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TIME AND SUBJECTIVITY IN CONTEMPORARY SHORT FICTION

by

Ailsa Cox

A Doctoral Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of

Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

30th April 1999

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Little Disturbances  Grace Paley, The Little Disturbances of Man (London: Virago, 1980)

Enormous Changes  Grace Paley, Enormous Changes at the Last Minute (London: Virago, 1990)


For simplicity's sake, my close textual readings refer to Paley's work by collection, while referring to Munro's, Mansfield's and Egerton's by individual story.


'Author and Hero'  M.M. Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', in Art and Answerability, ed. by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, trans. by Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), pp.4-256

"Discourse" M.M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp.259-422

"Forms of Time" M.M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp.84-258


| Revolution                              | Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. by Margaret Waller  
ABSTRACT

The aesthetics of contemporary short fiction have been shaped by its ability to engage with time as a boundless process of becoming. Historically and philosophically, the emergence of the short story as a specific genre may be related to modernist concepts of time and subjectivity. 'Real' time, as it is experienced by the subject, is a flux, in which past and present co-mingle. In Bergsonian terms, an unquantifiable 'duration' is contrasted with Newtonian concepts of absolute time as a succession of discrete units. As Hanson has argued, narrative in the short story is structured by a seemingly random association of images rather than linear causality.

I contextualize the short story genre, historically and culturally, examining texts by George Egerton and Katherine Mansfield before moving on to the main focus of my thesis, which is texts by Alice Munro and Grace Paley. These also present a dynamic reality, within time as a continuum. However, while utilizing modernist techniques, they also subvert them, problematizing concepts of transcendence. The blurring of the boundaries between autobiographical discourse, orality and fiction is used to destabilize notions of a unified subjectivity and of fixed truth.

My analysis applies Bakhtinian theories on language
and subject formation to investigate this presentation of time as endless self-renewal. I also draw on Genette's narrative theory and introduce Kristeva's theory to investigate the speaking subject from a psychoanalytical viewpoint, with particular reference to the gendered subject. The Bakhtinian concept of the chronotope enables the theorization of the space-time nexus as the foundation of generic specificity; I offer a generic chronotope for the short story, which is grounded in the present moment. An examination of the fiction-making process, through a discussion of my own short stories, concludes this discussion of the short story as a form of contact with undefinable reality.
INTRODUCTION

The short story has been a marginalized genre, neglected by literary criticism and frequently regarded as a stunted version of the novel (1). British writers are unlikely to publish a short story collection before they have made their mark as novelists. In Canada and, especially, the United States, the short story has achieved higher status as a national art form, as I explain in Chapter 1. But the novel remains the dominant prose genre on both sides of the Atlantic. Both Alice Munro and Grace Paley, the writers whose texts provide the main focus for this study, came under pressure to produce a novel early in their careers. Their attempts at delivering 'full length' fiction simply generated sequences of interconnecting stories, just as Katherine Mansfield's ideas for a novel based in her native New Zealand were transmuted into more short fiction.

Because of the tendency to dismiss the short story as mere apprentice work, short story criticism has been overshadowed by a desire to raise its status by proving generic specificity (2). This was the original motivation behind my own research. But, as I familiarized myself with previous studies, from Poe onwards, I moved away from a defensive agenda. I am reluctant to confine artistic potential within a system of narrow classification. One of the most exciting aspects of
postmodern literature has been the crossing of generic boundaries, as I discuss in Chapter 4. For these reasons, I do not supply an ultimate definition of the short story genre. But I do hope to demonstrate ways in which the aesthetics of contemporary short fiction have been shaped by its unique relationship with time.

This specific engagement with time, and its implications for the nature of subjectivity, became clear to me as I examined texts by Munro and Paley. I chose these authors because both their reputations are founded, almost exclusively, on the short story. Paley has also published poetry and Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* is sometimes classified as a novel (see Chapter 4); but they are rare exceptions, in that they have achieved relatively high literary standing through a low status genre. Munro is Canadian, while Paley is from the US; they do not, as yet, have equivalents in the British literary canon. I have also included readings of texts by George Egerton and Katherine Mansfield; in order to analyse the organization of time in the contemporary short story, it became necessary to retrace its modernist and symbolist roots.

All my close readings are of texts by women writers. I wish to celebrate their achievements. All of them investigate the role of the female artist. They all dismantle the construct of a unitary, phallocentric subject, questioning the possibility of a single, fixed
reality. I consider the relationship between gender and genre, and between gender and language. I address both writers' use of traditional 'feminine' strategies of silence and subterfuge; and ways in which they present female experience, such as maternity. However, important though it is, gender is not always my prime consideration. Just as I want to avoid constricting my discussion of the short story genre by concentrating too much on past misconceptions, I do not wish to restrict women writers to a purely female tradition. In her recent book on Munro, Coral Ann Howells places her within such a tradition, rightly acknowledging her debt to Cather, Welty and others; but she barely mentions Joyce, and omits any mention of Updike, cited by Munro as an influence in two important interviews (3).

I have taken an eclectic approach to my research, drawing on a range of theoretical approaches, according to the practical insight they gave into the literary texts. A common theme in many of the theories I have used has been a desire to resist totalizing systems; in tackling contemporary short fiction from a variety of perspectives, I hope that I am being true to the multiplicity and dynamism of the form itself. The thesis is founded on textual analysis and close reading, which are opened up by philosophical argument; critical theory serves the text and not vice versa.

I began my research with a particular interest
in the interplay of voices in the short story, and in the interconnection between speech and literary discourse. This led me towards Bakhtin, whose dialogic theories have provided most of the theoretical basis of this thesis (4). This has been combined with Kristevan theory, which adds a psychoanalytical dimension to consideration of the speaking subject (5). In order to study the interaction of time, text and subjectivity, and to appreciate modernist aesthetics, I have discussed Bergson's philosophy at some length (6). These three thinkers share a concern with temporal fluidity, reality as process and the complex interaction between individual consciousness and the material world and, despite significant differences, complement each other. Genette's work on narrative theory has provided an invaluable tool for textual analysis (7). I have also referred to Ong's concepts of primary and secondary orality (8).

Chapter 1 surveys the emergence of the short story as a self-conscious genre, towards the end of the nineteenth century. It associates the rise of the short story with discourses of modernity, through magazine culture and the abandonment of the traditional three-volume novel. Both Poe's American nationalist claims for short fiction and its international affiliations are examined. I also begin an investigation into the complex relationship between gender, genre and modernity,
which continues into the next chapter. I give a close reading of George Egerton's 'A Cross Line' as an example of 'plotless' short fiction, rendering fleeting impressions and changing moods. The story manifests a new attitude towards time and subjectivity which is a major preoccupation of modernist aesthetics.

In Chapter 2, I outline the modernist rejection of absolute, Newtonian time, in favour of concepts of time as flux. This is demonstrated with reference to Nietzsche and Freud, and to relativist and quantum physics. This conceptual shift is related to the cultural changes brought about through technological innovations, such as the cinema, wireless and the telephone. Most of the chapter, however, concentrates on Bergsonian philosophy as a key to modernist aesthetics, and as a means to theorize the presentation of time in textual analysis. I explain the opposition between 'clock time' and Bergsonian 'duration', and Bergson's work on perception and memory. I then give a close reading of Katherine Mansfield's 'Bliss', which both utilizes and subverts his ideas. The modernist concern with the passing moment and with presenting a complex interiority, in which past and present states co-mingle, has been crucial to the development of the short story which, as Hanson argues, is structured by a seemingly random association of images rather than linear causality.

Chapter 3 introduces Bakhtinian theory. Although
I link Bakhtin with a modernist emphasis on process, I am primarily concerned with his ideas as an aspect of contemporary critical theory. Chapter 3 marks a shift from contextualizing the short story to more purely theoretical concerns, as I begin my analysis of texts by Munro and Paley. I discuss double-voiced discourse in the short story, demonstrating how multiple meanings are generated through language. I introduce the concept of carnival ambivalence, which suspends linear time; and explicate Bakhtin's account of subject formation. In this chapter, I begin to use Genette's theories to anatomize elliptical narrative structures. I also look at the short story sequence as an 'open text'.

Chapter 4 examines autobiographical discourse in Munro and Paley as an aspect of carnival ambivalence. Autobiographical discourse is also used by these writers to interrogate the relationship between lived experience and fiction. Munro and Paley adapt modernist techniques; they share their modernist precursors' apprehension of time as a continuum, and their interest in rendering subjective experience. But they depart from the modernist paradigm by questioning the possibility of a transcendent self and an essential reality which may, ultimately, be grasped through aesthetic experience, however diffuse this may be. My discussion of autobiographical discourse in the short story also includes a consideration of its incorporation of orality, using Ong's theories;
and the concept of the short story sequence as an 'open
text' is widened to include the whole body of work produced
by each author.

Chapter 5 probes more deeply into the relationship
between subjectivity and the signifying process, with
particular reference to gendered identity. Here I draw
largely on Kristevan theory, relating her ideas to
Bakhtin's. Once again, I explore, through close reading,
ways in which unitary meaning is disrupted and the subject
destabilized; and in which time is presented as an
unfinalizable present. I apply her theory of abjection
to a close reading of a text by Munro. This is followed
by a further consideration of carnival ambivalence in
the presentation of maternal experience in Paley's work.

In Chapter 6, the Bakhtinian concept of the chronotope
is used to theorize the space-time nexus as the ground
on which generic specificity is based. I offer a generic
chronotope for the short story, founded in its engagement
with time as the boundless moment of becoming. Returning
briefly to the cultural considerations I included in
my discussion of modernist discourse on time, I relate
this to postmodern concepts of space-time compression,
which are evoked in stories about travel by Munro and
Paley. I conclude by suggesting ways in which new types
of narrative may be generated from the dialogue between
textuality, orality and secondary orality.

My substantial experience as a short story writer
cannot but inform my critical judgement. I utilize this experience in my final chapter, to build a bridge between critical theory and creative practice. It consists of a short story, 'Making It Happen', which I wrote during my research, followed by a commentary which reflects on its composition in the light of the theoretical insights I have gained. Unlike previous chapters, Chapters 7 is time-specific. Apart from simple corrections, its content was fixed at the second draft, in the summer of 1998. This is because the commentary refers to its immediate context, as it tackles the writing process from within.

As Bakhtin says, 'there is no first or last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context' (9). The diverse chapters of this thesis form a dialogue. It does not end with a formal conclusion, but is, I hope, ultimately unified by its understanding of the short story genre's particular ability to engage with the experience of time as the indefinable present, which vanishes even as it has arisen.
References

1. Studies of the short story which address the low status of the genre include Clare Hanson (ed.), Re-Reading the Short Story (London: Macmillan, 1989); Susan Lohafer, Coming to Terms with the Short Story (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985) and Valerie Shaw, The Short Story: a Critical Introduction (London: Longman, 1983).

2. In Short Story Theory at a Crossroads, edited by Susan Lohafer and Jo Ellyn Clarey (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), articles by Norman Friedman, Mary Rohrberger, Douglas Hesse and others debate the necessity of defining a short story genre. See Chapter 3 for a brief discussion of this issue.


4. See Chapter 3.

5. See Chapter 5.


7. See Chapters 3 and 4.

8. See Chapter 4.
CHAPTER ONE: THE SHORT STORY AND MODERNITY

The Culture of the Short Story

The history of the modern short story begins with the rise of mass circulation magazines, towards the end of the nineteenth century. Increased literacy widened the market for all kinds of reading matter. Advances in print technology lowered publishing costs while improving production values. There was a boom in general interest magazines which published fiction alongside journalism.

According to Mott, there were 3,300 American periodicals in 1885. Another seven and a half thousand titles were added over the next twenty years. Half of these had disappeared or been merged by 1905, but, overall, circulation was growing fast. In 1885, twenty-one American magazines sold over 100,000 copies per issue. This number had risen to 159 by 1905 (1). In Britain, almost 3000 magazines and reviews were being published in 1910 (2).

On both sides of the Atlantic, these publications were the primary outlet for short stories. In 1884, the American Literary World observed 'a spurt this year in short stories, the demand for which is always greater than the supply' (3). George Gissing was paid twice as much to write stories for the Illustrated London
News as he earned for his novels (4). For the more upmarket periodicals, quality fiction boosted circulation and attracted advertisers. Prestigious writers were paid a celebrity fee. Kipling, 'the most famous man in the world' (5), sold the American serial rights to his short novel, Captains Courageous, for 12,000 dollars.

Authorship was becoming increasingly professionalized, with the emergence of literary agents, international copyright protection and organizations like the Society of Authors. Although most writers earned a precarious living, the perception of a ready market for short fiction continued well into the twentieth century. American correspondence schools and universities began running courses on writing short stories. Handbooks such as The Art and the Business of Story Writing (Walter B. Pitkin, 1912) and Stories You Can Sell (Laurence D'Orsay, 1933) proliferated. Taking their cue from Poe's declaration that literary composition shares 'the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem' (6), the handbooks emphasized the virtues of self-discipline and rigorous technique.

In the United States, both the self-help movement and the highbrow critics subscribed to a modernizing philosophy that informed the definition of the short story as an independent genre, demanding specific technical skills. Both took their inspiration from Poe, who is, as Levy expresses it, 'the patron saint and the
neighbourhood bully of the American short story' (7). Poe's theories set a nationalist agenda, which claims short fiction as the manifestation of an innovatory American culture. In fact, as I shall argue, the modern short story has developed as an international genre. Nevertheless, Poe's aesthetic insights have provided a useful foundation for short story criticism.

In his 1842 review of Hawthorne, Poe claimed that, because a short story can be read in one sitting, it achieves a poetic intensity unattainable in a longer, discursive form like the novel. 'The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed' (8). His prescription for a unique and aesthetically rigorous genre, based on 'unity of effect or impression' (9) was formulated as part of a wider project to initiate a dynamic, magazine-based culture. Explaining his reasoning, in a letter of 1844, he wrote: 'I perceived that the whole energetic, busy spirit of the age tended wholly to the Magazine literature - to the curt, the terse, the well-timed and the readily diffused, in preference to the old forms of the verbose and ponderous and the inaccessible' (10).

Poe wanted to place this emergent American tendency at the service of a literary and social elite. His attempt to raise the status of short fiction was perpetuated by Brander Matthews's *The Philosophy of the Short Story* (1885), which recapitulated Poe's own
arguments. Both men were resisting the preponderance of serialized British novels in American periodicals, many of them pirated from abroad. New copyright laws put a stop to this after 1891, thus widening access to American authors. American magazines from this period featured mainly short stories, while their British counterparts continued to feature a greater proportion of serializations.

In that same year, William Dean Howells wrote, 'I am not sure that the Americans have not brought the short story nearer perfection in the all-round sense than almost any other people' (11). This nationalist tone has continued to inform both popular perception and mainstream literary criticism. According to Walter B. Pitkin's 1923 handbook, *How to Write Stories*, 'the short story is the highest form of American art' (12), while William Peden's critical survey in 1975 proclaims the short story to be 'the only major literary form of essentially American origin and the only one in which American writers have always tended to excel' (13).

More recently, Douglas Tallack has claimed that the American short story is a 'distillation of the American literary genre, the Romance' (14).

Poe's aesthetic counterposes a shorter, more energetic American form against an outdated 'verbose' tradition, represented by the three-volume English novel. Henry James was writing primarily of Maupassant when he commented
that 'the little story is but scantily relished in England, where readers take their fiction rather by the volume than the page, and the novelist's idea is apt to resemble one of those old-fashioned carriages which require a wide court to turn round' (15). But he too added that, in America, 'the short tale has had a better fortune' (ibid.).

In fact, as an American resident in Europe, James embodied the literary internationalism of his time. European writers like Maupassant, along with Flaubert, Turgenev and, later, Chekhov, were a strong influence on the short story in English. An American edition of the influential, London-based Yellow Book appeared, while Kipling perpetuated a narrative style, based on oral storytelling, inaugurated by Mark Twain and Bret Harte (who also lived in Britain for a while). French Symbolism, which was largely inspired by Poe's aesthetic theories, helped to shape anglophone short fiction, from Wilde to Mansfield.

The short story is a heterogeneous genre, which cannot be consigned to any single national tradition or to a uniform trajectory. The search for national identity may co-exist with internationalism. The stories that Mansfield wrote about New Zealand were composed and published in Europe. The contemporary writers that I am concerned with, Grace Paley and Alice Munro, come from the United States and Canada respectively. However,
Munro's work often receives its first publication in the New Yorker magazine.

In Canada, as in the US, the short story is associated with national identity. In her introduction to The Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories in English, Margaret Atwood points to an 'explosion of talent in the sixties and seventies, an explosion that was not unconnected with a general increase in national consciousness and confidence at that time' (16). Atwood, along with her co-editor Robert Weaver, also remarks on the contribution of magazine and radio publication to the relative popularity of short fiction in Canada since the war. While foreign paperbacks dominated the market for novels, indigenous writers turned to short fiction. Atwood makes several connections between the Canadian short story and postcolonial issues, beyond simple questions of the marketplace. A detailed look at the postcolonial dimensions of Munro's work is beyond the scope of this thesis, but I shall be touching upon Atwood's 'collision between a landscape and a language and social history not at first indigenous to it' (17) in later discussions on autobiography and on the Bakhtinian chronotope (see Chapters 4 and 6).

The identification of the short story with United States culture continues. Ferguson maintains that, far from being a neglected genre as is frequently assumed, the short story enjoys high critical status in the US.
because of its pedagogical uses (18). Self-contained and amenable to close reading, canonical short stories by Faulkner or Hemingway are repeatedly anthologized for the college classroom. Graduate creative writing programmes are booming. Levy counts two hundred in 1993, claiming that about a thousand would-be short story writers will be given degrees each year (19). This sustains a limited, but significant, market for literary magazines and anthologies, many of them university-based.

This identification between the short story genre and American culture sometimes minimizes its international origins. But it is of particular interest as a signal of its modernity. It is this historical aspect of short story aesthetics that I now wish to discuss, including a divide between the short story and short fiction that Hanson observes during this period.

Critical discussion of the short story was inseparable from the re-evaluation of novelistic form towards the end of the nineteenth century. Shorter forms of fiction were aligned with modernity, in opposition to what was regarded as a hidebound English tradition. As Felski points out, 'the culture of the fin de siècle was marked
by the rhetoric of novelty, innovation, and futurity' (20). Because of their topical nature, the periodicals were eager to identify new trends. The New Fiction was debated, alongside the New Art, the New Theatre or the New Woman. In America, *Scribner's Magazine* mocked fashionable taste: 'Probably more people, literary and other, have recently received a new and stimulating sensation from Maupassant's stories than a short time ago had heard of his name' (21).

The realist three-volume novel was becoming obsolete; only four British three-deckers were published in 1897, compared with 193 in 1884 (22). Showalter charts the reaction against George Eliot, following her death in 1880, as a rejection of the mid-Victorian literary values she was seen to represent. The success of the English novel had established a literary hegemony, in Britain as in America, which the next generation felt bound to confront.

Events, in Eliot's novels, follow a sequential logic. They are unified by the novel's metonymic structure and by the intervention of an extra-diegetic, authorial voice, which places them within a consistent moral framework, informed by a positivist epistemology. This is, necessarily, a reductive assessment, which ignores the dialogic elements within Eliot's work. She does, however, serve to exemplify the realist novelist who, according to Forster, 'is competent, poised above his
work...[H]is interest in cause and effect gives him an air of pre-determination' (23).

The realist three-decker charted its characters' progress through linear time, typically ending with the resolute closure of marriage or death. It was this inclusiveness to which George Gissing referred when he praised 'the new school, due to continental influence' for its habit of 'merely suggesting; of dealing with episodes, instead of writing biographies' (24). Shorter forms seemed to suggest the fragmentation of experience rather than its unification; and to favour narrative discontinuity over teleological progression.

Maupassant's stories are structured by forward causality, but, through a series of plot reversals, he foregrounds the role of chance and of human perversity. In 'Country Living', for example (1882), a middle class couple take a fancy to a group of peasant children. They decide to adopt one. The first family they approach are taken aback, and reject the offer. Having made their proposal more carefully, they are successful with the second. The family who have kept their son envy the prosperity their neighbours' deal has brought them, but also become loudly self-righteous about their own decision. When the adopted boy, now grown-up, comes to visit in his carriage, the other young man berates his parents for not giving him away instead, and walks out of their house, in search of a fresh start elsewhere.
Time is condensed, and the narrative is accelerated through summary and ellipsis. The ending comes as a sudden revelation, rather than gradual resolution; it does not deliver the 'restitution' which John Bayley identifies with closure in the realist novel (25). In Forster's terms, the characters are 'flat', rather than 'round' (26). They are defined by a limited number of static attributes, manifested by their external behaviour. Access to their inner lives is almost completely withheld. Narratives of adoption and allegiance are familiar ones in nineteenth century fiction (Eliot's Silas Marner, Dickens' Great Expectations), where they often trace the emergence of self-knowledge and a deepening ethical awareness. Unlike these longer texts, Maupassant's story excludes the temporal development of subjective identity. Experience is not granted unitary meaning by the passing of time.

Maupassant's supposed moral nihilism was much commented on by his contemporaries. This contrasted with the moral authority of realist writers like Eliot. It was a characteristic shared by other literature in translation, notably the drama of Ibsen and Strindberg. The new, naturalist aesthetics were based on a Nietzschean mistrust of all metaphysical preconceptions. Events are not ordered by an external force, inaccessible to quotidian human experience. The absence of a temporal pattern, whether shaped by supernatural justice, historical
fulfilment or personal destiny, is evident in 'Country Living'; events follow an arbitrary course. Closure is incomplete, since the story ends inconclusively, with Charlot storming out of his parents' hovel.

Maupassant's characters are motivated by blind instinct, appetite and a Darwinian drive towards self-preservation, at the expense of any ethical considerations. Human beings are constructed as animals. His notorious sexual frankness is only one aspect of his graphic, and often grotesque, representation of the corporeal. In 'Family Life', for instance (1881), the bodies of both the live characters and the supposed corpse are hyperbolized. The effect implied by Scribner's 'new and stimulating sensation' is as much a physical as an intellectual response. Anticipating modernist technique, 'Family Life' also uses sense impressions to evoke the past within the present. As the 'dead' old woman lies in state, her son is overcome by nostalgic memories of his childhood in Picardy:

And in his nostrils were the same smell of running water, the same mist rising from water-logged earth, the same reek of marshes which had stayed with him, pungent and unforgettable, and which now resurfaced this very evening when his mother had just died. (27)

This heightening of the reader's consciousness through an appeal to the senses became a primary aim of the literary movements that succeeded naturalism. Symbolism and Impressionism, as defined by Arthur Symons, each
tried to capture 'the truth of appearances to the senses, of the visible world to the eyes that see it; and the truth of spiritual things to the spiritual vision' (28). In recording the physical apprehension of the material world, writers began to explore ways in which material reality was mediated by subjectivity. Within Maupassant's own work, Cartesian duality breaks down in stories like the *doppelgänger* tale 'Le Horla' (1887). His insistence that human experience is grounded in the corporeal leads, ultimately, to an exploration of subjective perception. But this is a subjectivity which is based on instantaneous physical response rather than spiritual continuity.

Bradbury and McFarlane, in their examination of modernism's late nineteenth-century roots, describe 'a fascination with evolving consciousness: consciousness aesthetic, psychological and historical[...]. The new registers of consciousness alter our sense of history, and our sense of the stability of consciousness itself, taking us into new concepts of mental and emotional association' (29). This destabilization of consciousness links modernist short fiction with literary experimentation in the 1890s. Symbolism exploited the musical, non-discursive properties of language. The prose poem, originated in France by Baudelaire and Mallarmé, developed into the brief, visionary parables of Oscar Wilde and Olive Schreiner. At the other end of the scale, Henry James was publishing very long stories, like 'The Next
Time' and 'The Coxon Fund'. All of this generic and stylistic experimentation supported Poe's contention that forms which could be read in one sitting induced the most intense 'exaltation of the soul' (30). Short prose could be regarded as a poetic or, more precisely, a lyric form of discourse, in which plot was less important than stylistic virtuosity.

Illustrations were already a vital component of magazine fiction, but with the emergence of fin-de-siècle aestheticism, the association between the visual and literary arts become a philosophical affinity. Aestheticism gloried in the intensification of consciousness through artistic experience, rejecting didacticism in literature, along with the supposition that artistic experience was secondary to lived experience. For the aesthete, every type of artistic expression was interconnected. The exquisitely written, self-contained story or collection of stories became an objet d'art. The pictures in the avant-garde quarterly, the Yellow Book, were there for their own sake, not to illustrate the text directly. High quality design was integral to its literary impact.

Oscar Wilde's 'The Sphinx Without a Secret' (1887) was subtitled 'An Etching'; Ella D'Arcy's short story collection was called Monochromes (1895). These titles call attention to the stories' spatial dimension, through a direct analogy with the visual arts. Each story is
structured by the configuration of images rather than by temporal causality. In George Egerton's collections, *Keynotes* (1893) and *Discords* (1894), the analogy is musical. Once again, by associating the short story with a non-discursive art form, the writer is minimizing the role of linear narrative. 'A Psychological Movement at Three Periods' (*Discords*) suggests the development and recapitulation of motifs which, typically, form the basis of musical composition. Pater's dictum that 'all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music' (31) affirms a unity between all types of artistic experience, and between content and form.

Egerton's stories aim to capture shifting interior states through the juxtaposition of sensuous images. (I discuss 'A Cross Line', from *Keynotes*, in more detail, below). The artistic analogues chosen by these short story writers tend to imply improvisation, exercises and sketches - that which is spontaneous, preliminary or entails the mastery of basic techniques. Resistance to formal closure becomes an expression of artistic and philosophical freedom. The emphasis on nuance or subtle shading reflects a pre-occupation with subjective perceptions.

In *Short Stories and Short Fictions*, Hanson differentiates between 'those works in which the major emphasis is on plot and those in which plot is subordinate to psychology and mood' (32), preferring to reserve
the term 'short-story' for the plot-driven tale, while defining fiction based on interior states of consciousness, like Egerton's, as 'short fiction'. This is a useful distinction, but cannot always be strictly maintained. Tales of the supernatural are usually plot-driven, but they also often evoke ambiguous states of interior consciousness. The protagonist's psychology, in, for instance, Maupassant's 'Le Horla', conditions the description of external reality. Ferguson (33) argues that both the nineteenth-century ghost story and the detective story have contributed to the demands made on the reader by 'mainstream' short fiction after modernism. Both genres compel the reader's active interpretation of events; the detective story reaches its climax in the epiphanic moment of illumination.

For Ferguson, the primary distinction is based on reception, rather than intrinsic generic difference. By the end of the nineteenth century, a division had emerged between popular and 'highbrow' fiction - between the story as manufactured product and as artistic self-expression. As the magazine market expanded, it became increasingly stratified. Fiction-writing was subject to precise editorial requirements in both 'quality' and popular publications. By stressing formal and stylistic artistry, aestheticism secured the higher status of poetry for 'plotless' stories which captured transient states of consciousness. These belong to
the 'short fiction' category, identified by Hanson. 

Avant-garde magazines, like the Yellow Book or the Chap-Book in Chicago, appealed to a self-conscious minority, affecting a disregard for commercial values. These small circulation magazines defined a visible experimental vanguard, and were crucial to the proliferation of literary movements that continued into the modernist period. In publicizing a clearly identified product, their activities complemented the commodification of literature on the mass market. In both its popular and its literary guise, the short story was developing as a self-conscious genre, in contradistinction to the traditional three-volume novel.

Gender and Form

All of these developments within the genre, and in the form and social function of prose fiction as a whole, had gender implications. The mainstream, realist novel was associated with women like Mrs. Humphrey Ward, for whom writing had provided a socially sanctioned means of supporting their families without leaving the home. Their undiminished domestic responsibilities were emphasised by the use of their married title. Showalter claims that the aesthetically pleasing slim volume of
the nineties was a bachelor item, in contrast to the bulky full-length novel, which was disseminated through the circulating libraries, and aimed at a conventionally-minded family readership. The three-part novel might even suggest parturition, reproducing itself not only by volume but in the ceaseless productivity of many popular female authors.

In *The Gender of Modernity*, Felski analyses shifting constructions of femininity within the discourses of modernity. Representations of the feminine may be used both to signal modernity and to stand in opposition, as a timeless essence. She discusses an increasing identification of femininity with modernity as consumerism, and of women's reading with appetite. This duality was clearly at work in misogynist literary debate. When the paradigm old/British/three volume was opposed to that of new/'continental'/American/short, then women writers were assigned to the first configuration. Women readers, however, were aligned with a more pessimistic reading of modernity as commodification. Both belonged to the domestic sphere, but while women writers represented the maternal as reproduction, women readers were linked with consumption.

In the illustrated magazines, fiction and journalism mingled with advertisements, addressing an implied female reader. Silas Weir Mitchell's complaint that 'the monthly magazines are getting so lady-like that naturally they
will soon menstruate' (34) contrasts with the masculinist rhetoric of Poe's projections, earlier in the century. For him, magazine-based forms would provide 'the light artillery of the intellect' (35), patronized by a southern male elite. The rise of the adventure story, through writers like Stevenson and Kipling, in the 1880s, may be read as an attempt to claim short fiction for the male reader.

A predominantly female readership, like female authorship, was scarcely a new phenomenon in the history of prose fiction; nor were fears about the supposed degeneration of literature into an item for domestic consumption. But, as fiction was more strictly categorized into high or low art, the essentially masculine, priestly role, which Gilbert and Gubar ascribe to the poet (36), was extended to writers of highbrow fiction. Women continued to publish full length fiction; in the 1880s, three quarters of American novels were written by women. Increasingly, however, it was men who were reviewed, and whose work appeared in literary journals. The Yellow Book and the Savoy were exceptional in their relatively high proportion of female contributors (about a third). In 'The Future of the Novel' (1884, published 1888), Henry James blamed the low standards of contemporary fiction on mass female and juvenile markets.

Writing for publication seemed to offer financial independence to the feminist New Woman - herself a focus
of cultural anxiety at the fin-de-siècle. But the professionalization of authorship, occasioned by the publishing boom, marginalized women writers. In Britain, for instance, only the most successful women were allowed to join the new Society of Authors. On a less practical level, an artistic vocation offered personal autonomy to women, outside middle class convention. As Felski notes, the figure of the Aesthete was often linked with that of the New Woman in public discourse. In fact, access to the artistic lifestyle was strictly circumscribed. Several stories in Showalter's anthology, Daughters of Decadence - for instance, Constance Woolson's 'Miss Grief' - reveal material hardship and personal isolation in the lives of female artists (37).

In these circumstances, many women fiction writers were themselves ambivalent towards their female predecessors. Gilbert and Gubar suggest that, since the end of the last century, women writers have been 'haunted and daunted by the autonomy of these figures' (38). The emergence of a literary matrilineage, alongside the patriarchal tradition, provokes a 'female affiliation complex' (39), analogous to the female Oedipal crisis, as posited by Freud. George Eliot's posthumous reputation is as illustrative of female literary rivalry as of male anxiety. Her most vituperative critics were male writers, including Stevenson, Swinburne, Gosse, Yeats and Hopkins. But many women concurred with a view of
her as de-sexed, cerebral and worthy, preferring, in
their own work, to develop a more subjective voice,
including an explicit investigation of female sexuality.
Olive Schreiner declared that 'her great desire was
to teach, mine to express myself, for myself and to
myself alone' (40).

Feminists like Schreiner refused the domestic
status of the older generation. Although Eliot was
childless, led an unconventional home life and held
radical views, she played a maternal role, as moral
arbiter. Concepts of social responsibility simply extended
the notion of family obligation into the public arena.
Influenced by aestheticism, the new generation rejected
the self-effacing maternal paradigm.

Aestheticism privileged the private over the public,
and self-expression over social function. For some
writers, this pre-occupation with subjective consciousness
involved the problematizing of gendered identity. Both
male and female authors produced what Felski, in her
discussion of Wilde, Huysmans and Sacher-Masoch, describes
as a 'feminized counterdiscourse' (41). In such a
discourse, femininity was elusive and multi-faceted.
It stood for artifice and self-reflexivity within language
itself. However, as Felski shows, this multiplicity
is not necessarily incompatible with essentialist versions
of the feminine as a primitive force, aligned with nature.
This will become evident in my reading of George Egerton's
story, 'A Cross Line'.

**George Egerton**

By concentrating on short fiction, the feminist writer George Egerton was trying to cultivate 'one small plot', 'the terra incognita of (woman) herself as she knew herself to be, not as man liked to imagine her' (42). There is a tension in her work between the idea of femininity as universal essence, as implied here by the use of the third person singular; or as a social construct. The short story's stylistic freedom and relative independence from what Tallack terms the 'dense social world' of the novel (43) means that she can foreground her exploration of female subjectivity within a seemingly random narrative structure.

In 'A Cross Line' (*Keynotes*, 1893), female subjectivity is presented as a network of memories, fantasies and fragmented impressions:

Stray words, half confidences, glimpses through soul-chinks of suppressed fires, actual outbreaks, domestic catastrophes, how the ghosts dance in the cells of her memory! And she laughs, laughs softly to herself because the denseness of man, his chivalrous conservative devotion to the female idea he has created blinds him, perhaps happily, to the problems of her complex nature. (44)
Here, Egerton is describing a fluid subject in process, rather than a transcendent, unified ego. The broken syntax, repetitions and incantatory rhythms all incorporate traces of the pre-Oedipal disposition that Kristeva has called the semiotic, and which disrupts unitary meaning. (I shall be discussing Kristevan theory in Chapter 5.) Along with the use of the present tense, these elements indicate a protean and spontaneous interiority.

In 'A Cross Line', a chance encounter tempts Egerton's heroine to leave her dependable husband for a nomadic life with a stranger. The story is a psychological study, structured by the juxtaposition of images, which follow its heroine's changing moods. Linear causality is largely eschewed. Keynotes' musical affinities have already been observed. Egerton also draws on pictorial and dramatic analogues, to locate the narrative within a succession of fleeting moments.

The story begins with the stranger's distant song, which quickly turns into a 'mental picture of footlight flare and fantastic dance' (p.1). Such 'mental pictures' recur throughout the narrative. 'Do you like my picture?' the stranger asks, when he describes the life he can offer (p.27). Later, in her moment of decision, the heroine longs for her dead mother, whose image is summoned up by her daguerrotype. She then visualizes what she herself would look like after death. Attention is
constantly drawn to the characters' eyes and to spectatorship. 'She smokes and watches him, diverting herself by imagining him in the hats of different periods' (p.12). 'The maid comes in and watches her curiously, and moves softly about' (pp.33-34). The heroine's final decision is signalled to her lover when she hangs something white on a lilac bush.

By emphasizing the gaze, Egerton foregrounds momentary, instinctual reactions. Changing relationships are often communicated to the reader by an exchange of glances:

She gathers up creel and rod, and he takes her shawl, and, wrapping it round her, holds her a moment in it, and looks searchingly into her eyes, then stands back and raises his hat, and she glides away through the reedy grass. (p.30)

The theatrical framing of the present-tense narrative is achieved through an emphasis on gesture and setting. The theatrical influence, via Ibsen and Strindberg, is also evident in the declamatory passages of direct speech, where the heroine expounds her own needs and her views on gender relationships. She often punctuates direct speech with parenthesized 'stage directions':

'You (nearer) have the most tantalising mouth in the world when your lips tremble like that. I...What! can you cry? You?'
'Yes, even I can cry!'
'You dear woman!' (pause) 'And I can't help you!' (p.26)
Egerton avoids situating her characters socially, even dispensing with names. She reduces them to psychological types, playing their roles in a universalized, timeless drama.

This framing of the narrative within a series of self-contained tableaux minimizes temporal development. There are few apparent causal links between them, and time is largely indeterminate.

The way in which the story's elliptical, image-based structure is determined by its heroine's mercurial nature is especially apparent in the extensive passages of free indirect discourse. A cloud formation reminds her of sailing ships, which quickly transmute into Cleopatra's barge. By the association of imagery, 'she fancies herself in Arabia on the back of a swift steed' (p.19), until this brief vision yields to one in which she becomes an exotic dancer, 'on the stage of an ancient theatre, out in the open air' (ibid.). Fantasy and reality intermingle, as the imaginary landscape fuses with the Irish hills, where she is fishing:

The men rise to a man and answer her, and cheer, cheer, till the echoes shout from the surrounding hills and tumble wildly down the crags. The clouds have sailed away, leaving long feathery streaks in their wake. (p.20)

Throughout the story, experience is aestheticized through pictorial imagery and dramatic modes of discourse. The boundaries between art and nature, authenticity
and artifice, collapse. Egerton's heroine mocks the futile male search for the 'ewig weiblich' (p.21), positing a chameleon-like femininity, constructed through masquerade: '...we are cunning enough or great enough to seem to be what they would have us, rather than be what we are' (p.22).

Male subjectivity, by contrast, is far more restricted. Egerton compares feminine multiplicity with the univocal male:

There is a singular soft monotony in his voice; the organ with which she replies is capable of more varied expression. (p.11)

The lover paints an enticing imaginary picture of a life with him at sea; he is rather more fanciful than the farmer husband, who, when apparently sunk in a daydream is in fact pondering which bait to use for his fishing. But both men are denied a complex interior voice such as that which she reserves for the heroine. Their emotions are simple and externalized; after the first encounter, for instance, the lover 'feels small, snubbed someway, and he sits down on the spot where she sat and, lighting his pipe, says "check!"' (p.7). They cannot fathom the heroine's contradictory moods, because they are themselves incapable of such diversity.

In 'The Art of Fiction,' Henry James claims that 'experience is never limited, and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web
of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue' (45). The writer's senses are so finely tuned that these momentary external stimuli may be absorbed into subjective experience: 'When the mind is imaginative - much more when it happens to be that of a man of genius - it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations' (ibid.). The idea of a super-sensitive artistic subjectivity, able to convert the quotidian into the metaphysical was echoed by symbolist theory - for instance, in Arthur Symons's frequent appeals to the 'soul' in art. Egerton is almost unique, in that she identifies this artistic sensibility with a specifically female consciousness.

Although Egerton's heroine does not appear to be artistically productive, she 'reads' the world around her and transforms everyday experience through her imaginative powers. Her still contemplation is privileged over her husband's busy practical activities. If, at the fin-de-siècle, art is a form of self-expression, perhaps self-expression also functions as art. As an artistic free spirit, she evinces a Nietzschean will to power. In its lack of formal closure, the story's ending encompasses the concept of experience as 'never complete and[...]never limited', promising a future which is open to change. The closing pages are, however,
marked by a biological determinism, which is at odds with the notion of personal autonomy.

Egerton was deeply influenced by Scandinavian naturalist writers, such as Hamsun, Ibsen and Strindberg. By turning to 'continental' models, fiction writers were able, to some extent, to disavow both the paternal and maternal heritage, staking a claim to literary self-invention. In terms of Gilbert and Gubar's 'female affiliation complex', she pursues a strategy which they identify with early twentieth-century writers like Djuna Barnes and Gertrude Stein. Refusing to accept the 'fact' of castration, these women appropriate the phallus to themselves, and thus 'recovering and reconstituting the child's primordial, pre-Oedipal desire for the mother as an inspiring eroticism, they liberate aesthetic energy' (46), in a literary variation on the Freudian 'masculinity complex'. Egerton's masculine pseudonym creates an androgynous persona, which allows her to engage with a libidinal semiotic motility.

However, as Tallack suggests, in his discussion of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, there are dangers in an identification of women's writing with 'free' forms and apparent stylistic spontaneity (47). The feminine may be marginalized as the representative of an essentialized nature. Egerton's own alignment of women with the irrepressible forces of nature is problematic.
Like nature, her heroine is capricious and cannot be controlled. Woman is a timeless essence, a 'witch', a 'seer' (p.23). Egerton's reading of Nietzsche and Strindberg induces a dissection of 'the untamed primitive savage temperament that lurks in the mildest, best women' (p.22).

The heroine's instincts collide when she discovers herself to be pregnant. The realization is juxtaposed with images of her dead mother and of her own potential death, while the inexorable rhythm of her husband's digging dominates her senses. Yet, despite these portents, she finally greets maternity 'with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes' (p.35), transferring her libidinal energy to the unborn baby. This may be read as the triumph of biological drives over personal autonomy.

After Egerton's heroine has discovered her condition, direct access to her inner life is withheld. The free indirect discourse, through which the slow dawning of knowledge is communicated to the reader, gives way to an impersonal authorial voice. Her emotions are externalized, like the men's: 'she gets slowly up, as if careful of herself as a precious thing and half afraid' (p.36). By suppressing her heroine's subjective voice, Egerton suggests that she has turned from private fantasies towards the social realm. It is significant that, in these closing pages, she is with her maid. For the first time, she is portrayed in a hierarchical,
predominantly social relationship rather than a private one. The maid, Lizzie, is even named. A brief, extremely elliptical second level narrative, implying Lizzie's own illicit love affair, widens the scope of a story which has been, so far, implicated in its heroine's solipsism.

The 'something white', hung on the lilac bush to signal that the lover has been rejected, is a nightgown that once belonged to Lizzie's dead baby. As an emblem of spring, lilac signifies resurrection. 'A Cross Line' ends dynamically, with a line of direct speech: 'Or Lizzie, wait - I'll do it myself!' There is a sense of optimistic movement, towards an exciting future. Yet the earlier association of maternity with death leaves a lingering ambiguity in the story as a whole; particularly since the notion of a fluid, autonomous female subjectivity has been compromised by biological determinacy. The concept of the self as performance is undermined by the primacy of a single, universalized instinct.

Egerton's ambivalence towards maternity may be linked with the ambivalence of many fin-de-siècle women writers towards their literary matrilineage. As I have suggested, there was a desire to distance themselves from an earlier generation of women novelists, whose authority derived from the socially responsible maternal function. However the ending of 'A Cross Line' is read,
it would suggest that maternity is incompatible with female self-fulfilment. This apparent conflict between biology and artistic expression is re-assessed in stories by Paley and Munro, who take a more positive attitude towards maternity. I shall be discussing this aspect of their work in later chapters.

Egerton's work prefigures modernist themes and techniques, most particularly in her attempt to capture the passing moment and to represent a multiplicitious subjectivity. As images from the past and of the future mingle with fantasy and perception, time is experienced as flux. Like the heroine of Katherine Mansfield's 'Bliss' (1918), which I discuss in the next chapter, Egerton's heroine longs to grasp an essential, dynamic reality which unfolds within a heightened sense of the present. 'This thirst for excitement, for change, this restless craving for sun and love and motion' (Egerton, p.21) is akin to Mansfield's 'absolute bliss! - as though you'd suddenly swallowed a bright piece of that late afternoon sun and it burned in your bosom, sending out a little shower of sparks into every particle, into every finger and toe' (48). Both in 'Bliss' and in 'A Cross Line', this heightened, subjective experience of time as boundless present is in conflict with the heroine's domestic and social responsibilities. In both stories, access to the heroine's inner life is withheld at the end, frustrating the movement towards
closure. Egerton's heroine seems to have rejected the open road, while, in Mansfield's story, the female desire for freedom is also thwarted. Yet, in formal terms, the resistance to closure suggests a movement into a future which cannot be predicted.

The aesthetics of the contemporary short story have been largely shaped by a shift in attitudes towards time which can be traced back to modernist culture. This change is already evident in Egerton's work. She was writing during a period when, as I have demonstrated, the short story enjoyed critical and commercial success. It had emerged as a self-conscious genre, largely in opposition to the three-volume novel. From Poe onwards, much short story criticism has been founded on a perceived need to establish its generic specificity. However, attempts to classify the short story run the risk of defining mutually exclusive categories, and denying the complex interaction between, for instance, national traditions and internationalism; or between popular and literary fiction. This thesis does not seek to provide rigid generic distinctions. Rather than supplying a unified history of the short story, I have tried to show, in this chapter, how formal experimentation has related to discourses on modernity, subjectivity and gender, first current at the end of the nineteenth century. In the next chapter, I shall examine modernist discourse on time in more detail, relating Bergsonian theory to
a closer reading of Mansfield's 'Bliss'.

References


8. 'Nathaniel Hawthorne,' in Poe, p.469.
9. Ibid.

10. 'Magazine Literature', in Poe, p.549.


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29. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, 'The Name and Nature of Modernism' in Modernism: A Guide to European
Literature, 1890-1930, ed. by Bradbury and McFarlane (Harmondsworth; Penguin, 1991), p.47.

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CHAPTER TWO: MODERNIST TIME

Bergsonism

At the beginning of the twentieth century, developments in philosophy and in theoretical physics converged with the empirical results of technological expansion, to change the nature of discourse on time. The emergence of relativist theory coincided with an intense public awareness of the potential within telecommunications, the cinema, the automobile and air travel.

Technological innovation had implications both for the subjective experience of time and its social organization. Rapid forms of transport and communication favoured the perception of a variable space-time nexus over Newtonian concepts of fixed, clearly divisible units. Yet they were also dependent on timetables, clocks and schedules. The popularity of Bergsonian notions of 'real time' as immeasurable flux, from around 1910, contrasts with the various attempts to impose a unified standard time, which would synchronize both military planning and the running of international railways (1). Following the International Conference on Time, held in Paris in 1912, Standard World Time based on the Greenwich meridian, was adopted almost universally.

Bergson believed that any such system of measurement was simply convention, divorced from the experience
of temporality. His ideas were extremely fashionable in England and America from 1910, when his books were first translated from the French, until the end of the First World War. Later in this chapter, I shall be discussing his particular appeal for that current within modernism which drew from the aesthetic and symbolist movements I described in the previous chapter. In general, Bergson's work was a reaction against late nineteenth century scientific and philosophical determinism, as propounded by Spencer and supported by reductive versions of Darwinism. He attempted a synthesis between psychology, physiology and metaphysics which would avoid a mechanistic model of human consciousness. In so doing, he was drawn towards the interaction of time, perception and memory as the key to a subjectivity unbounded by the purely physical. I shall be looking mainly at his earliest books, *Time and Free Will* (1889) and *Matter and Memory* (1896), which were translated into English in 1910 and 1911 respectively, before comparing his ideas about time with those of Freud and Nietzsche, and with developments in early twentieth century physics. I shall then illustrate his influence on modernist short fiction through a reading of Katherine Mansfield's 'Bliss'.

In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson argues against associationism, as explicated by J.S. Mill. According to this theory, the self is the sum of psychic states, some of which will be strong enough to dominate the
others. For instance, the urge to commit a crime may be overcome by the fear of punishment. According to Bergson, emotions are not so clearly distinguishable or so simply defined. 'Such and such a feeling, such and such an idea, contains an indefinite plurality of conscious states: but the plurality will not be observed unless it is, as it were, spread out in this homogeneous medium which some call duration, but which is in reality space' (2).

Although spatialization has an important cognitive function, subjective experience can only be fully understood as a state of flux:

In a word, our ego comes in contact with the external world at its surface; our successive sensations, although dissolving into one another, retain something of the mutual externality which belongs to their objective causes; and thus our superficial psychic life comes to be pictured without any great effort as set out in a homogeneous medium. But the symbolic character of such a picture becomes more striking as we advance further into the depths of consciousness: the deep-seated self which ponders and decides, which heats and blazes up, is a self whose states and changes permeate one another and undergo a deep alteration as soon as we separate them from one another in order to set them out in space. (Time, p.125)

The attempt to evaluate psychic states distorts their true nature by expressing spatially what is actually experienced dynamically, through time as 'duration'. 'Duration' is unquantifiable. It cannot be measured, because it is a 'qualitative', and not a 'quantitative' multiplicity' (p.121). In 'real time', as it is
apprehended by the subject, past and present intermingle; 'states of consciousness, even when successive, permeate one another, and in the simplest of them, the whole soul can be reflected' (p.98). The division of successive states into discrete temporal units is merely a social convention. 'Time, conceived under the form of an unbounded and homogeneous medium, is nothing but the ghost of space haunting the reflective consciousness' (p.99). Although it is often convenient to measure clock time as if it were space, time, as perceived by the subject remains unextended.

Bergson aligns space with the intellect and with homogeneity. Duration, on the other hand, is heterogeneous, and associated with intuitive insight.

What we must say is that we have to do with two different kinds of reality, the one heterogeneous, that of sensible qualities, the other homogeneous, namely space. This latter, clearly conceived by the human intellect, enables us to use clean-cut distinctions, to count, to abstract, and perhaps also to speak. (Time, p.97)

In Time and Free Will, as in his other publications, Bergson often refers specifically to intuition. In his later work, the term is more precisely defined, and the link with duration becomes explicit. Considerations of duration, he claimed in his introduction to the essays collected as The Creative Mind (published 1946), led him to 'raise intuition to the level of a philosophical method' (3). He had already recommended
this concept as a philosophical approach in *Creative Evolution* (1911), where it refers to 'instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely' (4). It is a kind of sympathetic insight. Unlike intelligence, it is not concerned with the practical application of knowledge. But it is a dynamic force, since it requires an act of will. Intuition regards the object as part of a continuum within duration, rather than an isolated instance. It enables us to grasp mobility, 'the only reality that is given' (5).

Bergson appears to privilege duration and intuition over the spatial and the intellectual:

We are generally content[...]with the shadow of the self projected into homogeneous space. Consciousness, goaded by an insatiable desire to separate, substitutes the symbol for the reality, or perceives the reality only through the symbol. As the self thus refracted, and thereby broken into pieces, is much better adapted to the requirements of social life in general and language in particular, consciousness prefers it, and gradually loses sight of the fundamental self. (*Time*, p.128)

He presupposes that language contains fixed meaning, which distorts the fluidity of experience; 'the word with well-defined outlines, the rough and ready word, which stores up the stable, common, and consequently impersonal element in the impressions of mankind, overwhelms or at least covers over the delicate and fugitive impressions of our individual consciousness' (*Time*, p.132).
However, as Deleuze points out, temporal and spatial faculties are mutually bound through the interaction between the self and the exterior world:

While the idea of a homogeneous space implies a sort of artifice or symbol separating us from reality, it is nevertheless the case that matter and extensity are realities, themselves prefiguring the order of space. Although it is illusion, space is not merely grounded in our nature, but in the nature of things. (6)

Intuition is conditioned by intelligence. It should not be confused with animal instinct; it is a uniquely human property, as Bergson is careful to point out in *Time and Free Will* (pp.95-97).

It is important not to overstate Bergson's distrust of symbolization and the spatial faculties. His task, as he sees it, is simply to make it possible for science to establish a balanced view of human nature by taking into account the importance of duration. He does, however, regard language as an abstract, homogeneous system, incapable of expressing subjectivity in its essential multiplicity. Bergson regards the self as protean, yet also as a continuum:

There is one reality, at least, which we all seize from within, by intuition and not by simple analysis. It is our own personality in its flowing through time - our self which endures. (7)

In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson questions how far this complex self is reducible to physiological factors. He examines the interrelationship between subjectivity
and the body, the self and the world, often drawing metaphysical inferences from neurobiological observations. He claims that matter consists of 'an aggregate of "images"' (8), by which he means 'a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a representation, but less than that which the realist calls a thing' (ibid). An image is 'self-existing' (Matter, p.10); it can exist without being perceived. But because it is capable of being pictured, it is inextricably linked to the qualities by which it is perceived. 'There is for images merely a difference of degree, and not of kind, between being and being consciously perceived' (p.37).

Bergson emphasizes that perception is not a form of representation, but is grounded in action, citing neurological evidence from single cell organisms upwards. Perceptions consist of images filtered by the body (which is itself an image) according to the needs of the individual. The cortex must discriminate from the amount of material available to it. 'Consciousness - in regard to external perception - lies just in this choice' (Matter, p.38). Again, Bergson is differentiating between the animal and the human in his attempts to establish free will. Simple organisms carry out this screening by reflex actions; higher organisms select according to 'virtual actions'. As defined by Moore, these are 'actions which we are capable of performing, or have a tendency
to perform, given not only our physiology, but also our learning and training in a specific environment' (9).

Bergson next seeks to contrast perception, which is a physical reaction to an object located primarily in space, with memory, which requires the representation of an absence. In reality, these two categories are not mutually exclusive. Memory is always implicated in the act of perception, since perception must involve duration, however briefly:

Our perceptions are undoubtedly laced with memories and, inversely, a memory[...]

Bergson observes that, 'in fact, for us there is nothing that is instantaneous' (p.69). Pure perception and pure memory cannot exist in real life; if it were possible to eliminate duration from perception, there would be no gap between subject and object. But, for the purpose of his study, each process is classified separately. In pure perception 'the reality of things is no more constructed or reconstructed, but touched, penetrated, lived' (ibid.). Pure perception is 'a system of nascent acts which plunges roots into the real' (ibid.). Memory, by contrast, cannot be located wholly within the body because 'it is in vain to attribute to the cerebral
substance the property of engendering representations' (p.73). 'Our body is an instrument of action, and of action only' (p.225). While Bergson remains fascinated by the interaction of mind and body, he finds proof of ultimate transcendence, through the operations of memory. The body then becomes a 'place of passage' (p.151).

In his attempts to identify the relationship between remembrance and human physiology, Bergson divides memory into two distinct types, which he introduces as 'independent recollections' and 'motor mechanisms' (p.78). They are also referred to as 'pure recollection' and 'habit memory'. As an illustration, he uses the example of a lesson; there is a clear difference between the skills or knowledge stored in the memory as a result of the lesson and the recollection of a particular day when the lesson was learnt. 'The one imagines and the other repeats' (p.82).

Habit memory has a practical function. It is unchanging and is acquired by repetition. It is the type of memory that includes facts and figures. Pure recollection involves the representation of a single, unique event, the nature of which will, inevitably, change, whenever it is remembered. This type of memory is usually spontaneous, and has no use value. Indeed, Bergson refers to the 'radical powerlessness of pure memory' (p.141).
In practice these categories overlap, like many Bergsonian dualities. But, generally, the past is preserved either through utilitarian 'motor mechanisms', located in the body, or as 'personal memory-images which picture all past events with their outline, their colour and their place in time' (p.88). It is these 'memory-images' which are independent of physiological factors.

The concept of subjective experience as a continuum, should not be taken to imply that present reality is undifferentiated from past memories. Bergson examines the interaction between past and present in some detail. He describes a leap into the past, enacted when memories are deliberately summoned:

We become conscious of an act *sui generis* by which we detach ourselves from the present in order to replace ourselves, first in the past in general, then in a certain region of the past - a work of adjustment, something like the focusing of a camera. But our recollection still remains virtual; we simply prepare ourselves to receive it by adopting the appropriate attitude. Little by little it comes into view like a condensing cloud; from the virtual state it passes into the actual; and as its outlines become more distinct and its surface takes on colour, it tends to imitate perception. (*Matter*, pp.133-34)

The recollection must retain some of the virtuality which distinguishes it from the present moment. As Bergson points out, 'the essence of time is that it goes by; time already gone by is the past, and we call the present the instant in which it goes by' (p.137).
But there can be no mathematical instant; the present must occupy duration. The psychical present is poised between a perception of the immediate past and the preparation for the immediate future. In both senses, it is tending towards action, and is therefore 'sensori-motor' (p.138). It is grounded in the body.

The past persists, even if it is dormant within consciousness, just as, to follow Bergson's spatial analogy, the other rooms of your house exist even when you are not inside them; both are examples of 'existence outside of consciousness' (p.142). But 'our previous psychical life exists for us even more than the external world, of which we never perceive more than a very small part, whereas, on the contrary, we use the whole of our lived experience' (p.146). 'Our past[...] is that which exists no longer but which might act, and will act by inserting itself into a present sensation from which it borrows the vitality' (p.240).

Thus, the past, while in some respects distinguishable from the present, is also contemporaneous:

Your perception, however instantaneous, consists then in an incalculable multitude of remembered elements; in truth, every perception is already memory. Practically, we perceive only the past, the pure present being the invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future. (Matter, p.150)

As Deleuze explains:

The past would never be constituted if it did not coexist
with the present whose past it is. The past and the present do not denote two successive movements, but two elements which coexist: One is the present, which does not cease to pass, and the other is the past, which does not cease to be but through which all presents pass. (10)

Bergsonism in its Scientific and Philosophical Context

Bergson's scepticism about 'clock time' anticipates the abandonment of absolute, Newtonian time in science subsequent to Einstein's theories (the Special Theory of Relativity 1905, completed by the General Theory of Relativity, 1916). Unlike Einstein, who posited a space-time continuum, Bergson retained a conceptual separation between time and space. He also disagreed with Einstein's perception of time as a numerical multiplicity, varying in accordance with the observer's standpoint. In Bergsonian terms, relativity does not contradict the existence of a single, universal time, as it is experienced by the subject. Scientific calculation, as a form of exterior symbolization, must not be confused with essential reality (11). The contemporary scientist Paul Davies makes a similar distinction when he points out that 'time cannot be demonstrated experimentally' (12). As Bergson claims in Time and Free Will, 'the interval of duration itself
cannot be taken into account by science' (Time, p.116).

Bergson's challenge to atomistic concepts of time and external reality also prefigures aspects of the quantum theory of matter. First pioneered by Planck and Bohr in the 1900s, quantum theory redefined the physical world as a network of shifting relationships, rather than the interaction of autonomous entities. Heisenberg's 'uncertainty principle' (1927) establishes that, in the study of subatomic particles, either location or movement may be defined, but not the two of them together. Their behaviour cannot be predicted; cause and effect are not invariable, and scientific fact is conditioned by the observing consciousness. Bohm's comment that 'the primary emphasis is now on undivided wholeness in which the observing instrument is not separated from the observed' (13) recalls Bergson's attempt to rethink Cartesian dualism in Matter and Memory. 'No doubt[...],' Bergson says, 'the material universe itself, defined as the totality of images, is a kind of consciousness' (Matter, p.235).

Both Bergsonian philosophy and quantum theory question the boundaries between subjectivity and a physical world external to the self. Both deny mechanistic determinism in their investigations into causality. Relativist science is in agreement with Bergsonism, in that it perceives time as flux, rather than linear succession. The connections between Bergsonism and
the new physics are evident in the writings of the mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, whose *Science and the Modern World* (14) proposes an 'organic', rather than materialist, science. The static Newtonian model of the universe is replaced by a constantly changing world, dominated by process, multiplicity and interaction.

Describing the period from 1880 to 1918, Kern writes that 'the thrust of the time was to affirm the reality of private time against that of a single public time and to define its nature as heterogeneous, fluid, and reversible' (15). He notes the way in which both the cinema and the phonograph preserve images from the past within the present, confirming the Bergsonian belief in the persistence of memory. The apprehension of time as flux undermined Hegelian notions of historical progress, which informed many aspects of nineteenth century culture. J.S. Mill, whose theories were attacked in *Time and Free Will*, had claimed that historical comparison was the 'dominant idea' of his own era (16). There was a tendency in nineteenth century historicism, as in scientific determinism, to regard the individual as the product of impersonal forces, moving towards a predictable goal. This teleological approach to history persisted well into the twentieth century, for instance through Marxism. It is in the passing of such 'grand narratives' that Lyotard describes the postmodern condition.
But Bergsonism was a manifestation of a widespread reaction against the notion of historical destiny, which was already evident at the turn of the century.

Quinones contrasts a modernist distrust of abstract, universal history with what he defines as post-Renaissance 'ethical time' (17). 'Ethical time', as exemplified in Shakespeare's history plays, unfolds as a complex pattern, in which individuals discover their proper role. This sense of enduring historical values is problematized when time is perceived as flux, rather than linear succession.

Bergsonism elevates transience over stability, experience over the abstract. It engages with the moment of becoming; as we have seen, there can be no 'pure' present as such, since there can be no mathematical instant without duration. It attempts to come to terms with the irreversibility of time by establishing a complex and mobile subjectivity. This need to establish individual free will, in the face of a seemingly inexorable past, is also evident in the work of Freud and Nietzsche. Their ideas on the nature of time have much in common with Bergson's, as I shall now demonstrate.

Freud was born just three years earlier than Bergson. Like Bergson, he was Jewish. Kern suggests that the primacy of time in Freud and Bergson, as well as in Proust, can be related to their ethnicity. In Grace Paley's story, 'The Used Boy Raisers', Faith claims
that Jews 'aren't meant for geographies but for history. They are not supposed to take up space but to continue in time' (18). Jewish culture has survived through historical continuity rather than territorial integrity.

Freud's work is in accordance with Bergson's estimation that, for the individual, the psychical past may be more potent than present day spatial reality. Images from the past are regenerated as the latent content of dreams, fantasy, or symptoms of psychical disorder. The causal link is not immediately apparent, since repression distorts the memory as it emerges. Memories of childhood, in particular, 'quite unlike conscious memories from the time of maturity[...]are not fixed at the moment of being experienced and afterwards repeated, but are only elicited at a later age when childhood is already past; in the process they are altered and falsified, and are put in the service of later trends, so that generally speaking they cannot be sharply distinguished from phantasies' (19).

Such memories, serving no obvious purpose, recurring spontaneously, in forms that alter subtly over time, are similar to the Bergsonian 'memory-image'. However, Freud places far more emphasis on the involuntary nature of recurring memories. He anatomizes an unconscious mind, torn between instinctual drives, which is far more opaque and contradictory than anything implied by the Bergsonian model of an undivided, though complex,
Bergson and Freud both regard dreams as the revelation of an essential inner self, breaking free from the conventions of the rational mind. According to Freud, the unconscious, which resurfaces in dreams, is timeless. In dreams, Bergson says, 'we no longer measure duration, but we feel it; from quantity it returns to the state of quality; we no longer estimate past time mathematically: the mathematical estimate gives place to a confused instinct, capable, like all instincts, of committing gross errors, but also of acting at times with extraordinary skill' (Time, pp.126-27). Both men regard dreams as the expression of an untrammelled subjectivity; transcending artificial distinctions between past and present.

'On Dreams' (1901) records Freud's analysis of one of his own dreams, during which his attempt to restore chronology may be seen, in Bergsonian terms, as the intellect's battle to assert itself over intuition, by attempting to impose spatial abstraction onto duration. A friend is attacked in an article by Goethe. Freud knows that Goethe died in 1832, but struggles to establish the year in which he himself is living (20).

For Bergson and for Freud, memory accumulates; the psychical present cannot be divided from past experience. But a full awareness of that personal past enables the individual to take control of the present.
Bergson maintains that 'We must, by a strong recoil of our personality on itself, gather up our past which is slipping away, in order to thrust it, compact and undivided, into a present which it will create by entering. [...] It is then that our actions are truly free' (21). Freudian psychoanalysis tries to create such a 'recoil'. Using free association to access memory-images, the analyst reviews the patient's current behaviour through an active re-reading of the past.

This attempt to be reconciled with the irreversibility of time through an act of will finds its echo in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-85):

To redeem that past of mankind and to transform every 'it was', until the will says: 'But I willed it thus! So shall I will it -'
this did I call redemption[...]. (22)

For Nietzsche, the irreversibility of the past extends into the future. 'All truth is crooked, time itself is a circle' (23); past and future meet in the moment, which repeats all other possible moments, which must have already happened, since time is supposedly infinite while energy is not. This is the concept of 'eternal return': 'All things recur eternally and we ourselves with them, and[...] we have already existed an infinite number of times before and all things with us' (24).

Nietzsche conceives of past, present and future
as simultaneity, rather than a Bergsonian interpenetration. But, like Bergson, he stresses the urgency of the passing moment as a crucible for change: 'Existence begins in every instant[...]The path of eternity is crooked' (25). Zarathustra prophesies a new beginning, free of the stale preconceptions of the past – especially Christianity. Humankind will be reborn as Superman, without the need to impose supernatural authority on his own decisions.

By accepting eternal recurrence, the personal will is actively reconciled to the totality of existence:

My world has just become perfect, midnight is also noonday, pain is also joy, a curse is also a blessing[...].

(26)

As Rosen points out (27), it is difficult to reconcile the fatalism of the eternal recurrence with the emphasis on renewal in Thus Spoke Zarathustra. But the notion of a 'will to power' as a driving life force does contradict historical or psychological determinism. In ceasing to regret the past, the individual asserts their autonomy. Action, creativity and change are situated within the passing instant, and transience is welcomed. 'The best images and parables should speak of time and becoming: they should be a eulogy and a justification of all transitoriness' (28). In Bergson, Nietzsche and Freud, an intense self-awareness releases the subject
from the burden of the past. At first glance, Nietzsche's 'will to power' appears to be a more solipsistic process than Bergson's empathic 'intuition'. Yet both concepts invoke the necessity of mental effort as a form of active intervention in the external world. The most profound difference between Bergson and Nietzsche is that Bergson supports the existence of an essential 'reality', even though it may not be grasped by language or any other form of signification. Nietzsche denies transcendence, maintaining that reality is constructed through language.

However, Bergson and Nietzsche both envisage a heterogeneous universe, in which material reality is in dynamic interaction with the subject. In abandoning concepts of absolute time, they question concepts of linear causality. Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* (1882) claims that 'an intellect which saw cause and effect as a continuum and not, as we do, as a capricious division and fragmentation, which saw the flux of events - would reject the concept cause and effect and deny all conditionality' (29). He calls for a multiplicity of perspectives: 'the world has[...]once again become for us "infinite": insofar as we cannot reject the possibility that it contains in itself infinite interpretations (30). Every viewpoint, even when it aspires to objectivity, is necessarily limited by individual specificity: 'we cannot see around our own corner' (31).
Bergson's ideas often diverge from those of Nietzsche and Freud, but they also share a common core, which is at the heart of modernist attitudes towards time; each of them call into question the notion of absolute Newtonian time. In so doing, they emphasize the subjective apprehension of time as a continuum, in which past and present are contemporaneous. The nature of human consciousness itself is at the core of Bergson's work, and of Freud's. Both propose a model of subjectivity that is multiplicitous and mobile. Nietzsche shares Bergson's belief in the value of direct experience and his distrust of abstraction.

All three try to bring the irrational within the scope of philosophical and scientific analysis. They all investigate the influence of the personal past upon the present, negotiating a balance between free will and determinism. All three problematize causality. If time is non-linear, cause and effect cannot follow each other in a predictable chain. This reconceptualization of time and causality is, as I have shown, shared by relativist and quantum physics. Both subjective experience and external reality are regarded as a process of boundless change.

Both Bergson and Nietzsche celebrate transience as a path towards personal autonomy, and as an affirmation of a dynamic, self-renewing universe. The moment of becoming - Bergson's 'instantaneous which dies and is
born again endlessly' (Matter, p.139) - is particularly relevant to the development of the short story as a genre. I shall now discuss Bergson's impact on literary modernism, which I shall then illustrate with my reading of Mansfield's 'Bliss'.

Bergson and the Modernist Short Story

Bergsonism appealed to those writers who were formulating a modernist aesthetic based on the image and on an intensity of personal vision. This type of modernism may be traced back to the symbolism and aestheticism of the eighteen nineties. It owes much to Pater's belief that experience consists of transitory, indefinable impressions. Pater points out that human life is painfully finite; 'our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time' (31). The 'quickened, multiple consciousness' (ibid.) aroused by art offers the means to suspend time momentarily. Bergsonian concepts of time as duration were easily assimilated to this artistic and personal need to be reconciled with transience; and to establish the importance of artistic creation.

This was partly a response to the decline in religious faith after Darwinism. It was also a reaction to mass,
technological culture. There were several divergent currents within modernism; in *Shifting Gears* (32), Tichi demonstrates ways in which some writers embraced the machine age. But Bergsonism was a crucial element in the cultural climate. Amongst short story writers, Bergson was read by James Joyce, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Willa Cather and Katherine Mansfield. Edith Wharton dined with him in New York, and Gertrude Stein attended his lectures in Paris. Woolf's first hand knowledge of his writing is unproven, but Bergsonism was strongly advocated by many in her circle. The literary and artistic magazine, *Rhythm* (1912-14), edited by John Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield, provided a platform for a modernist aesthetic shaped largely by Bergsonism.

By validating intuition, Bergson appears to privilege subjective insight over scientific objectivity. His prose style is frequently poeticized; he often illustrates his arguments metaphorically, drawing on literary or artistic analogies. In his most widely read book, *Creative Evolution* (1907), he describes the way in which an artist breaks down 'by an effort of intuition, the barrier that space puts up between him and his model' (33); following this example in everyday life, we might be able to break down the barriers between ourselves and reality.

By providing a spiritual role for the artist, Bergson defends her/his status against the threat posed by mass
culture. His views on art are most overtly stated in his 1911 treatise on comedy, *Laughter*:

What is the object of art? Could reality come into direct contact with sense, and consciousness, could we enter into immediate communion with things and with ourselves, probably art would be useless, or rather we should all be artists, for then our soul would constantly vibrate in perfect accord with nature. [...] Between nature and ourselves, nay, between ourselves and our own consciousness a veil is interposed: a veil that is dense and opaque for the common herd - thin, almost transparent, for the artist and the poet. (34)

This is a romantic view of art, later mocked by Wyndham Lewis in his *Time and Western Man* (35). He attacks relativist scientists like Whitehead (though not Einstein himself) for valorizing the aesthetic and the irrational at the expense of scientific rigour. But, in affirming the value of direct experience, Bergson offered a dynamic world view, which celebrated transience. In *Creative Evolution*, he posited the existence of a positive life force, the *élan vital*, as an alternative to mechanistic Darwinism. As Quirk says, commenting on the mood of the time, 'the new reality meant that reality was by its very nature continually new, that one now lived in a world of immanence, a world of incessant and unforeseeable change and possibility, a world always about to be' (36).

The attempt to engage with time as duration necessitated formal and stylistic innovation. In following the Bergsonian model of subjectivity as 'a continuous
flux, a succession of states, each of which announces that which follows and contains that which precedes it' (37), writers sought to represent a multiplicitous and elusive interiority. Hanson has called the modernist short story 'the paradigmatic form of early twentieth century literature' (38), because of its particular ability to capture this fragmented sensibility. It is assembled through the juxtaposition of images rather than a metonymic 'grammar', based on causality, which she associates with the realist novel. A seemingly random, image-based narrative structure organizes time as the interpenetration of successive states.

Many critics, including Quinones and Kern, have commented on a sharpened sense of the present within modernist culture. Technological innovations, particularly the ship's wireless and the telephone, provided images of simultaneity. As we have seen, in Bergsonian terms there is no actual present, since every instant is absorbed by the past as it arises, just as the past impinges on the psychical present. A short form is well positioned in the attempt to capture this fleeting moment. As Hanson points out, a short story often describes a single incident, charged with a special significance. It represents a moment of transition, in which past, present and future converge. Rather than tracing developments in its characters' lives chronologically over the years, as in Quinones' 'ethical time', the modernist short
story often charts the events of a single day, which is also penetrated by images from the past. Such is the case in Katherine Mansfield's story 'Bliss' (1918), which follows events on the day of a dinner party. I shall now give a detailed reading of 'Bliss', as a supreme example of modernist short fiction.

'Bliss'

'Bliss' exemplifies Bergsonian attitudes towards time, whilst also parodying them. Its heroine, the significantly named Bertha Young, cannot reconcile her chronological age with a childlike sense of 'bliss'; clock time is at variance with duration. 'Bliss' satirizes the dilemma that Quinones calls 'the paradox of time', whereby the increased regulation of time reduces the individual's control over their own time. The timetables imposed by social convention clash with the exercise of free will. Thus, Bertha's impromptu visit to the nursery interferes with her baby's routine; her longing to communicate with her husband, when he telephones, is thwarted because he is behind schedule at work. As one of the fashionable guests at Bertha's dinner party says, 'we are the victims of time and train' (39). Another draws more heavily on Nietzsche to describe
the vicissitudes of travelling in a London cab: 'I saw myself driving through Eternity in a timeless taxi' (p.117).

Although Mansfield parodies the modernist problematizing of time, its organization in the story is informed by Bergsonian concepts. The narrative is structured by the association of images, representing Bertha's changing moods and impressions throughout the day. Mansfield uses free indirect discourse to give the reader access to Bertha's protean inner self, in which successive states co-mingle.

This becomes evident in the opening paragraphs. The conflict between clock time and 'real time' is enacted syntactically. The first sentence begins by stating, and the second by restating, Bertha's numerical age, only to undercut abstract classification by fragmenting the sentence through ellipsis and repetition:

Although Bertha Young was thirty she still had moments like this when she wanted to run instead of walk, to take dancing steps on and off the pavement, to bowl a hoop, to throw something up in the air and catch it again, or to stand still and laugh at - nothing - at nothing, simply.

What can you do if you are thirty and, turning the corner of your own street, you are overcome, suddenly, by a feeling of bliss - absolute bliss! as though you'd suddenly swallowed a bright piece of the late afternoon sun and it burned in your bosom, sending out a little shower of sparks into every particle, into every finger and toe?... (p.111)

These fragmented, paragraph-length sentences suggest
that time and experience are heterogeneous. Successive states interpenetrate; they cannot be divided into discreet moments. Within the free indirect discourse, an impersonal authorial voice ('Although Bertha Young...') is in dialogue with the speech of the character ('absolute bliss!'). These shifting voices increase the sense of a fluid reality. The transposition of Bertha's direct speech (whether thought or uttered) suggests spontaneity, or even improvisation. This is in accordance with the Bergsonian emphasis on direct experience. Along with the use of the present tense, the transposition of direct speech conveys the urgency of the passing moment.

Through repetition, the narrative often seems to double back on itself, suspending the passage of time. The second paragraph recapitulates the first, incorporating more of Bertha's language, with a corresponding shift in focalization. The pronoun changes from the third to the second person. In the third paragraph, Bertha's state of mind is, again, re-expressed, in questions and exclamations that suggest direct speech:

How idiotic civilisation is! Why be given a body if you have to keep it shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle? (p.111).

Finally, in the fourth paragraph, the movement towards direct speech is completed:

'No, that about the fiddle is not quite what I mean,' she thought, running up the steps and feeling in her
bag for the key - she'd forgotten it as usual - and rattling the letter-box. 'It's not what I mean, because - Thank you Mary' - she went into the hall. 'Is nurse back?' (ibid.)

Experience is presented as a continuum, in which subjective states interact with external reality; Bertha's inner speech mingles with the words she speaks out loud to the maid. Linearity is disrupted by ellipses, repetition and digression. 'Is nurse back?' has no apparent connection to the speech or events that precede it.

'Pure duration,' according to Time and Free Will, 'is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states' (Time, p.100). Successive states merge into an organic whole, 'as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another' (ibid.). In Mansfield's story, successive events are left unfinished and undivided from one another. Bertha's running up the stairs appears to be contemporaneous with her feeling for the key and forgetting the key, with her private thoughts and with her speech to the servant. They are enacted within the endless process which is duration.

Thus, the story resists finalization. It opens in mid-movement, with a conjunction. It ends with a question, followed by the cryptic image of Bertha's pear tree:
'Oh, what is going to happen now?' she cried. But the pear tree was as lovely as ever and as full of flower and as still. (p.124)

Although the 'still' image seems to halt time's passage, full closure is thwarted by the irresolution of the question.

Images like the pear tree play a vital role in the organization of time as duration, and contribute to the 'organic' structure of the story. But, before discussing this point in more detail, I should like to discuss 'bliss' itself. In the state of 'bliss', Bertha's consciousness is freed from the artificial strictures of clock time. She is able to retrieve an authentic Bergsonian self, which endures at a more profound level than the self which is ruled by social habit. She experiences that 'immediate communion with things and with ourselves' described by Bergson in Laughter as more usually the artist's prerogative (40).

Mansfield's evocation of 'the fire in her bosom' (p.115) recalls Time and Free Will's 'deep-seated self[...]which heats and blazes up' (Time, p.125). The imagery of sparks, fire and cosmic heat, which both share, implies transformative energy; Mansfield's simile comparing the sensation of bliss to swallowing 'a bright piece of that late afternoon sun' which sends out 'a little shower of sparks into every particle, every finger and toe' (p.111) suggests the absorption of a vibrant
material world into the human body. Matter is no longer seen as inert, but as a Bergsonian aggregate of images, in dynamic interaction with human consciousness. 'The dark table seemed to melt into the dusky light and the glass dish and the blue bowl to float in the air' (p.112). The physical world no longer consists of Newtonian fixed properties. Through intuition, the empathy which brings insight into external objects, Bertha is able to tear aside the veil which separates the ordinary mortal from an essential dynamic reality.

The experience of 'bliss' is grounded in the corporeal. This may be constructed, as in Bertha's vision in the dining room, as a heightening of the senses or as a new-found awareness of her own physicality - the body, which is 'shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle' (p.111), just as reality is confined by attempts at symbolization. Physical instinct erupts into socialized behaviour, as Bertha keeps feeling an urge to laugh uncontrollably; she is forced to dig her nails into her hands during her dinner party (p.120). Her longing to extend the Bergsonian 'communion with things and with ourselves' to her husband and to one of her guests, Miss Fulton, is clearly eroticized. 'For the first time in her life Bertha Young desired her husband' (p.122).

By its very nature, 'bliss' cannot be articulated. According to Bergson, emotions are unquantifiable, while signification, as a form of abstraction, is bound to
spatialize. It cannot contain the fluidity of lived experience. 'Language,' Bergson claims, 'is not meant to convey all the delicate shades of inner states' (Time, p.160). Bergson's attitude towards language presupposes a unity between signifier and signified; for him, the word operates as a transparent medium, serving a transcendent subject. In Mansfield's story, signification breaks down, as Bertha struggles to define her emotions: 'she didn't know how to express it - what to do with it' (p.113). There is an ambiguity in 'express', which refers both to linguistic definition and to physical gesture. The fragmented syntax exposes the inadequacy of language as a unitary code which, in Bergson's view, is an artificial imposition on the flux of lived experience. However, there is more to language then the limiting, discursive function perceived by Bergson. Signification is not limited to mere symbolization. The sensory and rhythmic qualities of language, which Kristeva calls the semiotic, channel libidinal excess. This multiplicity is incorporated in Mansfield's writing:

But now - ardently! ardently! The word ached in her ardent body! Was this what that feeling of bliss had been leading up to? But then, then - (p.122)

Language is grounded in the corporeal, and may itself be a manifestation of 'bliss'. It is qualitative, and resists finalization.

Dissatisfied by her conversations with Miss Fulton,
Bertha looks for a wordless 'sign' between them as a true means of communication. Metaphor compensates as unitary meaning collapses:

What was there in the touch of that cool arm that could fan - fan - start blazing - blazing - the fire of bliss that Bertha did not know what to do with? (p.118)

Bertha's emotions cannot be defined through language as abstract symbolization, but may be inferred through sensuous imagery, which Mansfield often associates with heat or cold. Such sensory data are fundamental to the apprehension of a psychical present. According to Bergson, the psychical present consists of 'both a perception of the immediate past and a determination of the immediate future' (Matter, p.138). It is experienced mainly as sensation and movement, and is therefore centred on the body:

More generally, in that continuity of becoming which is reality itself, the present moment is constituted by the quasi-instantaneous section effected by our perception in the flowing mass, and this section is precisely that which we call the material world. Our body occupies its center; it is, in this material world, that part of which we directly feel the flux; in its actual state the actuality of our present lies. (Matter, p.139)

Bergson's project in Matter and Memory is to demonstrate that consciousness is irreducible to physiological factors. As forms of representation, recollections cannot be generated by the body, which is predicated on action. However, Bergson is anxious to avoid traditional Cartesian
dualities. He stresses the body's potency as the agent of perception: 'we may speak of the body as an ever advancing boundary between the future and the past, as a pointed end, to which our past is continually driving forward into our future' (p.78). By foregrounding sensation, movement and the corporeal, Mansfield emphasizes 'the actuality of our present'.

But, as we have seen, a pure present, free of duration, cannot exist. In practice, memory cannot be expunged from perception: 'pure perception, in fact, however rapid we suppose it to be, occupies a certain depth of duration, so that our successive perceptions are never the real moments of things, as we have hitherto supposed, but are moments of our consciousness' (Matter, p.69). The interdependency between perception and recollection, physiological action and mental representation is made clear when Bergson discusses the memory-image:

Perception is never a mere contact of the mind with the object present; it is impregnated with memory-images which complete it as they interpret it. The memory-image, in its turn, partakes of the 'pure memory,' which it begins to materialize, and of the perception in which it tends to embody itself: regarded from the latter point of view, it might be defined as a nascent perception. Lastly, pure memory, though independent in theory, manifests itself as a rule only in the colored and living image which reveals it. (Matter, p.133)

The memory-image occupies an intersection between past and present, recollection and the body. Similarly,
the image, in Mansfield's story, binds memory with perception.

Miss Fulton held her hand a moment longer.
'Your lovely pear tree!' she murmured.
And then she was gone, with Eddie following, like the black cat following the grey cat.
'I'll shut up shop,' said Harry, extravagantly cool and collected.
'Your lovely pear tree - pear tree - pear tree!' (p.123)

Specific words and images recur, suffusing Bertha's perceptions with memories. Miss Fulton's direct speech is repeated in Bertha's memory, in a brief internal analepsis. Successive psychic states co-mingle as she realizes that her husband's ostensible dislike for her friend has been concealing their affair. The memory-image of the cats, which Bertha saw earlier as she was preparing for the dinner party, resurfaces spontaneously. The 'curious shiver' induced by that sighting (p.115) is transferred implicitly to the image of Miss Fulton followed by Eddie.

Like duration itself, the memory-image is 'qualitative' rather than 'quantitative'. A literary image like the pear tree seems to offer unity. It compensates for the inadequacy of language by communicating the heterogeneity of lived experience. The story's final sentence suggests that time is transcended, and that the pear tree signifies enduring values: 'But the pear tree was as lovely as ever and as full of flower
and as still' (p.12). The image is, however, ultimately indeterminate.

Bertha first notices the tree as she anticipates her dinner party, and wonders about Miss Fulton; in full blossom, it seems to represent fertility and beauty. This is immediately undercut by the juxtaposed image of the cats creeping across the lawn. Yet 'she seemed to see on her eyelids the lovely pear tree with its wide open blossoms as a symbol of her own life' (p.115). Its colours even match her own white and green outfit. But the image of the tree cannot be reduced to a single meaning. It changes across time, becoming, in the moonlight, 'silver as Miss Fulton' whose fingers are so pale 'a light seemed to come from them' (p.119).

The women's separate identities are fused in the image of the tree; it is at this point in the narrative that Bertha begins to look for the unspoken signal from Miss Fulton. Later, as they look at the pear tree together, Bertha feels the two women achieve the longed-for rapport, which transcends signification:

Although it was so still it seemed like the flame of a candle, to stretch up, to point, to quiver in the bright air, to grow taller and taller as they gazed - almost to touch the rim of the round, silver moon.

How long did they stand there? Both, as it were, caught in that circle of unearthly light, understanding each other perfectly, creatures of another world, and wondering what they were to do in this one with all this blissful treasure that burned in their bosoms and dropped, in silver flowers, from their hair and hands?

For ever - for a moment? (p.120)
External and internal worlds, self and other, are harmonized by intuition, which bridges the gap between subject and object. As the women blossom with the pear tree, it seems as though what Bergson describes as 'the sensible qualities' (Time, p.97) are understood from within the object that is perceived. Matter is vibrant; the tree that had been still earlier in the day, when it 'stood perfect, as though becalmed against a jade-green sky' (p.115) now seems to move. A unitary symbol has become dynamic. Immeasurable duration renders clock time irrelevant - 'for ever? - for a moment?'

Eliade has contrasted linear, historical time with archaic, circular time as it is understood by ancient cultures (41). Through the repetition of a paradigmatic gesture, such as a religious ritual, the subject is able to transcend time. The mythic overtones in this passage, particularly the references to the moon, suggest that the women are stepping outside of Eliade's 'profane' time into archaic time. In 'Women's Time', Kristeva aligns cyclical time with femininity (42). The moon is traditionally associated with the notion of repeated cycles and with the feminine; the 'circle of unearthly light' represents a female space. However, Mansfield's hyperbolic language signals her comic intentions; the reader should not view this feminine space uncritically, as I shall now demonstrate through a more detailed discussion of the modernist epiphany.
The experience of 'bliss' may be regarded as the privileging of values conventionally encoded as feminine. Bergson himself was accused, notably by Benda, of perpetuating a feminized contemporary culture, by elevating passivity and irrationalism. This is also implied in Lewis's attacks on Bergson in *Time and Western Man*. Some critics, for instance Shari Benstock (43) and Patricia Waugh, characterize modernist culture as masculinist. Waugh claims that 'women have not revealed the same obsession with formal abstraction, aesthetic distance, autonomy, and "objectivity" which has dominated modernist aesthetics' (44). But it is precisely those values which the Bergsonian strand within modernism calls into question. Bergsonian modernism may be regarded as a continuation of the 'feminized counterdiscourse' Felski notes in literature at the fin de siècle (45). The feminine stands for a heterogeneous subjectivity which is inscribed within certain types of modernist discourse. This does not necessarily imply any raised social status for the female artist herself; 'feminized' discourse may be appropriated by male writers. Neither does it require an explicit problematization of gendered identity; and, as we have seen in George Egerton's work, 'feminized counterdiscourse' may contain essentialist attitudes. It is, however, misleading to regard modernist fiction as a predominantly masculinist project. Bergsonian intuition is a key element within literary modernism.
as I shall demonstrate. It offers a clear example of a conventionally 'feminine' virtue.

According to Matter and Memory, 'memory, inseparable in practice from perception, imports the past into the present, contracts into a single intuition many moments of duration' (p.73). This 'single intuition' may be equated with the epiphany - a rare and fleeting revelation, transcending clock time and briefly uniting subjective reality with external objects. In Joyce's original formulation in Stephen Hero, it involves an empathic understanding of the true nature of the material world, so that 'the soul of the commonest object[...]seems to us radiant' (46). Woolf also speaks of spontaneously generated 'moments of being' (47) which transform mundane experience. In Bergsonian terms, habit-memory is superseded by an involuntary memory-image. A superficial, clock-bound reality is redeemed by a deeper state of consciousness, which is able to grasp the experience of duration.

As Hanson observes, within modernist short fiction, the epiphany serves as a narrative focus, 'a structural equivalent for the conventional resolution of a plot' (48). Bayley defines the 'short story effect' as epiphany, or a Wordsworthian 'spot of time': the realization that the most perfect art is precisely that which cannot capture the ineluctable quality of experience' (49). Bayley's comment echoes the Bergsonian belief in a numinous
reality which eludes symbolization.

Even though Mansfield's own aesthetics embrace Bergsonian attitudes towards time and subjectivity, these are satirized throughout 'Bliss', by comic hyperbole. The events that follow the epiphany of the pear tree make clear the dangers inherent in a crudely Bergsonian irrationalism. Bertha witnesses an intimate scene between her husband and Miss Fulton. This undercuts the previous epiphany, creating another 'false epiphany', in which both the reader's and Bertha's anticipations are suddenly blocked. The valorization of subjective experience has isolated Bertha within her own interiority. She has been unable to either communicate her state of mind or act upon it. In 'Women's Time', Kristeva warns that if women over-identify with an idealized, maternal femininity, they jeopardize their own sense of personal autonomy. The seductive space within the 'circle of unearthly light' may be illusory.

Following this scene, the text withdraws access to Bertha's state of mind; the authorial voice dominates. Without an interiorized context, Bertha's question, 'Oh what is going to happen now?' (p.124) remains ambiguous. Nevertheless, the closing image of the pear tree, 'as lovely as ever and as full of flower and as still' (ibid.), does suggest an abiding, Bergsonian reality, which is both self-renewing and essentially unchanging.
According to Nietzsche, 'all joy wants itself, therefore it also wants heart's agony...joy wants the eternity of all things, wants deep, deep, deep eternity!' (50). However painful the cost, Bertha has embraced the life force in all its totality. Mansfield questions the viability of an aestheticized, solipsistic form of consciousness. But she also celebrates 'bliss' as a form of heightened experience, engaging with time as duration. Her story is carnivalized; here, comic ambiguity resists fixed interpretation. (I discuss the concept of carnival ambivalence in the next chapter.)

Bergsonism provides an invaluable insight into the aesthetics of the modernist short story. However, Bergson's view of language as an abstract, unitary code limits his philosophy. Bergson does not address the possibility that language itself may be a form of lived experience, rather than an artificial imposition; or that language might construct reality, instead of merely reflecting it. The experience of time as flux generates multiple realities, as the past is re-enacted through memory; Bergson's belief in a single transcendent reality seems to resist the implications of his own theories, especially in the context of relativist and quantum physics.

The sense of time as duration, a boundless process of becoming, has been crucial to the organization of time within the short story since modernism. I shall
be examining ways in which this tendency has developed in stories by Paley and Munro. The shifting subjectivities and multiplicities of meaning apparent in Mansfield's work continues in theirs. This often becomes an exploration of the relationship between textuality and lived experience, particularly the way in which memory is shaped by discourse. The idea that contradictions may co-exist inside a text, without ultimate reconciliation, becomes increasingly dominant in postmodernist fiction, as Linda Hutcheon explains in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (51). The modernist re-evaluation of time, which helped forge an aesthetics of the short story, sets the themes explored by the contemporary short fiction. I shall now begin to discuss this contemporary work by Munro and Paley, augmenting the theoretical perspectives on time and consciousness that I have drawn from Bergson with Bakhtinian concepts of language. In the chapters that follow, I shall move away from contextualizing the short story historically and culturally to applying modern critical concepts to the texts that I examine. As I shall explain, Bakhtin's thinking may be situated within the modernist currents discussed in this chapter. But it is the application of his theories from a contemporary critical perspective that will concern me the most.
References


11. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Signs, trans. by Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), Part 11, Ch.8, 'Einstein and the Crisis of Reason' for an account of a public debate between Einstein and Bergson on this issue in 1922.


15. Kern, p.34.


23. Zarathustra, Pt.3, p.178, 'Of the Vision and the Riddle'.


26. Zarathustra, Pt.4, p.331, 'The Intoxicated Song'.


43. Shari Benstock, 'Beyond the Reaches of Feminist Criticism: A Letter from Paris' in Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship, ed. by Shari Benstock (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). Benstock claims that male modernist writers were united by their belief in 'the indestructibility of the bond between the word and its meanings' (p.15).


48. Hanson, 1985, p.7.


50. Nietzsche, Zarathustra, Pt.4, p.332, 'The Intoxicated Song'.

Bakhtinian Theory

Bergson proposes a dynamic model of subjectivity and a material world which is self-renewing, within time as a boundless flux. Yet he regards language as a unified code. The Russian thinker Bakhtin (1895-1975) situates language itself within an ever-changing physical and psychical reality. His ideas complement Bergson's, in that both originate within a modernist context which replaces a Newtonian world view with one based on relativity. Both reject totalizing systems. They emphasize a motility in lived experience which resists finalization. They conceptualize material and subjective reality as a network of shifting relationships. This involves an investigation into the nature of consciousness, with the body as a boundary between the subject and the world. Both the younger and the older philosopher are especially interested in the interaction between individual consciousness and the material world. This lends special significance to the body as a boundary zone between the two.

In Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, written with, or as, Voloshinov in 1929 (1), the author echoes Bergson's dissatisfaction with mechanistic models of the psyche:
The subjective psyche is not something that can be reduced to processes occurring within the confines of the matural, animalian organism. The processes that basically define the content of the psyche occur not inside but outside the individual organism, although they involve its participation. (Marxism, p.25)

Like Bergson, Voloshinov/Bakhtin is reacting against determinist philosophies. He is seeking to accommodate, within Marxism, a psychology which is neither crudely behaviourist, nor purely transcendent. His conclusion is that 'the reality of the inner psyche is the same reality as that of the sign' (Marxism, p.26). Subjectivity and language are bound together, and both are generated by social interaction.

Bakhtin's focus moves from an interrogation of the mind-body relationship, which he shares with the Bergson of Matter and Memory, to the relationship between self and other. This remains a primary interest throughout his career. In his later work on carnival ambivalence, this becomes an examination of the interaction between self and world. He problematizes Cartesian duality by considering the body as the delimitation between the human subject and the world.

Bergsonism was fashionable during modernism's heyday. Bakhtin's work was largely suppressed under Stalinism, only becoming at all influential towards the end of his life. Because of this, it is easy to overlook the connections between the two. But Bergsonism belongs
within a range of direct influences on Bakhtinian thought, including Neo-Kantianism and relativist science, as well as Marxism. Bakhtin's challenge to transcendence signals a departure from earlier thinkers (though not, as we have seen, from Nietzsche). But this is a transition, not a clean break.

Bakhtin's short article 'Art and Answerability' (1919) takes an approach to time, as it is experienced by the inner consciousness, which may be classified as Bergsonian. The individual's 'constituent moments' are not only experienced sequentially, 'but must also interpenetrate one another in the unity of guilt and answerability' (2). In his longer essay, 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', written in the early 1920s, this Bergsonian sense of multiplicity has developed into his own version of subjectivity as event rather than essence. Bakhtin claims that the sense of a unique self is founded in the body's specific situation in space and time, as it is differentiated from that of others:

When I contemplate a whole human being who is situated outside and over against me, our concrete, actually experienced horizons do not coincide. For at each given moment, regardless of the position and the proximity to me of this other human being whom I am contemplating, I shall always see and know something that he, from his place outside and over against me, cannot see himself; parts of his body that are inaccessible to his own gaze (his head, his face and its expression), the world behind his back, and a whole series of objects and relations, which in any of our mutual relations are accessible to me but not to him. As we gaze at each other, two
different worlds are reflected in the pupils of our eyes. (3)

The construction of an individual subjectivity depends on this relative positioning:

The correlation of the image-categories of I and the other is the form in which an actual human being is concretely experienced; this form of the I (the form in which I experience myself as the one-and-only me) is radically different from the form of the other (in which I experience all other human beings without exception). ('Author and Hero', pp.37-8)

Confined within our own bodies, we cannot find an approach to the self without the notion of an other. Even our reflection in a mirror can only be partial; and in looking in the mirror the subject projects an image of herself for the benefit of an imagined other.

Like Bergson, Bakhtin stresses that each subject is unique. An awareness of personal identity forms the touchstone for all other evaluations. Although he addresses the question at less length than Bergson, Bakhtin also asks if there are aspects of subjectivity that are irreducible to purely physiological factors:

The consciousness that this is all of me, that outside of this totally delimited object I do not exist - this consciousness can never be convincing within myself, since a necessary coefficient of any perception and of any mental representation of my outward expressedness in being is consciousness of the fact that this is not all of me. ('Author and Hero', p.37)

But selfhood is, nonetheless, a construction. There is an 'excess of seeing' (p.22), generated by the subject's
specific perspective, which cannot be shared by the other; yet the subject depends on a notional other for its own self-awareness. Bakhtin's emphasis on the social formation of the subject is clearly distinct from Bergson's essentialism. In his discussion of the self's image in a mirror, he states that:

In any case, what is expressed here is not a unitary and unique soul - a second participant is implicated in the event of self-contemplation, a fictitious other, a nonauthoritative and unfounded author. I am not alone when I look at myself in the mirror: I am possessed by some one else's soul. (p.33)

While subjectivity is grounded in a sense of a unique, unchanging self, this is only completed by a 'fictitious other'.

In contrast to Bergson, who regards language as an artifice, incapable of expressing lived experience in its multiplicity, Bakhtin believes that the subject itself is structured by language. This concept is fully explicated in Marxism and the Philosophy of Language. But it is also suggested in 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', where Bakhtin describes how the infant's sense of an autonomous self is formed by the encounter with the mother's speech:

The words of a loving human being are the first and most authoritative words about him; they are the words that for the first time determine his personality from the outside, the words that come to meet his indistinct inner sensation of himself, giving it a form and a name in which, for the first time, he finds himself and becomes aware of himself as something. ('Author and Hero',
As *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* explains, consciousness itself is 'inner speech', which demands at least a notional addressee. Subjectivity is therefore inherently social. Conversely, the individual is implicated within the social and the ideological:

The 'social' is usually thought of in binary opposition with the 'individual' and hence we have the notion that the psyche is individual while ideology is social. Notions of that sort are fundamentally false. (*Marxism*, p.34)

The idea that signifying practice accompanies entry into the social realm has clear affinities with Lacanian theory. In fact, Bruss claims that Lacan was indirectly influenced by Bakhtinian philosophy, via the Prague school and Levi-Strauss (4). According to *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, consciousness is 'filled with signs' (p.11), each one embodying ideological content; 'consciousness becomes consciousness only once it has been filled with ideological (semiotic) content' (ibid.).

Language is a form of social interaction, enacted within the boundless flux of time: 'language presents the picture of a ceaseless flow of becoming. [...] There is no real moment in time when a synchronic system of language could be constructed' (*Marxism*, p.66). Every utterance is part of a continuing dialogue, both responding to what has come before and anticipating what will follow.
- an 'ideological chain' (p.11), stretching from sign to sign and from one speaker to another. Meaning is constantly redefined by the shifting relationships of conflicting social forces.

In his essay 'Discourse in the Novel' (1935), Bakhtin calls this clash and interplay of voices 'raznorechie' ('different-speech-ness'), which is translated as 'heteroglossia' (5). Heteroglossia undermines any concept of a unified, definitive world-vision. Bakhtin claims that the novel is unique among literary forms in its ability to incorporate heteroglossia. It distinguishes the 'dialogic' novel from genres which in Bakhtin's view are 'monologic', such as the epic. I shall examine this argument in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

Monologue may also be disrupted by the carnivalesque, a tradition Bakhtin traces from Menippean satire through medieval popular culture to Rabelais and Dostoevsky. The theory is explicated in his 1940 doctoral thesis, later published as Rabelais and his World (6). In carnival, social hierarchies are overturned. Authority is ridiculed through broad satiric humour, a delight in the grotesque and the celebration of bodily functions. But this process is not merely an inversion. Laughter and seriousness, birth and death are not opposites. They are inseparable. Carnival is a communal impulse, a meeting of diversity, comparable to the linguistic
diversity of heteroglossia. Its traces may be discerned in the post-Renaissance novel in the guise of hyperbole, parody, obscene language and the image of the grotesque body. The carnivalesque disrupts attempts by church or state to impose monologue.

Before discussing the incorporation of heteroglossia and the carnivalesque into contemporary short fiction, I shall take a brief look at the relationship between novelistic discourse and the short story.

**Novelistic Discourse in the Short Story**

For Bakhtin, novelistic discourse reaches far beyond the limits of the extended work of prose fiction. Once the novel becomes dominant in literature, other genres are, inevitably, re-shaped by its influence. Bakhtin analyses Pushkin's long poem, *Eugene Onegin*, as a novel, and sees novelistic discourse embedded within Ibsen's naturalist drama and even in some lyric poetry. This very fluidity of form is characteristic of the novel, which he describes in his essay, 'Epic and the Novel', as 'the sole genre that continues to develop, that is as yet uncompleted' (7). It is difficult to imagine how such a completion might be accomplished, consistent with the novel's 'semantic openendedness, a living contact...
with unfinished, still evolving contemporary reality' ('Epic', p.7). That 'living contact' is embodied by heteroglossia, which can only enter literature through novelistic discourse.

Discussion of the short story has traditionally centred on attempts to distance it from the novel, often asserting a closer kinship with poetry. V.S. Pritchett, Elizabeth Bowen and Nadine Gordimer (8) have all made the connection, developing the line of theory originated by Poe's 'unity of effect and impression' (9).

Bakhtin's concept of a work of fiction as a diversity of voices contrasts with Poe's emphasis on unity. Although, according to Bakhtin, the author's 'ultimate semantic instantiation' ('Discourse', p.299) does create a stylistic unity, this is likened to a harmonizing of themes within orchestral composition, rather than to the single vision of Poe's more painterly analogies (10). In novelistic discourse, 'the "depicting" authorial language now lies on the same plane as the "depicted" language of the hero' ('Epic', p.27). Authorial discourse both represents and is represented.

However, Poe's insistence that 'in the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design' (11), is not irreconcilable with Bakhtin's dialogic approach. Poe himself points out the 'vast variety of modes or inflections of thought
and expression' which the short story writer 'may bring to his theme' (12). The stress he places on the centralizing role of the author may seem to be at odds with Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia as 'another's speech in another's language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way' ('Discourse', p.324, emphasis Bakhtin's). But textual unity does have a part to play in Bakhtinian aesthetics. In the opening pages of 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', Bakhtin speaks of aesthetic activity as a form of consummation. An author's 'excess of seeing' brings a completion to the artistic product which cannot be achieved in lived experience. 'Discourse in the Novel' suggests that heteroglossia in novelistic discourse is consummated by the artistic vision which reworks it:

The social and historical voices populating language, all its words and all its forms, which provide language with its particular concrete conceptualizations, are organized in the novel into a structured stylistic system that expresses the differentiated socio-ideological position of the author amid the heteroglossia of his epoch. ('Discourse', p.300)

Some kind of wholeness is achieved, although it must be provisional.

However, Bakhtin makes a sharp differentiation between the consummatedness of novelistic discourse, which still maintains its links with the evolving present, and the closure he detects in poetic unity. He claims that 'poetry, striving for maximal purity, works in
its own language as if that language were unitary' ('Discourse', p.399), ignoring the heteroglossia within extra-literary language. 'The language of the poet is his language, he is utterly immersed in, inseparable from it, he makes use of each form, each word, each expression according to its unmediated power to assign meaning[...] as a pure and direct expression of his own intentions' (p.285). This seems to echo Poe's assessment of the short story. But where Poe valorizes the short story by assigning poetic attributes to the genre, Bakhtin seeks to raise the status of novelistic discourse by discarding what he regards as a limitation in poetic 'monologue'.

This leads him towards literary generalizations which do not always withstand closer scrutiny. He claims that poetic discourse, in its dependence on the trope, exploits only one dimension of the individual word. 'The double-voiced prose word has a double meaning' ('Discourse', p.327), perpetuating, within every utterance, a dialogue between languages which cannot be contained within the fixed boundaries of metaphor. 'The entire event is played out between the word and its object; all of the play of the poetic symbol is in that space' ('Discourse', p.328).

Poetic discourse, he claims, may reflect the constant development of language, its social context and its ambiguities, but all of this is subordinated to 'a
single-personed hegemony' ('Discourse', p.297). Only novelistic discourse is able to relativize competing linguistic consciousnesses. 'The fundamental condition, that which makes a novel a novel, that which is responsible for its stylistic uniqueness, is the speaking person and his discourse' (p.333). The speech of the characters mingle with that of the author, through indirect speech, quasi-direct speech - 'inner speech transmitted [...] by the author' (p.319); and various forms of stylization, including parody and skaz (the narrative technique which mimics oral narration).

It will be evident that, despite Bakhtin's comments, 'the speaking person and his discourse' is not wholly absent from poetic forms, some of which, for instance the ballad, are rooted in oral tradition. If heteroglossia is inherent in language, its manifestations cannot be limited to the novel or to 'novelized' genres. However, the concept of double-voiced discourse is especially useful to the close reading of prose fiction, where multiple meanings are generated in a shifting linguistic context.

In his essay, 'Recent Short Story Theories: Problems in Definition', Norman Friedman attacks a tendency in short story criticism to focus on generic specificity (13). He maintains that some allegedly defining features of the short story are aspects of periodicity rather than genre. The affinity with the present moment, which
I discussed in the previous chapter, might equally well be applied to the modernist novel or poem. Friedman argues that theorists set up a priori distinctions, and then exclude examples that do not conform to these preconceived categories. He has been answered by Mary Rohrberger, who defends the usefulness of generic guidelines, while accepting that there will always be examples that fall outside them: 'systems can never be fully defined' (14). Hesse's view that 'it makes a difference whether a genre is conceived as a category of works or a cluster of characteristics' is helpful in this context (15). To focus on exclusive generic definitions is ultimately futile, and circumscribes analysis of what is, in fact, a body of widely divergent texts. To analyse the short story in strict opposition to the novel seems an unduly defensive posture, a hundred and fifty years after Poe's review of Hawthorne; while the traditional alignment with poetry obscures the importance of heteroglossia to prose fiction.

Like the novel, the short story may be a genre that can never be completed, inexhaustible in its capacity to incorporate an 'unfinished, still evolving contemporary reality' ('Epic', p.7). But, accepting Hesse's concept of a genre as a loose 'cluster of characteristics' (see above), I would argue that the short story since modernism has, indeed, been shaped by a heightened sense of the passing moment, which foregrounds this contact with
unfinalized experience. As an example, I shall now discuss double-voiced discourse in Alice Munro's 'Pictures of the Ice' (Friend of my Youth, 1990). I shall also use some concepts from Genette's narrative theories, which will facilitate my analysis of temporal organization in prose.

'Pictures of the Ice'

'Pictures of the Ice' tells the story of Austin, a provincial United Church minister who, a year after his wife's death from cancer, is apparently planning to re-marry in Hawaii. Karin, who is cleaning out his house for him, discovers that he is in fact leaving for a distant part of Canada, where he drowns in a supposed accident. The narrative is focalized almost entirely through Karin, using free indirect discourse (or, to use Bakhtin's term, 'quasi-direct speech'). Authorial intentions are 'refracted' through the speech of the characters. Here, Karin is remembering the break-up of her marriage after her husband's conversion to Christian fundamentalism:

It didn't really surprise her that he got as mad at her now for drinking one beer and smoking one cigarette as he used to do when she wanted to stop partying and go to bed at two o'clock. He said he was giving her
a week to decide. No more drinking, no more smoking, Christ as her Saviour. One week. Karin said don't bother with the week. After Brent was gone, she quit smoking, she almost quit drinking, she also quit going to Austin's church. She gave up on nearly everything but a slow, smouldering grudge against Brent, which grew and grew. (16)

Syntactically, the first sentence belongs to the posited author, but the vocabulary and the emotional stance are Karin's. Meaning is generated in the dialogue between authorial speech and that of the characters. Superficially, 'don't bother with the week' needs only a change in punctuation to become direct speech; but its context places it within free indirect discourse.

What this passage suggests most of all is some one going over a conversation again and again - Karin, nursing her grudge. The presence of a 'speaking person' is deeply ingrained within a style which is often reminiscent of small town gossip. The swift movement between direct and indirect speech is typical of oral storytelling, and so is the fluidity of tenses (see pp.149-50). The collective wisdom that occasionally surfaces is yet another reminder: '[...]ministers' wives often work now; it's a big help if they can get jobs' (p.139).

This may be regarded as an instance of stylization, in which the represented language is actualized. In the passage above, 'Christ as her Saviour' imports the idiolect of the born again Christian, while the repetition
of 'quit' classifies religion within the language of addiction. Different types of linguistic consciousness are striving within the same utterance, a feature of novelistic discourse which Bakhtin calls 'hybridization' - 'a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter within the arena of the utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor' ('Discourse', p.358). 'Quit' then develops into an authorial 'gave up', which becomes highly ambiguous in the hybridized context of 'gave up on nearly everything'.

Munro makes extensive use of of what Bakhtin calls 'speech genres' - defined by Graham Roberts as 'the broad sense of linguistic conventions which speakers more or less tacitly agree upon as operative for any particular discursive context' (17). Jokes, sales patter, conversations about the weather, are all dialogically inter-related. A clash of registers often indicates social or ideological conflict. Karin writes 'Lazarus Sucks' on Brent's car (p.139). (Lazarus House is the religious hostel run by Brent.) Austin's homilies are more appropriate to his professional role than to personal conversation: 'There's more than one way to love God, and taking pleasure in the world is surely one of them. That's a revelation that's come to me rather late' (p.145).
Here he is using a professional speech genre to disengage from conflict, when speaking to his daughter, Megan.

Austin is talking on the telephone which, along with the answering machine (p.153), brings its own set of formal conventions. Telephone conversation may be regarded as an 'incorporated genre' comparable to the personal letter in its potential to determine the structure of the story as a whole ('Discourse', p.321). Bakhtin notes the way in which novelistic discourse borrows other genres, from both everyday speech and artistic sources, without apparently originating its own linguistic approach. These genres 'stratify the linguistic unity of the novel and further intensify its speech diversity' (ibid.). The novel's uniqueness lies in its ability to synthesize rather than invent.

Munro exploits the sense of dislocation inherent within telephone conversation, where the speakers are both present and absent. Although Austin's nominal interlocutor is his daughter in Montreal, his words are actually read in counterpoint to Karin's silent speculations, as she eavesdrops. These speculations continue, unspoken, when Megan rings again, to talk to Karin. Because the story is focalized through Karin, the reader never hears both sides of Austin's phone calls. Within the text, Karin's silent participation dominates the family discussions, creating fantasy images shared by the reader ('Wouldn't her voice bring such
looks to mind even if you'd never seen her?', p.147). Although both Austin and Megan are talkers rather than listeners, their speech cannot be other than anticipation and response ('I know I'm behaving just the way adult children are supposed to behave', ibid.). Absolute monologue is impossible. Heteroglossia, in which there is no first and last word, runs through every page of the text.

The interaction of different types of language is fundamental both to the style and content of Munro's story. The use of speech genres highlights formulaic types of communication, which may conceal the speaker's emotions, even when they are not telling out-and-out lies. Free indirect discourse reveals what is thought but never spoken aloud. Austin's lies about a marriage in Hawaii are mirrored by Karin's strategic silences.

Cora Kaplan has observed that patriarchal cultures prefer women to be silent, and that female access to public discourse is restricted (18). In Munro's story, Austin points out that his son's conversations about his re-marriage concentrate on his financial situation while his daughter discusses his mental state - 'the male and female way of expressing their anxiety' (p.149), the material and the personal. As I have already indicated, he himself conceals his private self behind the public speech genres associated with masculinity. This is signalled at the beginning of the story, when
he acquiesces in an offensive joke in a men's wear shop, notwithstanding his personal distaste.

Karin seeks empowerment through silence - not only in keeping Austin's secret, but by withholding speech during crises in her marriage. After the marriage ends, she takes private speech into a public context by airing a 'public grudge against her ex-husband' (p.139). She interrupts other people's conversations and scrawls abuse on Brent's car, transgressing conventionally female speaking positions. Yet, like Karin's minor thefts from Austin's house, these speech acts are essentially subversive, rather than pro-active. The message on the car is, at least theoretically, anonymous, and temporary; she writes it in the dust. Karin is re-appropriating female silence and a restricted public role. Austin's own concealments parallel these strategies. As a fragile, elderly man, whose patriarchal role in the church has been usurped by Brent, he has, to some extent, lost the power to exert male authority. He turns instead to strategies based on subterfuge and silence, which are conventionally encoded within the feminine.

Kaplan notes a 'sanction against female obscenity' (19) which limits women's access to broad humour. 'Pictures of the Ice' is typical of Munro's stories, in its use of parody and the grotesque, and of jokes, breaking this taboo against broad female humour. It
is this carnivalesque aspect of Munro's work that Magdalene Redekop highlights when she calls Munro a 'female clown', likening her work to a circus parade (20). Munro combines carnival ambivalence with a continuing exploration of feminine tactics of subterfuge and silence. The titles of two of her collections, one from the beginning of her career and the other more recent, clearly evoke the unspoken - Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You (1974) and Open Secrets (1994). Rooke attributes a tendency to tell 'truth at a slant' in fiction by Munro and other Canadian women writers to 'woman's long experience of indirection and introspection and the need to consider the feelings of others' (21). Discussing Munro's radical appropriation of the domestic, Redekop evokes the story of Philomela, who wove her story into a tapestry when her tongue was excised (22). The story might also serve to illustrate the interaction of speech and silence in Munro's work. Silence is as deeply embedded in the dialogic process as the spoken word.

In novelistic discourse, meaning evolves through the interplay of language and context, rather than through the self-contained tropes that Bakhtin attributes to poetic discourse. Every individual sign is 'multiaccentual' (Marxism, p.86); it contains a multiplicity of potential meanings, dependent on the intersection of social and ideological forces. 'Word
is a two-sided act' (Marxism, p.86); every utterance is conditioned by the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener. This may be illustrated by Megan's word, 'bizarre':

'Let's face it, Karin. Mother was a snob.' (Yes, she is drunk.) 'Well, she had to have something. Dragged around from one dump to another, always doing good. Doing good wasn't her thing at all. So now, now, he gives it all up, he's off to the easy life. In Hawaii! Isn't it bizarre?' (p.147)

Karin associates 'bizarre' with teenage slang on television; Megan's use of the word suggests her immaturity (she is 'around thirty', p.145). The internal dialogism of 'bizarre' is opened up further by the homophonous 'bazaar', which reminds Karin of church fetes:

Then she thinks of Megan's mother on the chintz-covered sofa in the living room, weak and yellow after her chemotherapy, one of those padded, perky kerchiefs around her nearly bald head. Still, she could look up at Karin with a faint, formal surprise when Karin came into the room. 'Was there something you wanted, Karin?' The thing that Karin was supposed to ask her, she would ask Karin.

Bizarre. Bazaar. Snob. (pp.147-8)

This is followed by more direct speech from Megan, in which teenage slang is parodied again: 'We're talking about whether my father is sane or whether he has flipped his wig, Karin!' (p.148). The word 'wig' is dialogically related to the image of the kerchief around her dying mother's 'nearly bald head'. It also aptly evokes disguise; Austin is in fact, as Karin intuits, 'slipping
out from under, fooling them, enjoying it' (p.154).

The text is carnivalized through this use of parody, hyperbole and the grotesque. Even as he prepares for his fake wedding, Austin is disintegrating physically:

That downward slide is what's noticeable on him everywhere - face slipping down into neck wattles, chest emptied out and mounded into that abrupt, queer little belly. The flow has left dry channels, deep lines. Yet Austin speaks - it's his perversity to speak - as if out of a body that is light and ready and a pleasure to carry around. (p.146)

Austin's body is the grotesque body, fundamental to the Bakhtinian carnivalesque. In this hyperbolized description, it is almost - but not quite - a landscape. Bakhtin points out that the grotesque body 'can merge with various natural phenomena, with mountains, rivers, seas, islands and continents' (Rabelais, p.234). It may be dismembered; dismemberment is signalled by Austin's disembodied voice. Above all, the grotesque body is 'a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body' (ibid., p.233). It is generated at the boundary of self and other. It represents constant metamorphosis, rather than unitary meaning.

In carnival, death and birth are one. This reconciliation is figured in the photographs Karin is left with after Austin's disappearance. In them, Austin is simultaneously present and absent:
Karin looks at these pictures of the pale, lumpy ice monstrosities, these pictures Austin took, so often that she gets the feeling that he is in them, after all. He's a blank in them, but bright. (p.155)

'He has vanished as completely as the ice, unless the body washes up in spring' (ibid.). Austin's disappearance is implicated in the seasonal cycle of death and renewal. His own death is deeply ambivalent. Whether it is intentional or not, it represents escape from under the noses of his family and neighbours - 'slipping out from under, fooling them' (p. 154: see above). Carnival laughter overturns social rules of behaviour and overcomes the fear of death.

In Re-Reading the Short Story, Clare Hanson contrasts the apparently random images of the short story with the 'metonymic' repetitions she discerns in the novel:

Within the novel[...]each image as it appears resumes something of what has preceded it in the text. In the short story foregrounded details or 'images' tend to resist such interpenetration and integration. (23)

'Pictures of the Ice' seems to disprove this distinction. A key word or phrase is repeated, its meaning changed in a different context, while also interacting dialogically with its use elsewhere in the narrative. Spoken by the minister's wife to her unofficial nurse, 'Was there something you wanted?' communicates refined stoicism (see the passage from pp.147-8, quoted above). But the question has already been anticipated by Karin's
'People always want something' (p.141), where it refers to the disposal of Austin's possessions. It is repeated when Karin imagines that, if she helps herself to some of his dead wife's tableware, its previous owner's sang froid will rub off on herself:

A person sitting in such a room could turn and floor anybody trying to intrude. Was there something you wanted? (p.149)

The question is answered again by the story's final sentence; Karin 'just wants to make them wonder' (p.155). But the wondering itself poses another set of questions, unresolvable within the perpetual motion of verbal communication. Karin has picked up the photographs of the frozen waves at a nearby lake, which Austin took just before he left. She sends them, anonymously, to Austin's children and to Brent. Munro exploits the internal dialogism of 'wonder'; it implies both questioning and admiration. The recipients will wonder what the photographs are, who sent them and why. They may also wonder at the phenomenon of the strange shapes in the ice. Austin's death is a 'wonder', a carnivalized spectacle. It also leaves both Karin and the reader 'wondering'.

The ice functions only partly as a symbol of transience; once again, the double-voiced prose word produces a multiplicity of meaning, beyond the scope
of simple metaphor. In this sense, the image does resist integration, as Hanson suggests, if 'integration' is understood as a movement towards finalization. As I suggested in my discussion of Mansfield, the prose image remains indeterminate.

These gigantic frozen shapes suggest process rather than unitary definition. They serve to exemplify the Bakhtinian concept of a subjectivity which is only fully definable through the perspective of an other. The pictures of the ice are meaningless without a human presence to establish scale, 'to show the size that things were' (p.155). Similarly, both Austin and Karin need some one else to guess their secrets: 'no matter how alone you are, and how tricky and determined, don't you need one person to know?' (ibid.). According to Bakhtin, 'two voices is the minimum for life, the minimum for existence' (24). As we have seen, in Bakhtinian theory, signification and subjectivity are generated on the boundary between the biological self and the exterior world, and meaning is constructed as a network of shifting relationships.

The short story may be read both as a variety of novelistic discourse and as an independent genre, defined flexibly, as Hesse suggests, by a 'cluster of characteristics' (25). Among those characteristics is what Bakhtin, in his definition of the novel, describes as 'contact with the spontaneity of the inconclusive
present' ('Epic', p.27.). I would suggest that the ability to incorporate this ever-changing reality is particularly evident in the short story.

Austin M. Wright claims that 'recalcitrance', which is present in all genres, is especially pronounced in short fiction (26). By 'recalcitrance', he means the resistance offered to formal unity by, for example, unresolved contradictions or lack of final closure. Wright's theory highlights a structural openness which is related to the textual multiplicity which is manifested linguistically as heteroglossia. Both heteroglossia and the resistance to closure are aspects of the short story's organization of time as duration, rather than linearity.

Although the realist novel does engage with contemporary reality, it ultimately represents experience as cumulative. A succession of unique events is given meaning through hindsight, and the present is situated at the culmination of a linear progression through time. In the short story, time is organized as a continuum, in which past and present interpenetrate. This may be demonstrated by an examination of structure in 'Pictures of the Ice'.

'Pictures of the Ice' encompasses a broader time span than 'Bliss' - four years, as opposed to a single day. But time is compressed by summary and ellipsis. Karin and Austin's reliance on subterfuge is paralleled
by a narrative structure, in which key information is suppressed or dispersed. Important events are described almost parenthetically, through the use of analepsis and prolepsis.

'Analepsis' is Genette's term for 'any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment' (27) - in other words, the technique sometimes known as 'flashback'. 'Prolepsis' designates the narration or evocation in advance of an event that will take place later. Both may be either internal or external. If internal, they relate events that take place within the time span of the main narrative; if external, they refer to a period before or after that covered by the 'first narrative' (28).

'Pictures of the Ice' opens with a prolepsis:

Three weeks before he died - drowned in a boating accident in a lake whose name nobody had heard him mention - Austin Cobbett stood deep in the clasp of a three-way mirror in Crawford's Men's Wear, in Logan, looking at himself in a burgundy sports shirt and a pair of cream, brown and burgundy plaid pants. (p.137)

This opening teases the reader with an enigma that is never solved. The brief summary between the hyphens is, in fact, the most precise account of the actual circumstances of Austin's death in the whole story.

Similarly, the loss of Karin's baby is summarized on page 144, in an analeptic passage mainly concerned
with Brent's behaviour during the break-up of the marriage. More details of its death during a storm are added later (pp.150-51), in what Genette would classify as a 'completing' analepsis. As Genette says of the completing analepsis in Proust, 'the narrative is thus organized by temporary omissions and more or less belated reparations, according to a narrative logic that is partially independent of the passing of time' (29).

In this passage, as in the text as a whole, the narrative is accelerated by indirect speech and decelerated by direct speech. It is embedded in the description of another storm, in which the narrative switches from past to present tense. The narrative levels interpenetrate. The baby's death prefigures Austin's, which is anticipated, for the reader, in the proleptic opening. Karin's words, 'He would have died anyway' (p.151), refer to the baby; but they also anticipate her awareness of Austin's frailty as he stands on the snow. Direct speech is foregrounded in a narrative which makes such extensive use of indirect and free indirect discourse. In fact, the truth status of 'He would have died anyway' is undermined by the conditional phrases that come before:

Even if he'd been a fussied-over precious little baby in a home where the father didn't get drunk and the mother and father didn't have fights, he might have died; he probably would have died, anyway. (p.151)
Austin's death is both inevitable and a consequence of his family's indifference. Such unresolved contradictions often co-exist in Munro's work. There is no privileged authorial voice establishing a final interpretation of events. To borrow Bakhtin's comment on Dostoevsky, her stories contain 'a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices' (30), which may conflict with one another despite the ultimate artistic unity achieved by aesthetic consummation.

The intricate elliptical patterns that structure Munro's stories disrupt chronological succession, representing time as a continuum. The incorporation of heteroglossia achieves a heightened sense of contact with the ongoing present. So far, I have analysed double-voiced discourse within an individual story. But it is also important to consider ways in which stories resonate against one another.

Each of the stories I discuss in this thesis may be read separately or as part of the single-authored collections in which they appear. They may also, of course, be read as part of an anthology, containing work by various authors. Placed within this context, the stories add new intertextual dimensions to one another. Bakhtin's definition of the novel as 'a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized' ('Discourse', p.262) seems especially appropriate to the short story
collection, seen as a variant of novelistic discourse. This dialogue between individual stories is made overt in the short story sequence, where stories are linked by recurring characters or geographical setting. Several of Munro's collections may be classified in this way. I shall discuss Lives of Girls and Women (31) as a generic hybrid in the next chapter; it was originally planned as a novel, and is often described as such. The stories are linked by a first-person narrator and are organized as a chronological sequence. The Beggar Maid (32) centres on two main characters, Flo and Rose, again following chronological sequence. The stories in Open Secrets (33) are more loosely connected. They are mostly set in two provincial Canadian towns, Carstairs and Walley. Some characters recur. For example, the young Bea Ooud originally appears as a minor character in the first story, 'Carried Away', which covers a broad time scale that includes the First World War. She re-appears as a major character in the final story, 'Vandals', which is set more recently.

Robert M. Luscher has described ways in which the writer of a short story sequence 'courts disunity' (34). The individual stories form a configuration, rather than a linear chain, leading towards resolution. Critics often try to find unifying themes across Munro's work as a whole. For Carrington (35), it is patterns of disorder and control; while Carscallen (36) views her
stories as the interplay of dualities, such as home/other country, truth/reality. Redekop, on the other hand, regards such classifications as futile (37). Although she herself identifies a continuing preoccupation in Munro's work with maternity, she regards each story as a self-contained float within a carnival procession. In Chapter 4, I shall develop my argument that the short story collection resists unification. I shall use the interplay between fiction and autobiography across stories by Munro and Paley to suggest that each has created a body of work which embraces an ongoing, unfinalized reality.

But, before doing so, I shall end this chapter with a more detailed examination of carnivalized discourse in short fiction. In order to do so, I shall focus on Grace Paley's story, 'In Time Which Made a Monkey of Us All' (The Little Disturbances of Man, first published 1959).
Carnival Ambivalence in the Short Story

Virtually all of Paley's stories are set within the Lower East Side of New York, where she has spent most of her life. Characters recur - most notably two of her first-person narrators, Faith and Virginia, who have aged and developed, as the collections appear, across twenty-five years. The whole body of work may be read as an ongoing story sequence, as I shall argue in the next chapter. Judith Arcana comments that her stories 'describe and populate - with few exceptions - a neighbourhood of characters who share and exchange knowledge of their mutual history' (38). A collective voice is generated from the interaction of characters, place and time.

The neighbourhood forms a carnivalized space, where no single voice is privileged over others. For instance, women and children, whose voices are traditionally marginalized or suppressed by dominant forms of discourse, are able to speak in dialogue with others. According to Bakhtin, 'the novel is the expression of a Galilean perception of language, one that denies the absolutism of a single and unitary language' ('Discourse', p.366). Novelistic discourse relativizes the 'vast plenitude of national, and more to the point, social languages' (ibid.).
Paley's own comments draw attention to this diversity of speech within her prose: 'When you write poetry[...]it's really talking to the world[...]and fiction is getting the world to talk to you' (39). Elsewhere, she says, 'I couldn't write stories, really, until I really heard - listened - to enough other voices, until I began to pay great attention to other voices and tried to make that stretch to other voices. Then I really found my own' (40). As Bakhtin says, 'the human being in the novel is first, foremost and always a speaking human being' ('Discourse', p.332).

Paley grew up in a polyglot family, where Russian, Yiddish and English were all spoken. The language that she assigns to her characters and incorporates into the authorial voice is the reconstructed English of immigrants, who swap or invent idioms at will. In 'The Pale Pink Roast', Peter says, 'You look like a chick on the sincere make. Playing it cool and living it warm' (41). Languages in dialogue with one another generate another self-renewing language. Paley herself comments, 'This language of ours, here in this country, is always being refreshed and scrambled and knocked around. It's always coming up from the bottom, again and again' (42).

The oral tradition is at play with other voices in Paley's work. The title of 'In Time Which Made a Monkey of Us All' forms a hybrid utterance, in which
contrasting types of linguistic consciousness are relativized. Firstly, there is the colloquial metaphor, 'to make a monkey of', which itself suggests carnival inversion. Secondly, Paley parodies traditional literary discourse. We may read an intertextual reference to Hamlet's 'Thus conscience does make cowards of us all' (43). The word 'conscience' is implicated in the text, even though it remains unspoken. The young hero's conscience motivates events in the story. Eddie Teitelbaum devises first a humane cockroach exterminator and then the 'War Attenuator', an evil-smelling but theoretically harmless gas, intended to replace lethal weapons. Unfortunately it kills the animals in his father's pet shop, including Mr. Teitelbaum's beloved Itzik Halbfunt, kept unsold because he reminds him of an uncle 'who had died of Jewishness in the epidemics of '40, '41' (44). Eddie has a breakdown, and is sent to 'A Home For Boys'. When he is given a job in the zoo, his conscience forces him to resign, rather than feed live bait to the snake: 'I am no mouse killer' (p.170).

There is another dialogic relationship in the title, with the discourse of Darwinian evolution. The present tense 'makes' is appropriate to the title as a type of colloquial proverb; but it reverses the concept of human history as linear progression. I shall return to this inversion of the animal/human relationship later in this chapter.
'In Time Which Made a Monkey of us All' stands out from the rest of The Little Disturbances of Man, mainly because it is longer than most of Paley's work; but also because it is one of only two stories told in the third person, by an extradiegetic, heterodiegetic narrator. The witness-narrator guides the reader through events, as if we are watching a slide show:

No doubt that is Eddie Teitelbaum on the topmost step of 1434, a dark-jawed, bossy youth in need of repair. He is dredging a cavity with a Fudgsicle stick. He is twitching the cotton in his ear. He is sniffing and snarling and swallowing spit because of rotten drainage. But he does not give a damn.

Now look at the little kids that came in those days to buzz at his feet. That is what they did, they gathered in this canyon pass, rumbling at the knee of his glowering personality. Some days he heeded them a long and wiggly line which they followed up and down the street, around the corner, and back to 1434. (p.149)

The narrator is in dialogue with the reader. She addresses the reader in language which evokes direct speech. The shift from present tense to past is characteristic of spoken language, and also represents time as flux. If we read this story as part of an ongoing sequence, the narrator may be identified with the range of first-person narrators that Paley draws upon. This creates a sense of fluid, collective identity, based in Arcana's 'neighbourhood of characters'. There is no privileged voice, establishing authoritative truth. Although the narrator functions as a direct witness, she also refers to the memoirs of one of Eddie's friends, Schmul, which
are cited as footnotes in the text; parody disrupts unitary meaning. Finalization is also thwarted by characters' testimony, given as direct speech. Eddie tells his friends that Itzik is his own half-brother, sired by his father on a chimpanzee.

In this opening passage, Paley's idiosyncratic use of metaphor and metonymy is immediately apparent - 'bossy youth in need of repair', 'this brick-lined Utrillo', 'rumbling at the knee of his glowering personality' - often generating more hybrid utterances. An estate agent's euphemism is in dialogue with Biblical and artistic references, within the voice of oral storytelling. The narrative voice is also highly rhetorical, using anaphora with the repeated 'He is...'. The passage is intensely hyperbolic.

Physical perspectives change abruptly. If this were a slide show, we would be moving from a close-up of Eddie to an aerial view of the neighbourhood. Then the ellision between Eddie and his surroundings suggested by 'rotten drainage' adds a more surreal sense of spatial dislocation: 'in this canyon pass, rumbling at the knee of his glowering personality'. Here, the aerial view and the close-up co-exist within the hybrid utterance. Double-voiced discourse again disrupts stable meaning. Eddie's body recalls the grotesque body, as it is described in Bakhtin's work on carnival:
Of all the features of the human face, the nose and mouth play the most important part in the grotesque image of the body; the head, ears, and nose also acquire a grotesque character when they adopt the animal form or that of inanimate objects. (Rabelais, p.233)

Eddie's jaw, mouth, ears and nose dominate the opening lines. His body is a building 'in need of repair'. In fact, Eddie wouldn't mind replacing parts of himself artificially. His approval of 'dentures, and, for that matter, all prostheses' (p.150) only accentuates his corporeality: 'a man will be any colour he chooses, or translucent too, if the shape and hue of intestines can be made fashionable' (p.150).

Artificial modifications belong both to the subject and to the external world, and hence are a manifestation of the Bakhtinian grotesque body. The grotesque body is never complete and impenetrable, but is always renewing itself at the interface of self and other. Protuberances and orifices are the site of this interchange. Eddie pokes and snuffles; he shows the children how to 'make a neat ass cleaner' (p.149).

Bakhtin stresses the importance of activities that take place at the boundaries of the body:

All these convexities and orifices have a common characteristic; it is within them that the confines between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome; there is an interchange and interorientation. This is why the main events in the life of the grotesque body, the acts of the bodily drama, take place in this sphere. Eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up
by another body - all these acts are performed on the confines of the body and the outer world[...]. In all these events the beginning and end of life are closely linked and interwoven. (Rabelais, p.234)

Eddie's body is like a building. Conversely, his experiment turns the apartment buildings into his body. 'I am the vena cava and the aorta', he says (p.158), echoing Christian liturgy, 'I am the resurrection and the life'. The rubber tubing both nourishes and suffocates. The gas in the pipes is also his gas. 'Jesus, who farted?' howls the super (p.159). Bakhtin typifies the grotesque body, in architectural terms, as towers and subterranean passages. The rubber arteries feed the gas from the basement up into the buildings. The heart is where the anus ought to be, reversing the bodily hierarchy of higher over lower.

Paley's grotesque realism merges the human subject with nature, the inanimate and the urban environment. One of the most important manifestations of carnival ambivalence in this story is, as I have suggested, its challenge to the binary opposition between human and animal. Itzik Halbfunt is not even introduced as a monkey, on his first appearance, but as 'his father's hair-shirted Jacob'. The conventional relationship between the human and the animal is inverted; Itzik peels a banana for Eddie (p.164). 'Itzik' is a form of 'Isaac', 'laughter', the beloved son that Abraham was asked to sacrifice; the monkey is also identified
with Isaac's own child, Jacob, who stole his older brother's inheritance by disguising himself in goatskins. Eddie feels his father's love has been stolen by Itzik. However, the hair-shirt functions not only as a reference to Esau, the 'hairy man' of Genesis, but as an image of penitence. Eddie's father refuses to sell Itzik because he resembles an uncle who died in the Holocaust. The self-imposed guilt of the Jewish survivor, described by writers like Primo Levi is implied here (45); such guilt might also be linked with Eddie's acutely sensitive conscience. All of these concepts are in dialogue, creating multiple meanings within a single utterance.

'Halbfunt' is 'half pound', a diminutive like 'half pint'. It also suggests Itzik's 'half and half' nature, an alleged half-human. The theme of bestiality, like the hints of cannibalism in two other stories in this collection, 'The Pale Pink Roast' (pp.41-52) and 'The Used-Boy Raisers', (pp.127-134) transgresses social convention in a carnivalesque assertion of physical drives.

Despite Itzik's intelligence, he cannot survive on his own: 'although he was a brilliant monkey, in the world of men he is dumb' (p.163). There is a parallel here with Eddie, whose ingenuity leads to disaster. He is confined to an institution, just as Itzik was kept in his father's shop. The multiple meanings of 'dumb', which include both stupidity and silence, are
self-evident. After his War Attenuator wipes out the inmates of the pet shop, Eddie becomes a dumb animal himself, as his attendant, Jim Sunn, recognizes. 'Shut-eye don't hurt the kings of the jungle. Bears hibernate,' he coaxes (p.168). It is Eddie's empathy with his fellow creatures, when he is asked to feed the mouse to the snake, that brings him back his 'identity' (p.170) and finally stops him speaking for good. As in Munro's 'Pictures of the Ice', silence is used as a strategy towards personal autonomy.

As we have seen, the story's title reverses Darwinian evolution. Paley undermines notions of scientific progress. Through his carefully synchronized experiments, Eddie attempts to control time, as a sequence of cause and effect. His first invention, the cockroach segregator, is an electric fence which 'electrocuted the stubborn fools not meant by Darwin anyway to survive' (p.153). This is a device still favoured, in the continuing present, with which the story ends, by Mrs. Goredinksy, the 'old pot of cabbage soup' (p.151). The epithet invokes carnival ambivalence, but it is her Polish surname that is most significant; the fence is reminiscent of those around the concentration camps. Darwinian rationalism may, just possibly, account for the cockroaches. But the concept of the survival of the fittest fails when judged against the Holocaust. Mental superiority could not save the Jews, and Eddie's ingenuity brings little benefit
either to himself or to humanity; Itzik Halbfunt may be brilliant, but 'in the world of men he is dumb' (p.163).

Paley rejects nineteenth century, Hegelian notions of historical progress and scientific enlightenment. Carnival is beyond linear concepts. In carnival, time is suspended, and unitary meaning disrupted by the grotesque. The ambivalence of what Kristeva calls 'serious laughter' (46) runs through the story. Carnival laughter is a response both to supernatural fears and to earthly oppression. It is 'gay, triumphant, and at the same time, mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives' (Rabelais, p.200). The reference to the uncle who 'died of Jewishness in the epidemics of '40, '41' (p.157) is a kind of joke. 'Died of Jewishness' removes human agency, thus denies tragic dignity to an individualized group of perpetrators. It's also a form of euphemism; and euphemism is always ambivalent, because it so quickly becomes the thing it tries to hide. By using jokes, parody and grotesque humour, Paley resists monologic and determinist versions of history. Tragic destiny is denied, and several versions of events co-exist. As we have seen, Eddie's hyperbolized story about Itzik's origins remains as unproven as the monkey's alleged resemblance to Mr. Teitelbaum's uncle.

The carnival mode is particularly appropriate to a writer who is so closely identified with utopian politics; Paley has been strongly involved in community
activism and in the peace movement. Her work affirms the possibility of radical change by representing human experience as unlimited metamorphosis. She collapses the boundaries between animal and human, the world and the body, self and other. Within what she has called 'the open destiny of life' (47), anything is possible. However, it should not be forgotten that carnival inversion is temporary; while it empowers the dispossessed, it does not in itself entail permanent change. Even while social hierarchies are suspended, the subject cannot disengage from social relationships. On the contrary, the carnival mode is itself a 'social consciousness':

Medieval laughter is not a subjective, individual and biological consciousness of the uninterrupted flow of time. It is the social consciousness of all the people. Man experiences this flow of time in the festive marketplace, in the carnival crowd, as he comes into contact with other bodies of varying age and social caste. He is aware of being a member of a continually growing and renewed people. (Rabelais, p.210)

Read across her body of work, Paley's characters form a 'carnival crowd', with a collective identity that supercedes linear time. But, as I have noted, they also age and develop historically. Like the 'bodies of varying age and social caste' referred to by Bakhtin, they are positioned by the social conventions that they resist.

Here, as elsewhere, Bakhtin ignores issues of gendered identity. Moreover, both Ruth Ginsburg (48) and Pam
Morris (49) have problematized his construction of the womb as the site of renewal and death. As Morris observes, 'too frequently in the real world the womb is merely the space in which phallic power constitutes itself' (50). However, as Pollock points out, both Bakhtinian thought and contemporary feminist theory are vitally concerned with boundary phenomena and with the possibilities of an ever-changing language (51). A dialogue between Bakhtinian theory and feminist criticism enriches both areas of thought.

Such a dialogue is implicit in the work of Kristeva, which I discuss in Chapter 5. Before doing so, I wish to extend my analysis of carnival ambivalence in the short story by examining autobiographical discourse in the work of Paley and Munro. Dialogic thought emphasizes a continuity between lived experience and textuality. Literary discourse is perceived as a series of 'secondary' speech genres, which incorporate the 'primary' speech genres of everyday life. During carnival, as I shall demonstrate, the boundaries between 'real' life and artistic activity cease to operate. Lived experience is unfinalized, until death; as it is experienced subjectively, time is indeterminate. Thus, autobiographical writing highlights the dynamism of the passing moment. I shall now examine the implications of this argument for the development of the short story genre.
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44. Grace Paley, 'In Time Which Made a Monkey of Us All', in The Little Disturbances of Man (London: Virago, 1980), p.157. All subsequent references are to this edition.

45. 'It is no more than a supposition, indeed the shadow of a suspicion; that everyone is his brother's Cain, that everyone of us[...]has usurped his neighbour's place and lived in his stead' - Primo Levi, The Drowned and the Saved (London: Sphere Books, 1988), p.62.


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Autobiographical Form in Alice Munro

Lives of Girls and Women is prefaced by a statement from its author:

This novel is autobiographical in form but not in fact. My family, neighbors and friends did not serve as models. (1)

In fact, the book is a literary hybrid, which crosses generic boundaries. Although it is classified here as a novel, it is structured as a chronological sequence of self-contained stories, linked by an auto-diegetic narrator, Del. It may be regarded, then, as a short story sequence, based on Del's memories of childhood and adolescence. Munro disavows both autobiographical content and the short story form, for reasons which, as I discuss later, may be at least partly linked to literary status. But, before I discuss these issues, it is necessary to examine the relationship between fiction and autobiography.

This has been a contentious area in recent years, following the post-structuralist re-interpretation of the subject as site, rather than presence. If identity is a construct, truth and fiction are no longer oppositions. Liz Stanley says that 'telling fiction,
biography and autobiography apart is no easy matter, for these forms of writing a life do not exist each in a hermetically sealed vacuum: rather each symbiotically informs both the form and the content of the others' (2). Lejeune claims 'there is no difference between an autobiography and an autobiographical novel' (3). B.S. Johnson, on the other hand, insists that 'the two terms "novel" and "fiction" are not, incidentally, synonymous[...]The novel is a form in the same sense that the sonnet is a form; within that form, one may write truth or fiction' (4).

Johnson's emphasis on form is salutary. The use of the first person is not necessarily an indication of referentiality; Genette notes that the autobiographical content of the auto-diegetic Remembrance of Things Past is less than that of Proust's metadiegetic Jean Saunteuil (5). Interviewed by Rasporich (6), Munro has said that she based the landscape in Lives of Girls and Women on her home town, while her memories of the local community are incorporated into a later short story sequence, The Beggar Maid (7). First published in 1978, The Beggar Maid charts the development of another single character, Rose, from childhood into middle age, using an extradiegetic narrator.

There are parallels between Munro's family and background and Del's. Her own father was also a fox farmer, for a time. Her mother, who was once a
schoolteacher, sold fox-head scarves from door to door; Del's mother, Addie, sells encyclopaedias, thus combining a career in sales with a pedagogic function. According to Munro, her own mother was an 'organizing force' (8) and a 'theatrical personality' (ibid.) - attributes she appears to share with Addie.

Yet Munro claims that Addie is 'quite a long way from my own mother and she has quite a lot of several people in her, and actually, she is about the only character I feel that I have completely created because she is quite different from anyone I've ever known' (9). This statement appears to contradict the declaration on the flyleaf, since it implies that other characters might in fact be based on 'family, neighbors and friends'. But, as the Rasporich interview makes clear, fictive characters do not simply correspond to real life models. She goes on to say that Del and Rose are only partially aspects of herself. Their lives and personalities also incorporate entirely fictive elements.

In another interview, with John Metcalf, Munro highlights the extent to which incidents in Lives of Girls and Women are based on lived experience: 'Some are completely invented but the emotional reality, the girl's feeling for her mother, for men, for life, is all...it's all solidly autobiographical' (10). Speaking later in her career, she has differentiated between autobiographical and 'personal' material, which may
contain fictive elements (11).

While Munro's testimony sheds light on the process of literary creation, it also proves that the search for referential truth in these stories is ultimately futile. A writer may well have sound personal, as well as literary, reasons for affirming or denying autobiographical content. According to New, when Munro's first collection, *Dance of the Happy Shades*, was published in 1968, there were protests from Munro's home town, Wingham, who regarded the fictional Jubilee as an unmediated (and unflattering) account of their neighbourhood (12). Nevertheless, Munro uses Jubilee again in *Lives of Girls and Women*, whose original title was to be *Real Life*.

Since then, Munro has continued to set most of her work in small town and rural southern Ontario. The stories form a network of geographic and cultural interconnections. For instance, the fictional town of Walley appears in both *Friend of my Youth* and *Open Secrets* (13). However, it may be more productive to leave aside the question of referentiality, in order to examine ways in which Munro exploits the conventions of the autobiographical genre.

are episodic reminiscences of adolescence, told through an auto-diegetic narrator. Several motifs and incidents echo from book to book. Both heroines self-consciously test religious faith, and try to reconcile their intellectual abilities with their sexual drives. Both are disappointed at the lack of sexual passion in a mother figure, when they question her about choosing a husband - 'Grandpa was always good to me' (McCarthy, 'Ask Me No Questions', p.180); 'Your father was always a gentleman' (Munro, 'Princess Ida', p.78). Both describe the all-consuming nature of the school play, presided over by a spinster teacher whose sublimated passions make her a slightly ridiculous and yet compelling figure. McCarthy's description of Miss Gowrie's 'tall, doll-like figure' ('The Figures in the Clock', p.138) is paralleled by the equally 'dry and wooden and innocent' Miss Farris ('Changes and Ceremonies', p.120) with her 'two spots of rouge' (ibid.). Miss Farris's house, too, is like a toy, and looks 'designed for play, not life' (p.125).

These elements may be common features within twentieth century North American girlhood. But Munro might also be, consciously or unconsciously, influenced by McCarthy, about whom she wrote a critical article in 1973 (15). The religious crises in both books also call to mind those of Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Both may, in fact, be regarded as a female version of the Joycean Bildungsroman, chronicling the development
of a writer's sensibility, as they reject or absorb their own cultural background.

Heather Cam has drawn parallels between Munro's 'Changes and Ceremonies' and Eudora Welty's 'June Recital', which also focuses on an eccentric and lonely teacher (16). Cam also detects the influence of 'June Recital' in the title story of Dance of the Happy Shades (17). Stanley's suggestion of a symbiosis between lived experience and textuality indicates the difficulties of untangling referentiality from generic convention (18). This process is enacted as Del reads her own experience in language that recalls D.H. Lawrence:

She is in love. She has just come in from being with her lover. She has given herself to her lover. Seed runs down her legs. ('Baptizing', p.228)

There are many overt literary references in Lives of Girls and Women - notably, to Addie's favourite, Tennyson. 'Real life', which Del longs to experience first hand ('Baptizing', p.238), is itself shaped by textuality.

McCarthy's stories were originally published separately as fiction; in her introduction, 'To the Reader', she expresses surprise at some readers' confusion. She ascribes this to a public assumption that 'anything written by a professional writer is eo ipso untrue' (p.9). She was writing at a time when authors were not the public personalities that appearances in bookshops and the mass media have made them in more recent years;
current marketing strategies re-inforce the theoretically
discarded notion of the text as the unmediated product
of a uniquely constituted subject. However, readers'
disbelief may have stemmed more from the disturbing
nature of McCarthy's material, particularly the abuse
of children, than from literary scepticism. Mandel's
assumption that 'every reader' grasps a common sense
distinction between fiction and autobiography seems
rather complacent (19). If, as de Man claims,
autobiography is 'a figure of reading or of understanding
that occurs, to some degree, in all texts' (20), that
figure of understanding tends to be dominant among a
contemporary readership, whose responses are still shaped
by romantic, rather than postmodern, concepts of
authorship.

McCarthy constantly reminds the reader of the fictive
elements in her *Memories*; almost every episode is undercut
by an investigative commentary. But, by emphasizing
the partiality of her own memory, the fictive merging
of characters and incidents and even the lies that her
younger self told, she highlights her commitment to
a fundamental truthfulness. She is party to Lejeune's
'autobiographical pact' (21) which obligates the writer
to aim for referential truth, however problematic the
task may be. Mandel says, 'Of course it is true that
autobiographers use techniques of fiction, but such
usage does not turn an autobiography into a fiction
any more than Dvořák's use of folk motifs turns the New World Symphony into a folk song' (22). Even if McCarthy's honesty is fake, it is a fake 'folk song', rather than a 'symphony'. This is a question of context, rather than content.

Munro exposes the symbiosis between fiction and lived experience less through the speaking subject's questioning of her own memories than through her response to those of other characters. Addie and her brother Bill give conflicting versions of life with Del's grandmother ('Princess Ida'). Collective memory recounts a young girl's suicide in a language distinct from the words they apply to Miss Farris:

Marion had walked into the Wawanash River. People always said she walked into it, though in the case of Miss Farris they said she threw herself into it. Since nobody has seen either of them do it, the difference must have come from the difference in the women themselves, Miss Farris being impulsive and dramatic in all she did, and Marion Sherriff deliberate and take-your-time.

At least that was how she looked in her picture [...] ('Epilogue: the Photographer', pp. 239-40)

The image Del reads into Marion's photograph merges with local gossip, literary influence and sexual fantasy to generate the fictive Caroline, in Del's largely unwritten novel.

In Lives of Girls and Women, the narrative is often refocalized through other characters' accounts of their experiences, which are then mediated through the auto-diegetic narrator. This movement towards what
Genette has called the 'pseudo-diegetic' (23) is often achieved by blurring the boundaries between indirect and free indirect discourse:

From behind her darkened front windows she had watched men hooting like savages, had seen a car spin sideways and crash into a telephone pole, crushing the steering wheel into the driver's heart; she had seen two men dragging a girl who was drunk and couldn't stand up, and the girl was urinating on the street in her clothes. She had scraped drunks' vomit off her painted fences. All this was no more than she expected. ('Heirs of the Living Body', pp.40-41)

In this version of her Aunt Moira's life in Portland, Del is relating things she can only know about from listening to Moira's own account. This is then transmuted by Del's own consciousness. The narrator's speech ('from behind her darkened front windows') is in dialogue with Moira's ('and the girl was urinating'). 'All this was no more than she expected' is echoed by the reactions of Del's other aunts, as they listen to Moira's stories: 'Well no, you couldn't be expected to take that!' The word 'expected' is suffused by a middle class pride in respectability.

Images of Del's girlhood are overlaid by Addie's stories about her own past, which are themselves re-assembled through Del's imagination. In 'Princess Ida', the focalization shifts almost imperceptibly between Del and Addie:

And my mother, just a little girl then named Addie Morrison, spindly, I should think, with cropped hair
because her mother guarded her against vanity, would walk home from school up the long anxious lane, banging against her legs the lard pail that held her lunch. Wasn't it always November, the ground hard, ice splintered on the puddles, dead grass floating from the wires? Yes, and the bush near and spooky, with the curious unconnected winds that lift the branches one by one. She would go into the house and find the fire out, the stove cold, the grease from the men's dinner thickened on the plates and pans. ('Princess Ida', p.74).

'Spindly' is Del's invention, in response to Addie's description of a grimly Calvinistic upbringing. It is less clear whether the cropped hair and the banging pail belong to Addie's memories or Del's re-intepretation. The question and answer ('Wasn't it always November[...]Yes') might belong to indirect or free indirect discourse, representing an actual dialogue between mother and daughter or Del's inner speech.

Conflicting ideologies compete in the speech of mother and daughter. Addie's rationalism is at odds with Del's romantic ideals. In 'Princess Ida', Del quizzes Addie about her marriage to her father, repeating the phrase 'in love' - 'But you fell in love with him', 'You fell in love', 'Why did you fall in love?' (p.78). The discourse of romantic love meets with a reply which is couched in the formal language of etiquette: 'Your father was always a gentleman' (ibid.).

Del cringes at the way in which Addie tries to assert her intellectual prowess:

I hated her selling encyclopaedias and making speeches and wearing that hat. I hated her writing letters to
the newspapers. Her letters about local problems or those in which she promoted education and the rights of women and opposed compulsory religious education in the school would be published in the Jubilee Herald-Advance over her own name. ('Princess Ida', p.80)

Addie's commitment to a public identity is in conflict with Del's immersion in private passions; 'in love' is also a key utterance in the later story, 'Baptizing', where Del's erotic activities divert her from achieving the academic success her mother wants for her.

Addie's interest in 'education and the rights of women' aligns her with the first stage in the women's movement, as defined by Kristeva in 'Women's Time' (24). In calling for egalitarian social legislation as a means of female emancipation, she identifies with the symbolic order. She internalizes male, competitive values; while Del's sensual longings represent a desire to return to the undefinable, pre-Oedipal realm, which is associated with the maternal chora. (I shall discuss Kristevan theory in more detail in the next chapter.)

However, the play of ideologically competing languages represents dialogic interchange, rather than binary oppositions. The names of mother and daughter form two halves of a whole ('Adele'). Both identities are multiplicitous. Addie sends letters to a women's page in the city newspaper, 'full of long decorative descriptions of the countryside from which she had fled' (p.80). These are written in hyperbolized, sentimental
language: 'This morning a marvellous silver frost
enraptures the eye on every twig and telephone wire
and makes the world a veritable fairyland' (ibid.).
Despite her male values, Addie is using a femininized
type of literary discourse.

There are further contradictions. Addie signs
these letters 'Princess Ida', a name borrowed from
Tennyson's bluestocking heroine, which thus signals
her 'first stage' feminism (25). But the name also
incorporates an intertextual reference to Gilbert and
Sullivan's lampoon; and it is also worth remembering
that The Princess ends with Ida giving up her studies
when she falls in love.

In 'Baptizing' Del speaks a line of 'Mariana' into
the mirror when she is deserted by her lover: 'He cometh
not, she said' (p.238). The lines come from Addie's
Complete Tennyson, passed on, in matrilineal succession,
from her former teacher. Del says the line 'with absolute
sincerity, absolute irony' (ibid.), the oxymoronic
utterance placing rejection in dialogue with belief.
The rejection, which is also acceptance, applies both
to the masochistic emotionalism she reads in 'Mariana'
(26) and to her rationalist matrilineage. In the
carnivalized discourse of Lives of Girls and Women,
Tennyson's heroines represent both. Del's mirror suggests
the Lady of Shalott (27), who, like Mariana, is trapped
in masochistic isolation. The purple prose written
by 'Princess Ida' displays a feminized discourse; it is also another aspect of Addie's need for public recognition (paradoxically, through an assumed name). This, in turn, reveals her vulnerability to local opinion. Del recognizes that 'I myself was not so different from my mother, but concealed it, knowing what dangers there were' ('Princess Ida', p.80).

Mary Mason claims that female autobiographers trace the evolution of an independent self through alterity (28). This may be manifested as a relationship with one or two other autonomous subjects; with a transcendent being; or through a 'multiple collectivity' (ibid.). This delineation of an identity achieved through interaction with others may be contrasted with a traditionally dominant mode in autobiography, which inscribes the triumphalist creation of a wholly autonomous, unitary self. As Stanley observes, these 'exemplary lives' are 'linear, chronological, progressive, cumulative and individualist, and follow highly particular narrative conventions' borrowed from nineteenth century realism (29). Stanley cites Maya Angelou's work as an example; although this type of agonistic discourse is founded on values usually encoded as masculine it may also be adopted by women authors.

In Lives of Girls and Women, selfhood is achieved, following Mason's model, through interaction with a 'multiple collectivity'. Plurality is contained within
the title itself. Such a collectivity does not assimilate the individual in the mass; as we have seen, in the
discussion of double-voiced discourse in the relationship between Del and her mother, competing ideologies interact without final resolution. In dialogic relationships, neither side predominates; nor is there a Hegelian dialectic, in which synthesis might be achieved. Del's identity is delineated through her relationships with her mother, her friends and the wider community. The network is expanded by her 'reading' of their experience, as oral storytelling, fantasy and literary texts intermingle in Del's consciousness.

As we have seen, Bakhtin claims that all subjectivity is founded on alterity, as the self is evaluated through the eyes of a putative other. Thus, we 'author' our own selves. In life, this self-other nexus is subsumed by our construction of a unitary self. In aesthetic production, the hero and author must be clearly separated:

[...]In living experience projection and consummation are intimately intertwined and fuse with one another. In a verbal work, every word keeps both movements in view: every word performs a twofold function insofar as it directs my projection of myself into the other as well as brings him to completion[...] ('Author and Hero', p.27)

In the specific case of an autobiographical hero, 'the author must take up a position outside himself, must experience himself on a plane that is different from
the one on which we actually experience our own life[...] He must become another in relation to himself' (ibid., p.15).

Bakhtin does not address questions of gendered identity. However, critics such as Herrmann (30), who combines Bakhtinian theory with the work of Irigaray, find his ideas on subjectivity especially compatible with current feminist thinking. This is because they are based on a reciprocity between self and other, rather than on a hierarchy. In patriarchal culture, the other, identified with the feminine, is subordinate to a unified subject, which is identified as male. The self is delineated in contradistinction to the other as object, Bakhtinian theory replaces this subject-object paradigm with one in which self and other are autonomous subjects. He destabilizes the subject in accordance with the feminist challenge to phallocentric, unifying structures. As Del says, 'I wanted men to love me, and I wanted to think of the universe when I looked at the moon' ('Baptizing', p.178).

Traditional autobiographies, like the 'exemplary lives' discussed by Stanley, are, to some extent, the product of a self-other relation; the self who is narrated by the text is performed for an imagined audience. But that self is developed along a uniform trajectory, and is presented as its own creation. The self that is generated through dialogic discourse in Lives of

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Girls and Women is multi-faceted. The constitution of subjectivity through a self-other dynamic may not be gender specific, but alterity may be foregrounded in female-authored texts, since women's lives often demand an awareness of seemingly contradictory roles, defined in relationship to others. In The Beggar Maid, 'Rose is an actress; she can fit in anywhere' (31). Rose becomes an actress after leaving her husband and giving up her child; ideas of performance and mimicry inform the whole collection, whose Canadian title is Who Do You Think You Are?.

Munro returns to the autobiographical mode in several other stories, for instance the 'Chaddley and Flemings' sequence in the 1982 collection, The Moons of Jupiter (32). It is often combined with the discourse of local and family history, as in those stories or in Open Secrets' 'A Wilderness Station' (33). Throughout her work, the transgression of generic boundaries is a means of resisting unitary definitions of the self, including pre-determined gender roles; thereby undermining notions of single, finalized reality. I shall look more closely at how this is achieved by continuing my discussion of Lives of Girls and Women.
Truth, Fiction and Subject Formation

Domna C. Stanton has noted the way in which the literary skills of work by women writers like George Sand and Colette have been devalued because of its autobiographical content. She quotes de Beauvoir's dismissive comments on women's writing: 'It is her own self that is the principal - sometimes the unique subject of interest to her' (34). De Beauvoir's words are echoed by the magazine article Del reads in 'Baptizing': 'For a woman, everything is personal; no idea is of any interest to her by itself, but must be translated into her own experience; in works of art she always sees her own life, or her daydreams' (p.178). Del's response - 'I wanted men to love me, and I wanted to think of the universe when I looked at the moon' (ibid.) - refuses such polar opposition between self and world. The distinction between artistic or intellectual activity and subjective experience is called into question. By breaking down such oppositions, Munro reconciles artistic self-expression with femininity, something that, as we have seen, George Egerton found much more difficult (see Chapter 1).

In Bakhtinian theory, there is no absolute opposition between art and life. While it is important to distinguish between the two, as his comments on author and hero make plain, the importance of heteroglossia lies in
its incorporation of the dynamics of lived experience.
The novel and the genres that it has influenced share
life's resistance to finalization:

From the very beginning the novel was structured not
in the distanced image of the absolute past but in the
zone of direct contact with inconclusive present-day
reality. At its core lay personal experience and free
creative imagination. ('Epic', p.36)

Here, Bakhtin is locating the novel within a tradition
that is aligned with popular culture, for instance the
comic mask, touching on ideas which come to fruition
with his work on the carnivalesque in Rabelais. The
emphasis he places on contending speech genres within
novelistic discourse withdraws any special privilege
that might be accorded to literary language.

The short story is particularly able to exploit
this interconnection between life and art, because it
is a fragmented form. In Lives of Girls and Women,
the short story collection is fused with another low
status genre, the female autobiography. Although it
has been defined as a novel, this is largely a question
of marketing and literary rank. Munro had hoped to
consolidate the success of her first collection, Dance
of the Happy Shades, with a novel, which became the
'Princess Ida' story. All of the 'chapters', even
the 'Epilogue', can be read independently. It jumps
forward chronologically, as Del moves through adolescence,
but there are no linking passages between stories, and
the transition is often abrupt. Characters are dropped, marginalized or, like the aunts who are re-described in 'Age of Faith' immediately after their appearance in 'Heirs of the Living Body', introduced, as if for the first time.

Within the broad theme of gendered identity, each story has its own sub-themes - for example, religious belief in 'Age of Faith' or the mother-daughter dyad in 'Princess Ida'. Typically, within each story, the theme is suggested by an early reference, which becomes a prolepsis of a intensifying series of incidents which are variants of one another. 'Age of Faith' begins with the mythology of burglars which foreshadows Del's religious crises. After her prayer, not to have to thread the sewing machine in class, is answered, her brother tries to pray for his dog to be spared. The story ends with rather more sophisticated metaphysical issues, raising questions about divine indifference which are not explored explicitly again; although a knowledge of this story may shed light on 'Baptizing', just as an awareness of an author's other work may enhance the reading of any text. 'Changes and Ceremonies', the story that follows 'Age of Faith' strikes out in an entirely new direction with 'Boys' hate was dangerous' (p.115).

The autobiographical mode is sustained, not only through the role of the narrator, but through the frequent
use of iterative and pseudo-iterative narration. As coined by Genette, 'iterative' narration describes once what happens several times. 'Pseudo-iterative' appears to do likewise, but includes details that are unlikely to have been repeated exactly. The shift often occurs when direct speech is included:

When Garnet came to our house she treated him with courtesy, asked him questions about the lumber business. He called her Ma'am, just as Jerry and I would do in our parodies of country people. 'Well I don't really know so much about that end of it, Ma'am,' he would say, polite and self-possessed. (‘Baptizing’, p.217)

Intertextuality may also suggest a contrast with referential truth. 'When I read, years afterwards, about Natasha in War and Peace and how she "ascribed immense importance, although she had no understanding of them, to her husband's abstract, intellectual pursuits", I had to think of Aunt Elspeth and Auntie Grace' (‘Heirs of the Living Body’, p.32). The bathetic reference to Tolstoy implies a distinction between his fictional world and lived experience. When the aunts are compared to a fictional character, their supposed referentiality is emphasised, just as McCarthy's 'lies' highlight her apparent honesty.

As a fragmented form, the short story sequence is able to encompass a multiplicitous subjectivity; while the autobiographical genre may be used to present the subject in process, living in time as permanent
flux - 'a life that is directed ahead of itself toward the event yet to come' ('Author and Hero', p.16). Both these tendencies are at play in Munro's text.

In Lives of Girls and Women, as in most autobiographical writing, the 'I' is both subject and object. The narrating 'I' looks retrospectively at her younger self, who is the 'heroine'. Mandel has written persuasively on the primacy of the present over the autobiographer's apparent pre-occupation with the past: 'The past may appear to rule the present; but in fact all genuine power resides in the moment of creativity' (35). 'Now,' he says, 'is the only source of light' (ibid.).

There is no clearly established 'now' in Lives of Girls and Women. The distance, in time and space, separating the older Del from the younger is left indeterminate. References to the war give some clue to chronology, references to school some idea of the younger Del's age; but these remain imprecise. 'The second winter we lived in town - the winter I was twelve years old' ('Age of Faith', p.95) is one of the more specific indicators. The fragmented syntax suggests the hesitation of a speaker struggling to be exact; the attempt to locate experience chronologically is, to some extent, an artificial process. Clock time, as Bergson suggests, is irrelevant to interior states of consciousness, which exist within a continuum.
In the text, time is determined internally. The external passage of public time is abandoned for a private world, where a personal chronology is charted through such superficially minor details as a change of address or a visit from an uncle. The move from the Flats Road to a more respectable address in the town, during the winter months, becomes a key point of reference, although the decision to move is elided. As the reader reaches 'Lives of Girls and Women', Del and Ada seem to be living in town permanently. Del's father is marginalized, both geographically and in terms of the narrative.

Proust's comment that 'every reader is, while he is reading, the reader of his own self' (36) gives a more positive account of the narcissistic pleasures of art, for reader or writer, than Del's magazine article; and it is one which is universal, rather than gender-specific. It also indicates a process which is integral to autobiographical genres - the construction of an identity through language, which is generated in a dialogue between the narrating I, the narrated I and the reader. This makes it an ideal form in which to explore the aesthetic or creative impulse; in Munro's book, as in Proust, Joyce or McCarthy, a reader becomes a writer. The book that we are reading becomes the implicit enactment of the narrator's creativity.

The adult Del is almost entirely absent from the text. But the final pages do give some indication of
It did not occur to me then that one day I would be so greedy for Jubilee. Voracious and misguided as Uncle Craig out at Jenkin's Bend, writing his history, I would want to write things down.

I would try to make lists. A list of all the stores and businesses going up and down the main street and who owned them, a list of family names, names on the tombstones in the cemetery and any inscriptions underneath. A list of the titles of movies that played at the Lyceum Theatre from 1938 to 1950, roughly speaking. Names on the cenotaph (more for the First World War than for the Second). Names of the streets and the pattern they lay in.

The hope of accuracy we bring to such tasks is crazy, heartbreaking.

And no list could hold what I wanted, for what I wanted was every last thing, every layer of speech and thought, stroke of light on bark or walls, every smell, pothole, pain, crack, delusion, held still and held together radiant, everlasting. ('Epilogue: The Photographer', p.249)

This proleptic passage is posterior to the first narrative, but anterior to the 'now' in which they are narrated. The time since Del left Jubilee is elided. The 'one day' when she became 'greedy for Jubilee' is indeterminate, and the motivation for that greed unspecified. There is no information about her current age or circumstances. However, this passage signals a turning point in the transition from reading lived experience to writing it down. By the end of the story, an older Del, positioned somewhere between the narrating Del and the younger self, who made lists, is prepared to achieve her artistic identity as the implied author of Lives of Girls and Women.

Abstract systems of classification, which are
basically numerical, cannot contain what Bergson would call the 'qualitative multiplicity' of reality. Del's list-making is as futile as her uncle's massive and unreadable local history. Autobiographical writing, which here incorporates collective experience - 'every layer of speech and thought' - needs to transcend external reality and engage, on some level, with the fiction-making process.

Del has already transposed her neighbours, the Sherriffs, into a gothic novel which has remained largely inside her own head. The referential Marion, who drowned herself, becomes the fictive Caroline. In her novel, Del is both subject and object. She is both the photographer himself and his image. Caroline, like Bizet's Carmen, who is invoked in 'Baptizing', is a projection of Del's sexuality, treating men with 'tender contempt, indifferent readiness' ('Epilogue', p.243). The photographer is the male artist, the sinister outsider, who has no name, and mysteriously disappears, leaving the pregnant Caroline to destroy herself. Masculinity and feminity seem irreconcilable within the subjectivity that Del has constructed for herself in the dynamic between these two figures.

Del's novel seems 'true to me, not real but true, as if I had discovered, not made up, such people and such a story, as if that town was lying close behind the one I walked through every day' (p.244). But when
she is unexpectedly invited into the Sherriffs' house, by Marion's brother, Bobby, the fiction-making process is problematized. Entry into the house seems to trigger a Joycean epiphany.

This was the Sherriffs' house. I could see a little bit of the hallway, brown and pink wallpaper, through the screen door. That was the doorway through which Marion had walked. Going to school. Going to play tennis. Going to the Wawanash River. Marion was Caroline. She was all I had had, to start with; her act and her secrecy. (p.246)

In a moment of Bergsonian intuition, an essential reality is revealed through the transformation of material objects, like the brown and pink wallpaper. Del begins to feel empathy with people who have hitherto simply provided the inert raw material for her fiction. However, Munro undercuts modernist convention. Typically, within a modernist text the epiphany unifies the narrative. It reconciles subject and object, internal and external reality. Munro fractures unitary meaning, rejecting the notion of a transcendent reality which can be grasped through artistic experience.

Del discards her attempts at unifying experience through fiction, 'the whole mysterious and, as it turned out, unreliable structure rising from this house, the Sherriffs, a few poor facts, and everything that was not told' (p.247). Talking to Bobby about her own plans, she begins to wonder what happened to Marion in real life:
Not to Caroline. What happened to Marion? What happened to Bobby Sherriff when he had to stop baking cakes and go back to the asylum? Such questions persist, in spite of novels. (p.247)

The ongoing reality of lived experience cannot be finalized. Del's earlier attempt to transcend time, capturing 'every last thing, every layer of speech and thought, stroke of light on bark or walls, every smell, pothole, pain, crack, delusion, held still and held together - radiant, everlasting' (p.249) is doomed to frustration. Lived experience is multiple and contradictory: 'People's lives, in Jubilee, as elsewhere, were dull, simple, amazing and unfathomable - deep caves paved with kitchen linoleum' (p.249).

Wishing Del luck, as he takes her plate away, Bobby rises on his toes 'like a plump ballerina' (ibid.):

This action, accompanied by his delicate smile, appeared to be a joke not shared with me so much as displayed for me, and it seemed also to have a concise meaning - a stylized meaning - to be a letter, or a whole word, in an alphabet I did not know. (pp.249-50)

This is a carnival gesture, which defies definition. Its secret 'concise meaning' is part of a whole network of multiple meanings, which cannot be reduced to unitary symbols. It is out of the dialogue between material reality ('kitchen linoleum') and the unknowable subjectivity of the other ('deep caves') that Munro's fiction is generated. Del's fascination with the
unverifiable - Marion's 'act and her secrecy', the 'few poor facts, and everything that was not told', the concealed joke - signals the exploration of secrecy and silence that, as we have seen, informs so much of Munro's work.

As Chapter 3 discusses, Bakhtin claims that each individual subjectivity is constituted by its unique positioning in time and space. No one else shares our own personal vision. Yet the other has access to areas of ourselves that, like the back of the neck, we cannot see first hand. Aesthetically, or in lived experience, the attempt to imagine the totality of another's existence from within must be frustrated by this diversity. However:

Lovellite sympathy accompanies and permeates aesthetic co-experiencing, throughout the entire duration of the act of aesthetic contemplation of an object, transfiguring the entire material of what is contemplated and co-experienced. Sympathetic co-experiencing of the hero's life means to experience that life in a form completely different from the form in which it was, or could have been, experienced by the subiectum of that life himself. ('Author and Hero', p.82)

'Lovellite sympathy' is a concept which has some affinities with Bergsonian ideas on intuition. But, unlike Bergson, Bakhtin regards a fusion between subject and object as neither attainable nor desirable. While we may empathize with the inner consciousness of an other, that very identification is predicated on our separation from her.
According to 'Author and Hero', we sense our own inner selves as something irreducible to the body, and unbound to the external world, while experiencing others as connatural with the world. 'Everything in myself that is spatially given gravitates toward my own non-spatial inner center, whereas everything that is ideal in the other gravitates toward his givenness in space' (p.41). The other can only be represented outwardly, which means largely through the body. But this 'givenness in space' might also be expressed in the body's interaction with the mundane exterior world - Bobby's carnival gesture, or 'the doorway through which Marion had walked'.

Neither traditional historical discourse nor the purely fictive, divorced from the referent, form an adequate response to memory. Del's distinction between what is 'true' and what is 'real' has some validity, since lived experience is conditioned by fantasy and textuality. On the other hand, quantifiable material objects yield clues to the qualitative multiplicity of subjective reality. They are implicated in the Bakhtinian 'excess of seeing' which, to use Bakhtin's term, is 'transgredient' to self and other (see 'Author and Hero', pp.22-27). By incorporating autobiographical discourse into her text, Munro explores ways in which subjectivity is generated through a network of others. As a 'portrait of the artist', Lives of Girls and Women - 170 -
also investigates how the experiences of those others might be represented aesthetically.

Both the short story sequence and autobiography are genres which resist closure, while the realist novel courts it as the climax of a metonymic process. As Frank Kermode says, 'novels, no matter how much they shift time[...] are always in some way bound to what Sartre calls "manifest irreversibility"' (37). The end of a self-contained story seems to end a book at random; another story could easily be added. An autobiography recounts an unfinished life. 'Epilogue: the Photographer' ends with lines of fractured syntax that sustain indeterminacy through negatives ('never', 'instead of'):

People's wishes, and their other offerings, were what I took then naturally, a bit distractedly, as if they were never anything more than my due.

'Yes,' I said, instead of thank you. (p.250)

This resistance to closure engages with time as boundless process.

Del replies to Bobby's wishes 'distractedly', without fully appreciating his carnival gesture as it is enacted. Ideas connected with paying or withholding attention recur throughout the story - 'I did not pay much attention to the real Sherriffs' (p.244); 'I kept watching him attentively, so he would not ask me again if he was boring me' (p.248); 'At present I did not look much
at this town' (p.249). To write is to pay attention - to look more closely at what might otherwise be ignored or forgotten. Bobby's movement is not completed in the moment of perception, but as memory. Memory and perception interpenetrate, when time is represented as flux.

This fluid concept of time is, as we have seen, related to Bergsonian notions of duration, which shaped the aesthetics of modernist short fiction. Munro's concern with the multiplicity of lived experience and, hence, the limits of representation is also shared with her modernist precursors. But while, to some extent, Mansfield's image of the pear tree in 'Bliss' remains indeterminate, it ultimately stands for a transcendent reality. In modernist culture, aesthetic experience is valorized precisely because it enables the subject to grasp an essential reality which is obscured in the clockbound routine of everyday life.

Miriam Marty Clark includes Munro's work in her survey of contemporary postmodernist short fiction, which she contrasts with 'the unified, complex modernist short story, grounded in image and metaphor and moving towards revelation' (38). She claims that Munro's stories 'constitute not multiple perspectives on a unitary and knowable (if, within the limits of the story, unknowable) reality but rather separate stories, overlaid, competing, at odds, told in a single voice' (39).
Hutcheon claims that postmodern fiction is marked by a 'deliberate refusal to resolve contradiction' (40). This refusal stems from the abandonment of grand narratives, like Christianity or Marxism, which structure and unify experience within modernity. As we have seen, contradictions may coexist within a modernist story like 'Bliss', which both parodies and accepts Bergsonian philosophy; while a rejection of totalizing systems emerges from Bergson's attack on determinism.

It would be foolhardy to attempt a definitive analysis of the relationship between modernist and postmodern aesthetics within the scope of this thesis. There are different currents within postmodernism, as there were within modernist culture. But, in general, I would agree with Hutcheon that postmodern art is both a continuation of, and a challenge to, its modernist forebears. Although the contradictions and ironies of 'Bliss' are unresolved, Bertha's final question does expect an answer.

Bakhtinian thought helps to clarify this relationship. I have already indicated its debt to modernist concepts of non-linear time and to a concern with interaction and process, rather than a fixed, Newtonian view of the world. The resistance to totalizing systems, evident in Bergsonism, is at the forefront of Bakhtinian theory. But Bakhtin departs from the modernist context in his refusal of a unified subjectivity and a transcendent
reality. Two other, interrelated aspects of his work are useful in the criticism of postmodern texts. The first is his emphasis on the role discourse plays in constructing the subject. The second is the breaking down of barriers between art and life. Both are especially applicable to texts like *Lives of Girls and Women*, which incorporate autobiographical discourse.

*Lives of Girls and Women* explores ways in which Del's emergent identity is conditioned by language and textuality. In crossing the generic boundaries between autobiography and fiction, it challenges the modernist belief that aesthetic experience offers access to a greater reality than that which is available in the quotidian.

I shall now analyse autobiographical discourse in Grace Paley's work, extending my examination of the relationship between 'life' and 'art' to include the use she makes of the oral tradition.
Paley chooses to describe her work as 'storytelling' rather than 'fiction' (41), because stories have their beginnings in lived experience, however much that experience may be transformed in the telling. The distinction between invention and referential truth is not always clear-cut, as was evident in my earlier comments on Munro and McCarthy; and Paley often teases the reader by blurring the boundaries between autobiography and fiction.

For instance, Dotty Wasserman is one of the many characters who recur in different stories across her three collections. She first appears in one of Paley's earliest stories, 'The Contest' (Little Disturbances, pp.65-78), and is mentioned briefly in 'Faith in a Tree' (Enormous Changes, pp.75-100). In 'Love', a story in her most recent collection, Later the Same Day, Dotty enters the conversation as the narrator and her husband are reminiscing about previous romances:

Dotty and I were both delegates to that famous Kansas City National Meeting of Town Meetings. N.M.T.M. Remember? Some woman.
No, I said, that's not true. She was made up, just plain invented in the late fifties.
Oh, he said, then it was after that. I must have met her afterward. (42)

'Love' incorporates autobiographical discourse through its use of a first-person intradiegetic narrator who
is herself a writer; this is reinforced by the intertextual reference to 'The Contest'. The relationship between the fictive 'Dotty Wasserman' and any real life models is as unverifiable as that between Del's mother and Munro's own. Within the text, 'that's not true' may apply to Dotty's referential status or to that of the allegedly famous 'Kansas City National Meeting of Town Meetings'. The meeting's title sounds parodic; it might nonetheless be historically based.

The narrator of 'Love' may be identified with Faith, who reappears in the first person throughout Paley's work. Faith shares Paley's own cultural and political identity. Even their first names echo one another, each representing a spiritual quality. As the collections are published, over a twenty-five year period, her developing experiences seem to mirror Paley's own. Like Paley, she is a writer, a local activist and a mother. The frequent use of Faith as a narrator, addressing the reader directly, invites autobiographical interpretation. However, as Arcana points out (43), the circumstances of Paley's 'alter ego' do not correspond exactly with her own. Faith has two sons, while Paley has a son and daughter. Paley has never been a single parent.

Arcana's biography examines a 'transitional space' created by the interplay between Paley's lived experience and the published texts (44). The first story in which
Faith appears, 'The Used-Boy Raisers' (Little Disturbances, pp.127-134), was begun after Paley dropped in on a friend, to find both her current and her former husband in the kitchen. 'But all the rest I made up...after that first paragraph, none of it is real, none of it' (45). Arcana comments that 'We cannot read the texts as if they were the life; nor can we sever the life from the texts' (46). Stanley's notion of a symbiosis between autobiography, biography and fiction becomes a symbiosis between lived experience and textuality.

Nevertheless, Paley considers that she has a political duty to write 'truthfully'. Discussing fiction at a symposium in the 1970s, she said, 'I shouldn't say a work of art; I mean a work of truth' (47). During the discussion, she outlined her vision of storytelling as a socially cohesive force, with its roots in the oral tradition: 'People ought to live in mutual aid and concern, listening to one another's stories[...]Is there a way for people to tell stories to one another again and to bring one another into that kind of speaking and listening and attending community?' (48). This suggests the notion of a 'truth' constituted by multiple realities, grounded in the diversity of lived experience. It is a 'truth' which, as the self-reflexivity of 'Love' demonstrates, cannot be easily verified.

In 'Art and Answerability', Bakhtin states that 'art and life are not one, but they must become united
in myself - in the unity of my answerability' (49). To be human means to be in dialogue with the world beyond our own limits; that is how full subjectivity evolves. Artists must not lose sight of their place in humanity; while 'the man of everyday life ought to know that the fruitlessness of art is due to his willingness to be unexacting and to the unseriousness of the concerns in his life' (ibid.).

Paley's commitment to 'truth' reveals a similar concern with addressivity. The artist bears a personal responsibility towards social reality; the artistic product has a role to play in the world beyond the text. Life and art interact in complex ways. In The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship, Bakhtin describes the way in which literature, as super-structure, reflects the material base, yet also functions as an active ideological phenomenon; 'literary works have their own independent ideological role and their own type of refraction of socioeconomic existence' (50). He uses the term 'refraction' to avoid a crudely Marxist interpretation of literature as the direct transmission of fixed ideologies external to itself; while retaining the notion that there is some interplay between the text and the changing 'ideological horizon' (ibid.). The complications are evident from the following passage in The Formal Method:
Every literary phenomenon, like every other ideological phenomenon, is simultaneously determined from without (extrinsically) and from within (intrinsically). From within it is determined by literature itself, and from without by other spheres of social life. But, in being determined from within, the literary work is thereby determined externally also, for the literature that determines it is itself determined from without. And being determined from without, it is thereby determined from within, for internal factors determine it precisely as a literary work in its specificity[... ] (51)

A literary work cannot simply mirror social reality; yet it cannot help but 'refract' lived experience as mediated by textuality, which is itself conditioned by social relations. Paley claims that:

The story is a big lie. And in the middle of this big lie, you're telling the truth. If you lie (there), things go wrong. You become sentimental, opaque, bombastic; you withhold information. (52)

Ultimately, an artistic responsibility towards lived experience must be maintained, even though textual reality does not correspond to a single referential truth. Heteroglossia embodies the competing ideologies implicit in every utterance, read at the level of either an individual word or a complete text. The conflict between disparate social realities is enacted within language itself.

I concluded my previous chapter by noting that Bakhtinian thought emphasizes a continuity between lived experience and aesthetic activity. During carnival, the boundaries between life and art are abandoned altogether:
In fact, carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators. Footlights would destroy a carnival, as the absence of footlights would destroy a theatrical performance. Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. (Rabelais, p.198)

In the carnivalized space of Paley's texts, real and fictive characters intermingle. Bakhtin goes on to describe carnival's 'temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order[...]Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal' (ibid., p.199). In Paley's work, the interplay between fiction, autobiography and orality generates a similar sense of time as boundless possibility.

Like Munro, Paley came under pressure to write a novel after publishing her first short story collection. Faith was to be a central character in a narrative that covered different generations of her family. 'Faith in the Afternoon', 'Faith in a Tree' (Enormous Changes, pp.29-49, pp.75-100) and 'Dreamer in a Dead Language' (Later, pp.11-36) are products of this attempt. As in Lives of Girls and Women, female subjectivity is delineated through a network of others. But, compared with Munro's Bildungsroman, Paley's work is more overtly aligned with a collective oral tradition. The autobiographical elements in her stories need to be
examined within the political context of the sixties and seventies, when her reputation was established. Feminism, in particular, placed special value on the notion of revealing lives that had been suppressed or marginalized by patriarchal society. Personal testimony was seen as a form of political empowerment. Autobiography and oral history authenticated experiences that had been distorted or suppressed by dominant forms of literary discourse. These included the experiences of black or immigrant cultures like Paley's own. For instance, in 'In This Country, but in Another Language, my Aunt Refuses to Marry the Men Everyone Wants Her to' (Later, pp.107-8), 'my aunt' tells the narrator the story of a boy who, like Paley's own uncle, was killed in a demonstration back in Russia.

Paley's work crosses the generic boundaries between fiction, autobiography and oral storytelling. The recurrence of familiar characters may be likened to the reappearance of mythic or historical characters in the story cycles of oral tradition. Walter J. Ong has described the oral epic as an 'open' text, claiming that written forms tend towards linearity (53). In a short story sequence, that linearity is already disrupted. By incorporating the oral tradition into her work, Paley increases its resistance to finalization. As characters re-appear, events are perceived from new perspectives. For instance, in 'Distance', (Enormous
(Changes, pp.13-27), Virginia, the narrator of 'An Interest in Life' (Little Disturbances, pp.79-101) becomes 'that girl Ginny downstairs' (p.15), as her relationship with John is refocalized through his mother, Dolly.

Oral forms of discourse also disrupt the concept of unitary truth by fragmenting experience. In a very short story, 'Debts', a stranger asks the narrator if she will help her make a story out of her family archives. The narrator decides against the idea:

Actually, I owed nothing to the lady who'd called. It was possible that I did owe something to my own family and the families of my friends. That is, to tell their stories as simply as possible, in order, you might say, to save a few lives. (Enormous Changes, p.10)

'To save a few lives' incorporates the language of financial thrift in order to suggest the value of experience which may not be preserved, except through the storytelling community envisaged by Paley. Here again, storytelling is a form of collective empowerment. The narrator then recounts a story told to her by a friend, based on memories from her mother's childhood. This second degree narrative is brief and anecdotal. Its inconsequentiality contrasts with the authoritative and impersonal forms of discourse usually associated with historical writing. History, in Paley's stories, is not finished, and the past is not separated from the present.

Time, in these stories, brings endless change and
self-renewal. Paley uses double-voiced discourse and carnival ambivalence to explore this multiplicity. Yet, even as she represents time as a continuum, she remains aware that it must also be regarded as determinate. Linear time cannot be wholly disregarded, as I shall now illustrate with a discussion of art and life in 'A Conversation with my Father', (Enormous Changes, pp.159-167).

'A Conversation with my Father'

A dedication on the flyleaf of Enormous Changes at the Last Minute claims that:

Everyone in this book is imagined into life except the father. No matter what story he has to live in, he's my father, I. Goodside, M.D., artist and storyteller. G.P.

Yet, in one of the stories in the collection, 'Faith in a Tree', Paley attributes an anecdote to 'Marilyn Gewirtz, the only real person in this story' (p.84). The dedication itself is hybridized, the playfulness of 'imagined into life' contrasting with the precise, legalistic speech incorporated by 'I. Goodside, M.D., artist and storyteller.'

He is first introduced as 'the father', a structuring
element in storytelling, like the father in a folk tale, rather than 'my father', the unique individual, whose personal attributes are recorded. 'The father' also signifies patriarchal authority. In Lacanian theory, the 'Name-of-the-Father' is identified with the acquisition of language and the child's entry into the symbolic order. But in carnival, such authority is ridiculed, and hierarchies suspended. In this context, it is perhaps significant that Isaac Goodside is assigned his initial, rather than his full name. His egoism is mocked by the 'I'; the first-person pronoun is also in dialogue with 'my', which implies the daughter's identification with the dominant father.

According to Arcana, 'A Conversation with my Father', is based on Paley's actual literary disagreements with her father. Even without this knowledge, the reader is invited to identify the nameless first-person narrator with the empirical author. The father's complaints about stories with 'people sitting in trees, talking senselessly, voices from who knows where' (p.162) aptly describes 'Faith in a Tree', which appears earlier in the collection. Like his fictive counterpart, Isaac Goodside favoured realist writing. In the text, the father asks his daughter for 'a simple story[...]the kind de Maupassant wrote, or Chekhov, the kind you used to write. Just recognizable people and then write down what happened to them next' (p.161). The writer then
attempts to construct the type of story which might please him.

Throughout the text, colloquial language is in dialogue with the heightened speech genres, associated with conventional literary discourse. In the opening paragraph, short, direct statements gradually give way to more complex sentences. Externalized description merges with literary metaphor:

My father is eighty-six years old and in bed. His heart, that bloody motor, is equally old and will not do certain jobs any more. It still floods his head with brainy light. But it won’t let his legs carry the weight of his body round the house. Despite my metaphors, this muscle failure is not due to his old heart, he says, but to a potassium shortage. (p.161)

Paley uses hyperbolic language to draw attention to the artificiality of all literary genres; later in the story she also parodies poetic form:

the fingers of my flesh transcend
my transcendental soul
the tightness in my shoulders end
my teeth have made me whole (p.165)

By contrast, the tale the narrator constructs for her father is, in its first version, relatively 'unadorned':

Once in my time there was a woman and she had a son. They lived nicely, in a small apartment in Manhattan. This boy at about fifteen became a junkie, which is not unusual in our neighbourhood. In order to maintain her close friendship with him, she became a junkie too. She said it was part of the youth culture, with which she felt very much at home. After a while, for a number of reasons, the boy gave it all up and left the city and his mother in disgust. Hopeless and alone, she
grieved. We all visit her. (p.162)

The use of short statements or simple clauses linked by 'and' suggests a narrative voice that is aiming towards objectivity. There is no attempt to reproduce subjective states, which are introduced into the first narrative by metaphor. This second degree, past-tense narrative is embedded within the first, present-tense narrative. According to the first narrative, it is an account of 'a story that had been happening for a couple of years right across the street' (p.162). The iterative 'had been happening' implies a continuity which is imported into the beginning and end of the second narrative. The finalized 'once upon a time' has become the ongoing 'once in my time'. 'We all visit her' introduces an iterative, present tense statement into the singulative past tense account. Lived experience, which can never be completed, resists the attempt to impose closure.

Dissatisfied with this elliptical account, the father persuades his daughter to revise her narrative according to the conventions of classic realism. In this new version and in the first narrative, Paley parodies the realist accumulation of external detail, especially when it is used to present 'rounded' characters:

She had a son whom she loved because she'd known him since birth (in helpless chubby infancy, and in the wrestling, hugging ages, seven to ten, as well as earlier and later). (p.164)
Classic realist writing burdens the narrative with the obvious ('she had a son whom she loved because she'd known him since birth) and the irrelevant; the narrator resists her father's interest in the character's looks and her family background. The fractured syntax in the revised second degree narrative conveys the narrator's impatience with these conventions, as well as suggesting improvisation.

A linear narrative, which represents character as fixed attributes, denies the potential for change:

I would like to try to tell such a story, if he means the kind that begins 'There was a woman...' followed by plot, the absolute line between two points which I've always despised. Not for literary reasons, but because it takes all hope away. Everyone, real or invented, deserves the open destiny of life. (pp.161-2)

The narrator resists the idea of closure, while her father finds fatalistic satisfaction in tragic resolution:

'Yes,' he said, 'what a tragedy. The end of a person.'
'No, Pa,' I begged him. 'It doesn't have to be. She's only about forty. She could be a hundred different things in this world as time goes on...' (p.166)

For the living subject, closure cannot be achieved. Reality is experienced as a boundless process of becoming. Paley's texts evoke this quality through their polyphonic structure and their incorporation of heteroglossia. She also suggests that a literary text generates its own logic, regardless of authorial intention. Fictive
characters develop in unexpected ways:

'People start out fantastic. You think they're extraordinary, but it turns out as the work goes along, they're just average with a good education. Sometimes the other way around, the person's a kind of dumb innocent, but he outwits you and you can't even think of an ending good enough.' (p.163)

The dialogue between fiction and lived experience creates new meanings, which are not confined within the text, but have implications for external reality:

That woman lives across the street. She's my knowledge and my invention. I'm sorry for her. I'm not going to leave her there in that house crying. (p.167)

Storytelling can be an assertion of free will. The vitality of language itself expresses meanings which have a validity beyond verifiable truth; the 'brainy light' metaphor at the beginning of the story presents a human condition which cannot be merely identified with 'a potassium shortage'. Language is not a transparent code, but participates in the construction of reality. Parodic utterances like 'She had a son whom she loved because she'd known him since birth' produce new meanings. As Bakhtin points out in his work on Rabelais, parody should not be understood as a negative response; it is an active linguistic intervention. Comic ambivalence undermines the unitary meaning implied by purely tragic modes and authoritarian attempts at monologue.

Fictive and lived experience interact; by resisting
The narrator's optimistic vision of an open-ended future is in dialogue with her father's determinism. The family have asked her to give him the last word when they argue. The story does, in fact, end with the father's words: 'Tragedy! You too. When will you look it in the face?' (p.167).

Carnival can only be a temporary suspension of social norms. Although it provides a powerful challenge to the established order, its long term effects are, in themselves, limited. In carnival, the body is universal and immortal. 'The body and bodily life have here a cosmic and at the same time an all-people's character; this is not the body and its physiology in the modern...
sense of these words, because it is not individualized' (Rabelais, p.205). Collectively, 'the people' are immortal; Paley's stories 'save lives' by incorporating oral testimony. But, for the individual subject, death remains an immutable truth.

In this story, closure is, to some extent, frustrated by the posing of a question: 'When will you look it in the face?' Two competing ideologies are left unresolved. Each entails its own concept of time as self-renewing process or as a linear chain of cause and effect. The conflict between free will and determinism seems irreconcilable. Following Hutcheon's remarks on postmodernism's acceptance of unresolved contradictions (54) we may perceive this as shift in emphasis between Paley and her modernist precursors.

In both Paley and Munro's work, autobiographical forms of discourse engage with the protean moment of becoming, in which past and present intermingle. Bergson's 'instantaneous which dies and is born again endlessly' (Matter and Memory, p.139) becomes an aspect of carnival ambivalence, which, similarly, resists finalization.

By crossing generic boundaries, the texts that I have examined in this chapter problematize the distinction between truth and fiction, and between lived experience and aesthetic representation. They draw attention to ways in which the subject is constructed by language. Hence, the incorporation of autobiographical
discourse into the short story indicates a departure from the modernist belief in a self which, despite its multiplicity, is transcendent; and which belongs to an elusive, yet essential reality which may be grasped by escaping the distortions of clock time and embracing the full experience of time as duration. Such an escape is impossible in these texts, as I demonstrated in my discussion of the epiphany in *Lives of Girls and Women*.

In these stories, time is organized as continuum. Past and present intermingle. But there are differences in emphasis between a modernist story like 'Bliss' and later work, as represented by Paley and Munro. 'Bliss' represents the interpenetration of successive psychic states through the use of memory-images. Its concern is with the individual self and the personal past as it impinges on the psychic present. In these stories, the subject evolves in relation to a network of others. Collective memory is interwoven with private perception. Autobiographical discourse has been a crucial element in the development of contemporary short fiction, as it explores the relationship between time, subjectivity and the material world.

In the stories I have discussed in this chapter, an awareness of communal history is absorbed into the organization of time as a continuum. This type of history is not represented as linear succession; the discourse of oral history may suggest Eliade's archaic, circular
time, which is rooted in myth (55). Above all, there is a consciousness that, as Hutcheon says, 'we cannot know the past except through its texts: its documents, its evidence, even its eye-witness accounts are texts' (56). Autobiographical discourse may be used to relativize experience, implying that memory itself may be interpreted textually. The interpenetration of texts merges with the interpenetration of psychic states. In 'Bliss', the memory-image is of key importance, giving the reader access to a fluid interiority. In these stories, it is intertextuality which is foregrounded.

But, while time is organized as a continuum, it is also represented as irreversible succession. This is particularly evident in the sharpened awareness of mortality which informs both Paley's work and Munro's. Bergsonian philosophy insists that the psyche is irreducible to physiological factors; Bakhtin claims that we define others through their bodies, while constructing a sense of a unique self which we may imagine to be separated from our own corporeality. In the next chapter, I shall be examining ways in which Munro and Paley explore the relationship between subjectivity, biology and language. I shall introduce Kristeva's theories, in order to bring a psychoanalytical dimension to this discussion, particularly with reference to gendered identity.
References


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33. Alice Munro, 'A Wilderness Station', *Open Secrets*, pp.190-225.

34. Stanton, p.5.

35. Mandel in Olney, p.65.


39. Ibid., pp.156-7.


44. Ibid., p.2.

45. Ibid., p.5.

46. Ibid.

47. 'Symposium on Fiction', *Shenandoah* 76, Winter 1976, p.31.

48. Ibid.


51. Ibid., p.134.


54. See reference 40.

55. See the discussion of Eliade in Chapter 2, p 83.

56. Hutcheon, p.16.
Introduction

Kristeva was one of the theorists who introduced Bakhtinian thought to the West in the late 1960s. Her approach to signification has been strongly influenced by his understanding of language as a ceaseless process. Like him, she locates the production of meaning at the interface between self and other, which is linked to the subject's apprehension of corporeality. For both thinkers, subject formation is inextricably bound to language acquisition. Both believe that subjectivity and signification are positioned, rather than consisting of stable attributes. Kristeva adds a psychoanalytical dimension to this shared perspective, which enables her to address questions of gendered identity never raised in Bakhtin's work.

Bakhtinian theory has provided a useful correlative to Bergsonian concepts of time, which have shaped the aesthetics of the contemporary short story. It extends Bergson's vision of a dynamic, self-renewing reality in time as duration to include signification; as we have seen, Bergson himself regarded language as a unitary code, artificially imposed on the qualitative multiplicity of lived experience. According to Bakhtin, subjectivity itself is constructed through language. As I noted
in Chapter 3, there is an affinity between the Bakhtinian analysis of subject formation and the Lacanian approach; yet much of the work of the Bakhtin school expresses apparent hostility towards psychoanalysis. In this section, I shall begin the chapter by discussing the relationship between Bakhtinian theory and psychoanalysis, and then outline Kristeva's account of subjectivity and language, which combines the two traditions. Just as Bakhtinian ideas compensate for deficiencies in Bergsonian philosophy, so Kristevan thought adds a consideration of unconscious drives within individual subjectivity, which is largely omitted from Bakhtin's own agenda. This facilitates an analysis of the gendered subject, which, as we have seen in Chapter 3, is also left unexplored in the writings of the Bakhtin school. The section ends with a defence of Kristeva's analysis of semiotic and symbolic modalities in language against criticism from Felski and Butler. This prepares the ground for the next section, in which I apply Kristeva's theory of abjection to Munro's story 'Vandals' (Open Secrets, 1994). The chapter ends with a discussion of Paley's 'The Pale Pink Roast' (Enormous Changes, 1974) as a carnivalized text.

In previous chapters, I have explored ways in which double-voiced discourse and an elliptical narrative structure enable the short story to engage with time as duration. In this chapter, I shall develop a deeper
consideration of the material and non-discursive qualities of language, which I touched upon in my discussion of 'Bliss' (Chapter 2). I shall use Kristeva's theories to show how libidinal drives are manifested in the text, grounding the subject within the psychical present, where memory and perception, the virtual and the corporeal, are interconnected.

From Bakhtin to Kristeva: Dialogism, Psychoanalysis and the Signifying Process

Historically, the Bakhtin school has sometimes appeared to be at odds with psychoanalytical theory. Produced within a relatively orthodox Marxist framework, Voloshinov/Bakhtin's *Freudianism: A Critical Sketch* (1927) critiques Freud's subjectivism. While welcoming the Freudian emphasis on psychical conflict within the individual as a "dynamics" of the psyche' (1), it claims that psychoanalysis places too much emphasis on individual pathology, at the expense of social influences. As we have seen, in Bakhtinian theory, the unitary self is a construct, generated through language, in relationship with a notional other. Interiority consists of 'inner speech'.

This means that Voloshinov/Bakhtin doubt the
possibility of analyzing unconscious drives, which cannot, by definition, be articulated. Anticipating Foucault, Freudianism highlights the role discourse might play in hypostasizing the Oedipus complex, which is a retrospective interpretation of childhood events: 'The construct of the Oedipus complex is[...]a purely ideological formulation projected into the psyche of the child' (Freudianism, p.43). The repressed contents of the unconscious are revealed, during psychoanalysis, through verbal reactions. The unconscious is therefore, like any other utterance, ideologically informed. Thus, the Freudian unconscious may be regarded as an 'unofficial consciousness' (p.44), differing only in content from the 'official' version.

Despite these differences, Voloshinov/Bakhtin acknowledge the inadequacy of a purely materialist model of the psyche. Bakhtin's interest in the relationship between the speaking subject and the body is evident in 'Author and Hero', where he discusses the infant's "darkly stirring chaos" of needs and dissatisfactions, wherein the future dyad of the child's personality and the outside world confronting it is still submerged in the world' ('Author and Hero', p.50). Here, early in his career, Bakhtin's words seem to imply the existence of unconscious drives. Towards the end of his life (2), Bakhtin seems to have accepted the Freudian concept of the unconscious, in revisions to his book on Dostoevsky.
It would be wrong to take Voloshinov/Bakhtin's apparent hostility towards Freudianism as indicative of an entrenched incompatibility between dialogism and psychoanalytic theory. Freud's 1915 paper on 'The Unconscious' takes into account the difficulty of verbalizing the unconscious, which must ipso facto become conscious. His description of psychoanalytical procedure evokes the authoring process that Bakhtin links to subject formation: 'All the acts and manifestations which I notice in myself and do not know how to link up with the rest of my mental life must be judged as if they belonged to some one else: they must be explained by a mental life ascribed to this other person' (3).

The possibility that Bakhtinian linguistics may have helped to shape Lacanianism indirectly was noted in Chapter 3. Handley observes that 'it is an odd historical paradox that Voloshinov's basic premise that language and subjectivity are social, a premise that he used to attack Freud, now supports central assumptions in Lacanian theory' (4). Both Lacan and Bakhtin regard the unitary self as a necessary fiction. Both use the concept of a mirror to stand for the process of self-objectification (5); while Lacan's claim that 'what I seek in the Word is the response of the other' proposes enunciation, within a dialogic context, as the means by which a unified self image is constructed (6).

Lacanian theory has, in turn, provided a basis
for Kristeva's work. For Kristeva, as for Lacan, the signifying process is itself shaped largely by unconscious drives. Language is conditioned by its own materiality, originated during the pre-Oedipal phase preceding subject formation. Within this 'semiotic' disposition, existence is experienced as a libidinal flow of rhythms, sounds and impulse, channelled through the relationship with the mother. In Revolution in Poetic Language, Kristeva introduces Plato's term, the 'chora', to designate her own concept of an 'essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases' which generates the semiotic (7). Elizabeth Wright describes the chora as 'the unnameable, unspeakable corporeality of the inextricably tangled mother/child dyad which makes the semiotic possible' (8).

The semiotic 'psychosomatic modality' (Revolution, p.28) generated from the chora is outside 'the realm of signification which is always that of a proposition or judgement, in other words, a realm of positions' (p.43). It is anterior to language, but it lays the essential groundwork for signification through the gradual regulation of physical drives. With the emergence of a distinctive self-image, distinguishable from the world of objects, a 'symbolic' modality comes into play, which effects the split between signifier and signified. The Lacanian mirror stage and the 'discovery' of
castration are associated with a 'thetic' phase which divides subject from object:

All enunciation, whether of a word or of a sentence, is thetic. It requires an identification; in other words, the subject must separate from and through his image, from and through his objects. (Revolution, p.43)

The speaking subject, detached from the all-providing maternal body, is increasingly implicated in the social order. A second, symbolic modality regulates the semiotic, introducing syntax and fixed definition; but is also dependent upon it as the fundamental source of signs themselves. 'Language-learning can therefore be thought of as an acute and dramatic confrontation between positing-separating-identifying and the motility of the semiotic chora' (Revolution, p.47). Kristeva stresses the interdependence of the symbolic and the semiotic:

'These two modalities are inseparable within the signifying process that constitutes language and the dialectic between them determines the type of discourse (narrative, metalanguage, theory, poetry, etc.) involved' (ibid., p.23).

Like Bakhtin, Kristeva draws attention to a dynamism inherent in the production of language, which is grounded in an endlessly developing, and open, speaking subject. She rejects the concept of a unified, transcendental ego, for which language provides a transparent medium. The Kristevan 'subject in process' evolves through the
dialogue between unconscious drives and social behaviour.

Poetic discourse is particularly resistant to unitary meaning. Kristeva claims that avant-garde texts, such as those produced by Joyce or Mallarmé, have the potential to subvert social order by exposing the split within the speaking subject. In Desire in Language, she claims that the irruption of a suppressed semiotic charge 'accompanies crises within social structures and institutions - the moments of their mutation, evolution, revolution or disarray' (9). Poetic language 'utters incest' (Desire, p.137) through the 're-instatement of maternal territory into the very economy of language' (ibid.). Within a literary text, semiotic drives may be manifested in language which draws attention to its own musicality or introduces heterogeneity - for instance, through rhythmic or phonic patterns, fractured syntax, ellipses or obscenities. 'Poetic mimesis maintains and transgresses thetic unicity by making it undergo a kind of anamnesis, by introducing into the thetic position the stream of semiotic drives and making it signify' (Revolution, p.60). Intertextuality, the 'transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another' pluralizes meaning by re-adjusting the thetic position (ibid., p.59).

The chora is an ungendered, non-geometrical space, accessible both to male and female artists. In her essay, 'Women's Time', Kristeva warns against matriarchal
forms of feminism, based on nostalgia for the pre-Oedipal mother (10). The semiotic modality cannot stand alone, because it cannot produce coherent meaning unless regulated by the symbolic. On the other hand, Kristeva privileges the physical and psychical experience of maternity as affording special insight into the divided subject in process. In 'Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini' (Desire), maternity is aligned with artistic production, as the site of 'jouissance', the inexpressible, libidinal pleasure which transcends signification and suspends time: 'At the intersection of sign and rhythm, of representation and light, of the symbolic and the semiotic, the artist speaks from a place where she is not, where she knows not' (Desire, p.247).

Some critics, for instance Felski, accuse Kristeva of failing to take into account the social dimensions of artistic production and reception; and of valorizing a modernist, male avant-garde whose techniques have been assimilated into dominant ideologies. Felski argues that 'the subversion of fixed meanings and the unified subject does not in itself necessarily imply anything other than anarchism or relativism and can just as well serve the needs of a reactionary irrationalism as the aims of a feminist politics' (11). But the very notion of an aesthetic which serves such definable 'aims' is anathema to Kristeva; as she makes clear in Revolution in Poetic Language, such a stance 'denies the specificity
of "art", which is its position between metalanguage or contemplation on the one hand and the irruption of drives on the other' (p.233). Kristeva does not advocate literary experimentation as a revolutionary instrument; the avant-garde text is symptomatic of social unease, not a cause, and its relationship to social change may be ambivalent:

The avant-garde text of the nineteenth century [...] renounced any part in the contemporary social process, even while it exhibited that process' repressed yet inaugural moment - constitutive to the extent that it reveals the moment that dissolves all constituted unity. In so doing, the avant-garde text served the dominant ideology by providing it with something to replace what it lacked, without directly calling into question its system of reproduction within representation. (Revolution, pp.211-12)

This ambivalence was evident in George Egerton's short fiction, which I discussed in Chapter 1. Nevertheless, Egerton's work expresses new attitudes towards time and subjectivity which shape an aesthetic based on change and self-renewal, rather than a fixed reality.

Judith Butler attacks Kristeva from a Foucauldian perspective. She questions the notion of a pre-discursive realm, identified with the maternal. Like the Voloshinov/Bakhtin of Freudianism, she is sceptical about the possibility of a knowable, biologically determined state, prior to signification. She is against what she regards as Kristeva's identification of femininity with the maternal; she sees Kristeva's discussion of
the semiotic as complicit with those patriarchal forms of discourse which create a mystique around motherhood in order to engineer the desire to reproduce in women: 'The law that is said to repress the semiotic may well be the governing principle of the semiotic itself, with the result that what passes as "maternal instinct" may well be a culturally constructed desire which is interpreted through a naturalistic vocabulary' (12). She is particularly critical of heterosexist assumptions in Kristeva's writing.

But Kristeva regards gender as a cultural positioning, rather than biological essence. She has said that 'if the feminine exists, it only exists in the order of the signifying process, and it is only in relation to meaning and signification, positioned as their excessive or transgressive other that it exists, speaks, thinks and writes (itself) for both sexes' (13). This anti-essentialism is sometimes contradicted by her writings on maternity; she insists on a universal, female urge to reproduce, whose denial can only lead to regression. However, as Jacqueline Rose has said in Kristeva's defence, an analysis of psychic identity 'does not have to imply a collusion with the way that identity is paraded in the culture at large' (14). Butler does not address the relationship between biology and gender difference. She implies that all behaviour is socially determined, without any physiological basis.
Butler tends to interpret the semiotic and the symbolic as binary oppositions, dismissing the interdependence of the two modalities. In her assessment of Kristeva's theories, the paternally identified symbolic will always gain the upper hand over the intermittently subversive semiotic. But Kristeva's own writing makes it clear that neither modality can be autonomous. Each must condition the other, even when one appears to dominate. Although contemporary society seeks to privilege the rational, by clinging to the fiction of the transcendental ego, the dominance of the symbolic over the semiotic remains precarious. According to Desire in Language, 'transcendental mastery over discourse is possible, but repressive; such a position is necessary, but only as a limit open to constant challenge' (Desire, p.140). Kristeva's insistence that literature is 'something other than knowledge' (ibid., p.132) enables a more sophisticated analysis of the multiplicities of literary texts, where meaning is irreducible to simple denotation. The function of poetic language is 'to introduce through the symbolic that which works on, moves through and threatens it' (Revolution, p.81). As Bakhtin observes in his late writing:

Amongst utterances there exist relations that cannot be defined in either mechanistic or linguistic categories. They have no analogues. (15)
Abjection in Alice Munro's 'Vandals'

Alice Munro's stories investigate ways in which the subject in process is generated through the discourses of memory, speech and writing. Attempts to build unitary meaning and fixed subject positions are undermined by the incursion of the semiotic into the symbolic. This is achieved through the stories' temporal fluidity and intertextuality; and the evocation of the materiality of language as rhythm and repetition. I am going to briefly discuss these elements, before moving on to consider Kristeva's analysis of abjection, in relation to Munro's 'Vandals' (*Open Secrets*, 1994).

In 'Vandals', Bea Doud's house in the country, empty since her partner, Ladner, died, has been broken into and trashed. Unknown to her, the people responsible for the damage are the young Christian couple, Liza and Warren, who were sent to check on the place. Like much of Munro's work, 'Vandals' is structured around a complex network of analepses, subverting linear causality. The time scale is indeterminate; we do not know, for instance, how long Bea lived with Ladner. Narrative turning points, such as Liza's religious conversion, are frequently elided. Munro's use of free indirect discourse disperses subjectivity not just between characters, but between their younger and older selves. Time is experienced as Bergsonian duration. Past and
present intermingle; identity is formed provisionally, between the two.

In 'Vandals', the focalization is split between Bea in the first section and Liza and, to a lesser extent, Warren, in the remaining two thirds. The division creates conflicting identifications in the reader, as we learn about Liza's responsibility for wrecking the house. I shall be discussing this further in my consideration of abjection.

The story opens with a long 'letter' from Bea to Liza, whom she knew as a child. Letters are a recurrent intertextual device across the Open Secrets collection. Munro is incorporating a marginalized form, which has often been used by women who are traditionally excluded from more public forms of discourse. The letters are also a means of suspending linearity; and the movement between first and third person narrative fragments the speaking subject. In the collection as a whole, the letters are a means of introducing a first person narrative into the text. Inner speech is hybridized with a distinctive speech genre, creating tension between interiority and generic convention. This letter, like most of those that Bea composes after her meeting with Ladner, is unsent, and, for the most part, unwritten. Its thetic function is overwhelmed by unconscious drives.

Bea parodies Liza's Christianity, transposing biblical language into the conventions of the thankyou letter:
'Liza, my dear, I have never written you yet to thank you for going out to our house (poor old Dismal, I guess it really deserves the name now) in the teeth or anyway the aftermath of the storm last February and for letting me know what you found there. Thank your husband, too, for taking you there on his snowmobile, also, if as I suspect he was the one to board up the broken window to keep out the savage beasts, etc. Lay not up treasure on earth where moth and dust not to mention teenagers doth corrupt.' (16)

The broken syntax, stylistically appropriate to a personal letter, also disrupts thetic unity. There are many other intertextual devices in the story, including children's rhymes and the quotations from Rousseau and Aristotle which Ladner fastens to trees on his land. Nonsense words draw attention to the materiality of language, in their exploitation of sound and rhythm; 'Liza Minnelli, stick it in your belly!' the adult Liza murmurs as, re-entering Bea and Ladner's house, she regresses to childhood (p.283). Munro makes particular use of sound patterns in names: 'Bea. Bzz. My name is Bea' (p.284). The onomatopoeic 'z' links the two women's names, as well as emphasizing the story's animal imagery. Ladner stuffs animals and birds, arranging them in tableaux across his property.

The patterning of names is also evident in the long, initial letter. Liza's name at the beginning of both story and letter sets up an invocatory rhythm, which is a reminder of the materiality of language.
But it is the homophonous 'Ladner' that begins the third paragraph and dominates the rest of Bea's letter. In a sense, the letter is addressed to this man, whose silence early in their relationship prefigures that of the grave:

One night I got into his bed and he did not take his eyes from his book or move or speak a word to me even when I crawled out and returned to my own bed, where I fell asleep almost at once because I think I could not bear the shame of being awake. In the morning he got into my bed and all went as usual. I come up against blocks of solid darkness. (p.274)

In the dream Bea recounts in her letter, Ladner's bones are conflated with those of a 'little girl' (p.263). Bea imagines that she is confusing this child with Liza's dead brother, Kenny. However, the pattern of names suggests a displacement from Ladner to Liza, and a repressed bond between the two.

Both women are assigned a diffuse and heterogeneous subjectivity which is withheld from the male characters. Warren is essentially a passive witness; Ladner's inner life remains a secret. Kristeva sees two possibilities open to a girl as a resolution of the Oedipal crisis. She may identify with a fantasized, polymorphous mother; or, repressing her former dependence on the maternal body, invest in a paternal order, founded on 'sign and time' (17). Bea seeks re-union with the pre-Oedipal mother in sexuality: 'But still she felt the first signal
of a love affair like the warmth of the sun on her skin, like music through a doorway, or the instant, as she had often said, when the black-and-white television commercial bursts into colour' (p.265).

The sensuous combination of texture, light and fleeting sound recalls Kristeva's account of the first intimations of discrete space within the chora: 'the breast, given and withdrawn; lamplight capturing the gaze; intermittent sounds of voice or music' (Desire, p.283). It is in the 'nature' of women like Bea to seek out 'an insanity that could contain them' ('Vandals', p.268), by which Munro means a particular intensity of male obsession. The image of containment suggests the chora, which, like Ladner's 'insanity' is an articulation rather than a geometric space, and is 'analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm' (Revolution, p.26). It is neither sign nor signifier; it is an ordering. Ladner's specific habits and interests are not, in this instance, signifiers of anything. His 'insanity' is irreducible and unrepresentable. The 'so' of 'So she explained her condition' (p.269) casts doubt on the very possibility of explanation.

In this respect, Bea's relationship with Ladner offers reunion with the maternal body. But Ladner also represents paternal law. He introduces signification by regulating nature, laying paths and boundaries, and writing labels with 'tight, accurate, complicated
information' (p.271). Signification, initiated through separation from the mother, is accompanied by loss. Lacan suggests that it introduces the concept of death to the subject. Regarded as a signifying process, taxidermy is clearly founded on absence. The split between the corpse and the live animal is the split between signifier and signified. (However, considered as the abject, a corpse can be neither subject nor object; see below.)

Ladner is the bearer of 'sign and time'. His books are all histories; he does not waste words. His name inscribes him within the masculine; unlike Bea, who refuses her surname, Ladner chooses to be known by his. He may be identified with the phallus, the ultimate symbol of lack.

Yet he is also distanced from the symbolic order. He rejects the schoolteacher Peter Parr's rationalist discourse, predicated on stable social identities: 'I am not an educator[...] I do not give a fuck about your teenagers' (p.267). On their first walk together, he hurries Bea past the quotes from Aristotle and Rousseau, as if conscious of their inadequacy. She loses her sense of direction and the boundaries of his property seem to dissolve. She seems to be re-entering maternal territory. Ladner is positioned ambiguously between the symbolic and the semiotic; between unbounded maternal plenitude and paternal absence.
This ambiguity becomes even more powerful in the context of Kristeva's discussion of abjection in *Powers of Horror* (18). The abject is that which 'disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules' (*Powers*, p.4). It is manifested through body fluids and human waste, which are both integral to the subject and outside of it. Saliva, tears and faeces must be expelled, in order to establish an 'own and clean self' (p.65) which is divisible from the exterior world. This is a precondition of the symbolic modality. But such abjects can never be fully expunged from the subject. Thus, abjection stands on the border between self and other, inside/outside, life and death. It exposes the ultimate fragility of the symbolic:

The abject has only one quality of the object - that of being opposed to I. If the object, however, through its opposition, settles me within the fragile texture of a desire for meaning, which, as a matter of fact, makes me ceaselessly and infinitely homologous to it, what is abject, on the contrary, the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses. (*Powers*, pp.1-2)

As Elizabeth Gross comments, abjection is 'an insistence on the subject's necessary relation to death, to animality, and to materiality, being the subject's recognition and refusal of its corporeality' (19). Cultural and private taboos (such as phobias) are expressions of abjection; religion strives to contain the threat abjection poses to the symbolic order.
Kristeva identifies menstrual blood and excrement as the most abhorred pollutants in traditional societies. She relates the defilement rituals surrounding each of these to a need to 'ward off the subject's fear of his very own identity sinking irretrievably into the mother' (Powers, p.64). Abjection is therefore grounded in the subject's need to detach her/himself from the semiotic chora, prior to the thetic phase. Menstrual blood 'stands for the danger issuing from within identity (social or sexual); it threatens the relationship between the sexes within a social aggregate and through internalization, the identity of each sex in the face of sexual difference' (Powers, p.71). Excrement is a reminder of infantile dependence on the mother. It is the mother who, during the pre-Oedipal phase, regulates the drives; 'maternal authority is the trustee of that mapping of the self's clean and proper body; it is distinguished from paternal laws within which, with the phallic phase and acquisition of language, the destiny of man will take shape' (ibid.). The speaking subject, differentiated from the maternal body, also maintains a boundary between the 'clean and proper body' and excrement as a pollutant, distanced from the human subject.

The subject simultaneously represses the abject and is compelled towards it. Abjection is 'a deep well of memory that is unapproachable and intimate' (Powers, p.6). Like the sublime, it may induce jouissance. In
jouissance, time is both suspended and eternal. Kristeva evokes this duality in hyperbolized, mystical language, reminiscent of Nietzsche: 'the time of abjection is double: a time of oblivion and thunder, of veiled infinity and the moment when revelation bursts forth' (Powers, p.9). The concept of doubled time, both instantaneous and infinite, recalls Nietzsche's ideas about eternal recurrence, where the moment is the intersection of simultaneous infinities; and where the subject returns to a life identical 'in the greatest things and in the smallest' (20).

In the form of jouissance occasioned by the abject, the subject is 'swallowed up' (Powers, p.9), but does not completely disintegrate because it is held secure by repugnance for the other. The deject, 'the one by whom the abject exists' (Powers, p.8), is one 'who places (himself), separates (himself) and therefore strays instead of getting his bearings, desiring, belonging, or refusing' (ibid). In a secular society, literature takes the place of religion, by engaging with the 'desirable and terrifying, nourishing and murderous, fascinating and abject inside of the maternal body' (Powers, p.54). Abjection is a source of enormous cathartic energy which may be tapped at the risk of losing one's hold on individual identity.

In 'Vandals', both Bea and Liza enact purification rituals, although in Liza's case this is also an act
of defilement. In Bea's dream, she is collecting Ladner's bones, 'just as if I were getting my annual load of salvia or impatiens' (p.262). The association with summer bedding plants, the green aprons and the green plastic bags in which the bones are kept all suggest regeneration. Ladner's bones have been stored for seven years after his death. Seven is a mystical number in biblical and other ancient traditions. Levitical purifications lasted seven days. Nevertheless, Bea is uncertain if this is a pagan or a Christian ceremony. When she asks the other people in the dream, she realizes that her question breaks a social taboo, confirming her status as an outsider: 'I've lived around here all my life but I still get this look' (p.263). The Christian/pagan dyad, implicit in the title, is one of several sets of apparent oppositions in Vandals - notably, outside/inside, animal/human. The boundaries between each category give way during the course of the story. It is the Christians, Liza and her husband Warren, who 'vandalize' Ladner's house. Warren boards the window so that animals are unable to gain access from outside, when the humans have finished their damage from the inside.

After her conversion to Christianity, Liza imposes strict rules on herself, abstaining from sugar and alcohol and maintaining a regimented lifestyle: 'She did the laundry every Wednesday night and counted the strokes
when she brushed her teeth and got up early in the morning to do knee bends and read Bible verses' (p.276). 'Abjection,' Kristeva claims, 'accompanies all religious structurings' (Powers, p.17); 'an unshakeable adherence to Prohibition and Law is necessary if that perverse interspace of abjection is to be hemmed in and thrust aside' (p.16). Combining religion with private ritual, Liza embraces the symbolic, disavowing the semiotic. Such striving can never be completely successful, since abjection shadows the symbolic; it is its precondition, and, in a sense, its twin. To quote Gross again, 'abjection is the underside of the symbolic' (21).

In Totem and Taboo, Freud draws a parallel between the 'double meaning' in taboo ceremonial and neurotic obsession: 'the obsessional act is ostensibly a protection against the prohibited act; but actually, in our view, it is a repetition of it' (22). The line between pollution and purification, the suppressed impulse and the urge to suppress, is a very narrow one. As Kristeva points out in Chapter 5 of Powers of Horror, the knowledge of sin is requisite for holiness. Liza has to be especially scrupulous because, unlike Warren, she is sometimes possessed by a 'crazy, slithery spirit' ('Vandals', p.280).

Oral and anal drives re-assert themselves as Liza lays waste to Ladner's house. Food loathing is one of the most archaic forms of abjection; by refusing
food, the child insists on separation from the mother. Like a child in its high chair, Liza throws food around. But she is also turning food to waste matter. She is reducing Ladner's house to refuse, which Kristeva aligns with the corpse and excrement. Order is overturned. The boundaries between contrasting elements, and between the organic and inorganic, are shattered: 'Liza stepped delicately among the torn, spattered books and broken glass, the smeared, stomped birds, the pools of whisky and maple syrup and the sticks of charred wood dragged from the stove to make black tracks on the rugs, the ashes and gummed flour and feathers' (p.282). Liza is asserting her own identity, her 'clean and proper body', through abjection.

Foodstuff is also transformed into blood, in an unconscious parody of the Eucharist; crème de menthe becomes 'dark-green blood' (p.281) and Warren tries to repeat the trick of writing in ketchup for blood - blood which belongs both to the writer and to the intended victim. Blood is abject because it is positioned at the boundaries of the body; it is both a part of the subject and something which is expelled from it. Food crosses the subject/object divide in, as it were, the opposite direction, as it is ingested. It may become abject only if, like the ketchup, sauce and liqueur, 'it is a border between two distinct entities or territories' (Powers, p.75).
To write in blood or in foodstuff is to cross the organic with the social. It marks yet another transgression of boundaries. Noting the frequency of defilement rites in societies without writing, Kristeva wonders 'if all writing is not a second level rite' (ibid.). The act of writing causes the subject to confront 'an archaic authority' (ibid.) which preconditions language itself. This can only be the maternal chora. Liza writes 'The Wages of Sin is Death' (p.283) in magic marker on the kitchen wall; the materiality of the graffiti evokes the semiotic, parodying Liza's Christian beliefs and undermining the symbolic law.

However, it is the damage done to Ladner's stuffed birds that is most significant. His exhibits appear animate, but are in fact dead. According to Powers of Horror, the corpse is 'the utmost of abjection' (p.4), 'a border that has encroached upon everything' (p.3), because the entire body has become waste matter. The corpse is in transition between life and death. Taxidermy accentuates this ambiguity by reassembling the organic with the aid of the inorganic:

Skins lay in piles, folded flesh-side out. Heads of animals, with empty eyeholes and mouth holes, were set on stands. What she thought at first was the skinned body of a deer turned out to be only a wire armature with bundles of what looked like glued straw tied to it. (p.273)

Focalized through Bea, these apparently lifelike
creatures are merely skins 'around a body in which nothing was real' (p.287). Kristeva regards skin, 'the essential if not initial boundary of biological and psychic individuation' (p.101), as a dangerously permeable border between self and other. A corpse which is all skin is doubly abject. Insides are brought outside. As children, Liza and her brother Kenny play with the repulsive innards, assuring their father that they themselves are safe from pollution: 'We wash our hands in Borax soap' (p.286).

Kristeva interprets the levitical prohibitions against leprosy as a disavowal of biological origins. The skin must remain unblemished, as if the body is untarnished by contact with the mother. Broken skin is an unbearable reminder of rupture from the maternal chora. In Munro's story, skin is the fragile border that Kristeva describes. It evokes mortality and the animal within the human subject. For instance, Munro describes Bea and Ladner lying together the night before his death, 'with all available bare skin touching - legs, arms, haunches' (p.274), as each individual subject tries to merge with the other at the limits of body. At the same time, corporeality is emphasised by the zoological 'haunches'. Ladner's scar, 'the splotch on his face that shone like metal in the sunlight coming through the trees' (p.268) suggests camouflage.

The live animal is incorporated within the human
in most of the characters; only Ladner is aligned with the corpse. Mimicking Bea for the benefit of the young Liza and her brother, as they all play in his pond, he acts like a live bird:

His body was stiff but he turned his head sharply from side to side, skimming or patting the water with fluttery hands. Preening, twitching, as if carried away with admiration for himself. (p.288)

However, when he makes a grab at Liza, his body collapses 'like the pelt of an animal flung loose from its flesh and bones' (p.292). His eyes are 'hard and round as the animals' glass eyes' (ibid.). The eyes, as Bakhtin points out, 'express an individual, so to speak, self sufficient human life' (Rabelais, p.233). They are traditionally associated with the soul. That is why the glass eye is particularly abject, highlighting the transition from organic to inorganic.

This passage recapitulates the imagery on p.284, when Warren looks at one of the damaged birds. The glass eye recalls the earlier 'bitter red eye', which is already associated with Ladner when Warren asks, 'Do you care if he croaks?' Liza's birdlike croaking as she touches 'her teeth, her pointed tongue to his neck' mimics Ladner just as, later in the story, Ladner mimics Bea.

Kristeva includes within the abject 'the traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the
shameless rapist, the killer who claims he is a saviour' (p.4). Like these examples, Ladner appears contradictory and duplicitous during the analeptic passages which are focalized through Liza's childhood self. 'He could switch from one person to another and make it your fault if you remembered' (p.289). His behaviour is an unstoppable physical force, like 'an invasion of pins and needles' (p.290) - or like the spasms that accompany abjection. His dangerous ambiguity is manifested when he mimics Bea's actions while they are swimming in the pond.

Before the Oedipal stage, the child fantasizes an all-powerful 'phallic mother'. Bea and Ladner are Liza's surrogate parents. Together with his 'incestuous' overtures, Ladner's mockery of Bea flouts the authority of the phallic mother. He is abjecting the mother. Liza is fascinated: 'Part of her wanted to make Ladner stop at once, before the damage was done, and part of her longed for that very damage, the damage Ladner could do, the ripping open, the final delight of it' (p.288). Simultaneously repelled and compelled, she responds by diving deeper into the maternal element of the pond. But Bea fails to fulfil the fantasy of the phallic mother: Bea could spread safety if she wanted to. Surely she could. All that is needed is for her to turn herself into a different sort of woman, a hard-and-fast, draw-the-line sort, clean-sweeping, energetic and intolerant. None of that. Not allowed. Be good. (p.293)
The pre-Oedipal mother maintains a 'clean and proper body' on behalf of the emergent subject. The autonomous self 'draws the line' herself, abjecting the mother and identifying with paternal law. In Liza's case, this law takes the form of puritanical Christianity.

It is important to regard the maternal as position rather than essence; it is not synonymous with the feminine. Ladner's territory, as perceived by Liza, is full of maternal connotations. Like the man himself, it is polymorphous, 'a world of different and distinct countries' (p.291). Light, sound and smells are constantly shifting. Landscape and body are fused in 'places where Liza thinks there is a bruise on the ground, a tickling and shame in the grass' (p.291). The shade under the trees, which is like 'a black pond' (ibid.), recalls Liza's dive under the deep water.

Both 'parents', Bea and Ladner, are identified with the maternal, and both are abjected. Bea does take control when she sends Liza to college. But, far from reinforcing the maternal bond, her actions expel Liza from the family triad. The wrecking of Ladner's house is both an act of revenge against the exclusive parental dyad and a re-enactment of maternal abjection. Liza experiences a jouissance comparable to that of 'the ripping open, the final delight of it,' which was threatened by Ladner's mimicry.
In her discussion of abjection in Céline, Kristeva makes explicit reference to the Bakhtinian concept of carnivalized discourse. Abject writing provides an escape from the subject-object dyad which structures symbolic meaning. It offers a space in which the illusion of a fixed subjectivity is destabilized. Similarly, Kristeva's earlier explication of Bakhtinian theory interprets carnival ambivalence as an eruption of semiotic drives:

Carnivalesque discourse breaks through the laws of a language censored by grammar and semantics, and, at the same time, is a social and political process. There is no equivalence, but rather, identity, between challenging official linguistic codes and challenging official law. ('Word, Dialogue, and Novel', in Desire, p.65)

Linguistic heterogeneity shatters the illusion of a unified subjectivity, which undermines social authority imposed by paternal law.

Both Bakhtin and Kristeva regard the destabilization of corporeal boundaries as a challenge to the established political order. Bodily protuberances and orifices are crucially important to the Bakhtinian grotesque, because they cross this boundary. The grotesque body is a cosmic 'open' body, in contrast to the individualized, closed body sanctified by official culture. It resists authority's attempt to impose monologue; 'the grotesque ignores the inpenetrable surface that closes and limits the body as a separate and completed phenomenon' (Rabelais,
In Munro's story, carnival ambivalence is introduced through parodic and intertextual elements, such as the parody of Christian discourse and the childhood rhymes. Images of the open, grotesque body recur, often as images of dismemberment; the polishing of Ladner's bones in Bea's dream anticipates the theme of taxidermy, where, inverting the dream's imagery, it is the skin that is preserved. Bea recognises that the desecration of Ladner's house is 'almost the right way for things to be' (p.262). She is tempted to burn the place down; she also wishes Ladner had been cremated. The story's final image, of darkness rising 'like cold smoke coming off the snow' (p.294) restates the notion of funereal fire. But this is an ambiguous, oxymoronic simile. The story resists closure, and Liza's actions do not achieve catharsis. The abject cannot be wholly eliminated from the subject. The knowledge Ladner gives her about natural history remains a part of her identity. At the end of the story, she is remembering how to tell the trees apart. This naming and positioning indicates the symbolic modality; yet it is based firmly in its relationship with the maternal.

Carnival reconciles the sublime with the abject. This does not imply resolution. 'Vandals' is, at times, a comic, but also a deeply disturbing text, exposing the subject's fragile hold on identity. It suggests
a complex and contradictory relationship between female subjectivity and the maternal chora. In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva claims that 'all literature is probably a version of the apocalypse that seems to me rooted, no matter what its socio-historical conditions might be, on the fragile border (borderline cases) where identities (subject/object, etc.) do not exist or only barely so - double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, abject' (p.207).

The Maternal Body, Carnival and Cannibalism: 'The Pale Pink Roast'

Although the two approaches share much in common, Kristeva's work on abjection differs from Bakhtinian concepts of carnival ambivalence in the attention it pays to the structuring of the individual psyche. The 'unofficial consciousness' released by carnival is a collective phenomenon. Bakhtin distances the grotesque bodily imagery of medieval carnival from the 'new bodily canon' which dominates in the modern era:

In the modern image of the individual body, sexual life, eating, drinking and defecation have radically changed their meaning: they have been transferred to the private and psychological level where their connotation becomes narrow and specific, torn away from the direct relation to the life of society and to the cosmic whole. (Rabelais, p.236).
As in Freudianism, Bakhtin is pointing out the importance of social relations to subject formation. Contemporary attitudes individualize the subject and perpetuate a Cartesian duality. In his study of Rabelais, however, subject formation is not a major concern; still less is Bakhtin interested in gender difference. This means that, as Ginsburg points out, Bakhtin universalizes at the expense of the particular: 'the grotesque carnival body is degraded into the "lower bodily stratum" associated with the feminine, and, in the same breath, is elevated into a principle of universal significance as the Material Body, no longer that of woman' (23).

Bakhtin writes that 'the essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal abstract: it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity' (Rabelais, p.205). Degradation is associated with reproduction and childbirth; it means 'coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time' (ibid., p.206).

Ginsburg balks at this association of the maternal with degradation. She claims that the cosmic body is constructed as masculine, excluding female experience. Bakhtin uses the imagery of pregnancy as a metaphor of renewal, while repressing or sublimating the feminine. 'The true meaning of the material bodily principle that
dominates the grotesque as expressed in carnival laughter is the maternal bodily principle', she concludes (24). But this maternal body, which is both womb and tomb, has been appropriated by male fantasy, eliminating the actual female experience of pregnancy and birth.

She goes on to suggest that, for Bakhtin, the regenerating yet destructive womb represents the Freudian uncanny. Freud associates the uncanny with the fear of castration unleashed by repressed incestuous desires. The German unheimlich suggests a connection with Heim or 'home', 'the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning' - in other words, the maternal body (25). Like the abject (which is not addressed by Ginsburg's article), the uncanny induces both repulsion and compulsion; but, although the uncanny may disturb, it is less horrific than the abject, as Kristeva herself points out, because the abject attempts the utter expulsion of the maternal element. 'Abjection is elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin; nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory' (Powers, p.7).

Ultimately, Kristeva's version of ambivalence is more disturbing and violent than Bakhtin's. Kristeva foregrounds a fundamental 'horror of being' (Powers, p.208), rooted within an irreconcilably divided subject. Bakhtin celebrates the ability to overcome personal terrors through the symbols of communal interaction.
When he writes that 'the earthly element of terror is the womb, the bodily grave, but it flowers with delight and a new life' (Rabelais, p.210), he is describing a mixture of fear and pleasure at an all-consuming maternal element which is based on familiarity rather than loss.

Ginsburg's reservations about Bakhtin's phallocentrism have been shared by other critics, for instance Wayne Booth (26) and Mary Russo (27). However, the cosmic body need not be regarded as unfailingly masculine. In what Bakhtin calls 'its purest form' (Rabelais, p.234), the grotesque image is hermaphroditic; it is a protean entity, whose multiple 'orifices and convexities' (ibid.) defy gender definition. The problem raised by the efforts of both Bakhtin and Kristeva to locate discursive practices in the subject's experience of corporeal boundaries is that they risk producing exactly the kind of abstract, totalizing system that their theories seek to resist. While certain biological processes may be regarded as universal and eternal, the individual subject's experience of their own, tangible body is sexually specific and conditioned by irreversible time. In presenting maternity as an archaic disposition, beyond symbolization and outside time, Kristeva appears to marginalize women's lived experience. In 'Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini', she suggests that pregnancy entails the mother's loss of agency:
The maternal body slips away from the discursive hold and immediately conceals a cipher that must be taken into account biologically and socially. This ciphering of the species, however, this pre- and transsymbolic memory, makes the mother mistress of neither begetting nor instinctual drive (such a fantasy underlies the cult of any ultimately feminine deity); it does make of the maternal body the stakes of a natural and 'objective' control, independent of any individual consciousness. (Desire, p.241)

Kristeva acknowledges the symbolic aspects of pregnancy; the mother is satisfying her wish for her father's phallus by presenting him with a child. She also warns against over-investment in a fantasized phallic mother. But in withholding identity from the childbearing woman, she positions the subject as the child, emerging from the pre-objectal chora. I should now like to examine ways in which it might be possible to use the image of the maternal body without effacing female experience, in a reading of Grace Paley's 'The Pale Pink Roast' (Little Disturbances, first published 1959).

In 'The Pale Pink Roast', Anna is revisited by the charming and elusive father of her daughter, Judy. Impressed by her new apartment, he does some jobs for her. Then they make love:

She was faint and leaden, a sure sign in Anna, if he remembered correctly, of passion. 'Shall we dance?' he asked softly, a family joke. With great care, a patient lover, he undid the sixteen tiny buttons of her pretty dress and in Judy's room on Judy's bed he took her at once without a word. Afterward, having established tenancy, he rewarded her with kisses. But he dressed quickly because he was obligated by the stories of his life to remind her of transience. (28)
Double-voiced discourse creates a sense of changing perspectives and shifting power relations. Peter's quotation from Rodgers and Hammerstein enters into dialogue with the discourse of a children's story ('the sixteen tiny buttons of her pretty dress'). Legal parlance ('established tenancy', 'obligated') is matched with soft porn ('he took her at once without a word').

References to music recur throughout the story, including nursery rhymes, Beethoven and Cole Porter. As Isaacs says, 'The Pale Pink Roast' is a 'song and dance routine' (29); it is a strongly carnivalesque text, in which parody, grotesque realism and an emphasis on corporeality fragment unitary meaning. In this carnival, 'Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater' (p.48) plays the fool. He makes a grand entrance at the start of the story, 'an advertisement of a lover who startled men and detained the ladies (p.43); at its end, 'he cartwheeled eastward into the source of the night' (p.52). This final, circular movement frustrates closure. In carnivalesque discourse, self-renewal triumphs over death; linear time is suspended. In the opening paragraph, the human subject merges with nature, the inanimate and the urban environment:

Pale green greeted him, grubby buds for nut trees. Packed with lunch, Peter strode into the park. He kicked aside the disappointed acorns and endowed a grand admiring grin to two young girls. (p.43)

Discussing the significance of bodily protuberances,
Bakhtin comments that 'special attention is given to the shoots and branches, to all that prolongs the body and links it to other bodies or to the world outside' (Rabelais, p.233). Cosmic self-renewal is enacted on the borders between the 'shoots and branches' of the trees in springtime, Peter, the girls, his lunch and the acorns.

Defending his new health and fitness regime, Peter tells Anna, 'Don't mix me up with biology', (p.47). But biology is inextricably 'mixed up' with the human subject. When he asks Anna what she sees when she looks at him, she perceives the male body as meat:

Anna had read that cannibals, tasting man, saw him thereafter as the great pig, the pale pink roast' (p.48).

Peter's attempts to preserve his body as the inviolable 'temple of the soul' (p.48) are, inevitably, doomed by mortality. The Cartesian division between mind and body is untenable. Ironically, he is following the advice given by his dying Grandpa while 'sitting on the pot' (ibid.). The word 'pot', juxtaposed with Anna's 'cannibals', places the discourse of anthropophagy in dialogue with that of the lavatory.

Both eating and defecation are manifestations of the grotesque body. Both are performed on the confines between the self and the world. Bakhtin assigns particular importance to the bowels, in the imagery of the grotesque
body, because, like the phallus, they seem to lead a
life of their own, and are supremely subject to hyperbole.
Eating is particularly significant, because it represents
a victory in the encounter with the world. The eater
ingests the world without being consumed her/himself.
Eating is closely allied with speech, through the communal
interaction of the feast.

Cannibalism combines eating with dismemberment,
another significant aspect of the grotesque body. The
body is both devouring and devoured; flesh returns to
flesh, perpetuating the endless cycle of fertility and
death. In childbirth, one body expels another; in
cannibalism, the alien body is absorbed by the subject.
As we have seen, Bakhtin equates the maternal body with
the grave which 'devours, swallows up' (Rabelais, p.206).
However, from the mother's viewpoint, the foetus within
the womb is as much consuming as consumed; and the
lactating infant feeds from the mother's breast. The
image of cannibalism permits interchangeable subject
positions within the mother-child dyad.

'The great pig, the pale pink roast' is a comic
image. Bakhtin claims that 'sadness and food are
incompatible' (Rabelais, p.229). The banquet is 'the
triumph of life over death[...]equivalent to conception
and birth'. Bakhtin connects food images with procreation,
and hence to the maternal body, in which fertility,
death and degradation are reconciled.
The 'pale pink roast' is not abject, even though, to a Jewish writer, eating pork, to which it is dialogically related, breaks a taboo in itself. Roasted meat is unambiguously inanimate; it is not the sickening borderline phenomenon that is the corpse. It foreshadows the 'noble rib roast' with onions and pink apple sauce that is prepared by Faith in 'The Used-Boy Raisers' (Little Disturbances, p.134), another of the stories in this collection which associate cannibalism with procreation. In that story, the discourse of reproduction is in dialogue with that of eating in the utterance 'egg' (p.127).

'Pale' and 'pink' both suggest vulnerability. (In 'The Used-Boy Raisers', the husbands' names are 'Livid' and 'Pallid'.) The inanimate meat provides a subversive contrast with Peter's hyperactivity. The reader may also perceive an intertextual reference to the pig baby in Alice in Wonderland. Peter, the father, is childlike himself. The confidence in his own agency, demonstrated by his attitude to the body, is self-deluding.

As a manifestation of carnivalized discourse, cannibalism supplies an image of regeneration. Death is overcome as dead flesh becomes a means of sustenance. Peter's cartwheel turns full circle and is self-perpetuating. The oppositions between active and passive, consumers and their prey, are broken down. After they have had sex, Anna turns the tables on Peter,
by telling him she has a husband, who has provided her with the comfortable lifestyle that is attracting him back to her. Once again, the human subject merges with the animal:

'You're great, Anna. Man, you're great. You wiggle your ass. You make a donkey out of me and him both.' (p.51)

The discourse of 'making a donkey' anticipates that of 'In Time Which Made a Monkey of Us All', in the same collection.

But this reversal does not signify an unequivocal victory for female over male. The story resists closure. There is no evidence, beyond Anna's testimony that the husband really exists; she claims that he is just about to move in. When Peter asks 'Why'd you do it?', she swears that 'I did it for love' (p.51). This effects another reversal; Peter leaves with a smile on his face, while Anna is in tears:

In no time at all his cheerful face appeared at the door of the spring dusk. In the street among peaceable strangers he did a handstand. Then easy and impervious, in full control, he cartwheeled eastward into the source of the night. (p.52)

Carnival ambivalence subverts unitary meaning. 'In full control' appears to reinstate the agency that Peter has claimed for himself. But, as I have argued, the notion of an autonomous, unified subject is undercut throughout the story by double-voiced and carnivalized
discourse. Here, the boundaries of the external, natural world ('spring dusk') merge with those of the domestic space ('door'). Peter's body is fragmented between the disembodied 'cheerful face' and his carnival movements. His farewell gesture to Anna also suggests a dismembered body: 'with the fingers of both hands he tossed her a kiss' (p.52).

The handstand and the cartwheel are childish gestures. The discourse of childhood recurs in the story; I have already pointed out how Peter 'undid the sixteen buttons of her pretty dress and in Judy's room on Judy's bed he took her at once' (p.50), and referred to Peter's childlike behaviour. Anna's apartment is often presented as a space for children; 'although all the furniture had not been installed, there were shelves for Judy's toys' (p.49). Paley's hyperbolic language often suggests extreme, infantilized reactions: 'Petey sat absolutely still, but frowned, marking his clear forehead with vertical lines of pain' (p.51). Peter is often addressed as Petey and refers to himself by this name, which echoes the conventional use of the diminutive for his daughter, Judy.

Although Peter is the most obviously infantilized character, Anna is also positioned as a child sometimes, as in the reference to Judy's bed. Her tears are as childlike as Peter's handstand. Paley's story investigates the shifting power relationships between men and women,
as they exchange positions within the maternal dyad. The image of the 'pale pink roast' draws its power from the archetypal maternal body without neglecting the specifics of the maternal experience itself. The conflict between maternity and autonomous self-expression which was apparent in the George Egerton story in Chapter 2 is not wholly absent from Paley's work. But maternal experience belongs to the continuum between life and art, the biological and the social; it is no longer peripheral to artistic concerns.

The theories that I have discussed in this chapter ground the speaking subject's apprehension of an indefinable reality in the corporeal. The short story is marked by its engagement with time as ceaseless renewal. In the texts I have examined, the grotesque and the abject play a significant part in disrupting concepts of linear time and the illusion of a unified subjectivity. Having established ways in which the short story presents time as a boundless moment of becoming, I shall now introduce the Bakhtinian concept of the chronotope to establish the relationship with time as the basis for generic specificity.
References


24. Ibid., p.167.


The Bakhtinian Chronotope

In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterises the artistic chronotope.

The 'chronotope', Bakhtin's term for the artistic visualization of space and time, is a borrowing from relativist science. Although Bakhtin dissuades the reader from taking its scientific provenance too seriously, his own application of the term extends the concept of a space-time nexus in the physical and biological sciences to human consciousness. The direct philosophical influence on the formulation of the Bakhtinian chronotope comes from Kant. Bakhtin adapts Kant's theory that perceptions of time and space are elementary forms of cognition, originating from consciousness rather than an objective physical world. But he replaces Kant's transcendental approach with a materialist viewpoint. In Bakhtinian theory, the self is not autonomous; it is generated socially, in dialogue with an other.

As applied to texts, the term can be used in two ways. Firstly, it may be used to analyse the interaction of space and time in a specific motif. For instance,
in his late essay 'The Bildungsroman and its Significance in the History of Realism', Goethe's Rome is discussed as a chronotope, because the sense of a particular locality is made inseparable from a distinctive awareness of history. Secondly, the chronotope may be used to define specific genres according to spatio-temporal configurations. 'It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions' ("Forms of Time", p.85). In 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', Bakhtin uses the chronotope as a means of charting the development of the novel from what he regards as the static world view of the epic into a psychological journey through biographical time and an environment which is related to, and constituted by, human activity, rather than serving as an immutable backdrop. Both the hero and the world in which s/he lives are evolving entities, rather than fixed elements, and their progression is closely intertwined.

Literary evolution is inseparable from changes in the historical mindset, which are linked to material conditions. Thus, an awareness of 'the fullness of time' (2) which, according to the essay on the Bildungsroman, distinguishes both Goethe and Scott as citizens of a world increasingly measured by the clock, is a necessary concomitant to the biographical or historical novel.
As Morson and Emerson explain, 'it is as if each genre possesses a specific field that determines the parameters of events even though the field does not uniquely specify particular events' (3). Bakhtin identifies the chronotope as 'the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied' ('Forms of Time', p.250). Its value to literary criticism lies in its ability to integrate formal considerations with developments in the material world outside the text. Each genre manifests a distinct mode of perception, grounded in a unique conceptualization of space-time. This suggests that the specificity of the short story form might be established through the identification of a generic chronotope. As I explained in Chapter 1, I do not wish to limit the possibilities of the short story by imposing a prescriptive generic definition. It is, however, useful to examine the distinctive way in which the short story since modernism has organized the space-time continuum. In order to do so, I shall first discuss Alice Munro's, 'The Jack Randa Hotel' (Open Secrets, 1994), and then Grace Paley's 'Somewhere Else' (Later the Same Day, 1985).
'The Jack Randa Hotel'

In 'The Jack Randa Hotel,' the chronological sequence of events is disrupted by a succession of analepses. The narrative is constantly doubling back on itself, as may be seen in the very first paragraph:

On the runway, in Honolulu, the plane loses speed, loses heart, falters and veers on the grass, and bumps to a stop. A few yards it seems from the ocean. Inside, everybody laughs. First a hush, then the laugh. Gail laughed herself. Then there was a flurry of introductions all around. Beside Gail are Larry and Phyllis from Spokane. (4)

The use of the past tense, 'Gail laughed herself,' takes the reader a tiny step backwards, in a passage which is full of temporal and spatial disorientation. The narrative present - the 'now' of Gail's arrival in Honolulu - is interrupted by a series of longer analepses taking the reader successively further into her past. Eventually, this backwards chronology is disrupted by smaller digressions.

The narrative starting point, as we have seen, is the arrival in Honolulu. This establishes what Genette would call the 'first narrative' (5), and is told in the present tense. It is interrupted by an external analepsis, which recounts Gail's life back in Canada, before she set off on her journey. This second narrative is in the past tense, and is narrated iteratively and
pseudo-iteratively. (As I explained in Chapter 4, iterative narration describes once what happens several times. Pseudo-iterative appears to do this, but includes details that are unlikely to have been repeated exactly.) The second narrative describes Gail's habits after she splits up with her lover:

After Will went away, it seemed to Gail that her shop was filling up with women. Not necessarily buying clothes. She didn't mind this. It was like the long-ago days before Will. Women were sitting around in ancient armchairs besides Gail's ironing board and cutting table, behind the faded batik curtains, drinking coffee. (p.163)

The visits to Cleata (Gail's friend and Will's mother) move the narrative into the pseudo-iterative, with the introduction of direct speech. The second narrative then gives way to a third, with a shift further back in time, to 'when she met Will and Cleata' (p.165). Almost immediately, the third narrative assumes the role of a first narrative with respect to a sequence of shorter analepses, covering Gail's history, and some of Will's, before they met.

The continuing use of the iterative and pseudo-iterative throughout the story of Will and Gail's relationship creates a sense of temporal indeterminacy: 'There came a time when just the tone of his voice, saying "Your shoelace is undone" as she went ahead of him on a walk - just that - could fill her with despair' (p.167). 'Gail came to Walley one summer in the seventies'
is as close as the story comes to an external chronology. Usually, the passage of time is indicated internally: 'He had never had much to say about Sandy - Sandra - who had come to Walley last year' (p.167); 'at the end of the school year Will followed her to Australia' (p.168).

In addition to 'external' and 'internal' types of analepsis, Genette identifies a 'mixed' category, whose reach extends beyond the starting point of the first narrative (6). The story of the relationship (pp. 165-169), rejoins the present tense narrative 'in the airport washroom, on a new continent' (p.169). With respect both to the first narrative, the story of the relationship is a mixed analepsis; with another extensive analepsis intervening, which is external to the first narrative ('After Will went away...', p.163). An intricate network of ellipses blurs the boundaries between past and present. As it is experienced subjectively, through Gail's consciousness, time is a flux rather than linearity.

In Australia, the first narrative, as we have seen, is rejoined; it continues moving forward through time. Gail has followed Will and his new, younger partner to Brisbane. In his mailbox, she discovers one of his letters, marked return to sender. He has written to a woman whose surname, in the phonebook, is the same as his, hoping that they might be related. She has since died. Gail writes back, pretending to be 'Catherine
Thornaby'. She also rents the woman's apartment, under another assumed name. When Will guesses her identity, she flees to the airport.

There are further external analepses, reaching back to Gail's early life. But linearity is disrupted not so much by these brief passages as by the intertextual device of the letters. The letters are, in a sense, outside time, combining the moment of composition with that of reception, as well as the time evoked by their contents. Towards the end of 'The Jack Randa Hotel', Will's note, Gail, I know it's you (p.188), transmutes into what at first appears to be direct discourse:

Gail, I know you're in there! I know you're there on the other side of the door.
Gail! Galya!
Talk to me, Gail. Answer me. I know you're there.
I can hear you. I can hear your heart beating through the keyhole and your stomach rumbling and your brain jumping up and down.
I can smell you through the keyhole. You. Gail.
(p.188)

The status of this italicized passage remains ambiguous, as the language is hyperbolized through images of the grotesque body. Words which at first seem to be spoken by Will may be the product of Gail's fantasy. In the last two pages, the narrative is increasingly fragmented. Temporal indeterminacy is accompanied by the relativization of truth. It becomes evident that all the events of Gail's journey are to be read as possibilities rather than verifiable facts; the word 'can', repeated throughout
Words most wished for can change. Something can happen to them, while you are waiting. *Love - need - forgive. Love - need - forever.* The sound of such words can become a din, a battering, a sound of hammers in the street. And all you can do is run away, so as not to honor them out of habit. (ibid.)

Munro frequently uses italics to foreground key utterances. Another example would be *Was there something you wanted?* in 'Pictures of the Ice' (*Friend of my Youth, 1991*). In Chapter 3's analysis of that text, I discussed ways in which this specific utterance is re-accentuated by repetition in another context. In 'The Jack Randa Hotel', a similar process takes place with *'Gail, I know it's you'* and *'Love - need - forgive. Love - need - forever'*.

In Munro's stories, the italicized utterance usually signals a transition between another's speech and the inner speech of the character through whom the story is focalized. In 'The Problem of Speech Genres', Bakhtin describes certain words as having a 'stylistic aura' (7), which they carry with them when transposed from one speech genre to another. He claims that 'words can enter our speech from others' individual utterances, thereby retaining to a greater or lesser degree the tones and echoes of individual utterances' (8). The 'aura' is an echo of the past. Like the analepses in the story, it signals the interpenetration of past and
In the airport shop, Gail buys a patterned box made by Australian aborigines, whose yellow dots flung out in that way remind Gail of something she saw last fall' (p.189). This image initiates an analepsis which is external to the first narrative, but internal with respect to the story of the relationship, much earlier in the text. Unlike the earlier, pseudo-iterative narrative (pp.165-69), which gives a generalized account of their relationship over an unspecified period of time, this analepsis singles out an isolated instance. The use of rhythm, repetition and hyperbole invoke the semiotic; they stress the uniqueness and the intensity of the experience:

The yellow dots flung out in that way remind Gail of something she saw last fall. She and Will saw it. They went for a walk on a sunny afternoon. They walked from their house by the river up the wooded bank, and there they came on a display that they had heard about but never seen before.

Hundreds, maybe thousands, of butterflies were hanging in the trees, resting before their long flight down the shore of Lake Huron and across Lake Erie, then on south to Mexico. They hung there like metal leaves, beaten gold - like flakes of gold tossed up and caught in the branches. (p.189)

The rekindling of the past within the present moment through vivid memory-images suggests the modernist epiphany, which Munro subverts in Lives of Girls and Women. The use that she makes of the butterflies may be likened to the 'false epiphany' in Mansfield or Joyce.
An epiphanic image unites perception with recollection, enabling the subject to grasp an essential reality through Bergsonian intuition. But in a false epiphany, transcendence is incomplete, thwarting the reader's expectations.

When Gail sees the yellow pattern on the box, the interval between the present moment and the specific instance when she saw the butterflies is elided. Subjectively, the present instance in Brisbane airport is contemporaneous with last fall in Canada. But the past can never be regained exactly as it was. As Bergson himself points out, 'the essence of time is that it goes by; time already gone by is the past, and we call the present the instant in which it goes by' (Matter and Memory, p.137). Even as it arises, the sublime moment is lost, undercut by Will's speech:

'Like the shower of gold in the Bible,' Gail said. Will told her she was confusing Jove and Jehovah. (p.189)

The double-voiced discourse of 'Jove and Jehovah' fractures the unity of the image. Gail and Will are not bound together by a heightened awareness of essential reality, despite that emphatic short sentence, 'She and Will saw it'. Each speaking subject constructs their own reality, and competing ideologies are at play within their own types of discourse.

As the unique instant recedes ever further into
the past, it is re-contextualized, according to hindsight:

On that day, Cleata had already begun to die and Will had already met Sandy. This dream had already begun - Gail's journey and her deceits, then the words she imagined - believed - that she heard shouted through the door.

Love-forgive
Love-forget
Love-forever
Hammers in the street. (p.189)

Images of corporeality pervade Munro's story - Gail's self-consciousness about her middle-aged body; the elderly neighbour who dies grasping her hand. Human mortality and the death of love are symptoms of mutability. Individual identity may appear stable; 'she knows him at once, she will always know him, and will always have to call out to him when she sees him...' (p.187). But it is also subject to change, which is made palpable in the body. Although the story organizes time as a continuum, the reader is always reminded of its irresistible forward movement.

For Bergson, the conflict between mutability and duration is resolved by his faith in an ultimate, essential reality and in a subject which, though multiplicitous, endures through time. Language, regarded by him as a transparent code, can only attempt to represent experience in duration. For Munro, the subjective experience of time as flux undermines the possibility of fixed truth, rather than establishing transcendence. Language constructs reality; and both memory and perception
are forms of discourse.

Within 'this dream', Will's shouts are 'imagined', 'believed' (p.189: see extract above). It becomes impossible for the reader to untangle fantasy from reality, or to isolate a moment when they might exchange. An elliptical narrative structure and the incorporation of heteroglossia work together, in this story, to generate contradictory realities and expose a split subject. As Nietzsche says, the world 'contains in itself infinite interpretations' (9).

Rosalie Osmond has observed that Munro's later stories turn on 'disarrangements' (10). Her characters' attempts to read a pattern of meaning into experience is thrown into disarray by random events. The search for such meanings continues to motivate Munro's characters, but any conclusions they reach can only be provisional. With its constant crossed messages and misunderstandings, 'The Jack Randa Hotel' is based on contingency, rather than cause and effect. Even the title is based on a mis-hearing of 'jacaranda'.

Just as the story begins in a moment of transition, part-way through Gail's journey to Australia, so the story ends in a moment of becoming. The unpredictable future moves rapidly into the present:

What could you put in a box like that before you wrapped it up and sent it far away? A bead, a feather, a potent pill? Or a note, folded up tight, to about the size of a spitball.
Now it's up to you to follow me. (p.189)

In a broadly circular gesture, the reader has been taken from one airport to another, and to an ending which is also the start of another journey. The story's analeptic structure may also be regarded as a complex of interlocking circles. The urgency of that final sentence signals the importance of grasping the present moment, which, according to Nietzsche, is the only way the will can be reconciled to eternal recurrence. (The name of the character 'Will' resounds throughout the narrative.)

The generic chronotope of the short story is founded on contemporaneity. The interpenetration of past and present provides what Bakhtin describes as the narrative 'ground', which is 'essential for the showing-forth, the representability of events' ('Forms of Time', p.250). Its origins lie within the modernist paradigm, which I described in Chapter 2; but, like any example of novelistic discourse, it continues to develop, in response to 'an unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality' ('Epic', p.7). Munro is in dialogue with her modernist antecedents, both renewing and subverting their techniques. Her work is also marked by the postmodern dissolution of the subject and by an accompanying rejection of any single transcendent reality.

In 'The Jack Randa Hotel', the exigencies of long-
haul travel are symptomatic of a more fundamental dislocation, which is marked by the story's many misreadings, deceptions and fractured encounters. Within any individual text, several chronotopes may co-exist, in dialogue with one another; chronotopes are, Bakhtin claims, 'mutually inclusive' ('Epic', p.252). Having discussed the generic chronotope on which the story is founded, I should like to discuss its ending in the light of Bakhtin's work on the chronotope of the road. Bakhtin assigns a special significance to the chronotope of the road in the development of the novel, because it spatializes biographical progress. He goes on to argue that 'an "alien world" separated from one's own native land by sea and distance may sometimes take on a similar function to the road, in that it represents the journey through life, particularly as it is governed by chance' ('Forms of Time', p.245).

Gail's trip is open-ended and uncircumscribed. She is merely disguised as a tourist, some one with a clear destination, who has worked doggedly for 'the holiday of her life' (p.169). The expression is, of course, ambiguous; this 'holiday' is Gail's everyday life from now on, and not its opposite. She rents a flat and joins the library, like a permanent resident. She marks out her territory, on her daily walks. It is the old life in Canada that has become a simulacrum, without Will - 'useless cutouts, fakes and props' (p.168).
'Home' and the 'alien land' are transposed. The experience of time as flux also means the interpenetration of separate spaces. Everything that is alien is also familiar - the picture hanging on the walls of Gail's apartment; the galah birds, whose name echoes her own. Australia's exotic vegetation and bird life provide a setting for Will and Sandy's disconcertingly homely board fence.

The breakdown of a relationship estranges the subject from others and from the exterior world; Munro presents interior states of mind as geographical dislocation. Back in Canada, falling in love with Will, experiencing 'the foreign pleasantness of his house and his life with Cleata - all this made Gail feel like somebody getting a unique welcome in a place where perhaps she did not truly have a right to be' (p.166). As their relationship deteriorated, she entered a 'bleak country where his disappointment in her was boundless' (p.167).

Will's actions are also expressed territorially. He and Sandy are perceived as 'fugitives' (p.168), their relationship and move as a 'defection' (p.164). In the letters he writes to the supposed 'Mrs. Thornaby', he represents his state of mind in spatial terms. He describes himself as 'adrift' in Australia (p.181); Canada remains 'home', but between inverted commas (ibid.). According to the letters, Will feels out of place amongst Sandy's friends; he is doomed to remain a spectator,
admiring the world young people inhabit, but unable to follow them there.

This admission is quickly followed by his announcement that 'it has come to my attention that you are dead' (p.183). Both correspondents are stranded in a metaphorical limbo. Although he has not recognized her yet, Will has found a compatriot in the alien land; he has not escaped 'home' and the past which has followed him on his journey. He comes close to guessing the true identity of 'Catherine Thornaby' when he says his mother could have written the letters as a joke; once again, the strange is oddly familiar.

'The Jack Randa Hotel' is untypical of Munro's work, in that it is largely located outside of the small Canadian towns that usually provide their setting (and which also may be read chronotopically). In these stories too, Munro is concerned with patterns of stasis and mobility. The precariously achieved stability of postcolonial life is challenged by changing class identities and the break-up of traditional family structures. Gail re-invents herself in Australia; in 'Pictures of the Ice', both Austin and, finally, Karin, assert their autonomy by leaving town.

Tracing the narrative importance of the road in the novel from classical times through the medieval romance to Fielding and Gogol, Bakhtin points out the 'sociohistorical heterogeneity' of the territory it
crosses ('Forms of Time', p.245). On life's journey, the hero never really leaves home - unlike the hero of the travel novel, who passes through the 'alien land'. But, although 'home' is not left behind in Munro's story, it is defamiliarized. There can be no exact return to a prior state, any more than time can be reversed. In this respect, Gail's journey belongs to a chronotope which, as a variation on the Bakhtinian road, might be entitled the 'open road'. The 'open road' signifies personal freedom over historic or social destiny. Although there are examples in prose fiction, this chronotope is most closely integrated with cinematic form, as the 'road movie'. The heroes of 'road movies', from It Happened One Night to Thelma and Louise can never go back home. They cannot return to their former selves because chance intervenes so radically, that their identity has been transformed. On the road, they embrace contingency, thus paradoxically attaining a degree of autonomy which could not be realized in their previous, static existence.

Gail's chance discovery of Will's returned letter leads her towards such a process. What at first appears to be a tourist trip becomes a nomadic existence. Gail may be returning to Canada, but she has no ultimate destination. The news of Cleata's death marks the metaphorical distance that time has inserted between Gail and Will; and between themselves and 'home'.
Gail has taken to the open road before - 'when she left home at eighteen to wander about the country, as you did in those days' (p.176). Munro locates both of Gail's escapes within a colonial framework, through the symbolism of the beads, with which European explorers hoodwinked native peoples. Gail 'strung beads and tie-dyed scarves' (ibid.) when she first left home; she considers putting 'a bead, a feather, a potent pill' in the box for Will (p.189). A debate about colonial identity runs through the exchange of letters; Will has contacted Catherine Thornaby in the belief that her surname may be connected to his English ancestry.

Letter-writing itself is an integral part of colonial and postcolonial experience. In writing to one another, Will and Gail are building new identities, like emigrants who are literally 'writing home'. It is, in fact, the sight of Will's handwriting on a letter he has sent to Cleata that prompts Gail's flight to Australia.

Margaret Atwood has written that, like other former colonies, Canada undergoes 'a collision between a landscape and a language and social history not at first indigenous to it, with each side altering the other' (11). But, because Canadian land is so 'vast, northern and cold' (ibid.), it is peculiarly inaccessible to the imagination. This destabilizes concepts of home and identity. In the chronotope of the 'open road', the passage through unknown territory is often conflated with notions of
discovering the self. In this story, both self and territory are boundless; they cannot be 'settled', in any sense of the word. Gail's name suggests the restless movement both of weather and of the 'galah' birds she sees in Australia. The butterflies are migrating. The yellow-patterned box evokes the wanderings of the aborigines themselves, and the spatially conceived 'storylines' which, like Munro's own work, resist closure.

The chronotopic world of the aborigines may be related to the cyclical 'archaic' time which Eliade ascribes to cultures who do not conceptualize historically. According to Stanner (12), Australian aboriginal culture has no abstract word for time. It does not divide past from present. Aboriginal narratives are enacted within a temporal continuum. In his analysis of the Rabelaisian chronotope, Bakhtin offers another model of cyclical time, also derived from ancient folkloric paradigms. The Rabelaisian chronotope is characterized as 'a creative and generative time' ('Forms of Time', p.206), grounded in the 'collective battle of labor against nature' (ibid., p.207). It is contrasted with medieval eschatology. As we have seen, this chronotope is closely linked to novelistic discourse. But, although novelistic discourse is associated with time as self-renewal, the historical developments that Bakhtin discusses in his essay on the Bildungsroman bind the novel as a genre to clock time.
In 'The Jack Randa Hotel', the generic chronotope of the short story interacts with the chronotopic motif of the road and with the chronotopic world of aboriginal culture to construct a world of shifting spatial and temporal boundaries, in which identities are being retraced constantly. Coral Ann Howells has described Munro's work as 'projects of textual mapping', in which 'alternative worlds are positioned alongside in the same geographical and fictional space' (13). The ongoing process of mapping will always suggest further territory, which seems to elude representation. Howells identifies this tendency with postcolonial and feminist discourse. It is also a form of discourse which is well suited to the short story as a genre which resists finalization, as Raymond Carver suggested when he wrote that in order to write a novel, you need to live in 'a world that will, for a time anyway, stay fixed in one place' (14).

The concept of the chronotope highlights a subtle correlation between aesthetic representation and cultural change. 'Out of the actual chronotopes of our world (which serve as the source of representation) emerge the reflected and created chronotopes of the world represented in the work' ('Forms of Time', p.253). Aesthetic representation is not crudely mimetic, but it is linked to the experience of space-time in the world at large. The generic chronotope of the short story associates aesthetic form with modernist perceptions.
of time as flux. I have already alluded to ways in which Munro reformulates those perceptions, relating her work to the postmodern dissolution of the unified subject. In the next section of this chapter, I shall look in more detail at the short story genre in relation to postmodern discourse on time. I shall include a consideration of Ong's 'secondary orality', in relation to narrative structure.

As in my analysis of modernist discourse, in Chapter 2, I do not wish to provide a reductive cultural framework for aesthetic production. Postmodern theory encompasses a diversity as broad as that contained by modernism. Moreover, Stephen Regan (15) suggests that modernist and postmodernist strategies are less markedly distinguished from each other in Canadian literature than in American or European writing; and that those strategies merge with the postcolonial investigation into language and representation. However, I should like to relate the fragmentation I have noted in both Munro's work and Paley's to postmodern concepts of instantaneous time. In so doing, I shall examine Grace Paley's 'Somewhere Else' (*Later the Same Day*, 1985), which, like 'The Jack Randa Hotel', may be read as a travel story. Returning to concepts of cyclical time, in relation to oral storytelling, I shall also introduce the idea of 'secondary orality' as it influences narrative form.
Somewhere Else': Instantaneity and Secondary Orality

When Gail buys the patterned box at the airport; an archaic paradigm is evoked at the very hub of modernity. In *Time and Sense*, Kristeva writes that 'we live within a fragmented chronology that has yet to discover a founding concept of its own' (16). She points to some cultural phenomena as regressive, while others appear futuristic. This ability to move easily between time frames, and also between spatial references, may be read as indicative of a postmodern fascination with surface over depth. According to Baudrillard, the production of signs has ousted commodity production in late capitalism. His version of an America which lives in a 'perpetual present of signs' (17) pioneers a culture in which history is elided. The proliferation of images generated by the global media is so intense, and their exchange so rapid, that neither public nor personal history have a chance to accumulate: 'Things fade into the distance faster and faster in the rear-view mirror of memory' (18). Signs interact only with one another. They lose any reference to a 'real' object.

Gail's journey across continents is symptomatic of the 'time-space compression' which characterizes the postmodern condition for commentators like Harvey (19). Technological developments condition, and are
conditioned by, subjective perceptions, as the sociologist John Urry notes in * Consuming Places*. He discusses an enormous growth in air travel, from sixty million international arrivals in 1960 to four hundred million in 1989 (20).

Space and time are relativized according to the individual's access to transport and telecommunications. As Brunn and Leinbach observe, 'relative location is more important than absolute location in a tightly connected and integrated world' (21). Conventional maps are less relevant in estimating distance, when the time it takes to travel or to communicate becomes the determining factor.

The perception of a variable space-time nexus, fostered by technological change, is already discernible in the modernist culture I discussed in Chapter 2. Both relativization and fragmentation are inherent to modernist aesthetics. What is uniquely postmodern, according to critics like Harvey, is the speed of transition between habits and ideologies, necessitated by the market's dependence on a fast turnover of images. This relentless volatility destabilizes identity to such a degree that the subject is threatened by disintegration. The modernist belief in a multiplicitous yet enduring transcendent subject can no longer be sustained.

The short story genre is able to engage with this
compression of time and space. In the short story, the narrative is accelerated through summary and ellipsis. 'Somewhere Else' opens without any attempt at evoking a specific time or a sense of place:

Twenty-two Americans were touring China. I was among them. We took many photographs. We had learned how to say hello, goodbye, may I take your photograph? Frequently the people did not wish to be photographed. (22)

The narrative is also accelerated by the use of indirect discourse:

Mr. Wong, the political guidance counselor in the Travel Service, said it was because of Antonioni's film on China and his denigrating attraction to archaic charm. His middle-power chauvinism looked on China as the soufflé of Europe, to rise and fall according to the nourishment beaten into it by American capital investment and avant-garde art. (ibid.)

Various characters are introduced peremptorily, just by name or through direct definition - 'Martin, a jolly friend to all revolutions, an old-time union organizer, history lover, passionate photographer' (p.49). There is no access to a complex interior consciousness. When interiority is suggested, it is largely rendered through exterior gestures:

Joe Larsen chewed sugarless gum very hard. He walked around and around in a little circle of annoyance near the door. Then he moved directly across the room to look at Mr. Wong. He believed in doing that. His politics was based on staring truthfully into the cruel eye of power. (p.51)
The narrative's reliance on the characters' external gestures, in combination with direct discourse, is reminiscent of film or stage drama. Within this story, they may be categorized as 'flat' characters with static attributes which do not evolve through time. (However, the personal development of some of them may be traced if the story is read in conjunction with other work by Paley; see especially 'The Expensive Moment', later in the collection, where Ruth and Joe Larsen's China trip is re-introduced; see pp.179-195).

Events move ahead rapidly, connected to each other by comparison, rather than a more gradual process based on cause and effect. The first narrative, set in China, is succeeded by a second, set 'about three months later' (p.54). The interval between them is elided. During the trip to China, one of the party of radicals, Fred, has been chided by Mr. Wong for taking unauthorized photographs. Back home, the group is meeting up for a re-union. Within this second narrative, a third narrative is embedded, as an interior analepsis; another group member, Joe, tells a relatively lengthy anecdote about filming in the South Bronx. Local youths have stolen his camera. He talks them into giving the film back, but when he lets them keep the camera to make films of their own they are reluctant to accept.

In the first narrative, the chronotopic motif of tourism is established. On holiday, the clock-bound
routines of working life are abandoned. The space that is visited may itself be designated 'timeless' by travel literature and advertising: 'to this day, every evening at five, Franz Kafka returns home to Celetna Street (Zeltegasse) wearing a bowler hat and black suit' (23); 'the sardine fishermen still push their boats across the sand and set out for a night's fishing as they have done for centuries' (24); 'this scene evokes a timelessness which the visitor to China often seeks' (25). Yet movement is limited within a very specific space and a perceptibly finite stretch of time. Travel is dependent on schedules, even as it attempts to transcend time.

The alien world is defined in dialogic relationship to home, as Paley's title makes plain. Her left wing tourists are in search of authenticity:

We were to a tourist in love with the Chinese revolution, Mao Tse-Tung and the Chinese people. Those who were affectionate did once in a while hug a guide or interpreter. Others hoped that before the tour ended, they'd be able to walk along a street in Shanghai or Canton holding hands with a Chinese person of their own sex, just as the Chinese did - chatting politics, exchanging ideological news. Surreptitiously we looked into family courtyards every now and then to see real life, from which, though in love, we'd been excluded. (p.48)

They have been 'excluded' by their own status as tourists, within the confines of mass travel, which they hope to escape. The impossibility of shedding their own cultural specificity is indicated by the dialogue between the discourse of American interpersonal relationships
('love', 'hug') and that of the Cultural Revolution. There is a particular tension between the ideological meaning of 'love' or 'in love' in the individualist context of liberal western society and its implications within totalitarian speech genres. Mr. Wong's accusations begin with the complaint that 'you do not love the Chinese people' (p.48).

Baudrillard castigates the 'panic stricken production of the real and the referential' (26) in ethnology, tourism and politics as merely another form of simulation in a culture constructed by signs that refer only to themselves. In Paley's story, all three converge in the hyperreal scenario of Maoist China.

Like most tourists, Paley's group uses the camera to mediate experience. As Sontag has noted, 'having an experience becomes identical with taking a photograph of it' (27). The photographic image constructs authenticity. It also suspends time, by capturing a moment. Thus, tourism becomes a search for the recordable epiphany:

Ah, what a picture! China! The heavy cart, the toiling man, the narrow street - once England's street (huge buildings lined with first class plumbing for the English empire's waste), like the downtown Free West anywhere. In the foreground the photographed man labored - probably bringing early spring vegetables to some distant neighbourhood in order to carry back to his commune honey buckets of the city's stinking gold.

This act, this photographing, had been reported by one vigilant Chinese worker incensed by Antonioni's betrayal. (p.49)
Antonioni's crime lies in constructing 'archaic' images of a timeless China, contrary to the Maoist identification with self-inventing modernity. As Sontag says, photography 'offers [...] both participation and alienation in our own lives and those of others' (28). To see China as a picture reifies the country and its people. But Fred's photograph also invokes the familiar within the alien land - 'like the downtown Free West anywhere'. Paley parodies political rhetoric ('Free West', 'vigilant Chinese worker'), placing it in dialogue with North American demotic ('downtown') and the poeticized discourse of 'honey buckets'. Just as the alien world incorporates images from home, the language of the alien world infiltrates the speech of the visitors. Joe admits to Mr. Wong that he has wandered away from the guided tour:

Some people with poor character structures were jealous of his adventures. They'd been a little ashamed of their timidity when he spoke, but now that he was being spoken to, they were proud of their group discipline. (p.52)

Double-voiced discourse is used to satirize the visitors' adoption of their hosts' values.

As in Munro's story, home and the alien land interchange. In New York, Joe goes on another directionless wander, this time around the South Bronx: 'I just walked around kind of dreaming' (p.56). To some extent, this is familiar territory; Joe has been
working there on a youth project. But Joe is also an outsider, his camera signifying state surveillance: 'any non-Hispanic white man with a camera looks like a narc' (p.57). The power imbalance between photographer and photographed, subject and object, is even more apparent than in China. When Joe tries to right the balance by giving his camera back to the Puerto Ricans who steal it, they try to refuse. He is excluded from their world; they do not wish to participate in his. Despite his egalitarian principles, Joe's race and class make him a tourist in his own land.

Joe's camera stands for aesthetic representation, and hence for storytelling itself. The spectator hypothesizes a narrative: 'In the foreground the photographed man labored - probably bringing early spring vegetables to some distant neighbourhood in order to carry back to his commune honey buckets of the city's stinking gold' (p.49: see above). But, like Munro, Paley distrusts the impulse to transmute glimpses of other lives into aesthetically pleasing patterns. She 'disarranges' the narrative generated by the image through hyperbolic language, in the sentence itself, and in the contrasting discourse of the sentence that follows. This sentence also constructs a narrative around the stock figure of the 'vigilant Chinese worker, incensed by Antonioni's betrayal' (ibid.) who has reported the photographer. Throughout the story, unitary meaning
is undercut by a rapid movement between voices.

Paley poses several questions about artistic answerability, without offering an easy solution. It is not enough to simply hand over the means of aesthetic representation to its erstwhile objects. Joe's gesture, as he thrusts the camera at the distrustful Puerto Ricans, seems ineffectual. Nevertheless, she celebrates attempts to record human experience as it unfolds, without attempting to force it into pre-determined patterns.

When Joe has told his story, the others respond:

What in the world! said Ruth.
Forget the world, said Joe. I'm sorry I told you the story. I don't know why I did. I must be nuts.
Martin said, I know why you told the story. You wanted to show that just because a person owns a camera they do not own the whole world and you understand it.
That's what you think, said Joe. I think I told it to you because it just happened. Don't make a big Marxist deal about it. (p.59)

The story contains not just a dialogue between home and the alien world, but between the universal and the specific; between depersonalized political rhetoric and colloquial discourse. Earlier, Mr. Wong accuses Fred of 'invading' a noodle factory (p.50) by making an unauthorized visit. He reacts with disbelief:

Invading what? said Fred. Joe! he called out. He said, Oh God! and sat down. What was China talking about? (p.51)

As a borrowing from military discourse, the verb 'invade' would usually be attached to a plural or collective
subject, or to the name of a state. Similarly, Fred depersonalizes his accusers by referring to them as 'China'. Such an attitude is inherent in the tourist search for authenticity, which attributes homogeneous national characteristics to the individual.

In the story's final lines, Martin sets up the projector:

Number one. Here it comes, that old man, he's holding that grandchild in a pink and orange sweater - where was that?
Oh Christ, said Joe, can't you remember anything? It was in a courtyard in a village near Nanking. (p.60)

By naming this specific geographical location, the story affirms the uniqueness of the individual, and of each particular moment. Joe's unpremeditated wanderings are analogous to Paley's open-ended approach to storytelling. She refuses to impose pre-determined aesthetic patterns on lived experience. This, in turn, signals a distrust towards totalizing systems, such as the grand narrative of Marxism. As home and the alien land interchange, it becomes evident that there are unmapped areas of experience in the lives of others that must always resist definition. Nonetheless, the subject is founded on the dialogic relationship with the evasive other. Artistic representation can acknowledge human commonality, without seeking to appropriate the other's unique and unknowable subjectivity. Paley's work, like the film Joe makes with the community project,
commemorates. 'Maybe just to keep a record' (p.56).

As we have seen, space and time are compressed in Paley's story, and meaning is destabilized as competing voices disrupt one another. She presents characters through direct discourse and external behaviour, rather than suggesting complex interior states. In this regard, her work may be aligned with the postmodern aesthetic which Miriam Marty Clark claims has brought 'depthlessness, incoherence and ephemerality' to recent short fiction (29). However, within an aesthetic grounded in postmodern instantaneity, Paley affirms humanist values. The American warm to a Chinese guide 'because he rolled his pants up to the knee when it was hot' (p.53). Like the coloured sweater worn by the child in the photograph, this idiosyncrasy signals individual specificity, which escapes totalizing systems. In a short piece which does not accumulate realist detail, these images are foregrounded.

In describing Paley's 'humanism', I am aware of the problems raised by the term, which usually implies a natural human essence undetermined by ideological or social factors. However, in Paley's work, subjectivity is position, rather than essence. It is generated in relation to a network of others. The uniqueness of the individual lies, as Bakhtin argues, in their specific situation in space and time. We can empathize with the other, constructing our own view of them, but can never reproduce their experience within our own lives.
or as artistic representation. However, our own identity is generated precisely by what is unknowable in the other:

In short, we are constantly and intently on the watch for reflections of our own life on the plane of other people's consciousness, and, moreover, not just reflections of particular moments of our life, but even reflections of the whole of it. And while seeking to catch these reflections, we also take into account that perfectly distinctive value-coefficient with which our life presents itself to the other - a coefficient which is completely different from the coefficient with which we experience our own life in ourselves. (M.M. Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero', p.16)

'Somewhere Else' is alien, but it is also home; and while accepting that others are different to ourselves, we can still celebrate human commonality.

Bergson argues that the subject cannot experience a pure present, without duration; memory is always implicit in perception. Therefore, the past cannot be wholly expunged from the present moment. There cannot be a self-sufficient instant, entirely unrelated to the past. Bakhtinian theory also supports the idea that, contrary to Baudrillard's theory, some meaning is always generated in the dynamic between past, present and future. As Bakhtin writes in his essay, 'Towards a Methodology for the Human Sciences', 'there is neither a first nor a last word' (30). Even past meanings, which seem to have disappeared, cannot be lost for ever, but will resurface, transformed by changing circumstance.

The modernist opposition between clock time and
duration may appear to collapse, when social time is itself in a state of flux. The replacement of Fordist practice by more flexible work patterns undermines the perception of time as a series of homogeneous units. Continuity is also fractured by the breakdown of traditional patterns in family life, gender roles and class identity; in Munro and Paley's stories, successive generations no longer duplicate each other. However, time is no less regulated in a period of increased social mobility and fluid subjective identities; in a mass society, heterogeneous and individualized lifestyles rely on timetables and watches. Postmodern culture cannot dispense with synchronization, and public time must still be spatialized; what is distinctive about 'instantaneous time' is that it is not experienced as linear succession. As Borges writes, 'the chronological determination of an event, of any event on earth, is alien and exterior to the event' (31).

Walter J. Ong has coined the term 'secondary orality', to describe the way in which an increasingly visual culture, predicated on fragmented images, challenges a predominantly print-based culture, based on abstract, linear reasoning (32). Secondary orality cannot restore a pre-literate mentality. Our reading of film, television and the computer is conditioned by familiarity with print. Ong argues that even the most experimental texts cannot escape linear development. The process of writing
produces an inevitable, self-conscious reflectiveness. Rimmon-Kenan also points out that 'text-time is bound to be one-directional and irreversible, because language prescribes a linear figuration of signs' (33). In the texts she cites by Beckett and Cortázár, linearity is avoided only to be restored by the reader. Perhaps, as Ricoeur suggests, the construction of narrative is fundamental to the emergence of the subject as s/he envisages her own 'life story' (34) as irreversible progression. However, as I suggested in Chapter 4, the short story sequence resembles the oral epic, as an open text, resisting closure. The ongoing bodies of writing which Munro and Paley have built around familiar locations and characters form narrative networks which proliferate almost organically, like the oral epics described by Ong.

Returning to the question of secondary orality, I would argue that the screen and the page are in dialogue, each narrative form renewing the other. Elizabeth Bowen drew analogies between film and the short story in her 1937 introduction to The Modern Short Story when she wrote that 'the new literature, whether written or visual is an affair of the reflexes, of immediate susceptibility of associations not examined by reason' (35).

The concept of the chronotope highlights the subtle interconnection between aesthetic representation and cultural change. Bakhtin explains: 'Out of the actual
chronotopes of our world (which serve as the source of representation) emerge the reflected and created chronotopes of the world represented in the work' ('Forms of Time', p.253). Aesthetic representation is not crudely mimetic, but it is linked to the experience of space-time in the world at large. The generic chronotope of the short story associates aesthetic form with modernist perceptions of time as flux. The contemporary authors I have studied reformulate those perceptions within a postmodern context, where the modernist belief in ultimate transcendence is interrogated. As a fragmented form, in which narrative is accelerated, the short story is especially able to engage with concepts of instantaneous time. But, within this non-linear configuration, memory is nonetheless evoked, through the discourses of primary orality and personal testimony. The short story chronotope brings past and present together within the dynamic moment of becoming.

With this identification of a generic chronotope for the contemporary short story, my readings of texts by Munro, Paley and their antecedents are concluded; and my investigation into the nature of time and subjectivity within the genre is resolved. In my final chapter, I turn to a discussion of my own short fiction. I shall discuss a story I have written during my research, relating my creative approach to the genre to my theoretical observations.
References


6. Ibid., p.49


8. Ibid., p.88.


15. Stephen Regan, '"The Presence of the Past": Modernism and Postmodernism in Canadian Short Fiction', in Howells and Hunter, pp.108-133


18. Ibid., p.72.


28. Ibid., p.167.

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I wrote my story, 'Making It Happen', in April 1997, in between drafting other chapters of the thesis. Since then, it has been revised several times, but, as will be clear from my commentary, I still consider it to be work in progress.

Making It Happen

His new car's a woman. He speaks to her softly, calling her baby, there, he says, there, come on now, you can do it, teasing the switches - lets try swapping these setting to with a tiny screwdriver. His hands work swiftly and gently. You can trust this man. He knows what he's doing.

'Once,' I tell him, 'I came off my bike in the hills round your way. I was lying on the road, then this car stopped and some one said, "It's alright, I'm a Swiss doctor..."'

But he's not listening. He's far away from me now. I sit quietly, holding a torch, watching his fingers tweak the wires, until the lights flick on, and we're flying into the city, past the skewed paint tin handle of the Hulme archway, towards the mercury glow of the Bridgewater Hall. MANCHESTER, the billboard, says,
MAKING IT HAPPEN.

'You don't drive?' he says. 'Never wanted to drive?'

Something clunks in the hull of the big Scimitar. The dials glow like moons on the dashboard. It's a clear March night; you can see the comet on its way round the universe. We know tonight is our beginning; we've passed through that secret door where something is agreed. He sends me a quick fractured glance, and then he keeps his eyes steady on the road ahead.

My little brother David is thirty years old. Birthday cards and wrapping paper litter the long work surfaces, newly installed by his father-in-law. Orange and lime couples are admiring the blue and yellow kitchen, stroking the streamlined wood, discovering the fridge behind a panelled door, releasing tiered spice racks hidden in a corner. Still wearing my black winter best, I flit like a fly between the little splinter groups. These are people I only ever see on David's birthday. I find out their names, and how they fit together, and then I've forgotten them all by next year.

No mistaking Dave and Sophie for anything but the two halves of a pair. Muscular and blonde, they could represent Progress. They could be carved in bronze outside the town hall. They've been together for ever,
for as long as I've been alone.

Sophie asks me brightly, am I seeing anyone.

'Yes, yes I am, actually.'

She's startled, leans forward to hear more; but as I speak, I'm scared that I'm unravelling my fortune. Untangled from my tongue, the story's going to snap and vanish. When I imagine this man, I can't remember what he looks like. Yet his light, cautious voice keeps running through my head like my own memory. This is a dangerous state in which to find yourself. It is not entirely safe.

'Is he nice? How old is he? What's his name?'

I can't tell anyone, especially not Sophie. There is a particular reason.

'Go on, you can tell me. Is it anyone I know?'

I'm blushing girlishly. People keep shoving between us to get to the beers in the fridge. Everybody's still in the kitchen; no one's moved into the orange and lime living room. Just one or two are drifting out the back door for a smoke.

'Well, whatever, I'm very pleased for you,' Sophie says, in her clear, formal voice. 'It's about time.' I like my sister-in-law, but I've never really got to know her. She scares me a little. I'd like to ask her how to put eyeliner on that way, flicked boldly across the lids, like Japanese calligraphy. My hand's never steady enough for much more than a pencil smudge.
Suddenly, she turns solemn, gazing at her wine glass, then glancing swiftly into my eyes. 'Things haven't been going so well between David and me. In fact, I'm leaving him. It's alright, I've got somewhere to go. I'm moving out at Easter. He doesn't know that yet.'

I can't believe what I'm hearing. It's as if the wrong sound track's been dubbed onto her lips. Maybe she's joking. But her face is set hard.

'Has David said anything?'

'He told me you were going to start a family.'

She laughs bitterly. 'How can we have children? We hardly see each other. He sets the alarm for five-thirty. I don't get home till eight. But that's not it, it's not just that. We never talk. David won't talk. He can't talk.'

This is delusion, madness. Music leaks in from the orange room, the Chemical Brothers, fierce and insistent, but still nobody's moving. David's passing round the garlic bread. He asks Sophie, should he get the potatoes out, or leave them for later?

'Anyway,' she repeats, looking for paper towels, 'I'm happy for you. Where is he tonight?'

At a dinner party. One of his old-fashioned words, 'dinner party', like 'going dutch', like 'cinema'. He calls my cunt a fanny; he's changed a daughter's nappy, you can tell. I can see his friends, landscaped
dimly round a weathered table. What does he say, when they ask what he's been doing?

Maybe now, at the mid-point of David's party, which coincides with the closing stages of a Saturday meal, as the ice cream puddles in the dishes and the smell of coffee rises like incense, some one might say come on, where've you been, haven't seen you for weeks. He's sly and self-satisfied, searching himself for his packet of grass. 'I've been busy.' He starts talking about the car, how he waited a few days before putting in an offer. If it was gone, too bad. Serendipity. But a man of fifty needs to drive a Scimitar.

Every morning, my brother cycles towards the university at dawn, numbers already whirring through his brain. Hunched across the handlebars, he scents the fizzing blossom, the season on the turn. But most of his mind is slotted into the disk drive, running beyond the blue morning, towards infinity. If you ask what it is he's doing, he'll try to explain; but really he can't go beyond surface politeness. What David does can't be translated into ordinary speech.

If those two break up, there's no hope for anyone. I remember asking him at his wedding, what it felt like to be married. He just laughed. Then suddenly, he said, 'You know what it's like when you first meet some one? It's like a light going on. Everything's clear.'

No, I didn't understand what he meant, not from
real life. From songs, maybe, or the movies - the cinema - but that's just pretend, you can't take it seriously. He was as clumsy as a farmer's boy in his wedding suit. Sophie looked immaculate, larger than life in her glowing white dress.

Right now, my brother's in the orange room, skimming through his numerous CDs. Small candles have been lit along the scrubbed wooden shelves, and glass vases filled with gerbera, as bright and as perfectly round as lollipops. He smiles happily, across the empty room. 'Thirty, eh? Over the hill.' He swigs orange juice; David has no vices. He plucks some old tape from the rack - seventies funk that played at the clubs in the eighties, when I was David's age and he was still a student. He braces himself for the music, and, as we flip into the synthetic beat, he moves with the considered grace of a big man, holding himself like a skater on the stripped and polished floor. Gradually, the room fills, and like the record says, these are good times tonight. When you're dancing, you're part of the crowd, and you're also by yourself. You're here and somewhere else at the same time. A woman my age needs to do this now and then.
I've lain awake since dawn, watching the bow of his back, listening to his breathing, waiting to meet him again in the flesh. We're not young, but we're new to each other, our bodies freshly minted in the light of day.

He says, 'You didn't come - did you?'

'Don't let it bother you.'

'It doesn't.'

I pull at his thick grey hair. He chuckles. 'Men are beasts.' Almost unconsciously, he rolls a cigarette.

'Of course, the female orgasm's less intense than the male. The woman lasts longer, she reaches a kind of plateau, but physiologically, the muscular reaction, the blood pressure and so on, register more strongly in the male.'

I love it when he talks this crap. I love watching his guarded, smuggler's face - the knuckled cheekbones, the secret strain around the eyes. I like to witness the controlled assembly of the tin, the papers, the green bag of Golden Virginia, the constant relighting of squashed cigarettes.

'Well, you know,' I tell him, 'the best sex is purely mechanical. Some one you're never going to have to see again.'

'You haven't told me about the party,' he says abruptly. 'Did you mention me to Sophie?'

'She told me she was leaving David.'
'What, and let him keep the kitchen?'
'She's not joking, she's got it all planned.'
'That's just Sophie being dramatic.'
'She's not going to you, is she?'
'Lord, no. She wouldn't set foot in my hovel.'

As he ditches the fag-end, and glances towards me, something in his face suddenly shifts. For a moment, I catch Sophie's fractured gaze. Physically, the two of them couldn't be more different - the ageing bandit, the healthy young goddess. Yet some phantom presence, beyond skin and bone, turns one into the other, like those pictures that switch between a rabbit and a duck.

Go on, said Sophie, you can tell me, is he nice?
'I worked bloody hard on that kitchen.'

We shuffle limbs, our bodies still not accustomed to each other. He starts to work at me again, stroking my cunt - my fanny - with calm, circular movements. Is that nice, he asks me, is it good? I can feel myself crumbling, yet something remains, something hard and metallic, bolting my cunt to my brain. Useless. Still here. This is such a drag for him.

He changes angles, he's determined, but it won't do any good. Because I'm starting to love him already, and because I'm afraid of such longing, because you can't take what you want, how can you, you find what you've lost only when it's been forgotten. Because I'm thinking all these things right now, listening to
the tidal rush of the motorway traffic, wondering what
time it is, wishing he'd just leave.

He says, 'What's the matter, babe, what is it?'
I cover my eyes with my elbow. I can't bear to meet
his gaze. But then something lifts. I can't stop myself.
I'm there, alone, somewhere with him.

'You don't remember me', he said, 'I'm Sophie's dad.
We met at the wedding.' And yes, I remembered faintly.
He didn't give her away. He refused, or maybe he'd
not been allowed. There was some sort of danger around
Sophie's father. He was a solitary, gypsyish figure,
rolling a fag on his way out of church.

My own mum and dad were still together then. That
wedding cake was the last one he made. Mum was working
at the wool shop. David had just finished his thesis.

As for me, my history's a blank. I was being very
good; I know that. I held myself still and upright,
in high heels that stuck in the damp turf. Everyone
was a little under-dressed, in optimistic spring fashions.
But at least the rain held off. We can't complain.
Sophie's such a lovely girl, you must be proud of David,
I hear he's very clever. I smiled and nodded, knowing
what those aunts and cousins were dying to talk about,
once my back was turned. I couldn't hold anything down
in those days. I lost my job. I left the key in my front door, and had everything stolen. Not everyone knew the latest, but there was enough to be going on with.

As we gathered for the photographer, a gust of wind blew the blossom from the trees, like feathers bursting from a pillow. Sophie's mother went hurtling after her hat. She had very short, colourless hair, almost shaven - my mum said she looked like she'd been to the nit nurse - and dangly earrings that swung madly when she laughed. Her bloke was a shaggy, red-bearded lawyer, based somewhere in Moss Side. Posing with them, Sophie looked like a swan between two parrots.

Well, her father told me, watching bride and groom kiss on camera, those two ought to be happy, a Pisces and a Virgo. I said, you don't believe that shit, do you really think the planets move around us? I felt a sudden rush in my veins, as sharp as vodka. I wanted an argument, but I knew I had to control myself, so I covered up with some only-joking pleasantry, and moved out of his orbit as quickly as I could.

Sophie's parents were old hippies. That explained her lacquered gloss, the job in hotel management, the hired cars and the bridesmaids crowned with rosebuds. sold books round the markets, but so far as I could tell, he mostly survived doing odd jobs for people. Sophie was smarter than either. She saw the conventions,
but she also knew how to use them.

I must have already stopped drinking by then, because later I remember him pouring out champagne, and me covering the clean glass with my hand, and him teasing me, don't you have any vices... My hand slipped, I misjudged the distance, and the glass rolled on its side. Thank God it didn't fall. Sophie was watching us; so was my mother.

Mum had warned me; don't make an exhibition. That was all; we both knew what she meant. Dad had discreetly left the room to check the oven. I could smell the greaseproof paper singeing. The cake would be ready when it was nearly burnt, the sultanas popped and crisping on the surface. I used to go into work with Dad on Sundays, long before David was born. The bakery ovens were set deep in the wall, like in 'Hansel and Gretel'. I'd watch him push the trays inside the endless darkness. His blue tattoo glowed like a gas flame through the swirling fair hairs on his arm. A big shy man, like David; whereas I feature my mother. That must have been when he visited the other woman - on Sundays, after he stopped taking me with him. It was going on for years, apparently. She was an old flame; they'd been at school together.

I threw a brick through my ex-husband's windscreen. At least, I thought it was his, until I saw another red Capri parked opposite. It was in South Manchester Express, just an inch or so. But Sophie's dad might
not have known that, any more than I knew the disgrace that made him a ghost at the nuptials. You can't read history in a face. You can't predict the future either.

The truth is, we didn't really meet at David's wedding. I was hardly there at all. Nor did I really see him, the second time, on a train somewhere between Todmorden and Littleborough. I was rummaging through my backpack, hauling out the cagoul, the mineral water, the map and the book, but not my ticket, not my purse. They'd disappeared. I spoke calmly to the guard. I said, 'I'm sorry, I don't know what to do' - and then a muffled voice was offering to pay. I sensed a blurred figure next to me, by the shipshape wooden ladder they keep on local trains. I thought how kind strangers are sometimes. But mostly I was thinking about my money gone, and my bank cards, and everything dropping away from me.

I have been my good self for a very long time. I work hard. I keep myself clean. My doors are locked tight, and if I take a drink, it's only one glass before bedtime. I am not the woman I was at the wedding. But still he said, with some surprise, 'Have you taken up cycling?' Sophie's dad. The jack of all trades, the odd job man who believed in destiny.

The purse was in a side pocket all along. I found it right after I'd cancelled my cards, just as if some spiteful fairies had swiped it. Even then, I couldn't
guess which way the dice were rolling. I forgot that I'd promised to pay him back. 'De nada', he said, 'you can buy me a drink next time there's a wedding.' 'No,' I insisted, 'I can't be beholden.' One of my mother's expressions - like 'showing yourself up', like 'exhibition', like 'taking a pride in yourself'. I forgot all about Sophie's dad.

If his van hadn't been nicked, he wouldn't have been on the train at all; if Sophie hadn't nagged him to finish the kitchen in time for David's party. Don't worry, he said, it'll sort itself out. You can pick up a van anywhere. It was just that in the meantime he'd spotted this old Scimitar, the sort of car a man deserved before he was too clapped out to enjoy it.

They were paying him good money, David told me. But he liked to do everything in his own time. He hated being rushed. It was then I remembered the number on the ticket - one night when the flat seemed especially empty, when I'd showered and packed for work, and there was nothing else to do but wait for Monday. Was that a five or a three? If I chose the wrong number, I'd leave it. As I dialled, I realized I didn't know his name. But I recognized his voice the moment that he answered, almost as if we'd been friends throughout our lives.
And so, when David calls, my mind's tuned to someone else, who often calls me these days, just as the sun goes down, carrying the phone with him as he clanks around an invisible kitchen, searching out his baccy, making a brew, the radio rattling in the background.

'I was thinking about your boiler,' says David, in his usual tentative manner.

The boiler? That's a winter's tale, old history, no sooner said than mended. Yet I write down the number he gives me, and even repeat it, though I already know every digit by heart.

'Actually, it's Sophie's dad. He could fix it for you when he comes to do our bathroom.'

'How is Sophie?'

'Fine, she's fine.' Now my mind is firmly back here in Manchester, I can sense a weight on the line. 'She's working over Easter. Some big conference.'

'So what are you up to?'

'Oh you know, this and that. Want to come for a bike ride tomorrow?'

'I can't. What about Monday?'

'I don't know. I've stuff to do for work. And I'm supposed to get the bathroom ready...'

'Is everything alright?'

'What do you mean?'

'Are things okay between you two?
He laughs nervously. 'Why shouldn't they be?'

I wait to see if he'll go on; there's no pushing David. Outside, an ice cream van's playing a desperate version of 'Anchors Away'. Spring has arrived. The clocks are going forward this weekend.

'Look', says Dave, 'I'll ring you Sunday morning; I'm probably going to Mum's.'

Everything's fine. One day turns into another, running on paint rollers, disk drives, bicycle chains. But still, Sophie could be gone for good. For all I know, David's sitting by himself in a half-empty house, the CDs divided, the gerbera wilted in the shiny glass vases. I'm hoping to be somewhere else on Sunday morning. But Sunday can wait.

The sun hasn't quite gone down on this Good Friday. The horizon's lemon-tinted, beneath a deepening violet blue. In the Manchester flatlands, the broad skies are our landscape, never the same from one day to the next. When it's dark, I'll look for the comet, a milky smudge towards the west.

To the east, three quarters of an hour away, two hours by public transport, a man's still working on his car. Grit's caught in his teeth. His fingers are engraved with oil. He lives in a stone ruin at the top of the track - the sort of place the postman avoids, so he tells me, the sort of place where there might be rottweilers. The rain collects in oil cans and plastic
bottles. The windows are boarded, the walls unplastered, the bare floors cluttered with builder's junk and the boxes of unsold books that he couldn't bear to part with. But there is a bed and a fire. You must take me as you find me, so he says.

She's beautiful, his ageing folly, his great blue streamlined boat, the Scimitar - more trouble than he thought, but he knows what he's doing. He settles into the driver's seat, relishing the spaciousness, then turns the key in the ignition. A cough, silence. He turns it again, come on babe, still she won't bite - for me, come on, just this once for me. He sighs, sits back, thinking almost nothing. Then he smokes a cigarette until it's time to try again.
Commentary

I am interested in the short story, above all, as a practitioner. I have been a writer since childhood, and although I have completed novels, poems and film scripts, I am temperamentally drawn to the short story. It allows me to write out of a sense of concentrated energy - Poe's 'high excitement' which is by nature transient (1). I have no patience with the discursive and the explanatory. Like Valery, I could never write the sentence, 'The Marquise left the house at five o'clock' (2). I am concerned less with the specific co-ordinates of time, place and causality, than with presenting subjective states of consciousness. As a genre, the short story lends itself to a linguistic virtuosity which I would find difficult to sustain over a longer piece.

When I began my thesis, I was anxious not to divorce my creative activities from my research. Current critical theory and literary practice often seem to be estranged from one another. Since Barthes' 'The Death of the Author' (3) and Foucault's 'What Is an Author?' (4), academic attention has focused on the text as the product of other, preceding discourses and on the active participation of the reader. A text may no longer be interpreted as the expression of a unified, autonomous
subjectivity, identifiable with the empirical author. While this perspective is useful in textual analysis, it tends to minimize the creative achievements of the individual.

Jonathan Culler comments on this disassociation between critical theory and literary practice in the academy. His reluctant suggestion that perhaps nowadays 'the literary avant-garde simply is literary theory and criticism' only accedes to the divide, as he himself admits (5). (The term 'avant-garde' is, in any case, problematical, at a time when genre fiction crosses the boundaries between 'high' and 'low' art.) In my own experience as a lecturer, research student and fiction writer, I have observed a good deal of mistrust between theorists and practitioners. In higher education, consideration of the literary process is confined to creative writing, which has evolved as a separate field, often linked to literary studies, but founded on its own, broadly empiricist assumptions. There are exceptions to this generalization, but a crude opposition between pure empiricism and self-referring theory remains.

In this chapter, I am trying to build a bridge between theory and practice. During my research, I was attracted to those theories that confirmed my own insights as a writer - the Bakhtinian concept of language as dialogue; Kristeva's emphasis on a tension between the semiotic and the symbolic. I have applied such
concepts in my readings of texts by other writers. By discussing my own story, I wish to test their relevance from within the writing process.

But I cannot interpret my own work, as I would a story by Paley or Munro. I cannot function simply as another reader because, for its author, the text is always uncompleted. Every time I read 'Making It Happen', I'm aware of alternative possibilities. Perhaps the narrator's father didn't run off with another woman, but died instead; perhaps she didn't smash a windscreen but pissed on a war memorial (an example of 'committing a public nuisance', a phrase I especially wanted to use). Obviously, I am more satisfied with some stories than with others, and publication can also enforce closure, but my stories always appear to me as work in progress.

Although I am pleased by the earlier sections of 'Making It Happen', I feel that there is some narrative element missing from the second half - a key detail, an event or an image, that has not yet emerged. Whatever this detail may be, it is already implicated in the text. If the story was some one else's work in progress, the answer would probably be obvious; and it may become so in time, when I am more detached from the writing. Right now, I can't see the wood for the trees.

This brings me to a second problem in this chapter - finding the right discourse with which to discuss my own work.
At this point, while I was redrafting the chapter, I stopped work to go to a photographic exhibition about the teenagers who were extras in Pasolini's *Salo*. Afterwards I was going to meet my lover's daughter, who happened to be working next door to the gallery. I knew we were going to start a conversation we've been on the brink of for months - a kind of fond commiseration. I took Eve Kosofsky Segwick's 'A Poem is Being Written' to read on the way (6), but felt distracted, and started thinking about small changes to this chapter. I made a few notes at Oxford Road Station, surprised that I was putting them into my writing journal rather than jotting them down on disposable scraps of paper, like most academic brainwaves. Ten minutes later, as I left the train at Salford, it came to me, that the key to what was missing in the story was the daughter. Something to do with the daughter. Not Sophie precisely, or the narrator as a daughter, but the figure of the daughter, like a card I'd been randomly dealt from the pack.

I had some half-formed ideas about how to play this card. I wanted to rejig the story as soon as I got home. But there's no guarantee that I really have found the answer; what works in the abstract doesn't always catch fire on the page. If the ideas are any use, they'll keep. In the meantime, 'Making It Happen'
stays as it was. The exhibition was disappointing.
I enjoyed the conversation; but I'll leave its content for the reader to supply.

I've found it impossible to keep to conventional academic discourse in this commentary. Matching the first person pronoun to an impersonal style would mean pursuing a spurious objectivity, at odds with my intentions for this chapter. I don't want to universalize, merely to relate the insights I have gained from theory to my own experience of the writing process. Conventional academic discourse aims towards monologue, in that it argues a precise position as clearly as possible. When I write fiction, I am much less certain of what I want to say; it is a form of discourse which invites ambiguity. In commenting on my own story, it seems appropriate to use a more personal and exploratory style, analogous to fiction-writing itself.

Feminist writers have experimented with personal criticism in recent years by including their own subjective responses in their discussion of texts by other writers. The acts of reading and writing are situated at specific points in their lives. Nancy K. Miller gives a good overview of this type of criticism in the first chapter of her book, Getting Personal: Feminist Occasions and
Other Autobiographies (7). There is a danger in this type of work that, by privileging the subjective, the critic colludes with the stereotypical belief that women's judgements are essentially solipsistic. This is the view expressed in the article that so dismays Del, in Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*:

For a woman, everything is personal; no idea is of any interest to her by itself, but must be translated into her own experience; in works of art she always sees her own life, or her daydreams. ('Baptizing', p.178)

At the end of her book on Munro, Redekop adds a postscript in which she considers the relationship between herself as a reader and Munro as a 'living author' (8). This seems especially appropriate, since the stories themselves question the relationship between lived experience and textuality, inviting the reader to participate in that interrogation. While describing her dreams about Munro and suggesting ways in which her readings might be shaped by her own experiences, Redekop makes it clear that the texts are her paramount concern, not her own biography, nor Munro's. Reading the lives illuminates the texts, rather than the texts illustrating the lives. I hope that I can achieve the same balance in this discussion. Eve Kofosky Segwick's 'A Poem Is Being Written', which intersperses her own poetry with autobiography and a discussion of the poetics of spanking, has, to some extent, provided a model. But I have reservations about
the poetry itself, which seems to me to have absorbed
critical discourse less successfully than the prose
commentary has incorporated a poetic voice.

As critics who themselves produce fiction, Umberto
Eco and Christine Brooke-Rose have attempted to reconcile
contemporary theory with their own literary practice.
I found their work useful in clarifying the issues of
authorial intention which I raised earlier. Eco comments
that:

To understand the creative process is also to understand
how certain textual solutions come into being by
serendipity, or as the result of unconscious mechanisms.
It is important to understand the difference between
the textual strategy - as linguistic object that the
Model Readers have under their eyes (so that they can
go on independently of the empirical author's intentions)
- and the story of the growth of that textual strategy. (9)

He adds an 'intention of the text' to the conscious
decisions made by the empirical author and the reader's
interpretation (10). Each text generates a model reader
and a model author. In many circumstances, the empirical
author may function as that model reader, responding
to textual developments which arise with apparent
spontaneity. As I suggested earlier in this commentary,
I feel that there are limits to the empirical author's
ability to fulfil that function; nevertheless, I share
his capacity to be surprised by textual developments
when returning to one's own fiction as its reader.

Brooke-Rose makes a similar point when she describes
herself as the 'first reader' of her novels (11). Like Eco, she claims that a text develops its own impetus:

I never have a perfect idea, or even a perfect original conception, of which my text is but a feeble shadow. Or if I do it is an absence. [...] For me, the idea is formed out of the writing, the text is (generates) the idea, perfect or imperfect'. (12)

The notion of an absence recalls Barthes' affirmation that 'writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing' (13). The text is 'bound to jouissance' (14); in writing, as in reading, when words become pure pleasure, consciousness of time and place is suspended.

In my own work, as in Brooke-Rose's, 'the idea is formed out of the writing'; and it is an idea which can never be fully defined, least of all by myself. I cannot find the missing element in 'Making It Happen' by deduction, although I might grasp it through Bergsonian intuition. This does not mean that conceptual thought has no part to play in the creative process. My story 'Into the Sun' is a conscious reaction to the way in which images of war seem to be emptied of meaning (15). Some stories are shaped by a technical experiment, which is itself inseparable from content; for instance, 'Twentieth Frame' is structured as a series of snapshots (16).

However, most of my stories begin as a rhythmic
impulse. It may connect with more rational intentions, but without this libidinal drive the writing will be lifeless. Now that I have read Kristeva, I can associate it with the semiotic, which is draw from the formless maternal chora. The chora is beyond signification; it is 'analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm' (Revolution, p.26). My stories are generated on the move, on buses, trains and cars, or even on the dance floor (17). The material qualities of language are somehow interwoven with other sensual stimuli.

All enunciation is, however, as Kristeva insists, thetic, and it is the dialectic between the semiotic and the symbolic that generates signification. There is a convergence between particular words or phrases, images and conceptual thought. The first sentence is usually very clear in my head, but I rarely have any idea how the story might develop. In an interview with Harold Horwood, Munro has spoken about how her stories often begin with an anecdote, which may become redundant as the writing proceeds (18). Speaking to Geoff Hancock, she says 'that beginning perception, that first perception, is the total moment, and from then on there's all this work' (19). Something initiates a chain of meanings which, as an author, I shape and select. In Bakhtinian terms, that 'first perception' is itself a response to preceding utterances, in both inner and outer speech.

I cannot interpret 'Making It Happen' as I would
a text by Paley or Munro, but I can relate aspects of its composition to those I have discussed through their work - the organization of time, the presentation of subjectivity and the interface between autobiography and fiction. Before discussing the story in detail, I should like to talk in more general terms about this last issue, since it has already emerged on my trip to the art gallery.

Like Munro, I often disavow autobiographical sources in my work. I agree with Lorrie Moore that the writer's attitude to lived experience is that of the cook to the cupboard: 'what that cook makes from the cupboard is not the same as what's in the cupboard' (20). Characters and events are so transformed, that any correlation between the text and lived experience may be regarded as a coincidence.

And yet, it is not merely coincidental, and I am being disingenuous if I pretend that such correspondences are purely arbitrary. I haven't seen my own brother for years. But I have an old friend whose partner once announced to me that she was going to leave him because he never talked. Some of the direct speech in 'Making It Happen' might seem familiar to her; she might also recognize some, though not all, of the characteristics
attributed to David and Sophie. A friend, Helen Lagoe, told me that a character in her film script was 'an idea' of her partner. This is a useful concept, acknowledging a personal investment in the source material without harnessing the text to a crude referentiality. As we saw in Chapter 4, lived experience is itself mediated by textuality. Memory, fantasy and my own writing fictionalize lived experience, constructing patterns of meaning.

But I am still uneasy about the connections between autobiography and fiction in my work. Firstly, there is a power imbalance between the writer and the human subjects who become passive textual objects. This is an issue raised by Munro and Paley in the stories themselves, notably Munro's 'Material' (Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You, 1974) and Paley's 'Listening' (Later the Same Day, 1985). As I showed in Chapter 4's discussion of Paley's 'A Conversation with My Father' and Munro's 'Epilogue: The Photographer', both authors question an aesthetic which simplifies lived experience by imposing finalization. There is no such self-reflexivity in my work, to articulate my own doubts. I am left with the suspicion that Bakhtin is right when, in sections of 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope' he casts the figure of the author as a spy (21).

A second reason why I am tempted to suppress autobiographical connections in my work stems from an
anxiety about literary status. As Stanton demonstrates, women's writing has been devalued by its association with autobiographical discourse (22). Female autobiographical writing has been dismissed as a spontaneous outflow, devoid of technical skill. For myself, and, I suspect, for Munro, to admit to autobiographical content invites reductive readings which focus on our personalities at the expense of literary ability. But, to quote Moore again, 'writing is both the excursion into and the excursion out of one's life' (23). The author is positioned outside both lived experience and the fictive lives of all her characters, as Bakhtin explains in 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity'. Even when constructing an avowedly autobiographical hero, 'he must become another in relation to himself' ('Author and Hero', p.15).

As I demonstrated in Chapter 4, Munro distinguishes between 'emotional reality' and verifiable truth, asserting that her writing is 'personal' rather than autobiographical in content (24). This could also be said of my work. In 'Making It Happen', the anonymous first person narrator both is and is not myself. Unlike her, I have never had a serious drink problem, but we share other characteristics. I am well acquainted with the adrenalin rush she feels when she's arguing (p.295). Her fears with a new lover have been my own; the tattoo on her dad's arm belongs to my father (p.296). Most importantly,
her voice is mine. Writing in the first person, moving
in and out of the present tense, enables me to address
the reader directly, as Paley does, incorporating the
rhythms and vocabulary of spoken language. The immediacy
that this brings to the language is my strongest reason
for writing in the first person so often.

My anxiety that 'personal' writing may be
artistically limited and self-indulgent is not completely
resolved. I believe that the urge to write is, in itself,
driven by subjective needs. Yet I am eager to distance
myself from any perception of creative activity as romantic
introspection. Kristeva makes the point that artistic
activity operates as sublimation, rather than
self-fulfilment:

That has nothing to do with the freedom of expression
of some vague kind of subjectivity which would have
been there beforehand. It is, very simply, through
the work and the play of signs, a crisis of subjectivity
which is the basis for all creation, one which takes
as its very precondition the possibility of survival.
I would even say that signs are what produce a body,
that - and the artist knows it well - if he doesn't
work, if he doesn't produce his music or his page or
his sculpture, he would be, quite simply, ill or not
alive. (25)

The act of writing operates as a means of displacement,
and, as a consciousness of the text takes over,
self-awareness is transcended. Munro's 'Meneseteung'
(Friend of my Youth) describes the way in which 'a flow
of words somewhere, just about ready to make themselves
known to her' ousts 'human sympathies and fears or cozy
Graham Greene's memoirs also associate writing with displacement:

Writing is a form of therapy; sometimes I wonder how all those who do not write, compose or paint can manage to escape the madness, the melancholia, the panic fear which is inherent in the human situation. (27)

I quote Greene because he is a male writer, whose work is not usually defined as autobiographical. Although he is credited with a specific personal vision, his fiction seems to be shaped more by generic convention and by reportage than by the exploration of his own interiority. Yet his memoirs pay tribute to the role of the unconscious in his writing - particularly of dreams. As de Man maintains, autobiography may be a figure of reading that is applicable to all texts (28); and the urge to write fiction may be fuelled by a subjective imperative, irrespective of its overt subject matter, the genre in which it is cast, or the gender of its author.

Before discussing 'Making It Happen' in more detail, I should like to place it within the context of my development as a writer. In order to do so, I need to fill in some of my own personal background. Kristeva's
essay, 'The Adolescent Novel', likens the 'open structure' of the adolescent psyche to the novel itself (29). In her view, adolescence is less an age category than a state of mind, and one very closely associated with the need to write. Like Del, in *Lives of Girls and Women*, I was a romantic and passionate adolescent. Writing and reading were my escape from the restrictions of a respectable working class girlhood in the West Midlands.

Munro has spoken about the emotional significance of books during her adolescence, notably *Wuthering Heights* (30). As a child, I loved historical fiction; I also constantly re-read *Jane Eyre*, in the bowdlerized version I'd been given for Christmas. I felt myself mocked and mistreated, like Jane, and the reason for this was my bookishness and my incompetence at more practical activities, like knitting, for example. At fifteen, thanks to an intellectual boyfriend, my reading changed, almost overnight, from Jean Plaidy to Joyce. But both reading and writing served the same function as before. They gave me an inviolable private space, which I didn't have at home, where wanting to be by yourself was regarded as morbid. They also gave me access to a heightened subjectivity. I was brought up to be self-effacing and restrained; to 'make an exhibition of yourself' (see 'Making It Happen', pp.296, 298), to show yourself up - or to show your family up, which amounted to the
same thing - was treachery. I read Lawrence, Fitzgerald and Dostoevsky. I fantasized about becoming a great writer.

My background is, in many way, similar to Rose's, in Munro's *The Beggar Maid* - provincial, working class, with aspirations, but also deferential and self-mockingly pessimistic. The collection's original, Canadian title is *Who Do You Think You Are?*, another of those utterances, like 'making an exhibition,' which enforces self-restraint. But it also evokes Rose's shifting sense of identity as class and geographical allegiances are displaced, and as she negotiates the contradictory roles that are available to her as a woman. Like Rose, I am ambivalent about the culture I grew up in. Discussing it here, I am uncomfortably aware that I am constructing a single, unified narrative, which may not be the only possible version of the past, but which facilitates my current self-image as a writer.

I chose my first university mainly because it was one of the few institutions that offered creative writing in the 1970s. But I lacked the confidence to sign up for classes. Overwhelmed by the literary canon and intimidated by other student writers, who were mostly male, I almost gave up my own work. Grace Paley began writing stories during an enforced rest, after losing a baby. I began to take my writing seriously after having a child, when I realized I should make the most
of what little spare time was available.

I became involved in the worker writer movement, through a women's writing workshop in Manchester. I subscribed to a philosophy of writing as collective empowerment, which has much in common with Paley's vision of a storytelling community. It is directly opposed to the myth of the solitary genius, which only increased my isolation as a young writer. We published our own work, giving a voice to experiences which had, we believed, been marginalized or distorted by a white, male, middle class elite.

Ultimately, I became dissatisfied with a model of writing which valorized personal testimony, sometimes at the risk of devaluing technical skill. But my involvement in local workshops and community publishing fostered an awareness of a continuity between speech and writing, between literary discourse and the language of everyday life. As a young writer, Paley experienced a breakthrough in her work when, in classes with Auden, she found the confidence to use her own voice rather than trying to reproduce 'literary' language. Each of my own stories begins with the attempt to tune into a personal voice, which is constructed not just from my own speech, but from the diverse types of discourse with which it is in dialogue. This is not a single 'authentic' voice, nor is it exclusively derived from spoken discourse, but it is closely allied to orality,
and I edit my work by reading aloud.

This is how my approach to writing evolved, as a meeting between the exploration of subjective perceptions and the 'listening to other voices' which, Paley claims, leads you towards your own (31). I began to think of my stories as a type of collage; in fact, before I had a word processor, I used scissors and paste to re-order the narrative. Events rarely follow a chronological sequence; they are arranged elliptically, and the narrative emerges through the juxtaposition of words and images, rather than linear causality. In 'Making It Happen', the description of David riding his bike (p.290) has been relocated at various points across the section in which it appears.

I associate this aesthetic with an urban sensibility. I have lived in Manchester for twenty years, and set most of my work here. During this time, the fabric of the city has been constantly re-assembled, as old buildings are demolished or renovated, and new ones erected. Images from past and present, and of the future are juxtaposed literally. For me, the city embodies multiplicity. The intensity of word and image that my work aspires to is conditioned by the rapidly exchanging stimuli that I encounter here. The fragmentation of time in my stories owes less to direct literary influences than to the use of flashback and intercutting in film.

I have spoken about the affinities between film and
the short story genre in Chapter 6. I would argue that both film and the short story belong, chronotopically, to the unfolding present. But this is not a concept that is uppermost in my mind, when I am writing. Going to see a film eases me into a creative state of mind. Sometimes I make a conscious connection between a mood, an image or a technique on the screen and something I am trying to achieve on the page; sometimes the imaginative traces are less obvious.

I have provided some background to 'Making it Happen', and will now comment on the story itself. It is not my place, as its author, to offer a detailed textual analysis; rather, I am examining how the text emerged from the intermingling of conscious authorial intention, unconscious drives and intrinsic textual logic. This includes its treatment of time and subjectivity, which I raise as issues in the writing, rather than attempting their interpretation.

The composition of 'Making It Happen' began when I listened to a man 'speaking softly' to his car, exposing a tenderness which he could not always risk with me. In Bakhtinian terms, the story starts as a dialogue between two speech genres, one associated with car maintenance, the other with sexual intimacy:
His new car's a woman. He speaks to her softly, calling her baby, there, he says, there, come on now, you can do it, teasing the switches - let's try swapping these - setting to with a tiny screwdriver. His hands work swiftly and gently. You can trust this man. He knows what he's doing. (p.286)

My conscious intention was to explore some of the ambiguities of gendered speech and behaviour. 'His new car's a woman' parodies that type of discourse, which encodes multiplicity and contradiction within the feminine, for instance Nietzsche's 'Life is a woman' (32). Forms of transport are commonly assigned the female pronoun - particularly ships, to which the car is likened ('hull', p.287, 'great blue streamlined boat', p.301). This feminization may be an acknowledgement that technology does not always operate rationally, but may be as fickle as nature, the conventionally 'feminine'. My story inverts that reading, so that masculinity itself is diffuse and ineffable. Male subjectivity is enacted through skills, like driving, which, to the narrator at least, seem arcane. Her lover's attentions are concentrated onto his car; her father loads the dark bakery ovens (p.290). These skills are, of course, not infallible; 'he knows what he's doing' is spoken ironically at the story's beginning and end.

But in describing these initial ideas, I am already overstating the extent to which they were fully formed, and their importance in shaping the text as a whole. The symbolic and semiotic impulses that Kristeva ascribes
to the signifying process were both at play here. I chose the word 'baby', in the first paragraph, for its ironic connotations. But it is also there for its purely aural properties. The word was on my mind because I had been teaching David Mamet's play, *Oleanna*. In *Oleanna's* final, climactic scene, hostility turns into physical violence when a politically correct student warns her teacher, 'Don't call your wife "baby"' (33). In this sense, 'calling her baby' is an intertextual reference, although the connection would not be evident to the reader, or helpful to interpretation. The rhythmic and sensuous qualities of the prose are crucial to the ultimate choice of words and to the meanings they engender.

The opening passage initiates patterns of male speech and silence which are traced throughout the story. Sophie complains that David won't talk to her. The narrator's lover lectures her on physiology after they have sex; his conversation at the dinner party contrasts with the more intimate revelations that pass between the narrator and Sophie. In Chapter 3's analysis of Munro's 'Pictures of the Ice', I noted how a male character camouflages interior processes behind public speech genres. I might also add that while female access to public discourse has conventionally been restricted, there are no such limitations on private forms of discourse, such as gossip, where it is, traditionally, men who are disbarred. While I have no wish to ascribe
fixed characteristics to either gender, I do want to explore a female construction of masculinity as 'other', created in these gaps and silences. This is one reason why the narrator's lover remains nameless.

The entire story is told from the narrator's viewpoint, with some movement from internal to external focalization, as she imagines her lover's actions (p.286). As is evident from the opening paragraph, the distinctions between direct and indirect speech are often blurred; the words of others are embedded within the narrator's consciousness. Her lover is a mysterious, 'other', but he is constructed as such by her own subjectivity, which, in turn, is partially constructed through him. Bakhtin has said, 'As we gaze at each other, two different worlds are reflected in the pupils of our eyes' ("Author and Hero", p.23).

Critical theory offers a language with which to dissect linguistic strategies; but practice precedes theory, and this overlap between speakers and subjectivities has been evident in my work for a long time. The intention has always been to present a fluid subjectivity, in which the boundaries between self and other, external and internal reality are elided; and in which past and present interpenetrate.

When I look at my fiction as a whole, there are themes and images that recur. The interaction between bodies, machines and subjectivity is one of the most
obvious. 'Just like Robert de Niro' begins with the sentence, 'This is flesh and blood me, moving inside the machine' (34), before going on to evoke the urban landscape. The dialogue between speech genres which opens 'Making It Happen' associates the interplay between the human subject and the material object with sexuality. Again, this is something that is common in my writing. Sexual pleasure breaks down the illusion of a discrete, autonomous subject, merging self with other and surrendering rational control to animal instinct. The narrator claims that 'the best sex is purely mechanical' (p.292), but the Cartesian opposition behind that assertion is undermined by its context.

**Jouissance** suspends time, but sexuality is also attended by the past. As Camille Paglia says, 'every attraction, every pattern of touch, every orgasm is shaped by psychic shadows' (35). As I explained earlier, in most of my stories, time is experienced subjectively as flux, in which past and present intermingle. Like its predecessors, 'Making It Happen' is structured as an association of images, rather than a causal chain. The short opening passage between the new lovers is succeeded by the apparent discontinuity of David's party. Linearity is disrupted by analepses and digressions.

While representing the persistence of the past within the present, I also wanted to address the possibility of breaking away from it. This was the
most important of my conscious intentions. Earlier in this thesis, I have argued that the short story's affinity with the passing moment is used by writers like Munro and Paley to thwart the expectation that lived experience can be enclosed within predefined patterns. This can be seen at its most explicit in Munro's 'Accident' (36), where contingency is shown to govern her characters' lives. Adulterous sex is disrupted by the news that the man's child has been killed. But, far from ending the affair, the death unexpectedly transforms it into a marriage. There is no single, comparable turning point in 'Making It Happen', but the narrator's love affair is set in motion by a series of small flukes. I want to suggest that the future cannot be foreseen, and that the course of our lives may be altered by chance. This is scarcely a profound observation, but it does counter a determinism that currently dominates discourse on male-female relationships in popular psychology, the media and casual conversation. Male and female subjectivities are regarded as alien to one another, and each gender must decode the other in order to manage successful relationships.

'Making It Happen' compares a precarious new love affair with what may be the ending of an apparently stable marriage. Both relationships remain unresolved. The story's closing image, the car that might start or not, came to me quite early in its composition, but
I am less satisfied with the indeterminacy that surrounds David and Sophie. In avoiding conventional plot resolution, I may be sacrificing what can only be termed narrative drive.

While writing 'Making It Happen', I was influenced by Walter J. Ong's essay, 'Evolution, Myth and Poetic Vision' (37). He examines literature's fundamental dependence on repetition, particularly in poetry. He notes a conflict between the experience of time as a cycle - for instance in the return of the seasons - and mutability. The narrative structure of 'Making It Happen' is based on repetitions, variations and contrasts between words and images. It is cyclical, in that the final paragraph recapitulates the imagery of the opening. It is set mainly during spring, which signals seasonal renewal; there are other references to time as recurrence, for instance to palingenetic resemblance (p.294).

But spring also signifies rebirth. As I have suggested, the present moment forms both a continuum with the past and a movement away from it. The present disrupts inherited patterns; the strongest 'family' resemblance is that between Sophie and David. The identity of the nameless Scimitar driver is split between the sexual and the paternal; the two subject positions are never reconciled. Chronologically, the narrator is poised halfway between David, at thirty, and Sophie's
father at fifty, obscuring the gap between generations.
I wanted to present the subject in process as a web
of shifting identities, which cannot be confined within
conventional family roles.

Although I began with no specific ideas about the
narrator's circumstances, I sensed that she should have
re-invented herself, in some way. Her drinking problem
serves this purpose, although the idea came to me
intuitively, rather than logically. But its function
is to provide her with a former self which she separates
from her current identity. I wanted to present
fragmentation and discontinuity in lived experience
optimistically, as the potential for change. The
narrator's coyness about her love affair was to eventually
become an explicit decision to keep the relationship
concealed, cutting free from the family. But the intuition
that chose the drink problem worked against this particular
development as the text evolved.

Several other conscious intentions were not as
strongly registered in the text as I had planned. For
instance, the story was to be set very specifically
in the months leading up to the 1997 general election,
when British culture as a whole seemed be heading for
a sudden change. But, as I edited, the topical references
were cut, because they felt artificially grafted, rather
than intrinsic to the text. This may relate to a wider
difficulty in writing about contemporary events before
they have been clearly shaped by hindsight. I also expected to foreground the Manchester setting, but the characters' sense of personal territory has become more significant than geographical location.

A reader's response to any text varies over time. As I reconsider 'Making It Happen', eighteen months after the first draft, it is the initial image of the car that continues to intrigue me. Myself a non-driver, I am fascinated by cars, which to me represent a mysterious, autonomous space, offering both self-enclosure and escape. It is also a space I associate with masculinity. There are connections to be made with the autobiographical comments I made earlier on adolescence, writing and privacy; and on the way in which my characters, both male and female, exercise control through secrecy and silence. But to analyse these connections too thoroughly would tip the creative balance too far from intuition to intellect. I shall conclude my discussion now, leaving an 'absence', as Brooke-Rose describes it, out of which more texts might yet emerge.
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8. Magdalene Redekop, 'Postscript: Writing on a Living Author', in Mothers and Other Clowns: The Stories of
**Alice Munro** (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 229-239.


10. Eco, 'Interpretation and History', in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, p. 25.


18. Harold Horwood, 'Interview with Alice Munro' in *The Art of Alice Munro: Saying the Unsayable*, ed. by


21. See especially pp. 160-161 of 'Forms of Time'. He is referring specifically to the novelist, but I would extend this to other fiction writers.


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