Subjects, Inscriptions, Histories: Sites of Liminality in Three Canadian Autobiographical Fictions

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Abstract

This thesis explores how Beatrice Culleton's In Search of April Raintree, Joy Kogawa's Obasan, and Michael Ondaatje's Running in the Family trouble, by emulating and transgressing the protocols of the literary autobiography, formulations of the historical "subject" aligned to those conventions. Consequently, the primary site of interpretation of this thesis is the delineation of these texts' narrators as "subjects" who both write and are written by history. This thesis will demonstrate how these "autobiographical fictions" inscribe histories which question "official" accounts and probe gender and race articulations both within those official inscriptions as well as in their own historically constructed communities. These textual (dis)placements are interpreted in the context of the critical discourses of postmodernism and post-colonialism.

A set of claims articulated by literary theorist Linda Hutcheon in A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction and The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction constitute the initial theoretical axis of this thesis. Principally, two of Hutcheon's theoretical precepts are questioned. These are the particular delineation of postmodernism's critical alignment to modernism and her assertion that current socio-economic models are "inescapable" and postmodern texts respond to that inevitably through a process of ironic accommodation and functional affiliation. This thesis will demonstrate how its three primary texts establish critical alignments to the articulations of particular cultural paradigms within modernism: the inscription of history as sociology, the "machine" as socio-political model, and lastly a particular modalization of literary modernism in English. This thesis interprets how the invocation and postmodern (dis)placement of these paradigms creates textual accommodations and post-colonial affiliations. These three texts, by gesturing to the sites of liminality in both their writing and their writing "subjects," raise postmodern questions to clear a site for their own post-colonial inscriptions.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine comment les ouvrages In Search of April Raintree, de Beatrice Culleton, Obasan, de Joy Kogawa, et Running in the Family, de Michael Ondaatje, perturbent, par leur respect et leur transgression des règles de l'autobiographie littéraire, les formulations du "sujet" historique liées aux conventions propres à ce genre. Le site principal d'interprétation réside donc dans la délimitation des contours des narrateurs de ces textes en tant que "sujets" qui, tout à fois, écrivent l'histoire et sont écrits par elle. Cette thèse démontre que ces "fictions autobiographiques" inscrivent des récits qui remettent en question les comptes rendus "officiels" et examinent les articulations au sexe et à la "race", tant à l'intérieur de ces inscriptions officielles que dans leurs propres collectivités historiquement constituées. Ces dé(placements) textuels sont interprétés à la lumière des discours critiques du post-modernisme et du post-colonialisme.

Une série d'assertions formulées par la théoricienne et critique littéraire Linda Hutcheon dans A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction et The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction constituent l'axe théorique initial de cette thèse. La thèse conteste principalement deux questions. Ces questions sont la définition que donne Hutcheon de l'alignement critique du post-modernisme sur le modernisme et son assertion par laquelle elle soutient que les modèles socio-économiques actuels sont "incontournables" et que les textes post-modernes prennent donc inévitablement acte de ce fait par le biais d'un processus d'accommodation ironique et d'affiliation fonctionnelle. Cette thèse démontre comment les ouvrages qu'elle examine définissent l'alignement critique sur des paradigmes culturels particuliers, dans les limites du modernisme : l'inscription de l'histoire en tant que sociologie, la "machine" considérée comme modèle esthétique et socio-politique et, enfin, l'articulation coloniale particulière du modernisme littéraire en anglais. L'auteur interprète la façon dont les accommodations et affiliations culturelles découlent de l'invocation et du (dé)placement de ces paradigmes. Ces trois textes font allusion aux seuils de la perception tant dans leur écriture que dans leurs "sujets" écrivants, soulèvent des questions post-modernes afin d'instaurer leurs propres inscriptions post-coloniales.

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Introduction

The "autobiographical" text, the work which presents itself as the self-written life text, claims in some way to address the reader as the "history" of a "subject." It puts into play and calls into question the conventions and etiquettes[1] deployed in the delimitation of the genres of history and fiction as well as formulations of the "subject." This study will demonstrate how three contemporary Canadian "autobiographical fictions"[2] figure and refigure their formulations of their narrating subjects at the interstices of material histories,[3] averring to the discontinuities of both those histories and their own articulations of the historical "subject." Paradoxically, while these "subjects" acknowledge their own historical emplotedness[4] -- their performances within particular ideological discourses -- the communal histories they inscribe counter this textual emphasis by gesturing to the problematics which gather round the "body." The "subjects" of these texts do not allow a contemporary skepticism to make of their bodies, as well as the alternative historical consciousnesses and the contingent comprehensions which emerge from those sites, simply the ironic effects of a cultural simulacra.[5] Each of these texts, as Trojan Horse,[6] suggests, however contingently, an unarticulable interrelationship between the "human" and "non-human" by gesturing to the body as a site which exceeds the determinations of humanist epistemological categories. In these texts, bodies are inscribed by history, but they also point to the liminalities of self-reflection and thus of discourse.

This thesis demonstrates how its three primary texts challenge hegemonic discourses by posing postmodern questions about the categories of race, gender, and class which (dis)place those discourses and thus clear sites for their post-colonial inscriptions.[7] This thesis will delineate how these inscriptions gesture to both the liminal sites of their narrating subjects and the histories they inscribe. The textual (dis)placement of conventional literary forms and authorized identity articulations put in place by these three autobiographical fictions

are interpreted in the context of the critical discourses of postmodernism and post-colonialism.[8]

Initially, the writings of Canadian literary theorist Linda Hutcheon constitute the axis of a critical investigation into a set of claims about Canadian postmodernism and postmodernist literature articulated in A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction and The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction. As well, this analysis will be the site within which this paper demonstrates its position vis-a-vis that discourse. Principally, two issues relating to Hutcheon's postmodernism are questioned. The first is Hutcheon's delineation of postmodernism's alignment to modernism, and thus the articulation of its particular historicity. This thesis argues that Hutcheon's postmodern poetics occludes historical sources aligned to the issues of gender and race within modernism. Also, this thesis will demonstrate how each of these texts, in raising questions about the construction of gender and race identities, establish critical alignments to particular epistemological paradigms within modernism. Briefly, these paradigms are the inscription of history as sociology, the "machine" as aesthetic and socio-political model, and lastly a particular colonial articulation of literary modernism in English. Secondly, this thesis challenges Hutcheon's assertion that current socio-economic and political structures are "inescapable" (1988b, 50), and postmodern texts respond to that inevitably through a process of ironic accommodation and functional affiliation. The questions which surface from this analysis of Hutcheon's poetics are then addressed to the three primary texts. How do these texts invoke and (dis)place particular paradigms of modernism? When and how do their post-colonial inscriptions create cultural accommodations and affiliations?

Beatrice Culleton's In Search of April Raintree, Joy Kogawa's Obasan, and Michael Ondaatje's Running in the Family are three contemporary Canadian "autobiographical fictions" which deploy the rhetorical modes and tropes of the autobiography, emulating its

forms of address and troubling its claims to authenticity. These strategies (dis)place the margins between historical and fictional narratives and allow them to question both the promises of "modernity" and philosophical formulations of the "subject."[9] As well, the narrators of these three novels, the *I's* which both present and represent their communities, address histories which they call into question, while bearing witness to histories which they themselves write. The interpretation and contextualization undertaken here privileges current re-evaluations of the history of such concepts as gender and race, as well as discourses which address the politics and rhetoric of presentation and representation. Authors who write of the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II (Kogawa), the conflicts between "white" and Métis Canada (Culleton), and the linguistic legacies of British colonialism (Ondaatje) explicitly confront these issues. These three novels suggest the not always ironic incongruities of interplay between a postmodern legitimation of knowledge and a post-colonial necessity for a political ethos[10] in the construction of contemporary identities. It is exactly those not always ironic incongruities which this study notes. By taking up these texts and asking questions of them raised by postmodern and post-colonial thought, what will be demonstrated is that the necessities for a political ethos create particular aesthetic dilemmas focused around representations of the subject. However, as these three works demonstrate, the limits and doubts of representation should not occlude certain material histories or put in place a positional epistemology which ironically denies the lived effects of discourse. The postmodern analysis taken up here seeks out "crucial points at which even opposing positions seem to share a common conceptual dilemma" (Jameson 1994, xiii). Recognizing its postmodern alignment, this study locates its initial textual field locally. The particular textual sites of this study, the contemporary Canadian novel, and the questions which postmodern thought suggests, lead to an implication with the writings of Linda Hutcheon. Hutcheon's postmodern poetics and its reflective engagement with the histories of Canadian contemporary

fiction offer a Canadian articulation within postmodern discourse. Hutcheon's poetics also suggest a critical alignment between the "cultural logic" (Jameson 1989, 44) of modernism and postmodernism (1988b, 37-56) which is integral to any critical thinking about the history out of which contemporary works emerge. As well, its language tacts and etiquettes both install a contestatory ethos and suggest a certain reciprocation. The questions which this study addresses to its three autobiographical fictions arise out of this engagement with Hutcheon's delineation of postmodern poetics.

The primary texts of this study are sites of alterity which question the historical assumptions and aesthetic categorizations specifically delineated by Linda Hutcheon in A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction and The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction. Inaugural to an investigation of that assertion is an overview of Hutcheon's project. This brief analysis underscores a series of problematics around the concepts of race and gender as well as Hutcheon's privileging of one mode of literary expression, irony.[11] The latter strategy indicates both an expressive hierarchy and an assumption of a specific historical consciousness which is insufficient to the texts interpreted by this study. Hutcheon's texts marshall a series of pan-cultural historicisms[12] to situate the postmodern, a delimitation which serves to marginalize the particular histories out of which "ex-centric" literary texts are produced, particularly those Canadian works which invoke and address the issues of race and gender. Hutcheon's narration of modernism's terminus and postmodernism's inaugural manifestations gestures toward the specific categories of gender and race (1988b, xi-xii), but the formulation of the modern/postmodern historic collocation offered by Hutcheon, does not adequately account for the unique histories of their discourses.

Hutcheon delimits a postmodern praxis by setting it against the putative project of modernism. This latter project is defined through a process of cultural compression which fuses modernity and modernism. "Modernity," the project of the Enlightenment, is defined by

its rhetorical apotheoses, its utopian congeries, and "modernism," by the specific aesthetics of architecture -- narrowly delimited as the ideological discourse of the International Style. Hutcheon conflates a series of citations about "modernity" and "modernism" and locates the teleology of this undifferentiated project of Enlightenment qua modernism -- situates the summa of its expression -- within the works of Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Edouard Le Corbusier (1988b, 27-8). It is this particular cultural edifice of modernism, both as praxis and aesthetics, which Hutcheon both cites as apogee and razes as nadir (1988b, ix, 23-36). In contrast, Hutcheon claims that postmodernism clears a site for itself by ironically countering modernism's idealizations. This claim does not deter Hutcheon's postmodern poetics from inscribing its own idealization by positing for "postmodern literature" an exemplary genre, a site of textual privilege, whose taxonmyic is "historiographic metafiction."[13]

The three texts interpreted here all evidence the putative symptoms of Hutcheon's historiographic metafictions. They question the "status" of the delimitation of historical and fictional texts, the autonomy of the self-determining subject, and the metanarratives constructed around the sites of race and gender. Thus, they offer ideal textual sites within which to question the assumptions of Hutcheon's poetics, its underlying historicisms, and the status of Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction. Produced in the 1980s, these three works also offer an opportunity to query Hutcheon's assertion that postmodern cultural productions manifest a particular "sixties" purchase in the aesthetic formulations of their performances (1988b, 11, 202). Hutcheon argues that postmodern literary works emerge out of the zeitgeist of that decade. This paper will demonstrate that while one can appreciate the desire to dress cultural productions in the "threads" of a troubled time, the three texts interpreted here foreground particular sociopolitical self-reflexivities which need not don that particular costume.

The ways these three texts address the questions of gender and "race," and ask who addresses these questions, and to whom the questions are addressed constitute an array of (dis)placements of dominant historical narratives, of grand récits. These novels create their own critical spaces through the deployment of the universal, quotidian, and transparently mobile site of subjectivity: the *I*. The deployment of the autobiographical *I* in contemporary texts has been variously interpreted as the acknowledgement that social change is grounded in the "real necessity for everyone to exist as an individual" (Wittig 19), or the knowledge of "what it is like to be a peripheral man" (Mukherjee Blaise 151). Alternately, Hutcheon argues that it can be deployed to counter "the realist novel's representation of the world of consistent subjects who offer an origin of meaning" (Hutcheon 1988b, 169), and Emile Benveniste asserts that the *I* is the primary exemplification of the discontinuous nature of the linguistic subject: "[e]ach *I* has its own reference and corresponds each time to a unique being who is set up as such ... [i]t has no value except in the instance in which it is produced." Benveniste argues that its deployment is "a reality of discourse" where "I" is both "referent and referee" and as such demonstrates the multiple positions which can be claimed in the construction of a subjectivity (218). How then are we to think, in a postmodern way, about the particular (dis)placements of metanarratives by these autobiographical fictions? What this variety of possible interpretations suggests is that the deployment of multiple *I*'s is not already always an ironic gesture or a belletristic language performance which conforms to Hutcheon's postmodern procedure of literary production. These texts, although they rehearse particular postmodern questions of legitimation, do not necessarily deploy Hutcheon's necessary post-sixties binary trope which "use and abuse" (1988b, 50), "install and contest" (1988b, 180) or "install and subvert prevailing norms "(1988b, 222). To claim, as Hutcheon does, that within the sites of postmodern literature "the fiction enacts what the theory calls for" (1988b, 170) is simply to construct another metanarrative. Likewise, the (dis)placements of "given"

boundaries between historical and fictional texts suggest interpretations beyond ironic demonstrations of textual indeterminacy. There is no single pan-cultural poesis which can claim to delineate the conditions of possibility which accounts for the questions about history and fiction to arise unannounced, as it were, in these novels. They deploy a discontinuous dialectic which is not subsumed to an aesthetic practice, a strategy at odds with Hutcheon's postmodernism and its interest in the accessibility of its ironies (1988b, 202-3). These writings ask us to think about the conditions of possibility for a politics, a rhetoric and an aesthetics of presentation and representation of both subjects and communities of interpretation. They question modernity's promises and a poetics, such as Hutcheon's, which in the name of alterity proposes a new hierarchy. These works create, through their passages through histories, other networks of signification which (dis)place assumptions about who is asking the questions in the text and who might answer: they address interpretive communities historically created by and through the discourses of gender and race. Teresa de Lauretis underscores the importance of that categorial interplay in any postmodern thinking when she suggests that feminist critique becomes feminist theory "in a post-colonial" mode:

> it came into its own understanding of the interrelatedness of discourses and social practices, and of the multiplicity of positionalities concurrently available in the social field ...was brought home at the turn of the eighties, when certain writings by women of colour and lesbians explicitly constituted themselves as a feminist critique of feminism. (131)

Noteworthy in relation to Hutcheon's project is de Lauretis' privileging of the "interrelatedness of discourses and social practices" rather than a foregrounding of their status as contingent. The networks of reference set into motion by the three texts interpreted here are not the effects of an aesthetic praxis, "fiction" enacting "theory," or points on a philosophical continuum, which must in some sense follow in the footprints of Foucault or

Derrida. They are not formal rehearsals of a particular post-sixties condition or attitude which, with appropriate irony, demonstrates a positionality in late capitalist commodity exchange or along the interface of knowledge technologies. The passages charted in and by these texts emerge out of particular material histories: they are Canadian texts which emerge out of and address specific histories.

Although the questions raised here are postmodern, this paper is not the space in which something like the postmodern as a set of cultural performances and analyses or as the delineation of an historical period is being deliberated. The definitions of the postmodern are too abundant and contradictory for such an exercise. Likewise, the discourses of contemporary philosophers such as Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Judith Butler, among others, are not contested. The assertions, common to postmodern theory, that rationalism, "history" as a narrative of progress, and the autonomy of the "subject" are dominant paradigms of Enlightenment philosophy and "modernity" are conceded, as is the matching of this project of Enlightenment to an historical interval in Euro-North American culture between the early eighteenth century and the late nineteenth century. With a certain irony, this paper concurs with the peculiar "consensus" that the postmodern or the post-structuralist rejects a series of ideological formulations around the autonomy of the subject and the dominion of the rational. The questions taken up here emerge specifically from particular theoretical sites and assertions within Hutcheon's texts about what constitutes the practice of modernism and the pan-cultural assumptions of post-modernism.

If, as Hutcheon and others suggest, one of the crucial alignments which postmodernism puts into place is a critique of modernism -- not the era of "modernity" -- then this paper must revisit Hutcheon's assumptions of what constitutes the cultural practices of modernism and how postmodernism aligns itself to both those practices and that period. Additionally, since Hutcheon's postmodernism claims a particular critique of metanarratives, a regard to the

sites of alterity, and an ethos opposed to any totalizing discourse, then attention is paid to the way Hutcheon's history of modernism locates the metanarratives of race and gender. A beginning is made, an initial site for analysis set out, by way of a series of questions about modernism and postmodernism. Can Hutcheon delineate something like a poetics of postmodernism without making claims to something like a culturally shared modernism? How is modernism, as practice, distinguishable from modernity and the project of the Enlightenment? In short, how does Hutcheon delimit modernism and the postmodern?

Hutcheon delimits the postmodern in reference to parameters temporal, spatial and topological: the historical period referred to as postmodern, the discourses within which Hutcheon's postmodernism situates its formulation, and the protocols and conventions through which these discourses align themselves to their predecessors in modernism. Hutcheon's definition of postmodernism as an historical period is forthright: it follows and responds to modernism and its originary moment is the 1960s. For Hutcheon, that period's political *zeitgeist* is unique, its ethos of enquiry is both formative and normative of the postmodern: "The 1960s saw the 'inscriptions' into history of those previously silenced ex-centrics: those defined by differences in class, gender, race, ethnic group, and sexual preference" (1988a, 11). This claim to a particular historical inscripting determines the postmodern's own cultural performances: "The basic postmodern stance - of a questioning of authority - *obviously* is a result of the ethos of the 1960s" (my emphasis, 1988b, 202). However, lest one suggest that this *obvious* historicism betrays a particular generational privileging -- the historical mirror reflecting a certain self-consciousness -- Hutcheon emphasizes the irony of postmodernists. This ironic purchase affords them a certain self-determination and autonomy in regards to the construction and position of their own subjectivities, their personal histories: "The postmodern is ironic, distanced; it is not nostalgic - *even* of the 1960s" (my emphasis, 1988b, 203). Thus, Hutcheon's postmodernists, as part of their self-declared alterity, their ironic purchase, deploy

a critical stance which is incapable of succumbing to its own cultural determinations and effects. The force of irony is with them. According to Hutcheon, it is not "history" or its discourses which in any way produces effects, it is irony which is determinate. As well, there are problems with assigning to any historical period the connotations of a *zeitgeist*. As Renato Poggioli argues, that invocation carries with it a problematic historicity: "the Zeitgeist myth is dynamic. The fundamental principle . . . is that every age attains the fullness of its own time, not by being, but by becoming, not in terms of own self but of its relative historical mission and hence of history as an absolute . . . the past culminates in the present" (73).

A further aporia surfaces in Hutcheon's decadal notations. If the 1960s marks the historical moment in which the voices of race, gender, class, etc., are first 'inscribed' into history, presumably having never before been "inscribed," then there is no need to investigate the presence of these discourses within modernism. While Hutcheon does not deny that Brecht had something to say about class (218-21), Woolf about gender (67, 117), and W. E. B. Du Bois about race (44), their writings can presumably be gathered together under the banner assertion that modernism is about a "purist break with history" (1988b, 4). Hutcheon does allow for some deviation -- T.S. Eliot's work might evidence "a kind of wishful call to continuity" (1988b, 11). However, as a certain architecture so perfectly exemplifies, modernism succumbs to the myth of "elitist romantic/modernist originality and unique genius" (1988b, 26). It is an elitism which displays both "naivete [by its] ideologically and aesthetically motivated rejection of the past" (1988b, 30) and a rigid "seriousness" about its project. This petulant and purist modernism stands in sharp contrast to the Venturian lost-it-in-Las-Vegas playful complicity of the postmodern. In fact, adolescent modernism is beset by its "dogmatic reductionism, its inability to deal with ambiguity and irony, and its denial of the validity of the past" (1988b, 30). Alex Callinicos argues that particular articulations of

postmodernism appropriate a set of "Modernist motifs." He cites Eugene Lunn's delineation of these motifs: "[a]esthetic self-consciousness or self-reflexiveness . . .simultaneity, juxtaposition, or montage . . . paradox, ambiguity, and uncertainty . . . 'dehumanization' and the demise of the integrated subject or personality" (12-13). While Callinicos does not probe the particular valence of "demise" in this list, he nevertheless does emphasize the need for definitions of the postmodern to "confront the development of avant-garde movements such as Dadaism, Constructivism and Surrealism which deployed Modernist techniques to overcome the separation of life and art" (16). Hutcheon's emphasis on modernism's elitism occludes the many cultural productions which, as Callinicos argues, were engaged in dismantling elitist or class structures. Hucheon's appropriation of Brecht as "model" (1988b, 218) for the postmodernism demonstrates that the cultural practices of modernism cannot be equated to elitism and ideological naivete.

For Hutcheon, periodizing the postmodern also implicates a particular geography of origin. In contrast to the imputed ahistoricity of modernism, one decade defines both the thinkers and the thinking of postmodernism: "the 1960s were the time of ideological formation for many of the postmodernist thinkers and artists of the 1980s and it is now that we can see the result of that formation" (1988b, 8). This particular decadal formulation marks out a cultural geography which is explicitly Euro-North-American. Its defining philosophical sites and citations are "Foucault, Derrida, Habermas, Vattimo, Baudrillard" and "Lyotard" (1988b, 6) and its literary texts, its historiographic metafictions, while not wholly, are predominately first world: "The French Lieutenant's Woman, Midnight's Children, Ragtime, Legs, G., Famous Last Words" (1988b, 5). What this particular pan-cultural geography denies is the plurality of national, regional, race, gender and colonial histories. A reading of Canadian literature demonstrates this process of cultural compression.

While Hutcheon acknowledges that the history of Canadian literature is distinct or "different" (1988a, 3) from other English-language literatures, this difference does not set in place a particular relationship to its modernism, Hutcheon simply adjusts the compass of "modernism," its historical reference. For Hutcheon, Atwood's The Journals of Susanna Moodie is a postmodern text, "a poetic version of historiographic metafiction" (1988a, 143), which according to Hutcheon's delineation of postmodernism's questioning of modernist aesthetics would suggest that Atwood's text in some sense responds to the "modernism" of Moodie (1988b, 146, 141-2, 194, 140). How Canadian history in some strong sense determines this particular literary alignment is not accounted for in Hutcheon's poetics. What would be demanded as a gesture towards initiating an appropriate postmodern investigation, that is a laying out of the conditions of possibility of modernism and postmodernism in a particular locality, Canada, is bypassed in favour of an historical narrative which points to Canada's cultural productions as evidence of its membership in a larger social enterprise. This procedure of cultural reification unfortunately excludes any questions which might fruitfully be raised about locating and questioning the status of Canada's literary history. The intertextual relation of Atwood's poem to Moodie suggests that Canadian texts which raise postmodern questions do not have a necessary critical relationship to the texts of literary modernism.

Although it is undeniable that modernism in English literature marks a particular trans-national moment, as evidenced by the work and lives of expatriate authors such as Stein, Eliot and Pound, what the particular expatriate status of these authors and in some sense their works suggests is a particular relationship to the history of modernism and postmodernism in North America. Literary modernism is established as a field of indigenous production at a much later date in both Canada and the United States (e.g., Watson and Faulkner) than in

Europe (Woolf and Joyce). Additionally, the status of literary modernism in English stands in marked contrast to the reception of other forms of cultural production within modernism.

> If, on the one hand, literary modernists like Pound, Eliot and Woolf were opposed to and horrified by the automated mass culture of the twentieth century, then it is also true that these writers were quickly and aptly accommodated to the cultural and political mainstream; hence the peculiar contradiction, which is nowhere so sharp as in literary modernism, between radical disruption of form and traditionalism of content and ideology - in the works for instance, of Pound, Eliot, Woolf and Yeats. These sorts of factor[s] make it hard to construct a narrative of the slow betrayal of the avant-garde ideals of modernism. (Connor 104)

Connor's underscoring of how the traditional canonical works of modernism in English literature initially gained access to the mainstream for ideological reasons indicates that its relationship to the sites of dissent within modernism as well as assumptions about what constitutes that cultural project must be carefully delineated. As Poggioli notes, traditional Anglo-American criticism often tends to view the productions of the avant-garde within modernism as essentially "continental" (8) and thus beyond its boundaries. The pan-cultural history of modernism narrated by Hutcheon recasts the questions which must arise in any re-examination of modernism attendant to its relationship to postmodernism. Hutcheon's return to the questionable opposition between "avant-garde" and "kitsch" produces not an ironic reflection but a rational equation. According to Hutcheon, "The élitism of Dada and of Eliot's verse is exactly what postmodernism paradoxically seeks to exploit and to undercut" (1988b, 24). Ironic in that regard is Hutcheon's citing of Duchamp and his ready-mades as works which question "the referential function of sign systems" (1988b, 142). Much of Duchamp's work as well as that of other Dadaists precisely questioned the "accepted" and

"unexamined" ideological discourses of cultural production. This brief excursus into the particular history of literary modernism demonstrates the algebra at work in Hutcheon's project: Modernism equals élite equals Eliot equals Dada. What Hutcheon argues is that modernism is never more than the necessary terminus and sum of the Enlightenment's project of "progress" and humanist ideology. For Hutcheon, postmodernists do not so much align themselves critically to the particular productions of modernism, as question an array of "humanist certainties" (1988b, 8) commonly interpreted as the legacy of the Enlightenment:

> the postmodern novel puts into question *that* entire series of interconnected concepts that have come to be associated with what *we* conveniently label as liberal humanism: autonomy, transcendence, certainty, authority, unity, totalization, system, universalization, center, continuity, teleology, closure, hierarchy, homogeneity, uniqueness, origin (my emphasis, 1988b, 57)

The politics of address deployed in the conveniently collective "we" assumes that this invocation of the intellectual congeries of rationalist modernity is a shared cultural legacy. The references to "that" series and association of concepts marks Hutcheon's postmodernism as an unproblematized first world cultural project. Hutcheon discovers no need to enunciate the possibilities of cultural formation and construction of subjectivities within communities where other historical heritages or alternative blends of heritage -- burdensome or no -- are equally formative. Not rendering transparent that positionality and its denial of cultural hybridity calls into question Hutcheon's refrain of postmodernism's purchase on concepts like marginality and the ex-centric. For Hutcheon, postmodernism's European heritage remains an un-problematized history.

While admitting that Foucault, Derrida and other contemporary philosophers follow in the footsteps of modernists Marx and Freud "in their attempts to challenge the empiricist, rationalist, humanist assumptions of our cultural system" (1988b, 6), and insisting that

postmodernism interrogates the "notion of consensus" (1988b, 7), there is no investigation of the claimed collective history in "our cultural system." This inadvertent bracketing out of, among others, various post-colonial cultural sites, fails to account for a contemporary or postmodern work problematizing texts created outside the boundaries of a certain canon of literary modernism. Ondaatje's references to Sri Lankan poets in Running in the Family problematizes historical and literary relationships by suggesting a poetic lineage beyond both the canon and the English language. These implications are not bound and contained by the operations of irony and parody, nor is a critical alignment to first world modernism imperative. A certain homage is paid to these Sri Lankan poets and a (dis)placement of reader assumptions about the canon of literary influence is negotiated. Additionally, a particular post-colonial material history - Ondaatje's - is inscribed. Hutcheon's postmodernism ironically occludes this and other post-colonial and feminist cultural performances whose ex-centric questioning of history is not confined to an interrogation of first world modernism or articulations which deploy the expressive economy of irony. Hutcheon's sites of alterity fall within the narrow parameters of late-capitalist, technologically privileged social formations and her poetics leave the particular material histories inside those boundaries theoretically undifferentiated. Is modernism in Russia distinguishable from that in western Europe? Is there no need for postmodernism to note differences within modernism?

Analogous to a certain lack of transparency about postmodernism's first world status is an analysis of discourse which privileges humanist philosophy within the intellectual history which antedates modernism. This is partially explained by the formulating role philosophical discourse has within postmodernism; however its privileging in Hutcheon's delineation of modernism diminishes other paradigms of thought within that period. The end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century witness the circulation of Hegelian notions of "the consciousness of history," the moral authority of the state, and Nietzschean notions of

"heroism" throughout Europe. Carlton Hayes in A Generation of Materialism, points to "a galaxy" of Oxford "dons - T.H. Green, Edward Caird, Francis H. Bradley" (250) who, at the end of the century, promote a neo-Hegelian idealization of the nation state as "organic society." Concurrent to these discourses on moral and national authority is the rise of statistical authority in the "human sciences," which Culleton's text examines through its engagement with the "native girl syndrome" (66). Another important cultural paradigm is the machine.[14] The machine is articulated within modernism as a cultural ideal, it is a model for both social relations and aesthetics. The articulations and productions within modernism which respond to the "organic society," the Nietzschean Ubermensch, and the ideology of the "machine" as social and aesthetic model are multiple. Marinetti and the Futurists, the Vorticists, the Russian constructivists, and other avant-garde movements formulate aesthetics which engage these paradigms. The Futurists, important to both Dada and Surrealist aesthetics, seek to capture the dynamism of the "machine." Marinetti, in his 1909 Manifesto, urges Futurists to emulate the machine's ability to undermine time and space and create a new dynamism and movement: "the beauty of speed" where "movement and light destroy the materiality of bodies" (Tisdall 32). A set of humanist certainties, as well as its epistemological categories and delineations, are questioned within the avant-garde and, through the works of Freud and Marx, within the human sciences. While Hutcheon acknowledges that postmodern philosophers continue the project of modernism in that their challenges to empiricism and humanism "follow in the footsteps of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Marx, and Freud" (1988b, 6), she does not emphasize that their alignment to modernism is not undividedly contestatory or ironic. Foucault's turn to "archaeology" demonstrates a commitment to a certain set of empirical methodologies. Derrida's *différance* is aligned to de Saussure's theories of linguistics (especially the concept of differential value) and Levi-Strauss's anthropological practices. These latter projects mark a "modernism" within the

discourses of linguistics and anthropology, a turn to the syncretic and the psychological. As well, Derrida locates his formulation of *différance* in reference to Freud and Nietzsche, both of whose projects are integral to modernism. What Derrida emphasizes in his own writing is a turn away from language's orality to its inscriptedness, its writing. If this turn is read in terms of one of the cultural logics within modernism, it evidences both modernism's final turn away from any lingering connection to the metaphysics of presence and a decisive turn away from the "natural" speaker and the Enlightenment's romantic privileging of "nature." It is modernism's turn to the "machine" of the written, where the ghost in the machine is the trace and Derrida's emphasis on the mark, the "grapheme," echoes the privileging of that element in futurist, dadaist, constructivist and cubist works. The discourse of *différance* is the definitive turn away from representation to modernism's collocation of creation and abstraction. The indispensable bond to depth, the gesture toward presence/representation in creation or "meaning-making," is abandoned. The play and interplay of all potential abstractions exists along surface planes. With Derrida the "word" itself assumes what Hutcheon might term "modernist aesthetic autonomy" (1988b, ix), through its ability to be cited, re-cited, and montaged into an infinity of constructs. In contrast to this modernism, the postmodern purchase in Derrida's philosophy is, for Hutcheon, defined by its disseminative status. Hutcheon offers, by way of Rosalind Krauss, a telling distinction between the modern and the postmodern and the sites of philosophy within the latter. Krauss suggests that if the modernist literary text asks us to read critically, the postmodern is a critical text "wrought into a paraliterary form . . . [and] what is clear is that Barthes and Derrida are the writers, not the critics, the students now read" (38). Hutcheon's championing of historiographic metafiction places her at odds with Krauss as well as Frederic Jameson who suggests that, "Postmodernism as an ideology...is better grasped as a symptom of the deeper structural changes in our society and its culture as a whole -- or in other words in the mode of

production" (1994, xii). In terms of modes of production and the etiquettes which delimit discourses, postmodern thought reads the contemporary literary text as paraliterary. What Krauss and Jameson suggest is that the postmodern is best delineated in terms of critical thinking. The postmodern as cultural logic operates, and is thus best defined, as a set of questions rather than a set of particular cultural productions.

As troubling as Hutcheon's postmodernism is about its philosophical legacy and its alignment to that history within modernism, the relationship between her poetics and feminism and the texts of race contact or the post-colonial, whether these texts invoke filiations or privilege hybridity, is more problematic. These two discourses have focused critical attention on the concepts which underwrite the construction of categories of the "other," and as such they are privileged sites for any formulation of contemporary poetics. While Hutcheon repeatedly admits that feminism, given its unique history, has a particular relationship to postmodernism, that comprehension is unarticulated when Hutcheon locates some of the historical texts aligned to contemporary Anglo-North American feminism. When Hutcheon cites Barbara Johnson on Zora Neale Hurston or Virginia Woolf, Hurston and Woolf are referred to as feminism's "ex-centric forebears" (1988b, 67). That the writings of these authors were produced within the historical boundaries of modernism as a "way of dealing with multiple agendas and heterogeneous implied readers" (1988b, 67) is not noted. Virginia Woolf is called upon to define the ex-centric as the subject who is the "'alien and critical' one that is 'always altering [her] focus,'" (1988b, 67), but Woolf's place and feminism's within modernism is not underscored. Hutcheon asserts that "[f]eminist theory offers perhaps the clearest example of an awareness of the diversity of history and culture of women" (1988b, 67), but that diversity is denied in the mapping out of Hutcheon's modernism. Do feminists return to the writings of Hurston and Woolf to ironically reflect on the ways these texts demonstrate "modernism's purist break with history" or are there other interpretive valences

on offer? Woolf's and Hurston's writings are not simply a site of alterity within modernism, each of their texts constitute a "trojan horse" embedded within its discourse. The culture of modernism includes all of the "first wave" feminists, the suffragette movement, Hurston, Woolf, Stein, H.D., and others. Given the refrains to alterity voiced by Hutcheon, there are other curious occlusions.

If as Hutcheon asserts, "the concept of modernism is largely an Anglo-American (North and South) one," (1988b, 4) then how does her project historicize jazz? Does modernism or postmodernism, as practice, establish itself at the same time in jazz as it does within the works of European formal composers like Karlheinz Stockhausen (1988b, 24,93)? The narrow reference Hutcheon gives to modernism is indicated by the absence of any reference to jazz or the intertextuality of modern jazz. While two of the aesthetic impulses and cultural processes within modernism are montage and improvisation, an African-American composer such as Thelonius Monk and his influence within the "sites of alterity" is not noted. Hutcheon's postmodernism addresses a narrow cultural band, a limited number of socio-cultural structures, and it is best delineated when it concedes its cultural inflections: "to co-opt the feminist project into the unresolved and contradictory postmodern one would be to simplify and undo the important political agenda of feminism" (1988b, xii). Although the post-colonial is not offered the same inaugural qualification by Hutcheon, the occlusion of the cultural productions of jazz, the failure to locate W. E. B. Du Bois and the Harlem Renaissance within modernism demonstrate that Hutcheon's poetics, as part of the etiquette of its discourse, detours around works and activities which investigate and counter racialized discourse. But how does Hutcheon's postmodernism, given its claimed attention to alterities, come to hollow out both modernism and its relation to postmodernism? Bypassing the history of feminism and the post-colonial within the sites of modernism is the outcome of an aesthetics committed to accessibility, an aesthetics delineated by its affiliations to the sites of

intellectual commodification. Hutcheon's privileging of the relations of commodity, as in the compulsory alliance of kitsch and avant garde, high and low art, Las Vegas and *loggia*, installs a certain economic stratagem, exemplified by the paradigm of her historicism, architecture.

Hutcheon's poetics, delimited across a large cultural matrix and suggestively articulated through the citations of contemporary linguists, historiographers, literary theorists, artists, social critiques and philosophers, situates its exemplum in architecture. With meagre irony Hutcheon offers architecture as the dominant discourse in the procedure of periodization. It is a privileging which, for Hutcheon, demonstrates postmodernism's particular purchase as institution.

> Parodic references to the history of architecture textually reinstate a dialogue with the past and - perhaps inescapably - with the social and ideological context in which architecture is (and has been) both produced and lived. In using parody in this way, postmodernist forms want to work toward a public discourse that would overtly eschew modernist aestheticism and hermeticism and its attendant political self-marginalization. (1988b, 23)

How modernism in architecture can be in any sense marginalized in one moment and in the next responsible for "great purist monuments to the corporate élite and to the cultural seats of power" (1988b, 26) is a startling shift. The invitation to scrutinize what ideological assumptions stand behind the rhetoric of "political self-marginalization" must be displaced by the need to examine the aesthetic claims that follow from Hutcheon's equating architectural modernism to the International Style and the works of Le Corbusier, Gropius, and van der Rohe. Granting these men a certain cultural compass, one which underlines Le Corbusier's articulation of the building as machine and their common emphasis on geometry and the abstract shape, nevertheless demands that this compass be contextualized. Hutcheon bypasses

any consideration of the work of Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus in foregrounding traditional craft skills in their object production or their emphasis on cooperative methodologies in design processes. Also excluded is the range of aesthetic approaches evident in the school's faculty (teachers included Kandinsky, Klee, Moholy-Nagy, Schlemmer, as well as van der Rohe and Breuer). At the beginning of this institution's pedagogical life there is undeniably a dedication to modernism being in a strong sense both new and rational; however, as the early faculty demonstrates, there is also aesthetic heterogeneity. Beyond that significant consideration, to write of modern architecture and to bypass Frank Lloyd Wright's re-working of Japanese and Chinese design aesthetics is to reduce all architectural modernism to an engagement with the geometric and the mechanical. In contrast to Hutcheon's particular contextualization of modern architecture, postmodern architecture reconfigures "monuments to the corporate élite and to the cultural seats of power" as ironic complicities.

Hutcheon asserts that architectural modernism was inevitably betrayed by its "faith in the rational" (1988b, 28). In contrast, postmodern architecture "has been rethinking modernism's purist break with history" (1988b, 4). Hutcheon cites the work and writings of Portoghesi and Jencks as indicative of postmodernism's critical analysis and its rejection of humanism's rationalist claims: "Its aesthetic forms and its social formations are problematized by critical reflection" (1988b, 4). While postmodern architecture might be rethinking its relationship to modernism, what Portoghesi's text, Postmodernism: The Architecture of the Postindustrial Society demonstrates is that its "critical reflections" do not include the abandonment of either liberal humanism or rationalism. Portoghesi claims that postmodernism: "has brought into the city an imaginary and humanistic component" (7) and this dialogue between Europe and America reveals a "deep unity of debate" which "has not abandoned but rather developed the strong core of rationality." These claims of unity are echoed when he cites Poland's Solidarity as "a great movement of collective

consciousness" (9). While Portoghesi agrees with Hutcheon that late modernism was about the "annihilation of tradition" and an insistence on "difference as an autonomous value," it was, however, "equally heterogenous" (8) to postmodernism. For his part, Jencks emphasizes postmodernist architecture's continued allegiance to the International Style's elitist bifurcations. The postmodern architectural language speaks both to "a concerned minority who care about specifically architectural meanings" and to those who care about "comfort [and] traditional building" (10). There is no little irony in a postmodern interpretation of that categorial divide between "artist" and audience. What in fact links Portoghesi to Hutcheon's project is his assertion that within the postmodern, "the imitation of types is more important than linguistic invention" (9). For Portoghesi postmodern architecture plays the part of "confirming and developing the identity of places" (11), because it puts in place the "reemergence of archetypes" (11) whose "precise objectives [are] capable of having a great effect because they change systems of relations" (12). Far from criticizing modernism's putative attachment to rationality, the exhibit, "The Presence of the Past," emphasizes "the history of architecture as a unitary system" (14). Thus, while Portoghesi's narrative differs markedly from Hutcheon's post-humanist articulation of the postmodern, his underscoring of the reemergence of archetypes within architecture clearly echoes Hutcheon's project of privileging historiographic metafiction as the definitive site of a postmodern poetics because of its deployment of literary archetypes. However, Portoghesi's proclamations of postmodernism's unity, collective conscience and his enthusiasm for its abilities to empower change lacks what Hutcheon claims is its requisite irony and problematizing doubt.

What Hutcheon's poetics gather from postmodern architectural discourse are Portoghesi's archetypes and Philip Johnson's accommodations. Johnson, the only living "artist" to have a room exclusively dedicated to his works at the Museum of Modern Art, as well as being one of its directors, epitomizes the irony of using architecture to model the sites

of alterity. Johnson's AT&T building brackets the familiar monumentality of the International Style between references to the Italian *loggia* and surface articulations appropriated from pediment elements of colonial furniture. While doubtless speaking architecturally with the decorative freedom of the mall and Las Vegas, and producing an ironic gesture which admits to its contemporary complicities, it definitively installs and subverts aesthetic formulations while keeping in place certain economies of scale developed in his earlier International Style. What pointing to this cultural site demonstrates is the particular ironies that commodity aesthetics must call into play. When translated into literature, what Jenks referred to as a language which speaks to those who care about "comfort" becomes in Hutcheon's historiographic metafictions, "speak[ing] directly to a 'conventional' reader." Re-engineering archetypes allows a sixties subversive *zeitgeist* to marry an eighties sense of leverage and produce a certain ironic prodigy:

> This may explain why postmodern novels have frequently been best-sellers. Their complicity guarantees accessibility. I do not mean this as a cynical remark. Perhaps the most potent mode of subversion is that which can speak directly to a "conventional" reader, only then to chip away at any confidence in the transparency of such conventions.....[as opposed to the] "purity" [of late modernism which is] ultimately self-marginalizing because hermetic. (1988b, 202-3)

Hutcheon's postmodern has learned a very specific irony of accommodation. Because it concedes its "inescapable ideological implication in precisely the contemporary situation of late capitalism," it is discomfited by any "easy repudiation" of the bourgeoisie (1988b, 50). As Frederic Jameson suggests, the "inescapable" condition of "late capitalism," its "eternal" status within contemporary discourse "perhaps is due to some weakness in our imaginations" (1994, xii). What Philip Johnson, monumental practitioner of the International Style as well

as one of its authors (Hitchcock and Johnson), turned purveyor of postmodernism, epitomizes is the instrumentality of Hutcheon's irony and the dynamics of its purchase. Could there be authors in Hutcheon's postmodern world who need to oppose, create areas of resistance, to the specific "ideological implication[s] of late capitalism?" Do writers such as Rohinton Mistry, Dionne Brand, Monique Wittig, Neil Bissoondath, Audre Lorde, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Chinua Achebe, Adrienne Rich, Wole Soyinka and the many others who work at theory and practice misunderstand that "complicity guarantees accessibility?" There may be authors who question the "ideological naivety" which declares current cultural formations and fields as "inescapable." In fact this status of "inevitability," is itself a metanarrative, a closure and a teleology which postmodern thought must call into question and in some sense resist. The particular definitions which postmodernism formulates for "alterity" must be carefully contextualized. As Gayatri Spivak argues: "there must be a persistent critique of what one is up to, so that it doesn't get all bogged down in this homogenization; constructing the Other simply as an object of knowledge, leaving out the real Others because of the ones who are getting access into public places" (63). The site where the three texts interpreted here question and create an axis of resistance is the interplay of history and fiction, in the discourses where Hutcheon locates historiographic metafiction.

Hutcheon's poetics and the archetypal fiction she delineates, historiographic metafiction, emphasize the writing processes shared by historical and fictional narratives: "recent critical readings of both history and fiction have focused more on what the two modes of writing share than on how they differ" (1988b, 105). Focusing on the common ways these narratives are written occludes the conventions and legitimizations which differentiate them as discourse genres. While any delineation of discourse is problematic, attempts to define the field of literary discourse or literature can inform the questions taken up here. What literary theorists as diverse as Frye, Fowler, Hernardi, Guillén and Todorov share, in their efforts to

define literature or literary discourse, are delineations of field which suggest typologies of textual production -- kinds of writing -- and methods of textual interpretation -- kinds of reading. While this distinction in itself is naive and arbitrary what it suggests is the necessity to theorize in terms of both cultural activities. To answer that need, theorists Todorov and Frow cite the theoretical work of Bakhtin and Voloshinov on genres of discourse. What these two theorists -- writing from inside modernism -- suggest is a theory which emphasizes the process of meaning-making, and they offer the term "etiquettes" of genre. This term and its theoretical indices put into play the dynamics of convention, contravention, decorum and the intrication of power with discourse. History and fiction can be correlated as narrative constructs and as epistemologies; however, what postmodern thought must emphasize, given a certain skepticism, are questions about how these narrative constructions and their epistemologies are in fact linked to particular discourses of legitimization which ideologically sustain their rhetorical modes. As Edward Said suggests, "it is difficult to determine in absolute terms whether expertise is mainly constituted by the social conventions governing the intellectual manners . . . [or] by the putative exigencies of the subject matter itself " (1983, 141). In material terms, is it not possible to investigate the kinds of cultural negotiations wherein someone like Joy Kogawa becomes an author and produces literature and someone like Granatstein becomes an academic and produces history? Is it sufficient for postmodern thought to merely trouble narrative boundaries? While fiction and history are two "notoriously porous genres" (1988b, 106) which have "influenced each other mutually" (1988b, 105), are there material histories and conditions of possibility suppressed by an interpretation of these discourses which foregrounds their common narrative strategies? When Hutcheon asserts that "[f]iction and history are narratives distinguished by their frames (see B. H. Smith) 1978), frames which historiographic metafiction establishes and then crosses, positing both the generic contracts of fiction and history," (1988b, 110) what processes of

production and legitimization are occluded? Could those occlusions include questions of race and gender? If history and fiction "are notoriously porous genres," how does historiographic metafiction posit their "generic contracts?" While Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction takes up many of these questions, what is insufficiently problematized is the relationship between narrative tropes and positions of textual address. While postmodern thought must question any assumptions of a text's ability to forecast its interpretive communities, it cannot bypass the possibility that some part of a text's language tacts might seriously implicate such a forecasting through its position of address. A particular text or passage might address a belated audience or a particular interpretive community, installing a site of cultural transvaluation. As Toni Morrison suggests of her own reading, "I think I was very much aware of the gaze of white people, in a lot of books written by African Americans. They always -- frequently, not always -- seemed to be addressed to a white person's readership, talking just over my shoulder and not really to me."[15] To deny the theoretical possibility of particular strategies of address is to call into question the possibility of particular rhetorical modes. Hutcheon affirms the latter possibility, but insists that the ironic is the mode appropriate to postmodern questions about the relationship between history and fiction. That insistence has a particular locus within modernism.

In clearing a theoretical site for historiographic metafiction, Hutcheon calls on theories offered by, among others, Hayden White (1988b, 87-95). Hutcheon defines the narrative in both history and literature as operating within the confines of mimesis: "They have both been seen to derive their force from verisimilitude" (1988b, 105). This definition of literature as a discourse constructing sites of verisimilitude is particularly narrow. While literary theorists such as Auerbach and Stern, the latter deeply committed to the nineteenth century novel, emphasize mimesis -- particularly within the genre of the novel-- and verisimilitude, the pastoral, the allegorical epic, the fabula, the fantasy, and the dream-vision are but a few of the

literary genres whose "force" calls upon schema beyond the boundaries of verisimilitude. A genre as ancient as the dream-vision privileges the status of the liminal, its particular cultural purchase is a kind of access to phenomena which resist mimetic strategies. While White's theorization of narrative tropes effectively underscores the fictive elements at stake in all narratives, in particular the supposedly neutral prose of the "human sciences," what is less persuasive is an index of tropic modes. This delineation and Hutcheon's consistent invocation of White's theories as well as her privileging of the ironic underscores a shared intellectual legacy within modernism. That legacy is a kind of formalism, one which deploys archetypes to delineate modes of discourse.[16] White initially outlines his tropic typology in reference to the work of Kenneth Burke: "the 'master tropes' (Kenneth Burke's phrase) of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony" (5) and then aligns that particular typology to an intellectual continuum by discovering analogous tropic quartets in the writings of Piaget, Freud, Marx, and Thompson. Although White's adumbration of the tropic construct in narrative is useful in emphasizing *kinds* of historical narratives, what is also at stake with this formalist typology is an hierarchal formulation. White argues that these narrative configurations, taken as unique sets, trace an increasingly complex rhetorical transformation, a certain evolution in consciousness: a movement from a naive narrative mode to a self-reflexive ironic mode. While he is careful not to claim a "natural" status for this movement, he does argue that it has the "force of a convention" (13). He emphasizes that "the structure of any sophisticated, i.e., self-conscious and self-critical, discourse" demonstrates its own "progress from a naive (metaphorical) to a self-critical (ironic) comprehension of itself" (19). Hutcheon adopts both this delineation of the ironic and, in keeping with a Canadian formalist tradition, allies it to Northrop Frye's "anatomy" (308-314) and its "pervading tone of contemplative irony" (312), as well as a particular articulation of the genre: "Hence it is in satire and irony that we should look for the continuing encyclopaedic tradition" (322).

Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction, with its cultural breadth and emphasis on parody and irony, continues a certain formalist project.

While postmodern thought must question a formalist typology which sets in place even a conventional hierarchy of modes, it notes the irony of a dominant procedure within modernism -- delineating cultural productions in reference to typologies -- embedded within a postmodern poetics. This study agrees with White when he asserts that discourse is always "as much *about* the nature of interpretation itself as it is *about* the subject which is the manifest occasion of its own elaboration" (4). However, in Hutcheon's theory that tension between the "subject which is the manifest occasion of its elaboration" and the "nature of interpretation" is minimized as "elaboration" and "interpretation" define the field of literary discourse; and "the subject," as particular material history, as local articulation, and as particular position of address is insufficiently theorized in terms of the categories of race and gender. How a contemporary text questions the history of gender and race within any community of interpreters will be reflected more in its position of address. The mode of address reflects a variety of historical positionalities and a postmodern theory which needs to negotiate a plurality of positionalities cannot prescribe or inscribe one narrative mode, such as irony. A postmodern practice which is concerned to discover how contemporary texts deconstruct metanarratives of race and gender through an interrogation of history will pose its questions without predetermining a necessary position of address or related narrative mode. Thus, it is the invocation of positions of address and the alignments of discourse which those invocations suggest which can serve as sites of a postmodern enquiry.

What emerges from this engagement with Hutcheon's poetics is a series of postmodern questions with which to address this study's primary texts. How can these texts be affiliated to particular sites of gender and race discourse while one determines how they address postmodern questions about history and fiction? How do these texts invoke and (dis)place

particular paradigms of modernism? When and how do their post-colonial inscriptions create cultural accommodations and affiliations? These and other questions must be gathered around some critical axis. Frederic Jameson suggests a postmodern procedure for aligning these questions to a particular textual site. His thesis is that a postmodern enquiry can distinguish between the structural limit or closure of a material situation, and our multiple responses to it. Although this distinction recalls an all too familiar delineation between chronicle and narrative -- the closure of "event" versus the plurality of interpretation[17] -- what is appropriate to this study in Jameson's proposal is an analysis which focuses on the "dilemma" of a subject: "the structural limit is to be found in the situation or dilemma to which the individual architects and their specific and unique projects all have to respond in some sense" (1994, xv). In the present study this suggests an interpretive narration which addresses the emergence of these autobiographical texts as cultural products and analyzes a series of postmodern questions which the subjects of these texts, through their particular dilemmas of affiliation, raise. As well -- given the ironic return to architecture as critical paradigm -- it suggests that postmodern problematics of accommodation be clarified in terms of the critical alignment which these texts install vis-a-vis modernism. Lastly, the interpretation asks what is the cultural cost of their narrative mode, or more precisely, what do their cathartic tropes reveal about their textual accommodations. Lastly, Jameson's invocation of "all," posits the tracing out of a postmodern intertextuality. This procedure -- situating a cultural history in and out of which a text emerges, analyzing, in a postmodern way, its "dilemmas," assessing its tropic accommodations, and noting the textual strategies which link these autobiographical texts will shape the interpretive practices which follow.

As was seen in an earlier reference to Atwood's The Journals of Susanna Moodie, contemporary texts can address postmodern questions to an historical period or a cultural production beyond the boundaries of a critical paradigm which sets postmodernism against

modernism. Additionally, those questions are not confined to literary or aesthetic fields. However, this study, because it concurs with Hutcheon's insistence that a necessary component of postmodern thought is a critical relationship to modernism, will note how its primary texts question modernity and the project of Enlightenment in reference to cultural manifestations within the historical boundaries of modernism (post 1900), be they productions or articulations -- texts or ways of thinking. Thus, in the three texts interpreted in the following chapters the epistemological paradigms of modernism which are questioned are: history interpreted as sociology, the "machine" as social ideal, and a particular colonial articulation of literary modernism in English.

The axes of interpretation in the following chapters are the inscriptions of a *sujet-en-procès*[18] which these texts put in place. As the authors of The Empire Writes Back suggest "place and displacement" (Ashcroft 8-11) are among the central motifs of post-colonial texts, and, appropriately, the inscriptions which these texts offer align both "place" and "displacement" to their unique histories of the post-colonial subject.

Chapter One: The Body and "the Syndrome"

Prefacing an engagement with Beatrice Culleton's In Search of April Raintree is a brief description of a set of Canadian cultural tensions contemporary with its publication. Concurrent with its issue, the official discourses of legitimation in the academy and politics manifest a series of historical ironies, ironic in that Culleton's text underlines, calls into question and in some sense (dis)places them. It does so by investigating the intrication of "wealth" and "race." The text's "affirmative" closure ironically underscores the conditions of possible "choice" which that intrication authorizes.

The waning months of 1983 mark and re-mark a topology in the array of Canadian cultural discourses: language, race, gender and *real politic* remain an entangled homology, the misrepresentations of power their common bond. Debate continues in Ottawa around the latest "Manitoba question" and historian Thomas Flanagan's fourth text on Manitoba's Métis leader, Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered, is published as a Book-of-the-Month Club selection. Concurrent and congruent to that historical irony, Métis representatives from Manitoba and elsewhere draft a position vis-a-vis "self-government" and an umbrella organization of indigenous women lobbies for the representation of, and by, native women in the always up-coming constitutional negotiations. While these cultural phenomena disclose a certain tenacious historical correlation in national discourses, the year also witnesses the publication of Beatrice Culleton's In Search of April Raintree, the contemporary story of two Métis sisters, April and Cheryl Raintree.

April Raintree, the "autobiographical" narrator, follows these sisters from their childhood, through their youth in foster homes, to their early adult years as they continuously face a dominant "white culture" and its discourses. While Professor Flanagan's text rehearses a familiar historical articulation: the "problem" of the irrational (Riel) versus the culture of

modernity and "progress," Culleton's text addresses the "modernity" of the "Métis problem." That is, it re-presents the particular articulation with which the sociology of modernism has inscribed its racialized discourse onto the bodies of the Métis community. Historiographer Louis Mink defines the particular narrative protocols of this sociological epistemology -- and the historical narratives which uses its procedures -- as deployments of the "covering-law model of explanation" (169). This discourse claims to offer an explication of events "deducible from a set of empirical laws specifying earlier and later states of a system" (169-70) and thus "every adequate historical explanation could have been a sociological prediction" (172). In Search of April Raintree examines who makes those predictions about Métis women, as well it indicates how their "covering-law" narratives are underwritten and maintained.

Culleton's text follows by ten years Maria Campbell's Halfbreed and by a near century, Riel's return to the Red River and the Métis Rebellion. The initial media response to Culleton's text emphasizes its anguish and gritty realism. In contrast, Flanagan's "controversial" book on Riel is both denounced -- it is reported that the "entire Métis community" in the West is "outraged" -- and defended as exemplary scholarship.[19] Flanagan publicly admits that he responded to the voice of conscience: he was compelled to publish his reconsideration of the Rebellion because the government is contemplating a posthumous pardon of Riel (viii). The irony of Flanagan's "voice" and the adversarial debates which gather round his text underscore Riel's continuing ability to be an axis of Canadian racialized discourse, veiled as ethnic and linguistic tension. What the Flanagan text and controversy retrace and rehearse is an alignment, within a racialized Canadian discourse, of Riel and the Métis to an "outlaw" past and the frontier misadventures and adversities of the Canadian North-West. The "tragedies" of Riel and the Métis remain firmly set against a particular trinity within the Canadian Northwest racial diorama: colonial expansion's intercourse with

mercantile imagination yields a certain (mis)fortune which was, for the Métis, "inescapable." Flanagan does update the definition of the Métis as "outlaw," by suggesting that a very basic economic imperative lay behind the rebellion: "The Métis wanted money and successfully exerted political pressure to get it. This point must be emphasized because the almost mystical character which land has assumed in contemporary native politics tends to throw an anachronistic haze over the motives of the Métis in 1884-5" (74). Flanagan, as part of this "de-mystification," also emphasizes Riel's alleged request for financial indemnity: "Historians, clearly embarrassed by the episode, have tried to slide over it" (101). Flanagan is committed to putting in place an historical narrative which modernizes "the fall" of the naive Métis to empire's even-handed empiricism by ironically noting how "they" share its economic imperatives. That the "official" political response to Riel was in any way allied to the "perceived" perils of miscegenation, the "half-breed" problem and its subversive blurring of the oppositional distinctions which underwrite the hegemony of the colonizer, is neatly occluded. In fact, Flanagan explains his own use of the term "half-breed" by invoking the particular agential authority of the historian as well as claiming a certain desire for "authenticity."

Culleton's text also traces an inscription of this Métis crisis. It rereads the Riel story as community history and examines the "Métis problem" in terms of an articulation within modernism where sociology is transvalued and transcribed through the rhetoric of physiology: the social body is the patient, white authority remains the agent, and the "problem" becomes the "syndrome."[20] The ambiguity embedded in "problem" or "Métis" as well as their dialogic overtones[21] are erased by the positivism of pathology. Culleton's text interrogates this "native girl syndrome" (66) by putting in place a sorority, two sisters, divided by the "color-line." The tale of these Métis sisters is set forth in terms of a memory, a history, which is both personal and communal. It is an "unofficial" history which questions both narratives,

like Flanagan's, which inscribe Métis history as the account of a "problem," and a dominant "White" community and culture complicitous to that narrative accommodation. The text opens by underscoring its status as the history of a "subject":

> Memories, some memories are elusive, fleeting, like a butterfly that touches down and is free until it is caught. Others are haunting. You'd rather forget them but they won't be forgotten. And some are always there. No matter where you are, they are there, too. I always felt most of my memories were better avoided but now I think it's best to go back before I go forward. Last month, April 18th, I celebrated my twenty-fourth birthday. That's still young but I feel so old. (9)

This opening passage gestures towards the text's status as bildungsroman, invoking a retrospection, "Last month, April 18th, I celebrated my twenty-fourth birthday," which marks the text as a coming of age narrative, the inauguration of an historical "subject." It also locates its retrospection within a definitive category of memory, memories which "haunt." But how particular are these "haunting" memories? As the discourse which borders the text clarifies, these hauntings are communal. In recounting the text's production, Culleton states: "Both of my sisters committed suicide at different times, and I just decided that I was going to write a book after the second one" (Lutz 97). Culleton also proffers the rhetorical question which she claims initiated the text's production: "Why do we have so many problems?" This "we" being the "foster kids" who "had problems coping as adults" (98). While the autobiographical conventionally declares itself a history of the "subject," Culleton suggests that within In Search of April Raintree this subject's referent is always already subject(s). Thus, the autobiographical "I" is a site of exemplification, it is also the communal "we," and this initial formulation of its narrative subjectivity marks the inception of the text's first (dis)placements. In this inaugural site of textual authority, where a narrator first addresses her

audience, a resistance to adequation is installed, "auto" does not equal the singular, the autonomous. This resistance to equating a single autobiographical narrator to a singular "subject," which the autobiographical contract conventionally submits, is a performative strategy shared by Kogawa's and Ondaatje's texts and in a modalization which their texts also echo, the "opening" passage discloses a transition and transference between exteriors and interiors.

The passage moves toward to the sediments of memory, which, eventually revealed, disclose the residue of community narratives excluded from a governing history which thinks itself "common." The text then appropriately turns outward, allying the self-reflective to a position of direct address, the putatively internal and personal to the enunciative, the transparently ideological: "You'd rather forget them but they won't be forgotten. And some are always there. No matter where you are, they are there, too" (emphasis added). The alliance between the interiorizations attendant on history's récits and the challenge to a history -- "You'd rather forget them" -- links the particularity of communal pasts to a certain postmodern resistance to inscriptions of "common" history. It is a resistance enunciated in both Kogawa's and Ondaatje's texts and, as in Kogawa's Obasan, the direct address suggests that the text's community of interpreters are implicated in these assumptions about Canadian history. But if the text is initiating an investigation into what *kind* of history has in fact been "shared" -- forgotten by some, and paradoxically indelible to others -- a number of questions need to be set out. If April Raintree is putting in place a particular inscription of history, what are her dilemmas? What history does the text claim to (dis)place? What is this memory which is "always there?" As April continues her narrative, answers surface:

> My father, Henry Raintree, was of mixed blood, a little of this, a little of that and a whole lot of Indian. My sister, Cheryl, who was eighteen months younger than me, had inherited his looks: black hair, dark brown eyes which

> turned black when angry, and brown skin. There was no doubt they were both of Indian ancestry. My mother Alice, on the other hand, was part Irish and part Ojibway. Like her, I had pale skin, not that it made any difference when we were living as a family. (9-10)

April is a Métis, a woman of colour who has "pale skin," like her mother, while the "brown skin" of Henry and Cheryl leaves "no doubt" as to their "Indian ancestry." The rational, the doubtless, paints a certainty across the bodies of a family and split by the "color-line" and the discourse of race is installed as the "common" history which this text sets out to question and (dis)place. Thus, April announces that her narrative is by, and about, a family historically constructed as people of colour and the contingent comprehension linked to her body, arising from that site, is that while she is pale in comparison to her sister, paradoxically that made no difference "when we were living as a family." April's dilemma, her negotiation of this colour line, installs the Raintree family as a site of exemplification. It is inscribed in and inscribing a racialized discourse. Its history is genealogy and that genealogy is written under the sign of skin colour. By locating a "color-line" between the Raintree sisters, the text also proposes to trouble interpretive communities which define themselves in reference to that binary opposition. The dilemmas of identity which cleave to the autobiographical and the bildungsroman are here the dilemmas of address between culturally constructed "White" and "Métis" interpretive communities and these two communities address each other through the discourses of history and the sociology of modernism. It is this within these discourses and the conventions of address which they install that Culleton's marks out a site which will (dis)place its ideological assumptions.

This strategy of (dis)placing autobiographical conventions to install an exemplary text which addresses the discourses of race has a particular history within modernism and an ironic link to its sociology. It is a conjunction not only pertinent to a reading of Culleton's text but

also to a reading of Obasan and Running in the Family. In 1905, in Fort Erie, Ontario, W. E. B. Du Bois, sociologist and author, gathers with twenty-nine other activists to draft the charter of the Niagara Movement, a movement dedicated to the pursuit of political and economic rights for people of colour. Two years earlier in The Souls of Black Folk Du Bois had investigated the "problem of the color-line" by ironically examining the question, "How does it feel to be a problem?" (363). The questions of the "color-line" are taken up again in 1940 when Du Bois writes Dusk of Dawn. Du Bois claims the later text is "not so much my autobiography as the autobiography of a concept of race" (551). As Nahum Chandler suggests, Du Bois determines that the status of the "other" could be best questioned by examining the "status of the African American subject as an exemplary theme by which to trace the theme (or develop the topic) of the problem of racial distinction" (6). As well, Chandler emphasizes that Du Bois's examination of the "racial" intermixing in his own family's genealogy leads him to question "the logic of racial distinctions" and the "choice" an intermixing produces in a social field where "one cannot coherently and according to the operative systemic practices be both; that one cannot be neither" (30). What this reference to the discourses of race within modernism indicates is that Culleton's initial query about Métis "problems" and her subsequent investigation of the racialized discourse behind the "native girl syndrome" echoes both Du Bois' tropic shift from "problem" to "concept" as well as his examination of the "choices" offered within racialized discourse. It is a rhetorical shift which traces a movement from the deployment of the romantically enigmatic "problem" to modernism's investigation of that enigmatic by way of its "human sciences." Paradoxically, Culleton's examination of "syndrome," given its invocation of abstraction and process, is anchored in the material site which receives, exceeds and resists both public and private inscriptions, the body. The texts interpreted in this thesis put into question the links between the body and the Lacanian Symbolic and Imaginary. Further, in these texts the acquisition of

language and its deployment are complicated by a certain cultural hybridity which surpasses the particular theatre of identity which Lacan's mirror-stage outlines, since here the "Law of the Father" is already inscribed in a neo-colonial script.

The Raintree family, however, is not only divided by the "color line," it is also the site of historical trauma -- marked by memories which are always there. The brief family history which April introduces shifts directly from a genealogy to the re-presentation of a social pathology which reveals the locutions of a neo-colonial discourse. The term which will navigate between "problem" and "syndrome" is "medicine," and the field within which this term operates is the body. The Raintrees are in Winnipeg because of Henry's tuberculosis and a sickness now attacks the body of the family: "Both Mom and Dad always took their medicine" (10) and "of course, we were always on welfare" (10). There is "no doubt," there is only the "always" of ancestry, economic status, and within the Métis family, its body, an unnamed disease. The community of which the Raintree family forms a part is populated by other adults on "medicine" whose nameless children are, like their nameless parents, "sullen and cranky" or "aggressive bullies" (11). Adults offer little comfort and no protection to children. April's attempts to counter her mother's "normal remoteness" (11) is succeeded by the confusion of seeing her father "sleeping on the floor, still in his clothes" (13). The adult world's chaos is threatening. A nighttime trip by April to the bathroom is interrupted by a man who "played around with his thing. Then he peed right in my direction" (13). The certainties of a racial and economic caste underwrite the body's loss of any contingent status as private space and this trauma ruptures any emerging subjectivity, "I tried to figure everything out but I couldn't" (13). George Bataille, in writing about the "the delirious consequences of the expenditure of classes," notes that this expenditure marks a particular intersection of ethics and ideology: "It is as if society, conscious of its own intolerable splitting, had become for a time dead drunk in order to enjoy [its humiliation] sadistically"

(127). The expenditure directed at April by a drunken stranger on "medicine" is a transgression emphatically linked to April's rape (144). Oppressions patriarchal, economic and "racial" are linked by their transgressions against the body. This brief family history, this time together with the Raintrees, dwindles down to the birth and death of a baby sister, Anna Raintree, the intervention of the state through its commissioned agents, and April and Cheryl being "handed over" (17) to an orphanage.

Here, the body of authority, its "Mother Superior," articulates its status as private, guarded domain: "dressed in black, from head to foot, except for some stiff white cardboard around her face and neck" (18), this mother of institutional asylum is "dignified and emotionless" (19). April, alienated by this black and white inscription of authority and isolated from her own family is now troubled by dreams which envision the impossibility of any future reunion with her parents. In a Lacanian sense, the "Law of the Father" and its particularly "White" articulation is ruptured by the repressed Imaginary. Awake and delirious, April sees "this huge, white, doughy thing....if it ever touched me it would engulf me" (21). The dream and the delirium emphasize the rupture in April's personal history and her contingent and naive formulation of a subjectivity, out of this discontinuity, out of a lacuna in material history, begins a reformulation. It is at this point, as April receives the particular imprint of a racialized history, that she meets Mrs. Semple, the "social worker" who will later provide April and Cheryl with a definition of the "native girl syndrome."

A genealogy narrated in racialized terms imprints itself not only on the bodies of a family but sets in place a bitterly ironic recurrence of an historical motif: the necessary rupture of the Métis family. April's mother was raised in a residential school (11) and now April and Cheryl repeat a social configuration. The White community continues to address the Métis community through its "alternative" White families: the orphanage, the residential school, the foster home -- institutions created to foster progress and enlightenment, to

competently ameliorate the Métis "problem." These institutions call upon narratives, such as Flanagan's, to historicize Métis "naivete" and inscribe their subaltern status. Later, the DeRosier children, one of these White "foster" families, demonstrate their control of this racialized narrative. While April insists that her parents are "sick," the DeRosier children, empowered by a certain White narrative status, answer her assertions with their diagnoses of the Raintree problem: "half-breeds and Indians are pretty stupid" (47). The DeRosier children's parodic enactment of the Raintree family's "sickness" introduces a new rupture between April and her parents and in this reiteration of isolation she addresses and condemns them: "All those lies about taking medicine ... I hate you both for lying to us. I hope I never see you again" (48).

The interiorizations of this discourse now express themselves as a desire to "never see" herself again within the family, a family in which her pale skin has had no cultural purchase, which in turn provokes another kind of vision. April, alone among "the sounds of birds . . . [not really] thinking about anything" (48), begins, out of this lacuna, this thoughtlessness, to formulate a new subjectivity. It is, ironically, her body that appears to provide an alternative narrative. While she examines her skin's colour she thinks:

> A lot of pure white people tanned just like this. Poor Cheryl. She would never be able to disguise her brown skin as just a tan. People would always know that she was part Indian. It seemed to me that what I'd heard indicated that Métis and Indians were inclined to be alcoholics. (49)

Here, the racism which has surrounded April now emphatically inscribes itself as a dilemma within her narrative and a tropic turn plays along the surface of the text. April's articulation of the "problem" assumes a self-reflective maturity. What she has heard "indicated" that both Métis and Indians were "inclined to be alcoholics" and her narrative navigates towards the not-always ironic incongruities between her ruptured history and the narrative of "the

syndrome" with its particular legitimizations of racial distinctions. It is a rhetorical shift which stands in strong contrast to an earlier narrative which shuttled between what might be termed Métis and White rhetorical inflections. These earlier passages emphasized a post-colonial heterogenous language process, a particular bicultural articulation.

Maria Campbell, in commenting on her writing, describes the kind of English prevalent in her Métis community: "the way that I spoke when I was at home was what linguists call 'village English' -- you know, very broken English. It's very beautiful.... and I can express myself much better. I can also express my community much better than I can in 'good' English" (Lutz 48). Barbara Godard has also emphasized the oral traditions which underlie the inflections of this English (1985, 3-9). In April's early narration, the expressiveness of "ride-on stairs," "Mom and Dad laughed for real" and "I had a glorious old time" (11, 12) contrasts with her articulations of judgement, of moral and social categorization, where a certain formal English bleeds into the text. Typical of this blend of formal and village English are April's descriptions of family life. In spite of her mother's "normal remoteness," April's "first cause for vanity" is the cleanliness of her house. On warm summer days the two sisters' "daily routine was dictated by our hunger pangs and daylight" (11). The rhetorical shift seen in the interpolated passage marks April's desire to assimilate the dominant white discourse and its particular alienating inflections mark both Métis and Métis English as the site of the "other." Sneja Gunew, by way of Kristeva's theory of abjection, outlines the specific repressions of that process of assimilation. "To create a clean and proper language, [those who assimilate] need to suppress and expel their previous language, so that not simply the mother but the mother tongue is denied" (14). This is a process of identity definition that will be echoed by Stephen Nakane in Obasan and Mervyn Ondaatje in Running in the Family. It is an accommodation which in Edward's Said's terms marks a conscious affiliation proceeding under the guise of filiation (Said 1986, 614) and, as

the authors of The Empire Strikes Back indicate, a mimicry of the language of the centre arising from a desire not only to be accepted but to be adopted and absorbed (4). That desire to escape the prison of otherness has a certain price which includes a particular reformulation of April as historical subject:

> when I got free from being a foster child, then I would live just like a white person. Then the question came to my mind. What about Cheryl? How was I going to pass for a white person when I had a Métis sister? Especially when she was so proud of what she was. (49)

April's desire to embrace the white world underscores both the physical and textual rift between the two sisters which parallels their differing status as women of colour in a racist society. This rupture in the text emerges along the axis of historical discourse. When Cheryl gives April a book about Riel for her birthday, April's response rehearses the dominant culture's claim to historical knowledge: "I knew all about Riel. He was a rebel who had been hanged for treason. Worse, he had been a crazy half-breed. I had learned about his folly in history" (44). Although April, living with the DeRosiers, is in the midst of the traumatic dilemmas which surround her construction of a subjectivity in a racist community, she has learned one lesson: the history of Métis "folly." To live "just like a white person" demands that she create a rift in her personal and material history, re-formulate her sorority, and accommodate a racialized version of "common" history. Franz Fanon, in analyzing a text of "accommodation," delineates how its mulatto character "wants not only to turn white but also to avoid slipping back [to being black]" (54).

In a strategy echoed by both Ondaatje's and Kogawa's texts, Culleton's text installs historical discourse as the site through which the two sisters begin to differentiate the cultural practices which constitute their "identities" and mediate the differences by which the "color-line" determines the status of their sorority. As with Kogawa, and to a lesser extent,

Ondaatje, sorority is not articulated as a kind of unproblematized gender solidarity. The relations within these sororities are complex and emphasize both their status within a hegemonic patriarchy as well as their diverse articulations of sororial heterogeneity. For April, legitimating her particular knowledge of the Métis demands abandoning any cultural practices which suggest a Métis identity. In contrast, Cheryl, through her letters to April and essays, attempts to construct an identity and a political ethos through a process of cultural production and legitimation: inscribing a Métis history. Barbara Godard delineates the particular political alignments of this "resistance" writing when she notes that its authors "situat[e] their texts discursively, as writing of resistance, and historically, within the project of the contemporary Indian movement" (1990, 193). While I need to note that the "contemporary Indian movement" is itself heterogenous and its politics are not a unified and singular "project," Cheryl's youthful resistance writing is aligned to the desire that she and April be "whole Indians" (45), but that desire to be "whole" also emphasizes the troubled site of their hybridity, their marginality within both "White" and "Indian" discourses. Julia Emberley, in Thresholds of Difference, emphasizes that resistance writing, with its claims to political authenticity, "occupies a contentious space within geopolitical and cultural borders containing injunctions, demands and interests discontinuous from power and cultural relations within North America" (22). That containment is evident to Cheryl. Her attempts to directly confront the dominant history, her promise not "to learn this garbage about the Indian people" (57) and to challenge any authority which claims that narrative as "common" history, leads to a series of retaliatory punishments and threats (58-66).

This series of intimidations arising out of a "crisis' about history, serves as the introduction to Mrs. Semple's delineation of "the native girl syndrome" (66), an historical epistemology which serves to impose a neo-colonial status on these women of colour. An irony in the text is that one of Cheryl's final inscriptions, the journal April finds after

Cheryl's suicide, remembers their social worker, Mrs. Semple: "I've gotten into other things I bet Mrs. Semple never even heard of in her old 'syndrome speech'" (224). In the end, Cheryl, who had harboured dreams of being a social worker like Mrs. Semple, conforms to a certain "common" history and ironically it she who re-writes and revises Mrs. Semple's text, adding her addendum to the syndrome definition. The discursive struggle between April and Cheryl enacts the not always ironic incongruities of interplay between the legitimation of knowledge -- Cheryl's resistance writing -- and the necessity for a political ethos -- April's resistance to Cheryl's inscription: her economics -- in a culture which constitutes these practices by means of its dominant discourses. These textual (dis)placements are also the core of the text's intertextuality: the letters and essays which Cheryl sends to April.

The textual divide installed in the work by way of Cheryl's inscription of Métis history is repeatedly and ironically answered by April's desire to escape a racist society by accommodating its narratives: "reading [Cheryl's] essay didn't help. Knowing the other side, the Métis side, didn't make me feel any better. It just reinforced my belief that I could assimilate into white society" (85). This accommodation is epitomized by her own textual intervention, her story about the living conditions at the DeRosiers. Although April's account results in her leaving the "care" of the DeRosier family, her text is "not entered in the [writing] competition" (83), and April learns that cooperation, textual accommodation, demands silence and censorship. This "lesson" of history is emphasized by its intertextual status within April's inscriptions. In this coming of age narrative, it is this "lesson" which clearly distinguishes April from Cheryl. The distinction parallels a current debate about censorship and authentic voice, indigenity, and as such emphasizes the initial site to be investigated in any discourse's claim to a robust heterogeneity: who defines the etiquettes of the discourse. Julia Kristeva in "The System and the Speaking Subject," outlines her project of semanalysis which in some sense reiterates Bakhtin's concern that semiotics investigate

language in terms of both power, "identifying the systematic constraint within each signifying practice" [26], and process, "semanalysis, conceives of meaning not as a sign-system but as a signifying process" (28). To clarify if Culleton's text itself mirrors or questions April's textual accommodation, her particular affiliations as a *sujet-en-procès*, and to investigate how the text articulates the intrication of power and discourse, suggests an unpacking of critical responses to the questions which surround the issues of textual "silence" and "authentic" voice.

The critical discourse is troubled by both invocations of the essential and the subversive, and the critics who directly address Culleton's text do so largely in reference to those particular epistemologies. While Barbara Godard carefully adumbrates how Native women have historically been coerced to conform to middle class literary standards to assure the dissemination of their cultural products (1985, 5-6), she also posits a literary norm: "Native women's narratives have adopted entirely different formal strategies, discontinuous tales rather than coherently plotted quests, symbolic events rather than psychologized reactions. Moreover, they write miscellanies -- hybrid genres -- mixtures of sermons, narratives, poetry, ethnographical treatises" (1990, 190). Does this latter model simply replace what Sneja Gunew refers to as the "burden of authenticity," where "Aboriginal writers are seen as being relevant only to questions concerning Aboriginality" (12), with a desire to cite them as sites of exemplary textual subversion? Are Godard's assertions, as Daiva Stasiulis suggests, "more than a little overdrawn, romanticized ... and essentialist in their assumptions" (46)? Godard, in that same essay, does moderate her claims about Native women writers by suggesting that, "The response of oppressed groups to hegemonic culture is complex and frequently contradictory: accepted forcibly perhaps in some ways, it is resisted in others" (195). That latter observation is echoed by Gayatri Spivak when she suggests that critical interpretation avoid a "kind of homogenization" where the other is constructed "simply as an object of knowledge" (60, 63) or as Appiah suggests a manufacturer of "alterity" (356). In all

three texts interpreted in this thesis, the response to dominant discourses is complex and contradictory, both "subversive" and complicit and this paradox is not uniformly ironic.

Outlining the ideological articulations which have often framed these questions of race in Canadian literary discourse, Daiva Stasiulis points to the cultural milieu which configured the questions in the literary boom of the 1970s. For many of the white writers of that period, to be anti-racist "meant to write sensitively and evocatively about Native people and people of colour" (38), which in turn served to install a romantic representation of the Native community. Stasiulis suggests that the current debate about authentic voice should be wary of "new forms of essentialism inherent in any position that assumes that the race, gender and class of the writer is the guarantee of the authenticity of the text" (41). What Stasiulis's historical narrative fails to emphasize is that the naive anti-racism of the 1970s (38) rehearsed a very familiar "humanist" response to indigenous people and was congruent to the relative silence of Native voices. As well, locating "creative writing" in reference only to White writers, even as a gesture toward historical "clarification," reinscribes that silencing. Critical in considering Culleton's text is Stasiulis's reminder that "the lived experiences of many Canadians [is] bicultural and even multicultural" (41). This prompts the question: How does April resolve her bicultural status, her hybridity. The ways in which Culleton's text is dissident, the methods by which it challenges hegemonic culture -- such as its limited deployment of "village" English -- or accommodates it, finds particular focus in the resolution of the discursive conflicts inscribed by and inscribing Cheryl and April. This resolution ironically questions the conditions of possibility which underwrite any legitimization of either Cheryl's or April's articulation of an emerging subjectivity.

While Culleton's text does, as Jennifer Kelly suggests, portray "the struggles of April and Cheryl to construct positive identities from a range of subject positions," her assertion that "each sister identifies with, and rejects, the other's position" (122) offers an interpretive

economy at odds with a textual -- which is to say material -- demarcation that underscores the problematics of that "choice." Margery Fee offers a more attentive interpretation when she suggests that Culleton "use[s] characterization to represent the 'choice' of assimilation or oblivion" (171). However, while the status of that "choice" is at the core of the text's ideological questioning, Fee's assertion that the fantasies of Cheryl and April look to, respectively, the past and the future, does not in itself account for April gaining that "future." In fact, it is April's "fantasy" life which materially underwrites her possibility of choosing to reformulate her subjectivity under the sign of Métis. What Culleton's text emphasizes is the crucial alignment between the ideologies of race and class, an imbrication exemplified by the dream texts of Cheryl and April.

Cheryl's pride in her Métis history is joined to a dream of family reunion and community health. Its ecological hope and gesture to a symbiotic relationship within a "natural" world stands in marked contrast to April's economics. Cheryl's childhood dream of living like "olden day Indians" with "lots of books ... dogs and horses ... grow our own garden" (90-91), in turn inspires a desire "to become a social worker" (93) so that she "can help other kids" (92). That particular triad of a performative history, a symbiotic ideal, and a political ethos is resisted by April's monolithic economics. April's dreams of assimilation focus on future commodity access: "I'd buy magazines that featured beautiful homes ... I also studied fashion magazines ... Yes, when fortune kissed me with wealth, I'd be well prepared (100). The body, "kissed" with wealth, endorses its own reification. The economic narratives on offer within a racialized discourse suggest to April clear and obvious distinctions: "being Métis means being one of the have-nots ... I want what white society can give me" (111). Although the text offers historical counter-narratives, the economic narrative is monologic and this homogeneity in some sense determines the resolution of April's and Cheryl's discursive conflict. April's acquiescence to the "inevitability" of late capitalism reflects the text's own

response to cultural inscriptions which occlude the ironies of that "inevitability," those who read Native texts as simply cultural performances which manifest either "authentic" voice or textual subversion. The economic epistemology which informs April's construction of a subjectivity, of herself as an historical subject, would appear in fact what Linda Hutcheon articulates as a postmodern comprehension in that "its critique coexists with an equally powerful complicity with the cultural dominants within which it inescapably exists" (1990c, 168).

In the end, it is April who has acquired economic independence and a family with Cheryl's child, Henry Lee. The irony is that this is another alternative family acquired at some cost and that cost is partially paid by Cheryl, who inherited her father's "Indian" looks. Julia Emberley comments that "In the figure of April, Culleton reclaims 'identity' over difference ... Cheryl's death is, in fact, sacrificial: her irreducible difference as a figure who is made to occupy the vacancy of 'Indian' is cut out of Culleton's signifying space" (162). That reading of Cheryl's death suggests "Indian" is a stable category in Culleton's text and overlooks how Métis hybridity has questioned that "Indian/White" dichotomy. As well, it denies to Culleton's text the possibility of address to the historically constructed Métis community. It denies that Cheryl's death is any way linked to alcoholism and that this particular disease is presented as one which the Métis community must locate within its own healing narratives. As Daniel Day Moses notes, "it is part of our jobs as Native artists to help people heal" (xvii). Part of that process means addressing community problems, not simply as the effects of a neo-colonial status, but as issues which put the community at risk. The textual link between the child April confronting a drunk Métis man masturbating and the adult April being raped by drunk whites who "whooped it up and congratulated each other on their 'catch'" (140) graphically demonstrates the text's underscoring of that disease's link to aggression against women.

While it is the pale April who survives and can now foster Henry Lee, Cheryl's death is not history repeating itself; rather it is an event which underscores how modernism's sociology inscribes, by means of its epistemology, the "native girl syndrome," an epistemology whose positivism is underwritten by a monological economic discourse. While the formulations of subjectivities in the text underscore the aporias of both material history and these formulations, April's and Cheryl's racialized emplotedness -- their living inside the discourse of a certain modernism, its sociology -- definitively inscribes itself on Cheryl. The "Indian" sister predictably enacts the "native girl syndrome" and the not always ironic incongruities of interplay between the discourses of legitimation and a political ethos emphasize the cultural ruptures imposed by racialized discourse. April does not abandon the necessity of a political ethos, she simply accommodates what Hutcheon claims is the "inescapable" status of economic formulations. The text, with a certain irony, demonstrates the ethos of that accommodation, that lack of doubt.

After April separates from her "White" husband and returns to Winnipeg, she suffers a horrible rape, when she is "mistaken" for an "Indian." The trauma of this event, however, does delay the solidifying of her economic status. She returns to Toronto, settles her divorce, and feels "more independent, money-wise, than [she] had ever been before" (152), and dreams of opening a business "maybe a fashion boutique ... But Cheryl was what discouraged [her]. She would insist on drawing in native women" (161). What separates her from Cheryl -- even in the aftermath of a rape and divorce which emphasized to April her status in the Canadian community as "Indian" -- is an unwillingness to hastily dismiss the benefits of economic complicity. In contrast, through the words of Cheryl, the text gestures, with the thin measure of ironic contingency on offer within an accommodating postmodernism, toward an unarticulable symbiotic relationship between a people and the place where they live.

In Cheryl's pow-wow speech (168-70), an inscription which invokes a Métis oral tradition, and in her last letter to her sister, Cheryl inverts the sociology which the dominant culture has used to inscribe Métis history. She defines "White" culture as a pathological enterprise which produces, manufactures and feeds on disease. Not only have Whites "given" the Native populations "many diseases," their hegemonic discourse occludes the possibility of perceiving and confronting its own material effects: "White man, the rivers bleed with contamination. The winds moan with the heavy weight of pollution in the air" (169). The postmodern irony is that Cheryl's narrative, in that it gestures to a "natural" world, continues to be defined as -- at best -- a naive narrative, and as such is easily accommodated to a "history" like Flanagan's which rehearses the "fall," the failure, of the politically naive Métis. While the text's resolution gestures toward a certain affirmation, it is the irony of who survives to tell the tale of April and Cheryl which demonstrates the racialized etiquettes of that historical narrative. These etiquettes are disrupted by Culleton's text, not only through its ironies, but also by putting in place a certain "naive" gesture towards an ecology. As Frederic Jameson suggests, "It seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth than the breakdown of late capitalism" (1994, xii). The irony of the text's resolution is the postmodern "choice" which it offers the reader. Accept as inescapable the hegemony of late capitalism and align oneself to April's economic and textual accommodations and interpret Cheryl's attempts to inscribe "an effective identifying relationship between self and place" (Ashcroft 9) as a naive post-colonial process. Or, if those textual accommodations trouble, address the naivety of their own economic complicity. That is the postmodern question, the gap in closure, which the text leaves unanswered: how does the reader align herself to that "choice?"

The textual construction of a subjectivity which locates its terminus in April declaring herself a Métis is not, as Emberley insists, simply April choosing "'identity' over difference"

(162); rather it marks a process of signification and of alignment to a larger communal history. In that April cites her own voice, her own enunciation of Cheryl's dream, "I had used the words "My people, our people" (228), it is a performative which marks the combination of "voice" and writing and as such creates another textual link and contextual movement in the space which In Search of April Raintree, as political act, creates. That political space extends beyond the boundaries of the text to become, through its readers, a further "speaking among" native women. Thus, it establishes a contextual "network of differences and hence of referral to the other" (Derrida 137), a circulation of discourse between the writers in the text, Cheryl and April and the readers of the text. The embedded quote is also a citation and as such carries the mark of a history, of a "movement of interpretation" (Derrida 137) as well as inscribing an "unofficial" history marginalized by a discourse underwritten by neo-colonial "class" interests. This imbrication of economics and race in cultural discourse is a site of enquiry which Joy Kogawa emphasizes in Obasan through its alignment of Native Canadians and Japanese Canadians. The tension of cultural identification which these texts share is that "hybridity in the present is constantly struggling to free itself from a past which stressed ancestry, and which valued the 'pure' over its threatening opposite, the 'composite.'" (Stasiulis 36) If April's narrative in some sense re-inscribes Bakhtin's modernist hero, the "hero of an accidental family" whose desire to be "embodied," to re-attach [herself] to one of life's normal plots," (Bakhtin 1984, 101-2) and that inscription is resisted, then Culleton's post-colonial inscription of a process of affiliation ironically suggests the intrications of power and discourse which underwrite that resistance.

Chapter Two: The Body and the "Machine"

Before any interpretation of Joy Kogawa's Obasan is initiated, a brief outline of its narrative and the histories which surround its production will trace a certain historical trajectory. Obasan tells a series of interrelated stories about Japanese Canadians interned during World War II, principally through the first-person narration of Naomi Nakane. Naomi, a woman of thirty-six, recalls herself at the age of five when her internment begins and slips back and forth between this retelling of the historical "event" and the present, where the trauma of that history is both confronted and inscribed. As part of her process of inscription, Naomi must address two dilemmas. Within the Nakane family there is a particular silence about her mother, a silence put in place "kodomo no tame -- for the sake of the children" (245) when their mother left for Japan before the war, never to return. Also, there is an official account of the internment which imprints and encloses that history in a matrix of "rational" narratives. The text, slowly and by way of its intertextuality, discloses the adult Naomi's discovery of, and attempts at gathering together, memories and fragments of both official and communal histories of the internment. As well, Naomi is ultimately offered and offers a narrative which attempts to interpret a maternal and familial silence maintained "for the sake of the children."

In a postmodern way, the text revisits the sites of these silences to ask what ideology underwrites the ethics of a family's obedience to that dictum and how that obedience is intricated to the construction of gender and race identities. The text's critique of that obedience is evident in its aligning that familial compliance to an invocation and evaluation of one of the cultural paradigms of modernism, the "machine" as social and aesthetic model, what Renato Poggioli refers to modernism's "mechanical-scientific myth" (139). This chapter's interpretation of Obasan's engagement with this paradigm notes that, while it is a

brief discursive encounter, it is vital to the text's historical critique. Within modernism the machine was deployed as a paradigm of cultural logic; and materially as a "final" arbiter of history. Modernism's particular reifications of abstract thought and theory, its instrumental logic -- which the paradigm of the "machine" in some sense underwrites -- locates its apogee and vicious terminus among the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Kogawa's text links that event to its inscription of a Canadian communal history.

The "events" of the internment are histories which Naomi and her community still inhabit. For Naomi, these events initially refuse even a contingent closure in an integrated narrative. The "[s]egments of stories" (53) of this trauma suspend and loom out into the present. Naomi's narrative, its inscription of a *sujet-en-procès,* reformulates her subjectivity as one which comprehends her historical emplotedness within a communal narrative and consequently she becomes a narrator whose acts of signification and processes of inscription are aligned to both particular communal "voices" and, as she discovers, their absence. These absences, figured mainly through Naomi's mother, are the text's and Naomi's inaugural dilemma. Embracing her history as communal, producing a kind of post-colonial inscription, is a process which must also incorporate its sites of absence: both the textual and those which exceed that particular materiality.

In terms of the text's ultimate resolution of its dilemmas of inscription, both Erika Gottlieb and Shirley Geok-lin Lim emphasize the novel's final affirmation of language. Erika Gottlieb writes of the "hard-won miracle of creativity which alone has the power to turn silence into sound" (52) and Lim notes how the novel attests to "the recuperative powers of language itself" (1990, 308). Gottlieb's assertion in some sense mirrors the affirmative valences of the text's conclusion, but it translates that affirmation into a closure which diminishes her own delineation of a process of discovery more "hard-won" than miraculous. Shirley Geok-lin Lim notes how the text "impersonates the discourse of autobiography" and

modulates that emulation "through the liberating effects of poetic language" (1991, 214). However, she also asserts that "[t]he integration of the thematics of the maternal with the text's structure is modernistic and totalizing" (1991, 241). Putting aside for the moment the topos of the maternal, what is troubling is Lim's claim that the text's performance is totalizing. The text *is* a testimony, an emphatic inscription of a communal history disfigured and distorted by the racialized discourse of "official" accounts and as such it does suggest the integrative capacities of language. However, as with Culleton's and Ondaatje's texts, the affiliations inscribed at its terminus, remain, paradoxically, the axis of the text's problematics and dilemmas. Naomi's closing narrative underlines "the many absences within which we who live are left" (245). That deployment of "we" and "absences within which" underscores both the ideology of discourse and the aporias of language. Rather than a totalizing performance, the text collocates the "recuperative powers" of language to an ideological and perhaps ethical acknowledgement of its horizons. As well, set against what Lacan and Kristeva refer to as the Symbolic, the text's "poetic language" invokes a semiotic which troubles both the etiquettes of historical narrative and contextually underscores the lacunae of both language and material history. Paradoxically, it is the text's attentive intertextual history together with its "poetic language" establish sites for a post-colonial process of inscription.

Kogawa's Obasan inscribes a post-colonial text because of its particular engagement with the legacies of an English empire, its gestures to a history of colonization in Canada, its marking of English as the locus of generational and historical divides, its comprehension of the hybridity of Canadian culture, and chiefly because of the way Naomi's narrative figures both the dilemmas of the Japanese Canadian community and her relation to it. Naomi's initial description of her maternal and paternal families, the Nakanes and the Katos, underlines the imprint of Empire: "their expressionless Japanese faces and their bodies pasted over with Rule Britannia. There's not a ripple out of place" (18). Not only does a Canadian articulation of

Empire rule the cultural seas upon which these families move, as will be seen in this chapter's reference to contemporary accounts of the internment, this same culture of Empire underwrites the political discourse which oversees the "relocation" of this community and its internment. As well, Kogawa's text inscribes a "settler" community's processes of assimilation and aligns those accommodations and affiliations to an historical local/empire dyad. However, it is the questions which the text raises about obedience and how those questions align the "machines" of war to a problematized mother-daughter relationship which most definitively inscribe the post-colonial. The power relations between the obedient and the obeyed, daughter and mother, civilian and soldier, Canadians of colour and "White" Canadians are all figured as articulations of the relation between the colonized and the colonizer. Kogawa's biography bears the marks of that imperial imprint.

In 1942, when Joy Kogawa was a young child, she and her family were among the 22,000 Japanese Canadians who were evacuated from their homes in British Columbia. Their property was seized and sold and they were interned in various work camps in Western Canada. At the end of the war, Orders in Council, issued under the authority of the War Measures Act, set out provisions for the deportation of all the evacuated Japanese Canadians, regardless of their citizenship status. Four thousand people were deported. The rest, including Kogawa's family, were relocated inland. The adult Kogawa, as well as being a poet and novelist, is, and has been, a political activist involved in a redress movement which seeks a fitting official response to the internment. Part of that story is, in some sense, translated into a companion novel to Obasan, Itsuka. In contrast to both Culleton's and Ondaatje' texts, the discourse in the margins of Obasan clearly emphasizes its claim to be an inscription of a communal history.

This brief account of Obasan and Kogawa's personal history and political activism underlines an intrication in Kogawa's writing between "fictional" and "historical" narratives.

The history which surrounds the production of the novel underscores that intrication. Obasan, published in 1981, evolves out of a short story of the same title written in 1978. That short story follows by a year Barry Broadfoot's Years of Sorrow, Years of Shame: the Story of Japanese Canadians during WWII, a "collective autobiography" based on interviews with internees, and by two years, Ken Adachi's historical account, The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians. Obasan does not emerge in the Canadian cultural landscape as either revelation or simply as alternative or counter-history. It negotiates a particular re-evaluation of Canadian racialized discourse and thus this chapter's interpretation of its (dis)placements of "official" accounts does not begin with an assumption that it responds to a general category of historical narrative, such as "liberal humanist," rather it directs its attention to a particular set of articulations of officially sanctioned narratives. The tropes deployed by these historical accounts disclose the ideology and discourse to which Kogawa's Obasan responds. Following the suggestion of Hayden White,[22] an initial question then arises: how do the tropes deployed by these texts display the doubts which adhere to their narratives?

Two histories, one which proceeds the internment and one which follows the war, reveal particular articulations of the "troubles" which confront the "sensitive" White population of British Columbia in their social intercourse with Japanese Canadians. Charles Young's and Helen Reid's The Japanese Canadians, published in 1938 under the auspices of the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene, notes how the "fight for self-improvement" (119) engaged in by Japanese immigrants resulted in clashes with White Canadians and "feeling[s] became personal and bitter" (120). Japanese Canadians became the victims of a minority of "Whites" whose vocal opposition "largely determined" public opinion (121). In fact, "the White community for the most part has no alternative but to regard the Japanese as a group which threatens not only the few Whites who suffer from their direct

competition but also the welfare of the community as a whole" (127). Young's and Ried's text refers to the vocal White minority "who suffer" this race contact as "the more sensitive Whites" (138).

In 1948, Forrest E. La Violette of McGill University writes his account of the internment, Canadian Japanese and World War II. The title's inversion of the usual "Japanese Canadians" tempers the war-time rhetoric of "japs," but clearly invokes it. In the introduction, Professor Angus of the University of British Columbia describes the interred Japanese Canadians as "the humbler victims of the aggressive policies of Japan" (v). Professor Angus claims that "no attempt is made to pass judgement" by La Violette, rather his project is simply "to explain behaviour" (v). La Violette's text, published under the auspices of the Canadian Institute of International Relations and the Institute of Pacific Relations, begins this modest task by introducing the reader to the "Oriental problem" (3) in British Columbia before the war. The retrospect available to a postmodern or post-colonial analysis discerns the irony in the alignment between this articulation of an "Oriental problem" and Du Bois' analysis of that racialized rhetoric. Du Bois emphasizes that "a tremendous economic structure . . . based upon racial differences" (556) underlies the invocation of a "race problem" and that "by long education and continual compulsion and daily reminder" (653) this discourse inscribes the person of "colour" as a subaltern inhabitant of a "white" world. Young's and Reid's explanation of racism as "public opinion" -- history as the "inevitable" effect of racialized discourse -- is replaced in La Violette's account by citations of "various informants" who explain that their "'everyday common sense' led them to expect action against Japanese Canadians" (36). In his concluding chapter, "The Will of the People," La Violette notes, with an ironic inflection, that racial tensions were inevitable given that the White "empire" community, the sons and daughters of the British Isles, "have not reproduced rapidly enough"

(278). The rhetorical summit of La Violette's argument reiterates his "rational" refrain: "most Canadians felt that evacuation was a very sensible programme to follow" (289).

The tropes with which these two official accounts address their public trace a movement from the inevitable complicity of a majority of the population with a minority of vocal Whites "determining" public opinion to a reflective rhetoric which comprehends the ironic "recurrence" of racial tensions and the unexpected or "casual catastrophe" of slow "White" reproduction. Both narratives install a rhetoric which attempts to counter any potential doubt by declaring an ability to scientifically measure and "explain behaviour." Thus, a familiar episteme of modernism, the ability of the "human sciences" to assess and quantify persons as readily as the space they inhabit -- history as sociology -- is installed. The cultural paradigms of society as organic machine and the person as social machine, so prominent within modernism, are put into place. These articulations of the "inevitable" status of socio-political formulations also locates within modernism the roots of Hutcheon's contention that in the relationship between discourse and a political ethos, an author can only acquiesce to the "inescapable" status of socio-economic paradigms, such as late capitalism, and ironically suggest a "shared" complicity in that inescapable status (1988b, 209, 212-17, 224).

How can Kogawa's Obasan address what La Violette's "reasonable," "mature," and "slightly ironic" narrative suppresses? How can it question the stability of categories enforced by the rhetoric of inevitable complicity and ironic enlightenment? What Obasan claims, or installs to (dis)place these accounts, is a necessary relationship between a kind of history and a kind of literature. The style Kogawa deploys, its necessary insistence on "voice" -- and a particularly gendered voice -- translates the "unspeakability" of a history, its trauma, into a literature of witness. Inaugural to putting in place this process is an underscoring of position and address. As with Ondaatje's text, this strategy is joined to a suggestion that the body is

both an inscripted site which paradoxically marks the aporias of language as well as the locus of a symbiotic relation to what might be called the "non-human."

Obasan's initial address to its readers, its title, translates into English as aunt, auntie, old woman. It indicates family, generations and gender and an initial position of address outside the English language. Although it refers to one of the principal characters in the novel, one of Naomi's aunts, it is not a personal name which suggests that Obasan offers itself as a site of representation, an allegorical locus which in turn indicates an extended topology of potential reference. Moreover, it demonstrates a particular position vis-a-vis realism and the legitimation of a "proper" name. As Shoshana Felman suggests, the realist critic or reader is "haunted by an obsession with proper names -- identity and reference -- sharing the same nostalgia for a transparent, transitive, communicative language, in which everything possesses, unequivocally, a single meaning that can be consequently mastered" (1993, 18-9). Kogawa's text questions the relationship between "single meaning" and a certain desire to master. As script or writing, the word is neither Japanese nor English, it is both and neither, marking a certain "racial" contact and suggesting both a presence and an absence of reference. This inscription of racial contact also indicates that the text, like Culleton's, potentially addresses ideologically and historically constructed communities of interpretation with a series of questions in which they are implicated. Unlike a realist text, there is no concern to reproduce "a foreknown answer" (Felman 1993, 19). Obasan, as its title demonstrates, is both a site of difference and enigma, emphasizing that "the finiteness of a context is never secured or simple, there is an indefinite opening of every context" (Derrida 137). What does this naming name? Out of this "opening" enigma, a postmodern question emerges. Given its initial enigmatic address, how does the text set in place its epistemologies and its local legitimizations of knowledge? That question begins to be answered through a dialogic put in place within the textual sites and positions of address which the text opens

before it arrives at a kind of beginning, its "present," a journal entry dated September 13, 1972.

The first opening is a passage from the Book of Revelations which invokes a position of authority to make a promise and suggest an ethos:

> To him that overcometh
>
> Will I give to eat
>
> of the hidden manna
>
> and will give him
>
> a white stone
>
> and in the stone
>
> a new name written . . . (v)

What the passage promises "to him that overcometh" is both the sustenance of "the hidden manna" and a cryptic "white stone" which encloses a "new name," a kind of rebirth or resurrection. The narrator, in a strategy which is echoed by Ondaatje's text, responds to this epigraph, its invocation of authority as well as its promise and task, in a second opening, a proem. This proem establishes the text's autobiographical "I" through a bardic address which installs a kind of ironic questioning of the epigraph's authorial voice. What if this overcoming, this endurance, yields a silent stone? What if what is wanted is flesh, "living word" (vi), sound not silence, voice not script?

The narrator, in this initial direct address to readers, confesses a failure which unmasks a desire: "I fail the task. The word is stone. I admit it. I hate the stillness. I hate the stone. I hate the sealed vault with its cold icon. I hate staring into the night" (vi). This confession, given its bardic articulation, paradoxically emphasizes the narrator's "voice" and underscores her initial status as an isolate which underlines the problematics of the enunciative event, the crisis which surrounds a need not simply to be the scribe but to hear and be heard. How can

the narrator alone move the cold "icon" from the front of "the sealed vault," overcome the weight of events which has sealed this place of promised resurrection, of new life, of new names? This confession also exposes a poetic irony which (dis)places a traditional chronology. The admission of failure surpasses the conventionally temperate *apologia* and thus its particular declaration before the main body of text marks an inversion of temporality, the possible future moving toward an "impossible" past. However, the admission is collocated to the suggestion of an alternative to the cold icon and its authority. By means of a congruent doubt, by way of invocations of both a body at times called "female" and the "natural" world, the narrator suggests an alternative to the biblical ethos and its iconography: "Beneath the grass the speaking dreams and beneath the dreams is a sensate sea. The speech that frees comes forth from that amniotic deep. To attend its voice, I can hear it say, is to embrace its absence" (vi). Thus, within the textual site which defines the narrator's initial position of address, as well as locating her subjectivity in terms of its status as isolate, there is a lacuna in rhetoric and -- as will be revealed -- in a material history beyond the horizons of the scripted. It is within the sites of these lacunae that an autobiographical subject begins to be formulated and a history inscribed. Also, out of this formulation emerges a rhetoric which counters a certain patriarchal authority: the cold iconography of the dead. By invoking both "the amniotic deep" and the "seed" which "flowers" (vi) the proem is not responding to a patriarchal promise with an essentialist articulation of gender, but rather these invocations begin to construct a gender definition which comprehends an interrelationship between body, voice, and a "natural" world -- a subject able to hear "*its* voice" (my emphasis).

As with Culleton's and Ondaatje's texts, in Obasan the body is the site of historical inscriptions as well as their lacunae; and it marks the liminality of self-reflection. Toril Moi, in her engagement with the theories of Julia Kristeva, underlines the ideology which underwrites the deployment of the female body as "the necessary boundary between man and

chaos" or "the limit or borderline of the Symbolic order" (167). The emphasis here is not the stipulation of that kind of binary relationship, but rather that the body, particularly in Kogawa's and Ondaatje's texts, is the site of an open but unarticulated relationship to the "non-human" world, one which is not prescriptively linked to a particular political identity drama, gender construction, or nature/culture dichotomy. The relationship to this non-personal "other" is simply another element of a heterogenous subjectivity. In these texts the body alternately invokes the Kristevan semiotic, bears witness to history or gestures to the liminality of self-reflection. By gesturing to the body as the liminal site of an unarticulable interrelationship between the person and the "non-person," these texts question the humanist delineations of categories such as subject/object or subject/other. In these formulations of subjectivity the "Other" is always already the "human" and as such they underwrite a re-inscription of the Cartesian mind/body dichotomy where the body must be the mind's other. Humanist epistemological brackets which occlude the "non-human" from any role in an inscription of *sujet-en-procès* are put in place and an "inescapable" hierarchical relationship to the "non-human" is inscribed. It is not only that the "female" body is inscribed as "natural" which installs a patriarchal definition of gender, it is also that the "non-human" relation to the person maintains its humanist frame and subsequent definitions of the body can inscribe, within those boundaries, the ideological matrix of heterosexuality. Judith Butler points to the theoretical work of Mary Douglas to emphasize the regulatory rhetoric invoked to maintain the boundaries of the body: "Any discourse that establishes the boundaries of the body serves the purpose of instating and naturalizing certain taboos regarding the appropriate limits, postures, and modes of exchange that define what it is that constitutes bodies" (131). These texts, especially Kogawa's and Ondaatje's, question the "natural" dichotomy between "human" and "non-human" bodies.

In Naomi's narration the body is the site of narrational voice, the lacunae of discourse and also an unarticulable interrelatedness between the "human" and "non-human" which surpasses humanist boundaries. However, this body is not only the site of surplus but also of its inverse. Naomi faces a particular dilemma of signification: "to attend its voice, I can hear it say, is to embrace its absence." How can the narrator/poet embrace an absence? The text deliberately offers the possibility of a procedure: "If I could follow the stream down and down to the hidden voice, would I come at last to the freeing word? I ask the night sky but the silence is steadfast. There is no reply" (vi). If the night sky that looms over the "sealed vault" offers no reply, perhaps following the stream down "beneath the grass" will lead the narrator to "that amniotic deep." With this passage the narrator ironically begins to install an alternative to a patriarchal promise and does so by troubling assumptions about gender positions and articulations. The body, as alternative epistemological site, will be a locus of signification which houses voices that must be unearthed and heard so that they (dis)place the cold stability of an iconic force.

This installing of the body as the site of interplay between public and private discourse in the initial autobiographical articulation invokes a particular comprehension of the "subject" in "history." Hutcheon argues that the postmodern process of inscription is transparent in that it clearly emphasizes the acts of signification implicated in any creation of subjectivities (1988b, 191). However, in contrast to Hutcheon's postmodernists, the questions articulated in the proem deny the narrator's "full knowledge both of the power of and desire for those humanist master narratives [which console] and [of] their impossibility" (1988b, 191). Also, the narrator's emphasis on the problematics of the enunciative event is not simply a categorial gesture -- ironic -- to the status -- contingent -- of all such events, but rather it implicates its communities of interpretation in the process of discovering some missing history, and by a kind of forsaking of the "already written" and its definitions, desires, and ideological

certainties, uncovering or unearthing an absent voice. Unlike the "full knowledge" which the realist or Hutcheon's postmodernist claims in their "reproduction of a foreknown answer," Naomi's narrative suggests the horizons of its knowledge. This mystery is also, as befits Naomi's character and inscription, a lesson of history and as such its historical alignments install a set of cultural affiliations. The text's first invocation of Canadian history emphasizes these affiliations and the text's status as a post-colonial inscription.

The text's third opening is an entry from the narrator's journal or diary. The entry predates the "present" of the text and thus emphasizes the retrospective, the historical. Also, as this diary entry and the one which immediately follows are the only entries tightly bound to the text's present, it constitutes an emphatic alignment of topoi. This alignment installs a matrix of personal, familial, communal and official texts, an intertextuality in some sense shaped by the ironic questions set out in the proem. At the opening of the passage, Naomi and her uncle are making their annual visit to a coulee where "tall grasses stand without quivering" under the white stone of "a new moon." There, in a place "like the sea," they "wade through the dry surf" of grass to arrive at the spot where Uncle "usually rests" (1). The reiteration of images from the proem suggest that this place might lead the narrator to "the amniotic deep." Kogawa's text situates geography as a transitive site; it opens onto histories indigenous and imperial and these histories are themselves joined to both a familial and a "racial" legacy. The coulee is near an ancient "buffalo jump" and Naomi's uncle could be mistaken for "Chief Sitting Bull." With appropriate costume, he would be "a picture postcard" of the "'Indian Chief from Canadian Prairie' -- souvenir of Alberta, made in Japan" (2).

This particular invocation of indigenous history recalls a certain intervening imperial history which is linked through Naomi's uncle to the Japanese Canadian community. Through this alignment of Amerindian and Japanese Canadian histories the text establishes its

socio-political axis as post-colonial. Gary Wills notes how this alignment is underscored by the young Naomi's encounter with the Amerindian, Rough Lock Bill. Wills emphasizes how Rough Lock Bill teaches a shy Naomi the importance of words, "he insists that both of them speak and write their names" (246). Rough Lock Bill is also a community historian and he explains the etymology of Slocan's name, and as Wills notes, Naomi cites this particular lesson of history, "Slow can go" (23), when she follows Obasan into the attic to look for what history Obasan believes may be "lost" (26). Thus, the gender position of the narrator installed in the proem is now joined to a complex post-colonial position. While the gender position transverses and questions boundaries, the iteration of the post-colonial, given the ironic awareness of the commodification of racial identity and "otherness" -- the framing "postcard" -- is self-consciously and strategically set out. Within this particular post-colonial history, a personal enigma surfaces. For half her life, Naomi has waited for an answer to a question about this coulee, "why do we come here every year?" This time her uncle "seems about to say something, his mouth open" (3), but Naomi's question falls like "pock marks on the earth." Her uncle, like a sealed vault or "an animal in a storm," hides a response, "erase[s] his thought[s]" (3). It is only much later that the purpose of this visitation becomes clear: the coulee is a site of remembrance, of communal history. Thus, the diary entry underscores a post-colonial alignment between geography and self-definition as well as a link between a "settler" community and an indigenous population. This cultural alignment is later focused around a shared relationship to the processes of naming and language which "emphasizes the importance of the language-place disjunction in the construction of post-colonial realities" (Ashcroft 28). This textual/geographical locus gathers together a series of post-colonial histories and a particular family enigma put in place for the "sake of the children." Naomi's subaltern status within a family discourse is underscored by the colonial references and further emphasized by her relationship to her Aunt Emily.

Although Naomi's question is unanswered and the "underground stream" is not found, the text underscores the link between the proem's alternative, Naomi's question, the coulee and Aunt Emily. Naomi searches "the earth and the sky [above the coulee] with a thin but persistent thirst" (3). The "questions thinning into space" which the proem disclosed are now linked to a coulee which Naomi and her uncle have visited annually since "Aunt Emily's initial visit" (2) to Granton Alberta in 1954. That visit marks Naomi's introduction to this coulee and her "coming-of-age," but the enigma of the coulee demonstrates that Naomi is denied this adult status within her family's discourse. The textual openings which precede the second diary entry put in place a set of dilemmas about both subjectivity and history which will be added to, and reconfigured, in the diary entry which opens the text's "present." Kogawa's text, in making its inscription of a history part of the narrator's dilemma, locates, as does Kristeva's delineation of semiology, the process of meaning-making at the site of the subject, the *sujet-en-procès*. These processes of meaning-making are intimately intricated to a pair of voices, those of Naomi's two aunts.

B. A. St. Andrews and Mason Harris both emphasize the textual opposition which Naomi's aunts embody. St. Andrews opposes the "tyrannical silence of Obasan Ayako" to the "not-to-be-silenced Aunt Emily" and locates Naomi at the centre of a "battleground . . . between silence and speech" (30). Mason Harris underscores the generational differences between Nisei Emily and Issei Obasan and suggests that "Naomi's intense identification with her mother places her in a lineage of traditional women which includes Grandma Kato and Obasan" (45). He points to Aunt Emily's role as Naomi's teacher (she "provides the essential facts" (41)), and he reads this role as "an attempt to rescue [Naomi] from her frustrated solitude" (43). While that generational dichotomy is at play there is another kind of dynamic installed. As with Cheryl and April in Culleton's text and the father and son in Ondaatje's text, the roles which the two Aunts play force the reader to negotiate the same terrain as

Naomi. One reads Aunt Emily in terms of Obasan Ayako and vice-versa. However, in the text's "present," Naomi's relationship to Aunt Emily is underscored as is their common connection to the family enigma. Not only do both women share a gender definition, "old maid[s]" (8), this constructed identity is linked to a desire and the absence of its mirror: "Has Aunt Emily, I wonder, ever been in love? Love no doubt is in her. Love, like the coulee wind, rushing through her mind, whirring along the tips of her imagination" (9).

These rhetorical questions emerge from Naomi's own musings about her isolated status, articulated in terms of a colonized discourse of desire -- a "white" widower's questions about Naomi's ethnic identity -- and are later re-articulated when Naomi confesses that "[n]one of my friends today are Japanese Canadians" (38). Although it becomes clear that Naomi and Aunt Emily are initially opposed in their alignments to the Japanese Canadian community, they share a "stable" status within an economy of desire which is rhetorically connected to the earlier site of a family enigma, the coulee. This status will later be joined to their common inability to question the family's silence, a silence imposed by Nesan, Naomi's mother. The diary entry draws these questions together around the news of Uncle Sam's death and Naomi's subsequent visit to his wife and her surrogate mother, Obasan. Thus, the text's openings begin to clear sites for a sorority of voices to (dis)place both a patriarchal ethos and a racialized account of the internment. However, this sorority of voices is not idealized, rather it is problematically heterogenous. Although the text does install a generational dichotomy, and the critical discourse points to the enunciative poles which Obasan and Aunt Emily represent, it is the axis of "difference" which their alternate historical witness embodies which, as gendered post-colonial topology, begins to (dis)place the legacy of official accounts. These (dis)placements clear a site for Naomi's inscription of an "unspeakable" communal history.

Marilyn Russell Rose, in an essay which focuses on the kinds of rhetoric deployed in Kogawa's text, argues that Obasan puts in place "an historical speech . . . which recreates the past in and through the present" (219). Rose appropriately stresses the fact that Naomi reads Emily's documents "during the three days of present narrative time" and thus these documents constitute the textual body which -- by means of their intertextuality -- (dis)place official accounts of the internment. However, her assertion that Obasan's "voice" on the internment experience is one in which "the past is denied validity by the profound and dignified passivity of its victims" (220) echoes Hutcheon's claim that history is only apprehended as text (1988b, 225). Naomi's narration suggests, paradoxically, that in fact it is the reticent Obasan, "the bearer of keys to unknown doorways and to a network of astonishing tunnels . . . the possessor of life's infinite personal details" (16), who will provide answers to a family enigma.

It is in Obasan's house, in the place of memories which she houses, where Naomi begins to attend to the voice "from that amniotic deep." History dwells in the corners of Obasan's house "like parts of her body, hair cells, skin tissues, tiny specks of memory. This house is now her blood and bones" (15). But this articulation of Obasan's status as the body of memory also puts in place a certain history of gender constructions. As the title suggests, Obasan is an exemplary of that history. Hers is a house of history; she is "every old woman in every hamlet in the world" (15), (dis)placing both a master's house and history. It is a position of witness common to other women of colour in history and Alice Walker points to the silence which African-American women left out of official histories inhabit:

> They dreamed dreams that no one knew - not even themselves, in any coherent fashion - and saw visions no one could understand...They forced their minds to desert their bodies and ...They waited for a day when the unknown thing that was in them would be made known. (232-3)

In the body of Obasan's memory, Naomi will both unravel a mystery and bear witness to unspoken histories. The death of Naomi's uncle becomes the elegiac occasion for Naomi to begin her own inscription of history which becomes the site within which she both finds and listens to "the speech" from the "amniotic deep." Through a kind of departure Naomi comes to eventually hear a story of her mother's disappearance. That "coming to hear" becomes the occasion for the writing of stories about the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II as well as the formulation of a subjectivity inscribed in and out of the interstices of the material histories which survive those traumatic events.

This "coming to," this passage, begins with a kind of lucid dream, like "[f]ingers tunnelling. Wordlessness" (28). It is a dream set off by the memories gathered around Obasan and constitutes the narrator's initial "small signs" of historical awakening as she awaits the "return" of Obasan (27). It is Naomi's inscription of the past, including her citing of Aunt Emily's letters, which prepares a site for the "return" of Obasan and Naomi bearing witness to that particular history. Naomi's dream not only underscores the anxiety linked to Obasan's departure, it also aligns Naomi's initial enigma to a set of topoi. These include a probing of a mother-daughter relationship, both as presence and as absence, and the alignment of this relationship to a particular cultural paradigm of modernism, the "machine," figured here as the imperial inscription of its colonizing machine. However, before taking up that particular alignment, what needs to be set out is the text's engagement with the intertwined enigma of the missing mother and the coulee.

The dream, by locating the axis of a narrator's dilemma within a familial enigma both leads to and clears a space for a kind of unpacking of history. This opening up of a silenced past begins with a "package from Aunt Emily" (30) a set of documents which in turn creates an historical frame for Naomi's inscription of both her history and Obasan's. This package includes both official documents and Aunt Emily's diary of letters to Naomi's mother, Nesan.

The diary is a book "heavy with voices from the past" (46). These letters bridge the gap from Nesan's departure to the time when the annual visit to the coulee begins and Naomi turns eighteen. It is this gap, Naomi's life as the colonized child which in some sense must be inscribed if Naomi is to depart from that colonization and be inscribed as an adult, a "subject" in history. Emily's book and documents, "crinkly" (46) and "crumbled like autumn leaves" (39), like Cheryl's essay writing and Ondaatje's discovery of the "old, skeletal leaves" of "local history" (66), mark the text's inauguration of a post-colonial intertextuality. As Aunt Emily suggests, Naomi's recollection of her history will begin to end a kind of textual colonizing (49-50). Thus, Naomi's narrative emphatically inscribes its *sujet-en-procès* as historical process.

Unravelling the text's dramatic enigma, the annual visitation to the coulee, implicates both the story of Naomi's "missing" mother as well as inscribing the history of the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II, and these two topoi are emphasized in the critical response to Kogawa's Obasan. Both Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Robin Potter deploy the theories of Julia Kristeva to emphasize the central position which the relationship between Naomi and her mother occupies in the narrative. While both critics underscore the role of the female body, its semiotics, as a counter to patriarchal discourse, Geok-lin Lim stresses the mother's role in the narrative as a link to "a lost racial origin" (1990, 294); in fact, "this child-mother trope functions as the trope for the public bond of self and race" (1990, 309). Lim appropriates Obasan to a particular Japanese-American literary history and argues that the missing mother is the figure of race (1990, 293): "the lost mother is also the figure for the displacement of an entire people" (302). While that allegorical resonance is at play in the text, Lim's emphasis of "racial consciousness" and "the reconstruction of the maternal" (301) simplifies the mother's "complicity in her daughter's mystifications" (302). Geok-lin Lim explains that complicity as a silence engendered by racism. However, Naomi's narrative

indicates that the mother's disappearance is a more problematic construct, one which addresses the construction of identities within a racialized discourse as well as questioning the link between gender, a communally constructed economy of desire, and a certain ethos of obedience.

As Hutcheon, through de Lauretis, suggests, the subject is constructed at the intersection of the processes of meaning-making and desire (1988b, 173). The text, by linking the mother's departure to Naomi's sexual abuse at the hands of her "White" neighbour, Old Man Gower, emphasizes a troubling intrication of gender and race identities. This is further underscored by the shared gender "status" of Naomi and Aunt Emily on what Naomi refers to as "the marriage market" (8). While Geok-lin Lim notes that Naomi's narrative questions both "the Eastern mode of silence and the Western mode of public speech" (1991, 245), her paper interprets that dichotomy as one figured by Obasan and Aunt Emily and does not probe what is at stake in their mutual maintenance of a familial silence. It is the intrication of a community ethos with the imposition of a neo-colonial status which Kogawa's text calls into question.

By opposing -- and because of its generational reiteration, doubly opposing -- two kinds of duty and desire, a mother's and a child's, Naomi's narrative calls into question the discrimination between the ethical and the ideological, which Hutcheon suggests distinguishes the modern from the postmodern (1988b, 193). Kogawa's text questions -- by means of this generational opposition -- whether any ethics which collapses its judgements into the not always ironic dynamics of power within discourse is in fact an ethics of colonization. When Kogawa's text links the mother's obedience to her own duties as a daughter to five-year-old Naomi's lack of power, to her victimization, the endorsement of power as the normative interpretive evaluation of personal ethics is questioned. It asks if an ethics of obedience can claim to adequately articulate the problematics of desire. In that ethical model those

problematics are reduced to the binary opposition of those with power and those without. When Obasan explains to Naomi that her mother's departure for Japan is simply a response to a certain gendered articulation of duty, a daughter's duty to her mother, this rationale is immediately questioned in the text, marked by the adult narrator's rhetorical incursion into the childhood recollection: "My great-grandmother has need of my mother. Does my mother have need of me? In what market-place of the universe are the bargains made that have traded my need for my great-grandmother's?" (67). The deployment of "market-place" aligns this narrative rupture to the earlier iterations of gender "status" in the economies of desire, which suggests that the historically constructed Japanese Canadian community is being questioned about its particular complicity in the construction of oppressive gender definitions.

The questions which surround Nesan's departure and the silence which follows that departure are not simply the effects of racialized discourse, as Geok-lin Lim suggests. As Robin Potter emphasizes, Naomi's "feeling of betrayal" (132) is reconciled at the end of the novel when she is finally allowed, by other members of her sorority, to hear the letters which tell of her mother's death. The silence which she has inhabited is not simply due to Obasan's loyal obedience of a maternal dictum, it has been maintained by both her uncle's and Aunt Emily's submission to that same dictum. However, while Potter links Naomi's reconciliation wholly to an overcoming of "learned feelings of repulsion for the M/mother body" (138), that emphasis does not account for the silence which mother and daughter both share, nor the contingent articulation of Naomi's eventual amelioration: "perhaps it is because I am no longer a child I can know your presence though you are not here" (243).

The problematics of that avowed reconciliation are also emphasized by the irony of the letter's authorship. They are written by Grandma Kato, not Nesan, and Naomi deploys a particular metaphorical valence to mark their status as subrogate texts. The letters are "skeletons. Bones only" (243), and as such stand in marked contrast to the "blood and bones"

memory of Obasan. As Naomi suggests, "for a child there is no presence without flesh" (243). The emphasis on mother and daughter sharing a silence underscores a critique of the construction of both race and gender identities which the text installs: "Mother we were lost together in our silences. Our wordlessness was our mutual destruction" (243). Although Nesan is initially prevented from returning to Canada by the "pale arms" (241) of racism, her continuing absence is not wholly explained by racism: "First, you could not, then you chose not to come. Now you are gone" (241). The historical link between mother and daughter is their silence, the mother's final words of proscription and submission "'Do not tell'" (242) are answered by the child who "forever fears to tell" (243).

The text aligns this common fear to the confusions of desire: "In my dreams, a small child sits with a wound on her knee. The wound on her knee is on the back of her skull, large and moist. A double wound" (243). The "wound on the knee" and on the "skull" joins the wounds of mother and daughter and links them, by recalling Old Man Gower, to the discourses of desire, the "fiddlehead question mark asking with its unformed voice for answers still hidden from me" (61). The silence connected to desire is traced to a childhood incident with a boy in Slocan which provokes a particular question: "I am filled with a strange terror and exhilaration. When did this begin -- this fascination and danger that rockets through my body?" (61). The memory of the incident in Slocan in turn leads to an earlier memory of a White neighbour, Old Man Gower, and the "unfurled fiddlehead fist" (63) that first begins to grow inside Naomi in Old Man Gower's house.

Although the child claims: "There is nothing about me that my mother does not know, nothing that is not safe to tell" (60), before her mother disappears a silence is installed, a secret is not shared. "The secret is this: I go to seek Old Man Gower in his hideaway. I clamber unbidden onto his lap. His hands are frightening and pleasurable. In the centre of my body there is a rift" (65). While Naomi's mother puts in place a silence to protect the

child, the child deploys a silence, a kind of angry secret, to protect and preserve a physical link to her mother, "the shaft of her leg is the shaft of my body" (64). The reciprocation implied aligns the silences. Sexual molestation and a traumatic knowledge of the body, unmeditated by a mother's presence, is linked to "White" male oppression, physical violence and a kind of submission to a culturally constructed gender definition. As Rose suggests, Naomi's violation is a metaphor for the internment, for its "sociopathic rape." Naomi, as victim "suspects her own complicity . . . suspects that she enjoyed the subjugation" (222). This confusion of desire and subjugation, love and obedience, reflects back on the mother's departure and her obedience: "It is around this time that mother disappears" (66). Naomi's fear of rupture at the hands of Old Man Gower ironically foreshadows the rupture which follows: "If I tell my mother about Mr. Gower, the alarm will send a tremor through our bodies and I will be torn from her" (64). With their mother's departure, Naomi and her brother become "Two small Easter chicks. Who would not cry out?" (67). The ambiguity of that question -- if it is an accusation, who does it accuse -- remains linked to the questions which surround the "fascination and danger that rockets through" Naomi's body. These unanswered questions become a confession and a confusion maintained by silent compliance. While there is no doubt that Old Man Gower's molestation is an allegory of oppressive racism and male aggression, a response to that sexual oppression and racism is somehow absent, disappeared into another history in another country. It is an absence emphasized when Naomi hears Old Man Gower in her own home (69). It is he who sits in the dark with Naomi's father; he displaces her mother: "If mother were back, she would move aside all the darkness with her hands and we would be safe and at home in our home" (69). The reiteration of home emphasizes the overwhelming sense of dislocation, a dislocation integral to all the colonial dislocations which the text inscribes. A material presence which could assure some other possible signification of events is missing. That Naomi and Aunt Emily share the

particular gender status of "old maid" emphasizes the irony that a gender construction which emphasizes a sense of sororial duty has put in place a confusion between love and duty, desire and voice, and is now indelibly marked by the fiddlehead "lie" (63) . These confusions are maintained not only by hegemonic inscriptions but by an obedience which demands silence. It is a silence which echoes the colonizer's desire for a community to "be obedient, be servile" (37).

In spite of Aunt Emily's sense of sororial duty, it is she who, as social critic and historian, begins to articulate an alternative gender construction, one which translates its desire into a resistance to racialized discourse. It is, nonetheless, a gender construction that reiterates the confusion of desire and duty. As Naomi says of her Aunt Emily's zealous letter-writing, "Like Cupid, she aimed for the heart" (40). In response to Naomi's articulated sense of physical trauma, of laceration, Aunt Emily offers an alternative diagnosis: "You are your history. If you cut it off you're an amputee. Don't deny the past. Remember everything" (49-50). As Gary Wills suggests in his interpretation of the Rough Lock Bill episode, at an early age Naomi "learns the value of story" (248). Recalling a communal history can in some sense begin to mend a rupture. While Geok-lin Lim describes Aunt Emily role as that of a "crusader" (304), Rose emphasizes Naomi's initial response to Aunt Emily's admonitions. She is "the strident" aunt writing a "revisionist history" (220). The undeclared dilemma that Naomi faces in her need to reformulate a subjectivity and gender identity inside a neo-colonial discourse is that the memory which Aunt Emily wants to awaken threatens to overwhelm that possibility; it is a "whirlpool" (53). Aunt Emily's journal offers a kind of sheltered but painful passage, a textual marking out of a migration through time. The journals are also sites of authority; gaining these passages will provide an entrance to other memories. They are passages which link a history exterior to Naomi to an opening into her own internal voyage.

What the commentary and the text emphasize in this process is Aunt Emily's role as surgeon: "Aunt Emily, you are a surgeon cutting at my scalp with your folders and your filing cards and your insistence on knowing all?" (194). Geok-lin Lim labels Aunt Emily's journals "positivist occidental inscription[s]" but does not note how that positivism embraces the hegemonic: "It's good for the *New Canadian* which is now our only source of information and can go ahead with all the responsibility" (81). As well, the retrospection which Naomi's narrative provides lends a satiric valence to an essentialist gender definition aligned to this naive positivism: "It's illogical that women, who are the bearers and nurturers of the human race, should go all out for ill-will like this" (82-3). However, it is the simple statement which follows the journal's final words which indicate that it is not Aunt Emily's mentorship which will provide Naomi with access to her memories: "It is twelve years before we see Aunt Emily again" (110). Aunt Emily is not the aunt who shared Naomi's internment. It is Obasan who holds the "keys to unknown doorways" (16) and Naomi must "sit quietly beside her and wait for small signs of her return" (27).

Obasan, the surrogate mother, must be heard. She is the "absence" within Naomi's past that must be "embraced." Aunt Emily's journals, by their citing of official documents, political speeches, and newspaper headlines, trouble the boundaries between history and fiction, and they set in place a textual response to the array of documents, patriarchal texts, and racialized discourse installed by official accounts of the internment. However, it is the letters to Nesan which put in place another topology, an array of voices which establishes a different context, or more precisely a context of difference. Finally, it is the as-yet unvoiced story of Obasan, the tattered web of a memory which must be heard. What Kogawa's Obasan as text and as allegorical character claim is that history is not simply narrative texts, objects of inquiry, history is imprinted on the bodies of those who have borne it, who carry an "unspeakable" history, who carry on in silence, it is incarnate in their bodies (Hutcheon

1988b, 186). When Naomi reluctantly visits Obasan, her aunt is ancient, deaf and frail and the few words she speaks are truisms, "Everyone someday dies" (11). The rhetoric deployed in the official documents gathered together by Aunt Emily writes Obasan's words, it is a rhetoric of adequation, of the rational. The bodies of Obasan and the other Issei, which were initially "pasted over with Rule Britannia" (18), are now inscribed by that dominant discourse. If Obasan's traumatic history is to be told, then the witness to that telling must initiate her listening by means of an aligning departure.

Kathy Caruth suggests that listening to the story of a trauma calls upon, not an understanding of the pasts of others, but rather an "ability to listen through the departures we have all taken from ourselves" (11). These "departures" do not refer to a common experience of an historical event but rather a common experience of alienation, of "departure." The witness who presents this testimonial begins a "departure" from herself but directs that movement beyond herself and through that same act of testimony now speaks to and for others. This is in fact what happens between Naomi and Obasan. Naomi, through a series of reveries, lucid dreams, which she directs herself, begins a departure from herself, structures within her remembrances that experience of trauma. Obasan is not the only surrogate, Naomi is the surrogate daughter -- and in an ironic mirroring of her mother's sense of duty -- she must try to listen to their past in a place where, were it possible, Obasan might hear.

It is Obasan who indicates the need to remember. Frail and disoriented, she leads Naomi into the attic in search of what is "lost" (26). It is in the house of memories, which is Obasan's body, that Naomi, provoked by family photographs and mementoes, the history that Obasan has preserved, begins her own recollections. Appropriately, it is while waiting for Obasan's "return" that Naomi has the first of a series of dreams, dreams which confront her own traumatic history. Naomi's listening to the unspeakable through the troubling wishes of dreams leads to an eventual inscription of their years in Slocan and Granton. A text, initially

veiled, becomes legible and silence is displaced with voices. A topology of resistance, a resilient residue which the mirror of official history can't account for puts into place a literature of witness. "This is the position or place of literature's critical irony, and like the dream the site of its construction" (Felman 1993, 40). The lucid dream also establishes another affinity between Naomi and Obasan. The wish to find what has been "lost" is both Obasan's and Naomi's dream, the wish they share. To tell the story, to be heard, is to address the significance of Obasan's particular biography and to address the suffering and the necessity of an impossible narration to a listening community. Witnessing this testimony, hearing its requisite, its necessary "voice" displaces the "impossibility" of writing a history of the internment with a literature of witness. While history claims to know the consequences and antecedents of an event, testimony, as Shoshana Felman emphasizes, "is a struggling act of readjustment between the integrative scope of words and the unintegrated impact of events" (1992, 114).

Thus, Kogawa's text puts into place both a testament of communal history and a critique of gender construction within that community, which in some sense masks its relationship to power by naming it "*yasashi*, soft and tender" (51). Kogawa's probing of colonizing discourse also addresses the racism inscribed by Young, Reid, and La Violette by aligning those neo-colonial productions to a particular social ideal and cultural paradigm of modernism. As with Culleton's engagement with modernism's sociology and Ondaatje's with a particular articulation of literary modernism, Kogawa's text also calls into question one of the dominant epistemological paradigms of modernism, one which finds its apogee and in some sense its conclusion in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. While the earlier short story Obasan deploys many of the same characters and topoi of the novel, two elements are strikingly different in the novel: the problematizing of obedience through the mother-daughter relationship and the inscribing of a story which details some of the aftermath of the atomic

bomb. War, in its taking and giving of life, demands obedience to an unquestioned authority. Kogawa's text questions the code of *yasashi* by aligning it to what Renato Poggioli calls the "mechanical-scientific myth."

The introductory chapter noted modernism's deployment of the "machine" as a model for both aesthetics and social configurations. The response within modernism to that cultural paradigm was heterogenous. While the Futurists in Italy, the Vorticists in England, the constructivists in Russia and some architectural practitioners of the "International Style" enunciated positive articulations of this model, other cultural productions such as Karel Capek's R. U. R. -- which gave the world the word "robot" -- Georg Kaiser's Gas, and Elmer Rice's The Adding Machine called this paradigm into question. Renato Poggioli's The Theory of the Avant-Garde delineates the Avant-Garde's deployment of the "mythologies" of the machine. Poggioli argues that the "mechanical-scientific myth [, which is] one of the most significant ideological components of our civilization and culture" (139) is a prominent paradigm within the Avant-Garde. He notes the "functionalism and rationalism" (133) of the architecture of the International Style, the typographical emphasis of Mallarmé (133) and Futurism's formulation of "the aesthetic of the machine" (228). The "mechanical-scientific" myth also permeates the metaphors of contemporary discourse and Poggioli cites publisher James Laughlin's claim that his publishing concern, New Directions, will be a "laboratory for poetic experiment" as well as pointing to Ortega y Gasset's "'algebra of the word'" (138). What can be added to Poggioli's list are the multiple cultural productions which figure the person as machine. These include the "mechanical" ballet "Machine of 3000," the ballet "The Love of Two Locomotives for the Stationmaster," Giacomo Balla's "Printing Press," as well as the performance designs which Oskar Schlemmer created at the Bauhaus, all of which strived to create a human/mechanical ideal. Poggioli suggests that the symbolic power of this image is explained by its alliance to an ideology which makes possible "a view of the world

that reduces all powers and faculties, even spiritual ones, to the lowest common denominator of the scientific concept of energy" (139). In Marinetti's futurist poem he claims that humanity's destiny is to conquer the universe and "impose change with the aid of science" (Tisdall 89).

The particular machine and "energy" which is the axis of Kogawa's questioning of this paradigm of modernism is the atomic bomb. The events which surround its development and eventual deployment are defining moments within modernism's advocacy of the machine and in some sense locate the horizon of that paradigm and of modernism itself. While the death camps of Europe are often invoked as the end of any faith in rationalism and history as progress, the development of the atomic bomb, its consolidation of the leading practitioners of mathematics, physics, and their common exploration of current theoretical knowledge culminate in a series of accommodations and claims of "inescapable" historical determinants. Kogawa's text aligns that reified alliance of creation and abstraction, its accommodating destruction, to the inscriptions of Empire and a certain kind of blinding obedience. However, unlike Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale, which located its analysis of this paradigm by way of an intertextual alignment to Evgeni Zamyatin's We, Kogawa's text locates it within the semiotic, the dream, the text which disrupts and resists the mechanical and the measurable.

The text's initial dream delineates the beginning of a comprehension which recognizes the authority of the colonizer as synonymous to the idealization of the "machine." When the dream begins "there is no language" (28) and in this silenced landscape there is an ideal of *yasashi*, the "naked, youthful, voluptuous woman's body." This body is quickly transformed into the "square" dense shape of the indentured labourer of the internment camps. The commanding officer of this "forest" camp is a "British martinet" who yields his power with both a "glance" like a "raised Baton" and the assistance of a lion/dog whose "obedience is phenomenal" (29). However, within this colonial nightmare there is a kind of provisional

post-colonial comprehension. There is "[o]ne instant. One fraction of an instant, and a realization is airborne" (29). The ideology which underwrites the British puppet is perceived. The lion/dog, whose "obedience is phenomenal," is defined precisely as the colonizing embodiment of an ideal of modernism. The lion/dog is a "robot" and those who obediently toil alongside this "machine" are themselves transformed to its likeness. The square woman's arm is "now connected to her shoulder by four hooks locked to make a hinge" (29). With this realization "the great boulder enclosing a change splits apart" (29). It is this dream which precedes the arrival of Aunt Emily's package and thus the semiotic clears a site for the reception of the Symbolic.

This initial "white windless dream" (28) is aligned to the text's eventual resolution of the enigmas of the missing mother and the visits to the coulee. The questions which were asked of the "night sky" are now given their blinding daylight answer. Grandma Kato's letter from Japan describes the bombing of Nagasaki and tells how in "one instant" there is another kind of splitting and she feels that she is "floating tranquilly in a cool whiteness high above the earth" (237). Thus, the dream of the machine of Empire is linked to the machine as final arbiter of history, and the earlier "cloud that overtakes everything" (30) is now the cloud which obliterates.

An ideology of modernism, a certain articulation of instrumentality, finds its neo-colonial apotheosis in this historic war machine. Modernism's particular alliance of creation and abstraction locates its ultimate site of commodification in the Manhattan project. Theoretical physics and Einstein are inscribed within the history of modernism by way of the most efficient machine of death.

Kogawa's text, its post-colonial inscription, questions the "rational" narratives of Empire which underwrite the development of machines of logic and death. As well, it questions an interpretive community's construction of gender by emphasizing its colonizing

ideology of obedience. The narratives of gender which the Issei constructed were inscriptions which put in place a colonizing of women ironically susceptible to the discourses of an empire of English. Ondaatje's text also questions this legacy of Empire and points to, not its demand for obedience, but rather its intrication with a "theatre" of rebellion.

Chapter Three: The Body and its "Theatre"

Michael Ondaatje's autobiographical fiction, Running in the Family, published in 1982, is readily aligned to an established literary career. He is an author, editor, and literary celebrity with what might be termed a textually "troubled" biography. His biographers note a certain gathering of elusive problems around their attempts to fix the "facts" of his life.[23] Ed Jewinski, in Michael Ondaatje: Express Yourself Beautifully, notes that the problematics of that official record are as much due to Ondaatje's attraction to the fictive as they are to his personal reticence or to any dearth of detail (10). Thus, my noting that Ondaatje's autobiographical text addresses the particular problematics of meaning-making where an author and/or reader encounters both an absence of particular facts and a surfeit of fluent fictions simply underscores the ironic alignment between this autobiographical text's history of a "subject" and an established "literary" project which troubles the "facts" about historical subjects. Winfried Siemerling suggests that Ondaatje's writing, "seeks to free [the objects which it creates] from their determinate status, for fear of being immobilized itself by ossified perceptions. Formal 'fears of certainty' thus find their parallel in the figures that emerge in Ondaatje's writing" (108). Siemerling's reference to authorial anxieties rehearses an interpretive rhetoric common to the critical discourse on Romantic poetry; however, in the case of Running in the Family, this rhetoric confuses the "figures that emerge" out of Ondaatje's writing with an established philosophical perspective which the texts performatively install. As the citation of Berger which opens Skin of the Lion demonstrates,[24] Ondaatje clearly deploys an aesthetics of heterogeneity in the structuring of his texts and thus the critic of his work need not immediately invoke an "anxiety" to explicate that heterogeneity. Siemerling's assertion that Ondaatje's "willed transgressions of the historical 'sure lanes of the probable'" (180) more appropriately suggests Ondaatje's

appreciation of the rhetorical tropes embedded in historical narrative. However, that ironic appreciation is misread as a "transgression" rather than a postmodern problematizing.

Ondaatje's play with the etiquettes of autobiography, six decades after Stein's Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas and three decades after Blanchot's Le Livre à venir and Lacan's La metaphore du sujet, is now familiar. Nevertheless, a number of critics continue to enunciate a certain "shock" in their interpretative readings of the text. This particular trope installs a dubious historicity -- the claim that a contemporary text's breaching of a generic "contract" is still subversive -- and it privileges the articulation of the literary text as aesthetic object as opposed to its status as historical product and production. This regulation of the critical discourse also diminishes the text's post-colonial questioning of discursive fields beyond those of the formal and the aesthetic and assumes a Eurocentric historical trajectory. For example, Hutcheon points to the text's defiance: "Ondaatje has combined *his* challenge to the boundaries of art in general with a defiance of the limits of conventional literary genres" (1985, 301). Smaro Kamboureli's confident assertion that the contemporary reader is immediately refracted from a "singular response" (79) to Ondaatje's text conjures a cultural history which elides the textual experiments of modernism and the half-century-old impact of film on our de-coding of cultural productions. Concepts of montage and collage which deconstruct and re-assemble generic and gestural references have circulated and re-circulated through the discourses of cultural production for the greater part of the century and formulations of reader response warrant some acknowledgement of that history.

Running in the Family *is* an aesthetic rehearsal of these and other strategies of modernism and both Hutcheon and Kamboureli offer penetrating interpretations of the "midnight rat" episode (188-9), which deploys one of text's subtle (dis)locations of narrative enunciation. However, the text is also a process which masks, unmasks and re-masks the dilemmas of both colonial and post-colonial constructions of subjectivities, their attendant

histories, and English articulations. The tropes of mask which Ondaatje deploys negotiate an intertextual site which may be said to border comparable formulations to those advanced by Bakhtin and Anzaldúa. This chapter, through its engagement with the text's delineation of its narrator and the narrator's father, Mervyn Ondaatje, examines that particular negotiation. It also outlines how Ondaatje's text, by way of its inflections of the autobiographical author/subject dichotomy, shuttles between postmodern questions and post-colonial inscriptions.

Running in the Family is based on two trips to Sri Lanka taken by Michael Ondaatje in 1978 and 1980 and, as Ondaatje explains, the text attempts "to recreate the era of my parents. This is their book as much as mine. My own family too had to put up with compulsive questioning of everyone we met, hearing again and again long lists of confused genealogies and rumour" (205). It follows The Collected Works of Billy the Kid: Left Handed Poems and Coming Through Slaughter, two works which, in the enunciative sense, opaquely[25] display a willingness to play with "the facts" of history and the formulation of historical "subjects." Correspondingly, Running in the Family refuses to privilege either genealogies or rumours. In the appended Acknowledgements to the text, Ondaatje submits that, despite the text's "air of authenticity," it is its "fictional air" which constitutes its "portrait or 'gesture.'" It is a family portrait which deploys the Sri Lankan maxim that "a well-told lie is worth a thousand truths" (206). Ondaatje's use of "portrait" and "gesture" together with "lie" underscore the play and performativity of this cultural production and suggest that a certain privileging of expression will be deployed.[26] The claim also indicates that the text's representation of a *sujet-en-procès* will be rendered with particular figural articulations and surface tensions, rather than a layered or allegorical ground: it will be an expressive portrait rather than an historical mural. This chapter begins, in a postmodern way, by examining those assertions.

Ondaatje's questioning of the autobiographical text's truth claims rehearses a familiar postmodern apprehension of the fictive structure underwriting any narrative's truth claims. Janet Giltrow and David Stouck, in aligning Lyotard's postmodern "incredulity toward" metanarratives to Ondaatje's textual skepticism, note that "Ondaatje's writings always exhibit....such 'incredulity'" (163) toward narrative typologies. The question then arises: why invoke a Sri Lankan culture as legitimation? Is this simply a fictive gesture or is this a whimsical claim which coincidentally inscribes a first world ideological "condition" of interpretation onto a third-world culture? The claim does humorously invoke the postmodern praxis of establishing local legitimation. As Hutcheon notes (1988a, 15; 1988b, 12, 58), the postmodern suspicion of metanarratives is often congruent to the installation of local sites of discursive legitimization. The jest is that this local site is frequently allied to claims of authenticity and a particular status as an inscription of material history. Ondaatje's assertion ironically troubles that etiquette of postmodern discourse by allying locality to "a well-told lie." What is transparent in this invocation of Sri Lanka is its occurrence in the margins of the text. In contrast, the body of the text uniformly refers to the island nation as Ceylon. What then is the status of this Sri Lankan legacy? Does it reflect a textual claim or "worth," or does it posit a particular historical formulation of the text's autobiographical subject, perhaps one which aligns a colonial to a post-colonial figure?

Indirectly, Arun Mukherjee provides an initial reply. In her paper on Running in the Family, Mukherjee deplores what she perceives as Ondaatje's unwillingness to articulate his status as a "South Asian" author, a "Third World immigrant writer" (49) with a particular cultural legacy. This denial of "his experience of otherness" is evidenced by the lack of apparent "cultural baggage" (50, 51) in his work. What Mukherjee fails to note is how Ondaatje's Running in the Family troubles the status of those claims to historic and cultural stability. Jewinski notes that Ondaatje frequently deflects biographical questions with a ready

display of humour (10), and it is humour which Ondaatje initially deploys to ironically (dis)place what Mukherjee defines as a "racial and cultural heritage" (50). Whereas Mukherjee insists that Ondaatje is committed to an ahistorical approach in his writing (51-5), Ondaatje's use of "Ceylon" throughout the text and Sri Lanka in its margins puts in place a process of naming which claims the main body of the text as a kind of history. Contrary to Mukherjee's assertions, it is a history that delineates a genealogy and a "network of social relationships" (Mukherjee 57) which in turn calls into question the status of the categories of race and nationality; and, as *telemacheia*, the tale of a son's search for his father, it questions the gender definitions at work within a certain colonial class of Ceylonese male. Similar to Kogawa's Obasan, its narrating voice, the performative site of its autobiographical "subject," underscores the constructedness of its subjectivity and contingent epistemology, as well as its alignment to specific post-colonial cultural inscriptions. As in the texts of Culleton and Kogawa, the construction of this subjectivity is installed and reformulated in the lacunae and ruptures of history. With both humour and pathos the narrator self-consciously acknowledges the aporia inherent in the construction of his narrative. Linda Hutcheon notes the duality of Ondaatje's literary performance: "Here the process of recording and narrating history becomes part of the text itself ... Ondaatje is not only the recorder, collector, organizer, and narrator of the past, but also the subject of it, both as an Ondaatje whose tale will be told and as the writer who will tell it" (1985, 306). Ondaatje's postmodern questions are most pointedly allied to the text's *telemacheia* and his post-colonial inscriptions to his writer's research. Initially, these dual performances are anchored in a singular historical locus.

One of the text's initial engagements with the questions of community and history is found in the chapter entitled, "Historical Relations" (39). There is no ambiguity in the text's delineation of the compass of these relationships. The field of enquiry is a particular bourgeois social set, more particularly the narrator's family "relations" within that class during

the early decades of the century. Inscribed within that history is one the text's leading players, Mervyn Ondaatje:

> This was Nuwara Eliya in the twenties and thirties. Everyone was vaguely related and had Sinhalese, Tamil, Dutch, British and Burgher blood in them going back many generations. There was a large social gap between this circle and the Europeans and English who were never part of the Ceylonese community. The English were seen as transients, snobs, and racists, and were quite separate from those who had intermarried and who lived here permanently. My father always claimed to be a Ceylon Tamil, though that was probably more valid about three centuries earlier. Emil Daniels summed up the situation for most of them when he was asked by one of the British governors what his nationality was --"God only knows, your excellency." (41)

This delineation of a community and family genealogy underscores the arbitrary constructedness of both ethnic and national identities. Ondaatje's father, popping out of the larger portrait, exemplifies the irony inherent in any member of this group enunciating a racial or cultural heritage based on an homogeneous ethnic identity. As well, the Emil Daniels citation points to the ideology underlying the claim of a "national" identity. Mervyn Ondaatje misses his mark by a mere three hundred years, or bluntly, a whole colonial history. The passage also suggests that "stable" race and ethnic categories are intricated with the maintenance of empire. It is "the British governor" who seeks the comforts of these definitions, and anglophile Mervyn Ondaatje's desire to articulate and affirm a racial identity ironically underscores both the imperial interest in this self-definition and its particular English colonial articulation. Chelva Kanaganayakam suggests that "the tenuousness" of this community's strength "and [its] weakness lay in its cultural syncretism" (34), but that equitable suggestion does not in itself probe the relationship between this "cultural syncretism"

and Mervyn Ondaatje's "need," even in his most hallucinogenic state, "to be respectful to British officers," to be a "colonial officer" (40). It is precisely the problematics of this circle's hybridity which Ondaatje's text examines. What the interpolated passage clearly delineates is that the text's initial field of historical enquiry will be the specific English colonial inscription which surrounds "this circle" that was Nuwara Eliya. It is an enquiry which proceeds intermittently until Ondaatje's maternal grandmother, Lalla, floats by Nuwara Eliya's "symmetrical flowerbeds" (128) and the homes where she "had played and argued over cards" on the way to her death. The family matriarch exits this colonial stage, to drown in the "eye" of the sea (129), a "casual" tragedy. The probing of this "circle," its circus and symmetry, is ironically swallowed up by the autobiographical "eye." Yet, the circle will occasionally chafe that surface.

Ondaatje's narrator, like an early Evelyn Waugh, peoples the social set which Lalla and Mervyn inhabit by citing its prominent blooms: "The gardens were full of cypress, rhododendrons, fox gloves, arum-lilies and sweet-pea; and people like the van Langenbergs, the Vernon Dickmans, the Henry de Mels and the Philip Ondaatjes. There were casual tragedies" (40). This garden of imported European flowers is the appropriate metonymic site for the naming of this community's patriarchal clans. In a manner redolent of the high-society chronicle, the text then joins this colonial parade to a casual depiction of some of the circle's "tragedies," its hunting and dancing fatalities. The circle's production of cultural theatre is further emphasized by the narrator's capricious nod towards a number of cameo appearances made by its members in the circus' annual visit to Nuwara Eliya (40). It is this "charmed" circle, with its on-going production of a kind of colonial circus, which Ondaatje's text initially addresses in setting out the narrator's cultural legacy. His family is one of the circus' principal acts, a status emphasized in the text's initial Ceylonese dream, its first dream on Ceylonese soil.

In a Lacanian sense, this dream is an incursion of the Imaginary into the Symbolic Order and it ironically situates the law of the "Name of the Father." Frederic Jameson suggests how the Lacanian Imaginary is linked to the ethical:

> The Imaginary may thus be described as a peculiar spatial configuration, whose bodies primarily entertain relationships of inside/outside with one another, which is then traversed and reorganized by that primordial rivalry and transitivistic substitution of imagoes, that indistinction of primary narcissism and aggressivity, from which our later conceptions of good and evil derive. (1977, 357)

The narrator's initiatory dream gestures toward a father's equivocal articulation of "primary narcissism and aggressivity" and thus fixes the epistemological axis for "later conceptions of good and evil" as one which implicates both Mervyn and Lalla. As well, this vision, "not so much a dream as an image that repeats itself," installs the text's logic of identity and repetition through its insistent perception of the Ondaatjes as a family of acrobats, a "human pyramid," who collectively ignore an open doorway and "walk[s] slowly through the pale pink rose-coloured walls" (27).

As this family of hierarchical illusionists performs its trick, a number of its members are mentioned but only Mervyn Ondaatje is cited. He delivers the scene's comic one-liner, commonly sexist and tellingly colonial: his mother-in-law, Lalla, is a living Dutch antique. This figure of authority, the man who claims to be a "Ceylon Tamil" and thus asserts a desire for a cultural mirror beyond a colonial inscription, is also the comic of the clan, perhaps its clown, and these passages suggest that while he is aware of a colonial imprint on others, and aggressively defines himself in terms of this colonizing "other," he is ironically and lamentably less aware of the ways in which he himself is marked. As the earlier vision suggests, Lalla plays a specific role in this particular drama of colonial inscription, one which

eclipses the plumage of her English emulation and their shared eccentricity. The text notes how Lalla "continued to stress the Tamil element in my father's background, which pleased him enormously. For the wedding ceremony [of Mervyn and Doris] she had two marriage chairs decorated in the Hindu style and laughed all through the ceremony. The incident was, however, the beginning of a war with my father" (119). Hutcheon, commenting on the text's rendering of the parents' marriage, emphasizes the deferral of exposition of this marriage at play between the early "Honeymoon" (37) and the much later "Photograph" (161) sections. That particular play with suspense and the (dis)placement of a marriage scene by the seemingly tangential, however, is a less compelling element in the marriage "portrait" than the way Lalla's continued "stress" of the ethnic sign at the centre of this naming "ceremony" and her derision of that cultural "mask" leads to a "war" with the father. While the text will eventually and pointedly inscribe a Tamil filiation for Mervyn Ondaatje (187), Lalla's determination to be "physically selfish" and Mervyn's fragmented perception of "duty" (189) emphasize a certain colonial inscription's ability to deny and isolate hybridity and its challenge to the colonizer's regulation of bodily boundaries. Among the needs which these "eccentrics" share, and the site of their theatrical combat, is an engagement with the politics of identity. It is within this theatre of Ceylonese "otherness" -- an otherness inhabited by those who are neither the governed nor the governors, but rather the go-betweens -- in among its cultural brokers, those who trade tea and spices for a place at the governor's table, a chance to dress up and perform their tricks, that Ondaatje begins to construct a history of a network of social relations which is also a kind of literary performance. It is one which matches the hybridity and heterogeneity of that circle. As such, the text inscribes a post-colonial response to the "cultural hegemony [which] has been maintained through canonical assumptions about literary activity" (Ashcroft 7).

The text's masking and unmasking installs a particular discursive interplay between postmodern and post-colonial inscriptions: raising postmodern questions and installing post-colonial inscriptions. Gloria Anzaldùa uses the trope of masks, *las mascaras*, to both explicate and theorize the ways in which women of colour reply to racialized discourse. Masks are both "put on" and imposed by the dominant culture. The ability to "adapt a face," to be an effective player, "exact[s] a toll," for the danger is that one becomes "a series of roles" (xv), and endures the particular disfigurings of that process. Contrarily, Bakhtin, in his delineation of the folk carnival, notes how the Renaissance mask's "gay relativity" and "merry negation of uniformity and similarity, [it] rejects conformity to oneself" (1984, 39-40). Ondaatje's text re-presents the Nuwara Eliya set by masking them with a particular literary articulation within modernism. It is not, as Suwanda Sugunasiri suggests, "a celebration of life, however decadent [and] colonial" (63); rather it is a performance where one hand gestures to their "merry negation" and another unmasks the colonial history which underwrites their coercive culture of conformity.

The family, "the original circle of love" (25), is the initial subject, and its members, the subjects of this (de)facing history. Intriguing in regard to Ondaatje's portrait of the circle in which his family circulates is his citing of Gertrude Stein to explicate what he terms is his "immigrant's double perspective" (1990, 197). He offers as an analogy to this "perspective," Stein's being 're-focused' by Paris. Stein -- poet, portraitist, critic, autobiographer, literary exile -- and her "charmed circle" positioned at a definitive axis of modernism stand in ironic contrast to the portrait Ondaatje's text paints of the Nuwara Eliya set. This portrait rehearses a familiar typology within the historical framework of literary modernism. The Bright Young Things of Nuwara Eliya, like characters out of Waugh, Fitzgerald, or Coward, tango under moonlight and palm trees and drown in their gowns. It is a community of anglophiles devoted to the acquisition of the myriad artifacts which a burgeoning English-speaking

commodity culture, on both sides of the Atlantic, provisions. It is cultural acquisition by ingestion: "So many songs of that period had to do with legumes, fruit and drink" (46). Consumption and consummation are the opposite sides of the cultural coin, and power in this colonial market rests with its best players. As Ernest MacIntyre notes, "these lordly Burghers were to throw their creative energies into fantastic individual biographies" (316). It is a community of performers faithfully immersing itself in the theatrical production of an anglophone culture, devotees "so whimsical, so busy -- that we were always tired" (41).

In 1935, the busy and whimsical Francis de Saram, "the most extreme case of alcoholism" and host of the circle's follies at the Gasanawa estates, dies with "a fish in his hand" (47). Suddenly, with nowhere to play Bright Young Things, "What seemed to follow was a rash of marriages. There had been good times. 'Women fought each other like polecats over certain men'" (47). In an ironic jazz-age echo, the end of the twenties sees the tennis and tango market crash and competition in the heterosexual economy of desire intensify. In the case of Mervyn Ondaatje, these metaphorical polecats are displaced by a domesticated breed who willingly shares his preferences in consumption if not consummation or some confusion of the two: "Me and my polecat, my father said after one occasion when their drunks coincided, my father lapsing into songs--" (59). The intimation of a nostalgia for a time before women fought "like polecats," installs a familiar theme within the literature of the jazz-age: masculine self-doubt. The end of the twenties witnesses the reversion, particularly among the cosmopolitan bourgeoisie, to earlier and more "robust" definitions of male gender roles.[27] When a colonized patriarchy installs a heterosexual "peace" over "The War between Men and Women" (42), it does so at a certain cost, prescribing the donning of a particular set of masks.

Ondaatje ironically underscores these layers of artifice in his parents' "Fine Romance" and gestures to the economy of desire at play in their reciprocal performances. Hutcheon

notes that the "Honeymoon" section not only underscores a lacuna in history, it (dis)places a promised personal revelation with a list of "things that impinged" (1988a, 85) on the couple. What Hutcheon hints at but does not assert is that, given the absence of "personal" portrait, this cultural index emphasizes the inscriptions within which Doris and Mervyn formulate their particular gender identities as well as the commodifications of "romance" which dominate the local economy of desire. Although both Doris and Mervyn are implicated in this construction of "romance," the text, as *telemacheia*, focuses on Mervyn's particular dilemmas. Whereas Ondaatje's grandfather had heartily fought for "empire" (60), Mervyn Ondaatje attempts to establish a new gender role within both a "peaceful" colonized culture and an increasing competitive heterosexual marketplace. He is a unwilling militant in either domain and his engagement to Doris is presented as part of a defining male bond: "It is said he was enchanted by *both* girls, but Noel married Dorothy while my father became engaged to Noel's sister. More to keep my father company than anything else, Noel too had joined the Ceylon Light Infantry" (34). The text aligns a certain homosocial desire to the donning of a uniform and the acquisition and submission of a "huge emerald engagement ring" (34). The passage suggests that these acts are part of a performance within the sphere of "adult ceremonies" (180), in fact an ironic *tour de force* performance. Mervyn can assure himself a definition as a "man" of his time by marrying a young woman who was "greatly influenced by rumours of the dancing of Isadora Duncan" (33). The mutual willingness of Mervyn and Doris to define themselves by way of the "rumours" of style and the "ceremonies" of adult life suggests the finery of their romance. Later, and with some ceremony, Mervyn acclaims a different alliance. To celebrate the "companionship" of his drunken polecat, Mervyn Ondaatje reaches for an overhanging lamp and drains its kerosene "into his mouth" (60).

Is Mervyn Ondaatje's story, like that of April Raintree, an exemplary history? It is exemplary in that it details a particular colonial inscription of a cultural epistemology within

modernism. Like Dick Diver, Fitzgerald's psychologist in Tender is the Night, Mervyn loses his poise and competence at a certain jazz-age gender role, fades and then disappears into a fragmented history. In a essay which examines the fictional construction of post-WW I gender roles, Sandra Gilbert notes "the gloomily bruised modernist anti-heroes churned out by the war suffer specifically from sexual wounds, as if, having travelled literally or figuratively through No Man's Land, all have become not just No Men, nobodies, but not men, unmen ...[this anti-hero is] not just publicly powerless, he is privately impotent" (283). While Ondaatje's text does not overtly gesture to Mervyn's "sexual wounds," it is troubled by sexuality. The narrator confesses a frustration at his inability to de-code what was at stake in the intimate relationships of Nuwara Eliya (53).

Like April's narration in Culleton's text, which entangles and then deconstructs the sociology of modernism, here the text begins to be inscribed and bracketed by its own invocation of a literary epistemology of modernism. Whereas April's narration eventually surpasses that inscription, here the narrator's dilemma is that his attempts to question the jazz-age anxieties which surround the delineation of "maleness" is both articulated and foreclosed by its jazz-age historicity. Situating Mervyn Ondaatje's characterization within that literary landscape both underscores the problematics of his gender self-definition and re-inscribes that modernism to create the gesture of this portrait. The text does suggest other perspectives, such as the "tragi-comedy" (197) of his funeral, and it also traces a "textual" link to other Ondaatje writers. It notes the textual battle with Bandaranaike (151-2) and Mervyn's part in the local etymology of "'constructive criticism'" (152). As well it points to the "journals about every one of the four hundred varieties of cactus" (200) which he kept. Nevertheless, the typology of the jazz-age male in doubt and under fire, given its reiteration and its link to the rhetorical mask the narrator deploys to initially inscribe his historical "relations," overshadows

the alternative inscriptions. In turn, this calls into question Hutcheon's under-problematized assumptions of how the postmodern text installs and subverts literary models.

When the text returns to its probing of gender problematics in the section, "What We Think of Married Life" (168), its enquiry is initially deflected by a narrational rupture and then reformulated through the narrator's deployment of direct address. In Lacanian terms, this section's re-naming of Mervyn Ondaatje as "father," reformulates him as both an historical subject and the narrator's "other." As the narrator describes how his siblings were implicated in the battles between Doris and Mervyn, he intervenes to directly comment, "My father, I hope, too far gone to know the extent of the wars against him" (170). The intervention of this authorial "hope" underwrites the re-presentation of the conflicts of the heterosexual matrix as metaphorical "wars" against the "father," an articulation which averts the more troubling enquiry into a community's codes of "sexual" attraction and attachment. This reformulation is then underscored in the passage which precedes the narrator's interpretation of his "bright bone of a dream" (21), the putative origin of the text's process of meaning-making. The narrator directly addresses the father. As Bernard Hickey notes, "In a stroke, Ondaatje's personal family quest fuses with King Lear" (39) and thus suggests the "emblematic quality" of Mervyn's suffering. Kamboureli interprets that the particular articulation of this intertextuality -- its variation on Lear's plot -- indicates that "the son" wants his own hand "free from history, free for writing his own alphabet" (89). What neither Hickey nor Kamboureli note is the overdetermination of this invocation of Lear and the textual "value" of this rhetorical elevation. This passage's "giving and taking away of faces" is an "autobiographical moment" (de Man 70) wherein the text's reformulation of its subjectivities -- both the narrator's and Mervyn's -- is emphasized by the singular question which the son/narrator raises in relation to "love, passion, duty" (179) in his father's life. The narrator/son asks "Was he locked in the ceremony of being a 'father?'" (180). The invocation

of ceremony, the inverse of the earlier comic theatre (Bakhtin 1984, 44), installs a questioning of the "choice" of male gender roles if not their construction, which preserves a typology and an epistemology out of modernism: Mervyn is a prisoner of ceremony, specifically of "male" ceremony. All the forces of gender construction remain framed within an unquestioned heterosexual matrix, and the local index of how "interested in" or "attracted" couples were to each other (53), eludes the narrator. In Derridean terms, the iterability of the citations "interested in" and "attracted" underscores the mutability of those terms and thus an overt opening to interpretation, to question. The narrator enunciates his dilemma as a desire to unmask the landscape of the other's desire: "I want to sit down with someone and talk with utter directness, want to talk to all the lost history like that deserving lover" (54). Yet, he later suggests that the photograph of his parents where they appear as whimsical grotesques is the "evidence I wanted that they absolutely perfect for each other ... and this theatre of their own making" (162). The status of this "absolutely perfect" aligned to a theatre of self-distortion reflects a certain ambiguity. What also must be emphasized in interpreting the text's construction of Mervyn Ondaatje is that the "midnight rat" scene, the one repeatedly pointed to within the critical discourse as the moment of son/father and author/subject identification is embedded within a passage which deploys the "ceremonial" inflection of its earlier modernist articulation. However, that inflection is now, for reasons noted later in this chapter, collocated to a particular post-colonial inscription.

The episode begins in a Hemingway-like manner with Mervyn drinking in the sunlight. As he "Poured out the glasses of Nuwara Eliya beer" the narrator suggests a certain patriarchal continuity: "He wanted his wife to stop this *posing* at her work" (185). However, what now (dis)places the historicity of the narrator's earlier articulation is the installation of a post-colonial consciousness. Thus, Mervyn recalls a history where "their crowd," were "All burghers and Sinhalese families, separate from the Europeans" (185). He eats his final meal

at "a Muslim restaurant" and on his final drive -- the car preserves its textual status as jazz-age cultural emblem -- he discusses Orion with a Tamil cinnamon peeler "proud of that mutual ancestry." The text's troubling enquiry into gender construction is foreclosed by its modernist articulation, but the text's larger cultural explorations have created a site for the inscription of a post-colonial filiation. The initial Ceylonese dream which had indicated Mervyn's indistinction of "primary narcissism and aggressivity" and located the epistemological axis for "later conceptions of good and evil" within the battles for an identity beyond the colonized are now illuminated. One of the "evils" which Mervyn Ondaatje had "captured ... in the regions he had passed through" (182) was the hegemonic discourse of the colonizer which had foreclosed any filiation that recognized Ondaatje hybridity and heterogeneity. He is a fetish figure of colonial history, a gatherer of its poisons. To this paradoxical combination of roles -- author on exotic plants and fetish figure who gathers poisons -- is added a third configuration or mask; one which attempts to re-present that biography within the autobiographical subject's history, its now larger cultural perspective. The writer/narrator, like the son/narrator, returns to his inaugural gestures in the text and re-deploys the third person position of address to construct the writerly death of Mervyn Ondaatje, to locate it within a larger cultural landscape, to bury the father's *colonial* book and its raging magic.

What is also notable in this inquiry into "romance," bound as it is to an unquestioned heterosexuality, is its transformation into an inscription of a "father," the father who is the narrator. The lacuna in the history of Mervyn Ondaatje, the code of sexual affiliations within which he constructed his gender definition, reflects back upon the formulation of the autobiographical subject's own gender definition through the narrator's periodic gestures toward his siblings and his children, a construction of gender which seeks to remove the ambiguity of the quotation marks which enclose the sign, "father". This is a particular

reformulation of "male" gender which Ondaatje continues to explore in Skin of the Lion. In fact, there the relationship between Hana and Patrick frames the text.

But what is the relationship between Mervyn Ondaatje's biography and a communal history? Ironically, if verification of this autobiographical "family history" is sought, the reader can turn toward the text of another member of the "original circle of love," Christopher Ondaatje's The Man-Eater of Punanai. Christopher Ondaatje describes his father as a "snob" (87) who prohibited any friendship between his children and the servants' children. For her part, his mother insisted that they "speak with an English accent. Even the domestic help in the bungalow were not allowed to speak anything other than English in our presence" (48). Mukherjee's assertion that the social relations delineated in Running in the Family are less than transparent about the circle's status as *compradores* is pertinent (57). As was seen in the earlier interpolated passage, the narrator distinguishes this class from the "racist" English, but the circle's relationship to the general Tamil and Sinhalese population but for the brief father's meeting is unarticulated. However, as the portrait of Mervyn Ondaatje emphasizes, Ondaatje's method of questioning a community through a familial history is not an overt political evaluation but rather a literary gambol around "the original circle of love" which reveals its ideological fissures. As Linda Hutcheon notes, "Performance is very much a part of the content of this book" (1985, 306). The dilemma which this process of historical narration reveals is a certain postmodern questioning of categories of self-definition falling short and an inscription of modernism writing over those questions. In contrast, the text's post-colonial inscription, through its construction of the subjectivity of its narrator, locates and inscribes a particular Ceylonese colonial and post-colonial culture and history. The initial lessons which create a site for these inscriptions are the discourses of family.

Ondaatje's initiating partner is Aunt Phyllis. She is "the minotaur who inhabits the place one had been years ago, who surprises one with conversations about the original circle

of love" (25). Aunt Phyllis begins the initiation of Ondaatje into the "maze of relationships" (25) which constitutes a familial and communal history. However, she is not, as Smaro Kamboureli claims, an Ariadne providing the thread of an alphabet which will help Ondaatje unravel an historical maze (85); rather she is the minotaur who must be met, and like the maze itself, somehow surpassed. She is one of the charming manufacturers of tall tales, one of the "messenger pigeons" (54) dispersing history. If he, Theseus-like, is to make his way back to his father and his "Father Tongue" (192), and in some sense inscribe a Ceylonese history, then an initiation into the local processes of inscription must be undertaken. In this search for textual origins, for the original, he begins not as an outsider but rather as "one" of the circle. Developing a sense of how Ceylonese historical contours can be fabricated will suggest a construction for his own tale. As was seen in his delineation of the circle's "Historical Relations," taking on the voice of modernism's social wit, of the tattler, allows him to play both social critic and family historian. As opposed to the text's construction of Mervyn Ondaatje which attempted what Hutcheon would term a postmodern strategy, an installation and subsequent questioning of an articulation of modernism, the text's post-colonial inscription delineates a colonial comprehension but does not "install it." The methods of Aunt Phyllis, minotaur as mentor, must be both apprehended and surpassed:

> In the heart of this 250-year-old fort we will trade anecdotes and faint memories, trying to swell them with dates and asides, interlocking them all as if building the hull of a ship. No story is ever told just once. Whether a memory or funny hideous scandal, we will return to it an hour later and retell the story with additions and this time a few judgements thrown in. In this way history is organized. (26)

The narrator reveals a certain Ceylonese historiography, an epistemology, as well as a narrative strategy. It is the interplay of positions of address and the specific historical and

"natural" sites to which Ondaatje and his text journey, building the ship of history, which will install both the narrator's subjectivity as well as a familial and communal history.

Invocations of genre and literary reference, such as those previously noted, install a number of potential sites for the construction of this autobiographical subject. It is a strategy aligned to what the authors of The Empire Writes Back define as a post-colonial appropriation and reconstitution of "the language of the centre, the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages, [which] marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege" (Ashcroft 38). The text's construction of its autobiographical subject demonstrates that particular strategy by culminating in an inscription of poems which bring the English language "under the influence of a vernacular tongue" (39).

While Kogawa's and Culleton's texts deploy the tropes of the autobiographical to address both personal and communal history and establish the position of their text's "subject" as historically representative by locating them within "national" narratives of crisis -- the disruption and ruptures of residential schools and the internment of Japanese Canadians -- Ondaatje, in his history of the circle, gestures towards a specifically genteel colonial continuum. An "ancestry" begins to be traced out as the family members lounge in the wicker chairs of the colonial seat of power, the 250-year-old Dutch fort, an ironic displacement of colonial power occasioned by Uncle Ned's "heading a commission on race-riots" (26). While this aside to current political strife underscores the imperial legacy of racialized political discourse, for Ondaatje's narrative of his parents' circle, the historical link between the colonial past and its present is predominately situated in an oral and clan history which is permeable, contingent and as susceptible to rumour and judgements as it is to dates. Ondaatje, like Kogawa, initially situates his autobiographical "subject" through a series of positions of address before arriving at a kind of beginning, or prologue, which is both a time and a place: " 2.15 in the afternoon" (24) in the old governor's home in Jaffna.

This is one of the intrications which the text will continue to deploy: location, mapping, and the narrational position of address. While Kogawa and Culleton both deploy a similar strategy, particularly Kogawa in her use of the Alberta coulee, Ondaatje underscores geographical locus not only as the site of the problematics of familial origin, but of origin itself. If Kogawa's invocation of the coulee emphasizes a constant site of memory, one to which Naomi repeatedly and ultimately returns -- only to discover a partial or contingent memory -- Ondaatje's geography emphasizes both the isolated and the plentiful, the lacunae of history and that "nature" which exceeds the sites of history, the sites of text. As John Russell hints (27), nature is always encroaching, making boundaries disappear. It is the root which sucks the saliva off the tongue (17), the forest overgrowing the household, the flood at Lalla's doorstep, the "fifty-five species of poisons" (81), the mythical tongue of the thalagoya, the perfection of Kuttapitiya (146), and "the dust, the tactile smell of wetness, oxygen now being pounded into the ground so it is difficult to breathe" (191). It is this kind of plentitude and boundary-crossing which Ondaatje's text deploys to (dis)place, to surpass, the labyrinth of a familial and communal history. The geographical locus is as mutable as the recorded history which it witnesses. The contingency of the autobiographical subject's self-definition installed through diverse positions of address parallels this mutability within the text.

Winfried Siemerling, in Discoveries of the Other, links this variation to a particular definition of heterology, one which can refer both to the "interaction of different forms of speech viewed from the outside" and to "an orientation of speech or thought that addresses itself, as it were from the inside, that which is heterogenous to it." This latter form of heterology marks its own "incompletion" as well as diverse relationship to the "unknown other appearing at its conscious boundary." Siemerling argues that this perspective will never "encompass the other" (9). For Siemerling, Ondaatje's work demonstrates this type of heterology, in that it "thrive[s] on the impossibility of coming to terms with the other -- of

negotiating a final definition of the relationship between self and other" (11). Putting aside the problem of what is meant by a "final definition," Siemerling's delineation of heterology offers an important distinction. While the ego or "thetic" always constructs the "other" as "*its* other," the "other of heterology remains exterior to this figuration" (11). This heterological appears to apprehend what is at stake in Ondaatje's emphasis on a geography which doesn't simply question or challenge boundaries but traverses them. However, when Siemerling interprets the scene with the wild black pig (143) to detail the narrator's relationship with nature, he suggests that "the narrator faces the jungle around him, which is the jungle and chaos within him" (148). While this scene does create a brief "metaphorical equation" (148), Siemerling's assertion that there is an intersection of "the planes of self and other" (148) appears inconsistent to the definition of heterology offered. This particular scene appears to constitute a "measuring of the existing other" (10). What this interpretation demonstrates is Siemerling's assumption of a humanist convention wherein every formulation of the other in a subject/other or self/other dyad is prescriptively human or humanized. The epistemological brackets of humanism which impose this hegemony are questioned by Ondaatje's text as they are by Kogawa's. The "other" is heterogenous and its boundaries are not exclusively "human." The text's rendering of the son/father relationship does deploy a personal mirroring; however, the autobiographical subject's own post-colonial inscriptions question whether this other is always already a mirror held in human hands. The text's initial inscriptions underline its questioning of boundaries by way pointing to the liminalities of both geography and self-reflection.

John Russell suggests that the novel deploys a type of binary structure -- enigmatic sections "full of mystery and concealment" are set against sections "which flash with legend and natural triumph" (28). This tension between the enigmatic and the legendary exists, and Russell is prescient in his suggestion of a musical structure; however, rather than a "binary

opposition [which] is lateral" (28), what the initial iteration of themes suggests is a structure more akin to a sonata, perhaps by Beethoven (203). The major compositional themes are initially set out by the untitled map, the epigraph's citations, and the "author's" epigraph. They are then reiterated and extended in the prologue, "Asian Rumours," which also situates an initial alignment to the text's title. The themes and positions of address set out in these introductory passages are then developed through a series of six movements. The first major movement or leitmotif is the section entitled "A Fine Romance," and the second major movement, "Don't Talk to me About Matisse." This is followed by a coda section, "Eclipse Plumage," which develops variations related to the two major movements. The fourth and fifth sections of the text then inverse the order of the leitmotifs and vary their articulation by incorporating elements of the coda and by transgressing the boundaries of these thematic articulations. The last section sets in place a denouement.[28] A close reading of the text's opening sequence demonstrates how the text creates a site for the narrator's post-colonial inscriptions and the topoi integral to that inscription.

The untitled map, the epigraph citations and the "author's" epigraph develop their themes around sites geographical, narrational, and inscriptal, together suggesting the particular intrications of power and discourse inherent in the writing of a kind of history. These topoi are themselves intertwined through the motifs of travel, discovery, and mission. The untitled map (8) presents itself as the initial textual enigma, indicating both the geography to be in some sense discovered and arbitrarily named and the site which exceeds any naming. It is more than a national "Sri Lanka" or "Ceylon," and paradoxically, through the map's naming of towns and cities, tangibly local. As was seen in the Aunt Phyllis episode, epistemological claims will be aligned to the local. The act of naming is deferred and (dis)placed by the enigmas of place and origin: How does one name where one is from? How does one locate an origin? The two epigraphs ironically set out a further series of questions.

The first addresses the reader from the position of the earliest articulation of the imperial voice and its missions. The faith of Europe, its belief in itself, its intoxicated vision, is represented by the writing of the Franciscan Friar, Oderic. This 14th century traveller claims both a knowledge of the fantastic and certain privileges of authorship, the power to observe and to exclude: "I saw in this island fowls as big as our country having two heads ... and other miraculous things I will not write of" (9). As was seen in the description of the "building" of Sri Lankan history (26), the narrator will also deploy authorial preferences and, paradoxically, claim the impossibility of narration, allude to what is not and cannot be written. The contingency inherent in any narration will be demonstrated by the self-reflective admission of an inability to clearly distinguish between these two processes, the two heads of narration. Like Oderic, Ondaatje will gesture toward the island's excess, its boundless "nature," but this "natural" world will serve as a paradigm of both abundance -- the rich textual source -- and encroachment, particularly on the writing subject. It is this latter self-conscious gesturing toward encroachment which installs the text's postmodern questions about the arbitrary humanist boundaries at play in the construction of a subjectivity.

The second epigraph, which cites a contemporary Sri Lankan newspaper, makes an historical claim as outrageous as Oderic's two-headed birds. In referring to the American mission of putting a man on the moon, that contemporary voyage of discovery, Douglas Amarasekera asserts that it is their knowledge of English which separates these masters of the machine and the moon from the Tamils and Sinhalese who "thought the earth was flat" (9). He avers to a necessary relationship between English and epistemology, English and the knowledge of machine. It is this citation which names the island and its inhabitants and Ondaatje's text, with a certain irony, puts in place a local legitimation for the making of fantastic claims. The citation foreshadows a type of Ceylonese family who record history "by exaggeration" (169), and like them, Amarasekera makes of the Tamils and Sinhalese footnotes

to an American voyage of discovery. Citing Amarasekera also suggests that Ondaatje's text will inscribe a "Ceylonese" history. These epigraphs figure the dialectic between language and history, like that between colonizer and colonized, discoverer and discovered, author and "subject" as discontinuously intricated in particular formulations of hierarchical power. Thus, the arbitrary links between language and history are suggested and Ondaatje demonstrates his role as researcher and author, his power to select, to order, to exclude. That particular power is then called into question by the "author's" epigraph, "Drought since December" (17), which constitutes the next opening in the text.

I use "author's" epigraph because this italicized response to the earlier epigraphs self-consciously establishes Ondaatje as an author within a continuity of reportage on "Ceylon." It mirrors the authorial positions of the cited epigraphs -- Ondaatje is travelling to, and is from, this island -- and transparently manifests the text's constructedness. The epigraph addresses the reader through the third person, establishing the artifice of textual distance and narrational authority, and paradoxically demonstrating through its context the artifice of that distance and authority. The subject of the epigraph is Ondaatje writing about writing and that self-reflection yields as little as the weather: "Half a page -- and the morning already ancient" (17). The power to observe and exclude is set against the dilemmas of cultural production. Here, in response to Oderic's "miraculous things I will not write of" is the nightmare of authorial self-reflection, exemplified in the relationship between the author's body and "nature."

The thing not written of is indirectly, by way of a third person, acknowledged. The author's nightmare is that "thorn trees in the garden send their hard roots underground towards the house climbing through windows so they can drink sweat off his body, steal the last saliva off his tongue" (17). The nightmare which initially inscribes an authorial voice, Ondaatje as author of this text, underlines the troubling intrication of the "natural" and the

enunciative moment. The hard roots drain both the body and the voice. The body itself is the site of textual lacunae, it marks the liminality of self-reflection. Paradoxically, when awakened, it defines a certain colonial history. At the age of eleven, it discerns both privilege, "the floors of red cement polished smooth, cool against bare feet," and its tastefully shielded cost, "delicate bars across the windows so no one could break in" (17). If there is any peace between these domains, the "natural" body and the self-reflexive, it is "only a brief moment of the day" which offers "Clarity to leaves, fruit, the dark yellow of the King Coconut" (17). Within these transitory moments an easy naming can take place, the author enjoys a brief textual reign over the coconut. How the body and self-reflection continue to trouble each other's boundaries will be acknowledged in the metanarrative ruptures of the text. Janet Giltrow and David Stouck, in locating the pastoral resonances within Running in the Family, recall Julia Kristeva's delineation of the semiotic process (164). Ondaatje's narrative gestures toward that symbiotic relationship as a trace, "a delicate light," never completely erased or (dis)placed by the mechanics of self-reflection, by the literary performance within the domain of the symbolic.

It is the opening chapter of the prologue, "Asian Rumours," which in its delineation of another dream both installs a new position of address and aligns this position to the previous dream and a set of framing enigmas. Here, the narrating subject, the autobiographical "I," claims an initiating vision, "What began it all." It began with the "bright bone of a dream" where Ondaatje's father, "chaotic," is surrounded by dogs "barking into the tropical landscape" (21). The father's role in the dream remains an enigma until the penultimate section of the text; nevertheless the narrator invokes the originary, but that originary moment is a confusion and a dream which points back to another site of origin, the dream which begins the text, the author's epigraph. The dream is again linked to the feverish body. The site of origin, the place where things begin, is the feverish dream narrative whose inaugural enigma is the role

of the father and by way of an alignment of two dreams and two dilemmas the text sets out its two principal positions of address and their related leitmotifs begin to be put in place. There is the vision, voice and role of the self-reflective writer, the Ondaatje who constructs the text, and the role of the son troubled by the enigmatic father, the Ondaatje who writes of his family and its fractious history. While the latter articulates a colonial history, the second delineates the process of gaining a post-colonial perspective. The body and the dream are the sites which traverse this rupture and the construction and reformulation of the autobiographical subject is aligned to these ruptures and transversals. The division itself is explained by way of Jane Austen's Persuasion as the "'natural sequence of an unnatural beginning'" (22). The "spread maps" and the "sprawled" words will locate and narrate those traversals.

In this opening onto the autobiographical "I," the narrating subject partially and intermittently explains his dream as a portent of his mission, "I was already dreaming of Asia...I was already running...I had already planned the journey...travelling back to the family...I was running to Asia and everything would change" (22). The anaphoric refrain emphasizes the historical status of this dream and also puts in place a connotative alignment to "running in the family" which recalls a truism of genealogy, of origin. The dream also sets in place a tension between recollection and repetition. The search for the enigmatic father, the voyage back to the family, the running to Asia are paralleled to what runs in the family. The prepositional shuttle and layering; the running to, the running back, and the running in, suggest a process of discovery: the interplay between a kind of mapping and a kind of history. Narratives of location and origin, where and who one is from, narratives of the writer and those of the son, of epistemology and ontology, will be troubled at their boundaries by both self-reflection and the body. While the autobiographical subject claims the wish of his dream is to animate a familial "frozen opera....to touch them into words," this seemingly untroubled

union of language and body is quickly called into question by the allusion to Lalla's death by "Natural causes" (23). The trick of this assertion calls into question a narrative about the "nature" of family, what runs in it. It emphasizes the narrative process which inscribes nature and natural events, such as "'Floods'" (23). The autobiographical subject who navigates this dilemma is initially constructed in response to the most assuredly fictive construct, the dream, and he acknowledges that his narrative will be a parallel performance, that it will deploy the large gestures of opera, bear that kind of relation to history.

The untitled map, the epigraphs and the prologue set in place both the major leitmotifs of the text and the sites which will transverse the boundaries of these formulations. The autobiographical subject will traverse those boundaries through the paradoxically coupled sites of self-reflection -- narrative rupture -- and the body -- textual liminality.

While the text's first movement, "A Fine Romance," deploys the satiric tone of the tattler to emphasize a community's theatrical production of a colonial culture, their acts of emulation, and their consumptions and consummations, the second movement, "Don't Talk To Me About Matisse," installs the autobiographical subject as the self-conscious writer who conducts research and attempts to place the family history within a larger context. It also locates an authorial legacy, a personal and communal history of language and writing which in turn puts in place a response to that legacy, a series of poems.

The opening chapter, "Tabula Asiae," emphasizing its alternate inscription, returns to the initial site of the prologue, and begins another process of location and subject formulation, a search for cultural origin clearing a site for its eventual post-colonial inscription. The "false maps" on the walls in Toronto paradoxically record the history of Sri Lanka's colonization and the narrator catalogues "the invaders who stepped ashore and claimed everything with the power of their sword or bible or language" (64). Here the Ondaatje name is not an ancestral mark but rather "A parody of the ruling language" (64). While the son's

narration of the family circle's history made no claim to it as exemplary of a national history, here the self-conscious writer, the producer of culture, sets out to locate this genealogy within a national culture and history, "Here. At the centre of the rumour. At this point on the map" (64). A mission of discovery and naming is set in place.

The dilemmas of this cultural enterprise, where the "deep grey colour of old paper dust going down the drain" (68) witnesses the decay of the textual, are countered by the discovery of a textual legacy, a personal and communal history. The research itself is pointedly a collective activity, the autobiographical "I" becomes the communal "we": "We carry six ledgers out of the church" (66). This communal or collective claim by the cultural producer later finds its reciprocation in the alternate narrative when the son articulates another kind of historical legacy: "at certain years of our lives, we see ourselves as remnants of the earlier generations that were destroyed" (179). The aged church registers reveal a familial link between these two narratives, Dr. William Charles Ondaatje, the Director of the Botanical Gardens (67). This botanist was also an author and his 1853 report is at the crux of this writerly movement's intertextuality. In "The Karapothas" -- transvalued as "the foreigners" -- the narrator sketches, by citing the texts of "foreigners" on Ceylon, a history of the intervention of those who "overpowered the land" (80) to gain its delicate spices. Ondaatje offers two intertextual counters to this legacy of commodifying colonization. He cites the works of Robert Knox and W. C. Ondaatje, the latter being particularly aware of Ceylon's "darker side." This perception was joined to a passion for its beauty. The writer/narrator cites at length a footnote from the 1853 report where the botanist "steps away from the formal paper" and "gifts us his heart" (81-2). This ancestor's "journals delight in the beauty and the poisons" of Ceylon. A textual and a literary legacy is suggested.

It is W. C. Ondaatje and Robert Knox who uncover the island's hidden knowledge, its "intricate arts and customs" (82). As Hutcheon notes, it is Knox's text, An Historical

Relation, which suggests the title for the chapter on the Nuwara Eliya circle (1985, 307). Knox's text is also the source for the "ever inquisitive" psychology of Robinson Crusoe, a man who "'lived in an alien land among strangers, cut away from his own countrymen ... and striving hard not only to return but also to employ profitably the single talent that had been given him'" (82-3). The analogies between these historical texts and the cultural productions of the writer are commented upon only by way of their inclusion; however, they begin to (dis)place the autobiographical subject's centre of "rumour" with a certain profitable deployment of "talent." By way of this intertextual history, which is also the discovery of a legacy, this talent is aligned to another history of cultural production, that of the Sinhalese language and its poets and poetry. However, before that alignment is put in place, indeed before the legacy of W. C. Ondaatje is fully articulated, there is a particular re-formulation of the autobiographical subject as producer of culture, and a (dis)placement of the previously installed sites of transversal.

The writer maintains the textual interplay between body and self-consciousness, but the text begins to ironically deconstruct, by way of humour and textual fragmentation, these self-conscious assertions and the boundaries between this narrative and that of the father's son. The writer notes "where sweat falls in the path of this ballpen" (69), and claims "I witnessed everything. One morning I would wake and just smell things for the whole day, it was so rich I had to select senses" (70-1). Here, the writerly self-consciousness is ironically questioned by its own operatic assertion, especially when its hyperbole is shared with the observation that, "often I didn't have time to watch the country slide by thick with event, for everything came directly to me and passed me like snow" (70). The writer who witnesses "everything" plainly has trouble maintaining narrative coherence. Additionally, one of the previously iterated sites of textual transversal is foreclosed, "I slept totally unaware of my dreams" (70).

At the point of this personal intertextual lacuna, another subjectivity is formulated and an additional interplay between "the beauty and the poisons" of Ceylon articulated.

As was noted, the autobiographical subject's own gender definition seeks to surpass the legacy of certain male ceremonies, performative definitions, and ways of assembling history. Beyond the invocation of the communal "we," the transparent deconstruction of claims to narrative coherence, there is also a (dis)placement of intertextual relations. The narrator's dreams are (dis)placed by "one of my children talking about some dream she had before leaving Canada. Spray breaking and blazing white. Mad dog heat" (72). The elliptical ambiguity links daughter to father, and the echo of a father's dream of a father underscores a continuity, but dismantles its gendered certainty. The site of childhood is then linked to childhood memories of the kabaragoyas and thalagoyas: "if a child is given thalagoya tongue to eat he will be brilliantly articulate." The "forked tongue" (73) of this tall tale about the beauty and poison of the thalagoya tongue is followed by another which playfully (dis)places both narrative roles and their projects: "about six months before I was born my mother observed a pair of kabaragoyas 'in copula' at Pelmadulla. A reference is made to this sighting in 'A Coloured Atlas of Some Vertebrates from Ceylon, Vol 2,' a National Museums publication. It is my first memory" (75). The ambiguity of reference in this claim plays with both the search for origin -- what runs in the family -- and the evidentiary claims of the researcher/writer. It (dis)places that work with a literary performance which, by way of a matrilineal alignment, ushers in the text's first poem, "Sweet Like A Crow." The autobiographical subject begins to (dis)place not only the boundaries of his narratives but the gendered givens of historical authority and out of that (dis)placement puts in place another formulation of the autobiographical subject, that of poet.

This poetic response to a citation of Paul Bowles, who asserts that the Sinhalese are "one of the least musical people in the world" (76), installs an intertextual and cultural

critique which in turn leads to "The Karapothas" and its response, by way of W. C. Ondaatje and Knox, to the commentary of foreigners. All of which sets in place a certain claim to cultural origin. The beautiful Sinhalese alphabet is to the writer, "The self-portrait of language," shaped like "the small bones of the body" (83). The paradoxical union of body and language is given its Sinhalese origin and the writer, the self-confessed student-author "of rude expressions on walls," returns to "the 5th Century B.C. graffiti poems" of Sigiriya and the "beautiful false compare" (84) of their love poems. A cultural legacy is emphatically delineated and a political history which is also an aesthetic history is inscribed as the Sigiriya poems are then aligned to the poems of the 1971 insurrections and through the mentorship of Ian Goonetileke, the writer/researcher encounters "the voices I didn't know" (85). With the citation of a poem by Lakdasa Wikkramasinha, the title of this section, "Don't Talk to Me about Matisse" (85), is given its political and historical articulation. As John Russell suggests this section provokes a writerly response (31). What begins as research into family history, becomes, by way of an ironic performative (dis)placement of this search for origin and its evidence, the discovery that this researcher is "the foreigner, I am the prodigal who hates the foreigner" (79) and a post-colonial subjectivity is articulated. A history is inscribed and the writer/narrator locates himself within that colonial and post-colonial history. A new subjectivity is formulated within what was a lacuna in history and from that newly installed self-definition, a new position of address deployed.

The response to the belated discovery of a post-colonial cultural legacy is a series of poems which address the Tamil and Sinhalese who, as the poem "High Flowers" suggests, "my ancestors ignored." As Linda Hutcheon notes, "The political dimension...is tied to the aesthetic ... Ondaatje answers the poem [of Wikkramadinha] with a poem, not about painters from outside, but about the people of the land itself" (1985, 308). However, Hutcheon understates some of the ironies of this performance. While these poems respond to a cultural

legacy, they articulate that legacy as the ancient Sigiriya love poems and bring English "under the influence of a vernacular tongue" (Ashcroft 39). "High Flowers" ironically (dis)places the family of Ondaatje acrobats with the coconut-gathering husband who "moves / in the air between tress" (87). The poem also transparently admits to a particular cultural epistemology: "He works fast to reach his quota / before the maniac monsoon. / The shape of the knife and pot / do not vary from 18th Century museum prints" (88). The gesture toward the economic status of the gatherer, his "quota," is joined to the aesthetics of the museum. The poet's knowledge of the gatherer's life owes as much to the museum as it does to any personal observation. He attempts to bridge that divide through a familiar invocation.

The poet argues that while official history records the public, "Kings. Fortresses. Traffic in open sun," it is the unrecorded private which he will now inscribe, "everything that is important occurs in shadow . . . In the high trees above her / shadows eliminate the path he moves along" (89). Likewise, the poet's commitment to the romanticism of heterosexuality, its private acts and public declarations, underwrites the claim made in "Women Like You," that the Sigiriya poets, "carved an alphabet whose motive was perfect desire" (93). As the poet of "The Cinnamon Peeler" suggests, the true site of this private inscription is the body, for there is no value to be "wounded without the pleasure of a scar" (96). This lyrical socialism links him to his maternal grandmother, Lalla (122), and its insistence on inscribing an idealized heterosexuality also emphasizes the autobiographical subject's unresolved dilemma.

While the text's final three movements will align Mervyn Ondaatje to a textual history, as the producer of papers on plants and animals, and the founder of "The Ceylon Cactus and Succulent Society" (196), this alignment does not unravel another enigma, another historical lacuna. While the autobiographical writer claims the role of inscribing the personal lives of those "my ancestors ignored" (87), the autobiographical son declares that "Nothing is said of

the closeness between two people: how they grew in the shade of each other's presence" (54). All he can ask is "Where is the intimate and truthful in all this?" (54). The research which enabled the writer to inscribe the shadowed private history of Tamil and Sinhalese men and women is now deployed to construct some contingent resolution, impose some narrative order onto an intimate code of heterosexuality which he can not claim to decipher, but which he can inscribe. As Kamboureli suggests, "The father's other is the writer the son has become; in turn, the mirror becomes page 189 of Running in the Family" (90). The retrospective sweep of this miniature portrait of a father's final voyage overtly blends fact and fiction to impose a kind of closure, the gesture of closure on an impossible narration. The writer cannot bear witness to this man, this father, only his own production of a text, and the limits of that self-reflection are underscored. Nature has no closure, "Nature advanced" (189). It witnesses that self-reflection and moves on, carrying "the page away from its source" (189). When this closure is installed the self-conscious writer must still "[w]atch the hand move. Waiting for it to say something, to stumble casually on perception, the shape of an unknown thing" (190). In contrast, the "body must remember everything" (202). In the end the tension between the natural and the fabricated remains, "all this Beethoven and rain" (203).

Ondaatje claims a Sri Lankan legacy for his text because of a closure he himself comes to impose on a kind of Ceylonese history. The autobiographical subject has inscribed himself into a history, discovered himself within its boundaries, but like Kogawa's Naomi, it is not the fictive of this enterprise which most questions this closure, it is not its constructedness which causes doubt. It is the body, the site of the liminality of self-consciousness, the site which both locates the lacunae of discourse and surpasses its compass, the body which gestures toward a symbiotic never completely (dis)placed by the symbolic, this is the body which continually questions its own performance, and the "theatre" of its inscriptions.

Conclusion

This thesis begins to demonstrate how these three texts locate and align two related cultural critiques. The first critique relates to the construction of gender and race categories and identities, both within the historical inscriptions which these texts (dis)place as well as the ones which they inscribe. The second critique questions local articulations of epistemological paradigms within the discourses of modernism: particular inflections of its inscription of history as sociology, its authorization of the "machine" as social model and exact and exacting "final" arbiter, and a particular colonial articulation of a genre of literary modernism in English. The series of postmodern questions set out in the Introduction can now be responded to, if not completely answered. How do these texts invoke and (dis)place particular paradigms of modernism? When and how do they create cultural accommodations and affiliations?

Although critical responses to these texts, including this one, are all prey to what Wittig suggests is a certain ability to find exactly what is being sought (23), by its noting how these texts implicate the categories of race and gender, and the politics of cultural identity in relation to the narrating *sujet-en-procès*, this paper's interpretations mark out a set of observations which gather around particular inscriptions of the "history" of a "subject."

In all of these texts, the lacunae of material history, both textual and that which exceeds the textual, are the loci in which the narrators re-formulate their subjectivity. Although these narrators struggle against hegemonic discourses, their crises are not centered on the inscriptions themselves but are gathered around absences, particularly communal and familial absences. These absences represent the lived effects of those hegemonic discourses. As post-colonial inscriptions, the absences which these texts delineate are all linked to the

lived effects of the discourses of Empire. These discourses have materially (dis)placed the communities in which these narrators inscribe their histories.

These texts also point to the body as the site of the liminality of discourse and an unarticulable interrelationship between the "human" and the "non-human." These gestures are themselves heterogeneously aligned to the liminality of self-reflection and to questions about the humanist imprint on our formulations of dyads like subject/object and subject/other. These gestures to the body do not install an ideal or romantic relationship to the "natural" other, rather they emphasize both the liminality of discourse and a rejection of humanist brackets which delimit every body as "other" in and to the world.

As well, all three texts address the problematics of accommodation and affiliation. Culleton's In Search of April Raintree examined the sociology of modernism and its intrication with racialized discourse and economic accommodations. Its "naive" gesture toward a symbiotic "human" - "non-human" relationship asked the reader to align herself according to the "choices" April is offered. April's final act of affiliation -- and it is affiliation not filiation which is put in place -- problematizes Hutcheon's insistence that our status within late capitalism is inescapable. Its gesture, through Cheryl's narrative, asks that we question the costs of that claim.

Kogawa's Obasan inscribes not only an "unofficial" history; through its title character, it demonstrates that history is not only apprehended as text, it is among us, transcribed across the bodies of those who have borne the imprint of history. Naomi's narrative also questions the relations between "wealth" and racialized discourse and as with Culleton's text it addresses historically constructed communities of interpretation to question their particular ideological constructs. While Culleton addressed the Métis community about the abuse of alcohol and the damage which it carries, Kogawa addressed the Japanese Canadian community about the construction of gender roles. Naomi's narrative, in its deployment of a sorority of voices

emphasized the heterogeneity of women's voices within material history versus the idealization of obedient *ayashi*. In that sense both of these texts are involved with healing processes and not simply with underlining the hegemonic and subverting its authority.

Ondaatje's Running in the Family marks out a paradigm shift whereby the son of the compradore becomes the Canadian post-colonial Sri Lankan author. It inscribes not only a history but a literary legacy beyond the boundaries of the canonical. Its underscoring of a hybridity which challenges the "stable" categories of identity put in place by the discourses of Empire demonstrates that concepts of heterogeneity and hybridity have existed far longer than the European mind and its North American offshoots might admit. Like Kogawa's and Culleton's text it also gestures toward a relationship with a troubling "natural" world, emphasizing in that gesture the liminality of self-reflection. What is also clear in Ondaatje's text is that Hutcheon's postmodern process of installing and questioning, using and abusing particular literary gestures or genres underestimates how the boundaries of discourse, while readily challenged, are not as easily (dis)placed. Ondaatje's deployment of a particular inflection of literary modernism to create a portrait of Mervyn Ondaatje calls into question the Tamil filiation which he inscribes to resolve this portrait. Unlike the narrator of Ondaatje's text this gesture comes too late.

What is clear from this paper's interpretation of these texts is that Hutcheon's insistence on the ironic as the appropriate mode of inscription occludes those texts which may be addressing a particular heterogenous interpretive community or one which historically has been more sharply delineated in its deployment of categories of identity. In both of these cases, a multiple positionality needs to put in place. A text such as Kogawa's which addresses and inscribes multiple histories must deploy a range of modalities. Integrating the history of the internment and Nagasaki calls for voices beyond the ironic. As well, Hutcheon's delineation of modernism as univocal -- the shout of the International Style -- not

only denies the heterogeneity of that period but also, because of its privileging of the aesthetic object to periodize history, marginalizes other cultural paradigms which modernism put in place.

The emergence of these autobiographical fictions as cultural products within sets of critical discourses, such as "feminism" and the "post-colonial," demonstrate the need to go beyond invocations of subversion or authenticity. As noted, these texts are not only self-reflexive, they are self-critical and question ideologies within their own historically constructed communities. Interpreting these texts simply in terms of the categories of "subversion" or "authenticity" denies their heterogeneity and their individually troubling inscriptions, their singular history of a subject.

1 Conventions and etiquettes refer to a cluster of concepts about discourse genres, their formation and formulation. John Frow's "Discourse and Power," offers a particular articulation of these concepts. Discourse genres have different modes of "authority within the discursive economy as a whole and in relation to the distribution of social power" (213). At the level of "utterance," Frow by way of Bakhtin, asserts that the production of meaning in each genre "is stratified as a social practice through the importance of 'language etiquette, speech-tact, and other forms of adjusting an utterance to the hierarchical organization of society'" (213).

What Frow emphasizes is the intrication of power in the distribution of meaning-making throughout the discursive system: "The most important factor here is the discontinuity between discursive positions and the actual social position of the speaker. The positions of utterance and reception which are specified as appropriate are empty and normative positions which may be filled, or rejected, or ironized, or parodied, or replaced with alternative positions" (216). Bakhtin writes that "genres are so diverse because they differ depending on the situation, social position, and personal interrelations of the participants in the communication" (1986, 79). As well, the "archaic" elements of a genre are constantly renewed and contemporized (1984, 106). Related to these questions of discourse genre are the issues of legitimization which surround the setting of norms. Edward Said underscores the importance of actual affiliations between scholarship and audience. He argues that we must ask who is allowed to address the questions and provide any answers (Said, 1983, 142-4).

As to literature and genre, Tzvetan Todorov notes "An entity called "literature" functions at the level of intersubjective and social relations" (2). Function and structure implicate each other in the system of genres, but it is function and the ideological practices that delineate those functions which underwrite the construction of genres of discourse, "Any verbal property, optional at the level of language, may be made obligatory in discourse; the choice a society makes among all the possible codification of discourse determines what is called its *system of genres*" (10).

2 By referring to these texts as "autobiographical fictions," I want to emphasize the ways in which these three texts emulate, engage or contest the rules of autobiography. Although Ondaatje's text adheres to many of the "conventions" of the genre, it is also in some sense a biography of his father. Culleton's and Kogawa's text are not conventionally considered autobiography, although it is commonly understood that both of these texts are based on lived experience and they gain their authority within discourse from that knowledge. Reading them as emulations of autobiography opens up the interpretive enquiry into how they play with the concepts of "subject" and "history." Todorov in Genres in Discourse outlines the main elements of the autobiography: and that in connection to "genres bring to light the constitutive features of the society to which they belong (19). "An autobiography is different from a novel in that its author claims to be recounting facts and not constructing fictions" (18). "The autobiography is defined by two identifications: the author's identification with the narrator, and the narrator's identification with the chief protagonist. This chief identification is obvious; it is the one expressed in the prefix *auto-* and the one that makes it possible to differentiate autobiography from biography or memoirs. The first one is more subtle: it distinguishes autobiography (like biography and memoirs) from the novel, even though a given novel may be full of elements drawn from the author's life. In short, this

identification separates all the "referential" or "historical" genres from all the "fictional" genres: the reality of the referent is clearly indicated, because we are dealing with the author of the book himself, an individual who has a civil status in his home town. This we are dealing with a speech act that codifies both semantic properties (by virtue of the author-narrator identification; one must speak of oneself) and pragmatic properties (by virtue of the author-narrator identification; one claims to be telling the truth and not a fiction" (25).

3 The interstices of "material" history points toward both the absence of texts, of memory, and of physical presence. All of these absences are suggested by this deployment of material histories. It is an epistemological materialism and a practical materialism. Also relevant in this regard is the role of historical narrative as comprehension.

Within the "human sciences," the role of narrative is explored in the following texts: Arrow, Kenneth. "Rationality of Self and Others in an Economic System." and Simon, Herbert A., "Rationality in Psychology and Economics." Rational Choice: The Contrast between Economics and Psychology. Ed. Robin M. Hogarth and Melvin W. Reder. Chicago: U Chicago P, 1986. Cover, Robert. Narrative, Violence, and the Law. Ed. Martha Minow et al. Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 1992.

The role of the narrative in construction of a subjectivity is explored in the following texts: Gergen, Kenneth J., and Mary M. Gergen. "Narratives of the Self." Mancuso, James C. and Theodore Sarbin. "The Self-Narrative in the Enactment of Roles." All of which are in Studies in Social Identity. Ed. Theodore Sarbin and Karl E. Schiebe. Ed. Theodore Sarbin and Karl E. Schiebe. Praeger Special Studies. Praeger Scientific. New York: Praeger, 1983. As well the following: Crites, Stephen. "Storytime: Recollecting the Past and Projecting the Future." Gergen, Kenneth J., and Mary M. Gergen. "Narrative Form and the Construction of Psychological Science." and Mancuso, James C., "The Acquisition and Use of Narrative Grammar Structure." and Robinson, John A. and Linda Hawpe. "Narrative Thinking as a Heuristic Process." and Sarbin, Theodore R. "The Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Psychology." all of which are found in Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct. Ed. Theodore R. Sarbin. Praeger Special Studies. Praeger Scientific. New York: Praeger, 1986.

4 Emplotedness refers to a concept detailed by Hayden White in his essay, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact." White emphasizes the fictive qualities of history writing by invoking Northrop Frye's theories of literary archetypes: "Yet, I would argue, histories gain part of their explanatory effect by their success in making stories out of *mere* chronicles, and stories in turn are made out of chronicles by an operation which I have elsewhere called "emplotment." And by emplotment I mean simply the encodation of the facts contained in the chronicles as components of specific *kinds* of plot structures, in precisely the way that Frye has suggested is the case with "fictions" in general" (83).

5 Simulacra is a term given a particular definition by Baudrillard. For Baudrillard the contemporary is the era of the "hyperreal," there is no longer any link between essence and appearance, there are only relations between "that which is already produced." A hyperreality of pure surface where "simulation corresponds to a short-circuit of reality and its reduplication by signs" (Simulations, 143-46).

6 Trojan Horse refers to a metaphorical articulation of the role of the literary text in society, as outlined by Monique Wittig in an essay of the same name (1984). While the essay focuses on how particular works function as "war machine[s]" in the culture which produces them, it is also a way of thinking about words: "Words are, each one of them, like the Trojan Horse. They are things, material things and at the same time they mean something. And it is because they mean something that they are abstract" (71). I would qualify that latter assertion by emphasizing the potentiality for meaning rather than claiming a necessary relationship. Wittig also emphasizes that it is "the attempted universalization of the point of view that turns or does not turn a literary work into a war machine" (75). The autobiographical, by defining its position of address within the enunciative "I" of subjectivity, what Benveniste refers to as "the primary exemplification of the discontinuous nature of the linguistic subject" (218), installs that universalization.

7 This thesis, deploying a certain economy, refers to the categories of race and gender not as "natural" categories but as the effects of discourse. I recognize both of these categories and the interpretive communities aligned to those categories as socially constructed. As well, race is used in this thesis in a broad context. Because the discourses between various "ethnic" groups can and often does install or emulate racialized discourse, race becomes a term which can be used to refer to that discourse status and its material effects in the construction of historical communities.

8 Although the terms post-colonial and postmodern are engaged with and articulated in the thesis, I will briefly outline my position vis-a-vis these discourses and the deployment of these terms. The arbitrary distinction which this thesis deploys is one which thinks about the postmodern as a set of questions and the post-colonial as a set of inscriptions. The postmodern questions follow from a set of ideological positions about the status of the subject, language, philosophy and history. In the subsequent note (8), I cite Jane Flax's useful outline of a set of "humanist" or rational claims which the postmodern contests. These positions necessitate the questioning of any categories or cultural formulations which deploy either a binary logic or invoke the status of "natural" to maintain the ideological stability of their philosophical categories and ideological categorizations. Thus, this paper thinks of the questions which probe the construction of these "stable" categories as postmodern. However, the inscriptions, the narratives, the histories, which (dis)place these hegemonic discourses, are, in the case of this thesis post-colonial. They are post-colonial because of the material history to which they refer, the particular problematics which gather around the status of the English language, the relationship between subject and geography, and principally for the way their language figures the hegemonic -- as the conflict between the colonizer and the colonized.

While, Hutcheon's postmodern discourse suggests an alternative historicity for feminism, that distinction does not sufficiently problematize the heterogeneity of inscription. The point is that inscriptions are not only about questions they are also about creating, however contingently, networks of reference. Post-colonial inscriptions, because of their relationship to history, language, the subject and philosophy are concerned not only to contest humanist certainties they are also putting in place networks of reference which will (dis)place hegemonic texts not simply with ironic emulations or re-fabricated archetypal gestures and inscriptions but with particular histories which are alternative, local. These texts inscribe material histories occluded by racialized

discourse, patriarchy and a canonical English literature which determined appropriate textual affiliations and articulations.

9 Jane Flax, in the journal Signs, outlines a series of philosophical assertions which postmodern thought challenges:
"1. The existence of a stable, coherent self ... 2. Reason and its "science," philosophy, can provide an objective, reliable, and universal foundation for knowledge ... 3. The knowledge acquired by the right use of reason will be 'True'... 4. Reason itself has transcendental and universal qualities." There is a necessary interrelationship between reason, autonomy, and freedom, which reason legislates, thus "Truth can serve power" and "knowledge can be neutral." Science is the "exemplar of the right use of reason ... 8. Language is in some sense transparent ... a medium through which" the representation of knowledge is shared. Also, "there is a correspondence between 'word' and 'thing'" and objects are "made present" by language, not constructed by it (12:4, 624-625).

10 A clear statement about the necessity for a political ethos is found in Charles Taylor's The Malaise of Modernity. Taylor argues that one potential malaise in contemporary life is social fragmentation: "a people increasingly less capable of forming a common purpose and carrying it out. Fragmentation arises when people come to see themselves more and more atomistically....less and less bound to their fellow citizens in common projects and allegiances" (112-3). The postmodern question then arises: How does someone distinguish between fragmentation and the potentially contestatory discourses of local legitimization? These texts all confront the dilemmas of what Said terms "filiation" and "affiliation" (1986, passim). Disposition , character of community

11 Hutcheon, Linda. A Poetics of Postmodernism, passim. This study engages more particularly in that insistence of the ironic mode when it engages with Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction.

12 ibid., passim.

13 ibid, 105-23 and passim.

14 Stanley Fish, in outlining a brief history of the term and concept "rhetoric," refers to Thomas Kuhn's particular definition of paradigm and its deployment in discourse: "[science] proceeds when the proponents of one paradigm are able to present their case in a way that the adherents of other paradigms find compelling. In short, the "motor" by which science moves is not verification or falsification, but persuasion" (211). Critical Terms for Literary Study. Ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin. p. 211.

The paradigm of the machine refers to a series of discourses within modernism which deployed the machine as aesthetic, social, or epistemological model, as well as those discourses which contested that deployment. The former group would include the Futurists, the constructivists and of course Le Corbusier, who contributed the articulation of the architectural space as machine. Because of its importance to Marinetti and the futurists, the machine as ideal is embedded in the discourses of the avant-garde.

The man-machine paradigm contends that the same laws of physics govern both and thus all human behaviour is empirically attributable, that is patterns of behaviour can be predicted. The part these paradigm's played in the zeitgeist of modernism can also be seen by the texts which countered this epistemology. Capek's R.U.R and Georg Kaiser's Gas as well as Elmer Rice's The Adding Machine are three plays which spoke against this adulation of a kind of abstraction and reification.

15 Brick, 1992:44, 37. Toni Morrison is interviewed by Salman Rushdie.

16 Leroy Searle in "Afterword: Criticism and the Claims of Reason," aligns Northrop Frye's archetypal criticism to the work of the structuralists. What they have in common and what, I argue, allows me to refer to these various methodologies under the banner of formalism is a concern with "forms," or genres or types of literature. While literary history usually aligns "formalism" to the work of the Russian formalists, such as Jakobson, what is common to Northrop Frye, Hayden White, and Linda Hutcheon is a concern to isolate and analyze in terms of typologies, to develop a comprehension through an understanding of forms, and thus create a systematic criticism, a poetics.

17 As part of his adumbration of narrative comprehension, Louis Mink distinguishes between narrative and chronicle in terms of the claims to a kind of intertextuality. Hayden White calls that distinction into question by focusing not on generic claim but on reader comprehension.

18 In "The System and the Speaking Subject," Julia Kristeva defines her project of semanalysis as one which "conceives of meaning not as a sign-system but as a signifying process" (28). In that context semiotics can "establish the heterogenous logic of signifying practices, and locate them, finally and by way of their subject, in the historically determined relations of production. Semiotics can lead to a historical typology of signifying practices by the mere fact of recognizing the specific status within them of the speaking subject" (32). Thus, the *sujet-en-procès* is both the site of meaning-making and the axis of an analytical process which seeks to delineate, by way of the "subject," the regulatory norms of discourses -- consequently and provisionally their histories.

19 The Canadian Book Review Annual: 1983 provides a synopsis of the initial media response to Flanagan's texts. Tabor, Dean, and Ann Tudor, eds. Canadian Book Review Annual: 1983. Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1984. 314-5.

20 In some sociological discourses syndrome is a "set of characteristics, or behaviour that has come to be symbolized or associated with one person (real or fictitious) or group." The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought. Ed. Allan Bullock and Oliver Stallybrass. London: Fontana Press, 1988. 840.

21 Bakhtin, M. M. Speech Genres and Other Late Essays. Trans. Vern W. McGhee. Ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1986. 92.

22 Historiographer, Hayden White, in Tropics of Discourse, gestures to the moment when our writing meets a desire for a certain illuded clarity of expression. This is the moment when discourse "tends to slip away

from our data towards the structures of consciousness" (1). What is met in that place is a kind of resistance to coherence. Every discourse, in its attention to that resistance, as one of its etiquettes, displays its lack of intact authority, its status as doubt, "on its very surface." This desire to, and production of, display is a moment of "trope."

In White's use of the term, trope is a turn away from logical demonstration to the selection of a rhetorical figuration which initiates a style, sets into place a way of writing history. White argues that various tropic sets -- and he gestures towards the narrative configurations offered by Burke, Marx and Freud -- taken as unique sets, trace an increasingly complex rhetorical transformation, a certain evolution in consciousness: movement from a naive narrative to a self-reflective one. In the present context and at the suggestion of our interlocutor, Hayden White, we can think about Northrop Frye's archetypes of narration. The official history to which Obasan replies might, as part of its desire to drape a certain doubt, explain the internment camps by deploying romantic myths of heroism, comic myths of "progress," tragic myths of fall and decline, or ironic myths of "recurrence and casual catastrophe" (82).

23 Both Ed Jewinski and Sam Solecki note Ondaatje's humorous deflections from personal revelation. Jewinski opens his text by enumerating a number of these apocryphal diversions including Ondaatje's claim that he developed and breed the 'Sydenham Spaniel' (10). Jewinski suggests that "Ondaatje wants to maintain his privacy, but he clearly doesn't want to be forgotten. He rarely offers accurate information about his life, and when pestered by reporters or interviewers he resorts to wit to deflect attention from anything truly personal" (10). As well, Jewinski notes the particular difficulties confronting the archival researcher of Ondaatje's texts, which Jewinski claims is in some part due to the strict control which Ondaatje exercises over their dissemination (134). In Spider Blues: Essays on Michael Ondaatje, Sam Solecki prefaces his 1984 interview of Ondaatje by noting the difficulty of the encounter and the editorial etiquettes imposed on the process (321).

24 Ondaatje opens In the Skin of a Lion by citing John Berger: "Never again will a single story be told as though it were the only one (2).

25 The text which is "opaque" in an enunciative sense underscores the "presence" within its enunciative inscription of the speaker/writer and consequently is self-reflexive.

26 "Gesture" has a particular set of connotations in painting and the plastic arts which are pertinent to this paper's interpretations. Gombrich defines "gesture" as "the microstructure of movement and shapes" in a work which indicates the "personal accent of an artist" (365). It has conventionally referred to "conspicuous brushwork" as well as the "movement of the body in the painting process" (Bullock, 360). Irving Sandler in an essay, "Gesture and Non-Gesture in Recent Sculpture," deploys the word in the same sense as Gombrich: "[gestures] become signs of the artist's particular creative process" (310). Thus, when the narrator of Running in the Family makes intermittent reference to the action of his hand writing or his body absorbing sensation (e.g., 10, 202) he deploys a particular articulation of "gesture" in the plastic arts. As well, Ondaatje's use of the term

in the text's Acknowledgements indicates that the reader will encounter motifs familiar from earlier work. It also indicates, as this paper notes, a particular process of work and position vis-a-vis the work.

27 Relevant to the cultural frame which Ondaatje's text creates for Mervyn Ondaatje, is a citation of F. Scott Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald, with the added authority of Gertrude Stein voices a certain dismay at a coming reversion to earlier male gender roles. In commenting on a number of contemporary "erotic" novels or works which dealt with sexuality, he suggests: "these works....did not one particle of harm. Everything they described, and much more, was familiar in our contemporary life. The majority of the these were honest and elucidating - their effort was to restore some dignity to the male as opposed to the he-man in American Life. ('And what is a 'He-man'?' demanded Gertrude Stein one day. 'Isn't it a large enough order to fill out to the dimensions of all that 'a man' has meant in the past? A 'he-man'!')" (16-17).

28 In broad strokes, the sonata structure of the text is configured in the following manner. The initial statement of themes is presented in the text's opening: the untitled map, the two epigraphs and the author's epigraph, "Drought since December." These themes are then re-stated and developed in the "Asian Rumours" section which completes the piece's Opening. The First Major Movement, "A Fine Romance," privileges the position of address of the autobiographical narrator/son inscribing a family history. The Second Major Movement, "Don't Talk To Me About Matisse," privileges the position of address of the Writer/Researcher investigating the larger intertextual history of both his family and "Ceylon." The coda or bridge section, "Eclipse Plumage," explores the histories of several women in the extended Ondaatje "family" and explores the alternative histories which their lives constitute. The fourth section, "The Prodigal," recalls the themes of the Second Major Movement, but incorporates as a counter-motif, inscriptions of the narrator/son. The fifth section," What We Think of Married Life," returns to the theme of the First Major Movement, the history of the family and, as counter-motif, emphasizes the position of the Writer/Researcher. The concluding section, "The Ceylon Cactus and Succulent Society" joins the major themes and their variations in a denouement.

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