THREE HEROINES IN MARIAN ENGEL'S EARLY NOVELS

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MARIAN ENGEL'S EARLY NOVELS

By

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During an interview with Cathy Matyas and Jennifer Joiner of the University of Toronto Review, Marian Engel commented that,

> The only people who have done serious critical articles on me are Anne Hutchinson and George Woodcock. I'm not considered to be a post-modernist, so I'm O-U-T for many academics...at one point you have to make a conscious decision--and that is, who your audience is. When I took on most of the support of the family I had to decide--quickly--not to write for academics; after all, they get their books free. I suppose that I write for my peers. Unfortunately, my peers are women who don't have very much money...The point is, it would be nice to have enough money to spend ten years writing Ulysses, to create a text which is de-constructable and play all those intellectual games. I do enjoy those games, but in a way I also don't think that the games are worth it. I think the novel exists to be read...(Matyas 4)

Marian Engel's thoughts about her writing illustrate her primary concerns both as a woman and as a writer. And, as she herself notes, her lack of faith in "intellectual games" has kept her, for the most part, outside the mainstream of criticism being written about Canadian writers today. Engel's concerns lay with the women who she felt would read her books--the women she felt were most like her, the women who didn't have "very much money." As a result of her decision to write about the less celebrated aspects of women's lives, the attention she has received more often than not has come in the form of reminiscences and tributes, many

of which were written around the time of her death in 1985.[1] This paucity of academic research is remarkable when one considers that Engel's work was consistently deemed important enough to be reviewed both by literary journals across Canada and by newspapers and literary publications in the United States. Not surprisingly, the number of magazine-length book reviews of Engel's works far outweighs any other writing about her. George Woodcock suggests that this lack of in-depth attention arises out of Engel's writing style, out of her "economy of structure." "The reason why we are reluctant to discuss [Engel's novels] is that they are so clearly written, so simply formed, so deftly patterned in window-pane prose, that they appear to be more transparent than in fact they are" (Woodcock 11).

It seems, then, that Engel fulfilled her desire to write for "the other women of [her] generation," by writing simply and by consistently focussing on issues which involved the everyday (and infrequently recorded) events of women's lives. She also believed, however, that this focus on women's lives

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[1] With the exception of Bear, many of Engel's novels have yet to be discussed in articles other than those which refer to them in the context of Canadian women's writing. Notable articles which focus specifically on Engel's work are Elspeth Cameron's "Midsummer Madness: Marian Engel's Bear" in the Journal of Canadian Fiction, 21 (1978); Ann Hutchison "Marian Engel, Equilibriste," in Book Forum 4 (1976); Lois C. Gottlieb & Wendy Keitner, "Demeter's Daughters: The Mother-Daughter Motif in Fiction by Canadian Women," in Atlantis 3 (1975).

limited her readership. During the Review interview, she also commented on Canadian Literature and her place in it:

> Engel: There are a lot of good writers in Canada--particularly people who are published by Oberon Press, which does really good books of short stories--who don't reach a wide market because the little presses aren't handled by the big book chains. So in a way, Canadian writers are not reaching their public.
>
> Review: Do you ever feel that frustration, of not reaching your public?
>
> Engel: There are times when I get really furious, when I see that I've done something and nobody has ever seen it. I'm capable of roaring like a lion. I'm considered too domestic to be taken seriously by some male critics. They still haven't scrubbed enough floors. They will! (Matyas 6)

Engel's defiant attitude is characteristic of the anger which often surfaces in her deceptively "domestic" novels. And, as with the hidden depths suggested by the title of one of Atwood's novels, the metaphor of "surfacing" is also an important one to keep in mind while reading Engel's work: although her novels portray the apparently "simple" (and in the mind of at least one critic, "overblown and anti-climactic" [Moss 74]) lives of her female characters, the anger lying behind her words is never absent so much as it is neatly submerged. While Engel's works are not considered strictly "feminist," her concern with women's lives, and especially her concern with their powerlessness in the face of patriarchally sanctioned social pressures, often reveals

itself in the form of her heroines' repressed and yet powerful aggressions--aggressions which Engel always keeps close to the brink of erupting. As Alice Munro observes, Engel's contribution to Canadian literature is important in that she helped to legitimize the "domestic" and yet "subversive" voices of women in Canadian fiction:

> And here was a woman writing about the lives of women at their most muddled, about a woman who can't quite believe in the world of careers, academic strivings, faith in work, and another who is just managing to keep afloat in the woozy world of maternity, with its shocks and confusions and fearful love and secret brutality. You have to remember how shunned, despised, misused, this material was at the time...Before people like Marian Engel and Audrey Thomas and Margaret Laurence, in their very different ways, gave their attention as serious fiction writers to such material, most of us thought there was no way to deal with it except to turn it into the layer-cake fiction of the women's magazines, or hype it up to the manic level of the humour of the professional harried housewives who write newspaper columns. (Munro 33)

In keeping with Engel's attitude towards women and writing, this thesis will examine three of her novels--Sarah Bastard's Notebook (1968), The Honeyman Festival (1970), and Bear (1976)--and will focus on the nature of the emotional quests undertaken by the heroine of each.

While Engel writes in the Buldingsroman tradition--her heroine's are continually questing for self-definition--the cultural milieu in which each heroine labours is of great importance to Engel. Her heroines are often well-travelled

and well-read. They have often had the opportunity to develop, to a great degree, their intellectual capacities. However, the conflicts they encounter arise out of their inability to balance their emotional and intellectual lives. Engel often uses different geographical locations as metaphors for the emotional changes her heroines undergo either before or during the course of their quests. Engel's women are almost always in the midst of reconciling past and present experiences and this process of reconciliation is both heightened and given a specifically Canadian flavour by Engel's use of cultural contrasts: in order to more sharply define her Canadian heroines, she often pits the puritan Canadian culture they represent against older, and more sophisticated European cultures. The emotional awakenings which accompany her heroines' cultural awakenings (or as it happens in Bear, sexual awakenings) are what ultimately constitute the goal of each heroine's quest for a greater understanding of self: Engel often speaks of striving for "synthesis" in her texts, and her heroines often strive to do the same by attempting to integrate the diverse aspects of their lives. Since synthesis is a process Engel believes is strictly the operation of a "creative" as opposed to an "analytic" mind (Matyas 5), it is hardly surprising that Sarah, Minn and Lou all reach a successful level of reconciliation with their pasts by finally allowing their

more liberal and creative tendencies to guide their analytic, (self)-critical ones.

The three novels examined here trace the development of Engel as a writer and as a woman writing about women's lives. Sarah Bastard's Notebook, with Sarah as its very outspoken narrator, has aptly been referred to as Engel's most "irascible book" (Woodcock 230). (Engel herself later admitted that she couldn't "stand th[e] book anymore" when she attempted to read it at a public reading of her work) (Matyas 6). However, as her first successful novel, Sarah Bastard's Notebook is important in that the issues Engel examines in it represent, perhaps in their most potently distilled form, issues that predominate throughout all of her work. And central to her exploration of women's lives is her more precise exploration of how women's identities are shaped by the less benevolent forces of authority present in Canadian society--inept parents, puritanical religion, inflexible institutions and (sometimes, but not always), insensitive men. In this sense, both The Honeyman Festival and Bear can be seen as variations of the same theme that appears in Sarah Bastard's Notebook.

Engel's knowledge of familial and generational patterns and particularly their power as determining agents in women's destinies becomes evident as one reads through all of her fiction. Sarah Bastard's Notebook represents perhaps the most openly "sociological" of Engel's texts in that Sarah

articulates, quite clearly, her own problems in her own very angry words. The inexpert handling of time sequences and characterization in this early novel suggests that one of Engel's objectives was to profile the many difficulties she and her female contemporaries (writers and academics) encountered. Indeed, more than one critic has stated that Sarah Porlock seems to simply be a "mouthpiece" for Engel (M.E. Archives, Box 8). By contrast, the sociological patterns inherent in The Honeyman Festival and Bear are embedded more deeply within both texts and Engel's attention to literary devices is far more evident and successful. George Woodcock refers to The Honeyman Festival as a "tapestry" made up of "incident and memory" (Woodcock 230), and this definition aptly applies to all of Engel's work after Sarah Bastard's Notebook. Engel's concern with revealing the knowledge and fears of women is often presented as a tapestry of past experiences recalled in the context of present traumas. However, Engel's emphasis on the past and how it affects the present is often presented so forthrightly in "window pane prose" that a detailed examination of all aspects of Engel's work finally comes to rest most solidly on how her exploration of the "human condition from the point of view of women" (Woodcock 230) takes shape and matures throughout the course of her fiction.

Feminist theories of sociology and psychoanalysis

are used together in this thesis, then, to gain insight into Engel's preoccupation with both the cultural and familial pressures felt by women. Engel's professed desire to write for her "peers," suggests that sociological theories developed by women researching the stories of other women are highly compatible with her own intentions as a writer. On a more intimate level, it also appears that Engel's knowledge and experience of psychoanalysis plays an important role in her desire to portray, in intricate detail, the inner lives and personal histories of her heroines. As a result, processes of emotional growth rendered in Engel's work--particularly those processes which unfold in milieux typical of Canadian society--are often initiated by her heroines' desire to understand, more clearly and more precisely, who they are in relation to others. While Engel makes it clear that this emotional growth only comes at the cost of learning to cope with significant emotional losses, she is also quick to show us that these losses are compensated by the greater and much more important gift of self-knowledge.

In her rough notes on Sarah Bastard's Notebook, Marian Engel poses the question, "why does one become an expatriate?" (M.E. Archive, Box 10). As the story of Sarah Porlock's life unfolds, we see that that question undergoes considerable modulation throughout the course of the novel. After earning her Ph.D in England, Sarah returns home, compares the sophistication of Europe with the wholesomeness of Toronto and decides Toronto is too suburban for her tastes. Engel's rendering of Sarah's quest, however, relies less on the evocation of local colour (or lack thereof) and more on the evocation of Sarah's emotions as she responds to her surroundings. Sarah Bastard's Notebook is a novel told exclusively from Sarah's point of view and, despite the travelling Sarah does, the most noteworthy 'terrain' covered in her story lies in the psychic terrain which Sarah reveals throughout her attempt to repatriate herself. As Sarah reviews her past and begins to express the emotions which she feels define her most authentically, she also begins to hear, trust and rely upon an inner voice.

In the text, Women's Ways of Knowing, [1] the process

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[1] Women's Ways of Knowing is a sociological text written by Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clincy, Nancy Rule Goldberger and Jill Mattuck Tarule. The study examines--empirically--how women's understanding of knowledge differs from that of men. More specifically, the authors trace the development of knowledge from the initial position of the imposed silencing of women to the highest

through which women begin to trust their inner voices is seen as part of a series of learning processes. The first three stages in this series are designated as the following:

1) silence
2) received knowledge: listening to the voices of others
3) subjective knowledge: developing an inner voice

While there are seven steps in total, these first three stages, and particularly the emergence out of silence, signify important turning points for women in their accumulation and understanding of knowledge. Another even more significant change occurs, however, when a woman moves from step two, received knowledge, to step three, subjective knowledge. That is, the most decisive shift in a woman's understanding of her own ability to conceptualize her own knowledge occurs when she stops being simply a listener of other voices--particularly those patriarchal

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levels of procedural knowledge attained by women (as measured by academic achievement). My interest in these stages is limited to the first three: silence, listening and the development of an inner voice. "Subjectivism" is the term which, for the authors, designates the third stage of development, the development of an inner voice. More specifically, it denotes a woman's newly realized ability to trust her own beliefs, less often in tandem with external, patriarchally sanctioned sources of knowledge and more often in opposition to those sources. The term "subjectivism," then, is used to denote, primarily, a paradigmatic shift in an individual woman's conceptualization of knowledge, rather than <u>simply</u> denoting a positive attitudinal change in how she understands her own ability to accumulate and disseminate information. However, the authors also note that this paradigmatic shift <u>does</u> often result in an increase of self-esteem for women and that women themselves often perceive this shift as a liberating experience in terms of their self-development.

voices which dictate typically "feminine" behaviour--and begins developing an inner voice of her own:

> [shifting into subjectivism] is usually a turning point in a woman's life...a major developmental transition follows that has repercussions in her relationships, self-concept and self-esteem, morality and behaviour. Women's growing reliance on their intuitive processes is...an important adaptive move in the service of self-protection, self-assertion, and self-definition. Women become their own authorities. (WWK 57)

However, seen primarily as a positive step towards autonomy, the shift into subjectivism can also result in feelings of alienation and isolation. The authors of this study found that women often maintain a reluctant, albeit lingering, trust in old authorities. Because of that lingering trust, women subjectivists often choose one of two extreme ways of dealing with their burgeoning sense of individuality: they either conceal their newly-found feelings of individuality or go into self-imposed exile (away from loved ones) in order to more freely express their feelings. Women who conceal their attempts often write poetry and keep private journals. Women who chose self-exile, on the other hand, often isolate themselves from significant people in their lives--from people they feel will not welcome the changes they are making. In Sarah Bastard's Notebook, Sarah's attempt to define herself authentically and to do so by applying her own tough standards, reflects both the secretive and self-exiling

aspects of what can be seen as her move into subjectivism.

When Sarah Bastard's Notebook was first published (under the title No Clouds of Glory!) one reviewer remarked,

> Mrs. Engel has tried to hang traditional feminine problems on a character who would be maddening as a member of any sex: because she's deft at self-destruction and at persecuting others. But she believes that she's abused by men because of her intelligence. "Hated because female, nonconformist, self-important, intellectual free"--not at all. She would be unloved in any incarnation, due to the hostility that barks on every page. (New York Times 25)

Although the reviewer notes that hostility "barks on every page," she notes that Engel's heroine also speaks for a "rampant minority" of women disenchanted with the ambiguous rewards of their success. In terms of developing her own voice, Sarah seems hopelessly caught in a pattern of defending rather than developing her individuality--she seems prototypical of what sociologist Erik Erickson calls a "negative identity."[2] That is, despite Sarah's academic achievements (and the opportunity her education has given her to widen the breadth of her experience) Engel illustrates

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[2] A "negative identity" is defined by Erik Erikson as one which is determined not by what one is but rather by what one is not. One woman in Ways of Knowing "related with bitter humour how she considered herself to be a careless, impetuous slob who was the exact opposite of what her perfectionistic and methodical father expected her to be (WWK 79). The emphasis on the "negative" aspects of one's identity, of course, has ramifications on one's sense of self-esteem, despite the illusion of freedom one may feel.

that Sarah's apparent freedom--her exposure to the processes of higher learning--does not protect her from feeling either the pressure to conform to socialized expectations of feminine behaviour or the growing pains which come as a result of her resistance to that pressure.

According to Robert Fulford, Sarah Bastard's Notebook is a work which is less a "completed fiction than a series of notes towards a definition of a personality" (M.E. Archive, Box 7). The highly introspective nature of the novel--the attention that Engel pays to Sarah's thoughts rather than to her actions--is suggestive of a subjectivist's newly-discovered interest in her own emotional welfare. As the authors of Ways of Knowing observe:

> There were almost no women in this group who were not actively and obsessively preoccupied with a choice between self and other, acting on behalf of self as opposed to denying the self and living for and through others. In younger, single, advantaged women, this took the familiar turn of an adolescent push for freedom from "oppressive" or "stagnant" parental and community influences, bolstered by going away to school. . . In many ways, these women resemble fairy-tales figure (as we recall, usually male) who set out from the family homestead to make their way in the world, discovering themselves in the process. (WWK 77)

While Sarah is hardly an adolescent, her years of research in England represent a period in which she admittedly spent little time developing her own individuated sense of identity. For example, she reflects, ironically, on the fact that she chose to forsake her Canadian identity in favour of becoming more "sordid-English . . . than anyone," and that

she spent her research time learning to hate the work of fellow 'colonials,' Hugh McLennan and Patrick White (SBN 38). More importantly, however, she comes to realize that she has spent the last few years living primarily through others: other writers and others' aspirations. She finally acknowledges, during a conversation with her former mentor Dr. Lyle, what she feels is the inauthenticity of her academic work:

> I've no honest interest in the academic now. I could still be a missionary sort of teacher, but I can't rationalize what I'm teaching. I feel false, phony. (SBN 119)

Having lived through a period of listening, of "received knowledge," and having adopted a foreign cultural heritage as her own, Sarah begins to understand she has paid a price for not attending to the formation of her own identity. As the novel opens, she is in the midst of a crisis: her father has just died and her two (married) lovers have left her. Sarah surveys her losses and observes that

> Of a sudden, seven ducks. . . everything goes up in smoke. Job, family, <u>erotiko</u> and <u>agapo</u>, beginning of a reputation. Here I stand, naked, if anyone had eyes to see waiting for the evaluator. . . Finally satisfied to be alone? Finally free? (SBN 4)

As Sarah soon discovers, the question of what to do with her 'freedom' is what lies at the heart of a much more profound emotional crisis.

In her article, "Family Structure and Feminine Personality," Nancy Chodorow discusses the difficulty Western

women have defining themselves as autonomous individuals, separate and apart from others:

> It is difficult . . . for daughters in a Western middle-class family to develop self-esteem. Most psychoanalytic and social theorists claim that the mother inevitably represents to her daughter (and son) regression, passivity, dependence, and lack of orientation to reality, whereas the father represents progression, activity, independence, and reality orientation. Given the value implications of this dichotomy, there are advantages for the son in giving up his mother and identifying with his father. For the daughter, feminine gender identification means identification with a devalued, passive mother, and personal maternal identification is with a mother whose own self-esteem is low. Conscious rejection of her oedipal maternal identification, however, remains an unconscious rejection and devaluation of herself, because of her continuing preoedipal identification and boundary confusion with her mother. (Chodorow 65)

Unlike sons who often resolve their oedipal impulses both by rejecting feminine characteristics (as embodied by their mothers) and by gaining a sense of autonomy by associating with other males outside the family, daughters are encouraged to maintain a "feminized" identity within the larger identity of the nuclear family.[3] Women's oedipal impulses are often not allowed to be resolved through an outright rejection of their mothers and, as a result of this sustained

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[3] Boys, on the other hand, are allowed more individuation in that they often have less direct and sustained access to their (working) fathers. Unlike women they learn to replicate their gender specific behaviour through their encouraged participation in group activities with other males and also through their exposure to universal myths regarding masculinity. The autonomy they gain, therefore, is twofold: they reject

contact, girls learn to internalize and replicate aspects of their mother's devalued role.

In light of Chodorow's assertions, Sarah's attitude towards other women is significant in that not only does she take great pains to reject women, she also, by implication, rejects her own femininity. In a long flashback in which she describes each of her three sisters during a family gathering at the Porlocks' cottage, she expresses her feelings of distrust and contempt:

> Leah has found her karma: big, blossoming nothing. Since Ma banned bikinis she has worn nothing. She sunbathes two centimeters under the water so as not to tan her tits...She lies there all day, during the week, until we want to scream at her "Focus!" . . . If she did not also spend hours at Dostoevski, we'd be sure she was a half-wit . . .
>
> Rosemary is absorbed in her knitting, and in this boy who will never be naked or less than half-orphaned, hers. She makes a good widow. Ate her mate to save her son from the world: better than the wife of the Author of Beltraffio, but more ordinary. She keeps watch over her animated doll; when I am allowed to bathe him I look for the embossed "A Reliable Toy" on his nape.
>
> Peg draws fine, pubic things: veins, hairs on petals, little seeds: a tatooist on paper.

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femininity through the resolution of their oedipal complex and they are taught to replace this loss with their own freely compiled ideas about masculine behaviour. Women, Chodorow argues, are not encouraged to differentiate in so opportune and positive a manner. Cultural beliefs regarding femininity and motherhood prevent women from gaining the autonomy necessary for a resolution of their oedipal impulses and the concomitant formation of an independent personality. Moreover, myths regarding women, unlike myths regarding men, often serve to reinforce images of dependency and/or negativity. According to Chodorow, then, social and psychological oppression for women is most powerfully and insidiously perpetuated in the very structure of personality formation.

> She is all nerves and neatness, remote. You can't see her sick shadows from here. What mysteries did she learn besides drawing in her sanitarium? (SBN 14)

Feeling alienated from her sisters, Sarah expresses her hostility toward the feminine roles they represent: Leah is the "popular blond," Rosemary is the "suburban mother," and Peg is a "tatooist"--a passive woman and artist who uses her talent not for self-expression but for the purposes of medical science. Sarah is equally hard on herself, however. While comparing herself to Leah, she notes:

> Leah...never had a love-hate relationship with her mother's flesh-coloured corset strings. She had in fact quietly from the beginning of her life, and tidily, rejected the significance of everything I found bearable in our existence. She squatted in corners telling herself stories, to be far away from us. No snugness of armpits for her, no glorying in repellent love. I ooze, booze, stink, feel human rather than feminine, live in a welter of Kleenex and newspapers, cats, clay pots, pictures of people, dust. She is cool as a cat, aware, and apart. (SBN 88)

Sarah's self-deprecating remarks, along with her admittedly aggressive behaviour, suggests that she rejects typically feminine attributes in favour of more masculine ones. It is only when she is caricatured in a "Successful Young Canadian" feature by a reporter in the Toronto Star, that she realizes the grotesqueness and inauthenticity of the "tough" image she has cultivated for herself. Despite her gruff exterior, for example, she admits that the feature has undermined her confidence and left her feeling "like a tatty fool" (SBN 24).

Sarah's thoughts regarding her parents reveal her

ambivalence about how they prepared her for her future. Commenting on her father, she notes:

> Pa figured, if he couldn't give us money, he'd give us ambition; he sat heavy after work on the brown fuzz chesterfield, explaining how we could be something. Just not to bury your talent. Just become the best. Work more than anyone else.
>
> Poor Pa, he never knew, never had a chance to find out. Something in him was turned off or never turned on. He never knew what too big a dream could do, and how if you're going to make big dreams in other people, you have to stuff content in. (SBN 96)

And, commenting on her mother, Sarah reveals

> She was our love and our hate, looming bigger than the Cheshire cat, and when the sun shone, more beneficent than God. Examining eyes like an owl's . . . She was all poetry, magic, power, and strength. You could light candles to her and make incantations. Now we have all expiated her, like a sin. I wept for her. (SBN 124)

Both the lack of "content" in the encouragement imparted by Sarah's father and the images of "femininity" and "magic" imparted by Sarah's mother, contribute, in Chodorow's understanding of personality development, to the confusion that women like Sarah experience when they attempt to define themselves. Sarah's father encourages her to be "the best," and Sarah, in response, replicates her mother's experience by becoming a teacher. She escapes the ghettoized profession of elementary school teaching, however, only to find that she has no appropriate role-model in loftier academic spheres. Like the colonials whose literature she studies, Sarah carves out territory for herself and suffers, figuratively, what could be understood in Atwoodian terms as being "the

progressive insanities of a pioneer."[4] Even Dr. Lyle is inappropriate as a role-model in that Sarah sees her as being 'sexless' and therefore barren of (pro)creative impulses. As an exacting Spenserian scholar, Dr. Lyle also strikes Sarah as being both professionally and personally, too caught up in the pursuit of maintaining an appropriate "form." Having paid attention to following the proper form for so long, Sarah is now focussing more closely on filling in the content of her life.

Sarah's nemesis, her brother-in-law Eldon, is also caught up in the pursuit of a proper form. His interest, however, lies in the maintenance of a traditional, rationalist and sexist way of thinking. He admonishes Sarah

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[4] Taken from the title of one of Margaret Atwood's poems in her collection, The Journals of Susanna Moodie. Also see Selected Poems (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976). These poems "read between the lines" of Susanna Moodie's autobiographical work, Roughing it in the Bush. Atwood focuses on the emotional aspects of Moodie's experiences as one of the first settlers in Canada. The acute isolation experienced by Moodie while homesteading in Upper Canada is rarely discussed in Moodie's own "public" writing: it is only through her private letters that Moodie's distress over living in the "bush" is revealed. Her unhappiness at being isolated from proper British society has led to speculation about her appropriateness as a commentator of early Canadian society. In her poems, Atwood speculates on Moodie's emotional disposition during her homesteading years. By implication, the homesteading experience from the point of view of women is conveyed in The Journals. Atwood's rendering of women's estrangement from their culture of origin during the settlement of Canada functions, arguably, as a metaphor for the sexism that still exists in our culture today.

for her decision to resign from her post at St. Ardath's College:

> He ruminates and pleads: "Are you really going to go off and live among the dissolute expatriates on some damned island? They are dissolute, Sarah, they're wasters. They're wasting every valuable gift this country and God have given them. Drinking and smoking it away. Go on, laugh at me. Laugh at my old-fashioned values. But people like you--and Peg, and me--have an obligation. Not to bury our talents. And at a time when more people are going to university than ever before..."
> "I'm not so sure of the value of that if people like me are teaching."
> "Well, if you think you're a bad teacher, spend some of the time you waste drinking and running around and writing those God-awful plays becoming a better teacher. What's wrong with teaching anyway?" (SBN 127)

Eldon emerges as a representative of all that is normal, decent and, all that is, from Sarah's perspective, inarticulate and passionless in Toronto society. As her father had done, Eldon exhorts her "not to bury her talents;" like her mother, he too throws up his hands and says he just "doesn't understand her." In Chodorow's terms, Eldon espouses the sexist attitudes which serve to keep women in marginalized, feminized spheres: he encourages Sarah in her choice of teaching (or nurturing) on the one hand, and discourages her independence and self-expression as a writer, on the other. In her rebuttal, Sarah explains her need to engage in what Eldon and his ilk see as a traditionally masculine and aggressive activity. More specifically, she explains her need to stake out and claim her own literary

territory:

> The only literary thing which interests me is what is happening to literature now, why people write what. But we keep ourselves isolated from --the passion of making literature--from the passion of discovery. That's why we don't produce anything. And I want to produce, I want to get into a world where creation--creation of anything--is a fact, where ideas are important, where people are tough on you and where if you turn out something good nobody, but nobody, will say it's 'cute.' (SBN 128)

Sarah's decision to escape her colonial roots is symbolic of her desire to achieve distance from both her mother and from the feminine mythology that threatens to define and limit her.

Her rejection of her femininity, however, is tempered by what she learns in the course of her crisis. As the men in whom Sarah invests her emotions leave her and as she eventually realizes their frailty as human beings, she slowly gravitates back toward her mother and her sisters. Her last conversation with her mother, for example, is remarkably calm and affectionate. Sarah's loss of faith in male authority--a revelation which often accompanies a woman's move into subjectivism--is perhaps most clearly articulated in her relationship with Eldon. Her fear that she will become like him, indicates her changing assessment of the masculine, patriarchal power he represents:

> He is what I am told I am, what I am afraid that I am, what I shall kill myself in order not to be (except that I shall not know that I am he until too late): a self-elected personage, a gossip of

> second-hand values and an impressive range of half-truths. (SBN 115)

Her wish to become a writer in a world where "creation" is a "fact" symbolizes her burgeoning desire to integrate both her masculine and feminine aspects: she wants a world which will allow both passionate creativity and toughness.

Sarah's relationships with other men, unlike her more openly hostile relationships with women, are marked by ambivalence. More specifically, this ambivalence manifests itself in the distance she maintains in her relationships with Joe and Sandro, both married men. As Sarah admits, she is attracted to the unattainable because she is caught up in a "protection racket" (SBN 48). Despite her ambivalence, what does exist of Sarah's relationship with each man seems predicated on satisfying her very different needs. Through Sarah's description of both relationships, she reveals that Joe possesses many feminine, nurturing qualities while Sandro possesses many overtly masculine qualities: the former is a "missionary" while the latter is "haughty" and "devious." Their differences as men, combined with their simultaneous abandonment of Sarah, provides a measure of what Sarah eventually realizes is their incompleteness and inability to understand and appreciate her complexity.

While Sarah's relationship with Joe is described as one which has come out of a long friendship and one which is based on mutual comfort, her more fiery relationship with

Sandro--Leah's husband--reveals more about the anger which drives her. In terms of Sarah's relationship with Leah, she reports, with some acidity, that she and Leah have constantly been compared to one another, and that she often emerged from this process feeling unattractive and inferior:

> People might have taken us for twins, we were that close in age; they at least forced the dialectic on us: beauty/truth, light/dark, introvert/extrovert, down to the blue pyjamas and the pink. And if Snow White was feckless and lovely, Rose Red must be earnest and fat. (SBN 12)

Even at the age of thirty, Sarah still experiences pangs of jealousy when her sister's name is mentioned. In one of his rare, uncharitable moments, Joe reminds Sarah of this painful part of her past:

> "She was a legend. There were always fellows who said about you, 'She has this fantastic sister.' And you were jealous."
> "God, Joe, I still am"...I wanted to shout 'I hate her, I've always hated her, if you want her, go screw her.' (SBN 50)

Sarah's affair with Sandro, then, is perhaps not so surprising when one considers what years of being the 'homely sister' has done for her sense of self-esteem. Her instant attraction to Sandro is something, indeed, that she does not want to examine too closely:

> So there was a sudden close feeling I did not want to analyze. Because of this, furthermore because he was imperious, there was hostility. And because he was married to Leah. Yet I wanted to know him. (SBN 60)

As Sarah's relationship with Sandro develops, however, so does her understanding of Leah. While both women remain

somewhat distant from one another, Sarah sees far enough into Leah's marriage to realize that Leah has paid dearly for the prestige and glamour her marriage has brought her. When Sarah accidently meets Leah at the train station in Venice, Leah admits, indirectly, that she too is having affairs:

> I order coffee and sit across from her, keeping her face before mine to block out my own reflection. It was the year of the Vadim film No Sun in Venice. "It's dreary," she said.
> "Isn't it?"
> "Venice?"
> "I suppose for you it's wonderful. For me, that's worn off. In the winter I only hope to stay alive."
> "I've been trotting around like a madwoman with a guide-book. Enjoying it."
> "I know. Sandro saw you in the Merceria."
> "Oh."
> "He thought it was very funny. It's the sort of thing I do, sneaking around without anyone's being the wiser...
> "So you hate Venice now?"
> "Not really." She brushed the question off.
> "It's only--the winter's damp and dreadful. And I was waiting for someone who didn't come."
> I wondered if I had driven him away. (SBN 78)

The advice that Sarah gives Eldon as he lectures her--that he should "go away and read Henry James" (SBN 36)--takes on more significance as one considers how Sarah eventually comes to understand Leah's unhappiness. During their conversation, Sarah notes that Leah has a

> sad little 1929-theatrical look about her, a pretty parcel, left to wait, and uncomfortable under my eyes, but not talking. (SBN 77)

As with James' depiction of Isobel and Osborne in Portrait of a Lady, Sarah's portrait of Leah reveals the superficial

premises upon which Leah's marriage to Sandro is based. And, as Sarah's affair with Sandro comes to an end, Sarah realizes that his attraction to her, as with Osborne's penchant for collecting art, is grounded not in his need for love, but in his need to assert his masculinity by conquering and mastering. In his last letter to Sarah, he writes:

> Here, you come into my story, you and also your sister. When I met you both, I found a challenge; and both of you were, finally, in spite of your independence and your pride, easy, possible, and a disappointment. You made me angry, for seeming to be more remote than you are. A fault of my education, it may be. (SBN 154)

As Sarah acquires a stronger sense of own identity, she realizes that an affair that began as a "two-week assignation" has stretched into a "banality" that would sicken "fifteen-year-olds" (SBN 154). With her illusions about Leah's and Sandro's glamour and power shattered, Sarah comes closer to resolving two conflicts which have plagued her throughout her life--her insecurity and her competitiveness with Leah. Reading Sandro's letter she decides:

> "'Finished. Enough.' Manifestations of sibling rivalry, longings for security, these have been taken care of...I shouldn't have to read him on paper, Sandro being a fool...'"(SBN 154)

The masterful Venetian has become reduced, in Sarah's eyes, to a "raging fool chewing on his leash" (SBN 154): Sandro's sexuality and European sophistication are exposed as the props of a man whose appetite runs no deeper than the pursuit

of unattainable women. However, recognizing her own tendencies to pursue distant men, Sarah sees herself mirrored in Sandro's behaviour and this unflattering image gives her the insight she needs to feel more secure and decisive about her actions. As a result, Sarah's decision to stay in Montreal, rather than going back to Europe, indicates the degree to which she is able to reconcile her European past with her Canadian present. By remaining in Canada, she accepts her colonialism as part of herself and resists the desire to indulge in expatriate self-pity and cynicism: the same kind of abhorrent self-indulgence that Sandro exhibits in his letter to her. She also establishes some distance between herself and her family in Toronto, and this allows her to step out of her 'negative identity' by allowing her to embrace the potential for self-development that Montreal promises her.

In terms of how Sarah fits into the patterns of knowledge laid out in Women's Ways of Knowing, Sarah makes the transition from being merely a listener to being a subjectivist whose story ends on a positive note: she eventually departs on a quest to redefine herself. However, as Sarah's struggle to gain autonomy illustrates, she does not make this transition without experiencing some of the pitfalls the authors of Ways of Knowing outline in their examination of subjectivist women.

In the chapter "Subjective Knowledge: The Quest for

Self," the authors note that

> The eventual path a woman takes is, in large measure, a function of the familial and educational environments in which she is struggling with these problems . . . All too often, neither the family, whether the family of origin or of reproduction, nor the education institution she attends, recognizes or nurtures the budding subjectivist's impetus toward change, redefinition, and application of her new ways of knowing and learning. The family's reaction to a woman's return to school can be painful for her. One woman described her tearful daughter berating her: "You used to stay at home and do needlepoint." Another told us how her angry husband had first hidden then burned her schoolbooks. (WWK 79)

While Sarah's immediate family appears to have been largely indifferent to her pursuit of an academic career, Eldon's and Dr. Lyle's dismay over her resignation from St. Ardath's is comparable to the actions described above. The education that Sarah seeks in her desire to become a writer is the life experience she feels she has sacrificed in order to become educated. Her decision to leave the academy is interpreted as one which will change her irreparably. As with many women who begin to develop their inner voices, however, Sarah's growth into subjectivism is predicated on a recognition of the exhausted potential of her earlier life choices. Therefore, as with the mother who is forced to decide between her education and her daughter, Sarah, too, is forced to reject her former complacency at the risk of alienating others. The reviewer who notes the "hostility that barks on every page" of Sarah Bastard's Notebook is indeed right. However, the growing process that Sarah undergoes, that is,

the process of shedding a passive and inauthentic existence for a more dynamic, freer and authentic one, is a process that by its very nature is viewed as a hostile transgression of patriarchal beliefs when undertaken by a woman. And, not surprisingly, Sarah's feelings of hostility are most clearly aimed at those who would halt her in her personal growth.

In contrast to Sarah of Sarah Bastard's Notebook, Minn Burge of The Honeyman Festival, pregnant with her fourth child, suffers less from the absence of self-identifying totems and more from an over-abundance of them. Minn is not embarking on a journey into a new future; in her late thirties, she is planted firmly in the middle of that future. And yet, like Sarah, Minn's image of herself seems predicated on how she believes others see her and, quite often, on how she believes she is simply useful to those others. Minn's lack of physical energy--the result of an advanced pregnancy--functions as a metaphor for what appears to be a problem very similar to Sarah's: Minn too suffers from a weak sense of her own identity. Far less openly aggressive than Sarah, Minn's aggressive tendencies are held in check by her fear of hurting her children. As Engel illustrates, Minn's unwillingness to hurt others results in a mode of subservient behaviour which often extends well beyond her immediate family. Her one lapse--her vicious attack on a bullying policeman--comes at the end of a long line of impositions she endures. Although she is locked into her present by her children, her pasts--her upbringing in Godwin and her more glamorous life in France--illuminate aspects of her consciousness in a manner which allows us to understand the forces that have led her to her claustrophobic life in Toronto.

In Engel's correspondence with Dennis Lee, the issue of Minn's position as both a daughter and a mother is one that both writer and editor focussed on at length during the composition of The Honeyman Festival. In a letter dated August 10, 1970, Lee makes the following observation:

> ...I think Minn is trying first to find out whether or not she can live out her Godwin roots in Toronto...At a deeper level, I see Minn as wanting an answer to a much more desperate question...to overschematize, does she want to murder her children? Or more precisely, since she has already accepted that impulse as one of the many things that inhabit her--is the 'real truth' about Minn that she is a woman who could kill her children? To find that out, I take it that Minn has to know how Gertrude feels about her. (M.E. Archive, Box 9)

Focussing primarily on the parental roles of both Minn's mother (Gertrude) and Minn's one-time lover (Honeyman), Engel illustrates how the emotional imbalances of both relationships have left Minn feeling deprived and angry. However, the more precise nature of Minn's present conflict becomes evident when she admits that her expected child is, as perhaps she herself may have been, "not as welcome as the others" (HF 12). Pregnant and alone (because her journalist husband is away on a long assignment), Minn also feels overwhelmed by and resentful of her responsibilities and her isolation. Nevertheless, as she prepares to host a party in honour of Honeyman (a filmmaker not extraordinaire [Thomas, HF ii]), she allows her thoughts to wander back over her past

relationships. These are relationships which reveal the same patterns of loneliness, abandonment and yearning, of presence defined by absence.

It is significant then that Minn continues to visit her mother in Godwin despite the fact that she comes back "in little pieces" (HF 92). What she articulates, in psychoanalytic terms, is a lack of differentiation and individuation from her family of origin: she continually replays her role as a "good" daughter and feels frustrated at her inability to establish herself as an individual with her own needs and priorities while in the presence of her mother. Through her own insight--and anger--she expresses aspects of what can be interpreted as her unresolved Oedipal conflict. However, as many feminist theorists of both sociology[1] and literature assert, Oedipal impulses in women are far less easily resolved than those of men.

French feminist theorist Luce Irigaray, in her examination of the feminine Oedipal complex, "And One Doesn't Stir Without the Other," asserts her fears as a daughter of remaining undifferentiated from her mother. Speaking through a first-person monologue addressed to her mother, Irigaray relies on metaphors of infantile sensoria--satiation,

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[1] See my discussion (chapter 1, pp 15-16) of Nancy Chodorow's sociological approach to the issue of women's difficulties in achieving separation and individuation from their families of origin.

paralysis and glut--to express her feelings of being overwhelmed:

> Hardly do I glimpse you and walk toward you, when you metamorphose into a baby nurse. Again you want to fill my mouth, my belly, to make yourself into a plenitude for mouth and belly... to reduce us to consuming and being consumed, is that your only need...if you turn your face from me, giving yourself to me only in an already inanimate form, abandoning me to competent men to undo my/your paralysis, I'll turn to my father. I'll leave you...for someone who doesn't prepare anything for me to eat. (Irigaray 62)

Threatening to leave her mother and turn to her father--a man who "doesn't prepare anything for [her] to eat"--Irigaray also pleads with her mother, asking her to "keep yourself/me outside too. Don't engulf yourself or me in what flows from you into me. I would like both of us to be present. So that one doesn't disappear in the other, or the other into one" (Irigaray 61). According to Irigaray, allowing oneself to be consumed in a mother's love results in an obligation to that mother: a "debt" that can (or must) be repaid by reproducing the mother and the mother's story (Gallop 113). Engel suggests that Minn has indeed unconsciously gone about reproducing her mother's story:

> She brought the tray for more glasses...looked up towards the front room, and was amazed. It was not her house, it was her mother's house: Turkey carpet, plants in the window, dark curtains. Only the piano missing. She sank into herself, startled. Did she so much love Gertrude that she made her house again? Was she like her, staunch, starched, domineering, hiding all the hurt? It was to be done, it <u>shall</u> be done: and firm feet approaching. Were the children wild because she refused to be Gertrude? (HF 124)

To differentiate herself from her mother, Minn considers her own children as a means through which she may express her difference: in deliberately choosing not to replicate her own childhood experiences, Minn chooses not to be strict with her children. However, she pays a price for desiring this difference: as both a daughter and a mother, she is buffeted by Gertrude's puritan austerity on the one hand and by her children's exuberance, on the other. Acting as a fulcrum between two very powerful emotional attachments, Minn choses passivity as a means of remaining peacefully connected to both. She achieves this balance, however, only by suppressing her anger, and, ultimately, aspects of her individuality. It is only through her dreams and reveries that the sources of her anger are revealed.

Early in the novel, Minn has a "dangerous dream" (HF 4). While she is out shopping for things that will bring her pleasure--silk scarfs and amber jewelry--she comes home to find that she had put her children to sleep in the bathtub: "They were beautiful, not puckered at all from the water. They were curled up like little gleaming fish, and dead" (HF 5). During her conscious recollection of the dream she confronts her own power to destroy:

> Remembering the dream, her mouth was dry. This was the hardest instinct to face, the destructive one, when the sticky hands soiled the ego and the shrill demands plucked at the eardrums, and when you tried to steal a moment for yourself the innocent faces hardened into animal stupidity...

> Still, she was shocked when the rough beast assaulted her dreams, the deep selfish and murderous desire to be alone and independent again. (HF 5)

Minn's desire to be independent again, to escape her role as a mother, provides a compelling counterpoint to Irigaray's pleas for independence. Indeed Engel, in her rendering of Minn's memories, assumes the position of a mother defending her protective tendencies. For example, when trying to cope with her anger with her children, Minn thoughtfully considers prevalent beliefs which serve to punish mothers who express their anger or helplessness. Recalling two such women, Minn observes:

> Then you thought of Mrs-Prentice-in-Godwin who killed all hers with an axe (but not until after she had given Alice the blue flowered cream-and-sugar), and Prue Jarvis, who went to bed for a nap when her husband was in East Africa and woke a fortnight later in a psychiatric ward (not having committed violence, only neglect). (HF 6)

While Mrs. Prentice's criminal acts obviously constitute a genuinely dangerous expression of hatred and she is eventually "locked away in Penetang," Prue Jarvis, a woman who simply neglects her duties, is similarly incarcerated, similarly isolated from the rest of society. In Engel's vision of the Oedipal conflict, she takes into consideration the powerful social dictums which serve to regulate "womanly" and specifically "motherly" behaviour: the same forces which engender the "sadistic gestures of women in imprisoned situations" (HF 6). If Minn is frightened of her murderous

impulses, then, Engel seems to be saying she is frightened not only of her anger but also of being punished for feeling it.

Minn's recollections of Gertrude and of Godwin are notable in that they reveal the puritanical milieu in which Minn learned to repress her anger. Her mother Gertrude is granted an obvious degree of repressed masculinity in that she is likened to Gertrude Stein, while her father, Weeping Willy, is understood (at least in the eyes of those from Godwin) to have an emotional constitution much weaker than that of Gertrude. Indeed, Engel suggests that in terms of stereotyped 'masculine' and 'feminine' behaviour, Gertrude and Willy possess attributes which counter patriarchal notions of men's rationality and women's emotionality. Weeping Willy earns his nickname, for example, by "sobb[ing] at the stationhouse every night"; and, as with his mentally handicapped daughter, Annie, and Godwin's "unfit mother," Prue Jarvis, he is eventually deemed mentally incompetent and institutionalized. Gertrude, on the other hand, is an unemotional "stone wall": not only is Minn unable to communicate with her, Gertrude is intimidating enough to be feared by others in Godwin. And there appeared to be rewards for those who could keep a 'stiff upper lip' in Godwin: reminiscing about how her mother's reputation for toughness protected her, Minn pithily remarks, "at least nobody laughed

at you...they were all too scared of your Mum" (HF 74).

Engel suggests that the process of learning to repress one's more vital instincts is a lesson that not only comes with the emotional territory of small-town Ontario, but that this process is manifest in the physical territory itself. Driving into Godwin, Minn comments on the buildings built by her great-grandfather:

> She went past the Hat Shoppe and the Bandbox Beauty Salon and the other western storefronts updated with cracked tile, to the square her great-grandfather Morse built with his American Patent cement block machine: the park and the bandstand, the post office, Central School and the Morse Building, all equally squalid and squamous and indestructible (for Morse's patent cement blocks do not burn), all meanly designed and meanly executed, the work of her own ancestors. She turned sarcastically to sleeping Ben and said, "The blood that built that runs, diluted by several alcoholics', in your veins," and parked the car to drink the buildings in.
>
> The old man must have designed them himself. She had seen his portrait, he had a long face and dark squinting eyes and a narrow forehead, and they were like him, dour and tight-fisted. Wherever an arch could be crippled in its clumsy effort to soar, wherever a window could be darkened or a keystone disproportionately narrowed, it was. (HF 91)

The control exercised in the architecture of the buildings functions as a facade for uncontrolled despair underneath. Minn recognizes this disparity, however, and her insight grants her a privileged, if problematic, position vis-a-vis both her families--her family of origin and the family she and her husband have created. More specifically, Minn recognizes that the potential for change over different

generations exists and that this potential can only be fulfilled by establishing herself as an individual and a mother, separate from Gertrude. Bits of Godwin and Gertrude remain within Minn, however. While feeling frustrated with the apathy of one of her tenants, Richard, Minn desperately looks around for her "hard, dry surfaces" (HF 61); that is, she unwittingly uses metaphors of "structure" to lament what she feels is the flaccidity of spirit among the young people who occupy her attic. When faced with the uncontrollable aspects of her present, then, Minn summons up the "hard," secure images of her Godwin past to help her deal with them.

By contrast, it is the image of the "lolling length" of Honeyman which leads Minn to think about what appears to be, on the surface, a more liberated period of her life. Even in hindsight, Minn sees Honeyman as someone who rescued her from Godwin:

> He was a kind man, he had patience, and children almost her age. When she lay beside him in bed and drew the heathen blanket of southern Ontario guilt around her, he turned to her, he comforted her, he talked to her, taught her what she was. (HF 17)

From the perspective of a twenty-year-old Minn, Honeyman represented freedom and glamour. From the perspective of a more mature Minn, Honeyman, and the years she spent with him, are recollected with ambivalent nostalgia. Recognizing another advantage that Honeyman represented, Minn thinks:

> What a good rich life it was, then, when you were young and had a Honeyman, and could walk into

> Paris offices and come out employed, dubbing, translating, rewriting a script, holding a pile of props at the edge of a set. It was no small thing to be equipped to survive.
> And there was the love. (HF 129)

Being equipped to survive was indeed no small thing for a young Canadian expatriate living in Paris. However, as a parental father-figure, Honeyman's (apparent) liberalism, like Gertrude's puritanism, protects Minn from the less pleasant contingencies of life only at the cost of a more personal form of freedom. In Irigaray's terms, Honeyman might have indeed been the father 'who didn't prepare anything' for Minn to eat. However, through her portrayal of Minn, Engel illustrates that although a father/daughter relationship might appear to offer more autonomy than a mother/daughter relationship, a daughter's overwhelming need to gain her father's approval can also leave her in a very dependent position. Minn realizes, for example, that she still seeks Honeyman's approval, even after his death:

> She sat, startled by waves of emotion. Years since she weakened last for him, though she had never stopped talking to him in her head, saying, "See, Honeyman?" when she did what she was proud of, or what he would like, or resisted him. (HF 17)

While it is obvious that Honeyman replaced Minn's real father as a much more potent father-figure, Minn's conscious choice of Honeyman suggests that she turns, like Irigaray, away from her mother in order to experience a less demanding relationship with her father.

Juliet Mitchell, in her text Psychoanalysis and

Feminism, discusses three courses of action women often follow when attempting to resolve their oedipal impulses:

> After her recognition of castration, the girl has three courses open to her, only one of which is 'normal.' With her self-love already shattered by her 'lack', her hostility to the mother (who was supposed to be phallic but who was discovered to be likewise castrated) can make her turn away from women and womenhood altogether; in which case, debasing and despising women, as men do, she is liable to become inhibited and neurotic. Or she can refuse to abandon the pleasures of her clitoris; if so, she remains at the pre-Oedipal 'masculine' phase. Finally, if by exploiting 'her passive instinctual impulses'--that is, the passive aims of her sexual drive--she can transfer her sexual attentions from her mother to her father, she can want first his phallus, and then by the all-important analogy, his baby, then the man again, to give her this baby. Thus she becomes a little woman. (Mitchell 96)

Minn plays out her Oedipal drama by turning away from her mother and turning to Honeyman instead. And Gertrude's emotional reserve, as Engel clearly suggests, is the result of Gertrude's own rejection of womanhood, her own emotional immaturity. While Gertrude is competent in terms of the biological nurturance she has given Minn, she was, and still is, unable to engender in Minn a great deal of emotional maturity because that is an attribute she does not possess herself.

Thus, when Honeyman offers to fill the void left both by Gertrude's emotional absence and Weeping Willie's real absence, Minn is painfully aware of her vulnerabilities and yet cannot resist:

> The first time he came to me I wanted him frantically, but when the moment came, something inside me cried, "No, no." I pushed him off and sent him blue-balled into the night. If I go to that man he will own me absolutely, I thought. I was right. (HF 59)

Although Minn proceeded with the relationship and now, in hindsight, recognizes that Honeyman "changed her in a direction she was thankful for," his rejection of her persists in her memory precisely because of her neediness, both past and present. We are soon alerted to her present vulnerability, for example, when she complains about Norman being away during her pregnancy, her "most vulnerable hour" (HF 33). The "something inside" of her which said "no" to Honeyman, then, was perhaps less a fear of his power and more a recognition and fear of her own overwhelming needs. Minn's fears are certainly understandable. Honeyman's rejection of her occurred when she was highly sensitive to the fear of loss. While Minn took the risk of becoming involved with Honeyman, his eventual departure (an event she undoubtedly foresaw) simultaneously re-awoke and confirmed her worst childhood fears. When Minn demanded that Honeyman make her his wife--that he give her his phallus and his baby in order to make her his "little woman"--she again failed (symbolically) to win her (real) father's love: Honeyman countered her demand by simply marrying someone else. The fact that the daydreams which weave in and out of Minn's consciousness now focus on Godwin and Honeyman attests to

both the power of the experiential forces which have shaped Minn and, also, to the powerlessness that she now feels.

Another familial history reveals itself during the course of Minn's recollections. More specifically, the presence of Honeyman's son Cal offers further proof of how little Honeyman was able to give emotionally. When Cal shows up at the party, Minn notes that he

> ...used to be pathetic, [but] now he's merely unreal...He picked up his western accent at the movies, watching television. Hasn't been west of Chicago since he was ten, he would have told me. Dear surrogate Mum... Me and my daddy, the dream that never came off for him. Ever since kids found out they were supposed to be loved, they've been screaming for more. That pimply kid Cal pretending to be Holden Caulfield; steaming around Paris complaining about the plumbing and looking for hotdogs. Seven thousand boarding schools. Psychiatrists. Trouble. Honeyman laying aside the letter sighing, "Cal again." Mother some kind of society bitch. Or was she? (HF 121)

Measured against Cal, Minn's feelings about Honeyman, as ambivalent as they are, seem more final, more resolute. That is, while both Cal and Minn were, in a sense, Honeyman's children, Minn has obviously managed to work through her Oedipal impulses far more successfully than Cal. Although Cal's presence is rendered in caricatured terms, Engel undermines the comic aspects of his behaviour by allowing traces of his anger to surface. Despite the discomfort Minn experiences over Cal's obvious imitation of his father, the reality which lies beneath his posturing causes her even more discomfort:

> "I was thinking about my Daddy tonight, Minn." Her instinct was to say, "Oh, I wouldn't do that." She kept her mouth tight shut. "I guess he was a good man," he said.
> "He sure was, Cal." And damn me for catching the accent.
> "That's what we say about people when they're dead, isn't it?"
> "Sure, Cal."
> "Well, wasn't he a good man, Minn?" The voice rose dangerously in the nostrils.
> "Sure, he was a good man, if you want to make it that simple."
> "We've all got a little sin in us, eh?" he rolled his eyes unattractively sideways and dug her belly with his elbow. The baby kicked.
> "He was a honey," she said. "I never knew anybody to be so good to me." His shoulders sloped, he relaxed.
> "He sure was a hell of a good man." (HF 116)

Cal's idealization of his less than perfect father is what lies at the heart of his emotional troubles. Indeed, the need for people to believe in the power and artistry of a Honeyman--despite Honeyman's own apparent modesty--is what allows opportunists like Rainer to cash in on the filmmaker's now trendy campy-ness. While Minn herself admits she will celebrate the Honeyman festival with the same "phonies" that Honeyman himself disdained, Honeyman's professed simplicity and self-ironization are easily countered by the simple facts of his life--facts which indicate a greater degree of complexity and uncertainty underlying his outwardly confident behaviour. Cal's confusion becomes more understandable, for instance, as Minn discloses more and more telling details about Honeyman's contradictory nature.

Engel only subtly provides clues about the manipulative

side of Honeyman's personality. For example, while Minn is quick to point out that her friends murmured "father-figure" during her involvement with Honeyman, the question of why the fifty-five-year-old filmmaker chose to become involved with the twenty-year-old Minn is left unanswered. Honeyman's motives for becoming a "honey-man," or a "sugar daddy," are not investigated by others most likely because patriarchal society does not question, but rather applauds, May-December romances where the man fills the role of the older lover. Viewed as a harmless means of recapturing one's youth, a man's involvement with a much younger woman emphasizes the primarily male privilege of flaunting one's independence and virility. Cal's presence, as one of Honeyman's offspring, is disturbing because although he functions as a representative of Honeyman's legacy to society, he also, by virtue of his obvious suffering, serves as a reminder of his father's less admirable and, of course less celebrated, qualities--his selfishness and irresponsibility.

When Minn first meets Honeyman, for example, he is in the process of settling in Italy and divorcing his third wife. He is tired of America and of the "wives, worry, alimony [and] kids" (HF 127). As well, throughout Minn's relationship with him, there were the other "gilt and flashy ladies" he took to the more renowned restaurants of Paris while Minn remained his "secret girl," the one he took to out-the-way restaurants "snuffling out truffled pates and

full-bodied wines" (HF 19). Although he let Minn live in his best Paris apartment, the "arrangement" they had insured, to some extent, Minn's dependency on him:

> Always alone in the flat in the rue Dragon. That was the arrangement, no visitors. Alone, knowing no one, waiting for him. Seeing no one for months when he was away, except the son, Cal, the rootless one, run away from another school and hiding out with a passel of rootless friends, destroying things, destroying himself. (HF 20)

Minn also reveals that she only saw Honeyman for about ten weeks out of every year and, although Cal was allowed to bring friends to the apartment, she was not. The limitations Honeyman placed on Minn's social life, coupled with his criticism of her (he tells her she is a "damned stupid broad" and that "any other girl...would have made an actress of herself" [HF 128]) served to strengthen Minn's dependency on him in that he undermined her already weakened self-esteem. Although Minn was happy to live in a foreign country, away from the stifling puritanism she was brought up with, she also had to contend with the problem of surviving--a problem Honeyman was pleased to solve by offering her a job and a place to stay. Therefore, her dependency on Honeyman was twofold: Minn indeed fulfilled her role as a child to Honeyman's sugar-daddy in that she needed both his emotional and financial support. However, as Honeyman's initial motives for expatriation and his later failure with Cal illustrates, his potential as a truly caring and supportive

father is negligible at best. While he symbolized for the young Minn a form of liberalism she desperately craved--he didn't smother her as Irigaray's mother threatens to do--Minn's more mature assessment of him exposes the dangers of living out a too liberal and morally unconcerned life philosophy. As a counter-measure against the untenable puritanism of Minn's childhood, Honeyman's bohemian life-style, as breathless as it left Minn, emerges as an equally untenable extreme. The fluidity and flux of the celluloid images produced by Honeyman are, as Minn realizes in the end, as difficult to live with as the cold and imposing buildings of Godwin.

Minn's memories of both Godwin and Honeyman work toward the resolution of anger. Engel also offers an ambivalently drawn alternative to that anger in the form of forgiveness and nostalgia. And Minn's decision to (perhaps) not host the festival next year, indicates that her grief over Honeyman's desertion of her may be drawing to a comfortable close. However, Minn's ambivalence toward both Gertrude and Honeyman is important in that through her examination of both their desirable and undesirable qualities, her resultant recognition of their limitations as human beings allows her to replay and thereby resolve at least some of her present emotional discomfort: her anger over her husband's absence.

Although Minn is still caught in the pattern of subservience and anger set into motion in her childhood--she

will probably always be at least a little "angrier" than she wants to admit--Engel empowers Minn by allowing her a great deal of insight into her own vulnerability. She also allows her a measure of insight into her power to destroy. Minn's hostilities towards the authorities which have indelibly marked her psyche find expression in her highly symbolic attack against the police officer who barges into her home. Having perhaps answered the question of "whether or not she is capable of killing her children," Minn's protective instincts are tested and, at least in her own eyes, she is not found wanting. Rejecting aspects of both Gertrude's and Honeyman's behaviour, and also rejecting the invasive, symbolic presence of that upholder of social norms--the police officer--Minn stands her ground, as shaky as it is. Although her isolated circumstances at the end of the novel are left unresolved--she is still very alone and very pregnant--the joyful rumblings of her premature labour pains serve as positive omens of a future, forthcoming life.

In Marian Engel's most acclaimed novel, Bear, the heroine, Lou, is a middle-aged archivist at the Historical Institute. Unlike Sarah Porlock and Minn Burge, Lou is unencumbered by familial ties. In fact, the only emotional tie that Lou experiences is her weekly sexual encounter with the director of the Institute where she works--an act which is carried out routinely and lovelessly on her desk. However, the past still affects Lou: unlike the generational patterns apparent in Sarah Bastard's Notebook and The Honeyman Festival Lou's work as a historian leads her to her emotional and sexual awakening as she enters into the past of the eccentric Cary family. The rendering of her geographical displacement, that is, Lou's journey into the remote area of Ontario where the Cary estate is situated, makes Bear a novel different from Engel's other questing novels. Rather than reflecting on how past experiences with clashing cultures have changed her, as both Sarah and Minn do, Lou is initiated into a similarly illuminating experience and, moreover, her experience takes place in an exclusively--and perhaps hypertypically--Canadian setting.

Less adventurous than Sarah or Minn, Lou has existed vicariously through others and through the preservation of others' historical "detritus." Lou's quest, then, is a

process of integration: she uses her intellectual facilities to recognize her less ordered and more sensual nature; she is thereby transformed from being a mere spectator of the history being made around her to being a participant, a generator of her own history. Departing from her earlier, more reflective novels, Engel's Bear is perhaps the most balanced and controlled of her fictional work. While the same issues of separation and individuation predominate in Bear, Engel's objective seems somewhat different from that of her earlier novels. In terms of Irigaray's metaphor of a mother "not stirring" without the "other"--the daughter--Lou's quest seems to be a reverse attempt to bring the notion of a self separated from its protective self (an inner "mother") into synchronization. This third novel, as a result, achieves depth through Engel's trademark characterization of an anachronistic woman, but also through a narrative richer in allusive imagery.

One of the first clues that Engel gives us about Lou's transitory state is embedded within the opening paragraph:

> In the winter, she lived like a mole, buried deep in her office, digging among maps and manuscripts. She lived close to her work and shopped on the way between her apartment and the Institute, scurrying hastily through the tube of winter from refuge to refuge, wasting no time. She did not like cold air on her skin. (B 11)

Combining the image of transit with the image of Lou as a

burrowing animal, Engel suggests that the conflict between Lou's expectations of life and Lou's reality arises out of her self-perpetuated inertia. She remains within the warm and safe confines of her limited life because she does "not like cold air on her skin." However, her observation, several pages later, that she "has an odd sense...of being reborn," (B 19) suggests that her condition is about to change. As with the compromises Engel's other heroines make with regard to their Canadian backgrounds and their European experiences, Lou's observation comes at a mid-point between two significant sites: the city and Pennarth. Thus, Lou's observation, made in the form of a postcard sent to her director, proleptically anticipates the triadic patterns of images and relationships which proliferate throughout Bear.

Bear was originally written as a short story meant to be part of an anthology of Canadian erotica. That story, entitled "Ursus Resartus," is somewhat different from the novel. More specifically, the original story tends more towards gothic romance while the novel tends more towards realism. If we define a gothic romance as being a "blend of...two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern," and as having "mysterious and supernatural overtones" (Harper Handbook 215) Engel's original castle setting suggests that she intended to write a gothic romance:

> She was an archivist by trade and by nature. She kept the world in order and at bay.
>
> All the more delighted, then, by the appointment as official archivist at the Castle. No, she told them when she was boarded, it would not bother her to stay there alone, though she would expect decent living quarters. (M.E. Archive, Box 14)

Given that castles are not indigenous to Canada, the original story also appears to have been less geographically specific. It seems Engel deliberately scaled down elements of the fantastic and decided on a more likely, Canadian setting in order to write a story firmly grounded in realism. One may speculate that Engel's initial decision to use a castle may have been based on a desire to distance herself, through the use of a fantastic context, from the bestiality depicted in the story. However, Engel's later decision to exclude that typically gothic setting may also have been based on a desire to escape the thematic expectations (especially for a cliched, happy ending) that that setting suggests. Traces of the fantastic remain, however. The final story, for example, contains a subplot about bear mythology which complements the main plot involving Lou's relationship with the bear. Further, the two subplots--the subplot of Cary's mythical meanderings and that of Cary's real life--function as spectral contrasts to Lou's comparatively mundane existence. However, with the two subplots juxtaposed within Lou's vision of Pennarth and of the possibilities Pennarth symbolizes, it

is significant that Lou also, at one point, attempts to "humanize," or bring under control, the conflicting aspects of Colonel Cary by hanging up a lewd cartoon found in his papers (B 112). This symbol of Colonel Cary's sensuality acts not only as the bridge between the cerebral and emotional aspects of his personality, but also as the one outstanding contradiction in what appears to have been his austere and solitary life on the island. More importantly, however, Cary's sensuality indicates a desire to unite, intimately, with others and Lou's understanding of that sensuality (and particularly its "humanizing" properties) replicates her own on-going process of integration. The discord between her cerebral and sensual lives is solved, in part, by Lou's entry into what many people would consider a "lewd" sexual arrangement: through her practice of bestiality, Lou regains her sense of inner harmony.

It is the real bear, and specifically his position between the definitions imposed on him by both Cary and Lou, who, like Minn in The Honeyman Festival, acts as a balancing fulcrum in another triadic structure in the novel. As Cary's obsession and Lou's lover, the bear, in the end, eludes the anthropomorphization both would impose on him. What does the bear signify, then? The mythological subplot of the novel deals specifically with bears and bear mythology as it exists

in several cultures: Cary's notes about bears are puzzling precisely because they represent an incoherent assembly of possibilities. However, the title of Engel's short story appears to be a direct reference to the constellation, Ursa Major, the same constellation that benevolently watches over Lou when she leaves Pennarth. The Ovidian myth regarding Callisto's transformation into Ursa Major is worth quoting at length:

> Callisto was another maiden who excited the jealousy of Juno, and the goddess changed her into a bear. "I will take away," said she, "that beauty with which you have captivated my husband." Down fell Callisto on her hands and knees; she tried to stretch out her arms in supplication--they were already beginning to be covered with black hair. Her hands grew rounded, became armed with crooked claws and served for feet; her mouth, which Jove used to praise for its beauty, became a horrid pair of jaws; her voice, which if unchanged would have moved the heart to pity, became a growl, more fit to inspire terror. Yet her former disposition remained, and with continual groaning, she bemoaned her fate, and stood upright as well as she could, lifting her paws to beg for mercy and felt that Jove was unkind, though she could not tell him so.
>
> One day a youth espied her as he was hunting. She saw him and recognized him as her own son, now grown a young man. She stopped and felt inclined to embrace him. As she was about to approach, he, alarmed, raised his hunting spear, and was on the point of transfixing her, when Jupiter, beholding, arrested the crime, and snatching away both of them, placed them in the heavens as the Great and Little Bear. (Bullfinch 34, emphasis mine)

The themes of the myth of Callisto--sexual jealousy, enforced

silence, and victimization--emerge as features of Lou's own life. Moreover, Lou's characterization of the bear, as "a middle-aged woman defeated to the point of being daft" (B 36) and later as an "old woman" (B 138) suggests she sees the bear in feminine, and therefore similarly disadvantaged, terms. Her attempts to read meaning into the bear's expressionless face suggests that, as with Callisto's hidden identity, Lou senses a human mind trapped inside the bear's body. While her attempts to subscribe "human" meaning to the bear's behaviour are certainly not unusual, Engel takes Lou's and the bear's relationship a level higher on that same register, by suggesting that Lou's need to humanize the bear arises not only out of her growing emotional attachment to it, but also her burgeoning sexual affinity with it. Lou projects her anger over the social controls which force her to suppress her sexual needs onto a once wild animal that, like her, has been tamed or "socialized" into docility. While recollecting a past relationship with a man of "elegance and charm," Lou remembers that he "loved her as long as the socks were folded and she was at his disposal on demand" and, more importantly, loved her only "when the wine had not loosened her tongue" (B 118). Given the bear's bisexual portrayal (the bear does, after all, have a penis and physical strength), it symbolizes repressed and

conflicting aspects of Lou's own sexuality. Lou admits, for example, that despite her sensual nature, men have sensed her "gangrenous soul" (her anger and her needs) and that that has been responsible for the failure of her relationships with them. And, having attempted sexual relationships with women, Lou says that they "just leave her hungry for men" (B 118). Homer's warnings, then, that the bear is a "wild critter after all" (B 40) is perhaps an equally accurate assessment of Lou and her own fear of losing the control she has been taught, through past experience, is necessary to avoid rejection. After all, by the time we meet Lou, Engel is quick to let us know that Lou is already in the habit of keeping "the world in order and at bay" (M.E. Archive, Box 14).

Lou is not the only character in the story who keeps the world at bay. As a historian, she is put in charge of documenting the lives of the two Colonel Cary's: Colonel John Cary and, later, "Colonel" Jocelyn Cary. While it is tempting to see these two historical figures as parental figures to Lou, the misanthropy shared by all three enhances their separateness as characters. However, we do see the two Carys through Lou's eyes and her methods of historical documentation, as she soon realizes, prove to be a rather arid method of recording their lives. Homer's story about

the Carys prompts Lou into the realization that

> She always attempted to be orderly, to catalogue her thoughts and feelings, so that when the awful, anarchic inner voice caught her out, her mind was stocked with efficacious replies. "What am I doing here?" could be answered with lists...Here, however, she could not justify herself. What was the use of all these cards and details and orderings? In the beginning they had seemed beautiful, capable of making an order of their own, capable of being in the end filed and sorted so that she could find a structure, plumb a secret. Now, they filled her with guilt, she felt there would never, ever, be anything as revealing and vivid as Homer's story, or as relevant. They were a heresy against the real truth. (B 83)

In the search for perfection, Lou realizes that both Carys, like her, eventually opted to live alone. And, despite their ability to subsist on their own and to do so with considerable flair, Lou observes that her own life, like their lives, is just one of the "great irrelevancies of Canadian history" (B 84). More precisely, Lou realizes that the Carys' lack of connectedness with others diminishes their importance in terms of how much impact they have had on other lives. That the second Colonel Cary left Pennarth to the Historical Institute rather than to her "summer relatives" is perhaps indicative of two things: first, that her relationship with her relatives was not a strong one; and, second, she hoped that by bequeathing Pennarth to a historical institute, she would achieve some form of immortality--in other words, she hoped her story and the

story of Pennarth would be told. However, the means through which her story is told--through the unadorned quality of historical documentation--is precisely what begins to pale in Lou's eyes.

After Homer tells her the history of the Carys, Lou thinks:

> You could take any life and shuffle it on cards, she thought bitterly, lay it out in a pyramid solitaire, and it would have a kind of meaning; but you could never make a file card that said, "Campbell, Homer" convey any of the meaning that Homer had conveyed tonight. (B 84)

However, despite her recognition of Homer's insight into the Carys' lives, Lou soon resorts back to the relative safety of her own methodology:

> Deep in her files was buried the original letter from the director, instructing her...She read the instructions twice and sighed with relief. Anything she did would be relevant. Now she had her licence to exist. (B 85)

Lou's "licence to exist" inheres in her obedience to patriarchal notions of rationality and order. Moreover, Lou's usefulness is measured largely in terms of her ability to "service" others: her ex-lover who expected his socks folded and the director who expects Lou to perform administratively and sexually. Her justification for living, then, is grounded in her ability to give, to produce and perform. Her own needs and her own sense of worth lies

outside of herself and is dependent on the approval of others.

Engel's emphasis on Lou's burgeoning sexuality, particularly as it practiced in a non-procreative way, suggests that she wishes to render Lou's experience with the bear as an experience, and one that exists outside of an economy of the exchange of goods or services--an economy which aptly characterizes Lou's past sexual experiences. As a result, Lou's new focus on her sexual and emotional life leads her to adopt a romantic perspective similar to that of the first Colonel Cary. And, despite Lou's amusement at Colonel Cary's romantic folly--especially his decision to build an octagonal house out in the wilderness--Lou herself is initially unaware of her growing romantic tendencies. However, as she suffers some of the difficulties of rural living, she eventually begins to understand the deceptive nature of her romantic preconceptions. She is forced to admit, for example, a "new respect for farmers and pioneers" when she attempts to work out-of-doors during black fly season:

> Breakfasting outside with the bear, she tried to remember how long the black flies lasted. She decided she had never known that. Mid-July, perhaps. She was trying to decide to regard the black flies as a good symptom of the liveliness of the North, a sign that Nature will never capitulate, that man is red in tooth and claw but there is something that cannot be controlled by him, when a critter no

> larger than a fruitfly tore a hunk out of her skin through her trousers. Her leg streamed blood. She went inside. (B 71)

As with the first Colonel Cary, whose romantic ideas about escaping into the wilderness and the second Colonel Cary's reclusive tendencies, Lou's romanticism leads her to extremes when she attempts to take her sexual relationship with the bear too far.

The consequences of Lou's sexual experimentation with the bear are important for two reasons. First, they illustrate how Lou finally learns to trust and to receive affection freely and, secondly, how she learns of her own power to take advantage. Lou's response to Homer's sexual proposition, for example, illustrates how her awareness of manipulative maneouvering has become heightened:

> "Shut up, Homer." She stood and faced him. They were the same height. She was younger, he was stronger. She liked him, but she did not like what he was doing. Taking, she thought, advantage. Suddenly, she wanted to pull rank, pull class on him, keep him in his place. She knew they were equal but she did not feel they were equal, in her head she was a grand lady going to balls, he was the servant who knew her secret...She was thinking, I won't ever lie back on a desk again, not ever, ever...(B 108,109)

Lou's temptation to "pull rank" on Homer is not one that she gives in to. Rather, Lou steps back from the situation at hand, understands it in the context of her past experiences, and realizes that she has the power to refuse. It is only later, when Lou begins to doubt herself and doubt the

goodness of her relationship with the bear, that she turns to Homer and actively choses to have sexual relations with him. In some ways, Lou's liaison with Homer symbolizes her desire to return to having relationships with men. However, the brevity of their sexual relationship indicates that Lou is still vacillating between committing herself to life back in the real world of men and committing herself to remaining in her more Edenic life on the island.

Lou's sexual relationship with the bear finally allows her to loosen some of the strictures which have determined the extent of her emotional involvement with others. In a short series of exhortations which symbolically break through the comparatively ordered and rational surface of the text, Lou asks the bear to take her to the "bottom of the ocean" and to make her "comfortable in the world at last" (B 112). Admitting her sense of defeat at having lived within narrowly defined emotional parameters, Lou's frequent entries into the cool waters surrounding Pennarth--her symbolic baptisms--signify her willingness to accept the "cold on her skin," to accept the idea that there are different ways of living. However, before Lou's final transformation takes place and before she is able to make decisions about her life, her relationship with the bear must be resolved. In her final attempt to resolve their relationship sexually, however, the

bear himself draws limits by slashing Lou across her back. While she initially reacts with horror, her eventual realization of the changes their relationship has already wrought in her, leaves her feeling cleansed:

> She was different. She seemed to have the body of a much younger woman. The sedentary fat had gone, leaving the shape of ribs showing. Slowly, she turned and looked over her shoulder in the pier-glass at her back: on long, red, congealing weal marked her from shoulder to buttock. I shall keep that, she thought. And it is not the mark of Cain. (B 134)

In a scene reminiscent of Margaret Atwood's Surfacing, Lou wakes up and realizes that she has let herself become something of a wild animal. She surveys her bedroom and notes that "the room she lay in was dirty. Her hands were dirty. How long have I been like this? she wondered" (B 133).

As the bear prepares to go into hibernation, Lou prepares to leave for the city. Moving away from her romanticized vision of the bear, Lou quite factually notes that the bear is "growing a plug of fat in his anus against hibernation" (B 131). Despite the failure of their sexual union, an exchange of another sort takes place between Lou and the bear: while she emerges out of a long, sedentary silence having shed some weight along with her inhibitions, the bear gains weight, preparing to go into hibernation. Unlike the short-changing Lou accepted with her director and

her former lover, Lou's experience with the bear leaves her with a new sense of her own vitality and her own, newer, limits. This symbolic exchange, then, is notably different in terms of distribution of benefits it represents: Lou and the bear emerge as equals.

During Lou's drive to Pennarth at the beginning of the summer, before she sends her first postcard to the director, Lou observes that

> It was nearly dusk when they pulled into the ferry dock. She had sharp memories of being here before. She remembered a beach, a lake the colour of silver, something sad happening. Something, yes, that happened when she was very young, some loss. It struck her as strange that she had never come back to this part of the world. (B 19)

While Engel is careful not to cite the source of Lou's feelings--we are simply told it is a vague childhood loss--she does suggest that Lou has unconsciously avoided the specific site and memory of that loss. That the loss only makes itself felt once Lou is in the area once again, suggests that not only is Lou about to uncover a deeper truth about herself, she will only do so by lifting the repression that has kept her from seeing it. Her days at Pennarth, coloured as they are by her experiences with the bear and her experiences with the eccentricities of the Carys' pasts, become less and less ordered as time passes. While she keeps up with her achival work, she also finds herself waking up on

the lawn and spending entire nights working and going to bed at dawn. By the time she has her last, final experience with the bear, her orderly life, by her earlier standards, has become unorderly. However, as Lou's relationship with the bear ends and as she re-enters into a more orderly way of thinking, Engel suggests that Lou also enters into a phase of her life where her emotions will assume their proper order and place and where she will be able to tolerate the "cold air on her skin." As Lou leaves Pennarth, for example, the bear becomes part of a more distant and yet benevolent natural order:

> She drove south all night, taking the long, over-land route. She wore a thick pullover and drove with the windows open until the smell of the land stopped being the smell of water and trees and became cities and gas fumes. It was a brilliant night, all star shine, and overhead the Great Bear and his thirty-seven thousand virgins kept her company. (B 141)

Coming out on the other side of her excursion into the wilderness, Lou also comes out, as Minn in The Honeyman Festival puts it, "on the the other side of love" (HF 96). This is also a love Minn defines as being: "only one, a well of feeling in the back of your personality, in the bowels of your personal earth" and which you tended "carefully...in order later to be able to give" (HF 129). Lou's process of integration consists of her new-found ability to set limits (use her rationality) and to experience ecstasy (or,

experience her emotions more fully). The love that Lou learns about is self-love. Her affinity with the bear, both sexual and emotional, is what ultimately liberates her from her own fears and inhibitions.

As with Sarah and Minn, Lou discovers a sense of balance within herself when she recovers from having gone quite a "distance" with the bear. That is, like Sarah and Minn, who reconcile their European pasts with their Canadian presents, Lou reconciles her shame at having "gone too far" (B 122) with the bear with her happiness over her reclaimed ability to receive affection. To borrow, metaphorically, from Irigaray's understanding of mother/daughter relationships, Lou's own duality--her conflicting feelings of love and inadequacy--have merged and become part of her general understanding of herself as a good, but fallible, person. In other words, her love for the bear symbolizes her newly-found ability to love at all, and that understanding is strong enough to subsume her more negative feelings of anger and shame.

As with the triadic patterns of locales and choices which appear in both Sarah Bastard's Notebook and The Honeyman Festival, Bear also hosts two symbolically dichotomous locales. Lou escapes the city and the loneliness it represents by venturing into the wilderness and

rejuvenating her sense of her own freedom. And Lou realizes that, like the bear, she let herself become caught between two definitions of herself that others would impose on her. She attempted to live up to a "feminine" myth with her elegant lover--the myth of a perfect, womanly woman--and when that failed, she attempted to live as the Carys chose to live: as a singular person, isolated from others. Discarding what she considers to be two inauthentic ways of living, Lou also narrows the gap between her conflicting romantic and cerebral visions of life and achieves a measure of harmonious integration by immersing herself into the healing water and atmosphere of Pennarth.

George Woodcock's observation that Marian Engel's prose is as clear as a "window pane," accurately describes her writing style. However, this description also serves as a useful metaphor for the deceptively clear and yet divisive sociological and psychological barriers facing each of Engel's heroines.

Engel's women are always in the midst of reconciling (and balancing) the past with the present, the internal world of their needs with the external demands of others. The question of how "successful" her heroines are in achieving a new sense of balance, however, is not one which is completely compatible with traditional notions of success. Engel always places her heroines in circumstances which are destined to remain (at least somewhat) unresolved. Learning to cope with a chronic level of anger or disappointment, for example, ranks high on her list of achievements when it comes to devising goals for her heroines.

However, Engel compensates for the lack of absolute closure in her novels by suggestively positing specific parameters of success for each of her heroines. That is, although Sarah, Minn and Lou, all deal with their problems in very different ways, all achieve some level of satisfaction in the course of their struggles. In Engel's perspective, they are successful simply because they all take steps toward gaining a deeper sense of self-awareness.

Although Engel's novels are not autobiographical,

Engel's own experiences undoubtedly inform her work in the form of the anger and confusion which often plague her heroines. For example, Engel's first novel, Sarah Bastard's Notebook, was written at a time when Engel's career as a full-time writer was beginning. Similarly, The Honeyman Festival was written at a time when Engel was at home with her twins. Bear was written, for the most part, during her separation and divorce from writer Howard Engel. Alice Munro's assertion that Engel legitimized "domestic" and therefore "despised" material taken from the real lives of women, is certainly supported by the fact that Engel's work has yet to receive extended and in-depth attention. Engel wrote very directly about the everyday loneliness and despair of women. Her choice of subject matter--particularly the less celebrated aspects of higher education, motherhood and female sexuality--is perhaps what is responsible for this lack of academic attention. As Engel stated in her interview with Cathy Matyas, she wrote specifically for her "peers" (Matyas 4). She also felt, however, that she was marginalized as a writer because she was not post-modern enough to be taken seriously by many Canadian academics (Matyas 4).

The theories used in this thesis--theories of sociology and psychoanalysis--have hopefully touched on the split between self and other that pre-occupies Engel throughout all

of her work. The text Women's Ways of Knowing, and the feminist theories of Nancy Chodorow are used to examine how Engel deals with the larger sociological patterns and implications of women's oppression. By contrast, the psychoanalytic theories of Luce Irigaray and Juliet Mitchell are used to examine, more closely, the implications of the underlying familial patterns Engel weaves into the personal histories of her heroines. Themes common to both theoretical paradigms emerge in their common and shared conclusion that emotional stability eventually rests on an individual's ability to accept loss. Where Sarah gives up the inauthenticity of her academic aspirations, Minn's conflicting feelings of love and anger toward her ex-lover Honeyman are eventually resolved into an ambivalent albeit rosy glow of nostalgia. Lou learns to give up her inhibitions when she finally re-enters the countryside around Pennarth and allows herself to slip into the mythical atmosphere of the Cary estate and to redress her vague "childhood loss" with a renewed sense of self-love.

Lou is perhaps Engel's most "successful" heroine in the sense that she most fully realizes and fulfills her potential for emotional growth. That is, she allows herself to be guided less by her anger and more by her need to build a bridge back to the company of other human beings. Where Sarah Bastard's Notebook represents Engel at her angriest, Bear represents Engel at her most patient. The goal, then,

that Lou is propelled towards, represents the ultimate goal of all of Engel's questing heroines.

The three novels examined in this thesis chronologically chart the development of Engel's maturation as a writer. They also chart the evolution of Engel's concern with women, particularly with regard to the issue of how women have been taught to see themselves within the context of patriarchal society. While Engel does not offer a solution to the many issues she raises throughout her work, she does, finally, offer solace by depicting the on-going and daily struggles of her very ordinary (and yet very exceptional) heroines.

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