"WHO'S THERE?":
THE CHANGING SUBJECT(S) OF FEMINISM:
READING DAPHNE MARLATT'S ANA HISTORIC

by

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Title of Thesis/Project/Extended Essay

"Who's There?": The Changing

Subject(s) of Feminism: Reading

Daphne Marlatt's Ana Historic

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ABSTRACT

Daphne Marlatt's novel *Ana Historic* challenges both textual and social conventions, exposing links between the genres of history, autobiography and the novel and the traditional rules and roles of gender that define and limit female subjectivity; it undertakes a re-writing of these genres as part of its project of articulating an unconstrained feminist subjectivity. While the subject it constructs remains contained within a "mainstream" feminism increasingly criticized for its exclusive emphasis on sexual difference, the critical process the novel initiates enables readers to continue its exploration of the shifting contexts (cultural, historical, familial, political) through which the many subjects of feminism are formed.

The novel works to destabilize the authority of received narratives by foregrounding its protagonist's revisionary process of re-framing and contextualizing these--seeing their "facts" as products of the dominant, patriarchal culture, and moving past such ideological frameworks as they become visible--and this process becomes a model for the readers whose conscious participation in this political and theoretical project is explicitly invoked. Where *Ana Historic* resitutes narratives of the past and reads these as products of a masculinist perspective, the novel can
be similarly read as a document recording the limitations of the feminist thought out of which it arises.

Like feminist theories now being challenged by women of colour, *Ana Historic* posits an essential femininity that keeps its critique bounded by western dualism, even as it elides any discussion of racialization and class structures as sources of difference and inequity, compounding this flaw through its use of the metaphor of "sexual decolonization," and its representations of aboriginal women, who are constructed as Others in the service of its subjects' acts of self-creation.

*Ana Historic*’s emphasis on the act of reading means that any critical engagement with the novel must go beyond an enumeration of such textual blindnesses to a self-conscious examination of those ideological frameworks that similarly limit each reader's perceptions and interpretations. The novel implies an awareness of its own limitations, and challenges its readers not to fix its meaning within any one contextual frame, but to continue to question what it means to be a feminist subject from those contexts we inhabit at the moment of reading.
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"writing against her absence"

I

introduction:

Unlearning the rules of gender/genre
words, that shifting territory, never one's own.
full of deadfalls and hidden claims to a reality
others have made.
- Ana Historic 32

Daphne Marlatt's *Ana Historic* announces its primary concerns with its opening question: "Who's There?" a voice asks, the apparent transparency of the question belied by its context and framing. The full title, *Ana Historic: A Novel*, suggests a re-vision or even a renewal both of history and the presumed authenticity of its documentary facts, and the fictitious narratives of the novel, a form paradoxically both dismissed for its lack of authenticity and honoured as the major literary genre of the twentieth century. Another established and widely respected artistic form with an equally uneasy relationship with the world to which it refers is represented in the cover art: here, a highly stylized female nude draws attention to the inherent artifice of a long tradition of representations of women and the female body.

That this artwork is reproduced, this time in black and white, on the title page, beneath a line that introduces "A Novel by Daphne Marlatt," underscores the gender assigned to the author's name, and by implication to the literary form penned by her, "A Novel." This is a novel *written by a woman*, the page announces, promising, if not a more authentic depiction of women's experiences, an attempt to

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1The sub-title of this thesis attempts to address some of the complexities of this question, and of its many possible responses, by referring to Teresa de Lauretis' discussion of the radical re-thinking of the concepts of gender and of "the female subject of feminism" (Preface ix) between the 1960s and 1970s and the publication of her *Technologies of Gender* in 1987. Corresponding shifts in my awareness of the contexts and positions from which I read have resulted from my own gradual exposure to (and comprehension/incorporation of) changing theories of feminist subjectivity, and have led to a series of differently-focused readings of *Ana Historic*, which this thesis attempts to trace.
grapple with the disjunctures between women's lives and the representations of their embodied existence.

The nature of the relationship between gendered subjectivity and the social and textual conventions through which it is constructed, framed, and defined lies at the heart of Ana Historic and is central to the novel's implicit response to its opening question. "Who's There?" provides an opening for exploring a number of issues surrounding subjectivity, representation, and meaning. This thesis is particularly concerned with those issues suggested by Janice Williamson's observation that the question "opens an interpellation to the reader" (189); "Who's There?" both invites and requires critical examinations of the dispositions and roles of reading subjects, the various positions inhabited both within and before the text, and the interests and investments that inform processes of interpreting and constructing meaning. The novel itself, though, through the progress of its primary narrator and protagonist, suggests a much more narrowly focused perspective on the relationship between language and power, and requires that any critical reading first address the connections it posits between gender and genre.

In line with the theorizing of many contemporary rhetoricians, Ana Historic emphasizes the social aspects of genre--a phenomenon constructed by cultural, historical, social, and ideological contexts--and underlines "the relation of experience to discourse" that Teresa de Lauretis identifies as central to "the definition of feminism," and what it means to be a feminist subject (FS 5). As Carolyn Miller
argues in "Genre as Social Action," genres exist not merely as formal entities, but arise out of strategic responses to particular rhetorical situations; as such, they function as "rhetorical artifact[s]" that reflect "certain aspects of the way social reality evolves" (153). While the approach offered in Miller's work suggests more fluidity and adaptability than structurally-based definitions of genre imply, theorists working with this model are careful to note the extent to which existing generic forms can inhibit and control individual rhetorical strategies. Kathleen Jamieson argues that in situations where the previously existing generic response is no longer appropriate, it can still exert a powerful influence--often incompatible with a writer's current needs and intentions (406). This focus on genre as a social phenomenon also leads to Amy Devitt's observation that "[genre not only responds to but also constructs recurring situation]" (577). Established genres not only reflect certain definitions of social realities, but also work to reinforce these by shaping the ways readers understand, define, and thus participate in social relations. As Marlatt comments about one of the areas of discourse Ana Historic works to unsettle, "[h]istory . . . shapes our thought and especially our thought about what is possible" (SR 15).

By opening in the interrogative--by asking "Who's There?"--Marlatt's novel establishes scrutiny and critique as its important modes of undermining the generic constraints and the corresponding social and cultural codes that delimit and prescribe particular gendered identities. In attempting to answer this question, it
attempts the articulation of a subject whose existence has been consistently denied--a process that requires a disruption of the generic codes of history, the novel, and literary autobiography, and of their impacts on a gendered subject's responses to this question. It necessitates not only "Who's There?" but also the question of whose definitions and assumptions frame the answer. It is here that the given discourses of history and literature are unable to provide adequate answers, since it is her female self the speaker wakes in search of--a self they have conventionally constructed as both absence and object. To ask the question at all, then, initiates a process that disrupts the norms of history, autobiography, and the novel, and finally insists on the presence of a feminist subject articulated in her own terms.

The voice that continues this opening paragraph gestures not towards the terms of this articulation, though, but to the ideological context through which the narrator, Annie, has been already defined, and in which her literal and figurative awakening is situated. That her question is subversive is apparent; "she was whispering," the voice says. Annie is furtive--conscious, perhaps, of the illegitimacy of her action, and of the dangers inherent in speech that challenges or unsettles established codes. And Annie wakes "in the dark," next to a husband "dreaming without her in some place she [has] no access to." Annie is trapped, that is, on the de-valued side of a patriarchally constructed dualism (Man/Woman, Culture/Nature, Mind/Body). The surrounding night is marked by sounds of the masculine
activities of resource extraction and industry--"a truck gearing down somewhere. the sound of a train, in some yard where men already up were working signals, levers, lamps"--as she wakes not only to self-awareness and the recognition of entrapment and restriction, but also to the imperatives of physicality: "now she would have to move, shift, legs aware of themselves and wanting out." And it is not the words she utters that wake her--not language, the abstractions of ideas and intellect--but their material, bodily presence--"the sound of her own voice . . . heard like an echo asking . . ." (9).

This sense of being constrained and restricted is central to Marlatt's discussion of genre boundaries in "Self-Representation and Fictionalysis," an essay that outlines the critical impulse behind Ana Historic's disturbance of the rigid hierarchies dividing fact and fiction, history and imagination. Marlatt resists conventional definitions of history and autobiography, with their dependence on verifiable facts, "those frozen somethings of evidence" (SR 15), and stresses the importance of recognizing the operations of social and cultural power dynamics in creating those facts. Her attention to the tendency of language, and particularly heroic narratives, to define through separation--of figure from ground, or of the subject from (his) surroundings--is supported by Sidonie Smith's discussion of the problematic relationship between women writers and the androcentric tradition of autobiography; Smith traces the genre's construction of a singular, autonomous and decontextualized subject to its emergence during the European Renaissance, the period that gave rise to the
ideology of individualism and the constitution of a universal Subject through its opposition to a marginalized Other (Smith 5-10). As Marlatt's essay makes clear, representations of those who have been so positioned through this process can only be partial and reductive when they focus exclusively on facts; they impose inflexible limits of closure that trap their subjects within the stifling objectified status of their official roles, and preclude not only possibilities for change, but also the necessary examination of how these selves have come to be. "Fact," she argues, operates, like the still photo as a moment frozen out of context, that context which goes on shifting, acting, changing after the f-stop has closed its recording eye. The fact a still frame. The self framed . . . caught in the ice of representation. (SR 13)

In order to release the self from this narrowly circumscribed stasis, then, Marlatt proposes a mode of self-representation that combines an analysis of that context ("the roles we have found ourselves in, defined in a complex socio-familial weave") with a fictive imagining of the possibilities that lie beyond these assigned roles--"a fiction that uncovers analytically that territory where fact and fiction coincide" (SR 15).

Marlatt underlines this coincidence--undermining the conventional dichotomy between fact and fiction--by fictionalizing the role of the autobiographer in Ana Historic. While superficial similarities connect the author's life with that of her principal narrator, a search for authentic and verifiable correspondences becomes meaningless here, as the truth of the principal narrator's life
is clearly bounded by the novelistic frame. Moreover, Annie's position as both narrator and writer (of a manuscript that may be the novel itself [Davey 1981]), foregrounds the social and textual issues involved in the doubled project of re-presenting female subjectivity while simultaneously challenging those conventional forms that relegate her to object status. And this revisionary process is not undertaken in isolation, but grows out of Annie's increasing awareness of the relational nature of her identity--her position in a complex web of social relations she comes to recognize as hierarchical and patriarchal. Her resistance to the boundaries surrounding her position as the wife and research assistant of an historian is expressed in terms that emphasize the linkages between her own respectable life and relationships and the narrative conventions that prescribe and sanction particular feminine roles: "i ended up doing what i was meant to," she reflects, and concedes to her dead mother, "i followed the plotline through, the story you had me enact" (17). As her research repeatedly coincides with her personal interrogation of these social and narrative codes, she sees their effects repeated and multiplied in the lives of other women. Her attempts to uncover details from the life of Mrs. Richards, who appears in the historical record as little more than a footnote, and her observation that her mother Ina is now "locked up in a box. frozen in all the photographs Harald took" (11), show similar forces at work. Both women are constrained by narrative frames that, failing to accommodate or convey the complex vitality of their subjects, instead impose the
limitations of two-dimensionality on flesh and blood. "[T]hese are not facts," Annie notes, "but skeletal bones of a suppressed body the story is" (29). Annie's invention of an identity and a story around the figure of Ana Richards effectively releases all three women from such circumscribed versions of "who they apparently are to the full sense and the full sensory body of who each of them might be, if they could imagine themselves to their fullest" (SR 15) by unsettling the authority of those gendered/generic conventions through which they have been defined and contained.

Annie's revision unsettles established relations of power through re-interpretation; she changes the story by assigning different meanings to events, and by emphasizing in her readings the operations and effects of such suppressions, circumscriptions, and constraints. In memory, and in her internal rejoinders to Ina, she envisions her own acquisition of feminine behaviour no longer as something natural and inevitable, but as a distinctly unnatural process of socialization, resulting in an adolescent "walking down the back steps, self-consciously, slowly. it wasn't where she was going but what she was walking, her body, out into the world" (50). "you taught me a lot," she tells Ina,

you taught me the uneasy hole in myself and how to cover it up--cover girl, the great cover-story women inherit in fashion and makeup. you taught me how i was supposed to look, the feminine act. (60-61)

She recognizes also, though, "the inheritance of the mothers" (60) that pressed first Ina, and now herself, into the complicit role of
inculcating their daughters. And she writes herself out of the
patriarchally-defined limits of heterosexual domesticity that have
surrounded Ina partly by identifying and then subverting
corresponding limits in language and textual forms.

As Stan Dragland notes, "[t]he strand of the novel that tells
Ina's story is gothic" (173); her isolation within the familial home,
within the conventional roles of mother and housewife, resembles
nothing more than William Patrick Day's description of the closed
system of gothic fantasy, where the action of the protagonist "can
never be progressive, only circular . . . result[ing] in [her] own
disintegration (44)" (qtd. by Dragland: 172). And while the novel is
filled with "other interlinked images of gothic confinement: impasse,
frame, blank, silence," it is finally "the act of an escape artist" (173).
Integral to Annie's escape, as the narrator and protagonist of the
story she writes for herself, is her recognition that the very material
and tools she works with function already to shore up those barriers
she is attempting to breach. Her project begins at the "impasse" of
discovering "'my very words' were yours" (23); and as she constructs a
revisionary history for Ana Richards, she denies those words the
transparency they have previously assumed:

Proper, she says, Lady capitalized, and it is
barely sounded, the relationship between
proper and property. the other Ladies at the
mill would be wives or daughters-about-to-
to-be-wives . . . . she alone is without
'protection,' as they would say . . . . subject
to self-doubt in a situation without clearly
defined territory (because she is no one's
property . . . ), she . . . is at home only with
Having underlined the ideological underpinnings of language, she intensifies the significance of her own manipulations. "Bridie or Birdie with the wandering 'r'" (108) becomes far more than a failure to remember, or to decide upon, the correct spelling of this character's name. The ambiguity creates a figure who can neither be contained by a correct spelling or rule, nor made to adhere to a specific textual form. Her identity is located, instead, in the flicker of unresolved tension between "Bridie," a name emphasizing those characteristics valued in the heterosexual exchange of women, and "Birdie," representative of freedom, flight, independence. The claim Annie (and Marlatt) stake here is rendered more potent as previous meanings are acknowledged and their prerogative usurped.

Marlatt's subversions of genre expectations are similarly framed by her (narrators') recognition of the strength and persistence of convention. Despite Ana's absence from the historical record--evidence of history's indifference to the preoccupations of female subjects, which are dismissed as private and personal--and despite Marlatt's explicit refusal (both in the novel and in critical discussions) of the rigid boundaries guarding autobiography, both genres still insinuate themselves, or at least their insistence on truth and facts, into the text, through Ina's censuring refrain: "the trouble with you, Annie, is that you want to tell a story, no matter how much history you keep throwing at me" (27). And in an unattributed passage
marking a pause between sections, an anonymous voice even acknowledges the attraction that pulls the novel towards the familiar and apparently safe territory of established forms and clearly delineated boundaries; but this gesture turns in on itself ironically, revealing history as a story that, like any other, is told from a limited perspective: "come back, history calls, to the solid / ground of fact. you don't want to fall / off the edge of the world--" (111). Thus mocking history's authority and authenticity, the passage signals a final renunciation of this genre as the novel moves unconditionally into the realm of fiction and the imaginary.

Against Ina's insistence on the official line--that fiction is false and insignificant (or less than factual and authoritative)--fiction is presented here as a possible way out. It becomes a strategy for resisting historical discourse and its dead end of closure--the "inevitable end of the sentence" that Annie cannot/will not let Ana write (146)--and allows Annie, in her invention of a life for Ana Richards, to explore possible alternatives for her own, releasing her from the dangers of repetition and the threat of her mother's shadow. By enabling Annie's continual "telling, untelling, unravelling" (137) of the narrative strands of Ina's life, fiction opens a space for new configurations of this relationship; Ina's life-story becomes not a closed book but a text inviting multiple understandings and interpretations. And even the authorial assertion, pages beyond the narrator's final words, that "this is a work of fiction; historical personages have been fictionalized to possible and/or purely
imaginary lengths" (n.p.), presents fiction as a positive alternative to history. This inversion of the conventional fictional disclaimer transforms what might have been a renunciation, a denial of responsibility, into an announcement of reclamation (L. reclamo "cry out against"; reclaim: "seek return of [one's property]; . . . win back or away from vice or error or waste condition" [Oxford]). Fiction is proposed here as a means of freeing/releasing the historical into the realm of the possible. "[I]n inventing a life from Mrs. Richards," Marlatt says in "Self-Representation and Fictionalysis," "i as Annie . . . invented a historical leak, a hole in the sieve of fact that let the shadow of a possibility leak through into full-blown life" (SR 15).

Fiction as an antidote to (His)tory.

Lola Tostevin notes that Marlatt also "denies Ana Historic the solace of 'proper form,' . . . shunning prescribed rules of what a novel 'should be,' [to impart] a sense of the unpresentable" (37).

Having distinguished her novel from history, defined as "the real story the city fathers tell of the only important events in the world. a tale of their exploits hacked out against a silent backdrop" (28), Marlatt distances her text from the conventions of this dominant literary form with its emphasis, again, on the singularity and autonomy of its (heroic) subject. She resists what she calls "the single-minded project of following a singular life-line," or "narrative as climax" (SR 17), opting instead for an interrupted narrative that disrupts chronology and linearity, and displaces the grand, momentous achievements of the great individual with family snapshots, the personal reflections of
suburban housewives, and an account of a woman's bodily transformations as she labours to birth a child. "she keeps insisting herself on the telling," a voice explains:

because she was telling me right from the beginning stories out of a life are stories, true, true stories and real at once--this is not a roman / ce, it doesn't deal with heroes (67)

*Ana Historic* avoids a strict adherence to the Aristotelian definition of the "proper shape of the narrative" that Ursula Le Guin parodies as "that of the arrow or spear, starting here and going straight there and THOK! hitting its mark (which drops dead)" (169). Instead, it juxtaposes the fragmented and invented histories of three partially understood lives with documents imported from medicine and psychiatry, popular psychology and feminism, history, and nineteenth-century pioneer journalism--resisting, in Tostevin's words, "cohesion and narrative syntax . . . master plot . . . [and] one heroic voice" (38). The novel re-shapes the narrative line of fiction in order to fit more closely with Le Guin's model of the novel as a container--a means of both nurturing and exploring the connections between and among subjects and their environment (169). Despite the centrality of Annie among *Ana Historic*'s voices, she speaks not in isolation, but in the awareness of the constant interweaving of the three women's stories, which flow into and around and through each other and the social, political, and historical contexts from which they cannot be separated out or disentangled. Ana's virtual absence from history, and Ina's childhood, marriage, and final violent erasure are all
integral to Annie's sense of self, and the overlappings and connections among them present a model of mutuality and interdependence. Inextricably wrapped in each others' stories, Annie, the character she imagines against the historical absence of Mrs. Richards, and her mother, as she brings her into the present tense, all "give birth to each other" (131); the triumphs, insights, and advancements of each continually open doors and suggest possibilities for the others.

When Annie says, of Ana's early morning writing, "No one would ever follow that sentence. It was hers alone, leading her on" (86), she points obliquely to the shifting roles and reciprocity posited by their relationship as writer and subject. Because Annie, of course, is following the sentence, and the rest of Ana's story as she imagines/creates it; and both the writing and the (re)reading provide her with a way to make sense of, and to remake her own and Ina's stories. Positioned between these two threads, Annie reads and re-writes Ana's history and is prompted to attempt a similar salvaging of Ina's story. Her frustration at the brevity of the archival records in which Mrs. Richards appears is paralleled by, and perhaps initiates, a contemplation of the more intense and intimate gap of inadequate/unsatisfactory explanations for her mother's life and death. Observing and re-creating Ina's story according to a new set of reference points, Annie is able to articulate what, for her mother, was often unspeakable--inadmissible. Ina's insistence on propriety acquires new layers of meaning, for instance, when Annie recognizes
the seeds of her mother's experience in her analysis of her own use of the term "monstrous"—her own hesitation over moving Ana's story into the unspeakable territory of lesbian sexuality. From her vantage point, Annie is able both to acknowledge and articulate Ina's fear and anger, and to advance a partial explanation:

... the monster is what I always feared as real: the violence behind the kiss, the brutal hand beneath the surgical glove, the one who punishes you for seeing (through) him.

that's your voice, Ina, lucid and critical, seeing through the conventions that surrounded you. and though you saw through them, you still didn't know what to do with the fear that found you alone on the far side of where you were 'supposed' to be. wrong, therefore. guilty of 'going [too] far.' (in the woods alone.) (135)

Annie breaks, here, "the rigid difference between figure and ground" (SR 16); the truth of Ina's identity/reality is inseparable from the gendered, historical position she inhabits, or from the social relationships through which this position is constituted. This recognition simultaneously releases Ina's understanding from its original constraining context—re-creating Ina as both the source and the owner of greater knowledge, and hence, of greater power—and advances the novel's (and Annie's) project of moving past limits through acts of exposure and recognition of "that which bears us in all our harrowing complexity: context" (SR 17).

This act of contextualization becomes a guide for readers approaching Marlatt's text, just as the interdependent and mutually empowering relationships among her characters operate as a model
for the association between writers and readers. In foregrounding this aspect of Annie's writing process, the novel calls for a critical reading praxis that works through an attentiveness to positioning that, like Annie's writing, exposes and unsettles those discursive frameworks through which textual meanings are limited and circumscribed; the novel offers up a reading strategy wholly appropriate to its presentation of a writing/reading position that, like the phenomenon of identity, is experienced as both relational and contextualized. The responsive, interpretive quality of Annie's writing underlines and supports what contemporary cultural, literary, and rhetorical theorists contend about textual (and other) communicative utterances: they are not the products of autonomous, individual introspection, which are then "expressed to the rest of the world" (Paré 47), but the effects of complex sets of relationships that exist between writers and readers inhabiting fluid and changing social, political, and cultural contexts.

The novel's unsettling of traditional authorities extends to that of both the author and the text, as its attention both to the reassessment and revision that characterize Annie's writing and to its vulnerability and dependence on readers suggest a complementarity depicting reading and writing as equally necessary aspects of a reciprocal process. This presentation of readers as active participants in the construction of meaning culminates in the novel's open-ended closure, where the narrator effectively relinquishes control over her tale, entrusting it to a reader outside the text: "it isn't dark but the
luxury of being / has woken you, the reach of your desire, reading / us into the page ahead" (n.p.). Echoing the description of the narrator's awakening in the opening paragraph ("only it wasn't dark had woken her . . . ." [9]), the gesture calls for a reassessment of the novel's initial question; in soliciting readers' conscious participation in the creative process, it asks that we extend our investigation of "Who's There?" to include also our own selves, in our role(s) as reading subjects. The explicit invocation of a "you" external to the textual frame clearly contradicts the traditional image of readers as passive, receptive consumers of textual meaning. In the context of Ana Historic's continuing scrutiny of the structures that define the boundaries of knowledge, this address to actual readers demands an investigation into the relationships and processes involved in the activity of literary reading.
"my first, my ongoing reader"

II

Readers making meaning(s)
reading goes back to Indo-European ar-, to fit together, appears in Old English as rædan, to advise, explain, read. advise and care for seem to be enduring aspects of its meaning and still survive in the word rede, counsel or advice given, a decision taken by one or more persons; or, to govern, take care of, save, take counsel together. always there is this relating to others.

-Writing Our Way Through the Labyrinth 47-48

In its invocation of an active readership, Ana Historic echoes rhetorician Anthony Paré's rejection of the continued use of the classical metaphor of a textual "audience"--a metaphor which implies a largely passive and receptive readership or "[the] image of readers as 'folks out there in chairs'" (47)--as a wholly inadequate means of conceptualizing the complex web of interdependencies in which writers, readers, and texts are enmeshed. Paré disputes "what Karen Burke LeFevre calls a 'Platonic' view of invention . . . 'as individual introspection: ideas are created in the mind of an atomistic individual and then expressed to the rest of the world'(1) 'qtd. by Paré: 47). Such a metaphor concentrates power in the author as subject, he argues, "and does not easily permit a critique of institutional power and its hold on the individual" (59-60); instead, he calls for "a new metaphor, one which can suggest the rich social dynamics that surround and support texts, one which can account for the reciprocal relationships among writers and readers" (49). Paré advocates locating both writers and readers within communities--a theoretical move that forces attention on social, cultural, and historical contexts
as factors that not only influence, but determine, meaning. This "transformation of 'audience' into 'community.'" he suggests, "permits a view of discourse as conversation rather than oration, as interaction rather than transmission" (45), and helps to correct the most problematic of the misconceptions fostered by the audience metaphor: that the relationship between writers and readers is "largely one way: the writer acts on passive readers"; that it is "monologic: the writer speaks, the readers listen"; that it is "singular. . . : multiple readers of the same text form a single, monolithic entity"; and that it is "temporary: the writer's relationship to readers begins and ends with the text; the relationship is embodied (given form) or created by the text" (47).

The model of writing and reading represented through Annie's actions in Ana Historic matches this description of textual practices as interdependent and reciprocal communicative processes operating within social contexts. Annie's writing is clearly not the product of an isolated or autonomous creator, but a response to the field of social and textual narratives that surround her; and while it provides a record of her resistant reading of these, it also indicates the extent to which this resistance is still limited and constrained by the conventions of heterosexist discourses that govern the field of possible interpretations at her disposal.² Her memory of an emerging

²As Judith Butler points out in Gender Trouble, "The domains of political and linguistic 'representation' set out in advance the criterion by which subjects themselves are formed, with the result that representation is extended only to what can be acknowledged as a subject" (1); Jodey Castricano's discussion of criticism of
adolescent sexuality, for instance, is recounted in terms that expose
the variety of voices and texts (pop culture, a Western religious and
cultural tradition) that shape and define that sexuality as objectified--
as experienced through the lens of a patriarchal gaze:

\[...\quad \text{tanning ourselves in the light of the Look.}\]
\[...\quad \text{we went there to be seen, to be certified Teen Angels, Dolls. peering out of Adam's sleep,}\]
\[...\quad \text{waiting to be Made (passive voice), we flaunted gorgeousness like second skin . . .}\]
\[...\quad ('chantilly lace, a pretty face') (82).\]

Yet this heterosexist cultural lens continues to filter out the memory
of lesbian desire that accompanies this, and it is interpreted and
recounted as it was initially understood, as "envy":

\[...\quad \text{i looked at her instead, the soft rise of her breasts under her suit, so much fuller than mine. . . . i envied the gold blur of hair on her arms . . . . . (82)}\]

The passage unfolds to re-read and revise particular aspects of the
fiction of heterosexual femininity, presenting the narrator as active
and physically powerful, and gestures toward this forbidden territory
of homosexual desire. Yet the social structures on which Annie's
(increasingly uncomfortable) identities as wife and research assistant
depend exert their force in the retelling; the recognition of her feelings
is suggested, but remains beneath the surface of Annie's written text,
unarticulated, and ultimately discounted: "i couldn't account for it
then (i couldn't account for anything then)" (83). Neither Annie's text,

Djuna Barnes' Nightwood (West Coast Line 15:106-116), likewise notes, "that even recent criticism, which is decidedly feminist, is marked by the 'resistance to knowledge' [of a lesbian perspective] and . . . this criticism demonstrates the way that, to use Thomas Laqueur's terms, 'systems of knowledge determine what can be thought within them' (13)" (106).
nor those it alludes to, exist independently; all are inescapably embedded in a complex of (gendered) power relations that have shaped Annie's identity over time, and that she struggles, in the act of re-writing, to re-shape.

But while Annie's writing is reflective of and subject to this general field of social forces, it also anticipates and responds to a variety of particular readers. The frequency with which Annie discusses her writing with Zoe and with the internal critics she identifies as Ina and sometimes Richard refutes the notion of a silent or passive readership and underscores Paré's assertion that "writers, readers, and texts [are] not . . . objects or discrete entities but . . . sets or structures of relations . . . . The writing 'process' is not the isolated mental activity of the individual writer and the text is not an inert 'product'; rather, both are part of a larger process: a conversation" (50). Moreover, readers do not behave as a singular, predictable mass, but are heterogeneous. While Annie experiences Zoe's presence as consistently challenging and ultimately enabling--her interpretations a guide toward clearer understandings--the intrusions of other potential readers and their expectations work more consistently to obstruct her progress. The imagined presence of Ina, reading as Annie writes and insisting on the inviolate nature of conventional standards of truth, subjects her, for instance, to a continuous barrage of censure and negation:

now Annie, now you're indulging in outright speculation. this isn't history, it's pure invention. (55)
there you go, exaggerating again. you really must get yourself in hand. (60)

Even her descriptions of Ana's writing belie the anxiety Annie feels over others' interpretations of her words; Annie imagines her scratching out words and editing, "thinking about those possible others leaning over her shoulder as she writes" (46). She imagines Ana's father as the emblem of imperial patriarchal and religious authority--"his eyes staring from a vicarage window at wind-flattened heath, waiting for her to explain" (84)--looming up in Ana's mind, inhibiting her efforts as, "struggling to account for herself, [she] writes: 'What is it I might say?"' (83) And Annie's creation of this scenario itself is interrupted by her own deference to a readerly authority, as she pauses to address her husband and his implied question (or disapproval?), saying only, "i find it difficult to explain, Richard, what this scribbling means" (83).

Annie's writing is disrupted and constrained by her anticipation of others' expectations and possible responses to the extent that, like her mother, she is hesitant about admitting to such an "unladylike" activity. Self-consciously aware of the insignificance of her writing in the world of Richard's "Big Book, in which it is written: 'and to my wife without whose patient assistance this book would never have been completed," Annie shuffles to hide her "scribbler" under research papers when Richard comes into the room (79). She imagines his response as one of incomprehension; the significance of her work, she expects, would be lost on her husband, "a good
historian, known for the diligent research behind his books," and firm in his belief that "history is built on a groundwork of fact" (134):

but this is nothing, i imagine him saying, meaning unreadable. because this nothing is a place he doesn't recognize, cut loose from history and its relentless progress towards some end. this is undefined territory, unaccountable. and so on edge. (81)

Her writing and explorations challenge the very foundations of Richard's identity as an historian—and are meaningless and inadmissible within the terms of that discourse. Yet even as Annie rejects the limitations of history (both its insistence on the veracity of facts and its linear narrative form) as a damaging intellectual construction—"i'm no longer doing my part looking for missing pieces. at least not missing facts. not when there are missing persons in all this rubble" (134)—even as she re-evaluates her own dismissal of her activity as "scribbling" ("i look it up and it means writing. why do we think it so much less?" [81])—she is aware of an attempt, on her part, to explain—to translate "her real story" (83) into terms these figurative readers can understand.

While Annie's occasional remarks to Richard, and Ana's imagined need to "account for" herself point to the connections between language and social or political power and the ability of hegemonic authorities to command compliance, drawing subjects into a complicity with the very structures through which they are disempowered, her efforts to make her writing comprehensible to her readers also emphasize the social nature of writing. Annie's
suspicions about the relationship between gender and genre as analogous and equally oppressive systems are countered by an awareness of the necessary function of generic patterns in providing the common language crucial to communication. The importance of being understood--of finding a way both to articulate one's knowledge and to ensure that it is perceived and acknowledged--becomes apparent as Ana Historíc illustrates the parallels between subjectivity and writing. Just as Annie's understanding of who she is is inextricably tied to questions of how that subjectivity has been socially constructed--an exploration that replaces conventional notions of identity as singular and independent with a vision of identity as a relational process--her efforts at re-constructing that identity must also take place in relation to other subjects. Like writing and language, subjectivity and identity are shown here to operate as relational, social phenomena. Annie's manuscript (and hence, the novel itself) is not merely an object, but the record of an action, since in order for her textual and narrative interventions to be actualized (that is, in order for her to become a subject other than the one dictated and prescribed by the roles supplied by patriarchal fictions of femininity) her attempts at revision must be communicated--articulated or performed in some social context.

Running throughout Annie's narrative, and her refusal of the limitations imposed by patriarchal definitions (communicated to her largely through Ina), is the urgent hope that Ina will, even posthumously, hear and understand. The novel provides her with a
necessary venue for talking back to Ina. It allows for a response to
the figure who has acted as the source of so many constraining social
norms, and an attempt to create a more reciprocal dialogue where the
child had experienced only a one-way flow of power; it also enables an
articulation of Annie's growing understanding of these constraints as
they have affected Ina, precluding her mother's ability to negotiate
(with) them as Annie later does:

i want to talk to you. (now? now when it's too late?) i want to say something, tell you
something about the bush and what you were afraid of, what i escaped to . . . . (18)

i am trying very hard to speak, to tell it. why you didn't or couldn't. (49)

Narrating her process of self-discovery is crucial as a method of
ordering and making sense of her place in history for Annie, and also
as a means of changing the social dynamic through which that self is
constituted. Her insistence on making herself understood,
particularly in the context of her ambivalent relationship with her
mother, who she describes as her "first, [her] ongoing reader" (132),
involves far more than a desire for empathy; Ina's recognition, or its
absence, plays an integral role in Annie's creation of a less
constrained version of her self.

Annie's navigation through the tangle of rules, roles and
expectations that have sought to define her own and her mother's
existence often takes the form of a direct address, emphasizing the
analogy between a written text and the writer's turn in a
conversation. Annie is not creating "the" story of her life, or that of
Ina's, or of Ana Richards', but re-telling--constructing other versions in response to those that already exist. It is this ability to change the story and imagine other possibilities that so distinctly sets Annie apart from her mother, in whose voice she hears the prescribed tale repeated again and again. And it is in her internal dialogues with Ina that the nature of this conversation as a contested space where conflicting meanings interact and vie for dominance becomes clear: "I didn't know the first thing about sex," Ina's voice is heard to say, "your grandmother simply refused to discuss it, though I begged her" (60). Annie's response to this goes beyond a similar condemnation of Ina's role in her upbringing, placing their relationship within a cultural tradition of mothers' complicity in the socialization of their daughters--their role in maintaining women's ignorance and shame. The reply she hears, however, in its rejection or perhaps, incomprehension, of this analysis, makes the importance of readers' interpretations in the creation and assignment of meaning equally apparent:

--the mothers, the inheritance of the mothers. you taught me a lot. you taught me the uneasy hole in myself and how to cover it up--cover girl, the great cover-story women inherit in fashion and makeup. you taught me how I was supposed to look, the feminine act.

--I taught you to take pride in your appearance. (60-61)

The code of behaviour Ina alludes to here has had such far-reaching and insidious effects on her own and Annie's lives that the
conflict represented by this exchange can never be dismissed as a simple difference of opinion; Ina's refusal of Annie's reading of the situation functions as an attempt to silence her challenge, and to reassert the authority of the patriarchal order she questions. Ina's resistant stance is understandable, given the cultural framework within which the mother-daughter relationship is located—a context in which "woman feels endangered by her 'insides'" (133). And like their familial relationship, the textual relationship between Ina as reader and Annie as writer is not simply a connection between freestanding individuals, but a point in a complex and changing set of social relationships. As Paré notes in his discussion of textual "audiences":

... readers are often not part of any collective that could accurately be called an "audience"; instead, they are individual members of complex social structures created by the variety of explicit and implicit roles, relationships, interactions, and levels of power within a given community. (49)

The textual relationship functions as does any other social relationship: not in a vacuum, but ordered, shaped, and swayed by the political, cultural, familial, social, and historical factors that position each member relative to others—even as these factors interfere with and contradict each other. Ina's insistence on the distinction between history and fiction and on the importance of maintaining conventional gender roles is at least as much a function of the context through which her interpretive strategies were formed as it is her own interpretation or evaluation of events—perhaps far
more. Her responses to Annie's interrogations of gender relations are governed not only by the position(s) she and Annie share in this system, but also by her membership in the "interpretive community" of the bourgeois colonial family, which assigns to her the task of socializing and feminizing her daughters. Her interpretive role in the text demonstrates what Arthur Walzer's rhetorical study of audience notes about the effects of interpretive communities. He refutes the expectation that one's rhetorical position is always or inevitably tied to identifications based on gender, "race," class, or ethnicity, suggesting instead, that the position that effects responses in rhetorical transactions is "dictated more by the point of view a community of readers chooses to take on a subject than it is influenced by the immediate needs and particular backgrounds of actual readers." The positioning of an "'audience' . . . refers not to people as such but to those apparent aspects of knowledge and motivation in readers and listeners that form the contexts for discourse and the ends of discourse" (156). As C. Annette Grisé notes in distinguishing Annie from her mother in "'A bedtime story for you, Ina': Resisting Amnesia of the Maternal in Daphne Marlatt's Ana Historic," Ina is fixed within a "masculinist projection of the female self"--"the negative attached to the female assertion of identity [is] inscribed in [her] name 'I-na, I-no-longer' ([Marlatt]11)"--and she is unable to see beyond the confines of her position, which is "always confined and defined by the 'possibility of being seen, ambushed in the sudden arms of bears or men' (18)" (qtd. in Grisé: 92). Frustrated
as she is by the messages she hears in her mother's voice. Annie recognizes these as markers of the limits placed on Ina's perception by an interpretive context that portrays any transgression of boundaries as "catastrophic" (62). "you wanted it to end," she says, in lines addressed to Ina, "the world i mean, at least the world as it was then constituted. because for you there was no way out" (143).

Ina's reading also illustrates the way these social norms are reinforced and compounded through the effects of generic norms; readers tend to interpret events according to patterns that are familiar and reinforce a well-established view of the world. When Annie proposes that "our stories are hidden from us by fear. your fear i inherited, mother dear," Ina's voice insists that "the truth is, that's woman's lot. it's what you learn to accept, . . . all the ways we don't fit into a man's world" (79). "you can't rewrite what's been written," she insists in another passage, refusing to question "the writing on the wall" (142). Believing that a story about women's lives will always end at this impasse and will never question the walls supporting "a man's world," she demonstrates Amy Devitt's comments about the impact of genres on readers and reading, which Devitt suggests is equally as forceful as their impact on the creative processes of writers. "Based on our identification of genre," she says, "we make assumptions not only about the form but also about the text's purposes, its subject matter, its writer, and its expected reader" (575). In recognizing the cues that indicate a text's similarities to previous
texts, readers—often without an awareness of doing so—make assumptions about the context out of which it has risen, and about the writer's position relative to the situation the established genre describes.

_Anna Historic's_ attention, particularly in the case of Ina, to the factors that limit and control readers' access to _unconventional_ meanings, provides a warning that is especially germane for readers of some contemporary texts. Since our initial recognition or identification of a text's genre is usually implicit rather than based on careful analysis, and more often than not, stems from the appearance of easily recognized formal and substantive clues, generic expectations and reading habits will always be present, even as these are challenged. For instance, the novel's title, the archival fragments, and the insertion of a variety of documentary voices, all mark this as a member of the genre "history"; its identification as "a novel," its explicit references to fiction and the imagination, all suggest a work of serious fiction; and the presence of family histories, personal chronologies, memories from childhood, and the apparent identification of a first person narrator with the author imply the presence of "autobiography." While Marlatt's manipulations and disruptions of these generic codes initiate an exploration of how these very genres function in the construction of female subjectivity—how this is experienced and understood at the confluence of conflicting socially constructed narrative codes—the presence of these conventional signposts of "history," "autobiography," and "Literature"
generates expectations based on the traditional movements of these heroic narratives. A critical reader's awareness that Marlatt is engaged in a series of formal disruptions is heavily dependent, in fact, "on the intertextuality of discourse" (576) and a familiarity with and recognition of the conventions and the rhetorical functions of these (hegemonic) forms--"[t]he fact that others have responded to similar situations in the past in similar ways" (Devitt 577). Because conventional autobiographies, histories, and novels emphasize the progression of a single, central subject toward a goal, and present that subject as largely autonomous and complete prior to (his) entrance into culture, though, Marlatt's interventions can be (mis)read against these norms as structural anomalies and failures (to achieve climax, or a conventional resolution), rather than as gestures towards a greater understanding of the socially mediated nature of subjectivity. Given the positioning of many critical readers within the "interpretive community" of the academic literary establishment--a community with a tradition of such formal treatments of genres--the possibility for readings that reinscribe these norms is always present. In a novel that self-consciously examines

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5The opening chapter of Sidonie Smith's *Subectivity, Identity, and the Body* outlines the history and construction of this central subject of Western humanism--the "generic 'I'" (5) whose territory is so thoroughly guarded against the entrance of subjects like Annie: "Independent of forces external to it," Smith notes of this figure, "the self is neither constituted by, nor coextensive with, its class identifications, social roles, or private attachments. Social and communal roles with their elaborate masks of meaning may be inevitabilities. But however integumentary, they do not entirely absorb the essential self, whose internal integrity lies elsewhere in a discrete core, abstracted from society. Encroachments, disturbances, occasional detours, they do not determine but rather remain tangential to the central drama of an unembedded selfhood" (6).
its own manipulation of formal conventions, then, Annie's continued frustration at Ina's and Richard's refusals and inability to comprehend her writing also points to the possibility that some of the text's actual readers are similarly handicapped or resistant.

Rhetoricians suggest that readers' impacts on textual meaning can go far beyond the influence exercised through interpretation, or even the kind of normative power exerted over writers as they consciously tailor particular texts to accommodate the expectations or requirements of certain audiences. Arthur Walzer's analysis of a series of articles about a study, written by the same authors but appearing in different publications, asserts that an awareness of audience can also function as a kind of hermeneutic tool. "Given the pervasive and essential differences in the articles," Walzer says, "to speak (as we typically do) of 'adjusting' previously-known conclusions to 'accommodate' a particular audience seems inadequate at least. Rather, the analysis suggests that [the authors] discovered the several significances of their data in reflecting on the data from the points of view of several 'interpretive communities,' the readerships of the different journals" (154-155). An awareness of "audience" here is not simply a factor influencing the style or structure of a text, but "a means of invention" (155). Annie's exploratory writing, and Marlatt's novel, for that matter, arise not merely from personal dissatisfaction with the narrative expectations available to a gendered subject, but are also made possible in the presence of an audience that sees the questioning of such norms as a legitimate and necessary activity.
As the textual figure most clearly aligned with a "feminist" politics and interpretive agenda, Zoe functions as such an "audience" or "reader," by countering the constraining influence of other figurative readers of Annie's text; and it is through the relationship with Zoe that Annie begins to see not only the limitations she faces as a woman, and as a woman writer, but also a way to move beyond these. The meanings Zoe assigns to Annie's narrative, unlike the interpretations of Richard and Ina, allow for further challenges to the generic expectations Annie works to unsettle and escape. Acting first as a friend and confidante, and later as a lover, her position on the margins of Annie's respectable, middle-class world acting as a window into other possible identities and relationships, Zoe demonstrates to Annie that stepping out of the North Shore house she shares with Richard and their children (and out of the deadly sphere of "proper" feminine behaviour she fears she may be doomed to share with her mother) does not mean she will "fall / off the edge of the world" (111). Engaged in community work and political activism in their communal kitchen in Vancouver's East End, Zoe and her roommates represent an alternative "interpretive community"; their lives demonstrate different positionings that are not strictly bound by the gendered constraints Annie reads in the (fixed) generic forms she has inherited. And Zoe confirms, explicitly, the underlying premise of Annie's writing--that the barriers she faces there correlate with the social norms she is limited by as a woman--noting that the novel Annie is writing functions as a critical reading of the life she lives
outside the text: "'characters'," she repeats as Annie struggles with how to end their story. "you talk as if they were strangers. who are they if they aren't you?" (140). Zoe points to Annie's characters as figures born of her imagination (which has internalized the patriarchally-bounded discourses of her life), and then prompts Annie to read the implications of this narrative from a new perspective, informed by their extra-textual connection: "but don't you think we read with a different eye?" she nudges, "like MR & MISS ILES, have you seen that one?" (107). Zoe's responses to Annie's writing--her interpretations of the portions of the text that Annie shares with her--function as a model of readers' potential ability to move written texts beyond the limiting frameworks out of which they arise.

From her perspective outside of the barriers surrounding middle-class, heterosexual femininity, Zoe observes their limiting effects, and when Annie laments the absence of what cannot be accommodated within the textual structures that shore these up, reminds her of what she already knows about her imagination--that it functions as the "will to create things differently" (149): "so write it that way then," she interrupts. "you haven't even begun to think about what it would be if it could be what you want" (90). "Challenging" and "insisten[t] " (90), her words and her presence dare Annie to plunge wholeheartedly into the project she has begun--a project that mirrors Marlatt's writing project--to both expose and disrupt the boundaries of narrative and social propriety, providing Ana with an alternative to the full stop at "the inevitable end of the
sentence" she never quite completes (146). When Ana, instead of marrying Ben Springer, acknowledges her desire for Birdie Stewart, Annie comments that her shock, which "only demonstrates the confines of her class and culture," resembles "the sensation of a door opening inside her" (138). Annie's own shock at Zoe's earlier suggestion of the relationship is echoed here in a way that emphasizes the simultaneous fear and exhilaration that accompany such a transgression; change (in the plot, as in Annie's life) produces both disorientation and a sense of expanding and potentially limitless horizons. Much as Annie's re-writing of Mrs. Richards' and Ina's lives outlines the ideologies (outdated, she hopes) that led to Ana's absence from the city's historical record and to Ina's final violent erasure at the hands of the medical establishment, Zoe's reading exposes the limitations of Annie's perspective and constructs a new meaning that breaches those walls. A symbiosis between writers and those readers engaged in similar questionings--the complementarity of their actions as similar aspects in an expansive and on-going process--is underlined here; Zoe's act of reading and its contribution to Annie's politicization and empowerment is a hopeful gesture that invests readers with considerable power to loosen the structural and imaginative boundaries that threaten to constrain textual meanings.

The results of Zoe's reading, both on Annie's life and on her narrative, stand in sharp contrast to the obstructive influence Annie experiences simply by imagining Richard's, or even Ina's, responses to her text. Zoe is positioned, in effect, as the sympathetic, feminist
reader in opposition to their patriarchal rules and authority. This, together with her role as the only actual reader of Annie's manuscript, implies a strong degree of identification between Zoe as the ideal reader, and those readers beyond the confines of the book into whose hands the novel finally, and hopefully, places itself. The final verse-paragraph cements this connection, in fact, by bridging Annie's narration of her lovemaking with Zoe and the direct address to an external reader, described as if in the moment, "reading / us into the page ahead" (n.p.). The juxtaposition of this invocation to actual readers with the culmination of Annie's disruption of social boundaries suggests a continuation of the novel's subversive project beyond the final page, in a move that both resists conventional modes of closure and positions these readers as part of the ideal interpretive community the text constructs around the figure of Zoe.

The placement of the second person pronoun in this passage, however, constructs the "you" to whom the novel's fate is finally entrusted as securely contained within the eroticized space of Annie and Zoe's encounter:

we give place, giving words, giving birth, to each other--she and me. you. hot skin writing skin. fluid edge, wick, wick. she draws me out. you she breathes, is where we meet. breeze from the window reaching you now, trees out there, streets you might walk down, will, soon. it isn't dark but the luxury of being has woken you, the reach of your desire, reading us into the page ahead.

The reading posture that is here assigned to a "you" outside of the text is emphatically identified with the scene's lesbian sexuality, and
by extension, with the marginal social position Zoe, and now Annie, are seen to occupy.\(^4\) Like the associations between Richard, the historian and academic, and the need for linearity and coherence, and between Ina and admonitions to conform to a 1950s vision of appropriate, proper, feminine behaviour, this identification of a more radical reading stance with Zoe's unconventionality suggests a close alignment between reading position and social position.

What the foregrounding of a variety of clearly delineated responses to Annie's narrative forcefully demonstrates is the danger of remaining located within the perceptual framework of any single subject position. Richard's (imagined) "this is nothing . . . . meaning unreadable" (81) doesn't expose Annie's text as meaningless, but describes, in his need for linear, rational prose, the limits of her husband's comprehension. Likewise, Ina's insistence that "the truth is, that's woman's lot. it's what you learn to accept, like bleeding and hysterectomies, like intuition and dizzy spells--all the ways we don't fit into a man's world" (79) marks Ina's perspective as being painfully (and fatally) limited by the fiction of the pathology of the female body. Just as she recognizes Ana's shock as a demonstration of "the confines of her class and culture" (138), Annie recognizes Ina's final

\(^4\)Céline Chan emphasizes this identification in "Lesbian Self-Naming in Daphne Marlatt's Ana Historic." She notes that in the final poem: "the blurring of distinctions and fusing of identities that lies at the heart of lesbian experience finds a corollary in the erasure of barriers between and among the lovers, the writer(s), and the reader(s) . . . . Here lesbian love is celebrated, not from the voyeuristic or omniscient perspective of patriarchy as the penetration of an 'other,' but as a merging interface of boundaries between two selves which are distinct and yet alike" (71-72).
acquiescence as a function of her limited understanding of her own position—an understanding which sees "no way out" (143).

The novel credits Annie's broadened perspective—her scrutiny of limiting frameworks—with enabling her to move beyond the constraints of her prescribed identity and into a position represented as marginal, yet unencumbered by such expectations. And it presents Zoe, already living outside the definitions of middle-class heterosexuality, as a guide who aids Annie, helping her to view her position and its limits from the outside, until she sees it "falling apart. we are, i am. we have fallen apart. the parts don't fit. not well. never whole. never did" (150) in a crisis that reveals the walls that have surrounded, protected, and dictated her identity as a shaky, unstable construction, allowing her to begin a process of describing herself anew. Stan Dragland emphasizes this revelation when he labels the work "the act of an escape artist" (173). His reading sees Annie's escape from the "gothic circle of patriarchy" that constrains and finally destroys Ina as Ana Historic's primary accomplishment; the novel moves through Annie's analysis of this trap and culminates as she "discovers she has a choice: in or out" (175).

But, like Dragland's reading, the novel stops short of examining the frame that constructs Zoe's position, or the space that Annie joins her in; this is presented simply as a space outside of the confines of a culture described as "patriarchal." Here, Annie and her lover are no longer subject to the "names guarding the limitations" but "rise above
them" (152). While the space Annie and Zoe enter here is clearly bounded ("we go up the stairs, we enter a room that is alive with the smell of her" [152]), it is constructed throughout the novel, in Annie's expressions of desire, as simply that which exists outside of patriarchal enclosures: "when she let herself out of the house, it was night--it was moonlight and briars, it was the fascination of desire for what lay out of bounds" (77). As Céline Chan argues, "Annie and Zoe have placed themselves in nomad space--the kinetic, unbounded region that lies outside the static enclosures of patriarchal power" (69). It is from this space that the novel directly addresses a "you" in the process of "reading us into the page ahead," implying that actual readers have access to this space apparently outside of all ideologies--that our readings are not limited (as Richard's and Ina's are by the discursive boundaries of patriarchal culture), but somehow authentic and unconstrained. There may be some accuracy in seeing the perspective of actual readers as somewhat analogous to Zoe's; there is a distance that separates us from the textual frame, just as there is a distance separating Zoe (represented as an ambiguously-employed, politically active, lesbian artist, living communally in an East End house) from Annie (contained with her husband and children in upper-middle class North Shore suburbia). But as some readers' responses to this final textual gesture demonstrate, neither Zoe nor these actual readers inhabit the de-contextualized space that this closure implies--a space both Lola Tostevin and Frank Davey have argued is utopian, transcending the limits that the text has laboured
to expose. But a historically- and culturally-situated reader/critic can detach herself neither from her subject position nor from the various reading strategies she has acquired through membership in a variety of interpretive communities: as a naive consumer of conventional texts, a practitioner of dominant literary critical modes, or a resistant feminist reader.

Tostevin's 1989 reading of *Ana Historic*, with its examination of the implications of the novel, particularly for the future of feminist thought in Canada, carefully responds to the apparent transcendence of its closure by contextualizing the work both within Marlatt's progress as a writer and within the field of philosophical, literary, and political influences that have left their imprints on the text. In suggesting that "[t]he powerful ending of the novel . . . will undoubtedly be unsatisfactory to some readers" since it is so "unexpectedly conventional in its utopian vision" (38), she anticipates the challenges that have become the focus of debates around the meanings of "feminism" in the 1990s. Many women have, as she predicted, found "solutions to complex social problems" profoundly limited when "confined to the sexual sphere" (38). Her observation that "[w]hen Marlatt writes, 'mouth speaking flesh. she touches it to make it tell her present in this other language so difficult to translate. the difference'" (126), it is evident that she is referring to the

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5While Chan, in fact, celebrates this transcendence, suggesting that the novel's closure "heralds a culture centred on the embracing woman and rich with utopian possibilities" (69), I would argue that Marlatt's attention to contextualization renders this 'utopia' (literally *no place*) little more than an inversion—a space of *im*possibility.
difference, keeping it within the traditional concept of binary
opposition" (38) demonstrates the extent to which this dualistic
framework still defines and contains both author's and narrator's
attempts to write their ways out of this structure, a point that another
reader, Frank Davey, outlines in convincing detail in a 1993 essay. At
the same time, her comments identify the novel as a product of a
particular, historically-situated brand of feminism currently being re-
read in light of the limitations inherent in its exclusive focus on "the
difference" of gender--a focus that elides discussion of the many and
complex differences between and among women.

Tostevin's situating of both the novel and her reading within
the terms of contemporary feminist debates effectively belies the
assumption that a generic feminist reading, or reader, exists; her
response problematizes the implication that any feminist reading
involves a straightforward identification with the projection of Zoe and
her reading position as ideal. Davey's discussion, part of an
argument tracing a movement away from literary nationalism, in fact,
disputes this assumption entirely, outlining the construction of Zoe's
position within the novel in quite another light. His assertion that
Ana Historic's politically subversive tactics are essentially
"superficial"--that the novel is "in the end not a political novel at all"
(208)--is based in part on an analysis of the novel's underlying
narrative structure in which, he points out, Zoe functions as an
alternative, but nonetheless monological authority whose truth Annie
eventually recognizes as authentic (203). Davey reiterates Tostevin's
comments about the novel's apparently contradictory dependence on binary opposition, indicating an agreement with her suggestion that Annie's entrance into Zoe's room, and into her arms, signals, in fact, a "displacement of 'phallocentrism' by 'vulvalogocentricism' [sic]" (Tostevin 38)--a gesture that, like all reversals, reinforces the stability of the existing order. But while Tostevin's reading emphasizes the revolutionary potential of the novel's "formal strategy," which, she says, "so brilliantly subverts cohesion and narrative syntax and is not bound by master plot or one heroic voice" that it renders this final reversal both "unsatisfactory" and "unexpectedly conventional" (38; my italics), Davey reads the novel's closure as the culmination of a narrative line that has been structured according to highly conventional patterns throughout. He insists that "Annie's text of fragments becomes, despite its bits and pieces, as unitary as the one it opposed" (202), and he describes a violent contradiction between the novel's explicit advocation of structural displacements and its underlying form:

Her dialogical text, however, is itself firmly contained within signs of a constructing signator. This signator has provided Annie with the initial resemblances between her life and those of her mother and Mrs Richards... The signator has also given the text's characters economic and vocational roles consistent with the thesis Annie will come to argue... But most importantly, this signator has also written Annie's narrative in a discourse that is positivist and incorporating. Bracketing the desire it gives her to admit many voices, it has allowed Annie's overall quest for certainty about the causes of her mother's mental collapse to
dominate her citation and organization of these voices; all the voices she cites are framed so as to contribute to her concluding conviction that she, Mrs Richards, and Ina were all victims of discursive alienation from their own and their mothers' bodies. On the final non-numbered page, Annie's multivocal text offers Ana Historic's unequivocal meaning. (199)

In light of Davey's argument, the enthusiasm of my own initial reading of Ana Historic's final pages (which saw these primarily as a resistance of conventional forms of closure) begins to shift and fade. Although I had been conscious of allying my reading with the novel's subversive strategies, and had perceived the satisfaction I experienced in reading the final pages as congratulatory—as joyful identification with the novel's successful unsettling of a traditional generic form—Davey's reading implies that such satisfaction might just as easily be tied to the work's fulfillment of expectations associated with the novelistic form. That my own reading has focused predominantly on Annie in her role as narrator appears to reinforce this claim. The protagonist does, in his reading, achieve a resolution—arriving at both an answer to the troubling questions surrounding her mother's death and life and at an authentic identity; and the fragmented, apparently unrelated "interruptions" by other voices can be seen to cohere according to the logic of this central narrative:

Her imagining of her mother's and Mrs Richards's words becomes an appropriation and occupation of their names; in her imagination the views and fears of the two women become increasingly congruent with her own. Her various citations and
quotations are framed within her own insistently interpretative discourse. (Davey 202)

Having first read the ending's imaginative leap as opening onto greater possibilities, and having seen the echo of the opening paragraph's "it wasn't dark had woken her" (9) as a further resistance of the enclosures of the straight-line narratives of history and the hero's tale, I subsequently doubted this reading and began to re-evaluate it. Where before I had decided that, structurally, this ending was not so much a destination at which the narrative arrives, but a circling back that connects, signifying the infinity of process, continuous change, renewal, and metamorphosis, I later found myself conceding that this very circularity also reinforces the gendered binary that operates through the book, locating the feminine story in the (endlessly?) repeating cycles of the natural world, separated from the masculine story of linear progress toward a goal. And the prevalence, in my descriptions of the novel, of the "not . . . but" construction Davey points to as a marker of an essentially dichotomous paradigm in Marlatt's text (205) began to suggest that the care Marlatt takes to distance her work from the ideological underpinnings of dominant cultural forms results, instead, in reversals and inversions that ultimately confirm a binary vision of the social world.

That the implications of Davey's reading can be so easily accepted as a demonstration of the naïveté of my earlier interpretation speaks volumes about the strength behind traditional structures of authority: the words of the established and respected
(male) academic literary critic, speaking from a position of institutional power, almost immediately convince me that my prior reading had been faulty, even as they illustrate the hold exercised by generic norms over the creation of textual meanings. For the satisfaction that had accompanied my first encounter with these pages, regardless of my conscious enthusiasm for the text's exposure and unsettling of conventional boundaries and laws, also measures the extent to which my reading practices are guided and shaped by these very generic norms, even when I believe I am participating in a resistance to these. A subversive reading stance does not preclude the activation of conventional expectations or responses, this suggests, but operates simultaneously, and often in competition with these. Davey's analysis adds further to the strength of the hegemonic structures whose presence he critiques in the novel, though, by enacting yet another (en)closure: his reading ends with what he reads as the failure of Marlatt's text to escape those structural barriers that the novel uncovers and resists—a move that implies such structures, both textual and political, are in effect, insurmountable: "beyond Annie's narrow vision, beyond Zoe's room, within the various signs by which she has represented and dismissed that patriarchal order—'history,' 'North America,' 'Canada,' 'worker'—other huge conflicts continue" (209).

While I would agree that "Annie's narrow vision" does fail to acknowledge the overlap between her gendered focus and these other spheres of activity, the terms of Davey's dismissal, and the conventional assumptions these betray about the necessary attributes of a "political" novel, work to reinstate the very discourses Marlatt's text aims to subvert by creating a distinction between a public sphere—history as "the real story the city fathers tell of the only important events in the
Tostevin's disappointment leaves the text in a similar manner, emphasizing the limitations of its final strategy. Rather than judging the novel as inadequate, however, she turns her discussion of these limitations into a jumping off point, locating *Ana Historic* within the context of contemporary theorizing around the meanings of "feminism," and asserting a collective responsibility for the necessary next step--a move that seems far more in keeping with the novel's construction of an empowered and active readership:

> Now that the leap of the imagination has been made, it seems more vital than ever that the mutual containment of binaries that has traditionally defined our society be deciphered and unraveled so that the female subject writing herself on to "the blank" page of history conceive herself not only as *the* difference, but as a multiplicity of differences that cut across sexuality, gender, form, class, race. It would seem more vital than ever that in our newly created spaces we discover not only the multiple differences that exist between men and women, between women and women, but perhaps more importantly, within each woman. (39)

Tostevin credits Marlatt's novel with taking a crucial step along this journey, but neither she nor Davey acknowledge the opening provided in its "unsatisfactory" closure for exploring questions of difference and subjectivity through and around the text itself. Yet the novel's call to a subject: "reading / us into the page ahead" makes this virtually imperative. These final words become an address to the actual readers problematically identified with the textual construction of a world" (Marlatt 28)--and a less important private sphere in which issues such as gender operate. Questions of "politics" are clearly prioritized here over the (separate and secondary) issue of gender in a move that reinforces the hierarchy that traditionally excludes Woman from public life.
of an ideal feminist reader, and with the possibility, exemplified through Zoe's interpretations of Annie's writing, of a reading that reaches beyond the contextual and perceptual frames that both shape and constrain writers' imaginations.

It is this call to readers, coinciding with the impossibility of such a direct identification with the figure of Zoe, that has guided my observations of my own participation in the on-going processes of this novel. Its resolution, in which Dragland senses a "feeling . . . of arrival and re-beginning" (181), returns me to my entrance into the text through its echo of the opening lines and the scene of Annie's initial awakening. And the question that confronts me as I recognize the explicit and direct address in the final pages (that is, "How am I to continue this project 'into the page ahead'?") is answered with the question that first confronts the narrator; both writing and reading subjects enter into agency by standing back to examine "Who's There?" Having traced Annie's exploration of the question as she begins to understand her subjectivity not as a dependable and coherent state, but as a tenuous and complex set of effects and responses to social, familial, political, and historical relationships and struggles for power, each particular reader before the text is asked to turn this textual mirror outward to explore the positions s/he inhabits and the contexts through which s/he reads. With Annie's investigation of her mother's and Mrs. Richards' identities and the contexts through which these were constituted as an example, we are asked to re-read the question from those historical, political, and
cultural contexts we inhabit outside the text, examining both the model of subjectivity that operates within the novel, and the social forms involved in the construction of the positions each of us inhabit as readers both within and before the text. In Ana Historic's field of widening perspectives and admonitions to examine frameworks and the effects of their shaping influence, "Who's There?" becomes inseparably linked to the question of who is reading; to return again to this interrogation of subjectivity and its relationship to genre requires a reading that examines the contexts through which both writing and reading subjects are framed, and that continuously works to recognize these also as perceptual limits.
"reading us into the page ahead"

III
Re-framing the reading/writing subject
Difference is where the words turn depending on who reads them and how we bring who we are to that reading. When we each bring our differences into that reading, the multiple nature of the real begins to be heard.

- Difference (em)bracing 189

In its attempts to redefine "the subject of feminism" (TG 9), Teresa de Lauretis' *Technologies of Gender* participates in a move towards critical examinations of the theoretical assumptions of mainstream feminisms--political, cultural and academic movements characterized by their predominantly white, heterosexual and middle-class origins and concerns. Describing the gradual emergence of this new critical awareness as largely initiated by the publications, in 1981 and 1982, of the anthologies *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, and *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave*, de Lauretis notes that "the feelings, the analyses, and the political positions of feminists of color, and their critiques of white or mainstream feminism," first made available to "mainstream feminists" through these books, were instrumental in bringing about a "shift in feminist consciousness" that has focused on acknowledging the complicity of feminism with ideologies of race, class and empire, and, de Lauretis adds, "the ideology of gender in particular--that is to say, heterosexism" (TG 10-11). This theoretical work, which opens by stating that the "notion of gender as sexual difference . . . [has] now become a limitation, something of a liability to feminist thought" (TG 1), is representative of many and continuing efforts, by women of colour, lesbians, and
those privileged women traditionally associated with the term "feminism," to grapple with this feminism's problematic position in relation to structures of oppression and dominance. This shift has created a critical context in which Ana Historic's emphasis on "the difference" (126) of gender as a primary determinant of subjectivity can be clearly identified as a product of that earlier feminist framework. It is a context in which the novel itself can be read in much the same way that Marlatt's Annie reads the archival tracings of Mrs. Richards, her own memories, and the family snapshots in which she sees her mother "locked up in a box. frozen . . . " (11)--as a document that records the ideological context out of which it was formed.7

Read from a position within this contemporary context, the novel's emphasis on the identifications among these women reveals the resemblances between the model of female subjectivity operating within Ana Historic and the limited "subject of feminism" marked primarily by sexual difference that de Lauretis associates with "the feminist writings and cultural practices of the 1960s and 1970s" (TG 1). The ease with which the stories of Annie's, Ina's, and Ana's lives fade and blend into each other suggests not only interdependence and a relational view of the self, but also a commonality based on their shared relationship to the pronoun "she." As Stan Dragland notes, pronouns in this novel "are very active . . . often arranged for

7Manina Jones, in "I quote myself or, A Map of Mrs Reading: Restitit Woman's Place" in Ana Historic," examines Marlatt's (re)reading of these documents, noting how their incorporation into the novel questions and subverts the authority of the historical record.
maximum shift" (184), their referents often ambiguously defined or even absent, so that they seem to point in several directions at once:

a-historic
she who is you
or me
'i'
address this to (129)

she is my first, my ongoing reader. you, i want to say. but you are not reading this as i write . . . . (132)

The use of the second person pronoun calls female readers into this identification as well. In the second of these passages, an initial ambiguity is never wholly resolved; a woman reading the novel is momentarily, here as elsewhere in the text, identified with Zoe, the figurative reader of Annie's manuscript. The absence of any contextual referent in the first passage suggests an identification among all female "she"s both within and before the text based not so much on our common experiences as women as on a common relationship to the figure of Woman. Or, as Dragland's discussion of Marlatt's use of pronouns proposes, to the "core of feminine mystery, The Great Mother," "The Goddess" (185). The novel's female subjects connect primarily through that which is identified as inherent and essential to womanhood.

In a passage where an unnamed narrator describes Annie writing Ana writing, the emphasis on the similarities between the two women serves to introduce this figure of Woman as the point at which Annie and Ana (and Marlatt?) unite. The subject is introduced here only through the pronoun "she"; it is the use of Annie's daughter's
name that identifies this figure as Annie, who writes, "a woman sitting at her kitchen table writing" (45). As this narrator (who may be Annie herself) records the words Annie is writing, she also observes her attitude ("as if her hand holding the pen could embody the very feel of a life. as if she could reach out and touch her . . . ."

[45]); her critical eye takes in Ana also, sitting at her kitchen table and "thinking about those possible others leaning over her shoulder as she writes" (46). And when Annie, who "lean[s] over [Ana's] shoulder as she tries, as she doubts: why write at all?" asks "who else is there in this disappearing act when you keep leaving yourself behind the next bend . . . . looking for . . . some elusive sense of who you might be," the boundaries between the two appear to dissolve, or rather, both are subsumed in the answer to the question. "she, unspoken and real in the world, running ahead to embrace it" (46) is the imaginary figure of "Woman" each writer imagines herself becoming, inscribing her female presence "against her absence," as "each evening she enters her being, nameless, in the book." Even as "she" becomes particularized again as Mrs. Richards, it is clear that Annie, also, is "writing her desire to be, in the present tense, retrieved from silence" (47). As in Barbara Godard's description of the feminist reader's encounter with such women's texts, "[a]t the heart of the communicative process, the subject / object relationship is transformed into the singular experience of a female subject shaping her life as writer" (116-117).
Both Godard and Marlatt approach this communicative process through an awareness of physicality and an evocation of the bodily presence of the other. "she was looking for the company of another who was also reading--" Marlatt's narrator says, "out through the words, through the wall that separated her, an arm, a hand--"; "it's this small and present thing her arm, her hand holding the pen between which fingers of which hand" (45). For Godard:

Our drive to connect flows in the blood. To the text we bring our biological lives as women. Between the lines of the female text, unverbalized, we read the hidden text of our bodily experience. Blood line, life line, poetic line. . . . The word takes on flesh of woman and gives birth to us. Through the complicity of reading, we have a single reader, a single text. (116)

The encounter between a feminist reader and a woman's text creates a situation in which the usually resistant reader can "give up the struggle to control the text, abandon the power game entirely, in an effort to connect with the woman behind the text" (115-116).

But this advancement of an essential, authentic femininity located in the body both contradicts the novel's assertion of subjectivity as a site of agency--its faith in the possibility of resisting "others' definitions" (132), of overturning the "already pre-ordained, prescribed" and "chang[ing] the ending" (147)--and retains the gendered binarism that the novel works on so many levels to unsettle. Moreover, it universalizes the experiences of a particular class of privileged female subjects and presents these as generic, repeating "the ways in which philosophers, male and female, ancient and
modern, feminist and non-feminist, have assumed for their analyses that 'women' are females of the privileged race/class" (Phelan 129). In "Specificity: Beyond Equality and Difference," Shane Phelan notes, for example, Simone de Beauvoir's argument that "sexism operates only among those who are not oppressed in other ways, . . . 'sexual oppression is nullified when men and women are subject to other forms of oppression'" (qtd in Phelan: 130). 

Historic's positioning of Beauvoir's words as representative of a subversive or true discourse in opposition to the dominant or false discourse of patriarchy, then, reinforces the novel's erasure of the experiences of women of colour through its representation of middle-class, white women's experiences as generic. The many differences among women are consolidated here into an artificially unified difference of gender in a move that denies the complex histories and alliances of the majority of the world's women. Such a consolidation fails to acknowledge divisions between women based on the discourses of race, sexuality and class or the accompanying inequities of power and privilege that operate in relationships between and among women. In reproducing this blindness, the novel reflects a (dominant) mode of feminist analysis that Phelan notes is characterized by "inadequate theorizing about the position(s) and problems of women" (128-129).

While noting that non-privileged women, who cannot ignore the complex and intersecting differences that determine subjectivities,”

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have advanced "complex, careful analysis and action" in response to such homogenizing notions of gender, Phelan says, "white bourgeois women (of whom I am one) have not always kept up with this development, because we have no material reality pressing these facts home. In fact, we have the opposite: we are the bearers of the hegemonic, that which is so privileged that it appears unquestionable" (129). My own initial reading(s) of Ana Historic underline Phelan's reasoning and confirm the necessity of her proposal that we continue philosopher Elizabeth Spelman's efforts at making "the specificity of whiteness and middle-classness visible" (129) as a necessary preliminary step towards a more workable view of "difference" in feminist theorizing. Although I first encountered the novel at a time when the theoretical and political implications of the novel's essentializing of sexual difference might have been--and probably should have been--apparent to me,9 I continued to not see this construction of difference as a mark of privilege as long as it coincided with my own. That the ease with which I could identify with the novel's feminine subjects marked both myself and Marlatt as "bearers of the hegemonic" became clear only with the introduction of a difference separating my subject position from that of the author and protagonist. It came as Annie's "leap" into a sexual relationship with Zoe (152) cemented the novel's opposition between homosexuality and a heterosexuality it identifies as coterminous with

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9I first read Ana Historic during the same months I was reading the essays in This Bridge Called My Back, and preparing a term paper on white women and racism for an introductory women's studies course.
patriarchal oppression. In these early encounters with the text, my reading position was problematized first by the awareness that the novel's most explicit address to actual readers outside the text comes from within the eroticized space surrounding Annie's and Zoe's encounter--disrupting my identification with Zoe's reading of Annie's text by emphasizing the boundary that placed my participation outside of this context. More importantly, what is brought into focus here is not only this difference of sexuality, but a crucial disjunction separating the novel's construction of this difference as opposition, and my own experience of that difference in a cultural and historical context marked both by sexual ambiguity and heterosexual privilege. The impossibility of accommodating the complexities and ambivalences of my own position within the text's oppositional structures highlights the necessity for rethinking such structures, and for recognizing representations of essential, authentic identities as both problematic and limiting.

Julia Watson and Biddy Martin, two theorists whose work has critiqued textual representations of a lesbian essence, both note the dangers of presenting such difference as opposition in terms that echo de Lauretis' concerns over an emphasis on sexual difference that "keeps feminist thinking bound to the terms of Western patriarchy itself, contained within the frame of a conceptual opposition that is 'always already' inscribed in what Fredric Jameson would call 'the political unconscious' of dominant cultural discourses and their
underlying 'master narratives'' (TG 1). Like many involved in theorizing women's autobiographical writings, both emphasize the importance of voicing a sexuality that, as Adrienne Rich has argued, has become "unspeakable" within the terms of a discourse that defines female sexuality as simply "the other of heterosexual masculinity" (Watson 140). Watson notes that articulations of the unspeakable contribute to critiques of dominant models through their status as "transgressive act[s] that knowingly [seek] to expose and speak the boundaries on which the organization of cultural knowledge depends" (140). She underscores the limitations of many such articulations, though, in naming her intention to search for "a politics of reading that undoes [the] simple opposition" of "a polarized framework in which normative heterosexuality and oppositional homosexuality operate as authorized and mutually exclusive discourses" (141).

One of the works Watson refers to in her survey, Biddy Martin's "Lesbian Identity and Autobiographical Difference(s)," focuses on this normative status of heterosexuality, particularly as it is reproduced both in mainstream feminist theories, and more problematically, through the conventions of the coming-out story. She notes Martin's assertion that white heterosexual feminist critics have marginalized lesbian autobiography by representing it as a homogeneous, unitary other, "its difference localized reductively in sexual practice", and her suggestion that the linear progression of the coming out story similarly "reduces and institutionalizes lesbian difference" (Watson
143), further strengthening a hierarchical opposition that privileges a heterosexual norm. Martin reads the conventions of this fictional/autobiographical genre--the return to "something that has always been true," a "movement beyond distortion and constraint, grounding identity and political unity in moral right and truth" (89)--as a construction that imposes its own constraints and distortions, denying the complexities and specificities of subjectivity, even erasing the sexual from the sexuality it purports to name and validate. She describes texts such as Adrienne Rich's "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" as:

The ultimate formulation of a politics of nostalgia, of a return to that state of innocence free of conflict conceived as women's primary emotional bonds with one another, [which] enacts its own violence, as all dreams of perfect union do. . . . Rich's lesbian continuum effectively erases sexuality and robs lesbianism of any specificity. As Hilary Allen argues, " . . . genitality will yield to an unspecified eroticism, eroticism to sensuality, sensuality to 'primary emotional intensity,' and emotional intensity to practical and political support." (87)

Martin's comments illuminate Ana Historic's final pages and Annie's tentative discovery of her desire for Zoe, which is positioned as the final, logical outcome of her growing political awareness, and as aided and enabled to a large extent by Zoe's interest and participation in the construction of Annie's narrative. The eroticism of the final pages is prefaced not only by Annie's introduction to Zoe's shared, working-class home and her political activism, but also by
comments that imply this sexual encounter is important primarily as an escape or transcendence of the confinements of heterosexism and its norms: "whole wardrobes of names guarding the limitations," Annie muses, "we rise above them" (152). Desire and the body merge here with textuality and reminders of the intellectual practices of critical theory: "it isn't dark but the luxury of being / has woken you, the reach of your desire, reading / us into the page ahead" (n.p.). And while Annie's conscious re-creation of Ina's story and her imagination of Ana's both operate to enable her own self-creation, this apparent recognition of her lesbian essence at the novel's close echoes Martin's concern about the genre of coming-out stories, and their tendency to "erase the individual's and the group's active participation in their formation as social beings by relying on apparently transcendent 'essences' lying in wait for discovery and language" (90).

Martin also points to the experiences articulated by the writers of This Bridge Called My Back as powerful refutations of the notion of a shared lesbian essence, noting that for the women represented in this anthology:

There is no linear progression toward some other world or new "home" with women and no restored origin in innocence and wholeness. In fact, for women of color, the very expectation that women shed a patriarchal past for a new home with women constitutes a form of cultural imperialism. For the feminist dream of a new world of women simply reproduces the demand that women of color (and women more generally) abandon their histories, the histories of their
communities, their complex locations and selves, in the name of a unity that barely masks its white, middle-class cultural reference/referent. (93)

To locate difference solely in gender and sexuality underlines the privileging of white bourgeois womanhood as normative or natural. As de Lauretis notes, drawing on arguments by Hortense Spillers, "[s]exuality is a term of power . . . and it belongs to the empowered." Because of this, she says, "the (white) feminist discourse on sexuality . . . can ignore the compelling connection between sexuality and the requirements of survival that is the perceived reality of those women whom class and status do not protect" (FS 13); the resulting discourse can be easily incorporated and institutionalized within the dominant academic models of literary and critical theory. And its relevance to women from outside the world of white middle-class privilege is marginal, at best. Watson cites Nigerian novelist Buchi Emecheta's denunciation of this preoccupation with sexual politics as an example of critiques of first-world feminisms as "being mired in personal and bourgeois issues rather than addressing the exploitation of entire classes of women workers characteristic of late capitalism."

Issues of female sexuality and lesbianism are peripheral, Emecheta says, to the major economic and political concerns of African women living and working within historical contexts of colonization and neo-colonization by western multi-national companies:

Emecheta's critique strikes at the heart of the feminist dictum "The personal is political," by reading the phrase as a substitution of the personal for the political. For Emecheta, as for other African women
writers, a critique of sexual politics is not a sufficient act of "self-decolonization," and practicing heterosexuality does not necessarily signify the absence of a critique of how sexual organization intersects macrosocial organization. (147)

The metaphor of "sexual decolonization" provides an even more problematic marker of the distance separating the concerns of mainstream western feminists and those women exploited through the race- and class-based structures of (neo)colonialism, as it points to a reading of these material realities as analogous to the experiences of middle-class white women under patriarchal, heterosexist systems.10 Citing Rich's assertion that the bodies of western women have been "colonized" by "heterosexist, patriarchal culture which has driven women into marriage and motherhood through every possible pressure--economic, religious, medical, and legal" (146), and Mab Segrest's description of her autobiographical project aimed at "divest[ing] herself of the inherited cultural baggage of heterosexism . . ." as "self-decolonization" (146), Watson questions the use of "decolonization" as a metaphor for "self-investigation of sexual difference" within the context of western lesbian feminism, that is, "outside a network of political, externally imposed, repressive practices that operate on entire peoples" (146-147). While the metaphor is dependent on an awareness of the effects of colonial regimes on the lives of colonized peoples, and implies an

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10This analogy is present in some of the earliest writings of "second wave" feminisms; Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970), for instance, describes sexism as "a most ingenious form of 'interior colonization' . . . . It is one which tends moreover to be sturdier than any form of segregation, and more rigorous . . ." (25).
acknowledgment of the intersecting nature of oppressive and repressive structures, it effectively enacts a kind of levelling that equates colonialism with the operations of heterosexual patriarchy within a context of social and economic privilege, and evades any recognition of white women's complicity in racism, (neo)colonialism, and class structures; the experiences of working-class women and women of colour are erased here much as they are through other constructions of feminist subjectivity that subsume women's differences under the sign of a white, middle-class norm. Watson acknowledges arguments against critical uses of this metaphor in De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography, an anthology of which she is co-editor, outlining the kinds of textual violence done by such inappropriate and appropriative uses of the term, and suggests that it "needs to be bracketed as a problematic and potentially misleading concept within the privileged discourse of Western identity politics" (148). The contradiction between this comment and the choice of title for the anthology illustrates, somewhat ironically, the apparent ease with which mainstream feminisms participate in the construction of women of colour as "others" by re-enacting this marginalization and silencing. The very language that has been identified as both inaccurate and exclusive is reproduced with a disclaimer, rather than discarded in favor of a (possibly difficult) search for more precise understandings and definitions.
None of Ana Historic's theorizing extends to an overt discussion of "sexual colonization," yet the metaphor is persistent and dominant throughout the novel, and has prompted some readers to note the parallels it draws "between Canada's colonial experience and women's experience under patriarchy" (Goldman), and to the "uneasy relation between Father History and mother hystery in Ana Historic," which Grisé points to as a "power dynamic which parallels that of the colonizer/colonized":

The gendered violence represented by the solutions to Ina's 'hysteria' is analogous to the colonial impulses of our Canadian past, tracing a process by which the (m)other is erased, silenced and captured by the cinematic reels of official history. (93)

The novel's reading of both history and empire through the oppositional framework of gender presents these as exclusively masculine concerns, and absolves its women characters of responsibility for, and complicity in these structures; yet it simultaneously presents these women as active participants in this imperial project as they claim space for themselves in a territory traditionally reserved for the masculine subject of western discourses--a position founded on the silencing and objectification of Others. The novel draws persistent parallels between women and the natural environment, and presents Vancouver's early settlement and the exploitation of this environment as the activities of a monolithic patriarchal order--likening "the silence of trees" to "the silence of women" (75); it consistently reproduces the leveling Watson describes
by metaphorically equating the violence of colonization with the
sexual oppression of the middle-class white women whose
experiences are at its core. Ana's observation of herself and the other
women at Hastings Sawmill indicates a recognition of their role as the
carriers of a particularly British brand of domestic culture into the
North American settlement:

They were surrounded by trees at the edge of
the clearing, she knew that. By the dark of
standing timber, rain forest, and everywhere
trees were cleared the rapid growth of
bramble, salal, salmonberry thicket--'bush.'
But they were sitting with English china,
Scotch shortbread, their talk dancing the
leafdance shadow and light of weather,
polite, of whether her time was near . . . .
(118)

Yet her musings on the significance of Jeannie's Glasgow roses and
the rituals of tea-time are framed by the passage that introduces this
section describing the birth of Jeannie's child--a listing of ship's
cargo, "EX STAR OF JAMAICA" (113)--and by the juxtaposition of this
description with archival newspaper clippings detailing the intrigues
of the men at the mill who place bets on the "Annie Fraser" and the
"Pearl" in a boat race (held, appropriately, on Dominion Day), then
dispute the outcome. By the time Ana's account turns to the labour
itself, the metaphor has been firmly established: here, at the "farflung
reaches of the imperial mother" (117), "the ships men ride into the
pages of history" become "the nameless women who are vessels of
their destiny": "the ship R.H., H.O. ride into history as stars on board
the mute matter of being wife and mother--ahistoric, muddled in the
mundane, incessantly repeating, their names 'writ in water'" (121). History fails to record Jeannie Alexander's act of giving birth; instead, it commodifies this function of the female body, and accords her status and value in return for her role as a vessel. That this role is essential to the project of "civilization," and that white women become objectified in their domesticity is difficult to dispute. But the invocation of a metaphor that compares the function of those European women who followed men to the colonies to that of the vessels that carry the "goods" exchanged in this colonial enterprise goes beyond an emphasis on the difficulties experienced by colonial wives, to elide and effectively erase the experiences of those women and men whose status as human cargo, and as casualties of the exploitation of colonized lands, is implicit in these references to shipping and colonial trade routes. The text itself remains mute on the matter of those who first reach the Americas not "at the ship's rail," as Mrs. Richards does (14), but stacked in the cargo hold--or of those who watched this arrival from the rapidly disintegrating communities on shore.

Marlatt's novel more problematically equates the position of white women under patriarchy with that of colonized peoples in a passage describing Ina's isolation in a world of housework and "getting things done" in her North Vancouver home. Spoken in Annie's voice, and addressed to her mother, the paragraph expresses empathy with a woman faced with "weeks and months of days alone
in a house with all its chores crying out for you to do." "you were always home where your place was," Annie recalls:

with the sawdust furnace, with the wood stove for heat, hanging clothes anywhere you could to dry them. filling up the silence with songs. black working songs, slave songs. 'Ol' Man River,' 'Lazy-bones'--always the question: 'how you gonna git yo' day's work done?' when it is never done, never over with, and there is no one there to witness your accomplishment. (137)

The analogy drawn here between the unrecognized and unpaid labour of housework and the work of people displaced and dehumanized by the oppression of slavery becomes all the more obscene in the context of Ina's early life, described earlier in the paragraph. Ina's experience is particularly difficult, we are told, because of its strangeness to her; it is not the kind of life she is accustomed to. Annie remembers her mother struggling to maintain the customary style of her upbringing in Vancouver: "dismissing things that looked 'cheap,' vainly trying to clothe us with the class you had in the tropics where your clothes were handsewn by Chinese tailors and our intricately smocked dresses came from the School for the Blind" (33). "you never lived alone," she recalls. "you went from your parents' colonial house to boarding school, then back to your parents and into

11That the songs she refers to as "black working songs" are the "popularized" and commercialized versions attributed to a celebrated white Broadway composer adds yet another layer to this pattern of appropriation and silencing, as painful collective histories are distorted, trivialized, and turned into "entertainment" for a dominant culture that includes women like Ina and Annie (who often fail to see the contradiction between their own struggles for autonomy and control over (self-) representations, and their consumption of material such as the recently revived Show Boat).
marriage with your own servants" (137). The incongruity between this reference to Ina's racial privilege, in the strictly hierarchical world where she "negotiate[s] the cross-currents of Mother and Mem" (136), and the representation of her perceived loss of this privilege--the necessity that she labour in the service of her own family--as comparable to the racial oppression of slavery, remains unexamined. The appropriation of the experience of slavery as a metaphor for the domestic entrapment of white, middle-class women both presents this privileged status as normative, and denies the dependence of this status on the interlocking structures of empire that construct much more brutal limits around the subjectivities (erased by this text) of both colonial servants and slaves.

Neither is Ana Historic's attribution of all aspects of colonialism to patriarchy seamless. Even as the text presents characters struggling to divest themselves of the oppressive, hierarchical precepts of a male-defined culture, it exposes their participation in its colonial mythology. Correcting her mother's image of "Canada: romance of the wilds," Annie comments that "there was first of all: 'a clearing three hundred and fifty yards along the shore,'" "a mill and then: 'three hotels . . .'" (26-27), locating the origins of the city not with the First Nations' use of the beaches and forest, but with the physical changes in the landscape that mark the arrival of "civilization." And the independence and autonomy she imagines must have accompanied Mrs. Richards' arrival here echoes the tone and spirit of the many masculine adventurers who followed promises of personal
fulfillment and affluence to the shores of the "New World." In Annie's imagination, Mrs. Richards writes, "I am orphaned here at the end of the world--Yet I feel no grief, for I am made new here" (30). Frank Davey suggests that this new land at first appears to offer an escape from "the social proprieties and conventions which grant authority to men and exclude women from both administrative decision-making and official history" in England--an escape which ultimately proves to be illusory (197). Yet the words ascribed to her, and Annie's elaboration--"[she can] see herself aboriginal in the new world (it is the old one she is at the end of)" (30)--mark Ana as a participant in the heroic narratives of empire, where the new land offers generous opportunities for self-creation, providing a blank canvas for "the only important events in the world. a tale of [her] exploits hacked out against a silent backdrop of trees, of wooden masses" (28). Both Mrs. Richards and the narrator who (re)creates her as Ana are sensitive to the ease with which the gender-based constraints of England have been transplanted to Ana's new home in British Columbia; yet her eagerness to view this land and its original inhabitants as a silent and unprotesting space in which she can write her own story--a view that partakes of both the romantic individualism and the ethnocentrism of the patriarchal culture she is attempting to distance herself from--is left to stand without comment. Surely, though, to "see herself aboriginal" here (30) requires both a denial of the existence of aboriginal cultures and an appropriation of their anterior position. Annie repeats this erasure in her distress over Ina's
insistence on maintaining English customs in Canada: "the world you brought with you, transposed, onto a Salish mountainside" (23-24). In the context of Annie's anxiety over her family's difference--her desire to fit in to the dominant (anglo-) Canadian culture of the 1950s--the adjective Salish denotes not the First Nations culture or the coastal territory of that group, but the mountainside's foreignness--the lack or absence of markers of English culture (or at least, of Ina's version of this) in the landscape.

Similarly, silence and the absence of (European) cultural constructions of the self appear to be the primary characteristics of the aboriginal women Ana encounters in and around Gastown and Hastings Mill--a situation that highlights the eurocentrism inherent in the novel's concern with cultural construction of both feminine and feminist subjectivities. As Julia Emberley notes in Thresholds of Difference: Feminist Critique, Native Women's Writings, Postcolonial Theory, Ana Historic partakes in the construction of this silence/absence, then deploys "the usefulness of an aboriginal authenticity" (152) as a foil for the complex and problematic pressures brought to bear on its primary subjects. "... [T]he figure of the aboriginal fulfills the desire for the 'other'" (154) here in a process of self-definition that in many respects parallels those of the imperial, patriarchal powers it critiques. Rather than continuing the novel's exploration of the power of naming and definition to include an analysis of similarities between the oppositional structuring of gender
relations and the ways that European colonizers consolidated both their powerful position and their own self-definitions through their representations of native peoples, Marlatt allows her narrators to take part in this very process of Other-ing. Ana's experiences of difference, in her encounters with aboriginal women and men, offer opportunities to expand on the novel's critique of the restrictive and inadequate nature of culturally-bounded perceptual frames. Instead, this difference is finally attributed to the native characters, who function as mirrors in which Marlatt's narrator(s) find their own images reflected.

For instance, while Ana's initial observation of Ruth opens a space for a critique of the power differential separating the white European schoolteacher and the native house servant, it also reinforces this dynamic by positioning Ruth as the object of another's actions:

Yesterday, [Mrs. Patterson] sent her Siwash woman, Ruth— that cannot be her real name— and the woman's mother, to scrub the Schoolhouse. (69)

While Ana recognizes the imposition of a foreign identity, and the effacement of what is "real," it is this effacement and the appropriation of this "authenticity" that continues as Marlatt allows her to slip unproblematically and unself-consciously into her role as the colonizer:

As I was straightening books and the children's things, I observed Ruth to pass her fingers slowly over the slate, as if the letters marked thereon might leap into her very
skin. Our Magic is different from theirs, I see--And yet it cannot capture them--the quiet with which each seems wrapt, a Grace that--the Grace of direct perception, surely, untroubled by letters, by mirrors, by some foolish notion of themselves such as we suffer from. I cannot find the words for this the others would dismiss as Pagan--perhaps our words cannot speak it. (69)

Here, as in her frustrated attempts to teach the letter a to a student for whom the concept of angel is meaningless (91-92), Ana notes the difference in cultural context--the limits of her own experience and expectations--but remains silent on the connections between this difference and the structures of power that accord her privilege based on "race" and nationality. Instead, her recognition of this difference becomes an appropriation of the other woman's silence, as she constructs, of Ruth, a mirror in which she (Ana) can see her own self reflected. Just as the toughness and labour implied by the calloused feet of Ruth and her mother work, through contrast, to define the delicacy and softness of the English women in their "swish of long skirts" (70) and foundation garments, the silence and "untroubled" grace Ana attributes to her highlights the layers of cultural narratives that define and constrain Mrs. Richards and her counterparts. When Ana speaks here of this "Grace of direct perception, . . . untroubled by letters, by mirrors, by some foolish notion of themselves such as we suffer from" (69), she is not talking of Ruth at all, but of the difference she perceives in her, which allows her to articulate the ways that both Ana and Annie are "troubled" by historical and social notions of how and who they should be. In romanticizing this apparent freedom from the restrictions of European history, the novel defines "history" as
European, denying the previous existence of aboriginal cultural traditions and identities, and elides any discussion of the injustices accompanying the imposition of European rule on the people of the new colony. Ruth, her mother, and the other aboriginal characters are represented not as subjects positioned within a set of structural relationships that also includes Ana, but as figures untouched and unfettered by these configurations of power. Emberley notes:

The Native woman is an embodiment of an essential and authentic language. At the same time as a Woman/Native language is figured as different ('Our Magic is different from theirs'), it is a key metaphorical displacement of the very 'unconditioned language' (75) Marlatt is seeking to reproduce for the disenfranchised female bourgeois subject. (156)

This "unconditioned language" is replaced in the text by silence; like the other native figures in and around Hastings Mill, Ruth does not speak, but watches and observes silently. And it is Ana who repeatedly interprets and ascribes meaning to these looks and actions. Her interpretation of Ruth's actions here represent the "Pagan" subject as awed by the power of the written word--an attitude that functions to reinforce and even to legitimate the limiting meanings the text inscribes. This opposition between a writing subject negotiating a relationship (however qualified and problematic) with textual and cultural authority and a naive, even mystical, figure associated with the natural world culminates in Ana's encounter with...

... the Indian crone they called the Virgin Mary, who had risen like an apparition out of bush, and joining the trail with her basket of
shoots, roots, whatever they were, had given her a singularly flat look, a look not at her but through, as if she were a bush or fern. At first she had thought the old woman was blind, but no one blind could find the path like that. There had been a large amount of sky in those eyes. It was the look of mountains, when she could see them through fog and cloud, snowy otherwheres she had forgotten about until they were suddenly on a clear day, perfectly present. (96)

Ana's interpretation of the woman's gaze positions her as an aspect of the natural world, wholly mysterious and inscrutable, and echoes the implications of her earlier description of Ruth's "direct perception." These women are presented as pure, their contact with the world as unmediated, untainted by culturally prescribed identities or notions of femininity. Just as in Annie's memories of "what i did when i was she who did not feel separated or split" (11) -- when "without history we squatted in needle droppings to pee, flung our bodies through the trees" (19), and ran in the woods "spirit(ed), filled with it, the world of what was other than us" (13) -- Marlatt's native women are at one with the world around them. The novel advances, in these "pagan" women, the possibility of a return to an origin in an authentic feminine essence.

But this return is neither possible nor consistent with the novel's opposition between Western Culture (in which its feminist subjects participate) and a (feminized) aboriginal Nature. That Annie turns to an etymology of the English word pagan in order to underline this "go[ing] back and right on through" (69) to what is being proposed as women's essential un-civilized (and thus, un-
circumscribed) "nature," points to the culturally-bounded perspective in which this interpretation has currency. And it is the cultural frame that contains the very concept of a Nature/Culture dichotomy that is reinforced through these representations of Ruth and "the Indian crone they called the Virgin Mary" (96). These representations participate in a colonial project aimed at strengthening the power and centrality of the colonizing subject while eradicating the cultural histories of First Nations people; First Nations women are represented here as the Other of the novel's white narrator(s), whose position is then naturalized as representative of a homogeneous, and uniformly oppressed category, "women." While the novel fails to acknowledge this as an exercise of power and an illustration of the inequities that disrupt this category, some recent readings work to see these representations as consistent with Ana Historic's interrogation of the ideological frameworks that surround and define identities.

In "A Bedtime Story for you, Ina," Annette Grisé claims that Ana Historic offers a "post-colonial inquiry" (93) into the revisionary feminist framework constructed in and around the novel--that several moments in the text point "towards the limits of Annie's feminist project as a colonial critique of the experiences of white women" (95). Grisé focuses particularly on the episode describing Jeannie Alexander's labour and the birth of her child, and suggests that while the juxtaposition of this sequence with the published accounts of a boat race points out both "the insignificant role to which the mothers
of the community are relegated" (93) and "the phallocentrism of historical documentation," (94) the presence of "Harriet, the Indian girl" (Marlatt 114) also underlines the "the potential danger for monologism in [this] white feminist project of historical revisioning" (94). She notes that Harriet is neither spoken of nor to "in this scene of sisterly familiarity and support" (94), though her presence is clearly necessary:

Jeannie leaned back in her rocker with a tiny sigh, smiling under half-closed lids: 'What would I do without you [Susan], my dear? Things always seem right when you're here.'

But it's Harriet, Ana thought, who makes them right. (115)

Critiquing Tostevin's failure to make space, in her analysis of this sequence, "for the doubly colonized Harriet," Grisê presents a reading in which she finds herself, "as a woman of European descent, caught gazing past Harriet through the eyes of Jeannie," and then recognizes both her own and Jeannie's blindness as markers of the perceptual limits of colonial subjectivity:

Just as Ana's presence in the text points to the absence of the lives/texts of other colonial women, Harriet's presence attests to the native peoples, born and forgotten, whose histories and lives are dismissed by Alice as "only Indian births" (117). (qtd. by Grisé: 94)

What is crucial to this analysis, which appears to resolve a major contradiction in the novel, is Grisé's perception of irony in this scene. Grisé notes the incompatibility between Marlatt's project of contextualizing subjectivity and destabilizing its surrounding (and
circumscribing) discursive frameworks, and the reinscription of "the colonizer's projection of the Other" onto First Nations subjects (95), and sees this very incompatibility as creating an ironic frame through which this textual content can be interpreted (94). But since irony is inherently dependent upon the ability (and the inclination) of readers to recognize such disjunctures, and to read the subtexts of such doubled meanings, Grisé's analysis effectively underscores the necessity for an interpretive stance that attends to the complexities of reading contexts and the position(s) readers occupy in/among these.

I am hesitant to endorse Grisé's insistence that the other-ing of colonized women is "revisioned in Ana Historic through the present absences of these indigenous women" (95), though the contradictions she notes in their representations in the novel, combined with the reading strategies modeled there, do point to the possibility of such critical revisioning "beyond the bounds of this text" (Grisé 95). Within the limits of the theoretical context represented by Marlatt's text, though, these "present absences" simply reproduce the invisibility of First Nations women in conventional feminist paradigms; the contexts in which this can be read as irony are fairly limited, and consensual readings that retain the perceptual frames Annie inhabits and constructs simply reinforce the silencing of Harriet and those other native women both included and excluded from this text. Only readings that take up the novel's challenge to see feminist theorizing as an ongoing process, and to question the assumptions and limitations implicit in Annie's/Marlatt's construction of the subject of
feminism, may interpret these passages as "an internal critique of Annie's project, just as Annie's novel acts to critique Richard's 'Big Book' [79]" (Grisé 95).

"Who's There?" is a question that points in several directions simultaneously: in to the pages of Ana Historic and its process of discovering and articulating a feminist subject; back through the literary, historical, and cultural traditions of the west and their construction of the limited and limiting figure of Woman; and out to those readers called to continue the novel's exploration of these subject(s) of feminism beyond its closure, from those places we are grounded in as historically- and culturally-situated participants in its revisionary project. It is this last direction--the attention to the positioning and participation of readers in the construction of meaning--that is so crucial to a continuation of the re-writing and re-reading process Marlatt sets in motion with this novel. And it is only through conscious and continuing efforts at specifying and particularizing these positionings and activities that such gaps in the novel's theorizing can open spaces for further explorations of the interlocking power structures these represent.
"that's her name:
   back, backward, reversed
   again, anew"

IV

Conclusion:

(Re)reading the question again (and again)
In formulating a response to its own initial "Who's There?" so firmly based on gender as a primary determining factor, the novel reproduces the very failures emphasized in contemporary critiques of feminist theories; in these representations of First Nations women, in particular, it illustrates how feminism's "drive for equality has served to assimilate, which is to subjugate, those who are not members of hegemonic groups" (Phelan 140). As Phelan notes, "white middle-class feminists' theoretical work on 'difference' has too often foreclosed appreciation of differences among women, by constructing a story about 'our' unified difference. It thus shifts us from one sort of subjugation to another . . ." (140). Returning to Spelman, Phelan reminds her readers that "as long as white feminists treat our position as generic, our feminism as 'feminism,' we will continue to obscure the situations and thoughts of other women, with implications as racist as those of the 'first wave' of feminists who tried to buy their rights at the expense of racial and ethnic minorities" (131).

While readings that simply comply with Marlatt's oppositional construction of difference can only exacerbate these political effects of the novel's model of feminist subjectivity, the challenge implied in Ana Historic's final address to those subjects "reading / us into the page ahead" implores readers to continue its narrators' explorations of ideological frameworks. Reading from a position that exposes and
critiques these limitations of the feminist theorizing inscribed in the novel, then, is both the responsibility of any reader intent on addressing the divisions between this mainstream feminism and the histories and experiences it compromises and excludes, and a necessary response to the demands of the text itself. In order to answer the text's "Who's There?" in terms that can account for the complexities of the cultural and historical structures in which our own subject positions are embedded, the readers called to participate in the novel's processes must find other models of subjectivity through which to frame our relationship(s) to this text; we need to turn to models such as de Lauretis', which see the female subject of feminism not as unified, but as "a site of differences" (FS 14):

... a subject constituted in gender, to be sure, though not by sexual difference alone, but rather across languages and cultural representations; a subject en-gendered in the experiencing of race and class, as well as sexual, relations; a subject, therefore, not unified but rather multiple, and not so much divided as contradicted. (TG 2)

For Phelan and Spelman, this necessitates turning away from the common attempt to find the theory or commonality that links and can account for the experiences of all women, pointing to its obvious tendency to elide and erase differences, and also to the problematic nature of the term "difference" itself, which "never seems to mean white or middle-class, but rather signifies that which is not, just as it has come to mean that which is not male. The effect in both cases is to privilege the hegemonic, 'generic' group, a privilege which
manifests itself as absence, as the unquestionable" (132). Phelan suggests, instead, an attention to "specificity" which "aims at destroying white bourgeois hegemony by making it manifest, just as feminism has aimed at destroying male hegemony by highlighting and questioning it." The analytical stance she proposes would specify the critic's or theorist's "location in various systems of power," questioning how these locations influence meaning and interpretation, and "rendering everyone accountable for her positions and actions" (133).

Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty's reading of Minnie Bruce Pratt's essay "Identity: Skin Blood Heart" concentrates on the implications of precisely this kind of specificity and accountability, commending the narrative's unsettling of "not only any notion of feminism as an all-encompassing home but also the assumption that there are discrete, coherent, and absolutely separate identities--homes within feminism, so to speak--based on absolute divisions between various sexual, racial, or ethnic identities" (192). Pratt's autobiographical narrative is organized around the problematic notion of "home," or, around the tension between the opposing states of "[b]eing home" ("the place where one lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries") and "not being home" ("a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences even within oneself") (196). The recognition
that "home" as a space of privilege exists primarily through this denial of its relation to oppressions and subjugations reasserts itself throughout, as the author continuously re-evaluates her understanding of self and identity, and re-situates herself in relation to a series of geographical sites from her personal past, which she learns have "witnessed and obscured particular race, class and gender struggles" while her eye "has only let in what I have been taught to see" (196). The process "politicizes the geography, demography, and architecture of these communities," prompting Pratt to "[problematize] her ideas about herself by juxtaposing the assumed histories of her family and childhood, predicated on the invisibility of the histories of people unlike her, to the layers of exploitation and struggles of different groups of people for whom these geographical sites were also home" (195). Rather than attempting to resolve or transcend the contradictions inherent in these explorations, Pratt recognizes in them both the intersections among various planes of power relations, and the very relational nature of identity, and "constantly has to problematize and define herself anew in relation to people she meets" in these locations (199).

Pratt's narrative, and Martin and Mohanty's reading of her text, are instructive in their emphasis on the entanglements and interconnections that necessitate an understanding of various oppressions and hierarchies as simultaneous and interdependent, rather than mutually exclusive. Pratt's recognition of the structures that diminish her humanity and worth because of her female-ness or
her lesbianism neither excludes an awareness of the subjugations visited upon other women and men based on class, ethnicity or "race," nor sees these as analogous or parallel to her own experience. Rather, she notes how the points in this web of exclusions work together to shore up the whole--to maintain a stubbornly resilient but ultimately unstable structure which, like her father's identity "sustains its appearance of stability by defining itself in terms of what it is not: not black, not female, not Jewish, not Catholic, not poor, etc." (196-197).

Martin and Mohanty emphasize two things in particular about Pratt's essay that are relevant to a discussion of Ana Historic's construction of a feminist subject. They commend its avoidance of the assumption implicit in many critiques of "what is increasingly identified as 'white' or 'Western' feminism [which] unwittingly leave the terms of West/East, white/nonwhite polarities intact": that the terms of this discourse, which is criticized as both irrelevant and inadequate to most women in the world, "are adequate to the task of articulating the situation of white women in the West" (193 emphasis in original). They also endorse Pratt's representation of

The complexity of the father-daughter relationship and [her] acknowledgment of the differences within it--rather than simply between herself and her father--[which] make it impossible to be satisfied with a notion of difference from the father, literal or figurative, which would (and in much feminist literature does) exempt the daughter from her implication in the structures of privilege/oppression, structures that operate in ways much more complex than the
male/female split itself. The narrator expresses the pain, the confusion attendant upon this complexity. (203-204)

Pratt's reading of the social and political structures through which her own subjectivity is constructed provides a useful guide for a reading of Ana Historic that may be able both to make sense of the contradictory positions of actual readers and feminist subjects, and to resist the threat of the novel's recuperation by the very binary systems of Western patriarchal discourse it works to destabilize. Ana Historic's attempt to erase its protagonists' complicity in these structures, and to privilege their gendered identities over a recognition of the many and overlapping factors relative to which subjectivities are constructed leaves the text itself vulnerable to such a recuperation; but just as Annie's (re)reading of Ana's and Ina's histories from her own historical and political context allows for a growth in understanding her own position and how it has been constructed, a reading that re-frames my relationship(s) to these textual subjects from a perspective that emphasizes the various power relations that inform these can contribute to a less exclusive (and more realistic/relevant) model of feminist subjectivity.

This re-framing has meant that moments that had initially triggered recognition and identification with Marlatt's protagonists have now become markers of far more dubious positions within intricate webs of power relations. Annie's distress at "barely remember[ing] the mother who'd . . . read 'The King asked the Queen and the Queen asked the Dairy-Maid' in funny voices . . . " (144) once prompted a nostalgic response based on my own memories of reading
(or being read to from) A.A. Milne's poetry. In my interpretation of Annie's comments, as in my own life, *The World of Christopher Robin* was a site of shared pleasure in the context of an innocent, primarily emotional connection between mother and child. While Marlatt's text places this memory within a political context—inserting it between passages that underline Ina's disempowerment, and the destruction of this bond, at the hands of the medical and psychiatric profession—it retains the innocence surrounding this moment. The political implications of Milne's text, and of the transmission of the "common sense" assumptions about class, "race," and empire contained therein, are absent from this reading. But a reading that takes Pratt's essay as a model can see these several power relations operating simultaneously. The focus on Ina's entrapment and ultimate destruction by a patriarchal social and medical culture need not mean that her participation (and Annie's) in the imperialism and rigid class structures represented by Milne's text is erased. What Pratt's narrative suggests, instead, is that this awareness of one's own dehumanization or disenfranchisement can provide an opening through which the other inequities in which one participates become more rather than less visible. In "'We Cannot Live Without Our Lives': White Women, Antiracism, and Feminism," Ann Russo argues that maintaining an awareness of those issues that simultaneously privilege and disempower us, and recognizing these as coexistent and inseparable, is necessary to an ability to move through and beyond these structures. She notes that it is the realization of "how skin and
class privilege have not always 'protected' me (though clearly I have reaped many benefits as well)," that has helped her "to understand how [her] survival is intricately linked with the survival of women of color and that real freedom can be a reality only when all of us are free" (308).

Russo's comments and Pratt's example have led me to re-evaluate my initial readings of two other potentially contradictory passages. Emberley's reading of a section describing Ana's encounter with two Siwash men on a forest path appears to dismiss the moment as only an example of the novel's failure to acknowledge the colonial power relations in which it participates: "... two Siwash men appear in the text (41-42) as victims of white racism, which takes the form of fear and loathing of stereotypical drunken Indians, crazy and irrational" (155-156). Her emphasis is on that aspect of the passage that I had slighted, in my first reading, in favour of a response focused on empathy and identification with Ana's fear of male violence. Her transformation from someone wanting "to kick off her boots, dance the well-being of her soul at home, for once, in her skin" (40) to a woman "froze[n] on the path" with "the sickness of fear" (41-42) was both familiar and terrifying to me, and the fury she directs "at herself" and at her "foolishness" (42), points to our similar positions in a social order that both advises women to curtail our movements for our own safety, effectively making us responsible for the actions of others, and then denies that the threat of violence is either real or significant.
But both this reading and Emberley's--readings that emphasize one system of power at the expense of the other--can only work to strengthen the perception that "race" and gender exist as mutually exclusive and competing categories. That Ana is presented here as both a consumer and a purveyor of racist representations and assumptions does not diminish the fear she experiences as a woman alone facing two male strangers. But neither does my recognition of that fear--or the fact that the threat it responds to is present even in my protected middle-class neighbourhood--alter the racial and class privilege that allows me to pass through other neighbourhoods (on my way "home") where it is a much more constant presence, and where physical violence represents only one of many affronts to the dignity and sovereignty of those for whom these spaces are "home." It seems important to maintain an awareness of these several measures of inequities as interlocking, and as operating simultaneously here, rather than to assign Ana a role as either a victim or an oppressor in this scene--to acknowledge her fear, even as I recognize that the stories that intensify it--stories of the way "[t]hey go crazy when they drink" (41)--feed the distinction between European "civilization" and native "savagery" while failing to comment on the colonial erosion of native civilizations as the source of these images.

A question near the opening of Marlatt's novel refers quite directly to these entanglements: "what if he were hungry, starved even," Annie asks, tiptoeing down the stairs,
and so desperately from outside he would kill to get what he wanted, as afraid even as she, to get what he needed, while she who had her needs met, secure (was she really?) in her parents' house, trembling and bare-armed (in nightie even), she was merely in his way . . . . (10)

While a reading in line with the novel's emphasis on a unified difference of gender as the primary determinant of feminist subjectivity might focus on the vulnerability and fear of this speaker--her perception of being both contained and threatened by boundaries she has had no part in creating--another reading, attentive to the work's persistent re-framing, can see an interlocking system of vulnerabilities and hierarchies suggested here. The passage emphasizes Annie's physical and sexual vulnerability, as "trembling and bare-armed (in nightie even)" she makes her descent into the unknown; it also underlines the instability of those structures--"her parents' house," or the bourgeois patriarchal family and her place within it--that purport to keep her safe and secure.

But Annie is aware not only of threats to her own security here, but also of the effects of these structures on those whose positions are different from her own. The masculine Other whose presence she senses as a danger is also, potentially, "as afraid even as she," and maybe "hungry, starved even, and so desperately from outside he would kill to get what he wanted" (10). In other words, it is the construction of an inside and outside, and the energies required to maintain this boundary, that both separate and endanger. And while several criticisms of Ana Historie have focused on its retention of this boundary--its tendency to leave the dualistic paradigm of Western
culture intact--there is ample opportunity for readers of the novel to step back and examine/expose this ideological framework just as Annie re-examines that of the conventional structures in which she finds her mother's and Mrs. Richards' lives represented. Those readers and readings that are attentive to the confluence of cultural, historical, institutional, political, and social contexts through which meanings are produced and shaped are the ones most able to recognize the novel's own processes and discoveries as necessarily provisional and contextually-bound--as signposts pointing beyond their own perceptual framework, or "skeletal bones of a suppressed body the story is" (29).
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