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**"Memory work" :
Imaginal memory as feminist praxis in the works of selected
Contemporary Canadian women writers**

by

Amanda Gibbs

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
in Canadian Studies

Carleton University
OTTAWA, Ontario
December 20, 1994

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"'Memory Work': Imaginal memory as a feminist
praxis in the works of selected
Contemporary Canadian women writers"

submitted by Amanda Gibbs, B.J.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

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Director
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Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
January 1995

This thesis is dedicated
to the memory of my maternal grandmother,
Stella Petrick.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of three texts by Contemporary Canadian women writers: Gail Scott's Heroine, Elly Danica's Don't: a Woman's Word, and Jeanette Armstrong's Breath Tracks. The project explores these texts in light of their relationship to memory and life writing, theorizing the imaginative weaving of memory as a form of feminist praxis or agency. Each text is situated in the historical and social context of its production and reception in a meditation on the various feminist projects which have been significant in the Canadian cultural realm. The project also deploys a range of Contemporary feminist theory ranging from poststructuralist and psychoanalytic discourses to engaged political and cultural theories in order to expose the possibilities and contradictions in discussions of feminist agency.

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Preface

This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward.

Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Illuminations.

In making explicit my personal connections to this topic and how these might bear on the subject matter and mode of inquiry, my own memories are situated in my cultural position of white skin, middle-class, heterosexual privilege, yet also tied to a notion of solidarity in a politics of remembrance. My personal investment in this project has had much to do with memories of my late maternal grandmother, Stella Petrick, to whom this project is dedicated. She haunts me in innumerable ways. Her stories, wrung from my summer visits, somehow leaked into my ego-centric child spaces. A second generation Ukrainian-Canadian, she was moved by writing and yearned to write fiction herself, yet was thwarted by the demands of her traditional family. Since her death I have found clippings of lyric, and literary letters from her friend Ada, pressed into poetry books. I seek her out in photos, letters and a thousand little acts of memory--every relic primes my thinking of her. This lens of memory--how we remember childhood and how we

memorialize the dead--gives focus to how we conceptualize self and personal history.

A countervailing interest in and respect for memory is discernible in a variety of literary works appearing in Canada over the past decade. Perhaps this signals the *cri de coeur* of an age in which the spatial has taken over from the temporal as a means of situating ourselves in the lived environment, we have come to use the language of computer scientists in speaking and thinking about our memories. There has been a resurgence of concern with historical memory and the need to keep alive the dark images of this century's horrors lest we, in forgetfulness, allow their continuation on a yet greater scale. In recent years, the film Shoah has provided poignant, anguished remembrances of the Nazi Holocaust. Similar observances include an annual memorialization of the murder of 14 women engineers at L'ecole Polytechnique in Montreal in 1989; yearly lantern ceremonies that commemorate the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the AIDS Quilt Memorial Project in which friends, family and lovers create a square commemorating the life of those who have fallen to the disease; and the enormous attention given to the recovered memories of abuse survivors, as well as questions of their verity.

Cognitive and neuropsychological researchers excitedly discover and speculate over a multiplicity of discrete facets of memory and the location of these in different areas of the brain. Yet how can something as evanescent as memory take on

substance and become part of the brain, part of the body? Briefly, this process has been called an engram, or a memory trace, a forging of connections between neurons, creating a new circuit that acts as a symbol, a representation of something in the "outside" world that exists as a physical record in the brain. As soon as an impression impinges on to consciousness, it ignites memories and memories of memories. We are left to construct an unstable "identity" from these visual and verbal signs and fragments. Yet the question is how do we piece together these mnemonic snapshots, the little stories, so that they make "sense" ? What of amnesia, is it the erasure of memory or the absence of memory? Is this a productive gap which marks the site where memory should have been? (Johnson, 5-92)

Some would argue that memory is the very cloth from which culture is woven, and yet it is so ephemeral that it is intensely difficult to elementize or define. Memories are ghost narratives, shapes, gestures; they are something resting beneath a narrative acting as its own double, refusing to be managed, a life's haunting, or perhaps, as Marge Piercy has remarked, an extended form of prayer.

I have theorized literary or "imaginal memory" for its enormous disruptive potential. The prospect of externalizing inner "worlds" through writing carries a revolutionary promise; for women, the idea of bringing to light those parts of our experience which have been deemed "fictions" bespeaks

cultural change. In the last several years, I encountered work by several women artists, or rather memory "archivists," which has profoundly informed my approach to this writing project.

The first was an exhibit by Newfoundland environmental artist, Marlene Creates, entitled Landworks. Within this retrospective were a series of striking "memory maps" -- hand-drawn maps referring to specific places in Labrador accompanied by photos and small piles of found objects from these sites. The maps were sketched by long-time residents of the area and included the spoken texts of their particular memories of place. The exhibit also included a series of Creates' own memory maps and those of her family, revisiting the homes and community of her maternal grandmother and great-grandmother. Central to this series was a long shelf on which photographs of the story tellers and significant parts of the land they described were lined up and placed, as one would lovingly set family photos on a mantel.

This exhibit probed issues of identity, context, and community using the "cartographic" agency of memory. The specificity of memory was underscored by the drastic differences in the "mapping" of identical physical sites. The voicing of these memories, however, inscribed the sites as sources of meaning and value. The exhibit spoke back to the widely-held belief that much of this landscape is a desolate, uninhabitable void, absence itself. The remembrances of Innu people and traditional Euro-Canadian families, many of whom

have been dislocated at one time or another, speak against this belief which allows NATO fighter jets to fly at terrifying low altitudes over the "barren landscape." I was moved by the energy of the memory map; the project of mapping geographical, social, and inner spaces which have been disprivileged or silenced is an important one. I was also struck by how this project of memory mapping could work in relation to textual space as well as geographical ones.

The second event which has deeply informed my approach to this project is my reading of Elly Danica's Don't: A Woman's Word. Danica works through her childhood experiences of being sexually abused and tortured by her father. Her text is a recovery of horrifying memories she had submerged for the better part of her adult life. Don't is difficult to read, terrifying, and yet ultimately, revolutionary. Her remembrances--"potshards pieced together--" are tools of healing and survival, and more than anything I've read, resistance.

Benjamin's "angel of history" with his "face turned toward the past" yet irresistibly propelled by a storm into the future, is a resonant and haunting image which gives poignant voice to the movement of memory and history. With storms pinning his wings, he is pulled into an unfamiliar future witnessing the wreckage of history. He is a melancholy figure, a guardian to the saturnine Benjamin, and yet remains a figure of healing and possibility. The voicing of memory,

an embodied witnessing to the past through the literary imagination, arguably holds the power to propel the angel into the history and consciousness of our times.

Introduction:

"Memory work" as healing praxis

Re-vision--the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction--is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival.

Adrienne Rich, *"When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision"*

I have found that memory and the act of remembrance is a discourse which has been braided through the work of numerous contemporary Canadian women writers. To map the space memory occupies in these literary texts has an overt political dimension: it interrogates connections between women's experience and the social order. This "memory work," as it was termed in a recent edition of the feminist journal Tessera, has appeared in diverse imaginative and theoretical embodiments ranging from the experimental *écriture au féminin* conceived by Quebecois fiction/theorist Nicole Brossard to the meditative poetic dialogues Bronwen Wallace has created between remembered past and present; from the de/colonizing remembrances of Jeannette Armstrong to the engaged testimony of childhood terror in Elly Danica's Don't: A Woman's Word.

Many of these literary voices appropriate, poach, transgress, revise, and reconstruct the generic modes which have traditionally served as forums for the writing and speaking of personal narratives. The act of "telling it," of giving imaginative voice to memory, is visible in a hybrid of fictional, poetic, and oral genres--autobiographical,

epistolary, confessional poetry, and modes of testimony and storytelling. In her essay, "Coming to Terms: Life Writing -- from Genre to Critical Practice," Marlene Kadar redefines life writing as documents or fragments of documents written out of a life or unabashedly out of personal experience:

The narratives within life writing are linked by their common thematic concern with a life, or the self, but in recent years they have come to share a more complex feature: a philosophical and linguistic imperative that comes first, and then a sincere, probing disregard for genre and its rules, which has the effect of blending genres, creating new genres and derailing the once-respected 'objective' speaker or narrator. (152)

These textual strategies of life writing with their overlapping connections and discontinuities all posit an agency, a praxis in the speaking of experience, often mapping complex and nuanced relationships between theory and lived lives. This project will engage questions of how the confluence of memory and hybrid genres of life writing operates as feminist praxis--as a creative tool of healing, dialogue, and cultural intervention.¹ I will be looking at this question in relation to Gail Scott's Heroine, Elly Danica's Don't: A Woman's Word, and Jeannette Armstrong's Breath Tracks. Each text enacts a range of feminisms and projects situated within Canadian social and historical contexts.

In this methodological frame of feminist cultural interventions, memory voiced through life writing performs an act of resistance against those dominant discourses which threaten to submerge, deny, or erase personal and cultural

histories. By tracing memory in women's life-writing, I am working to counter the pervasive characterization of personal experience and memories as dubious and excessive. (Smith, 1987, 12) For instance, I will delve into how life writing works as healing, often providing a space in which to imaginatively revalorize suppressed anger and grief, as with the writing of childhood abuse survivors. My project draws upon Rita Felski's insights in Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change which suggests

the politics of feminist reading or writing is not a question which can be resolved at an aesthetic level alone; it is inextricably linked to the fate of the women's movement as a whole... Writing should be grasped as a social practice which creates meaning rather than merely communicating it. (182)

This discussion resonates with Adrienne Rich's consideration of memory as an act of "re-vision," which for women, "becomes more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival"(38). It is not enough to say that we must remember; we need to explore cultural images and metaphors that guide the work of memory and illuminate its largely forgotten possibilities, as well as possible weaknesses and deceptions. I invoke the term "imaginal memory," developed by Michael Perlman, which he defines as that aspect of memory that involves some kind of imagining as a specific practice of remembering images. The practitioners of "mnemonic art" draw on the co-presence of memory and imagination in the psyche, engaging and making present whatever images most deeply stir and "impress" the memory. The memory of what-has-been reveals

what-is-present in imagination, so that imaginal memory engages a witnessing to the past while opening into the imagining and remembering of future possibilities. Several of the texts I have studied combine an intense involvement with psychic images with a strong practical orientation. To remember often requires much practice, time and repetition, thus may be termed "memory work": it is not a simple act of pulling back the scrim of truth, but a process of recovery.

With remembering, however, there is often a simultaneous forgetting which should also be considered (Kadar, 10). This fused reading of remembrance and amnesia highlights social and cultural memory as a contested site where interpretations of the past and claims for the "truth" are constantly struggled over. Now, more than ever--with incest survivors speaking out and breaking out of the hold of a denied reality, with the recent commemoration of 500 years of Indigenous resistance to colonization, with feminist "revisionist" readings of history--we find that what is most crucial about remembering the past is how it figures in struggles to define the stakes of the present. These various "mnemonic struggles" raise numerous questions for this project: What is it that is being reflected upon in remembrance and how? With what visions and for whom? What dominant historical narrative of remembrance is being organized and constructed? How are feminist literary interpretations of/for remembrance being written into and out of the production of social memory? This project will explore

the literary dynamics of memory, not only at the thematic and aesthetic level, but also at a material level--as a process which activates an embodied agency.

ii. Displacing the remembering "I": Memory and the critique of subjectivity

Theorizing feminist cultural production and the possibility of feminist cultural politics means occupying a space fraught with speculative traps and snares. Numerous feminist critics argue that by positing the "truth" of female experience or standpoint as an adequate basis for the development of an oppositional women's culture, little attention is being paid to the ways in which the notion of a female reality is, itself, mediated by ideological and discursive systems which are neither innocent nor transparent. Certainly the idea of the unitary, transcendent, self-constituting subject, as one who can discard or transcend racism or class privilege, quickly becomes inadequate and reductive. Canadian poet Erin Mouré addresses this universalizing impulse in relation to women's writing in her essay, "Poetry, Memory and the Polis":

when we write of other women, create memories for them (concept of writer as witness, as resuscitator of the past, of invisible women's history), we tend to create them in our own image, out of our own class and cultural background, our own values and processes. Perpetuating our own law. Our own privilege. Thus placing these women we speak of in a double silence. (204-05)

This philosophical crisis of subjectivity has translated into a distrust for convention-laden forms of articulating

memory, particularly the variety Sidonie Smith describes in, A Poetics of Women's Autobiography as the "great man" genre. The autobiographical works of Augustine, Rousseau, Montaigne, Wordsworth, Mill, and other philosophical "movers" of Western history have been held up as definitive and canonical works in this genre. In a linear, chronological fashion they narrate the life of an authoritative male subject caught up in a steamrolling will to truth and history, intent on using the "imperialistic designs of naming, controlling, remembering, understanding," unfettered by historical or cultural circumstances (Smith, 1987, 8).

Social contestation lodged by women, by intellectuals or artists of different races and ethnicities, by lesbian and gay activists has disputed the Eurocentric, patriarchal, and heterosexual hegemony of literary history, poetics and aesthetics, in order to remember histories, write personal narratives, criticism, and theory from different perspectives. Genre, in particular, has been crucial to a reconsideration of literary memory. In the last twenty years, feminist literary critics have turned their attention to a consideration of how women's identities within a patriarchal cultural order affect their relationships to generic possibilities: from the need to inscribe memories which have long been deemed culturally insignificant to how women writers structure this content, from the reading and writing of the subject to the authority of voice and the construction of narrative perspective, to the

problematic nature of representation itself (Smith, 1987, 8).

In their essay, "De/colonization and the Politics of Discourse in Women's Autobiography," Smith and Julia Watson flag Western autobiography as a neocolonizing form of discourse:

Western autobiography colludes in cultural myth-making....it functions as an exclusionary genre against which the utterances of other subjects are measured and misread. While inviting all subjects to participate in its practices, it provides the constraining template or the generic law against which those subjects and their diverse forms of self-narrative are judged and found wanting.(xviii)

In order to transgress or "unstick" such canonical forms, there has to be a reframing of our understanding of traditional and alternative forms of storytelling, both oral and written, as in Danica's engagement with testimony, and Armstrong's traversal of oral history. Such writers challenge the valorization of so-called "high" cultural forms over personal, more local forms of expression, such as journals, films, testimonies, popular novels, and poetry. Life writing responds to the dominant canon as a means of narrating agency by suggesting alternative modes of being. An appropriation of Foucault's conception of genealogical analysis is useful in a critique of canonical modes of self-expression. Whereas traditional or totalizing history inserts events into grand explanatory systems and linear processes, celebrating great moments and individuals, genealogical analysis attempts to establish and preserve the singularity of events--turning away from the spectacular in favour of the discredited, the

neglected, and a whole range of phenomena which have been denied a history.

In Life/Lines, a revisionist collection of essays on women's autobiography theory, the contributors attempt not only to describe specific female features of the text, but also to demonstrate that generalizations about female experiences or style are dangerous because they tend to ignore issues of class, race and sexual orientation. Editors Bella Brodski and Celeste Schenck suggest that gender must be a vital yet not privileged consideration in autobiographical criticism: "to help us push beyond the mere overturning of binary oppositions"(15).

Similarly Francoise Lionnet, in Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender and Self-Portraiture, points out that "women are so diverse and live in such varied cultural, racial, and economic circumstances that we cannot pretend to speak in a single voice"(xi). She puts forward a theory of metissage--of hybridization, braiding--a term signifying "a concept of solidarity which demystifies all essentialist origins, be they racial, sexual, geographic, or cultural"(9). Like Brodski and Schenck's call to move beyond simply overturning binary oppositions, Lionnet asks us to "articulate new visions of ourselves, new concepts that allow us to think otherwise, to bypass the ancient symmetries and dichotomies that have governed the ground and the very condition of possibility and thought, of 'clarity,' in all of Western philosophy. Metissage

is such a concept and practice: it is the site of "undecidability and indeterminacy"(6). Her study shows that although women "belong to widely different cultural backgrounds...[they can] share a profound concern for the rhetoric of selfhood, for the processes of self-reading and self-writing"(21).

I contend that the braiding of women's politicized memories through fiction and poetry, "imaginal memory," holds the possibility of upending generic laws. The interweaving of genres has an unsettling effect of shifting modes of meaning. The transcendent, heroic "truth" privileged in the autobiographical mode is displaced in favour of more improvisational forms which poach, borrow and warp as needed to communicate often urgent and politically motivated memory.

At the seminal 1983 Women and Words conference held in Vancouver, First Nations writer Madeleine Oulette-Michalska made explicit the connection between memory and subversive art "in the feminine" :

[It] invent[s] forms and vehicles for the expression of what has not yet been said, revealed or acknowledged ...revive[s] lost memories: group or ethnic memories obscured by notions of folklore and technology [which] the imperialist colonizing powers have imposed, making the people strangers to themselves; the memories of women whose only links with cultural heritage have been, in many cases, through the sons who struck their names from the registers and had them appear in poems, bibles, and tracts, whether philosophical, historical, or sociological, as symbols, Freudian slips, doubtful sources, or suspect materials.(30)

iii. Theorizing embodied agency & the social body

Although sophisticated poststructuralist critiques have, in part, opened apertures enabling disempowered voices to enter the cultural arena, some theorists have argued that the institutional ascendancy of such theory has created a new, closed orthodoxy marked by "intellectual elitism and exclusionary power relations endemic in the sheer difficulty" of its discourses (Freidman, 468). Poststructuralist axioms refuse a commitment to a general ontology of history, society, and the human subject or to advance any general theory of power. "The death of the subject" denies that there remains any progressive political potential in the ideal of the autonomous subject, which makes it very difficult to theorize agency. In terms of feminist theory, a good deal of current theorizing about identity, representation, gender, and the "writing body" has happened in a highly abstracted analytic context that frequently pays little attention to public and institutional contexts and the needs of the engaged female writer (Berland, 19). There has been a concurrent desire for materiality and groundedness which Susan Stanford Freidman names as our historic situation in a "post/ poststructuralist moment":

a shift in the critical mass toward commitment, vocation, social responsibility...a growing legitimacy (once again) for questions of ethics and politics, of agency and action, of intention and meaning. It has meant the insistent return of urgency, of a sense that our intellectual work matters--or at least it should matter, must matter, in the arena of cultural production and social change.(465)

This "resurgent activism" has prompted a reconsideration (not a nostalgic quest for unity) of concepts such as agency, body, self, collectivity, solidarity and as Freidman notes, the issue of "feminist engagement--its nature, its origin, its arena, its direction, its objectives, its alliances, its effects, its contradictions"(469).²

Perhaps the most compelling argument for such a renegotiation of agency rests with the continuing place of life writing as a literary forum for oppressed groups, a medium for confronting problems of self and of cultural identity which fulfills important social needs (Felski, 78). There is a profound urgency to Elly Danica's Don't and Jeannette Armstrong's Breath Tracks--memory becomes a strategy for propelling devalued experience into the history and consciousness of our times. Sidonie Smith in Subjectivity Identity and the Body notes the place of life writing in emancipatory politics: "autobiographical practices become occasions for restaging subjectivity, and autobiographical strategies become occasions for the staging of resistance"(157). This approach also resonates with Biddy Martin's theorizing of agency through "practices of self-representation which illuminate the contradictory, multiple construction of subjectivity at the intersections, but also in the interstices of ideologies of gender, race, and sexuality" (Martin, 157).

However, the privileging of standpoints and the discussion of "authentic" voices constitutive of meaning, raises important questions for this project--for example, in tensions which emerge in discussions of individual and collective memory. Restagings of individual memory may interrogate the closure of the unitary subject, while the invocation of a collective memory often risks essentialism in its cultural project of shifting existing modes of meaning and envisioning new ones. This project will attempt to "map" an interval between these positions---a space of webbed and overlapping positionalities.

Feminist standpoint theorist, Donna Haraway's discussion of "situated knowledges" is a nuanced theory which speaks in favour of an embodied subjectivity, while it deals with the tensions between the unquestioned privileging of standpoints and poststructuralism's relativistic funeral march for the subject. She says that in the "radical multiplicity of local knowledges," only partial perspective promises objective vision. It is a vision or, in the case of the remembering subject, re-vision, located in "partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology"(191). Haraway articulates doubts about self-presence which borrows from and tempers Jacques Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence:

The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole or simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another.(193)

This embodied subjectivity becomes a space of possibility and agency in which the "split and contradictory self" can interrogate positionings and be accountable, yet can also construct and join rational conversations and "fantastic imaginings that change history." Haraway's embodied subject supports an argument for a feminist cultural politics as an interweaving of appropriation, re-vision, and struggle against existing frameworks--generic and narrative. This resistance is evident in the hybrid aesthetic of life writing, which breaks the codes of canonical forms of self-expression, in its voicing of memory mediated by language and culture.

Haraway's partial vision is useful for examining those mnemonic technologies that underwrite the incorporation of the social body into the physical body, the theoretical cartography mapping the processes that mediate and transform the nexus between the collective and the individual. The question of how to relate the remembering body and society is also a question about the borderlands between subjectivity and the symbolic order, agency and social control, experience and representation.

Social theorist Paul Connerton claims in How Societies Remember that collective and individual memory are so thoroughly interconnected, and those interconnections are so

central to how societies reproduce their social order across generations, that it is vital to analyse how societies remember. Connerton professes that societies remember in three rather different ways: through inscription on to cultural texts; by way of commemorative rituals that engage people in social action; and via incorporation of social memory into the human body. Drawing on the work of ethnographers and social historians, he elaborates his evocative argument to illustrate what societies remember: namely, historical events, social changes, cultural identity, along with ethnic, class, and gender difference. In her therapeutic work, Trauma and Recovery, Judith Herman also keys on the movement between social and individual memory, but through "public truth-telling"--"a common denominator of social action"(208). For Herman, engaged testimony links "the private dimension, which is confessional and spiritual, and a public aspect, which is political and judicial. The use of the word testimony links both meanings, giving a new and larger dimension to ...individual experience" (Herman, 181). In this manner, testifying creates links between the remembering body and the "body politic."

iv. Counter-public spheres

In modern societies, there seems to be a constant struggle for interpretative power, while prevailing ideologies limit the means by which individuals understand their material experiences. Marxist theorist Frederic Jameson, among others,

points to the modern culture industry, transnational capitalism, escalating communications technology as robbing individuals of 'languages' for interpreting self and world by denying them the media for organizing their own experiences.(50) Individuals and social groups are in urgent need of public "spaces," in which they can deal with subliminally felt experiences and learn to understand them on a more conscious, critical level. Rita Felski's discussion of a feminist counter-public sphere is a useful tool in theorizing the complex mediations between literature, feminist ideology, and the broader social domain, and can be used in a nuanced discussion of the agency of feminist cultural activity. The counter-public sphere has its genesis in Jurgen Habermas' discussion of the emancipatory moment of Enlightenment universality. However, Felski's feminist appropriation of this concept is no longer based on notions of universality, but on the specificities of gender, ethnicity, class and sexual orientation. Felski locates the most vital space for feminism in the aesthetic and cultural sphere because of the success of culture in repoliticizing the act of reception through the emergence of "oppositional interpretative communities". Yet this oppositional politics does not dissolve into a binary construction:

Given the complex interpenetrations of state and society in late capitalism, it is no longer possible to adhere to such a nostalgic model of an autonomous public community which can remain outside existing institutional structures and at the same time claim an influential function as an oppositional forum. Instead the category

of the counter-public sphere needs to be understood as a series of political and cultural strategies which can be effective across a range of levels. Rather than a uniform interpretative community, then it is more appropriate to speak of coalitions of overlapping subcommunities (Felski, 1989, 233).

This nuancing of the space of feminist cultural intervention echoes Haraway's discussion of situated knowledges and webbed and interweaving understandings of culture. Felski addresses the discourses of "self-discovery" and "confession" which constitute significant strains of women's life writing. Echoing Spivak, she claims that "issues of autonomy and self-emancipation possess a continuing and often urgent relevance for marginalized social groups"(Felski, 1989, 234). The relation between speaking memory and "empowerment" may be examined in this context. In line with Felski's notion of literature as social practice, Elizabeth Fox Genovese advocates a reclamation of the political value of literary texts for to

insist that texts are...participants in history [conceptualized] as structured social and gender relations is to reclaim them for society...for political scrutiny by those whom they have excluded, as much as those whom they have celebrated...And it is to reclaim them for intentional political action, and ourselves for political accountability ("Literary Criticism," 217).

The notion of political accountability compellingly provokes a reading practice and which allows the agency of the subject to be "read" within historically specific sets of socio-cultural relations and ideological assumptions.

v. Re-reading chapters

There is something very difficult and inevitably political in the selection of texts for a project such as mine, particularly in light of the numerous women writers whose works are relevant: the poetry of Bronwen Wallace, Marlene Nourbese Philip, Daphne Marlatt, Nicole Brossard, Libby Schier, Di Brandt, and the fiction of Joy Kogawa, Carol Shields, Evelyn Lau, Jane Rule, Margaret Laurence, Alice Munro, Mavis Gallant, to name but a few. The works I have chosen may seem incongruous--from the deconstructive play of Heroine, to the urgent testimony of Don't, to the identity politics of Breath Tracks--yet I feel that these texts activate a number of creative and political dissonances in relation to women's inscriptions of memory.

Literary texts should be read intertextually with the author's "critical writings" and interviews, as well as with the work of other writers and theorists. Carolyn Helibrun in "Writing a Woman's Life" calls for a "politics of reading" women's autobiography; a reading and writing affiliation with other women which helps steer through the difficulty of negotiating and describing women's associations outside a patriarchal framework (Helibrun, 54). This practice of re-reading, shared by a number of contemporary women writers, also has the effect of invoking a collective memory/tradition, as a means of validating or lending energy and pride to the enterprise of women's writing. Nicole Brossard uses a tactic of quoting and naming literary precursor figures in her

writing, in order to produce a "definite political effect," pointing out "literary, cultural or political networks" (The Aerial Letter, 79).

Gail Scott's Heroine may be read against a theoretical backdrop of radical play with language notable in writing by Quebecoises over the last two decades. Scott describes her prose as part of "a spiral-like movement, linked in space and time to the work of other women in Quebec and elsewhere. It exists "and is more exalted because it's part of a community" (Spaces, 51). This novel also foregrounds the particular relationship between Quebecois and English-Canadian writers and the cross-fertilization of their texts. In broad terms, the Anglo-North American radical feminist tradition has taken a pragmatic, grass roots approach to social change; whereas, the French-Quebecoise feminists articulate their work within a more intellectual, philosophical framework which mobilizes critiques/appropriations of poststructuralist theorists and philosophers, particularly the psychoanalytic discourse of Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, and Julia Kristeva. Quebecoises Nicole Brossard, Louky Bersianik, and Madeleine Gagnon are but a few of the writers who have gained attention for their creative and radical appropriation of French feminist thought in a praxis of "écriture au féminin." Such writing combines a diffuse political agenda with the creative and imaginative power of French feminist theory, which has contributed powerfully to the feminist debate about the nature

of women's oppression, the construction of sexual difference, and the specificity of women's relations to language and writing. Patricia Smart, in Writing in the Father's House: Women's Writing in Quebec, identifies strategies of French and Quebecoise practice as:

The recovery of the figure of the mother, the patient autobiographical search for traces of the feminine in the mythologies of the past, and finally the exploration of a new relationship between the dualities of body and spirit, emotion and thought, fiction and theory, are among the facets of the deconstruction of the patriarchal symbolic order undertaken as a shared task by these writings. (Smart, 238)

My second chapter, then, will address Heroine's engagement with feminist theory naming its limits for healing and agency, and its theoretical collisions with the grounded urgency of works by Armstrong and Danica. Heroine engages nostalgic memory, as Scott and her quasi-autobiographical character draw from the bottom of the well of subjective inwardness. Because the text's hyper-theorizing of gender and literary representation are demanding and often perplexing for the reader, I would argue that it engages a privileged textual agency. The self-conscious probing, and displacement of nostalgic memory through a montage aesthetic enables a critique of dominant literary/cultural "plots" and the (male) objectifying gaze evident in fictional and visual representation. Heroine also probes the problem of (white) female psychic melancholia and disrupts feminist prescriptions for an idealized and unproblematic cultural heroine.

Elly Danica's Don't: a Woman's Word, the focus of my

third chapter, should be placed in a context of what Elie Wiesel has named the "literature of testimony"; those compelling articulations written by survivors of the Holocaust, political prisoners, and survivors of abuse and trauma (Felman, 6). Much of Don't's power lies in its capacity to evoke powerful response from its considerable readership; it has sold 10, 000 copies in Canada and has been translated into numerous languages throughout the world. Many survivors compelled and encouraged by Danica's story have voiced their stories of childhood abuse. In 1988, CBC Morningside host, Peter Gzowski, broadcast an interview with Danica interspersed with sections of Don't read by an actor. Women and men responded with letters recounting their own stories of abuse and significantly, after Gynergy Press published Don't, the P.E.I. publishing house received one hundred similar poetry and prose manuscripts from women across the country. The need to map, to imaginatively inscribe these memories, had become urgent.

Don't may be read against a web of intersecting discourses: therapeutic, political, testimonial, legal, and familial. In this piercing narrative, body memory, life writing, and social history merge, as the pained, vertiginous, feeling body becomes an axis of experience, symbolic meaning, and social institutions. The intensity of Danica's testimony reveals it to be a form of commemoration which reciprocally activates a process of witnessing for the reader, and creates

a larger sense of communality. This chapter will examine the cultural/familial problem of silence and the subsequent movement into agency enacted in Don't; a discussion of the literary form that traumatic memory takes; Danica's narrative method of fragmentation and descent as a strategy of reclaiming submerged memory; the relationship between testimony and witnessing and writing and reading in Don't; and the reconstruction of the "remembering self" and her confluence with an engaged social memory.

The fourth chapter will engage Jeannette Armstrong's Breath Tracks which may be read against a backdrop of Native political and cultural issues in this country. Resistance and cultural transmission are linked in Breath Tracks as its poetic interventions perform acts of subversion against what Armstrong has named the "hostile cultural supremacy" of dominant, non-Native Canadian society. Her founding of the En'owkin International School of Writing in Penticton and the Theytus publishing house bespeaks her commitment to cultural renewal in a project of placing marginalized voices into cultural space. Significantly, Armstrong's engagement with life writing works as resistance against institutional and dominant literary "standards" and discourses, speaking back to the lack of access to publication and performance which work to negate, exclude, and limit the possibilities for Aboriginal expression in Canada. Life writing is an urgent response as Armstrong invokes memory as an historical and social

intervention towards a collective healing. This chapter will probe the dissonances between the privileged, individualistic framing of agency in Heroine, and the invocation of collective historical memory by the rhetorical poet/speaker of Breath Tracks. This chapter foregrounds Okanagan cultural knowledges, a collective knowing, over more abstract theorizing in the first chapter.

This study will also examine Breath Tracks in relation to a recovered tradition of Indigenous life writing as a form of healing; the hybrid form of Native oratory and western lyric as productive counter-discourse; the invocation of a matrilineal tradition through the figure of grandmother; a practice of quietness and community accountable memory; and restagings of colonial history. Overall, this thesis will attempt to interrogate how these texts activate the texture of "memory work"--the social, material, and experiential dynamics of memory--as well as, the literary forms that nostalgic, traumatic and communal memory assume.

Displacing Nostalgic Memory and(White) Women's Melancholia:
 Narrative Montage as Agency in Gail Scott's Heroine

"O Mama, Why'd You Put this hole in me?"

Gail's refrain, Heroine

On the wall, I saw a photograph of her when she was
 twenty. I saw on the wall a photograph of Florence and
 John with her grouped around a virile man. I saw memory
 in action.

Nicole Brossard, Picture Theory

Adrienne Rich has aptly characterized nostalgia as the "imagination's sugar rush, leaving depression and emptiness in its wake" (145). Gail Scott's poetic novel, Heroine enacts a defamiliarizing dance with nostalgia; its writer/heroine frequently binges on the "junk food" of memory, yet attempts to resist its empty appeal. She repeatedly defines nostalgia as the ruination of the forward-looking heroine. The site of this narrative two-step is the politically charged space of Montreal in October 1980--the year of Quebec's referendum on the question of sovereignty and the tenth anniversary of the "October Crisis." The heroine, at home in her flat in the Waikiki Tourist Rooms, soaks in her bathtub, re-membering her rite of passage from socialist revolutionary to feminist and writer. Many of her memories obsessively reconstruct and analyze her agonizing relationship with a Quebecois revolutionary, as the narrative time swings between nostalgia--the heroine's longing for the fixed, heterosexual romance

plot--and desire--her will to move beyond a hurtful and destructive relationship.

The tub is also the site from which this writer/heroine meditates on her work-in-progress, piecing together the mnemonic shards of her dissolved affair and circling around the problems connected with the creation of a "suitable literary heroine" ("writing starts in...", 254). Scott describes her complex interweavings of writing and remembering as assuming "the job of imagining what [I] now think of as a "writing subject" in the feminine. Not the "self" as a (feminist or otherwise) predetermined figure, but a complex tissue of texts, experience, evolving in the very act of writing" (*Spaces*, 11). This emphasis on the construction of the "writing self" marks *Heroine* as an "anti-autobiographical" form, or what Caren Kaplan terms "out-law genres"--autobiographical, but eclectically "errant" and culturally disruptive writing practices (119). Marlene Kadar reads *Heroine* as life writing, the redefined genre which derails the conventional autobiographical impulse as a "playground for new relationships both within and without the text, and most importantly,...the site of new languages and grammars...the site of the other, and this other is 'autobiographical' in one sense, and not at all in another" (Kadar, 154). Certainly the separation between signator and narrator are blurred in the text as Scott and her writer/heroine self-reflexively named Gail, or G.S., remember and discontinuously reconstruct their

journey through the political and cultural signposts of radical socialist Quebec of the 70s.

Gail's fragmented memories, "drifting by in the steam," are worked into a literary montage characterized by a disregard for generic categories. Heroine appropriates and re-visions a complex chain of interwoven genres and media, ranging from epistolary entries to graffiti and cinema. This traversal of boundaries embodies a disjunctive emphasis on multiple perspectives, warping and exceeding the canonical modes for the speaking of memory. According to Scott this cross-border poaching--this glissade between genres--marks a challenge to the authority and legitimacy in texts (Spaces, 31). Poststructuralist discourse, as I suggest earlier in my thesis, has contributed powerfully to a rupture in the notion of sovereign and transcendent individuality inherited from the Enlightenment. The "postmodern" self is not the centred and controlling subject, set apart from and "master" over history; indeed, as much as postmodernism emphasizes the regulating power of social forces, it can be said to theorize the decentring of the self. Its major focus is less the modernist theme of the creative subject of production than the production of the subject, for it inquires into the ways in which our identities are constructed by representations in society. Scott investigates the underside of this process, examining how the dominant cultural representations of women legislate, define, and subject. Heroine is inspired by avant

garde and postmodern intertextuality and interdiscursivity as the female writing/remembering subject is re-presented in a hybrid space of montage. Although the text exhibits a concern with language and its relation to cultural functions, Scott differentiates between her project and others: "our [women's] postmodernism, with its consciously female subject is quite different from that of men--where the subject is distanced, erased or neuter" (Spaces, 35). This postmodernism is, as Linda Hutcheon describes, "paradoxically both self-reflexive and historically grounded, both parodic and political"(1989, 40).

Heroine's status as life writing also intersects with the project of "fiction/theory," a prominent form of feminist deconstructive literary theory in Canada which involves appropriations and re-readings of intricate French feminist psychoanalytic and linguistic theories. The "semi-autobiographical" fiction/theory collapses the generic boundaries of fiction, poetry, and theory in an attempt to "explore the process by which texts generate effects of reality and real effects"(Moyes, 3). Scott defines the "real" as "that 'universal' represented by society's institutions: the practice of politics, of systems of law, education, etc"(Spaces, 78). It could be argued that Heroine's generic crossings between theory, autobiography, and fiction mediate between the representational and the "real" to effect a disturbance in those constructions which, as Barbara Goddard

has suggested, "work at keeping us[women] in our proper places"(Goddard, 1986, 4).

Scott's metafictional inscription of "self" into Heroine fuses the categories of fiction and theory in an attempt to unsettle and subvert the literary and gender codes determining the representation of women in literature (Goddard, 1987, 4). Writing fiction/theory, then, becomes a means of deconstructing these traditional "fictions" about women--images and models, codes, knowledges that make up the symbolic order. Scott targets the pervasive heterosexual bias of feminism, tropes of romance, revolutionary politics, and pervasive visual images of women.

Heroine's hyper-theorizing of gender and language, however, positions it as a critical, but dissonant text in relation to this project. It does not fit effortlessly into a discussion of memory as a literary strategy of agency and healing; although it theorizes an agency, it lacks the political urgency of texts by Elly Danica and Jeannette Armstrong. Productively, however, the novel provokes creative fissures in this examination of literary memory and within the larger literary context of Canadian women's writing. Lorna Irvine flags Heroine's self-reflexivity as tracing the "tension between political action--both national and feminist--and the contemplation necessary to aesthetic and theoretical construction"(111). This chapter will briefly engage discussions of Scott's "remembering subject" in relation to

Quebecois fiction/theory and in relation to the historical and cultural site of Montreal. It will further explore the disruptive narrative practice of montage as a "vehicle of memory"; Scott's probing of nostalgic memory as a critique of the heterosexual romance plot and the male objectifying gaze; a discussion of the enduring and endemic problem of (white) female psychic melancholia; and a disruption of feminist prescriptions for idealized and unproblematic heroines.

ii. Re-membering and "writing in the feminine": Scott and fiction/theory

As a founder and former editor of the feminist journal, Tessera, the principal forum for fiction/theory in Canada, Scott has explicitly situated her writing within this theoretical and cultural project. Like her heroine, Scott is a bilingual writer who travelled to Montreal in the 1970s, and often uses her cultural position as an anglophone to present an anti-imperialist critique of her own culture from within her adopted one. This positioning intersects with a series of cross-cultural exchanges which brought Tessera into existence. Quebecois writers Nicole Brossard, Louky Bersianik and Madeleine Gagnon, first gained attention for their creative and radical appropriation of French feminist theory in their theoretical musings on "*nouvelle ecriture*," *fiction theoretique*, or fiction/ theory. These inventive writings, translated into English over the last ten years, have been important in the formation of a new Canadian feminist

deconstructive "writing the body" practice. Scott's participation in this project foregrounds the struggles between Canada's anglophone and francophone critical perspectives as they work themselves into the fabric of social practice and gender and generic traditions. Scott names the writing of Heroine as the challenge of trying "to synthesize experience issuing from two diametrically opposed cultural situations" (Paragraph, 4). This tension is a pull between the "francophone preoccupation with text and the English lust for story in that fragmentation" ("a very rhythmic...", 249-50).

In a 1986 joint issue of Tessera/Canadian Fiction Magazine dedicated to fiction/theory, Tessera's editorial collective published a series of epistolary exchanges on this topic. In her inventive poem/essay in this issue, "Spaces Like Stairs," Scott meditates most concisely on fiction/theory's movement between genres and modes asking, "how to state the facts when we are fiction/to be imaginative when our fiction is biography when in/ order not to sink in sadness our fiction must be theory"(27). Throughout Heroine, the story and the writer/heroine's analysis bounce off each other, while the narrative product--the story and processual act of writing--intertwine in the narrative space. Her interrogations of narrative allow the reader to examine the writing we call "fiction" or "autobiography" as a site for feminist inquiry into representation and subjectivity (Moyes, 2).

Scott openly presents us with the problem of narrative distance in Heroine--the space between women authors and their female characters. The narrative voice shifts fluidly from "I" to "she" and from Gail to "my heroine," enacting what Scott has described as a "third voice, not the author or the narrator, but the voice of the author/narrator subsumed (as opposed to commenting from a distance as in a more traditional narrative) into the object of the narration"(Spaces, 94). Ruminating on her novel and her life, Gail muses:

A heroine locked in time could be the ruination of a novel. I should get out and write this down. Still, sitting in Bagels, the heroine seems to think of time as moving more like in music than in a storyline. For she always wakes up with his perfect body glowing like the silver of illusion in a corner of her mind. While in another corner grows the free woman faintly outlined in the future. Even while still with him (therefore lacking distance) she wrote of this contradictory sonatina in her diary: Winter. Return of light (snow) and inspiration. And the sad-sweet combination of you and I in bed. Warmth, then battle. What is this revolt in me that must destroy (half-baked) love? The question is, if she's fractured over time with the inner self shining bright and dark like that, from what angle can a person start the story?(132)

Another intriguing variation in the speaking voice appears in the figure of Sepia, addressed "in moments of great excitement" throughout the novel. Sepia, the cast of yellowing photos and possibly the colour of a snapshot of the heroine and her lover on a perfect holiday in Europe, proves to be a catalyst for heady remembrances from Gail's tub:

Who or what is Sepia? Memory perhaps, but coloured like an old photo, the sepia tint taking away the sharp contrast between black and white. There is something dream like about this Sepia. She seems to represent an ideal of perfection. Like the moment of "love" in a

Northern European town, that my heroine remembers through a photo taken of her and her ex-lover. The photo lays now on a stool by her tub. (Spaces, 85)

Sepia is constituted as a novelistic character, and is addressed almost as a confidante, a diary addressee to whom Gail confesses her nostalgia for lost love and memories of her childhood. A witness to the "internal desolation" of the text, Sepia becomes a narrative figure for nostalgic memory and interiority, an other, who displaces the project of self-investigation, an important thread in the process of remembering the past.

Heroine's lack of an "univocal author" works as fiction/theory in that it disrupts "the nature of the enunciated and the enounced" (Goddard, 1986, 4). This blurring of genres, and collapsing of narrator and heroine, probes how women can implicate themselves in their texts, "the point at which writing and life are so intertwined" (Carey, 18). This "third voice," this self-reflexivity, points to productive questions of distance between women writers and their characters. Scott ironically muses on the creation of her novel:

...people will say 'its autobiography, like all first novels.' Odd how many women keep writing 'first novels' over and over again. In Quebec, we've been saying that women, in writing their own gendered voices, are creating a 'real' that has to date existed only as fiction created by males. (Spaces, 82)

iii. Situating the heroine in a "real" city.

There is no doubt that the heroine writes in a cultural milieu where writers are more concerned with syntax and

language than with "story," yet her play with the notion of a literary, politically engaged and feminist heroine is situated in the historical and social space of a "real city." From her tub, the author/narrator situates the remembered action in a historical context, the charged political site of Montreal in the 1970s. The narrator evocatively re-creates this landscape--the bars, the music, the restaurants, the mountain hanging over the city. Her pleased and abject body functions as a lens through which she comes to see her complex cultural and historical positioning as a woman, feminist, marxist revolutionary, and writer--agendas which frequently conflict and collide. Significantly, Scott refuses the notion of an essential feminine memory suggesting "the issue is a social and cultural one...the body is mediated by language and our perception of ourselves, which is also mediated by culture"(Paragraph, 7). This positioning speaks to Peter Stallybrass's observation that the body and social conditions are inseparable. The body and the memories it contains

cannot be thought separately from the social formation, symbolic topography and the constitution of the subject. The body is neither a purely natural given nor is it merely a textual metaphor, it is a privileged operator for the transcoding of these other areas. Thinking the body is social topography and vice versa.(192)

The fact that Gail is a minority anglophone in a largely French cultural milieu, as well as a writer "in the feminine" is constantly emphasized by her observations on nationality and culture. Scott has said of this novel that it was

motivated in part by her curiosity as to how the English-speaking heroine might look against the backdrop of contemporary Quebec. (Spaces, 83) She frequently links "the repression of the female body as central to her Protestant heritage" ("a very rhythmic...", 250). The heroine also makes her home in the Waikiki Tourist Rooms, an ironic comment on her status as a cultural observer and a "tourist" of sorts. Her parody of the radical left of the 70s and the roles women assume within it is devastating and creatively subversive in character, and plays with the notion that feminism has replaced Quebec nationalism in its revolutionary power and fervour. (Hutcheon, 1)

Heroine's narrative movement positions memory as a space where "inner and outer voices meet". The writer attempts to map the space between her inner narrative, the hallucinatory remembrances from the tub, and the "external," the city in which she is trying to be a "good revolutionary" as she envisions(95)

a woman in a bath. An empty bath, but she's oblivious, for she's masturbating under a jet of water. I have to find a narrative way to give her meaning. Some plot to tie together the memories floating past her in the steam, not only the lost love, but also the dissolution of certain political dreams in what she knows already will be the Yuppie decade (the 80s). And, to relate these somehow to the images from the "exterior," the street. (Spaces, 81)

The deconstructive play with the absence of the female gendered body is extended to the body politic as Scott's heroine traverses Montreal political and social landscape with

a present/absent bodily relationship to this context. The streets are a spectacle which her body takes in. The female body, fragmented, in pain, its cells reaching out to all the other fragmented, pained bodies...the poor, the effect of les restes de colonization, is sometimes literally splayed across the city (96).

Significantly, Sidonie Smith's discussion of the "autobiographical subject" seems to mesh with Scott's project of mapping a connection to material conditions:

Writing her experiential history of the body....engages in a process of critical self-consciousness through which she comes to an awareness of the relationship of her specific body to the cultural body and to the body politic. That change in consciousness prompts cultural critique.(Smith, 1993, 131)

The narrator's subject position, geographical location and historical situation are all revealed as mutually imbricated in Heroine's textual process of literary montage. The text's unstable, fragmentary construction of memory operates as an intransitive, writing out of the frame, which disrupts any single context, and provokes a complex seeing of visual and literary tropes.

HEROINE

A NOVEL BY GAIL SCOTT

iv. Photonegative montage: the underside of romance

Heroine answers the call in Tessera's manifesto for a juxtaposition of discursive codes, representational frames, writing and graphic art, writing and photography. (Moyes, 7) Cheryl Sourkes' striking photonegative collage on its cover operates as a fluid analogue to the writing practice found "between the covers" and offers a visual re-reading of the literary text which Scott has described as "hundreds of little overlapping stories" ("a very rhythmic...", 249). Of pictorial modes, photomontage is possibly the most political and the most subtly subversive. Violating conventional rules about aesthetic correctness and cohesiveness through the juxtaposition of disparate materials, it registers its critique at the level of technique itself (Pakasaar, 7). As textual montage, Heroine appropriates and re-visions a complex chain of interwoven genres and media--autobiography, snippets of diary entries, dream-narratives, graffiti, conversation, advertising, theatre, newspapers, radio, banners, visual art, cinema and popular music. There is something carnivalesque in its surreal juxtaposition of "high" and "low" cultural images, from the lyrics of Janis Joplin to its portrait of a revolutionary as a young woman, from shards of French and English text to constant interruptions from a hushing voice. Manina Jones notes the Bakhtinian nature of such "narrative disordering" in her reflections on Canadian literary "documentary collage":

the use of an astonishing variety of generic conventions...may be seen as one way of creating a kind of carnivalistic riot within traditional, monolithic, linear historical discourse...multi-styled, hetero-voiced stylistically disruptive writing that Bakhtin attributes to the novelized genres, which operate in opposition to an "epic" version of the past, closed off from change and impossible to revise.(102)

Sourkes' photo-negative montage is palimpsestic in form with negative and photo layered one on top of the other, creating disruptive traces of images in reverse--light on dark. The cover recalls many of Heroine's narrative "shards," including the shadow of an ascending female figure; a clawfoot bathtub--the heroine's site of remembrance; and graffiti which makes explicit the reference to the radical political/bicultural site of the text--Watchout and L'anarchie s'en vient.' According to cultural critic Hal Foster, graffiti may be read as a symbolic activity of individuals who are alienated by the mainstream media, those

who are represented(if at all) in the register of the stereotype (vandal, victim, unemployed youth)--a response of people denied response. In the midst of a cultural code alien to you, what to do but transgress the code? In the midst of a city of signs that exclude you, what to do but inscribe signs of your own (Foster, 48-49).

Graffiti messages in Heroine, "cite the ideological past and also signify the city of Montreal as the external site of activity and memory"(Blumberg, 60). Image and text play contrapuntally as Heroine explores media "signage," but also the reality of mediation, or the hold on the "real" exerted by the plural sign circulating in society. A window, visible as trace in Sourkes' cover collage, also speaks to the bridging

between the interior narrative of memory fragments and an external meditation on historical and cultural location. This is a disruptive photographic memory map, whose negatives, unlike the fixed photo, are open/ended, indeterminate, and have the capacity to generate further images.

Similarly, I contend that Heroine's literary photonegative montage amplifies and displaces nostalgic memory in the text. The process of media montage calls into question the authority of its documentary evidence (Pakasaar, 6). Scott's self-described "urban jazz piece," contrapuntally performs and dislodges sentimental myths and romantic structures which prime Gail's melancholic nostalgia. The novel's ironic, parodic intentions are underscored by the gaps between the nostalgic reconstruction of a love story about a melancholy, deeply unhappy woman and the broken radical style of the telling. Scott develops this "contradictory concertina" by reproducing other texts, popular love songs, snapshot photography, and appropriating dominant cultural representations of romanticism in order to defuse their rhetoric.(132)

Heroine's parody and instalment of romantic structures and motifs is clearly visible in Gail's attempts to convince herself that "a feminist (I kept repeating) Cannot be impaled by a white prince"(12). She satirizes the romantic rhetoric of lyric, constantly repeating "my love," and "lover" in a ritualistic manner. Our heroine also indulges in a guilty

nostalgic reverie listening to the lyrics of "hurting" music mourning lost love, especially those performed by "tragic" female singers: Janis Joplin, Bessie Smith, and Edith Piaf:

The dark arpeggios on the radio blend with the sirens outside. Janis is singing: 'Don't you know when you love somebody it's so precious/your beauty could never be had/ah/cheaply.' If someone comes I'll turn it off. So no one can say: 'You're stuck in the past. In his photos of Morocco; in his images of love.' (20-21)

The paucity of popular culture's cliched romantic opiates--soap operas and astrology--are revealed in this snippet from Gail's diary which details her paralysing melancholy:

Not working. Hooked on soaps. Alain came and read my Tarot, predicting a spiritual victory. felt thoroughly defeated because things seem to be over with you, my love. This time for good. Down ray of hope, I won't be so lucky again (52).

Scott locates memory, in particular the nostalgic memory of her heroine, as a "many-sided fiction" which "serves up different types of images--often strongly coded ideologically to reflect the 'real'" (Spaces, 20). Heroine disrupts these disparate images from their seemingly natural position within the flow of dominant social directives, into the realm of commentary. Her montage, like Benjamin's concept of allegory, pulls an element out of the totality of its life context, isolating it and depriving it of its function, then re-piecing such fragments together. Perhaps the best example of this principle is Brechtian theatre, to which Scott makes constant reference. A play by Brecht does not aim at organic unity but consists of interruptions and juxtapositions which disrupt

conventional expectations and force the audience into critical speculation. (Mitchell, 46)

This disjunctive combination of narrative scraps is visible in the novel's relation to time. A key structural feature of Heroine is its starting over and its setting off again, its repetition of memories, phrases, and "little stories" within the larger narrative. While the remembrance of the heroine automatically suggests a movement backwards to an original point, this repetition creates "a spiralling forward into the future--the point of origin is continually displaced" (Tessera 14, 10-11).⁴ In "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community," Edward Said advocates a use of

the visual faculty (which also happens to be dominated by visual media such as television, news photography and commercial film, all of them fundamentally immediate, "objective" and ahistorical) to restore the non-sequential energy of lived historical memory and subjectivity as a fundamental component of meaning in representation (158).

The "non-sequential" is clearly evident in Heroine's response to the temporal. Within the text there seem to be two "times": the time of the reflective narrator and the time of the active writer. Scott describes the "tub-time" of her novel as attempting to map a "double movement" which

has something to do with trying to confront past and present at once. I don't only want her memories, ie., how she got into the tub. But also for the text to have a running self-reflexive commentary about now. As in a kind of poetic essay about women today; or the way poets insert the everyday in their texts. (Spaces, 82)

This "double movement" is further apparent in the heroine's "rapport d'adresse" with Sepia, in which, "the plot of her

obsession [is] dealt with blow by blow. But its clearly only a thread of the whole novel: the memory of each meeting is framed by her woman from the past (memories, perhaps recorded in a diary) in relation to the 'now' woman" (Spaces, 90). The present works as a "defence against the nostalgic effects of memory: the narrator has to defend herself against the character she has created for whom the past always seems best" (95). The narrator acknowledges in a "whisper campaign" to herself that, "a heroine locked in time could be the ruination of a novel," and pits melancholic remembrance against progress in the heroine (95). Nostalgia has much to do with a woman who is stranded in her own monologue, mired in "her desire to repeat that past moment in time as if nothing had changed" (Spaces, 97). Gail finds herself paralysed in language and despair:

When suddenly I can't remember how to get to the end of a sentence. Each time I start, its as if the memory of the past (the poem, the sentence's beginning) wipes out the present(verb). So I can no longer move forward in the words. Gail the problem is you've lost your boundaries. (175)

For Scott writing acts as a way of working the "fabric of memory"-- a material reconstruction of bits of narrative primed through memory. (Spaces, 25) Scott's montage, the complex tissue of the subject-in-process, works the myriad "shards" of self into a subjectivity that acknowledges the fragmentation process, but that encompasses and embraces the parts and brings them into dialogue with each other:

suddenly I could see how survival for a woman is a little like the negative of a photo. She just has to pick the place in which night (her deepest self) and day (reality) are combined in the right synthesis of light and dark for her. Even if it's not quite (I started laughing) socially acceptable (177).

Heroine also "demystifies" popular visual language, reframing the charged images which prime nostalgic memory. The text conspicuously foregrounds sight or vision in a chain of signifiers that includes vision, lens, telescope, camera, and in particular, photography. Throughout the text, photography can be read as an insurgent analogue for nostalgic memory. It is no accident that the heroine's lover moonlights as a wedding photographer--his job is to record and perpetuate the icons of the heterosexual romance plot. Photographs are often responsible for the priming of memory and nostalgic remembrance in particular, as the snapshot becomes the "point where image production in society intersects...with personal memory" (Spence in Smith, 1993, 172).

Gail addresses the idyllic holiday snapshot by her tub, musing: "Later, my, love, taking your picture, when it seemed to me we saw it all the same, I began to think of you as an extra window on the world. Helping me to figure out what real is"(40). The narrator stands, or rather soaks, in a fractured present, attempting to solve the problem of her alienated distance from the photographed couple and to regain the sense of unity and coherence suggested by the photograph--regardless of the "reality" discovered or remembered about her lover. Realistic photographic representation, like traditional

autobiographical representation, has promised to make "reality" visible and all-knowable in its gaze. In contemporary culture, women are frequently "caught" not only as silenced object of that possessing and empowering gaze, but as its very sign. Jo Spence has described realistic photography as that which makes "the subject transparently and thus disarmingly visible while doing the work of cultural hegemony by rendering invisible the sources and forces of coercive interpellation" (Spence in Smith, 1993, 148).

Feminist theory has extended this critique by addressing the eye's propensity for mastery, exposing it as a distinctly masculine prerogative. Thus, Luce Irigaray observes that

investment in the look is not privileged in women as in men. More than the other senses, the eye objectifies and masters. It sets at a distance, and maintains the distance. In our culture, the predominance of the look over smell, taste, touch, hearing, has brought about an impoverishment of bodily relations...The moment the look dominates, the body loses its materiality (28).

Heroine is marked by Gail's vigilant awareness of how she is viewed, especially by lover Jon and other men who pass through her life. This self-consciousness points to the manner in which visual mastery becomes aligned with difference or, more pointedly, to the way in which representations position women as objects of the male gaze. When the heroine's love affair starts to disintegrate, she muses: "oh my love was that really us? With me at the centre and you watching from the margins of the picture. So what went wrong? I mean how did i slip out of focus in your retina?"(50)

This male gaze, photographic and cultural, is internalized. As Irigaray has said, a "woman's entry into a dominant scopic economy signifies...her consignment to passivity"(26). In her essay, "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema," film theorist Laura Mulvey describes the male gaze: "in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly" (11). However, the montage aesthetic causes shift to a different angle of vision, displacing "reality". The dispersion of the gaze provides the potential for slippage between images, questioning the truth-claims of photography and conventional literary and visual modes for the representation of women. One means of dispersion is repetition: Sourkes' text in its layering of photo upon negative; Scott's in the spiralling, discontinuous repetition of remembered and reconstituted images and narratives throughout the novel. According to Scott, the movement through boundaries in Heroine

has to do partly with the displacement of the writing subject from a position of certitude towards one of doubt, ambivalence. Ambivalence opens the space for constant slippage, questioning, which is the real work of poetic language. (Paragraph, 4)

A psychoanalytic reading would suggest that representations do not actually produce these objectifying effects; instead, they reproduce and reinforce modes of mastery that are found in

early psychic structures of control. Nevertheless, the social shaping of the "scopic" is manifest in the regimes of looking enforced through ideology. One can discern, in Heroine, the narcissistic investments of consumption, which invoke an ideal self-image through the acquisition of objects. Gail has an almost fetishistic response to style, the need to be a "cool ironic player" wearing the right leather jacket, the perfect blouse.(122) She is working on an external image for her heroine, within a culture that uses "little 50s objects of nostalgia to dull the pain"(122).

Gail turns the objectifying lens around upsetting the surveyor/surveyed split with an alternate female gaze: becoming subject, not object of the gaze, and subject, not object of literary representation. There is ironic play with her specular, "bird's eye view" from the bath tub, as she notes how the "single eye" of the tap "watches my floating smiling face in its enamel embrace"(9). This too is a narcissistic impulse which consists of erotic investment in her own image, displacing it from viewed to viewer. Said, however, references an "alternate" and political use of photography: "using photomontage to tell other stories than the official sequential or ideological ones produced by institutions of power"(158). Heroine's alternate gaze is dispersed from the heterosexual romance plot which spells despair for the Gail to her bisexual attractions and admiration for lesbian women. One of the text's most ironic

lines emerges in a scene between the heroine and two lesbians in a cafe. Quite simply they tell her to "cut the melodrama" as they watch her frantically scribbling in her diary and comment mockingly: "We hope the heroine of that story isn't a heterosexual victim. Il y en a trop dans le monde"(34). Her constant struggle to resist her nostalgia for Jon, involves her meditations on her attractions for various women including Marie, a Quebecoise who rebukes Gail for her self-indulgent sense of tragedy, and Anne, a British woman who works at a women's shelter. Gail's relationship with Marie comes to represent possible freedom from her nostalgia and melancholy:

I'd love to insinuate myself into the middle [of the young lesbians]. Then I could hear to which version of 'live and let live' they ascribe. Is it yours my love where everybody does what they want as if the other weren't there? Or Marie's where a person lives for herself in order to keep from living for others as women usually do?(57)

The refraction of vision in the novel extends to the external world of the city. Many of Heroine's memory vignettes are framed as if part of a film: "the lens," "the telescope," "the camera," sweeps and pans across Montreal. Scott's filmic sweeps repeatedly capture a black tourist also viewing Montreal, but through a telescope on Mount Royal and a streetwoman dressed in grey, wandering aimlessly: "From the mountaintop, the Black tourist turns his telescope. The grey woman sloshes through a yellow puddle and climbs some outside chairs. Her sister died there"(38). These characters are situated at oblique angles to the novel's self-reflexive

concerns, and appear as external markers of the city. The grey woman projects homelessness and a grey depressing potential future for the narrator, while the discussion of the tourist is more problematic. There is a doubled framing of vision as the narrator watches the tourist watching the city, using this marginalized figure to frame her own privileged spectatorship.

**v. Melancholic Nostalgia and the abject. (white) female body:
an inappropriate feminist heroine**

The bathtub is the site of emotional depression, sexual pleasure, and ideological and personal loss as Gail remembers her experiences of the seventies and is empowered to act/write. Her memory, seemingly stimulated by the bath water and the orgasmic body it contains, becomes the site of past and present fusion. This movement occurs in a spiralling flood of fragments of memory, pleasure, desire, despair, and nostalgia. Scott attempts to map the space between the novel/subject-in-process and the orgasmic peaks of masturbation in the bathtub, as the heroine tries to "pull herself together from under the froth, falling gently now on my small point" to "get a fix on my heroine of her novel"(60-61). The text makes readerly play with French feminist theorization of the embodied erotics of women's imaginings/writings/ remembrances.

In this watery location, memory and the body seem ineluctably entwined. Gail is re/membering moments and imagining a novel from the site of female bodily pleasure as

if in ironic homage to "écriture feminine." Heroine does perform, if ironically, the Cixousian imperative to speak the body, situating the female body as the site of woman's writing (in this case, in the bathtub). Scott meditates on the body as a "vehicle of memory," as she describes writing in the feminine as "letting what we heard/sensed of our female bodies spill over into a new kind of writing" (Spaces, 96). She links memory to a "jouissance," noting that Luce Irigaray's bodily image of "two lips" as "both at once" describes women's expression of their relationship with language through the process of theorizing their fiction within their fiction ("a very rhythmic...", 252).

This "ludic" body is also locked for a great deal of the novel in nostalgic remembrance, principally filtered through the memory of her ex-lover. The narrator becomes mired in her own monologue, her "bathos" of despair and "heavy sadness," which is born of her "desire to repeat that past moment in time as if nothing had changed" (Spaces, 97). This persistent melancholia blights the character's relationship with self and her cultural environment, and threatens her idealized external image of a revolutionary heroine with an internal desolation. Humour and parodic play with pop culture aside, Gail also recognizes something deeper in Edith Piaf's Je ne regrette rien: "singing her pain to make a story out of the chaos" (39).

Film theorist Kaja Silverman's psychoanalytic discussion of female melancholia usefully illuminates the narrator's

continuously repeated refrain: "O mama why'd you put this hole in me?" This mantra makes reference to the mother/daughter bond, which in feminist psychoanalytic terms is the originary text for women--the beginnings of memory and sexuality. As Adrienne Rich has put it, "the loss of the daughter to the mother, the mother to the daughter, is the essential female tragedy"(1976, 237). Silverman makes a connection between the theoretical alignment of melancholia and female subjectivity as a "negative Oedipal complex":

the female version of that complex is predicated upon a narcissistic desire for the mother--upon the girl's love for an object which represents both what she was, prior to differentiation, and what she aspires to become (ie the mirror in which she sees an idealized version of herself). Within this libidinal economy, there are no hard and fast distinctions between subject and object. Even though the former can never possess the latter (183).

The memories or links to the mother are suppressed by a culture that does not recognize the erotic bond between women, yet the real force of hostility and anguish is self-directed against the female subject for being inferior and insufficient, unworthy of love (Silverman, 158).

At the close of her work on melancholy and literature, Black Sun, Julia Kristeva reveals the conception of melancholia that implicitly guided her analysis: while the psychological/literary syndrome of melancholy is triggered, articulated, transformed, half-remembered, or suppressed by the textual dance of cultural history, melancholy itself remains behind its masks--essential and transhistorical. For Kristeva, a depressive fixation on melancholia is the

expression of the unsymbolizable, unnameable narcissistic wound or loss of the mother. Arguably the heterosexual nuclear family economy, the relationship between the loss of the mother, the cultural devaluation of women, and female melancholia are crucial problems for white women. In Elizabeth Grosz's reading of Kristeva, the maternal body has been positioned as the unsignifiable, engulfing the individual in a narrative of abjection/melancholy" (222). In this theoretical frame, in order to combat silence and absence, signification "must work through a narrative of remembering, recovering the affects around the loss of the mother" (Tessera 14, 20), Silverman suggests that melancholy may take on a more displaced and indirect form of living the relation to the mother through another woman or perhaps even through a man-- both the case in Heroine. (180) Gail juxtaposes a nostalgic address to her lover with a screen-memory of her mother:

I'm glad for what we had. Before you put your hands on my face nobody ever touched me like that. I used to sit close to Her on the verandah. It was very hot. The mosquitoes buzzed around my neck. The air was so intense with heat that it became a screen. Reflecting the bleeding hearts growing by the sidewalk bigger and bigger. I said: 'Mom, I'm scared.' She answered (without even looking): 'Then get down on your knees and pray to the Lord.' (35)

Scott's "Memory and Writing" also flags her preoccupation with the mother/daughter narrative of loss and recovery:

Mother and me. Simulated in the same skin. The vicious-circle search for boundaries memory mass of borrowed phrases...Now she's gone I carry her inside as she once carried me...The love for her. The hate. Separation would have to be by assault. Yet, her unspoken frustrations also formed the warp of my rebellion. So

that once I ripped off that outer nagging, fearful fictional mask of the mother, I found a troubled strength. And the desire to recreate her as a kind of strange almost gothic heroine. (Spaces, 18-19)

Throughout Heroine, the narrator makes clear her rejection of her mother's life and feels her disapproval: "I felt so terrible I couldn't make Her happy, I started planning my departure"(28). Following Silverman's notion of melancholia, the narrator's nostalgic and melancholy retreat to the tub restages the heroine's displacement of loss from mother to lover, and her attempts to re-member this connection.

The heroine's deep melancholy over the loss of her lover and her mother cannot be contained by her desire to live as a strong revolutionary woman and move beyond her depression, for she is unable to "will order even by writing it down"(93). This melancholic, excessive figure foregrounds Scott's intervention in feminist theory as she refuses prescriptions for a stable literary role model: a "totally avant-garde woman," the revolutionary Marxist heroine. Though "detachment is part of the image she's working on,(62) she notes that the "feminine 'I' still gets crushed... by politics, by her left lover, as well as by patriarchy"(Spaces,84). The heroine's attempts to raise issues of gender and race in her Marxist cell, win her little favour, as she quickly becomes disenchanted with revolutionary politics: "The comrades suspected me of being part of the feminist phalange...they called us les sorcieres behind our backs"(59). She also ponders a Brechtian solution for her heroine, "emphasizing the

external the better to distance from inner chaos,"(10) yet "blasphemous" thoughts continue to squeeze out her revolutionary consciousness as she confesses to Sepia that she found Marx, "hyperrational...the way he stood outside nature, the better to harness her"(30). Musing on her attempts to resist her nostalgia Gail acknowledges: "the heroine's tough, socially progressive external image will protect her from such sentimental weakness. But what to do then with her internal isolation?"(92) Yet despite her sardonic and parodic shots at the left, the heroine captures something of value in the project, its futurist rejection of nostalgia: "Sure we had internal squabbles, fear of police repression, and crazy painful love affairs. But we also had something so heady so incredible...we lived on the fringe of a new era"(97).

Interestingly, Scott has suggested that writing Heroine, "a radical feminist was leaning over my shoulder repeating 'she (that is, 'Gail,'the narrator) is too wimpy'"(Paragraph,6). Hushing is a frequent narrative intervention as the feminist writer interrupts Gail's melancholy:

Shh, for a novel I have to be more rational. The heroine could be from Brecht. Emphasizing the external the better to distance from inner chaos. What was it that Dr. Schweitzer said earlier? Women often lack the moral courage to synthesize what they know. Due to fragmentation of consciousness resulting from the upheaval of their roles. What does he mean? Maudit chavin. We're not scared. Just exhausted from wanting to change the world and have love too.(84)

These arguments within the text foreground the failure of

conventional plot structures to represent a contemporary female character's life. Seemingly, the heroine turns to lesbian relationships as examples of revolutionary potential. However, the heroine's final query--"Is it possible to create Paradise in this Strangeness?"--is a literary retort to the "prescriptive" feminist characters visible in Nicole Brossard's lesbian utopia. Brossard's invocation of an "all-encompassing gynecological memory" advances a positivist essentialist stance.⁶ Heroine's characterization of the literary heroine, according to Scott, "doesn't gum over the tension between thinking and feeling," and "doesn't deny or repress that contradiction of self-as mask or public face--and what's really going on inside. It permits an honest look at our foibles as we try and move forward to some new vision"("a very rhythmic...., 254).

Scott's creation of a woman protagonist with melodramatic and "hysteric" tendencies is a response to the prescriptive relationship between art and politics which she states, "is more complex than getting across a certain message...you cannot engage in writing-as-exploration--and at the same time be involved in some kind of positivist cover-up"("a very rhythmic...., 254). Yet despite its ironic intention, the psychic reality identified by Scott is hysteria and paranoia. The narrative movement largely surrounds this interiority, and at the same time deprivileges it by insistently referring it back to an abstracted body, collapsing the distinctions

between inner and outer, between self and culture.

Kaja Silverman's description of female filmmakers' attempt to "reauthor the classic film from the site of its feminist reception," parallels Scott's re-authoring of the female heroine and the heterosexual romance plot:

This project has much in common with that Barthesian undertaking whereby the "readerly" text yields to the writerly one, in that it shifts productivity away from the ostensible author to the side of the reader, and places itself on the side of heterogeneity and contradiction rather than unity. However, rather than working to disclose the chorus of cultural voices within the text, it strives to install the female voice at the site of a very qualified and provisional origin (and one, which, I would argue, is once again defined through the subject of speech)--the voice, that is, of the female critic or theorist. (Silverman, 211)

My struggle with Heroine has much to do with the tension between this text as a privileged narcissistic response to memory and as a political tool of agency and healing. This tension ignites an important question for this thesis: is it possible to narrate agency through this privileged, Western theoretical play with memory and the body? The narrator qualifies this melancholy noting that a "heroine can be sad, distressed, it just has to be in a social context"(25). Scott has described her writing as an exploration of how cultural notions of "the feminine" are inscribed in and by language. This is a political process of

getting behind the cover of cultural ennui, skirting linguistic and legalistic conventions by asserting our feminine voice--a voice that may be initially denigrated by some, self-indulgent, narcissistic by others. For it is not language itself, but the social conditions governing its use that pose the problem. (Spaces, 90)

The heroine's remembrance of her lover Jon continues to the final section of the novel; however, the signification alters. Overt expressions of need are absent from the last two sections as the narrator/heroine has written herself into awareness and a shift in angle from the past/present to a tentative contemplation of the future. She moves from her nostalgic reconstruction in the tub to new relationships with women and writing her novel. The heroine's refusal of nostalgia becomes one of creating "a conspiracy between remembering and a desire to move forward"(Spaces, 2). She finally emerges from the tub and concludes, "I must get dried and start the novel. The heroine and her friends moving towards the future"(148). Her coming to awareness involves a shift from nostalgia to desire, from past to present structuring the story:

by means of the fluctuations in her ...(dare I?) hysterical voice? The use of voice invoking a poetic meaning in excess of the sentence. But the forward movement of the healing process, ie., her coming to awareness of what needs to be changed, displaced in her context in order to come through the labyrinth, invoking the novel. (Spaces, 90)

When the "heroine has to finally face her pain, uncensored by her feminist consciousness," the novel moves towards a new image--opening out, not closing in. (Spaces, 104) This discussion suggests a psychoanalytic process of the talking or writing cure, as the heroine writes herself into healing and awareness suggesting, "The novel could be a form of clarification written through to resolution"(55).

Propelled by nostalgic remembrance, this text is unique in its ironically textured engagement with memory. However, its philosophical and linguistic heterogeneity are frequently limited to a hyper-theorizing of the abject female body, reducing it to tropes of sexuality and observability (Berland,19). Though the doubled narrative strategy of nostalgic yearning for an idealized romantic past and writing into an active present is intended as a critique of the representation and creation of the literary heroine, it is impenetrable without the tools of deconstructive and psychoanalytic theory. This is not to say that it is impossible to theorize agency in this text, but it is a privileged agency as we examine how the heroine's "interior" remembrance activates tenuous connections to an external politicized and social memory.

Re-membering the "woman made of potshards":

Elly Danica's Don't: A Woman's Word.

*memory is a strange thing a strange sting its little
brain flames hotting up this and that corner of skull
till cells flare into snapshots.*

Libby Schier, Sky

*The literature of testimony is thus not an act of leisure
but an act of urgency. It exists in time not just as a
memorial but as an artistic promissory note.*

Shoshana Felman, Testimony

*Where men and women are forced to endure terrible things
at the hand of others--whenever, that is, extremity
involves moral issues--the need to remember becomes a
general response. Spontaneously they make it their
business to record the evil forced upon them....Here--and
in similar situations--survival and bearing witness
become reciprocal acts.*

Terence Des Pres, The Survivor

For survivors of childhood abuse, memory acquires enormous therapeutic and disruptive potential in the act of testifying or "telling it." Breaking the shame-based silence through life writing, or related cultural interventions, creates a healing and imaginative space in which to revalorize submerged anger and grief. Yet the writing of these life texts hold possibilities beyond the convalescence of what psychoanalyst Dori Laub has termed the "creative testifying self"(55). Adrienne Rich's discussion in "Resisting Amnesia: History and Personal Life" resonates with this meditation on memory. For Rich, memory must resist amnesia and strive for "connectedness" by "becoming consciously historical"; a

process which lies not simply in speaking out of silence, but in "where we place the weight of our existences on the line, cast our lot with others, move from an individual consciousness to a collective one"(145). Such a collective invocation of memory shifts life writing's representation of an individual life to a feminist concern for the representative and intersubjective elements of women's experience. Survivors who reconstruct their experiences through writing enact self-healing, as well as creating a more congenial space from which others may speak. Arguably such texts hold the possibility of liberating groups of readers from silent collaboration in their own suppressed guilt and shame, shifting them from silent victim to engaged survivor (Williamson, 1992, 136). Elly Danica's Don't: A Woman's Word enacts such a cultural shift.

In this literary testimony, Danica reconstructs childhood experiences of sexual abuse, torture, coerced pornography, and prostitution at the hand of her father; this account is a recovery of horrifying memories she submerged for the larger part of her adult life. Don't is difficult to read, terrifying, and yet, ultimately, revolutionary. The reader cannot help but be drawn into the anguished and urgent voicing of resistance in this text, so that as a literary testimony, it performs the momentous task which Shoshana Felman characterizes in Testimony: A Crisis in Witnessing as "open[ing] up in that belated witness, which the reader now

historically becomes, the imaginative capability of perceiving history--what is happening to others in one's own body"(108). Don't activates a dialogic relationship between testimony and witnessing and the analogous acts of writing and reading to potent effect.

The act of "telling it" in Don't is visible in a hybrid of fictional, poetic, and oral genres--autobiography, epistolary, confessional poetry, modes of testifying, and the psychoanalytic "talking cure"--typifying Marlene Kadar's designation of life writing as crossing genre boundaries and disciplines. Each paragraph of Don't is numbered and separated into a verse paragraph, like a biblical verse or philosophical argument. The language is so distilled and terse that it traverses the generic borders of poetry and prose: "1.21 Forty. The Year of the Hare. The year of light in darkness. Rebirth. Memory as a talisman"(13). The text is extraordinary in its use of a hybrid of confessional and testimonial modes of speaking memory. The confessional, which Rita Felski has described as a means of revealing the "most intimate and often traumatic details of the author's life" in order to "elucidate their broader implications" is evident in the personal tone with which Danica addresses the reader, and her concentration on serious, personal, emotional experience which has previously been proscribed.(99) Testimony, according to Felman, is "a discursive practice...to testify is to accomplish a speech act"(6). She describes this act of

testifying for survivors of trauma as a repossession of one's life story, a "form of action, of change, which is necessary for healing and survival"(83). Similarly, Inger Agger and Soren Jensen, in their work with survivors of political persecution, note the universality of testimony as a ritual of healing (Herman, 178).

The very existence of a text such as Don't counters threats to invalidate memories of incest survivors, performing an attack on the standards and structures which negate, exclude, and limit possibilities of traumatic memory expression and subsequent healing. Danica's childhood attempts to reveal her abuse were dismissed or suppressed by the adults around her. Her traumatic memories, which challenged dominant ideologies of the idealized nuclear family, were forced "underground."

With Danica's testimony against the clutch of a denied reality, we see that what is most crucial about remembering the past is how it figures in struggles to define the stakes of the present--its place in a public, social memory. Frigga Haug argues that our memories are often organized to "unname" domination; that the invisibility of the social order is an effect of socialization.(5) It is politicized memory which moves this dance from the private stage of paralysing emotional struggle to a public stage of analysis and action. It also raises questions of how feminist interpretations of remembrance are being written into and out of the production

of social memory.

My study will explore the ways in which Don't activates its own embodied/experiential agency--by its narrative methods, by its patterns of voicing and its mapping of complex and nuanced relationships between literature and socio-cultural domains. I will engage Danica's revalorizing of her submerged traumatic memories as a strategy of survival, recovery, and healing which creates the possibility for agency and change--as resistance to and intervention in oppressive systems of family, church, and state.

This chapter will examine the cultural/familial problem of silence and the subsequent movement into agency enacted in Don't; a discussion of the literary form that traumatic memory takes; Danica's narrative method of fragmentation and descent as a strategy of reclaiming submerged memory; the relationship between testimony and witnessing and writing and reading in Don't; and the reconstruction of the "remembering self" and her confluence with an engaged social memory.

Liberation, according to Donna Haraway, "rests on the construction of the consciousness, the imaginative apprehension of oppression, and so of possibility" (191). This confluence of material reality and imagination, evident in Don't, bespeaks the urgency of Danica's quest for social justice and transformation. In my introduction, I invoked a renewed dedication to a politicized reading practice. I would like to reintroduce the notion of political accountability,

especially in light of the enormity of Danica's message. This method prompts an historicized reading of this work as an inter-relation of literary and socio-cultural domains. The politicization of "culture" emphasizes the importance of consciousness, ideology, imagery, and symbolism in women's resistance to oppressions, and exposes relations of domination obscured by false distinctions between epistemological and ethical questions, between the personal and political. (Barrett, 37)

Arguably feminist cultural practices perform in a nexus of interconnecting disciplines. Danica's intervention may be read within a matrix of therapeutic, legal, social, and literary discourses. For instance, literary narratives by incest survivors both enable and are enabled by feminist interventions in such areas as psychology, law, and sociology. They also play an important role in the development of adequate therapy for and analysis of sexual abuse experienced by children and adults (Williamson, 1992, 134). Danica's writing intersects with the work of feminist therapists who encourage survivors to speak and acknowledge their voices, and intervenes in a personal manner for individual readers who have their own stories to tell. Significantly, many of Danica's remembrances were provoked by a "body memory." In this discussion there is a need to reorganize ways of knowing to incorporate the "feeling body," to bring forward women's perspectives that have been distorted and denied in

traditional organizations of knowledge. Conversely, an interdisciplinary reading permits the power relations of familial violence to be seen, not only in terms of social institutions and practices, but also in terms of symbolic meanings, deeply entrenched belief systems, and the formation of identities. For instance, this text addresses issues of traditional religion, pornographic representation, and the familial hierarchy in relation to patriarchal authority. One of the central projects of Don't is to bring these power relations to crisis by exposing their place in the symbolic order and by calling their authority into question. In voicing her memories, Danica makes apparent not only the specificity of her abuse, but also the entwined conditions of authority and representation which permit it to happen.

ii. Cultural/familial silence

The urgency and necessity of bringing traumatic memories to light is often constrained by prohibitions against "telling." Threatened and brutalized by her father to prevent her from revealing his crimes; dismissed as a liar when she is compelled to; abandoned by her mother, aunt, Church and siblings, Danica was effectively silenced, as signified by this opening set of prohibitions: "Don't tell. Don't think. Don't, what ever else you do, don't feel. If you feel, the pain will be there again. Don't"(7). She is haunted by the bodily sensation of "choking," a memory of her father's abuse which effectively blocks her ability to voice: "I don't want

to remember this. This never happened. The world is dark. There is no memory. Only his hands around my throat. Blocking. Memory gone. Speech gone. Feeling gone. No I. Nothing left"(8). Danica has described this silencing as "a way that patriarchy maintains its power by making large numbers of people unwilling or unable to challenge their learned powerlessness"("an enormous risk...", 82). Mennonite poet Di Brandt's essay, "letting silence speak," may be read intertextually with Don't. Brandt, who also explores childhood abuse and healing in her poetry, explains that in writing "non-Resistance, or love Mennonite style," she understood,

there was nothing natural about [my] own silence, about the silence of Mennonite (& other) women. each joyous organ in us had been suppressed, consciously, violently, into unconsciousness, numbness. naming the suppression as the beginning of remembering, of undoing it.(56)

Danica's exploration of the extent to which the prohibition-- "Don't speak"--arises out of and reflects underlying social practices is part of her healing journey. Don't reinforces a feminist assertion that the supposedly "private" problems which have particularly affected women--rape, incest, abortion, child care, the sexual division of labour--are in fact political issues which involve fundamental questions of power, underpinning the most deeply felt aspects of social organization (Felski, 1989, 72-3). Significantly, this text explicitly names the silence imposed by Danica's traditional Catholic upbringing. As a terrified eight-year-old, she attempts to tell her nun/teacher what her father is doing to

her, but is dismissed and answered with the full force of dogma: "You are subject to your father in all things. He is your lord as Jesus is your lord. He would do no harm or no wrong. He is right in all things"(5). Danica who once prayed for martyrdom, stops speaking to Jesus or God (her emphasis in lower case), resisting a religious structure which permits her father to hurt her:

Then I hate God too. I don't want anything to do with God if he lets daddy do things to me. I'm sorry, I'm sorry I didn't mean that. Please don't punish me anymore God. I'll talk to Mary instead. She'll ask forgiveness for me. I can't take it Mother Mary, please make it stop.(64)

Don't interrogates how the familial structure embedded within religious codes designates her anguished response to violent abuse as fiction: "kids don't remember" or "fathers don't abuse their daughters."

Danica is also the object of her father's pornographic representation, which, according to Linda Warley, is "crucial to an understanding of the speechless condition that is hers"(75). Her father takes pornographic photographs of her in a basement studio in the family home, where he also repeatedly rapes and beats her, and eventually prostitutes her to a group of men. She is the object of the male gaze, frozen for consumption by the upstanding citizens of Moose Jaw: "Click. Tilt your head. Click. Open your mouth a little wider. Wet your lips again. Hold it right there. Click. Smile"(52). Her "clenched teeth" and "eyes of the hunted" telegraph her resistance, as she is "Caught. Powerless. Smile"(41). Yet to

stress a reading of her victimization is strategically and theoretically limited insofar as it reproduces, at least implicitly, the notion of women's passive response to violence. In fact, Danica's literary representation of her objectification by her father's pornographic lens, works as a reclamation of agency. She disrupts pornographic representation by turning the gaze back on the pornographer, interrogating and naming his practices:

Scum of the earth. Pimp and pornographer. He used my mother. He used young women he enticed with stories of fame and fortune. He liked waitresses. He had them all sign releases, or since one or two of them were too young, he had their parents sign a release. He loved women he said. He loved them all. He used them all. He sold them all.(39)

Certainly the silence exacted by "suppression" can exact a heavy toll-- the "not telling" of trauma can become a circular perpetuation of its tyranny. Psychoanalyst Dori Laub, an interviewer of Holocaust survivors and a child survivor himself, has described this effect of silence as an increasing distortion of events in their "silent retention" which can only "pervasively invade and contaminate the survivor's daily life"(79). The longer the story remains untold, the more distorted it becomes in the survivor's understanding of it, so much so that the survivor doubts the reality of the actual events.(79) Danica describes her life before her "telling" as a void in which she negates both self and memory:

Life as a black hole in space. All memory, all craziness, stored in a closet in the back of my head. I'll never let it out. I promise. I don't want anybody to know how crazy I really am. I don't want anybody to know how I imagined

what happened in the basement. Daddy's friends were not any different the next day, his friends were not any different when I next saw them in daylight. I imagined it. Nothing happened. It's me. I'm sick....Strange that whatever I remember about my childhood, no matter what it is, my mother says I am wrong. Nothing is as I remember it. I had no childhood...(70)

These socio-cultural barriers to memorializing events overlap with therapeutic and psychoanalytic issues. Among sexual abuse survivors, memory disturbances have been well documented; given the pain and trauma inherent in memories of the sexual abuse, amnesia can be understood as an unconscious attempt to defend against re-experiencing the victimization through memories (Dolan, 8). Psychotherapists have observed a relationship between frankly violent or sadistic abuse, such as that experienced by Danica, and the resort to massive repression as a defence (Herman and Schatzow, 5). According to Judith Herman, the very nature of traumatic memory--wordless, static, iconic, like a series of still snapshots--makes it difficult to recover. A reconstruction of fragmented components of frozen imagery and sensation is fraught, yet vital (177).

iii. A perilous confrontation with traumatic memory

In Sister Outsider, Audre Lorde describes "the transformation of silence into language and action" as an "act of self-revelation," and one that always seems fraught with danger.(42) Don't maps such a transformation from silence to memory and healing through anamnesis, or a psychoanalytic "writing cure." Danica's construction of a speaking

voice/narrative strategy reclaims submerged memory and grief through a perilous confrontation with her traumatic past. As Judith Herman has movingly stated, "The hard part of this task is to come face-to-face with the horrors on the other side of the amnesiac barrier and to integrate these experiences into a fully developed life narrative"(184).

Danica's healing and narrative journey to agency began with her retreat to the sanctuary of the basement of an old church in Marquis, Saskatchewan, not far from her childhood home of Moose Jaw. It was here that she spent ten years reading, "curled up in a chair with a blanket around me,...looking for a story similar to mine, anything so I could find my way into my own story" (Gzowski, 120). Reading and writing became Elly's strategies for investigating her heretofore devastated life. By the time she reached the age of 38, the legacy of her abuse was long: estrangement from family, broken personal relationships, substance abuse, anger, depression and a general feeling of dis/ease. Her amnesia had left her a fragmented "woman made of potshards," the remnants of shattered personal boundaries from years of physical abuse (13). She piercingly compares her painful recovery of memory to removing shards from beneath her anguished skin:

I find one shard implanted under my skin. I rejoice. I remove it with care. I try not to leave scars. I don't use a pocket knife. I try to heal the wound. Why no relief? There are two? I will remove the second then. Still no relief. There are more? Still more? The woman made of potshards. Pieces. Not herself. Never herself. Who is herself? Only broken pieces. Each one removed grows a new piece in its place. The wounds fester. There

is no healing. The bleeding cannot be staunched. There is no healing. Fear again. The pieces cannot be removed.(13)

As she describes it, vivid bodily memories kept surfacing and leaching into her writing, until she could no longer ignore their presence ("an enormous risk...", 82). She relates their insistent leaching into her creative work with her plea: "I don't want to remember. Memory pursues me. Memory uses a pen to pursue me. Memory runs out the ends of my fingers and makes marks on paper. I don't have to read this. This is useless"(8). Her "writing cure" generated an enormous, 2000 page text, which she then distilled into the current version. She submitted the manuscript to Nicole Brossard, who immediately invited her to join the West Words Conference in Vancouver, where Libby Oughton, from Gynergy Press, decided that it should be published.(3)

This text is unlike any other that has preceded it, including Sylvia Fraser's My Father's House (1987) and Charlotte Vale Allen's Daddy's Girl: A Very Personal Memoir (1980). Both texts examine a recovery of repressed incest memories, however, these earlier texts differ substantially from Don't in their narrative style, which tends toward conventional, linear retellings. These stories also differ substantially from Danica's in the subjects' willingness to seek rapprochement with their fathers. Certainly, as Debi Brock notes, "without presenting a wide range of stories conveying how sexual abuse occurs, we do not get a picture of how normalized (and all the more insidious) sexual abuse can

be in the lives of women and girls"(110). The extremity of Danica's story, however, has meant that she is unwilling to do so, and her urgent account is also a call to accountability: "Hate as a promise. Never forget. Don't remember. Just never forget....He doesn't have to remember. I can never forget"(10). Herman has noted that the "survivor mission" may take the form of pursuing justice: "holding the perpetrator accountable for his crimes is important not only for her personal well-being but also for the health of the larger society," as she rediscovers an "abstract principle of social justice that connects the fate of others to her own"(185). The urgency of such narratives, according to Danica, cannot be contained in a straight re-telling of events:

We have lots of straight-up narrative that says this happened, that happened, that happened. These are important, but they don't seem to have been enough to get the culture as a whole to look at what it is we are doing when kids have to survive this kind of pain and trauma, or to consider how we disempower not only those children, but the adult women and young men these people become. (Williamson, 80)

Danica's literary performance of traumatic memory does not take the form of a seamless linear narrative, but one composed of fragments of a memory that "has been overwhelmed by occurrences that have not settled into understanding or remembrance, acts that cannot be constructed as knowledge nor assimilated into full cognition, events in excess of our frames of reference"(Laub, 71). This phenomenon becomes clear with Danica's sensory memories of pain: "Fear is

the taste of my own blood in my mouth. Hands again. Always hands. Always hurting. Jaw. Neck. Throat. Arms. Belly. Genitals. Thighs. Always hurting"(5). Narrative memory consists of mental constructs which people use to make sense out of experience; however, it is the case that "frightening or novel experiences may not easily fit into existing cognitive schemes" (Van Der Hart, 427). Danica experiences a psychological homelessness within her own skin, born of unspeakable crimes committed on her body, as she "peels herself out of her skin" and loses self:

I am someone else. Someone I don't want to be. Someone I don't want ever to remember having been. Someone I used to know sits on a white brocaded bench, under photo lamps, in front of a camera. A body sits here naked. The body tries to cover itself.(53)

Elaine Scarry's The Body in Pain analyses the representation of pain as existing at the edges of language, resisting articulation. Danica has noted that when she "put the story into 'normal' narrative structure, the pain [was] not there"("an enormous risk...", 84). Her traumatic memories exist in excess of patriarchal language which she asserts, "works to obliterate or minimize our pain... we're not supposed to tell the truth about our lives..."("an enormous risk...", 84). This "pained body," stands in stark contrast to the melancholy or ludic body of which Gail Scott speaks. Danica's traumatic memory is urgently recorded: "each scar holds a book," that must be inspected and exposed in this manner in order to heal. Each memory is held, "Toward the mirror. Reflection of scars.

Multiplied...Reversed. Read it in the mirror. It is done. done"(93).

iv. Descending into memory: the creation of a narrator-witness

The narrative structure in Don't performs Danica's descent into the trauma of her submerged memories of tortured sexual abuse and her quest for recovery through an invocation of the mythological Sumerian goddess, Inanna. Inanna descends into the underworld, through seven gates of hell. At each gate, she loses a bit of clothing in order to bribe the keeper to ensure her ascent, so that the cycle of birth, death and rebirth would not be broken (Warley, 77). Danica addresses the reader before her textual descent:

Inanna had insurance. If I'm gone too long, come for me. Who will be my insurance? Who will bribe the guardians of darkness and bring me back to the light? Who could find all the pieces? How can this be done? How can this not be done? Faith in the process. Descend. Enter. Memory.(14)

Arguably Inanna is a narrative figure of memory and interiority, an other, who parallels and witnesses her project of self-investigation. In this way she becomes a character like Heroine's Sepia, a performative trope for the narrative structure. Danica's descent, ascent, and "rebirth"; Scott's as a focus of nostalgic remembrance and as a witness to the internal desolation of the heroine.

Various sections of Don't are marked as urgent passages through gates of hell and take Danica through deepening layers of remembrance. She passes through five portals to the

agonizing memory/level of her father's basement studio where she is gang raped by him and his friends. The sixth gate is named as silence--her amnesiac defense against remembrance. Danica has said that she fashioned the text in this way to reconstruct how her memory work revised her long, repressed history (Williamson, 1992, 137). This "cataloguing" performs as a memory map--plotting the oppressive spaces of her childhood through each descending level of recall, in search of some kind of ascent/healing. Shoshana Felman comments on the radicality and momentous nature of the literary performance of telling, in which the "witness" is prepared to

pursue the accident, to actively pursue its path and its direction through obscurity, through darkness, and through fragmentation, without quite grasping the full scope and meaning of its implications, without entirely foreseeing where the journey leads and what is the precise nature of its final destination.(24)

Inanna's journey is mirrored in a narrative strategy of descent and ascent into self as Danica creates an inventive, narrator-witness persona. Certainly testifying could be viewed as both an external and internal process by which the narrator/survivor reclaims her own position as witness. Don't exposes a means of survival in the creative act of establishing and maintaining an internal witness who substitutes for a lack of witnessing from others.(Laub, 87) Danica speaks of her secret "star search" she preserved as a child, "making a promise to write this book"(Gzowski, 125). She voices a small space of possibility, making a commitment as a nine-year old child to write the book. Memory is a

"talisman," which she hides in order to survive.(13)

Danica's textual descent and ascent into self, following the "mad" March hare of her nightmares, is enacted as the adult brings the small child back to the surface and reclaims her terrifying visions. The text frequently operates as a complex interplay between these memories and the speaker's role in the present, as Danica disrupts her "static" wordless past, drawing on memories in a continuum along the present and the future. This movement is evident in the co-presence of adult and child voices in many episodes. This fusion speaks to recent approaches to therapy which stress the power of self-nurturing in the healing process. Healing for women who have been abused can involve a process of "reparenting," or recovery through remembering the traumatized child, discovering and fostering within oneself the presence of a nurturing adult figure, and establishing a healing relationship between the two. (Laidlaw and Malmo, 21) Danica's testimony fuses memories of the past with her present remembering, rendering her history exposed and immediate; it becomes what can be recovered, through contact with a reparented child self. The remembered four, nine, eleven, twelve-year-old voices of her childhood "selves" are interspersed with the narrating adult voice:

The third gate. The trouble maker. The four year old trouble maker. The liar. Everything had changed in my world. I was right. My mother. What was wrong with my mother? What had he done to her while I was away? Had he hurt her too? Why did her face look all puffy like that?...Why didn't she want me near her?...Where was my

mother?...Had I remembered it wrong?...What had I done that was so bad?(30)

In performing this fluid, shifting dialogue between her adult and child voices, the forty-year-old woman ironically frames the voice of her four-year-old self, naming herself as a malicious child trouble maker and foregrounding the travesty of such a claim with her childhood disbelief and confusion:

He says I'm stupid? What he wants is stupid. Why don't you get somebody else for your stupid games? I like you. Daddy's girl. Wanna be daddy's girl? No. Just think that. Don't say no. Say nothing. I said don't you want to be daddy's girl? I expect a yes. Say yes. Say thank you daddy. That's what he wants. Don't say it.(11)

Danica's reclamation of past selves becomes a means of recollecting the lost and distorted fragments of her life ("Recollecting Our Lives," 202). She has an opportunity as an adult to integrate an experience that was beyond her capacity to endure as a child. Her writing pieces together shards of the unspeakable memories of her childhood, revalorizing previously unapproached grief.

Arguably, these textual strategies of remembrance help propel or lower Danica through healing and recovery. Ultimately, Danica avows a "faith in the process" of her arduous descent into memory:(14) "Soul dwelling: found. Self: found. Heart: found. Life: found. Wisdom: found. Hope, once lost: found. Process: never lost"(93). This "process" of testimonial reconstruction actually transforms the traumatic memory, so that it may be integrated into the survivors's life story (Herman, 175).

v. Testimony and witnessing: The reader's response

I have discussed how Danica's narrative strategy creates a witness/child self, yet the text is also unusual in its ability to address the reader. According to Laub, healing can only occur through a therapeutic process of

constructing a narrative, of reconstructing a history and essentially, of re-externalizing the event... This re-externalization of the event can occur and take effect only when one can articulate and transmit the story, literally transfer it to another outside oneself and then take it back again, inside. Telling thus entails a reassertion of the hegemony of reality and a re-externalization of the evil that affected and contaminated the trauma victim.(69)

Don't is remarkable in its structure of "re-externalization" which ignites a testimonial process similar to a psychoanalytic process. The text activates the reader as listener--a necessary enabler in re-externalizing and historicizing the events.(Laub, 70) Throughout Don't, Danica implicates the reader as an engaged witness: "Please tell me this was a dream. Tell me I'm wrong. Tell me I can't remember it. Tell me it was too long ago. Tell me kids get it wrong. Tell me I don't have to remember"(13). This dialogic relationship between testimony and witnessing, between speaking and listening, and between writing and reading is vital, according to Felman and Laub:

Bearing witness to a trauma is, in fact, a process that includes the listener. For the testimonial process to take place, there needs to be a bonding, the intimate and total presence of an other--in the position of one who hears. Testimonies are not monologues; they cannot take place in solitude. The witnesses are talking to somebody: to somebody they have been waiting for a long time (70-71).

Similarly, Bronwen Wallace has aptly described the confessional mode as a dialogic quest for healing, as

not simply bear(ing) the autobiographical details of our lives but it can be a particular stance vis-a-vis the reader, a tone of private conversation. When we tell the stories of our lives, we're confessing to each other...when we tell people intimate things about ourselves we are in some way asking for, if not absolution, at least support, inclusion, something, a healing gesture from the other person. ("Arguments," 213)

In an interview with Danica, Williamson has commented that Don't's prose style "violates and breaks down the reader's boundaries. It is as though the reader "symptomatically experiences the pain"(83). Danica has remarked that she wanted to "see a change in how society looks at incest...to present on paper the pain of this experience with no space between the text and the reader. No distance"(79). There is a declarative nature to the prose which reinscribes the abuse at a textual level. The fusion of voices, the narrative "I" that shifts from child to abuser, causes the reader uncertainty as to whether he/she is complicit in abuse or is re-experiencing the violence. Parallel to her fusion of child voices, Danica also assumes the authoritarian voice of her father. The reader often has no signal that the voice is shifting, so that there is fluid, disturbing relation between utterances:

children don't remember. Anyway. What does it matter? Who will believe the kid? I know what I'm doing. There are no visible bruises. Nobody will ever know. I'll kill you if you do.(13)

This instability in the reader's location provokes an embodied witnessing. This lived metaphor could arguably be extended

from individual anatomy to the social body, from the anatomical network of muscles, bones, nerves, and blood to the social network of interpersonal experience in conflicted family and social settings, so that this memorialized experience merges subjectivity and social memory. In this manner, Danica activates an engaged witnessing to the crimes committed against her, "Survival. Dreaming with a pen in my hand. Writing. Writing. Writing. Who will hear me?"(92) She narrates her story for the first time, stirred to remembrance by the public purpose of her writing, the possibility of addressing the significance of her biography to a listening community:

In some ways, making this public is part of the process of healing myself. One of the things that is most exciting to me is the number of copies of this books there are. To me that translates into people who know about this. It's no longer a secret. It's no longer a burden I have to carry forever. I'm no longer haunted.(Gzowski, 125)

Though Don't charts Danica's personal movement from incest to healing, the reader is forced to confront the ideology that has produced these experiences and its horrifying implications. The return of traumatic memory in disjointed fragments, as in poet Libby Scheier's surrealistic description of recovered memory as "brain cells flaring into snapshots," facilitates a creative reconstruction in which both survivor and witness must see and hear beyond the trauma fragments to wider circles of associations.(Sky, 48) As Laub suggests "reflections intersect, converge, a latent and forgotten

memory might suddenly emerge--come back to life--establishing a further link in the testimonial chain"(71). In risking the pain of writing and remembering, Danica implicitly urges the reader to do the same. The only way out of this depth, it becomes clear, is to descend deeper, avowing a "faith in the process"(14).

vi. reconstructing a self: entering social memory

In order to shatter a recurring cycle of childhood abuse, the survivor undergoes a long process of healing, a "process of renaming and understanding as well as reclaiming what was damaged and distorted by the abuser"(Dolan, 201). This is the transformation from dissociated image to mnemonic narrative. Danica echoes this process, describing the creation of Don't as a process of becoming comprehensible to herself as a subject:

[a] search for a voice, for an "I" who could speak with authority about the Self. For me, the daily writing was where and how I worked towards a re-integration of the aspects of Self which had been fragmented. So it was a search, a quest, to find the pieces and then a long process of writing them into a whole I could live with. I sometimes think that I wrote myself as a character called 'Self', and as new insights were gained I had to find ways to re-vision the 'Self' to allow for what I learned. ("an enormous risk," 84)

This reconstruction and centring of self contradicts a number of postmodern axioms in its strategy of closure. The text certainly might be considered a "suspect" narrative from the point of view of poststructuralist methodologies and sophisticated critiques of subjectivity, because of its collapsing of author and text, assertions of authorial

intentionality, and claims to personal and political authenticity. Interestingly, when fiction/theorist Nicole Brossard first read the text she called it "postmodern," while Danica writing from the basement of her drafty church, had not conceived of it in these terms. Certainly there is a multiple positioning of voice in the text, which speaks to the provisional nature of memory, not simply unrevealed truth. Yet as Danica's comments suggest, memory is fragmented because of the anguished condition of the remembering self who seeks not play with language, but unity, transcendence, and closure. The terrifying and grounded urgency of Don't implies that a poststructuralist, deconstructive reading may not be appropriate and risks trivializing its message. A hyper-theorizing of subjectivity distances the actual, physical, social subject who exists in history. It may also provide, as Janice Williamson uncovered in an interview with Danica, a means of defending oneself from the disturbing nature of this text. The theory of experience, as ideologically formed, needs to be expanded to allow for a place of knowing that takes into account the unconscious, emotions, body memory, and resistance. (Rockhill, 42) Biddy Martin and Chandra Mohanty have called for a new sense of political community in which connections have to be made at levels other than abstract political interests. They foreground "the ways in which intimacy and emotional solidarity figure in notions of political community," thereby, avoiding an "all too-common

trivialization of the emotional, on the one hand, and romanticization of the political, on the other"(205).

Danica has said that her writing is an attempt to encourage other women to speak their experience. As Bronwen Wallace has said, the "power of feminism is the power of the victim who has recognized a way to use her damage as a source of power"("Arguments with the World," 213). The sense of communality encouraged by the confessional/testimonial mode of speaking allows for the recognition that women's problems are not private. Such testimony becomes a politically significant act in relation to a community of female readers who share a consciousness of the silence which has circulated around their diverse experiences.

This "literature of testimony," as it may be termed, has been censured for its "art as therapy" strategy, in much the same manner that women's confessional poetry has been branded excessive in relation to canonical works. Frequently, it is diagnosed as a symptom of the "culture of narcissism," the apolitical atomistic doctrine of self-improvement and its relation to consumer society. Yet this text works not only as a means of self-healing, but maps a complex and engaged relationship to a reading community. Audre Lorde makes a most compelling case for this kind of revelatory text in The Cancer Journals, in which she claims that she is addressing other women of all ages, colours, and sexual identities, who recognize that imposed silence about any area of our lives is

a tool for separation and powerlessness. She exemplifies the continuing importance of testimonial life writing as long as privatized areas of shame, fear, and guilt continue to exist in women's lives.

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Mapping a memory "rooted in a place of loss":

Jeannette Armstrong's Breath Tracks

Life is a perpetual to and fro, a dis/continuous releasing and absorbing of the self. Let her weave her story within their stories, her life amidst their lives. And while she weaves, let her whip, spur and set them on fire. Thus making them sing again. Very softly a-new a-gain.

Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Grandma's Story," Woman, Native, Other.

The "mappings" of landscape and identity found in Jeannette Armstrong's Breath Tracks may be read as analogous to the "memory maps" which I discuss in my preface--charting geographical, cultural, and interior spaces which have been disprivileged or silenced. Armstrong's poetic interventions revise the symbolic and material "cartographies" of colonizing powers which have deterritorialized and exacted the silence of Aboriginal peoples. Since European contact on this continent, there has been widespread dispossession and genocide of Aboriginal peoples across the Americas. The imperializing discourses of "discovery" and "exploration," used by the European "new comers" to justify the practices of conquest and appropriation, presumed a vacant "terra nullius" prior to European occupation.

Recent work by Canadian Aboriginal writers, in tricksterish fashion, renegotiates these invasive discourses, investing them with new meanings through re-evaluations of history and re-discoveries of identity (McMaster, 15). The

possibility of re-mapping culture and history through memory resonates in light of current claims for Aboriginal land title and sovereignty, countering the massive geographical disinheritance levelled by imperializing practices in Canada. There is an interlocking "centrality of place--land and cultural space--in Aboriginal cultural re-empowerment" (Longley, 372). This entwined "politic" resonates with Barbara Harlow's politicized reading of "resistance literature":

In the same way that institutions of power...are subverted by the demand on the part of dispossessed groups for an access to history, power and resources, so too are the narrative paradigms and their textual authority being transformed by the historical and literary articulation of those demands...(in Kaplan, 120)

"Coming from a place rooted in a memory of loss" (58), Armstrong addresses dispossession as cultural amnesia--the principal legacy of dehistoricizing colonialism, according to Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi.⁷ To counter this forgetting is to explore the nexus between history and memory--the articulation of a collective memory bound to a sense of place (Lionnet, 112). As an Okanagan woman, Armstrong anchors her poetry in the spiritual and physical landscape of her grandmothers, the matriarchal "keepers" of a cultural memory preserved through an oral tradition of storytelling. Breath Tracks is composed of four sections, "From the Landscape of Grandmother," "History Lesson," "Fire Madness", and "Wind Woman." The four part structure suggests the four

"activities" of Okanagan Human existence: the first, "Sacred Earth Walkers," is related to "all things required to stay alive;" the second, "Warrior," is related to "learning and incorporating in living as much of the laws of the external natural world as possible": the third, "Eagle Wings," is the perpetuation of human life which depends on the first two sections"; and finally, "soft power" or the "creative process," which entails spiritual acts that celebrate, enhance and contribute to the first three activities and push out into the unknown. (Armstrong and Cardinal, 70) Marlene Nourbese Philip, a Caribbean-Canadian writer, speaks powerfully on the subject of collective memory. Her essay, "A long-memoried woman," as well as much of her poetry and critical writings, foreground the confluence of race and culture in and through the effects of colonization, dispossession, and diaspora of African peoples. She makes her case for decolonizing remembrance and writing:

[to] defy a culture that wishes to forget; to rewrite a history that at best forgot and omitted, at worst lied; to seek psychic reparations; to honour those who went before; to grieve for that which was irrevocably lost (language, religion, culture), and those for whom no one grieved; to avoid having to start all over again; to save ourselves. (Frontiers, 56)

Similarly, Armstrong's project should be read in the context of this urgent and poetic manifesto for historical remembrance. Breath Tracks is shaped by a communal, collective memory--the oral trace of the past--as an instrument for

giving access to submerged or oppressed histories.

As in my reflection on some contemporary theorizing in relation to Don't, a valorization of a Native standpoint and Native women's voices as "authentic" and constitutive of meaning could be challenged by postmodern critiques of subjectivity and essentialism as always-already reductive. Yet these critiques threaten to become another hegemonic discourse which ignores the conditions of a text's historical and socio-cultural reading and reception. In her article, "What More Do They Want?," Aboriginal film maker Loretta Todd challenges the practice of applying contemporary, Eurocentric critical discourses, namely modernism and postmodernism, to Native cultural production as another "legacy of colonialism"(15). Though feminist theorizing has also challenged post-modern and post-structuralist discourses for their political relativism, feminist approaches may graft an unsuitable project onto Aboriginal women's writing. In fact, many Native women writers have resisted an articulation between their struggles and white feminisms.

Significantly, although Armstrong names herself a feminist, and her life writing records the specificity of her life as an Aboriginal woman, in addressing questions of gender and culture, she is hesitant to embrace "feminism(s)." The feminine is associated with renewal, creativity and culture in the Okanagan tradition, which Armstrong refers to as a

compassionate "soft power". Armstrong notes that her interests are in

looking at and understanding people who are thinking not about male or female, but in terms of feminine gender and thinking. It's critical to my thinking and philosophy to understand how this feminine process can work in healing both the world and individuals in the world, including males. ("Words," 8)

A number of "post-colonial" theorists, including bell Hooks, and Gayatri Spivak, insist that "privileging the oppression of gender over and above other oppressions can effectively erase the complex and often contradictory positionings of the subject" (Smith, Watson, xiv). Julia Emberly suggests that feminist critical practices, however "resistant to the universal constructions of 'Woman' in institutional discourses and cultural productions, remain inadequate to the interests of Native, Metis and Inuit women's struggle for self-determination" (Emberly, 92).

Once again the urgent articulation of memory in this text stands in contrast to the abstracted framing of Heroine. The power of naming in Breath Tracks avoids an effacement into the "signature" of individualistic autobiography. Armstrong's remembrance does not slide into nostalgia, but engages what hooks has described as a politicized memory "that distinguishes nostalgia, that longing for something to be as it once was, a kind of useless act, from that remembering that serves to illuminate and transform the present" (hooks, 1992,

147). I will argue in this chapter that Armstrong's project of memory mapping documents a collective struggle to reclaim what she designates as the "gaps between memory/the lost places of history/pieces mislaid/forgotten or stolen"(60). With her invocation of the politicized lyric/speaker, Armstrong becomes an engaged witness to the cultural and physical displacement of her people. This chapter will examine Breath Tracks in relation to a recovered genre of Indigenous life writing as cultural resistance and healing; to a displacement of the individualistic frame of Western autobiographical writing; to the hybrid form of Native oratory and Western genres as productive counter-discourse; to the invocation of a matrilineal tradition through the figure of grandmother; to the power of strategic quietness and community accountable memory; and to re-stagings of colonial history challenging official narratives.

**ii Poaching life writing and lyric: Redeploying the
"ethnographic gaze."**

During a 1993 lecture at Carleton University, Armstrong described life writing by Aboriginal writers as a strategy for cultural renewal--"the life voice of cultural reality which shapes the lives and acts of those portrayed" (Munro Beattie Lecture). As a cultural medium, life writing holds the possibility for healing, for revalorizing Native voices, experiences, and memories as Native writers become agents of

their own historical and cultural experiences.* Significantly, up until the late twentieth-century, Native women and men were often regarded as objects of study rather than subjects of their own discourses. Early native "autobiographies" reflect this bias in that they were largely recorded and re-interpreted by travellers and ethnographers. (Helen Carr, 132)

Native artist and cultural theorist, Gerald McMaster describes this practice:

The stories which we would have liked to tell were largely appropriated and retold by non-Aboriginal "experts" in such fields as anthropology, art and history and especially in the political realms. Not surprisingly, the appropriated stories distort the realities of our histories, cultures and traditions.(17)

For Armstrong, aboriginal life writing represents a quest for healing in the midst of a cultural "horror story"(Munro Beattie lecture). Faced with what she describes as the "hostile cultural supremacy" of dominant white Canadian society, memory and its various technologies work as strategies of resistance ("Real Power," 24). Breath Tracks may be read in relation to Emma Laroque's discussion of aboriginal literature:

whether blunt or subtle, [Native writing] is protest literature in that it speaks to the processes of colonization, dispossession, objectification, marginalization, and that constant struggle for cultural survival expressed in the movement for structural and psychological self-determination. (Laroque, xviii)

Armstrong's commitment to "truth telling," giving an embodied testimony to a history of colonial occupations and

representations becomes vital in cultural renewal:

words releasing unspeakable grief
 for all that is lost
 dispelling lies in the retelling
 I choose threads of truth
 that in its telling cannot be hidden and bring forward
 old words that heal.(60)

Creatively, "resistance projects" such as Armstrong's pose a challenge to the dominant means of expressing memory partly through a generic refashioning, a hybridity of form which has politically strategic implications. As Caren Kaplan notes, in the case of women writing from a culturally marginalized space, textual innovations are linked to the struggle for cultural survival, rather than purely aesthetic experimentation or individual expression:

an oppositional relationship to writing and to genres such as autobiography requires the difficult embrace of unfamiliar narrative strategies as well as the validating insertion of your own systems of signification.(130)

Numerous post-colonial theorists also flag the traps in adopting "neocolonizing" forms of speaking experience. Doris Sommer productively interrogates traditional autobiography in this manner:

Is [autobiography] the model for imperializing the consciousness of colonized peoples, replacing their collective potential for resistance with a cult of individuality and even loneliness? Or is it a medium of resistance and counter-discourse, the legitimate space for producing that excess which throws doubt on the coherence and power of an exclusive historiography? (111)

Armstrong echoes this concern with autobiographical form:

...when we start writing about those things [Aboriginal contexts] we find that the way people perceive what mode we write becomes transfigured into the dominant cultural mode and we find ourselves explaining many things; we find ourselves talking in terms that aren't necessary. ("In the Feminine," 56)

There is, however, a "plaited" aesthetic evident in Armstrong's poetry as she gives voice to an embodied collective memory in a hybrid of poetic and prose genres--life writing, as well as modes of oratory and storytelling. Breath Tracks also activates a radical mix of discourses--history, anthropology, sociology, and subjectivity--inciting her audience to read across literary and socio-political boundaries. The lyric/life writing in Breath Tracks is inscribed along a range of different political possibilities--in relation to history, women, men, grandmothers, language, and community, as she articulates an ever-widening circle of association from the personal to the collective. Life writing and lyric poetry blend in Breath Tracks, constituting an "I" that becomes a place of creative and, by implication, political intervention (Smith and Watson, xix). As an interior mode of speaking, Breath Tracks may be read as life writing, in the manner articulated by Celeste Schenck:

the indeterminacy of some poetic autobiographies written by women is a deliberate strategy; the discontinuity enforced by non-linearity, the accretion of subjective moments in the form of series of poems, the emphatic vocal signalled by the presence of the first-person lyric speaker are the signs of more than aesthetic rebellion. Poetry as autobiography constitutes a potential space in

which a subject may be repeatedly and repeatably present to herself during the act of utterance, in a genre, that Audre Lorde reminds us, is economical; having been the refuge of women and the poor in this century, she argues, poetry has been an underprivileged genre itself.(292)

Armstrong's invocation of the lyric "I" performs a shift from that which has always been constituted as native "other" to self; from 'subject' of anthropological or ethnographic inquiry, an ethnographic "gaze," to embodied witness and active participant in cultural self-definition. Armstrong reclaims subjectivity and identity as they have been imposed through colonial texting, addressing the potential in a "process of understanding, the renewal of that feeling that we are going to determine our own destinies"(Fuse, 36).

Many of the lyrics in Breath Tracks assume the voice of a poet/speaker whose creative remembrances gesture to a collective memory or set of experiences. Armstrong describes such creative acts as "continuance links," in which, "consciousness and knowledge continues unfolding from one generation to the next"(Armstrong and Cardinal, 82). In this conception, individual lives are the "continuance of human dreams/memory and visions into the future," as the poet/speaker intones: "I am the weaver of memory thread/twining past to future"(60). She challenges the terms of Western normative autobiography by expanding the "borders of life writing to include coalition, the "construction of a community of strength and diversity"(130). Her engaged

memorializing dislodges the individualistic frame of Western lyric poet/speaker renegotiating the relationship between personal identity and the world, between personal and social history through a form of "collective self-storytelling": (Watson and Smith, xxi)

those words that become the sharing
the collective knowing
the links that become a people
the dreaming that becomes a history
the calling forth of voices
the sending forward of memory. (60)

The poet/speaker's invocation of collective knowing gestures to the "native creative process" articulated by Douglas Cardinal and Armstrong, which "places importance on the internal understanding of [our] individual selves as a process towards building relationships, moving outward to all other things," as opposed to an "external search for knowledge which places importance in a materialistic determination of how things relate back to immediate individual human desire" (22). In relation to the more "external" genre of fiction, which we see in her novel, *Slash*, Armstrong locates her poetry as an identification of a "landscape," of her "own internal sensibility, reactions and understanding of all that affects her as a person" ("what I intended...", 20).

Arguably Armstrong's restaging of the lyric poet/speaker disrupts conventions of romantic poetry which "often presents

itself as ideologically innocent"(Eagleton, 20). Kevin McGuirk addresses historicizing the lyric speaker in his study of Adrienne Rich's The Dream of a Common Language which:

achieves moments of high lyrical poetry--centred in subjective experience, yet confident in the transcendent presence of otherness to the self--but a poetry that also insists on a relational, not unitary, subjectivity--social, gendered, historical: a politicized lyric self.(61)

Armstrong articulates such a politicized lyric figure in Breath Tracks. Her poetry activates a persuasive rhetorical voice, which McGuirk defines as "language disposed to others, whether overt in direct address or implicit in stances that reflect an awareness of a broad socially conceived audience"(McGuirk, 62).

Armstrong's lyric/life writing in "Grief is Not The Activity That Heals," enacts a complex movement from lament to a healing praxis spurred by this politicized lyric self. The poet/speaker suggests that "to grieve is only to find the place to begin"(56). Echoing the native-creative movement from internal meditation to a collective purpose of healing, this poem revisits an anguished history--that of the "terrible the hidden the unbearable"(56). In an interview, Janice Williamson asked Armstrong how writing and finding a voice work to heal herself and the reader. She responded:

In uncovering my own philosophy as a native person, I've come to realize that my people and my self are beautiful and necessary in this world, where there is sickness, discordance, chaos, hatred, and violence. That discovery

continues to be a healing process.(10)

The poet/speaker invokes the toxic effects of a colonized world with eyes "turned inward calling up/disfigured babies," the physical decay of "crooked bodied adolescents," "mangle breasted women," and "rotting cancerous figures"(56). The second stanza of the poem suggests the possibility in speaking these memories--"the forming into words of the unspeakable" as "the magic out of which comes healing." The poet/speaker's expression of such unspeakable death quiets "the internal quivering and shaking of flesh and bone," and is invested with the "power to dispel the myths that cling and cling"(56). Healing is a process of turning outwards into the "landscape of living/ a leaving of horror," in order "to finally reach outward to restructure"(56). It is achieved through the creative renewal implicit in this retelling as "fresh words/ new stories a song.../pushes outward to fill others"(57).

iii. Dancing across the divide--Orality in the written

Oral history and storytelling are dominant means of communicating memory in Okanagan culture, according to Jean Webber:

nearly all of the material culture and social customs of the Okanagans are either no longer active or have undergone profound acculturation....The traditions that are preserved best are those that depend on language, the ancient legends and stories of the Okanagan, transmitted orally generation after generation. These are Okanagan history and philosophy, doctrine and poetry. Through them instruction is imparted on how to view the world and how to live in it. In brief they mirror Okanagan culture.(146)

Such narratives are meant to be performed, as a physical gesture of repetition for emphasis. As Lee Maracle suggests, oratory is a "place of prayer, to persuade. This is a word we can work with. We regard words as coming from original being-- a sacred spiritual being. The orator is coming from a place of prayer and as such attempts to be persuasive" (Maracle, 1990, 45). This persuasive gesture is connected to a physical exchange--Armstrong meditates on how the oral tradition connects to "the body, the voice, [our] thinking and [our] internal processes, gesture in speaking sound, how you replace the body in writing" ("what i intended...", 21). A poem such as "Words," stresses the physical passage of stories "from mouth to mouth":

physical power in thought
 carried inside silently
 pushing forward in each breathing
 meaning wished onto tongues
 transforming with each utterance
 the stuff of our lives
 to travel on wind
 ...to become sound
 spasms coursing upward into imagine
 there to turn grey silence
 into explosions of colour.(17)

Embodied memory becomes language performance as oratorical devices of repetition and emphasis are woven through the rhetorical lyric.

Breath Tracks engages questions of orality and literacy, investigating the productive spaces between speech and being spoken by a language. As part of a process of "de-

colonization," Emma Laroque speaks of "philosophy and praxis (a blending of genres) to teach [our] audiences [our] way of seeing and naming our worlds"(xxivi). She lodges a critique against the colonizing "civ/sav" binary in which the written word is advanced as superior to the spoken word. Francoise Lionnet, discussing texts of the African-Caribbean diaspora in Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender and Self-Portraiture, addresses those writers "who must survive (and write) in the interval between different cultures and languages" (28). Armstrong works in this "gap," situating language as the contested site in her poetry, naming the coercion of her people, "brutalized for speaking their language and practicing their culture until their memory grew distant and dim" ("Words," 24). There is a paradox, however, at the heart of this lament. Armstrong, "the weaver of memory thread," writes mainly in English, but in a voice inflected with the deep grammar of her Okanagan heritage, speaking in a "language of words/formed of the actions of the past"(60). She traverses boundaries of traditional Native oral storytelling and the written word--arguably the most powerful legitimator of a Eurocentric notion of history which "often hides the ravages of imperialism" (Emberly, 145).

The passage of Native/oral traditions into print culture represents a generic border crossing and a "mode of braiding dominant technological forms with traditionally performative

modes of storytelling" (Emberly, 93). Lionnet invokes a process of "metissage" in her discussion of African-diasporic writing in the Caribbean--a blending of genres, which she says has led to the recovery of histories through "a simultaneous re-valorization of oral traditions and re-evaluations of Western concepts"(9). In her privileging of the oral within the written, however, Armstrong is caught in a "mid-point," speaking across the cultural gap, in which the "horizon is not the same/as it always was," and "all the waysigns/the milestones/are somehow placed in a new order/and [I] find myself/lost"(87). Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldua in Borderlands also speaks of the cultural formation of mestiza:"the coming together of two self-consistent, but habitually incompatible frames of reference, causing un choque, a cultural collision"(78). Similarly, Armstrong has characterized this meeting of cultures as dialectical: a "power struggle," when "languages collide in mid air/when past and present explode in chaos/and the imaginings of the past/rip into the dreams of the future"(60). This collision could signal a cultural politics of difference in the relations between Native and non-Native women: it may be read as a site of productive struggle which marks an emancipatory potential within Native oral practices to, as Armstrong has suggested, "bridge two separate cultures and world views"("What I intended....," 20). Possibly this "collision"

resonates with Armstrong's discussion of the Native/creative process and the notion of productive change:

To the Native, balance is a way of describing how change, which is the natural outcome of a creative process, can be brought about by humans in a deliberate, mutually beneficial pattern as an enrichment process rather than one which is competitive and therefore occurs as a destructive force. (Cardinal and Armstrong, 18)

At the 1988 Women and Language Across Cultures Conference, surtitled "Telling It," Armstrong participated in a panel discussion which addressed such questions as "What are the difficulties and pleasures of writing in a language and culture different from your own?" and, "What are the implications of working in the genres of repressed traditions that are not recognized by mainstream culture as legitimate?" These questions seem particularly apt in that Armstrong both mourns and celebrates her traversal of English as a challenge and threat to her Okanagan cultural knowledges:

speaking across the cultural gap has become a challenge and a way for me to speak to those of my people who share the experiences of our history, our culture, in a way that they can understand. I learn this [English] language so that I can say to indigenous people, this 's what my people understand. This is how I have experienced it in these words I give to you. ("Words," 27)

Armstrong also addresses the anguish of speaking within what Lionnet has termed "the straight jackets of borrowed discourses," or what Beth Brant describes as a "contra language" (17) or what Marie Annharte Baker calls the "language of the enemy" (59). Yet this weaving of cultural knowledge and

language systems speaks resistance to the Queen's English. Emma Laroque views the use of English as the "new native language..that is serving to decolonize and unite Aboriginal peoples", as "poetic justice"(xxvi). This "metissage" also disrupts a nostalgic reconstruction of Aboriginal stories and oratory as being somehow outside of time and preserved in a pre-contact state, or what Johannes Fabian in Time and the Other describes as the anthropological device of a "denial of the coevalness" with western cultures. Armstrong's cross-woven mode of oratory dodges nostalgia on the part of the colonial critic, for unmediated, closer-to--the bone, kinds of exchange (Goddard, 1990, 203).

"Threads of Old Memory," part of the cycle of poems entitled, "History Lessons," maps many of the connections and fissures between voice, memory, and language. The dialectic relationship between written language and indigenous oral cultures is expressed as the place "rooted in the memory of loss/experienced in ceremonies/wrenched from the minds of a people/whose language spoke only harmony," occupied by a "language meant to overpower/to overtake/in skillfully crafted words/moving towards surrender"(58). The poet/speaker suggests that cultural renewal is possible, played out in a recuperation of memory into the present, "twining past to future"(60):

When I speak
 I attempt to bring together
 with my hands
 gossamer thin threads of old memory
 thoughts from the underpinnings of understanding
 words steeped in age
 slim
 barely visible strands of harmony
 stretching across the chaos brought into this world
 through words.(59)

This process of weaving, a powerful cultural metaphor, can be read in light of Armstrong's discussion of a "feminine process of renewal": creating something new using the collective understandings of the past. (Munro Beattie lecture) Trinh T. Minh-ha also refers to the "to and fro," the cultural coming and going of the figure of the weaver: "Making material: spinning and weaving is a euphonious heritage of wo/man kind handed on from generation to generation"(128). Wendy Wickware's introduction to her collection of stories by Okanagan storyteller Harry Robinson, speaks to his creative reworking in each oral performance. Robinson weaves contemporary Christian references, as well as "Fairy tale" figures such as Puss N' Boots, and events such as the moon landing, to traditional spiritual tales. While each story receives the positioning of its creator, it is reinvented so many times that its connection with the place and the community of people in that place becomes much more important than the specific personal and temporal details of the original event. What is transmitted from generation to

generation is not only the stories, but the very power of transmission. As is evidenced in "Grief is Not the Activity that Heals," there is a sense of the creative poet/speaker as healer and storytelling as a cure. In some oral cultures, healers are often referred to as the "living memory" of the people, deriving power from listening to the others and absorbing daily realities. (Longley, 140) The poet/ speaker in "Threads of Old Memory" speaks "through medicine eyes.../ shaped by new words/joining precisely to form old patterns"(61).

v. "From the Landscape of Grandmother": Invoking a matriarchal tradition

Breath Tracks is haunted by a sense of dispossession, a sense of loss which compels remembrance. The invocation "I remember," which situates the poet/speaker as elegiac witness for her people, appears and re-appears throughout this text, restating the urgent call to memory. As Laroque has so elegantly described it, the "poignancy of taking on the historical millstone of keeping our ancestor's memories alive comes through in our unsettling dreams and visions"(xxviii). Breath Tracks is marked by its elegiac references to the "immense power" of women in pre-Conquest Okanagan culture "who shaped the thinking of all its members in a loving, nurturing atmosphere" and assumed the "responsibility of bearer of life and nourisher of all generations"("Real Power," 24).

Armstrong's dedication, "In memory of those Okanagan Grandmothers whose blood and words live inside me," immediately invokes matrilineal connections and a reverence for tradition. Armstrong as a creative "weaver of memory thread," a repository of social and cultural history, calls upon these connections in order to resist a dislocated cultural amnesia. The first poetic cycle entitled, "From the Landscape of Grandmother," fluidly maps connections between the landscape of her foremothers and the present. A brief survey of the titles intimate geological and generational spaces: "Glacier," "Winds," "Green," "Blood." This cycle seems to speak back most clearly to the deterritorializing effects of colonialism. In "Blood," Armstrong calls up ancient connections to her people:

blood, courses through veins
 coming to me through dust that is my people
 that is the land rises a continuous red line
 across people across time is what we are
 the living pulsing walking earth inside me.(16)

Re-membering ancestral lineage echoes Armstrong's experience of having a grandmother who could speak to her "in the total purity of [our] language, the total purity of the words which have been handed down through thousands of years from mind to mind, from mouth to mouth"("What I intended...", 12). She notes that it is "through words, it is through the ability to communicate to another person, to communicate to your children the thinking of your people in the past, their history, that

you are a people"("Words," 26). In "Words," the power of orality to fuse past and present is invoked as the poet/speaker raises a communal tradition in "the sharing/in what we select/to remember/ reclaiming the enormity of the past/a piece in the collective experience of time"(17). The "voices of continuance" reach the speaker "alive with meaning/a fertile ground/ from which generations spring/ out of the landscape of grandmother"(17). The invocation of a "collective human past" is described by Armstrong as, "the old one who speaks to us all "(Cardinal and Armstrong, 82). Similarly, in Woman, Native, Other, Trinh T. Minh-ha positions the storyteller, often the old woman, crone, or griotte as the "living memory of her time and her people," the world's earliest archivists and librarians, whose memories were,

transmitted from mouth to ear, body to body, hand to hand. In the process of storytelling, speaking and listening refer to realities that do not involve just the imagination. The speech is seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched. It destroys, brings into life, nurtures. Every woman partakes in the chain of guardianship and of transmission. (121)

Throughout Breath Tracks, the reader is made aware of the presence and power of the "grandmother keeper." Armstrong lovingly invokes the name of Sahapxenelks, "Our Matriarch," her grandmother, "repeating whist whist over and over that only those whom she loved and was loved by know the meaning of"(108). In the "Keepers Words," the grandmother's "tribal

conscience," those "words...carved as bone/and so old no one remembered/were placed side by side/in a pattern/fashioned in the beginning/of her kind"(91). In "Blood," the poet/speaker recognizes that she is one "fragile breath" amongst the blood of her people... "across ages...a continuous red line..."(16). In her address, "Real Power: Aboriginal Women--Past, Present, and Future," clearly positions the grandmother as empowering figure of survival:

We find our strength and our power in our ability to be what our grandmothers were to us. Keepers, of the next generation in every sense of that word. Physically, intellectually and spiritually. We strive to retain that power and interpret in into all aspects of survival on this earth in the midst of chaos.(25)

vi. Possibility in Silence: Community Accountable Memory

The poem "Visions," in "From the landscape of Grandmother," addresses the gaps between speaking and being spoken by language as Armstrong intones: "We live in silences/little bits of spaces/ slim fitted slivers wedged between bunches of sound...We speak in languages whose speakers have no tongues"(19). Apart from markers of silencing, I have the sense that these gaps are ultimately spaces of possibility. These visions "play in the god-minds/of the great, who capture us/only in silences"(19). A number of Native writers have named the power of silence as an important tool. Beth Brant discusses the possibilities in the active silence of listening: "Because [our] words were spoken, it was

important that we chose words carefully, and that we listened equally with care"(16). Armstrong also theorizes the responsibility of speaking and the power of "quietness" as she advocates that her people,

practice quietness, to listen and speak only if you know the full meaning of what you say. It is said that you cannot call your words back once they are uttered and so you are responsible for all which results from your words. It is said that, for those reasons, it is best to prepare very seriously and carefully to make public contributions.(Cardinal and Armstrong, 90)

She invokes this "power of language and silence" in "Threads of Old Memory." This strategic quietness emerges from the "pure place":

where thoughts I choose
silently transform into words
I speak and powerfully become actions
become memory in someone
I become different memories to different people
different stories in the retelling of my place(59).

Memory is linked here to "responsible speech"--a community accountable memory--which influences the selection of those events, ideas, and visions which enter into the long-term social memory of a people. In "Threads of Memory," this reticence to speak translates into the poet/speaker's admission: "When I speak/I choose the words gently/asking the whys/dangerous words/in the language of the newcomers"(60). This strategy is visible in other "postcolonial" writings: the "split image of voiced silence" of which Nourbese Philip speaks, or Trinh T. Minh-ha's discussion of a resistance in

silence, which is a "a mode of uttering, and a response in its own right"(83). The agency in such a "non-response" is in its affinity with other silences, without which silence "goes unheard, unnoticed; it is simply one voice less," and one more triumph for the silencers (83). Armstrong speaks to this radical conjuncture of memory and silence, as a "reaching ever forward into distances unknown/always linking to others/up to the last drum/vibrating into vast silence"(18). Conversely, some white writers have spoken of the need for their own responsive silence or listening attention. Wendy Russell, in her essay, "Who Gets to Say? Conversations about Talking Across Cultures," articulates this practice "where [I] have to accept to learn to listen" as a form of agency (Gould & Russell, 53). Whites must acknowledge that historically their voices have "drowned out" most others, acknowledging their complicity in linguistic colonization. Armstrong also emphasizes, however, that it is vital that Native expression be heard by a non-Native audience:

...it's here that I know the work has to be done among all of us. And it's here that Native people's words, and their thinking, and their process, and their system, their philosophy, world view or whatever, needs to be understood, and looked at, and assimilated by other people. That's so important and so critical, and so necessary...("Contemporary Racism," 32)

This strategic silence may also provide the Native writer with a means of resisting an ongoing co-optation of cultural heritages and personal experiences. In this way the notion of

silence intersects with issues of cultural appropriation, which is addressed most clearly in Armstrong's "Glass Coffin."

Literature is political in that its linguistic and ideological transmission is defined and determined by those in power, according to Emma Laroque (xvi). This has often meant that the white skin privilege has allowed writers to mine Aboriginal cultures, restricting the access of Native artists to cultural spheres. The question of cultural appropriation has been addressed by numerous Canadian Native writers and theorists including Lenore Keeshing-Tobias, Lee Maracle, and Joanne Cardinal Schubert. A recent issue of Fuse magazine cites cultural appropriation as "one of the most contentious terms used in/for examining the exercise of social power in the realms of culture and creativity"(Maart, 45). The issues are economic, political, and cultural in an argument which has polarized around the question of non-Native imaginative freedom to use Native stories, memories, and myth in their creative and theoretical endeavours; and the desire of Aboriginal artists and theorists to reclaim, invent, and speak from their own cultural positioning, without being imaged as "other."

In "Glass Coffin," the poet/speaker, in tricksterish fashion, upends the Western pilfering of Native culture, through her parodic and grotesque reversal of the "Sleeping

Beauty" story. The speaker lies sleeping, entombed in a glass coffin, a trope for the romanticization of a dead or dormant Native culture awaiting a kiss of life from the vital white prince. The speaker states, "you seek me and treasures/gathered since childhood, and want to "slither between the cracks." She promises to

dig a hole,
 slit through parchment of body,
 then I will enter
 the eggshell body
 I will speak from there
 I will watch with your eyes
 you have eyes to another stone age
 you have images to steal. (33-34)

This piece evokes a sense of brutal possession, as the poet/speaker marks her intention to revisit this fate on those who have entombed her in the coffin. She redeploys the ethnographic gaze, turning the lens back on Western culture. Emerging from a position of uneven power relations, this reversal strategically foregrounds the violence lurking in cross-cultural "exchanges." It also brings into relief the vampirism which skulks beneath the romance of Western myth and its genteel fairy tales. Lee Maracle speaks often of the "vampirism" which she sees as inherent in the appropriation of native culture:

Our stories had original authors; we are not dead. Someone told these stories to someone else who reaped copyright, royalties, credit and the dubious privilege of bastardizing them. We have lost both revenue and dignity in the process...We object to the theft of our stories and the distortion of our lives. Those who would hide

behind the lie of censorship to justify thievery and dishonesty don't hold the same terror for us. (Maracle, 1989, 31)

Certainly as a white, privileged graduate student, a "noviate" into the academy and its demands of theoretical mastery, I acknowledge my complicity in a Canadian academic milieu which frequently applies culturally inappropriate and silencing theory to Native issues and culture (Post-Colonial Literatures Conference, University of Guelph, 1992). Yet as Linda Alcoff has noted in her article "The Problem of Speaking for Others," simply acknowledging the problem of speaking for others cannot result in eliminating a speaker's accountability"(16). Alcoff flags the problem of seeking immunity by attempting to "avoid the problematic of speaking for by retreating into an individualist realm...well-supported in the individualist ideology of the West, that a self is not constituted by multiple intersecting discourses but consists of a unified whole capable of autonomy from others"(21). Richard Hill in "One part per million, White Appropriation and Native voices," speaks of tremendous personal pain he faces in being "defined" by non-Native "experts," yet he also makes a distinction between "exploitative readings of [my] experience and readings that emerge out of dialogue and honest interaction founded on common humanity"(9). I believe that in this manner there is possibility for dialogue and solidarity in a project of politicized memory. Armstrong, as I have noted

earlier, expands the power of politicizing an audience to non-Native communities.

She has said that an increased awareness of Native issues by non-Native audiences, is vital to change thinking in the dominant culture. (Munro Beattie lecture) A particularly arresting site for the meeting of Native and white cultural critique is in Armstrong's restaging of colonial history.

vii History Lessons

In the cycle of poems entitled, "History Lessons," Armstrong unpacks many of the "stories" which give meaning to imperial projects, re-evaluating history as written, and refusing its degeneration into "the remembrance of paralysing images" (Lionnet, 112). This section undertakes a radical questioning of historiographic versions of the past in colonial discourses, in order to rewrite the colonial endings (Goddard, 1999, 198). In many of these poems, Armstrong uses tools of parody and humour to turn the piercing ethnographic lens around, and employs what Michel Foucault has termed "counter-memory": historical memory that resists current modes of truth and justice, helping us to understand and change the present by placing it in a new relation to the past (hooks, "representing whiteness," 344). Armstrong's commitment to life writing is motivated by "the necessity to examine the past, thereby culturally affirming a new vision for all Aboriginal peoples" ("Disempowerment," 145). In Breath Tracks

Armstrong enacts resistance by speaking back to the dominant codes by which the "native" has been represented, often by re/writing visual and literary tropes used to represent the "imaginary indian". The objectifying gaze of white visual and literary representation has clearly participated in the creation of destructive cultural signs. Descriptions of Aboriginal peoples which positioned them as "less civilized" in European terms, justified imperial expansion, and enacted a profoundly deculturating and objectifying effect. This pervasive and damaging imagery persists into the 20th century in what numerous theorists have called the "Hollywood Indian"; for Native women, the helpless, sometimes scantily-clad figure representing a sexual, historical, and racial fantasy for white culture. According to Beth Seaton, she bears the representational burdens of both sexual and racial difference--embodying eroticism, exoticism, and nostalgia. She symbolizes,

an image of native culture condemned to immobility and repetition in the imagination of a "progressive" white race. And paradoxically, she figures as a romantic idealization of oppression; a fantasized history which enables white society to forget its past by strategically imagining another.(41)

Armstrong upends historical and cultural texting with her roving eye and parodic inversion. In "History Lesson," she subverts a number of the pervasive discourses of European contact with Aboriginal people: Christianity; progress;

discovery; civilization. Columbus' men, messengers of "civilization," burst out of the "belly" of his ship in an unruly mob "Shooting buffalo/Shooting each other/left and right"(28). In the "Hollywood speak" of the "Indian," she names the deterritorializing agents of "civilization" in Canada and their paternalism: "Father mean well/waves his makeshift wand/forgives saucer-eyed Indians," and "Red coated knights/gallop[ing] across the prairie to get their men/and to build a new world." In ironic play with the notion of benefaction, the gift, the poet/speaker tells us these, "Pioneers and traders /bring gifts./Smallpox, Seagrams/and rice krispies/ Civilization has reached the promised land"(28). The poet/speaker activates an historical counter-memory, humourously reframing the pervasive tropes of colonial representations from an ironic present. She telescopes from the point of contact to the production of cultural goods like breakfast cereals with too much sugar.

The poem "Indian woman" uses a strategic and parodic invocation of identity to upend reductive and ultimately violent discourses about Native women, reading ethnicity against the dominating culture's penchant for stereotyping and classifying. In this subversive text, Armstrong targets representations of Aboriginal women, which have passed from earliest European contact through Hollywood filmmaking: sentimentalized native portraiture and the pervasive myth of

sexualized "squaw" or prostitute. This text may be read against Armstrong's remarks that in Okanagan culture it is

through the attack on this [pre-contact] power of aboriginal woman, that the disempowerment of our peoples has been achieved, in a dehumanizing process that is one of the cruellest on the face of this earth...the attack on the core family system, resulted in the disintegration of our peoples towards genocide. ("Real power," 24)

The poem opens with an ironic set of self-identifications, "I am a squaw/a savage/basically a mammal"(106). She cites demeaning stereotypes of Native woman as breeder, "female/only in the ability to breed/ and bear papooses/ to be carried quaintly/on a board/or lost to welfare"(106). The myth of the "squaw"--a derogatory epithet often applied to native women by non-natives--depicts a debased, immoral, sexual convenience, who lives a squalid life of servile toil, mistreated by men. The equation of 'Indian' otherness with a dangerous female sexuality has long been part of the discourse of dispossession since the time of contact.(Helen Carr, 85) Armstrong parodically invokes this damaging trope: "I have no feelings/ The sinuous planes of my brown body/carries no hint/of the need/to be caressed/ desired/ loved/Its only use/to be raped/beaten and bludgeoned/in some/B-grade western"(106). Armstrong further speaks back to the sentimentalized portraiture of native women: "The lines/cut deep/into my aged face/are not from bitterness/or despair/at seeing my clan destroyed/one by one/they are here/to be painted or

photographed/sold to be hung on lawyers walls"(106). Once again the poet/speaker activates a politicized counter-memory reframing pervasive cultural representations of Native women with irony. She arrestingly concludes this litany with the line--"Someone is lying". The piece then shifts to invocations of positive, powerful images of native self in relation to a re-empowered collectivity, concluding with, "I am a sacred trust /I am Indian woman"(107). In this dualistic construction, Armstrong speaks back to the one-sided ethnographic gaze trained on Native women in white colonizing culture, disrupting the savage/civilized binary so prevalent in literary and visual representations. Seaton contextualizes this split in her description of gender and race:

an arbitrary term whose identity is negatively inscribed within a framework of binary oppositions. And just as 'woman' (within a schemata of heterosexual difference) is defined in opposition to what she is not (man), so too is 'Indian' (within a schemata of racial difference) shaped and discoloured against a bleached and 'neutral' background of 'whiteness'. Bound within a tedious field of dichotomous distinctions - nature/culture, passive/active, dark/light, body/mind, savage/civilized - both 'woman' and 'Indian' occupy the devalued side of an asymmetrical split. Sitting on the valued side of course is the pale male, who acts as the normative (and supposedly impartial standard) against which all others are measured.(41)

By ironically subverting and occupying both sides of a split of her own devising, Armstrong inverts these tropes, reclaiming her subject status. She then reductive tropes first by parodically speaking them, and then reversing them in

a strategic invocation of "soft power". She declares, "I am the strength of nations," and "I am keeper of generations," replacing objectifying tropes with those of her own devising. This poem brings to mind the subversive practices of Pauline Johnson, who resisted the script provided for her by occupying and moving between borders of identity as Native princess and European "lady". Armstrong's text works in a similar fashion, as a radical invocation of essential identity, which inverts and unsettles binary and racist representations. She describes this inversion as a kind of healing for Native women, in reconstructing

an image of themselves, an image that they take on and help to perpetuate, sometimes in frustration and anger and hostility. But at some point the other image of Native women that is really what being woman and in particular what being Native woman is needs to be given to Native people. This is our perspective. I want to be sure that other Native women have an understanding of the perspective I have of myself, so that they can look at themselves in a different way...This is what we Native women must portray, understand, and pass on to our daughters and granddaughters. ("What I wanted," 9)

"Rooted" in a "memory of loss," Breath Tracks gives voice to an elegiac and politicized memory which probes issues of identity, context, and community. The figure of the politicized "memory weaver" is a particularly resonant one for this project. Her traversal of language is undertaken as an opening of what is closed, "a soft feeling" which "reaches outward," as she moves from a position as solitary woman in a marginalized culture to the relational space of a network of

voices(27). While Armstrong's mobilization of "metissage," in her speaking of oral culture within written genres, subverts and warps the codes for the "voicing" of memory, her social and historical intervention activate resistance against a collective forgetting, making transformation possible.

CODA

This thesis was undertaken from the point of a personal commitment to memory. The photo in the frontspiece of this thesis portrays a young woman of about twelve or thirteen sitting demurely on the front steps of her home in Souris, Manitoba. However "decorous" she appears, she does not avert her eyes from the photographer, but seems to be gazing beyond, imagining. My yearning re-visioning of this woman is invested with several parts memory, several of storytelling, as well as an imaginative reframing of this static photograph.

I have theorized that a similar process of re-vision undertaken by numerous Canadian women writers holds enormous productive potential--imaginal memory holds possibility as a socially engaged form of thinking and writing. This study has not been an easy one. The very ephemerality of memory seems incongruous in a discussion of political change, of feminist praxis. Memory possesses an "inward" history in literature; it seems to invade the very capillaries of the text. Its modes of representation and manipulation, its deep grammar, its problematic of history and insight, all combine into a constellation that, is difficult and at times unruly for the purposes of academic writing.

The process of healing, cultural intervention, and agency are, however, foregrounded in the work of these writers, though in varying degrees and modes. The texts I have taken up

in this thesis activate memory multiply: the melancholic nostalgia and "many-sided" memory of Heroine; the embodied traumatic and social memory of Don't; and the collective, politicized memory of Breath Tracks. Read "against each other" these texts work in somewhat uneasy alliance, yet all, I contend, enact feminist praxis in their dissonant voicings of memory.

Scott's mode of critical construction in Heroine, which captures the energy of montage, prods at the movement and links between cultural expression and political action. In this text, critique becomes a strategic act in a politics of intervention, directed toward the heart of the present against nostalgia and melancholia. The heroine's deep and paralyzing nostalgia is displaced through the text's ironic dance between fiction and theory. It activates, as I have mentioned, a narcissistic, privileged agency which plumbs the depths of subjective contemplation--the text has particular relevance for the bourgeois female subject of the nuclear family and heterosexual romance plot. At times the heroine, who has written through/about melancholy is, for all her perspectival achievements, perhaps thrown back more deeply into the radical immanence of melancholia and nostalgia--the text collapses in on itself.

I found this an often impenetrable and unsettling text which required numerous readings in order to find an "in" for

the reader/writer. While Heroine rouses a strong personal resonance in its discussion of the enduring problem of melancholy and depression for women, I found it difficult to balance its parodic textual play with its overlapping narrative of incalculable pain. The criteria for political action in Heroine, remain primarily aesthetic ones.

Don't: A Woman's Word stands in stark contrast to Heroine in a number of significant ways: its foregrounding of the pained, remembering body, rather than the ludic, pleased body of which Scott speaks; its capacity to directly address and implicate its readership in social remembrance through its urgent voicings rather than privileged textual musings; and its overt quest for justice and healing throughout. Don't does not distance memory by reading it as a text, but rather Danica's traumatic memories of abuse overwhelm the reader and activate and structure the narrative. In giving her poetic and disturbing testimony, Danica initiates her own personal healing, as well as creating an "oppositional interpretative community" for a more congenial space from which other women may speak. The reader becomes imbricated in the text as a participant in the process of "telling," and bearing witness to the terrifying events of the text.

This text also proved to be difficult and perplexing, yet principally in its power of emotional affect. It would not be inappropriate to suggest that Don't is a revolutionary text in

that it replicates at the textual level, the feeling of violation, of hurt and fear, as we take this testimony into our own bodies. It is part of a literature of emergency which has entered into social memory, and is a seminal text in a discussion of memory and women's writing in Canada.

Breath Tracks displaces the individual remembering subject of Heroine with its invocation of an historical, communal remembrance. This community-oriented memory combats a collective amnesia provoked by the hostility of the dominant culture. Like Danica's text, Breath Tracks speaks with a grounded urgency which is simply not evident in Heroine. This text traverses the faultlines of a discussion of individual and collective remembering; it restages the lyric speaker as a politicized figure who bears creative witness to the culture and history of her people. Significantly, however, this remembering does not slip into a nostalgic reconstruction of an untouched past, but serves as a poignant elegy, a call to remembrance against forgetting. To trace memory/memory traces in Armstrong's poetic practices is also to probe the prohibitions which have been placed on Aboriginal expression. In the frame of a cultural politics, her mnemonic interventions perform a radical act of resistance against the discourses and practices of Non-Native culture which threaten to deny or erase Okanagan cultural survival.

Finally, the inward contemplation which impels the

narrative movement and ultimately defines Heroine, moves outward to a consideration of external concerns far more readily in Breath Tracks. In fact, this outward movement of the politicized single voice to a communal or social memory distinguish both Danica and Armstrong's texts from Scott's. Heroine's complex dance of texts theorizes a relationship to the social and political context of their creation, but not as actively as the others. Nevertheless, as I have argued these texts all enact a healing praxis in their activation of imaginal memory, giving creative voice to cultural metaphors and images which guide the important work of remembrance.

1. "Woman-identified" is a more appropriate term for those writers who do not identify with the term feminist because of its distinct history of white and middle-class centred-ness.

2. Freidman's suggestion for a reappraisal of terms constitutes reanimating these concepts by taking into consideration the critiques levelled against them. These concepts are irrevocably altered for having been submitted to critique. This should not be mistaken for a nostalgic return to unprovisionalized subjectivity.

3. Watchout and L'anarchie s'en vient (anarchy is coming) make direct reference to the radical anarchist political climate of the 70s in Quebec. Marxist-leninist groups coalesced around the issue of political sovereignty.

4. The spiral is a mediated textual figure often invoked in fiction/theory. Nicole Brossard, poaching from Barthes, refers to the spiral as the expression of an "essential gynecological memory," which both imagines and remembers from a single point. (The Aerial Letter, 75)

5. Helene Cixous first raised the notion of an *écriture féminine*, which suggests that women should write the body, in an evocation of "the essential bond between feminine writing and the mother as source and origin of the voice to be heard in all female texts." (Moi, 114) Luce Irigaray's theorizing addresses the phallogocentric, Lacanian psychoanalytic discourse and its construction of the female as "lack" or absence. These texts activate a tactical essentialism with a "jouissance," a diffuse, orgasmic, free-flowing narrative where signifiers play. (The Sex Which is Not One)

6. Deploying a tactical essentialism, Brossard seeks tradition as a means of validating or lending energy and pride to the enterprise of women's poetry. She frequently lists "lesbian" foremothers in her poetry, using quotation to point out "literary, cultural or political networks" (Aerial Letter, 79). Writing in the feminine makes the body the site of memory that has a tactical potential--a utopian project which envisions a different relationship to authority and writing:

The female body will speak its reality, its images, the censure it has been subjected to, its body filled to bursting. Women are arriving in the public squares of Literature and Text. They are full of memories: anecdotal, mythic, real and fictions. But above all women are filled with an all-encompassing memory, a gyn/ecological memory. (Aerial Letter, 73)

7. Fanon and Memmi speak to cultural amnesia in The Wretched of the Earth, and The Colonizer and Colonized, respectively.

8. Armstrong named some of her contemporaries, among them Lee Maracle, Maria Campbell, and Beatrice Culleton, as having created a more congenial cultural climate for writing by Native women authors.

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