian ayah," "Mary with the rosary," her own mother, nature, moon, "mare" - who are rendered poisonous if left in the male script: "She will swallow you up if you cannot admit Her, name Her--" (148). This turn, which moves both back to the past and in to the earth, creates a textual foothold - a cry for a naming of the mother outside of the male linear mold. By "spanning two worlds" the possibility of stepping outside of the script becomes a reality.

That reality is scripted in "leaning out on twilight rolling in on Dartmoor hills," a section where Marlatt affects the possibility that she could be the writer of the text or the director of the masque. However, to assume the role that has been used by men to suppress the mothertongue (ie. to be the author) would be simply subscribing to the same ideology; hence, a new type of freedom is presented, the freedom of (finally) being "unnamed" by anyone else:

to be free, have scope, do what you like, go at large, feel at home, stand on your rights

to feel at home, even on unfamiliar ground,
stand on your own (two feet, two eyes, ears,
nose, ten tactile fingers go where the wind
goes...

be unnamed,
walk unwritten, de-scripted, un-described. or
else compose, make it say itself, make it up
(149)

The first two lines are an exercise in auto-scripting where the word "freedom" is reinscribed six times. The next lines push this rewording into the realm of the family through an entreaty for freedom outside of the male-written family/ar scripts: "even on unfamiliar ground." The listing of the body parts asserts the need to be comfortable with the self and the self's perceptions, refusing to be enclosed by structures of either oppression (the woman's body as a tomb) or grammar (the open-ended parenthesis). The last few lines posit a deconstruction of what has been scripted about mothers and women. Marlatt realizes that to "make up" the stories about her mother would be ultimately just as real as the "histories" that her grandmother tells because, regardless of perspective, both version are merely scripts that were written by someone, and hence can be unwritten.

The final sections of the poem investigate

different rings of possibility that circle around the ideas of "de-scripting." Realizing that deconstruction is not an end in itself, Marlatt must come to terms with her mother's failure to escape the script:

Tino, my mother, small in a henge of emotion,
removed somewhere. no stars to plot this course,
only foreboding & hope against her father's
words, against the script. learning how to fly
(158)

As recounted by the grandmother, Edrys did have dreams of acting "against the script" by becoming a clothing designer:

We went to Penang and she said, 'Mother, I'm so tired of this life, of just wasting my time going out dancing every night, getting engaged to play tennis, somebody ringing up and wanting to take me out to golf. It seems so futile. I want to learn dress designing and dressmaking. I've seen advertisements and I've written off to England. I won't be coming back with you when we go on leave.' This was when we were in the hotel in Penang sitting on the grounds facing the sea just where her wedding photograph was taken a few months later. Isn't it extraordinary?" (144)

Edrys verbally attempts to break from the script, and yet with a scant pause for breath in the grandmother's rescripting of the event, Edrys is married off with an almost cruel "Isn't it extraordinary?" Ironically, the fact of Edrys giving up her dreams for marriage is quite inside the bounds of "ordinary." It is the impossibility of escape from the prescribed female roles that seems truly extraordinary in nature.

Within that diminutive gap in the text rests the

entire story of Edrys's dreams, fears and eventual submission to the patriarchal script. How does one find the script that will make that gap talk? Marlatt begins to look outside of the written scripts to examine the constructs of other types of scripts that fix the mother in the gap.

"Ellesmere"⁴ moves outside of what would be considered traditionally scripted histories (stories, familial accounts, books, etc.) to investigate "other" histories that surround Marlatt and work to suppress the maternal/feminine voice:

the news confirms my landlady's view of history,
this plot we're in...

stairs painted white under a familiar-beige
carpet. lace at the window. pot of plastic
anemones & one liquor bottle, one jamjar, one
picklejar full of tinted water. small histories.

what if history is simply the shell we exude for
a place to live in? all wrapped up. break out
before it buries us. stories can kill (163)

Marlatt realizes that the patriarchal script does not only permeate spoken and written languages but also the language of familial life. In this sense each domestic object is a type of separate script, a "small history" unto itself. For example, the media (the 'news') is a

4 Interestingly, the name "Ellesmere" itself can be divided up into the french words "elles" (the women) and mere (mother) thereby etymologically mirroring the two positions of Marlatt as woman and mother.

language that is constructed to reinforce dominant cultural views through the inclusion or erasure of events and issues from the newscast. The lace at the window tells a story of the inner/outer or private/public division which has guarded women in the private realm. The lone liquor bottle speaks of temporary escape from the confines of the word "woman." And the jam and pickle jars tell the tale of unpaid domestic labour. Marlatt questions the "createdness" of these histories and the arbitrariness of this dangerous "shell" within which women are placed: "stories can kill."

Nevertheless, these stories which place women in a constructed frame of reference are just that: constructed. This domestic space need not be any more static than the video-game realm of her son, or her own childhood magical realm. To recognize all structures of oppression as language is to open the possibility of "un-writing" them, "de-fixing" them.

With these new insights, Marlatt is able to move to a place "long after The Brown Day of Bride," where there is a blurring together of Edrys, earth and mother which creates an undefined yet safe maternal space: "earth word (home again), seed word (safe again) (181).

Heavily quoting from this section of the poem, Carr describes the spiral out of history into the mothertongue:

Our desire is to go beyond "the limit of the old story," "to redeem them [our ancestors], or them in ourselves, our 'selves' our inheritance of words. wanting to make us new again: to speak what isn't spoken, even with all the words." Our mothers, the mother, is "not a person", not even a name (Edrys, Mary Gypsy, Mary of Egypt, Miriam, Mary of the Blue Veil, Sea Lamb, Bride of the Brown Day, etc.). "She is what we come through to & what we come out of, ground & source. the space after the colon, the pause (between the words) of all possible relation." Mother is the "forgotten parts" of the old story; she is the mother tongue; she is the possibility of language and relation. She is what makes us want to speak what is not spoken. "Narrative is a strategy for survival." (219)

The "pause" is the "ground and source" of the mothertongue - a language of other-writing that creates a new space for a maternal narrative by grace of its "unscriptedness" and difference from all other linear texts. By creating and recreating the narrative for that gap, the mothertongue can survive.

Marlatt has been criticized for attempting this project of "finding the mothertongue" due to the seemingly origin-worshipping nature of the task. Lola Lemire Tostevin and Frank Davey⁵ have both criticized

5 Lola Lemire Tostevin, "Writing in the Space that is her Mother's Face."
Frank Davey, "Words and Stones."

Marlatt for relying upon a "Great Mother" figure which only acts as a binary opposite to the "Great Father" and hence remains relational to (and not outside of) patriarchal ideologies. However, the spiral nature of the text and its continual movement between speakers, time frames and locales refuses the possibility of an originary place. Just as the reader feels grounded, the lines blur and the text turns into an interaction between what is "eternal and what is time-bound" (Marlatt quoted in Carr, 220).

In her preface to her 1993 collection Ghost Works, Marlatt sums up the reason for a retrieval of "Mother:"

For a woman writing autobiography, history itself becomes a ghost...Because she forgets herself, she loses herself in this or that, or finds herself wiped out, erased from her place in history, even her personal history. Because, so many because, but one of them revolves around her eclipsed mother whose shadow she has difficulty escaping - because her mother didn't or couldn't from hers, because this fraught relationship has yet to receive the attention it deserves. The abdication of the mother, of all the mothers, who were abandoned in their turn.
(viii)

The eclipsed mother is just one of the othered women for Marlatt, and yet finding the mothertongue provides an integral point of access for female voices. The great unwritten script between the daughter and the mother must be written in order that the "speaking elle" can

emerge from the shadowed presence of her own historically erased mother. In "How Hug a Stone," Daphne Marlatt spirals to that place outside of linear time and outside of patriarchy to give Mary a space to breath, to give Edrys a chance to be mother/daughter/friend/woman, and to give herself a new voice to speak with.

A Map to Interzone :

"Reading and Writing Between the Lines"

I shall speak about women's writing: about what
it will do. Women must write her self: must
write about women and bring women to writing,
from which they have been driven away as violently
as from their bodies....
Hélène Cixous

The author has disappeared; God and man
have died a common death.
Michel Foucault.

While writing Double Negative, Daphne Marlatt
and Betsy Warland felt the need to move beyond rewriting
objects in "women's terms" to placing objects within
language in order to find, through this language, a new
intersubjective space:

After we got back to Canada and took a second
look at what we had written, we realized that
the desert (our route ran through the Nullarbar)
was as much the subject of our writing as the
train. So we decided to write a prose sequel,
"Real 2", that would break the narrative frame,
get off the track, and explore the desert and
what it meant to us. Our ground rules for this
collaboration were that we would take phrases
from each other's entries as titles for our own
prose texts. This immediately pushed us into a
more theoretical mode, as our subject then
became words rather than objects (towns, people,
fauna, flora) outside the writing or (to use a
train metaphor) the writing was passing through.
Indeed this writing wanted to walk around in
what is decidedly not an inert landscape (take
language as landscape) and saw as problematic
any fixed distinction between subject and

object.

(Tessera 116)

As Marlatt and Warland state, this move away from a formalist "subject-writes-object" narrative, to a deconstructive "object-writes-subject-writes-object" flux is a conscious journey through the space in between the subject and the object. This 'via melangee' however does not end with the voyage through the subject and the object, but continues to negotiate a path through the landscapes of theory and poetry and personal biography and public art, all in an attempt to write in a language-space that is, if not outside of, then at least conscious of the patriarchal, heterosexist ideologies that are encoded in language and that hence frame this path.

Naturally, these three areas do not exist outside of one another, but work together like keys fitting into locks to open the door into this female "interzone." An example of how all three of these processes work together appears in "Reading and Writing Between the Lines" a work (poem? essay? transcript?) published in Tessera 5, an issue devoted to conversation and dialogue. This piece, in its form, process of creation, and content, underlines the dialogic voyage of communication that takes place in a space between the lines of subject and object, theory and poetry, and

personal biography and public art.

The title of the introduction, "En collaboration: lire et écrire entre les lignes," moves the reader immediately into an intersubjective realm. Marlatt's and Warland's insistence on the collaborative project shatters the "myth of author as social isolate working alone" and hence shatters the possibility of the unified subject "I" (Heinrich 19). Indeed, many theories, from psychoanalysis (with its division of the subject into Id, Ego and Superego) to deconstruction (in that there is never, in any instance of speech or writing, one fixed, present meaning), force the reader to recognize that "meaning" is not only diffused in its communication, but also diffused in its creation. Through the declaration of collaboration, Marlatt and Warland dare the reader to naturalize the text into one speaking subject's narrative.

In addition to the introduction's explicit declaration of a collaboration, there is an implicit recognition of the power relations engendered in pronominal subjects. The introduction is written in French and is somewhat conspicuous in its refusal to use the pronoun "il." The English language can be slightly devious in its use of pronouns to prioritize the male over the female, but the French language is

quite clear in its use of the male gender as the universal representative of all subjects and objects. Hence, where the English language uses the seemingly gender-neutral "they" as the third person plural, French uses "ils" to represent either "they" (the men) or "they" (the men and women), whereas "elles" only can signify "they" (the women). Therefore, apart from being nicely Canadian, the juxtaposition of the French introduction with the English text underlines the structures of language that create seemingly unified subjects that engender patriarchal power relations.

The lack of boundaries that is discussed in the introduction to "Double Negative" (and quoted on page 45) reappears in the first words of "Reading and Writing Between the Lines." As in "Real 2," where language becomes a landscape, here the particulars of that landscape are examined and found to be blurred, indistinct and mixed. For example, the summits of the capital "I" are replaced by an ubiquitous lower-case "i" and are inextricably surrounded by "you":

Collaboration is a specious term for the writing
you and i do together...how i write with and
to you. you my co-writer and co-reader the one
up close i address as you and you others i
cannot foresee but imagine 'you' reading in for.
(80)

This 'i' is dismantled as a speaking subject because the 'i' does not create or write but for the existence of

'you.' In addition, 'you' is destabilized by guarding the lower case letter at the beginning of the sentence. Finally, the grammatical fact of 'you' representing equally one possible reader and all possible readers is underlined with the reference to the 'you others,' or the other you's who will engage the text.

The boundaries of the 'you' and the 'i' slip again as the speaker/s insists on the plurality and reciprocity of each other's "you's" within each other's 'i's'. This phenomenon is noted in Rhoda Hanalafi's essay "Theory of the Subject as Pronoun" (TSP) where she states:

Allocation thus implies dialogue and reciprocity: a speech drama in which the personae exchange the masks of their persona in a reciprocal play of pronominal cache-cache.....Subjectivity is not any thing: it is the itinerant effect of an incessant positing and posing of the person, a double play that calls into action "I" and "You" in a perpetual game of revealment and masking.

(96)

In "Reading and Writing Between the Lines," the speaker/s¹ realizes that in writing from a temporary 'i,' there is a necessity to negotiate the "you in me, the you's you address in me" (80). Subsequently, there is a

1 Henceforth I shall refer to the voice in "Reading and Writing Between the Lines" as "speaker/s" in an attempt not only to avoid guessing at who is writing which section but also to incorporate the reciprocal nature of Marlatt's and Warland's voice. I have therefore decided that this word should be considered a singular noun.

move to the possessive "our" at the end of this first paragraph which signals both an act of sharing and an act of possession within the landscape of language. In other words, in order to move through and in language, there can be no fixed subject, for at the moment when the subject presumes to observe, all movement stops:

Subjectivity is not any thing: it is a motionlessness, an instantaneous stasis in a pronominal equilibrium brought on by a relational positing of "I" and others.
(Hanafi,95)

Marlatt and Warland refuse to posit one "I" and therefore any moments of pronominal equilibrium are constantly decentered. A later passage demonstrates this resistance to stasis through the inextricable intermingling of "i" and "you":

...the you of the page i subvert in the
unwritten you i walk our streets with...i saw
'you' of your page subvert in me...our lives (86)

Here, writing becomes an act of subversion between subject and object which results in a subversion (or a derailment) of the lines that create the boundaries of language. In essence, "you i" is the streets where Marlatt and Warland attempt to walk on /in. For them, the constant act of subversion (of themselves and of others) is one way to gain access to an intersubjective intersection. Throughout the piece, Marlatt and Warland exchange the "i" and the "you," thereby refusing to

observe from a transcendental 'i' and continuing to move in a space between the subject and object.

Nevertheless, the space created by moving between subject and object is, at best, ephemeral; the the constant flipping of these two terms must result in a linguistic dead-lock or 'aporia'². Although aporia underlines the impossibility of creating a singular meaning within a text, it also creates a problem for the Marlatt/Warland project of "reshaping language to something closer to our concerns as women with a feminist consciousness" (Heinrich 19). Therefore, in an attempt to negotiate (but never resolve!) this aporia, the speaker/s turns to other pronouns to express a reciprocal space. I will use a "semiotic" chart to examine this movement between pronouns:

| | | Section | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------|---------|-----|-------|------|------|-----|-------|
| | | one | two | three | four | five | six | seven |
| P r o n o u n s | i | 8 | - | 2 | 2 | 1 | 4 | - |
| | you | 11 | 1 | 10 | 4 | 1 | 19 | - |
| | u | - | - | - | - | - | 3 | 6 |
| | your | - | - | - | 4 | - | 5 | - |
| | me | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | - | 1 | - |
| | my | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - |
| | mine | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| | we | 6 | - | 12 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 5 |
| | our | 5 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| | us | - | - | 3 | 1 | - | 3 | - |
| u/s | | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - |
| each other | | 3 | - | 3 | - | 2 | - | 2 |
| one another | | - | - | 3 | - | - | - | - |

2 I am using aporia in the deconstructive sense: an insuperable deadlock of incompatible or contradictory meanings which are undecidable. I include pronominal adjectives in this chart.

For the sake of simplicity, I will group the first seven pronouns (i, you, u, your, me, my, mine) under the heading "boundary pronouns" (ie. pronouns that create lines of reference from a single perspective) and the second group of pronouns (we, our, us, u/s, each other, one another) under the heading "inter-subjective pronouns" (ie. pronouns that negotiate between the boundary pronouns by referring to both lines of reference at one and the same time).

Section one posits the aporia created between "you" and "i" and, as I have already stated, attempts to destabilize the two terms by intermingling them to the point of interchangeability. The two boundaries are evenly marked by eleven repetitions of "you" and eleven repetitions of "i/me", which, through this balance of pronouns, points out the gap in between. As section one progresses, the intersubjective pronouns "we" and "our" appear and, through their inherent doubleness (or plurality), provide a point of access to that space in between the "you" and the "i." In addition, "each other" appears three times and provides a second point of access through the reciprocity of the 'defining' word "each" coupled with the 'non-defining' word "other." Although the boundary words outnumber the intersubjective words by one and a half (1.57 : 1), the

latter are prioritized by their exclusive use in the last paragraph:

reciprocal in this, that the holes we make in such a definite body leak meaning we splash each other with, not so much working as playing in all this super-fluity, wetting ourselves with delight even whetting our tongues, a mutual stimulation we aid and abet (entice) in each other.
(my emphasis)

Bit by bit, Marlatt and Warland use intersubjective pronouns to poke holes into the definite body of a patriarchally bounded language.

Section two, however, breaks down the paragraph structure of section one and pulls away from the use of pronouns almost altogether. Some of the pronouns are present only as parts of the structure of catch phrases, such as "'let me slip into some thing more comfortable'" and "she glides across the room" (82). Just as catch phrases and slogans are emptied of meaning through repetition, so are pronouns emptied of a referent by being situated in these phrases. In addition, the boundary words "you & me" are transformed by the following word "collabi" into "our," which appears five lines later. Therefore, by transforming and then refusing pronouns, Marlatt and Warland create a second method of access to an intersubjective space.

Nevertheless, one could note that refusing to acknowledge or use pronouns is merely a denial tactic,

and hence does not actually deal with the problem.

Section three marks an example of the inescapability of the boundary pronoun in action. For example, at this point in the work, the speaker/s turns into two distinct and individual speakers as questions are bandied about:

... hey what are you really after...
 ... even if it lies in two different directions?
 what happens to our writing when together to
 be in a body breaks down?
 ... 'where are you going with this?'
 'you didn't go deep enough'
 ... 'you've written it all; there's nothing left
 for me to say'
 'you gave me the slip' (84-85)

Here Marlatt and Warland clearly delineate the boundaries between subject and object, and because they "write the lines," the reader is forced to "read the lines" (and not "between the lines"). And yet once again, the speaker/s's voice reasserts itself in the final lines of this section through the exclusive turn to intertextual pronouns "each other" and "we." Unlike the first section, it is the intertextual pronouns that outnumber the boundary pronouns by one and a half (1.56 : 1).

Nevertheless, the negotiation between speaker/s and two speakers is visually juxtaposed in the following two sections. Section four appears as one paragraph that intermingles the boundary pronouns, much as section one does, under the guise of the voice of

the speaker/s. Also similar to section one is the explicit relation of the tension between these boundary words to the act of writing:

....the tension necessary between what gets written or left (out in the dark with other readers-in who are also us party to the parts we play in the game, apart and not) 'you put your whole self in' but what is yourself, your voice? as our heads slide through semantic shifts that are not ours as language never is. (86)

Once again, the boundaries of language - the words, the signs, the semantics - are revealed to be not only restrictive, but also silencing: "what gets written or left (out...". The speaker/s is permitted to write her "whole self" but this self, this "i," is named in a language that reflects patriarchal boundaries and "semantic shifts that are not ours as language never is." Hanafi explicates this point in TSP where she observes:

A woman is in the act of writing. Putting pen to paper, she enters into a socio-symbolic contract, contractualizes herSelf into a signifying practice, and encodes the expression of herSelf into a series of sign-functions already negotiated by a community of language-users. The bargain has already been struck: the woman who writes is a woman being written. (100)

Section five negotiates the actuality of being written by language, through the splitting of the traditional paragraph (which appears in section four) into two

columns that can be read either separately, or beside one another or against one another. Here one might think that there are two separate voices writing on either side of the page, but interestingly, these separate voices speak almost completely without the boundary pronouns that appear so strongly in section three, where two voices can also be discerned. The repetitive use of "we" and "our" undermines the singularity of the two separate columns and forces the reader to read these words, written by women, against the other column of words, equally written by women. Although one could argue that Marlatt and Warland are still using signifiers that inherently engender an inequality of representation, by breaking a boundary form (the paragraph) and by replacing boundary pronouns with intertextual pronouns, perhaps yet another access point to the realm of intersubjectivity is achieved.

Now, it would seem that an added moment of aporia appears due to the fact that pronouns, whether they be boundary or intersubjective, still create a centre of reference that the ruling class, in this case men, can use in exactly the opposite way to control the oppressed. In other words, just as "we" and "our" and "you" can be used to create a woman's space, so can these words be used to silence women. The final two

sections of the piece attempt to address this problem through the deconstruction and reinscription of pronouns into a space between the lines of the oppressive structures of language.

In terms of form, section six provides a mixture of all of the different forms that have been used thus far in the piece: paragraph, columns, questions, dialogue, quotations, etc. There appears to be a massification of the boundary pronouns "you" and "i," but if anything, these you's point not to the centrality or stability of the word, but to its multiplicity and instability:

...to keep (y)our word. eroticizing
collaboration we've moved from treason into
trust. a difficult season, my co-labial writer
writing me in we while we are three and you is
reading away with us -

who?

you and you (not we) in me and all of us
reading... (88)

Much like in "How Hug a Stone," in this and the surrounding section alone, there are nineteen "you's" and seven "we's" which, from their incessant repetition, create the effect of a gyre spinning out of control. Indeed, a vertiginous ascent of not only Marlatt and Warland, but also of the actual words that they are using is enforced by the images of the speaker/s who is "dancing", "stumbling"; and the

words that are "turning and turning their sense and sensing their turns," and "whirling out." Ultimately, these words break down and are reformed by the speaker/s into a new shape that is neither subject nor object: "your" becomes '(y)our', thereby incorporating 'our' into the 'you'; "you" becomes 'u,' thereby reducing the object to a single letter; and the "you's" become 'u /s', thereby incorporating 'us' into to object 'you.' Hence, yet another door opens on this intersubjective space, a door whose key is made by breaking apart old keys and welding the disparate parts together to create a sort of 'un-key'...an inter-key.

However, if this key is unlocking that realm between the subject and the object, then the lock into which it fits contains tumblers made of both theory and poetry; therefore, that key must negotiate a path between the two in order to open up the door. As I stated earlier, it is difficult to place this text as a strictly theoretical or poetic one. Because Marlatt and Warland consciously intermingle qualities of each, this text breaks the boundaries of poetic and theoretical structures and thereby creates an inter-genre space...a space that, like the intersubjective space, is decidedly female.

As one could note in the text's breakdown of

words and use of aporia, it is difficult to avoid reading this text deconstructively. In fact, the text itself points to, and comments upon, the theory of deconstruction in many ways. For example, 'différance' comes into play throughout the text. This Derridean term, on the one hand, points to the fact that a text proffers the effect of having a significance that is the product of its difference and, on the other hand, shows that this supposed significance can never be an extra-linguistic transcendental signified because its meaning is continually being deferred in a movement of regressive play (Abrams 227). Subsequently, slippages are created in a text where one word's meaning slips into another's and yet another's. This concept of slippage is named and demonstrated in section two of "Reading and Writing Between the Lines" where the speaker/s says:

room
 labi, to glide, to slip

 (labile; labilis:
 labia; labialis)....
 not two mouths but three!
 slipping one over on polarity
 slippage in the text (82)

This section demonstrates the effects of slippage as the meaning of, for example, "labi" is deferred to labile, labilis, labia, and labialis in a realm of play 'en abyme.' And yet, at the same time, the form of this

section seems to be extremely poetic. The words move across the page, creating pauses, silences and gaps that, like poetry, beg to be performed aloud. In fact, one can be overwhelmed by the sound repetitions: for example, the assonance, consonance, and alliteration of "graft, graphium, graphein, to write / slippery lines," and the rhymes of "gutteral, dental, labial." Therefore, in this passage, one can find an extremely theoretical discourse placed in an extremely poetic form...a space that thereby negotiates both genres.

Another theoretical realm is engaged through the speaker/s's attempt to write through the body. Not only do we find this concept in proprioception (phenominological poetics where bodily perception is central) but also in the writings of the French feminist, Helene Cixous, who proclaims:

By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display - the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. (1093)

Marlatt's and Warland's insistence on writing the female and lesbian body appears repetitively throughout the text. For example, the creation of meaning is described as "wetting ourselves with delight even, whetting our tongues, a mutual stimulation" (81). This reference to

"tongues" creates an inextricable link between the actual organ in the mouth, and language which becomes fluid (wet) and sharpened (whet) in the act of communication. Similarly, Marlatt and Warland write theoretically through the lips of the mouth and the labial lips of female genitalia:

labia majora (the 'greater lips')
 la la la
 and
 labia minora
 (the 'lesser lips')
 o labialism o letter of the lips (82)

For them, essentialism creates a positive route of access to areas of knowing that have been historically silenced. These two examples of writing the body (tongue and labia) are cemented in section three where the tongue that is whetted or sharpened in section one is replaced with "semantic shifts":

...the erotic zones of a word we're both
 attracted to stroke arousing our enigmatic
 menage a trois one nearly always on the outside
 edge of two a living on it sharpening our
 semantic shifts slips.. (85)

In fact, in addition to semantics being a type of tongue, words become a body with "erotic zones" to stroke. Hence, Marlatt and Warland posit not only a type of *écriture féminine*, but also a new "*écriture lesbienne*." This theory, like *écriture féminine*, is definitely circular, resistant to hierarchies and is

indicative of an attempt to write the body; however, unlike *écriture féminine*, there is a rationale and logic behind this writing that is rooted in both the cleavage between the subject and the object, and the inherent heterosexuality of that subject. Therefore, Marlatt and Warland do not simply write the woman's body, but more succinctly write each other's bodies as a language unto itself.

Once again, however, this theory of an *écriture lesbienne* is presented in a most poetic fashion. Granted that *écriture féminine* is supposed to be non-linear (and indeed, Cixous's essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" does appear to be quite "non-theoretical" compared to, perhaps, Lacan) nevertheless, Marlatt and Warland dramatically intermix the boundaries of theory and poetry in this text. For example, the act of writing (through) the body becomes an extended metaphor for literary creation; this writing becomes a new lover, a "menage a trois," from which "jealousy" could arise:

...us desiring yes this third body
we go chasing after and jealousy
moves in... (84)

Indeed, section five warrants a play on words where talking between the lines is compared to talking "between the sheets" which can be interpreted as either talking (writing) between sheets of paper or making love

between sheets on a bed. By comparing writing to lesbian erotica and sex, Marlatt and Warland negotiate an interesting space that subverts not only the "boundary myth" of the male author ejaculating his thought through his phallic pen onto the virginal page, but also the myth of one woman writing her body. Marlatt's and Warland's writing exists like a dance between two bodies...between two boundaries.

And yet one could argue that many theoretical papers engage metaphor at one point or another because many metaphors and figures of speech lose their status as such due to their constant usage. Nevertheless, Marlatt and Warland move through not merely one, but numerous metaphors to explicate (or perhaps to demonstrate) their version of "Reading and Writing Between the Lines."

For example, one could cite the military metaphor that is related to patriarchal language: "...i find it difficult to use the word collaboration with its military censure, its damning in the patriot's eyes..." (80), and later, "...reading one another's min(e)ds, stumbling onto unexpected gaps, holes, wait, explosive devices..." (84). In addition, there is the metaphor of the card game where collaborative writing is described as follows: "we shuffle / cut / and play

into the source of ou r u-phoria" (90). And finally, the entire text is compared to a music score that not only refers to the lyricism and musicality of poetry, but also illuminates the nature of Marlatt's and Warland's theoretical project:

"rhythmic synchrony"
 a sociolinguistic microanalyst documenting the
 unique rhythmic patterns of familial
 conversation has found the crescendos, pauses,
 stressed syllables and cutlery punctuation of
 plates to reveal a score which is replayed
 and replayed (no matter what the narrative)
 are u keeping score? (89)

Here the existence of pure theory is undermined by the absurdity of the meticulously defined "sociolinguistic microanalyst." Therefore, the insistence of the figurative language moves the theory into a realm that is more conscious of its inter-generic status. In effect, by insisting on metaphorizing their theory (or theorizing their metaphors) Marlatt and Warland force the genres of theory and poetry closer together, thereby making it easier for that intersubjective key to slide into the lock. Accordingly, Marlatt and Warland find a space between the strict lines of subject and object, and they find the key that will open the door to this interzone, but as yet, walking in this "interzone" is still firmly situated in language: grammatical interzones, poetic interzones, theoretical interzones...
 are you trying to avoid the autobiographical? (88)

Indeed, Marlatt and Warland change the nature of the interzone by mixing the realm of personal biography with the realm of public art. In this way, "Reading and Writing Between the Lines" becomes an act that negotiates a woman's space between the realities of women's lives and the language or art forms that often serve to silence that experience.

Doubtless, even the act of biography can be situated in terms of not only language, but a very male tradition of language. Late in the seventeenth century, Dryden defined biography concisely as "the history of particular men's lives" (quoted in Abrams, 14). Marlatt and Warland therefore choose to step outside of that tradition that writes "particular men's lives" and move into a realm that incorporates personal facts in the poetry and theory. For example, in their interview with Kim Heinrich of the Vancouver Sun, their project of reworking language to create a space for women writers is inexorably linked with their personal lives:

Both previously married and divorced, Warland and Marlatt met at a 1981 conference for English and French Canadian women writers in Toronto. Their love affair with the English language and a firm belief that language is a powerful organism critically in need of reassessment rapidly developed into a love affair of their own.

From the inception of their collaborative writing, personal experience has played a large role in shaping

the space in which they communicate.

In "Reading and Writing Between the Lines", personal experience seems to surface out of the theoretical and poetic language and provide signposts within the female interzone. For example, from the beginning, there is an emphasis placed on their personal intimacy and how it changes the way in which they write:

here, even here, hovering between third person
and second person pronoun, to choose second
with its intimacy seems to me indicative of how
i write with and to you. (80)

The speaker/s uses a system of direct address in this text because of the personal nature of their writing project. The supposedly objective stature of the third person view which appears in the literary domains of science as well as much literary theory is displaced by the decision to write in a different space that is "with and to you." This space echoes other "typically female" modes of writing such as letters, journals and diaries.

Secondly, one cannot ignore the overt references to their sexual experiences as lesbian lovers which were earlier interpreted as examples of a theoretical practice, "écriture lesbienne." Indeed, the balance between public theory and private sexuality is debatable to the point that one wonders if Daphne and Betsy are talking about words or each other:

moonning (we wander aimlessly) or spooning (with
 a lure, but whose?) slippery words this slippery
 body we tongue between us comes between us in
 the ways a word can sound 'slippage' you said
 slipping in the age it takes the mind to turn
 around its mooring words that bind you gave me
 the slip suggesting you'd slip into something
 more comfortable (84)

"Moonning" and "spooning" are words that can connote a
 love relationship and yet in a few lines, "moonning"

turns to a "mooring" which is related to words.

Similarly, "allure" refers to a sexual attraction, but
 it is also thrown into the world of the moored words by

breaking "allure" into "a lure." Finally, the act of

tonguing can be related to making each other's bodies

wet (slippery) in a sexual way, or to tonguing

(speaking) words that become slippery in their meanings.

Therefore, Marlatt and Warland use the personal sexual

connotations of words to negotiate a public art and

thereby push the boundaries of what is accepted in

critical writing. In essence, they reveal the

public/private split⁴ to be a fiction perpetuated by a

system that assigns the private realm of emotions to

women in order simultaneously to devalue both females

and feelings.

4 For more on this split, see Jane Tompkins, "Me
 and My Shadow", in Feminisms, Eds. robyn r.
 warhol and diane price herndl. New Brunswick:
 Rutgers University Press, 1991. 1079-1093.

Throughout this chapter, I have referred to "Reading and Writing Between the Lines" as a text, a poem, a theory, a map, a landscape and an "interzone." In addition, I have explicitly called on feminist, psychoanalytic, and deconstructive literary theories, as well as implicitly calling on formalism and structuralism. In essence, this work crosses far too many boundaries to ever be labelled any one title. It is in doing this - refusing to be either subject or object, refusing to be either theory or poetry, and refusing to be either private or public - that Marlatt and Warland do negotiate, for now, a separate space, an interzone, where a specifically female voice can speak.

Con/clusions

I have discussed how Daphne Marlatt uses the boundaries of language to open up a new space in writing for women. I have discussed how Daphne Marlatt creates this "other-space" by writing both from the perspective of a woman, mother and lesbian and about the perspectives of women, mothers and lesbians - a scripting and a script that has remained silent in canonical literature. However, writing against a script inherently causes a major problem: could Marlatt's new and explicitly "freeing" script become just as enclosing as the previous patriarchal one?

Sometimes I wonder if "other-writing" can really work. After all, whether writing in an academic form, using perfect grammar and conventional theoretical lingo, or whether writing in an "other" style, poetic or simply anti-establishment, one is still using words and letters that have an ascribed conventional meaning and an ascribed conventional format where they are considered acceptable. One is likely to naturalized Marlatt's other-writing because it takes place within the realm of poetry where experimentation is expected.

Hence, language is a structure that is even more difficult to step out of than myself or perhaps Marlatt had earlier imagined. To be truly in an other space, one would have to be outside of language systems. In turn, this space would be a non-communicative structure and hence women's issues, although truly outside of a patriarchal script, would ironically still be silent.

Another dilemma arises from my simplistic division of chapters into "woman," "mother," and "lesbian." Primarily, by no means do these three categories account for all women, and this search for a "woman's voice" or a "woman's space" can and does result in the silencing of women outside of Marlatt's and my own categories. I cannot help but feel a good dose of fear in using the term "woman" in any cohesive manner. Although cohesion serves in some cases to politically motivate and empower an oppressed group, it cannot help but oppress others within the hierarchical structure of those oppressed. Is Daphne Marlatt's "mothertongue" a native voice? Could it speak to the African American experience? Does it silence the Malaysian women's voices that surrounded her as a child? Although the existence of a "mothertongue" is a lovely and warm utopian wish,

that "huggy-feely" sentiment quickly dissipates when removed from the white academic environment.

These political meanderings beg the question: just who is Daphne Marlatt's audience? Could an unemployed single mother feel empowered by "How Hug a Stone," or better yet, could she afford to buy it at the university bookstore? Similarly, who is Tessera's audience? It appears that the only women who could be enlightened by Marlatt's other-writing are the women who have the means to be university educated in the field of English and theory. And realizing that only this "élite" group will be reading her work, does Marlatt not in fact close her texts to most women through that sense of wry "intellectual insideness" that passes under the guise of intertextuality? Is there not that same pretension in my own "Marlattian" pre-introduction? Perhaps the criticism is in fact much more political than literary. Is Marlatt truly attempting to champion the plight of the silenced woman or is this style of writing already an established generic to be categorized, put on a syllabus, commodified in books and regurgitated on exams? Or, could it be that the academic world provides the only space where such poems could be

published?

The question still rests unanswered in my head, sitting neatly on the fulcrum of indecision, intermittently tipping from one extreme to the other. At this point, a series of concluding "at leasts" usually enter the academic script: "At least Marlatt is writing as a woman/mother/lesbian"...."At least these voices are being heard/valorized"....."At least Marlatt underlines the constructedness of language as she uses is...." etc. I think perhaps the one aspect of Marlatt's poetry that tips the balance in her favour is that it is fully aware of deconstructive techniques and hence leaves itself open to be deconstructed. Marlatt terminally refuses to be an "I" and hence she shifts herself into a perceiving space instead of an authorial role. It would be a mistake to read Marlatt's poems (or this thesis) progressively, as though Marlatt's perspective has ameliorated through some feminist hierarchy of marginalization:

lesbian

m o t h e r

w o m a n

As in the earlier leaf leaf/s poems, "How Hug a Stone,"

and "Reading and Writing Between the Lines," the reader can only find traces of women's perspectives, maternal narratives, and lesbian spaces. The texts "gap," opening them up to interpretation and criticism. Marlatt begins a journey of discovery in her poetry, a journey that hopefully one day will trickle down through academic discourse, out of the abstraction of theory, into different women's consciousnesses to create an active other space of women's communications. Or perhaps it will remain as a text, bound by a printer, commodified on the bookshelves, ideas shelved, undelved...existing outside of conclusions, counter closure and bro

ken...open.

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